

peer-led prototyping

idea testing with and by young people

Prototyping: A Preference for Doing

Learning by doing is a key mindset for social innovation. At its core, it is a preference for *action* - for doing, making, learning, and experimenting - over talking and having meetings. Effective solutions evolve through iterative cycles of trying and reflecting. We favour prototyping as a way to try, evaluate, and discard potential solutions, building on the ideas that work.

Prototyping is a rapid and often inexpensive way of making an idea, or aspect of an idea, tangible. Its intention is to 'test' a solution to see if it has merit within its intended context. Changes can be made - adding, adapting, or removing elements as we learn what works. It combats the tendency to spend significant time talking about whether something will work, and instead focuses on safely trying it out with the people who will use, deliver and manage the proposed solution.

Young People as Ideas Testers

When we think about engaging young people, we think about effective youth participation that positions young people as active designers in the social innovation process.

Our model of prototyping with young people does *not*:

- pretend young people are doing our job.
- put young people at a table with a group of paid professionals and expect them to participate in the same way.
- ask young people to undertake in-depth interviews that design and social innovation practitioners are trained to do.
- attend meetings and undertake work between 9am and 5pm on weekdays.

Rather, when we collaborate with young people as idea testers, they:

- have a legitimate and clear role that is critically important and valued.
- are trained and supported to do that role.
- can fulfil the role in their own time, within their own social networks, in a way that works for them.
- have an opportunity to do the work in their own way (add their style).
- are valued and compensated for the role they are playing.
- have an opportunity for on-going involvement.

Steps for idea testing with and by young people

1. Create prototypes (models, visual or digital examples) of the ideas you are trying to test
2. Recruit Idea Testers from the target group the ideas are intended for
3. Hold an initial workshop to explain the ideas you're testing, and train Idea Testers how to have conversations with their peers, using the prototypes and record feedback
4. Give Idea Testers 2-3 weeks to go and test the ideas with 3-5 peers
5. Hold a second workshop to analyse the feedback with the Idea Testers
6. Compensate the Idea Testers for their time.