

SAFEGUARDING VOICES LEADERSHIP NETWORK

Tool of the month

The **Head, Heart, Hand** tool is a simple but powerful reflective framework used to support balanced decision-making in safeguarding and participation work. It helps practitioners and partnerships test ideas, policies or actions by considering three equally important perspectives.

Head (Logical – Understanding, Evidence & Impact)

This focuses on whether an idea makes sense. It encourages critical thinking about evidence, safeguarding outcomes and long-term impact. Key questions include whether the approach is appropriate within a multi-agency context and whether it is genuinely in the best interests of babies, children and young people.

Heart (Emotional – Feelings, Values & Lived Experience)

This centres lived experience. It prompts reflection on how babies, children, young people and families might feel about an approach in practice, including what feels caring, reassuring or potentially harmful. This helps ensure decisions are not only procedurally sound but also relational, trauma-informed and respectful.

Hand (Practical – Action, Delivery & Barriers)

This looks at what it will take to make something work. It explores practical challenges, capacity, resources and partnership working, and who may be most affected by implementation barriers. This ensures ideas are realistic and deliverable across agencies.

Used together, Head, Heart and Hand help teams avoid one-dimensional decision-making, supporting approaches that are evidence-based, emotionally intelligent and practically achievable. The tool is particularly useful in multi-agency safeguarding contexts to slow down thinking, surface different perspectives and strengthen collective accountability.

The challenge

Breakdown the process of how we would recruit young people to a group representing the North West

We considered...

- What Does GOOD Youth Participation Look Like?
- What Tools do we have?
- Our First Steps
- What Barriers do we need to overcome?
- What would make them want to stay? (retention)

What we did

1. Welcome, norms, and intros.
2. Thermometer check (-3 to +3): Where is voice/participation within your MASA today?
3. Live problem-solving circle (clarify → question → advise).
4. Tool of the Month: Head, Heart, Hand

The challenge

Early Mapping / Exploration

This stage focused on understanding what already exists and where young people are currently connected. Discussion highlighted existing routes into participation, including schools, youth services, voluntary organisations and informal community spaces. There was clear recognition that many young people are already engaged in different ways, but that these opportunities are often fragmented and not connected into a wider, coherent network.

“You Win”

This section explored what success would look like if a youth network was working well. Participants described positive outcomes such as young people feeling confident, valued and listened to, having real influence over safeguarding decisions, and seeing tangible change as a result of their involvement. Success was framed in relational terms – trust, belonging and visibility – rather than being measured solely by numbers or attendance.

“Game Over”

This conversation focused on what could cause recruitment or engagement to fail. Key risks identified included tokenism, over-professionalised processes, unclear purpose, lack of follow-through, and seeking young people's views without acting on them. Practical barriers such as time, transport, digital exclusion and inconsistent adult commitment were also highlighted as significant threats to sustaining a network.

Pathways / Journey

This section considered how young people might move from initial contact into deeper and more sustained involvement. Emphasis was placed on the need for multiple entry points and flexible pathways, allowing young people to engage at different levels and in different ways over time. Recruitment was understood as an ongoing journey rather than a single moment, with trust and confidence developing gradually through relationships.

Inventory

This focused on what is needed to make a youth network work effectively. Participants identified practical resources such as funding, staff time, venues, food, transport and expenses, alongside relational resources including trusted adults, youth workers and peer mentors. Structural support – such as clear roles, safeguarding arrangements, communication and feedback loops – was also seen as essential, highlighting that recruitment depends on strong foundations.

Level Up

This section explored how the network could grow, strengthen and evolve over time. Discussion focused on learning from what works, supporting young people to develop skills and take on leadership roles, and creating opportunities for progression. “Levelling up” was linked to sharing power, increasing influence and embedding youth voice more deeply into decision-making processes.