



Five Ways to Embed Youth Social Action

September 2018



empowering more young people to play their part



Context - the #iwill campaign

The #iwill campaign’s collective goal is to make participation in meaningful social action the norm for 10-20 year olds across the UK by 2020. The #iwill campaign aims to inspire and empower leaders from across society to enable every young person to take part in social action that helps others as well as their own development, creating a habit for life. The #iwill campaign was launched in 2013 by HRH The Prince of Wales and the three party leaders. It continues to maintain cross-party support.

Over 875 organisations have already given substantive pledges of support towards the campaign’s goal. For more information visit: www.iwill.org.uk. The campaign’s definition of youth social action (YSA) is: Young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change.

There are lots of organisations already taking a leadership role on embedding YSA across the UK. We hope you will find this document helpful, which uses learnings and examples from #iwill partners to show the many ways you can successfully embed social action in a variety of settings.

What has the campaign learnt to date?

Young people from low-income households are less likely to participate in meaningful YSA	The appetite for social action remains strong: the majority of young people (58%) have taken part in some form of social action over the last 12 months, and 68% say they are likely to take part in the future. ¹ Currently 4 in 10 young people participate in meaningful social action – but participation rates have remained the same since 2014. There has been a persistent gap in meaningful social action participation between young people from the most and least affluent backgrounds (51% vs. 32% in 2017, similar to the gap found in the baseline survey in 2014, which was 51% vs. 31%).
Young people who take part in YSA report higher levels of wellbeing	Participation in youth social action is associated with higher life satisfaction: 8.4 out of 10 for those taking part in meaningful social action versus 7.8 for those who never participated. This difference is similar to the difference between adults who report ‘fair’ and those who report ‘good’ health. ² Social action is also associated with and reduced anxiety. ³
The earlier you participate in YSA, the more likely it is to become a habit	Those who first get involved in service to others under age 10 were found to be more than two times more likely to have formed a habit of social action than if they started aged 16-18 years. ⁴

¹ Ipsos MORI (2017). *National Youth Social Action Survey*
² Ibid.
³ Behavioural Insights Team (2016). *Evaluating Youth Social Action*
⁴ The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (2017). *A Habit of Service*



<p>High quality social action is more likely to benefit young people and their communities</p>	<p>After consultation with many organisations across the youth, voluntary, education, business and faith communities, the Cabinet Office, The Young Foundation and Institute of Voluntary Research produced a report identifying six quality principles (youth-led, socially impactful, challenging, embedded, progressive and reflective).</p> <p>In 2016 the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) conducted Randomised Controlled Trials (RCT) of several social action programmes that embed these quality principles and showed that young people who participated saw robust improvements in character qualities like empathy, cooperation, resilience, problem-solving and sense of community⁵. Youth social action can encourage social integration⁶ and the Thirteen steps to tackle social segregation by the Social Integration Commission showed that a lack of integration costs our economy £6 billion, or approximately 0.5% of GDP, each year.</p>
<p>Young people are more likely to participate in YSA if it is part of their school’s culture and practice</p>	<p>In 2017, 65% of young people doing social action got involved through school or college, moreover teachers are the biggest motivator for young people from the least affluent families.⁷ Primary and Secondary school teachers increasingly see social action as part of their school’s culture and practice (34% in 2015 vs. 59% in 2017), but fewer than 25% say over half their students participate regularly⁸.</p>

Embedding youth social action checklist

In order to secure the legacy of the #iwill campaign beyond 2020, it is critical that a wide range of organisations integrate YSA into their ways of working and consider how they can work with young people as partners. You can use the checklist below to identify activities that will support your organisation to prioritise, measure and celebrate youth social action. For more information on the examples given below, please email hello@stepuptoserve.org.uk.

Five ways to embed youth social action

1. Prioritising the growth of quality as well as scale and reach of YSA opportunities
2. Measuring quality, scale, reach and impact of YSA
3. Developing sustainable partnerships
4. Promoting and celebrating young people
5. Empowering young people into leadership roles

⁵ Behavioural Insights Team (2016) *Evaluating Youth Social Action*
⁶ Kingdom United? (2015), *Social Integration Commission*
⁷ Ipsos Mori (2017). *National Youth Social Action Survey*
⁸ National Foundation for Educational Research (2017). *Teacher Voice Omnibus*



Theme	Activities to consider	Who's doing this well?
Prioritising the growth of quality, scale and reach of YSA opportunities	Explicitly reference supporting youth social action within key organisational strategies or policies	Defra have committed to supporting youth social action, as part of their 25 year plan to improve the environment Generation Change impact accelerator that supports organisations that deliver youth social action to measure and improve their outcomes in a rigorous way. Green schools project help schools run environment social action projects for the whole school
	Develop a plan to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the quality of YSA opportunities your organisation provides engage more young people from low-income backgrounds to participate in YSA engage younger age groups to participate in YSA 	
	Stipulate support for YSA within your procurement requirements	
	Incorporate YSA into your existing curriculum/ programmes/ calendar of activities or for young people	
Measuring quality, scale, reach and impact of YSA	Number of quality YSA opportunities provided	The evaluations of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund shows the impact of reaching those from low income backgrounds
	Proportion of opportunities that meet six principles of high quality YSA	
	Proportion of young people from low-income backgrounds engaging in those opportunities	Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital engage those aged 10-16
	Proportion of younger people (e.g. below 14) engaging in those opportunities	The NHS Forum Youth Impact report shows the impact of YSA on young people and on the NHS The EEF toolkit shows the impact of youth social action on essential life skills which was supported in RCTs led by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) of the youth social action programmes Children's University and Youth United.
	Impact of YSA on the young people participating (e.g. social mobility, attainment etc.)	
	Impact of YSA on their communities	



Theme	Activities to consider	Who's doing this well?
Developing sustainable partnerships	Collaboration with education partners to embed YSA activities where young people already are	<p>Scouts and NCS partnership to enhance current opportunities and reach more disadvantaged areas.</p> <p>Investment from Virgin Money Foundation and Pears Foundation to offer grants to organisations</p> <p>The #iwill Fund has enabled growth of YSA opportunities as well as helping funders collaborate together.</p>
	Collaboration with uniformed and youth organisations to grow the scale and reach of YSA opportunities	
	Closer collaboration with #iwill campaign partners to promote, celebrate and grow YSA	
	Collaboration with or between funders to support YSA	
	Exploration of whether your organisation can fund others to grow YSA	
Promoting and celebrating young people	Develop case studies illustrating the impact of young volunteers	<p>Points of Light is where the Prime Minister recognises outstanding volunteers daily</p> <p>NHS Youth Forum regularly take over the NHS England Twitter and Facebook accounts to share the impact young people can make in improving the NHS</p> <p>Fixers are a great example focused on young people using media to engage in social action and encourage others to get involved</p> <p>The Diana Award is an accolade for 9-18 year old's to receive for taking part in social action</p>
	Have your own young ambassador programme, so that young people can act as role models to their peers and promote YSA	
	Recognise the impact of young people through Young Volunteer/ Campaigner/ Fundraiser of the Year awards	
	Support youth 'takeovers' of social media/communication channels so that they can discuss their social action experiences	
	Extend media and speaking opportunities to young people who engage in YSA	
	Explicitly reference your support for YSA/the #iwill campaign on your website	
	References to youth social action within annual reviews and evaluation reports	
	Share your impact during "Share Your Pledge Day" and "#iwill week" by including items in your communications, hosting events to showcase YSA etc.	



Empowering young people into leadership roles	Recruit youth advisors or ambassadors	<p>British Youth Council have only young Trustees on their Board.</p> <p>Step Up To Serve recruit a number of Trustee Board members aged under 25.</p> <p>Young voices are woven into the fabric of decision-making through the Spirit of 2012 Youth Advisory Panel</p> <p>Co-op Foundation have 15 young people on a board who have a say in how the business is run and how they allocate funding</p>
	Recruit young trustees on to your trustee board	
	Create a youth advisory panel or shadow board	
	Invite a young person on to your commissioning and procurement panel	
	Involve young people in decision-making more broadly	

Next Steps

- Pledge or re-pledge to the #iwill campaign, incorporating the activities above
- Showcase and share progress towards embedding youth social action
- Let us know key contacts in your organisations that are responsible for strategy, measurement and evaluation, communications, partnership development, and governance. We'll keep them updated on cross-campaign activity and partners that can support embedding youth social action in those areas.
- Share this checklist with your networks to ensure they are also embedding YSA