GATHERING YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS ON ACTIVE TRAVEL

A Toolkit

Leeds CITY COUNCIL

Yorkshire Sport Foundation

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Hello! Welcome to this Young People's Views on Active Travel toolkit, which aims to support and empower organisations to have conversations with young people about their views and experiences of active travel in order to create positive change. Before we get started, a few basics…

What is active travel?

"Active travel" means getting from A to B by any physically active means such as walking, cycling, kick scooting or skateboarding. Not only does active travel benefit physical health and mental wellbeing, it also helps to protect our environment and is more sustainable than other types of travel.

We hope that getting young people involved in the conversation about active travel may lead to positive changes - made at both the individual level and by organisations and other decision-makers that could have an impact on the uptake/accessibility of active travel by young people.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is for any organisation or group that wants to engage young people in conversations about active travel in order to support positive change. No prior knowledge about active travel is required – this toolkit is for anyone who works with young people!

Who created this toolkit?

This toolkit has been created by a team of researchers at the University of Leeds working in partnership with Leeds City Council and the Yorkshire Sports Foundation. It was based on work undertaken with young people at a community youth organisation in Leeds. The aim of this work was to engage young people in conversation about perceived barriers to active travel, specifically to their extra-curricular activities and clubs, and to identify changes that would benefit the young people and their communities.

How will this toolkit help me?

The toolkit contains step-by-step guides to activities and exercises that you can use with young people (aged 11-18), as well as helpful hints and tips for how to approach the consultation, how to run activities and what to do afterwards.

So please read on!

We hope you will find this toolkit helpful to engage the young people you work with in conversations about active travel.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is divided into three sections:

Section One explores why you might consult young people about active travel and what you might gain. This section will help you to provide a strong foundation for the consultation by having clear goals and avoiding work becoming confused or unfocused.

Section Two presents six step-by-step activities that you could do with young people, as part of the consultation, to understand their perspectives, experiences and ideas around active travel.

Section Three explores how you might summarise the information you have gathered from the consultation and what you might do next with the outcomes.

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Introduction & Getting Started

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Step-by Step Activities

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Outcomes and next steps

The next few pages provide more information about why you might engage young people in discussion around active travel and a few things to consider before you get started.

Why is active travel important for young people?

Here are some of the reasons why we think it's important to engage young people in consultation about active travel:

01 More take up of active travel can help to address high levels of childhood inactivity;

02 Research suggests that engaging in active travel during childhood can have long term impact and can be a predictor of active travel in adulthood;

03 Research suggested that when young people engage in active travel they may develop greater autonomy and safety awareness;

04 Being physically active is linked to a greater sense of wellbeing;

05 More engagement in active travel may result in less car use and therefore reduced congestion, reduced carbon emissions, and improved air quality within communities and cities.

06 When people walk more in their community, the environment often improves, becoming safer and more connected. Young people can be influential in kick-starting this process.

Introduction & Getting Started

Why engage young people specifically in discussion about active travel?

Young people, with their own rituals, friendship groups and motivations, have their own travel needs **distinct** from adults and younger children. Consultation with young people allows travel behaviours to be **understood from their perspective**, and any changes are more likely to be effective if they are produced in **partnership with young people**.

What might the consultation achieve?

Whatever activities your organisation provides, having an understanding of how your participants access your venue will provide you with valuable information about any access issues individuals face or local issues that may indirectly affect your organisation.

Consultation allows for greater awareness of how your organisation is placed and the impact you have or could have.

Benefits to your organisation and young people can include:
- Providing young people with opportunities to take part in local decision making and political processes.
- Giving ownership and an active voice within your organisation can feel empowering for many young people.
- Improvements that lead to greater up take of active travel are likely to have health and wellbeing benefits for your young people.

You may also find that:
- You are more ready to apply for support and/or funding for active travel-related projects where the opportunity arises, due to having a clear understanding of existing access issues and the potential for improvements.
- You are able to identify (and cater for) those currently excluded from activities/your organisation due to transport constraints.
- Any car parking issues are alleviated.

Example

If you find during discussion that young people aren't riding their bikes to your organisation because of a lack of secure bicycle parking you may find infrastructure or Council funding available to support implementation.

Identify the goals of the consultation

A good starting point for the work is to clearly identify the goals and expected outcomes of the consultation. What are you hoping to achieve? It is well worth spending some time thinking this through.

You will also want to talk to anyone who has an interest in this work or who has initiated the consultation (a 'stakeholder') — it's vital that their perspectives are sought at the very start of the process.

Questions to consider or to ask other stakeholders:
- What initiated the consultation with young people about active travel?
- How do you imagine the process of consultation unfolding?
- What do you hope the consultation will achieve?
- What might the outcomes of the consultation look like?
- What do you think other people involved in/connected with the consultation might hope for in terms of the process and outcomes?
- Is there any funding requirements for this consultation?

Example Goals

Your consultation may focus on the following goals:
- Identifying barriers to active travel among young people.
- Identifying potential solutions to the barriers to active travel among young people.

And once these are well understood, further work may involve:
- Trialling solutions to the barriers to active travel among young people.
- Evaluating the impact of trials.

- Once you have considered these questions, and collated responses from others, spend some time creating clearly defined goals and anticipated outcomes from the consultation.
- Be mindful of what is realistic to achieve given the time and resources constraints you are working with. Aim for around 2-3 goals at most.
- Make sure that you share the consultation goals with all stakeholders. Having a shared understanding of the anticipated outcomes is important and will help you, and others involved in leading the consultation, keep focus as the work is carried out.

Tip
Involve the young people right from the start of the consultation in helping to identify the goals for the work.

Key areas to consider before getting started

01 **What can be achieved?**

Be realistic about what can be achieved with the time and resources available. Focus efforts on the primary goal(s) of the consultation. Clearly communicate the focus and potential impact of the work to the young people involved, to avoid anyone being misled or disappointed by the consultation process or outcomes.

02 **What is being asked of young people?**

Ensure that the expectations of the young people are reasonable in terms of their time commitment to the consultation, effort and skill set. You may wish to reward the young people's time and effort in some way (e.g. a voucher or free lunch), although it is important that rewards are not used to coerce young people into participation.

03 **Recognising young people as 'experts'**

It's easy to assume the adults in the room are more experienced and knowledgeable about issues of travel and transport, but young people have the expert knowledge about how local areas make them feel, about the reputation of communities and forms of transport and the kinds of places they want to travel to. Listening to young people, without adult preconceptions, can be difficult.

04 **What permissions are required?**

It is vital that young people and those responsible for caring for them (i.e. parents, schools, and youth organisations) are fully informed about consultation plans and agree to the activities and processes involved.

SECTION TWO
Step by Step Activities

This section provides six activities to engage young people in discussion around active travel to help you understand their perspectives, experiences and ideas.

An overall approach to engaging young people

There are six different activities in this section (activities A-F) and each activity includes details about the time it takes, the age range it is intended for, the purpose of the activity, the materials required and any issues to consider.
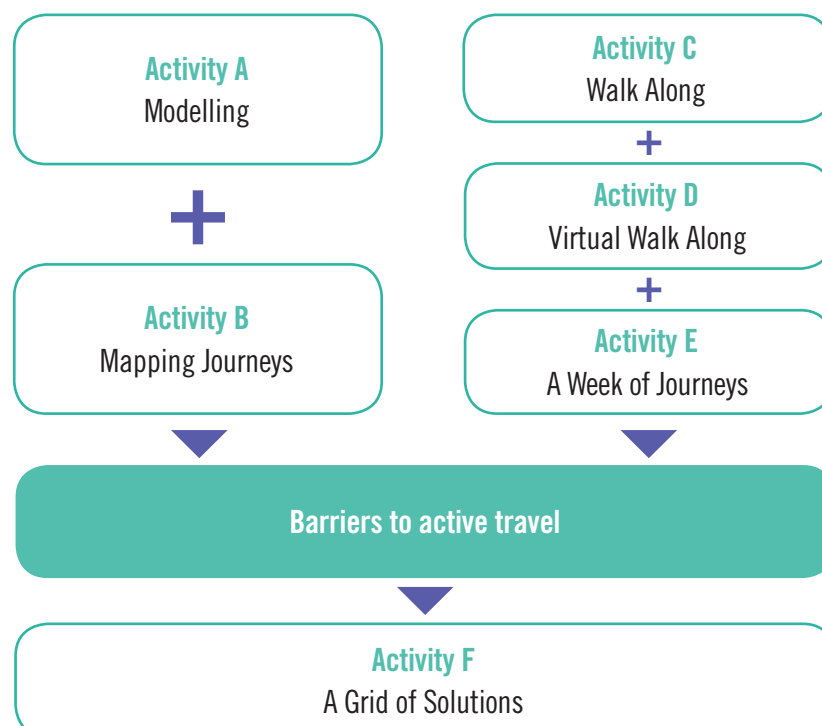
You might want to carry out just one or two of these activities, or they can be combined to allow the outcomes of different activities to feed into one another.

See the image on the left for an example of how we combined the activities with a community youth organisation in Leeds. Activities A & B were carried out with a younger age group (ages 11-15) and Activities C, D & E with an older age group (ages 14-17).

The findings were brought together at the end to brainstorm possible solutions to the barriers identified by all age ranges.

Section Two: Activities

Example Goals

Activity A Modelling	**Activity C** Walk Along

+

Activity B Mapping Journeys	**Activity D** Virtual Walk Along

+

Activity E A Week of Journeys

Barriers to active travel

Activity F A Grid of Solutions

Activity A Modelling

Time to complete the activity: **15-20 minutes**
Recommended age range: **8-14 years**

Purpose of the activity

Icebreaker activity to get young people talking and explore their feelings about specific locations in their local area.

Resources you will need

Playdoh, plasticine, or Lego for all participants

How it works

01 Introduce the task: *"With a lump of Playdoh [or other modelling material], create a building or place that is significant to you. It could be from your past, it could be somewhere you go regularly, it comes be somewhere you go occasionally. It could be significant because it's somewhere that you enjoy or feel at home, of because it's somewhere that brings up negative emotions."*

02 Give participants 5-10 minutes to make their models.

03 Ask everyone to take it in turns to share what their model shows and talk about how they feel about that place and the kinds of things that influence those feelings.

Tip
Interesting comments are often made by the young people when they are creating their models - makes notes whilst they work as well as when they share their models with each other.

Things to consider

How the task is introduced by you will influence the types of places that they might choose. If there is a specific area of interest, then explain this in the introduction to the task.

If your target audience is an older group of young people who might be reluctant to use these materials, you could ask them to write a short description or find an image online.

Activity B Mapping Journeys

Time to complete the activity: **30-40 minutes**
Recommended age range: **11-18 years**

Purpose
Explore young people's travel routes and methods of travel while considering the context and reasoning behind their travel choices.

Resources
Printed maps of the local area (include different levels of focus to ensure it covers necessary areas).
Pens and highlighter pens (pink, yellow, and green).

How it works

01 Participants are provided with 3 highlighter pens (pink, yellow and green) and maps in three scales – 1 mile radius from the venue, 3 mile radius, and city-wide.

02 Ask participants to mark the route they usually take to the venue in question, selecting the appropriate scale map depending on how far they have travelled.

03 Then ask participants to use the different highlighters to mark significant places on their route. A significant place is anywhere they have any particular strength of feeling about or somewhere that means something to them. This can be a good, happy or useful place (green highlighter); a place that is significant but they feel fairly neutral about it (yellow highlighter); and a significant place that holds some kind of negative feelings (pink).

If participants look like they're struggling to think of significant places, ask the following:
- Is there anywhere that you stop regularly?
- Do you pass any houses you know? Do you pass any shops you visit?
- Is there anywhere you have to wait?
- Do you ever walk part of this route to get somewhere else? Where?
- If you were in trouble and had to get help, where on this route you could go?

04 Ask participants to go around in a circle and talk through their journeys; use the following prompts:
   - How do you usually get here? (e.g. what mode of transport? Who do you travel with?)
   - Can you talk us through the route you usually take to get here?
   - Why do you choose to come this way? Are there alternative ways to get here?
   - What are some of the key places you go to/or pass on the way?
   - Do you sometimes use other forms of transport to get here? (If yes – why do you sometimes use different forms of transport?)

Things to consider

How familiar the young people are with the local area will inform their confidence interpreting and engaging with the maps. Be mindful that some young people may need support with this task.

Tip

Using Google Maps may help the young people to find places on their journey, which they can then translate onto the paper maps.

Activity C Walk Along

Time to complete the activity: **Depends on route**
Recommended age range: **14-15 years**

Purpose
Gain an understanding of barriers to active travel from real time reflections on experiences of the local area.

Resources
Map of the local area, Video/audio recording devices

How it works

01 Discuss with young people some key local areas that they feel are unsuitable for active travel for whatever reason and mark/find these on the map.

02 Plan a route to walk that targets areas identified in the previous discussion. Explain that you'll be asking them to share their thoughts as they walk and suggest some different types of reflection they might share. For example:
- Telling stories about their experiences in the area
- Highlighting features of the area that they like/dislike, which contribute to their feelings about active travel
- Descriptions of how it makes them feel in the moment or in other contexts (e.g. in the dark, on their own etc)

03 Walk the planned route with the young people inviting them to reflect on things as you walk. (Video/audio recordings can help to keep a record of these conversations.)

04 The walk can be followed by an activity where the young people identify the key barriers that were discussed during the walk. This could be an individual exercise or a group discussion led by one of the facilitators.

Things to consider

Planning will need to accommodate how confident the young people are leading a walk in that area. It is important to consider road safety and any further dangers or hazards that might apply in that area.

Tip
Depending on the size, the group may split into smaller groups of 2 or 3. Think about how facilitators will support and move between the groups if this happens.

Activity D Virtual Walk Along

Time to complete the activity: **20-30 minutes**
Recommended age range: **14-17 years**

Purpose
Gain an understanding about barriers to active travel in a variety of areas of particular interest.

Resources
Laptop/tablet/phone with access to Google street view

How it works

01 In discussion with the group identify some areas that are not suited to active forms of travel. Depending on the context researchers may or may not already have ideas about areas they want to look at. If the young people are guiding this process, they might think about:
- Areas that they frequently visit
- Places where they have experienced problems while engaging in active travel
- Areas that they would like to be able to visit more frequently

02 Using a laptop/tablet/phone 'visit' each of the locations identified in the previous discussion. Allow the young person to show you around the area and explain how active travel is experienced in that location.

03 If you want to keep a detailed record of what is discussed take screen shots during this process. Allow the young people to annotate the screen shots taken during their virtual tour to highlight the key features.

Things to consider

You will need a reliable internet access for this task. If you want to do this task in small groups, you may need several devices and facilitators.

Tip

This task works best when the young people can confidently use the devices. Make sure they feel they can take charge of the device and use it effectively.

Activity E A Week of Journeys

Time to complete the activity: **10-15 minutes**
Recommended age range: **11-18 years**

Purpose
Establish understandings of young people's routine travel behaviours and the barriers to active travel that they regularly experience.

Resources
'Week of Journeys' worksheet and pens

## Things to consider

How it works
Talk through some examples to show the group how to fill out the worksheet. Young people each work independently to fill in the work sheet a row at a time.

Weekly Journeys		
Where did you go	How did you get there	Why/why not active travel?
Supermarket	Car	Too much to carry on foot
University	Walk	It's pretty close and is the cheapest to walk

Things to consider

This should be a relatively simple task for most young people, but some may prefer to complete it through discussion rather than as a written task.
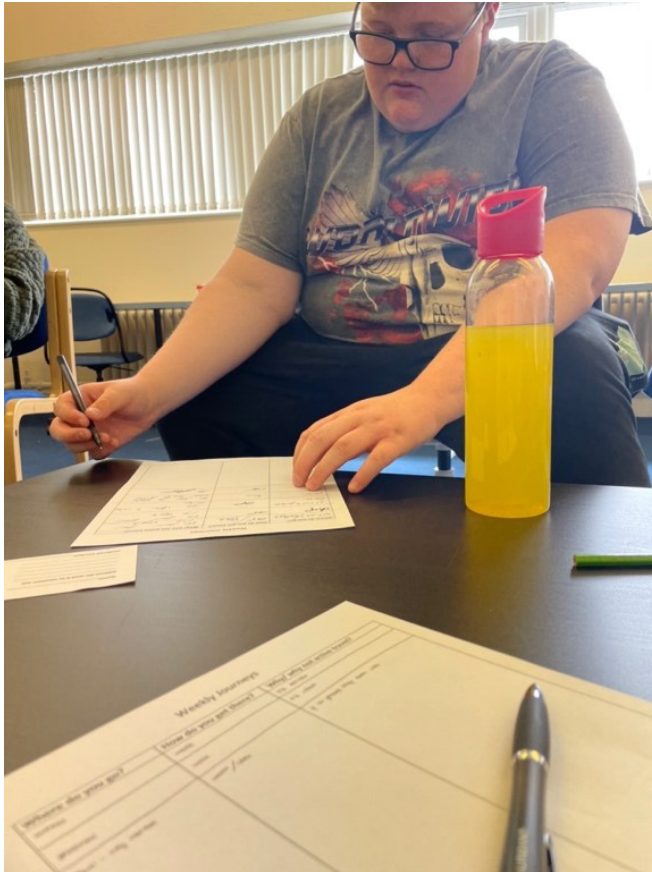
Activity F Grid of Solutions

Time to complete the activity: **20-30 minutes**
Recommended age range: **14-17 years**

Purpose
Identify people/groups that might be able to help address barriers to active travel.
Suggest solutions to barriers to active travel focusing on specific people/groups

Resources
A list of identified barriers (these could be taken from activities A-E or might be brought to the group as a starting point)
each listed on a sheet of A4 paper
A2 paper and markers
A4 paper
Post-it notes

How it works

01 Begin by brainstorming ideas of people or groups that might be able to impact barriers to active travel. These can be individuals (e.g. local MP) or groups (e.g. police).

02 Transfer key groups/people onto sheets of A4 paper and use these to construct a grid structured like the one below. This will require a large amount of space so the floor might be the best place to set this up.

03 Young people then populate the grid with suggestions of how a particular group/person might address a particular barrier. Suggestions are written on a post-it note alongside the row/column co-ordinates (e.g. C2) and placed in the appropriate location.

	Group/ person A	Group/ person B	Group/ person C	Etc.
Barrier 1				
Barrier 2				
Barrier 3				
Etc.				

Things to consider

The size of this task is determined by the extent of the initial brainstorming and the number of barriers that the group tries to address. How the task is broken down or managed will be determined by any specific goals that are brought to this activity.
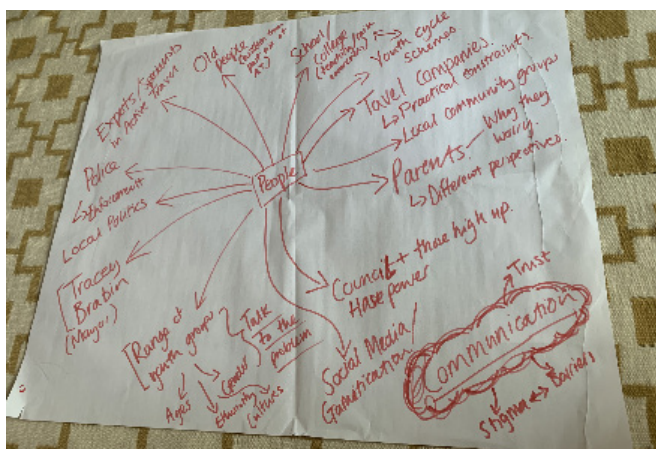
Tip

Individuals/pairs could be tasked with thinking about some specific barriers or groups of people to divide up the work. Each pair would then share their thoughts with the wider groups.

A few thoughts about notetaking

You will want to think about how you (or the facilitators) will record the perspectives and views that the young people are making during the activities. You might decide to use a recording device such as a Dictaphone to record the conversations or you may wish to take written notes during the activities. Here are some tips, as well as the pros and cons, of both choices:

How to use recordings:
You must explain to the young people how the recordings will be used and who will hear them, ensuring that everyone has consented before you start.

You can listen back and transcribe whole recordings afterwards so you have a record of what everyone has said. Or just take notes of the key points discussed. Keeping a note of times in recordings that particularly interesting conversations took place, allows you revisit these precise moments more easily and dig out specific quotes from the young people themselves.

Pros:
You are not distracted by writing notes and can fully focus on listening to the conversations taking place.

You will have an exact record of the conversations, which you can go back to check details.

Cons:
Listening to the recordings to either transcribe the discussion or take notes can be very time consuming.

Some young people may feel uncomfortable about being recorded, which might affect their participation.

How to use recordings:
Note-taking can be carried out by the adults facilitating the discussion, the young people contributing to the discussion, or both.

If you are taking notes you can do this during the discussion or straight afterwards. If afterwards, you could chunk the conversation into small sections with short breaks in-between to allow you take a note of the key ideas discussed.

You could use flip chart paper to capture ideas together with the group, or ask the group to brainstorm their ideas on paper, which you can then collect afterwards to form part of your notes.

Pros:
Because ideas and notes from the discussion are collected at the time you will have a an instant record of the ideas and will not have to spend a lot of time listening back to recordings.

You might find writing notes during discussion helps you remember to return to ideas to explore them further, if the need arises.

Cons:
If you are taking notes you might find it hard give the discussion your full attention. You might also miss important points or ideas.

It might be difficult to obtain exact quotes from the young people.

A few thoughts about notetaking

The role of the facilitator is to guide the discussion, helping the group of young people to explore the topic and be open about their experiences, views and perspectives in a safe and non-judgemental environment. Here are a few tips for facilitating sessions with young people:

Do:
- Be curious, ask lots of open questions starting with what, why, how and where (e.g. why do you think that? how does that make the journey more interesting?)
- Find ways to allow quieter group members to contribute (e.g. individual brainstorming, or writing ideas on post-it notes)
- Ensure sessions have a relaxed pace, lots of breaks and group 'doing' activities to make the process enjoyable
- Look out for body language – is everyone in the group feeling comfortable and confident to participate?
- Listen carefully to what is being said and follow up on anything particularly interesting (e.g. can you tell us a bit more about that experience?)
- Be patient, non-judgemental and aware of your own possible biases

Don't:
- Allow any of the participants to dominate the discussion
- Put anyone on the spot, or force someone to speak/contribute
- Make assumptions or influence with your views – you are there to listen to the young people and hear what they think

Things to think about in advance:

Consider if any of the young people may find certain activities challenging – how might you overcome this or offer an alternative?

Are there any other challenges that you can anticipate, and plan for, in advance?

Think about the space that you will be using – is it quiet and comfortable? Are there any access issues to the venue? Do you have internet access if required? Is drinking water available?

SECTION THREE
Outcomes and Next Steps

This section explores what to do with the outputs of your discussions with young people and what the next steps might be.

Bringing it all together

Now you have all this information, it can be hard to see what to do with it. What are the key views and ideas emerging from all the discussion?

It might be that some immediate ideas or actions jump out from what young people have said – you can take a note of those straight away.

But sometimes the route from young people talking, to figuring out how to improve the situation, isn't as clear. It feels like there's a series of loosely collected stories and ideas, spread across images, flip chart paper, audio recordings, and your memory.

To help with this process of organising the information we often think of **'themes'**, that is: some words or phrases that seem to summarise what young people have told you, that makes the information easier to manage.
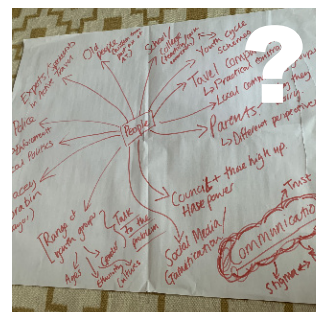
How to identify themes

Here are some ideas of how you might start to identify themes from all the information you have collected (your notes, video recordings, flip chart paper, post-it notes etc)

1. Your themes
You could start with your own themes, particularly if you are looking for ideas that match a particular funding call. Perhaps you could look for perspectives and ideas around the use of buses, or safety issues.

This can mean some of the information young people have given you won't be used, and it's important to remember this may not give a fair reflection of young people's perspectives, however it can be a good place to help to develop a project bid around a particular call.

2. Stories
You can put together stories that seem to have the same meaning – if there's a moral to the stories young people have shared, perhaps they can go together too. For example, if there's a range of stories that all tell you about young people's emotional response to active travel (whether that's fear or enjoyment), you can put all those stories together and explore them in more detail later, when you could ask 'what is it about these different stories that mean young people have different emotional responses?'.

3. Outcomes-based
You can create themes based on potential outcomes or challenges. For example, if access to equipment or maintenance in an issue, then you might have lots of different examples of why young people can't use bikes or scooters.

Outcomes could include anything that young people say they would like to achieve. It might be that different outcomes could come under one theme that would allow you to focus on one related set of issues. For example, lots of different instances of 'boredom' during active travel could be solved with a similar set of outcomes or possible solutions. This approach is very solutions-focussed, so remember it also means that some of young people's perspectives may be missing if they didn't talk about an issue that could be changed.

4. Summarising
Finally, the most time consuming method, but which takes the fullest account of the information, is to read everything you've collected and think "how would I summarise this into a few words?". It may be that some pieces of information can have multiple summaries attached.

A few practical tips

You might want to use visual tools and techniques to help organise all of your information. For example you could use:

- A series of different coloured post-it notes
- Mind-mapping (on paper or using an electronic tool)
- Lists or tables – written or electronic

Steps

01 Begin moving different content around to see if any of the ideas logically fall into groups or related ideas (e.g. there might be a group of ideas about traffic and road safety). This will start off quite disorganised and some ideas might feel like they don't belong anywhere! But don't worry, it is fine if some ideas never get grouped, they can form a miscellaneous group.

02 Next try to summarise what you think each group might be about in a few words. Once you have done this for each group, review them all and see whether any of the ideas feel out of place or need to shuffle around. You might want to reword some of your descriptions as you go through this process.

03 The descriptions of each grouping/theme should provide a useful summary of the main outcomes that came out of consultation.
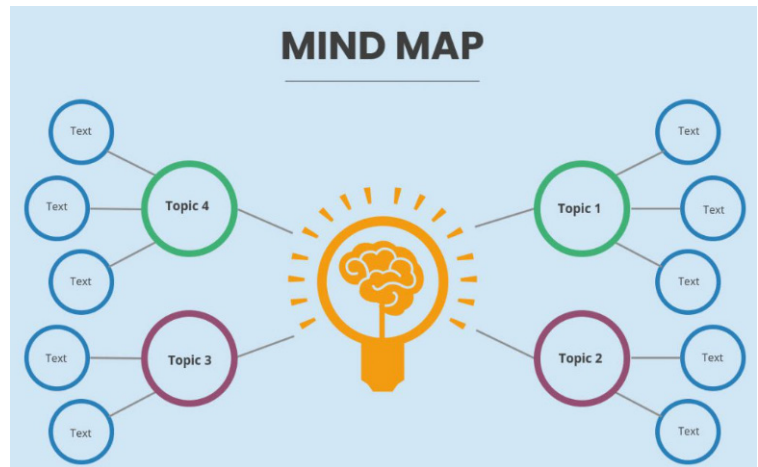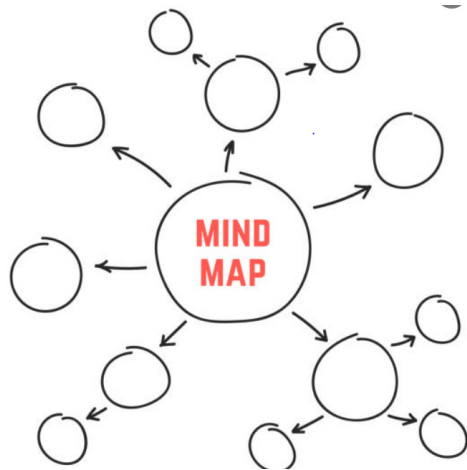
	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3
Description of this grouping/theme	Description of theme	Description of theme	Description of theme
From audio recording 1 on 21/05/22	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc
From discussion on 22/05/22 after walk along	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc
From discussion on 22/05/22 after a week of journeys (Group 1)	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc	Quotes, ideas, views etc

What's next – plans of action

Once you have these themes, you can use them to create plans of action. Think about:

- What action or actions can you take?
- What resources do you need to be able to create the changes young people are asking for or may need?
- What other support do you need? From who?
- How might you go about implementing any actions?
- What are the timescales?
- How will you go about evaluating any actions?

You could imagine you're writing a plan for a funder – how could you convert that information into a project someone might be willing to support?

One final note:
Try to avoid sudden disengagement with the young people and organisations that you have worked with to carry out the consultation once it has concluded. You might want to feed back the final outcomes and actions from the consultation to the young people who have been involved. You might even want to see if they have further views to add to the proposed actions.

Or it might be that the young people will continue to be involved in trailing and evaluating actions that have been identified from the consultation (if that forms part of the goals for your work).

Case Studies

During 2022 we used these methods to talk to three organisations. Here's a brief overview of what we learnt:

Kentmere Community Centre
A community organisation serving a disadvantaged area that runs events for all ages, including youth clubs, girls groups, as well as work with older members of the community.

In our in-depth study with this group, young people told us they would like to see:
- Older or more 'intimidating' groups of young people may move away from common thoroughfares if there was dedicated skate parks, making active travel feel safer.
- Valued destinations created that young people would like to travel to, that were affordable.
- More opportunities to hire bikes and scooters
- Improved bike storage
- An app developed that allows young people to earn credit with local businesses for active travel
- Greater communication with trusted decision makers around transport and safety.

ChapelFM
A community radio station with educational opportunities for young people

In our mapping exercise discovered:
- A specific church-yard that many young people avoid for fear of intimidating behaviour by other young people
- The location of organic 'meet-up' points for young people who already walk, that other young people could join.
- Parent's fears over the use of public transport.
- How conflicts within the home street can make it unsafe to leave the house without a car.

Catch
A community centre, with a focus on cohesion and belonging within a diverse area

- In our mapping exercise discovered:
- Young women's fears around public transport leads to using door-to-door taxis
- Lack of time to walk
- Car ownership and greater travel by car is an aspiration to be achieved, not a problem to be overcome

Further Reading

Publications/research have been referred to when undertaking our project and producing this toolkit. A list of these is below if you are interested in any further reading around the subject of active travel and young people.

Herrador-Colmenero, M., Villa-González, E., & Chillón, P. (2017). Children who commute to school unaccompanied have greater autonomy and perceptions of safety. *Acta Paediatrica, International Journal of Paediatrics*, 106(12), 2042–2047. https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.14047

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Thank you for reading this toolkit!

We hope you have found it helpful.
If you have any comments or require further information please get in touch with us at
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Acknowledgements

Leeds CITY COUNCIL

Yorkshire Sport Foundation

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