



# YOUTH SPORT TRUST

## *What is Youth Voice?*

Developed by



Funded by



# What is Youth Voice?

## Youth Voice...

- actively **seeks the views** of young people to **understand** their experiences and perspectives.
- involves them meaningfully in **making and enacting decisions about topics that affect them.**

The Youth Sport Trust recognises that Youth Voice may include any or all of these elements:

**Actively seeking the views of young people and supporting them to share their feelings, thoughts, ideas and experiences.**

**For example, in a school:**

Pupils disengaged from PE are asked what they enjoy most and least about PE, and why.

### Consultation



### Co-production



### Collaboration



**Enabling young people to design and deliver activities, projects or services.**

**For example, in a school:**

Young leaders plan, deliver and review a lunchtime programme for less-active pupils.

**Meaningfully involving young people in making decisions about topics that affect them.**

**For example, in a school:**

A group of low active girls works with PE staff and school leaders to agree changes to the PE kit.

Light to deep

These may overlap, e.g. consultation with a large group informs co-production with a small group.

Youth Voice varies **in depth**. Different numbers of young people may contribute in different ways, for different lengths of time, and at different levels.



### Download Inspire me!

for a spectrum of Youth Voice examples.



### Download Roles

for ideas and examples of different depths of Youth Voice.

## Young People have a right to a voice.



Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

“Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.”

This applies at all times.



**Download** a Summary of the UNCRC.



**Download** a Summary of the UNCRC with Symbols.



**Download** or read more about the Lundy Model

## Why is Youth Voice essential?

Young People have a **right** to a voice.

Youth Voice **benefits** everyone, not just young people. For example:

### Young people

- Feel valued and connected
- Gain confidence and self-belief
- Develop transferable life skills
- Have new and more relevant opportunities
- Are fully included and better supported

### PE and sport providers

- Provide better, more relevant services
- Increase engagement of young people
- Improve equality, diversity and inclusion
- Develop the current and future workforce
- Increase efficiency and effectiveness

In particular, Youth Voice helps to address current **inequalities** in PE, sport and physical activity – when it reflects the experiences and insights of under-served young people. By enabling more young people to have positive experiences, it also promotes their **physical literacy** – for life.

**Think of Youth Voice as a tool: it helps you to better help young people. As with any tool, how you use it makes the difference.**  
Professor Laura Lundy says Youth Voice needs:

### SPACE

Safe, inclusive opportunities for young people to form and express their views.

### VOICE

Facilitation to enable and support young people with different needs to be involved.

### INFLUENCE

A commitment to respond to and act on young people's voices – and report back to them.

### AUDIENCE

Willingness to listen to young people with openness, respect and empathy.

The **eight areas** within this toolkit help you to implement the Lundy Model.

# What hinders Youth Voice?

Youth Voice helps us to dismantle barriers to participation. But barriers also hinder Youth Voice. These are the main barriers identified by young people. They are common to many under-served young people, but we must also use Youth Voice<sup>1</sup> to identify barriers faced by specific groups and individuals. Never assume!



## Practical

- Awareness – limited promotion, no active welcome for diverse people.
- Language – no translation, complex, jargon, unappealing.
- Cost – actual expenses, loss of other income, lack upfront cash.
- Accessibility – of buildings, transport, resources, communication tools.
- Time – unclear, unrealistic, need more, other commitments.



## Social

- Diversity – lack role models, fear tokenism, fear discrimination.
- Judgement – from peers – not cool, staff preconceptions.
- Isolation – don't know others, won't fit in, lose time with friends.
- Bullying – personal or virtual – before, during, after sessions.
- Wider pressures – schoolwork, family expectations.



## Personal

- Confidence – lack confidence, self-belief, sense of self-efficacy.
- Past experiences – negative experience of sport or Youth Voice.
- Knowledge – unaware of expectations, procedures, purpose.
- Skills – not explicit, not linked to wider aspirations, unrealistic.
- Value – not rewarded/ recognised, no action, no change/ impact.



## Sector partners

have also identified their own barriers, such as:

- Confidence – lack knowledge and skills to initiate Youth Voice.
- Tokenism – concern about doing it 'correctly' and thoroughly.
- Time – pressure from other commitments or funders to act quickly.
- Support – need ideas, examples, guidance and proven approaches.
- Reach – how to engage the 'right' young people to effect change.
- Duties – concern about legal, financial, safeguarding implications.

The **eight areas** within this toolkit help you to address the barriers.

<sup>1</sup>See acknowledgements on page 6.

“ Youth Voice isn't worth it when we don't know where it leads to or there's no outcome.”

“ It's not seen as being cool to speak about how you feel to help others.”

“ Not being involved in Youth Voice before leads to worry and doubt about being involved.”

# What makes Youth Voice meaningful?

There is no 'one way' to implement Youth Voice. However, if it is to be meaningful and effective – for young people and you – it does need to be underpinned by **core principles**. Our co-production group, involving young people, identified these as important principles for Youth Voice.

## Youth Voice should be:

### Universal

All decisions that affect young people's experience of PE, sport and physical activity should be informed by Youth Voice – we are accountable and should not assume.

### Representative

Youth Voice requires diversity – we need young people from different backgrounds and with different experiences, including within targeted groups.

### Inclusive

Young people with specific or additional needs should be able to contribute – we need to make space and adapt Youth Voice to include them.

### Safe

Young people want to feel welcome, cared for and respected – we need to create a safe, kind, mutually respectful and non-judgemental culture.

### Connecting

Young people seek connections to people, places, values and causes that are important to them – we must use Youth Voice to create a sense of belonging.

### Empowering

Youth Voice requires confidence, capability, authority and autonomy – we need to upskill and empower young people.

### Valued

Young people want their time and insights to make a difference – we need to show that their voices are valued and impactful.

### Aspirational

Youth Voice involves risking, trialling, adapting and improving – we must always be willing to learn and change what we do.

The **eight areas** within this toolkit reflect these principles.



## Download Self-review

to identify which of the eight areas to prioritise.



Then visit the **areas** you have prioritised for ideas, tips, examples and tools.

# Acknowledgements

The Youth Sport Trust Youth Voice Plan was co-produced by young people and Youth Sport Trust staff. The young people on the co-production group included:

## A core group of eight young people, aged 16-25 years:

- Zainab Ali
- Grace Best
- Emmanuel Gebreyes
- Radhika Kalia
- Amelia Kozłowska
- Frances Mackie
- Joel Moore
- Abhishna Yogarajan

## Three targeted school groups, with pupils aged 11-14 years:

- The Joseph Whitaker School, Mansfield
- Abbeyfield School, Chippenham
- Our Lady and St Chad Catholic Academy, Wolverhampton.

The young people are from diverse backgrounds and have diverse experiences of Youth Voice within school, sport and the Youth Sport Trust.

## THANK YOU – your voices were essential and insightful

For further information and Youth Voice resources, visit <https://www.youthsporttrust.org/school-support/free-resources/youth-voice-resources>



Doing something is better than doing nothing. You have to start somewhere, then get better. The most important thing is to dip your toes in: you try and, crucially, you learn. You ask children what worked and what didn't, and you try to get better."

**Laura Lundy**