

PRINCIPLE 3:

FAIR DISTRIBUTION AND PATHWAY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



THIS RESOURCE
WAS CO-PRODUCED
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This principle ensures the organisation offers diverse and accessible opportunities for young people to participate, removing barriers and supporting different preferences for engagement. It helps broaden participation across a wider range of young people and prevents overreliance on the same individuals.

In turn, ensuring the organisation's youth voice work is representative of the communities they serve.

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

A common issue within youth voice and participation work is an overreliance on the same group of young people, who tend to be better prepared to access more formal and long-term engagement opportunities. While there is high value in this, relying solely on these young people places too high a burden on them, limits the representativeness of the feedback the organisation receives, and is unfair on young people who want to engage but lack the networks, skills and experiences to participate in youth voice opportunities at that point.

This principle is crucial because it recognises that young people engage with youth voice opportunities in diverse ways. This means variety in both the focus of the opportunity (e.g. creative vs strategic workshops) and the commitment level required (e.g. ad-hoc vs longitudinal engagement).

Examples of different opportunities The Diana Award have offered:

- One day social media workshop.
- 3-month working group with staff to collaborate on a campaign.
- Participating in a series of policy consultation sessions.
- Peer-Researcher opportunity within the Evaluation team.
- Ad-hoc social media ambassadors.
- Youth Panel for recruitment.
- Long-term Youth Board opportunity.

PATHWAY OF OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to provide a range of opportunities that enable young people to continue their journey of engagement with organisations and further develop their skills. E.G offering pathways such as progression from a Young Advisor role to a Young Advisory Governance Steering Group supports consistent, long-term involvement. These ongoing opportunities benefit both the young people and the organisation, fostering mutual growth. Crucially, diversity should remain central—tailoring opportunities to individual needs and preferences not only fuels young people's development but also strengthens the organisation through sustained engagement with experienced and invested youth contributors.

TOP TIPS FOR OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Audit your opportunities:

Take stock of the youth voice opportunities on offer and consider if there is variety EG are your opportunities mostly online sessions? Are there a mixture of creative vs strategic opportunities available?

Think creatively: don't be afraid to trial new ways of working with young people. This may involve encouraging youth voice opportunities in teams or projects which hasn't been done before.

Encourage learning: By adopting a 'test and learn' approach, you can take the pressure off teams who may be trialling new youth voice opportunities for the first time. There will always be key learnings and improvements for delivery, but framing it as collective learning from the start can help with staff buy in.

Ensure inclusive practices are built in from the start:

Offer a variety of participation options E.G interactive workshops, regular online sessions, one-off creative art day, youth-led or co-adult/ youth led sessions. This will ensure your activities cater to a wide range of young people and can stop your activities becoming only accessible to a certain group.

Work with young people:

If possible, partner with young people at the start of project and collaborate to identify what type of youth engagement would work best.

Ask your young people:

Before delivering the youth voice activity, ask the young people what they need to feel confident participating in the space. EG more upskilling training, extra sessions to meet the team etc.

Monitor participation: Keep track of the demographics of the young people you are engaging with. This will enable you to see if there are any populations or communities you are not reaching or catering for.

Communication channels:

Consider how you are outreaching your opportunities to young people and monitor their effectiveness.

Create the journey:

Plot out different steps and methods of youth engagement within your organisational structure, to carve out a journey for young people – what does the next step of skills development look like?

Be clear about what your offboarding processes look like: When does a young person's journey start with your organisation and when does it end?



PRINCIPLE IN ACTION:

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

FAIR DISTRIBUTION: CASE STUDY: SOCIAL MEDIA

Young Advisors identified a need to embed youth voice within areas of our organisation which had not been integrated yet, such as our social media function. In addition to providing opportunities to young people who had an interest in these areas, this also allowed us to trial creating different roles for young people, to cater for different engagement preferences and skillsets.

We trialled the following avenues of engagement:

1

World Mental Health Day Video Campaign

Young Advisors worked alongside our social media team for three months to develop a campaign video. They led on creating the concept, writing the script and designing an outreach strategy to involve young people from across all our programmes in a video marketing World Mental Health Day.

Young people from across The Diana Award had the opportunity to contribute to the campaign video, speaking about the importance of mental health and how charities can support young people's wellbeing while they are engaged in social action.

This was a more intensive opportunity for young people to be embedded within one of our teams over the course of a few months.

2

Social media forum

Young Advisors hosted an online and in-person social media forum, with the aim of gathering feedback on our social media content and shaping future strategy, through interactive workshops. Young Advisors also delivered a session on how to utilise social media as a force for change and attendees were guided through storyboarding their own social media campaigns.

This provided two different types of engagement for young people: the opportunity for young people to participate in the workshops and the opportunity for young people to plan, facilitate and review the workshop, with the support of staff.

PATHWAY OF OPPORTUNITIES: CASE STUDY: YOUNG ADVISORS

To kickstart the youth voice project, we were able to create a new opportunity within our organisation – our Young Advisors. This opportunity offered a next step for young people with prior experience of the organisation, enabling them to participate in strategic decision-making roles within The Diana Award.

Working with Young Advisors over two and a half years allowed us to deeply invest in their development alongside their work with us. We provided 1-2-1 skills development sessions, specialist upskilling training, leadership opportunities, opportunity to participate in recruitment for our Chair of Trustee, contribute to fundraising bids and co-design a new youth advisory structure within the organisation.



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