

EMPOWHER

Social Action Toolkit

for Young People

EMPOWHER

Delivered by

UK YOUTH

In partnership with

+ British Red Cross



Funded in partnership by



Welcome



Welcome to this social action toolkit, whether you've done social action before or never even heard of it, we hope this will help you have a positive impact in your community. We have created this resource following on from the EmpowHER Project. Watch **this video** to find out what EmpowHER was all about!



There are so many amazing social action opportunities that it can sometimes feel overwhelming to know where to start. This resource aims to break down the process so that young people can be empowered to initiate change at the heart of their communities. In here, you will find examples of impactful and effective EmpowHER projects to inspire your very own social action project! The project ran from 2018-2021 so there are loads of examples to motivate you. In addition, this resource hopes to equip you with the tools to be able to design a social action initiative from scratch, specific to your passions and concerns.

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What is social action?



Social action is the practice of taking action to make positive change. You might recognise **volunteering**, **campaigning** or **fundraising** as common social action activities, but it is important to remember that there is **no one way** to carry out social action! This resource is a guide, not a rulebook. Whether you're sporty, creative, confident or shy; whether you prefer volunteering, advocating, fundraising or learning - everyone and everything has a place in social action!

Throughout EmpowHER, we have championed the **double benefit** of social action – not only is social action great for communities and its beneficiaries, it also improves the wellbeing and reduces the limiting perceptions of those who participate. So, if you want to help your community, tackle an important social issue, learn skills and gain confidence, it's time to start devising a plan of (social) action!

Research suggests that, for social action to be high-quality, it should abide by these principles:



Reflective: take time to reflect on what you've learnt



Embedded: make action accessible and link up with existing groups



Youth-led: have young people at the forefront of decision-making and developing ideas



Challenging: set your ambitions high



Progressive: include other opportunities and have scope for continuation



Socially impactful: have a clear social purpose and ethos

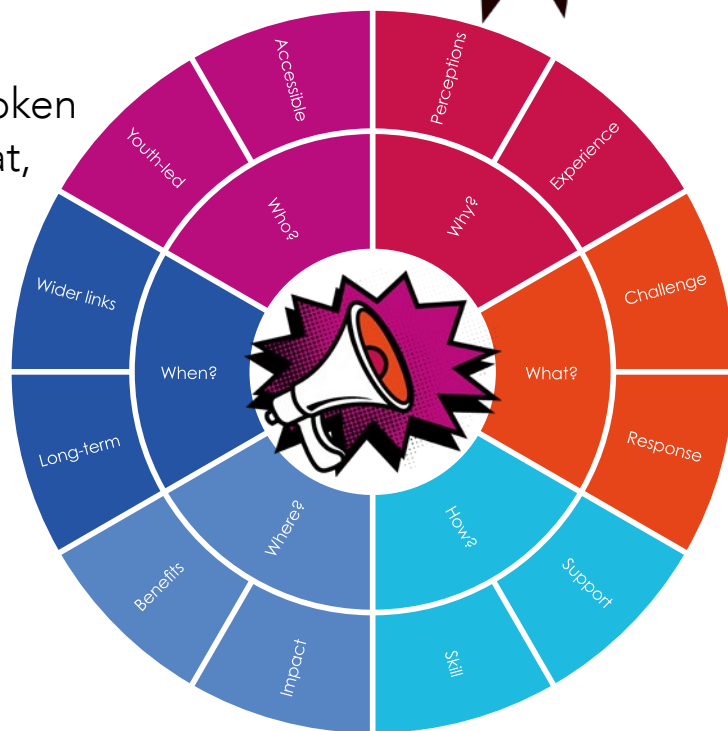


What does social action mean to you? In the EmpowHER Quilt project, New Routes decided to create digital patches rather than sewn patches - they thought that sewing would be too stereotypically feminine. Other groups, on the other hand, embraced the idea of embroidery. Both approaches created beautiful patches which celebrated what it means to be a woman in 2021. These differences only increased the creativity and impact of the final project!

Where to begin



The process of social action can be broken down into six questions: who, why, what, how, where and when? Once these factors have been addressed, you will be well on your way to delivering a high-quality social action project!



Please see Appendix for a text-only version

Who...

Who would you like to engage in your social action project? Using the principles of social action being **youth-led** and **embedded**, how can you make your project empowering and accessible for young people? Which young people will find the experience rewarding? Who in your community needs support?

The EmpowHER handbook expands on who might benefit the most from taking part in social action.

Young women at the JCA School found common ground in their experiences of womanhood, whilst a different group of Year 6s at Allesley Hall were all experiencing transitions and puberty. Both groups decided to orientate their projects around these shared issues and carried out highly impactful and relevant social action!

Why...

Why would you like to be involved with social action? Perhaps there are shared experiences that you and your group can reflect on, an issue you have noticed in your community or a cause that you have been personally affected by. Having a strong reason 'why' will increase the extent to which your project can be **socially impactful**. Take a look at **what young people have to say** about how taking part in social action benefitted them.

Developing a plan



What...

Now you've identified why you want to take part in social action, can you identify a specific challenge that needs addressing? If you want to learn about challenges in our society, the [UK Youth EmpowHER Toolkit](#) is a great place to start. What could be a potential solution? You could focus on education, advocacy, fundraising, kindness and community – check out [this quiz](#) to see which function might suit you best! Have a think about where in the community you can add value and what skills and experiences you have to offer. These decisions can be what make your social action project truly **challenging!**

Here are some topics that EmpowHER groups explored!

Positivity

Disability

Confidence

Body Image

Key Workers

Sexual Health

Elderly people

COVID-19

Identity

LGBTQ+ Rights

Racism

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Refugees

Animal Welfare

First Aid

Poverty

Homelessness

Environment & Climate Change

Harassment

Community Spaces

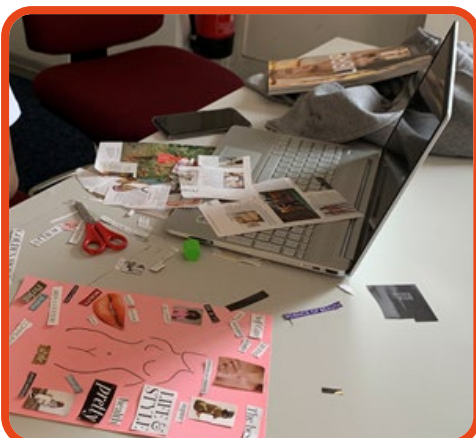
Carers

Media

Period Poverty

Loneliness

Women's Rights



BE-UNIQ realised they could add value and have meaningful social impact by tackling issues that weren't taught in school and including them in their magazine. In another instance, the group at Young Somerset researched whether schools offered free period products, then campaigned and raised awareness about period poverty. You can use the beginning of the letter written by young women and girls in the Young Somerset EmpowHER group to inspire your own:

Continued

Developing a plan



"To whom it may concern,

I wanted to get in touch to see if you had signed up for the Department for Education's free period products scheme, which is available for all state-maintained schools and colleges in England? Many girls struggle to get access to the products they need when they need them, a percentage of girls miss schools due to periods. This can disproportionately affect girls from families who are already struggling....

.... It's vital that eligible institutions sign up to make the most of the resources available – and to show girls and other students who menstruate that they matter and their needs will be met....

Please consider getting involved in this scheme.

Yours,"

How...

Once you have an idea, putting it into action can seem daunting. However, you are not alone. Access support and develop relationships – who can you contact for advice? Are there any Role Models related to the particular cause you have chosen? Where can you source funding or how can you fundraise to support your project? If you think you need a particular skill for your project, check out this online

Skills Builder Framework

Some steps to get you started:

Funding

Contact companies for donations and host fundraising events to engage community support. The Henderson Trust contacted companies when making pamper boxes for key workers to increase the number of items they could include. Think about how to improve and upsell what you already have!

Role Models

Reach out – there are so many people willing to help! When doing a reproductive rights project, Positive Youth Foundation skyped an Irish woman who was involved in the 'Repeal the 8th movement' to gain valuable insight from her experiences. To find and connect with available Role Models, contact LouiseCrowe@redcross.org.uk.

Access Support & Advice

It's impossible to know everything about your chosen cause, so don't be afraid to get help. When making rucksacks for the homeless, a group in West Essex worked with the charity 'Streets2Homes' to decide what was most useful to include in the rucksacks. This made their project even more effective!

Work Together

Share your skills and experiences amongst your friends and peers. In an anti-racism campaign, an all-white group in Wigan Youth Zone consulted with EmpowHER Ambassador and race advocate Macie Myers to create the most impactful posters. The teamwork and advice truly paid off!

Where...

Social action occurs on many different scales – locally, nationally and internationally. Deciding where to direct your social action project will affect its impact and influence, as not everyone is equally affected by the same issues. Where will the benefits be greatest and who might benefit the most? Where will you be able to create change? Don't feel limited to your immediate surroundings!

Who might need your help?

A UCO Mental Health campaign noticed that many young people didn't have access to appropriate Arts & Crafts or Baking equipment, leaving them unable to take part in relaxing activities. As a result, the UCO group prioritised providing these supplies to those in need, so that more people could benefit from the relaxation techniques. A group at Hartpury College thought that their male peers would benefit from learning about the social issues that are covered in EmpowHER, so created EmpowTHEM to share their knowledge and awareness. By streamlining where to direct their social action, these groups made a meaningful difference!

When...

High-quality social action should be **progressive** and **reflective**, meaning there is no restricted timeline when carrying out a social action project – let it evolve! For its launch, you could sync it with events happening in broader society (e.g. International Women's Day) or simply go ahead as soon as you feel confident to. Once your project is up and running, how can you facilitate long-term engagement? What can you reflect on to evaluate how you might adapt the project in future?

Lots of social action projects have been able to broaden their reach by using social media. Groups have spread awareness about first aid, spread kindness on TikTok (check out PositivityCheck2021) and created long-term campaigns on social media (see [@wechangeadversity](#) on Instagram). Other groups focused more heavily on making change in community spaces, connecting with local residents and organisations. During the pandemic, many of our **amazing projects** were adapted to be socially distanced or online!

Where is there a gap?

Participants of the EmpowHER legacy programme 'Youth Act on Climate' were outraged that they had to take part in a course outside of school to learn about important climate and environmental issues. It got them thinking about the lack of climate education in school, so they decided to launch a campaign to **get climate change on the curriculum**. They're looking to work with **Teach the Future** to make climate change part of our compulsory education!



Stroud Valley Primary School's Refugee Support project sustained longer-term links through five girls who remained pen pals with young female refugees. The group also set up an ongoing collection point in the school for essential items needed by refugees. When the needs change, the project can now adapt with it!

Bringing projects to life

EmpowHER groups have come up with some brilliant ideas and put them into action which have made a meaningful impact to both their community and their own wellbeing. In these projects, they have been able to:



EDUCATE - Education is fundamental to social action. It is important to educate both yourself and others!

Host & attend workshops

Numerous EmpowHER groups attended British Red Cross Workshops in order to learn and share life-saving skills. These are free for groups of young people under 19! Sign up to **digital workshops** to learn about topics such as empathy and migration, first aid and coping with challenges. You can also **download** and share the British Red Cross app!



Listen to speakers

Everyone is different so we can all learn from and be inspired by each other! Metamorphosisters assembled a panel of female Role Models at the Change Festival to explore values of womanhood from different perspectives, broadening horizons and providing valuable insight.

Create resources

Whether it's posters, booklets, podcasts or videos, get creative and make informative resources! Some fantastic examples have been InUnity's posters on sexual harassment and the 'Perieducate' campaign about period poverty. Check out **UK Youth's poster templates** if you want more guidance.

Research

Research is so important to be able to identify challenges in the community. You can even do this from the comfort of your own home! **Missingmaps** is a forum where you can contribute to much-needed data that will help direct resources to the world's most vulnerable. **Zooniverse** is another platform for people-powered research that wouldn't be possible without volunteers.

Bringing projects to life



ADVOCATE - Share your story and the stories of others. Feel free to get creative and experiment on different platforms!

Social media

Many people assume that social media is just for fun, but it can also be an **amazing tool for advocacy**. Pick a topic that's close to your heart and develop your own social media campaign! If you don't want to go public, you could share your creations within your own social circles. **Infobuzz's affirmations video** spread positivity and kindness to their school, local hospital and community!

Speak out

Feel EmpowHERed to make your voice heard. You could set up a stall, organise an event or write letters to important members in your community. A group in Chorley decided to host a stall to raise awareness about LGBTQ+ and wrote to the CEO of Inspire Chorley to request a Pride mural. At President Kennedy School, there were so many passions that the group decided to host a collective event which covered multiple issues over **various stalls**.

Express yourself

Think of a creative way to get your message across. Whether it's creating a zine, choreographing a dance, writing a song or getting crafty, you can create a very powerful message. The EmpowHER Quilt (inspired by the **Changi Quilt**) proves that it is possible to advocate for what it means to be a woman in an innovative and creative way! If you want to create something similar, check out **these video tutorials** on making patches.



Bringing projects to life



FUNDRAISE - You can support existing charities by fundraising for and raising awareness about their work!

Get active

Take part in a sporting challenge and ask people to sponsor you. Young People Cornwall raised money for the Samaritans by walking/cycling/running an incredible 28 miles each in one week! You could also encourage others to take part, such as through the **#see10do10 challenge**. When you complete it, tag others on social media to do the same!

Upsell & upskill

Everyone's got niche talents, and this could be an opportunity to raise money with yours! Through platforms like Zoom, YouTube or Google Hangouts you could share and teach your skill in return for donations that go towards your chosen cause. You could also upsell existing items – Wigan Youth Zone successfully raised money for **WWF** by **tie-dying** a selection of tote bags and adding quotes and images of endangered animals.



Run games

People might be more likely to donate if they also have a chance of winning a prize, so why not run a game? Examples of great initiatives have been an online gaming marathon ('Operation COVID-19'), a '**Name the Sloth**' stall, quizzes and community talent shows. You could require an entry fee and find a way to reward the winners. Be imaginative with the prizes – you could offer to do their errands for a week, cook them a meal or ask companies whether they could donate a voucher!



Bringing projects to life



SPREAD KINDNESS – The Power of Kindness underpins work at the British Red Cross, as small acts of kindness and ‘paying them forward’ can truly be life-changing

Spread kindness regularly

Download this [Kindness Calendar](#) to remind you to spread kindness often. You can fill it with things like chatting to someone lonely, cooking a meal or sharing a positive quote. You could also create a Kindness Diary, where each day you produce something creative to express yourself. Whether it’s painting a picture, doing [origami](#), [knitting](#), using [chalk to decorate](#) pavements or writing a poem, these creations will be uplifting and can be shared with your community!

Demonstrate care

Show somebody you are thinking about them by creating a personal care package. You can include items that are specific to what they might want or need, such as large-print wordsearches for the elderly or vital hygiene products for the homeless. If you’re not sure where to start, see if you can find local [beauty banks](#), [food banks](#) or [baby banks](#) to help at. You could also improve existing items, such as making face masks more comfortable for key workers through this handy [button band tutorial](#)!



Connect

Connection is key to kindness. What you might not realise is that there are ways to connect without even talking! You could write [positive affirmations](#) on pavements, draw rainbows or quotes and put them up in your window, paint rocks and help develop a community space. BBA School created ‘[pockets of peace](#)’ in school, whilst Gastrells Primary School planted and decorated a memorial tree to commemorate those lost to COVID-19 and offer their sympathies. These became spaces that many people could visit and feel calm.



Bringing projects to life



BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER - Connecting local communities can have fantastic social and emotional benefits. You can check out existing local projects on [Neighbourly](#) or start one of your own!

Build relationships

Become Pen Pals with a member of your local community – you could send cards, artwork or letters. Students at Chalford Primary School wrote to the elderly in care homes and other groups have formed friendships with refugees. Inspired by the British Red Cross' **Christmas Card** campaign, you could also send cards to vulnerable and lonely people on special occasions.

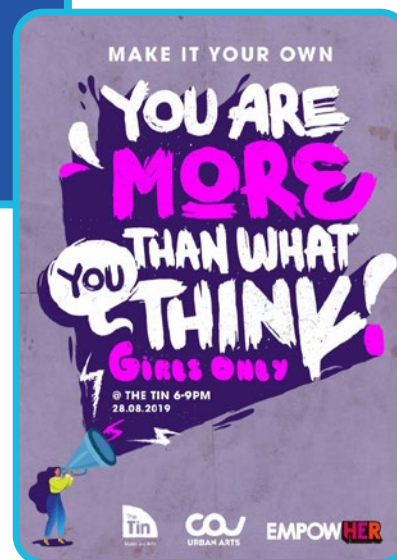


Organise an event

Create an opportunity for people in the community to spend quality time together. New Routes organised a Community Festival, Care Coventry put together a safe '**Girls Night**' for those in care and Wigan Youth Zone performed a socially distanced carol concert. No matter how big or small, it will boost community morale!

Share a project

Unite people through a shared project. Integrate UK created a community cookbook with BBA School to celebrate the diversity in their community, whilst Team GB X British Red Cross' '**Isolation Games**' proved that it's possible to connect with people from further afield by taking part in a challenge together. You could collectively regenerate a **local garden spot**, paint a mural or do a community photoshoot – whatever makes you excited!



What's next?



Hopefully you're feeling inspired and ready to plan out your own social action project! So, without further ado, let's get started! What will your next steps be? Feel free to fill in this template, check out [UK Youth's template](#) or make your own. If you want more detail about the process of social action, dive into [UK Youth's EmpowHER toolkit](#). We look forward to seeing what you come up with - keep us in the loop by tagging the British Red Cross or using #EmpowHERLegacy to share your projects. Good luck!

I'm going to join.....social action group!

I'm going to follow.....to educate myself
about.....

I want to get involved in social action because.....
.....

I have noticed.....
.....in my community, which needs to change!

I think.....
.....could help solve this problem.

I am going to reach out to.....
.....for help!

I think.....
.....will benefit the most from this project.

I'll make it long-term by.....
.....

Throughout the process, I'll look after my wellbeing by.....
.....

Appendix



Who?	Youth-led
	Accessible
Why?	Perceptions
	Experience
What?	Challenge
	Response
How?	Support
	Skill
Where?	Impact
	Benefits
When?	Long-term
	Wider links

BritishRedCross

British Red Cross

44 Moorfields
London, EC2Y 9AL

Email: contactus@redcross.org.uk

Website: redcross.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 196 3651 (for help during the coronavirus pandemic),
0344 871 11 11 (for everything else)

Registered charity number: England and Wales (220949),
Scotland (SC037738), Isle of Man (0752) and Jersey (430)

Socials:



UK YOUTH

UK Youth London Office

Kings Building
16 Smith Square
London, SW1P 3HQ

Avon Tyrrell Outdoor Activity Centre
Bransgore
Hampshire, BH23 8EE

Email: events@ukyouth.org

Website: www.ukyouth.org

Telephone: 0203 1373 810

Registered Charity Number: 1110590

Socials:

