

Youth Work & Technology Sector Partnerships: A Getting Started Guide

Partnerships between youth organisations and the technology sector can unlock new opportunities, digital skills, resources, and long-term support for young people. But getting started can feel daunting. This guide breaks it down into practical, achievable steps.

THE ESSENTIAL GETTING-STARTED CHECKLIST

- ✓ Know your strengths and needs
- ✓ Map potential technology partners
- ✓ Send a warm introduction
- ✓ Propose a simple first step
- ✓ Make involvement easy and safe
- ✓ Keep communication regular
- ✓ Co-design for shared value
- ✓ Celebrate success and grow the relationship

1. Understand what you bring as well as what you stand to gain

Before connecting with any technology organisation, understand your own strengths and gaps.

What youth work can offer towards a partnership:

- Deep community connections and an understanding of young people's needs.
- Experience in safeguarding, inclusion, and youth voice.
- Safe spaces (either physical or digital) where young people already engage.
- Use [The Unique Value Blueprint tool](#) to delve into identifying your strengths further.

Then think through what problem you are trying to solve, and whether there is a clear ask of a technology partner. Think through what the technology sector might offer a partnership:

- Digital skills training and/or awareness
- Equipment (e.g. devices), software, infrastructure, or licensing
- Staff volunteering days or mentoring
- Funding or sponsorship (e.g. Charity of the Year)
- Innovation support (AI education, coding clubs, digital literacy sessions)

Knowing this ahead of time helps frame more productive and clear conversations.

2. Identify the right technology partners

Not every company is the right fit. Look for:

- Local technology businesses (start-ups, app developers, digital agencies)
- Large technology companies with established corporate social responsibility (CSR) or environmental, social and governance (ESG) programmes
- Technology community groups e.g., meetups, coding clubs, tech-for-good networks
- Universities and colleges with computing or digital media departments
- Use [The Risk Assessment Decision Tree tool](#) to evaluate whether this is the right partnership to pursue

Tip: search for organisations already doing STEM outreach, digital inclusion, or skills-for-employability work.

3. Start small - create a simple, friendly introduction

A first contact does not need to be a pitch. Think of it as the start of a relationship.

Keep it:

- Short (3–4 paragraphs max)
- Clear (explain who you are, who you support, why you are reaching out)
- Inviting (propose a low-pressure conversation)

A good first ask: “We’d love to chat about how local youth services and the technology community might support each other.”

People are much more receptive to conversations than commitments. Make sure the person that you are making a connection with is the right person to engage on this topic about.

4. Watch your language

Youth work has its own terminology and so does the technology sector.

Useful tips:

- Focus on outcomes rather than youth work specific phraseology. For example, use “helping young people build confidence and skills” rather than “targeted provision.”
- Do not be afraid to ask partners to explain any unfamiliar terms - technology people are often used to doing this.
- Link your goals to theirs:
 - Skills shortage = youth employability

- Diversity in technology = your inclusive practice
- Social impact = your community reach

This makes the partnership feel like a natural fit.

5. Make it easy for them to get involved

Technology companies value efficiency. Offer simple, structured pathways to connect.

Some quick-win partnership ideas:

- Host a 1-hour digital careers talk
- Run a coding taster session for young people
- Set up a mentoring or job shadowing scheme
- Invite them to a youth centre open day
- Run a technology volunteer day (e.g., digital upcycling, device setup)

Keep the admin burden light and explain exactly what support you will provide (such as safeguarding, logistics, youth engagement). Sometimes just inviting them along to your setting will generate a huge amount of energy and enthusiasm to engage further.

6. Build trust through consistent communication

Relationships grow through regular, but not overwhelming, contact.

Tips for maintaining momentum:

- Keep in regular email contact, with relevant updates or opportunities
- Share impact stories and photos (with permissions)
- Involve technology partners in celebration events or youth showcases
- Acknowledge volunteer time publicly

The more they see the impact, the more invested they become.

7. Co-design to deepen the relationship and outcomes

Rather than asking technology partners to “deliver something,” invite them to co-create – their staff will thrive at the opportunity to share and learn alongside another sector.

Such as:

- Co-design a digital skills programme
- Invite technology staff to problem-solving sessions with young people
- Work together on a small innovation project (e.g., a youth-created app idea)

This shifts the relationship from transactional to collaborative.

8. Focus on the mutual benefit of the partnership

While funding is helpful, many technology partnerships work best when driven by shared purpose.

Benefits for technology partners:

- Staff development and morale boost
- Reaching diversity and inclusion goals
- Positive community reputation
- Opportunities for innovation with real-world users
- Pipeline building for future talent

Highlighting these helps them see the value beyond a donation.

9. Put safeguarding and ethics at the front and centre

Technology companies may be unfamiliar with some of the ethical and safeguarding expectations from the youth work sector side. Work with them to address this by:

- Providing clear safeguarding protocols
- Offering a short briefing before any youth contact
- Clearly outlining supervision responsibilities
- Use [The Ethical Partnership Charter tool](#) to come to a shared position across purpose, people, practice, and partnership.

This builds confidence and encourages repeated involvement.

10. Start with one success story—then grow it

Partnerships build on momentum. Start with something small and achievable. Once a technology partner has a positive experience:

- Ask them for feedback
- See what else they are interested in doing
- Use that success to approach other companies
- Use [The Partnership Agreement checklist](#) as you enter a more formal way of working together.

Good partnerships attract further engagement and opportunities to grow together.