

# THE LISTENING FUND SCOTLAND



# LISTENING TOOLKIT

A way of being which supports young people by connecting and understanding

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACTIVE LISTENING</b>	<b>3</b>
LISTENING TECHNIQUES FOR EVERYONE	
<b>ICEBREAKERS</b>	<b>13</b>
ACTIVITIES TO WELCOME YOUNG PEOPLE AND START CONVERSATIONS	
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>	<b>18</b>
SUGGESTIONS TO HELP TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE	
<b>UNDERSTANDING</b>	<b>26</b>
RESOURCES TO ASSESS A YOUNG PERSON'S SITUATION	
<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>32</b>
TOOLS TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL	
<b>USER GROUPS</b>	<b>38</b>
BEST PRACTICE ON HOW TO KEEP GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED	
<b>EVALUATION</b>	<b>45</b>
OUR APPROACH TO GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE'S FEEDBACK	
<b>LISTENING FOR PRACTITIONERS</b>	<b>61</b>
LISTENING TIPS & TRICKS	

# Introduction

The Listening Fund was initially developed by a group of committed funders who recognised that more was needed to help increase opportunities for the voices of children and young people to be heard.

The Listening Fund Scotland was an investment collaboration between Comic Relief, Corra Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, The Gannochy Trust and William Grant Foundation. It was designed taking a rights-based approach consulting with children and young people on the initial idea, followed by a participatory approach to the development of criteria, application form and final funding recommendations. The purpose to develop and embed listening practices within organisations allowing for more active and responsive listening.

In 2019 the Listening Fund Scotland committed over £400,000 to 11 children and youth focused charities operating across Scotland. The fund focused investment in supporting the organisational capacity. Alongside investment, funded organisations were offered capacity building support and the reflective spaces to share lessons on the opportunities and challenges of creating a listening culture.

The Listening Fund Scotland concluded in 2022. This guidance is part of the legacy in offering practical tips and insights for others looking to change their organisational culture and practices.



“We want to live in a society where all young people have the opportunities to use their skills and energy to lead fulfilling and enjoyable lives, and to make a meaningful contribution the communities in which they live.”

# How To Use

The Listening Fund (Scotland) Toolkit presents active listening tips and tricks, how practitioners can initially engage with young people to build trust, and what makes a space feel safe for a young person. It makes suggestions to encourage engagement and assess young people's needs. It goes on to show ways that practitioners can transform their needs into an action plan tailored to suit the individual young person and includes resources that can support their personal development. Finally, there is a section about developing a successful evaluation process to gain valuable feedback from young people.

This approach has helped the Listening Fund partners to embed listening into their organisation's culture, so we encourage practitioners working with young people across the sector to explore and utilise the resources in this toolkit to support their day-to-day work. Tools and activities are outlined together with guidance on how everyone can use them.

The resources in this toolkit blend tools used by four Listening Fund Partners: Access to Industry, The Moira Anderson Foundation, The Junction, and Girvan Youth Trust. They have been carefully curated collaboratively with staff members and in consultation with young people to create a reference that advocates listening as a core mechanism and way of being for engagement with young people.







# ACTIVE LISTENING

LISTENING TECHNIQUES FOR EVERYONE

“

listening  
is  
simple

”

Anonymous young person, Access to Industry

# What is Listening?



Day to day conversation  
and communication

Young people listening to  
staff and each other, as well as showing  
respect in group activities

Observation - assessing a  
situation so it can be dealt with proactively

Listening to someone when  
they need support

Monitoring and evaluating - collecting  
qualitative and quantitative data

# Defining Listening

“By ‘listening’ we are referring to an active process where young people are given tangible opportunities to have a say in, and shape, services, or to influence wider policies and practices. There are two related but distinct types of listening that partners’ projects focused on:”\*

“Internally-focused listening: a process where an organisation takes account of young people’s views, opinions and experiences with the aim of developing their offer, in terms of the activities and services they deliver and how they are delivered.”\*

“Advocacy-focused listening: a process where an organisation provides young people with opportunities to influence external organisations, agencies or institutions, such as local authorities or national bodies, on the basis of their views and experiences.”\*

\*Listening Fund (Scotland): Final Learning Report 2021

# Why Listen?

All children and young people have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously. Article 12 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) says children have the right to be listened to.

Spaces to  
connect with  
each other

Building trusting  
relationships  
with trusted  
adults

Opportunities to  
give feedback and  
be involved in  
decision making  
processes

Listening to children and young people is important to ensure that services designed to support them are meeting their needs. It is important for organisations including funders to understand what really matters to children and young people.

# Children's Rights



Everyone has human rights. It does not matter where somebody comes from, their age or beliefs.

The UNCRC is a list of human rights specific to children and young people. Those in power, including organisations, funders and policymakers, are responsible for ensuring the rights of children and young people are protected.

This includes ensuring the rights of children and young people are championed when planning and delivering services. There are 45 articles in the UNCRC that list all the rights that are important for children and young people to live a healthy and happy life. Some examples include:

**Article 12 – I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously**

**Article 15 – I have the right to meet friends and join groups**

**Article 29 - I have the right to an education which develops my personality, respect for others and the environment**

**Article 31 – I have the right to play and relax**

This toolkit provides practical examples and activities to support the realisation of children and young people's rights through listening and participation. You can learn more about how funders incorporated children and young people's rights in the Listening Fund work.

# Ten Tips for Active Listening

Keep an open mind: listen without judgement; be patient

Be attentive, but relaxed; be present and pay attention

Clear your mind of other thoughts

Pay attention to body language and facial expressions; active listening involves observing the whole person

Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying: don't plan what to say next

Try not to interrupt or suggest solutions while you are listening

Wait for the speaker to pause before asking questions

Ask questions only to clarify understanding

Try to empathise with what the speaker is feeling

Give the speaker regular feedback



# Active Listening:

## THE TECHNIQUE



### WHEN TO USE

When a young person approaches you for a chat

When you notice or suspect that someone is struggling

If a colleague seems to have a lot on their mind



1

Start by asking the person what they would like to talk about

2

Allow the person to talk through their problem uninterrupted (this can take 5-10 mins)

3

Listen with undivided attention and if the person pauses, allow them to gather their thoughts and continue

4

Observe verbal and physical cues, all behaviour is communication; then respond accordingly to show that you are listening

### IMPORTANT:

If you learn anything that may indicate a child protection issue, please take immediate action by referring to the company's child protection policy



# Active Listening: RESPONDING



Ask few questions - those that you do ask should be open-ended in order to invite more than a one-word or yes or no answer

Use a variety of brief responses; such as nodding your head, or saying 'uh-huh,' 'I see,' 'go on,' 'what happened next?.' This communicates that you are listening encourages the young person to continue

Rather than offer solutions help the person to identify options for themselves

Active listening will help young people to decide a course of action by themselves. Solutions suggested or imposed by adults are often resisted, short-term or only agreed to by the young people in order to maintain relationships / please the practitioner

# Active Listening Conversation Tips

**Restating** - To show you are listening, repeat what you think the person said every so often – not by parroting, but by paraphrasing in your own words. For example, 'Let's see if I'm clear about this....'

**Summarising** - Bring together the facts and pieces of the problem to check your understanding. For example, 'So it sounds to me as if ....' Or, 'Is that it?'

**Reflecting** - Instead of repeating, reflect on the speaker's words in terms of feelings. For example, 'This seems important to you...'

**Giving feedback** - Let the person know what your initial thoughts are. Share appropriate information, observations, and experiences. Then listen carefully to confirm.

**Emotion labelling** - Putting feelings into words will often help a person see things more objectively. For example, 'I'm sensing that you're feeling frustrated....worried....anxious....'

**Probing** - Ask questions to draw the person out and get deeper and more meaningful information. For example, 'What do you think would happen if you...?'

**Validation** - Acknowledge the individual's problems, issues and feelings. Listen openly and with empathy, and show you are interested. For example, 'I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue....'.



# ICEBREAKERS

ACTIVITIES TO WELCOME YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND START CONVERSATIONS

# TWO TRUTHS & A LIE

Icebreaker activity for engaging with young people



20 minutes +  
depending on size  
of group



- **FTF OR ONLINE DELIVERY**
- **FOR GROUPS**

Ask participants to write down three statements about themselves (two truths and one lie) on a piece of paper (allow 5 -10 mins). Make sure they do not tell each other what they are writing.

- Ask one member of the group to read out their three statements
- Allow the group 2 minutes to 'quiz' them on their statements
- The group should then vote as to which statement is a lie
- Repeat for the rest of the group

# BUILD A TOWER

Icebreaker activity for engaging with young people



10 minutes

- FTF OR ONLINE DELIVERY
- FOR GROUPS



Divide the group into two teams and give each a pack of cards.

In 10 minutes, the group must build the cards into a structure which is taller than the other group's. This can be measured by the number of cards or by measuring with a ruler.

The activity can be adjusted for online working by asking the group to find objects around the room at home to create the tallest tower.

# DESERT ISLAND

Icebreaker activity for engaging with young people



20 minutes  
depending on size of  
group



- **FTF OR ONLINE DELIVERY**
- **FOR GROUPS**

The group are about to be stranded on a desert island and have 5 minutes before being stranded to choose one of each of the following to take with them:

1. A film
2. A book
3. Music
4. An item they couldn't live without

Give them 5 minutes to think of their answers and then run through each question, giving everyone the opportunity to share their answer and why.

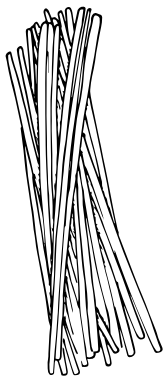
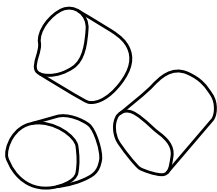
# MARSHMALLOW & SPAGHETTI TOWER

Icebreaker activity for engaging with young people



20 minutes  
depending on size of  
group

- **FTF DELIVERY**
- **FOR GROUPS**



The group are split into small teams and provided with dry spaghetti and marshmallows. Each group has 10 minutes to work together to create the tallest freestanding structure.

The tower must not be held up by any group member or lean against anything. It must be built on a flat surface. Structures are measured from the base to the tallest point at the end of the allocated time to determine the winning team.



# ENGAGEMENT

SUGGESTIONS TO HELP TO ENGAGE WITH  
YOUNG PEOPLE



“

you would be  
surprised how  
much that  
actually helps  
you - just  
listening

”

Anonymous young person, Access to Industry

# Enabling Engagement With Young People

Working with young people as partners to work towards shared aims and objectives

Being an advocate (supporting young people by ensuring they have their voice heard and have their rights respected)

Prioritising young people's voices: knowing when to stay quiet, prompting less vocal ones, reminding other staff to make room for their input

Asking questions, listening and allowing young people to come to realisations on their own

Accepting young people as they are - not expecting them to be different, or better, or anything other than they are

Modelling appropriate behaviour, effective communication, acceptance and kindness

Acknowledging young people's strengths, attempts, successes and failures



# Trauma Informed Practice in Scotland

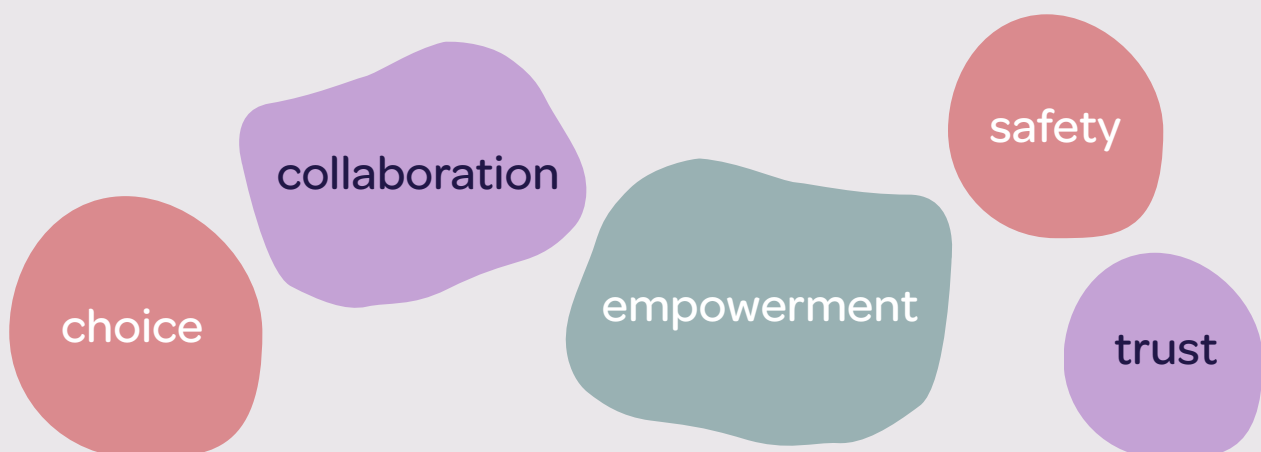
The first step to employing a trauma-informed approach to our work recognises how widespread trauma is. In 2019 Scottish Health Survey asked respondents about ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) for the first time. It found that 71% of adults reported having experienced at least one ACE, and 15% had experienced four or more ACEs.

The following is a well-used definition of trauma from the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration:



Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

The Scottish Government committed to investing significantly in developing a trauma-informed training programme in 2018, led by NHS Education for Scotland (NES). The training outlines the following principles that are key to a trauma-informed approach to working with young people:



How we work with people who have experienced trauma and being appropriately informed can make all the difference to young people's recovery and progress. A short [video](#) was created as part of the training developed by NES and introduces trauma-informed practice.

# Creating Safe Spaces



Listening and creating a safe space for young people is at the heart of a trauma-informed approach. Remember that what will follow when you meet a young person is a natural conversation between two people and that you are trying to build a connection and trust with them.

Most importantly, you are physically, mentally and emotionally present for someone. It means focusing on the young person to support them as they share their thoughts and experience their feelings. Young people may be unable to be themselves with anyone else, so this is their chance to feel heard and valued. Building trusting relationships with young people helps their recovery and can be initiated by using the following steps:

- Listen and respond with empathy and without judgement
- Respond by asking what help they need
- Keep in mind that behaviour or reactions might be trauma-related
- Make sense of a person's current difficulties
- Explaining what's going to happen
- Offer choices
- Understand triggers
- Understanding that everyone is unique
- Refer young people to other services if more support is needed



“

Trust is the biggest issue. For someone who has my background, trust will be broken easily. You have never had it your entire life.

”

Anonymous young person

# THE BLOB TREE\*

Engagement activity for young people

Print out a copy of the worksheet on the next page. The Blobs on the tree are a variety of characters expressing a variety of feelings. It's essential to use the name Blobs rather than he or she, as they are not white males or females, but genderless and colourless. Ask the young person, "Which Blob best describes how you feel today and why?"

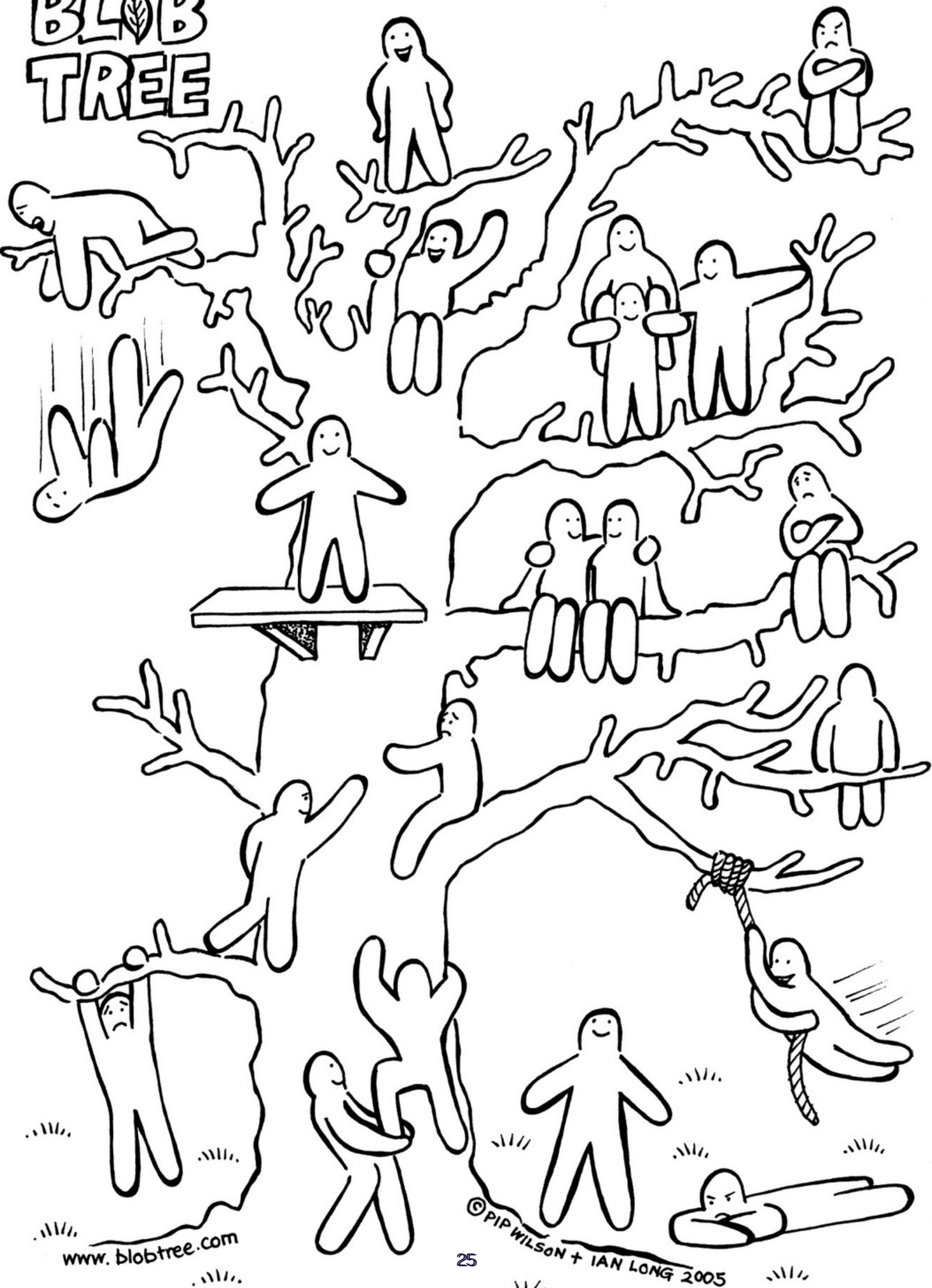
The selection of a Blob is a snapshot of how that person feels at that moment. Perhaps if colouring pens or pencils are available, the young person can take a moment to colour in their chosen Blob. The colour they select can also indicate how they are feeling.

The activity can be used as a visual assessment tool or to check in with a young person each time you meet. If you keep a note of this, you can use it to monitor their progress.

\*The Blob Tree: <https://www.blobtree.com>



# BLOB TREE





# UNDERSTANDING

RESOURCES TO ASSESS A YOUNG  
PERSON'S SITUATION





Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)\* is a framework for working with children and young people, developed by the Scottish Government in 2006. It is central to the policies which support children, young people and their families. Both statutory services and third-sector organisations use it in their work.

The approach has children's rights at its heart and aims to enable children and young people to get the help and support they need when they need it and from people best placed to do so. GIRFEC seeks to help children and young people flourish in an environment where they feel safe and loved to reach their full potential.

The Scottish Government has produced national GIRFEC resources for family members and professionals to enable them to better support children and young people. Eight factors are used to talk about and measure a child or young person's wellbeing: safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, which are known as SHANARRI.

The policy promotes interagency working and nominating a named person so that families have a clear point of contact. It demonstrates a commitment to improving how support for children and young people who need a range of additional support is planned, together with guidance on how this can be shared across services providing the support.

Some Listening Fund partners use the GIRFEC resources to support their work with children and young people. This toolkit suggests how to use GIRFEC resources, to help practitioners working in this sector.

\*<https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec>

# GIRFEC: MY WORLD TRIANGLE

Engagement activity for young people

My World Triangle is one resource that forms the Government's Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy. It is a mind map used to holistically understand a young person's situation with the child at the centre.

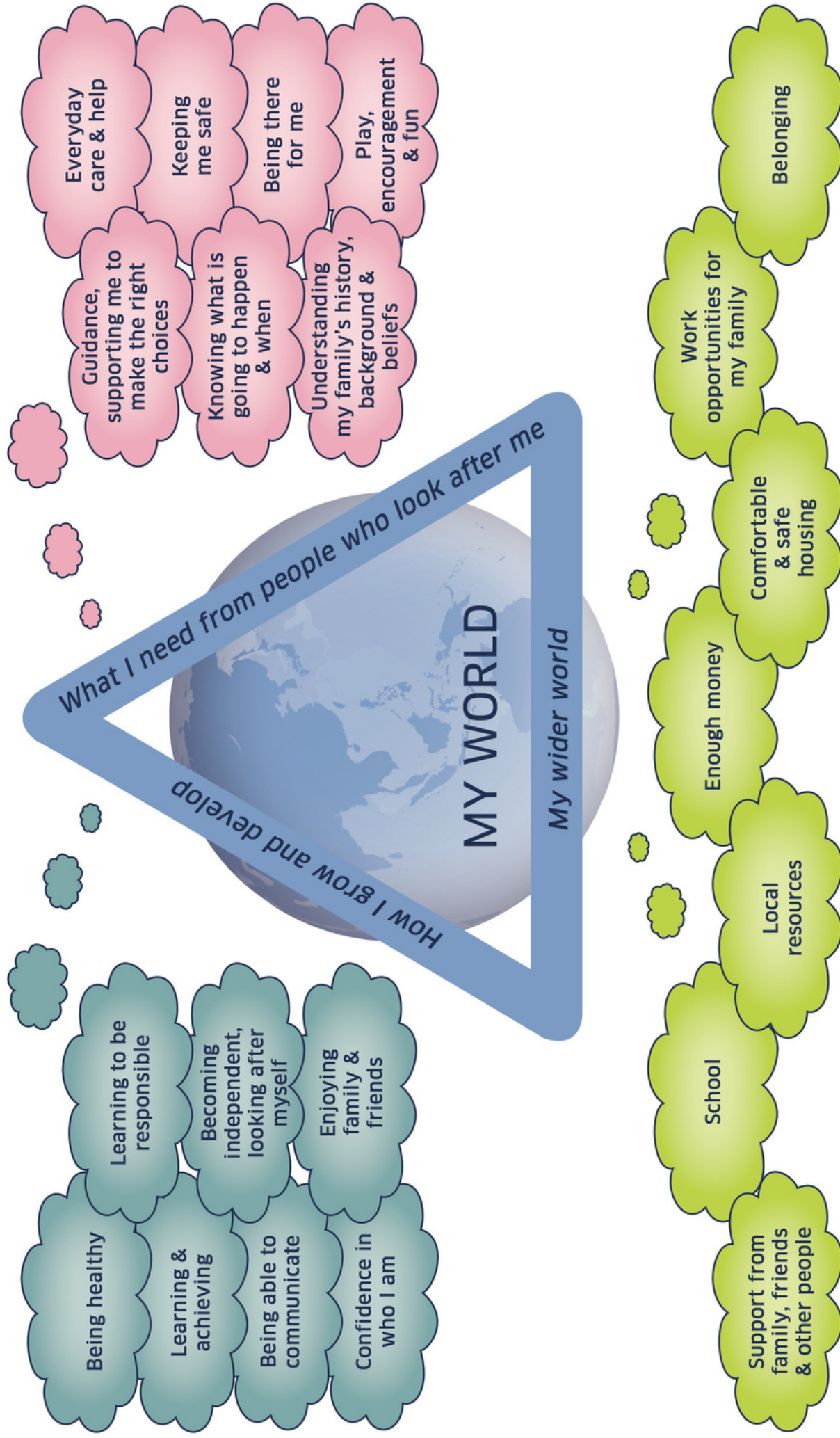
The three edges of the triangle are:

- How do I grow and develop?
- What do I need from people who look after me?
- My wider world

Discussing and reflecting on the topics on the worksheet helps young people to understand all the factors in their life which affect their well-being and development, including Physical, Educational, Social, Emotional, Spiritual and Psychological.

My World Triangle worksheet can be shared step by step with young people, ensuring they understand each area and how it connects to others to make up a whole picture of their life. Making a well-being assessment using the SHANARRI well-being web or the Wheel of Life is a great next step.

# My world triangle



The whole child or young person: Physical, Social, Educational, Emotional, Spiritual & Psychological development

# GIRFEC: WELLBEING WEB (SHANARRI)

Engagement activity for young people

The well-being web comprises eight different areas, each rated to give an overall impression of a child or young person's well-being. They are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (SHANARRI) and referred to as the 'indicators of well-being.'

Each area has a prompt within the circle, which explains what it means to a child or young person. The well-being web determines a child or young person's 'baseline' and measures progress and change over a more extended period. It can be used with a child or young person individually and separately with their parent or carer to identify key issues as they arise.

Working with the child or young person, ask them where they are on a scale of 1-10. Try to find out why they chose this rating and get more information about what may be happening to them if necessary.

The goal is to arrive at a mutually agreed point for each of the eight areas, so it's also good to discuss why you might have rated an area differently and why perceptions of that area may differ.

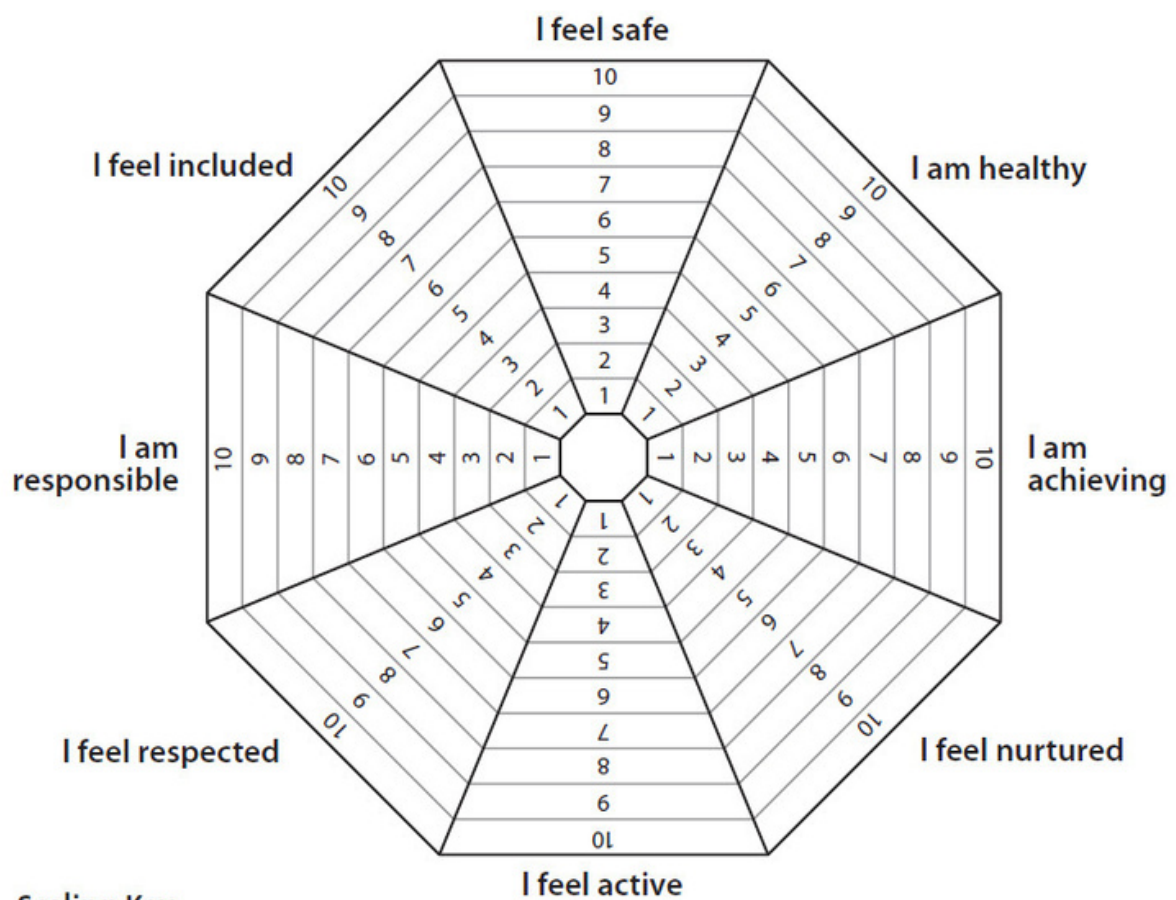
Using the worksheet on the next page and coloured pencils, discuss each area with the child or young person and decide on a score together, which they mark on the web. Once each of the areas of the web has been addressed, join the numbered points to create a shape. You can then discuss the formation of an action plan together based on the scores.



# Wellbeing Web

Name

Date of Completion Name of Worker

## Scaling Key

1 = Not at all true of me

10 = Very true of me



# EMPOWERMENT

TOOLS TO HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE  
TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

# WHEEL OF LIFE

Engagement activity for young people



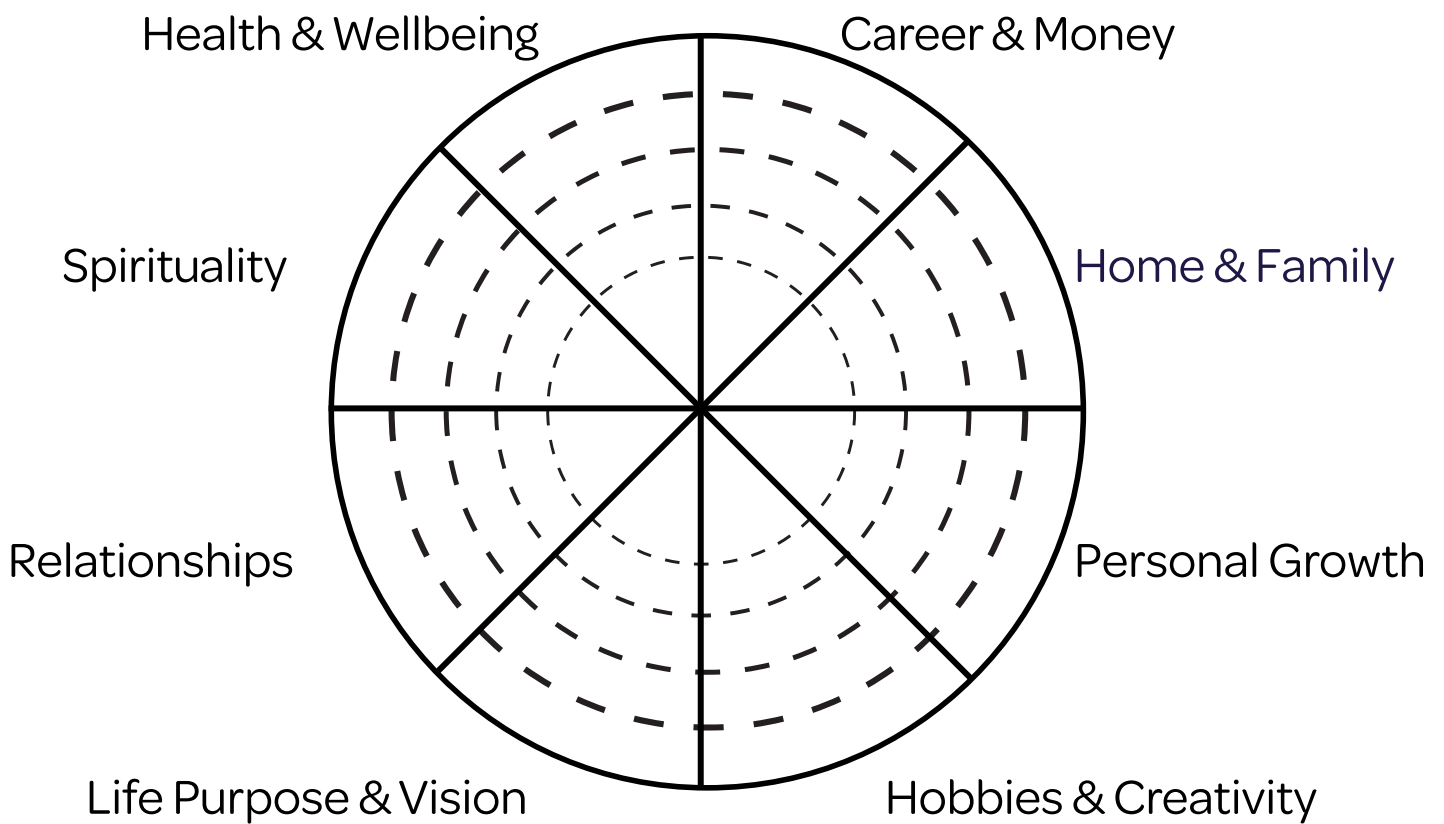
20-30 minutes

The Wheel of Life is a visual tool that helps young people measure the different areas of their life to understand how balanced it is and identify areas for improvement. It's good to complete it with a young person at the beginning of their journey and again at 3, 6 & 9 months to reflect on their progress and help them recognise if they are on track with their personal goals.

Use the worksheet on the next page and a pen/pencil or coloured pencils. Ask the young person to score each area of their life by entering a number 1-4 in the relevant box or colouring in the correct number of wheel segments. You could also ask why they chose that score, what their ideal score might be, and which areas of their life they might want to focus on.

# Wheel of Life

An important thing to remember is that this is YOUR Wheel of Life



NB - Being spiritual is synonymous with feeling a sense of connection and compassion to the world around you.



# BUILDING SELF CONFIDENCE

Engagement activity for young people



20-30 minutes

Self-confidence means trusting in your judgment, capacities and abilities. It's about valuing yourself and feeling worthy, regardless of imperfections or what others may believe about you.

Building self-confidence can be an important part of personal development as it helps young people find ways to believe in themselves, making it easier to appreciate their strengths and recognise their progress.

Using the worksheets on the following pages, ask your young person to give themselves a score for each question. After that, ask them to determine which areas of their life need attention from the results. You can help young people to improve their confidence levels by helping them to put into place strategies that will increase their scores in those areas.

# How to Build Confidence

## EVALUATE YOUR CONFIDENCE LEVELS

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have a clear sense of what's important to me					
I know what I want in my life					
I admit my mistakes and know that setbacks can be learned from					
I can stand back and think clearly when things get emotional					
I make other people feel good about themselves					
Even though I dive into new opportunities I have a balanced perspective about risk taking					
People know me as being an optimistic					
I respect myself and others					
I am realistic about my strengths and weaknesses					
I know what others consider to be my strengths					
Even though I dive in to new opportunities, I have a balanced perspective about risk taking					
I have positive yet realistic experiences					
I am clear about my purpose in life					
I freely ask for help					
I am able to see the wider perspective and the smaller details of a situation					
I enjoy taking on new challenges					
I take care of my mind and body					
I seek out opportunities to learn and grow					
I handle stress with ease and don't take things too personally					

## YOUR SCORE

Score yourself as follows:

5 points for strongly agree

4 for agree

3 for neutral

2 for disagree

1 for strongly disagree

Add up your points and check below to see how you rated.

80-100 – The Top! You are a confident person and are clear with your purpose in life. You know what you want and confidently strive for it.

60-80 – Great! You are fairly confident but there are a few areas that bring you down. You can tweak a few things to increase your confidence levels.

40-60 – You're on track! At times you may experience confusion about your life and where you want to go, what you want to do and who you want to be. Take some time to work on the areas that need attention and you'll be surprised with the results.

20-40 – You've been knocked around and your confidence may be low right now. You don't have to remain stuck in this situation though. It's time to take action and use personal development techniques to increase your confidence.

## SELF EVALUATION

Now it's your turn. Take another look at your scoring and try to determine which areas of your life need your attention. Have a look at where you ranked strongly disagreed and see if there are similar questions that brought your score down.

Some people are naturally more confident in some areas of their life, while in others areas they are lacking confidence. It's easy to improve your confidence levels by first determining where you are low and then put into place strategies that will increase those areas.

<http://www.personaldevelopmentinsights.com>



# USER GROUPS

BEST PRACTICE ON HOW TO KEEP  
GROUPS OF YOUNG PEOPLE ENGAGED

# What Makes a Good Youth Advisors Group?

The Junction  
Youth Advisors  
give their  
thoughts on  
what makes a  
good youth  
advisors group



## EMPOWER YOUTH VOICE

Prioritise the voices of young people by listening and responding to their ideas and needs

Treat everyone equally and be inclusive by recruiting young people from underrepresented backgrounds

## OFFER A SAFE PLACE TO HANG OUT

Provide a comfortable and casual setting for the group to meet, which is easily accessible

Be available and take the time to connect with the group individually as well as at meetings to build trust

Encourage the young people to be respectful so that all group members are empowered to share their opinions

Offer a space for friendships to form, for random conversations, and the group to bond

“

“ the JYAs  
taught me  
that I can  
change my  
mind ”

”

Anonymous young person

# Facilitating a Youth Advisors Group

## MANAGE GROUP DYNAMICS

- Encourage the young people to be respectful so that all group members are empowered to share their opinions
- Create and maintain boundaries both to keep the group safe and recognise how much you can ask of young people
- Celebrate individuality and offer a person-centred approach to each group member

## INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION MAKING

- Empower young people to take part in discussions by making sure they have the correct information, building confidence and offering suitable spaces
- Maintain communication between staff, trustees and youth to enable collective decision making
- Take actions based on what young people say where possible

## DESIGN INCLUSIVE WAYS TO TAKE PART

- Offer multiple ways for young people to participate in the group, bearing in mind that everyone works differently and has different needs
- Work with the group individually to develop strengths and work on goals

## COMMUNICATE FINDINGS IN A WAY WHICH RESONATES WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Use simple language and explain complicated terms if needed
- Use communication channels chosen by young people



# What Brings Young People Back to a User Group?

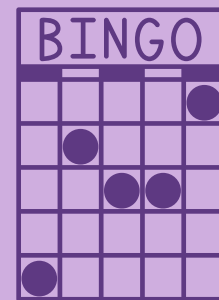


The Girvan Youth Trust User Group share their favourite things about coming along

**AGENCY**  
Working with the  
Girvan Youth Trust to  
make changes



**RESPONSIBILITY**  
Running bingo nights for the local  
community



**SOCIALISING**  
Coming together  
to enjoy  
takeaway food



**CHOICE**  
Designing the interior and  
exterior spaces



**FUNDRAISING**  
Creating hampers to raffle  
and raise money

“

“ I come to make friends and  
get more confident “

“ It makes me  
happy “

“ You can be who  
you want “

“ You can meet  
new people “

“ We work with  
the council to get  
stuff done “

”

Members of Girvan Youth Trust's User Group

# Which Biscuit?

## HOW TO MAKE DECISIONS INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

A fun exercise to demonstrate the different types of decision making\*



Group lead decides what biscuits the group get

1

### AUTOCRATIC

An autocratic decision is when someone in authority makes a decision that will affect a group without consulting anyone

Each member of the group is asked to choose their favourite packet of biscuits

2

### VOTING

The group decides by casting a vote from a choice of options. If there is an even number of people in the group, they can take a vote to come to a decision

Everyone in the group is asked which biscuit they want. After considering allergies for example, the group might choose to go for the second most popular choice so that everyone can have a biscuit

3

### CONSENSUS

Consensus means trying to reach a decision that suits everyone in the group. Ask everyone for their view, knowing that a compromise may need to be made to reach a decision

Everyone in the group votes for the same biscuit

4

### UNANIMOUS

When everyone in a group decides the same thing without any debate or voting



# EVALUATION

OUR APPROACH TO GETTING YOUNG  
PEOPLE'S FEEDBACK

# Why Evaluate?

EVALUATING YOUR PROJECT OR SERVICE HELPS YOU TO:

1.

Get direct feedback from young people

2.

Be more effective and efficient

3.

Provide high quality services for young people

7.

Report to the Board and report back to young people

4.

Measure how well you are doing

6.

Report back to your funder

5.

Demonstrate the difference you are making

# Asking Young People for Feedback

The Moira Anderson Foundation Listening Fund project aimed to develop an evaluation process. They worked with the MAF CHAMPS to build their strategy, and the following two pages set out their recommendations based on this experience.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Start by considering how you will collect the feedback, what sort of information you would like to collect and how you will ask for it.

Digital  
vs.  
Analogue  
process

Qualitative  
vs.  
Quantitative  
data

Open  
or  
Closed  
Questions

## HOW WILL THE DATA BE USED?

Feedback could be used to support funding applications. Quotes from young people can be published on social media to tell a story about their experience of the service or support they have received.



# How to Develop an Evaluation Process for Young People

## INVOLVE AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE

If the organisation has a youth group, ask them how they would like to give feedback

Ask staff and management how they will use the feedback, as this will inform how the process develops

## DEFINE THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Decide if respondents will be identified or anonymous

Explore different apps and forms available online to support the process

Find an owner for the process who will be responsible for maintaining the form and pulling reports

Decide how often you want to obtain feedback and how you will ask young people

## DEVELOP THE EVALUATION

Work with young people and staff to define a list of questions

Consider how the form looks and whether it reflects the organisation's branding

## TEST THE PROCESS

Ask young people to test the process by filling out the form and be prepared to tweak it based on any feedback

Pull a report of the test data to ensure everything is working correctly, and it is in the required format

## AUTOMATE THE PROCESS

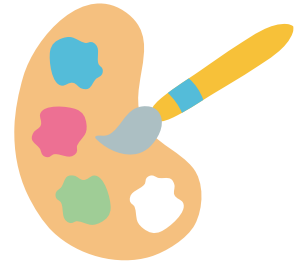
Consider if you could connect the evaluation with an existing database of clients to gain deeper insights into how the service is performing?





# What Makes a Good Youth Feedback Form

Here are the key considerations when collecting feedback for the Celebrate Art Project run by Access to Industry, in partnership with the Fruitmarket Gallery



## MAKE IT FUN

Use emojis or graphics rather than text where possible

Try a simple creative activity to gain feedback as sometimes young people find it hard to put their feelings into words

## KEEP IT SHORT

Ask young people what they liked about the service

Ask what they didn't like - so that you can take this on board and make changes to the service or programme

Offer plenty of space for responses

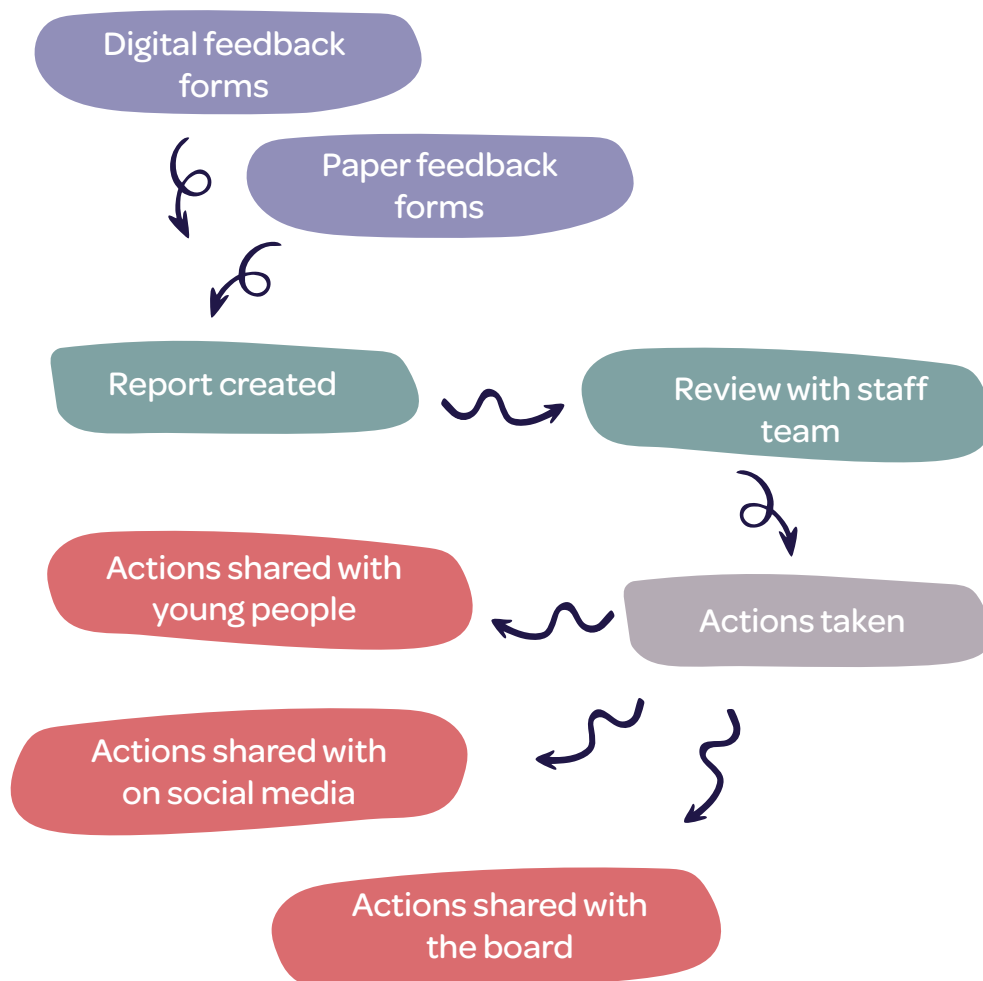
## MAKE TIME

Set time aside to discuss feedback as a group, as this will give young people an opportunity to think about their answers



# What Happens to Feedback?

Once we have collected our feedback from young people, it's just as important to make sure we have a process in place to analyse, review and report back on any actions taken. Young people want to know what has happened as a result of what they've said. This process reflects what many of the partners do with their feedback, although the regularity and ownership differs between organisations.



# Listening Evaluation Questions



The following questions are examples which could be used to gather feedback from young people about the services that you offer and to find out if they feel listened to:

- If there was one thing you could change about [organisation name] services, what would it be?
- Do you feel included in your decisions by [organisation name]?
- What would it look like to you if young people were included in the running of [organisation name]?
- What would you like to happen in meetings with your support worker, groups or events you attend?
- What sort of support would you like from [organisation name]? E.g. more group activities and chances to meet young people, better mental health support, mental health classes, etc.
- What would it take for you to become more involved in [organisation name] activities ( e.g. classes/courses if not already enrolled, youth groups, group activities, etc).
- What makes you feel listened to? How do you know you are being listened to?
- Can you think of an example of when your feedback made a difference to [organisation name]?

# Organisational Learning

The Listening Fund (Scotland) was a special fund which allowed dedicated time to be spent on listening activities and resulted in positive change to organisational delivery and strategy for the twelve partners involved. This learning summary is taken from the Final Learning Report, which was conducted using quantitative and qualitative research methods.

## Impact

Partners involved have observed that utilising time and resources to focus on listening allowed space for reflection and to consider different ways of working with young people in more creative and collaborative ways.

Partners said that throughout the fund, they were:

- using a more comprehensive range of tools to enable listening with young people
- putting the focus on listening across all its groups of young people
- encouraging co-design with young people to influence service changes and overall strategy

Young people reported positive changes during the fund, such as:

- having more influence and decision-making abilities
- improvements to youth services
- feeling better supported through having their voices heard when they need it most



# What Changed?

## What Changed for Partners

The fundamental changes that partners reported happened as a result of the fund were that they placed value on an intentional focus on listening, shared a range of listening practices internally and with other partners, and started to engage young people in the whole listening process.

## What Changed for Young People

Acting on listening was noted by young people as a significant development which occurred during the fund, as well as more opportunities for co-design and partner organisations to close the feedback loop (i.e. explaining what actions were taken in response to listening to young people).

Specifically, young people mentioned the following with regards to acting on listening:

- changes were made based on suggestions put forward by the youth board
- the organisation's website was improved based on specific feedback
- staff bios were added to information boards



# Challenges

## The COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic presented many challenges to partners' listening projects, not all young people had devices or a steady internet connection, and organisations had to navigate the constantly changing lockdown restrictions.

As partners developed their remote provision, they also had to consider safeguarding online spaces, for example, social media. When the pandemic disrupted the normal services on offer so significantly, it was challenging for partners to work with young people to build confidence around listening. Youth boards or steering groups became challenging to maintain online, particularly where no face-to-face relationship with young people had formed first.

## Listening to Inform Strategic Development

Partners noted that young people might not be in a position to contribute strategically to their organisation due to personal challenges, and the learning was that organisations need to offer pastoral care or space for relationship building before or in parallel to the strategic work. Attending board meetings can be quite 'dry' for young people - so it's good to consider how we can make it fun and engaging and what we are offering back to the young people?

## Key Learning

If organisations help to develop hard skills in young people, such as using email or understanding the language of funding bids, they are both upskilling young people and supporting them to become confident at participating in strategic discussions.



# Conclusion

The fund enabled partners to identify the needs of the young people that they support, allowing them to listen and respond to them with a person-centred approach. Partner organisations have been challenged to look at how youth-led their practices actually are, and this provided a starting point on which to improve.

Understanding how to create the right conditions for listening has been a big part of the learning process, by asking young people what they think and exploring best practices externally.

Establishing a youth board is a great way to gather more in-depth feedback and involve young people in decision-making across the organisation. A youth board or steering group partnered with the use of feedback tools co-designed by young people help to gather inputs from a broad range of clients accessing the service.

Many of the partner organisations involved with the Listening Fund recognised that dedicated resources are needed to listen to young people at a deeper level as this work is based on relationships forming, and that takes time.

Change happens within youth organisations as a result of building positive relationships with staff members and by providing safe spaces for young people to connect.





“

“ it provided a great opportunity to engage with the young people we support, and had sustainable benefits “

”

# Organisational Listening Self-Assessment

The purpose of the self-assessment is to aid your own reflection on different aspects of your organisation's listening practice, to establish where your organisation is at with listening, and indicate areas for improvement.

The self assessment takes a broad definition of organisational listening, and explores different elements of how you listen to, and with young people, including questions on your listening practice, culture, skills, resources, communication and how you act on what you hear.

It is recommended that you complete the self-assessment with at least one other person in your organisation. This will likely include someone with a strategic overview of the organisation, and someone who plays an active role in your organisation's listening practice. The questions should take 30-60 minutes to complete.

It could be an exercise you do on a bi-annual basis, so that you are able to track your organisation's progress.

1. What forms of listening does your organisation undertake with young people?  
Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Surveys – with closed questions
- ☐ Surveys – with open questions
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☐ Interviews
- ☐ Case studies of individual young people (that involve listening)
- ☐ Youth forums
- ☐ Comment and suggestion boxes
- ☐ 'Open door' between staff/volunteers and young people
- ☐ Ongoing listening within practice (e.g. informally asking for feedback within a session with young people)
- ☐ External evaluation (that involves listening)

2. On average, how regularly does your organisation undertake any form of listening with young people? Please tick one.

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ 6-monthly
- ☐ Annually
- ☐ Less often

3. Do young people engage anonymously in any of your organisation's listening?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. Does your organisation undertake any outreach activities in order to engage those groups who you have found it difficult to engage in listening? Please specify

5. Does your organisation have an organisational listening policy?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. What analysis does your organisation undertake on your forms of listening? Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Compare responses between young people,
- ☐ Compare responses between services within our organisation
- ☐ Compare responses over time
- ☐ Compare to external source of data (e.g. schools data or government data sets)
- ☐ Check for any bias in who is responding to your listening
- ☐ Check for other biases

7. Approximately, what proportion of the young people you work with engage in at least one form of your listening?

- ☐ 0-25%
- ☐ 26-50%
- ☐ 51-75%
- ☐ 76-100%
- ☐ Don't know

8. To what extent does your organisation listen to a representative sample of the young people that it works with? (By representative we mean that the types of young people that engage in listening activity are the same types of young people who you engage more broadly in your organisation's work)

9. To what extent does the leadership in your organisation do the following? Please enter a value for each row between 5 -1, with 5 being the highest

- ☐ Talk about the importance of listening
- ☐ Building listening in to organisational strategy
- ☐ Refer to listening in organisational business plans
- ☐ Create structured time for listening

10. To what extent do staff/ volunteers who work directly with young people in your organisation do the following?

- ☐ Talk about the importance of listening
- ☐ Actively create opportunities for listening to young people
- ☐ Actively pass the insights gained from listening on to your organisation's leadership

11. To what extent are the young people you work with willing to engage in your organisation's listening?

- ☐ 5 – a great extent
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 1 - not at all

12. Overall, how skilled is your organisation around the following areas of listening? Please enter a value for each row between 5 -1, with 5 being the highest

- ☐ Surveys
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☐ Interviews
- ☐ Case studies of individual young people (that involve listening)
- ☐ Youth forums
- ☐ Analysing quantitative data
- ☐ Analysing qualitative data

14. Is listening explicitly included in the role description of any staff/volunteers in your organisation?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, Please specify which staff/volunteers

15. Is there a specific budget line within the organisation for listening?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Does your organisation use any types of technology to support its listening?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please specify which types of technology

17. To what extent does your organisation evaluate its listening practice?

- ☐ 5 – a great extent
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 1 - not at all

18. To what extent do you undertake the following elements of communication around your listening? Please enter a value for each row between 5 -1, with 5 being the highest

- ☐ Communicate what you have heard to people who have engaged in your listening processes
- ☐ Communicate what you have heard to people who have not engaged in your listening processes
- ☐ Communicate your actions to people who have engaged in your listening processes
- ☐ Communicate your actions to people who have not engaged in your listening processes
- ☐ Include an explanation of why you have not acted on some of what you have heard

19. To what extent do you use listening for the following? Please enter a value for each row between 5 -1, with 5 being the highest

- ☐ To give young people an opportunity to express themselves
- ☐ To evaluate your services
- ☐ To influence how you develop your services
- ☐ To influence the fundamental strategic direction of your organisation
- ☐ Because it is young people's democratic right to shape the services they receive
- ☐ To support young people to influence external organisations and generate societal change

20. To what extent do you engage young people within your listening in the following ways? Please enter a value for each row between 5 -1, with 5 being the highest

- ☐ Discuss responses of your listening with young people
- ☐ Analyse the responses of your listening with young people
- ☐ Create actionable recommendations with young people

21. To what extent does listening practice vary across your organisation?

- ☐ 5 – a great extent
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 1 - not at all

Dr Jo Hickman Dunne



# LISTENING FOR PRACTITIONERS

LISTENING TIPS & TRICKS

# Measuring Our Listening Skills



Having assessed your organisation's listening skills, you may be curious to determine your own. Below are two suggestions to help you understand where you're at and areas where you may need to improve.

1

Complete a listening self-assessment. This doesn't take long but may be an excellent way to gauge your good and bad listening habits. There is an online assessment [here](#)\*. The printable worksheets are on the following pages of the toolkit.

2

Write a listening diary every day for one week. Think about what went well and what challenges you faced, as well as any distractions. Aim to learn new things about the people around you through active listening.

\*Mind Tools: How Good Are Your Listening Skills?



# Listening Skills Self- Assessment

To help you start to be more aware of your listening habits, complete the following listening self-evaluation. It will give you an idea of which listening habits you can be proud of and which ones you might want to reshape. Put an X in the appropriate column.

Put an X in the appropriate column	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Almost never
1. Tune out people who say something you don't agree with or don't want to hear?				
2. Concentrate on what is being said even if you are not really interested?				
3. Assume you know what the speaker is going to say and stop listening?				
4. Repeat in your own words what the speaker has just said?				
5. Listen to the other person's viewpoint even if it differs from yours?				
6. Learn something from each person you meet, even if it is ever so slight?				
7. Find out what words mean when they are used in ways not familiar to you?				
8. Form a counter-argument in your head while the speaker is talking?				
9. Give the appearance of listening when you aren't?				
10. Daydream while the speaker is talking?				
11. Listen to the whole message – what the speaker is saying verbally and nonverbally?				
12. Recognise that words don't mean exactly the same thing to different people?				
13. Listen to only what you want to hear, blotting out the speaker's whole message?				
14. Look at the person who is talking?				
15. Concentrate on the speaker's meaning rather than how he or she looks?				

# Listening Skills Self- Assessment

(continued)

Put an X in the appropriate column	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Almost never
16. Know which words and phrases you respond to emotionally?				
17. Think about what you want to accomplish with your communication?				
18. Plan the best time to say what you want to say?				
19. Think about how the other person might react to what you say?				
20. Consider the best way to make your communication (written, spoken, phone, memo, etc.) work?				
21. Think about what kind of person you're talking to (worried, hostile, disinterested, shy, stubborn, impatient)?				
22. Interrupt the speaker while he or she is still talking?				
23. Think "I assumed he or she would know that"?				
24. Allow the speaker to vent negative feelings toward you without becoming defensive?				
25. Practice regularly to increase your listening efficiency?				
26. Take notes when necessary to help you remember?				
27. Hear noises without being distracted by them?				
28. Listen to the speaker without judging or criticising?				
29. Restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?				
30. Paraphrase what you believe the speaker is feeling?				

# Listening Skills Self- Assessment

## SCORING INDEX

Circle the number that matches the time frame (always, most of the time, etc.) you checked on each of the 30 items on the self-evaluation. For example, if you put an X under “most of the time” for number 1, you would circle 2 in the “most of the time” column. Then, add the circled scores in each of the columns. Now, write the scores of each column in the lines under each time frame category.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Almost never
1.	1	2	3	4
2.	4	3	2	1
3.	1	2	3	4
4.	1	2	3	4
5.	1	2	3	4
6.	1	2	3	4
7.	1	2	3	4
8.	4	3	2	1
9.	4	3	2	1
10.	1	2	3	4
11.	1	2	3	4
12.	1	2	3	4
13.	4	3	2	1
14.	1	2	3	4
15.	1	2	3	4

Totals: \_\_\_\_\_

Total of items circled in each column:

Always \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mostly \_\_\_\_\_  
 Occasionally \_\_\_\_\_  
 Almost Never \_\_\_\_\_

Grand Total \_\_\_\_\_

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Almost never
16.	1	2	3	4
17.	1	2	3	4
18.	1	2	3	4
19.	1	2	3	4
20.	1	2	3	4
21.	1	2	3	4
22.	4	3	2	1
23.	4	3	2	1
24.	1	2	3	4
25.	1	2	3	4
26.	1	2	3	4
27.	1	2	3	4
28.	1	2	3	4
29.	1	2	3	4
30.	1	2	3	4

Totals: \_\_\_\_\_

Scoring:

110-120 Superior  
 99-109 Above Average  
 88-98 Average  
 77-87 Fair

# Listening Skills Self- Assessment

## ASSESSMENT OF LISTENING QUALITIES – ACTION PLAN SAMPLE

### Listening Qualities I Have

I am an expert at observing body language.

### How I Know

I focus on maintaining eye contact when people speak to me and recognise when their words do not match their tone of voice and facial expressions.

### Listening Qualities I Want to Develop

I want to get better at listening completely without planning what I'm going to say while waiting for the speaker to finish.

## ASSESSMENT OF LISTENING QUALITIES – ACTION PLAN

### Listening Qualities I Have

### How I Know

### Listening Qualities I Want to Develop

Adapted from Madelyn Burley-Allen, in *Coaching Conversations: Transforming Your School One Conversation at a Time*; Cheliotis and Reilly, 2010

# Listening to Ourselves

When working with young people, we must take care of ourselves too. To hold the space for young people and be present physically, mentally and emotionally, we need to feel like we are in a good place; otherwise, we cannot support young people in the way we intend.

NHS Education for Scotland has created a Wellbeing Planning Tool to provide a framework for staff to identify warning signs when we are feeling stressed and suggest how to preserve our wellbeing.

## STEP 1: KNOWING YOUR WARNING SIGNS

The first step to managing your wellbeing is recognising when you feel stressed and using the traffic light system on the worksheet on the following page to identify the point you may need to take action.

## STEP 2: ACTIVELY MANAGING YOUR WELLBEING

We all respond differently to stress, and many ways to manage our wellbeing. You can use the suggestions on the worksheet in on page 68 to reflect on what works for you and what you can commit to doing to maintain your wellbeing.

Some additional suggestions are:

Meditation Apps:

Headspace, Waking Up, Calm, Smiling Mind

YouTube Channels:




Yoga with Adriene, Yoga with Olga

Wellbeing Apps:

HearMe, Tide, Wim Hof



## Step 1: What are your personal warning signs?

What are my warning signs? What tells me I'm feeling stressed?	Physical	Psychological	Social
<b>Red</b> Feeling stressed, stop – time to do something straight away 			
<b>Amber</b> Feeling a little stressed, time to do something different 			
<b>Green</b> I'm ok, no need to do anything differently 			

**Step 2 Wellbeing plan:** What do I commit to doing to protect my wellbeing when I notice any amber warning signs?

My amber warning signs are:

When I notice them, to protect my wellbeing I will:

	Physical: What will I do and not do?	Psychological: How do I want to think and feel?	Social: Who will I connect with? Who will I talk to about how I am feeling?
At home:			
At work:			



# Contributors

Written and collated by Beth Farmer on behalf of The Listening Fund (Scotland), with help from:

William McEwan - Girvan Youth Trust

Gillian Urquart & Kirsten Jorgensen - The Moira Anderson Foundation

Helen Munro - The Junction

The Staff Team at Access to Industry

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Moira Anderson  
FOUNDATION



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## About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Corra Foundation  
Riverside House  
502 Gorgie Road  
Edinburgh EH11 3AF

e: [hello@corra.scot](mailto:hello@corra.scot)  
t: **0131 444 4020**  
w: [www.corra.scot](http://www.corra.scot)



[www.corra.scot](http://www.corra.scot)

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