ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

A Community Matters toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help you harness the potential contribution of young people in your community in constructive and creative ways.

The step-by-step approach allows you to reflect upon and improve your practices. You may choose to work through each step or select particular steps, depending on your needs.

Community Matters offers tailored consultation services and support on a range of issues, often free to our members. If you are interested in joining **Community Matters**, or want to find out more, call **020 7837 7887** or go to our website **www.communitymatters.org.uk**

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If you need support accessing these tools call us on **020 7837 7887**

Community Matters promotes:

- increased recognition of the important contribution that young people make within their local community
- greater engagement of young people within multi-purpose community organisations
- improved understanding and mutual respect between people of all generations and backgrounds.

Step 1

Assessing your organisation

Assessing the values and aims of your organisation should involve all stakeholders including the management committee, staff, existing volunteers and service users – any of whom could be young people. If you don't currently have any young people directly involved in your organisation consider how you might be able to include their views.

The research leading to *Promising young people* (published by Community Matters, 2003) discovered that successful engagement of young people is dependent on the approach adopted and the level of support for youth involvement within an organisation. Perceived barriers such as lack of resources or experience might actually be less significant than they first appear.

You may meet resistance to engaging young people, and you should be prepared to challenge negative perceptions. It is crucial to address fears, issues and concerns at the assessment stage to ensure there is support from the outset.

Consider producing a statement of the values of your organisation.

Tool 1 **Looking at values**

See CD inside front cover for tools

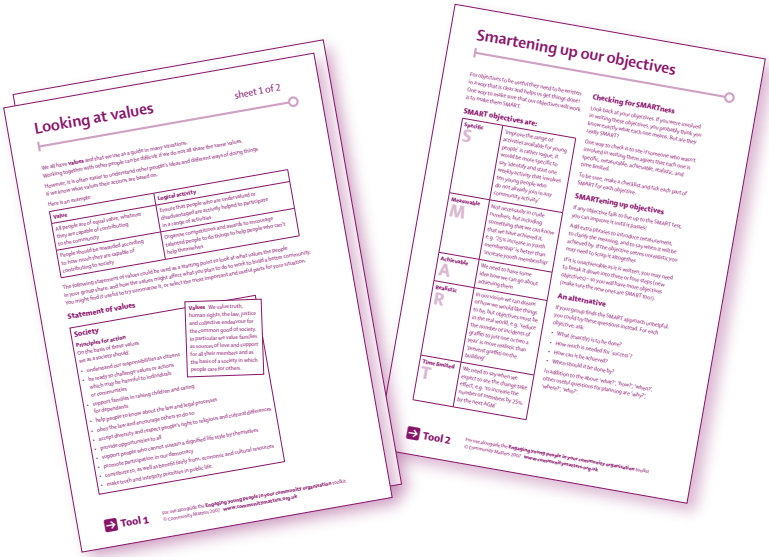
Any discussions around values should lead to an action plan together with a list of who could do what, a set of priorities, and some SMART targets (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed).

Tool 2 **Smartening up our objectives**

See CD inside front cover for tools

'The only way good governance will work is if all concerned parties take ownership of it.'

Matt, 22, young trustee


Looking at values

sheet 1 of 2

Statement of values

Tool 1

Smartening up our objectives

SMART objectives are:

Checking for SMARTness

SMARTening up objectives

An alternative

Tool 2

1

Some questions to help you structure your discussions

- Is your mission clear, understandable and does it include or appeal to young people?
- What sort of credibility does your organisation have with young people?
- What do young people know about you, and how do they know it?
- Is the space available welcoming to young people and available for them?
- Is the first point of contact welcoming to young people?
- What are you trying to achieve by working with young people?
- What have your experiences and achievements been so far?
- What has stopped you from working with young people previously?
- What barriers currently prevent young people getting involved?
- Do you have any resources for working with young people?
- Will youth work be an independent or an integral part of your community organisation?
- Are you prepared to be criticised, and to learn from both your successes and mistakes?
- Do you recognise youth participation is more than a one-off event?
- Do you recognise that change will be necessary to truly engage with young people?
- Are you prepared to empower young people by allowing them to make decisions about what they do and how they do it, and to have a real say in the wider work of the organisation?
- Are you willing to be responsive to what young people say, and what they need?
- Are you prepared to commit to involving young people and making them an integral part of your organisation?
- What skills will you need to make this happen?

If any staff or volunteers need training for working with young people you should be able to find appropriate courses available free or at low cost in your area. Contact your local children's information service or children's trust for details. Your council website should tell you how to get in touch.

Step 2
Mapping and researching

Before you start to make your own plans, find out what is currently available for young people in your area to avoid duplicating the work of others. What is available? Where and when? Who provides it? Is it well used? How much does it cost?

This information should be available from local or regional networks including your local children's trust, council for voluntary youth service, children's information service, youth service, or council for voluntary service.

There may have already been a recent consultation exercise with young people that you could build upon. Talk to other organisations about your plans and they may have useful advice or information, or even be interested in forming a partnership.

You may find that what young people want is already happening but needs to be advertised more effectively. Start to explore, with young people, any gaps in provision that would need to be filled to meet their identified needs.

Tool 3 **Who can help with what?**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Once you have made initial contact with the major providers of activities for young people you may consider developing this further through the formation of partnerships.

Why form partnerships?

- All sectors are being encouraged to work together to meet the identified needs of young people through central and local government policy.
- It provides the opportunity to share good practice and training opportunities.
- It gives you access to information on current provision, thus avoiding duplication.
- It can make funding more accessible.
- It provides further opportunities to engage with young people.

Tool 4 **Working with your children's trust**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Finding funding

It is often useful to research funding options both before and after planning a new project. There are a wide range of funding opportunities for working with young people, and lots of advice available on how to give yourself the best chance of success.

Try to plan for your ideal project, rather than manipulating it to meet funding criteria, as this is usually spotted by the funder.

It may help to speak to similar organisations in the area who have already made successful funding bids, and who may know what is available locally.

Tool 5 **Finding funding for your project**

See CD inside front cover for tools

2.

Case study

Hangleton and Knoll Project – Knoll Youth Café

The Hangleton and Knoll area in Brighton was experiencing a high degree of reported anti-social youth incidents, mainly related to large groups of young people hanging around the streets in the evenings. This had created a high degree of tension within the community, and youth behaviour became a key topic for discussion within community action meetings (attended by residents and relevant service providers).

As a means of addressing these issues the youth team spoke to the young people to look at the causes and consequences of their behaviours. The young people said that they had nowhere else to go in the evenings, and even when they just hung out in the park they were moved on.

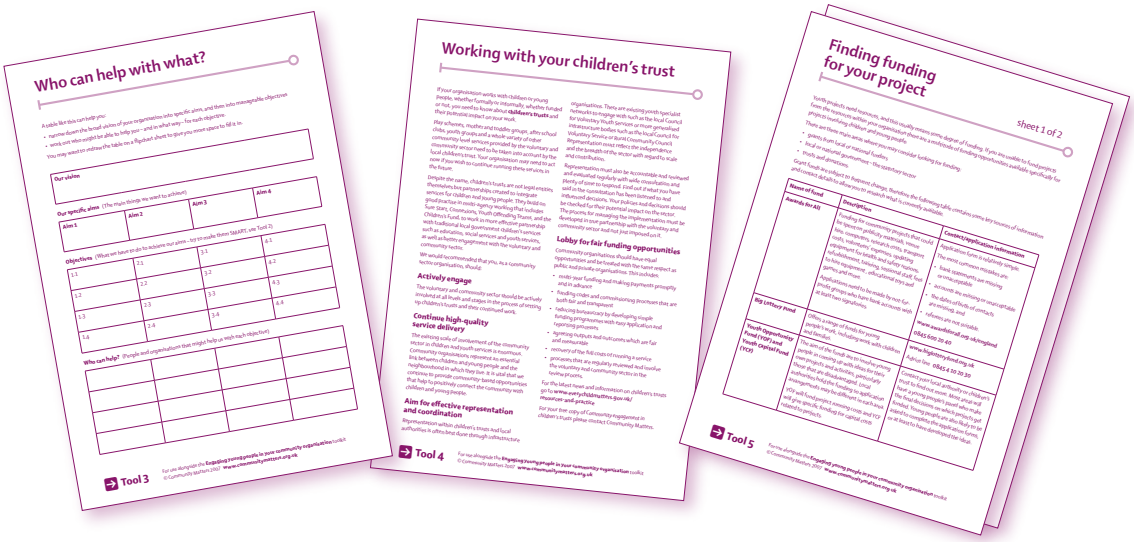
The youth team, together with the young people, decided to set up a youth café on Friday evenings using the premises of an existing community café. This became a space just belonging to them, run by local volunteers and youth workers, where they could hang out and take part in different activities that they proposed themselves.

The young people made an agreement that the café would run as long as they continued to make an effort within the community.

The café has now been running for four months and continues to be well attended by young people. Within two months of the space being opened, a report by the local police showed incidents of youth anti-social behaviour had dropped by nearly 40%.

While the youth café was also accompanied by other strategies – involving the police, the anti-social behaviour team, and other organisations working with young people – young people themselves recognised their contribution and the space that the café has provided. Involving young people from the beginning of this project and giving them the opportunity to help create their own solutions are key factors in its ongoing success.

Contact Helen Bartlett, participation worker for the Hangleton and Knoll project for more information **helen.bartlett@hkproject.org.uk**



Step 3
Planning and consultation

This step is all about finding out what young people want. Consultation, involvement, and empowerment of young people is the key to successful youth engagement and successful projects. Young people must be involved in developing, designing, monitoring, assessing and running both services and organisations.

The full involvement of young people is a requirement of the government's Every Child Matters and Youth Matters agendas, and there is a growing consensus that young people must be empowered to shape and deliver local services. However, many organisations are struggling with exactly how this could and should happen, and the challenges that this entails.

Use a variety of consultation methods – this will increase the chance of meaningful outcomes

The National Youth Agency provides a useful list of consultation methods that can be used as a starting point **www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright**.

Why not try...

- A comment box or comment wall using sticky notes.
- Questionnaires asking a range of open and closed questions.
- Arranging to consult young people at other existing organised activities in places such as local schools or youth clubs.
- If there is a youth outreach programme in your area ask if it is possible for a representative from your organisation to accompany them so that you can talk to young people congregated on the streets, particularly those who are not currently involved in any organised activities.
- Continue communication through ongoing meetings, email lists, message boards.
- Set up a young people's advisory group or forum.
- Form shadow committees of young people or provide young people's places on existing committees.
- Set up specific task groups that will include young people in the planning or delivery of specific activities.
- Get young people to come up with their own ways of evaluating of current activities.
- Use creative methods such as photography, art, creative writing and electronic media.

It is vital that you are responsive to the consultation and make sure that the views you get from young people are listened to and acted upon as far as is reasonably possible. Be careful not to ask the same questions too many times, as this can be very frustrating, or to rely on one particular group of young people as this can become tiring for them, and exclude others.

3.

Consultation should be realistic – think very carefully about the questions you ask

A broad consultation asking open questions about what young people would like may lead to raised and unrealistic expectations. However, these consultations can provide a powerful tool for lobbying and working in partnership to provide access to the required services.

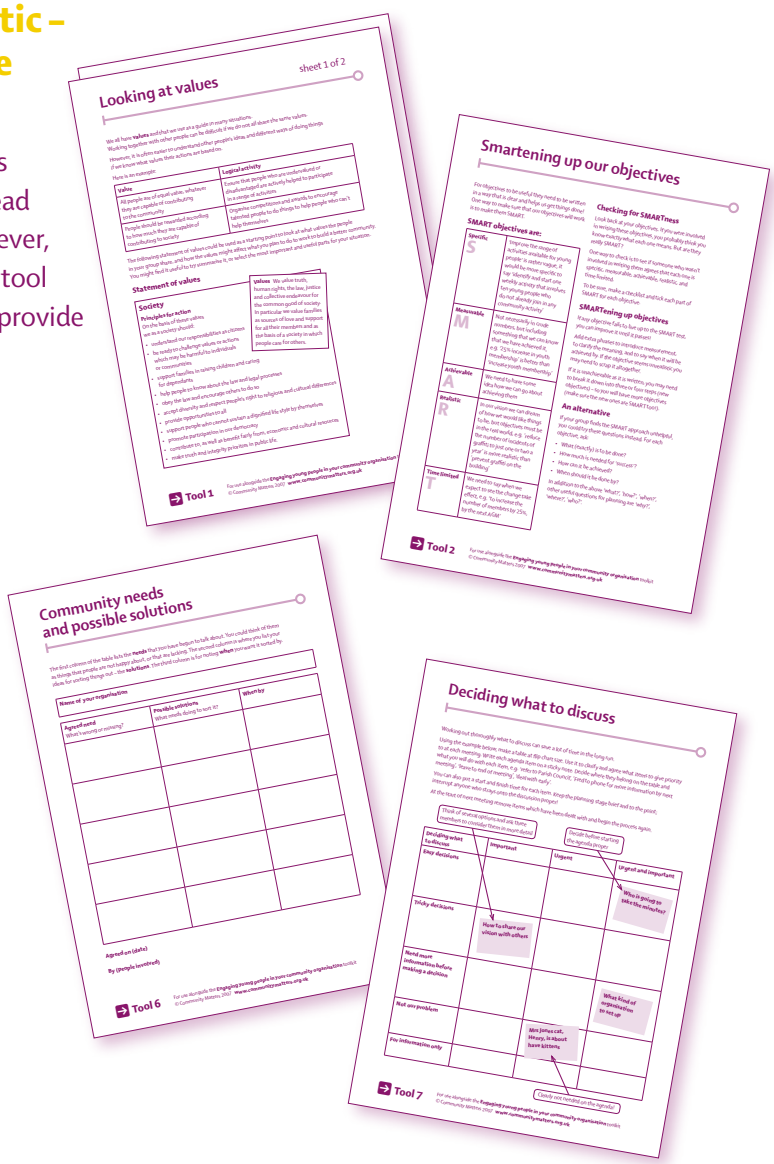
Tool 1 **Looking at values**

Tool 2 **Smartening up our objectives**

Tool 6 **Community needs and possible solutions**

Tool 7 **Deciding what to discuss**

See CD inside front cover for tools



Step 4
Organised and safe

Young people should always be kept safe, protected and supported. Before your organisation can start to deliver any activities for young people you will need to ensure all policies, procedures, and practices are in place to safeguard their wellbeing.

The following policies and guidance will give you a starting point, but you should think about safeguarding as a much wider process. See *Positively Safe: A Guide to Developing Safeguarding Practices*, available at **www.everychildmatters.gov.uk**

Child protection policy and procedures

These should include, but not be limited to:

- principles, legislation and guidance that underpins the policy
- procedures for safe recruitment
- the role of a designated and trained child protection officer
- guidance on the types of abuse, how to recognise them, and the procedures to follow if abuse is suspected
- procedures for how to respond to disclosures or suspicions of abuse
- a code of conduct for any adults working with children or young people
- an outline of how young people will informed of the policy and be able to make contributions.

Tool 8 **Child protection**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Confidentiality policy

This should include:

- clear guidelines on what is confidential
- guidelines on what information can/must be passed on where appropriate for child protection issues
- how young people are to be made aware of the policy.

Tool 9 **Confidential disclosure form**

Tool 10 **Data protection**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Health and safety policy

This should consider:

- the display of a health and safety law poster
- how premises are kept clean, safe, tidy and hygienic
- how risk assessments are produced and accidents reported
- a health information form and parent's or carer's written permission (for activities, trips and photographs)
- fire and evacuation procedures
- how to use any resources appropriately, and that they are insured, regularly checked, maintained, and supervised
- which members of staff are qualified in first aid and availability of a first aid kit
- that the premises have adequate heat, light, ventilation and are in a reasonable standard of decoration and repair

4

- that there are sufficient staff and volunteers available at appropriate times to provide a safe environment.

Tool 11 **Health and consent form**

Tool 12 **Health and safety checklist**

Tool 13 **Risk assessment form**

See CD inside front cover for tools

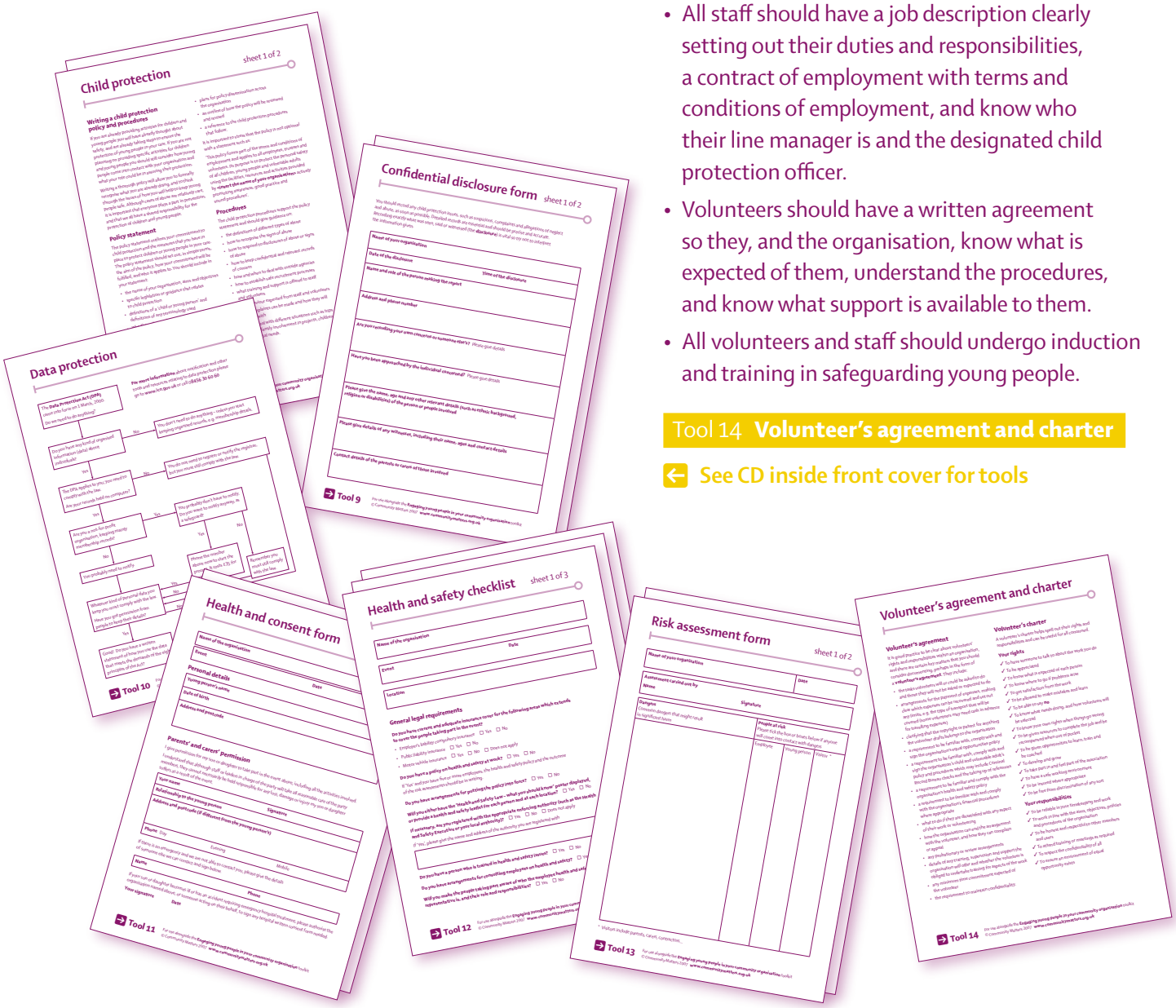
Staff and volunteers

It is crucial for the protection of young people that all staff and volunteers are safely recruited and supervised.

- All staff and volunteers working with children and young people should be recruited subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.
- When recruiting staff or volunteers two references should be taken and followed up.
- All staff should have a job description clearly setting out their duties and responsibilities, a contract of employment with terms and conditions of employment, and know who their line manager is and the designated child protection officer.
- Volunteers should have a written agreement so they, and the organisation, know what is expected of them, understand the procedures, and know what support is available to them.
- All volunteers and staff should undergo induction and training in safeguarding young people.

Tool 14 **Volunteer's agreement and charter**

See CD inside front cover for tools



Step 5

Mutally beneficial

Real engagement of young people provides tangible benefits to the wider community, as well as benefiting the personal and social development of young people.

What are the benefits for your organisation?

- You will be helping to harness young people's natural enthusiasm, energy and innovative ideas and to channel them into creating specific benefits for the community.
- You will be helping to create a new generation of community activists who can carry on your work in the future.
- Youth projects can help to break down preconceptions and lead to greater understanding and cooperation between the young and the old.
- You will raise the profile of your organisation locally through the development of new partnerships and the broadening of your service users.
- You will be fulfilling your commitments to working with the whole community, especially as young people are a group who are often excluded.

What are the benefits for young people?

- Feeling empowered enough to accept part of the responsibility for meeting their needs.
- An increased sense of social inclusion with new opportunities to make friends and meet new people.
- Opportunities to learn new skills, gain confidence, and widen their experience which can also help to increase their enjoyment of activities and their employability.
- Opportunities to volunteer and feel part of a wider force for change.
- A diversion from harmful activities or criminal behaviour.
- Being able to direct services and to find responses to their own issues and concerns.

What are the benefits for the wider community?

- Increasing young people's confidence and interest in community issues will increase their involvement in local democracy and enable them to make a positive contribution.
- Community safety often improves with increased activities for young people.
- Young people can volunteer in local projects and to give specific benefits.

Case study

Bullingdon Community Association and Woodfarm Youth Centre

Young people on the Woodfarm estate in Oxford are working closely with their local community association to develop youth provision in their area. Since winning a very long campaign for a new youth centre, the young people have set up a youth council to allow themselves to continue to be involved in effective decision making.

The youth council is able to make decisions on the content of the youth centre programs, centre membership rights and responsibilities, disciplinary procedures, and centre facilities and equipment.

The management committee have requested that the youth council ensures that all decisions reinforce equal opportunities and have given them a budget of £500.

As a result there has been lots of really positive feedback from the young people and increased involvement and commitment to the running of the centre and activities. The young people have gained confidence as they begin to realise that the centre is there for them and that it is up to them to make it a place they really value.

There has also been a great deal of very positive feedback from the wider community and local agencies. The estate has become noticeably quieter now that the young people have somewhere to go, and residents have said they can see a more positive side to the young people now that they have become more involved. Local police officers have also reported that crime in the area has reduced significantly since the centre opened.

'I really love making a difference. I really love the fact that something I'm doing with my life can help somebody else... I feel very satisfied inside myself. It just makes me feel like I've got meaning into my life.'

JC, 14, member of a youth action group

Step 6

Inclusive and diverse

Any opportunities you provide should be accessible to all young people and provide for differing interests, abilities, needs and aspirations. Projects should particularly try to reach those young people in danger of exclusion and disaffection. To achieve this you must consider issues of diversity and inclusion at all stages from planning and promoting to delivering, supporting, and evaluating.

'Young people today generally tend not to have much of a say in society. They tend to be dismissed. And when you're a sub-set of a sub-set – you know, you're young and you're gay or lesbian or whatever, then you get pushed aside. So I thought... if there were more of us, we could actually achieve a chorus.'

Jack, 15, Member of LGBT Youth Forum

How do you become more inclusive?

- Use the accessibility checklist to assess your organisation.
- Demonstrate your commitment to being accessible to young people through a written statement.
- Promote and practise equal opportunities and develop young people's understanding by displaying their own version of the policy.
- Make sure you have a complaints procedure that can be used to challenge discrimination.
- Give young people the opportunity to share their ideas and comments about your service and activities, listen and provide a response.
- Make sure recruitment of staff and volunteers is fair and promotes equal opportunities.
- Promote positive images and role models that actively include under represented groups.
- Use a range of formats for publicity and promotional materials including the spoken word – direct personal contact from youth workers or other young people can be very powerful.
- Offer a range of levels of responsibility so that everyone can play a part.
- Try not to overestimate young people's confidence and try to keep things simple.
- Make your expectations of young people clear and get them to help write the rules.
- Check young people understand forms.
- Offer support without being patronising.
- 'Buddying up' new members with older ones can help them feel more welcome and gives those with more experience additional responsibility.

Tool 15 **Accessibility checklist**

Tool 16 **Equal opportunities**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Accessibility checklist
sheet 1 of 2

Approaching and entering

Can disabled people park near the premises?

Is the entrance easy to find from the street or car park?

Is the entrance wide enough for all users?

Moving around

Is the front door at street level?

Is the door easy to open?

Are signs adequate and clear?

Tool 15

Equal opportunities
sheet 1 of 2

Responsibilities

Employment

Policy statement

Discrimination and harassment

Objectives

Monitoring and evaluation

Tool 16

Step 7
Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are vital to finding out whether our aims have been met and whether we need to make any changes in the future.

What is monitoring?

Monitoring is an ongoing process of collecting information to provide the evidence on which evaluation is based. You should try to collect both qualitative and quantitative evidence to show your progress and the steps you need to take in order to reach your aims and objectives. Using an assortment of monitoring methods, such as user feedback, observations, registers and questionnaires will give a broad and varied overview to your evaluation. The quality of your monitoring directly affects the quality of your evaluation.

Monitoring as you go makes the process of evaluating much easier. Ensure all your monitoring is completed before you begin to evaluate.

Be clear from the beginning who is responsible for monitoring which parts of the project so there are no misunderstandings or lack of evidence when it comes to evaluating.

What is evaluation?

Evaluating is the process of analysing your monitoring information so that you can learn from your experiences and make changes. Everyone who was involved in your project, such as management, staff and young people, should contribute.

Evaluation can help you to assess the four 'E's of your project:

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Economy (value for money)
- Equity (fairness)

Preparing for evaluation

Before you begin your evaluation you need to be focused on what it is you want and need to evaluate. Drawing up a table of the key points you will need to evaluate may help you.

Some questions to help you evaluate

- Were the aims, objectives and targets achieved and to what extent?
- Did you manage to keep to an agreed timescale?
- To what extent was your project value for money? Was the amount of expenditure necessary to achieve the outcomes?
- Were all human and material resources fully and appropriately used?
- Did you have to change any of your objectives? If so, why?
- Were the processes and premises suitable for successful delivery?
- Has this project highlighted any new ideas, gaps in the service, or problems that now need to be addressed?
- Have any issues arisen from you project that need to be considered in future planning and development work?
- Have any resources been generated from other sources as a result of your project?
- Have you had any unexpected outcomes?
- What parts of the project could you improve on?
- What have you learnt that you can apply to future projects?

7.

Key points to remember

- Be clear about your aims.
- Write out a plan noting aims and objectives and how you intend to achieve them.
- Make sure what you monitor is relevant and significant to what you want to evaluate.
- Be clear whose responsibility it is to monitor certain aspects of your project.
- Make your evaluation open, clear and accessible so that everyone can contribute.
- Be open about successes and failures. We can learn a lot from our failures and use them to shape future plans and objectives.
- Remember to begin monitoring from the start of your project and continue monitoring throughout.

Step 8
Empowering

Community organisations should seek to empower young people by allowing them to make decisions about what they do and how they do it.

Why empower young people?

- It increases young people's feelings of ownership and improves their motivation and confidence.
- If their views are listened to and acted on they'll have more faith in decision-making processes.
- They will learn to support each other, allowing them to take on more responsibility over time and empower other young people.

'It's made me more confident. At first I was nervous about contacting other people but now it's fine. I wasn't sure I'd be able to do what I wanted to do... now I know. It's going to look so much better on my CV with all this stuff.'

Jenny, 16, member of youth forum

How can we empower young people?

- Encourage young people to evaluate their progress and achievements to help develop their self-awareness and confidence in their own judgement and assessments.
- At the end of an activity ask young people to reflect on what they have learnt, and the positives and negatives of the experience.
- Offer training and support to young people to represent their own and other young people's views, e.g. presentation skills and public speaking.
- Involve young people in publicising and promoting the project.
- Provide clear information on the structure of your organisation, meetings and how it works.
- Produce informal summaries of minutes from meetings to keep young people informed.
- Encourage young people to lead consultations and surveys, this will be good for them and should help to include more young people.
- Invite young people to shadow staff in interesting meetings or community events – make sure staff are trained in this first.
- Keep young people regularly updated on the work of the organisation.
- Provide a range of rewarding volunteer opportunities and allow young people to decide how much time they can contribute.
- Consider providing a range of challenging team-building activities so that young people can learn, gain confidence, ability and develop skills.
- Celebrate young peoples' achievements by encouraging them to produce their own displays or run their own celebration or awards events.
- Make sure young people have a say in the choice of equipment they use, and are encouraged to fundraise for it.
- Offer work experience opportunities for young people in your organisation.
- Support new members or those lacking confidence by encouraging more experienced members to take on the added responsibility of supporting them.

Setting up a youth forum

Tool 17 **Setting up a youth forum**

See CD inside front cover for tools

Useful contacts

Community Matters
National federation of community associations promoting and supporting action by ordinary people in response to social, educational and recreational needs in their neighbourhoods and communities.
www.communitymatters.org.uk
020 7837 7887

National Youth Agency
Aims to advance youth work to promote young people's personal and social development, and their voice, influence and place in society.
www.nya.org.uk
0116 242 7350

Learning and Skills Council
Responsible for funding and planning education and training for over 16 year olds in England.
www.lsc.gov.uk
0870 900 6800

Participation Works
Online gateway to the world of children and young people's participation.
www.participationworks.org.uk
0845 603 6725

National Council for Voluntary Youth Services (NCVYS)
Independent voice of the voluntary youth sector in England.
www.ncvys.org.uk
0207 253 1010

National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA)
National voice of local voluntary and community sector infrastructure in England.
www.navca.org.uk
0114 278 6636

National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)
National organisation giving voice and support to voluntary and community organisations.
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk
020 7520 8900

Big Lottery Fund
Largest distributor of Lottery money, including funds for young people.
www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
0845 410 2030

Youth Access
The national membership organisation for young people's information, advice, counselling and support services.
www.youthaccess.org.uk
020 8772 9900

Children's Workforce Development Council
Aims to improve the lives of children, young people, their families and carers by ensuring that all people working with them have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice.
www.cwdcouncil.org.uk
0113 244 6311

Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE)
Promotes the interests of rural communities. It also acts as the national umbrella organisation for 38 rural community councils throughout England.
www.acre.org.uk
01285 653477

Baasac
National network of multi-purpose community based organisations, dedicated to tackling the causes and effects of poverty, exclusion and discrimination.
www.bassac.org.uk
0845 241 0375

Children's Rights Alliance
A coalition of voluntary and statutory organisations committed to the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
www.crae.org.uk
020 7278 8222

V
Independent charity championing youth volunteering in England.
www.wearev.com
020 7084 8001

National Council of Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NCVCCO)
Aims to ensure the wellbeing and safeguarding of children by promoting the voluntary sector's contribution to service provision.
www.ncvcco.org
020 7833 3319

Community Matters is the nationwide federation for community associations and multi-purpose community organisations.

We play a key role in promoting and supporting action by ordinary people in response to social, educational and recreational needs in their neighbourhoods and communities. Our members include more than 900 community organisations, 100 local authorities and 150 infrastructure organisations and housing associations.

Our services include:

- information and advice
- consultancy services and technical support
- training and development
- publications
- operating standards
- national representation for community organisations
- youth work advice and consultancy
- specialised development projects.

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VISIBLE™, the Community Matters quality assurance programme, Community Matters, 2006

Youth matters – Somewhere to go, something to do, someone to talk to
www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth

Every Child Matters
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk

Extended Schools
www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/ete/extendedschools

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‘This toolkit is fantastic and very helpful. We consider ourselves to be really inclusive and to have great working practices... but these tools have helped us to hone our work.

The values section made us question our attitudes and think about how to involve more diverse sections of our community in our organisation.’

Simon Edmonson, Woodfarm Youth Centre, Oxford

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