

BUILDING  
**BRI** X **TON**  
YOUNG

# GOVERNING YOUR PARTNERSHIP



# A BUILDING YOUNG BRIXTON PARTNERSHIP HOW-TO-GUIDE

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# OVERVIEW

Building Young Brixton (BYB) is a partnership of 9 Lambeth-based youth organisations, working together to inspire and empower young people in Brixton to build the lives that they want. Our partnership is made up of the following organisations: Advocacy Academy, Baytree Centre, Ebony Horse Club, Grove Adventure Playground, High Trees., Indo-American Migrant and Refugee Organisation (IRMO), ML Community Enterprise and Spiral Skills. Our services include coaching & mentoring, personal development programmes, therapeutic recreation and educational & employment support.

Our partnership is about bringing both staff and users together to create a better service, a stronger community voice and share our knowledge. At BYB we have governance on three levels: our Steering Group, Practitioners and Managers and Youth Steering Group.

With this How-To-Guide, we hope to make the process easier by sharing what we have learned along the way.



# YOUTH STEERING GROUP

Our Youth Steering Group (YSG) is made up of a group of young people from across the partnership. This is a group of young people that want to have more of a say in the partnership as a whole.

## Your Young People

The YSG play an important role in helping us bring the young people we work with together. They're a key part in ensuring our joint services are youth led, and both interesting and fun as their feedback helps to shape what we do and how we do it. The YSG is optional for young people as their involvement in youth led activities still needs to be a choice. We found that a few of the YSG members were already involved in their own organisation's youth councils. While this wasn't a necessary requirement, it's worth noting that YP that are already used to making smaller decisions will find it easier to make bigger decisions such as session planning. You may already have a youth council, or young volunteers, ambassadors or leaders. It's likely that these active young people will want to be involved but remember to make sure that you have a fair representation of your wider group of users to avoid tokenising.

### Tip!

**Encouraging young people who don't usually speak up to have a say in their spaces is a great way of helping to develop their confidence.**

## Youth Voice

You also want to consider the format that you capture youth voice. Our YSG would meet once a month (prior to lockdown) and were able to give ideas for joint activities we could run and also plan large joint events like the Summer Day Out and Chilled Out Christmas Party. We always provided snacks in a welcoming space and we would also reward their time and effort with treats such as pizza and a gift.

A formal meeting may not be best suited for your young people. You may want to use a suggestions box, a voting system or run activities where young compete to win their choice. You can also casually discuss topics during sessions you're already delivering and make a note of any suggestions they raise. You know your young people best, so choose a method that will work well.

**"I like how they actually listen to me. If I say a point, I'll see it being put into action next time."**

## Skills

You are more than likely already delivering personal development programmes in some form. Allowing young people to be involved in decision making for your organisation will only help in furthering this development. Think about the skills they need for impactful decision making such as leadership, budgeting, planning, communication and empathy. Setting mini tasks that encourage the use of these is one way that you can build them up.

### Tip!

**It's important to show the young people how their decisions have been acted upon. You can do this with a "You said, We did" board.**



## Managing Expectations

It's important to manage the expectations of your young people and be clear with them what is and isn't possible. For example, young people may really want to go on outings and suggest a trip to a theme park. A trip like this can easily go beyond your budget so you may opt to shelve this idea. However doing this without offering an explanation may create a reluctance from your young people in the future to give anymore suggestions. Instead you could be clear on your reasoning and ask them to brainstorm ideas to fundraise for trips. This is a great way of keeping them informed and developing their skills.

# PRACTITIONERS AND MANAGERS

Our Practitioners and Managers (P&M) are made up of frontline staff, working with young people day in, day out. They provide an insight into our delivery on the ground and help to develop the partnership with their practical collaborating.

## Meetings

The P&M meet every 4-6 weeks to share updates on their services and opportunities for both staff and young people. This is a space rich with information with staff coming together to share resources from work experience placements to free theory tests for young people. During the first national lockdown, partners had to consider how they were going to transition their services online. The P&M meetings were a place to bounce ideas off each other, share best practice with new online safeguarding policies, and share online remote working platforms and tips on online activities. While there was a lot of new work that came along with the lockdown, being able to share materials meant that the P&M could spend a lot more time delivering.

## Peer to Peer Support

Outside of their meetings, the P&M are able to reach out to each other for support on specific topics. This has included safeguarding, finding facilitators for sports activities and advertising job roles. They can also lean on each other for moral support. For example the first lockdown, the staff teams found engaging young people to be particularly difficult. However there was reassurance in knowing that they were not alone in this challenge. The P&M would receive and give advice on their different approaches to online working and evaluate what was working.

Recognising where collaboration is most appropriate is important in making sure you get the best out of it. For example, our partnership has two Adventure Playgrounds where there is a natural connection for fun and creative joint activities or referrals. This is not to say they haven't successfully collaborated with other partners but to highlight that you should make the most of opportunities that naturally form. On the other hand, Spiral Skills offer amazing career and learning based opportunities that all partners can get involved with, with referrals from Juvenis and IRMO being prevalent during lockdown.

**"What we've done so far has been of immense value to the young people as they have been able to have access to such a wonderful mixture of activities."**

## Joint Training

To encourage a level of best practice across the board, we organise both internal and external joint training sessions. These sessions are decided by looking at the needs of the P&M and suggestions from the Steering Group. In 2019, Advocacy Academy delivered Just Education training to 10 members of staff, and MLCE delivered a 3-day Trauma Training course. MLCE also delivered a tailored practical safeguarding training for the entire Baytree staff team. Making use of the range of expertise that brought your partnership together is great way of seeing the practical benefits. External training for our P&M has included Conflict Resolution, Sexual Health and Virtual Working and Safeguarding.

## Networking

Having regular P&M meetings is a great way of helping the staff teams become more familiar with their partners. While the Steering Group is heading the partnership, the P&M play an important role in ensuring the on the ground collaborations take place. We like to rotate the location of our in-person meetings so that staff feel more ownership over the partnership, as well as begin to know their partner sites better. We'd also suggest making sure there is time for partners to network socially, which helps building stronger relationships.



# THE STEERING GROUP

Before you begin, it is vital that there is buy-in from all partners. You need to have established your aims, values and the mission that brings you all together. Our partnership on an organisational level is led by the directors and CEO's of the 9 partners. They are able to make decisions that will drive the partnership forward, share information and ensure that collaboration is seen throughout all levels of their organisation by encouraging closer working.

## TOC and TORs

When setting up your partnership, you need to make sure that your Steering Group is representative of all the partners involved, with Directors or CEO's committing to your collective mission and vision. The members will also need to agree on the role and purpose of the Steering Group and what it will be used to achieve. These can be written up as your Terms of Reference. We'd also advise having TORs for each level of governance so everyone can be clear on what their involvement looks like.

As you would have done in your own organisation, we'd also advise taking the time to create your Theory of Change. This should be put together with guidance and input from both the Steering Group and P&M. This will not only help to embed the purpose internally, but make it clear to external organisations and potentially funders your reasoning, outcomes and overall intended impact.

**"I think the biggest thing is moral support in such uncertain times, but also really practical outcomes."**

## Meetings

Similarly to the P&M meetings, our Steering Group meetings take place every 6 weeks and provide a regular space with a focus on sharing knowledge, expertise, networks and other available resources. These meetings tend to run slightly longer as partners will also be reflecting on and reviewing developments for the partnership and from the P&M and the Youth Steering Group. It can also help you to review your progress and agree on actions.

While this is a partnership meeting it is important that this is a space for partners to contribute and receive support on their individual organisations, as establishing a level of best practice across the board is key in ensuring your partnership continues to thrive.

## Further Opportunities

One of the benefits of partnership working is that it focuses on working together with organisations in your sector, rather than having to compete with them. Your partners will come with their own networks which is a great start for collaboration with other organisations doing amazing work. These can be both formal and informal partnerships, allowing the potential for growth and the building of a network of networks.

Working together to ensure that your users are aware of and have access to a range of services in their community not only strengthens your impact on the young people but within the sector. We believe that teamwork does indeed make the dream work. In a sector that is too often underfunded, a strong sense of community and being able to rely on peers in the field will only be beneficial in proving your value. As you know, there is strength in numbers and your work continues to be recognised, we'd advise sharing your accomplishments with reports or social media posts.

## Funding

Partnership working also creates the opportunity to apply for joint funding bids, making it clear how your collective working is impacting the sector and changing the way it works. Not all funding bids will have requirements that every partner will meet, so in these circumstances it's important to be selective and transparent. Applying to cover some or all of your core funding costs takes away an element of having to compete. For example, rather than trying to create a new service to meet needs or funding requirements, you can instead show that you have an effective referral process with a partner organisation.

The Steering Group also openly discuss their individual funding bids and share opportunities where suitable for partners to apply. There is no competitiveness here, as your partner winning a bid only strengthens what you can offer collectively.

**"Collaborating has sped up the creation of robust policies and procedures. This provided the platform to act quickly and support more of our young people."**

# PARTNERSHIP COORDINATION

With governance on 3 different levels it's fair to say that managing a partnership can at times be a job in itself. With 9 partners to oversee, we created the BYB Partnership Coordinator and BYB Youth Worker roles, whose primary jobs were to be the linchpin that brings it all together. From reporting, to joint training and events, to sharing best practice, they are working behind the scenes to help ensure that momentum isn't lost and key actions are seen through.

## Communications

The most key element of effective partnership working is communication. The Partnership Coordinator/Officer is responsible for ensuring that all partners can still have an equal say in spite of their varying capacity. For example, our main form of communication is email, and it can at times be difficult to receive timely responses. The Partnership Officer will follow up with check-in phone calls to make sure they are up to date with partner activities. If a partner is unable to attend a meeting, the Partnership Officer can share important updates on their behalf. After each meeting, they will also be able to chase up or action any key points highlighted to ensure they aren't lost.

We also have an internal newsletter that we use to highlight the updates, opportunities or award nominations of our partners. We use it to share opportunities from across the sector that are available to both young people and staff.

## Strategy

In order to ensure the longevity of your partnership, you'll need to keep thinking ahead, setting goals and targets for things you'd like to achieve. This can be in terms of your community presence, the impact on your beneficiaries or increasing the number of partners. Input will be needed from all partners and from all levels to fully see what it is that you should be aiming for.

The Partnerships team will play a huge part in implementing your strategy. This will involve highlighting priorities, creating tangible actions and assigning tasks to different partners. As always, they will need to bear in mind everyone's capacity and offer support to ensure that the workload doesn't become overbearing.

## Joint Working

Your partnership coordinator will be well aware of what expertise each partner possesses. Outside of the regular team meetings, they will be able to pick up on where strategic collaborations can take place. For example, a partner may need to find a bigger venue for a session, and your coordinator may know which days other partners have spaces available. Or a partner may mention that their young people would like bike riding sessions, and your coordinator knows of a partner currently running bike riding and maintenance sessions. This inside knowledge will help natural collaborations occur and partners on the ground to see immediate benefits of partnership working.

The Partnership Coordinator will also help to facilitate collaborative working with other organisations, taking on the initial meetings to ensure that by the time it is presented to the partners, all additional queries should be answerable. This ensures that collaborations can run smoothly and are deliberately aimed at appropriate partners.

## Ground Work

As much as they may want to, it's unrealistic for partners to be able to frequently move around and attend each other's sites or sessions. This is where your Partnership Coordinator steps in. They will need to be flexible, moving across the different organisations to not only build better rapport with the staff teams, but with your users. This relational hands on work will not only help them to identify needs that the partnership can meet, it really helps in building trust, awareness and a solid community of support.

