



# Youth voice: what exactly are we talking about?

A typology of youth voice for UK youth provision: version 2.0

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# Youth voice: what exactly are we talking about?

## A typology of youth voice for UK youth provision

Version 2.0, November 2022

### 1. Introduction

As part of the *Young People's Voice, Influence and Power* project, the Centre for Youth Impact has developed a typology of youth voice practice. This is to provide those working with and for young people with a shared, or common, way of describing the different activities that are encompassed under the umbrella of 'youth voice', across the UK for young people up to the age of 25.

This typology has been developed to give delivery organisations, funders, evaluators, and young people a shared vocabulary for talking about youth voice practice. We believe that if we talk about practice more, using common definitions and understanding, the sector will be better able to evaluate, advocate for, and focus on quality improvement in our practice.

We are very grateful to the individuals and organisations who gave feedback to help us develop this typology, through the feedback survey, consultation sessions, via email, and through contributing the case-studies included in this document. Of course, a job is never truly finished, and we will continue to review and refine this typology as appropriate, responsive to the evolving context and needs of the youth sector.

### What is a typology?

A typology is a systematic categorisation of the types of something, according to their common characteristics. A typology is exhaustive; it provides a comprehensive list of all possible expressions of a thing. It is also mutually exclusive – things can only be one 'type'.

A typology provides a framework for description, clarification and comparison. We use typologies every day, in many aspects of our lives.

#### An everyday typology: blood types



There are four main blood groups: A, B, AB, and O. Your blood type is determined by the genes inherited from your parents, and is based on the presence/absence of antigens and antibodies, and the presence/absence of Rhesus D factor.

In total there are **eight possible blood types: A+, A-, B+, B-, O+, O-, AB+, AB-**.

Like all typologies, blood typing is exhaustive. All blood types that exist fit into one of the eight categories above. It's also mutually exclusive – a person can also only belong to one blood type.

## What do we mean by youth voice?

A wealth of resources already exist that provide definitions of youth voice practice, and we do not intend to duplicate them here. We recognise that for many organisations working with young people, youth voice is an umbrella term that captures a range of activities with a range of intended outcomes. These activities will also vary in terms of initiation and leadership, and the accountability and collaboration between adults and young people. The practice covered in this typology is intended to apply to this range of activities. These activities will vary in both the degree of power-sharing with young people, and the quality with which the practice is delivered.

Through the consultation process conducted as part of the development of this typology (see Section 4 of this document), and in conversation with the Youth Steering Group for this project, we have defined youth voice practice as:

***Providing support (i.e., the space, skills and time) for young people to express their views and ideas, and action being taken based on what they say.***

*This practice will result in positive change: in the situation, organisation or context that the young person is sharing their views about (e.g., the services they or others receive), in the young person's personal development, or both.*

This definition acknowledges that the sector should be striving for 'action-based' youth voice, i.e., ensuring that action is taken/impact is created based on young people's views, as opposed to simply creating space for young people to be heard.

Organisations may use other terms to describe this practice, including but not limited to:

- Engagement
- Participation
- Consultation
- Co-production
- Co-design
- Empowerment
- Youth-led practices
- Youth leadership
- Youth governance
- Youth influence

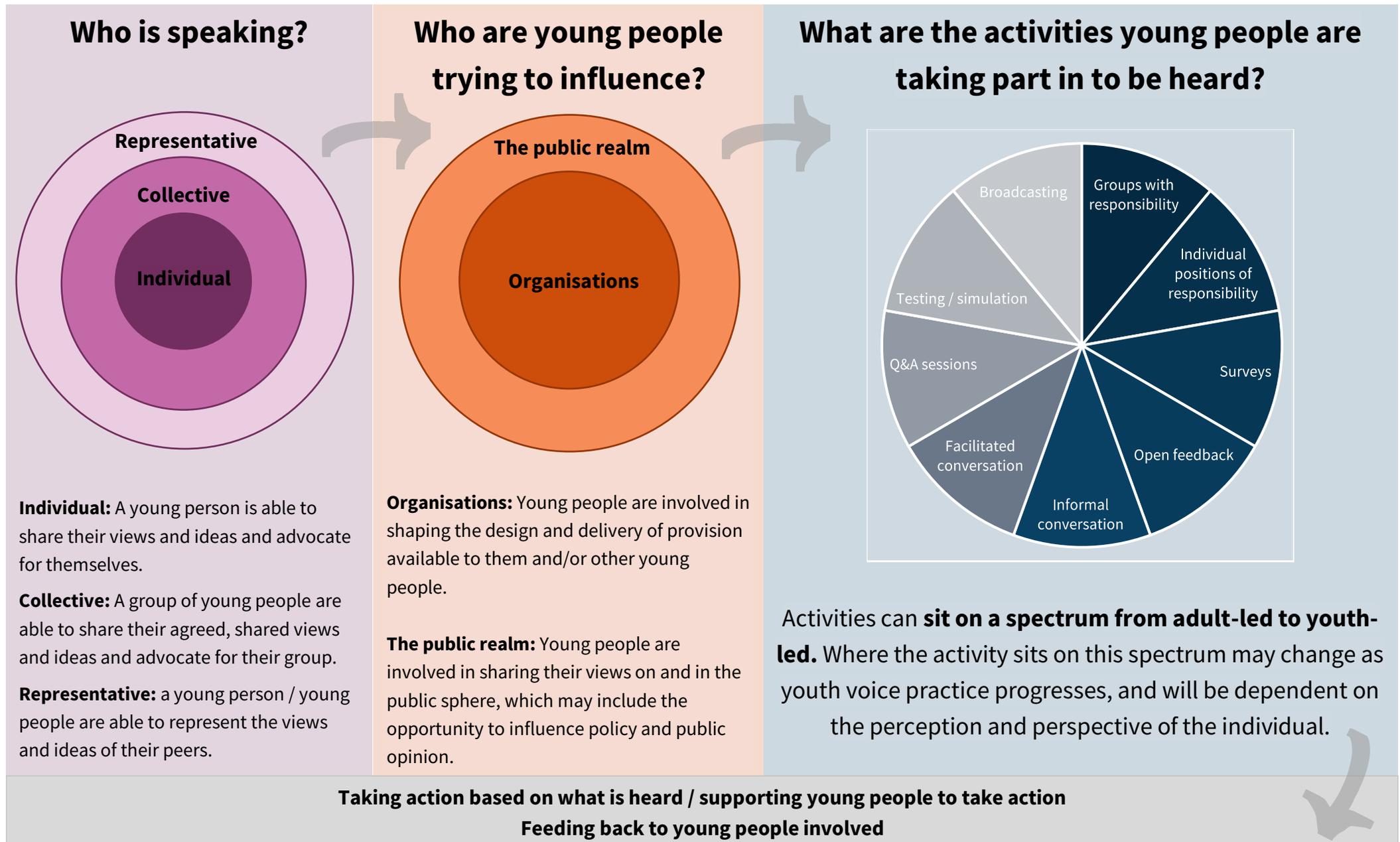
If you undertake practice that aligns with the definition above, then this typology is for you, regardless if you use the phrase 'youth voice' to describe this work.

## What type of youth voice practice are you doing?

In Section 2 (page 3), you'll find our typology of youth voice. You can think of it like a slot machine – the specific combinations of each category: 'Who is speaking?', 'Who are young people trying to influence?', and 'What are the activities young people are taking part in to be heard?' will determine the actions and approach taken and the intended outcomes. However, youth voice practice is not about pot-luck! Youth voice practice should be designed intentionally, considering the young people involved and the context within which it is happening. The slot machine analogy also helps us think about how the design and approach needs to change or flex if one of the categories changes.



## 2. Typology of youth voice practice



**Note that ‘youth voice’ does not only mean the spoken word of young people.** Creative approaches to youth voice – those that allow young people to express views, ideas and experiences through alternative methods and do not necessarily require young people to express their ideas in words, e.g., story-boarding, mind-mapping, collage, photography, dance, amateur dramatics, and video-making – will cut across, and can be one element of the activities defined below.

**Table 1: definitions of youth voice activities**

Activity	Definition	Criteria
<b>Groups with responsibility</b>	A group of young people that come together (virtually, in person) on a regular/semi-regular basis. Working on a particular project or towards a particular aim, e.g., a Youth Steering Group, a Youth Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young people hold a position of responsibility</li> <li>• Part of the responsibility pertains to sharing their individual / collective views and/or the views of their peers, in relation to the project or aim</li> </ul>
<b>Individual positions of responsibility</b>	A young person holding a role within a group or organisation, where they can input/support the goals of the group/organisation, e.g., Young Trustee, Young Evaluator, Youth Governor.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young person holds a position of responsibility</li> <li>• Part of the responsibility pertains to sharing their views and/or the views of their peers, in relation to the goals of the group</li> </ul>
<b>Surveys</b>	A list of questions aimed at eliciting specific information about young people’s views, ideas and experiences. Can include closed and open questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online or paper-based.</li> <li>• Runs for a set period of time.</li> <li>• Questions are standardised i.e., the same on every survey</li> <li>• Completed individually.</li> </ul>
<b>Open feedback</b>	Activities that allow young people to share their views and feedback in their own time, and with broad parameters on topic or theme, e.g., comment boxes, graffiti walls. Users can be anonymous or identifiable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-determined format for feedback</li> <li>• Not facilitated/directed by anyone ‘in the moment’</li> </ul>

<b>Informal conversation</b>	Opportunities for young people to share their views in spontaneous and unplanned ways. Can be 1:1 or group based.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unplanned</li> <li>• Do not have a pre-determined agenda or line of inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Facilitated conversation</b>	Structured and intentional conversations with a young person/group of young people where the facilitator has a specific set of questions or lines of enquiry they want to explore, e.g., an interview or feedback session. Can be activity-based, e.g., using prompt/flash cards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated time and space has been set aside</li> </ul>
<b>Q&amp;A sessions</b>	Young people being able to meet with influential individuals and ask questions they design, or respond to questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated time for young people to ask questions, or be asked questions</li> <li>• Answers are tailored towards young people</li> </ul>
<b>Testing/simulation</b>	Young people are able to test or assess a service, e.g., as a 'mystery shopper'. Occurs in conjunction with another activity to allow them to feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people make use of a service</li> <li>• Young people assess their experience against pre-defined criteria</li> <li>• Young people feedback their assessment to the organisation or agency running the service</li> </ul>
<b>Broadcasting</b>	Activities where young people are addressing others, and sharing their views and ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people have a space or platform to broadcast their ideas</li> <li>• Does not involve dialogue</li> </ul>

## Bringing the categorisation to life

To support organisations to consider how the typology shows up in their own practice, we invited colleagues to share how the typology fits into their everyday work. These case studies, from both voluntary and statutory organisations, highlight the dominant youth voice activities in the given projects or practice. However, it is important to acknowledge that these likely connect with other opportunities for youth voice within these organisations. These examples are also not exhaustive of the youth voice activities being undertaken in each of the organisations listed.

We see the value of these case studies, and applying the typology to organisational practice more broadly, as:

- Providing others with examples of where youth voice can be implemented and demonstrating the multiple opportunities for young people to influence and be involved in decision-making;
- Highlighting, within individual organisations, what they are doing in terms of youth voice, and therefore what they are not doing and where they might be able to increase or diversify their youth voice practice to create further opportunities for young people; and
- Beginning to create a bigger picture of the most common types of youth voice practice, to understand what the sector is doing in terms of youth voice practice - and therefore what we are not doing - and where we might be able to increase or diversify our youth voice practice to create further opportunities for young people.

### **The Resilience Revolution (RR) Blackpool HeadStart**



Blackpool HeadStart has worked to orientate systems more strongly towards the prevention of mental health problems, promotion of wellbeing and resilience, building resilience promoting environments, as well as the reduction of wider adversity contexts that link to health inequalities. Supported by the National Lottery Community Fund, young people have actively shaped the RR via leadership roles in schools such as Resilience Committees, and more broadly via the Young Persons Executive Group and the Blackpool Youth Climate Group **[groups of young people with responsibility]**. The RR removed financial

barriers to engagement via paid sessional worker and apprenticeship positions **[individual positions of responsibility]**. This offered a variety of flexible involvement that further improved the accessibility of taking part. With support, young people took an active role in co-designing and delivering training **[broadcasting]** and reviewing health services **[testing/simulation]**. They held researchers and policy makers to account in knowledge exchange practices such as academic conferences and council events **[Q&A sessions]**. Engagement work began with a focus on building relationships and offering activities young people said they wanted and enjoyed **[open feedback; facilitated conversations; informal conversations]**. As co-leaders of the Resilience Revolution, young people supported the evaluation of the programme. Many shared their experiences of co-

production, and some conducted their own research projects with support [**facilitated conversations; surveys**].

The team at Kent County Council run a number of programmes that support youth voice:

**Kent Youth Voice [groups of young people with responsibility]** brings together young people in Kent to work on the campaigns and issues that are important to them. Young people are supported to design and develop **their activities [open feedback; facilitated conversation]**. These could be aimed at young people e.g., building resilience groups developing a board game for young people, and working with key stakeholders relevant to the issue, e.g., the issue of feeling safe working with the Police and VRU. In **Kent Youth County Council**, young people are elected each year as district or community members [**groups of young people with responsibility**], including presenting their Annual Report to the KCC Cabinet [**broadcasting**]. Their **Emotional Wellbeing Participation work** is funded by clinical commissioning groups to gather the feedback and views of young people who have had contact or are trying to access emotional wellbeing and mental health services in Kent. Feedback was gathered by a number of methods, including attending events, sessions in the community, and surveys [**surveys; open feedback; informal conversation; facilitated conversation**]. This initiative also includes the Changing Minds group [**groups of young people with responsibility**], the Big Mental Health Conversation [**Q&A sessions**], and the coproduction training for health staff [broadcasting].

Other youth voice activities undertaken by the team include:

- Recruitment and selection panels [**facilitated conversation**]
- Commissioning services (Kent County Council and Health) [**facilitated conversation**]
- Pay it Forward funding decisions [**facilitated conversation**]
- Community Resilience toolkit verification [**facilitated conversation**]
- Consultations within KCC and externally [**facilitated conversation, surveys**]
- Young Evaluators [**groups of young people with responsibility; facilitated conversation**]
- Try Angle awards [**groups of young people with responsibility; facilitated conversation**]

**Kent Youth Voice**  
**Kent County Council**



**Kent  
County  
Council**



## Coram Voice

Coram Voice supports young people in care and care-leavers. They enable youth voice through a number of initiatives and projects, outlined below.



getting young voices heard

**A National Voice (ANV):** ANV is the ‘National Children in Care Council’ for children in care and care leavers aged 11-26, who are passionate about how the care system works and how it affects those within it. We work to improve the care system through the voices of care experienced young people.

Each year we recruit a group of ANV Ambassadors, a group of 16-25 year olds, who represent children and young people from a specific region of England [**groups of young people**

**with responsibility**]. ANV ambassadors meet monthly in order to represent young people’s voice nationally and develop campaigns or resources to address the issues that they identified. We support these young people to develop skills in public speaking, facilitation training, media training confidence building.

**Employing young people:** Coram Voice recruit a group of care experienced consultants to work across the projects run at Coram Voice and to support the work it does with young people in and leaving care across the country [individual positions of responsibility]. Coram Voice employs different types of care experienced consultants, these are:

- **Creatives [facilitated conversation; broadcasting]**
  - Devise, plan and create vlogs, photos, films focussing on communicating key information about care experienced young people’s rights, entitlements and views as well as information for young people on what Coram Voice does.
  - Working with care experienced young people aged 13-25, to involve them in the development of digital resources.
- **Peer Researchers [facilitated conversation; broadcasting]**
  - Facilitate workshops with young people to gather their views and opinions on the research topic.
  - Advise researchers on the design of the research and how young people are involved.
  - Develop user-friendly information guides aimed at young people for local authorities who are participating in the study.
  - Conduct interviews with young people to gather their views on the area of research being looked at.
- **Youth Practitioners [facilitated conversation; broadcasting]**
  - Support care leavers to communicate their views and opinions to local authority professionals and services
  - Give advice to the local authority about ways they can engage with local care leavers

**Future of Children’s Social Care Project:** Newton Europe was working with the County Council Network on a ‘Future of Children’s Social Care’ project. Care Experienced Consultants (CEC’s) were asked to review the report on ‘an optimised model for supporting children in care and on the edges of care: national enablers, local delivery’. Coram Voice held a session with Newton and CEC’s to discuss the report and identify priorities for children in care and care leavers [**facilitated conversation**]. Newton took on board the feedback and included it within the final report. The

County Council Network invited a CEC to make a speech at a launch event and sit on a panel for questions [**broadcasting; Q&A sessions**]. For more information please visit: <https://www.futurecsc.com/>

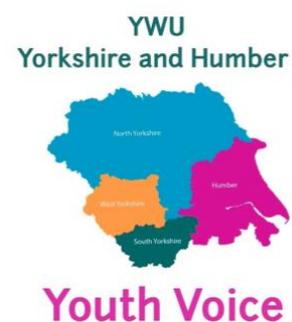
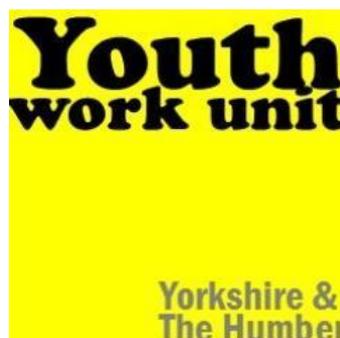
**Independent Review of Children’s Social Care:** As part of the Independent Care Review, Coram Voice supported the review through its A National Voice Network, creating a participation menu for children in care councils and a survey for individual young people, to make sure the voices of more children and young people in care and leaving care are heard [**survey**]. Subsequently, A National Voice published a report about [‘what children and young people want to tell the independent care review’](#).

**ReThink Research Project:** Coram Voice is supporting a four-year Medical Research Council funded project ‘ReThink’ about supporting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing during transitions (primary to secondary school and from children’s services to adult services). Through the ANV network, Coram Voice has recruited a youth advisory panel for 16-25 year olds who will meet four times a year to support the development of the project [**groups of young people with responsibility**]. Coram Voice will also be supporting a youth advisory panel for 10-15 year olds through a local authority children in care council.

**Staying Connected:** The views and experiences of over 7,500 children and young people in care on their contact with family members and impact on their wellbeing were captured and **reported** through collective work by Coram Voice and The Rees Centre at the University of Oxford. As part of *Staying Connected* ANV Ambassadors **shared their stories** too [**broadcasting**].

The Yorkshire and Humber Youth Work Unit is the strategic youth work development agency for the Yorkshire and Humber region. It enables youth voice through a number of initiatives and projects, outlined below.

### Yorkshire and Humber Youth Work Unit



**The Regional Youth Climate Assembly (RYCA):** The RYCA was self-up in August 2020 with the aim to support young people to be climate campaigners – to be a place for them to share ideas and be a place that decision-makers could go to, to find out what young people thought [**groups of young people with responsibility**]. The group wrote a 12-point manifesto, outlining their ideas on how to address climate change [**broadcasting**]. They have worked with groups from across the world to identify how climate change impacts the lives of young people [**facilitated conversation**] and shared their learning of this process at Cop 26 [**broadcasting**]. The group has supported the allocation of research grants into decarbonising transport and society readiness. They have spoken at numerous conferences and events, sharing the views of young people and encouraging policy makers to listen and involve young people [**broadcasting**].

**National Young Inspectors:** Youth Inspectors [**individual positions of responsibility**] inspected different organisations, funders and providers on their involvement of young people in decision-making [**testing/simulation**]. Having undertaken training in interviewing, question setting, participation and personal bias, the young people worked in smaller teams, to research into and create reports on the activities of the Youth Inspectors, providing recommendations for improvement [**broadcasting**]. Local Young Inspectors focus their work on how young people receive services, often creating a ‘scoring’ system, where they can give points on different aspects of their experience [**testing/simulation**]. Providers are given feedback and recommendations to help improve services.

**South Yorkshire Combined Authority:** The young people identify areas to be discussed with the Mayor and/or their representatives, based on the Combined Authority’s areas of responsibility or influence [**facilitated conversation**]. The agenda, and areas of specific interest are shared with the Mayor and their team, prior to the meeting so items can be prepared for. The quarterly meetings with the Mayor are chaired by one of the youth members, but all the young people present have the opportunity to ask a question on the topic they are interested in [**Q&A sessions**]. Key questions are prepared and put on PowerPoint, to both support the young person, and also in case of Wi-Fi problems so the question can still be read. Follow up questions are also asked and if they can’t be answered, the young people can ask for a written response. The young people also update the Mayor on their work and respond to questions, often helping to shape policy through sharing their lived experience, such as the cost of bus fares leading to the Zoom Beyond travel pass.

**Talent Match  
Black Country**



Young People | Experts through Experience

The team at Talent Match Black Country considered their youth voice activities within the categories of *who is speaking*, and *who they are trying to influence*.

**Individual:** Young people at Talent Match are empowered, encouraged, and supported to voice their own ideas while working with their mentor to co-design the support and plan to achieve their individual goals [**facilitated conversation**]. As part of the more structured support, one-to-one mentoring has given the ability to feedback privately and in a more process-driven way to create solutions and plans for individual young people [**facilitated**

**conversation**]. A variety of Q&A methods have been piloted over the years. While formal groups have worked for those young people who feel confident enough to participate, it often left the quietest voices, and often those in most need of support, unheard. By listening to young people, **Q&A sessions** evolved into smaller groups with breakouts so individuals could ask questions on a one-to-one basis or discuss any questions with their mentor first [**facilitated conversation**]. Sometimes it’s forgotten that some young people have been let down so often trust is not forthcoming and takes time to build. Asking questions publicly is trusting the group not to ridicule or devalue their question, something many young people have negative experiences of.

**Collective:** Talent Match operates in small community hubs where young people themselves decide the best way to share their voices. Some created hub youth-led focus groups [**facilitated conversation**] to help improve the services and support the project offered. Some created theatre

productions to express their lived experience and learning [**broadcasting**], others created pop-ups in shopping centres to help open conversation with the public on subjects like autism [**open feedback**]. Talent Match hubs were created to be safe spaces for young people to feel included – the design and shape of this were decided by the young people they supported.

**Representative:** Talent Match was designed by young people and has always been youth-led, with young people involved at all levels of the decision-making process. Young people who felt confident enough to represent themselves, other young people on the project, and the wider community of young people joined the project steering group [**groups of young people with responsibility**] and became the majority voice in the quorum. Additional training to help with confidence and communication was delivered to invest leadership skills with young people. This was a means for young people to hold the project to account and ensure actions agreed upon were completed and that empty promises were not made.

**Organisations:** Talent Match was designed with young people and its core ethos was to listen and involve young people at all levels of decision making. The project was about testing and learning with young people to allow the project to fine-tune support and services to what young people needed [**informal conversation; facilitated conversation; open feedback**]. The learning cycle facilitates the continual evolution and improvement of the project, meaning the input and feedback from every young person directly improves the provision for future participants.

Within local hubs young people have always been encouraged to share their voice openly and freely whilst feeling their voice is valued. Activity days have taken place to try and encourage young people to try new things, and during that process of challenge and pushing boundaries, encouraged them to share with peers and staff their informal spur of the moment feedback [**informal conversations; open feedback**].

**The public realm:** In their journey with Talent Match some young people have expressed incredible passion and determination to share their voices publicly. At every opportunity, many young people have been supported and encouraged to deliver public speeches, at project events, national conferences, in parliament and in the community [**broadcasting**]. The aim is to empower them to be heard and shape change. Young people with Talent Match have not only been empowered and supported to provide evidence at All Party Parliamentary Group sessions (APPGs) to help shape policy at the highest [**broadcasting**] level, but just as importantly been empowered to share their lived experience at regional and local levels to help drive change and improvement in the communities they live in. For example, young people provided feedback to Transport for West Midlands on the challenges young people face with public transport in the region [**facilitated conversation**]. They have also participated in LGBTQ+ local panels to help inform professionals and peers alike of the barriers and challenges being faced in their own communities [**Q&A sessions**].

### 3. How can this typology help you?

We anticipate that the typology will predominantly support practitioners who work with young people to describe what they are (and are not) doing to support young people to have their voices heard, as a first step towards evaluating and improving their practice. The types outlined in this typology provide a way of systematically sorting activities, and therefore provide a framework for description, clarification and comparison. There is also an opportunity for the typology to be used by funders, young people and evaluators, as outlined in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: How the categorisation can support organisations working with young people to deliver high-quality practice**

Activity?	Who?	How?
Service design	Delivery organisations	Provides a common 'language' for team members, supporting internal consistency in understanding. Support organisations to understand what they are and are not doing, and what other opportunities they might want to consider in service design.
Development of youth voice practice	Young people, Delivery organisations; Funders	Identifies opportunities for youth voice and expectations of this practice. Supports young people to understand what is expected of them and what other opportunities could or should be made available to them for their voices to be heard. Supporting organisations and funders to consider what else they could do and what this might look like in practice.
Developing an evaluation plan	Delivery organisations; Evaluators	Supports organisations to simplify and clearly describe what they are (and are not) doing. This is the first step towards evaluating practice.  Focusing on 'what exactly are we doing?' forms the first part of our <a href="#">Asking Good Questions Framework</a> : designed to support organisations to reflect and understand the quality of their work.  Evaluators can use the categorisation to develop shared evaluation frameworks.
Communicating your work	Delivery organisations; Funders	Supports organisations and funders to concisely and clearly tell others what they do to support young people to have their voices heard.
Grant design and application assessment	Funders	Provides a common 'language' for funders to discuss and develop grant activities with (potential) grantees, and assess grant applications.

## What this typology *does* and *does not* do

This typology is a descriptive tool and has been designed to support the above activities. Table 3 indicates the limits of this typology, i.e., what it does, and does not do.

**Table 3: What the typology does and does not do**

This typology does:	This typology does not:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe youth voice practice in youth provision in the UK for young people up to the age of 25</li> <li>• Provide common groupings for the <i>sphere of influence</i> of youth voice; <i>mechanisms</i> of youth voice; and <i>methods</i> of youth voice</li> <li>• Break down these common groupings into discrete categories that are objectively verifiable</li> <li>• Seek to represent the diversity of youth work settings and contexts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a judgement on the prevalence of groupings and categories</li> <li>• Make a judgement on the benefits or drawbacks of particular categories</li> <li>• Make a judgement about the quality of youth voice practice based on particular categories</li> <li>• Make a judgement on the level of power sharing between adults and young people involved in the youth voice practice.</li> </ul>

## What should be considered alongside the types of youth voice?

Committing to supporting youth voice and developing youth voice practice should not be viewed as a single event or moment in time. This work should be ongoing and part of a wider process through which organisations support young people to share their views and ideas, take action based on what young people have shared, and reflect back on the process, to support ongoing and future youth voice practice.

We encourage users to consider other elements of youth voice practice alongside drawing on this typology:

### Degrees of power-sharing with young people

- This will vary depending on a number of factors, including the skill of the practitioners and young people, resources dedicated to the work, and the purpose of the work.

### Quality of delivery

- There are many factors involved in delivering youth voice practice well. These include but are not limited to:
  - Ensuring it is accessible and inclusive;
  - Respecting and valuing young people's views;
  - Properly resourcing activities;
  - Creating a safe and supportive environment;
  - Ensuring it fits around young people's lives; and

- Sharing feedback with young people on actions taken/not taken.
- The specific needs of the young people engaged will determine what high-quality youth voice practice looks like.

### Supporting structures

- We recognise that youth voice practice is just one part of working with young people, and does not occur in isolation.
- There is often a wider process of engaging and supporting young people, which occurs before, during and after any youth voice practice.

### Evaluation and learning

- As with any aspect of youth provision, it is important to evaluate the *process* and the *outcome* – what went well? What didn't go well? Did you achieve your aims?
- Evaluation is an ongoing cycle of learning and reflection. It can be formative (during a project or piece of work, to learn from and adapt as you progress), or summative (at the end, to assess the extent to which the piece of work has met its aims and objectives).
- Evaluation and learning can be undertaken with young people, not only in gathering their feedback, but in supporting them to design or lead elements of the evaluation process.
- Remember that any assessment of success and progress is dependent on an organisation's / project's aims and starting point.

## Supporting evaluation and learning through the typology

As outlined in Table 2, using the typology will help you to use the Centre's [Asking Good Questions Framework](#): designed to support organisations to reflect and understand the quality of their work. The framework is structured around eight questions to promote reflection and curiosity:

1. Why do we do what we do?
2. What exactly are we doing?
3. Are we doing it consistently well?
4. Are we true to our intentions?
5. What do young people think about what we do?
6. Are we achieving our aims?

You can approach evaluating and learning about your youth voice practice by focusing on these questions, and our [Resource Hub](#) will support you to do this. You don't have to work through the questions in order, but we do recommend you engage with all of them as they are all equally important.

It will take time – particularly in the beginning – to think about these questions: but it is mainly time that is required, not necessarily external consultancy, expertise or funding.

## 4. Methodology for development of the typology

We adopted a three-stage approach in the development of this typology:

1. Evidence review-based draft
2. Sector consultation
3. Redrafting and refining.

### Evidence review-based draft

The first draft of this typology, '[A typology of youth voice for UK youth provision](#)' was primarily developed through an evidence review of 34 local authority youth participation and engagement strategies and 12 organisational youth participation strategies (46 in total). We included strategies that were published in English and by organisations operating in a UK context. All included direct examples of how young people are engaged in youth voice activities. Additional key documents, for example, research reports and theoretical models of participation, were drawn upon to guide the typology development.

The four key steps in the process:

1. A web-based search was conducted to identify potentially relevant youth voice practice articles (n=66)
2. Removal of documents (n=20) that did not include direct examples of youth voice practice (e.g., police statements on ethos or particular models of participation lacking details on practice with young people)
3. Remaining articles (n=46) were reviewed and any detail regarding youth voice mechanisms and methods was extracted and logged
4. Extracted data was grouped according to 'type' in an iterative process, directed by a series of internal reviews to arrive at the development of common groupings and discrete categories within these groupings.

We then published this first draft for consultation, as outlined below.

### Sector consultation

We ran the consultation from 08 April – 06 May 2022, capturing feedback from 45 individuals via:

- An online consultation session with National Participation Forum members (n=9)
- An open online consultation session with individuals working with and for young people, advertised through the Centre for Youth Impact's networks (n=17)
- Individual calls (n=2)
- An online feedback form (n=16).

Respondents represented a variety of roles, including CEO/directors, senior leadership, middle management and direct delivery staff. Unfortunately, we could not arrange a session with young people, although one young person (university-age) attended the open online session.

**Online sessions** began with a discussion about the language used in the sector, prompted by two questions:

1. *What terms do you use to describe your work to support young people to be heard?*

2. *What terms do you commonly come across – e.g., in guidance, funding and reporting – used to describe the work of supporting young people to be heard?*

Participants were then invited to join breakout groups to consider the following questions:

1. *Who is the typology for?*
2. *How can it aid the sector? (Can it?)*
3. *What would make it more useful?*
4. *How could you see it being used in the next 12 months? (In your organisation, in/outside the sector)*

Finally, participants were invited to try to fit examples of their practice into the typology, as a means of testing its useability.

**Participants sharing feedback via the online feedback form** answered the consultation questions set out below, as well as any other feedback they would like to.

1. What terms do you use to describe your work (and that of your peers and networks) to support young people to be heard (e.g., youth voice, participation), and how would you define these terms?
2. Is the typology clear? Does it include everything it needs to?
3. Does it feel like a useful tool that could aid your practice?
4. What would make it more valuable to you or the sector?
5. Can you see your youth voice practice reflected in the categories? Is there something you do that doesn't easily fit?
6. Do the categories feel clearly distinct, or is there some overlap/lack of clarity in the criteria?
7. Does the introduction clearly describe and explain the typology (and development process), or could it be improved in any way?

A comprehensive overview of the feedback gathered through the consultation can be found [here](#). This feedback was distilled into **three key areas** to carry forward and consider in the final draft: language, journey and process, and evaluation.

### **Language: clarity and de-jargonizing the document**

- Providing an understanding of where the typology fits with the various terminology that is used to describe youth voice practice
- Providing a definition of what we mean by youth voice, and the spectrum of activity that sits under this, including the role of 'action'
- Simplification of language
- Considering the user profile/scope of the document to ensure it is useable for the intended audience
- Revision of categories to ensure they:
  - Are simplified and understandable
  - Incorporate common forms of youth voice activity, e.g., youth boards, young trustees.

### **Journey - acknowledging youth voice as a 'process'**

- Articulating the 'why' of youth voice practice
- Reframing to acknowledge the cyclical and ongoing nature of this work, and inclusion of a wider set of engagement and participatory practices
- Acknowledge opportunities for co-creation and youth-led work.

### **Evaluation - What else do we need to provide so that the typology can support evaluation and learning?**

- Consider how the typology can support best practice and impact measurement, including:
  - Guidance for best practice - how do we know we are doing it well? (Caution that this depends on starting point and aims)
  - Guidance around equity
  - Appropriate evaluation methods.

### **Redrafting and refining**

Following the consultation, we undertook a number of steps to reach the final version of this typology:

- The learning from the consultation was collated and discussed in an internal team meeting to consider the next steps and actions for a re-draft
- A redrafted version was presented to the funders and a final iteration was developed
- This final draft was reviewed with the youth steering group to confirm language and definitions, and develop an accompanying resource relating to motivations and quality
- Consultation contributors were invited to add examples from their work, to bring the typology to life through practical application.



The Centre for Youth Impact is a community of organisations that work together to progress thinking and practice around impact measurement in youth work and services for young people. Our vision is for all young people to have access to high quality programmes and services that improve their life chances, by enabling embedded approaches to impact measurement that directly inform practice. Our work, therefore, is dedicated to three objectives, together with our expanded networks and other organisations from across the youth sector: curating the debate, building the movement and shaping the future.

**Find out more about the Centre for Youth Impact at [www.youthimpact.uk](http://www.youthimpact.uk) and follow us on @YouthImpactUK.**



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