

The Lookout Handbook

*Exploring young people's
experiences of lockdown
and their hopes for the
future*

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Contents

Introduction	1
Objectives	2
About the Session Plan	3
Our Chief Listeners	4
Session Plan Overview	5
1. Setting Up	6
2. Briefing	7
3. Looking Around	8
4. Debrief	12
5. Reporting	14
6. Signing Off	16
Safeguarding	17
Data protection	18
Finishing up	19
Offline reporting	21





About this Handbook

This resource pack has been created by The Relationships Project, in association with the Summer of Play. It has been designed to support youth workers, play leaders and teachers to run “Lookouts” in their setting.

What is a Lookout?

A Lookout is an opportunity for young people to reflect on their experiences, feelings and perspectives on the pandemic, their return to school, and the future.

The main session plan has been designed for an age group of c.8-12, and we are working on alternative activities for older or younger children. Sessions have been designed to last c. 1 hour, although can be shortened or extended if needed.

We are very keen to receive the outputs of your session, which can be shared in a variety of formats on our website. This will allow us to draw out core themes from young people’s contributions, and reflect them back to policy-makers and professionals.

We have engaged a panel of “Chief Listeners” to respond to the young people’s perspectives. Please find more details on how to submit young people’s contributions at the end of this pack.

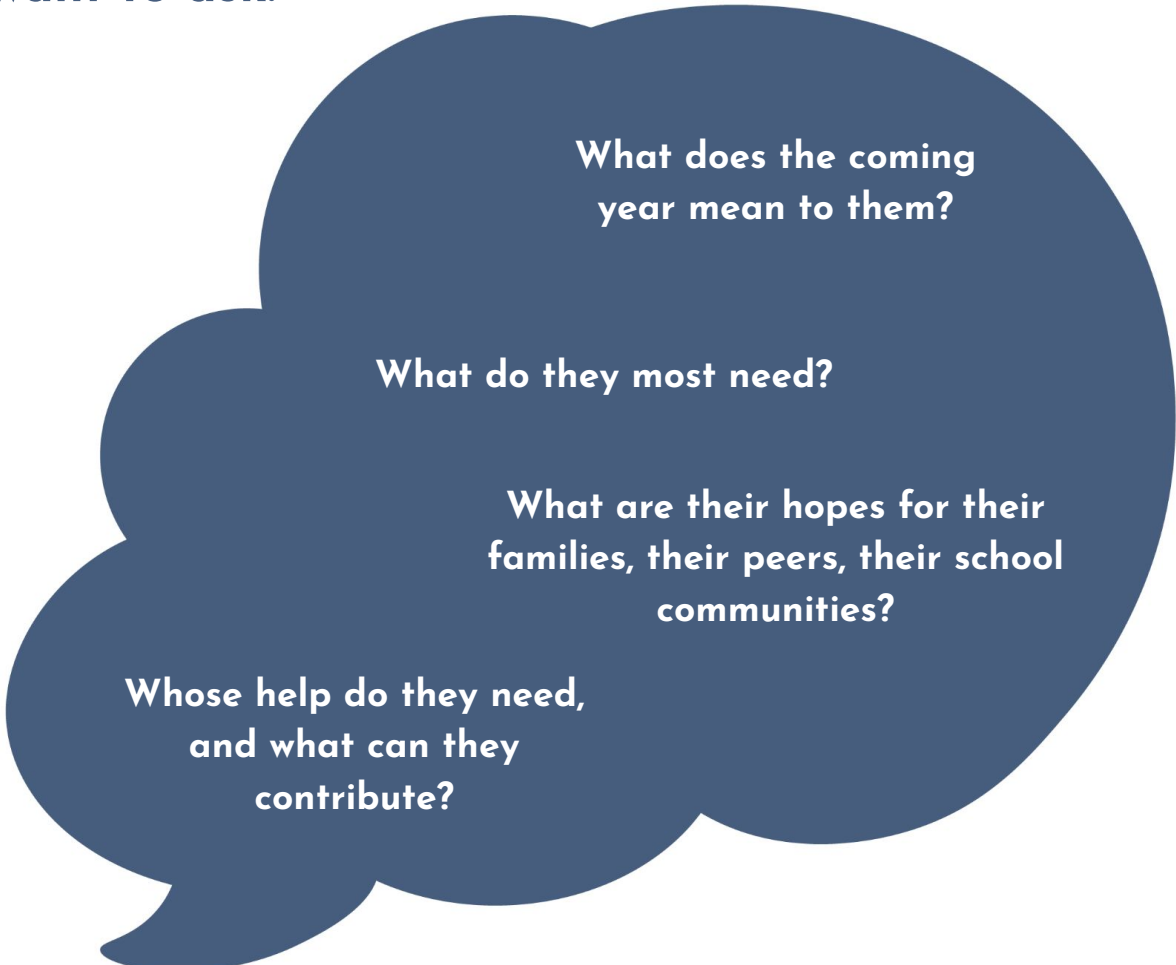
Note: We are also hosting facilitated online conversations with groups of young people to explore these questions in more detail. If you would be interested in arranging one of these online session with the young people you work with, please get in touch with hello@relationshipsproject.org.

The Lookout is loosely modelled on the Relationships Observatory which the Relationships Project has been running with a largely adult audience since Lockdowns began in March 2020.

As adult society grapples with questions about the future shape of our communities, our working lives and our support structures, we are creating the same space for young people.

The project will focus in particular on young people and their relationships over the past 18 months. We want to understand what has changed for them, how they have coped so far, and what relationships will help them into the future.

We want to ask:



What does the coming year mean to them?

What do they most need?

What are their hopes for their families, their peers, their school communities?

Whose help do they need, and what can they contribute?

The Lookout will elevate the voices of young people, and draw out the key themes that youth workers, teachers and policy-makers should consider.



The activities in this Session Plan are suggestions only. You're the expert when it comes to your group so please feel free to tailor the activities as you feel fit, or to pick the elements which you like best.

We warmly welcome contributions to the Lookout in any format - written words, pictures, audio files etc. We only ask that you make sure that the relevant permissions are sought before anything is submitted. More details can be found on our website: relationshipsproject.org/the-lookout.

We understand that it might not always be possible to send contributions to us, in which case we hope these activities are useful in their own right. Any contributions we do receive will feed into our final report on the Lookout, and will be shared with our Chief Listeners for their response.

We know that many young people have experienced traumatic events during the pandemic, and/or have been adversely affected by mental health difficulties. The Lookout may invite difficult feelings for some young people.

Our aim in preparing these resources is to provide an open, honest and safe space for children and young people to talk about their experiences with adults they trust.

Please use your own judgment in tailoring the sessions as appropriate, and responding to any issues which arise in accordance with your own safeguarding procedures. Please also make sure that you listen to the [audio resources](#) before using so you can assess whether they are appropriate to use with your group. You may find it helpful to see this [brief guidance](#) on how to speak to young people about the pandemic. You can find more details and additional signposting and support in our Safeguarding guidance which is included at the end of this handbook.



Chief Listeners



Mete Coban, MBE

Mete is the Chief Executive of My Life My Say, which works to empower young people to take part in democracy and lead change. He is also a councillor in the London borough of Hackney, where he was the youngest councillor ever elected.



Kirsty McNeil

Kirsty is the Executive Director for Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns at Save the Children, where she works to create campaigns that improve the lives of children in the UK and around the world. She was previously a Special Advisor at 10 Downing Street.



Ray Shostak, CBE

Ray is an international adviser in education and in improving public services. He has held senior roles in both national and local government, including as Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit.



Linda Woolston

Linda is an executive coach who has worked with business executives, politicians and charity leaders to help them achieve their dreams and goals. She was a Founder Director of We Are What We Do, an organisation helping people get involved in changing the world.



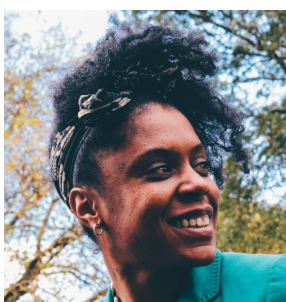
Tulip Siddiq, MP

Tulip is the Shadow Minister for Children & Early Years. She has been the MP for Hampstead and Kilburn since 2015. Two things she focuses on are ending child food poverty, and improving early years education and childcare.



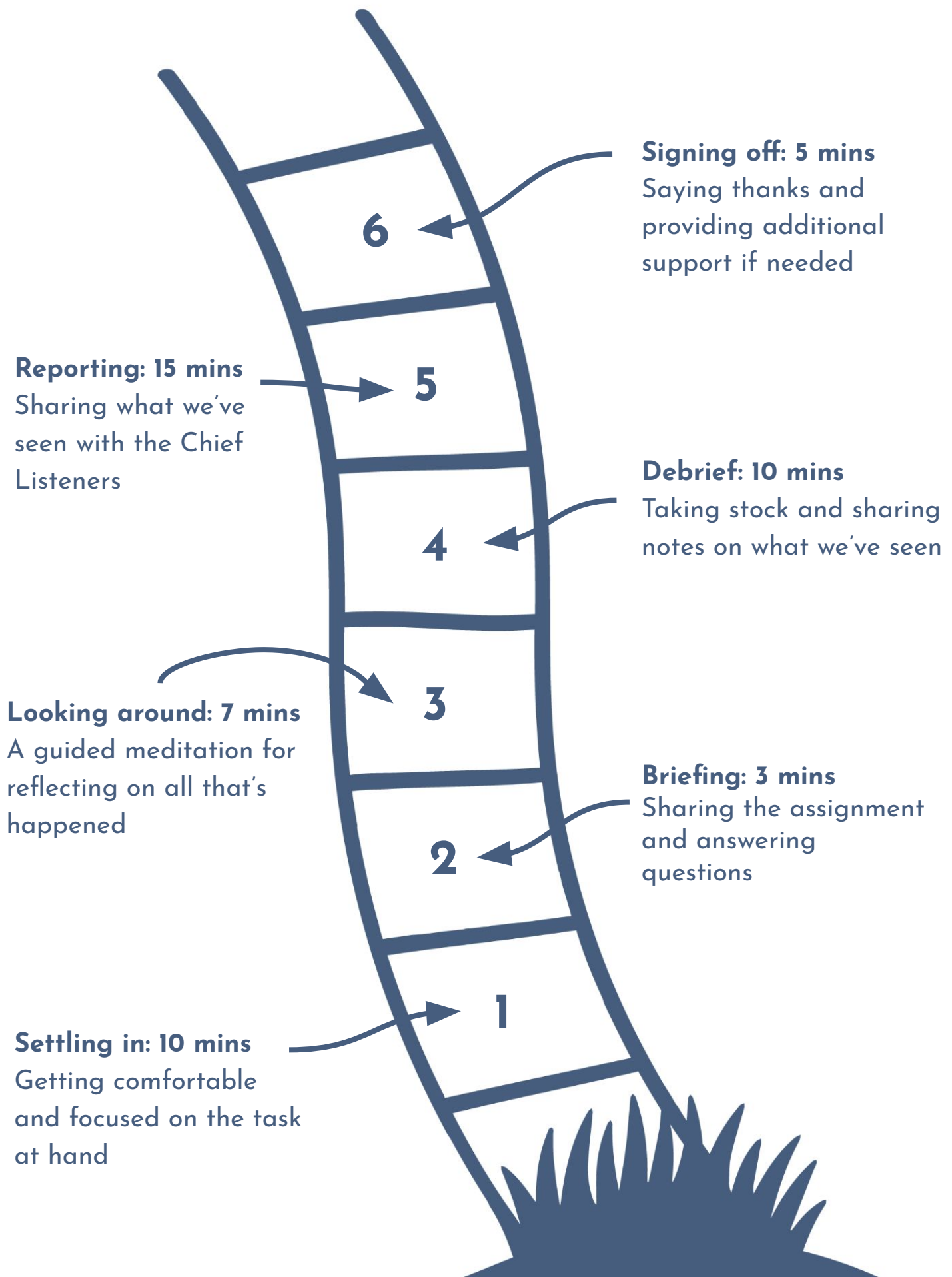
Danny Kruger, MP

Danny has been the MP for Devizes since 2019. He's particularly interested in strengthening communities and has set up a project called the New Social Covenant Unit focused on this. He cares about giving young people the chance to gain the skills they need to build a great life.



Ilesha Small

Ilesha is Head of Change for Education and Families at The Youth Endowment Fund. She is also a writer and former teacher. She is passionate about creating a fairer society, particularly for young people.





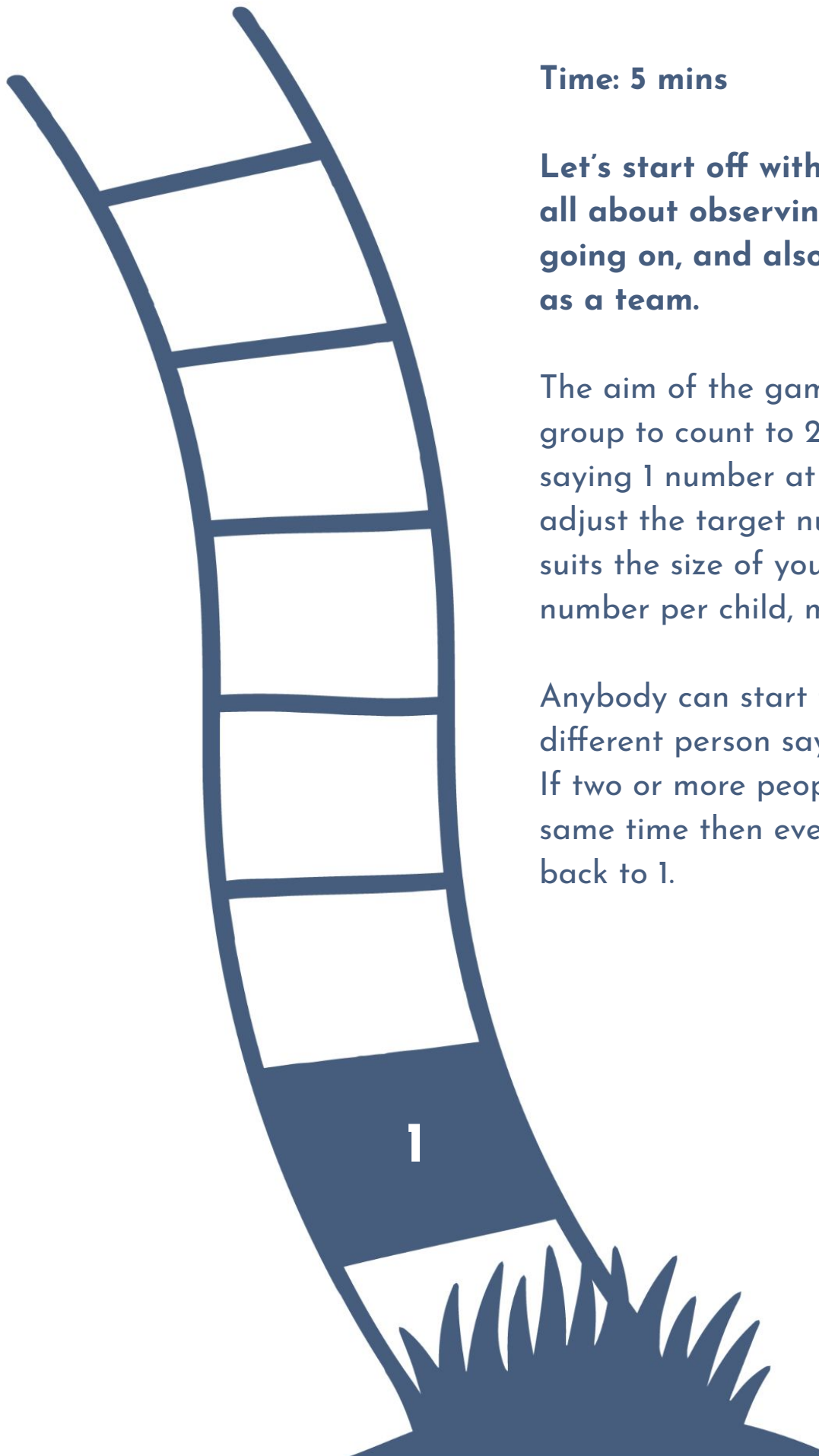
Step 1 - Settling in

Time: 5 mins

Let's start off with a game which is all about observing carefully what's going on, and also working together as a team.

The aim of the game is for the whole group to count to 20, with 1 person saying 1 number at a time. You can adjust the target number to whatever suits the size of your group (at least 1 number per child, minimum 15).

Anybody can start the count. Then a different person says the next number. If two or more people speak at the same time then everyone has to go back to 1.





Time: 5 mins

Now let's share the assignment for the session.

Explain to your group that they are taking part in an activity called The Lookout, which is about understanding how the pandemic and the last year in general has been for young people - and what we need to do next.

Let them know that we'd really like to understand their experiences, their feelings and their opinions. As part of the project we have a group of important adults who want to hear their stories and opinions about what life has been like for them, and what they hope will happen next.

You can share with them who the Chief Listeners are (see p4).



2



Step 3 - Looking around

Time: 7 mins

Next, let's go into a guided meditation activity to help the group reflect on their thoughts, feelings and experiences. Ask your group to settle in a comfortable position - this might be lying on the floor with closed eyes, or sitting on a comfy chair.

Tell them you're taking them on a trip to the Lookout. Encourage them to focus on the story and the ideas and feelings it makes them think of. Say that the story will happen in silence, but they should keep all their thoughts in their mind, ready to share shortly.

You can run this activity yourself, using the script that follows, or play a [recording](https://relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#guided-meditation) which can be found on our website: <https://relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#guided-meditation>

Please make sure to listen to or read this resource before using with the group, to check that it's appropriate for the group you're working with.



3



Make sure you're sitting comfortably, and let your body relax. If you want to, you can close your eyes. Block out the noises and thoughts and feelings of this day so far. Take a deep breath. I want you to imagine that you leave the session today and are on your way home. You walk past all the familiar sights of the neighbourhood - the shops, the park, the school (adjust as appropriate). You turn around the corner at a quiet spot, and then you see something very strange.... There is an absolutely huge tower in your way. You look up and it reaches as far as you can see, high, high, high up in the sky. You walk up to the tower and put your hand out to touch it - what's your tower made of, is it smooth metal, or wood, or something else?

Just at your eye height, there's a bright sign saying "Come on up". And right next to the sign there's a ladder. You reach up to the first rung. Do you feel excited or nervous to climb the ladder? Is it cold or warm to touch? You start climbing higher and higher. How do your arms and legs feel when you're climbing, do they get tired or do you have lots of energy?

You are climbing higher than the people, higher than the trees, higher than the houses. After climbing for several minutes you get to the top of the tower. There's a platform you can climb up on to, and you're relieved to see a big comfy chair to sit in. What colour is the chair, and what's it made of? Is the weather nice up there? Does it feel good to be so high up? You sit down and settle into the chair.

In front of the chair there is a big sign. It says "Welcome to the Lookout". And then you see an object hanging from a hook. It's a pair of binoculars. You pick them up - how do they feel in your hand? Are they old or new? Heavy or light? You lift them up and put them to your eyes, and you start to see all sorts of fascinating things through them.

The first thing you see is yourself, somewhere here in this neighbourhood. It's not today though, it's back in March 2020 when the pandemic was just starting. You're sitting in your favourite, comfy place to be, wherever that is: maybe at home, maybe close by.

What moment is it that you can see? Did you understand what was happening? What were the important things happening in your family and in your neighbourhood? You put down the binoculars for a second to think back to that time and how it made you feel.

When you lift them up again, the binoculars do something strange - first they go to the moments over the last year that were difficult. What moment can you see when things were feeling really tough for you? Was that right at the start when we didn't know what was going on, or later on when we'd been in lockdown for a while? Was your experience similar to other people you knew, or was it different?

The binoculars are flicking through different experiences you had. Now they zone in on some of the other people in your life. When you think about which people have been important to you during the last year, who do you see popping up through your binoculars? Are there any moments which you shared with other people that you will always remember?

Were there people who became more important in your life than they had been? Or who became less important? Can you see any moments through the binoculars where people helped you? Or can you see moments where you helped other people?

Now the binoculars are focusing in on a different moment - they are trying to focus on any good things that happened. What can you see through the lenses? Are there any moments where you did something that you were proud of? What can you see? Where were you, who were you with? How did that moment feel?

Now you lift the binoculars and look into the neighbourhood around your house. Was there anybody in your community who was helping other people? Who were they and what image can you see of them? Were they surrounded by lots of people doing good things together, or were they acting alone?



Now the binoculars swivel round, and they end up looking right here into this room, right now. They zone in on this week and all the activities we've been doing - what can you see happening? How does it feel to be here now after this very strange year? What are the activities which you most want to spend time on? Do you see yourself playing, or reading, or spending time with people, or something else?

The binoculars make another swivel, and they point into the future. You can see yourself going to school again in September. You can see yourself arriving into school on the first day of term, and later getting home at the end of the day. How does it feel to see yourself getting ready for the next year? What are you excited about? What are you worried about? The binoculars zone in on the people who you want to be there helping you - who are they? What are they doing?

Finally the binoculars move one last time, to the important moment that you most hope will happen over the next year. What do you see? Who is there? What is happening? What do grown ups need to do to make that moment possible?

The binoculars suddenly fade to nothing, and you can see the neighbourhood exactly as it is right now. The same houses, the same trees, the same streets. You put the binoculars down, and take a moment to sit back in the comfy chair, thinking about what you have seen.

You wiggle your toes to check they're still there. You wiggle your fingers. You stretch out your arms. You stretch out through your whole body.

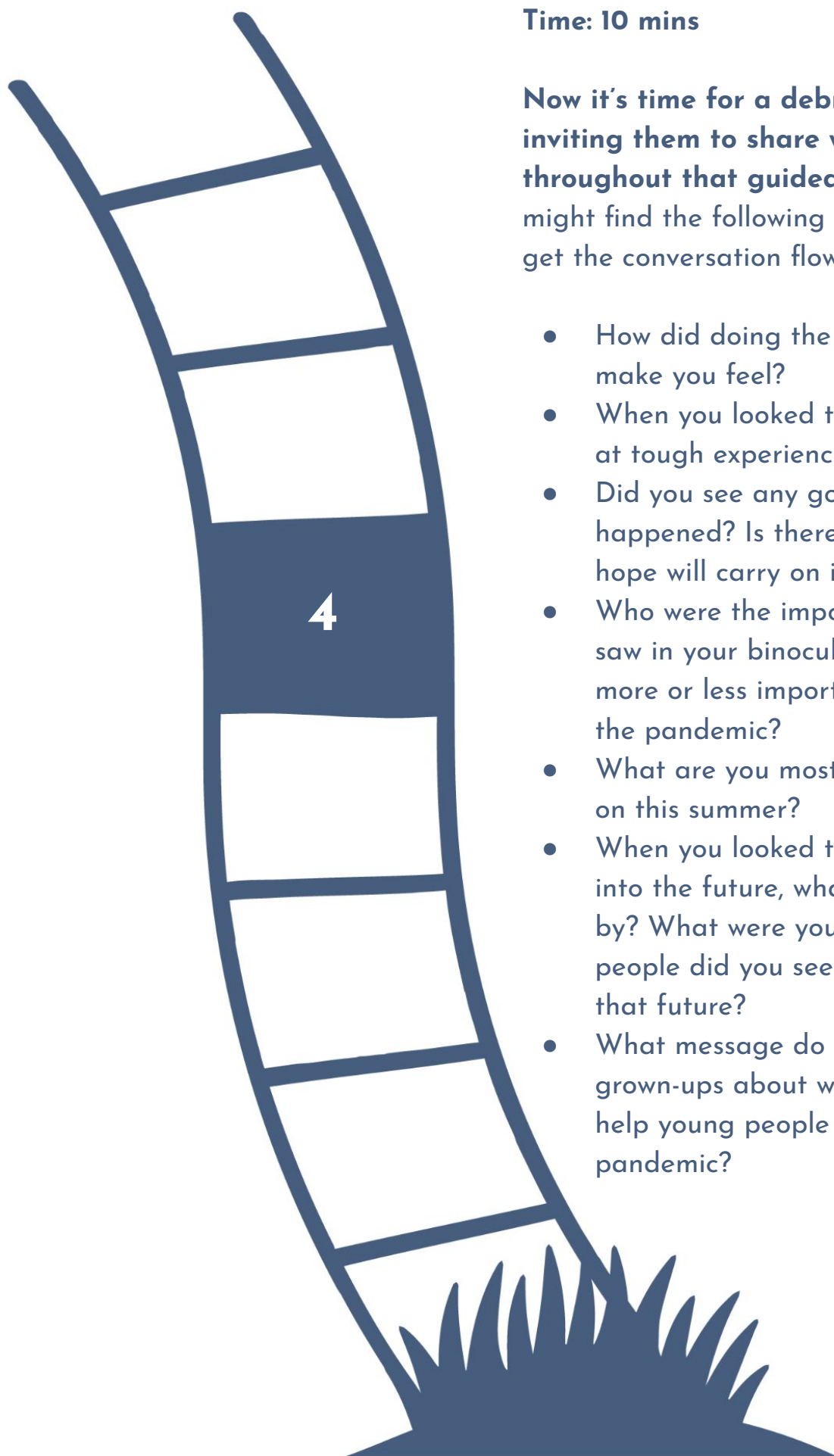
As you get ready to climb down the Lookout tower, you see an invitation. It's from a group of adults who can help affect young people's lives, who want to understand what you saw through the binoculars. They want to understand your thoughts, feelings and experiences so they can make sure the next year is a good one for everyone. That's what we'll try to do now.

Step 4 - Debrief

Time: 10 mins

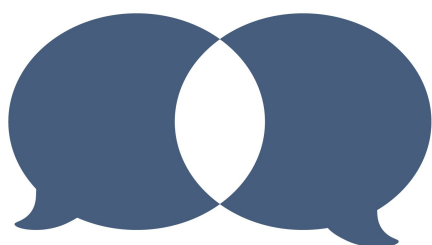
Now it's time for a debrief with your group, inviting them to share what they saw throughout that guided reflection. You might find the following questions helpful to get the conversation flowing:

- How did doing the Lookout activity make you feel?
- When you looked through the binoculars at tough experiences, what did you see?
- Did you see any good things that have happened? Is there anything that you hope will carry on into the future?
- Who were the important people who you saw in your binoculars? Who has become more or less important in your life since the pandemic?
- What are you most hoping to spend time on this summer?
- When you looked through the binoculars into the future, what were you excited by? What were you worried about? What people did you see as being important in that future?
- What message do you want to send to grown-ups about what is important to help young people recover from the pandemic?



If you are willing and able to record this conversation, we would love to see / hear it and to include the themes that come up in our reporting. All recordings will be treated in accordance with our safeguarding policy, and will be deleted once the project has been completed, but please make sure you have the relevant permissions before sharing.

Here are some extra ideas you could try as part of this activity:



Pairs and shares:

Young people discuss their ideas in pairs before feeding back to the group



Stop and jot:

Young people have a few moments before and/or after a discussion to write down what they saw during the meditation, or in response to our questions

Draw it out:

Young people use a pen and a very large piece of paper / papers stuck together to draw around the outlines of each other (if appropriate in your setting). You can then give the young people prompts to write and draw in response to the discussion themes, considering what's on the inside (thoughts and feelings), and on the outside (experiences and events).



Step 5 - Reporting

Time: 15 mins

Now that you've fully debriefed, it's time to report to the Chief Listeners.

There are a few different ways you could do this (see the next page for some suggestions). Please select the option that works best for your group.

Whichever option you go for, please use the [Group Lookout submission form](https://relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#share-what-you-see) on the website to report back (<https://relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#share-what-you-see>).

Via the form you can share submissions in all range of formats: photos, videos, writing, audio, artwork. Please share all of your group's submissions via one form. You must have consent from the parents / guardians of each member of the group before doing so. For guidance on this, head to page 18.

5



There are lots of different ways your group could share back to our Chief Listeners. Feel free to get creative as you like!

Your young people might want to work individually, in pairs or as a whole group. However you share back, please make sure everyone has the chance to contribute and make their voice heard.

You might want to try one of these activities to share back:

Postcards: Young people could fill in the postcards at the end of this Handbook. You could then take photos of these and upload them via the form

Storyboard: Young people could make a storyboard of themselves through the last year, developing a film / play about their feelings and experiences over time and upload it

Interviews: Young people could interview each other (on film if they like) about each other's answers to the key questions. You could audio record the interviews and share them via the form

Letter to the Listeners: Confident writers could write letters directly to the Chief Listeners about the ideas that they thought about during the activity and share these via the form

Contributions to the Lookout are welcome in any format. Whilst you don't need to check any ideas with us, we're on hand if you'd like to talk through your ideas. You can find us at hello@relationshipsproject.org

Please remember to share your group's work - whatever format it's in - via the Group Lookout submission form at www.relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#share-what-you-see

Step 6 - Signing Off

Time: 5 mins

That's it! Please thank your group for taking part in the Lookout.

We hope everyone found it a fun and useful activity. We'll be sure to share your submissions with our Chief Listeners and share back with you their response. We'll also be drawing together the key themes that come out of the Lookout and share them on our website: relationshipsproject.org/the-lookout

If the Lookout has raised any themes which have upset any members of your group, please follow up with them and support in the best way you see fit. Our Safeguarding guidance (p17) includes some suggestions.

6



Our aim is to give you a structure for creating a safe and supportive environment for young people to discuss their experiences, thoughts and feelings - including positive ones. However we know that many young people may have had difficult or traumatic experiences over the last year. Some young people might find the activities in this pack upsetting, or they might bring up issues which require professional intervention. **We therefore strongly recommend that you review all resources before using them, and tailor them to your group given your knowledge of the individuals and their circumstances.**

You should always ensure that you have safeguarding policies in place in order to follow up on any concerns raised by young people in Lookout sessions.

You can find our full safeguarding policy on our website (relationshipsproject.org/the-lookout) or [here](#).

If you find that young people in your group need extra support, here are some organisations who can help:

- **Childline:** If a child needs advice or just wants to talk, they can call this helpline: **0800 1111** (calls are confidential and free). Visit their website to find out more: www.childline.org.uk
- **Young Minds:** Young Minds helps children and young people to cope with difficult feelings - the website has lots of useful information and you can also call them on: **020 7336 8445** (local rates) www.youngminds.org.uk
- **The Samaritans:** The Samaritans provides confidential support for anyone feeling low or in distress. Call them 24 hours a day on their Helpline: **08457 909090** (local rates). Visit their website to find out more: www.samaritans.org
- **NSPCC:** If you're worried about a child's safety or welfare or if you need help or advice, call this helpline: **0808 800 5000** (calls are confidential and free) This NSPCC number is for anyone who's at risk or is worried about any other children who are at risk. Visit their website to find out more: www.nspcc.org.uk
- **CEOP:** If you're worried about online abuse or the way someone has been communicating online, let CEOP know. Visit their website for further information: www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
- **UK Safer Internet Centre:** Find e-safety tips, advice and resources to stay safe online. Visit their website: www.saferinternet.org.uk

Please make sure that you have parental permission before sending us any photos or videos. If your group is submitting their reports online, the form will ask them and their parents for their consent. If you are sharing reports on behalf of your group, please make sure you have sought parental permission yourself. You can find a template letter for parents to adjust to your setting [here](#).

We need to collect personal details of parents and young people so we can contact them if we would like to ask their permission to use anything they submit publicly, or if we are worried about them and need to get in touch. Personal data will be deleted at the end of the project (end of September 2021) and will only be accessible to a small group of trained, DBS-checked adults. Please see our [data protection policy](#) for more details.

As long as parental permission has been received from any young people featured, we are happy to receive submissions to the Lookout in any format. As the main output of the Lookout is a report written by adults, the vast majority of material will not be directly published either online or in print. We may ask for explicit permission to use specific quotes or images, in which case we will write to parents and young people to confirm written consent.



Checklist

- ☐ Have you shared the young people's contributions with us via the Group Lookout form at www.relationshipsproject.org/covidrelationships/the-lookout/#share-what-you-see?
- ☐ Would you be interested in arranging a facilitated online conversation for the young people you work with and the Lookout team to explore these themes in more detail? If so, please get in touch: hello@relationshipsproject.org
- ☐ Would you be interested in contributing to an adult Lookout, hearing the perspectives of play leaders / youth workers / teachers who are working directly with young people? Again, please get in touch: hello@relationshipsproject.org
- ☐ Do you have any feedback on these resources or the project in general? Please share them with us (we're always keen to improve!) hello@relationshipsproject.org

**We'd love to hear from you on any of the above.
Thank you so much for taking part in this.**



Many thanks for your contribution to the Lookout, and for supporting young people in sharing their experiences. We are working to make sure that their insights reach the people who need to hear them, and that our recovery from Covid takes into account the needs of young people.

To stay in touch with the Relationships Project, do follow us on Twitter (@RShips_Project) or join our newsletter (www.relationshipsproject.org)

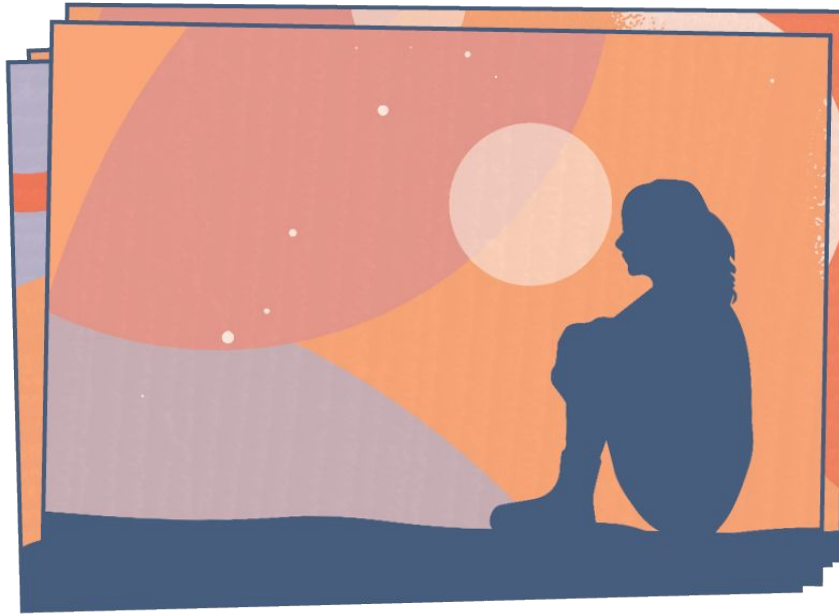


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Q1: Who has helped you through this year and how?



Q2. What things have you found hardest over the last year, and what would make it better?



Q3. What good things have happened over the past year?



Q4. What do you most want to do this year? Why does that matter to you?