

PRINCIPLE 5:

SHARE POWER AND DECISION MAKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE



This principle is about cultivating meaningful, inclusive engagements where young people are actively contributing to decision making. It involves more than simply inviting young people into the room where decisions are made – it means preparing and briefing both young people and staff, ensuring the environment is accessible and inclusive and actively welcoming their ideas and perspectives. Crucially, it also requires transparency: clearly explaining how decisions are made and closing the feedback loop so young people can understand the impact of their contributions.

This principle extends to involving young people in high-level decision-making structures, such as senior leadership and boards of trustees, recognising their role as important stakeholders in shaping key decisions about the direction of the organisation.

TOP TIPS FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS

DESIGN

- **Be intentional:** Map out opportunities in advance to identify where young people can meaningfully contribute to decision making spaces.
- **Consider your setting:** Encourage staff and senior leaders to come to young people led spaces, instead of young people always attending traditionally 'adult' led spaces. This can remove hierarchy but also boost the participation of young people, as they may feel more comfortable to express their views in their own or usual setting.
- **Create policies and processes:** A key component of culture change is having policies and processes in place which enable staff to consistently embed youth voice practices in their work.
- **Youth friendly resources:** Ensure meeting resources are accessible for young people participating in the space, and provided in advance where possible.
- **Time:** Build in enough time into your project plans to allow for meaningful youth participation in decision making spaces – to avoid it becoming rushed and a tick box exercise.
- **Training:** Run youth voice and participation training for staff – this will also give them a space to ask any questions related to youth voice work before taking part in the opportunity.

This picture is from one of our residentials, where Young Advisors and staff began working together to design their project collaborations for the year ahead. Continue reading on the next page for some top tips for how to share power with young people when delivering your project.



DELIVERY

- **Build trust:** Be mindful of pre-existing power dynamics that young people may feel conscious of before entering the space. Building trust between young people and staff can take time, but investing time into this can help young people feel more comfortable collaborating with staff on projects.
- **Involve senior leaders:** Ensure senior leaders are actively engaged in your youth voice work and are regularly meeting with young people – culture change starts from the top. This also signals to young people that your organisation takes youth voice seriously and goes beyond just consultation on a programmatic basis.
- **Be mindful of who is in the space:** Including a staff lead who has an existing working relationship with the young people attending, will support with facilitation and encourage intentional participation in the space.
- **Close the feedback loop:** After the opportunity, ensure young people are kept informed with the outcome of the decision. Even if the outcome of the decision isn't what young people advocated for, don't let this deter you from being open and transparent in the reasoning behind this, as this can be a helpful learning experience for young people.

REVIEW

- **Prioritise feedback:** Ensure you gather feedback from both young people and staff after participation to understand what worked well and any areas for improvement.
- **Celebrate the impact:** Celebrate young people's contributions to decision making spaces, this will help young people feel valued and feel recognised for their time. Additionally, it is important to celebrate successes in staff practices too – this will also help build towards a strong culture of participation.



HEAR FROM OUR STAFF AND YOUNG ADVISORS ON THE IMPACT OF THIS COLLABORATION:

"I really like how the icebreaker activities were led by the Young Advisors. They came in straight away and knew what they were talking about – all of their ideas were brilliant. It felt like a genuine conversation and I was able to talk about things we could trial and things which might not be possible, but reaffirmed we would work together to find a solution."

"The weekend was a fantastic opportunity for young people and staff to network, understand one another's experiences to work towards creating activities for young people. The weekend was a fantastic success and guided everyone toward a path of creating collaborative, youth focused change that has measurable impact on young people." You can read more about the weekend from our Young Advisor, Gracie, [here](#).

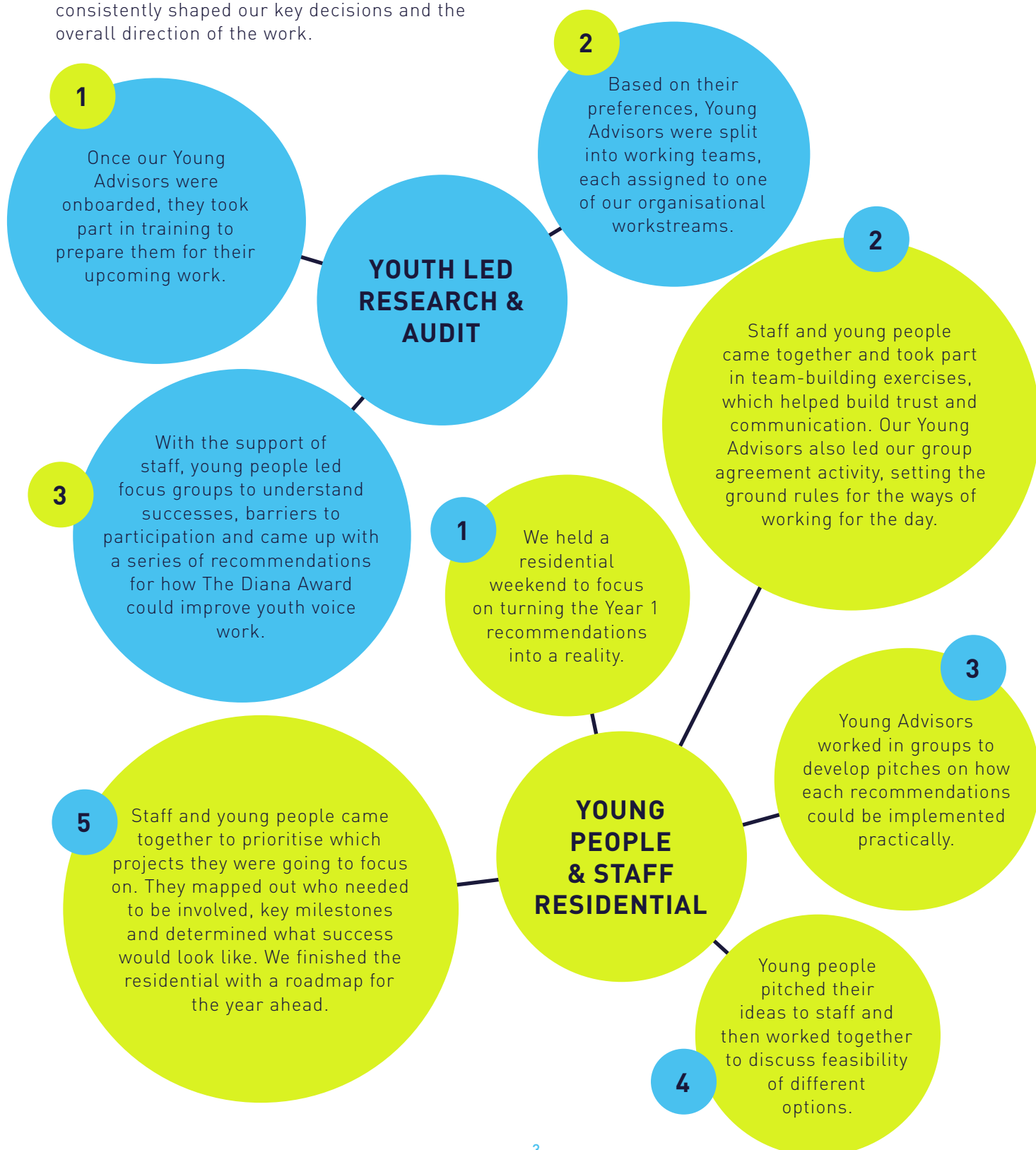
PRINCIPLE IN ACTION:

HOW WE WORKED WITH YOUNG ADVISORS TO IMPROVE AND TRIAL THIS WITHIN THE DIANA AWARD

The Diana Award is a charity set up in the memory of the late Diana, Princess of Wales. We work to empower young people to change the world and influence systems in their community.

Throughout the Young Advisors project, we remained committed to working in partnership with young people, ensuring their voices consistently shaped our key decisions and the overall direction of the work.

From the beginning, a few things were certain: we would collaborate with a dedicated group of young people, take a 'test and learn' approach in our second year, and co-create The Diana Award Youth Voice Charter. Below are some examples of what we achieved through this approach:



The Diana Award Youth Voice Charter project
was supported by:



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