

LISTEN -
DON'T TALK
OVER PEOPLE

NO BAD
IDEAS

Everyone
should
feel
involved.

Everyone's
contribution
is valid

Don't say anyone
has a bad idea

Respect
everyone's
opinions and
thoughts!

Respect the person
that's talking

Use
their
language
&
style

Dont
talk
over
people

Youth Voice Innovation Storybook

September 2024

Acknowledgements

Thank you!

Thank you so much for the incredible contributions from:

- The **14 young people** aged 16–22 who participated in co-design, recruited through Mind and StreetGames
- The **16 young people** aged 16–23 who participated in the Design Jam, recruited and supported by StreetGames
- The **15 organisations** across the sport, physical activity and education sectors who participated in interviews and co-design
- A special thank you to **StreetGames** and **Mind** who recruited and supported young people in co-design
- **Sporting Communities** for inviting us to participate in their 2024 Youth Innovation Conference and the 50 young people we met there
- **Colleagues** across Sport England and a range of other partners who have supported this journey.



Foreword

Our Youth Voice Innovation Storybook is the result of a one-year partnership between Sport England and Innovation Unit.

It was borne out of our shared ambition to advocate for youth voice as a key enabler for creating positive experiences for children and young people when being active, particularly those from underserved communities. All young people have the right to be heard in matters affecting them.

In the spirit of working openly, this storybook shares the realities of how this work felt, and what we've learnt it will take to embed youth voice in our sector.

The innovation approach we took, while challenging at times, has resulted in four brilliant ideas, co-produced with young people and our partners. This document explains how we got there and where we are going next.

It is designed to inspire anyone who wishes to start by providing practical tools, and to give confidence to those who are already embedding youth voice and innovation to keep going.

We didn't start this process from a position of expertise, but we have been inspired by and learnt from the knowledge and experiences our partners and the young people have shared along the way.

We hope that you find this document useful.

Find out more

If you would like to know more about this project, please contact us at [Sport England](#) or [Innovation Unit](#).

Foreword

Ideas and impact

This project was a creative and collaborative effort that produced valuable ideas and reflected the values young people told us were most important to them: inclusion, respect and empowerment.

The ideas at a glance

1. **A young person investment panel** that advises Sport England on funding decisions to support partners trusted by young people facing the greatest inequalities.
2. **Local champions** who connect organisations with young people to help organisations understand and respond to young people's needs and experiences.
3. **A sharing stories event** where young people share personal stories to inspire organisations to commit to strengthening youth voice.
4. **A youth voice mentorship programme** that pairs experienced organisations with those seeking support to enhance their youth voice practices.

How the process felt for young people

I'm emotional right now. I can't believe I just did that [presenting in front of the group]. On day one I barely spoke and locked myself away in the toilets; now I'm crying happy tears and I'm so proud of what I just did.



Our voices and ideas were heard and were the most important thing in this room.



I am more comfortable with myself and more confident in speaking and sharing my views.



Contents

1. Our approach

Pages 6-11

How we agreed our approach, our ways of working
and the steps we implemented



2. Research phase

Pages 12-18

How we understood the problem and learned
more about youth voice



3. Engagement phase

Pages 19-26

How we co-designed with young people and partners,
generated insights and prioritised what to take to the
design phase



4. Design phase

Pages 27-38

Developing and testing ideas with young people and partners



5. Where do we go from here?

Pages 39-41

Looking ahead, what will we do and what we want to learn next



Example resources

Pages 42-57

A range of tools we used throughout the process



Our approach

Since 2021, Sport England has partnered with Innovation Unit to cultivate a culture of innovation within our work.

Initially, we explored the role of innovation in addressing inequalities in sport and physical activity, aligned to Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy.

From October 2023, we shifted our collective focus on how to apply innovation to embed youth voice within the sport and physical activity sector.

This aligns with Sport England's strategy, which aims to ensure every child and young person experiences the joy and benefits of physical activity. To do this, we need to learn how to put their needs, expectations and safety first in the design and delivery of activity.

[Sport England's Uniting the Movement strategy >](#)

Youth Voice Innovation Storybook

Youth voice is the right of young people to be heard.
It's your ideas and opinions being listened to and acted upon.

Living our best practices

The first phase of our work with Innovation Unit culminated in the development of Sport England's Innovation Playbook. It contains a set of tried and tested tools to embed innovation in our everyday work.

Sport England's Innovation Playbook

[View Playbook >](#)



Innovation Playbook

Tools to apply innovation in sport and physical activity – and beyond

Innovation Unit
Creating impact
Reducing inequalities
Transforming systems

SPORT ENGLAND

It includes a set of eight key practices to guide how we work, which we believe will enable great innovation to happen. This youth voice project tested putting these into practice.

Innovation and Digital Best Practices

[View >](#)



Innovation and Digital Best Practices

- Put the problem first.
- Be people centred.
- Value skills and experience.
- Take small steps.
- Be open.
- Reframe failure.
- Look to the future.
- Embrace the uncertainty.

Start with learning

We used learning questions to co-create our approach and we came back to them at the beginning and end of each phase, helping us to synthesise what we'd learned and inform our next steps.

This work had **parallel and connected strands**.

We wanted to learn how to elevate youth voice both **internally**, within our own practices and processes, as well as **externally**, supporting the sector to embed youth voice in how they work.

We also recognised that it was critical to continue to **build the skills and culture required for ongoing innovation internally**, if we want to have the impact on inequalities that we desire.



1

What is the role of youth voice within Sport England?

Exploring to what extent young people's views are currently integrated within Sport England and identifying areas for improvement.

2

What is the role of Sport England in embedding youth voice across the sector?

Exploring how Sport England can support partner organisations in incorporating youth voice into their practices.

3

What works – and doesn't – in building the innovation skills, knowledge and confidence of Sport England colleagues?

Exploring how to enhance colleagues' skills and confidence in innovation and youth engagement.

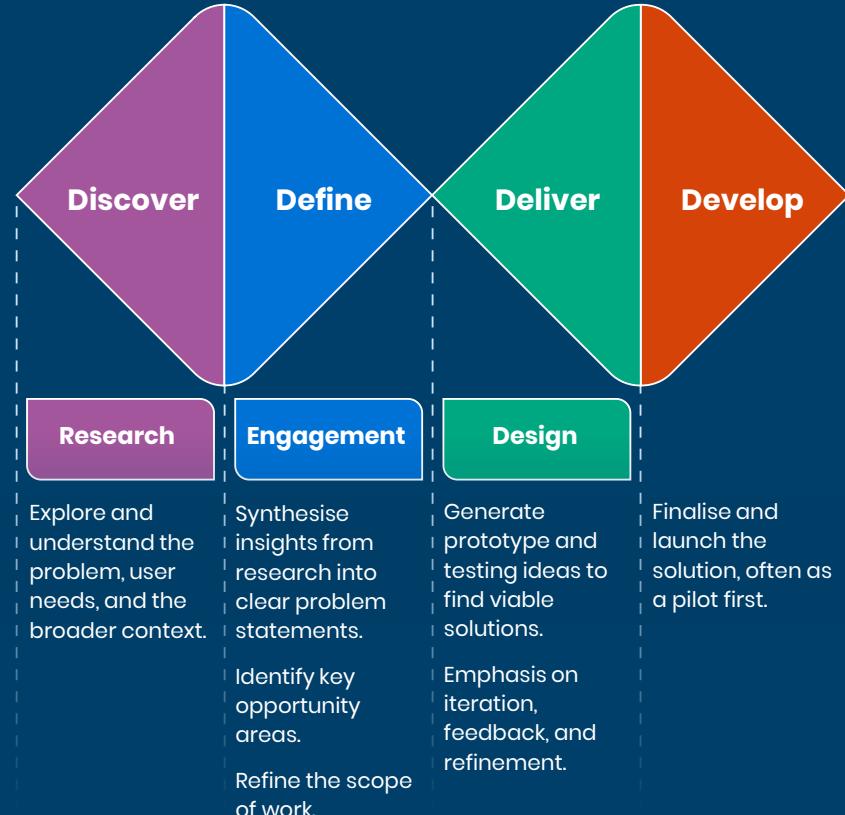
The Double Diamond

We used the **Double Diamond** to guide the **steps we took**. This framework for innovation places user voices (in this case, young people and sector partners) at the centre, all the way from problem research to solution delivery.

By involving key stakeholders in the key stages of research, co-design and prototyping ideas, we followed a collaborative process which values differences in perspective and experience.

This approach provided us with the practical opportunity to learn by doing, and to live our best practices in real time.

[Read more about the Double Diamond >](#)



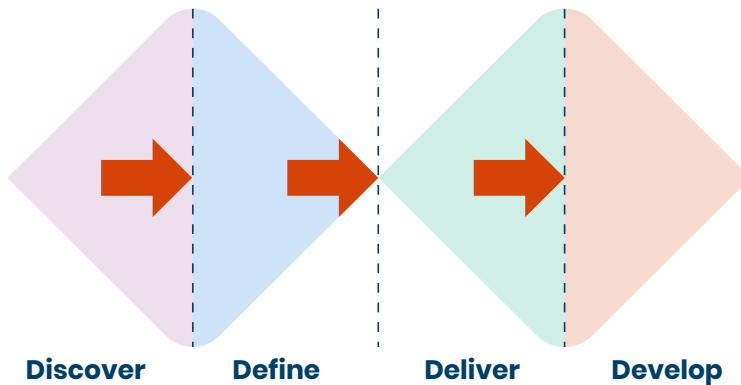
A reflective process

We learnt it is important to make space for reflection and synthesis when working on complex challenges.

Synthesis is a critical part of any design process, which **cuts across different phases**, helping to consolidate insights from each phase and allowing you to move forward with confidence.

When to do it

- Whenever there is a large amount of information to consolidate.
- At the end of each phase of the project.



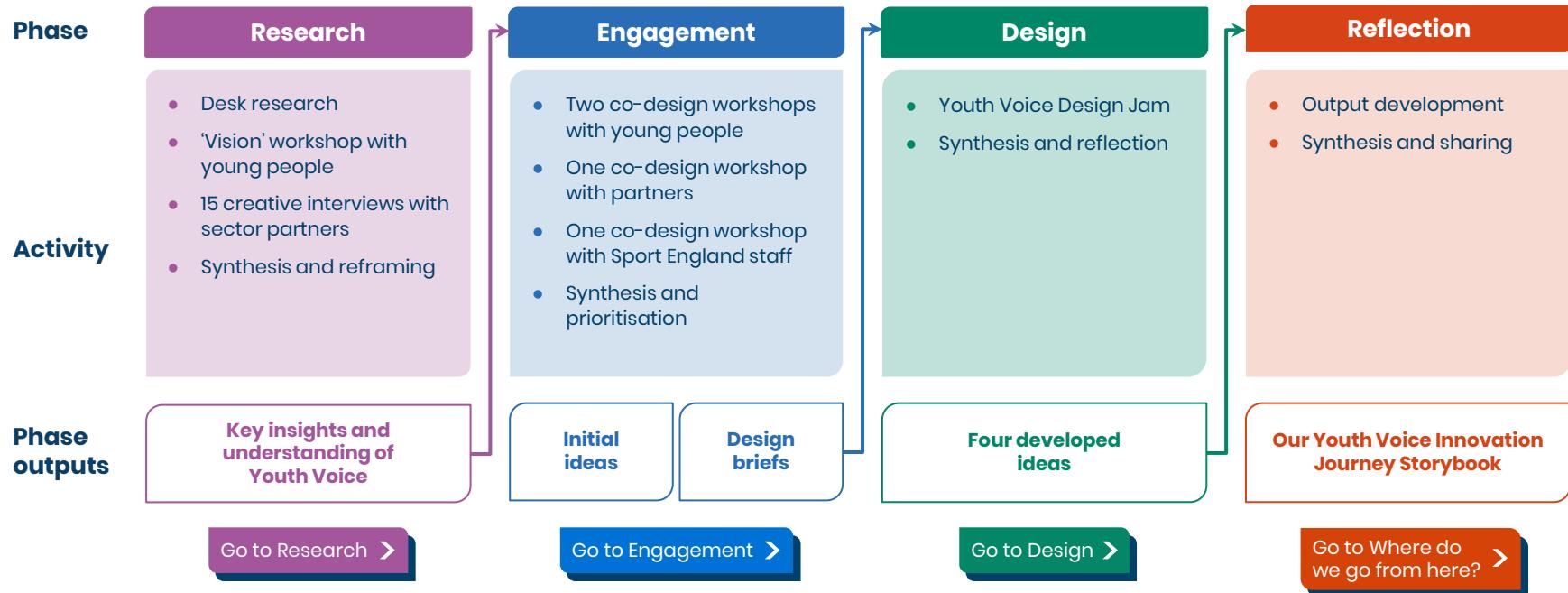
Mindsets for reflective synthesis

- **Be open:** Embrace diverse ideas and perspectives. Adapt when new insights emerge and explore information that challenges your assumptions.
- **Spot patterns and themes:** Identify connections and common themes. Ask 'why' to uncover underlying causes and insights.
- **Synthesise together:** Coming together in a physical space is recommended. Work towards a shared understanding.
- **Actionable insights:** Provide practical, specific recommendations and know when you have 'good enough' insight to move the work forward – you can fill gaps as you go.

The steps we took



We have explained each of these steps in more detail in the next sections. You can either work through them one by one or jump to the section that is most relevant to you by clicking the titles.





Research phase

Understanding the problem

Our goals

- Get clear on the definitions and practices around youth voice within Sport England and other organisations.
- Find out what's most important to young people when it comes to youth voice, and where the biggest opportunities and challenges are.
- Make sure the key insights are strong and clear to guide the next phases.





Research phase

Activities

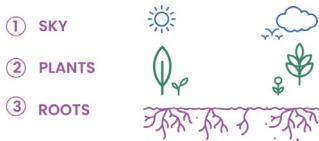
- **Desk research:** this involved mapping the youth voice landscape, defining where we need to gather insight and conducting desk research on great existing practice.
- **In-person workshop** at the Sporting Communities Youth Innovation Conference, where we crowdsourced barriers to feeling heard and engaged 50 young people to co-create a vision for youth voice which meets their needs.
- **Creative interviews** with 15 professionals across the sport, activity and education sectors, identifying challenges, sector needs, opportunities and good practice.
- **Synthesis and reframing** to ensure the insights were strong and clear to guide the next phases.



Example resources used

Creating a Vision

- ① SKY
- ② PLANTS
- ③ ROOTS



Creating a vision



Online canvas (Miro)

Click here to navigate to the resources section at the end of this Storybook.

[View resources >](#)

Other resources

To explore other useful tools for the 'Research' phase of a project, you can use the [Innovation Playbook](#).

[View tools >](#)



What we learned about youth voice from desk research

Our desk research allowed us to understand more about youth voice and the challenge we wanted to tackle.



Definitions

Youth voice is an umbrella term that captures a range of activities and outcomes ranging from consultation to co-production. Definitions recognised children's right to be heard and meaningful engagement, taking appropriate actions based on young people's views.



Practice

Good youth voice practice involves understanding the need to flex and evolve depending on the context. Youth voice can shift power by giving young people the chance to shape their own experiences in a meaningful way.



Implementation

Frameworks exist for practitioners to adopt more child-centric approaches, such as the Lundy Model of Child Participation. Youth voice should be seen as an ongoing, evolving process rather than a one-time activity.



Impact

There were a range of benefits in adopting youth voice practice. Young people having their rights respected, gaining confidence and skills, funders becoming more inclusive, delivery organisations more relevant and communities more strongly connected with young people.



What we learned about youth voice from other organisations

We heard about lots of great examples of youth voice in action. These helped us to shape our key insights, initial ideas and design principles for working with young people.



Youth Sport Trust

Hosted a Youth Summit, uniting over 80 young people aged 16-25 to co-design a youth call to action, to influence positive change in physical activity.



Active Devon

Active Devon co-designed with young people a non-competitive event for local non-sporty girls. The Neon Run focuses on fun and social interaction.



Community Fund

Young people co-created the Mind Our Future fund's aims, application criteria and decision-making and evaluation processes.



UNICEF

UNICEF UK's Youth Advisory Board advocate for child rights and shares insight about what matters to young people.



LutaPod

LutaPod is a youth-led podcast that provides space for young women and girls to discuss and share their thoughts and experiences in sport.



Hope Collective

A Hope Hack gives young people a voice and focuses on their hopes for the future. Groups discuss their thoughts and solutions on issues that affect them.



Top tips for conducting research

There is a lot to consider in the research phase, in particular gathering insight directly from users. We wanted to share some top tips from our approach.



Humility, curiosity and patience are key: test any assumptions you may be holding, ask open questions, and be transparent that you are not the expert.



Value diverse voices: speak to people and organisations with a broad range of experiences and frames of reference. People you engage with may disagree with you or one another, and there is important learning in that tension.



Nurture the relationships you form through research: take time to understand stakeholders and their priorities, be transparent about the goals and next steps. Engage them as early as possible and be as flexible as you can to design the research methods around their needs.



Be transparent about your findings: visibly displaying insights in real time ensures a shared understanding. We displayed an online canvas (Miro) that participants could contribute to. We also shared the board openly, to allow further comments or clarifications.



How it felt for the team

“

Embarking on a new approach was both exciting and a bit daunting. There were moments of inspiration as **we saw how many partners were already doing incredible work in this space.**

Our desk research helped us to narrow down the specific challenges we wanted to tackle, but **it required a mindset of resilience and openness to overcome the uncertainty and complexity** of the task.

The highs of collaboration and learning were balanced by the lows of navigating uncharted territory, but the experience **reinforced the importance of being agile, persistent, and willing to embrace new perspectives.**



Natasha O'Flaherty

Project Manager – Children and Young People

Key takeaways

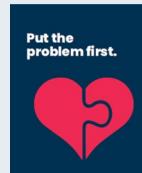
It is so important to do in-depth research first; gaining as much knowledge as possible really helped prepare us for the next stage.

Using Miro boards helped us when collating extensive amounts of information and with the planning of the various stages.

It is really important to consider what you know, but even more important to define what you don't, whilst building connections and opportunities.

My advice to you: embrace the new process of **learning while doing!**

Important practices in this phase:





How it felt for users

Colleagues at partner organisations, after an interview.



“ A useful conversation – Sport England were open to **listen** and **share**.



“ The session was such a good opportunity to **connect** and have a moment of **reflection** so thank you for holding the space.



“ Sport England did a brilliant job of capturing our thoughts and feedback, and **it was nice to have this visual to refer back to**.



“ It was useful to have the notes captured and sent back (sometimes this is not the case).



“ Good to have information in advance to ensure we were fully prepped.



One colleague at a partner organisation, after an interview with us, reported that they particularly appreciated:

“ Knowing we're **not in it alone**.



Engagement phase

Co-designing with young people and partners

Our goals

- Turn research findings into clear problem statements that will help shape solutions.
- Engaging with young people and sector partners to see if our insights resonate with them.
- Collaboratively generating opportunities and ideas to go into the Youth Voice Design Jam.
- Narrow down our focus based on feedback from everyone involved



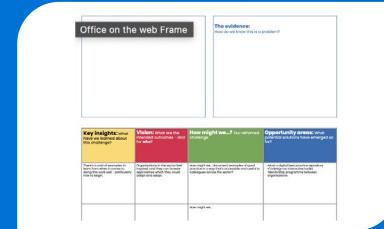


Activities

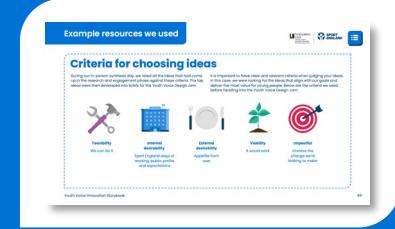
- **Generate insights:** this involved looking at our research phase and identifying the biggest problems partners face in embedding youth voice.
- **Co-design workshop with sector partners** where we presented and tested our insights and collectively generated ideas to overcome some of these problems.
- **Co-design workshops with young people** supported by Mind and StreetGames. Built on the learning from the partner workshops and were a chance to test our approach to engaging with young people
- **Co-design workshop with Sport England staff** to test some of the emerging ideas.
- **Synthesis and prioritisation** to apply our criteria and select the ideas to take to the design phase.



Example resources used



Design brief table



Criteria for choosing ideas

Click here to navigate to the resources section at the end of this Storybook.

[View resources >](#)

Other resources

To explore other useful tools for the 'Engagement' phase of a project, you can use the **Innovation Playbook**.

[View tools >](#)

Read our reflections on our co-design activities in this blog, **Our Youth Voice Adventure**

[View blog >](#)



Insights about youth voice through co-design

In the co-design workshop with partners, we explored what challenges prevent organisations from embedding youth voice, and potential opportunity areas. We heard:

There are different opinions around the **definition, terminology and scope** of youth voice.

For some, it is hard to find relevant **examples** to learn from when it comes to successfully embedding youth voice – particularly **how to begin** and what **good practice** looks like.

Getting youth voice to be **meaningful and regular** requires **resource** (e.g. money and time) and **capacity**, which are often scarce.

Many don't feel **confident** about bringing young people into decision-making and worry about **safeguarding**. The fear of getting it wrong acts as a barrier.

The **culture** might get in the way of **embedding youth voice**. Not everyone can see its value – some people think professionals should make all decisions

Some organisations can find it more difficult to reach young people from underserved communities, **often leaving certain voices unheard**, which leads to things being designed with only some people in mind.



Insights about how to work with young people

Five design principles

Using our desktop research and learning from partners, we co-designed with young people these five principles to prioritise when working with them. We also kept these front of mind in how we designed the design phase.



1

Connection and **trusted relationships** are important to young people – with each other and with adults working with them.

2

The **purpose** and role of the young people's involvement should be clear and time-bound.

3

The format should allow young people to participate on their own terms and must be **accessible**.

4

Young people want to be **rewarded**, receive feedback on and be credited for their contributions e.g. qualifications or vouchers.

5

Young people want to be part of a process from **start to finish** and make a **meaningful** contribution, not brought in a tokenistic way.



Top tips for co-design

There are a number of approaches to co-design; we summarised five key tips that were helpful in our process.



Welcome diverse ways to contribute

Tailor your approach to people's preferences and needs. Be intentional about the platforms you use. Online workshops allow you to use a range of formats, including breakout rooms and chat/written word for those who do not want to come off mute.



Stay flexible

Be prepared to pivot depending on the preferences and needs of the group, for example when it comes to the time, duration and location of sessions – as well as materials, platforms and processes used.



Prioritise creativity and fun

Ensure a co-design session is an enjoyable and valuable experience in itself, making it more likely for people to stay involved throughout the process. Gather feedback and leave the door open for more reflections after the session.



Keep it simple

Ensure you give people appropriate context, but leave out unnecessary or distracting information, and keep objectives for the session clear and achievable.



And don't forget... keep an open mind

Being comfortable with the unknown can be challenging, but it is important as the co-design phase can take you into places you might not have expected.

The choices we made

A large number of ideas came out of the engagement phase. We applied our criteria for choosing ideas to assign them to these three categories.

Ideas to prototype (take to design)

- Young people meaningfully involved in Sport England decision-making
- Accelerating place-based innovation to amplify marginalised youth voices
- Develop a youth voice incubator programme for sector partners
- Create a platform for young people to make their voice heard

Quicker wins to explore (just do it!)

- Youth voice in Sport England's campaigns, advocacy and socials
- Better inclusion of youth voice in funding processes
- Co-design a quick-start guide to youth voice
- Youth voice questions in Active Lives Children & Young People survey

More thought needed (ideas to consider)

- Youth voice data insight and resource hub
- Develop a metric/framework for measuring youth voice
- Youth voice training for Sport England staff



How it felt for the team



Following positive and energising partner conversations, we moved into co-design. At the start there was a **feeling of uncertainty** around whether partners would be willing and have the capacity to engage and interact with this new way of working. However, we had more than 20 organisations participate, supporting us to **check our thinking, generate ideas and providing us with valuable information**.

Designing sessions to engage with a group of young people was another new area. We put the **users first** to consider what we would need to ensure young people could engage fully.

For both partner and young people sessions, the **energy and interactions** within the session reinforced how valuable and important it is to **take the time to listen**.



Naomi Beckles

Senior Manager – Children and Young People

Key takeaways

Delivering and facilitating co-design sessions was new to us but, having **built relationships** with many of the partners in the research phase, and our growing understanding of the area, helped us to **bring confidence to the sessions**.

Within the sessions we were **open and honest** that this was a new area for us and needed their experiences to help to shape the work.

For the young people session, we worked with partners who identified and attended with the young people, a **familiar face**. During planning the partners were able to advise and give feedback on the session plan.

Important practices in this phase:





How it felt for users

From colleagues at partner organisations who attended the online co-design session:



“ Great facilitation that felt inclusive, vulnerable and open and really energised people and partners... the Miro board is crammed with thoughts and ideas!



“ Enjoyed the diversity of expertise within the group, the creative ideas and solidarity of cause. Also, enjoyed using Miro.



“ Excellent facilitation. Great use of breakout rooms to increase diversity of contributions. Miro board was superbly managed by Sport England staff. In the same way we do with young people, it was great to see a range of ideas captured. The key step is continuing to bring people with Sport England on this journey, to identify what's already out there and what you are planning to do.



Design phase

Developing and testing ideas

To maximise value, we decided to bring young people and partners together through a Youth Voice Design Jam. It allowed for rapid movement through the whole Double Diamond process, alongside ensuring a valuable learning and social experience for everyone.

Our goals

- Run a constructive, collaborative and engaging event that truly reflects everything we've learned about embedding youth voice.
- Iterate, gather feedback, and refine ideas to make sure they're hitting the mark.
- Choose the best ideas to move forward with for the next steps.





Design phase

Activities

- Building a relationship with a trusted partner:** StreetGames helped us plan the event and recruit the right young people
- Creating effective Design Jam briefs:** Ideas were presented in a tangible way with supporting context and were owned by “Brief Champions” (Sport England staff who facilitated this brief on the day).
- Recruiting and briefing partners:** We brought in partners who had been involved in the process to support in the different phases of the youth voice design Jam.
- Designing the Jam content flow:** In line with the Double Diamond, we followed a structure of discovery, ideation, development and presenting ideas.
- Deliver the Jam:** 16 young people and partners came together for three days to solve the challenge



Example resources used



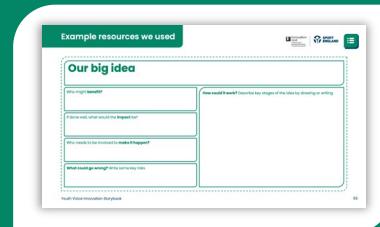
Recruitment flyer



Design jam briefs

Click here to navigate to the resources section at the end of this Storybook.

[View resources >](#)



Big idea template



A note to me

To explore other useful tools for the ‘Design’ phase of a project, you can use the [Innovation Playbook](#).

[View tools >](#)



Design phase

Youth Voice Design Jam

Over three days, young people and sector partners came together to move through an energetic, facilitated design process called a design jam.

Each team developed one idea. Moving forward, Sport England will continue to work with young people and partners to further explore these ideas.

Over the following pages, we summarise each team's final idea and the impact we could expect these to have if they were implemented.



The process we used



1

Forming teams

Team-building and understanding each others' strengths to foster collaborative working



2

Understanding the brief

Desktop research and interviews with sector partners to deepen understanding of the sector and get specific about their focus



3

Ideation

Build out ideas through storyboarding and drawing



4

Testing ideas

Plan and build prototypes (early samples of concepts or processes) – for instance through games, role play and craft material – gather feedback and improve ideas



5

Present final ideas



Young person investment panel

The idea in a nutshell

Sport England should create an investment panel of young people and organisations to recommend the partners Sport England should invest in, **who are trusted by young people who face the greatest inequalities.**

The problem it solves

How might Sport England
**involve more young people in
the decisions** they make?

Key features

Rewards and benefits e.g. development opportunities, networking, mentoring, vouchers.

Feedback mechanism for panel members and a forum for sharing their experiences.

It identifies organisations from **non-traditional sport settings**

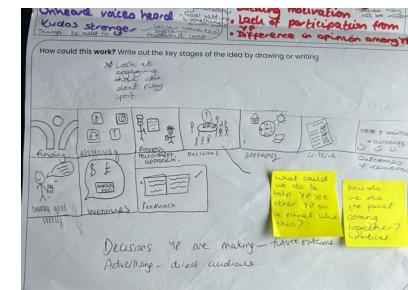
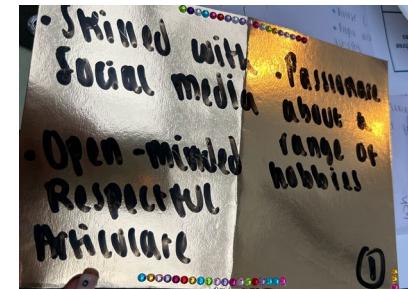
Impact it could have

Cultural change: youth voice in decision-making becomes the norm.

Increased engagement: more positive experiences for young people as their voices are heard leading to greater participation.

Role modelling: Panel members and Sport England set an example for others.

Confidence building: young people gain confidence and motivation, fostering a sense of purpose.



Local champions

The idea in a nutshell

Local champions will **connect organisations with young people** to create collaborative opportunities for local organisations to understand young people's needs and experiences.

The problem it solves

How might organisations **hear from the young people** in local places **who face the greatest inequality**?

Key features

Local champions already have **sector experience** and connections.

Sport England provide **resources, funding, and training** to support their efforts

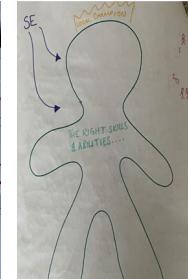
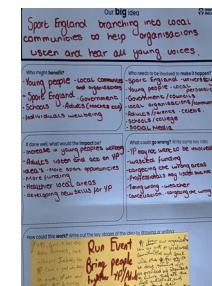
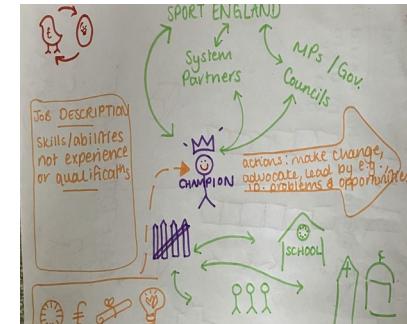
Champions will **share learning and build connections across the country** for advice and collaboration.

Impact it could have

Stronger local relationships: collaboration between local organisations and communities.

Insight sharing: valuable insights into young people's needs shared locally and with Sport England.

Safe spaces: young people feel safe expressing themselves and accessing more sport and activity.



Sharing stories event

The idea in a nutshell

Sport England invite organisations to an **event** where young people share stories to inspire others to embed youth voice. Organisations **commit to taking action** based on what they learn.

The problem it solves

How might Sport England amplify the voices of young people so that they are heard and acted on by organisations who are delivering sport and physical activity?

Key features

A **co-production group** of young people who lead the project.

Organisations will be **held accountable** for the actions they commit to after hearing the stories.

The event will **showcase ways to integrate youth voice**, giving organisations actionable steps to follow.

Impact it could have

Skill development: young people gain new skills, mentorship and valuable experience, while feeling that their voices are heard.

Platform for voices: young people who share their stories feel supported and empowered.

Action: organisations leave the event inspired and ready to take concrete steps towards embedding youth voice.





Youth voice mentorship programme

The idea in a nutshell

Sport England should develop a **mentorship programme that pairs experienced organisations with those needing support** to develop their youth voice practices.

The problem it solves

How might Sport England support organisations to **learn and test new ideas** to embed youth voice?

Key features

A youth advisory panel to oversee the programme and hold regular feedback sessions with organisations.

At least six months' duration, with an emphasis on sharing knowledge, tools and experiences.

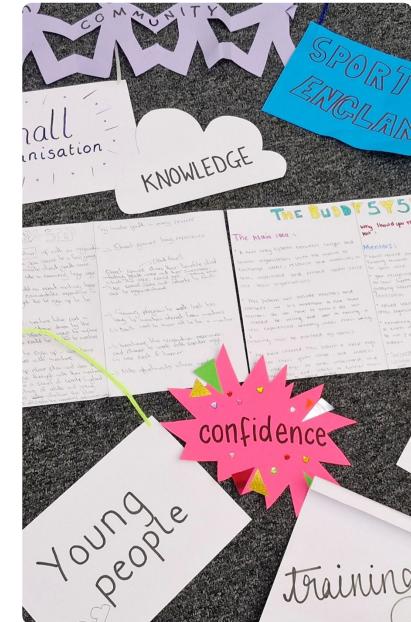
A final networking event to share learning and showcase progress to the sector.

Impact it could have

Youth empowerment: young people act as advisors and gain confidence.

Collaboration: organisations develop their youth voice approach, gaining skills and expanding their networks

Support system: access to resources, training and funding enables organisations to make real progress in embedding youth voice.



Top tips for delivering a Youth Voice Design Jam

Here are our tips for creating an engaging event that put our youth voice design principles into practice and moved the ideas forward.



Get organised and recruit early: if you do not have existing relationships with young people, recruit through a local partner who does. With clear messaging, purpose and incentives, many young people were happy to come forward and offer their insight. Cover costs of food, travel and incentives.



Inclusive, fun and constructive activities: design takes time and thinking space, so avoid being overly ambitious and be prepared to pivot away from the plan, responding to energy and preferences. Fun is a necessity: it leads to comfort, high energy and honest feedback. Ensure there are a range of ways contributions can be received e.g. acting, writing, drawing, craft materials.



Safeguarding, comfort and trust: pay close attention to your safeguarding policies, and/or adopt the policies of trusted partners who know the participants. Ensure all consent is acquired before kicking off and gather key information on accessibility and dietary requirements. A quiet room available for anyone to use to decompress or pray was appreciated by the young people.



Invest time in facilitator roles: the 'brief champion' role ensured there were clear roles and responsibilities for facilitators. Each facilitator could go deep into one of the challenges over three days. Regular team huddles created space for quick reflection and enabled facilitators to better meet the needs of their team.



Putting the design principles into practice

In the engagement phase, young people told us the five design principles (page 22) that we should prioritise when working with them.

We worked hard to keep these front of mind and to ensure that we used them to design and deliver the three-day Youth Voice Design Jam.

In practice, we call this our 'cheese sandwich' lesson.



At the end of each day, we asked young people to share feedback on what they liked and what they needed. We heard that they wanted more energisers, extended breaks over lunch and specific snack requests! One very specific ask was for a cheese sandwich, so we made sure this was provided the next time we met.

Listening and responding to feedback and requests from the young people quickly built trust and rapport.

Getting the small things right builds trust for the bigger things.

How it felt for the team



Going into the Jam felt **exciting and daunting** in equal measure. Whilst we'd done **lots of planning**, we didn't know how things would play out, what ideas young people would create or even whether they'd come back after day one!

As a team, we were focused on creating an environment that felt **positive and safe**. As a 'brief champion' working with four young people, there was time to build **trust and rapport**.

The overwhelming sense I got from the Jam was the **positive energy** I took from working openly with young people and partners to shape our work together.



Andrew Liney
Head of Children and Young People

Key takeaways

Being open and seeing this as an important opportunity for us to **learn and grow** – truly putting young people, partners and their needs first.

We had to constantly iterate and **change our approach** to respond to the needs of young people and energy in the room across and in between the three days.

The **energy and enthusiasm** gained from working in this way is infectious and something we want to keep doing.

Important practices in this phase:





How it felt for users

Young people reported the following takeaways from the Youth Voice Design Jam:



“ I've learnt so much about myself; that I can work with anyone and **achieve things I wouldn't think I could**. If you had asked me on day one if I could build relationships with people I've never met before in just three days, I wouldn't have believed you. I also would never have imagined standing up and presenting to a room of people that were strangers. **I am more comfortable with myself and more confident in speaking and sharing my views.**”



“ I'm emotional right now. I can't believe I just did that [presenting in front of the group]. On day one I barely spoke and locked myself away in the toilets, now I'm crying happy tears and **I'm so proud of what I just did.**”



“ Thank you for showing great care during the three days.”



“ Our voices and ideas were heard and were the most important thing in this room.”



How it felt for users

Partners shared the following takeaways from the Youth Voice Design Jam:



“ It’s been an absolutely brilliant project to be a part of, and I’ve learned a lot from the teams and young people. Can’t wait to see what you all do next.



“ It was a real privilege to be in the room for this big first for Sport England. The first step in youth voice is often the hardest, as it’s tricky to know where to start and to foresee all the support and sign-off needed to be in place.



“ You all brought a huge amount of enthusiasm, patience and positivity, which made the young people feel comfortable and created a fun atmosphere... I was really touched to see every young person receive a handwritten card and a certificate to recognise their contributions.

Where do we go from here?

Our key learnings and next steps

Throughout this Storybook we have shared what we have learnt along the way about these three questions:

1. What is the role of Youth Voice within Sport England?
2. What is the role of Sport England in embedding youth voice across the sector?
3. What works – and doesn't – in building the innovation skills, knowledge and confidence of Sport England colleagues?

We now look ahead to where we should go from here.





Our ongoing journey

We acknowledge that Sport England didn't start this journey from a position of expertise in knowing how to embed youth voice, but the last 12 months have given us greater confidence that we have a critical role to play.

This involves taking an active role in continuing to advocate for **young people's right to be heard**, whilst working to explore how our internal processes can adapt so we are able to embed youth voice in a way that is meaningful and amplifies the voices of young people from underserved communities.

Looking ahead, we will:

- Continue to work with partners and young people to explore how the four ideas we have co-designed can be progressed and embedded in our work.
- Endeavour to pilot at least one of these ideas.
- Identify collective opportunities to share learning in spaces that are open to all.

Looking ahead, we will:

- Stay focused on what young people tell us they need.
- Collaborate together to generate learning.
- Openly share as we go.



What we want to learn next

There's still a lot to explore. Below we have outlined the key areas we believe are the priority to focus on next:

- How Sport England and partners can **hear from young people from underserved communities**, as it is their voices that we need to listen to the most to address inequalities.
- How Sport England can **build stronger, more meaningful connections** between and with partners that lead to lasting collaborations.
- How Sport England and partners can **advocate effectively for youth voice** so that it becomes the norm.
- How Sport England can best **support partners to apply innovation to their work** and build their skills and confidence along the way.
- How the Sport England Children and Young People and Innovation teams can **support other internal teams that want to embed youth voice** so that it is meaningful and genuine for young people.

Example resources we used

We used a range of tools throughout the process and we wanted to share some examples to bring these to life.

Don't forget to check out the Innovation Playbook for tools, examples and templates to support you on your design journey.

[View Playbook >](#)



Example resources we used



Creating a vision

What

A creative activity that helps participants imagine their ideal future. We focused on a world where young people feel heard.

Why

Encourages 'blue-sky thinking' and helps participants visualise change beyond existing systems, exploring conditions and impacts in a structured way.

When

Great for the start of a design process to align on a shared vision, to develop empathy and an understanding of your users and to provide a reference point to come back to throughout the project.

How

- Sky – Discuss and visualise what success looks like.
- Plants – Identify the necessary conditions for success.
- Roots – Explore what the essential components or ingredients are.



Key information

Time:
60-120 minutes

Difficulty:
Medium



Tip

'Roots, Sky, Plants' is one of many frameworks you could use for this discussion. The goal is to think big and arrive at a vision that people believe in.

Example resources we used

Creating a vision

1 Sky

What will we see through effective youth voice?



2 Plants

Conditions for ensuring youth voice can grow



3 Roots

Foundations for youth voice





Creating a vision

1

Sky

What will we see through effective youth voice?



2

Plants

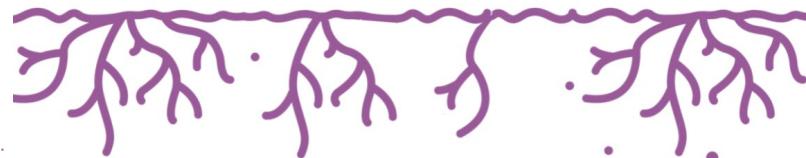
Conditions for ensuring youth voice can grow



3

Roots

Foundations for youth voice



Example resources we used



Online canvas (e.g. Miro)

What

A digital tool for collaborative, visual brainstorming and organising ideas in a flexible online space.

Why

Facilitates open collaboration, allowing participants to contribute and interact in real time. Demonstrates transparency and shared understanding.

When

Throughout the design process, especially during ideation, synthesis and planning stages.

How

Create a frame on the canvas that helps participants to know what they are contributing to and include any guidance or stimulus to help them contribute.

Use sticky notes, diagrams and drawing tools to capture ideas and organise information.

Encourage participants to add their own thoughts, comment on others' ideas and visually map out connections.



Tip

Use Miro as a tool in workshops, or as a place to track your entire project, so that all your information is in one place, and it can be kept transparent throughout.



Free versions of these tools are available. Regular use might lead to exploring paid licences – we encourage bringing your internal teams in early if this happens!



Design brief table

What

A table that collects important information about the design challenge, including the problem, evidence of the problem, key insights, vision, reframed challenge, and emerging ideas.

Why

Helps everyone on the team understand the challenge and goals clearly. It acts as a guide during the design process.

When

Create the design brief table at the start of the design phase, after doing some initial research.

How

- Describe the problem you want to solve.
- Summarise the evidence that shows this is a real problem.
- List the key insights you learned about the challenge.
- Write down the vision by saying what you want to achieve and for whom.
- Use 'How might we...?' to reframe the challenge in an inspiring way.
- Note down opportunity areas where possible ideas have come up.



Tip

Use Miro as a tool in workshops, or as a place to track your entire project, so that all your information is in one place, and it can be kept transparent throughout.

Example resources we used

Innovation Unit | SPORT ENGLAND

Design brief table

The problem: What is the challenge we want to solve?	The evidence: How do we know it is a problem?
List the key insights you learned about the challenge.	Create a vision by saying what you want to achieve and for whom.
Use 'how might we...?' to reframe the challenge in an inspiring way.	Note down opportunity areas where ideas to solve the problem have come up.

Youth Voice Innovation Storybook 47



Design brief table

The problem:

What is the challenge we want to tackle?

The evidence:

How do we know it is a problem?

List the **key insights** you learned about the challenge.

Create a vision by saying what you want to achieve and for whom.

Use “How might we...?” to **reframe the challenge** in an inspiring way.

Note down **opportunity areas** where ideas to solve the problem have already come up.

Example resources we used



Criteria for choosing ideas

What

A quick decision-making tool to help prioritise ideas based on specific criteria.

Why

Helps narrow down ideas to the most feasible and impactful options, aligning the team around clear priorities.

When

After generating multiple ideas, to decide which ones to develop further.

How

Set criteria based on project goals (e.g. impact, feasibility).

Score each idea against the criteria and conduct a dot voting exercise where each team member places dots on their preferred ideas.

Discuss the top-voted ideas together, comparing scores and considering different perspectives before making a final decision.



Key information

Time:
45-90 minutes

Difficulty:
Medium



Tip

Having criteria that everyone agrees on and a simple method of scoring helps the team reach a decision that everyone supports.

Example resources we used

Criteria for choosing ideas

During our in-person synthesis day, we rated all the ideas that had come out in the research and engagement phase against three criteria. The top ideas were then developed into tools for the Youth Voice Design Jam.



Feasible
We can do it



Internal credibility
Sport England ways of working, public profile and expectations



External credibility
Appropriate from user



Visibility
It would work



Impactful
Creates the change we're looking to make



Criteria for choosing ideas

During our in-person synthesis day, we rated all the ideas that had come up in the research and engagement phase against these criteria. The top ideas were then developed into briefs for the Youth Voice Design Jam.

It is important to have clear and relevant criteria when judging your ideas. In this case, we were looking for the ideas that align with our goals and deliver the most value for young people. Below are the criteria we used before heading into the Youth Voice Design Jam:



Feasibility

We can do it



Internal desirability

Sport England ways of working, public profile and expectations



External desirability

Appetite from user



Viability

It would work



Impactful

Creates the change we're looking to make

Example resources we used



Recruitment flyer

What

A simple flyer to attract the right participants for your project, outlining key roles and information and reasons to get involved.

Why

Brings in participants who have the right skills, interests, or perspectives to contribute to project success.

When

Early in the planning phase, especially before key events or workshops.

How

Outline the roles and benefits clearly.

Explain the project and why it's worthwhile.

Keep it simple.

Share it through relevant channels.

Design your project to match the offer in the flyer.



Tip

Make your flyer eye-catching and concise. Tailor it to highlight why the project matters and what unique skills or perspectives you're looking for.



Example resources we used



Recruitment flyer





Design Jam briefs

What

A starter pack for prototyping ideas to solve a problem that provides the essential context, goals and insights for a focused design sprint.

Why

Aligns teams on goals and constraints, helping keep prototypes focused on solving the right problem. Design should be user centred – introducing personas and insights at the outset enables this to be considered throughout the process.

When

Early in the planning stages of the design phase, especially before key events or workshops.

How

Work on this as a project team, using information you have already gathered up to this point. Create a design brief in a single document that includes:

- Problem statement and important context
- Specific brief information
- Initial ideas and constraints
- Persona
- Guiding principles

Tip

The briefing pack sets people up for their design sprint. Include important context and constraints so people can get on with designing.



Example resources we used



Design Jam briefs

The Big Picture
We want **every** child and young person to experience the enjoyment and benefits that being active can bring. Their needs, expectations and safety should come first in the design and delivery of activity.

The Big Question
How might we put young people's voice (their ideas and opinions) at the heart of Sport England's work, and support other organisations to do the same?

This is about giving more young people access to physical activity that is inclusive, enjoyable and rewarding for them by listening to the voices that are often left out.

Over to you...

Problem statement and important context

Your question...

How might Sport England involve more young people in the decisions they make?

Sport England don't currently have a way to speak directly to young people. We would like to involve young people in processes and decisions that could impact them.

What should Sport England do to create opportunities for young people to have a voice in a way that is **inclusive, meaningful, and rewarding** for young people? How do we make this **accessible** to any young person who wants to be involved?

Specific brief

Zaynab: 17, Kent
Zaynab is passionate about healthy living and shares nutritious **halal** recipes on her blog. She loves swimming outside in summer, but come winter, she doesn't feel comfortable being the only person wearing a hijab at her gym.

Strengths
Social media and content creation
Happy and positive
Funny and friendly

Motivators
Stop feeling so sluggish and depressed during the winter months
Passion for equality!

Struggles
Feeling isolated in a very white area

What could help Zaynab?
Raise awareness of issues young people face in being active, such as tracking discrimination and negative body image
Listen to what Zaynab needs and co-create solutions

Personas

- Senior Sport England staff are buddied up with a young person who supports them in making big decisions.
- Local assemblies:** partner with schools and community centres to conduct workshops and assemblies where young people can be involved in key Sport England decisions and build this into the regular organisational process.
- Young people attend different events where personal stories can be shared and heard. This could be a youth panel or someone who has knowledge and understands how to ensure voices are heard.
- An interactive platform where young people can share ideas, vote on proposals and comment on each other's ideas.
- A paid Sport England youth panel that advise on decisions that will impact young people nationally. Young people could be nominated yearly by their local schools, clubs or organisations.
- Recruit young ambassadors who are passionate about sports and physical activity to represent their peers and relay feedback to Sport England.

Initial ideas and constraints

Young people have told us to prioritise these 5 design principles:

- Connection and trusted relationships are important to young people - with each other and with adults working with them.
- The purpose and role of the young people's involvement should be clear and time bound.
- The format should allow young people to participate on their own terms and must be accessible.
- Young people want to be rewarded, receive feedback on and be credited for their contributions e.g. qualifications or vouchers.
- Young people want to be part of a process from start to finish and make a meaningful contribution, not brought in a tokenistic way.

Guiding principles

Example resources we used



Big idea template

What

A template to outline a main idea, including who it benefits, the potential impact, key people involved, risks, and steps for execution.

Why

Helps the team define the big idea, bring it to life for others, explaining the possible benefits, challenges and how to make it happen.

When

Use this template after brainstorming ideas, when you're ready to develop your main concept further and narrow down the number of ideas.

How

1. Who might benefit? Identify the people or groups who will gain from this idea.
2. If done well, what would the impact be? Describe the positive effects this idea could have.
3. Who needs to be involved to make it happen? List the key people or organisations needed for success.
4. What could go wrong? Write down potential problems or challenges.
5. Some key risks: identify any risks associated with the idea.
6. How could it work? Outline the main stages of the idea by drawing or writing them down.



Key information

Time:
30 minutes

Difficulty:
Easy



Tip

Encourage open discussion about potential benefits and risks, ensuring everyone's input shapes a well-rounded plan.

Example resources we used

Our big idea	
Who might benefit?	How could it work? Describe key stages of the idea by drawing or writing
If done well, what would the impact be?	
Who needs to be involved to make it happen?	
What could go wrong? Write some key risks	



Our big idea

Who might **benefit**?

If done well, what would the **impact** be?

Who needs to be involved to **make it happen**?

What could go wrong? Write some key risks

How could it work? Describe key stages of the idea by drawing or writing

Example resources we used



A note to me

What

A personal reflection worksheet used at the end of the day to capture key takeaways and reminders for the next day.

Why

Helps participants reflect on their experience and prepare for the next session or stage, improving focus and continuity.

When

Used at events that cover multiple days, or at the end of a session to capture commitments or reflections that are important to the next phase of the project.

How

Hand out blank templates.

Ask participants to reflect individually, jotting down insights or standout moments from the day in 'What stood out today'.

Use 'Don't forget' to note key reminders for the next day.

Gather completed templates and keep safe until the next day.

Hand out at the start of the next day for participants to review and refocus.



Key information

Time:
5 minutes

Difficulty:
Easy



Example resources we used



A note to me

Name:

What stood out to me today...

Don't forget...



Thank you

**Thank you for reading Sport England's Youth Voice
Innovation Storybook.**

For further information or to share feedback, please visit:
www.sportengland.org