Fresh perspectives: setting up a youth advisory panel

the Plan:

to help other organisations set up their own youth panel

Where:
GLOBAL

What:
HOW TO GUIDE 2011

Impact:
Organisations involve young people in their work in a meaningful way

Read on to find out more or visit us at www.plan-uk.org
Acknowledgments

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Introduction

This is a step by step guide which will help you to set up a youth advisory panel.

It builds on Plan UK’s experience of involving young people in our work over the last six years. We want to share the things that have worked well, and the things that still need improving (by ‘we’ we mean Plan UK and the young people who form our youth advisory panel). We don’t have all the answers, and we’re not saying that it will be easy, but we hope that the lessons we’ve learned will help you to set up your own youth advisory panel.

So why does Plan UK have a youth panel? Plan believes that children’s voices should be at the heart of everything we do. This is summed up in our Child Centred Community Development approach: children are the focus of all Plan’s programmes globally, and they participate in all our projects in developing countries. However, we also believe that children and young people in the UK should be able to engage with the organisation. The panel was created in 2005 and the timeline on the opposite page shows the journey it has taken, and how it has changed and evolved along the way.

Plan UK’s Youth Advisory Panel (YAP) is a group of 14 young people between 13 and 18 years old. They meet at least four times a year to discuss Plan’s work. The panel advises Plan UK in several different ways, which we will explain in more detail later in this guide. The panel’s main activities involve giving a youth perspective on Plan’s work, ensuring young people are involved in Plan UK’s internal governance, and encouraging other children and young people in the UK to learn about international development.

One step on this journey was an independent review of the panel. In 2010, we asked an external consultant, supported by a YAP member, to look at what had worked well and what could be improved. The review resulted in a report, documenting achievements and suggestions for improvement. This made us think more carefully about the purpose of involving young people, and encouraged panel members to work with staff to redefine the objectives of the panel. It also inspired us to reassess how YAP’s work fitted in with our organisational objectives. These are things that we have been reflecting on since YAP’s creation, and are still thinking about six years later in 2011! These reflections and the lessons learnt from the review form the basis of this guide.

The guide isn’t trying to persuade anyone to set up a youth panel. Nor is it saying that there is only one way to go about setting it up. We think organisations need to think through their own reasons for involving young people and the best ways of doing so. This guide aims to give practical advice about how to set up a youth panel and suggests some key questions to consider. Involving young people within a large, complex organisation in a meaningful and effective way is challenging. How it’s done best will vary for different organisations, depending on your context, internal governance and objectives. We know it takes time, money, energy and commitment. We know we still need to continue improving on the work we’ve done so far. But we also know it’s worth it; that engaging young people in our work has made us better at what we do.
2002: The Child Centred Community Development approach is brought in across Plan.

2004: The idea of a Children’s Advisory Panel is presented to the Plan UK board.

2005: After the Board approval, the panel was created: 8 members (7 girls, 1 boy) recruited


2006: A development education adviser and two interns recruited to support YAP’s work.

2006: Development Education team became part of the Communications Department.

2006-11: Grant from DFID (UK government) used to set up the Plan UK Governance Programme, which includes funding for UK youth engagement work.

2007: YAP members attended a Global Youth Engagement Conference held by Plan UK in Bangkok.

2008: Members of global Plan Child/Youth Advisory Panels held a conference in London.

2008: A full time Youth Engagement Officer recruited, 70% of time on supporting youth participation in Plan.

2009: YAP moved to the Governance team in the Programme Department, reflecting greater emphasis on strengthening young people’s role in holding the organisation to account.

2010: YAP review completed.
1. Why set up a youth panel?

There are many different reasons for setting up a youth panel, from protecting children’s right to participate in decisions that affect them, to providing a fresh perspective for an organisation or giving an organisation a ‘media-friendly’ face. The key is to think carefully about why you want to set up a youth panel: how will it contribute to your organisation, and how will it fulfil the rights of children? It is important to decide the mission, purpose and objectives of the youth panel, making sure that these are clear and fit with the overall mission of your organisation. The clearer all of this is from the start the better, as it will make the questions asked in the rest of this guide much easier to answer.

Plan’s experience

There are three main reasons Plan UK decided to set up a youth panel. We believe that:

1. children and young people have the right to participate in decisions that affect them (Article 12 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)
2. young people are stakeholders in Plan UK’s work and we must be accountable to them, and
3. young people’s energy and fresh perspectives make our work better and more effective.

Establishing our mission and purpose has not been easy! The recent review raised lots of questions for Plan UK about YAP’s purpose and practical ways of working. The review noted that the most important part of setting up a youth panel is to be clear about its purpose. For Plan UK, this has been a process of consultation between members of YAP and Plan UK staff, because we firmly believe that both parties must have an equal stake in deciding the purpose of the youth panel.

A difficult question for us was whether young people from the UK had any right to influence our work with young people in other countries. We believed their involvement could make our work better, but we had to think carefully about all the different people we are accountable to. Because of this, the focus of Plan UK’s youth panel is on our policy, campaigns and fundraising work in the UK rather than our programme work in other countries.

“Plan UK needed to learn to listen to young people in the UK on how best to engage them - so the youth advisory panel was established. As we started to see the value of young people’s perspective we gradually, together, opened spaces for these young people to influence our policy, practice, campaigns, communications and indeed to become decision makers as trustees.” Marie Staunton, CEO
Key points to consider

- If you are setting up a youth panel, you must believe that youth participation in your organisation is important. Make sure your organisation spends some time thinking about why this is and how youth participation can be meaningful and effective.

- Right from the start, youth participation should be a two-way process. Young people themselves need to work with key staff members to set out the panel’s mission and purpose.

- Nothing is set in stone: remember that all of this must be reviewed and updated as your organisation and the panel grow and change.

- Don’t underestimate this first part of the process – plenty of discussion and reflection at this stage will make it a lot easier to decide how your youth panel will work.

- Be specific – we’ve found that if the youth panel does not have a clear mission and purpose, its members are pulled in too many directions and their work risks becoming tokenistic, so depth of purpose rather than breadth is key.

Plan UK’s Youth Advisory Panel: Purpose and objectives

**Mission**
The panel’s mission is to work with Plan UK at the forefront of a global movement demanding justice with and for the world’s poorest children, young people and communities, by ensuring the voices of young people are at the heart of Plan UK’s work and are able to question how Plan UK’s activities help advance children’s rights.

**Purpose**
The purpose of the YAP is to enable Plan to implement its core value of youth participation. Panel members provide a youth perspective on Plan UK’s policy and programme work in the UK, they ensure young people are involved in Plan UK’s internal governance and they enthuse and engage UK youth as global citizens in support of children and young people’s rights across the world.

**Objectives:**

1. **Advising Plan:** To advise Plan UK on child rights issues, youth participation and engagement and to ensure that young people are represented in Plan UK’s internal governance structures.

2. **Ambassadors of Plan:** To represent Plan UK at key policy forums and events and to build support for development and youth engagement in development within the UK.
Once you’re clear about why you are setting up a youth panel, you’ll need to develop objectives. The more specific the objectives are, the better, because this helps make sure that all the activities carried out by the youth panel are meaningful and in the best interests of the young people involved and the organisation itself.

Plan’s experience

YAP works on a huge variety of different activities. While this is positive in many ways, the review found that there wasn’t always a clear strategy joining up these tasks. This meant that the activities weren’t as effective as they could have been, and it also meant it was difficult to prioritise between them. For example, panel members felt that sometimes Plan asked them to participate at short notice, but without adequate preparation or information, which meant that they were not sure why they were participating. Since the review we’ve tried to fix this by being clearer about YAP’s objectives and how the activities they undertake fit into them, as you can see in the box on the previous page.

For example: as advisers, panel members advise on the design and implementation of a range of events and campaigns, help to produce youth-friendly documents and resources, and provide a youth perspective on the Plan UK Board of Trustees. As ambassadors, panel members lead workshops on Plan’s work with groups of other young people in schools, colleges, youth centres and youth parliaments; and bring a youth perspective to debates on international development issues, particularly in support of child rights.

YAP voices:

“One of YAP’s most significant achievements was the ‘A Hand in My Future campaign’. The campaign lobbied world leaders, asking why they were so far off their targets of the Millennium Development Goals. We led youth-designed workshops with young people across the world, focussing on girls’ rights and climate change. At the end of each workshop we asked the participants the question: “Why should world leaders listen to young people?” and we asked them to draw or write this on a cut-out of a hand print. We collected 2015 hands and passed these over to ministers including the Deputy Prime Minister. I believe that the campaign is one of YAP’s biggest achievements because it was designed and led by young people.” Katie, former YAP member and Plan UK Volunteer
Key points to consider

- How could your youth panel engage most effectively? On what topics? Internally or externally?
- Activities should be focused on realistically achievable projects over a long period and should clearly link to the youth panel’s purpose.
- The panel should have a clear work plan which dovetails with other departments’ work and details activities thus facilitating greater engagement with staff. This work plan should be flexible, as it will be subject to change!
- The work plan should include monitoring mechanisms – how will the panel measure progress towards its objectives?
- Having clear objectives, activities and a work plan means that the youth panel’s work will be proactive and not reactive and will contribute effectively to your organisation.

Some of Plan UK’s Youth Advisory Panel’s achievements:

Over the last three years:

- 14 members have delivered 36 workshops and school assemblies.
- The panel has worked with over 3,400 young people, raising their awareness of development.
- Panel members have worked with the UK Youth Parliament, facilitating workshops at their annual sitting and collecting campaign pledges from over 300 youth parliamentarians.
- Panel members have influenced the UK’s Department for International Development policies, calling for recognition of young people’s right to participate in the decisions that affect them.
- Following their work on climate change, panel members persuaded the Department of Energy and Climate Change to establish its own youth panel.
- Panel members have worked with young people from countries around the world to make sure a youth voice was heard at international events such as the UN Climate Change Conference, EU Development Days and the UN Youth Summit.
- YAP’s ‘A Hand in My Future’ campaign recruited over 2,000 young people from all over the world.
- Campaign pledges were presented to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for International Development.
Once you have set out the youth panel’s strategy, the next part of the process is to decide where they will be located within the organisation. Which department will host them? Which departments will they work with? How will you ensure that everyone supports the panel and their work? The purpose of the youth panel will affect where it is placed within the organisation.

**Plan’s experience**

Initially YAP had very broad objectives and so members were involved in most departments across Plan. This was great in some ways, but difficult to manage and meant that support for activities was often spread too thinly. Because of this, we decided we needed to be much clearer about how the youth panel fitted into the organisation and which departments and teams it was best for them to work with.

We’ve found that, given the right guidance, YAP members develop a good understanding of Plan UK’s internal workings and so are highly capable of being involved in a range of different activities. For example, members have helped write Plan UK’s child protection policy with the HR department, run campaigns and lobbied policy makers with the Advocacy, Campaigns and Communications department, and advised on youth participation in Development Education projects in the Programme department.

However, just because they work in a specific department doesn’t always mean they’re really able to influence things there, and there is always more to be done to allow them to properly engage in Plan UK’s internal governance. We’ve found that creating ‘Youth Champions’ within each department who act as advocates and contact points for youth engagement, and setting up a ‘Cross-Departmental Youth Working Group’ helped to really integrate the panel within the organisation.

In our experience, one of the greatest challenges of ensuring participation and influence across the organisation is establishing organisational buy-in. Staff need to know why the youth panel is there, its objectives and perhaps most importantly what their working relationship with the panel will be. Answering questions such as ‘How is the youth panel involved in my day to day work?’, ‘What can I ask them for help on, and what they can ask me to work on?’ are vitally important in deciding the space that the youth panel will occupy within the organisation. We have put together some useful documents, including ‘frequently asked questions’ and ‘guiding principles for participation’ to help staff and the youth panel to work together.

**YAP voices:**

“Since I joined YAP, its position within Plan UK has changed from the Communications Department to the Programme Department, and Plan staff have become much more aware of us and what we do. This means our work has become more focussed and meaningful, and rather than just having our picture taken at events we are on our way to really effective, genuine youth engagement with Plan. There’s a long way to go but any concerns we have are being listened to and more and more people within Plan understand who we are and why we’re here.” Aakash, YAP member
In order for everyone to benefit from the youth panel, the mission, purpose and objectives should be clearly communicated across the organisation.

The youth panel’s work plan must fit with other departments’ work plans and vice versa.

Staff should understand how the youth panel’s work relates to their own and how they can work together – what is acceptable to ask of the young people and the staff? Establishing guiding principles can be helpful in making this clear.

Both young people and staff need clear lines of accountability and communication to ensure that they can work well together. Spaces should be created for both sides to discuss demands placed on them and differences of opinion.
4. How do you recruit young people?

Recruiting members for a youth panel isn’t as simple as you might imagine, because there are so many things to take into account. You’ll need to think about factors such as age range, geographical location, socio-economic status, ethnicity, gender and level of required knowledge. Being clear about what your youth panel is for is the first step in thinking about who should be on it.

Plan’s experience

Initially, YAP members were recruited through Plan UK’s sponsor newsletter and through development education organisations in the UK. But we’ve had to ask ourselves whether it’s appropriate that most applicants are already well-educated and engaging in extra-curricular activities, or if we should try to recruit young people who may not all have had the same opportunities.

Because of this, we’ve widened our recruitment field to get more of a mix of people from different backgrounds. We decided to try to recruit slightly ‘harder to reach’ young people by advertising in youth clubs and centres in the UK via the British Youth Council, and through schools and national groups such as Girlguiding UK and The Scout Association.

There is another issue around gender and recruitment. We’ve found that the female to male applicant ratio is extremely uneven; previously, girls outnumbered boys by 10-1 on the panel, perhaps reflecting the charity sector as a whole. In order to balance the ratio we have actively recruited through traditionally male networks like the Scout Association. We now have a balance of 3-1. We are continuing to work on this, encouraging current male members to ensure we present the work of the panel in a way that is appealing to both young men and young women.

A further question is that of representation. Some staff members argued that as Plan is an international development charity, the young people on the youth panel should come from overseas. However, we believe that just as Plan International Country Offices have young people who give advice on country programmes, young people in the UK should be able to advise Plan UK. Furthermore, we would argue that YAP members don’t need to ‘represent’ anyone; as volunteers they are selected because of their skills, potential and experience in the same way as staff members are.

YAP voices:

“Recruiting for YAP has been a difficult process. We recognised that YAP wasn’t totally reflective of the UK’s youth population; but this is difficult to achieve because of the diversity of the UK. We tried to reach as many young people as we could through partner networks. The diversity and dynamics of the panel have totally changed since my original involvement four years ago. I’ve seen individuals from more diverse socio-economic backgrounds join the panel, making our perspective even more refreshing and relevant.”

Leon, former YAP member and Plan UK trustee
How can you ensure you have a diverse range of young people with different skills and experiences?

Should you recruit people who have a level of knowledge regarding development issues, or is it the aim of the youth panel to help them learn? We have found that it is good to have a combination of young people with knowledge and experience and some without.

Who will your youth advisory panel members represent? Themselves as individuals? Other young people from the same country?

What will your age range be? Plan’s YAP members are aged 13-18 which means they’re younger than most of the other members of similar UK youth panels. People have commented that this means that YAP genuinely brings a youth voice to the table.

How will you ensure youth participation in the actual interview process? Our current YAP members carry out telephone interviews with potential new members.
For young people to be able to carry out the varied and demanding work of a youth panel, the organisation must provide a full support package. This includes regular opportunities for team building with their peers, practical training, clear communication and direct and consistent contact with the organisation.

**Plan’s experience**

We aim to support and build the capacity of the members of our youth panel and our recent review found that we’ve mostly been successful. Obviously, this support needs resources (see section 6) and training to make it happen. As YAP is a national panel with members from different parts of the country, we’ve found quarterly residential training and team-building weekends to be invaluable. Residential meetings take place at a youth hostel over a weekend, usually during the school holidays, and are where most of YAP’s work (especially planning and training) takes place.

Plan UK provides training on specific development issues (such as child rights, gender equality, climate change and governance) to develop members’ knowledge and enable them to better advise us and to pass on their knowledge to their peers in the UK. We also support YAP with more practical skills like work planning and monitoring, and communication, presentation and facilitation skills.

YAP members also learn by training others. They are often involved in peer education activities; facilitating workshops on international development issues with other groups of young people. We’ve found that the residential weekends provide a safe space for members to practice and develop their facilitation skills. Another way YAP members learn is through ‘on the job’ training. For example, Plan UK holds an annual ‘Take Over Day’ where youth panel members ‘take over’ the organisation by working alongside senior members of staff for a day.

YAP members are expected to develop in-depth knowledge about development issues, which takes time, commitment and creativity from them and from staff. The more thorough the training, the more effective the young people’s engagement becomes with the organisation as a whole.

Positive, trusting and consistent relationships are also vital to the success of individual and group development. The young people need to trust and be familiar with their fellow panel members and all the adults they work with, and these adults need support to involve young people in their work.

**YAP voices:**

“Throughout my time at Plan I have learnt a lot through training from Plan staff and also other YAP members. This is essential in making members in the group feel confident about what they are doing and therefore more willing to take part and even eventually give training themselves. I have learnt so much from residential and team-building exercises and feel that these are some of the most beneficial things I gain from YAP."

Nia, YAP member
Key points to consider

- What training will panel members need and how will you facilitate this? What do they need to know about your organisation’s work and policies? If they are speaking and lobbying externally, how can you give them the technical knowledge and practical skills to do this?

- Don’t forget your staff! They may not have much experience of working with young people and so they, too, will need training and support in youth participation.

- Use the skills that you already have in the organisation; your staff members and the young people themselves have a huge amount of knowledge and expertise that can be shared in order to deepen everyone’s knowledge and improve their skills.

- Be practical: any training or capacity building needs to be tailored to individuals' needs and the work in question, and must be built into work plans and adequately resourced.
The resources necessary to run a youth panel mustn’t be underestimated! Obviously, without enough resources (both human and financial) none of the other points in this guide can be put into practice.

**Plan’s experience**

When YAP was first established it was coordinated by one member of staff who had many other responsibilities, and it was difficult to provide the YAP members with the support they needed. So the position of Youth Engagement Officer was created. This began as a part-time role but soon became full-time, and was filled by someone with a background in youth work. The Youth Engagement Officer is responsible for youth engagement across the organisation as a whole, with supporting YAP as the priority. Much of the officer’s time is consumed with administration and logistics and so we would recommend having two roles attached to the youth panel: one full-time member of staff and one part-time administrator. This would mean that more time could be spent on bigger issues surrounding youth participation.

As well as the human resources, you need to consider the financial resources. Setting up and running a youth advisory panel costs money! Our annual budget for YAP’s core functions is £12,000 (not including staff costs). Most of this (£11,000) is for quarterly residentials, and covers costs such as venue and accommodation hire, train tickets and food. There is also a small budget (£1,000) for training and for other activities related to YAP’s objectives. For Plan UK, these are the minimum, core costs – obviously your costs may vary depending on your country and the activities you want to carry out. Other activities, such as specific campaigns or participation at international conferences, will need additional resources.

The budget needs to be decided at the same time as the youth panels’ annual work plan is developed and should, if possible, include potential for participatory budgeting where panel members themselves decide how money is allocated. We’ve also found it helps if different departments contribute funding for different activities related to their areas of work. This ensures buy-in and that they recognise the level of resources required to support genuine participation.

**YAP voices:**

“As I live in Leeds I often have to take long train journeys from my city to London or to other destinations for residentials. This is sometimes tiring and it’s also expensive, but it’s the only sensible way to travel on such long journeys. Without the financial resources that Plan provides, it would be very difficult for me to go to the residentials which are very worthwhile, interesting and fun. There are also other various financial resources that are vital to run a successful youth panel. Even small things such as having money for paper and pens can make a dramatic difference to the impact the youth panel can have.” Sarah, YAP member
Key points to consider

- A youth panel requires at least one full-time member of staff with extensive youth work and child protection experience.

- Logistics are time-consuming, and the more time spent on these means less time spent supporting quality youth participation more broadly.

- Working with the youth panel needs to be built into several staff members’ work plans and job descriptions, not just the person who is responsible for them overall.

- Having a ‘youth champion’ in each department who sits on a cross-departmental group (see section 3) could be an effective way of making sure that your youth panel has enough human resources.

- Think about how you will involve young people in budgeting. When and how will your budget be drawn up? Residential meetings are the best place for us.

- Youth panels cost money. There aren’t many ways to reduce the budget while still involving young people in a meaningful and secure way, so how will you fund yours?
A youth panel is at the heart of a web of connections – they need to be connected with each other and with the staff members who work with them, with other groups and networks, and perhaps also with relevant government bodies.

**Plan’s experience**

Internally, we use weekly ‘NewsBeat’ emails to maintain and control the flow of information and discussion between staff and YAP members. NewsBeat discusses forthcoming events, updates on ongoing work and shares interesting articles and relevant current events. Spending residential weekends together four times a year has also really helped develop connections between panel and staff members.

Externally, YAP has worked with a large number of different youth networks, from small youth groups and schools to the National Youth Parliament. This has been a key part of YAP’s work in terms of building awareness of international development among young people in the UK. YAP also has access to the UK government via their presence on two youth groups; one for the Department for International Development and one for the Department of Energy and Climate Change (which YAP members successfully lobbied for!).

If the youth panel is to be truly international then it could work with its global equivalents – for us, this means connecting our panel with other youth panels in the Plan family (known as Children’s Advisory Boards or CABs). It has not been too difficult to connect the CABs from our offices in the global north; widespread internet access means that online forums can be set up to keep the groups in contact. However, we haven’t yet established a system to keep young people connected from our youth panels in the global south. But international events such as the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in 2009 have brought representatives from different Plan panels (in both the north and south) together. Such events bring huge organisational and individual benefits including peer support and deepening understanding of development. However, organising youth participation at international events and ensuring this participation is meaningful is hard work! In particular, it is very important to provide support to ensure follow-up and continued engagement after the event.
Key points to consider

- How will you connect your youth panel members to each other?
- How will you ensure regular, clear lines of communication between panel members and staff?
- How could you use social media to your advantage when working with a youth advisory panel, whilst addressing child protection issues?
- What are the potential difficulties you might face in working with panels from different countries, and in different languages?
- You will need to identify relevant existing networks and coalitions with which to build relationships based on their objectives. If there are no such bodies your youth panel could lobby for their creation.

YAP voices:

“Being part of the UK Youth Parliament has given me a platform to raise awareness of the issues that YAP deals with. While in YAP, I have come across a wide range of other organisations, from the National Children’s Bureau to the Girl Guides, and these connections have been extremely useful in helping us to engage with as many young people from as many different backgrounds as possible, while also bringing an international aspect to many of these organisations’ local work. YAP has also opened my eyes to the incredible variety of different organisations that currently exist to support and represent young people. We really need to ensure that these relationships are continued as they are truly beneficial to both parties.” Colette, YAP member
This section sets out good practice for child protection in relation to youth panels, which must be at the front of our minds when working with young people. Obviously the specific legalities of child protection (for instance, chaperone guidelines) will vary depending on the country you’re working in, but there are universal standards that must be adhered to, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Plan’s experience

Our child protection policy explains that our global child protection mission is ‘to create ‘child-safe’ environments – internally and externally – where children are respected, protected, empowered and active in their own protection, and where staff are skilled, confident, competent and well-supported in meeting their protection responsibilities through clear policies, procedures and good practice’. We have a robust child protection policy that every member of staff has signed and is trained on within their first six months of work.

However, we’ve learnt that creating a youth panel creates some specific child protection challenges. The biggest challenge is posed by the many activities that require members to travel away from home. This means that legally we must provide a chaperone who takes full responsibility for the young person. Furthermore, in terms of logistics, getting 14 young people from all over the country to one place is a challenge! Under our system parents are responsible for their child until he or she arrives at the residential venue or closest railway station, where they’re met by a chaperone. We require every chaperone to have some experience of youth work and have a police check on their background.

There are lots of other things to consider, from the safety of the physical environment and child-friendly spaces, to data protection issues and confidentiality. Addressing all these issues will mean your youth panel is as effective and empowered as it can possibly be.
Key points to consider

- You must have a robust child protection policy in place and make sure all staff and young people know how to put it into practice.

- You will need a detailed chaperone policy, which should include things like the ratio of chaperones to young people (one adult chaperone to eight young people is the legal UK requirement, but we’ve found that one to five is ideal and, if international travel is involved, a ratio of one to three is necessary).

- Other tips for your chaperone policy are that there must always be at least two chaperones (ideally one male and one female) at any event, in case, for example, one of them is required to take a young person to hospital.

- Both staff members and panel members should sign a ‘reasonable behaviour agreement’ prior to the event.

- All staff must receive child protection training as well as training on youth participation in general (as discussed in section 5).

- An important part of child protection is developing a good relationship with participants’ parents or guardians – for example, you’ll need to discuss medical, dietary or religious requirements before any residential events.

- Before every event or residential, you must have the following paperwork in place: parental information forms with emergency contact details, parental consent forms and risk assessment forms.

“Good child protection policies and procedures are important to ensure meaningful participation. Unless the young people feel safe and supported and are working within clear boundaries, it is impossible to expect them to have a clear focus. My top three tips would be: 1) consent forms must contain all the information and be kept by more than one chaperone, 2) information forms— it is vital that both parents and youth participants have comprehensive information about the agenda, venue, and travel arrangements and 3) setting clear boundaries at the beginning of a visit—ask the staff and young people to work together to draw up shared behaviour guidelines.”

Jo, Youth Engagement Officer
This map is designed to give you space to jot down your reflections on the different steps of the process, and how you will take them into account when setting up your own youth panel.

**ACTIVITIES AND WORK PLAN**

- **Purpose and objectives**
- **Organisational buy-in**
- **Human resources**
- **Financial resources**
- **Youth recruitment**

**Connections (internal, external & international)**

- **Don’t forget youth participation at every step of the process!**

**Child protection**

**Training:**
**who, what, where, when?**

**Reasons for having a youth panel**

**Child protection**
Plan UK YAP’s top tips

For organisations:

1 **Time management**: Young people have more responsibilities and commitments than you may think. It is important to commit to the development of your panel but remember that the young people you are working with will have academic or extra-curricular commitments that they have to prioritise. A realistic approach to time management will help your panel thrive and truly focus.

And for youth panel members:

2 **Belief**: Truly believe in the invaluable perspective you as young people have to offer. Believe in yourselves and believe in the young people from developing countries you want to make a difference for. Believe that nothing is impossible.

3 **Perseverance**: Not everybody you will work with will value or believe in youth participation. It will take longer to win those people over, but if you commit and persevere, in time, you will succeed.

4 **Commitment**: A Youth Advisory Panel is just like any other board. It can only function at its full capacity when all members are 100% committed.

5 **Stay fresh**: It is very easy to become consumed by the issues you focus on as a Youth Advisory Panel. It is very important to remember your panel’s purpose and the true value of offering a youth perspective to your organisation.

You are fresh, open-minded and intuitive - stay that way!
To work with the world’s poorest children so they can move themselves from a life of poverty to a future with opportunity.