

PRINCIPLE 1:

PUT THE SAFETY AND COMFORT OF YOUNG PEOPLE FIRST



THIS RESOURCE WAS CO-PRODUCED ALONGSIDE OUR YOUNG ADVISOR, ELSA

WHAT IS SAFE STORYTELLING?

At The Diana Award, we recognise that listening to, championing and platforming young people's stories are central to our work. We believe that all young people have the power to change the world, and young people we work with may share their story as a catalyst and force for this change. We champion young people's voices and support them to make their mark. However, when doing this we must ensure the comfort and safety of young people are prioritised and their wellbeing is our top priority.

WHAT DOES THIS PRINCIPLE MEAN IN PRACTICE?

"Storytelling is at the core of social action as it helps us communicate why it's important to take action and make change."
Harman, The Diana Award Young Advisor.

Ensuring that the organisation has robust safe storytelling processes in place, so staff feel confident supporting and guiding young people to tell their stories while being mindful of their safety and wellbeing.

Please see the 'Top Tips' section for steps your organisation could include in your work.

Supporting young people to make an informed decision around when and how to share their story. We do this by providing young people with all the information regarding the opportunity as well as talking through potential implications of sharing their story. E.g., if the opportunity is for a news article publication, being clear from the outset over the level of control we can have over this type of opportunity.

Empowering young people to reflect and feel supported to say 'no' if an opportunity is not right for them.



WHAT COUNTS AS A STORYTELLING OPPORTUNITY?

There are a variety of ways a young person can share their story. This can be through internal opportunities to support with guiding organisational decisions.

Storytelling opportunities for young people can also be outward-facing allowing them to share their experiences with external audiences E.G through roundtables, television interviews, radio shows, campaign videos etc.

EXAMPLE: Focus groups to determine the impact of The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme

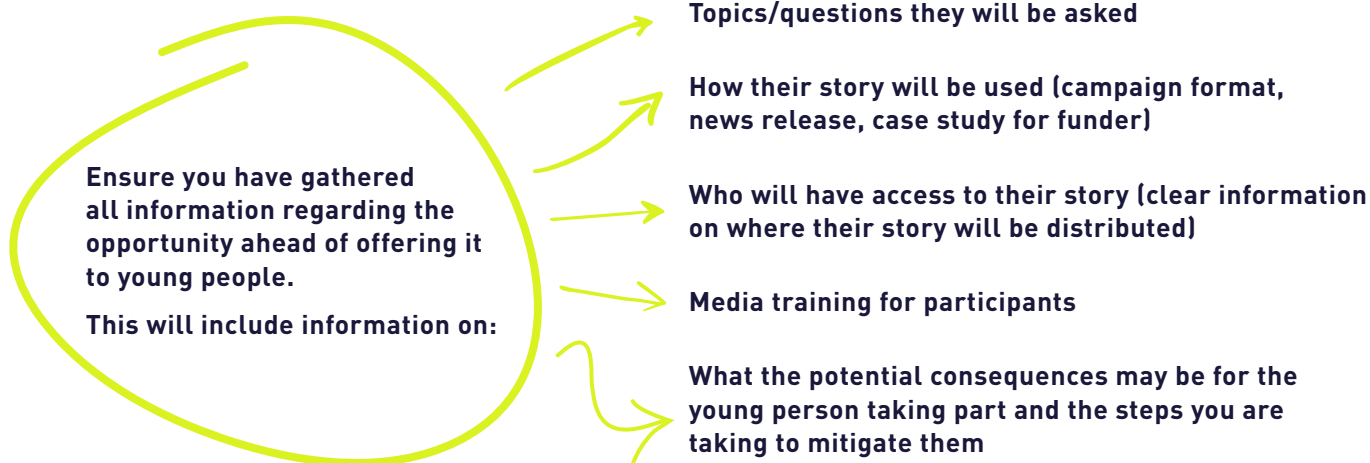
- Our Impact & Evaluation team leads a focus group with young people to understand how we can shape our programmes to ensure it is most impactful for young people.
- As part of this process, young people draw on their own experiences of bullying behaviour when thinking about what kind of support young people in schools may need.

The support an organisation provides may vary depending on several factors, including the type of storytelling opportunity, the young person's age, the sensitivity of their story, the context in which it is being shared, and any accessibility needs—so that appropriate adjustments can be made to ensure meaningful participation.

EXAMPLE: Campaign Video for Anti-Bullying Campaign

- A young person talking to a news organisation about their experiences of bullying behaviour as part of a 'Back to School' campaign. Found here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOYLFOB1di8
- Young people draw on their own experiences to raise awareness as part of Anti-Bullying Week.

TOP TIPS FOR ORGANISATIONS SUPPORT FOR STAFF



This will ensure young people can make an informed decision about whether they want to participate in the opportunity (with the support of a staff lead and/or their parent/carer).

Establish clear communication channels between young people and staff.

Have regular reflective spaces for staff to share successes & challenges when it comes to supporting young people, to ensure this remains an active topic of conversation throughout the organisation.

Revisit your safeguarding and storytelling policies regularly alongside young people to understand how they can be improved, to ensure they are relevant to the needs of the young people you work with.

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Depending on the opportunity, provide on-hand support throughout participation, E.G breakout spaces, regular check-ins and debriefs.
- Ensure you gather feedback after each storytelling opportunity to identify where improvements can be made to your support practice.
- Lean on other organisations: sign-post to support services with more tailored support and guidance.
- Be mindful of asking a young person to share their story multiple times – just because they have shared their story before does not mean they will want to do it again.
- Have regular meetings with young people to ensure they feel empowered to say ‘no’ to storytelling opportunities that are not right for them. Ensure opportunities are communicated as early as possible, to avoid them feeling pressured or rushed into making a decision.
- Create a ‘youth friendly’ safeguarding policy – not only will this help demystify the topic for young people, it also demonstrates your commitment as an organisation to foster regular and transparent communication on this topic.

PRINCIPLE IN ACTION:

HOW DID WE WORK WITH YOUNG ADVISORS TO IMPROVE THIS WITHIN THE DIANA AWARD?

In the first year of our project, Young Advisors recommended we refreshed and improved our safe storytelling policies and processes, to ensure that when young people used their voice as a force for change, it was done so in the safest, most empowering way possible. In Year 2, our Young Advisor, Harman, worked alongside staff to put this recommendation into action. Within this project, we:

1

Co-produced an updated media training session alongside our PR Lead.

This included:

- Reviewing session content based on feedback from young people, and creating interactive opportunities for them to practice engaging with the media.
- Co-delivering the upskilling session to our National Anti-Bullying Youth Board.

Impact: 90% of young people who attended the workshop ranked the media training in their top 5 most useful sessions for developing their skills and knowledge.



2

Created a Safe Storytelling Toolkit for young people.

This included:

- Conducting focus groups with staff and young people to understand what content would be most useful and impactful for young people who may be participating in storytelling opportunities for the first time.
- Exploring content with staff and young people – to ensure the workbook was beneficial and practical.
- Sharing the workbook with all young people participating in storytelling opportunities.

[Workbook >](#)

3

Reviewing our Safe Storytelling policies and processes for staff.

- Creating clear guidance for staff to create a culture where they feel confident supporting young people throughout the storytelling process.

Hear from our Young Advisor, Harman:

“This was my first time developing a toolkit, which was an opportunity to be creative and engaging through interactive prompts. I strengthened my communication skills, and the experience allowed me to mentor young people by drawing upon my own time on the Youth Board and enabled me to be more accessible and thoughtful as a facilitator.”

The Diana Award Youth Voice Charter project
was supported by:



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This resource was created in July 2025.

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