Principle 10: Design for overlapping life experiences

leaders like us


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

Principle 10: Design for overlapping life experiences



Why This matters

Young people's lives do not fit neatly into one category. They may face multiple barriers at once – cost, transport, caring responsibilities, racism, anxiety, disability, faith commitments, language barriers or negative experiences of sport and physical activity. When barriers combine, a programme that works for many can still be hard to access for others. Intersectionality helps us notice this. It means recognising that young people have overlapping identities, experiences and responsibilities that shape whether a programme feels possible, safe, relevant or out of reach.

The aim is not to label young people more precisely, but to design with real lives in mind – so inclusion does not depend on confidence, disclosure, or knowing how to ask for support.

"From the get go... you're including everybody, including those who have challenges that overlap." (Programme deliverer)

What this can look like in practice







If you notice:	Try:
Young people do not consistently attend sessions	Check whether different barriers are makign attendance difficult, such as transport, cost, caring responsibilities, anxiety, work, exams, faith commitments or family expectations. Adjust programme design to accommodate attendance
The same confident young people take up most leadership opportuntities	Create different routes into leadership, including quieter, practical, relational and less visible roles. Rotate opportunities carefuly and only is safe for the young person. Check who is not being supported to progress how they would like to
Young people are physically present but seem anxious about engaging fully	Offer low-pressure ways to take part such as observing first, working with a partner, taking breaks, helping with a task, or contributing ideas in writing, voice notes or small groups
Recruitment reaches some groups but not others	Review where and how the programme is being promoted. Test images, wording and examples with different young people and partners, and ask who might not see the invitation or feel it is meant for them

Principle 10: Adhere to the principle of intersectionality



How to design for overlapping life experiences

- Offer different ways to join, take part, contribute, develop and lead.
- Make support visible and easy to access, without young people having to explain personal circumstances repeatedly.
- Think about how cost, transport, timing, confidence, caring responsibilities, faith, disability, racism, language and safety may overlap.
- Offer plain language, reminders, visual information, voice notes, translated information or alternatives to written forms where helpful.
- Look for patterns in attendance, drop-out, leadership opportunities and who is missing from decision-making.
- Use check-ins and feedback to make concrete changes to recruitment, delivery, support, timings, venues or progression routes.
- Avoid relying on one young person to represent a whole group or explain what everyone needs.

Signs it’s working

Recruitment and participation is diverse and inclusive

Young people use different routes to join and participate in the programme, and they participate and lead in diverse ways

Paterns of absence, lateness or limited engagement reduce after design changes are made

Staff and young people notice when someone is missing or struggling to engage and make effort to support them

Responsibility for inclusion is shared across the programe, rather than placed on individual young people



Continue exploring the toolkit

Ready to move on? Continue to the next section:
Principle 11: Broaden opportunties by recognising different forms of leadership

You can also return to the Leaders Like Us toolkit 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.



