This participatory project worked with young people in a secondary school in Glasgow to develop a student-centred research protocol that will be used to decide what research takes place at their school. In doing this project, the students’ experiences of taking part in research (through participatory research methods) and the experiences of other researchers who have worked in the school, were explored. Developed because students wanted to be better informed about why research was being carried out and to have a greater say in how they participate, the protocol aims to make it easier for decisions about taking part in research to be student-led, rather than made by teachers. It also sets out how research should be conducted and how researchers should behave when working with young people. Shawlands Academy is frequently approached by social researchers as the school is within a diverse part of Glasgow. This brand new protocol provides a framework within which pupils and teachers will be able to make informed decisions about whether or not to participate in research.

This brand new protocol provides a framework within which pupils and teachers will be able to make informed decisions about whether or not to participate in research. The students said that taking part in research gives them a chance to explore a range of topics relevant to their lives, and helps them understand why they think the way they do and why they might disagree with their friends and classmates. As a guide to researchers, a summary of topics young people think are important is included in the protocol.

While developing the protocol, the group of S4 students visited Newcastle University to talk to researchers to learn more about the research process. They then presented their finished work to officials from Glasgow City Council at a special event in June. The group is also mentoring and training younger pupils at the school so that there is a sustainable student voice in decisions about which research takes place at Shawlands Academy. Teachers, pupils and researchers will be able to access the new research protocol on the Glasgow City Council website, and the student-centred research protocol is being introduced in schools across Glasgow.

“The genuine partnership between Shawlands Academy and Newcastle University was built firmly on the principle of allowing students to have more than just a voice about research in schools, but actually to steer the project from inception to outcome.” Cath Sinclair, Deputy Head at Shawlands