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

leaders like us


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
?

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

Why this matters



- Working with young people helps build trust and shared ownership.
- It also helps make sure the programme is shaped by people who understand what it feels like to take part.
- Asking for feedback is not enough on its own. Young people need to know what they can influence, how decisions will be made, and what will happen with their ideas.

"Do not just consult young people. Involve them, listen to what they want and need, and be ready to act on it"

What this can look like in practice





If you notice:	Try:
Only confident speakers are shaping decisions	Use different ways for young people to share ideas, such as polls, sticky notes, voice notes, mapping, small groups, or anonymous feedback.
Young people are giving feedback, but do not have real influence	Be clear about what young people can change. Show them what happened because of their ideas.
The same young people are asked to attend meetings or represent the group	Share roles and opportunities more fairly. Rotate who gets invited, who speaks, and who leads.
Young people are unsure what they are being asked to decide	Explain the decision clearly. Say what is fixed, what can change, and when they will hear back.

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

What you can do to design with young people



- Be clear about what young people can influence and what is already fixed.
- Explain how decisions will be made and when young people will hear back.
- Offer different ways to take part, such as speaking, writing, drawing, voting, mapping, voice notes, or small-group discussion.
- Do not expect young people to share personal stories to prove their point.
- Show what changed because of young people's ideas.
- Build youth roles into delivery, such as co-leads, insights leads, welcome leads, or atmosphere leads.
- Rotate roles and opportunities so the same young people are not always asked to represent the group.
- Protect emotional safety with clear ground rules, named support, and consent-led use of photos, quotes, recordings, or creative work.
- Treat working with young people as an ongoing practice, not a one-off activity.

Signs it’s working

- Young people understand what they can influence
- Young people know what is fixed and what can change
- Different young people contribute, not only the most confident speakers
- Feedback leads to visible changes
- Young people are told what changed because of their ideas
- Young people do not feel pressured to share personal experiences
- Young people describe the programme as something they help shape, not something that is done to them

