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Youth Empowerment Strategy

Youth Empowerment Strategy | 2024/25

Purpose

Our very first Youth Empowerment Strategy, developed with members of our [Youth Advisory Board](#) (YAB), describes why empowering young people both within Mission 44 and as part of its core mission is important to us.

The following strategy:

- Describes which young people are a priority for Mission 44; and why it's important to embed them in our work.
- Establishes and defines the values and principles that underpin our approach to youth participation.
- Defines the role and remit of our inaugural Youth Advisory Board within Mission 44.



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Which young people do we wish to empower?

Mission 44 focuses its efforts on young people under the age of 27 who face social injustice, including young people from low-income backgrounds, young people of colour and care-experienced young people.

Whilst a wide cross-section of young people can contribute to social change, Mission 44 is particularly concerned with ensuring that the lived experience of young people who have experienced social injustice lies at the heart of our work. We aim to mirror our commitments to these young people in all our youth empowerment work, ensuring that it never inadvertently replicates existing privilege.

Why embed young people in all of Mission 44's work - 'Nothing about us without us?'

This work is core for Mission 44 to:

- **Model the world** it wishes to see through its own culture and practice, working collaboratively, curiously and inclusively with young people.
- **Re-distribute power** and challenge social norms, amplifying the voices of underserved young people.
- **Gain insight** into young people's lived experience, for deeper impact.

Mission 44 aims to work with young people to:

- Build their **individual power** and **capacity** to support wider social change.
- Ensure that young people are **listened** to by **people in positions of power** and influence, through the **power of youth voice, campaigning or advocacy**.

Principles of youth participation

To do this work well, means safeguarding young people - prioritising their health and wellbeing and ensuring that they have a positive and enriching experience with Mission 44. It also means ensuring that Mission 44 has the necessary capacity to work with young people and set them up to succeed. We build our youth participation approach on the following principles, to which we are fully committed:

Power builders	Through transparent practice, productive inter-generational relationships, investment in building necessary skills and capacity at all levels, and the opportunity to generate meaningful insights, we will build the conditions for young people to exert influence, authority and agency.
Asset-led	All our work with young people will start by acknowledging their strengths, individuality and uniqueness, and ability to contribute to solutions.
Adequately resource	Whether it's the payment of young people, the additional staffing needed to facilitate work with young people, or the development of learning and skills, we will invest in this work at a level that matches our ambition.
Relational	Sufficient time will be built into all work with young people to build trust, mutual understanding, and open communication.
Accessible	All our organisational communication will be accessible and jargon-free.
Equitable	Working fairly and equally, making space for those that are less heard.
Creative	Young people will be given the space to express themselves in a way that speaks to them and to their generation and to develop work that reflects their creative energy.
Accountable	Mission 44 will always provide feedback to young people on actions resulting from their influence. And will seek

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	feedback from young people in different ways to capture, document and learn from their experience of working with Mission 44.
Committed to learning	We will invest in the learning needed to do this work well, listening carefully to young people and other organisations who are ahead of us, and sharing our own learning externally. Mission 44 and the Youth Advisory Board commit to reflecting on the learning together at appropriate moments throughout the strategy period.

How young people contribute to Mission 44

- **Young people contribute their lived experience:** they can illuminate what it feels like to be a young person today, and how they experience life in key areas of Mission 44's work.
- **Young people contribute specific subject matter expertise on thematic areas:** young people can bring the knowledge and professional experience that Mission 44 lacks.
- Young people support work that is about reimagining the future: **young people can excel at imagination and creativity** – thinking outside the norms of how we work, to push practice.
- The Youth Advisory Board can **hold Mission 44 to account:** ensuring we are living our values and upholding our principles of youth empowerment.
- Young people have **access to networks** of other young people that Mission 44 don't and can **inspire their peers.**

The role and remit of the Youth Advisory Board

The role and remit of the Youth Advisory Board will likely evolve with us as a growing organisation that aims to share power and collaborate with young people. Currently, the Youth Advisory Board influences in the following ways:

Grantmaking decisions - Our Impact Committee is the decision-making group which has the authority to review and approve grants under £200,000. The Committee includes equal numbers of Youth Advisory Board members and Trustees. A Trustee and YAB member also jointly co-chair the Committee. This plays a vital role in

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inter-generational decision-making and ensures we share decision-making power with those we aim to serve.

In programme design - In 24/25, Advisors are being empowered to lead an investment of £450k through the design of a programme that advances our goal of *“More young people facing social injustice can drive positive social change”*. This creates opportunities for our Advisors to increase their power, leadership and capacity to drive forward change while pushing us to reimagine our programmatic activity.



“Being bold within empowerment means pushing boundaries, challenging conventional norms and fearlessly advocating for the rights and capabilities of individuals. It involves taking calculated risks to bring about significant, positive changes in the lives of those we seek to empower.” - **Youth Advisory Board member**

Via Consultancy: Advisors leverage their expertise and diverse experiences as consultants to contribute significantly across various aspects of our work. This has ranged from providing strategic guidance on our business plans and strategy, DEIB activity, fund design and event planning to policy recommendations, campaigns and communications.

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As Mission 44 Ambassadors: As Mission 44 Ambassadors, our Advisors participate in a range of activities including annual fundraising events, partner convenings, networking events, and staff days. The Advisors represent Mission 44 in a range of ways ensuring our mission and values are effectively communicated and that young people’s voices are represented in a variety of spaces.

In Governance - Youth Advisors attend Trustee Board meetings to ensure trust and connections between Trustees and young people are built- creating spaces for young people’s opinions to be heard aiming to minimise power imbalances. Advisors are involved in staff recruitment and commissioning processes, influencing decisions on who we hire and work with.

Through evaluation and learning - We have commissioned an external learning partner who will help us define the extent of the Advisor's influence, the value of their contributions, and any future recommendations for Mission 44 to consider when aspiring to truly embed youth participation in everything we do. Our learning partnership is also critical to ensuring our learning approach is participatory and we are keen to share our practice with the sector as it emerges.

Youth Advisory Board role and remit at a glance

Role/type of activity	Co-design	Grantmaking decisions	Ambassadors	Consulting
Level of participation	Leading	Collaborating & informing	Representing	Informing & Consulting
How	Via Empowerment Programme Co-design activity including commissioning research, collaborating with a learning partner and programme design.	Via Impact Committee decision-making meetings, influencing our grant-making practices	Speaking and representing Mission 44 at fundraising events, summits, partner events, convening activity, leading or facilitating sessions	Consulting on programmatic design and development, strategy development, and attendance at Trustee Board meetings.

Resourcing the Youth Empowerment Strategy

Genuine commitment to our Youth Empowerment Strategy means adequate resourcing – to set the Youth Advisory Board up to succeed by providing them with the necessary information, time and skills; and to learn and grow the culture internally. How we resource needs can be divided into the following areas and in the table below:

- Investing in the capacity of Mission 44 to work with and support young people meaningfully across the organisation.
- The resources the Youth Advisory Board need to fulfil their role.

Key functions needed	
Facilitation skills	Individuals who can hold space for young people, ensure all voices are heard, summarise themes, keep work moving forward positively, to reflect and act on feedback.
Administrative support	Coordinating and organising meetings, sharing prep, acting as a day-to-day point of call for the Youth Advisory Board, and arranging payment.
Programme management/ strategy	Supporting the content of the work and the execution of programmes; providing a framework for decisions. For example, providing expertise on empowerment; being up to speed with bold and exciting initiatives externally that can feed into the work; paying external experts to come in and stretch thinking and share learning; and ensuring Senior Leaders are briefed on progress.
Safeguarding	To continually ensure appropriate levels of safeguarding young people in all Mission 44 work.
Non-staff resources	
Administration	Payment of Youth Advisory Board, venue and travel costs for meetings.
Training and development	A modest personal development budget for each Youth Advisory Board member to access as needed.

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Research and evaluation budget	For any exploratory work related to the youth empowerment strand e.g. bringing in another group of young people to explore themes, or commissioning some survey work or research. We'll also invest in the learning and evaluation of our youth participation journey.
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Questions? Get in contact

To find out more about Mission 44's approach to youth participation you can contact Deshni Pyndiah, Senior Youth Participation Manager deshni.pyndiah@mission44.org or visit mission44.org/youth-empowerment/.