

YOUNG CHANGE MAKERS

Coming together to reimagine
mental health services

YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS: A GUIDE TO CO-PRODUCTION_

UK YOUTH



CENTRE FOR
MENTAL
HEALTH

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THIS POEM WAS WRITTEN BY ELLIOT (CO-PRODUCER)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHANGE MAKER?

What does it mean to be a change maker?
In a world full of policies and politics
diversity check boxes and performative activists?

Is it to tell the untold?
stories hidden under shame linen sheets
waiting to be uncovered?

About Black students
suffering with insomnia
stewing over the statistic that they are 10x more likely to drop out of uni than
their white counterparts. Seems their wokeness left them sleepless and yet
their fatigue only seems to worsen as the young woman overworks herself to
the point of exhaustion.
Just to prove a point.

What does it mean to be a changemaker?
Is it to inspire hope?
Encourage us to dream. To keep pushing for reformation
for those growing impatient with our inpatients;
disproportionately representing Black men.
Yet that same population
being underrepresented in services providing early intervention.
As another young Black boy is kicked out of school because he doesn't
express emotions the way others do.

What does it mean to be a changemaker?
Is it to remind us all
that the world was never meant to rest on our mahogany shoulders;
but with arms linked we can march forward.
With willing hands we can sow, planting gardens of progress.
Change is at our fingertips. Our small seeds will eventually birth orchards
We are changemakers.

INTRODUCTION TO YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS_



OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMME

Young Changemakers is a programme by The Diana Award, Centre for Mental Health, and UK Youth. With funding thanks to the players of the People's Postcode Lottery and Comic Relief.

The Young Changemakers Programme is led by and for young people from Black and Black-mixed heritage communities to re-imagine mental health support and services.

Local youth organisations support Young Changemakers to design and deliver their own social action projects to create lasting impact.

THE PARTNERSHIP



The Diana Award is responsible for coordinating the youth development journey including leading on content for youth organisations to train young people in social action, mental health awareness and social/emotional skills. They also manage Co-Producers - focusing on delivering upskilling sessions and exploring opportunities for young people to get involved in the wider programme.



Centre for Mental Health is responsible for establishing the evaluation methodology and impact tools across the project. They resource a peer research model to lead the research phase, arm in arm with young people.



UK Youth is the lead partner and manages the coordination of project stakeholders, alongside supporting the delivery of youth-led Young Changemakers social action projects through local youth organisations.

INTRODUCTION TO CO-PRODUCTION

To ensure that every element of the Young Changemakers Programme was designed and delivered by young people for young people, we worked with a group of young people called the Co-Producers.¹ This is a group of young people aged between 16-25, who identify with Black and/or Black mixed-race heritage, have lived experience and a passion for supporting mental health. Throughout the programme, the group has meaningfully directed and shaped the project, from co-designing programme content to sitting on our steering group.

As a partnership, we believe that being led by the communities our work is targeting, is imperative to producing high-quality and meaningful outcomes. Therefore, we have worked with our Co-Producers to co-write this resource, aimed at outlining what co-production is, why it is so important and ways in which you can embed it in your work. Please note, due to this the tone of writing between sections may differ. We have also worked with some of The Diana Award's Young Advisors.²

At the end of the resource, you will be able to learn more about each one of the young people who fed into this work. You will also find a glossary of terms, detailing the language and definitions we have used throughout. While these are the terms we use, as guided by our Co-Producers, we encourage you to be led by the communities you work with to inform the language you use.

WHAT IS CO-PRODUCTION?

Hear from Naomi, Harman, and Gracie on what co-production means to them and why organisations should strive to embed it within their culture.

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY NAOMI (CO-PRODUCER)

Co-Production is defined as direct collaboration between individuals to create more equitable relationships. It's a way of assisting people and directly reflecting their experiences and aims in the work we generate. It's vital to remember that co-production takes time, effort, and patience because everyone is learning a new skill. When interacting with young people, there may be times when they have competing priorities such as school or job. As a result, being flexible with meeting schedules or task allocation is required.

BENEFITS OF CO-PRODUCTION:

- Improves confidence and self-esteem
- Makes the programme a better fit and more accessible
- Maintains a person-centred perspective
- Empowers young people

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY GRACIE (YOUNG ADVISOR)

Co-Production allows fresh perspectives that benefit all sectors by inviting young people into the process. Co-Production can be defined as 'the process by which evidence is generated by the equal and reciprocal participation in research activities by academia and other partners'.³ When conducting research, the Carnegie Trust found that 8 in 10 people believed that the use of co-production made evidence more relevant, influential for policy, and influential for practice.

THE BENEFITS OF CO-PRODUCED EVIDENCE



8 out of 10 say it would make evidence more relevant



8 out of 10 say it would make evidence more influential for policy



8 out of 10 say it would make evidence more influential for practice



6 out of 10 say it would make evidence easier to access

This figure was adapted from [the Carnegie Trust UK](https://www.carnegie-trust.org.uk/)⁴

A vital aspect of co-production is the successful integration within an organisation and its culture as seen in an article by The Social Care Institute for Excellence.⁵ This is because it is important to ensure that co-production develops a culture within an organisation about being risk-aware and averse, and understanding a mutual definition for co-production. As a result, these methods establish a greater understanding of the intent behind co-production.

According to HeadStart Wolverhampton Project, an important case story featuring Fran demonstrates the impact of successful youth co-production. This is made clear through the way in which they relate their experiences co-producing as having been "one of the most important pieces of work (they) have been involved in".⁶ The skills young people develop following co-production within an organisation could also benefit them by leading to positive progress into future roles. Co-Production also greatly impacts the way in which young people can become more well-rounded individuals. This is because co-production sessions are designed to upskill the communication of young people through thought-provoking activities.

¹ <https://diana-award.org.uk/our-programmes-and-initiatives/changemakers/meet-the-co-producers>

² <https://diana-award.org.uk/our-programmes-and-initiatives/cross-directorate-initiatives/young-advisors>

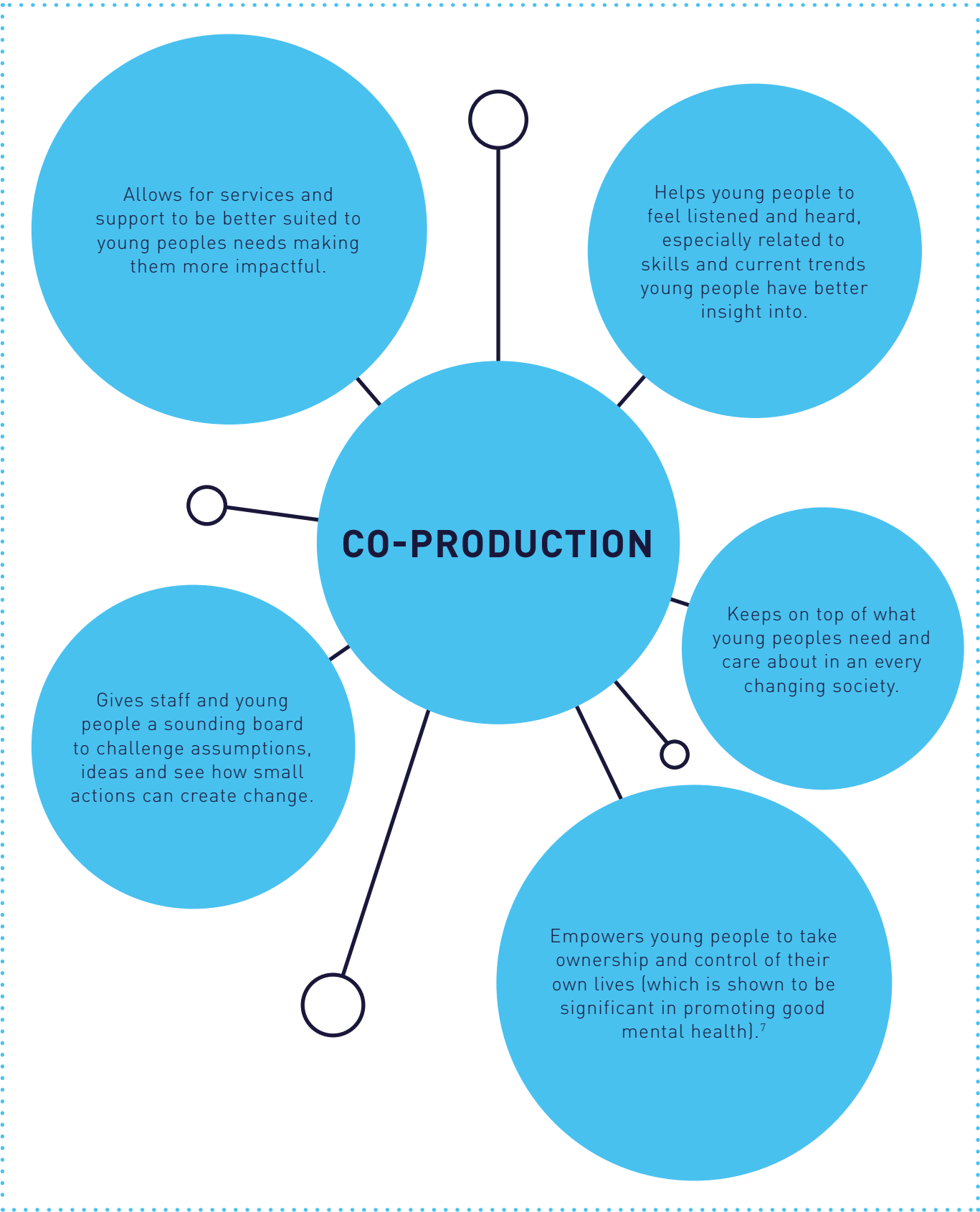
³ https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2019/02/06085408/The-many-shades-of-co-produced-evidence-final.pdf

⁴ https://d1ssu070pg2v9i.cloudfront.net/pex/pex_carnegie2021/2019/02/06085408/The-many-shades-of-co-produced-evidence-final.pdf

⁵ <https://www.scie.org.uk/co-production/>

⁶ <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/All-together-now-a-toolkit-for-co-production-with-young-people.pdf>

Additionally, there are many benefits to using co-production with young people as underlined by Boingboing Resilience and the University of Brighton, as listed in the diagram below. Co-Production is evidenced to help young people with their development socially and emotionally. It can also help to upskill young people and develop their confidence. By working in a multidisciplinary team striving towards the same project, young people will develop their interpersonal skills such as communication, creativity, and active listening.



THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY HARMAN (YOUNG ADVISOR)

Following a range of experiences in youth social action and working with The Diana Award as a Young Advisor has enriched me with valuable reflections on embedding co-production within organisations. Drawing upon my experience from various levels of participation, co-production has been embedded with the intent to foster a partnership between young people and organisations into a solution-driven community.

Youth-focused organisations often aim for youth-led models to tap into the insights of young people, recognising their importance in the sector. However, the reality is often unrealistic due to many factors:

- Organisations have rigid hierarchies that cannot embed this approach without dedicating time and resources to invest in structural change. It also requires significant investment in the development of young people’s skills (e.g. knowledge of funding and working with trustees) and considering time commitment.
- When considering participation, youth-influenced movements may offer incentives to partake, such as vouchers but can fail to prioritise young people’s development. This approach can become tokenistic as it is a passive engagement that does not necessarily provide any progression beyond consultations.
- Wellbeing holds great importance, especially in discussions that have the potential to re-traumatise or trigger young people. Continued activism can also be overwhelming, demotivating, and isolating, particularly for passionate young people. Therefore, it’s crucial for youth-led movements to actively mitigate the risk of poor mental health in young people.

Implementing a co-production model is important to cater to young people at any stage in their youth social action journey. It prioritises the significance of lived experiences over technical competencies, empowering young individuals to actively control how their stories shape a project based on their narratives. They also still have the opportunity to develop skills during the process whilst mentoring young people as they expand their activism.

Having direct support, implementing safe storytelling, transparent feedback mechanisms (such as the “you said we did”) and recognising the young people who have shaped projects is key. This:

- **Helps young people better navigate challenges**
- **Ensures wellbeing remains a priority**
- **Encourages trust and alignment between young people and organisations**
- **Promotes a culture of accessibility and inclusivity within the youth sector**

For example, exploring, re-defining, and making active changes in language and terminology used from a young person’s perspective.

Co-Production presents the opportunity for young people to redefine a wide range of practices and is not limited to the few outlined above.

7 <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Putting%20co-production%20into%20practice%20with%20young%20people%20-%20A%20guide%20for%20services%20re%20Pathway%20Planning.pdf>

RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING



THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY CROWN (CO-PRODUCER)

Onboarding young people in a meaningful and supportive way involves several key steps and considerations:

1. DESIGN AN INCLUSIVE APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Develop an application form that is accessible and easy to understand.
- Clearly outline the purpose, expectations, and desired outcomes of the programme.
- Consider using alternative formats such as video submissions or interviews to allow applicants to showcase their skills and interests.
- If there is an informal interview process consider having young people on the panel and help applicants feel relaxed and supported.

3. CREATE A SAFE SPACE:

- Establish a supportive environment where young people feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas. This can take time but should be consistently worked towards.
- Implement confidentiality and data protection measures to ensure privacy.
- Foster a culture of inclusivity, diversity, and mutual respect.

2. SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS:

- Provide a detailed overview of the programme's objectives, activities, and time commitments.
- Communicate the roles and responsibilities of young people, facilitators, and any other stakeholders.
- Highlight the importance of participation, collaboration, and respectful behaviour.

4. BUILD TRUST:

- Engage in open and transparent communication with young people from the beginning.
- Actively listen to their opinions, concerns, and suggestions and seek to make changes where needed.
- Demonstrate consistency, reliability, and integrity in your interactions.

5. FACILITATE TEAM BUILDING:

- Organise ice-breaking activities and team-building exercises to encourage relationship building among participants.
- Foster a collaborative atmosphere by promoting teamwork and cooperation.
- Provide opportunities for young people to contribute their unique skills and talents.

6. FOSTER A SENSE OF COMMUNITY:

- Create opportunities for young people to connect and form meaningful relationships.
- Encourage peer support and mentorship.
- Facilitate networking events, social gatherings, or online platforms for ongoing engagement.

7. ESTABLISH CODES OF CONDUCT:

- Develop a code of conduct that clearly outlines expected behaviour, including guidelines for respectful communication, handling disagreements, and addressing conflicts.
- Involve young people in co-creating the code of conduct to ensure their ownership and adherence.
- Regularly review and reinforce the code of conduct to maintain a positive and inclusive environment.

8. PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT:

- Assign mentors or coaches to guide young people throughout their participation.
- Offer regular check-ins and feedback sessions to address any concerns or challenges they may face.
- Be aware of your own biases and culturally appropriate support or services.
- Provide resources, training, and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

9. CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Recognise and celebrate the achievements and contributions of young people within the programme.
- Showcase their work and provide opportunities for them to present their ideas to a wider audience.
- Offer certificates, awards, remuneration or other forms of recognition for their efforts.

The key to successful onboarding and support is to involve young people in the decision-making process, empower them to take ownership and ensure their voices are heard and valued throughout the co-production journey.



WORKING WITH CO-PRODUCERS

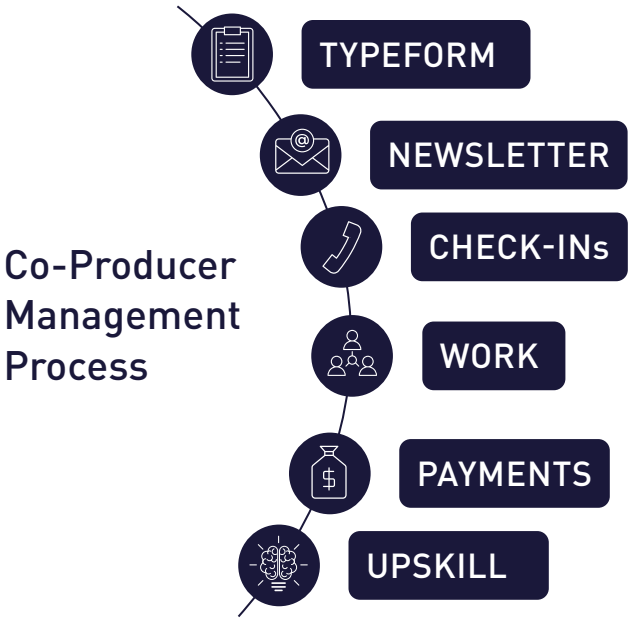
When working with young people it is important to consider generational differences. Gen Z are the first to grow up with technology embedded in many areas of their lives. They are also the first generation to grow up as neo-digital natives. Gen Zs like clarity and getting things done quickly.⁸

They are also a more diverse generation due to increasing globalisation and technological advances. This means that it's important not to assume a certain way of working will be successful with Co-Producers. We recommend working with young people to establish a structure that will be effective and efficient for both parties. This ranges from engagement right up to language used to communicate with them.

It's also important to remember that young people are not accustomed to working life practices because they have not yet begun their careers. This means certain work etiquette you expect from them may not come as naturally. Organisations should include brief training on any internal software or practices that are the norm and have patience while young people adapt to the ways of working.

WAYS OF WORKING

There are many approaches you can use to engage young people in co-production. The one described below is The Diana Award Young Changemaker Team's internal model that has evolved and adapted based on young people's feedback:



Typeform: Each month Co-Producers are sent a Typeform with all the activities they can get involved in. The Typeform has the type of task (e.g., co-design, guest speaking, decision making etc), the deadline of completion, and its location (e.g., in-person or online). Once Co-Producers have selected their interests, they are sent an automatic email with their jobs for the month and the staff are sent one as well.

Newsletter: Co-Producers are sent a newsletter highlighting all the achievements of the previous month, any updates they need to know, an encouraging word to acknowledge the work they do, and an upskilling resource. This allows them to feel connected to the wider work and the organisation.

Check-ins: Young people have 1-2-1s with a member of staff monthly to speak about their well-being, any highlights, insights, or challenges with the programme and to confirm the hours they have worked and what they have agreed to participate in. This meeting also touches on their personal development. These check-ins allow staff to make sure young people are supported and fit to work.

Work: Young people are not micromanaged. They are given all the information they need to complete tasks. If they need clarity or are having a hard time, they are encouraged to reach out. In the instance Co-Producers can no longer complete tasks they agreed to, they are expected to communicate that to staff within a reasonable period.

Payments: We believe in respecting young people by compensating them for their effort, time, and participation. We will explore compensation deeper in the section below.

Upskill: We aim to provide young people with tools and encouragement to develop skills that will help them in their roles and beyond. To do these we use an upskilling survey when they are onboarded to support young people during 1-2-1's or group upskilling sessions.

Notes to consider:

- Creating a consistent routine of engagement will help young people form a working habit with your organisation.
- Young people are potentially working on your project alongside education and other commitments so having a level of flexibility on deadlines is advised.

ADDING VALUE

There are multiple ways Co-Producers can add value. Below is a list of examples of some of the roles young people can be involved in.

- 1 CO-DESIGN**
Designing content, resources, and presentations for stakeholders.
- 2 CO-PRODUCTION**
Active and meaningful collaboration to reach a project's outcome.
- 3 MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION**
Managing social media and strategising new ways of advertising.
- 4 FOCUS GROUPS**
Facilitating feedback workshops, creating surveys, and running evaluations.
- 5 INTERVIEWS**
Providing youth voice and perspectives during interview panels.
- 6 BOARD OF TRUSTEES**
Provide youth perspective at a governing level.
- 7 WORKING GROUPS AND STEERING GROUPS**
Provide youth perspective with key decision makers.
- 8 PUBLIC SPEAKING**
Speak and represent the organisation at external events.
- 9 NETWORKING**
Interacting with others for the sake of the organisation.

8 <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-gen-z>

WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

In order to continue to build the collaborative relationship with young people where they feel they are truly valued it is important to:

- **Invite meeting participation:** There are several approaches to include young people in meetings. This may include inviting young people to a communication meeting or inviting them to sit and contribute to an executive meeting.
- **Be open to new ideas:** When working with young people, be open to fresh creative ideas that may be unique to the team. The phrase validation is crucial in this context. Even if the proposal isn't feasible, affirming and discussing options with the young person is critical.
- **Prioritise feedback:** Creating the space for young people to provide feedback on their roles allows the position to be built around co-production. The team will be able to identify areas for improvement as well as what is functioning effectively.
- **Consider your staff:** It is critical to have staff that like working with young people and are from similar backgrounds where possible to guarantee that all feel comfortable, safe and supported.
- **Encourage research:** Young people should be active in research and development. This is done to guarantee that the demographic's opinions are considered.
- **Provide ongoing support:** Regular wellbeing check-ins are important when working collaboratively with young people to ensure they are being supported appropriately and don't feel isolated.

COMPENSATION

When working with Co-Producers, often they are giving up their time alongside other responsibilities such as a full-time job or education. Therefore, it is important to ensure they are compensated appropriately.

It's important to make sure young people are appreciated and that their work counts and does not always have to be monetary compensation.

Over the past three years, engaging with Co-Producers has provided insight into the way young people value being rewarded. We have learnt that young people have various ways they'd like to be compensated all revolving around three key themes: unique experiences, tangible impact, and recognition.

Below is a list of compensation ideas that our young people approve of:

1. FINANCE*

- Hourly fixed rate per hour (using national minimum living wage as the base).
- Lump sum payment of a fixed amount at the end of a project.
- Vouchers specific to stores e.g. Amazon, All in One gift card.

*Please note that covering travel, food, and accommodation expenses is not acknowledged as compensation but a requirement from professionals for Co-Producer engagement.

2. MEANINGFUL OPPORTUNITIES

- Public speaking engagements which provide professional and/or personal development e.g. offering a young person the chance to represent your organisation at an event.
- Access to exclusive networking events.
- Visits to places that are usually out of reach but relevant to them e.g., trips abroad or to a different city, parliament, TEDx.
- Access to counselling e.g. gala's, showcases, conferences or concerts.
- Invitations to events (galas, awards, showcases, conferences, and concerts).
- Connecting with local or nationally prominent people.

3. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Certificates.
- References for university, internships, jobs, graduate schemes.
- Public acknowledgement celebrating their input to a project. e.g. newsletter to the wider organisation or social media posts.
- Mentoring.
- To provide a professional development budget which can be used for booking courses, attending workshops or buying books.
- Sharing freelance or relevant job roles.

4. RECOGNITION

- Digital recognition of work created e.g. this could be by having a dedicated page on your website, for young people who work with you. Check out ours for some inspiration at The Diana Award - [Meet the Co-Producers \(diana-award.org.uk\)](#).
- Citation/icons /logos on work created.

It's important to understand what young people value and tailor a compensation package to their needs. One can also take a broad approach to determine what kind of compensation is appropriate for the work Co-Producers are engaged in. We encourage you to use the ideas listed above as part of a compensation package as opposed to offering one idea on its own.

UPSKILLING

There are many ways to provide growth and development for Co-Producers. There are both essential and hard skills that young people will need in their future careers and/or businesses. There are also personal skills that are beneficial for young people too. Below is a list of examples of both categories.

It is important we consider different ways that we process or retain information. This is not fixed and can be a combination of methods. It is important that content uses different learning techniques so young people can benefit from upskilling opportunities.

Essential and Hard Skills	Personal Skills
Networking	Time management
Managing Stakeholders	Setting Boundaries
Fundraising	Wellbeing
Project Management	Goal Setting
Strategy and Scaling	Problem Solving
Storytelling and Branding	Adaptability and Resilience
Creative Campaigning	Growth Mindset

**Auditory** Learning through hearing and listening.

**Kinaesthetic** Learning through activity.

**Reading and Writing** Learning through reading and writing.

**Visual** Learning through reading or seeing pictures and videos.

Keeping in mind the busy schedules young people have, offering independent learning options is also suggested. Alternatively, personal development budgets can be offered to young people so they can develop the area they are passionate about. To measure the impact of personal development we advise you to ask Co-Producers to complete a survey at the beginning and the end of their time with you to be able to see the progress young people make and the value added due to their development.

THINGS TO CONSIDER_

In order to build and maintain trust with young people there are additional factors it is vital to be aware of and consider when working with them. This will ensure you are continually providing a safe space for young people to engage.

1. MENTAL HEALTH

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY KWAME (CO-PRODUCER)

The COVID-19 pandemic has unearthed the reality that has been ignored over a prolonged period regarding the mental health of children and young people. The unease that the pandemic created caused children and young people to adjust to new ways of learning and working. This negatively affected the mental health of most young people as between April and September 2021, there was an 81% surge in referrals for children and young people regarding their mental health compared to the same period in 2019.⁹

My personal story and the statistics shared on the gaps in the system regarding mental health education make it alarming in my opinion. The evidence above shows that the mental health and wellbeing of young people has not been protected well in the past. Therefore, organisations should ensure that measures are put in place to support young people to prevent causing further distress. The measures below suggest how this can be ensured:

ADDRESS AND PREVENT MICROAGGRESSIONS

One of the hindrances that most young people, especially young people of Black and Black-mixed heritage tend to experience is micro-aggressions. This is a subtle form of discrimination or prejudice that occurs either unconsciously or unintentionally and takes the form of racism or affects other protected characteristics. These are not always intended to be offensive to an individual. However, such actions remind young people that they are not fully trusted or accepted in a community. This tends to make young people from this background lose their self-confidence and belief that they too can achieve just as much as their counterparts of other heritages. You can find out more about microaggressions and how to deal with them from young people in a resource [here](#) (page 5).¹⁰

A SAFE SUPPORT SYSTEM

This should be established within the organisation to enable young people to be able to access support if they are experiencing any challenges. It opens up the space to express concerns or address questions they may have, rather than suppressing them, which could hinder their mental health and wellbeing further. Also, encouraging young people and helping them to build upon their personal strengths, whilst they work on areas to improve, will enable young people to build resilience to cope with stress and thrive to achieve the best that they can.

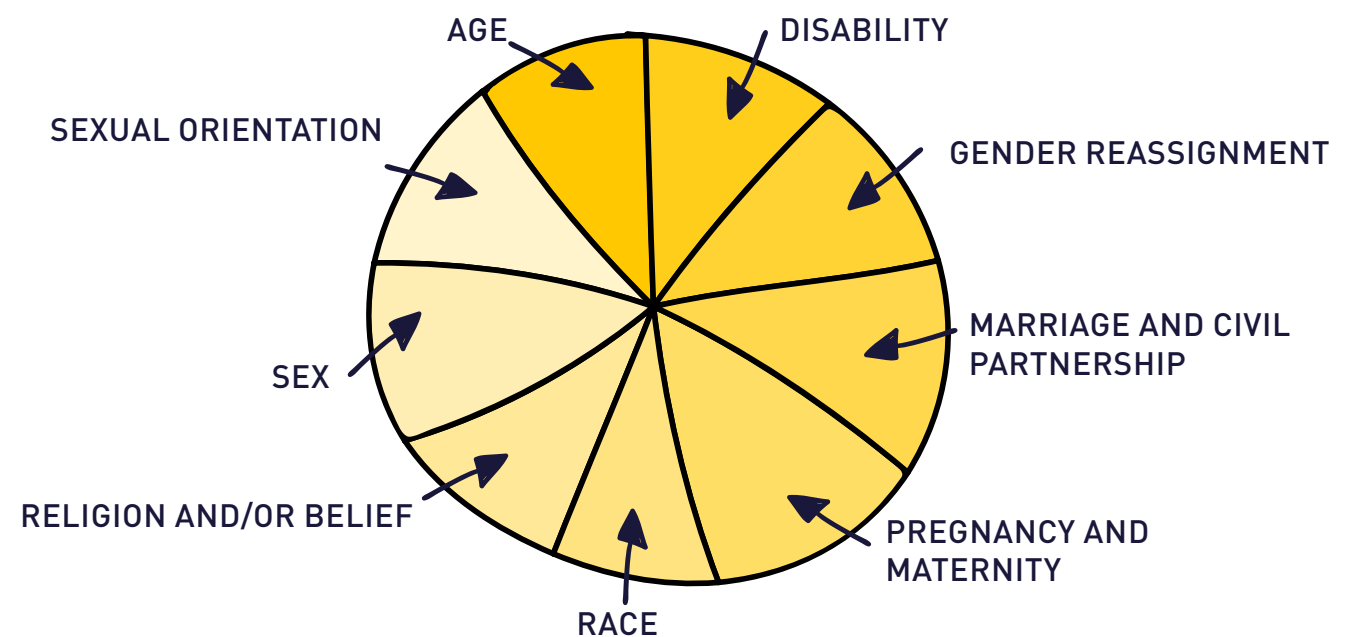
CELEBRATING SUCCESS AND MILESTONES

When young people are celebrated or validated chemicals called dopamine and serotonin are released. These are known as the “happy chemicals”. and they help to stimulate the mood of young people and improve their work output.

2. PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY IOLA (CO-PRODUCER)

Under the Equality Act 2010 people are protected from discrimination because of the following:



Under the Equality Act, there are nine protected characteristics. As we all possess some of these characteristics (e.g. age and sex) we are all protected from discrimination. Discrimination of any form that occurs because of any of these protected characteristics is illegal.

Direct discrimination is treating someone unfairly due to a protected characteristic they possess or are assumed to possess - this is known as discrimination by association. Direct discrimination can also occur if you are treated unfairly because of a person in your life having a protected characteristic, for example, being treated less favourably than others because your child is gay. This is known as discrimination by association.

Indirect discrimination is when there is a policy or rule within an organisation and while it applies to everyone, it places people with a protected characteristic at a disadvantage - whether that be an individual or a group of people. It is important to remember that just because people may share a protected characteristic, does not mean policies impact them in the same way. For example, a policy may discriminate against people with a visual impairment, but the policy would not discriminate against every disabled person. Therefore, if one person with the shared characteristic is saying that it does not impact them, it does not mean the policy is not discriminatory.

Indirect discrimination may occur during job advertisements. If a job advert states that a person must have ‘at least 5 years’ working within the given field, this discriminates indirectly against people within a certain age group. This advert would immediately exclude younger people who have had less time to work, however, they may still possess all the desired skills and traits for the job. Alternate wording can be used to avoid this, such as ‘applicants should be able to demonstrate...’ and then state the required skill.

Positive Discrimination/Action is where there are occasions within employment where discrimination may be justified. For example, if you are running a project aiming to tackle homophobia and transphobia within schools, you would want the Co-Producers you hire to have relevant lived experience, in order to inform the project. Automatically, this would mean you were looking to hire people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and for the project to be relevant to current social issues, you would want to work with those within the school age range or those who had only recently left education.

⁹ <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/resource/growing-problems-in-detail-covid-19-s-impact-on-health-care-for-children-and-young-people-in-england>

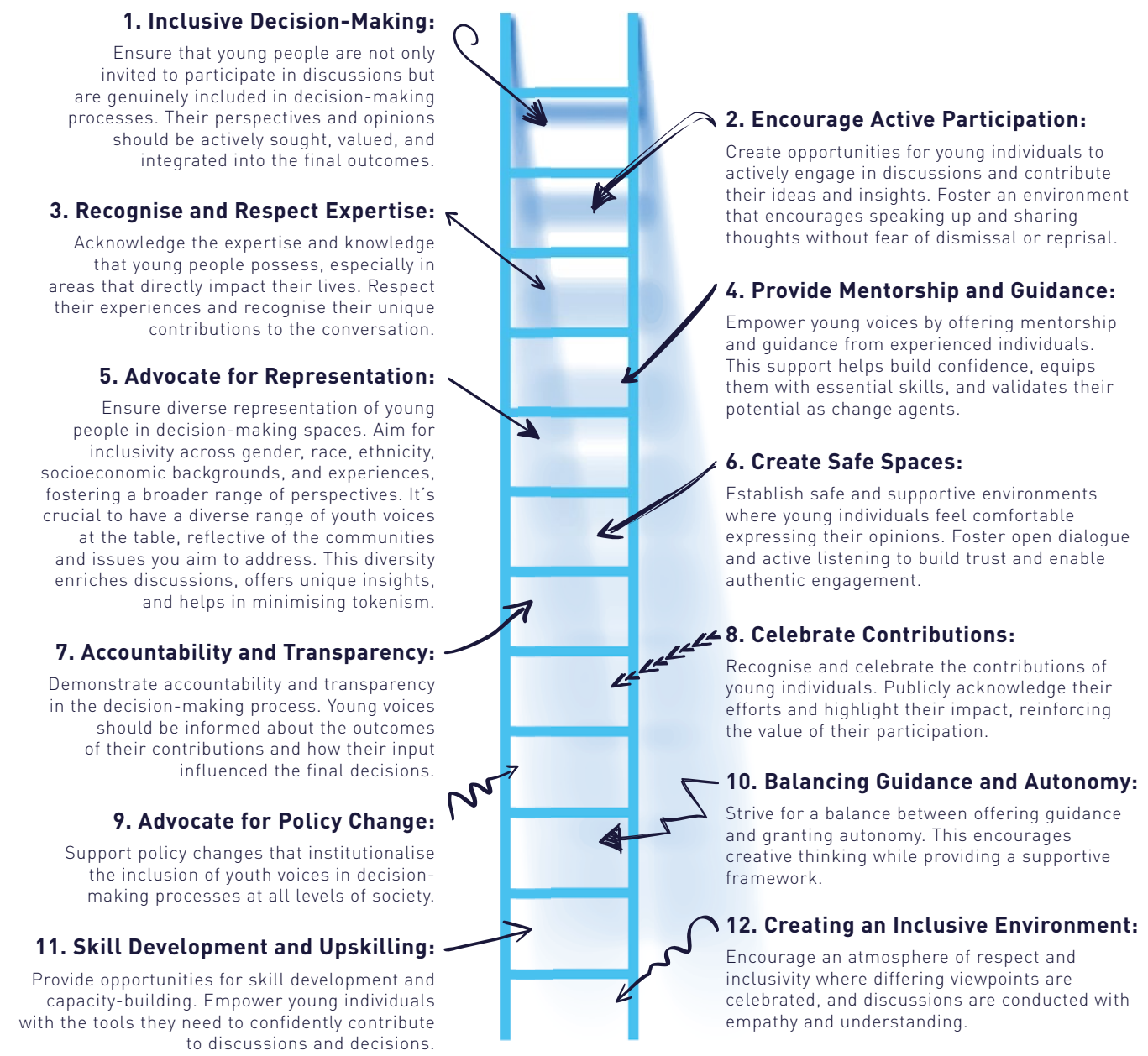
¹⁰ <https://www.antibullyingpro.com/resources/an-educators-guide-to-anti-racist-bullying>

3. POWER DYNAMICS

THIS SECTION WAS WRITTEN BY AALIYAH (CO-PRODUCER)

There are inherent imbalances of authority, influence, and control that exist in relationships and interactions between individuals or groups. It encompasses how power is wielded, shared, and distributed, affecting decision-making processes and the level of influence different parties have in shaping outcomes. Empowering young voices involves recognising and addressing the disparities in authority and creating an environment where young individuals can actively participate, contribute, and influence decisions. Here's how we can achieve that:

EMPOWERING YOUNG VOICES



By understanding power dynamics and actively working to empower young voices, organisations and communities can benefit from diverse perspectives, innovative ideas, and more inclusive and impactful solutions to address the challenges facing young people and society as a whole. Incorporating youth voice is not just about representation; it's about creating an environment where young individuals feel empowered, valued, and confident to share their insights. By prioritising open dialogue, inclusivity, and skill development, organisations can effectively harness the potential of young changemakers to drive meaningful change.

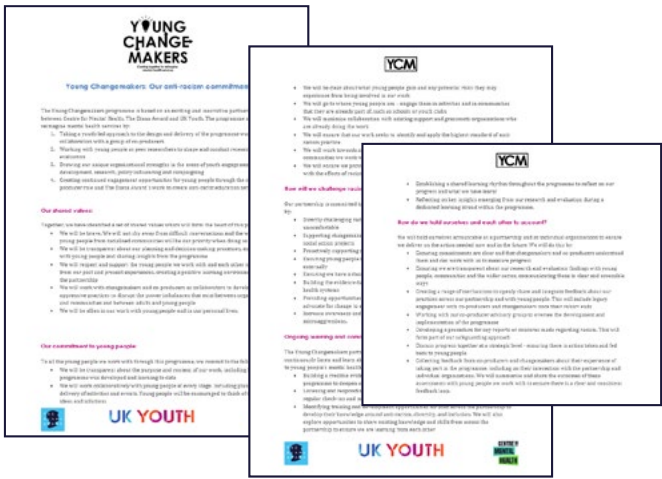
4. OPERATING IN A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE WAY

As a partnership, working in a culturally sensitive manner is essential for the effective and meaningful delivery of Young Changemakers.

To ensure clarity and accountability, the partners developed an anti-racism commitment, which was then signed by the project team, Co-Producers, youth workers and comms group.

Our vision was that all spaces on the Young Changemakers programme had high levels of psychological safety, and that work was led and/or meaningfully informed by, people with lived experience, and that this programme provided guidance to future programmes on anti-racist work.

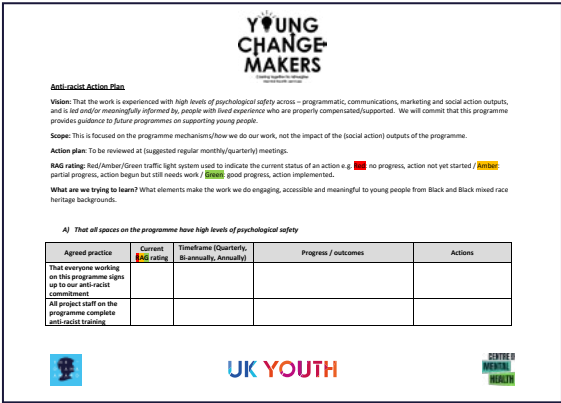
ANTI-RACISM COMMITMENT



To view the Anti-racist commitment and action plan please [click here](#)¹¹

ANTI-RACIST ACTION PLAN EXAMPLE

Alongside our commitment, we developed an action plan, to ensure we are actively taking accountability and ensuring the programme is accessible to the young people.



HOW HAVE WE PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE?

COMMS AND SAFE STORYTELLING

When planning our external communications, we worked with the Co-Producers to create principles. These include ensuring talent is committed to supporting young people or improving mental health in marginalised communities, and that Young Changemakers are genuinely involved, not just as tokens, and can influence creative direction. We also offered young people debriefs and the option to step back from opportunities. Additionally, we have a comms working group that invites Co-Producers to ensure our plans reflect the voices of young people.

SUPPORTING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

To support youth organisations and upskill youth workers, we offer various training opportunities, including:

- Anti-racist practice training with an external expert.
- Workshops on policy and influencing ran by Centre for Mental Health.
- Training on racially responsive approaches to young people's mental health.

We also co-delivered an initial train-the-trainer session alongside Co-Producers, covering context, practical examples, and case studies. UK Youth facilitated a mid-way update for youth organisations to discuss best practices, challenges, and collaborative problem-solving. Youth workers received flexibility and support to tailor sessions to their groups' needs.

continued...

11 <https://www.ukyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/YCM-Anti-Racism-Commitment.pdf>

PROGRAMME CONTENT

The curriculum for Young Changemakers was co-created with our Co-Producers, incorporating lived experiences and real-life examples. Each session included a content warning and relevant signposting. When involving external experts, we ensured they were relatable and credible to serve as effective role models for the young people in the programme.

RESEARCH

Throughout the lifecycle of the programme, the research, evaluation approach and tools have been co-designed with peer researchers to ensure it is both culturally relevant and trauma-informed. In addition to this, the research team at Centre for Mental Health are trained in anti-racism and the impact of racism on mental health. The Centre is also developing an organisational action plan which includes a workstream on anti-racist research practices, with the aim to move away from extractive processes and move more towards community-centred research.

WHAT DID THE CO-PRODUCERS THINK?

We asked, “Do you feel like the partnership supported you in a culturally reflective or sensitive way?”

OUR CO-PRODUCERS SAID...

“Definitely. I don’t think I had any cultural barriers with anyone. I can’t really pinpoint and expand because I think there’s just never been any hostility in speaking to either staff members or me approaching them or me coming up to them. It’s never been any type of like hostile behaviour, it’s always been a very welcoming presence. And culturally, I don’t think that’s ever been a factor in our conversations at any point.”

I was very supported and also felt safe enough to share some of my issues

CO-PRODUCERS

While managing the Co-Producers, The Diana Award prioritised their wellbeing by creating wellness action plans and using 1-2-1 check-ins to offer support. At the start of each cohort, we establish shared values and ways of working, giving the group the autonomy to shape them.

OFFBOARDING

As Co-Producers time with your organisation ends, we recommend the following steps:

Dedicate some time to feedback and evaluation. There is always room for improvement, and these improvements cannot be made without hearing from those directly involved. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as focus groups, surveys, or open discussions.

Celebrate their contributions! Consider hosting an offboard/celebratory session where all the Co-Producers can come together, socialise, and reflect on what they have achieved.

Signpost to other opportunities. Whilst their time on your project may be coming to an end, there may be other areas of the organisation they can get involved in. Make sure to state how they can stay in touch with your organisation and any future work.

Provide support. Depending on the work they have been doing, some topics may have been triggering and/or upsetting. Dedicate some time to check in on their wellbeing, provide them with the opportunity to speak openly about their feelings and provide relevant signposting to organisations who may be able to support. Check out our Support Centre for some ideas - [The Diana Award - External Support Services \[diana-award.org.uk\]](https://diana-award.org.uk/policies-and-guidelines/external-support-services)¹²

12 <https://diana-award.org.uk/policies-and-guidelines/external-support-services>

GLOSSARY OF TERMS_

Type	Definition
Activism	Activism involves efforts and actions aimed at bringing about social, political, or environmental change, often through advocacy, protest, or other forms of mobilisation.
Allyship	Allyship is the act of actively supporting and advocating for individuals or groups who are marginalised or oppressed, often by using one's privilege to help promote equality and justice.
Bias	Bias is a systematic and often unconscious preference or inclination for or against a particular group, individual, or thing. It can influence decision-making and judgments in various aspects of life.
Cisgender	Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, a person assigned female at birth who identifies as a woman is cisgender.
Cultural Appropriation	Cultural appropriation is the adoption or use of elements from one culture by individuals or groups from a dominant culture without proper understanding, respect, or acknowledgment, often leading to exploitation or harm.
Cultural Competence	Cultural competence is the ability to understand, respect, and effectively interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds while recognizing and valuing cultural differences.
Diversity	Diversity represents the presence of a wide range of different backgrounds, identities, and perspectives within a group, organisation, or society.
Empowerment	Empowerment is the process of giving individuals or communities the tools, resources, and self-confidence to control and improve their own lives, make informed decisions, and advocate for their interests.
Equity	Equity is the fair and just distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society or organisation to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.
Feminism	Feminism is a social and political movement advocating for gender equality and the rights and opportunities of all genders, with a focus on challenging and dismantling patriarchal systems.
Implicit Bias	Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes or stereotypes that influence our actions, decisions, and perceptions, often without our awareness. These biases can impact how we interact with others.
Inclusivity	Inclusivity involves creating environments, policies, and practices that welcome and value the contributions and experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities.

Type	Definition
Intersectionality	Intersectionality is the recognition of how multiple aspects of an individual's identity (such as race, gender, sexuality, and class)
LGBTQ+	LGBTQ+ is an acronym representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other identities within the broader spectrum of sexual orientations and gender identities.
Marginalisation	Marginalisation occurs when individuals or groups are pushed to the edges of society, often resulting in reduced access to resources, opportunities, and social inclusion.
Microaggressions	Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional, acts or comments that convey derogatory or prejudiced messages to individuals based on their race, gender, or other characteristics.
Oppression	Oppression is the systemic and unjust exercise of power and control over individuals or groups, leading to discrimination, harm, and the denial of basic rights and dignity.
Prejudice	Prejudice refers to preconceived opinions or attitudes, both positive and negative, that are not based on reason or actual experience but are instead rooted in stereotypes, biases, or generalisations.
Privilege	Privilege is the unearned advantages and benefits that individuals from certain social groups may have based on their race, gender, class, or other characteristics, often resulting in systemic advantages.
Restorative Justice	Restorative justice is a system of addressing wrongdoing or harm by focusing on repairing the harm caused to victims and communities, rather than solely punishing offenders. It emphasises reconciliation, dialogue, and rehabilitation.
Social Justice	Social justice is the pursuit of fairness, equality, and the eradication of social and economic disparities in society through advocacy, policy change, and activism.
Stereotype	A stereotype is a widely held but oversimplified and generalised belief or idea about a particular group of people, often based on assumptions, prejudices, or limited information.
Systemic Racism	Systemic racism refers to the systemic and institutionalised practices, policies, and structures that perpetuate racial inequalities and discrimination against marginalised racial groups.
Transphobia	Transphobia is the irrational fear, hatred, or discrimination directed towards transgender or gender-nonconforming individuals, often manifesting as prejudice, bias, or acts of violence.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS_

I'M NEW TO CO-PRODUCTION, HOW CAN I GET STARTED?

If you're reading this guide, that's a great start! It's important to remember meaningful co-production is a continuous process and something that you always be actively working towards. Organisations should every effort to listen to and work with young people in a non-tokenistic or transactional way.

Don't be afraid to research, try something new, seek feedback and change existing structures into something works with and for your young people. Through engagement with young people from the early stages or review, you are working towards meaningful change for them and may others who will benefit.

HOW CAN I FIND MORE ABOUT THE YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS PROGRAMME?

You can visit our webpage here
diana-award.org.uk/changemakers

If you have any questions, suggestions or would like to get involved please email us at
changemakers@diana-award.org.uk

WITH THANKS_

This guide was co-written by our team of Young Changemaker Co-Producers and The Diana Award Young Advisors. It has been a privilege to work with you, your lived experience, expertise and voices are always valued.

AALIYAH MULENGA_



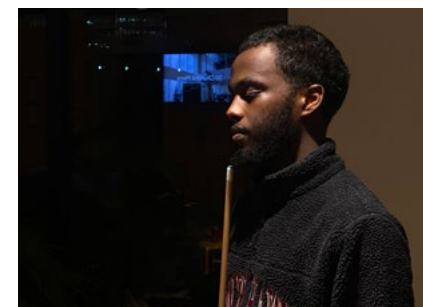
CROWN AGABI_



ELLIOT BUSARI_



IBRAHIM HIRSI_



IOLA NKAU_



KWAME OSEI OWUSO_



NAOMI ADESIYAN_



HARMAN GURAYA_



GRACIE FITZSIMONS_



Please see below for bios to learn more:
The Diana Award - [Meet the Co-Producers](#)¹³ and [Young Advisors](#)¹⁴

¹³ <https://diana-award.org.uk/CPcohort3>

¹⁴ <https://diana-award.org.uk/youngadvisors>



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