

From Reflection to Revolution: Sharing the Principles That Changed Us

A journey of discovery, transformation, and collective growth

Background

Lancashire Youth Challenge (LYC) is a charity that supports young people through creative expression, physical activity, and wellbeing programmes. Their three core offers—Restore, Time to Breathe, and Rise to the Challenge—have made a lasting impact, but a lack of consistency across delivery began to surface. Different practitioners brought different approaches, leading to varied experiences for young people. The leadership team saw the need for a shared framework that could align their values and practice, bringing clarity and cohesion to their work. In June 2023, CEO Guy Christiansen and Wellbeing Coordinator Sam Harding attended Empire Fighting Chance’s “Box Champions” training in Bristol. From the outset, EFC’s clearly defined principles and consistent delivery sparked a lightbulb moment. It was exactly the kind of model LYC had been seeking. Inspired, they embarked on a 12-month journey of exploration and development, ultimately creating a unified set of six core principles to guide and strengthen their programmes.

What Change Happened?

The turning point for Lancashire Youth Challenge (LYC) came in June 2023, when the team—led by CEO Guy Christiansen and Wellbeing Coordinator Sam Harding—was introduced to Empire Fighting Chance’s (EFC) “Box Champions” programme during a visit to Bristol. The clarity, structure, and intent behind EFC’s model immediately struck a chord. Seeing their 20 principles laid out and actively embedded into session delivery was like finding the missing piece of the puzzle. It captured exactly what LYC had been striving for but hadn’t yet articulated. This moment of recognition sparked a 12-month journey of internal reflection and co-creation. Upon returning to Lancashire, LYC initiated a series of creative conversations and workshops to explore which of EFC’s principles resonated with their own programmes. From there, they began developing a distinct set of six principles that aligned with LYC’s mission and values while reflecting the realities of their delivery. These principles now underpin all LYC’s work—from staff development and programme planning to how they engage with young people and communicate with partners, ensuring consistency and clarity across every aspect of their operations.

What Led To This Change?

Several key factors contributed to the development of LYC’s new approach. A major influence was the support from EFC, especially the guidance from Sports Psychologist Sam Kotadia, whose critical feedback helped LYC refine their principles and stay on track. EFC’s openness in sharing their methodology provided valuable insights and a collaborative framework that LYC could adapt to their needs. Equally important was the buy-in from LYC’s board, which gave the team the freedom to explore and innovate. The board’s endorsement and ongoing feedback were crucial in empowering the team to take risks and develop a consistent set of principles that would shape the organisation’s future work.

What Difference Has It Made, And For Who?

The new principles have brought clarity and consistency to LYC's operations, making it easier for the team to define and communicate their unique offer to funders and partners. Young people are adopting the principles, applying them across different activities like boxing and hiking, which has helped foster emotional resilience, focus, and confidence. The staff team have also reported increased confidence — one practitioner noted feeling more comfortable leading wellbeing conversations, while a project facilitator shared that they now feel better equipped to engage young people around their mental health and emotional wellbeing. This consistency in approach has elevated the overall quality of delivery, ensuring that all team members, regardless of their role, can deliver impactful sessions.

The principles are now embedded in LYC's strategic plan, and staff are being trained to integrate them into all activities. Additionally, LYC is mentoring EFC partners across Lancashire, sharing their experience and providing support to others.



What Did You Learn That Might Be Helpful for Others?

One of the biggest takeaways for LYC has been the power of collaboration, curiosity, and courage. It took bravery to question existing practice and pursue a new way of working. Seeing a clear, effective model in action at EFC provided both inspiration and validation—but it also required letting go of ego and critically reflecting on what needed to change. The concept of “addition through subtraction”—shared by EFC's Sam Kotadia—helped LYC simplify its approach and cut through complexity.

Crucially, this wasn't a solo effort. The guidance and encouragement from EFC, Active Lancashire and their board gave the LYC team the confidence to take risks and iterate. Support from trustees, who engaged with the process and offered challenge as critical friends, helped ensure the changes were owned and embedded at every level.

Now, LYC is not only using the principles internally but also mentoring other EFC partners across Lancashire. Rather than pushing replication, they're offering the same kind of support they received—sharing how they built their framework and acting as a sounding board for others. There have also been unexpected ripple effects. LYC's principles now feature in their business plan and website and underpin their long-term strategy. They are currently exploring the development of a digital wellbeing app, with interest from design partners and youth organisations across the UK. And with new Department for Education funding, LYC is embedding EFC and LYC principles into the RESTORE curriculum in schools across Lancashire—delivering impactful, long-term support to young people.

Ripples of Impact and Learning

LYC's transformation sparked broader change, enabling mentorship, collaborations, and innovation. Their principle-led approach now influences practice beyond their own organisation, supporting others while expanding their reach in youth wellbeing.

Dare to Dream and Be Brave

Guy and Sam took a bold step by creating their own set of principles. They trusted their instincts and reshaped their programmes to better reflect what truly mattered.

Professional Growth

Staff have developed new skills in areas like wellbeing and mental health, boosting their confidence and fostering a culture of continuous learning.

Strategic & Operational alignment across LYC

Guy and Sam's co-created principles are guiding programme design across LYC, aligning delivery with the organisation's wider goals.

Positive Influence on Young People

The principles provide young people with a consistent framework and language that enhances their emotional resilience, confidence, and ability to apply these lessons in all areas of life.

Mentoring - Sharing What's Worked

LYC now serves as a mentor to other organisations, sharing their experiences and supporting partners in adopting similar approaches to improve their practice.

Wider Reach

The principles have opened up new opportunities for LYC, including the potential for a digital wellbeing app, expanding their reach on a national and international scale.

How Does LYC's Story Apply To The Enablers For Change?

Developed by Together an Active Future, 'Enablers for Change' are rooted in both individual and collaborative behaviours that drive the creation of conditions necessary for sustainable change in tackling physical activity inequalities.

These enablers function in a fluid, multi-directional relationship, where individual behaviours feed into system behaviours, and vice versa, contributing to the maturity of local systems for change



Scan the QR Code to learn more about the Enablers for Change.



How Does LYC's Story Apply To NELP's Conditions For Place Based Working?

The National Evaluation and Learning Partnership (NELP) has been working with Sport England and local communities to support learning and evaluation of whole systems and placed-based approaches, enhancing understanding of how to address inequalities in physical activity. An outcome of NELP's work is the identification of 9 'conditions' that may be necessary for place-based approaches to address inequalities - to understand more about these conditions, please scan the QR Code below.

Cultures and practices for physical activity

Capacity and Capability

Cycles of learning and action

Collaboration

Organisational Policies, Processes and Structures

Leadership

Scan the QR Code to learn more about the NELP Conditions for Place-Based Working.

