

# AMPLIFY YOUTH VOICE



**KAZZUM ARTS**



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## USER NOTES

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- This guide is supported by animations, please click the play buttons to view them

## ABOUT KAZZUM ARTS

Kazzum Arts is a trauma-informed arts charity. Our mission is to use creativity to enable marginalised children and young people who have been impacted by trauma to feel seen, heard and valued. We do this by providing opportunities to explore creative expression and agency through multidisciplinary arts activities.

We work with young people who have experienced high levels of Adverse Childhood Experiences which have resulted in social, emotional and mental health issues, communication needs, disabilities, exclusion and displacement. Our programmes use creative activities as a means of building confidence, communication skills, creativity and engagement in learning, whilst also helping children and young people to develop healthy relationships with others and the world around them.

## ABOUT AMPLIFY

Across our programmes Kazzum Arts offers opportunities for children and young people to experience creativity and build relationships to others, whilst also highlighting social injustice and supporting young people to advocate for their needs and vision for their worlds. When working in this way there are many considerations which need to be explored and understood, to ensure that an ethical approach is upheld and maintained at every stage and within every structure of the organisation.

We conceived of Amplify to develop and explore methods of youth voice activity which contribute towards our strategic vision and create opportunities for children and young people to meaningfully influence Kazzum's future.

Over the course of the process, we shared practical approaches for inclusive working across our participatory programmes. It became clear to us that we needed to align our youth voice activity with our unique trauma-informed approach.

This guide is a milestone within our organisational development, offering a foundation for discussion, action and reflection. We believe that the implementation of Amplify will support all members of our community to contribute to the direction of Kazzum Arts.

## OUR COLLABORATORS

This project has been informed by the children and young people on our programmes, partner organisations and our pool of associate artists, through consultation, participation and reflective activities ([see page 20](#)).

## WHAT IS YOUTH VOICE?

Youth voice is widely interpreted as the process of seeing, hearing and valuing the diverse and unique perspectives of children and young people. When we honour the distinct lived experiences of children and young people and offer spaces for the sharing of opinions, beliefs, knowledge and skills, we may be able to amplify their concerns, build their potential and support future generations.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Many organisations have integrated youth voice into their strategic development, enabling young people to contribute their significant skill and wisdom, share power and make necessary changes to support the access and inclusion of all young people.

There are many existing models which describe youth voice engagement, for example **Treseder's Degrees of Participation** or **Hart's Ladder of Participation** both of which offer potential guidance for best practice and milestones for success. However, there can be limitations to these models when particular methods of engagement or outcomes are valued over others.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

As a trauma-informed charity addressing the nuances and complexities of youth voice, we are particularly aware of the challenges which can come from universal models which may not feel adaptive to the needs of young people as we meet them in our day-to-day work. Challenges that we have identified are:

- Kazzum's work takes place externally in partnership with community and education settings where we may not have strategic or practical influence.
- We can work with some children and young people for years with regular contact or others for half a day, often with little notice about when someone will transition to another space, or phase in their life, meaning lengthy processes may not feel accessible or suitable.
- Many of the young people we work with are living through adverse or challenging circumstances, which can impact their mental and physical health and preparedness to engage with adults unknown to them in strategic and reflective discussion.
- Often young people we collaborate with have additional educational, physical or cultural access needs, requiring sensitive preparation and consideration.
- We are working across an age range of 5 to 25 often without the involvement of parents or carers.

Every child or young person is a unique individual, deserving of dignity and respect. They offer incredible diversity of thought, feeling, experience and personality. We therefore believe that every youth voice process should be as individuated as possible, responding not just to who is in the room, but how they are in the room too.

# THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA

## WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Trauma can be understood as the body's natural stress response to overwhelming experiences and sensations. Protecting us from threat and danger, traumatic stress moves through the body, enabling us to respond to frightening and shocking encounters by mobilising away or towards danger or by shutting down completely.

## WHY IS TRAUMA IMPORTANT?

When trauma is unprocessed and unsupported, we can experience lifelong impacts to our physical and mental health, our relationships and life chances. We can experience traumatic overwhelm at any age and within any area of our lives.

Our experiences of the world shape how we grow and learn, think and feel. Events we encounter inform how we relate to others, inhabit our bodies, feel safe in environments, make decisions and understand ourselves.

The impact and importance of trauma-informed working has been evident for many decades across public health, education and social care sectors. As creative professionals working in environments impacted by trauma such as hospitals, schools and refugee settings, our ability to mentalise the impact of trauma on an individual and systemic scale is essential to our work.

## WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

With rising social inequality, mental ill-health and increasing risks associated with climate change, children and young people are facing unprecedented challenges. Understanding the impact of trauma and creating youth-centred trauma-informed approaches is an important part of supporting young people to navigate adversity with a strong sense of themselves and their unique place in the world.

## AT KAZZUM ARTS OUR TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH:

- Uses the creative arts to support wellbeing, self-expression and mental health.
- Embodies relationships to nurture safety and trust.
- Understands the impact of trauma to increase protective factors and support growth.
- Recognises systemic and structural factors to amplify the voices of children and young people.

We believe that our approach meets young people where they are and responds with the sensitivity and creativity necessary to support their ongoing growth. This guide is a part of meeting their needs.

# OUR TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

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## USES THE CREATIVE ARTS



We offer repeated opportunities to experience a creative environment, enriched with music, movement, art, and games.

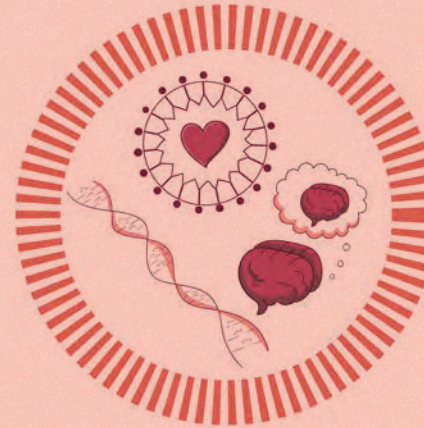
We contribute to an increased sense of wellbeing and positive mental health through shared imagination and self-expression.

## EMBODIES RELATIONSHIPS



We nurture connections between children, young people and artist practitioners, building bonds of safety and trust and encouraging friendship, support and empathy to flourish. We actively create an engaged community which nurtures, nourishes and supports.

## UNDERSTANDS THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA



We deliver holistic and responsive activities guided by our knowledge and insight into the complexities of trauma. We understand the biological, psychological and social factors which can determine healthy child development, working to increase protective factors and support growth.

## RECOGNISES SYSTEMIC AND STRUCTURAL FACTORS



We recognise that trauma and adversity is reflected within environments, throughout systems and across society, creating damaging conditions of inequity. Our work actively amplifies the voices and lived experiences of children and young people and raises awareness of the issues that matter to them most.

# PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

A trauma-informed approach is led by a set of key principles which, when embedded in an organisation can serve to democratise and distribute power between everyone within the organisational community, enabling the underpinning values to be made visible and shared with all.

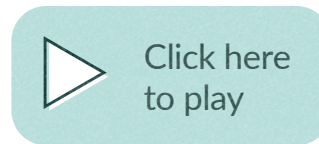
## PRINCIPLES OF CARE

The 6 key principles of trauma-informed care developed by **SAMHSA** (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) in the USA have been instrumental in the development of research and practical approaches which enable services to meet the needs of those impacted by trauma.

## ADOPTING PRINCIPLES IN YOUTH VOICE PRACTICE

Our Amplify strategy addresses these principles, exploring their application in the context of youth voice working. With each principle we have created a working definition, key considerations for practitioner development, animated content and reflected the voices of young people throughout.

There is no 'one size fits all' approach. The success of the implementation within policies, processes and delivery models will take significant time and effort if it is to be both sustainable and meaningful. We hope that this guide may offer an insight into the principles and how these may influence young people's engagement in youth voice activity.



# SAFETY

Our sense of safety is completely unique, based upon our individual life experiences. What feels safe to you may not feel safe to others.

Our nervous systems are primed to respond to stimuli and let us know if we are safe or in danger. This then influences how we feel, what we think, and how we behave.

The youth voice practitioner works towards understanding different physical, psychological and social safety needs, so they can support everyone to engage by maximising safety cues.

By knowing our own safety needs, and discovering the safety needs of others, we can support everyone to thrive.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- How do you know when you feel safe or unsafe?
- What might you be sensing/ feeling/ thinking/doing?
- What supports you to feel safe when participating in and facilitating youth voice activity?
- How can youth voice activity contribute to individual and collective understanding of safety?



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“It’s not a safe space just because you say it is.”

“Our life experience impacts your sense of safety. If you have experienced periods of unsafety, then your behaviour changes.”



“Safety is freedom. Unsafety is looking over your shoulder.”





# TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trust is created through mutual respect and connection. Relationships which offer commitment, transparency and honesty support trust to flourish.

By trusting ourselves we can develop trust in others including individuals, groups, organisations and the systems which influence our lives.

Youth voice practitioners will build trust through repeated experiences, offering young people clear explanations about what they are doing and why. Managing expectations and not over-promising will support everyone to build trust over time.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- How do you build trusting relationships with young people?
- How do you know when you are trusted by others?
- How might you resolve a breach of trust between people?
- How do you build self-trust?



[▶ Click here to play](#)

“Trust depends on the experiences that you have.”



Practitioners who do what they say they are going to do and maintain clear and fair boundaries for all, will offer enhanced opportunities for young people to develop trust too.

“Be openminded, trustworthy and friendly.”



“It’s not about what you say it’s how you express yourself.”



# CHOICE

When we are offered transparent and fair opportunities to make choices we can experience a sense of our individual and collective agency.

The right to choose is an important factor in our wellbeing. It contributes to us feeling valued, considered and respected to make decisions about the things that impact us directly.

The youth voice practitioner considers how to offer consistent opportunities for decision-making, whereby fair and realistic choices can be made by all. Outcomes are acknowledged and actioned through dialogue and consultation, supporting young people to take ownership and share responsibility.

“Too much choice can be a bad thing.”



“Everyone has the right to choose.”



“It’s important to have opportunities to give our opinion and be heard”



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- What supports you to make choices?
- What is the difference between a choice and a decision?
- How does choice and decision-making feature in your practice?
- How can shared decision-making be enhanced in your youth voice practice?



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# COLLABORATION

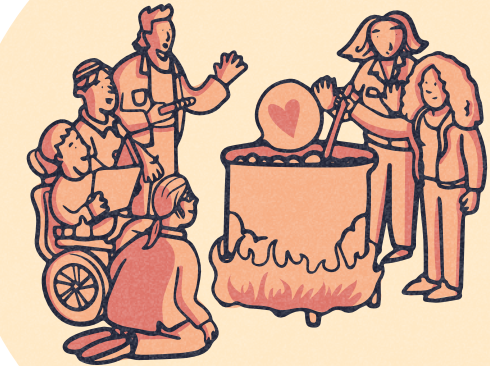
When we collaborate, we share power and responsibility, supporting everyone to contribute and feel valued.

Vital to the process of collaboration is the opportunity to communicate our needs and experiences so that we may work together with mutual awareness and connection.

Youth voice practitioners will ensure that the collaborative process is transparent and visible to all, working alongside young people and encouraging peer support throughout. Sharing language and approaches will enable everyone to engage in the collaborative nature of youth voice activity.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- How do you collaborate with young people?
- What are the conditions necessary for meaningful collaboration?
- How can you tell when a collaboration is successful?
- How can you name and visualise the collaborative process?



Click here to play

"Listen to each other and respect each other."



"Collaboration means being able to achieve more than on your own. All together we can achieve anything."



"Sharing different opinions to achieve one goal."



# EMPOWERMENT

When we feel empowered, we recognise our strengths, which can support us to have agency in our lives.

Our sense of empowerment will influence our feelings of self-esteem, our relationships with others and our engagement within society.

When we are empowered, we can advocate for our needs and support others to feel empowered through mutual respect, ethical approaches and collaboration.

The youth voice practitioner will recognise the complexities of power dynamics and develop co-creative processes which avoid harm. This can support young people to experience empowerment and autonomy.

“When I’m empowered I gain confidence to talk to people and raise my voice.”



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- What supports your empowerment?
- What influence might power dynamics have within your practice?
- How do you encourage young people to experience their empowerment?
- What does empowerment look like to you? How might this differ to other people?



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“To be empowered means to believe in yourself and having someone who reminds you that you can make it.”



“I’ve learnt that if you go to a new country, you can try and get help and people will help you.”



# CULTURAL AWARENESS

Developing knowledge, skills and attitudes around cultural awareness is an ongoing process which requires sensitivity as we learn, grow and reflect together.

The youth voice practitioner will be aware of their own culture and unique identity, reflecting upon how their values and beliefs influence their practice. This self-awareness will support their readiness to understand others and engage with people with different lived experiences.

Increased empathy and awareness will allow space for everyone to contribute to a society which values the experiences, cultures and identities of all.

“It’s about new ways of learning from one another.”



## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- What supports the development of your cultural awareness?
- How do your values and beliefs influence your youth voice practice?
- How do you relate to young people with cultural awareness?
- How do you encourage young people to explore cultural awareness and the value of diversity?



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“Make a welcoming space. Be open to people whoever they may be.”



“It is important to share our experiences.”



# CYCLE OF CO-PRODUCTION

Central to youth voice and the trauma-informed principles of care is the concept of co-production – whereby people share power to make joint contributions, offer mutual support and experience agency.

Throughout Kazzum’s work we encounter participants, facilitators and partners at different stages of a shared process. Transparent and accessible communication around co-production is therefore a necessary part of our youth voice process to enable meaningful engagement.

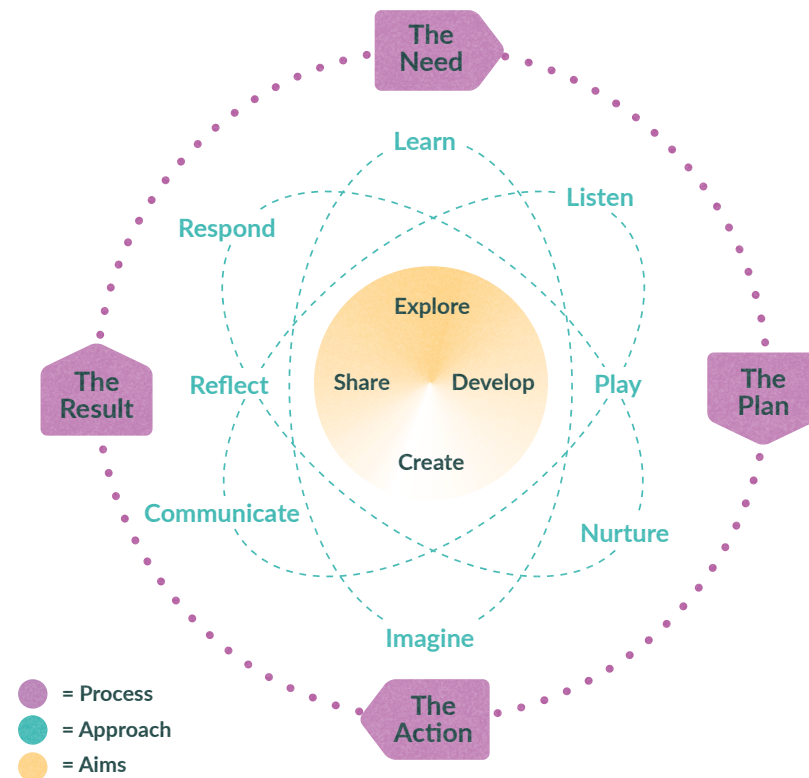
We have developed our cycle of co-production to communicate our trauma-informed process.

## IN CREATING THE CYCLE, WE AIM TO:

- Express the flexibility of the creative process, as it plays out for groups and individuals.
- Describe activity as it unfolds over time.
- Reflect the dynamic values and approaches which aid access and inclusion.
- Support everyone’s responsibilities and accountability.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

- How can the cycle of co-production support your youth voice practice?
- What are the implications of visualising co-production in this way?
- Who might benefit from sharing this approach widely?

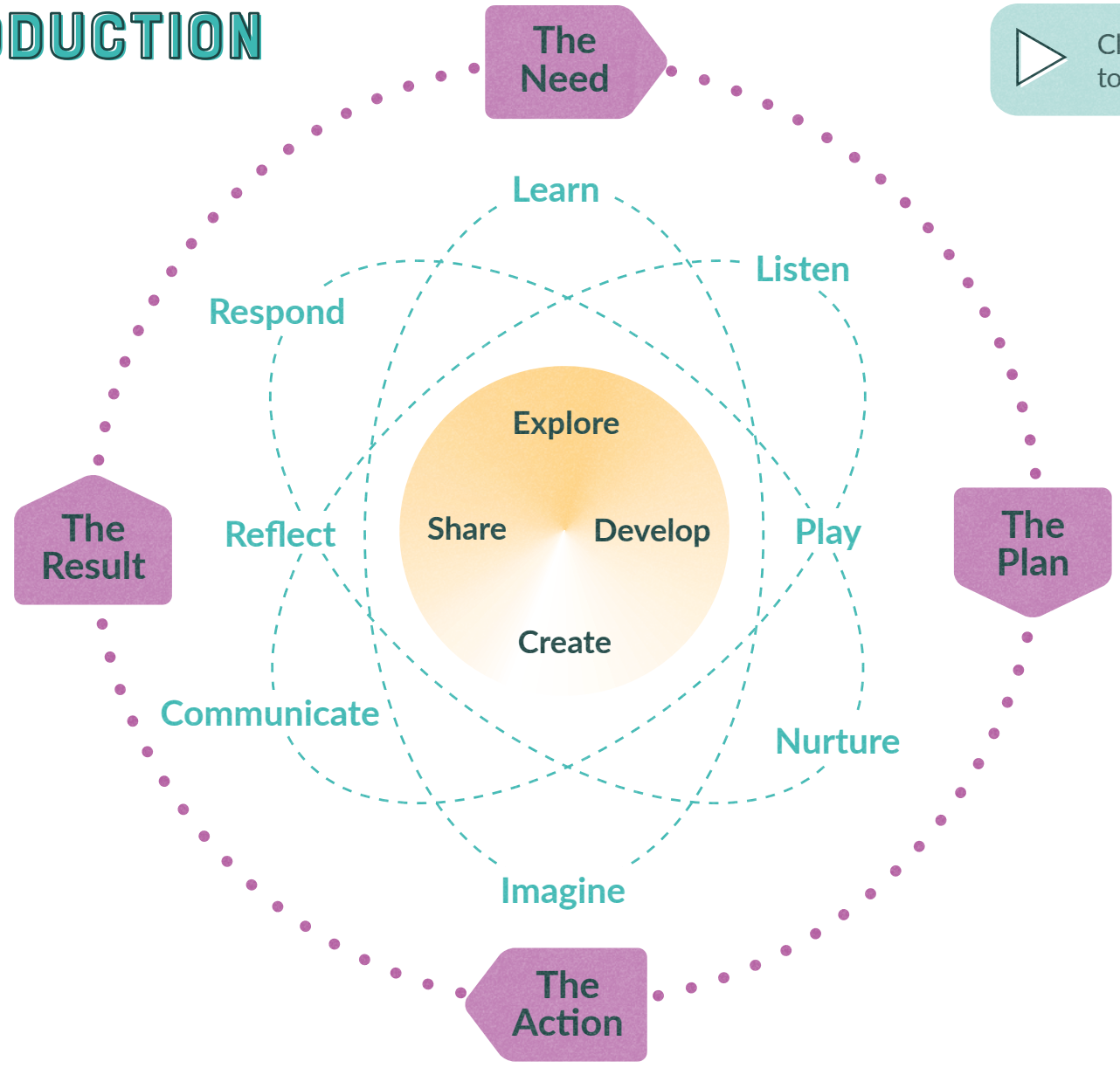


# CYCLE OF CO-PRODUCTION

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Our cycle of co-production offers a visualisation of the creative process, working within and towards the 6 trauma-informed principles of care.

The cycle needs to be enacted by everyone within the organisation including young people, staff and trustees in order for it to make the deepest and most systemic impact.



- = Process
- = Approach
- = Aims

# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Adopting the 6 trauma-informed principles of care within youth voice settings encourages facilitators to reflect and respond to the nuances of collaborative practice and co-production.

Kazzum have created the following practice guidance to support everyone to access and engage within small or large groups, across age ranges and within a variety of settings.

This guidance has been formulated to develop the principles of Safety, Trust, Collaboration, Choice, Empowerment and Cultural Awareness within youth voice activities.

## A CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT:

Practitioners who ensure that the youth voice workshop environment is creative and engaging will stimulate shared imagination and support playful and curious thinking. Activities which integrate the creative arts into decision-making, including music, visual arts, drama and games for example, can alleviate pressure and create a holistic youth voice space.

## SETTING CLEAR OBJECTIVES:

Practitioners who offer transparency about the nature, strategic purpose and intended benefit of youth voice processes will support young people to feel trusted and responsible for the many different outcomes. Ensuring young people have access to the aims and objectives of the activities can provide containing boundaries to support everyone. Reflecting together on progress within the process will create accountability and encourage ownership too.

## COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIOUR:

Youth voice activities offer young people opportunities to experience responsibility and power, which could feel unfamiliar to some. This may influence how a young person then thinks and feels about themselves and others in the space, both positively and negatively.

The role of the youth voice facilitator is to support young people to identify and express their needs, no matter how they are being communicated. Dan Hughes' PACE model for example, can remind practitioners to stay connected to others through Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathic encounters and support everyone to engage.





# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS:

Facilitators should be mindful not to make false promises, or unfairly raise expectations. They should inform young people of the limitations and boundaries of what is possible, whilst also promoting the imagination and resourcefulness required to solve problems and develop incredible outcomes.

## SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT:

Practitioners who attend to accessible opportunities for participation will support all young people to engage. Resources such as visual aids, sensory approaches and the use of clear language will help to communicate complex ideas or instructions. Offering appropriate lengths of time for activities, encouraging everyone to take their turn and using praise throughout will support everyone to feel confident and involved.

## OFFERING QUESTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS:

Youth voice practitioners will offer questions and instructions with conscious awareness. Open-ended questions offer people greater space to think, wonder and imagine, whereas closed questions – which usually result in a firm Yes or No answer – can sometimes be leading, or shut possibilities down.

## MAKING DECISIONS:

Youth voice facilitators make sure that young people are offered realistic and fair opportunities to make choices on the things that will influence their participation and engagement. They should also respect the right of a young person to offer challenges to the process or change their mind as their participation deepens.

## LISTENING:

Be aware that when you are offering young people space to reflect, they will need extra room for listening. Youth voice practitioners will avoid pre-planning their responses, 'filling in the gaps', ending someone's sentences or turning the conversation back to themselves. Using non-verbal communication to indicate that you are listening will offer young people the space to speak freely without judgement.

## RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP:

Sharing responsibilities throughout youth voice sessions will support young people to take ownership of the process. Delegating tasks and encouraging participants to self-elect for the preparation, facilitation, documentation and evaluation of the activity, will model shared power and encourage everyone to have agency within the process.

# PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

## CREATING CLOSURE:

A well-managed session will offer appropriate time and encouragement at the end for everyone to feedback on their experiences and achievements. Listening to what everyone shares and responding to the thoughts and feelings of the group will increase youth voice and ownership.

## ACTIONING AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

The youth voice practitioner should identify and share how the work of young people will be actioned. Progress should be relayed back to the group with updates about how the youth voice activity has contributed to the ongoing development of the task at hand.

## CAPTURING AND KEEPING TRACK:

Youth voice practitioners should make sure that they are building in formats for recording and documenting the many conversations that will arise throughout the process. Responsibilities can be delegated appropriately for capturing the many voices within the conversation to ensure authenticity and accountability. Take care to make legible notes, recording voices, using verbatim language, photos and video can capture the magic of a youth voice process. Always be mindful of gaining young people's consent to have their thoughts and feelings documented and shared.



# SUMMARY

The Amplify process has been an impactful experience for everyone at Kazzum Arts. Across the company the dialogue and exchange of ideas challenged our assumptions and offered us an opportunity to connect and reflect on our shared vision of youth voice within our organisation, and more broadly too.

The 6 trauma-informed principles of care can be a supportive framework for developing meaningful and engaging relationships. We believe that the principles of safety, trustworthiness, collaboration, choice, empowerment and cultural awareness are essential for building resilience and creating systemic changes which respect the diverse and dynamic voices of young people.

Through reflective workshops with artists and young people we have grown to appreciate the nuances of the 6 trauma-informed principles of care and how they are shaped by each person’s lived experiences. Embedding these principles into an organisation will take time and care in order to be effective. It will require development, support and consistency to build understanding and consensus so that the opinions of young people are centred.

Amplify offers a framework for interpreting the trauma-informed principles of care. It also communicates our cycle of co-production, a visualisation of collaborative practice which, when used alongside the suggested practice techniques, can support everyone to deepen their understanding of the creative process and their vital place within it.

When we tune into the thoughts, feelings and experiences of children and young people from a non-judgemental and curious perspective, we can build the necessary empathy to take on board their viewpoint, connect with compassion and ensure that everyone feels seen, heard and valued. This guide represents our commitment for the future of Kazzum to be rooted in the thoughts and ideas of young people.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of the children and young people who contributed their thoughts and opinions to this piece of work. We could not have done it without your input.

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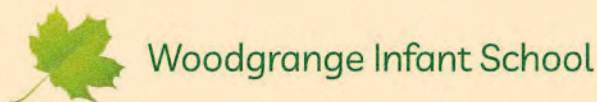
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## IN COLLABORATION WITH



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For more information about our work, or to get in touch visit [kazzum.org](http://kazzum.org)