

All people have innate value, are talented, and have a purpose to discover and enjoy.

Key guiding principles for youth development

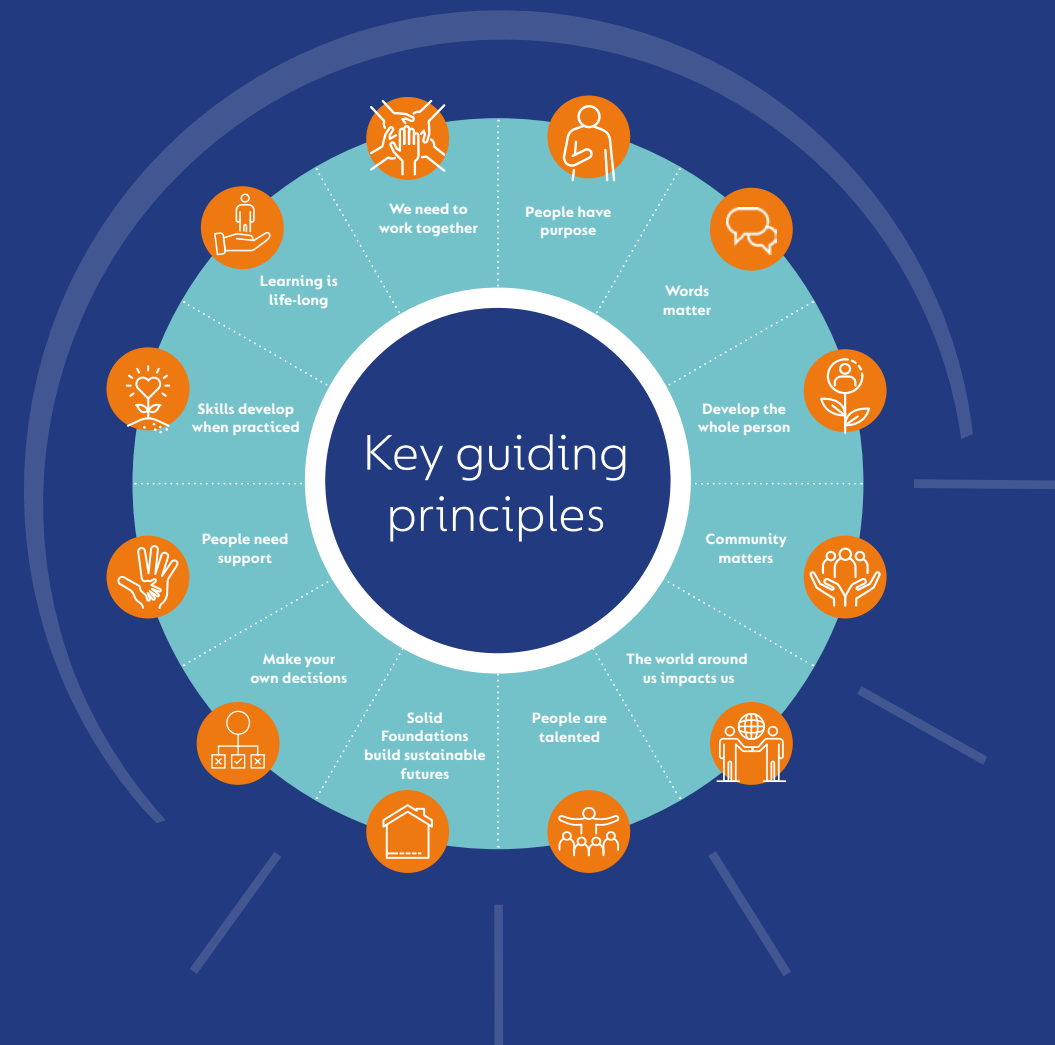
Through iteration and debate, based on internal expertise and the analysis of what seems to make key programmes successful, the team formulated twelve core principles that underpins our opinion, attitude and approach to youth development. We believe these philosophies should act as the guiding principles for behaviour and engagement with any youth development framework, across all stakeholders, for maximum impact to be achieved.

At its core, it is our principal belief that **“the youth are not a problem to be solved”**; they already have what it takes, and therefore development programmes merely unlock potential. All people have innate value, are talented, and have a purpose to discover and enjoy. We believe that individual and collective purpose must be pursued, discovered and valued. Development in general, therefore, must speak to a holistic approach to an individual across all facets of self, namely, spiritual, emotional, intellectual (mental), physical, and communal.

We also hold the view that words, and the framing of a situation through language and thought, has a direct impact on the outcome of a situation. The tone and content of the message that individuals speak over themselves, over situations and over others, both consciously and unconsciously, establish the parameters within which an outcome can be achieved. We therefore maintain that “words matter”.

In line with this, we reject the terminology of “soft skills”. Soft skills generally include communication, personal habits, social skills, cognitive and emotional empathy, time management, teamwork, etc. Inputs into human development are often framed as secondary, with “hard” skills (the specific knowledge and abilities required for success in a job) being seen as the real need, without the acknowledgement that these cannot be learnt and developed without a foundation in place. In our view, there is nothing “soft” about being resilient, or mentally well, which leads us to conclude that developing this cannot be secondary either. It is essential that we reframe and rename the very concept of “soft skills” if we are to address the youth challenges which we face.

The key guiding principles that we developed from our research, findings and experience are:



Our guiding principles are described below:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION
 <p>People Have Purpose</p>	<p>We believe that people have purpose - individually and collectively. Purpose speaks to the inherent value that every human has, as well as their capacity to influence impact through a life dedicated to a purpose higher than themselves. Purpose is uniquely pursued and discovered by the individual but may also find momentum in the collective.</p>
 <p>Words Matter</p>	<p>We believe that words carry both meaning and power. The words spoken over oneself, others, and situations have the power to direct an outcome. We must all therefore be intentional about the words we use and the narrative we frame youth and youth development in.</p>
 <p>Develop the whole person</p>	<p>Human beings are wonderfully complex. Selective development is an injustice to an individual and an inefficient cost to society. The growth and maturation of a person to their full potential and development should be pursued. Holistic development means the development of all aspects of the self: spiritually, emotionally, intellectually (mentally), physically as well as through talents and personality.</p>
 <p>Community matters</p>	<p>No person functions successfully in isolation. People live, work and attend educational opportunities within immediate communities, that require attention, input and service. We believe active citizenry, community involvement and paying it forward is necessary not only for successful youth development but for the future of society.</p>
 <p>The world around us impacts us</p>	<p>There is a broader world-system that we live in that impacts us directly and indirectly, even if we try to isolate ourselves. We must respond to the needs and challenges of a global world, understand how it can impact us, and be aware of how we can impact and influence it in return.</p>
 <p>People are talented</p>	<p>Every person has strengths and talents. It is each person's unique privilege and responsibility to explore, discover, develop, enjoy and apply these talents, to the benefit of themselves, their communities and society as a whole.</p>

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	DESCRIPTION
 <p>Solid Foundations build sustainable futures</p>	<p>Life is an unpredictable experience of dynamic events, and seasons; many of which can be significantly challenging. For many, a sign of healthy adult development is the ability to respond to these seasons in a way that still enables progress and the achievement of developmental goals. We believe that a person is more likely to be able to build a sustainable future if their foundations are solid, if they have an immediate community they contribute to, and if the global ecosystem in which they operate is relatively stable.</p>
 <p>Make your own decisions</p>	<p>Ultimately, every person has the freedom to choose their reaction to the inputs they receive. They have the freedom to make decisions at every moment and must indeed make decisions at times rather than vacillate between options. We believe in enabling people to make good decisions for themselves and others, also recognising that the onus of the decision itself remains with the individual.</p>
 <p>People need support</p>	<p>People are fundamentally relational and gain great strength from healthy relationships that can strengthen and support growth; provide wisdom and feedback and offer a healthy community for belonging and fellowship.</p>
 <p>We need to work together</p>	<p>Ideas and impact multiply in a collective effort. We believe in co-creation of solutions with our participants, as well as collaboration with the participants and stakeholders within the ecosystem within which we operate.</p>
 <p>Skills develop when practiced</p>	<p>Skills development is not academic. Skills are developed and honed when they are practiced and repeated, therefore we advocate for the process of learning through cycles of doing and reflecting. This also extends to mean that relevant work and life skills can be developed in non-work-related environments, for example, volunteering, raising children, managing households, etc.</p>
 <p>Learning is life-long</p>	<p>Learning is and should be, a lifelong endeavour. It never stops. This implies humility and curiosity within an individual that should remain, and be continuously pursued, regardless of what may have been achieved in the past. Questions should be asked, and failure should be seen as merely an opportunity for growth.</p>