

Youth Voice Innovation... our story so far



Youth
Innovation

Conference

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Natasha O'Flaherty



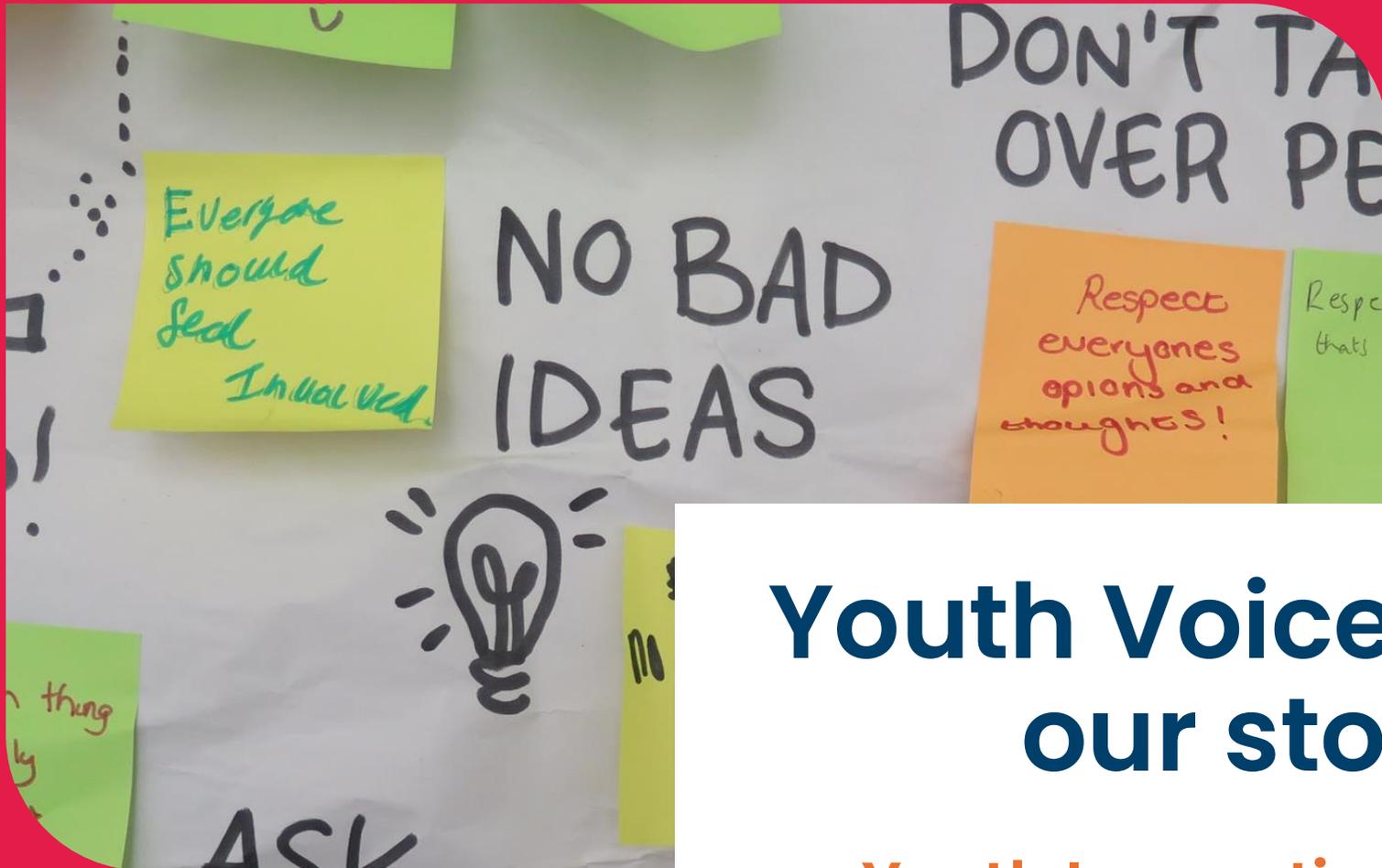
Welcome to the Session!

We've shared some information from our **Youth Voice Storybook** around the room;

- **8 Personas** representing young people and professionals working in sport and physical activity.
- **6 Insights** that might prevent organisations from embedding young people's voices in their work.
- **5 Design Principles** to prioritise when working with young people.

As you walk around and read the information **use the dots to add to statements that you agree with.**

For example, if you feel adults don't listen or take you seriously, place a dot next to this statement.



Youth Voice innovation... our story so far

Youth Innovation Conference 2025

Andrew Liney, Naomi Beckles, Natasha O'Flaherty

What we'll be doing today:

- Quick introduction to Sport England and what we do
- Creating your own persona
- Tell us what is important for young people's voices to be heard



What we do



We award funding

We fund projects and organisations small and large that help people to get active.



We provide insight

Our insight will help you understand how different people can be supported to be active.



We gather data

We have a number of different tools you can use to explore activity levels across England.



We have expertise

Our expertise is not just for us, we share that knowledge to help you and people across the sector.



Our vision is clear

We want everyone in England regardless of age, background or ability to feel able to engage in sport and physical activity.



Our ambition

Positive Experiences for Children and Young People

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

Our youth voice story...so far

Engagement phase

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.

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Engagement phase

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.

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Youth Voice Innovation Storybook

Tools to embed youth voice in sport and physical activity

Innovation Unit
Creating impact
Reducing inequalities
Transforming systems

SPORT ENGLAND

Creating your persona

A persona is a made-up character that represents a person or group of people and helps us to understand their needs.

We would like you to create a persona based on either a time when you haven't wanted to or been able to take part in physical activity, if this doesn't apply to you, can you think of any friends who can't or don't take part in physical activity and think about why this is.

Professionals – we would like you to think about your involvement in youth voice within your role and what more you might be able to do to ensure children and young people have a positive experience.



Persona Name, age range, area

About 'me':

Tell us about some of your good and bad experiences of being active and why?



Strengths

- What do you like doing? – this doesn't need to be sport and physical activity related
- What are you good at? – it might be lessons at school



Motivators

- What motivates you to be active?
- What are you passionate about?
- Who or what inspires you?



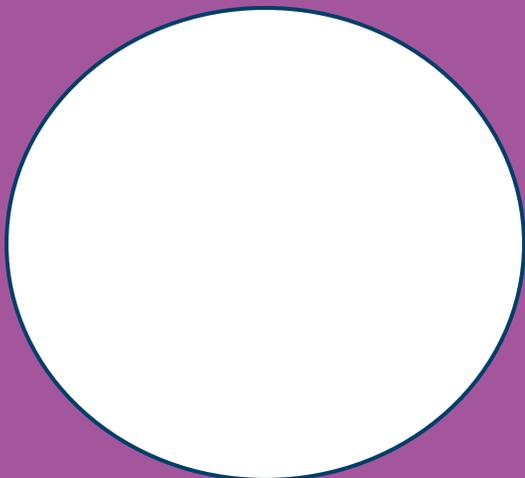
Struggles

- What holds you back from being active?



How do you like to be heard?

- Where and how do you feel most comfortable sharing your views and why? For example, group conversations, online surveys, with people you already know etc



Persona Name, age range, area

About 'me':

Which organisation do you work for?

What does your role involve?

What is your aim around youth voice in your organisation?



Strengths

- What skills do you bring to your role?



Motivators

- Why do you think it's important to hear from and involve young people?



Struggles

- Where do you face challenges in the work that you do? Why?



What role could you play to support more young people's voices to be heard?

- Where are there opportunities to do more?
- What are the barriers that you face?

Takeaways and throwaways



Takeaway

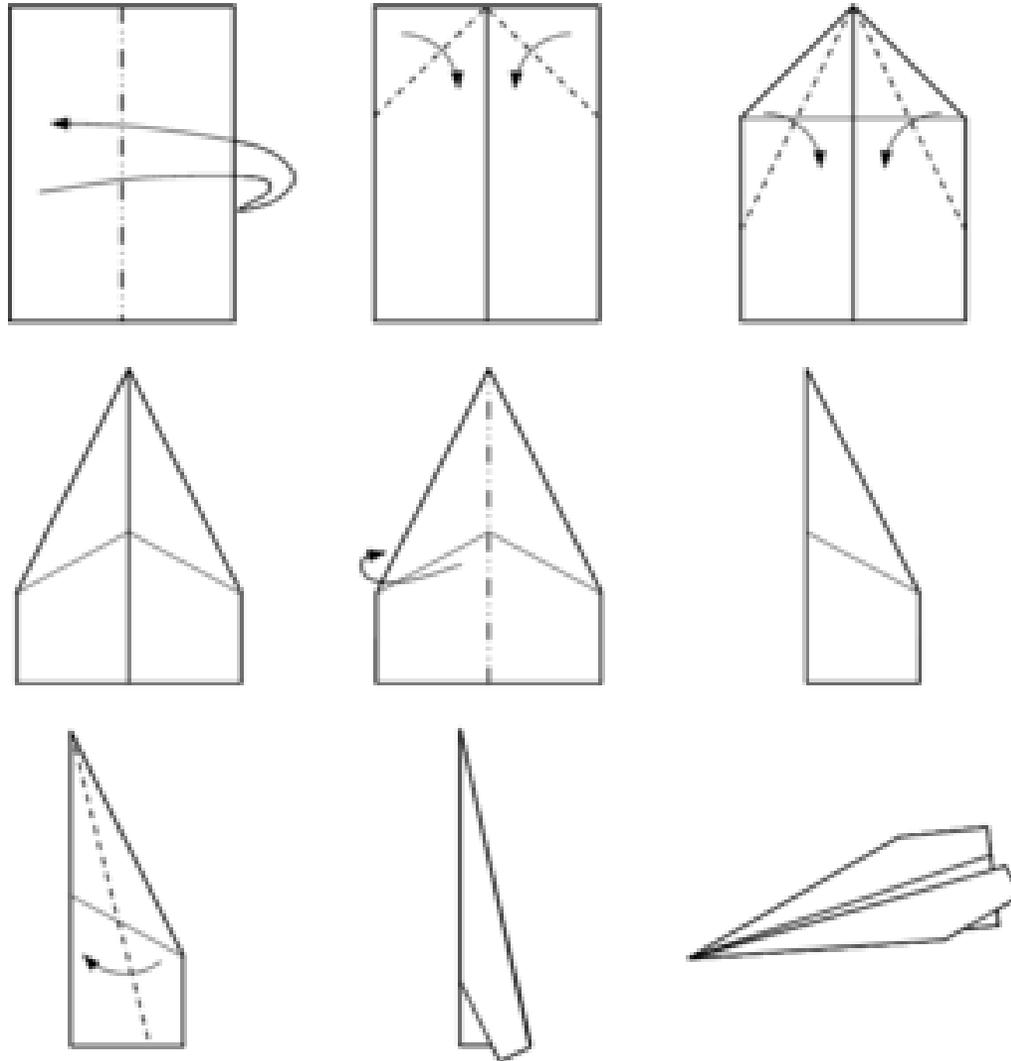
What one thing do you think is most important for us to share with the sector to make sure **young people's voices are heard?**



Throwaway

What one thing should the sector **stop doing that would help young people's voices be heard?**

How to make a paper plane



1. Fold the paper in half lengthways
2. Fold the top corners into the middle
3. Fold the edges into the middle again
4. Fold in half inwards
5. Fold the edge to the centre straight
6. Turn over and do the same the other side
7. Blunt the point of the plane



Thank you
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Scan to access the storybook: