Leaders Like Us Principles: 11 ways to make physical activity leadership more inclusive for girls and gender diverse young people









What are the principles, and why are they important

The principles are the main component of this toolkit. They were developed through co-production and positioned to support the development of physical activity leaders' projects that are accessible and inclusive for young women and gender-diverse young people from underserved groups.

Rather than a checklist to "tick off", the principles are a set of design commitments. They can help you make better decisions as you plan, deliver, adapt and review leadership opportunities, especially where inclusion, trust, safety and progression are at stake. The 11 principles are organised across five thematic areas:

1) Belonging and trust 2) Support and accessibility
3) Systems change and power 4) Fit and fairness
5) Expanding the idea of leadership

Build belonging, trust and safety before expecting leadership.

Young people are more likely to take part and grow as leaders when they feel safe, connected, and taken seriously. This starts with strong relationships, trust, and a sense of belonging.

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Principle 1: Build belonging and safety before leadership

Principle 2: Design with young people, not just for them

Principle 3: Build trust and connection


Hello!
LEARN NAMES
BUILD
BELONGING
& SAFETY
before
leadership
A CULTURE OF
TRUST &
CONNECTION
APRI
EMOTIONAL
SAFETY
RAPPORT
PREDICTABILITY
BREAK
THE ICE
CONFIDENCE CAN
GROW WITH TIME
& SUPPORT


MAKE DECISION-MAKING TRANSPARENT
OUTLINE THE PROCESSES & TIMELINES
SHOW WHAT CHANGED, WHAT COULD NOT CHANGE & WHY
?
CO-PRODUCE AT ALL POSSIBLE LEVELS
INCORPORATE YOUTH ROLES INTO DELIVERY
& ROTATE
DESIGN WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, NOT JUST FOR THEM
ACCESSIBLE PARTICIPATION METHODS
OFFER VARIOUS WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE
ANONYMOUSLY, OR PRIVATELY
?


BUILD TRUST & CONNECTION
APRIL
M T W T F S S
PREDICTABLE + RELIABLE
DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL
REGULAR RELIABLE CONTACT
SUPPORT IS OFFERED WITHOUT SINGLING OUT OR EXPOSING YOUNG PEOPLE
SUSTAINED FOLLOW-THROUGH

Design programmes around real lives, not ideal conditions

Leadership programmes work better when they are designed around young people's real lives. This means building fairness, flexibility, and access into the programme from the start. It also means making sure young people have what they need to take part.

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Principle 4: Support young people as whole people who have lives and needs beyond the programme

Principle 5: Make flexibility and access part of your programme design

Principle 6: Make it as easy as possible for young people to take part


YOUNG PEOPLE BRING REAL-LIFE CONCERNS
SO THE PROGRAMME NEEDS TO OFFER SUPPORT
REGULAR TOUCH-POINTS
SUPPORT THE WHOLE YOUNG PERSON BY OFFERING HOLISTIC SUPPORT
PRACTICAL
CULTURAL
RELATIONAL
DEVELOPMENTAL
ACCESSIBILITY
EMOTIONAL
INCLUSION
OUTPUTS
MENTOR
"...make sure they've got loads of wrap-around support... together build that support network for them... they can reach out at any time"


OFFER REALISTIC OPTIONS OVER WHERE, WHEN & HOW YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATE
MAKE FLEXIBILITY & ACCESS PART OF YOUR PROGRAMME DESIGN
LEADERSHIP IS BUILT OVER TIME
CHOICES ABOUT
LEVEL OF VISIBILITY
SENSORY DEMANDS
COMMUNICATION
PACE OF LEARNING


MAKE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE PART
BARRIERS ≠ LACK of MOTIVATION
POTENTIAL BARRIERS
CARING RESPONSIBILITIES
TRANSPORT
DISABILITIES
MONEY
BARRIER REDUCTION SHOULD BE ONGOING
LOW-PRESSURE ENTRY ROUTES REDUCE FEAR and FRICTION
ASK:
WHAT IS GETTING IN THE WAY?
& ACT ON WHAT YOU HEAR
MAKE SUPPORT VISIBLE

Change the programme, not the young person

If young people are not taking part, the first question should not be, “What is wrong with them?” Start by asking what needs to change in the programme, the environment, or the way decisions are made. Young people’s lived experience should be valued as knowledge. They should have real influence over the programmes designed for them.

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Principle 7: Change the programme, not the young person

Principle 8: Value young people’s lived experience


CHANGE THE
PROGRAMME
NOT THE
YOUNG PERSON
REVIEW CHANGES REGULARLY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE & ACT ON FEEDBACK
FLEXIBILITY IS KEY
INCLUSION
MAKE PARTICIPATION EASY
SMALL STRUCTURAL CHANGES = REDUCED BARRIERS + IMPROVED PROGRESSION
PLACE
FOCUS on PROGRAMME COMPONENTS
KIT
TIME
COSTS
ADMIN


ENABLES CONTRIBUTION FROM A WIDER RANGE OF PEOPLE
CREATE SUPPORTED ROLES WITH GENUINE INFLUENCE
RECOGNISE CONTRIBUTION SO LIVED EXPERIENCE IS NOT EXTRACTED WITHOUT BENEFIT
VALUE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVED EXPERIENCE
ALLOW PRIVATE SHARING TO PROTECT DIGNITY
IMPROVE ACCESS
IT'S POWERFUL!
WELCOME
LEARN WHAT WORKS FOR DIFFERENT YOUNG PEOPLE & CONTEXTS

Design with young people's overlapping life experiences in mind

Young people are never just one thing. Their lives may be shaped by their gender, culture, religion, disability, mental health, caring responsibilities, money, transport, where they live, and whether they feel safe and welcome. Programmes work better when they are designed around the whole picture of young people's lives, not one label or assumption.

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Principle 9: Shape the programme around young people and communities

Principle 10: Design for overlapping life experiences

SHAPE THE PROGRAMME AROUND YOUNG PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES *you work with*




DESIGN FOR OVERLAPPING LIFE EXPERIENCES
KEEP ADAPTING
LISTEN, SHARE POWER, & CHALLENGE EXCLUSION
ASSUME LAYERS
TRANSPORT
FINANCE
EQUIPMENT
TIME
IDENTITIES OVERLAP
REGULAR CHECK-INS TO UNDERSTAND CIRCUMSTANCES

Broaden what leadership can look like

Leadership in physical activity is not only about coaching, qualifications, being loud, or always being at the front.

Young people need to see that there are many ways to lead. This can help more young people recognise themselves as leaders.

Principle 11: Make space for different kinds of leadership

BROADEN OPPORTUNITIES by RECOGNISING DIFFERENT FORMS of LEADERSHIP



Continue exploring the toolkit

Ready to move on? Continue to the next section: Principle 1: Belonging and Safety

You can also return to the Leaders Like Us at a Glance page to explore the modules and principles in any order.

Contact us

If you have questions about the Leaders Like Us toolkit, would like to discuss how to use the resources in your setting, or are interested in working with us, please get in touch.

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We welcome feedback on the toolkit, including how you have used or adapted the resources and what you have learned.



