

Communication

Giving all young people a voice



Why is this area important?

- Every young person should be able to share their voice and be listened to – directly as far as possible.
- We need to adapt our communication methods to suit the young people.

I want to feel that I'm not being seen as difficult when stuff has to be done differently because I have a disability."

**Young Person,
Co-production Group**

Communication methods

How and when you communicate with young people will depend on your context, the young people's needs and the Youth Voice process. Communication methods may include:

- **Casual conversations** – e.g. walk and talk on the way to the pitch to discover what young people feel about PE.
- **Structured conversations** – e.g. use prepared questions to guide a focus group discussion about the PE kit.
- **Written information** – e.g. ask young people to keep a journal that reflects on their experiences of a targeted programme.
- **Visual information** – e.g. use emojis, photos or drawings as an alternative way to capture young people's experiences.
- **Audio-visual (AV) information** – e.g. use recording tools such as voicemessages or video clips to gather quick feedback on an activity or event.
- **Online** – e.g. 'meet' with groups of young people in virtual sessions or gather their ideas using remote apps/tools (subject to safeguarding and your school policies).
- **Access tools** – e.g. use specific tools to address the needs of specific young people, e.g. signboard, Makaton, Braille, interpreter, translated documents.

Use a mixture of methods to reach all young people. These can be used to transmit information as well as to gather their voices.

For **'deeper' groups**, where you are communicating over a longer period, older young people said...



WhatsApp is good for quick messages or polls.



Email is best for details.



Use emojis for rapid responses.

Zoom is best for virtual meetings.



Try creative online tools that are accessible to all



Don't forget the power of in-person events.

Examples

As part of its 'You said, we did' process, the PE team holds discussion groups in the first lesson of each year. Staff display themes in the PE corridor and report progress in assemblies each term.

Sports committee members who have learning difficulties meet additionally, supported by the SENCo, so they have time to explore and prepare their ideas ahead of the full committee meeting.

The PE advisory panel has five sub-groups – one for each development priority – which meet independently. Each half-term, the reps and PE lead meet to report progress and agree next steps.

Depth of Youth Voice

Practical steps

Our co-production group suggests:

- Listen to understand, not just to hear.
- Ask young people what works best for them, including those with specific needs.
- Agree how, when and how often you will communicate with the young people.
- Be aware of external factors that affect communication, e.g., school or home restrictions, digital exclusion.
- Use sub-groups, with specific tasks, to complement the work of larger groups.
- Allow young people to communicate through their own networks – subject to safeguarding.
- Facilitate and support so that all young people can contribute and be heard (see Collaboration).
- Support young people with specific needs to have a direct voice where possible, e.g., use other methods/languages, use additional aids/tools, give more time, provide information in advance.
- Give supporting staff or parents/carers guidance so they don't lead or judge young people's input.
- Report regularly on progress, setbacks and impact.



Young Peoples Top Tip's

1. Ask your allies and our peers to help to share communications outside of PE and sport slots.
2. Don't worry if you don't get 100% attendance every time – we have commitments too!
3. Let us know what is happening – even if progress has stalled!



Tools

(these help to make communication inclusive of young people with additional needs)



Inclusion 2020 Youth Voice Toolkit – a toolkit for inclusive focus groups [Inclusion 2020 Youth Voice Toolkit - Youth Sport Trust](#)
Tips, ideas and examples for involving young people with additional needs (SEND).



Activity Alliance – the leading voice for disabled people in sport. [Inclusive communications factsheets](#) A series of 10 inclusive communications factsheets.



British Dyslexia Association – supports young people with dyslexia and dyscalculia [Reasonable Adjustments - British Dyslexia Association](#) Guide for creating dyslexia-friendly materials.



National Deaf Children's Society – supports young people with hearing impairments [Resources for education professionals](#) Communication and learning guides for professionals as well as families.



Royal National Institute for the Blind – supports young people with visual impairments [Education professionals](#) Resources and information for education professionals.



National Autistic Society – supports young people who are autistic [Communication tools](#) Examples of tools and techniques to support autistic people with communication.



Mencap – supports people with learning disabilities [Communicating with people with a learning disability](#) Tips for communicating with young people with learning disabilities.

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