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

leaders like us


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

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Why it matters

Young people may want to take part, but still face practical barriers that make joining or staying involved difficult.

These barriers can include cost, kit, transport, confidence, caring responsibilities, disability, sensory needs, digital access, uncertainty, or hidden expectations. If these barriers are not named and addressed, they can be mistaken for a lack of motivation.

Addressing barriers clearly means making expectations visible, reducing avoidable pressure, and treating barriers as programme design issues — not young people's personal failings.

"The programmes should be accessible to be engaged in by everyone... for people to feel like things such as money... are not a boundary" (Young person)



What this can look like in practice







If you notice:	Try:
Young people seem unsure, hesitant, or say they are “not ready”	Spend time building relationships before moving into leadership tasks. Use simple activities that help young people connect with the programme and each other
The group feels high-pressure or performative	Use small groups, paired activities, or quieter roles so young people are not put on the spot
Some young people seem on the edge of the group	Change the delivery structure, not the young person. Give clear instructions, allow more time, offer quiet spaces, and provide different ways to take part
Young people look isolated, stay quiet, or struggle to connect	Offer buddy systems, bring-a-friend options, and activities that help people get to know each other

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What you can do to address barriers clearly

- Tell young people exactly what will happen, what they need, what is provided, and how to contact you in advance.
- Make support visible before young people have to ask for it.
- Check practical barriers early, including cost, kit, travel, timing, confidence, disability, sensory needs, caring responsibilities, and access adjustments.
- Make it clear that confidence is not needed before joining. Confidence can grow through the programme.
- Ask routine check-in questions such as “what nearly stopped you from participating today?” or “what would make next week easier?”
- Look for patterns in attendance, engagement and feedback
- Treat recurring barriers as information about programme design, not as individual shortcomings.
- Record useful adaptations and share them with relevant staff so support becomes consistent.
- Avoid saying the programme is “beginner friendly” unless the design and delivery reflect that.



Signs it’s working

- A wider range of young people apply to take part
- Fewer young people drop out because of uncertainty, cost, kit, travel, or hidden expectations.
- Support around cost, equipment, travel
- Attendance and engagement improves after changes are made
- Young people feel confident asking for support
- Recurring barriers are treated as programme design issues, not individual problems



Continue exploring the toolkit

Ready to move on? Continue to the next section:
Principle 7: change the programme, not the young person

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.

