



Teen Views on Adolescence

Harmonising the
meaning of
'adolescence' between
young people and
health researchers

Defining adolescence

THE LANCET Child & Adolescent Health

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The age of adolescence

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Adolescence now lasts from 10 to 24, say scientists

'Earlier puberty has accelerated the onset of adolescence in nearly all populations, while understanding of continued growth has lifted its endpoint age well into the 20s'

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Health

'Adolescence now lasts from 10 to 24'

By [Katie Silver](#)
Health reporter, BBC News

 19 January 2018

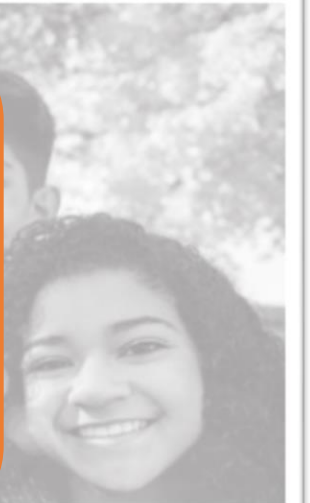
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Defining adolescence



- **Young people (YP) as a widely used term already exists**
- **Young/emerging adult as a widely used term already exists**
- **Extending adolescence to mid-20s risks underestimation of competencies**



Déjà vu

Same debate from 1995, after suggestion to define adolescence as 10-25 yrs



Journal of Adolescent Health
Volume 16, Issue 5, May 1995, Pages 339-340

Commentary
The age of “Adolescence”
M.D. Richard R. Brookman (Immediate Past-President, Society for Adolescent Medicine) 

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[https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X\(95\)00071-Y](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1054-139X(95)00071-Y) [Get rights and content](#)

“This age range... acknowledges that the discipline of Adolescent Medicine is applicable to the **preteen[s]**... to **young adulthood.**”

But ultimately, age is just a number:

“As a pediatric residency training director, **I observe adolescent behavior in our residents ages 24 to 32, but also in our faculty, ages 30 to 65.**”

Defining Adolescence: Main Observations

'WEIRD' population
focus (Western,
Educated,
Industrialised, Rich,
Democratic)

'Top-down' definition
of adolescence. **Why
not ask young people,
too?**

What we did

Workshop with ~30 young people at UCL

Open to 14-24yrs living in England, recruited through schools and social media (twitter, facebook groups, etc)

Final participants aged 14-19, mostly 16-18, more girls than boys



Adolescence in research

A workshop with researchers and young people

Aged 14-24 and live in England?

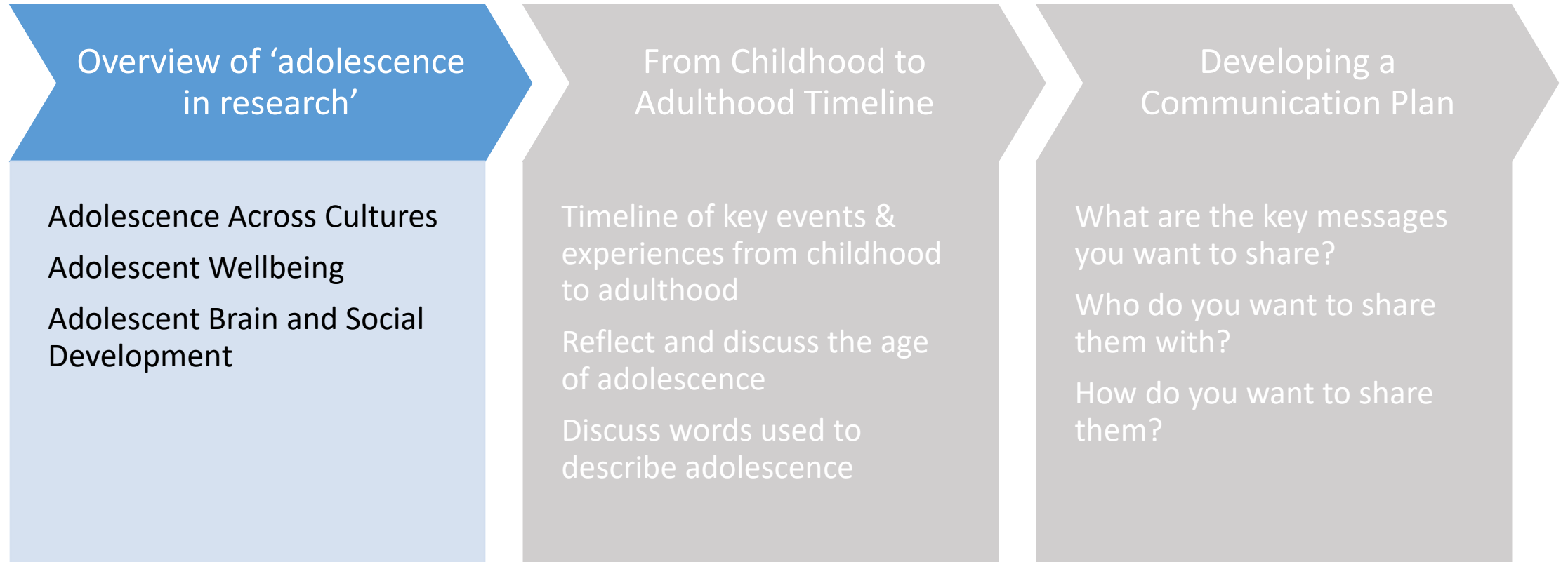
Join us for a workshop at University College London on Thursday 28th June.

What does it mean to be a young person in England today? Learn about the latest research on 'adolescence,' and get your voices heard.

Your travel costs will be covered, and lunch will be provided. For more information and to sign-up, please e-mail Francesca Vaghi at francesca.vaghi.15@ucl.ac.uk by Friday 8th June. Places are limited.

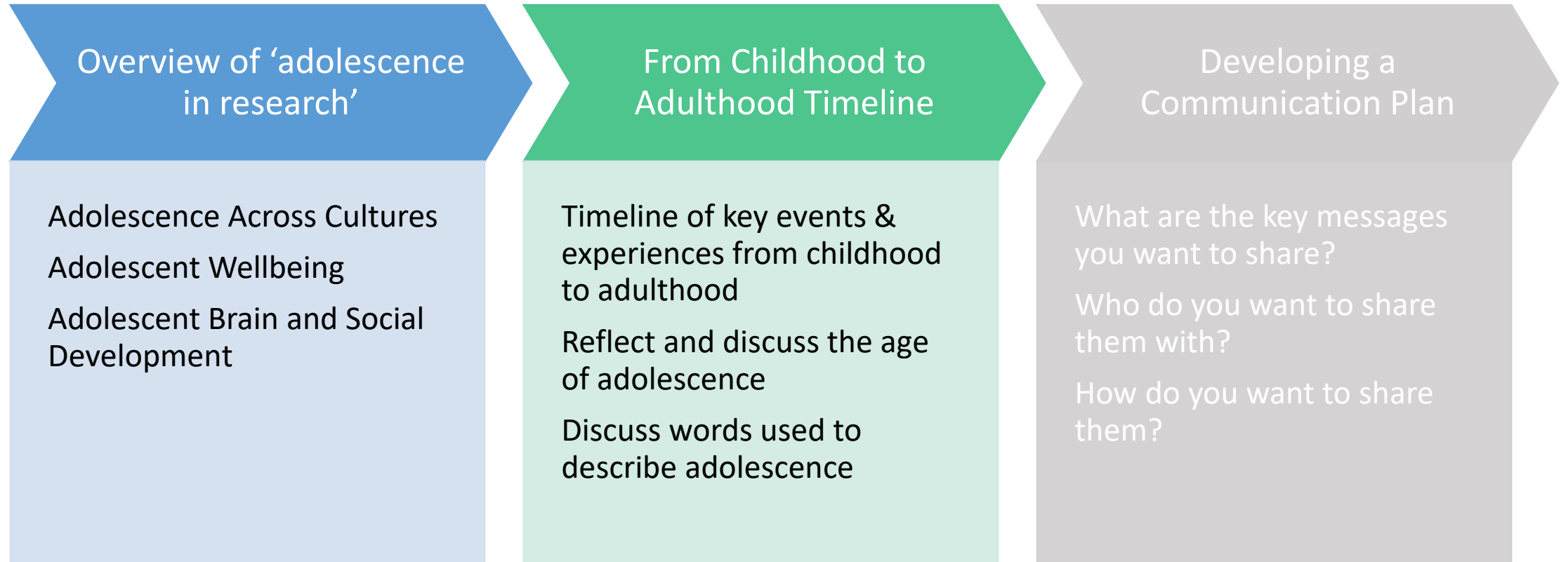
This workshop is organised by Dr. Emily Emmott and Francesca Vaghi (Thomas Coram Research Unit, UCL Institute of Education) in collaboration with Prof. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore (UCL Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience) and Larissa Pople (The Children's Society). This workshop is funded by UCL Grand Challenges. For more information, please contact Francesca Vaghi at francesca.vaghi.15@ucl.ac.uk.

What we did



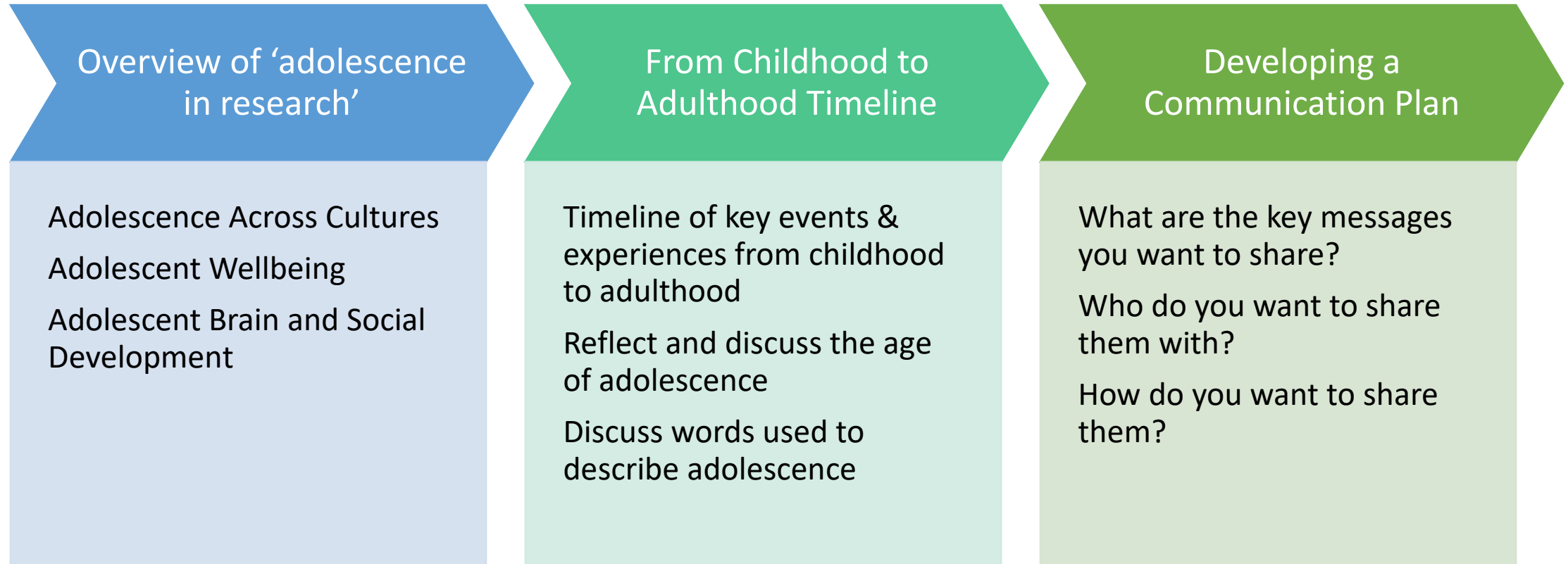
Delivered by: Francesca Vaghi, TCRU/SOAS; Larissa Pople, The Children's Society; Alex Turner, The Children's Society; Cáit Griffin, UCL Cognitive Neuroscience; Cliff Manning, Parent Zone

What we did

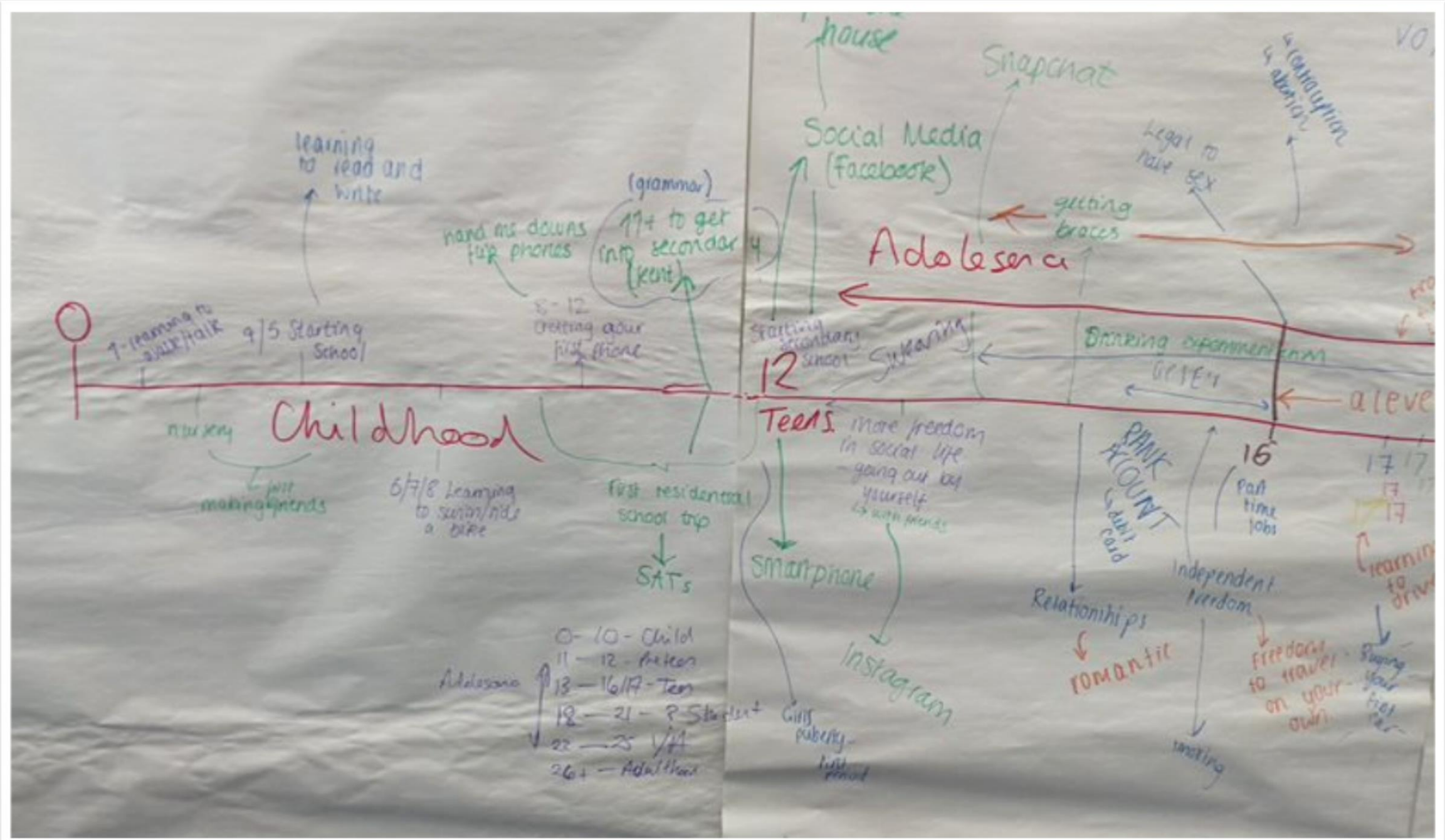


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What we did



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Adole science
Adole


(ASE study: A (England) 

Rite of Passage: N/A (if you don't include religious ceremonies)



#happy for Mizan!
#teen life



(ASE study: B (Kateré-Mami) An Amazonian tribe 

Rite of passage: wearing gloves packed with bullet ants for 10 min/20 times



#That's gonna hurt!
#teen life



x2

In some cultures, adolescents go through a rite of passage
#teenlife #happy for Mizan
#that's gonna hurt

Summary of what they said

The meaning of adolescence

A time for “freedom to grow”

- Increasing autonomy
- Trying new things & learning new skills
- Building/expanding social network

“It's a time where you find out more about yourself, and what kind of people you want to be friends with. There are changes in your friendship groups as you fall out with people and make new friends”



Summary of what they said

The meaning of adolescence

A time of challenge

- Increasing responsibilities
- Uncertainties/contradictions



“The bad thing about being my age is being expected to act like adults at college/work, but being treated like a child at home.”

Summary of what they said

The meaning of adolescence

A key life stage

- Defined by events and experiences, not age
- Foundations for adulthood

“Adolescence lasts longer these days, as people go to uni and do internships, and need more support from parents.”

“We spend most of our lives as adults, so it’s important to understand what happens before, and how it impacts adulthood.”



Summary of what they said

Communicating adolescence

Want it to be...

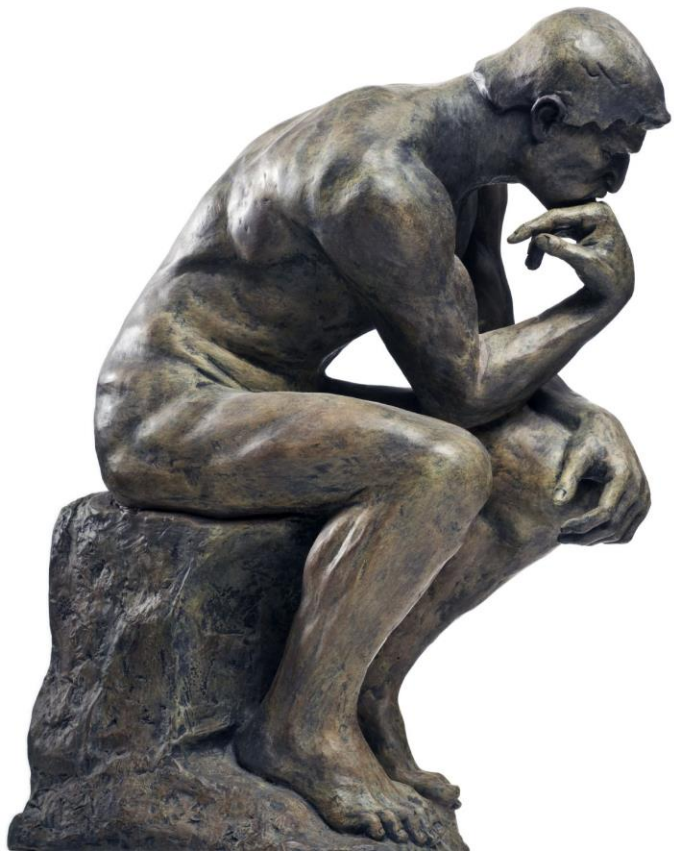
- catchy & simple: click baits are ok
- Pictures/emojis make it interesting
- Use social media, communicate through schools

Word use:

- “Adolescent” sounds formal, “teen” is informal. “Young people” is ambiguous.

Words	Suggested Age Ranges
Childhood	0-10
Pre-Teen	11-12
Teen	13-18, 13-16/17
Adolescence	13-16, 16-24, 13-21, 14-17
Student	18-21
Youth	Under 18s
Young Adult	16-18, 18-26, 18-25, 22-25
Young People	Under 25s, 25-40, 16-20
Adulthood	26+, 25+

Learnings/Reflections



For this particular group of adolescents:

Suggested age range of adolescence (10-24) broadly matched up to their own identity (13-24) – but they thought it varies between people

Many not a fan of age-based definition of adolescence. Educational/financial situation seemed to be key in defining their life stages

Teen Views on Adolescence

Findings from a one day workshop

Francesca Vaghi & Emily H. Emmott



Key findings: Teens at the workshop said...

- Adolescence is a phase of **growth and freedom**, but also **increased responsibility**.
- Adolescence can be an **awkward time**, somewhere between childhood and adulthood which can lead to uncertainties and anxiety.
- **Educational progress** is an important marker for life transitions – from primary school (childhood), into secondary school (adolescence), into higher education (young adult). **Financial independence** was the ultimate marker of adulthood.
- As a term, 'young people' is too vague – 'teens' or 'adolescents' are better expressions.

Meanings of 'Adolescence'

What does 'adolescence' mean for teenagers in England? We explored the concept of adolescence in small groups, by building a "timeline of childhood to adulthood" and discussing key events based on individual experiences.

Adolescence and the 'freedom to grow'

Young people talked about adolescence as a time of **increasing freedom and independence**: travelling by yourself, getting a smartphone, having keys to the house, and joining social media were some of the things that young people considered positive

changes when reflecting on adolescence as a life stage. One group talked about "choosing your GCSEs" as a significant event where you begin making your own decisions about the future, which goes on to shape your adulthood.

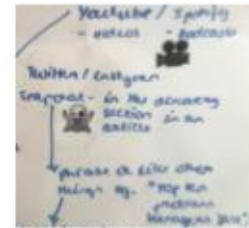


Snippet of a group's timeline activity.

Communicating Adolescence

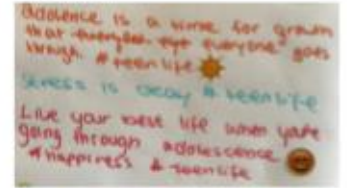
Teenagers in our workshop came up with a range of ideas on how to communicate research about adolescence. They agreed that there is a need for research findings to be communicated to both young and older people. Engaging adults in conversations about younger people's experiences was seen as helpful to fight stereotypes of teens being lazy or selfish.

Social media naturally came up as one of the preferred ways of accessing information, with Snapchat and Twitter on top of the list. Participants also expressed preference for infographics: "We don't want walls of text!" Keeping information entertaining and simple was seen as a way to make academic research accessible.

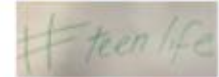


"How to communicate research to young people"

One of the groups designed a communication plan using a clickbait headline. Clickbait headlines were seen as acceptable, "As long as it's tasteful." Over-using emojis was discouraged.



One group's communication plan – a Twitter campaign to share information about adolescence (both positive and negative!) using the hashtag:



Another group worked with a clickbait title:



Adolescence

can be

AWKWARD

Being expected to act like an adult at college and work, but being treated like a child at home.

Adolescence

is a time of **GROWTH**

Adolescence is a time for growth that everyone goes through. It's a step to prepare for the future.

Adolescence

is a time of **self-discovery**

It's a time where you find out more about yourself, and what kind of people you want to be friends with.

