

Introduction

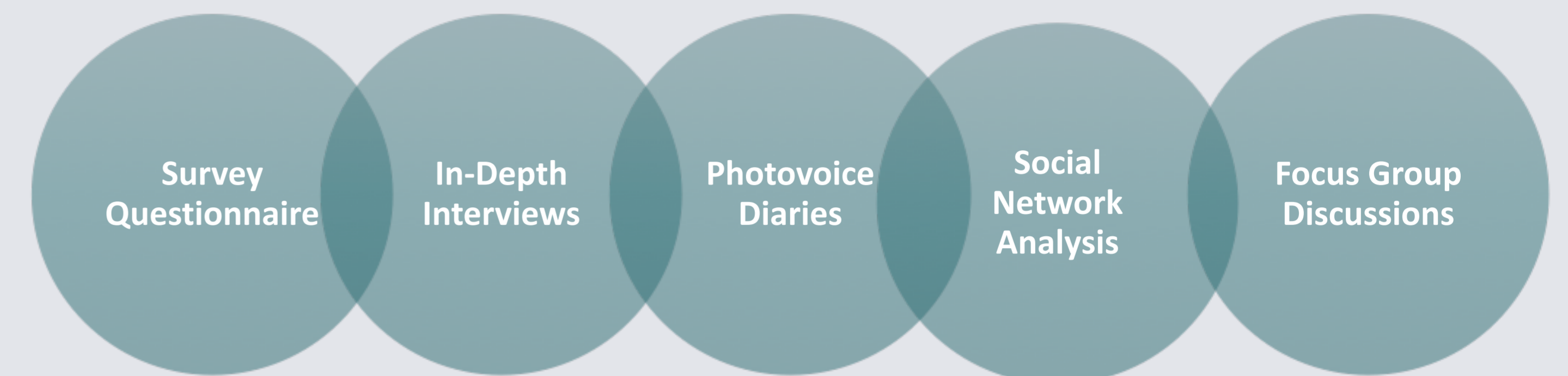
Studies such as Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) and Teenpath have documented inequalities in the lives of children and young people in Ireland, describing patterns of health-related behaviours among adolescents, and noting inequalities by family social background and gender [1].

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into focus and amplified these health inequalities, harming the mental, social and material well-being of young people, with the most disadvantaged hit hardest [2]. Research examining the lived experience and impact of COVID-19 on young people is needed to better develop and target supports for those most vulnerable and affected [3].

Teenpath Covid is a mixed methods, participatory study that aims to capture these experiences, and centre young people in co-producing this evidence toward identifying pathways for policy.

Methods

The project uses a combination of quantitative, qualitative and participatory research approaches such as photographic photo diaries and social network analysis to collect a rich dataset of quantitative and qualitative insights into what it means to be growing up in pandemic. Recruitment will target adolescents and young people aged 16-25 to participate in a range of activities.



Together these will explore the impacts of the pandemic and restrictions on friendships, family networks, and support in relation to health and wellbeing, as well as the ways young people have coped with and adapted to restrictions in Ireland.

Research in Progress

PPI Model

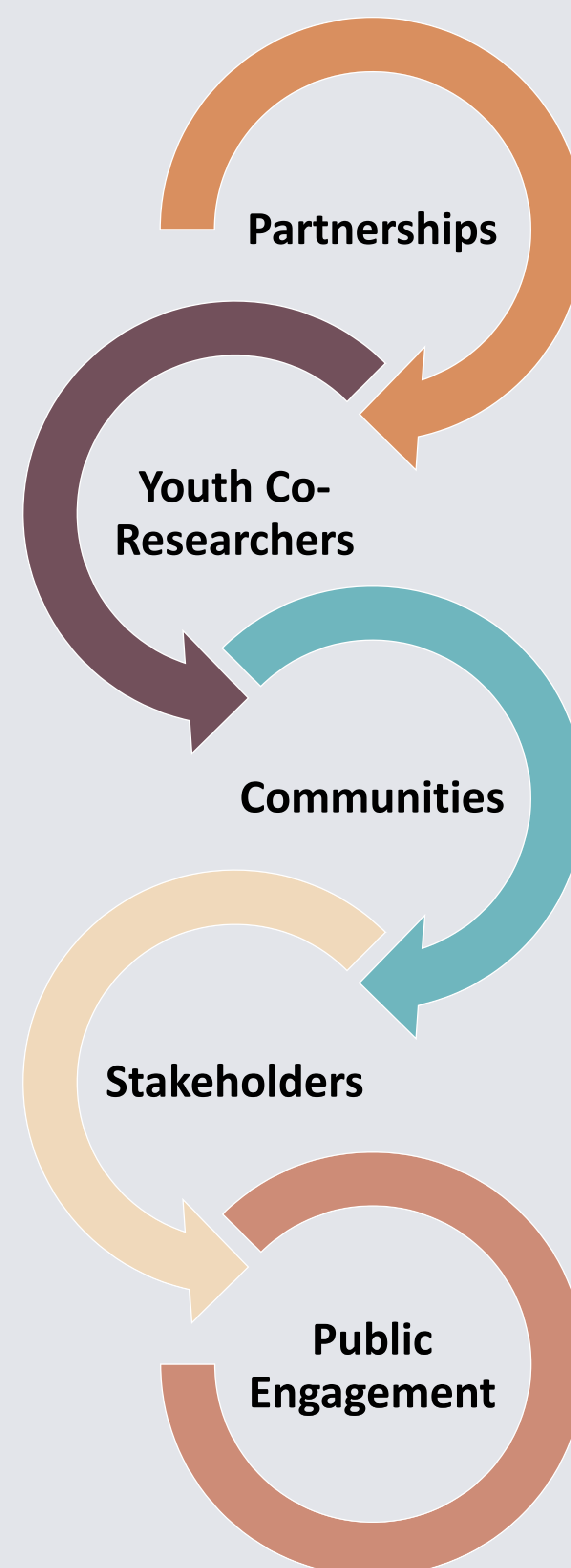
In line with the principles of **participatory research** and **Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)**, our approach **involves** participants and the public throughout the research process as **equal partners** in evidence co-production.



Photovoice diaries will document themes on health behaviours and wellbeing. Image by by Marco Verch.

Co-research

An extension to this model is the direct involvement of young people as co-researchers who contribute to the project's study design, recruitment, participant material development, analysis and communication. This creates relevant and direct pathways for dialogue and policy development with key organisations and agencies.



Stakeholder Analysis

A preliminary stakeholder analysis involving semi-structured interviews and consultation is underway with staff from several organisations. This is gathering valuable insights into the experiences of staff delivering services and support to young people throughout the pandemic, including key concerns and challenges, and refining the study's research priorities, design, and guide recruitment.

Communities

Multi-sited community-based participatory activities within local communities and disadvantaged groups are planned, with co-researchers being trained in peer interviewing and ethnographic observation.

Public Engagement

Project activities and outputs will be communicated via social media channels (@Teenpath_RCSI) and a blog. This will raise the profile of the project and its objectives and share key findings from the study. A knowledge translation workshop at the end of the study will exhibit photovoice projects and share findings with stakeholders and the public.

Discussion

TeenPath Covid will capture the experiences of young people navigating the upheaval of growing up in a pandemic. Analysis will explore the significance and role of personal networks in shaping health behaviours and disruptions to these, and identifying differential vulnerabilities and exposures to health inequalities potentially amplified by COVID-19.

Involving young people in the research process helps us in gain a common understanding of complex structural and social determinants of health, enhance interpretation of our findings, aid in developing policy, and inform collective action with young people at the centre of change [4].

Conclusion

As we anticipate a post-pandemic future, we must listen to, learn from, and find ways to support young people growing up in a pandemic who will go on to shoulder much of its economic and social costs. Participatory research can bring their experiences and valid expectations to bear on public discourses and policy.

References

1. Growing Up in Ireland (2016). Health, Weight, Physical Activity and Diet. Key Findings: Child Cohort at 17/18 Years. Dublin, Economic and Social Research Institute.
2. Irish Youth Foundation (2021) Generation Pandemic Report.
3. ESRI (2021) Growing Up in Ireland: Key findings from the special COVID-19 survey of Cohorts '98 and '08.
4. Martin, S. et al. (2018). Including the voices of children and young people in health policy development: An Irish perspective. Health Education Journal, 77(7), 791-802.

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