



# REFRAMING YOUTH VOICE

## WHAT IS YOUTH VOICE?

Youth voice is the practice of actively supporting young people with the space, time, skills and trust to express their views and ideas, and ensuring those views influence real decisions and actions. Meaningful youth voice happens when young people’s input leads to visible change – in services, systems or organisations that affect them – and/or supports their personal development, confidence and leadership.

## WHAT IS TOKENISM/YOUTH WASHING AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Tokenism (sometimes called youth washing) happens when young people are involved in name only – asked to share their views without real influence over decisions.

Tokenism wastes young people’s time, erodes trust, and reinforces unequal power between adults and young people. When youth voice is symbolic rather than meaningful, young people feel unheard or exploited – and organisations miss the chance to design better, more responsive services.

Meaningful youth participation is about influence, transparency, and shared power.

## EXAMPLES OF YOUTH VOICE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
Informal conversations	Opportunities for young people to share their views on an ad hoc basis.
Facilitated conversations	Structured and intentional conversations with young people in which they are asked specific questions.
Q&A sessions	Young people meet with influential individuals and ask/respond to questions.
Testing/simulation	Young people assess a service and provide feedback.
Broadcasting	Young people address others and share their views, ideas and experiences.
Groups with responsibility	A group of young people (virtually, in person) working on a project or towards an aim.
Individual positions of responsibility	A young person holding a role within a group or organisation where they directly influence.
Surveys	List of questions aimed at eliciting information about young people’s views, ideas and experiences.
Open feedback	Activities that allow young people to share their views, ideas and experiences with broad parameters.



Beyond the activities listed above, embedding youth voice requires developing a youth-led culture and involving young people meaningfully in decision-making. The resources below provide advice and guidance on how to support this.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

### **CENTRE FOR YOUTH VOICE**

Capacity building resources, including a new self-assessment framework, that will help your organisation reflect on your youth voice practice.

### **FIGHT FOR PEACE**

Deliver free training on youth voice and how to develop a more youth-led culture.

### **LEAGUE LEADERS**

Accessible pathways for young people to express voice through sport, creativity and leadership, offering practical routes for engagement beyond traditional methods.

### **PARTNERSHIP FOR YOUNG LONDON**

The Youth Engagement and Research toolkit supports organisations to involve young people meaningfully in research design, delivery and decision-making.

### **POWER OF YOUTH CHARTER**

Part of the #iwill movement, the charter is a commitment to empowering more children and young people to be active citizens.

### **CONTEXTUAL YOUTH WORK**

Report produced by Reaching Higher and the University of Greenwich on Contextual Youth Work.

### **SALTO PARTICIPATION RESOURCE POOL**

A collection of tools, methods and case studies to help organisations design inclusive, youth-led participation – particularly useful for evolving digital engagement approaches.

### **WORD ON THE CURB**

Creative, youth-led insight and research approaches that help organisations understand youth culture, build trust, and engage young people authentically in digital and community spaces.

### **YOUNG TRUSTEES MOVEMENT**

Intergenerational governance resources that ensure young voices have a real pathway to impact.

### **YOUTH VOICE TYPOLOGY**

Helps organisations define what they are (and are not) doing to support youth voice, as a first step towards evaluating and improving their practice.

### **YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTION GROUP (YPAG)**

YPAG are a key part of London's Violence Reduction Unit. They ensure the voices, opinions and ideas of young people are heard and used to influence policy, partnerships and funding decisions.