Connect and Reflect

Introduction to using the Connect and Reflect playing cards

The easiest way to use this resource is to simply print off all the cards and play them with your team. The cards are designed to help reflection, spark discussion, and encourage thinking about ethical practice in youth work.
Each card type has an instruction card.
Fold each page down the middle to make a deck of A5 cards.

Ethics and Principles Cards

These cards are designed to encourage discussion and support reflection on the core ethics and principles of youth work. Each card highlights a specific principle to help youth workers think about values, behaviour and good practice in their role.

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Dilemma Cards

These cards present ethical, real-life challenges that youth workers may encounter "on the ground."

Each dilemma encourages youth workers to explore how the core ethics and principles of youth work guide decisions in complex situations. They are designed to spark conversation about judgment, boundaries, and practical decision-making, helping workers connect everyday practice back to the values that underpin youth work.

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Decision-Making Cards

Prompts to help you think about when organisational policies, procedures, or guidance may be needed.

1. **Confidentiality and concern**
2. **Safety and meeting strangers**
3. **Challenging harmful language**
4. **Participation and inclusivity**
5. **Navigating boundaries**

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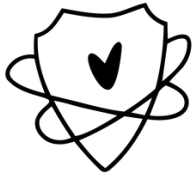


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2. Use the prompts on the back to guide your discussion. You don't need to cover them all, they're simply there to spark thought and conversation
3. Reflect together, share perspectives, and explore the "why" behind your decisions
4. Use the blank cards to create scenarios relevant to your team, setting, or current challenges

Creating a Safe Space

Some scenarios may feel sensitive or triggering. Before starting, ensure you:

- Agree a group contract (respect, confidentiality, listening, optional participation)
- People to pass on questions if they want to
- Check in with the group during and after discussions

Confidentiality Reminder

Discussions should follow your organisation's Safeguarding policy. This means:

- Conversations stay within the group unless there is a safeguarding concern or risk of harm
- Any real-life examples must be shared in a way that protects young people's privacy and does not reveal identifiable details
- If a scenario leads to uncertainty about confidentiality, use this as a chance to explore how you would respond in practice

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Ethics and Principles 1

Participation and Empowerment

Principle

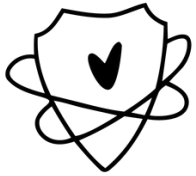
Young people are empowered to make their own choices, have their voices heard, and actively shape their futures.

Summary for Youth Workers

You do this by helping young people make their own choices, speak up, and take part in decisions. You support them to feel heard, respected, and confident. You listen to their ideas and help create chances for them to join in with community activities. Your role is to listen carefully, believe in young people, and give them space to grow in their own way

Related Code of Ethics themes

- Empower young people to explore and grow
- Listen to their voices and perspectives
- Offer guidance that is reflective, fair, and mindful of how personal assumptions or biases can shape judgment
- Put young people first, always



Ethics and Principles 1

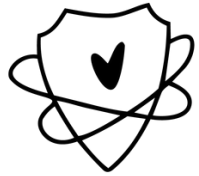
Participation and Empowerment

Reflective Prompts

- How do you make sure young people feel truly heard in your sessions?
- Have you ever seen a young person lead something their way? What happened?
- What's one way you could share more power or decision-making in your work?
- What assumptions might influence how respond in this moment?
- What helps me pause, reflect, and respond fairly when I feel challenged?

On the ground reminder:

Enable young people to share ideas, make decisions, and be part of the plan, this builds confidence and shows their voice matters.



Ethics and Principles

Ethics and Principles 2

Voluntary Relationships and Engagement

Principle

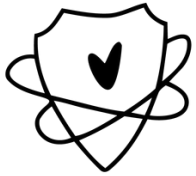
Youth work is a choice. Young people choose to show up. Your job is to make it feel worth showing up for.

Summary for Youth Workers

You do this by making young people feel welcome, respected, and valued. You create a safe and friendly space where they want to be. Young people choose to take part, so your role is to support them without pressure. When they feel free to join in, stronger and more honest relationships can grow.

Related Code of Ethics themes

- Put young people first
- Respect privacy and consent
- Listen to their needs and shape responses accordingly
- Commit to lifelong learning



Ethics and Principles 2

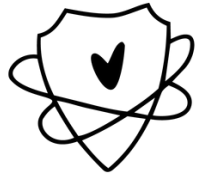
Voluntary Relationships and Engagement

Reflective Prompts

- How do you create a space where young people want to be?
- What could it feel like for a young person to say 'no' or 'not today', and still feel respected?
- What's the difference between encouraging and pressuring?

On the ground reminder:

Being present is just the start. When youth workers are seen as trustworthy, respectful, and supportive, young people feel safe to come back, try new things, and fully take part.



Ethics and Principles 3

NYA

Non-formal Education and Informal Learning

Principle

Learning doesn't only happen in classrooms. Youth work helps young people grow through conversation, action, and lived experience.

Summary for Youth Workers

You do this by supporting learning in everyday moments, through chats, activities, and real-life experiences. You help young people build skills, confidence, and self-awareness in a relaxed and friendly way. Your role is to make learning feel natural, not like school, so young people can grow and recognise their progress in a way that works best for them.

Related Code of Ethics themes

- Encourage curiosity and challenge
- Offer honest, unbiased support
- Empower young people to shape their journey
- Commit to continuous learning yourself

Ethics and Principles 3

NYA

Non-formal Education and Informal Learning

Reflective Prompts

- When has a casual conversation over playing a game of cards or baking a cake led to a big learning moment?
- What's something you've learned from a young person recently?
- How can you have turned setbacks into learning?
- What ways have you supported young people to recognise what they have learnt and/or develop a sense of achievement?

On the ground reminder:

Keep it relaxed and let learning happen naturally, showing young people different ways of learning and helping them discover what works best for them.

Ethics and Principles

Ethics and Principles 4

Professionalism and Integrity

Principle

Young people thrive in safe, trustworthy environments where youth workers are consistent, ethical, and transparent.

Summary for Youth Workers

You do this by being honest, respectful, and following the rules that keep everyone safe. You act in a fair and professional way, so young people know they can trust you. Your role is to create a safe and caring space where young people feel supported every time they take part.

Related Code of Ethics themes

- Uphold professional boundaries and safeguarding
- Maintain integrity, online and offline
- Act with fairness, not favouritism
- Put young people's needs before personal gain

Ethics and Principles 4

Professionalism and Integrity

Reflective Prompts

- What does 'professional' look like in youth work?
- How do you balance being friendly with maintaining clear boundaries?
- What would you do if, on reflection, you feel that you made the wrong decision when working with a young person?

On the ground reminder:

You don't have to be perfect. You do have to be accountable.

Ethics and Principles

Ethics and Principles 5

Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EEDIB)

Principle

Every young person deserves to feel safe, welcome, and celebrated, no matter who they are.

Summary for Youth Workers

You do this by treating everyone fairly and with respect. You make sure all young people feel safe, welcome, and accepted, no matter who they are or where they come from. Your role is to speak up against unfairness and help create a space where everyone feels they belong.

Related Code of Ethics themes

- Create fair and diverse environments
- Actively remove barriers to participation
- Respect and value differences
- Let young people's perspectives shape your actions

Ethics and Principles 5

Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EEDIB)

Reflective Prompts

- Who might feel left out in your space and why?
- What's one thing you could do to help everyone feel they belong?
- When have you stood up for fairness, even when it was uncomfortable?

On the ground reminder:

Inclusion starts with the small things; the words that you use, who you notice, and how you create safe, welcoming spaces. Belonging means being seen, respected, and valued, and acting when something isn't fair or right.

Ethics and Principles

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Dilemma 1

Participation and Empowerment

Theme

Voice, choice, leadership

Scenario

A young person in your group wants to run a campaign against local racism. Staff are worried it might cause tension in the community and say it's “too political.”

The young person feels ignored.

Trigger warning:

Dilemma cards may tap into our values, beliefs, and biases. The scenarios included are designed to challenge thinking, encourage reflection, and create a safe space for exploring different perspectives in youth-work practice.



Dilemma 1

Participation and Empowerment

Reflective Prompts

- What would you do?
- How do you support young people’s ideas while also managing risks?
- In what ways can youth workers facilitate political awareness while remaining impartial?



Dilemma 2

Voluntary Relationships and Engagement

Theme

Trust, respect, consent

Scenario

One young person has stopped coming to the group. You find out another youth worker messaged them on Instagram to ask why, but they didn't reply. The team is worried, but the young person says they just needed space.

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Dilemma 2

Voluntary Relationships and Engagement

Reflective Prompts

- Was it OK for the youth worker to contact them like that?
- Why or why not?
- How do we show care without pressuring young people?
- What does your GDPR and Data Protection policy say?



Dilemma 3

Non-formal Education and Informal Learning

Theme

Natural learning, reflection, curiosity

Scenario

During a group project, a young person breaks some ground rules that causes tension. Another youth worker wants to “move on quickly” to keep things running smoothly. But you feel this could be a good learning moment.

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Dilemma 3

Non-formal Education and Informal Learning

Reflective Prompts

- How do we support learning from real life, even when it’s uncomfortable?
- What can happen if such things are not addressed?
- What messages do young people receive when boundaries are enforced, OR ignored, by adults?



Dilemma 4

Professionalism and Integrity

Theme

Boundries, trust and safety

Scenario

A young person asks to follow you on TikTok. Your content is mostly harmless – dance videos and daily life, but you're unsure how to respond. You want to be friendly yet professional. You know the young person outside of your youthwork role as they're a friend of your younger sister (who doesn't attend the youth club), and they have been to some family gatherings.

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Dilemma 4

Professionalism and Integrity

Reflective Prompts

- Do you accept? Why or why not?
- What are the risks and boundaries?
- Does it change things if a staff member or volunteer gives a gift to a young person?
- How do power dynamics between adults and young people influence situations like this?
- How might a well-meant gift affect trust, boundaries, or expectations?
- What does your policy say?



Dilemma 5

Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EEDIB)

Theme

Fairness, diversity, belonging

Scenario

Two young people are always picked last for games. You notice others laugh at how they speak or dress. One of them has stopped talking in the group. Another says, “they just don’t fit in.”

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Dilemma 5

Equity, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EEDIB)

Reflective Prompts

- What can you do to make the group safer and more welcoming for everyone?
- What impact might repeated exclusion have on a young person’s confidence, participation, and sense of belonging?
- What other ways could you intervene in a way that supports the targeted young people while also educating the wider group?
- What is the impact if this is left unchallenged?



Dilemma

NYA

Create Your Own

Theme

Scenario



Dilemma

NYA

Create Your Own

Reflective Prompts



Dilemma

Dilemma

NYA

Create Your Own

Theme

Scenario



Dilemma

NYA

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Create Your Own

Reflective Prompts



Dilemma

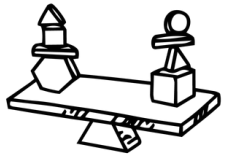
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Decision Making 1

NYA

Confidentiality and concern

Theme

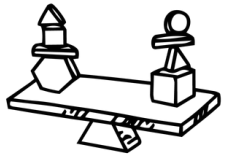
Disclosure

Scenario

A young person tells you they think they might be gay but haven't told their family or friends. They say they're scared of how people will react and ask you to promise not to tell anyone. They seem anxious and ask if you think "something is wrong" with them.

Safeguarding reminder

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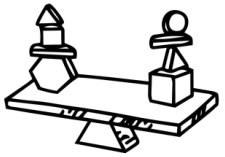
Decision Making 1

NYA

Confidentiality and concern

Prompt questions

- How do you respond in a supportive, non-judgmental way?
- What are the limits of confidentiality in this situation?
- How do you ensure the young person feels safe and accepted?
- What resources or support could you connect them to?



Decision Making 2

Safety and meeting strangers

Theme

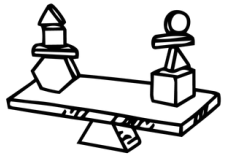
Online safety and risk

Scenario

A young person says they're planning to meet someone in person who they met online. They seem excited, but don't know much about the person. You're unsure whether they've told any adults at home.

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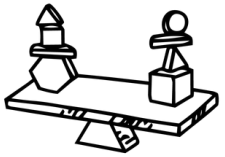


Decision Making 2

Safety and meeting strangers

Prompt questions

- How do you balance trust and safety?
- What action would be respectful, but protective?
- What role does consent play in this situation?
- What does your online safety or safeguarding policy say?



Decision Making 3

NYA

Language, respect, and accountability

Theme

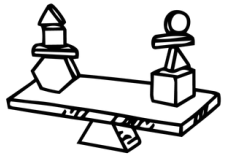
Language, respect and accountability

Scenario

During a youth club session, the group wants to play some popular music to energise the space. One of the tracks requested contains sexist and racist lyrics. Some young people dance and sing along, while others look uncomfortable and disengaged. You, as the youth worker, are unsure whether to play the song, remove it, or address the issue directly.

Safeguarding reminder

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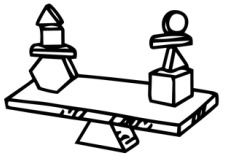
Decision Making 3

NYA

Language, respect, and accountability

Prompt questions

- What message does silence send in this situation?
- How could choosing to play or not play the song affect the group?
- How can you respond in a way that is respectful while offering a learning opportunity?
- How could you address the issue without alienating the group?
- How does this situation make you feel?
- How does it relate to your own values and beliefs?
- How do you support the young person(s) who may have been harmed or offended by the lyrics?
- What does your equality, diversity, and inclusion policy say about this kind of situation?



Decision Making 4

Participation and inclusivity

Theme

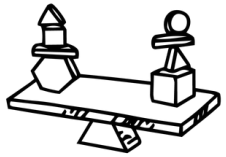
Participation and inclusivity

Scenario

During a planning session, a colleague comments that they don’t want to engage in Participation work, saying, “The disabled young people won’t understand anyway.”

Safeguarding reminder

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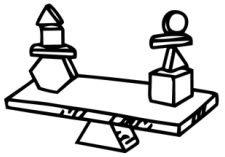


Decision Making 4

Participation and inclusivity

Prompt questions

- How do you challenge this assumption with your colleague?
- How might assumptions of this type effect young people's rights or experiences?
- How do you ensure participation is meaningful and accessible for all young people?
- What role does safeguarding play in protecting young people from exclusion?
- What does your Equality and Inclusion policy say?



Decision Making 5

Navigating boundaries

Theme

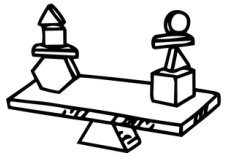
Professional boundaries and conduct

Scenario

A young person gives you a gift and a hug at the end of a session, you feel flattered but unsure about what is appropriate in your work with young people.

Safeguarding reminder

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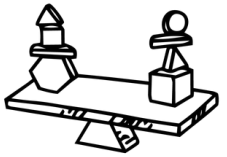


Decision Making 5

Navigating boundaries

Prompt questions

- Do you accept? Why or why not?
- What are the risks and boundaries?
- What does your policy say?
- How do power dynamics between adults and young people influence situations like this?
- Does it matter whether a staff member or volunteer gives a young person a gift?
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Decision Making

Decision Making

NYA

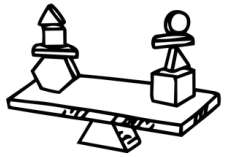
Create Your Own

Theme

Scenario

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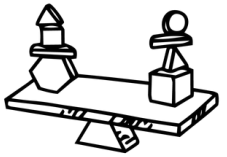


Decision Making

NYA

Create Your Own

Prompt questions



Decision Making

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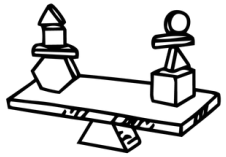
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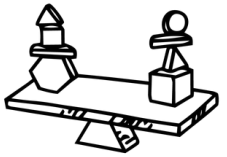


Decision Making

NYA

Create Your Own

Prompt questions



Decision Making

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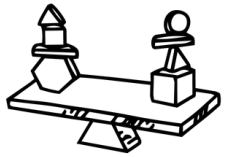
Create Your Own

Theme

Scenario

Safeguarding reminder

These scenarios may explore sensitive issues. If you are worried about a young person, follow your organisation's safeguarding procedures and speak to the safeguarding lead.

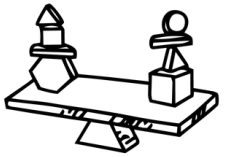


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Prompt questions



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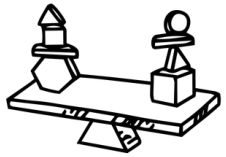
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