

Empowerment

Enabling young people to grow



Why is this area important?

- Young people need to have the authority, autonomy and capability to contribute.
- We enable young people to develop over time – by taking calculated risks!

A bad situation is when adults lead a decision-making process but just want us to rubber-stamp what they have already decided."

**Young Person,
Co-production Group**

A commitment to youth empowerment

If Youth Voice is to be more than tokenistic, it needs to empower young people. Empowerment means giving young people:

- **authority** – we must allow them to act
- **autonomy** – we must trust them to do things independently
- **capability** – we must enable them to gain confidence, self-belief, knowledge and skills.

This means that Youth Voice should be **developmental**. We need to:

- support young people's continuing **growth**
- take appropriate risks – and learn from **trial and improvement**
- know when to **relinquish control** – allow for the unplanned.

Youth Voice enables young people to develop leadership skills that will sustain them in sport, education, work and life.



Download

Extract from the **Youth Sport Trust's Leadership Framework** to see the skills prioritised by our co-production group for the different stages of Youth Voice.

We need to facilitate leadership skills development. This includes enabling young people to have:

Recognition

they have a skills vocabulary and know what a skill looks and sounds like in action.

Acquisition

they learn and develop the skills through practice and experiential learning.

Application

they have opportunities to transfer and test their skills in different situations.

Progression

they increase their range of skills and apply multiple skills in more complex ways.

Examples

Pupils take part in taster sessions and gain experience of different activities and groups. This gives them knowledge before choosing what they would like to do and who with.

Before designing a sports festival for their peers, young people take part in outdoor problem-solving activities. This helps them to develop the problem-solving skills they will need to plan a complex event.

Young leaders are each allocated a mentor – an older leader who has experience of Youth Voice in school. The mentors support the young leaders whilst continuing to develop their own skills.

Depth of Youth Voice

Practical steps

Our co-production group suggests:

- Promote examples and show role models of young people's increasing empowerment.
- Make sure Youth Voice opportunities are appropriate for young people's stages of development.
- Provide relevant information (in appropriate formats) to build young people's knowledge.
- Use leadership training and opportunities to enable young people to develop the necessary skills.
- Provide or signpost young people to opportunities to continue their growth.
- Report back regularly to young people so they know what is happening (or not) as a result of their input.
- Make time and space to do things differently and respond to the unexpected.



Young People's Top Tips

1. Build our confidence and self-belief – help us to know that we can make a difference.
2. Learn to trust us and let go!
3. Expect the unexpected!
4. Use us to support the next cohort of young leaders.



Tools

(these provide examples of increasing empowerment of young people)

» **Young Changemaker Awards (Youth Sport Trust)** [Young Changemaker Awards – Youth Sport Trust](#) Videos of previous award winners to show examples of and role models for Youth Voice.

» **Inclusion 2020 Youth Voice Toolkit – a toolkit for inclusive focus groups (Youth Sport Trust)** [yst-inclusion-2020-youth-voice-toolkitfinal.pdf \(youthsporttrust.org\)](#) Practical examples and tips for scaffolding young people's involvement in focus groups.

» **Young Voices in Sport – a toolkit for Involving Young Members in Decision-making (Sport Ireland)** [Young Voices in Sport](#) Booklet of tips plus activity cards for scaffolding young people's decision-making skills.

» **Youth Advocacy Toolkit – a toolkit to support young people as advocates (Unicef)** [Youth-Advocacy-Toolkit.pdf \(unicef.org.uk\)](#) Booklet of tips and activities to support young people to run their own campaigns.

» **Unified Action – a framework for diversifying sport governance (Youth Sport Trust)** [a-framework-for-diversifying-sport-governance.pdf \(youthsporttrust.org\)](#) Suggestions for enabling young people to take on sports governance roles.

» **Young Board Members – an online resource (Sport and Recreation Alliance)** [Young Board Members | Sport and Recreation Alliance](#) Provides a model youth board and case studies of youth boards in practice.