Views and Ideas Guide

Helping children and young people discuss their lived experience of mental health and wellbeing support

Introduction

Thank you for helping gather the views and experiences of children and young people.

We assume that you've already completed the NYTH|NEST awareness training and that this session will be feeding into a specific NYTH|NEST self-assessment.

This resource helps you run simple activities that explore the six areas of the NYTH|NEST self-assessment. It supports children and young people to share what it feels like to get help, what works well and what could be better.



This is NOT about:

- evaluating or grading a particular service
- teaching young people about mental health and wellbeing
- teaching children and young people about NEST

This is about:

- discovering how children and young people experience mental health and wellbeing support
- listening to their ideas, opinions and suggestions
- recording comments, ideas, experiences, quotes, themes and suggestions
- helping gather evidence to inform a NYTH|NEST self-assessment

The views and ideas you gather should be used to inform the NYTH|NEST self-assessment.

Thank you to the young people from Barnardo's Meddwl Ymlaen for the help co-producing these resources.

Tips for running a session

You know your group, their dynamics, their abilities and the best way to work with them. Use your judgement and adapt as needed.

Before you begin

This resource is designed to support a NYTH|NEST self-assessment.

It does not replace NYTH|NEST training and should be used by people who have already completed the relevant training and understand the self-assessment process.

The activities in this guide are flexible discussion tools. They are designed to help children and young people share their experiences and ideas. Facilitators should use their professional judgement when choosing and adapting activities.

Not every activity will suit every age group.

Some activities may work well with younger children and need adapting for older children and teenagers. Likewise, some activities may work better in schools, youth clubs, family settings or one-to-one conversations.

The most important thing is gathering meaningful views and experiences that can contribute to the self-assessment process.

The Space

- Create a calm, safe, accessible and comfortable environment.
- Offer a warm welcome.
- Help everyone feel included.

The Lundy Model of Participation can help guide your approach.

The Session

Children and young people communicate in lots of ways. Some will talk. Others may draw, write, play, move around or share in different ways.

- You do not need to use every activity.
- Choose what works best for the group and individual needs.
- Adapt activities where needed.
- Let the conversation flow naturally.

Using the animations

The animations are optional. You can use the animations, introduce activities yourself, read from the scripts provided or adapt the wording to suit your group. **The important thing is the conversation and feedback that follows.**

Safeguarding

At the start of the session, explain the group's safeguarding expectations.

Children and young people should know that this is a safe and respectful space where they can share their experiences, views and ideas.

They should also understand that if they share information that suggests they or somebody else is at risk of harm, you may need to pass this information on in line with your organisation's safeguarding procedures.

Participation should always be voluntary.

What matters most

Children and young people should feel heard, respected, and safe.

Their views will help decision-makers understand what is working well and where support can be stronger. During discussions:

- Go at their pace.
- Show that you value what they say.
- Help them feel safe to share real experiences if they want to.
- Let them know how their views will be used.
- Make sure there is a plan to feedback what is changing as a result of them sharing.
- Make sure they know participation is voluntary.



The discussion activity resource

You can access the resource ideas here:
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This resource has 6 parts. You can mix, match and assemble them however you like. Each area has:

An introduction explainer animation from the NEST bird

A main activity

Some discussion questions.

Some adaptation ideas for different ages, communication styles, and settings.

Each area also suggests 3 of our 5 general activities:

- **Thermometer** – quick rating
- **Can of Worms** – problems and frustrations
- **Star Awards** – strengths and positives
- **Magic Wand** – improvements
- **Time Machine** – future support ideas

These flexible discussion activities explore the areas from a different perspective and they're useful for pulling out themes, quotes and improvement ideas. They may not work for everyone.

Working with babies and toddlers

If you're working with young families, babies and toddlers, we have support information in **Appendix A**

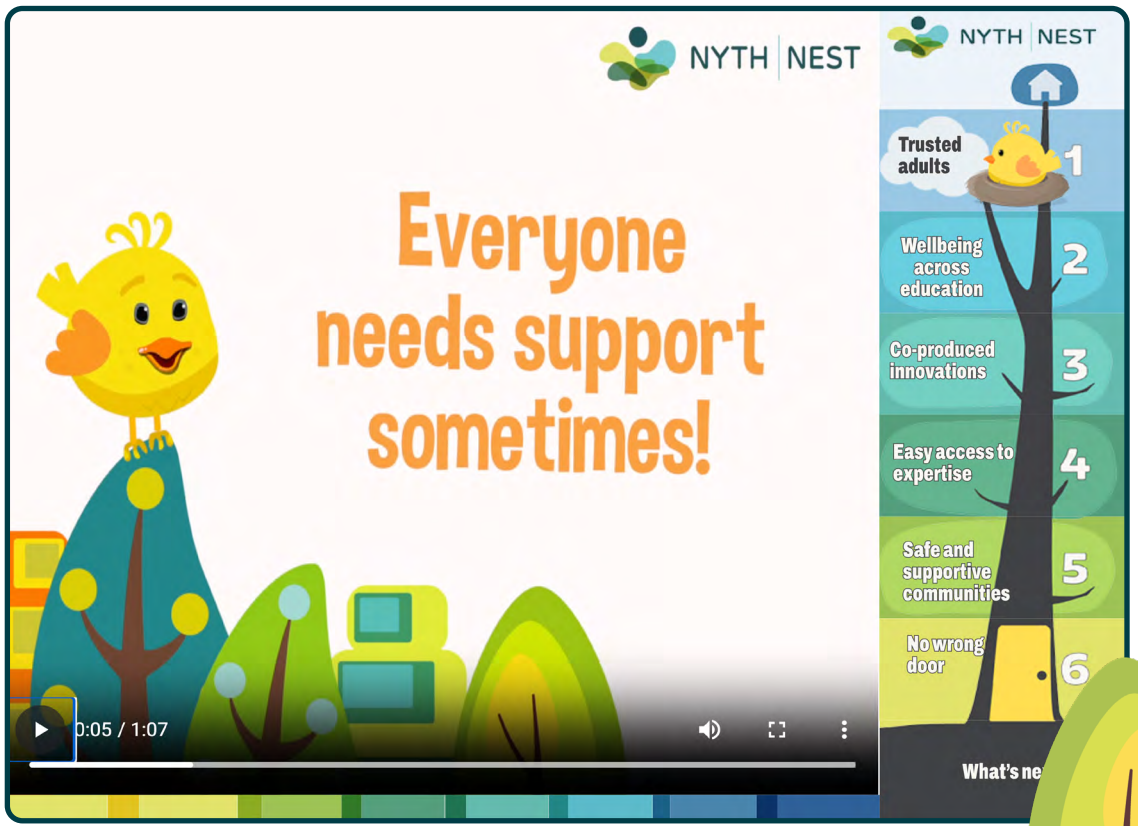
Welcome and introduction

You can start off with one of your favourite icebreakers or jump straight into this resource.

The welcome animation

You can let the NEST bird do the talking or you're welcome to introduce the session in your own way. Feel free to edit the script to suit your group. The scripts are all in the Appendix B.

Restate: We just want to understand what mental health and wellbeing support feels like from your point of view.



1 Trusted adults

People who support you

Explainer animation

Support Nest

Inner circle – people who help the most and you trust the most.

Middle circle – people who sometimes help or you can trust.

Outer circle – people you know but might not go to for help.



Conversation ideas:

- Who helps you when things are difficult?
- What do they do that helps?
- Is there anyone who should be closer to the centre?

Adaptations:

- You could get feathers cut out of paper that they can write or draw the person on, colour in and put in the nest.
- You can print the nest A3 and they can use post-it notes.
- You can mark the circles of the nest on the floor, and they can stand there holding the person's name or role and discuss.

Ideas for different ages

- Young children could draw people or use photos.
- Primary-aged children could use feathers, post-it notes or character cards.
- Teenagers could map trusted people on their phones, on paper or through discussion.
- Groups could physically stand in different circles around the room.

2 Wellbeing across education

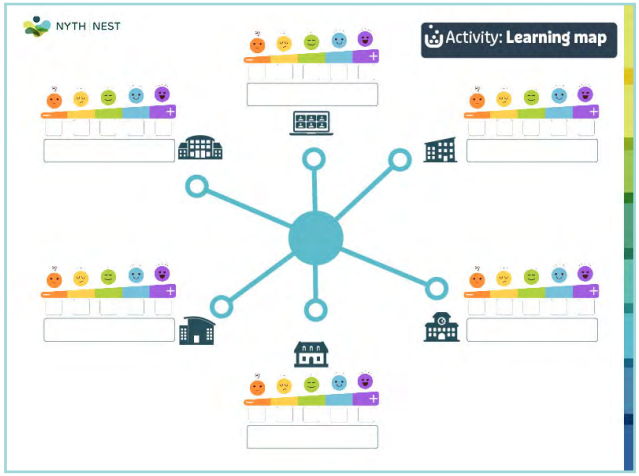
Places where you learn

Explainer animation

Learning Map

On the learning map label the places where you learn: school, college, training, youth clubs, online learning, home and other places.

Then tick the emoji face that shows how well you think they support your wellbeing.



Conversation ideas:

- What sometimes makes learning harder?
- What would make these places better?

Adaptations:

- You can mark out the voting responses along a line on the floor and get the group to stand on the response for each learning space.
- Put the learning spaces on posters around the room, give them coloured dots to go round and vote. Then discuss as a group.

Ideas for different ages

- Young children could use smiley faces and stickers.
- Primary-aged children could vote with coloured dots.
- Teenagers could discuss specific experiences in school, college, training or online learning.
- Groups could create a “dream learning environment”.



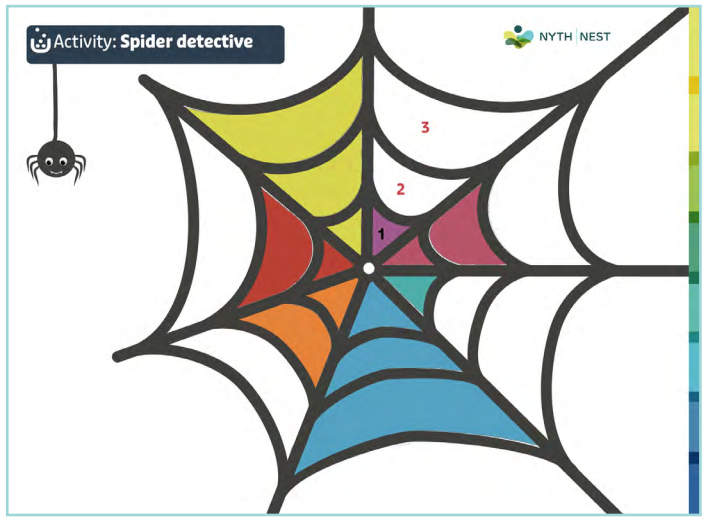
3 Co-produced innovations

Adults listening to young people

Explainer animation

Spider Detective

You get to investigate how well adults listen to you — support workers, services, school, youth workers and more. Write them into the web and give each area a score: 0, 1, 2 or 3.



Conversation ideas:

- Do adults ask for your ideas about support?
- When have you felt listened to?
- When have adults made decisions without you?

Adaptations:

- Make a spider web with wool. Put a plastic cup on the end of the wool like a telephone. Discuss how far the child's voice travels from the centre of the web for each service.
- Older groups can put a detective board together. "You're a Spider Detective. Your job is to spot when adults really listen to young people and when they don't. How do we fix the web?"

Ideas for different ages

- Young children could talk about times adults listened to them.
- Primary-aged children could colour sections of the web.
- Teenagers could score services and discuss real examples.
- Groups could investigate how decisions are made and how young people could be involved.



4 Easy access to help

Finding the support you need

Explainer animation

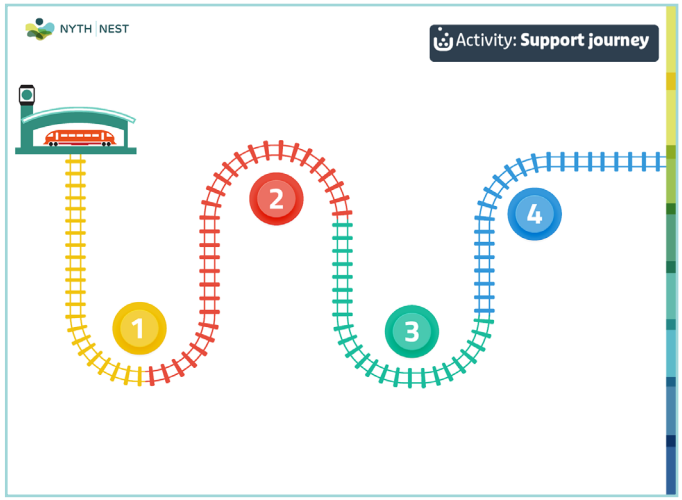
Support Journey

Use the railway line to describe a time when you needed help. Mark stations or steps on the journey.

Example: I need help Central Station → spoke to teacher → waited → spoke to counsellor

Add feelings along the journey like helpful, confusing or frustrating.

"Think of getting help like a journey. Sometimes it's smooth. Sometimes there are delays. Your job is to show us what the journey really feels like—and how we can make it easier."



Conversation ideas:

- Where was it easiest to get help?
- Where was it confusing?
- What would make the journey easier?

Adaptations:

- Let them design and draw their own journey.
- Let them put together a board about their journey. People icons (teacher, parent, worker) arrows (next step) clocks (waiting) faces (feelings) their tickets.
- Older groups can map a real experience in detail.

Ideas for different ages

- Young children could draw the people they spoke to and how each step made them feel.
- Primary-aged children could use picture cards, emojis or stickers along the journey.
- Teenagers could map a real experience and identify where support worked well or became difficult.
- Groups could act out different support journeys and discuss what would make them easier.



5 Safe and supportive communities

The places where you live and spend time



Explainer animation

My World

List or draw the places in your life: home, park, youth club, sports, town centre, school and more.

Mark places where you feel:

safe and welcome

uncomfortable

“Everyone has their own world made up of places they go. Some feel safe and welcoming. Some don’t. This activity helps us understand what it feels like in your world.”

Conversation ideas:

- Where do you feel happiest and most relaxed?
- Are there places you avoid?
- What would make your community better?

Adaptations:

- Map out their community in the room with posters marking the places. Walk around the imagined community with coloured stickers for feeling safe and happy, unsure and uncomfortable.
- Younger groups can draw their communities.
- Older groups could role-play being a community action team, looking at how to fix issues.

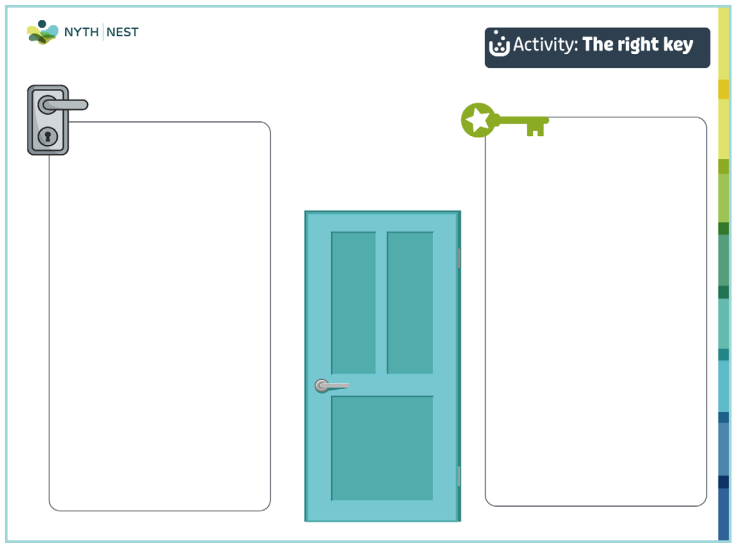
Ideas for different ages

- Young children could draw their favourite places and where they feel safe.
- Primary-aged children could create a map of their community using stickers, symbols or colours.
- Teenagers could explore how different spaces affect wellbeing, belonging and safety.
- Groups could become a “community improvement team” and suggest changes that would make local places more welcoming.



6 No wrong door

Getting help wherever you ask



Explainer animation

The Right Key

Around the door, write or draw the locks and barriers that can stop you getting help, for example: long waiting lists, not knowing where to go, adults not listening, feeling worried.

On the other side write or draw keys that could open the door: clear information, being listened to, services working together.

“Imagine there is one door to getting help. Right now, it has lots of locks. Your job is to show us what the locks are—and what keys would open them, so any door you try leads to support.”

Conversation ideas:

- What are the locks that make it hard to get help?
- What keys would make it easier to open the door?
- Who could help provide those keys?

Adaptations:

- Using a door to your room, the group can role-play knocking on the door for help — different scenarios, barriers and responses.
- Use flip chart sheets as doors around the room, and use post-it notes in one colour for locks and barriers and another colour post-it notes for solutions.

Ideas for different ages

- Young children could talk about what makes them feel happy, safe or brave when they need help, and what might make them feel sad, worried or unsure.
- Primary-aged children could draw locks and keys or use post-it notes to match problems with solutions.
- Teenagers could identify real barriers to support and discuss practical ways services could improve.
- Groups could role-play asking for help in different situations and explore what good support looks like.

The five general activities are next.



Thermometer

How strong does this area feel?

Where would you put this on the thermometer?

Purpose

Helps the child show how well support is working in different areas.

This creates very clear evidence for the NEST headings.

What you need

A thermometer scale for each of the six areas.

Example scale:

- Great support
- Mostly good
- Sometimes works
- Not sure
- Not working well.

How it works

For any of the NEST areas, ask the child to place a marker on the thermometer.

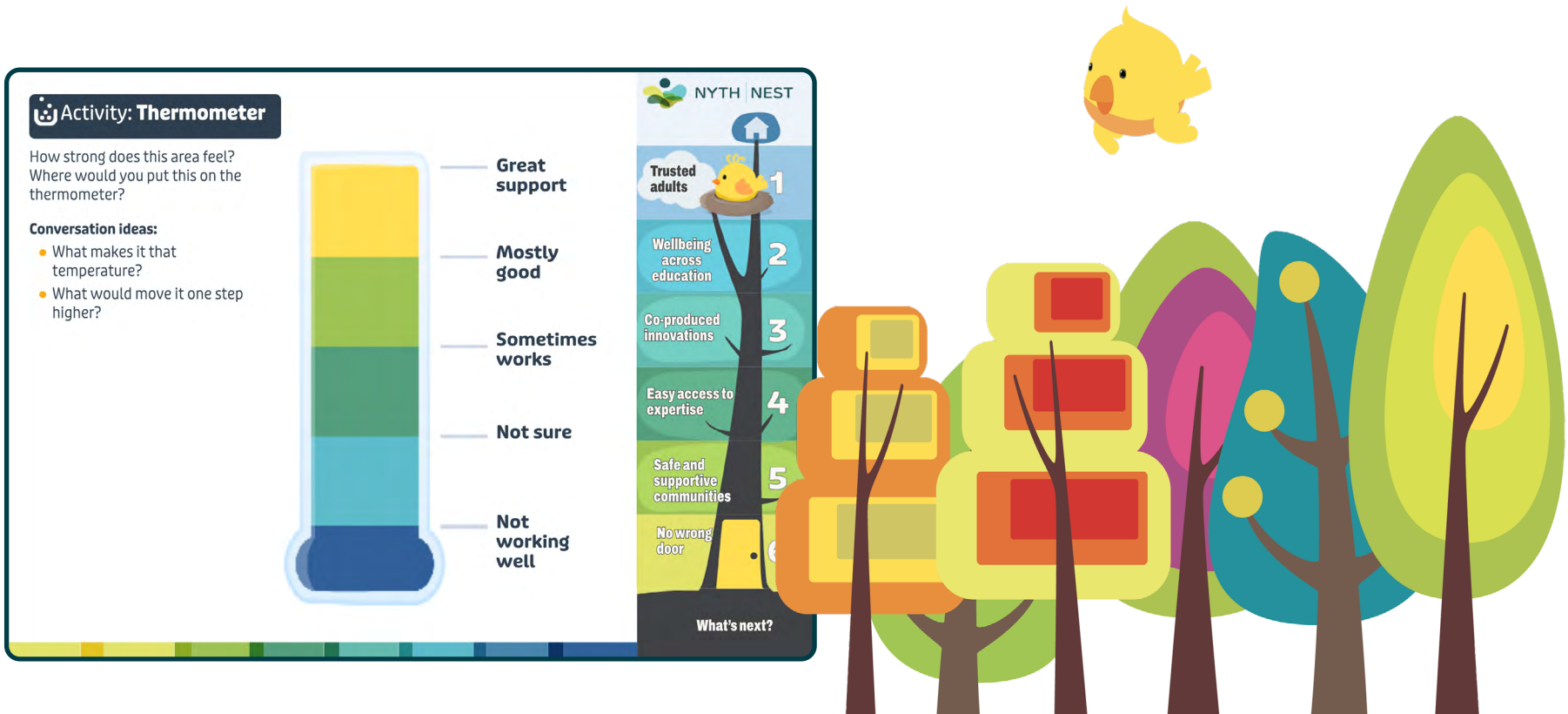
Conversation ideas:

- What makes it that temperature?
- What would move it one step higher?

Why this works

It quickly identifies strengths, gaps and improvement ideas.

And, it feels less confrontational than direct questions.



The Can of Worms

Find the problems wriggling in this area?

Someone opened a can of gooey worms and they wriggled into all the problems in this area. Let's spot them and pick them out.

Purpose

Helps the child talk about problems or frustrations.

How it works

The children write or draw problems on worms or sticky notes. Examples:

- waiting too long
- adults not listening
- confusing services
- bullying at school.

Then they decide which NEST area each worm belongs to. Areas 1-6.

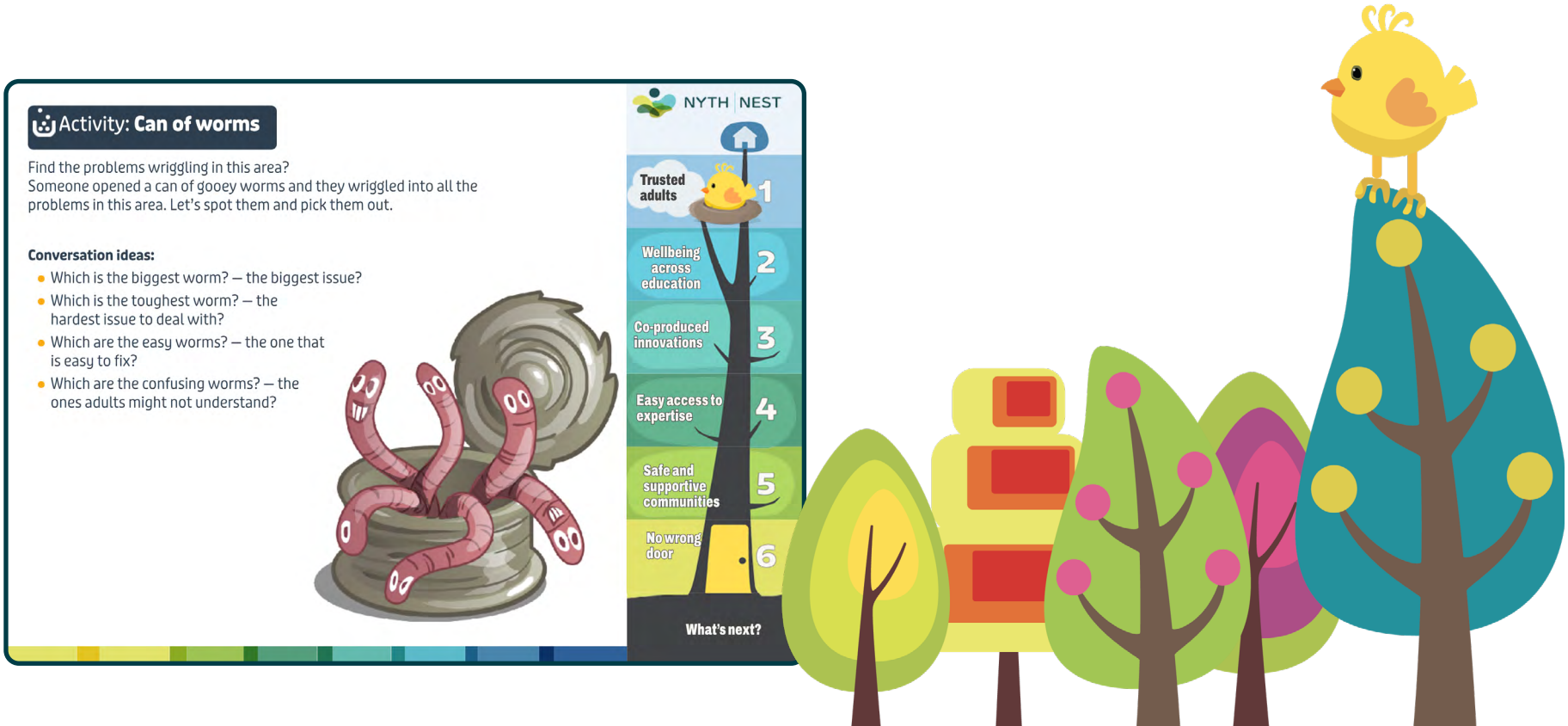
Conversation ideas:

- Which is the biggest worm? — the biggest issue?
- Which is the toughest worm? — the hardest issue to deal with?
- Which are the easy worms? — the ones that are easy to fix?
- Which are the confusing worms? — the ones adults might not understand?

Why this works

Young people often find it easier to talk about problems through humour.

It also naturally links issues to the six framework areas.



The Glittering Star Awards Ceremony

Which parts of this area are working well? Today we're having a Glittering Awards Ceremony

You get to choose who or what deserves a Star Award?

Examples:

- Trusted Adult Star or Learning Support Star
- Listening Star or Community Star
- Best Information Star or Helper Star

Write out the winner of each award and the reason why.

Purpose

Helps the child recognise what is already working well.

What you need

Stars or star stickers.

Conversation ideas:

- Who wins the Trusted Adult Star? Why?
- What place wins the Community Star?
- What service wins the Help Star?

Why this works

Young people are often much more open when starting with positives.

It also produces great quotes and examples.



Your Magic Wand

What would make this area stronger?

If you had a magic wand you could just 'swish & tap' something and change it to make support better for you.

What would you 'swish & tap'?

- people who help
- school or learning
- getting help
- places in your community
- adults listening to young people

Purpose

Helps the child or young person imagine how support could be better.

What you need

A wand or star image to make the activity fun

Glitter is a pain to clean up but also so much fun!

Conversation ideas:

- What would you change first?
- What would make the biggest difference for young people?
- What would make this branch stronger?

Why this works

Young people often find it easier to talk about improvements than problems.

This activity encourages positive ideas and helps identify practical ways support could improve.



A Time Machine

What would support look like in the future if things improved? Imagine we travel three years into the future. Swoosh! Support for young people has improved. Yay!

Purpose

Helps the child imagine better future support.

Conversation ideas:

- What changed?
- What do adults do differently now?
- What makes life easier for young people?

Why this works

Future thinking often produces creative ideas adults never expect.

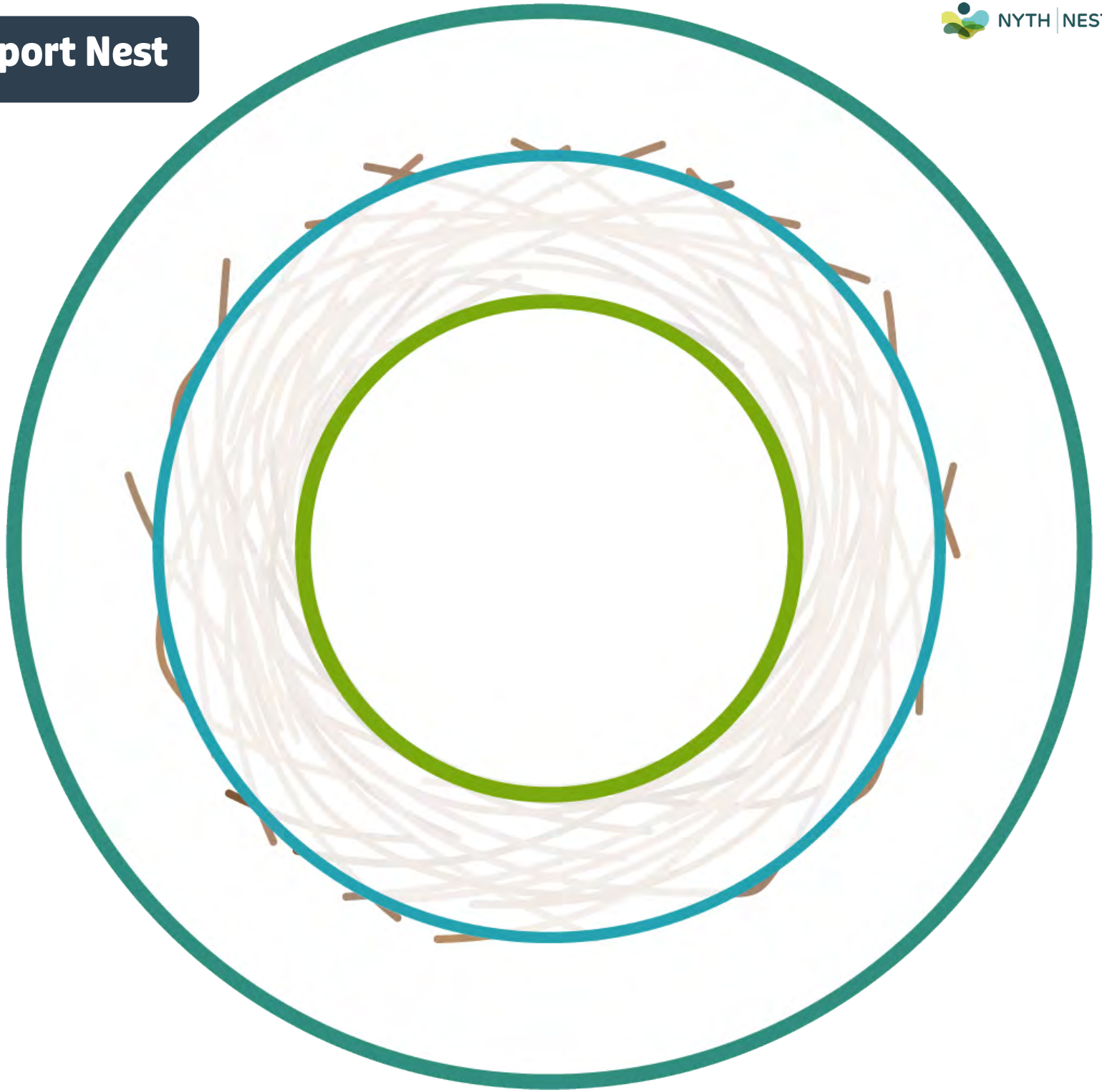


The worksheets for printing are next.



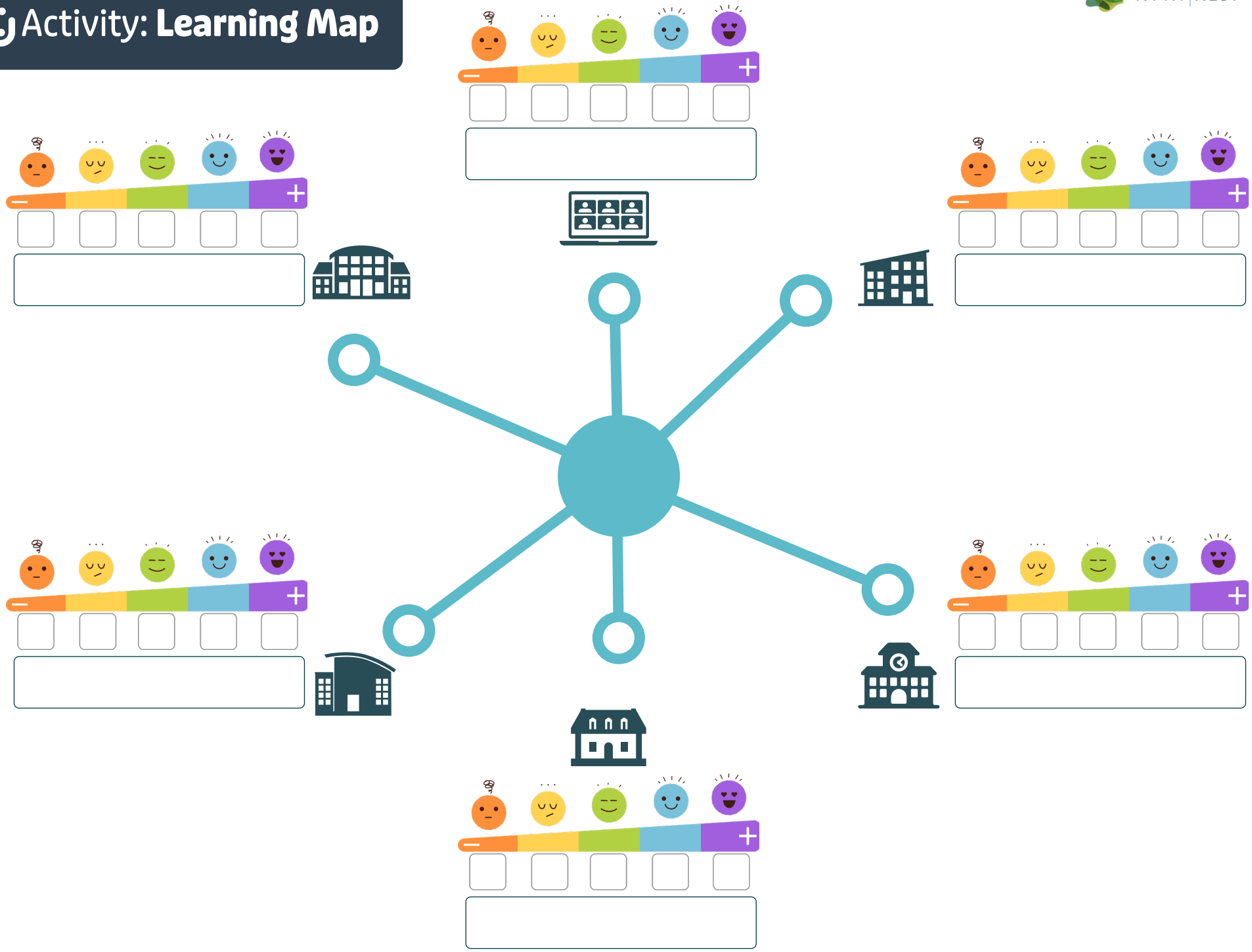
Activity: **Support Nest**

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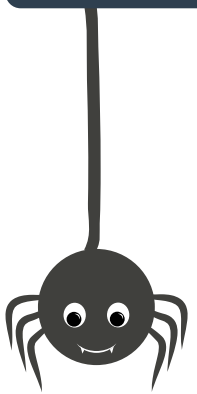


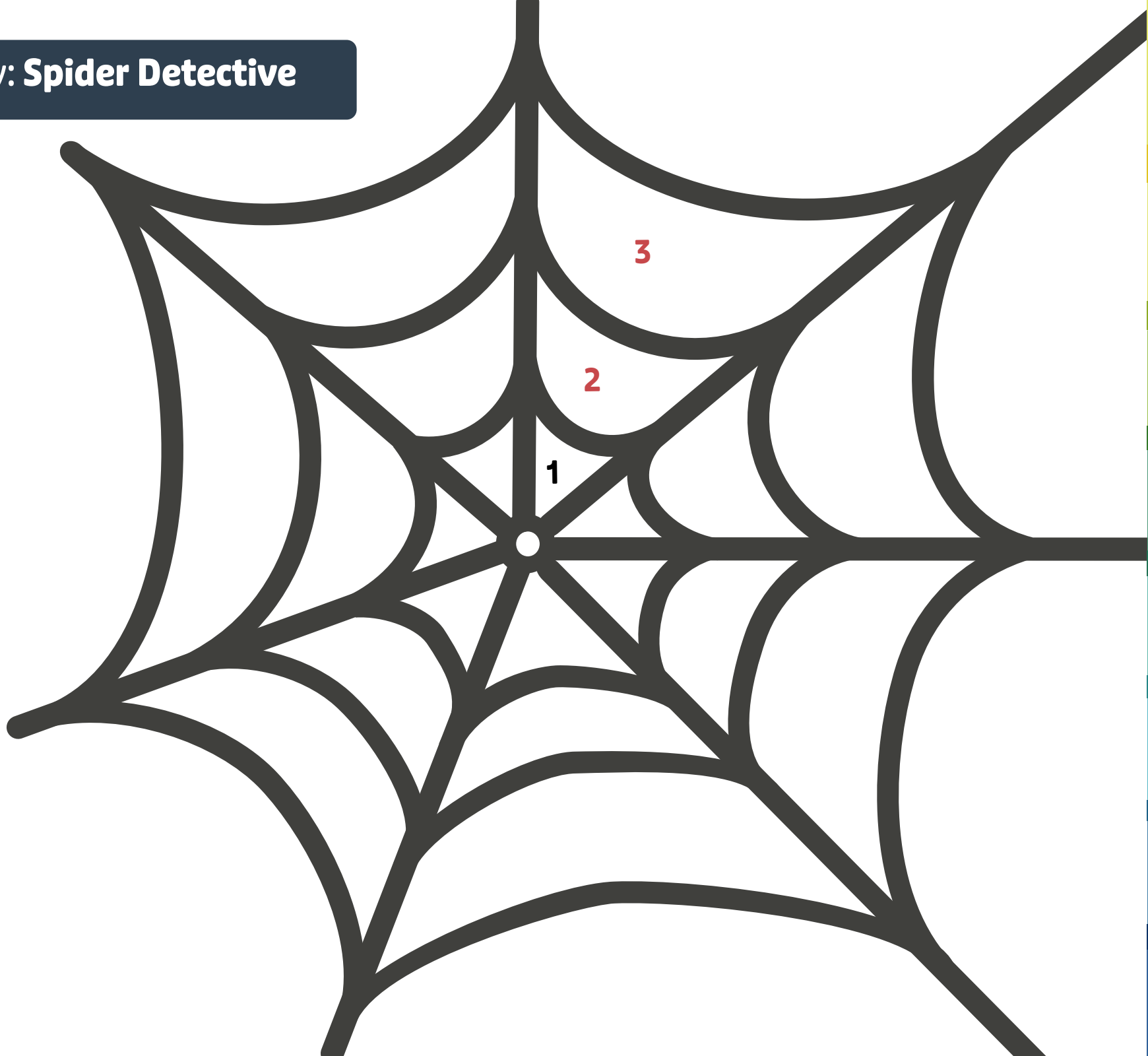
Activity: Learning Map

NYTH | NEST



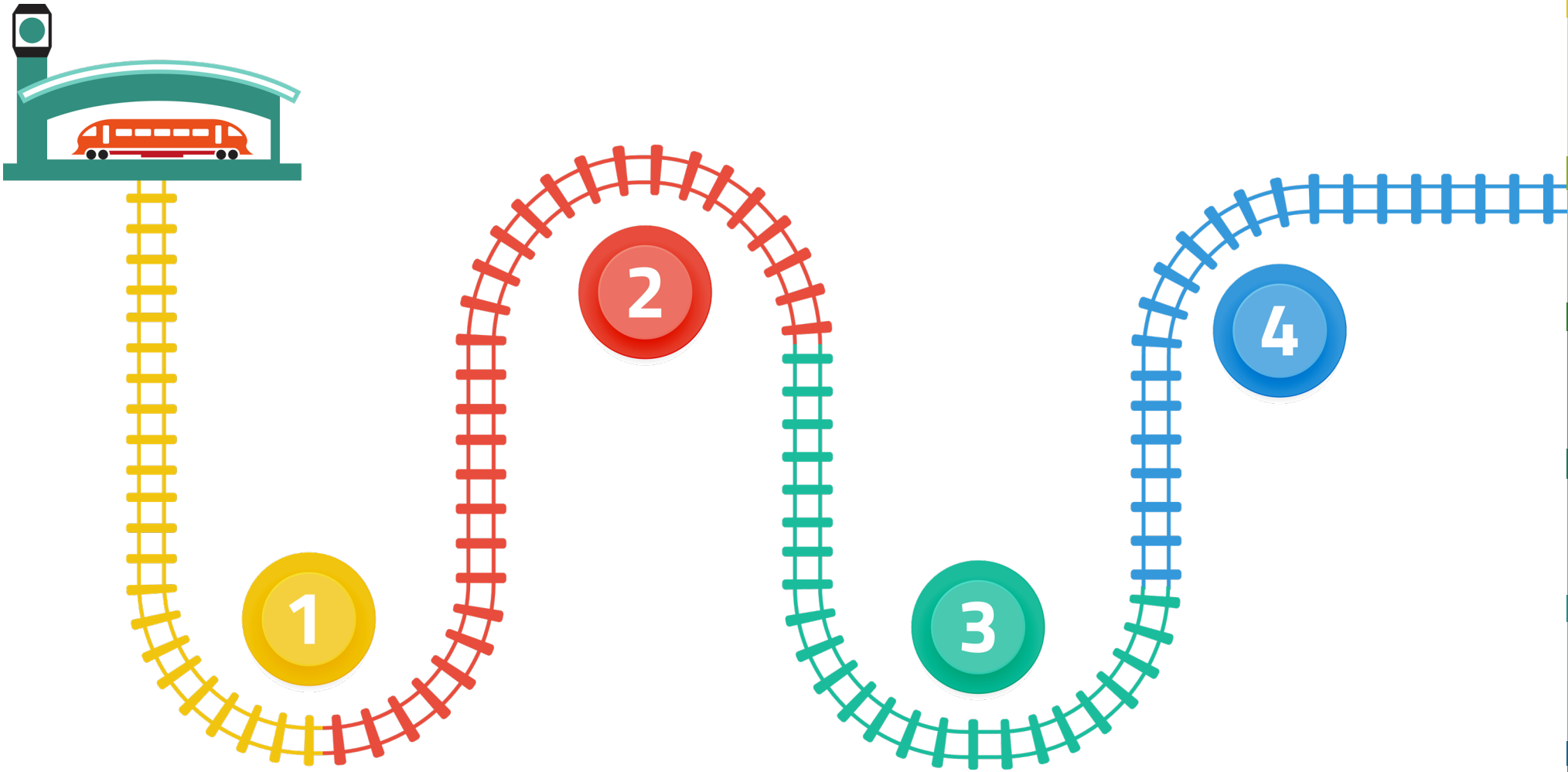
Activity: **Spider Detective**





Activity: **Support Journey**

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Activity: **My World**

NYTH | NEST



Activity: **The Right Key**

NYTH | NEST





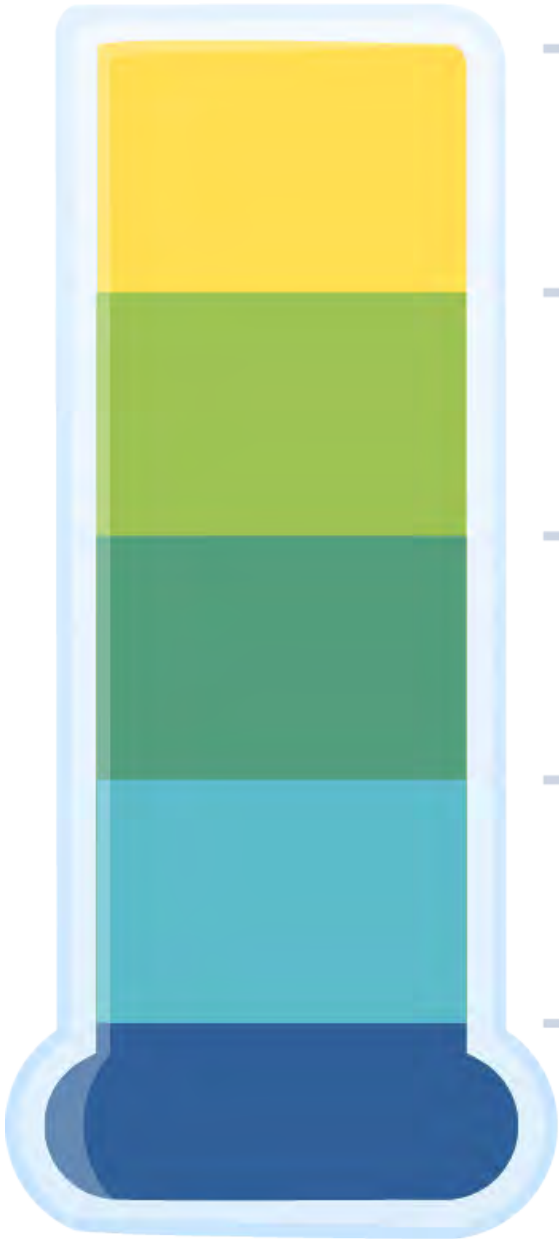


Activity: **Thermometer**

How strong does this area feel? Where would you put this on the thermometer?

Conversation ideas:

- What makes it that temperature?
- What would move it one step higher?



Great support

Mostly good

Sometimes works

Not sure

Not working well

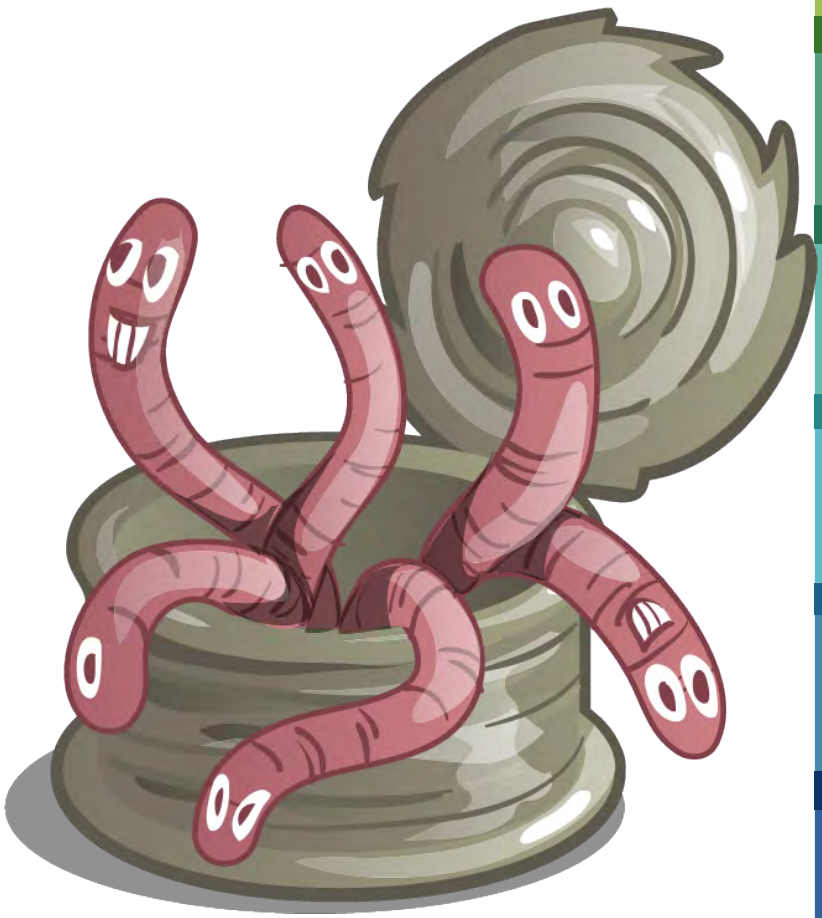
Activity: **Can of Worms**

NYTH | NEST

Find the problems wriggling in this area?
Someone opened a can of gooey worms and they wriggled into all the problems in this area. Let's spot them and pick them out.

Conversation ideas:

- Which is the biggest worm? — the biggest issue?
- Which is the toughest worm? — the hardest issue to deal with?
- Which are the easy worms? — the one that are easy to fix?
- Which are the confusing worms? — the ones adults might not understand?



Activity: **Star Awards**

Which parts of this area are working well? Today we're having a

Glittering Awards Ceremony

You get to choose who or what deserves a Star Award?
Examples:

- Trusted Adult Star
- Learning Support Star
- Listening Star
- Community Star
- Best Information Star
- Helpful Door Star

Write out the winner of each award and the reason why.



Conversation ideas:

- Are there any other star awards you'd give out?
- What would help adults win one of your awards?

Activity: **Magic Wand**

What would make this area stronger?

If you had a magic wand you could just **'swish & tap'** something and change it to make support better for you.

What would you **'swish & tap'**?

- people who help
- school or learning
- getting help
- places in your community
- adults listening to young people

Conversation ideas:

- What would you change first?
- What would make the biggest difference for you?



Activity: **Time Machine**

What would support look like in the future if things improved? Imagine we travel three years into the future. Swoosh! Support for young people has improved. Yay!

Conversation ideas:

- What's changed?
- What do adults do differently now?
- What makes life easier for young people in this future?



Appendix A — Working with babies and toddlers

Babies and very young children can't always explain their thoughts or experiences in words. However, they still communicate a great deal through their behaviour, emotions, and relationships.

Adults working with infants often act as careful observers and interpreters of the child's experience.

Your role is to notice what the child shows through interactions and responses. Bring that voice into this conversation. That doesn't mean speaking for the child or only collecting the parent's opinions. It means paying attention to what the child may be showing us about their needs, comfort and wellbeing. Then use this to reflect with parents, carers and professionals who know the child well.

Observing the child's experience

Babies and toddlers communicate through:

- facial expressions
- body language and movement
- vocal sounds and crying
- curiosity and exploration
- who they seek comfort, reassurance and interaction from
- how they respond to people and environments

These signals can help describe how a child responds to support in different situations. For example, you might notice:

- who the child turns to when they need comfort
- how they respond to familiar adults
- differences in behaviour across different settings or environments
- how they respond to changes or transitions
- how they explore and play in their environment

These observations help build a picture of their experience of support.

Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers often understand a baby's signals best. Invite them to share their insights about the child's behaviour, emotions and experiences. Ask them about moments when the child seems most settled, engaged or distressed. Their knowledge illuminates the child's perspective and can ensure the child's experience is represented accurately. For example:

Trusted Adults: Who does the child go to for comfort and/or reassurance? Who supports the child in meeting their needs?

Learning and Early Development: How do nursery, childcare, or early learning environments support the child's wellbeing?

Your Ideas Matter: How do parents feel they are listened to and respected by services?

Getting the Right Help: How easily can the family access advice or specialist support when they need it?

Community: Are there welcoming spaces where the child and family feel supported?

No Wrong Door: When the family asks for help, do services work together to guide them to the right support?

Recording the child's experience

Your role is to gather these observations and reflections carefully and record them in a way that represents the infant's experience and parents' views as closely as possible.

Appendix B — Scripts

Hello.

Today we're going to talk about support.

Everyone needs support sometimes. Support can come from people, places, or services.

The people who run mental health and wellbeing services want to understand what support feels like for young people in real life.

The best way to understand that — is listening to you.

So Nyth/Nest have this system of discussing, listening, thinking, planning and improving!

A nest is built from many different pieces that help young birds grow strong and ready to fly.

In the same way, young people need lots of different kinds of support.

[diagram wheel]

We're going to explore these six parts of support together.

For each one, we'll do a short activity and talk about your ideas and experiences.

There are no right or wrong answers.

You can talk, draw, write, or share ideas in whatever way feels comfortable.

Your ideas will help us make better plans so young people can get the support they need.

Let's begin.

Area 1

"Now let's look at the first part of support: Trusted Adults

That means: The people in your life who care about you, support you, and help you when things feel difficult.

So, let's think about the adults in your life who help and support you."

Area 2

"Now let's look at another part of support: Wellbeing in Learning

That means: Places where you learn should help you feel safe, supported, and able to do your best.

So, let's talk about the places where you learn and how they help you feel."

Area 3

"Now let's look at another part of support: Co-Produced Innovations

That means: You should be listened to and involved in decisions about services that affect your life.

Your ideas matter. So, let's think about how adults listen to young people."

Area 4

"Now let's look at another part of support: Easy Access to Expertise

That means: You and your family should be able to find the right help quickly and easily.

So, let's look at how easy or difficult it is to get help."

Area 5

“Now let’s look at another part of support: Safe and Supportive Communities

That means: Communities should give you safe places to live, play, learn, and belong.

So, let’s think about the places and communities around you.”

Area 6

“And finally: No Wrong Door

That means: If someone asks for help, they should always be supported or guided to the right help the first time they ask.

So, let’s talk about what happens when you ask for help.”

What’s Next — Closing script

Hey, thanks for sharing your ideas and thoughts.

Your experiences help us understand what mental health and wellbeing support is really like for young people.

This helps us make better plans so young people can grow, feel safe, and do well in life.

Your voice matters.