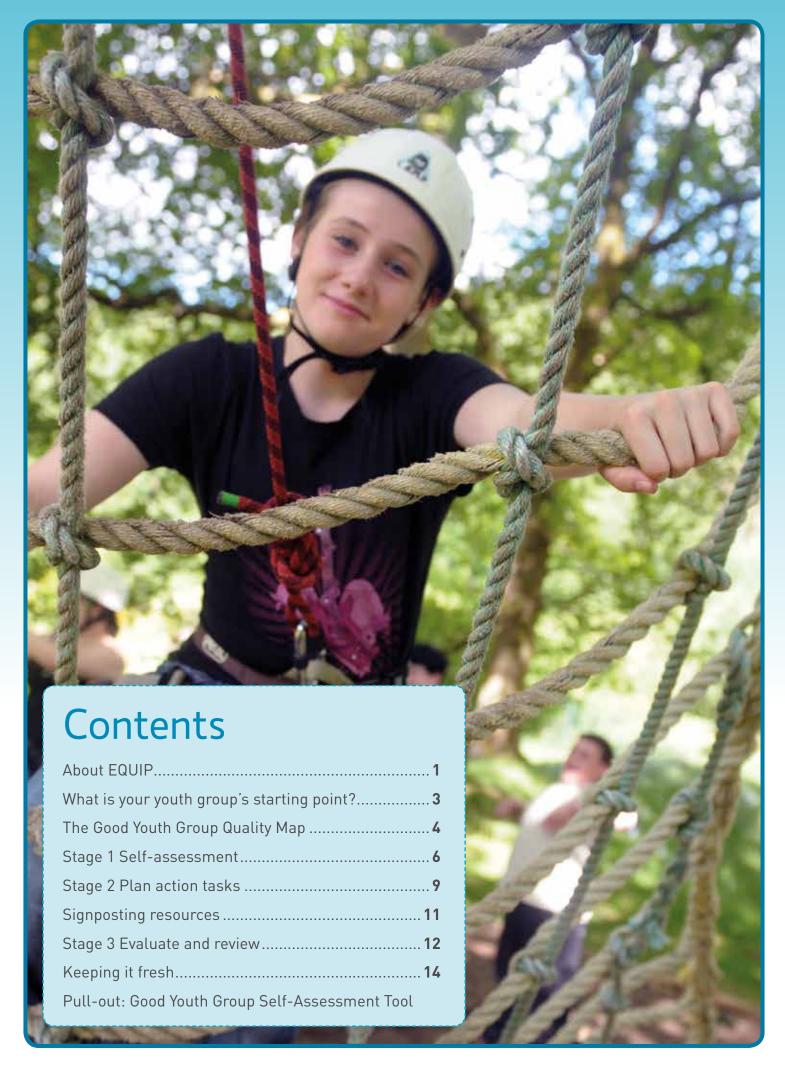


- "We want to know that we are on the right track."
- "We want to know how we can improve and what our next steps are."

VOLUNTARY LEADERS





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About EQUIP

EQUIP is a practical toolkit for improving practice in voluntary and community youth groups. At its heart is a focus on the needs and outcomes of young people and the actions a youth group can take to develop, support and improve these outcomes.

Engaging with the EQUIP process will enable youth groups to improve how they run their group and the opportunities available for young people by:

- Learning about what makes a high quality youth group.
- + Self-assessing their good youth group practice.
- + Accessing high quality resources and learning materials specific to their needs.

Background

EQUIP was developed by Youth Scotland and is based on the quality framework produced during consultation with youth workers, volunteers, young leaders and voluntary youth groups and clubs across Scotland¹. They told us that a framework or guidance tool would help them know how to develop quality youth groups for young people.

The quality framework that was developed used existing frameworks for young people's wellbeing (Getting It Right For Every Child or GIRFEC), for young people's learning (Curriculum for Excellence or CfE) and for the management of organisations and groups (Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations or PQASSO) to shape a set of indicators and self-assessment questions. The quality framework also recognised that youth groups are at different stages with different needs: they may be starting out/up and running/established. In EQUIP this framework is called The Good Youth Group Self-Assessment Tool.

Who is EQUIP for?

EQUIP is for youth groups and organisations who want to improve how they support young people. Whether you are a small local group led and run by volunteers; or a youth organisation with paid staff; or a local authority youth group; EQUIP will have something for you. The most important ingredient for getting involved is that you want to learn and improve.

What does EQUIP involve?

In a nutshell, EQUIP involves youth groups in a discussion where everyone gets a say in how the youth group is doing, what are its strengths and how can it improve. The discussion is based on 10 quality practice areas such as: establishing the group's ethos, purpose and needs. At the end of the discussion, groups are asked to select one quality area to work on to improve their group, and are signposted to resources and training to help them.

¹ A quality framework for voluntary youth groups? (2013) Youth Scotland – Report from the initial stage of the Quality Framework project funded by the Scottish Government as part of the Voluntary Action Plan.



How to get started?

Firstly, it is a good idea to read through the EQUIP toolkit. You will find simple and easy to use instructions and signposting to Youth Scotland and other resources and training to support the areas that you want to work on. We have also included some practical examples of how you can improve your youth groups.

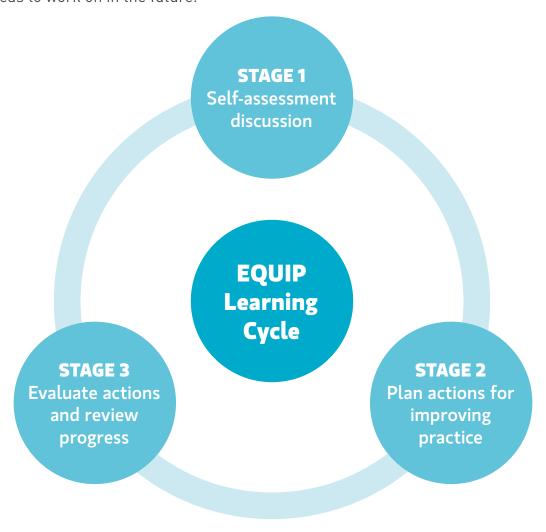
The EQUIP Learning Cycle

EQUIP uses a three-stage learning cycle to guide you through a series of activities:

Stage 1 Self-assessment – Groups carry out a self-assessment discussion and decide on one quality area to focus on.

Stage 2 Plan actions – Groups create an action plan to help them learn about, develop and improve their youth group.

Stage 3 Evaluate and review – Groups reflect on and evaluate their progress and identify new areas to work on in the future.



Finally, EQUIP works best if the activities involve others including young people, committee members, youth workers and volunteers. You may want to form a small working group to do this, or you may want to consult with the whole club membership.

3

What is your youth group's starting point?

EQUIP recognises that youth groups are all at different stages with different development needs.

The **starting out** stage requires what may be described as 'lead in' or preparation activity. Getting the youth group sorted at an early stage enables volunteers to better engage with young people when they open their doors.

Once a group is **up and running**, organising the youth group becomes an ongoing activity. This means that more attention can be given to young people, their involvement and in developing the programme, activities and events.

Even for the **established** youth group there are challenges such as how do we keep it fresh?

Have a look at the example youth groups opposite. Do you recognise these stages? Now have a go at working out your own starting point by answering the questions below.

What is your starting point?

Circle each answer that best describes your group.

- How would you describe your youth group?
 Starting out Up and running Established
- **2. How many young people are involved?**Less than 10 10-50 More than 50
- **3. What are their age groups?**Under 10 10-13 years 14-16 years Over 17
- **4. What is the male/female balance?**More boys than girls 50/50 More girls than boys
- **5. How many volunteers are involved?**Less than 5 5-20 More than 20

starting out... A group of parents and local people have got together and feel that the community would benefit if there were a place for young people to go and activities for them to get involved in. There are a number of people willing to help out but the question is:

- ♣ How do we set up a youth group?
- Are there any requirements?
- What help is available?

VP AND RUNNING... The Red Sky
Youth Group has been running
for about 2 years. There are good
numbers of primary and early
secondary ages but the club finds it
harder to attract older teens. There is
a small core group of volunteers who
run the club. Things are ticking along
nicely but their question is:

- + How can we improve the group for young people?
- + How can we attract older teens?
- + How can we get more volunteers?

ESTABLISHED... The Corner Youth Group has been running for 15 years, young people are involved across all age groups and there is a strong team of volunteers. The leadership of the club is managed through a voluntary committee of parents and young people. Sorted! But the question is:

- + How do we develop the club further?
- How do we keep it fresh and responsive for young people?



The Good Youth Group Quality Map

The Good Youth Group Quality Map consists of 10 practice areas, all of which contribute to improved outcomes for young people and the group. Each practice area and its outcomes hold the key to what you need to do to develop and improve your youth group.

Let's take practice area 10 -

Celebrating successes and recognising achievements. This might seem like an extra but a focus on positive feedback really helps to motivate everyone. In addition, finding ways to share your good news stories more widely raises awareness about what the group is doing, changes attitudes towards young people and increases support. And, an end of year party is a great way to celebrate and have fun together. For now, have a look at all the practice areas and outcomes to see if you recognise things that you are already doing and maybe a few that you are not.

Area 10 :Celebrating successes and recognising achievements

What can we do?

- → Introduce a 'Good News' newsletter for sharing what's going on at the club.
- Find opportunities for inviting the community into the club.
- Hold a summer party or celebration event to recognise achievements and say thank you.

Stage 1 of EQUIP provides a more systematic way for you to review your practice.



The Good Youth Group Quality Map

	A good youth group involves	Outcomes
1	Establishing the group's ethos, purpose and needs	 Group has clear purposes in response to local needs. Young people feel included and welcome. Group promotes equality and diversity.
2	Providing a programme of activities, projects and events for young people	 There is a programme of activities and projects that are attractive to young people, relevant, safe and well organised. Young people are involved in organising activities and projects. Young people choose to participate and have fun with their peers. Young people have opportunities to become confident individuals. Projects and programmes are reviewed and evaluated against planned objectives.
3	Working together with young people	 Young people contribute to decision making. Young people take on responsibilities. Young people feel supported and are successful learners.
4	Safeguarding children and young people	 Group is a safe place to be for all young people, leaders, volunteers and staff. Group is compliant with the requirements for safeguarding children and young people.
5	Communicating with young people, parents, leaders and others	 Young people, parents, leaders and others feel informed about what's going on in the group, and, They are consulted on the areas that affect them. Group engages with its local community.
6	Managing volunteers	 Volunteers are clear about their role and are aware of the policies and procedures that operate in the group. Volunteers feel supported and have opportunities for developing their skills.
7	Managing staff	 Staff are clear about their role and the terms of their employment. Group is compliant with employment law.
8	Managing funding and finances	 Group raises funds for new opportunities. Group is compliant with the financial requirements of its status.
9	Maintaining good governance through committees or boards	 Group involves young people, leaders and others in decision-making processes. Committee members are aware of their role and responsibilities. Committee members and senior volunteers have opportunities to develop their leadership skills and expertise. Group is compliant with its legal responsibilities.
10	Celebrating successes and recognising achievements	 Young people's achievements and contributions are recognised. Volunteers are thanked and valued. Group is recognised as a good place to be.



Stage 1 Self-assessment

In this section we will explain what's involved in the selfassessment activity and provide some guidance on organising and facilitating a self-assessment discussion in your group. At the end of this section you will be ready to complete The Good Youth Group Self-assessment Tool.

How to carry out the self-assessment discussion:

- 1. Get a group of 4-8 people (or more) together. Include: young people, committee members, staff and volunteers.
- **2.** Ask someone to be the discussion organiser see the self-assessment discussion plan opposite.
- **3.** Take each of the practice areas in turn and discuss your group's response to the questions.
- **4.** Use the traffic lights method to rate your strengths and weaknesses.

To help you get started have a look at the example on the next page which shows how one group have answered questions about how they celebrate success and recognise achievements

Traffic lights rating method

We need to work on this as a priority!

An improvement here would make a big difference.

This is a strength, but we have ideas to improve it further.

The 'gold' standard – keep doing what you are doing and think about sharing it with others.



The Red Sky 'Up and Running' Group

First off, the group agreed that they were quite good at celebrating success – they have a summer barbecue event where they say thank you to the volunteers and they give out club certificates to their young leaders, but they could widen the event by inviting parents, family and local contacts. However, this made them think about the second question. They don't currently have a young leaders' programme or training. This is something that they would like to explore further, and it might be a way to attract older teenagers. The last question is something they have not thought about, but for a starter they could be more pro-active and invite family and local contacts into the group more.

Red Sky Group self-assessment results

A good youth group involves	Self-assessment questions:	What are our strengths and weaknesses?		
Celebrating successes and	How do you celebrate success and recognise voluntary contributions?			
recognising achievements	Do you offer young people awards or accredited learning programmes?			
	How do you promote the group in the wider community?			

How to organise the self-assessment discussion

Q. What does the self-assessment discussion involve?

The discussion is very straightforward. It requires someone to bring the group together and to take them through the self-assessment questions. It is a good idea to share out the tasks involved such as: organising the meeting and inviting people; leading people through the discussion; and recording the answers for the group.

What can we do?

- Find out about award schemes for young leaders - Amazing Things.
- + Introduce Dynamic Youth
 Awards or the Youth
 Achievement Awards.

Q. Who should lead the discussion and what is their role?

This can be anyone from the group, although they will need to stand back from becoming too involved in the discussion. A good idea is to think of someone from outside of the group such as a youth worker or volunteer from another group. They need to be able to:

- → Manage the process and keep the discussion on track.
- + Ensure that everyone is included in the discussion.



Q. Who should be involved?

Think about the people involved in the group – young people, committee members, volunteers and staff. You should try to include a mix of these people in the discussion. As a guide, try to aim for a group of 4-8 people. Alternatively, you may want to widen the discussion to all group members. In this case the smaller group can act as a working group to guide and manage the process.

Q. How long should we plan for and when?

Choose a time for your discussion that is suitable for as many people as possible, for example building it into a normal club night. You will need about 1½ hours to complete the discussion. Remember, once people get talking about something they are interested in they may need prompting to ensure that they complete all the questions.

Q. What resources will we need?

Minimal resources are needed, just a good space to hold the discussion without too many distractions, a group of people, someone to lead the discussion, and copies of the EQUIP Self-Assessment Tool at the end of this guide.

What can we do?

- If young people did not enjoy the activity – change it!
- Evaluate activities using games, discussion, or a show of hands.
- Carry out a small survey to find out what young people want.

Self-Assessment discussion plan

- 1. Welcome the group and if there are people who don't know each other, ask everyone to give brief introductions.
- 2. Explain that the purpose of the session is to discuss and complete the EQUIP Self-Assessment tool.
- 3. Use the pull-out: The Good Youth Group Self-Assessment Tool to guide your group's discussions. You may want to ensure that everyone has a copy of the pull-out at the end of this guide.
- **4.** Encourage discussion between group members.
- **5.** When you are happy that you have fully explored the self-assessment questions and recorded your strengths and weaknesses, you are ready to decide what to focus your actions on.
- **6.** Thank participants for their time and contributions, and arrange to meet again to check your progress.



Stage 2 Plan actions tasks

In this section we will help you to decide your next steps, based on your self-assessment results. We will show you how to make an action plan and will signpost you to resources and training that can support your learning.

Get started

- 1. Look at your completed self-assessment tool.
- 2. Discuss and choose ONE practice area where you think it would make a big difference to your group if you made some improvements or took some action.
- **3.** Agree at least ONE action or task that you think will achieve this improvement.

What can we do?

- Create a list of jobs for young people to help out on club night.
- Develop a buddy system: older members looking out for new and younger members.

Make an action plan

The actions or tasks that your group design provide a sequence of activities. These are likely to involve a mix of things such as: seeking information; learning or training; and practicing or piloting activities. It is helpful to plan a timetable as a way to check your progress as you complete these activities. Have

What can we do?

- + Set up a working group of young people to plan a new project.
- + Apply to CashBack for Communities Small Grants Scheme.

a go at creating your action plan by completing the template on the next page.

Ideas and signposts to resources and training

There are a number of ways that you can get ideas and learn about the actions or task you are planning including accessing information and resources, training, and learning from another group. Local support and guidance is also available from national organisations like Youth Scotland's network of area associations. The next page signposts and links the Good Youth Group Quality Map directly to resources from www.youthworkessentials.org and other Youth Scotland resources and training. It also includes links to resources available from other organisations.





Your action plan What practice are you working on? What improvement or development do you want to achieve?					
When will you start? When will What will you do?	you finish?)			
Tasks or actions:	When?	Who is involved?			

Signposting Resources for Youth Group Development

A good y	outh group involves:	Youth Scotland Resources and Training	Other Resources	
1	Establishing a youth group	 How to start a successful youth group Planning for young people's needs Attracting volunteers 	 The purpose and nature of youth work (YouthLink Scotland) About equalities online toolkit (Glasgow's Learning) 	
2	Programme and activity planning	 How to plan a programme in Up and Running Planning outings and residential in Safe and Sound Outcomes for Youth Work CashBack Small Grants - Mini Evaluation Toolkit 	 Glasgow Community Toolkit is full of useful information about how to set up and run a voluntary group and its activities. Evaluation Support Scotland has lots of free evaluation support guides. 	
3	Working with young people	 Youth work and role of the youth worker in Up and Running Activities for supporting youth participation Supporting young people in decision-making Involvement Training Programme for leaders and young people 	Young people, informal education and association an article by Mark Smith, YMCA George Williams College, London (2001)	
4	Safeguarding children and young people	◆ Safe and Sound includes policies and procedures, health and safety, PVG scheme and legislation.	Disclosure services (Volunteer Scotland)	
5	Communication	CashBack Communications Toolkit includes how to promote your projects and activities.	 CashBack Communications Toolkit includes how to promote your projects and activities. Community Engagement Toolkit 	
6	Managing volunteers	 All about youth work volunteering Volunteer Induction Volunteer policies and recruitment, selection, induction and supporting volunteers in Safe and Sound 	Volunteer good practice guides [Volunteer Scotland]	
7	Managing staff	How to employ and manage staff in Employment Law	Useful links to employment practices (SCVO)	
8	Managing funding and finances	 Fundraising in Up and Running How to apply to CashBack Small Grants Scheme 	 Charity accounts and financial reporting (SCVO) CashBack for Communities Small Grants Scheme Finding funding for your group (SCVO) 	
9	Maintaining good governance	 Management committees, constitutions, legal structures and charitable status in <u>Up and Running</u> 	Setting up a charity (SCVO) Committee meetings and AGMs (SCVO) Committee roles and responsibilities (SCVO)	
10	Celebrating success and recognition	 Dynamic Youth Awards for young people 10-14 yrs Youth Achievement Awards for young people 14+ 	+ Amazing Things – a guide to youth awards in Scotland (Awards Network)	



Stage 3 Evaluate and Review

When you have completed your actions or task it is a good idea to take stock:

- ◆ To evaluate the impact what has improved and what needs to happen now.
- + To review what the group has learned what worked well and any challenges.

In this section we highlight some simple tools that you can use to review and evaluate your EQUIP experiences. You are encouraged to use and adapt these tools to fit your purpose. Also visit Youth Work Essentials – Outcomes for Youth Work and Evaluation Support Scotland

Tools for evaluating impact

Impact is all about change and the difference you are making. In the EQUIP process this means: How has the youth group improved as a result of your actions? What changes can you see? You can answer these questions in a number of ways:

- ♣ By asking for feedback from young people, volunteers, staff, and parents.
- + By monitoring the youth group for change:
 - Is there a more welcoming atmosphere at the group?
 - Is the new activity programme attracting new young people?
 - Have you attracted some new volunteers?

Evaluating what you do also provides valuable information about what needs improving next. Here is a simple feedback tool that you can adapt to help you evaluate change.

About your youth group

Purpose: To gather feedback from young people about their youth group.

Make the following into small 'postcards'. Ask young people to complete and hand in at the end of club night. You can adapt the card for different groups e.g. volunteers, parents.

Your views are important ...

- 1. Which of these words describe what you think or feel about the youth group?
- 2. Circle as many words as apply to you.
- **3.** Add new comments of your own in the spaces.

DIFFICULT TO MEET PEOPLE	HELPS ME TO TRY NEW THINGS
STIMULATING	GOOD ACTIVITIES
BORING	CARING
	MEET PEOPLE STIMULATING

What one change would improve your youth group?

Tools for reviewing learning

Reviewing is an opportunity to look back at what you have done, your successes and challenges. It is also a chance to identify learning points for future projects. Here are some easy to use tools for you to try at your next group review.

10 key facts

Purpose: To identify what you did during an activity or project from the start to the finish.

- 1. On a flip chart list all the things you did as a group to achieve your task.
- 2. Now number the tasks in the order they happened a bit like telling a story.
- **3.** Try to tell the story about what you did in 10 key facts.

Recipe for success

Purpose: To reflect on achievements and challenges and to identify how they contribute to group success.

- 1. As a group, discuss and agree:
 - What did we achieve through this action or task?
 - What were our key challenges?
 - How did we respond to these challenges?
- 2. Now have a go at designing your group's recipe for success by highlighting the 'ingredients' that helped your group in their task.
- **3.** Your recipe will be useful learning for future activities or tasks.

Reflecting with images

Purpose: To explore and share feelings and perceptions in the group related to a particular activity or task.

Recipe for success

- ♣ An open mind, friendliness and fun are the basis for this recipe.
- Approach the task with confidence and knowledge in your own ability.
- Add relevant information and training with support.
- Add good communication and the ability to relate to others.
- Mix the ingredients with consistency and reliability and encourage your recipe to grow and develop according to its needs.

Finally, be prepared to **suck it and see** before setting your recipe in stone.

- 1. Collect a bundle of postcards or pictures from a magazine.
- **2.** Pass round the pictures for the group to look at.
- **3.** Each person picks an image or images that reflect how they feel about the group's achievements and say why they picked this image.









Keeping it fresh

We hope that EQUIP has started your group on a continuous cycle of learning and improvement. Whether you are a new group starting out or an established youth group, this opportunity for 'keeping it fresh' will ensure you provide quality opportunities and outcomes for young people.

'Keeping it fresh' is what youth leaders and young people told us was critical for youth groups. It means: having new ideas; taking on new challenges; introducing new activities; keeping up-to-date; encouraging new people to get involved and making connections with the people and organisations that can help. They also highlighted pointers for how youth groups can continue to improve by:

- "Keep asking young people what they want."
- "Ensure young people's ideas are included in taking the group forward."

VOLUNTARY LEADERS

- + Involving young people in planning and decision making being young people led.
- → Developing young people as leaders provides learning opportunities for young people and helps to increase the volunteer capacity of the group.
- → Feedback and consultation with young people and parents to learn and improve. Thinking about an open day as a way to get input, feedback and raise awareness of the group.

Finally, groups highlighted the important **role of learning and training** whether it was peer sharing or accessing resources and materials or attending training. This is important for ensuring that the youth group and its leaders maintain and refresh their knowledge and skills.

We wish you and your youth group good luck as you continue to use **EQUIP**, and we welcome comments and feedback on the EQUIP Self-Assessment Tool.

Further support

If you would like further support and guidance to help your group to use EQUIP, please contact Youth Scotland:

Youth Scotland Balfour House 19 Bonnington Grove Edinburgh EH6 4BL

T: 0131 554 2561

www.youthscotland.org.uk

The Good Youth Group Self-assessment Tool

Get a group of 4-8 people (or more) together. Include: young people, committee members, staff and volunteers.

This is a strength, but we

would make a big

difference.

this as a priority!

have ideas to improve it

further.

keep doing what you are

The 'gold' standard –

- Ask someone to organise the discussion see p7.
- Take each quality practice area and discuss your group's response to the questions.
- Use traffic lights to rate strengths and weaknesses and record your notes.

A good v	A good youth aroup	Self-assessment questions:	What are our	Notes	doing and think abo
involves	S		strengths and weaknesses?		
-	Establishing the	What values guide your group?			
-	group's ethos, purpose and	How do you know there is a need for the group?			
	needs	How do you ensure that young people feel welcome?			
		How do you promote equality and inclusion?			
C	Providing a	What do you do to ensure that activities and projects are well organised?			
1	programme of activities, projects and	How does your group deal with problems or complaints such as behaviour at the youth group?			
	events for young	Do your facilities and equipment provide a good environment for youth work?			
	people	How do you involve young people in planning and organising activities and projects?			
		How do you encourage young people to make active choices?			
		How do you evaluate your projects, programmes and activities?			
C	Working with	What responsibilities do young people have within the group?			
7	young people	How can young people contribute to decision making?			
		Do you have a recognised programme to support young leaders such as Involvement Training ?			
7	Safeguarding	Do you have a child protection policy?			
1	children and young people	Are youth workers and volunteers checked through the PVG scheme?			
	-	Are volunteers trained in child protection issues?			
		Where do you get advice if there is a problem?			





Do you have a newsletter? When do you consult with young people and parents? How do you encourage people to contribute ideas? How do you connect with your local community?	What are the group's volunteer policies and procedures? Do you have a volunteer induction programme or pack? What opportunities do volunteers have to develop their skills, knowledge and expertise?	Do staff have a job description, a contract and a named contact or supervisor? Do you have a system to ensure that you comply with employment law? Where do you get advice if there is a problem?	How successful are you at generating new funds for the group? Do you have a suitably experienced treasurer? Where do you get advice if there is a problem?	Do people know how the group is led and who is on the committee? Do new committee members have information about their role and responsibilities? How do committee members and senior volunteers develop their leadership skills? Where do you get advice if there is a problem?	How do you celebrate success and recognise voluntary contributions? Do you offer young people awards or accredited learning programmes? How do you promote the group in the wider community?
Communicating with young people, parents, leaders and others	Managing volunteers	Managing staff	Managing funding and finances	Maintaining good governance through committees or boards	Celebrating successes and recognising achievements
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What next?

- Look at your completed self-assessment tool.
- Discuss and choose ONE practice where you think it would make a big difference to your group if you made some improvements or took some action.
- + You are now ready to make an action plan for achieving this improvement.





Notes



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