

YOUTH GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT



≡ Created by ≡

CHESTER ZOO
YOUTH BOARD

CHESTER ZOO YOUTH BOARD

ings a year, every 2 months

In attendance:
Chester Zoo Youth Board
Chester Zoo Director Liaison (CEO)
Director of Conservation Education and Engagement
Senior Personal Assistant
Board of Trustees Liaison



FOREWORD

One objective of a modern zoo is to provide education about the ongoing biodiversity crisis - but this is not possible without a diverse range of voices being included.

This essential work often views young people as an audience to deliver to, rather than acknowledging how they are able to contribute. We believe that the **tangible, essential** skills young people possess are invaluable in providing insight and contributing to zoos and their missions. Other conservation charities have begun to recognise this, **rethink** the way they consider young people, and include them within their organisations as co-creators. **It is time zoos follow.**

In 2020, Chester Zoo started to embed young voices across our organisation by establishing our first **Youth Board**, a group of 18–25-year-olds recruited to evaluate the zoo's operations and make sure they reflect the views of young people. As Chester Zoo Youth Board, we want young people to feel **empowered** and **engaged** with the zoo's mission. By being involved at the highest level of governance within the zoo we are demonstrating the impact young voices can have.

This **Toolkit** draws upon the experiences of ourselves, organisations we have collaborated with and other young people to provide advice on how to start your own youth governance journey.

This Youth Governance Toolkit aims to:

- Collate the outputs of workshops we've hosted at the **IUCN Global Youth Summit** and our own Youth Symposium, outlining our approach, and those of other youth governance groups.
- Bring together **advice** on best practice gathered from our experience, our workshops, and discussions with other youth-led conservation groups.
- Provide a framework for effectively inviting young people into an organisation and giving them the **agency** to contribute to its decision-making.
- Give conservation organisations the tools to establish their own systems of youth governance and collectively **drive forward** the role of youth voices within the conservation sector.

Our hope is that the sector will soon see the value of including young people **in a meaningful way**, which will shape the way zoos operate in the current age.

Connor Davies
External Reach Co-Lead, Chester Zoo Youth Board

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY YOUTH GOVERNANCE?

In this Toolkit, we consider **youth governance** as young people in an organisation working in partnership with older adults to establish, develop or evaluate the policies, practices and activities of that organisation. It's all about young people and adults working together to make decisions and take action in order to strengthen organisations.

Youth governance is especially important within the conservation sector because the issues facing our planet, and the actions we take to solve them, affect us all. To address this issue effectively, we must value and engage with all levels of society - but young people are often left out of the decision-making and policy-making processes. This is why it's important that those looking to implement youth governance do so in a **meaningful** way, which appropriately values the contributions of young people and equips them with the **skills, knowledge** and **agency** needed to affect change and maximise their impact.

Legal Status of the Youth Board

In setting up a youth governance group, it's important to consider the legal status the group will have. Being a Trustee or Director brings with it legal duties and failure to discharge these duties can lead to significant consequences, including personal financial liability and criminal liability. At Chester Zoo, the Trustees decided that these are duties the full Board of the organisation will carry and that the Youth Board wouldn't be asked to take on these duties and liabilities. This means Chester Zoo Youth Board members are not Directors or Trustees and operate in an advisory role only. This means the Youth Board's decisions can't be actioned without the full Board, or authorised members of the Executive, approving them - but it provides an essential safety net to allow the Youth Board to grapple with difficult issues and make recommendations.

What is youth?

The UN states this is any person between the ages of 15-24, but some consider youth to be anyone over 10 or under 30. For the purposes of this toolkit, we are defining youth as those between the ages of 12 and 26.

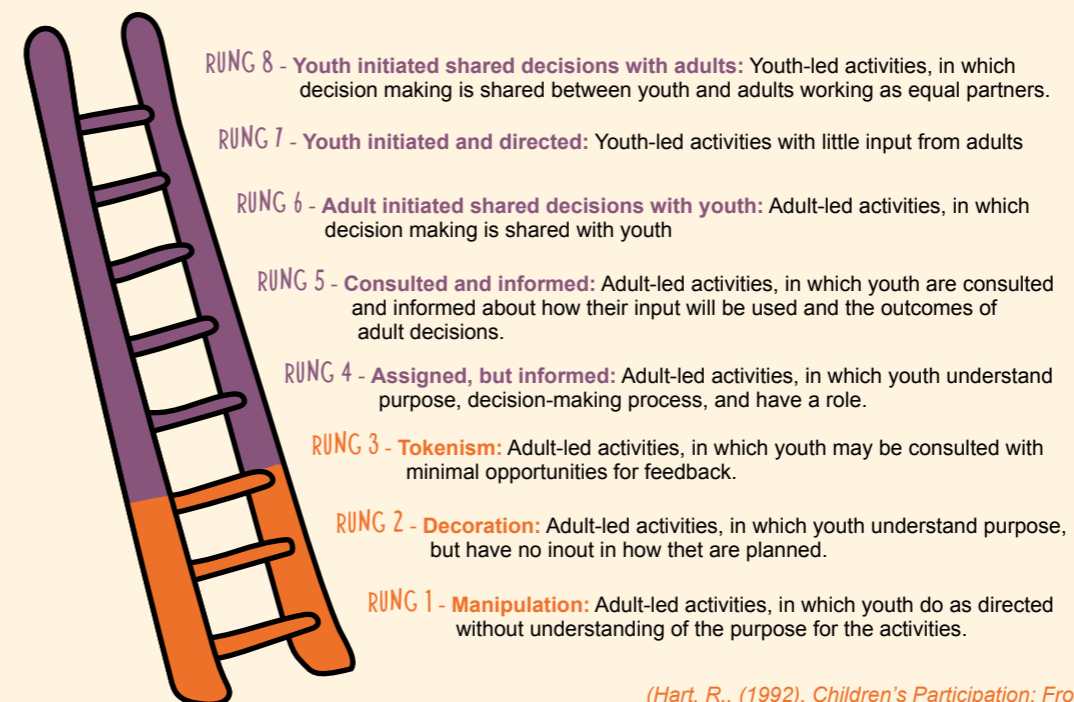


There are many terms that can be given to a system of youth governance - in this Toolkit we use Youth Board throughout for clarity. It's also important to note the difference between young people acting in an advisory capacity (through a Youth Board) and young people having a role as Young Trustees. For more information on Young Trustees, see the Young Trustees Movement.



Hart's Ladder of participation

To make sure young people are having maximum impact within your organisation, it's important to examine how they work within the organisation, and how that relationship shapes their input. Hart's Ladder of Participation can be a useful framework for thinking about how your organisation is engaging with young people. It describes three rungs of non-participation and five rungs of participation.



To be truly meaningful, the integration of young people into decision-making must happen at those higher rungs. This is where the idea of youth governance comes in - it acts as a channel for youth voices to be heard at the highest level, and represents a huge opportunity to broaden the scope of young people's contributions to conservation organisations.

(Hart, R., (1992), *Children's Participation: From tokenism to citizenship*, Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre)

Why is youth governance beneficial?

It's easy for young people to feel invisible, undervalued and disheartened when youth voices tend to be deemed less important and less impactful than older voices. Youth governance tackles this misconception by facing these challenges head on and demonstrates the impact that young voices can have.

The reasoning for bringing young people into decision-making should consider the tangible value that younger voices can bring to the table. Through the workshops we have run, several benefits of youth governance have been identified:

- Young people tend to see things differently - they can give different perspectives and provide valuable insight into important areas of an organisation's work. This brings a greater level of inclusion to ensure the organisation is truly representative of a variety of groups at both a formal and an informal level.
- Access to expertise on issues and challenges facing youth and the things that matter to them.
- Access to new networks, which in turn can mean the organisation will grow and gain increased support.
- Getting involved with youth governance is an ideal way for young people to use their time and skills, mutually benefiting themselves and organisations.
- Nurturing young people's passion in their early career stages can ensure their future in the sector. They can also provide insight into barriers to participation and help open the door for others.
- Young people may have knowledge about social trends, technology, and youth culture that are missing from the organisation. They are a great source of expertise on issues and challenges facing young people and the things that matter to them
- Young people will inherit organisations, so having them on board now is valuable to ensure organisations stay relevant and are future-proofed.
- Young people can provide access to new networks, which in turn can mean organisations will grow and gain increased support.

We set up a Youth Board to help us ensure that the zoo is relevant to everyone, particularly young people who may have had less engagement with us in the past. Having their perspectives informs our work to involve people with conservation both now and into the future.

Jamie Christon, Chief Executive Officer

Through our Youth Board we are able to create opportunities for young people from a variety of backgrounds to develop the insight, skills and confidence to participate in conservation governance here at the zoo and elsewhere. It's an important part of our commitment to developing young people as conservationists and ensuring the sector is accessible as possible.

Charlotte Smith, Director of Conservation Education

Who are CHESTER ZOO YOUTH BOARD?

12 young people
Aged 18-26
6 full-board meetings per year



Nicole Jess Fariba Sian Connor Izzy Felix Jess Andy Elliott Beth

1 Chair
2 Vice Chairs

CHESTER ZOO YOUTH BOARD

The Chester Zoo Youth Board is a group of young people who were recruited to help address a gap in the visitor experience Chester Zoo offers. It was created to **evaluate** how the zoo was already engaging young people and **develop** it further to ensure the zoo's public offering appealed to the demographic. To make sure the input provided by the Youth Board is as representative as possible, members were selected regardless of background or conservation knowledge. The result was an **eclectic** mix of members, including tattoo artists, students, vets, finance analysts and zoo educators, each bringing their own experiences.

The main aims of the Youth Board were initially determined by the zoo's senior management and the Board of Trustees before recruitment, but have since been shaped by the Youth Board. We support the zoo's overarching mission of **Preventing Extinction** and our first task as a Board was defining how we do that. We created our mission statement - **Preventing Extinction by Empowering Future Generations** - and laid out our priorities.

Our Mission Statement

As Chester Zoo's first Youth Board, our mission is to **provide a voice for young people**. We will ensure that Chester Zoo offers a **universal experience**, whether at the Zoo or in wider communities, that puts young people **right at the heart of it**.

We will work to make sure the next generation are **represented**, are **engaged** with the work of Chester Zoo and are **empowered** to have an impact on the future of conservation so that together we can all help to **prevent extinction**.

HOW HAS THE YOUTH BOARD HAD AN IMPACT?

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion work

Our Youth Board Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee aims to make the zoo more **accessible** and **inclusive**. We recognised this was an important issue for young people, and that making improvements would increase visitor engagement.

The Committee wrote a Paper of Recommendation to the Board of Trustees, listing improvements the zoo could make. They have since done several **accessibility walkthroughs** of the zoo to highlight where other improvements could be made, and continually provide an ongoing accessibility perspective during zoo projects. These actions have contributed significantly to delivering a key priority in our mission statement: **to offer a universal experience**. These actions have contributed significantly to delivering a key priority in our mission statement: **to offer a universal experience**.



Youth Symposium

Our Youth Symposium provided a weekend of **young speakers, discussions** and **workshops** to empower over 100 young attendees and celebrate the impact young people can have in the conservation sector. Attendees could **connect, network** and **discuss** the barriers young people in conservation face, and the brilliant things we can achieve. Keynote speakers celebrated **inclusion, representation** and **optimism** as key tools for effective engagement with conservation.

The Youth Board decided the concept and objectives, then hosted the event by facilitating discussions and workshops from a range of speakers. Zoo staff worked with us to organise event logistics and provide technical support. This **collaborative approach** ensured it was a truly **youth-led, youth-focussed** event, which was recognised in the positive feedback we received.

100% of feedback* rated the Youth Symposium as good or very good.

84% of attendees* were aged 16-24

"The event felt 100% youth-led - like it was giving young people a voice"

"It provided a great opportunity to network and share ideas"

*60% of attendees provided feedback

Department for Education Consultation

The Youth Board were approached by the **Department for Education** to input into the development of their new **Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy** from a youth perspective.

Alongside other **youth-led organisations**, we were able to send a representative to consultations to **feed back** directly to the Department for Education. As a result of these consultations, the strategy was amended to reflect feedback before publication.

This represented a **huge opportunity** for us to offer a youth voice at a national level, and **directly influence Government policy**. It further demonstrates how conservation organisations can drive forward the **youth voice** on a wider scale through youth governance. Through these consultations, Chester Zoo has moved closer to their **Conservation Masterplan** target of *getting climate and sustainability embedded into the national curriculum* in a way which would have been impossible without a Youth Board.

The Youth Board made a positive difference to our engagement with the Department for Education and its new Sustainability and Climate Change and strategy. They were asked to join the department's youth panel and enabled us to feed into the development of the strategy. That work has put us on DfE's radar and the Youth Board will play a crucial role in our future efforts to influence policy relating to conservation education.

Gareth Siddorn, Head of Public Affairs



GETTING STARTED

Making your case for youth governance.

When thinking about youth governance, consider what you hope setting it up will achieve. We've outlined some of the benefits of youth governance above, but you may have already identified specific aspects of your work that need to be developed. It's also important to **be open to changes** suggested by young people. Ensuring everyone involved is open to being challenged is an essential part of laying the groundwork for your Youth Board to be successful.

Think about your organisation's **capacity to support** young people. It's good to make sure you have the resources to provide the training, mentoring and facilitation that young people may need to be able to contribute effectively. This includes making sure there are multiple points of contact for your young people within your organisation, to ensure the operation of your Youth Board is resilient to staff changes.

Deciding on the **structure** early on is key. The closer your Youth Board sits to the decisions you want them to influence the better. Map out where and how decisions affecting young people are made in your organisation, and then decide where your Youth Board should sit, so that they can influence **and** be appropriately supported.

Before your Youth Board is recruited, it is crucial that everyone is clear on expectations and open to being influenced by the ideas and aspirations of young people. Fortunately, there are lots of great examples of where organisations are benefiting from youth governance that can be used to shape these conversations.

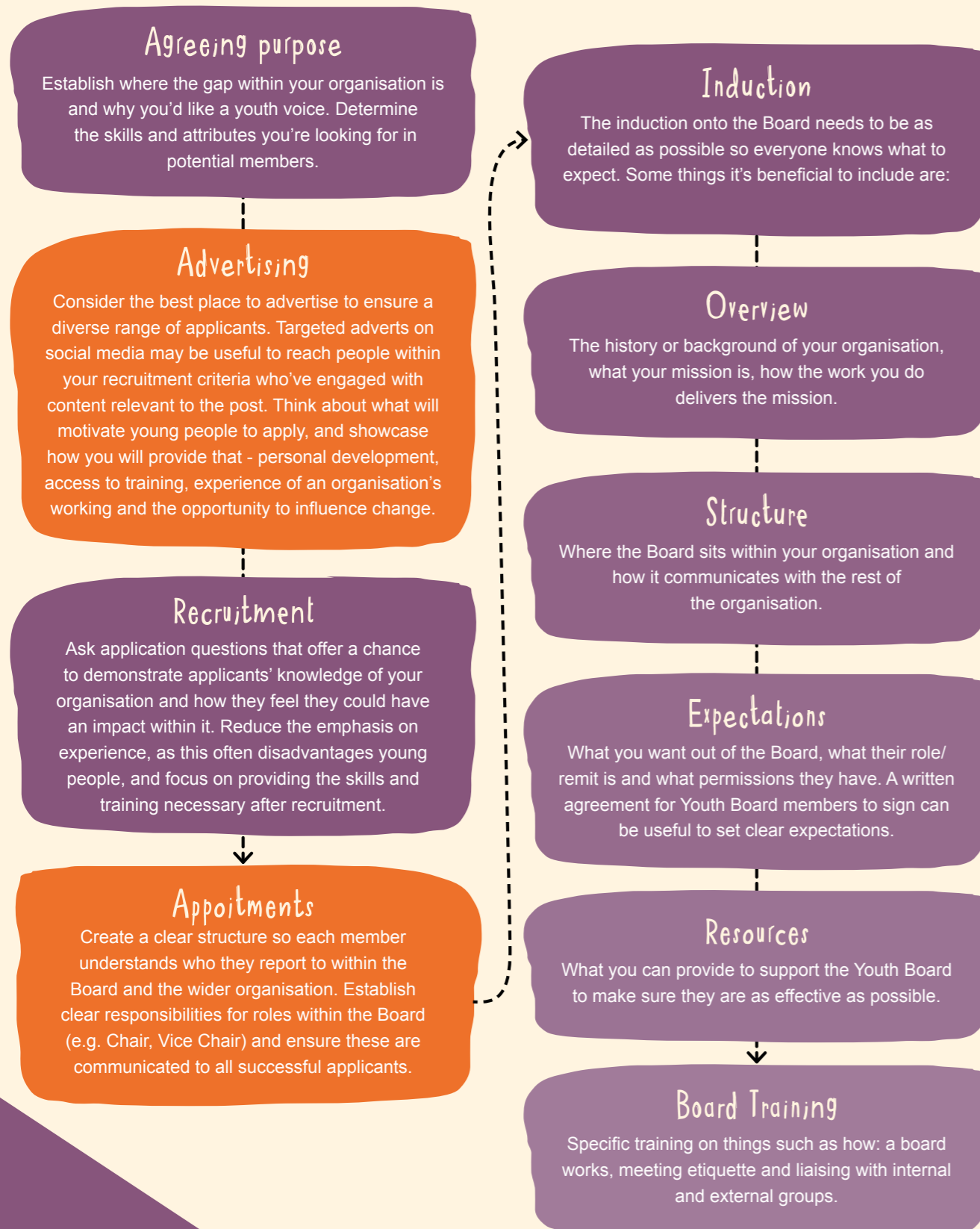
At Chester Zoo...

As Chester Zoo is a charity, the Board of Trustees are the highest decision-making body in the organisation. So, to give them maximum reach, our Youth Board sits as an official advisory board to the Trustees.

The Chester Zoo Youth Board are supported by the Conservation Education & Engagement team (who have experience working with and supporting both volunteers and young people) and designated members of the Director and Trustee groups. All of these groups worked together to develop the framework into which the Youth Board were recruited. Now, the Youth Board themselves work with these stakeholder groups to continue the evolution of youth governance at the zoo.

RECRUITMENT AND ONBOARDING

Preparing for and recruiting a Youth Board



At Chester Zoo...

Once they'd identified the need for a Youth Board, Chester Zoo recruited for members using targeted Youtube adverts, adverts on Chester Zoo's owned channels, and through the connections of their existing network. Chester Zoo asked applicants to produce a 90-second video explaining why they wanted to join the Youth Board, followed by attending a selection day for those shortlisted.

During our first meeting after the recruitment day, the zoo team ran an induction workshop to familiarise us with the zoo's policies, safeguarding and discuss non-disclosure agreements. We were each provided with an iPad and a Chester Zoo email account to ensure we could access confidential information on devices that weren't personal. This also meant no one was disadvantaged by being unable to access a personal device.

Later recruitment was led by the Youth Board and we adapted the process to make it more inclusive. All personal data, such as gender, name and age, was removed to reduce the risk of unconscious bias during selection. We found it was best to ask 5 general questions about Chester Zoo and youth governance, rather than using a CV. Applicants who answered the questions were marked using a points system based on pre-agreed criteria. Those which demonstrated an **alignment with our mission, values and goals** scored the highest on a 1-5 scale.

Once we had reviewed all our applicants, we invited 13 young people to a recruitment day on site at Chester Zoo. The recruitment day involved a team-building task, a discussion and a presentation task to observe how well they understood the role of a Youth Board Member. The day closed with a round of interviews with senior zoo staff, Trustees and the serving Youth Board members to assess how they aligned with the Youth Board's mission.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference for your youth governance structure should be in place by the time the first young people join. These are likely to evolve, but the initial terms should clearly set out everything that's expected of your young people, how decisions shall be made, and by whom. The Terms of Reference explain:

- The duration of initial membership, and a maximum duration if the possibility is given to extend membership beyond one term.
- The maximum number of members permitted, and the minimum required for the youth governance group to be functional.
- The process for electing the Youth Board Chair/Vice Chairs.
- Any behaviour and attendance requirements that must be met for membership of the Youth Board, and the process by which any issues will be addressed.
- An outline of meeting commitments, including how many meetings will occur each year.
- The process for resigning from a youth governance position.

At Chester Zoo...

You can find an example Terms of Reference at the end of the Toolkit.

MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure youth governance is effective, it is useful to define exactly what it is that you want your young people to feed into, evaluate or influence, and where relevant discussions happen within your organisation. Try to make sure young people can communicate as directly as possible with that team.



At Chester Zoo...

As a registered charity, Chester Zoo is governed by a Board of Trustees (The North of England Zoological Society), and the Youth Board sits directly below, in an advisory capacity. This means any recommendations made by the Youth Board are delivered straight to the highest levels of Chester Zoo, maximising impact.

Trustees regularly communicate with the Board of Directors, who manage the daily operation of Chester Zoo as an organisation and visitor attraction. Significant projects are discussed within specific committees, then agreed by the full Board of Trustees. To ensure representation across the full breadth of decision-making, the Youth Board can send representatives to all full Board of Trustee meetings and any committee meetings.

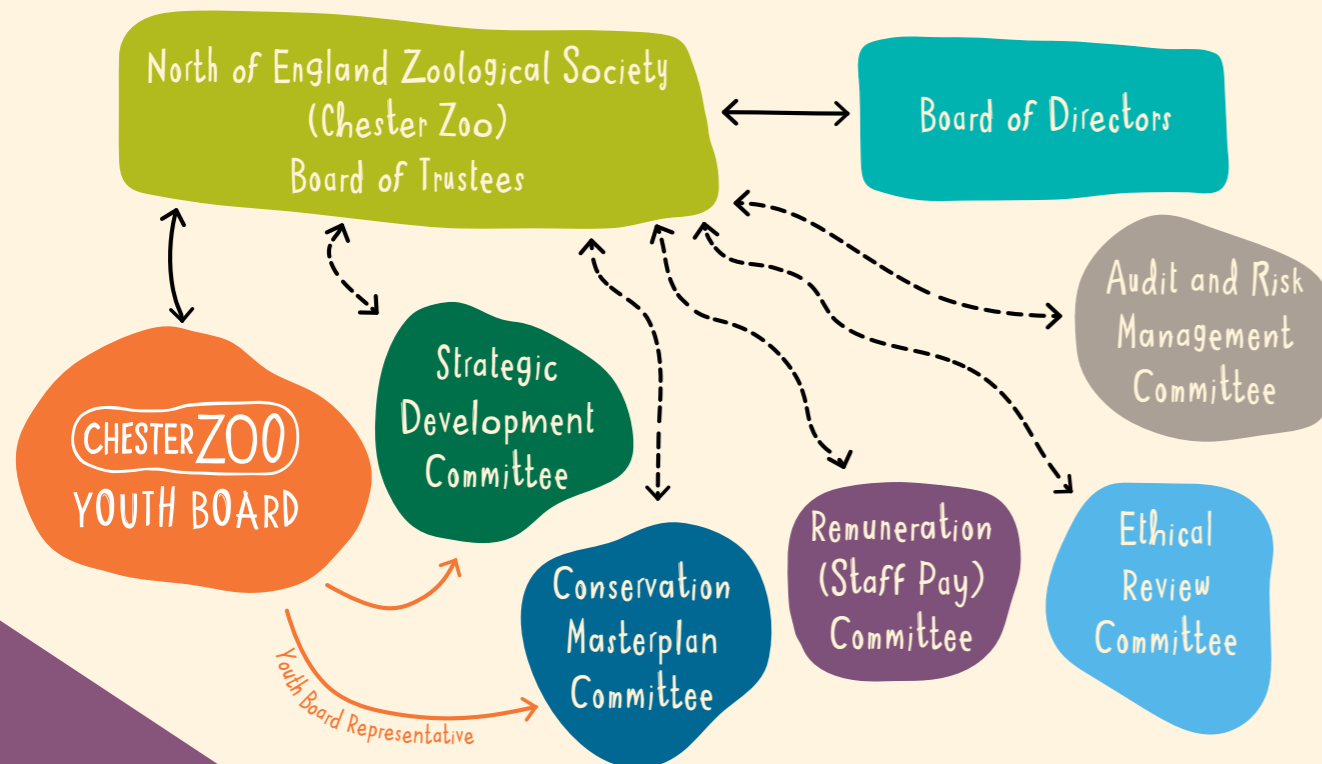
The Youth Board has created **working groups**, to streamline work on separate projects, that progress outside of meetings, then present work, ask for feedback and get decisions agreed upon within meetings. Due to the short-term nature of some projects, working groups change frequently, but they generally fall into one of several key areas of work:

- **Inclusivity and diversity:** breaking down barriers that prevent accessibility, to promote diversity and inclusion across Chester Zoo.
- **External reach:** connecting with other youth-led conservation organisations.
- **Programmes:** supporting the development of events and programmes for young people.
- **Communications:** developing ways of communicating with young people and designing youth-focussed conten.
- **Public affairs:** supporting the Zoo's role in influencing policies and driving change, providing a youth perspective.



CHESTERZOO

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Once recommendations have been made at a Youth Board level, there are different pathways to present these to the wider zoo:

- Feedback on zoo-led projects can be given at Youth Board meetings, or as part of collaborative working group meetings.

- Small-scale recommendations impacting the wider zoo are presented to the Board of Directors to give permission.

- Large-scale recommendations impacting the wider zoo must be ratified by the Trustees before they are progressed.

MEETINGS

Youth board meetings are where most of the communication between your Youth Board and your organisation occur.

In the Room

When thinking about who should attend, try to balance providing support and making your young people comfortable. Having members of senior management teams in a meeting may help drive actions forward, but may make young people feel less comfortable. If senior management do attend, maybe choose one specific member to attend every meeting to ensure consistency and build a rapport.

It's sensible to invite the head of the team which directly facilitates and supports the Youth Board, as they will be your board's main point of contact with your organisation's staff. Other members of your organisation may be invited to meetings to present proposals for Youth Board feedback, or to give context around how different areas of your organisation work.

At Chester Zoo...

Full Youth Board meetings are led by the Chair, or Vice Chair if the Chair is unavailable, and are facilitated by the Director of Conservation Education. If they are unavailable, another member of the Conservation Education & Engagement team will attend in their place.

We also invite a chosen liaison from the Board of Directors, usually the CEO, and a liaison from the Board of Trustees. We have a Senior PA who attends to write minutes and organise the logistics of running the meeting. Depending on the ongoing work of the Board, we may invite relevant individuals from around the organisation.



Setting the Agenda

The agenda should be set by members of your Youth Board, with support from staff or Trustees from your organisation, to ensure everyone agrees on what it needs to contain.

The agenda should be circulated to all attendees before a meeting to give people time to prepare. When circulating the agenda, any materials necessary for the upcoming meeting should also be sent, including any papers or proposals up for discussion as part of the meeting.

At Chester Zoo...

The responsibility of planning the agenda for Youth Board meetings is shared between the Chair and Vice Chairs. They will meet with the Trustee Liaison and the Director of Conservation Education 4 weeks before each meeting to finalise the agenda.

The standing items on our agenda include:

- **Apologies**
- **Minutes and matters arising**
- **Trustee and Director Liaison update:** an update from the Trustee Liaison on what Trustees have been discussing and an update from the CEO to provide an overview of the running of the Zoo.
- **Conservation and Engagement update:** an update from the Conservation Education & Engagement team on what they are working on and a chance to explore how the Board can assist.
- **Youth Board update:** updates on the progress that working groups have made since the last meeting - also an opportunity to split into groups to discuss any major work or proposals and then re-group for further discussion.
- **Any Other Business**
- **Closed Youth Board Session:** a quick chat open to Youth Board members only, which isn't minuted. We have found that this works really well as an agenda point, as it gives less confident members a chance to speak freely, without feeling intimidated by the presence of zoo staff.

Once the agenda has been agreed, two weeks prior to the meeting it's circulated in the 'Youth Board Pack'. Included in the Youth Board Pack is:

- Agenda for the upcoming Youth Board meeting
- Minutes from the last Youth Board meeting
- Agenda from the last Trustee Meeting
- Any papers that are relevant to the upcoming Youth Board meeting
- Meeting dates for the Youth Board, Trustees and Committees for the next 12 months
- Summary of Youth Board members' attendance at meetings

Meeting structure

When developing your Youth Board's meeting structure, it's useful to think about when young people are available, how they are able to organise their time and how often they will need to meet to contribute effectively. Fitting meetings within your organisation's decision-making cycles may make it easier for the Board to have an influence.

It can be useful to assign time during meetings to allow members to socialise and build a rapport. This will help your young people work together more effectively and is especially helpful in the first few meetings after a board is established. A mix of in person and virtual meetings should be considered to increase accessibility.

Between meetings

How your Youth Board operates between meetings may vary. For bigger projects, it may be beneficial for the majority of the work to be carried out during meetings, but work may need to be carried out between meetings to action points that have previously been discussed.

At Chester Zoo...

Meeting structure. Full Youth Board meetings occur six times a year. Allocating a full day for meetings allows time for different elements, such as working group discussions, workshops to progress assigned actions and time to socialise. This has been beneficial as Youth Board members with outside commitments (eg. full-time education or work) are able to complete work in meetings, minimising the amount which needs to be completed between meetings. We ensure all members can attend virtually if necessary - but we do emphasise the benefit of attending in-person.

We have also found it useful to explore the zoo prior to a meeting - either by ourselves, or with members of staff who can show us the behind-the-scenes operations of the zoo. This provides a social opportunity to strengthen the relationships between the Youth Board, but also helps familiarise members with the site and provide insight into the zoo's work.

Between meetings. Historically, a lot of the Youth Board's work has been completed in our working groups between full Youth Board meetings. This allowed smaller groups to take projects and progress them over time, providing updates at full meetings. However, we learnt from experience and now allow time for working group discussions within the meeting agenda, which reduces the time members need to commit outside of meetings.



SAFEGUARDING AND SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is about the actions taken to protect the wellbeing of everyone that comes in contact with your organisation.

Young people may face risks because of their age, race, gender, religion, disability, social background, sexual orientation or culture. Youth governance should offer a safe and inclusive environment for young people, and your organisation must take your duty of care seriously.

At Chester Zoo...

We set out a benchmark of acceptable behaviours and expectations to help us to work well together well and manage boundaries. We also follow statutory guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Charity Commission.

For further advice on safeguarding within volunteer roles, you can consult the NCVO and the Charity Commission.

Case Study: Reserva: The Youth Land Trust'

The Chester Zoo Youth Board is made up of young people aged 18 and above - and working with young people below this range comes with added safeguarding responsibilities. Reserva: The Youth Land Trust works with an international Youth Council of young people, including those under the age of 18. Below they share how they approach safeguarding:

- Gain permission from parent/guardian and ensure they are kept up to date. They will typically form the main communication channel with the youngest members.
- Adhere to all relevant national and local rules on data protection, such as what data to collect, how to store it, who has access etc.
- Adhere to all relevant national and local rules on working with children, such as the need for background checks, youth worker qualifications etc.
- Ensure all members of your organisation are aware of the appropriate language, tone, and content for your organisation. Creating a Code of Ethics for members to sign is one method we use at Reserva.
- Provide safeguarding training for key members of your organisation. This will cover relevant laws and appropriate actions to take when issues arise.

Supporting

A key element of establishing an effective Youth Board is ensuring you are providing support to help your members thrive and feel comfortable in their role. This support can come in many ways:

Administrative support: helping to facilitate and organise meetings, circulating agendas and taking minutes.

Training: addressing gaps in knowledge, making sure your young people are all at the same level. This is important as your young people will likely have varying levels of experience of formal meetings - many will have no prior board experience. The following training may be worth considering:

- Effective meeting planning, participation and facilitation
- Project and campaign planning
- Recruitment practices, including unconscious bias
- How to write and present a proposal
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Safeguarding
- Confidence building
- Budgeting and fundraising
- Health and safety

Familiarisation sessions: offering young people behind-the-scenes tours of facilities, lectures, presentations and workshops from staff members about their work and the opportunity to volunteer on the ground with your organisation helps to develop understanding of how things operate.

A mentoring scheme: providing each young person with a personal mentor from within your senior management team can be really beneficial to young people. These mentors are there to answer questions, provide insight and advice, and support their mentee young person in their Youth Board role.

At Chester Zoo...

Our mentoring scheme has been really valuable to the success of the Youth Board and has helped each of our members to grow in confidence within their role. Our mentors are made up of the Board of Directors, and other members of senior management teams. Mentors and mentees are encouraged to meet as often as they'd like, but a recommended frequency is once a month.

Every 6 months the Youth Board have a prioritisation workshop, facilitated by zoo staff to allow us to re-evaluate our priorities and set realistic goals for the future. These workshops allow reflective practice, and an opportunity for members and staff to give honest feedback about the Board's performance.

It's also important for all Youth Board members to support each other and identify any barriers to participation. These may be identified and discussed with mentors, during a prioritisation workshop, or through feedback from members of staff or Trustees.



MEASURING IMPACT

Deciding if young governance is working can be tricky. Going back to your original goals and deciding if they are being achieved is a good place to start.

You can also measure other aspects of youth governance such as:

- Time (in hours) donated by young people to the organisation
- Numbers of recommendations or decisions made (and implemented)
- Range of projects delivered
- Increases in uptake of your youth programmes
- Increase in organisational profile in the young voice sphere - this is hard to measure but numbers of mentions, invitations to speak and social media engagement could give some indication.
- Perceptions of the organisation amongst young people.



Measure success from the perspective of your organisation and your young people by taking a baseline measurement (using surveys or working groups) at the beginning, then measure at different points along your youth governance journey.

Sharing what your Youth Board has done acknowledges their contribution and also enables others to see that you're serious about working with young people.



SPOTLIGHT ON

Reserva YLT

Reserva: The Youth Land Trust is a youth-led organisation empowering other young people to make a measurable difference for threatened species and habitats through conservation, education, and storytelling. Reserva is the only organisation working to protect habitats and biodiversity solely through youth empowerment at an international level.

Our Youth Council is a self-assembled group of proactive, inclusive, solution-oriented optimists who share a love of nature and are resolved to protect it. They are much more than formal advisors; they directly design, share, and implement Reserva's initiatives.

Throughout our youth governance journey, we have connected with several youth-led organisations to share ideas and best practice.

Here, two of those organisations share how they have approached youth governance.

The biggest lessons from Reserva:

- Young people are more than just voices and our symbolic connection to the future. We can be active leaders today by using our financial and organisational power to make measurable differences to our planet.
- Meaningful youth empowerment is a journey. There will be times when things don't quite work out as planned. With very few past examples, all of us are learning and collaborating for our shared goals.

Action for Conservation

“My biggest hope from this project is for even just one young person to see Penpont and decide to listen to the burning passion inside of them, and to speak up and champion it.”

Esther, 16, Youth Leadership Group member for the Penpont Project

Action for Conservation is a UK grassroots charity inspiring and empowering young people, aged 12 to 18 from diverse backgrounds, to become the next generation of environmental leaders. Through its various programmes, AFC has supported over 5,000 young people in bringing about long-term, meaningful change in their communities and ecosystems. AFC have also recruited a 20-strong Youth Leadership Group (YLG) for the Penpont Project, the charity's first intergenerational land-based initiative.

Young people are more concerned than ever about the climate and ecological crises, but are rarely given a meaningful say in what we should be doing about these major issues. This is why AFC set up the Penpont Project, where young people are

helping to decide the future of a large site at Penpont Estate in the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The YLG come from all corners of the UK, and include five local members who live a stone's throw from the site. They visit Penpont three times a year on multi-day residential visits, staying with the landowners and meeting local stakeholders and ecologists. The YLG have been responsible for leading on the project's overall strategy, identifying the aims of the project and delivering key actions with the landowners, tenant farmers and Action for Conservation team, who together constitute the Project's Co-Management Council. Participatory mapping has been central to this process, creating an open and safe space to express ideas, develop strategies and make collaborative decisions about Penpont's future. Over the last 2 years, this intergenerational co-management structure has shaped the delivery of rigorous ecological baseline surveys, community engagement events and the first actions for establishing a wider landscape, including tree and hedge-planting, as well as generating considerable media interest locally and nationally.



HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUTH GOVERNANCE AS A YOUNG PERSON

Be realistic about what you can do.

Being part of an organisation can involve a big time commitment and schedules can change drastically - so it's important to manage your own resource effectively. Be honest about how much time you can give, and if this changes make sure you communicate this to the rest of your team as soon as you can.

“Be transparent and honest about your capacity - having flexibility to step back or take the lead on projects is really valuable. It's not admitting defeat or letting anyone down by taking time for yourself”

Felix Rowan-Young, Youth Board Member

Be proactive: ask questions.

Being on a board is a great learning opportunity, so ask as many questions as you can.

“There are no silly questions – if you're unsure of something, chances are you probably aren't the only one”

Beth Hughes, Youth Board Vice Chair

Ask for help.

If you think you need training in an area in order to make recommendations, ask for it. Being honest about the support you need will benefit the entire board.

Be confident of your voice.

Remember your organisation has formed a Youth Board because they want to hear your thoughts. Every single member has something valuable to add to the conversation.

Celebrate your successes.

Being on a Youth Board is brilliant in terms of improving your confidence and experience so it's important to celebrate every little win you achieve.





OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUTH GOVERNANCE IN ZOOS

We have a vision where the conservation sector recognises the responsibility they have to help drive change and begin to operate with fully-integrated, successful Youth Boards. A vision where we won't need to strengthen youth voices within conservation, because those voices will be heard and taken seriously.

Once individual organisations have youth governance in place, it will pave the way for Boards to come together and influence the sector at a national and international level. Dedicated networks of representatives from Youth Boards

across collections would ensure that zoos remain relevant, accessible and engaging for young people.

This invitation to young people to join the decision-making should not be limited to UK institutions, and we look forward to more organisations across Europe and globally establishing youth governance, to strengthen the future of zoos around the world.

We think this vision is realistic, achievable, and essential.

We hope this Toolkit will help to push the movement along, encourage zoos around the world to take up youth governance, and make setting it up a smoother process, for the benefit of both zoos and young people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With this Toolkit we hope to inspire and empower other young voices, but this work would not have been possible without the young voices who contributed and the people who have empowered us.

Our huge thanks go to:

Our external partners who contributed to this Toolkit and to our IUCN Global Youth Summit workshops: Tess Corcoran (Teach the Future), Haidee Bailey, Joe Wilkins and Callie Broaddus (Reserva: The Youth Land Trust), Emma Schofield and Forrest Hogg (Action for Conservation), Carmela Ellaga (Philippine Reef and Rainforest Conservation Foundation Inc.), Harilefitra Ratovo-Andrianarisoa (Madagasikara Voakajy).

All the staff at Chester Zoo, who have supported our Youth Board since its inception, and the entire NEZS Board of Trustees. Further thanks go to all Chester Zoo staff who volunteered themselves for the mentoring scheme, and have provided invaluable guidance throughout our time on the Youth Board.

All the young voices that have been part of our Youth Board, past and present: Isobel Cook, Andy Trembling, Nicole Regan, Beth Hughes, Holly Parr, Elena Lindsey, Chelsie Jones, Felix Rowan-Young, Amy Richardson, Jess Hugill, Elliott Ford, Fariha Agha Connor Davies, Jessica Jones, Lloyd Kershaw, Emily Corner and Sian Bramham.

APPENDICES

When discussing youth governance with other organisations, one thing that they always ask about is the paperwork - the policies, procedures and agreements. To assist with the finer details of setting up a Youth Board, we have included below a series of examples of the most important documents and policies you may need when establishing youth governance.

We have removed all personal details and any reference to confidential information that may be discussed during meetings. And as these examples have all been adapted from our own operations they make frequent mentions to the key stakeholders the Chester Zoo Youth Board work with:

The Board of Trustees* as Chester Zoo is a registered charity, we are governed by a Board of Trustees, and they are the highest level of governance within our organisation. For organisations that are not governed by a Board of Trustees, the examples provided can be easily adapted by removing reference to Trustees and replacing them with the highest levels of governance within your organisation.

The Executive this term refers to the highest level of governance, within paid staff employed by Chester Zoo, including the CEO and the wider team of Directors. This is likely to be the highest level of governance in organisations that are not registered charities.

The Staff team this refers to the staff team within Chester Zoo that works most closely with the Youth Board, and who are the Youth Board's main point of contact. In our case this is the Conservation Education and Engagement team.

Appendices Contents:

