

#iwill

**GENERATION
CHANGE**

Raising the Quality of Youth Social Action:

Applying 6 quality principles

Embedded
Reflective
Challenging
Progressive
Youth-Led
Socially impactful

Double benefit



- Individual
- community

 step up to serve



Cabinet Office



Institute for
Volunteering
Research



THE
YOUNG
FOUNDATION
THINKING
ACTION
CHANGE

ncvo





Youth led



Embedded



Socially Impactful



Reflective



Progressive



Challenging



Foreword: promoting participation in meaningful social action

Last year, HRH the Prince of Wales launched Step Up To Serve and the #iwill campaign, setting an ambitious goal to make participation in social action the norm for 10-20 year olds by 2020. This is a remarkable challenge for our nation that calls on contributions from everyone in society to achieve.

The campaign has already received pledges from a diverse range of organisations in the business, education and voluntary sectors that make the goal achievable. The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition pledged their support to the campaign at the launch in November 2013 – a union reminiscent of the Olympic spirit that gripped the country in 2012.

I was delighted to be asked to lend my support having worked to deliver the London Olympic games, an achievement that also required many contributions, and not least the time and passion of 70,000 Games Makers. Our country has a great history of ordinary citizens serving others – and more than ever, young people are ready to take part in making a difference.

Jean Tomlin OBE

Jean is a trustee of Step Up To Serve, and chairs the Data and Quality Assurance working group, bringing a wealth of leadership experience in the public and private sectors. Jean has delivered a series of complex start-up and transformation programmes, most notably being accountable for the mobilisation of the UK's largest peacetime workforce of 200,000, including the world-acclaimed 70,000 Games Makers, for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

There are two components to achieving the goal that will guide the campaign's efforts – firstly, we need to gain a clear picture of the numbers of young people already taking part and have better information about the opportunities available to them. And secondly, we need to clarify what is meant by “high quality” youth social action opportunities – a difficult task, but an important one.

Because this campaign is not just a numbers game. As we drive a shift in the scale of participation from young people, we must ensure that their experiences are high quality, creating genuine impact both for themselves and for their chosen cause or community.

I am enormously grateful to all who have contributed learning and research on the 6 quality principles that underpin the campaign. I am confident that the findings in this report can act as a guide for those who are contributing to our goal, to ensure that all the opportunities that come within our target number are of high quality.



Introduction

This report seeks to offer guidance to all stakeholders who are interested in understanding what high quality youth social action looks like in practice. It has been produced as part of the #iwill campaign, in consultation with groups and organisations across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland that help young people to make positive change in a wide variety of contexts.

#iwill was launched in November 2013 thanks to the leadership of HRH The Prince of Wales and the three main political parties. It aims to make participation in meaningful youth social action the norm for 10-20 year olds across the United Kingdom. The campaign describes this as ‘young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change’. Examples include caring for someone in the community, providing peer support online, volunteering for a charity, campaigning or fundraising.

Part of the campaign’s strategy is to improve understanding of what high quality youth social action looks like in practice, and enable organisations to increase the quality of their opportunities. This will ensure that young people benefit the most from their engagement, and that projects have a meaningful impact in communities.

Generation Change facilitates a partnership of youth social action organisations that together support over 600,000 young people a year to create social change in every part of the UK. Our organisations have united around a shared strategy to improve the quality and recognition of youth social action in the UK. To underpin this partnership, we will create common standards for youth social action programmes, to help identify and recognise the most impactful opportunities for young people and communities.

Background

In the summer of 2012 the Prime Minister announced an independent review into youth social action, conducted by Dame Julia Cleverdon and Amanda Jordan OBE. One of the key recommendations of their interim report *In the Service of Others* was the need for a quality framework to enhance understanding and recognition of youth social action.

The Institute for Volunteering Research (IVR) and The Young Foundation led work to consider how such a quality framework could be created. The review consulted with many organisations across the youth, voluntary, education, business and faith communities, and established a definition and set of 6 principles agreed by all the sectors to underpin quality and meaningful youth social action.

By “youth social action” we mean **practical action undertaken by children and young people in the service of others to create positive change.**

We know that youth social action takes place in a range of contexts and can mean formal or informal activities, in any setting; for example online, extracurricular, in clubs and groups, informally, or as part of structured programmes.

The 6 principles are that social action in all these contexts should be:



We anticipate that youth social action that applies these principles will be able to demonstrate **double benefit outcomes** – benefitting the young person who takes part by developing their skills, character and life opportunities **as well as** creating tangible benefits to a community, cause or social problem.

One of the priorities of the campaign in its first 12 months was to invest time, funding and pledges into unpicking how the quality principles support these outcomes:

- The Cabinet Office and the Education Endowment Foundation invested £11 million in trials, selecting 26 youth social action programmes in two regions of the UK that were applying the principles. Independent evaluation from the trials will build an evidence base on outcomes associated with the quality principles.
- The National Development Team on Inclusion (NDTI) and Pears Foundation facilitated a study into inclusion practices that can support the quality principles. Their findings are incorporated in this guidance. For the full report click [here](#).
- The Jubilee Centre pledged a research associate to develop understanding of the link between youth social action and development of character. For more information click [here](#).
- Generation Change and PWC hosted roundtables with research agencies and #iwill pledge partners to investigate how community outcomes can be identified and measured in youth social action. Findings have led the campaign's strategy for further work in this area in collaboration with Cabinet Office.
- Generation Change and The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP) have scoped a proposal to implement common reporting in youth social action programmes.

Well-managed, meaningful social action adds value to the curriculum

Ofsted has not sought to define social action within its inspection frameworks. In school settings it may be 'active citizenship' with the activities that students engage in part of the citizenship curriculum in whichever form a school chooses to provide it.

Ofsted carried out [a national survey](#) in 2012 on the impact on young people of volunteering. It was clear from the report that many school and college leaders had not realised the extent of volunteering activity taking place within their institution – they were pleasantly surprised. It was also evident that many students were involved in activities beyond school or college and within their communities.

The same report noted the challenge in ensuring that social action and volunteering activities engages those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. For some young people the barriers were related to their disability or special educational need, for others their financial, home or personal circumstances.

We noted that rates of participation for disabled young people were particularly low, although the benefits of such engagement were often very high.

Ofsted is firm in its views that well-managed, meaningful social action has a very positive impact on children and young

people. Inspectors are keen to hear about the added value which social action can bring to the curriculum – and while there is no 'check list', here are a few observations that can support the guidance in this report;

- get the culture right. Where personal development is high on the agenda and social action is embedded, staff and young people talk about it and do it.
- it's the learning which young people accrue as a result of social action that makes the difference. Think about impact and the teacher expertise needed to promote meaningful social action.
- identify and nurture the skills which young people need to shape and take forward their own social action projects.
- a strategy and an overall direction of travel for social action help give it visibility and merit. The best strategies are linked to achievement.
- be creative and fresh in your social action ideas; avoid the trap of doing 'what we did last year'.
- communicate the benefits for students of social action through displays, parent newsletters and the website.

Ensure all young people develop the skills, attitudes and behaviours that they need for success in life and work

In our *First Steps* report, the CBI worked with a range of stakeholders to identify the key attributes that employers look for when recruiting young people. Businesses were clear that while knowledge, skills and qualifications are important – they are only ever a part of the picture.

What really matters are the wider attitudes and behaviours – such as resilience, determination, confidence and creativity. And this is reflected in the results of our annual education and skills survey, which highlights time and time again the importance placed on these wider attributes.

Our report set out why schools should make this a priority, calling for a focus on developing rigorous, rounded and grounded young people who are set up to succeed. Incentivising this through the Ofsted inspection framework, for example, would be one way to help ensure this is a focus in all schools and colleges.

But there is also a wide range of informal and extra-curricular opportunities for young people to develop these life skills and grow as individuals outside of the classroom.

The CBI recognises the positive impact on young people that can be had from taking part in community volunteering and social action – and that is why we have pledged

to support Step Up to Serve and the #iwill campaign.

The chance to make a difference to others and to their community is often what motivates young people to take part in social action, with this enthusiasm creating a volunteering experience which can often be the first opportunity a young person has to work with their peers in a team, to commit themselves to an extended project, to take responsibility and lead – all valuable skills needed in the workplace.

Sometimes – through this wider character development – a young person emerges from such experiences better equipped to face the challenges employment and the world of work. We believe that the best social action opportunities should put in place a conscious framework for supporting these outcomes in young people, building on similar development within the school or college environment.

In the same way that formal education needs a rigorous framework for achieving excellence, we feel that the potential of youth social action is best achieved with a common understanding of what high quality looks like in practice. Importantly, we also believe that the best programmes are those that encourage young people to reflect on and assess their own skills development – as this will help to embed these behaviours in all aspects of life.

We're investing in programmes that apply the quality principles

Cabinet Office is committed to increasing the role of social action in society by investing in social action opportunities, supporting organisations with promising social action initiatives to scale up and become sustainable, and developing the evidence base on the impact of social action-based interventions.

Launched by Cabinet Office in April 2013, the Centre for Social Action is investing up to £40m to support organisations that want to mobilise people to take part in social action. Specifically on youth social action, Cabinet Office is investing up to £21m across three competitive funds for providers to engage young people in social action programmes.

For the launch of the #iwill campaign the Government announced a £5m Youth Social Action Fund, which set up social action trials with providers in two UK regions. As part of the bid criteria, providers were asked to explain how their programmes would meet the six quality principles. These principles have become a core part of the #iwill campaign, recognised by all of their partners and creating a common understanding in the field of youth social action.

Subsequently, Cabinet Office also launched the £6m Youth Social Action Journey Fund, geared towards encouraging young people

to continue their social action journey before or after National Citizen Service (NCS). And most recently, Cabinet Office launched the £10m Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund which is to provide social action opportunities as part of existing uniformed youth group programmes on offer to local communities, and target hard-to-reach groups to ensure opportunities are inclusive for all young people.

In addition to financing opportunities, Cabinet Office is funding independent evaluations of each of the three funds to build the evidence base for double benefit outcomes associated with applying the principles. Cabinet Office will be releasing some of the early findings from the evaluations as part of the first anniversary celebrations of the #iwill campaign.

Using the quality principles and a common outcomes framework allows parallels to be drawn between varied programmes, and to identify knowledge gaps in the field.

Cabinet Office is encouraging organisations to think about incorporating the quality principles and double benefit model into their offer for young people. This framework can support stakeholders to focus on improving their outcomes and will lead to better recognition of what works. Cabinet Office is pleased that this report offers constructive guidance on how schools, charities, voluntary groups and businesses can do this.



The principles are a starting point to critically reflect on outcomes

Arguably volunteering has never been so widely acknowledged by the public and by Parliament, thanks to the successes of the Olympic and Paralympic Games Makers, and the cross-party support for the #iwill campaign.

The #iwill campaign brings together many organisations from across society who celebrate and support young people who are creating social change by volunteering and taking part in social action. This is a positive development, as the value and impact of youth volunteering has lacked the recognition it deserves.

Volunteering by young people has multiple positive impacts for those involved. The young person themselves can experience life-changing benefits and the stories we hear during the course of our research at IVR are frequently inspiring. But it can be all too easy to forget the benefits experienced by the communities these young people seek to help – not least because these can often be harder to measure.

This challenge, and a desire to articulate the holistic benefits of youth social action, was behind work undertaken by IVR, the Young Foundation and Generation Change in 2013 in which we developed the notion of the ‘double benefit’; the young person on one side, and the community on the other.

Both elements of this “win-win” equation are important – and great social action has a logical and tangible link between the young person taking part and the community, cause or social problem.

But we also know that we’re unlikely to witness many of these outcomes if the social action that young people are getting involved in isn’t any good. Our work therefore collaboratively developed six principles of what we and others felt high quality social action should look like. It is vitally important that we use these quality principles as a starting point in the task of understanding – and enhancing – the depth and breadth of the outcomes of youth social action.

Shared principles allow organisations to critically reflect on how to make their offer to young people more inclusive, engaging and impactful. In reality, this will be the start of a journey for many – as the best practices developed by programmes are informed by evaluation and assessment of the outcomes they create.

Using this guidance

The guidance in this report is intended to offer a range of providers of youth social action a useful basis for critically reflecting on their offer for young people. We are only examining the principles, not the outcomes they create, and so few of the practices captured below come with a proven evidence base for how well they achieve the double benefit outcomes. This report is therefore not intended to be definitive, exhaustive or at all prescriptive.

It was produced by collecting detailed input from 63 providers of social action working in a wide range of contexts and regions of the country. Our call for information asked providers to tell us what the principles meant in their context, and to share specific practices they had developed. In addition to this, Generation Change was able to refer to the programme literature from its member organisations, including training documents, handbooks, independent reviews, and staff policies. By this method we feel we have captured a representative reflection on practices in the field which can help others to apply in their own context. Our summary is below.

Summary

Principle	How is your programme...	Do you...	
Embedded	Well integrated into a young person's journey.	Provide clear incentives for beneficiaries and young people to participate and sustain commitment.	
	Well integrated into local communities, services and environments.		
Progressive	Sustained, and developed over time to create lasting impact.		
	Recognising and rewarding achievements to encourage others.		
Youth Led	Giving young people opportunities to take team roles they have not experienced before to organise, lead and represent.		Enable young people to direct activities, with support appropriate to their competencies.
	Driven by the needs, passions, motivations, ideas and goals of young people		
Challenging	Suitable to the starting point of young people by offering an appropriate level of challenge.		
	Ambitious, exciting, innovative, adventurous, fun.		
Socially Impactful	Able to convincingly describe how activities will lead to intended social benefits	Articulate a theory of change that relates outputs to outcomes, and communicate outcomes of the project.	
	Enabling direct contact with people experiencing social problems.		
Reflective	Building awareness, knowledge and understanding.		
	Ensuring that young people are able to articulate the outcomes of their social action project.		

Contexts

We found that the principles are being applied across a wide variety of contexts. From our call for information, we identified some of the contexts below. The categories suggested are not exhaustive and can over-lap.

Digital social action

Taking place online, using digital tools or creating digital solutions to social problems

- vInspired
- Brightside Trust
- Youth Net
- Code Club

Structured programmes

A dedicated social action programme that offers a new opportunity for young people.

- NCS
- City Year
- Envision
- UpRising

Local clubs and services

Community focused groups or organisations specific to a local area.

- Youth Moves
- ERVAS
- Aylesbury Youth Action
- London Youth

Social enterprise

Supporting young people to start their own businesses or ventures for social good.

- UnLtd
- O2 Think Big
- Year Here

Public Services

Putting social action at the heart of public services such as hospitals, schools and councils

- Hospital trusts
- Fire Cadets
- County Councils

Schools and education

Included as part of education including schools, colleges or universities.

- Citizenship Foundation
- Student Hubs
- Academies and schools

Outdoors and active

Taking place in natural places such as parks, rivers and forests.

- Woodcraft folk
- Canal and River Trust
- Wildlife Trusts

Federated organisations

Large organisations with lots of members offering a similar set of experiences.

- The Scouts
- UK Youth
- Citizens UK
- CSV

Training and development

Offer personal development opportunities, training and new skills.

- The Prince's Trust
- Future Foundations
- Essential Skills Training
- UFA

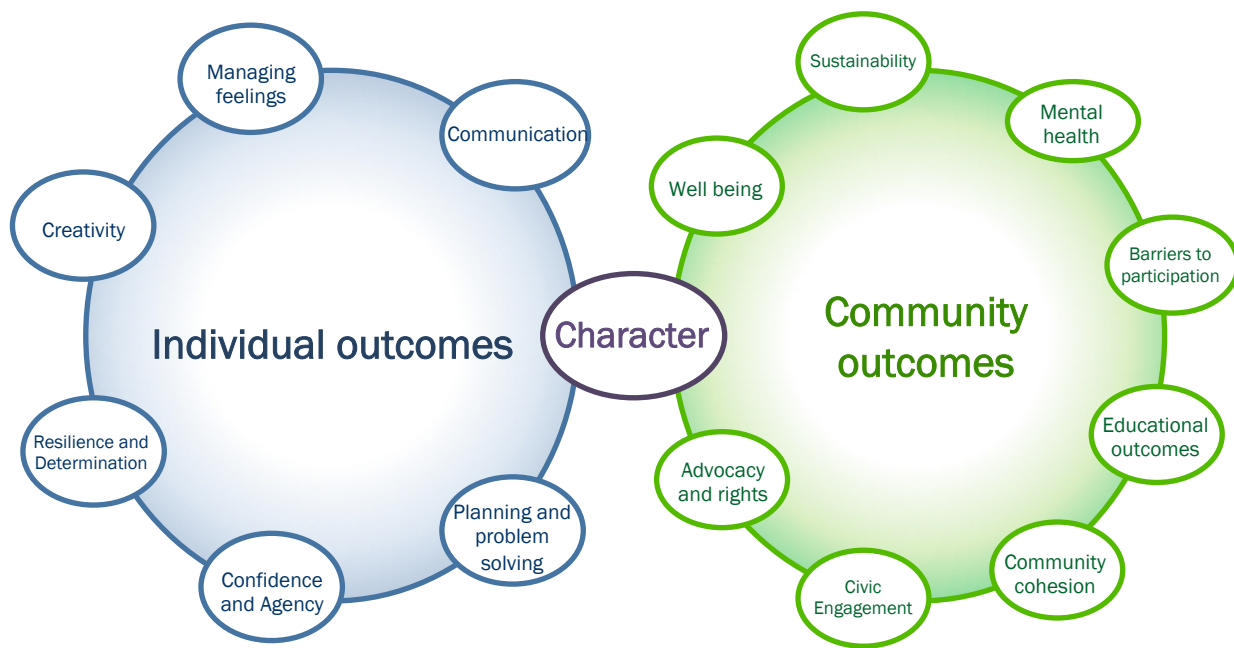
Why these principles?

In each of these contexts, we asked organisations to tell us what the principles mean to them, and how this relates to the double benefit outcomes. Below is a summary of responses, collated with findings from Pears Foundation and National Development Team on Inclusion study for the #iwill campaign on inclusion practices.

	<i>Creates a double benefit</i>	<i>Is inclusive</i>
Embedded	Is valued and prioritised, recognised, available to all, inclusive, creating lasting change, leaving a legacy, changing behaviour, integrated into communities, part of education and career pathways, a habit for life.	Support and opportunities to participate in social action reach out and integrate social action within young people's lives now and in their future.
Progressive	Providing opportunities, relevant to career pathways, lead on to other activities, ensuring continuation of a project's impact, sustainable, lasting, habit forming, offering personal growth and change, developing ideas and approaches, sustainable.	Young people can use their experiences of youth social action to grow and develop in all areas of their life
Socially Impactful	Intentional about creating change, planned and researched, measuring outcomes, directly involving beneficiaries, setting goals, engaging audiences, having a strong ethos and vision, instilling hope and belief, connecting people.	Opportunities help young people find their passion, involve everyone in discussions about the issues, offer diversity and offer flexibility in the cause and level of commitment.
Youth-Led	Enabling young people's voice and agency, relevant, offering direct responsibility, young people able to lead and manage, directing activities themselves, making decisions, informing strategy, setting the agenda, shaping governance.	Opportunities and support to participate, and experiences of participation, in social action are tailored to take account of the circumstances, needs, experiences and interests of young people.
Challenging	Doing something "real" / high impact / directly about a social problem, not takenistic, taking people out of their comfort zones, confronting ideas and issues, providing learning and growth, setting ambitious goals, encountering difficult social problems.	Young people are supported and encouraged to increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills; and are stretched whilst being supported to make a difference.
Reflective	Self-awareness and learning, recognising achievement, review and analyse results, able to articulate and justify, proving and demonstrating, communicating to others, growing as a person, sharing experiences, celebrating and recognising	Young people's contributions and ambitions are acknowledged to help them recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute

Double benefit outcomes

The 6 quality principles are intended to help organisations focus on achieving better outcomes for both young people and communities, as well as being inclusive. Therefore it is important that organisations use this guidance report as a starting point for critically reflecting on these outcomes.



Individual outcomes

Youth social action is competency based – giving young people a practical means of developing crucial skills that are difficult to learn without doing. Some of the key areas that young people can develop are listed above. These skills areas were chosen to reflect both the necessary skills outlined in the CBI’s *First Steps* report, and the Young Foundation’s *Outcomes for Young People*, which can be found [here](#).

Character

Character development – and the importance of virtue – should be viewed as a core element of youth social action, empowering all young people to develop a clearer sense of their relationship with others, as well as the purpose of their own life. The Jubilee Centre defines character “as a set of personal traits that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct”. Find out more [here](#).

Community outcomes

Young people participate in social action through the desire to make a difference, therefore their outcomes in this regard are vitally important to the quality of the activity. Planning to have a positive impact on others helps young people build and express their character. Activities should focus on a clear cause, community or social problem and be able to logically state the outcomes that should be experienced from the social action through a theory of change.

Common practices

Embedded	Progressive	Youth Led	Challenging	Socially Impactful	Reflective
Build networks and link to other services	Signposting / referrals / portals	Young people self-directing activities		Using evidence to inform approaches	Planning / research
Part of education / curriculum or linked to employment		Providing a democratic voice	Expectations of behaviour are set	Having a clear theory of change	Recording progress
Community participation	A "natural next step" upon completion	Creating peer leadership roles	Timescale / high level of commitment	Measuring outcomes	Reporting / measurement
Positive peer pressure and role modelling	Lifecycle of alumni is emphasised	Develop young people's management skills	Offer a new experience	Social mixing between demographics	Adult guided reflection
Valued and prioritised in culture	Rewarding and recognising	Young people part of the governance	Training that is stretching and new	Beneficiary led interventions	Mentoring and coaching
Using a behaviour change theory	Sustainability of social action projects	Young people informing strategy	Difficult to solve social problems	Communicating impact and presentations	
Early exposure and encouragement	Engagement pathway is mapped	Training staff to facilitate youth leadership	Variety of backgrounds / out of comfort zone	Setting goals and targets	Dedicated time for reflection
Enabling excluded groups and needs	Young people at points of transition	Young people decide what to do	Setting goals and targets	Before and after comparisons	Before and after reflection
Longitudinal studies and approaches	Mentoring and coaching	Advocacy and representation	Challenge thinking and ideas	Having a strong ethos and purpose	Awarded and recognised
Training and collaborations with experts		Reflecting young people's needs / interests	Offer fun and a spirit of adventure	Instil idealism / sense of purpose	

Practices for each principle

From our call for information, we isolated nearly 1000 instances of specific practices cited by organisations as being associated with one of the principles. Whilst there is currently limited evidence to prove that these practices are effective at achieving double benefit outcomes, some of them were referenced by many different providers, indicating that they are: a) *thought to be* effective, b) relevant in multiple contexts, and c) widely used.

We therefore think that anyone involved in providing youth social action opportunities can benefit from critically reflecting on which of these practices they put in place.

The practices below are not exhaustive and only offer suggestions to consider and adapt to your own context, age-range and length of programme.

Embedded

Accessible to all and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life

Linked to youth services / referrals / existing groups	The project involves or has support from existing services for young people like counseling, youth clubs, careers services, student union, social networks. This helps make the activity more accessible and visible.
Available to all	E.g. through financial support, encouragement, adaptation of the offer for different backgrounds. This is strongly linked to the inclusion practices.
Direct link to organisation's mission	A core part of the organisation's mission is for social action to be a more normal / frequent activity, and outcomes are measured on this basis.
Showcasing inspiring examples	Showing young people that they are not the exception, and that others are doing it too, helps normalise the activity and make it aspirational.
Using a behaviour change theory	Using practices based on theories of behaviour change, and aimed at forming habits of giving that last into adulthood.
Practice what you preach	Staff, adult volunteers and young people demonstrate commitment in their own lives (e.g. actively volunteer as well) and can act as role models.
"Positive peer pressure"	Using the power of young people's influence on each other to encourage and normalise social action
Part of education or employment	Directly linked to qualifications, learning and careers either in education, extra-curricular or part of employment
Instil belief or hope	Helping young people to reflect on the difference they've made to instil lasting belief.
Valued and prioritised	The organisation values and prioritises social action at all levels of leadership and strategy.
Sustainable	The project can be sustained financially or through volunteers so that it is not a one off.
Early exposure / points of transition	Engaging younger people, or young people at points of transition with the intention of establishing habits later on in life.

Youth-led

Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision making

Independent / self-directed activities	Young people make decisions about what to do, and are responsible for their own engagement
Young people leading their peers	Alumni or more experienced young people lead groups of their peers and act as role models.
Democratic voice	Using democratic practices to give young people power and voice.
The approach and capabilities of staff or adult volunteers	Staff and adult volunteers are trained to have an enabling, facilitating approach that encourages young people.
Developing management skills	Young people learn how to budget, plan, recruit, manage and organise which enables them to lead the work.
Youth governance	Young people are an integral part of the organisation's governance.
Young people informing strategy	The strategy of the organisation is directly informed by young people through engagement and listening.
Young people choose the cause and approach	More structured programmes include decision making by young people in a supported way.
Capturing opinion	Young people's opinions and views are actively sought through surveys, reflection and research.
Led by young people's needs	The needs of young people are the primary starting point of the programme design.

Reflective

Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning

Dedicated time	The project is structured to include time for reflecting on outcomes and how things could be improved
Planning and research	Encouraging young people to plan and research their project's cause or chosen issue
Awards and recognition	Recognising and rewarding achievements to value and encourage outcomes
Adult guided reflection	Actively guided reflection through workshops or facilitated sessions
Building a culture	Instilling an ethos or culture of reflection e.g. with speakers, quotes and stories
Recording progress	Recording activities and outcomes to encourage learning
Beginning and end comparison	Encouraging young people to think about their own journey and personal growth
Training and mentoring	Providing training and personal mentoring to build self-awareness
Articulate and communicate	Communicating achievements e.g. through social media, impact reports, testimonials
Ceremony and waymarkers	Celebrating clear markers of progression – e.g. graduation ceremony, uniform, badges
Reflect on outcomes evidence	Use data and evidence to reflect on what is effective and can be replicated.

Progressive

Sustained and providing links to other activities and opportunities

Signposting to other opportunities	Young people are signposted to opportunities they might not have found on their own.
Young people at points of transition	Projects are tailored for young people at points of transition – e.g. primary to secondary school, at 16, or young people who are new to a community / experiencing change.
Lifecycle of alumni is emphasised	The role and prospects of alumni is demonstrated at the beginning to encourage expectations of continuation.
Coaching and mentoring	Projects provide or incorporate an element of coaching to support young people to take the next step.
Training and collaborations	Projects include training from other organisations, or collaborate to cross-pollinate ideas and opportunities.
Linked to employment	Social action programmes have opportunities to meet employers, or highlight transferable skills and experience
Linked to education	Linked in to education either through the curriculum or part of qualifications, university applications, or teaching
Careers opportunities	Offering interviews, work placements, guidance or a job.
A natural next step	Once a project is completed, there is a natural next step to either continue a project, take it to the next level, or go on to something else that is related.
Portals and networks	Young people are catered for after they have finished a programme – with an ongoing network, or portal of opportunities.

Challenging

Stretching and challenging as well as enjoyable and enabling.

Competitive element	Teams and projects are encouraged to compete with each other for achieving goals
Critically engaging with ideas	The structures and causes behind a social cause are critically engaged with to challenge thinking.
Time commitment	There is a high level of commitment in terms of time given either periodically or in sustained experiences.
High expectations of behaviour	Young people are challenged to change their behaviour and attitudes.
Self-directed / independent activities	Young people make decisions about what to do, and are responsible for their own engagement
A new experience offered	The project offers an experience that young people do not typically have elsewhere at school or home.
Meeting people from different backgrounds	Young people are challenged by meeting and working with people that are from different backgrounds to them
Training and development	Young people are given training and personal development in new skills areas
Reflect skills level and needs	Roles and tasks are assigned in a way that is challenging relative to starting level of skills and experience.
Setting goals and targets	(Ambitious) goals are set to inform effort and to give an indication of the challenge.
Staff who encourage appropriately	Staff and adult volunteers are able to push young people to achieve more in a way that is fun and exciting.

Socially Impactful

Have a clear intended benefit to a community, cause or social problem.

Using evidence to inform approaches	Using evidence around a social issue (e.g. prevalence of the issue in the local area, experience of beneficiaries) to inform the social action activity
Having a clear theory of change	Many social action projects have a core component of supporting young people to create a theory of change for the action they want to take, to logically question whether their outputs will achieve intended outcomes.
Measuring outcomes	The project plans and puts in place ways of measuring the outcomes of the activity and the benefits to people involved.
Social mixing between demographics	Projects actively seek to mix people from different backgrounds including age, ability, ethnicity, etc in teams and through projects.
Beneficiary led interventions	Projects seek input and direction from the people they hope to benefit, e.g. through consultations, research or community meetings.
Communicating impact and presentations	Many social action projects include a communications element to engage more people, for example presentations or testimonies.
Setting goals and targets	Outcomes are given targets or goals in order to motivate and focus young people's efforts.
Before and after comparisons	Project measure the change that has been created by comparing a starting measure with the same measure conducted afterwards.
Having a strong ethos and purpose	Teams and adult volunteers instill a strong culture of inspiration and ethos of social change.
Partnerships	Projects work closely with established community groups or charities that have a specialism in the area to be tackled (e.g. fundraising or volunteering for them)

Case studies

In order to bring these practices to life, we decided to include case studies from organisations that offer a unique example of how the principles are being applied.

Case study organisations were selected from contributions to our call for information. They are intended to show a range of contexts, whilst highlighting a specific practice that can be adopted elsewhere.

If you would like more information about any of the organisations featured in this section, please get in touch with Generation Change on: enquiries@generationchange.org.uk

Youth Led

Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision making



Student Hubs

Management skills

Students have a wide range of opportunities to take on leadership roles through working with us – they can organise conferences, coordinate volunteering projects, set up their own social enterprises, and much more. All student leaders are responsible for managing their area of work, often managing teams as well as budgets. They are provided with extensive training and support from Student Hubs – on key skills ranging from project management, to leadership and financial management, and through on demand one to one support from our staff. Any student in a Hub university can apply for the Social Leadership Award, recognising the next generation of social leaders. To receive the Award, students have to demonstrate leadership and reflection.



Girl Guiding

Advocacy and campaigns

Throughout **Girlguiding** girls lead on the programme they undertake from 5 – 25. Our advocacy work gives girls a voice and also informs the way we develop programme. Go For It: Be The Change, a programme designed for 10 – 14 year olds, and our Girls Matter campaign designed to get girls voices heard, have been directly guided by issues highlighted by girls and were created alongside young people. Girlguiding's youth panel, Advocate gives members a platform to influence decision makers on the issues they care about. Our Advocates meet regularly to discuss the issues, and they are central to developing Girlguiding's research and campaigns.



Aylesbury Youth Action (AYA)

Youth decision making

At **Aylesbury Youth Action (AYA)**, young people are involved in planning all their projects, from discussing ideas, writing funding applications, choosing activities, promoting them to other volunteers and the project users, as well as helping with evaluation. AYA also runs a weekly Young People's Management Group, with a session programme that includes project design, reviewing trustees' meetings and feeding into them in person and by written report. We encourage young people to be Youth Action advisors to the board, and Trustees where appropriate.



UK Young Parliament

Democratic voice

The **British Youth Council's** "UK Young Parliament" uses democracy to engage young people in social action and offer a credible mandate to inform and influence decisions makers. Not only do one million young people elect its representatives, but it also conducts annual referenda on the campaign issues. In 2014, 876,000 teenagers took part in ballot to choose its campaigns. The British Youth Council, empowers the UK Youth Parliament through training, support and volunteering opportunities to make a difference in local communities and national policies. The 13 Directors, aged 16-25, are also elected by young members.

Challenging

Stretching and challenging as well as enjoyable and enabling.



Self-directed activities

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) works to ten guiding principles, one of which is 'Personalised'. Young people design their own programme, which can be tailored to suit their personal circumstances, choices and local provision. They start at a level that suits them best and they can take as long as they wish to achieve an Award. Another guiding principle is that the DofE is 'Voluntary'. Whilst DofE programmes may be offered within school, work time, or custody, young people choose to do a programme and commit their free time to undertake activities. A participant must choose to take part and then show dedication in order to achieve an Award.



High level of commitment

City Year's strapline, 'Give a year. Change the world' resonates with young people seeking meaning and adventure. They sign up to a full year of service, but know they'll also gain a life changing experience and improve their future prospects. Challenge is crucial to the year's appeal. Our volunteers make it through with the help of the team they volunteer with, dedicated staff support and a hardship fund. But, most important is that they can see their impact. As one volunteer said: "The only thing worse than kids giving up on school, is if we give up on them."



Offering a new experience

The first part of NCS brings new teams of young people together in unfamiliar settings and presents a series of outdoor physical challenges. The second part of the programme then reconnects the teams to their local community, where participants' preconceptions about local people and issues are challenged. In the final stages, NCS teams are challenged to design and deliver a social action project in 60 hours, informed by their experiences. This means the series of challenges presented are designed to shift the focus of the participant from self- and team-development to having a tangible impact on the local area.



Difficult social problems

Year Here is a full-time postgraduate course in London designed to develop purpose-driven innovators and social leaders. In the first few months of the programme, young people are placed in a social service organisation and challenged to lead an innovation project. The frontline service placement puts participants directly into contact with some of the UK's most challenging social problems. Afterwards, course participants form a consulting team for a government client, try their hand at developing a social venture from scratch and lead their own independent project.

Embedded

Accessible to all and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life



Early exposure to social action

Woodcraft Folk engages children from pre-school, exploring issues of equality and active citizenship. Our youngest members are supported to learn about themselves, their communities and global issues such as poverty and climate change. To help children put these big ideas into context they are supported to explore the contribution they can make to create a fair and just world. Woodcraft Folk's older age groups build on these first steps to create longer term youth led social action projects. To embed social action, the following helps; a co-operative approach, children involved in planning and decision-making, ongoing support, and activities that engage the whole family.



Community needs lead projects

At Affinity Sutton our Community Ambassadors identify the need for their projects by consulting with their local community and then coming up with creative solutions. One great example of this was our South Shields Community Ambassadors who discovered the main issue on their estate were the fires at the Wreck, a place where they all congregated. So the Community Ambassadors contacted the local Fire Service to complete training so as they could raise the awareness amongst their peers and their families. They also presented fire awareness training to local elderly residents which built valuable relationships.



Valued and prioritised

At Bethnal Green Academy, opportunities for whole school social action is a fundamental part of our students' education and employment prospects. All social action is documented on the school's Management Information system for staff to assess and evaluate the whole school impact of social action and leadership development. Sixth Form Leaders evaluate impact to ensure autonomy, self-worth and positive feedback from our wider community.



“Positive peer pressure”

Student Volunteering Week (SVW) is an annual nationwide campaign on student social action at over 100 colleges and universities. The national campaign enables students to feel part of a nationwide movement of their peers who see social action as the norm. Throughout the year, we shine our national spotlight on best practice at the local level to inspire others. In 2015 we will host the first ever Student Bootcamp. Bringing together 100 students for a day of inspiration and idea generation, they will then take that enthusiasm back to their campuses and lead by example, with the support of their peers around the country.

Progressive

Sustained and providing links to other activities and opportunities



Planned engagement pathway

UK Youth's Starbucks programme offers successful NCS graduates a progression opportunity to run their own social action projects. Increasing levels of responsibility are key to sustaining involvement of young people in social action. Success in implementing this pathway is based on: clear action plan, choosing the right partner organisations, excellent relationships with NCS providers and participants. By enabling a "next step", we and experience to continue on a lifetime of social action. They will have developed a mind-set which will pre-dispose them to starting more social action initiatives in the future.



Next step upon completion

With the Key, young people get together as teams of friends to 'Think', 'Plan', 'Do' and 'Review' their own projects. Key projects have 4 stages with increasing levels of challenge. For example, 6 young men from the North East set out to inspire the next generation of break dancers by hosting a professional workshop for everyone to get involved. This was a stage 3 project upon completion of which the natural next step for the young men is a stage 4 project - the team are going to continue developing their skills by doing a project that is more challenging for them; organising a two day break dancing festival.



A link to employment

As part of our Realising Potential social mobility initiative, Linklaters employs approximately six apprentices each year. We embed youth social action in the programme through a community challenge, where they manage a community project culminating in hosting a visit to a group of sixth form students to explore alternative post 18 pathways. All of the apprentices wanted to run another project and proactively sought another group to work with. Those who still work for Linklaters have continued to engage in volunteering, thus creating a habit for life.



Supporting collaborations

Each Team v campaign, draws on sector experts for guidance to progress the campaign beyond the starting ideas of young people, and to link up the campaign across other networks. Earlier this year, Team v ran a campaign called 'Love is..?' during which we collaborated with the charities Tender and Girlguiding. Tender helped us to progress the campaign beyond its starting point, and delivered training to help Leaders progress, whilst Girlguiding activated their network to support the campaign. With this support we engaged 107 local support services and had a much wider reach and audience.

Socially Impactful

A clear intended benefit to a community, cause or social problem.



Ethos and culture

Each year, we come together to celebrate the power of young people to lead change with an inspirational event—**We Day**. In March 2013, the UK hosted its first We Day, with 12,000 students and teachers gathered at London's Wembley Arena to hear from renowned speakers and performers as well as extraordinary young change-makers. We Day is free to attend, but each young participant earns their ticket by taking action on one local and one global issue. Each one leaves with the inspiration to fuel a multitude of new initiatives for the year ahead, like collecting food for local foodbanks, and launching coin drives to fund clean water projects in developing countries.



Planning and research

Primary children taking part in **Citizenship Foundation's Go-Givers Make a Difference Challenge** choose their cause democratically. The child-led, Plan-Do-Review model is facilitated by teachers who have undertaken a full day's training. The children share what they know about the issue, then carry out research, and community surveys to gather information about attitudes. They map organisations and individuals who may be supportive. They plot their ideas on an impact ranking chart and participate in a De Bono thinking activity to develop a rounded view of their plans.



Outcomes are measured

King's College Hospital runs a Trust wide *How Are We Doing?* survey for inpatients, which has now been running for several years. Since January 2013, we have been able to compare the survey results for those patients who met a volunteer during their hospital stay, against the results of those patients who did not. Stratifying the data also allows us to examine the impact of volunteering on all aspects of patient care, perception and experience. Our findings suggest that those patients with access to a volunteer are more likely to recommend the Trust to friends and family.

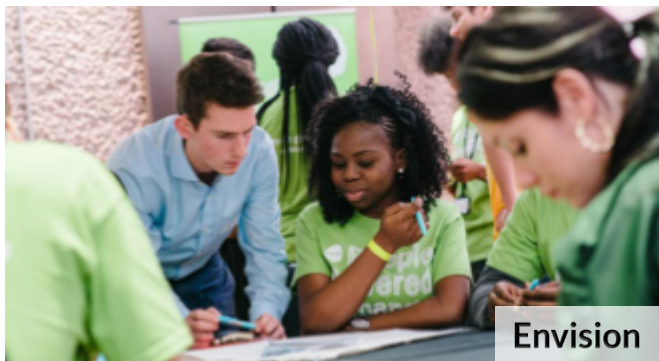


Social mixing

The Challenge works locally to connect people across all ages and walks of life. Social mixing is at the heart of our programmes, designed to increase the positive contact different groups of people have with each other. Research has shown that these factors ensure positive contact between diverse groups of people: conditions of equal status, opportunities to challenge stereotypes, co-operation between different groups, opportunity to form close friendships (often through sustained contact) These principles lay the foundation for our programme delivery, from recruitment, to design of curriculum content and programme outcomes.

Reflective

Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning



Adult guided reflection

Envision's adult volunteers support reflection sessions where young people complete their "Skills Passports". This is where students record the skills and qualities they've developed during the programme. The adults are able to guide students to articulate their skills in a way that will resonate with employers. They also support them in identifying their MAD ('Make A Difference') moment – the exact moment they realised they could make a difference. By having their 'MAD' moment of feeling empowered pinpointed alongside adult volunteers, young people feel validated, and that sense of empowerment is reinforced.



Reporting and measurement

Youth Focus: North East has an Outcomes Measurement Framework in place. Outcomes are described in three subcategories: Individual, Friends and family, Community. This enables a young person to think about their own skills, abilities and personal wellbeing, and how this affects those around them, be it their peers or the wider community. To evidence impact both quantitative and qualitative data is gathered via questionnaires, personalised case studies and testimonies of participants. All participants complete evaluations (before and after questionnaires) to identify their personal learning in relation to their strengths and achievements.



A clear theory of change

London Youth's social action programme, Athan 31 has a 'journey of change' that describes how young people engage with and develop through the programme. This framework is our basis for evaluating the programme's impact on young people, and is shared with participants so they can understand what they are working towards. We measure the development of resilience, confidence and leadership through an impact questionnaire, which young people fill in at the start, and end of each project. Participants also present their learning at panel presentations and through project evaluations once they have completed their project



Recording progress

Plan.do, Catch22's social action app, is a tool for volunteers to record progress and plan projects. Alongside the free web app for young people there is an admin dashboard available to those delivering social action programmes, which provides an overview of young people and projects. Volunteers are able to reflect on how they have spent their time and to have a tool for ongoing reflection throughout a project. They can also allocate parts of the budget and total time to each task and keeping everyone organised in the app; logging what everyone has done and going back to check it's done.

Useful resources

- **The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT)** have produced a [Social Action Toolkit](#) for teachers and schools – and also offer [free starter resources](#) for the Giving Nation programme.
- **The British Youth Council (BYC)** offer [resources](#) for encouraging youth voice as well as [activity ideas](#).
- **Participation Works** have produced resources including how to involve children and young people in [commissioning](#) and [social enterprise](#).
- **UnLtd** have produced [A Young Person's Guide to Social Entrepreneurship](#).
- **The CIPD** have set out the aims and benefits for employer involvement in youth social action in their policy report *Youth social action and transitions into work: what role for employers?* [Here](#)
- **Inspiring Impact** offers a useful [catalogue of impact measurement tools](#), and you can read their code of practice [here](#).
- **Nesta's** [standards of evidence](#) sets out 5 levels of increasing rigour for proving the impact of interventions.
- **The Young Foundation's** [Noticing the Change: a framework of outcomes for young people](#) offers a helpful guide to the individual outcomes part of double benefit.
- **NYA** publish [an e-book for practitioners](#) called “*Capturing the Evidence: Tools and processes for recognising and recording*”
- **NCVO** offer [a practical guide on assessment](#) called “*Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit: A practical guide for assessing the difference that volunteering makes.*”
- **The Jubilee Centre** have published a Statement on Character in youth social action which can be found [here](#).
- **The National Development Team on Inclusion (NDTI)**, with Pears Foundation, have published a guidance on inclusion practices for youth social action.
- **The Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF)**'s 2013 report on [The impact of non-cognitive skills on outcomes for young people](#) summarises the field of metrics for non-cognitive skills.

Thanks

- Affinity Sutton
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- Citizens UK
- Citizenship Foundation
- City Year UK
- Co-operation Ireland
- CSV
- CVQO
- Diana Award
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Education Business Partnership Kent
- Envision
- East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS)
- Free the Children
- Fixers
- Future Foundations
- Girlguiding
- Go-Givers (Citizenship Foundation)
- GwirVol
- HeadStart, The Challenge
- Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade (JLGB)
- The Key: Your Potential Unlocked
- Kings College School
- Kings College Hospital
- Linklaters
- London Youth
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- National Youth Agency
- NCVYS
- The National Citizen Service (NCS)
- The National Youth Association (NYA)
- O2 Think Big
- Project Scotland
- The Scouts Association
- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation
- Student Hubs
- Suffolk Constabulary
- Swale Action To End Domestic Abuse (SATEDA)
- Team London
- UFA (Academy of Youth)
- UK Youth
- UK Youth Parliament
- University of the First Age
- UpRising
- vInspired
- Volunteer Now
- Volunteer Police Cadets
- Woodcraft Folk
- Worcestershire Youth Cabinet
- Year Here
- Youth Action Northern Ireland
- Youth Focus: North East
- Youth Net
- Youth United
- Youth Moves

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