



YOUTH SPORT TRUST

Youth Voice Plan

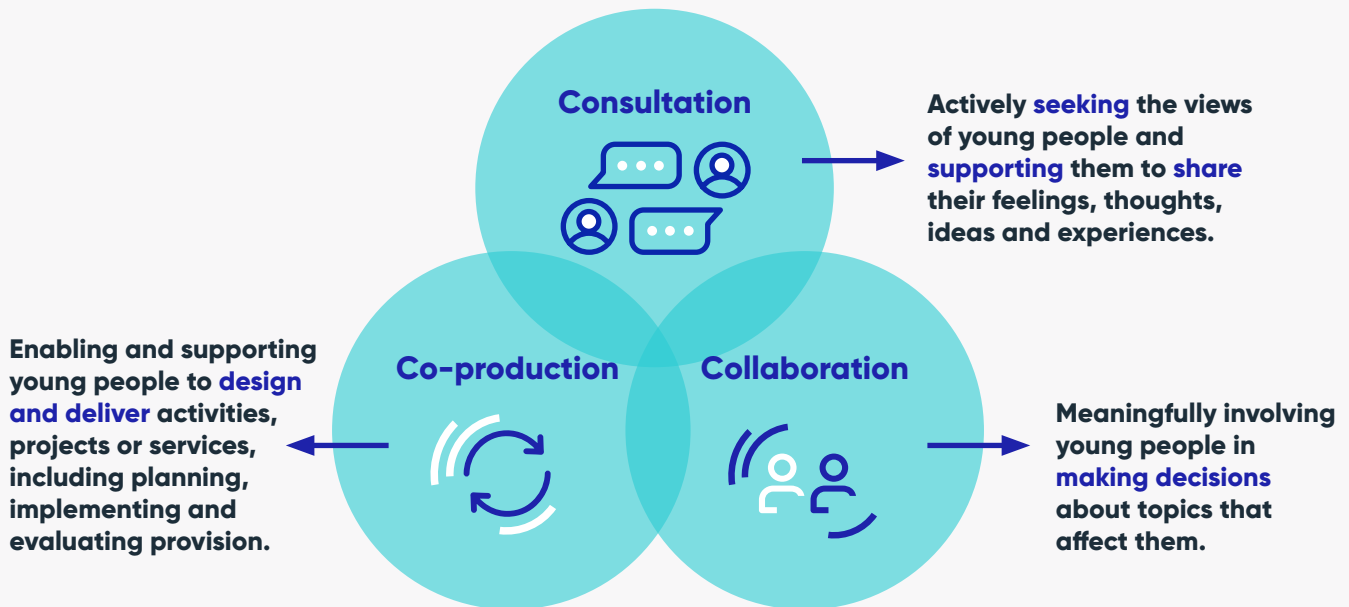


Principles and purpose

What is Youth Voice?

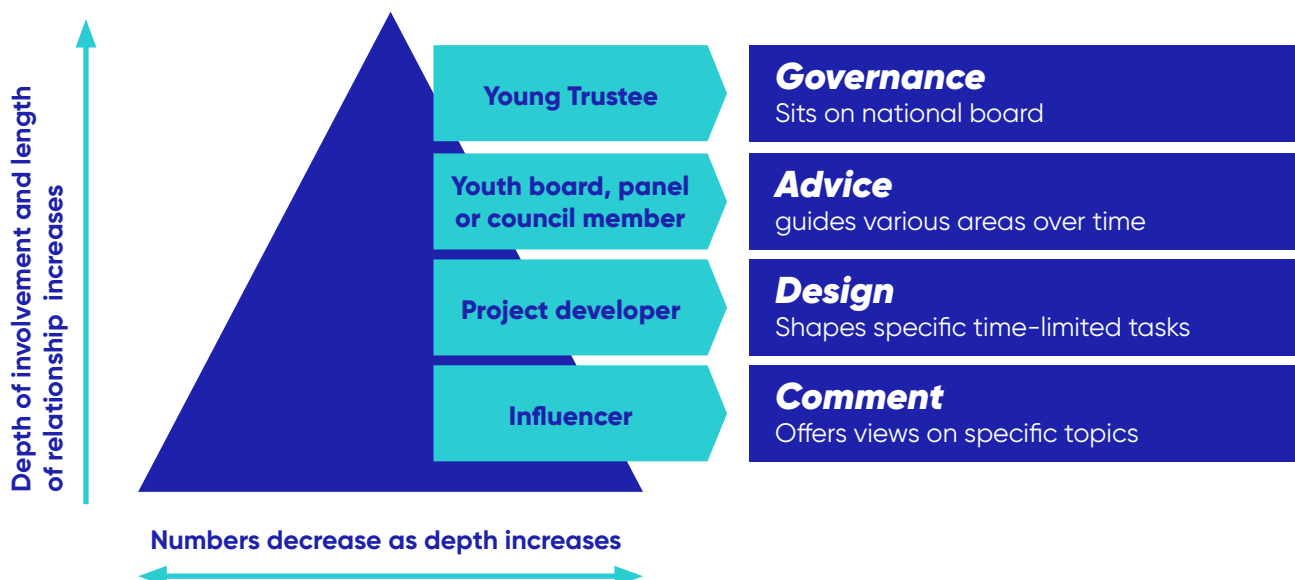
Youth Voice is about actively seeking the views of young people to understand their experiences and perspectives; and involving them meaningfully in making and enacting decisions about topics that affect them.

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



In practice, these elements may overlap, e.g. consultation with a wider group of young people informs co-production involving a smaller group of young people.

Young people may contribute in different ways, for different lengths of time, and at different depths. There is no 'one way' of structuring Youth Voice: the form should suit its purpose. For example, this is the Youth Sport Trust's Youth Voice structure.



Why have we developed this Youth Voice plan?



The Youth Sport Trust wants to provide – and support our partners to provide – PE, school sport and physical activity opportunities that are meaningful and enjoyable for all young people. Youth Voice is an essential tool for **addressing inequalities**; it enables us to seek, listen and respond to the voices of young people who are under-served and/or who have low levels of participation. Only through Youth Voice can we make significant, sustainable change.



Our **goal** is that, by 2025, Youth Voice is helping to shape all Youth Sport Trust work and is influencing how PE, sport and physical activity are delivered by the sector.



The plan has been, and will continue to be, **co-produced with young people**¹. We will also continue to collaborate with and learn from other **partners**.

Why is Youth Voice essential?

Young People have a **right** to have a voice. Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child¹ states that: **“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.

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

Youth Sport Trust and partners

- 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

As advocated by the Lundy Model², Youth Voice requires:

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.

We need to plan for this.

¹<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

²<https://www.playtheirway.org/resources/coaching-tips/the-importance-of-giving-children-a-voice/>

³See acknowledgements on page 8.

Barriers

We must recognise and remove young people's barriers to having a voice if we are to **redress inequalities**. These are the **main barriers** identified by the young people involved in the co-production⁴. Whilst these are common to many under-served young people, we also need to use Youth Voice to identify the barriers faced by specific groups and individuals. **We should 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.

This plan summarises the **principles and priorities** that will help us to overcome these barriers and create – and support our partners to create – meaningful and effective Youth Voice.

⁴See acknowledgements on page 8.

“ 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.”

Principles



We will use the priorities in this plan to support us and our partners to put these principles into practice.

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



Youth Voice provides us with a place to feel connected."



To me, Youth Voice means having a space where, when I share my thoughts and opinions, I know they will be valued and taken seriously."



It is important that action is taken on what we say."



Youth Voice gives a place for us to be exposed to the position of decision-makers."

Impact on young people

As we have highlighted (page 3), Youth Voice benefits young people in many ways. At an individual level, it can enable young people to develop **leadership skills** that will sustain them in sport, education, employment and life – if Youth Voice is facilitated appropriately (see principles – page 5).

This plan for Youth Voice complements the Youth Sport Trust Leadership Framework, developed in 2023. Our co-production group identified which leadership skills might be needed at which stage of Youth Voice. These have been mapped against our Leadership Framework.

Early-stage skills (e.g. consultation)

 Share vision	Communication	I connect with others.
	Encouragement	I help others to change.
 Manage self	Self-motivation	I motivate myself.
	Integrity	I do what seems right.
 Understand others	Respect	I treat others the way they like to be treated.
 Take action	Problem-solving	I find different solutions.

Additional later-stage skills (e.g. co-production)

 Manage self	Resilience	I deal with setbacks.
 Understand others	Empathy	I see other people's perspectives.
	Cooperation	I trust and work with others.
 Take action	Responsibility	I act responsibly and reliably.
	Decision-making	I make and action decisions.
	Evaluating	I make informed judgements.

All Youth Sport Trust Youth Voice resources are mapped against our Leadership Framework. For more information visit www.youthsporttrust.org/leadership-framework.

Priorities

Our vision

Our vision is that all providers of PE, sport and physical activity for young people – including the Youth Sport Trust – understand, value and embed meaningful Youth Voice in our work. This will enable us to reduce inequalities and create positive experiences for all young people.

Based on our own learning about Youth Voice, and in collaboration with other partners, we will:




Support others

Provide Youth Voice **training** for young people and practitioners to build their confidence and skills.


Develop a **toolkit** for practitioners to share advice, ideas and examples that inspire and minimise workload.

Meanwhile, within the Youth Sport Trust we will:




Strengthen strategy

Engage young people in the development and implementation of our strategy so that our decision-making and delivery are always shaped by Youth Voice.




Take action

Implement Youth Voice in our programme design and our support for the school sport network so that we all learn what works best for young people.



Embed youth voice in policy

Include a requirement for Youth Voice in all of our relevant policies so that our work clearly and consistently reflects young people's needs and wants.



Advocate change

Advocate and create opportunities for Youth Voice through our political influence, partnerships and communications so young people are always at the forefront of PE, sport and physical activity.

The toolkit will provide guidance and tools for the **eight areas** identified by the co-production group as key to effective Youth Voice.

Roles	Recruitment	Communication	Collaboration
Empowerment	Compensation	Evaluation	Engagement of others

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