# Principle 8: Value young people's lived experience

leaders like us

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
IT'S POWERFUL!
IMPROVE ACCESS
WELCOME
LEARN WHAT WORKS FOR DIFFERENT YOUNG PEOPLE & CONTEXTS

# Principle 8: Value young people's lived experience

## Why this matters

Young people understand things about their own lives that programme designers may not see. Their experience can help programmes work better in real life, not just in theory. Valuing lived experience means listening to what young people know about access, safety, confidence, culture, relationships, and participation. It also means giving young people real influence over how programmes are designed and delivered.

But lived experience should never mean pressure to share personal stories. Young people should not have to disclose private information, educate professionals, or perform vulnerability to be taken seriously. Programmes should create safe, supported, and consent-led ways for young people to contribute.

***"Build leadership around lived experience — young people know themselves best, and lived experience is a powerful thing"***

# What this can look like in practice

| If you notice: | Try: |
| --- | --- |
| Lived experience involvement is limited to one young person telling their story | Create supported roles where several young people can shape programme design, delivery, and decision-making. |
| Only the most confident voices are shaping decisions | Use different ways for young people to contribute, such as anonymous feedback, written ideas, creative activities, group discussions, polls, or practical tasks |
| Young people fel pressured to disclose prsonal experiences | Make non-disclosure the default. Ask for ideas, preferences, and feedback rather than personal stories |
| Young people are unsure what they are agreeing to when they are sharing something | Use plain-English consent processes. Explain where information will appear, who will see it, and how consent can be changed or withdrawn |
| Young people give feedback but do not see what changes | Providing feedback to young people to inform them how their feedback has influenced changes, and also what could not change and why |

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## What you can do to value young people's lived experience

- Create clear roles where young people can influence programme design and delivery.
- Offer different ways to contribute, including options that do not require speaking in front of a group.
- Do not rely on one young person to represent a whole group, and avoid having young people act as spokespersons for any challenges that emerge within a programme.
- Make it clear that young people do not have to share personal experiences to take part.
- Only ask for information that is relevant and will be used.
- Use strength-based storytelling when using stories, avoiding making hardship the main focus. If telling stories in reports or advertising, work with young people to produce them.
- Support young people by making delivery staff responsible for safe practice, boundaries and support and do not leave young people to carry complex needs alone.

# Signs it’s working

Young people can describe how their input changed the programme

Several young people contribute in different ways, not just the most confident speakers

Young people understand what information they are asked to share and why

Young people know that when requested to do something they can say no, take time to think about it and have the opportunity to change their mind

Decisions about programme design feel more practical, safer, and better connected to young people’s lives

Storytelling, if used,feels led by young people and does not feel extractive