



BILLIE JEAN HARRIS

AGE: 16 years old FROM: England - North West

“Social action is important because this is our world too and the future belongs to us all. Young people don’t want to be ‘done to’. We want to ‘do with’.”

By volunteering at my local food bank, I’ve learned the extent of isolation and poverty in my community and how they affect every area of people’s lives. The way we work doesn’t just stop our neighbours from going hungry, it also instils a sense of hope and dignity.

I’ve been a volunteer at the Raft food bank in Rossendale since I was ten. I started by helping to pack parcels and now I collect, sort, pack and deliver food donations. I’ve also helped organise Christmas parties for families that access the food bank.

Alongside this, I’ve worked on the fundraising side, organising raffles and community tombola stalls, creating posters and taking part in sponsored activities.

Having just completed my GCSEs, I’m now a member of the food bank’s first Holiday Hunger project. This aims to fill the gap created in the holidays for families whose children receive free school meals in term time.

My concern about the impact of food poverty has led to me beginning to network with and support other groups that are working on similar areas. For example, I plan to join the Darwen Gets Hangry campaign as one of 100 young people who will visit the Houses of Parliament to raise awareness of the effects of food poverty on children and young people.

I’m also hoping to start a Just Change Campaign in Rossendale to call for equal treatment for pupils who receive free school meals.

Looking ahead, in July, I’ll finish my National Citizen Service programme and will then complete my Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. In September, I’ll attend the Labour conference as a youth delegate.

I’ve recently started digital campaigning on climate concerns, so that will be an increasing focus, as well as my ongoing work on food poverty and homelessness.

ORGANISATIONS I’VE WORKED WITH

THE RAFT FOUNDATION, DARWEN GETS HANGRY, NCS

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

CONFIDENCE, COMMUNICATION, RESILIENCE, PERSEVERANCE AND DETERMINATION, COMMUNITY AWARENESS, SOCIAL JUSTICE

