

Proudly supporting  
youth social action



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport



DARTINGTON  
SERVICE  
DESIGN LAB

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# #iwill Fund Learning Hub Evidence Workstream

Data Review 7  
Dartington Service Design Lab  
February 2022

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## Introduction

This is the seventh data review produced by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub. The purpose of these reviews is to synthesise the learning that is being generated and documented by the #iwill Fund and Match Funders with existing and emerging evidence outside the Fund. The scale and variety of youth social action supported by the #iwill Fund represents an unprecedented wave of activity. These data reviews seek to harness this activity to capture and disseminate valuable learning for the field. We assess this information using the Sector Evidence Plan questions as a framework to understand how learning can feed into youth social action going forward.

### 1. What is youth social action?

*A summary of our learning on this question prior to this review can be found in Appendix 1.*

#### 1.1 What has the #iwill Fund funded?

The Information Management System allows us to paint an emerging picture of what has been funded. Data was accessed in January 2022.

Volunteering (46% of funded opportunities) is the most common form of youth social action supported through the #iwill Fund, followed by tutoring, coaching or mentoring (21%) and helping to improve the local area (16%). Campaigning still represents a small proportion of funded activity (8%). Over half (63%) of youth social action opportunities in the #iwill Fund portfolio are delivered in community settings with the second most opportunities delivered through schools (28%).

The vast majority of #iwill-funded youth social action opportunities are directed towards a specific cause (85%) and the most popular causes are People & Communities (27%), Education & Learning (25%), health and care (13%) and environmental (7%).

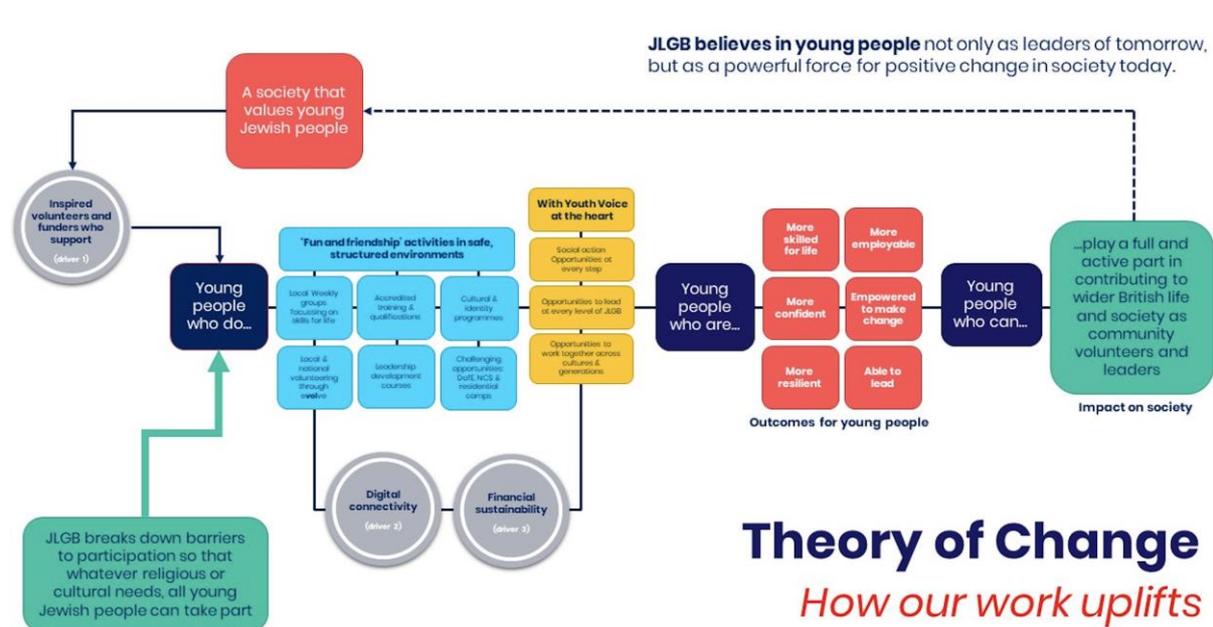
#### 1.2 Our emerging typology

The Learning Hub's paper '[Towards a Typology of Youth Social Action](#)'<sup>1</sup> reviews definitions and typologies of youth social action, and begins to build an evidence-based picture of the different types of youth social action being supported by the #iwill Fund. To clarify this further, we have recently adjusted our evidence questions to focus on what common theories of change and 'user journeys' exist within youth social action (See Appendix 1 for a summary of the evidence plan questions).

#### 1.3 Theories of Change

The Learning Hub is pleased to have received theories of change in the most recent match funder reports.

## JLGB



This theory of change highlights the necessary 'ingredients' that make up JLGB's programmes and the outcomes they are expected to produce. The yellow boxes perhaps most closely describe mechanisms of change, with youth voice overarching all mechanisms suggesting that JLGB<sup>ii</sup> think that what makes the difference is

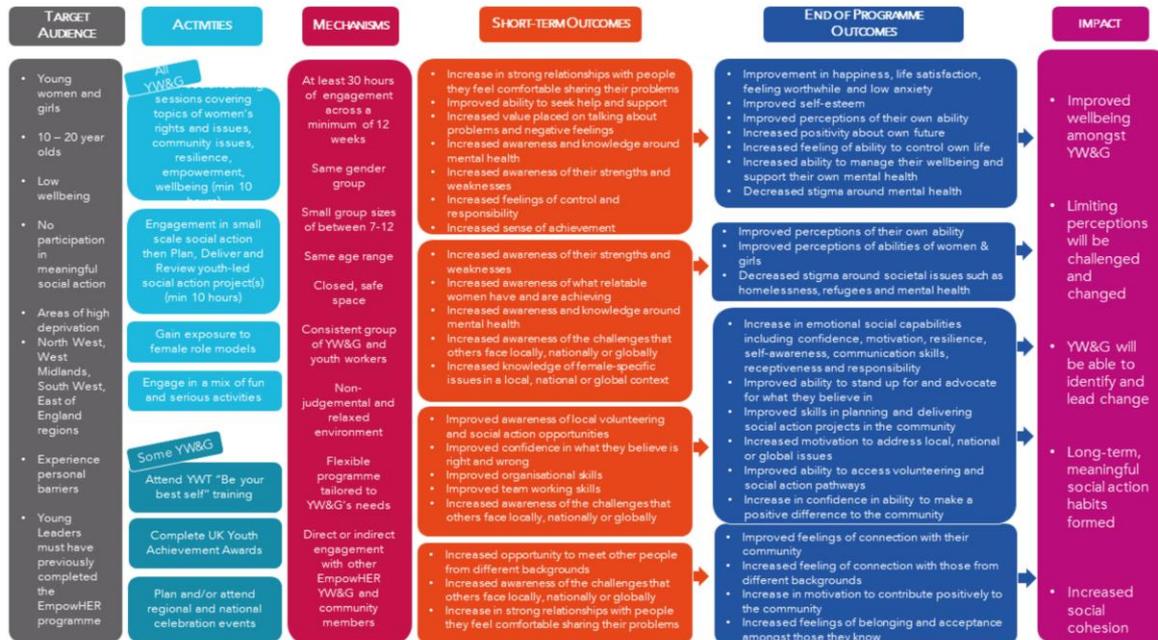
- repeated opportunities to take part in youth social action
- repeated opportunities to lead in different ways
- opportunities to meet people from different cultures and of different ages

These are hypothesised to lead to a variety of specific outcomes for young people, and a more general societal benefit of more active and engaged young people.

## Spirit of 2012 (EmpowerHER programme):

# Theory of Change

## Young women and girls



This detailed theory of change is explicit about the mechanisms of change they believe support outcomes. It should be noted that they are exclusively about the type and quality of experience young women have on the programme, rather than specific content or activities they should engage with (although these are also specified). While the content of the EmpowerHER<sup>iii</sup> programme is specific, this theory of change suggests that these mechanisms could be replicated in programmes using different content and aimed at (somewhat) different target populations.

## Scouts Association:

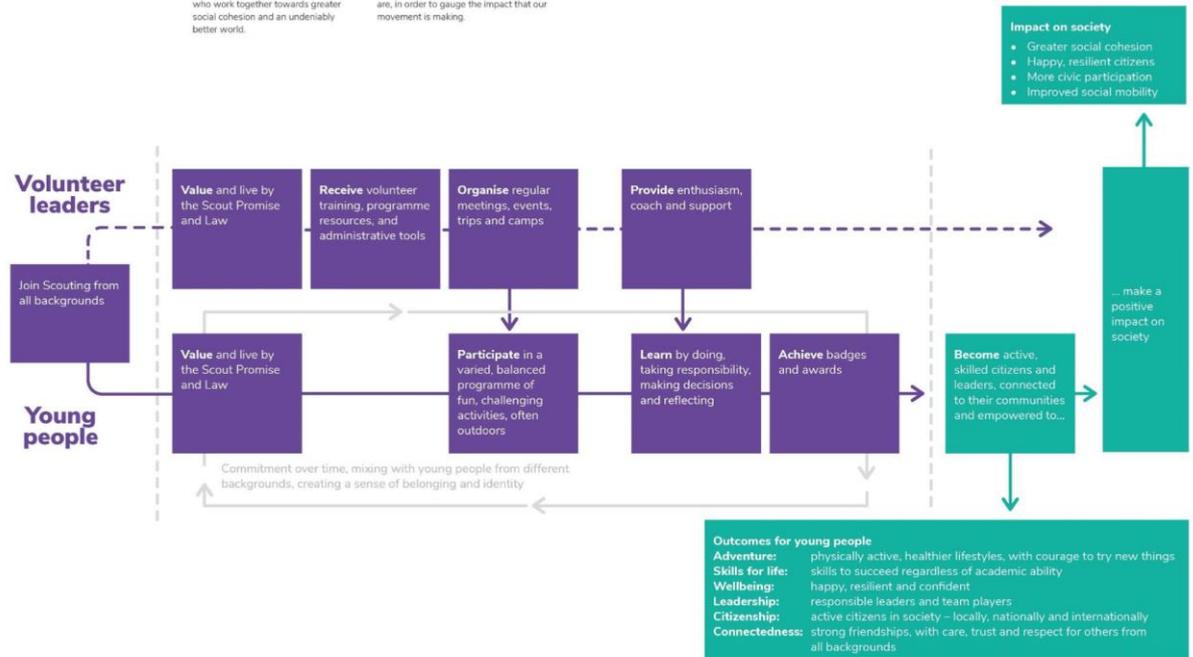
### Theory of Change

Our theory of change shows the positive difference Scouts makes in society. We welcome young people and volunteers from all backgrounds. At Scouts they learn and share skills, enjoy an engaged and varied programme of activities, honour the Scout values and become active citizens of a connected community. We produce happier, more resilient citizens who work together towards greater social cohesion and an undeniably better world.

Over the last two years, we've conducted research with 13-17 year olds through the Scout Experience Survey. Based on responses to a variety of questions about their daily lives, activities, interests, citizenship and wellbeing, the research compares the experience of young people aged 13-17 who are not Scouts with those of the same age group who are, in order to gauge the impact that our movement is making.

The results of this research show that Scouts is bringing out the best in people, and that those people are contributing more to their communities. It shows that compared with young people who are not part of our movement, Scouts are learning more skills, volunteering more often, and contributing to a kinder, more cohesive society.

The role of volunteers delivering an amazing programme is vital to the impact that Scouts is making.



In this theory of change, the words in grey and some in the purple boxes appear close to mechanisms of change, suggesting that the Scout Association<sup>iv</sup> hypothesise change comes from:

- commitment over time
- mixing with peers from different backgrounds
- participation in varied but balanced and challenging activities

Again we see detailed and multiple outcomes for young people hypothesised, and a more general conception of a societal benefit.

There are many similarities across these theories of change; this helps us to build a more complete picture of the mechanisms that are hypothesised to take place in different youth social action opportunities, and the different outcomes they connect to. This is an important element in building high-quality (and 'evaluable') youth social action opportunities, as well as in supporting shared understanding of the potential of youth social action to promote outcomes.

## 2. What does youth social action do?

A summary of our learning on this question prior to this review can be found in Appendix 1.

### 2.1 A framework for the benefits of youth social action

In our paper [on the community impact of youth social action](#)<sup>v</sup>, the #iwill Fund Learning Hub set out a framework for thinking different kinds of benefit for young people and communities. We identified five kinds of potential benefit from youth social action opportunities.

1. **Young person.** Young people benefit directly from participating in the youth social action. Our paper on outcomes for young people identified four major categories: (i) socio-emotional or character outcomes, (ii) civic or societal outcomes, (iii) employment outcomes (iv) education outcomes.
2. **Organisational.** Organisations that provide youth social action opportunities can benefit directly from the activity, e.g., young volunteers free up capacity for paid staff.
3. **Community.** Benefits may accrue to a community directly from the social action young people are engaged in, e.g., the local community may benefit from young people regenerating a park area, or people may benefit from volunteering undertaken by a young person.
4. **Reflexive.** Young people belong to communities. Any benefits that accrue to their communities may also benefit the young person individually, e.g., young people can also enjoy the regenerated park.
5. **Societal.** Young people continue to belong to communities as they grow up. Some of the benefits that accrue to young people directly from youth social action participation may be beneficial for the societies in which they live, e.g., young people may become more active citizens.

### 2.2 Early insights from the #iwill Fund

In this section we present some emerging findings from the #iwill Fund against the five outcomes listed above. We include here only findings that have been reported since the most recent Data Review was published in January 2022.

Outcomes for Young People	New evidence in the last quarter	Further questions to consider/points to note
Socio-emotional	<p><b>Spirit of 2012</b> undertook pre-and-post entry and exit surveys for three of their EmpowHER cohorts:</p> <p><b>Wellbeing:</b></p> <p><b>Spirit of 2012</b> used ONS indicators to measure changes in wellbeing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Spirit of 2012</b> undertook a pre -and- post entry and exit survey (n=366)</li> </ul> <p>Wellbeing measurement:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53% of young women and girls (YW&amp;G) reported increased levels of happiness</li> <li>• 55% of YW&amp;G reported increased levels of life satisfaction</li> <li>• 57% of YW&amp;G reported an increased sense that things in their life are worthwhile</li> </ul> <p><b>Confidence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 63% of YW&amp;G reported an increase in confidence</li> </ul> <p><b>Limiting Perceptions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 13% of YW&amp;G reported a decrease in limiting perception around their gender</li> <li>• 22% of YW&amp;G reported a decrease in limiting perceptions around their self-efficacy</li> </ul> <p><b>Anxiety:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• YW&amp;G reporting a very high anxiety decreased from 44% to 40%. Levels of change for Anxiety are not significant.</li> </ul> <p><b>Optimism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I feel happy when I think about my future" increased from 48% to 66%</li> </ul> <p><b>Self-efficacy/ Perception of own ability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "I can do things as well as most other people" (Cohens <math>d = 0.44</math>, <math>p &lt; 0.05</math>)</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership, community agency, and empowerment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement with the statement "I feel comfortable taking the lead in small groups" increased from 38% to 57%.</li> <li>• Agreement with the statement "I feel happy when I think about my future" increased from 48% to 66%.</li> </ul> <p>YW&amp;G reported statistically significant improvement across all indicators for emotional and social capabilities (See below), with a highest</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in all 3 ONS wellbeing indicators found to be statistically significant</li> <li>• ONS uses four indicators to measure wellbeing – life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness and anxiety. They use a scale from 0-10 where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely' agree with the metric for the indicators. Low on these indicators are at the lower level of spectrum and very high at 10 of the scale.</li> <li>• Analysis conducted was to compare three patterns: YW&amp;G wellbeing in ONS categories before EmpowHER (pre); YW&amp;G wellbeing in ONS categories before EmpowHER (post); UK population's wellbeing in ONS categories.</li> <li>• Based on ONS averages for 16-19 years old, very high results for life satisfaction are 31%, worthwhile is 32%, happiness is 36% and anxiety is 39%.</li> </ul> <p>Optimism measurement:</p> <p>Changes in optimism were statistically significant.</p> <p>Limiting perception measurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limiting perceptions means a candidate scored themselves 0-</li> </ul>
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	<p>increase for confidence, followed by leadership and responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Communication</li><li>- Receptiveness and self-awareness</li><li>- Resilience</li><li>- Responsibility</li><li>- Motivation</li><li>- Confidence</li></ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All the YW&amp;G interviewed about their experience of EmpowHER mentioned improved confidence levels as a key learning and benefit of the programme for them.</li></ul> <p>Through the interviews YW&amp;G also reported other personal development areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• making friends</li><li>• having the safe space to discuss gender centred issues</li><li>• better ways to communicate ideas and their concerns and opportunities to think about topics they have not previously explored, such as gender identity.</li></ul>	<p>6 out of 10 for the metric</p>
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	<p><b>OAT (Ormiston Academies Trust)</b></p> <p>Participating pupils at endpoint reported statistically significant higher average scores across all three social-emotional learning (SEL) domains than pupils who had not participated in #iwill-funded activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tackling challenges, achieving goals</li> <li>• Solving problems and working with others</li> <li>• Agency over the future, the school, the community</li> </ul> <p>For participating students, spending more hours on #iwill projects per week appeared to be associated with higher average SEL scores in each domain.</p> <p><b>Tackling challenges and achieving goals</b></p> <p>#iwill students rated themselves higher on the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am a hard worker.</li> <li>• I will have a go at things that are new to me.</li> <li>• feel that I have a number of good qualities.</li> <li>• I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.</li> </ul> <p>Non-participants tended to score themselves more highly in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do not become interested in new pursuits every few months.</li> <li>• I have not been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.</li> <li>• I do not often set a goal and later choose to pursue a different one.</li> <li>• My interests do not change from year to year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Solving problems and working with others</b></p> <p>#iwill participants scored themselves more highly than non-participants, particularly in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.</li> <li>• I can solve most problems if I put in the necessary effort.</li> <li>• I try to understand how other people feel and think.</li> </ul>	<p>OAT administered a survey.</p> <p>Over 14,000 students across all Ormiston Academies responded to the survey, generating a response rate of just under 50%.</p> <p>The survey's design was informed both by validated measures of young peoples' social and emotional characteristics, as well as the draft of an Ormiston Academies Trust survey of students' social and emotional learning.</p> <p>While it is not possible to attribute causality for these higher scores to the #iwill project, there was a statistically significant relationship between whether or not a pupil had participated in #iwill-funded activities and their scores on SEL questions in each domain.</p> <p>To note, as surveys were administered only at the end of the programme it is unclear whether those who participate in #iwill-funded activities might simply have higher SEL scores than those who don't participate.</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I try to understand what other people go through.</li><li>• It is important to think before you act.</li></ul> <p>Non-participants scored themselves more highly in one area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other people do not decide what happens to me.</li></ul> <p><b>Agency over the future, the school, the community</b></p> <p>#iwill participants were more likely to score themselves positively than non-participants on every statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I feel confident to be able to make positive choices for my future.</li><li>• I have goals and plans for my future.</li></ul> <p>The biggest difference in the proportion of positive responses was in the following area:</p> <p>I can help make positive changes in my school community (participants 83%, non-participants 65%).</p>	
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	<p><b>Sport England</b> collected self-report data on the impact of the programme. The following percentages represent the proportion of young people that reported there was a positive impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with life 70% (N=1,475)</li> <li>• Happiness yesterday 68% (N=1,473)</li> <li>• Things are worthwhile 68% (N=1,451)</li> <li>• Achieve most goals 69% (N=1,465)</li> <li>• Confident to have a go 76% (N=1,468)</li> <li>• Satisfaction with myself 61% (N=1,463)</li> <li>• Ability to bounce back 66% (N=1,464)</li> <li>• Motivate/influence others 76% (N=1,028)</li> <li>• Valuable skills/experience 69% (N=287)</li> <li>• Neighbourhood belonging 45% (N=694)</li> <li>• People can be trusted 49% (N=1,450)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sport England</b> collected self-report data at the end of the programme.</p> <p>N is the base for the number of respondents for each question.</p> <p>Sport England collected data through their national evaluation up to April 2021.</p>
	<p><b>HAYN</b> Young leaders programme collected survey data and reported the percentage of young people that “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had improved in the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 52% increased agency for change</li> <li>• 49% increased sense of opportunity</li> <li>• 44% increased desire to help others</li> <li>• 44% increased desire for new opportunities</li> <li>• 38% increased self-belief</li> </ul> <p><b>HAYN</b> also collected pre-and-post survey data. The following outcomes shows the percentage increase in how many young people agreed they had the following outcomes at the end of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire for civic participation 13%</li> <li>• Leadership 12%</li> <li>• Aspirations 11%</li> <li>• Communication 10%</li> </ul>	<p>HAYN collected post-programme data from 223 young people.</p> <p>Pre-and-post survey data was collected from 230 young people.</p> <p>To note, it is unclear whether the same young people completed both survey timepoints and data was matched.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving 9%</li> <li>• Confidence &amp; agency 8%</li> <li>• Creativity 7%</li> <li>• Resilience 7%</li> <li>• Empathy 2%</li> <li>• Educational motivation 2%</li> <li>• Relationship building 1%</li> </ul>	
<p>Civic-societal</p>	<p><b>Spirit of 2012</b> reported that YW&amp;G showed a statistically significant improvement in their <b>ability to make a positive difference where they live and to lead change:</b></p> <p>We saw an increase in agreement with the following statements, measuring leadership, community agency, and empowerment:</p> <p><b>Leadership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel comfortable taking the lead in small groups” increased from 38% to 57%.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I can make a positive difference to where I live” increased from 40% to 60%.</li> </ul> <p><b>Optimism</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I feel happy when I think about my future” increased from 48% to 66%</li> </ul> <p><b>Community cohesion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 54% YW&amp;G felt a greater sense of trust in the local community.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social mixing:</b></p>	<p><b>Spirit of 2012</b> undertook pre-and-post entry and exit surveys. (n=366)</p> <p>Change in all 3 social cohesion indicators was statistically significant.</p> <p>Change in young people’s leadership and community agency was statistically significant.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>47% YW&amp;G felt they are more “often meeting” people that are different to themselves.</li> </ul> <p><b>Social cohesion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>47% YW&amp;G felt more accepted by people they spend their time with.</li> </ul> <p>66% of youth workers stated that the programme enhanced and improved relationships between the young person and the local community</p>	
Employment	No studies identified in this period	
Education	No studies identified in this period	

Outcomes for Community	New evidence in the last quarter	Further questions to consider/points to note
Community Benefit	No studies identified in this period	
Societal Benefit	No studies identified in this period	
Reflexive Benefit	No studies identified in this period	
Organisational Benefit	73% of youth workers interviewed as part of the <b>Spirit of 2012</b> expressed that the programme improved links with local organisations	Spirit undertook pre-and-post entry and exit surveys with youth workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33 entry surveys</li> <li>41 exit surveys</li> <li>18 matched surveys</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Types or features of YSA which increase the chances of outcomes

### Impact of time

OAT<sup>vi</sup> shared that students who spent more hours on #iwill-funded projects per week appeared to have higher outcomes in social and emotional learning scores. Similarly, staff described that students who joined the projects halfway through the project seemed to derive fewer benefits than students who had taken part in the full project from inception to delivery. Thus, more time may be beneficial for both providers and young people taking part in social action.

### Accreditations

HAYN<sup>vii</sup> survey suggests that gaining additional qualifications has no consistent effect on a young person reporting personal gain from youth social action. However, it may be because these gains would be realised in the future, beyond the evaluation period. Although it is uncertain whether

accreditations increase the chance of personal outcomes, the importance of celebrating young people’s achievements should not be disregarded. Indeed, other match funders such as *Team London*<sup>viii</sup> and *Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> noted that receiving recognition for their YSA has consistently been a highlight of their programmes.

### Youth-led opportunities

Through interviews with young people, *HAYN*’s<sup>vii</sup> young leadership programme highlighted that youth-led opportunities provided young people with leadership opportunities and real-life opportunities to grow through. This was proposed to drive the self-reported increase of outcomes in communication, leadership, aspirations, and desire for civic participation and is in line with the quality principle of youth social action being youth-led.

Similarly, *OAT*<sup>vi</sup> qualitative interviews with staff suggested that the emphasis on student leadership, guided by an #iwill lead, contributed to students’ sense of agency.

However, *HAYN*<sup>vii</sup> noted that the emphasis on youth-led leadership in the programme may mean that consistent and long-term *community impact* is less likely to occur. The diversity of the types of projects chosen and delivered by young people, a core component of the young leadership programme, means that the type and quality of impact were very different across the portfolio of projects. As such, although YSA being youth-led may drive personal outcomes, it does not necessarily increase community impact.

### Personal relevance of projects

*OAT*<sup>vi</sup> staff relayed that changes in outcomes in agency and students feeling that they can make change happen were particularly pronounced for students with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. It was suggested that taking part in social action that was directly relevant to the students’ experiences and backgrounds, and subsequently seeing a direct impact on that, changed the students’ perceptions of their role in the world.

*"The whole point of Ormiston as an academy trust is to help those students that come from potentially more deprived areas, isn't it? So, to be showing students their impact on the wider world is a really, really empowering thing that we're doing for them with the #iwill projects."* – *OAT* staff

## 2.4 Double benefit

The majority of match funders reported that they provided training for staff. *OAT*<sup>vi</sup> noted that this could be seen as a double benefit, with #iwill creating professional development opportunities for staff involved in the programme.

## 3. How do we support youth social action for all?

*A summary of our learning on this question prior to this review can be found in Appendix 1.*

### 3.1 Background

Our paper on the [socio-economic participation gap in youth social action<sup>ix</sup>](#) sets out the data on the fact that young people from lower-income backgrounds are less likely to participate in social action. It also lays out the external evidence about what drives, and can help close, this gap.

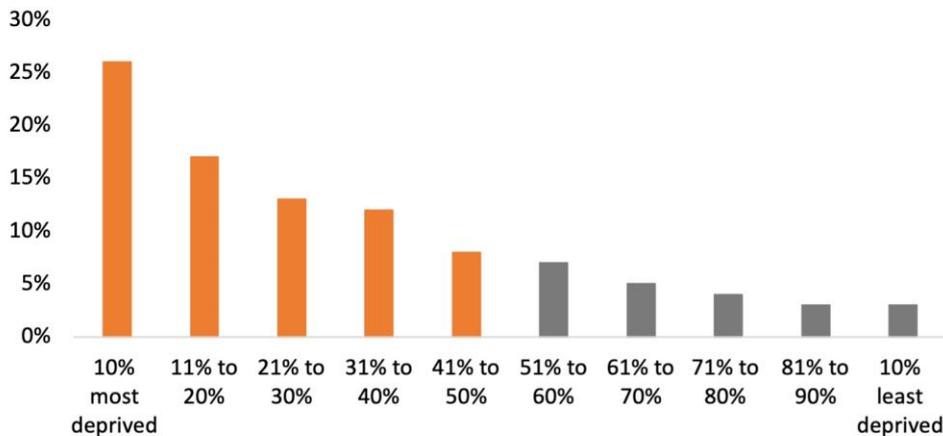
Alongside closing the socio-economic participation gap, the #iwill Fund aims to support younger children (less than 14 years of age) into social action.

### 3.2 Reach of the #iwill Fund

#### 3.2.1 Deprivation

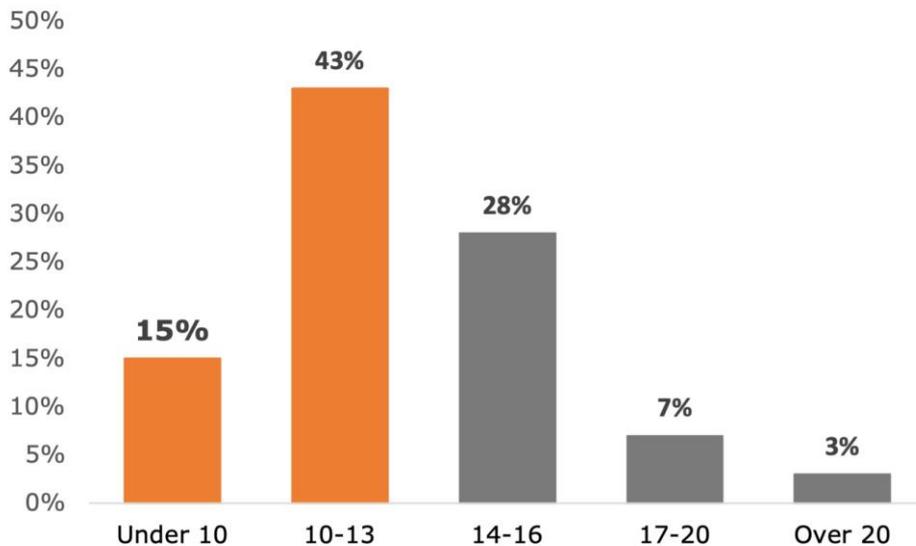
The #iwill Fund investment driver of engaging (which covers recruitment, retention, completion, and transition) more young people from lower socio-economic groups to participate in youth social action has translated into an increase in the number of social action opportunities taking place in the most deprived postcodes in the UK.

The #iwill Fund has supported **more opportunities for YSA in deprived postcodes** than affluent ones.



#### 3.2.2 Age

Over half of the youth social action opportunities supported through the #iwill Fund have been for children younger than 14. However, the vast majority of opportunities supported through the Fund have been for children and young people of secondary school age (between 10 and 16 years old).



### 3.3 Funding access

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and many YSA opportunities moving online, many match funders created funds that enabled digital inclusion. *Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> reported that their “Access Fund” was crucial in enabling young people in accessing and meaningfully engaging in the programme, ranging from providing access to transport to digital devices. Digital exclusion and other barriers remain an issue that reaches beyond the pandemic. *Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> asserted that providing individual grants is an effective, and crucial, enabler to overcoming barriers to access and thus ‘access funding’ will remain a core part of their approach going forward.

### 3.4 Engaging young people from deprived areas and low-income families

*HAYN*<sup>vii</sup> noted that on average, children with personal barriers and from more deprived areas completed more hours of youth social action than their peers. It was suggested that once they have been engaged, they have more motivation or desire to deliver projects that help improve where they live. Additionally, accessing youth social action through housing associations may be a strong avenue to engage young people from deprived areas.

*OAT*<sup>vi</sup> reported varying levels of engagement for disadvantaged students in #iwill. One academy was unable to sustain engagement over lockdown due to digital exclusion. Another academy suggested that they had difficulty with engaging disadvantaged students due to social action topics such as food poverty being “too close to the bone”. This contrasts with *OAT*’s<sup>vi</sup> hypothesis that outcomes for disadvantaged students are driven by participation in activities that are relevant to their own lives, or at least suggests that such issues must be handled with sensitivity.

### 3.5 Engaging children and young people younger than 14

*HAYN*<sup>vii</sup> shared that their mini ambassadors’ programme was a great success in engaging those aged 5-11 in youth social action. For online delivery, rather than communicating to children directly,

WhatsApp groups were used to liaise with parents. It was emphasised that the application of a “youth-led” principle with children aged 5-11 looks different than applying it with older participants. For younger children, the ultimate goal and project idea can still be youth-led, but the implementation and project plan need to be led by youth workers and teachers to ensure that children and the community benefit from the project.

### 3.6 Digital Delivery

Although *Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> reported that many young people preferred face to face sessions their evaluation indicates that digital delivery did not substantially impact levels of engagement or reduce the amount of time spent on the programme.

## 4. How can we support quality Youth Social Action?

The Impact Accelerator, delivered by the Centre for Youth Impact, is an intensive process of impact support, challenge and development – 3 cohorts of grantee organisations will be supported in total. Learning from these organisations is being shared more widely to spread knowledge about improvement across the youth social action landscape.

Whilst the Impact Accelerator is our main source of understanding how we can support quality Youth Social Action, we gained some reflections from Match Funders’ reports about what they think supports quality.

### 4.1 Training

Match Funders highlighted training as an important aspect for upholding quality youth social action. This was often delivered by specialist professionals or organisations, whether it be internal or external, and covered topics ranging bereavement and trauma to using various online platforms for delivery. *Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> noted that this was well received by youth workers - for many of whom the pandemic has both changed the nature of delivery and increased the level and complexity of support needed by young people.

### 4.2 Protected and funded staff time

Match funders reported that funding and protecting the time of staff is critical in supporting quality youth social action. *HAYN*<sup>ii</sup> highlighted that funding youth worker time was crucial in the popularity of the programme with grassroots youth organisations while *OAT*<sup>vi</sup> head office staff suggested that #iwill leads having protected time stemmed from a decision to pay leads.

### 4.3 Long-term funding

HAYN<sup>ii</sup> reported that long term investment in social action projects was key in embedding capabilities within youth social action organisations. Those with multi-year funding were able to build up internal expertise, supportive partnerships, and understanding of how to develop quality youth social action. Whereas organisations with one-year funding were said to have only one opportunity to deliver programmes and therefore had to learn as they went along.

#### 4.4 Core and flex approach

*Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> noted that the enablers for quality youth social action remained the same for online and offline delivery. This emphasised the value of a programme having a clear model or theory of change which articulates the 'core' and 'flexible' components for a quality youth social action opportunity.

#### 4.5 Digital Delivery

*Spirit of 2012*<sup>iii</sup> reported that the key to successful online sessions was interactivity and fun:

"We added a new dimension to our work, we found new ways to engage with girls. Last week we had an illustrator teach us how to express our emotions with drawings." *EmpowHER* youth worker

Overall, *Spirit of 2012*'s<sup>iii</sup> evaluation found that digital delivery impacts the YW&G experience of youth social action but not necessarily the outcomes. Similarly, other match funders used various and creative methods for remote delivery (such as podcasts or radio shows) to keep young people engaged.

#### 4.6 Peer learning and support

Match funders emphasised that peer learning and support opportunities were not only valuable for young people but also for delivery staff. *VMF*<sup>x</sup> reported that having a social action learning circle for staff without the presence of the match funder created a safe and open space for staff to discuss challenges.

## Appendix 1. Summary of Evidence Plan Questions

The #iwill Fund Learning Hub exists to harness the evidence and learning generated by the wave of youth social action opportunities supported through the #iwill Fund. Our Data Review papers synthesise the learning and evidence from within, and external to, the #iwill Fund through the lens of our Strategic Evidence Plan questions. The Learning Hub developed the questions in consultation with stakeholders in the #iwill Fund – Match Funders, their evaluation partners, and the Leadership Board.

The boxes below summarise our emerging answers to the Strategic Evidence Plan questions. These answers are based on previous Data Reviews and are updated here in light of new evidence and data that has been generated by the #iwill Fund since the most recent Review. New content appears in **bold**.

### What is youth social action?

- **Is there a useful typology of youth social action that can cover both the nature and aims of an activity?**
- **What kinds of youth social action have been supported through the #iwill Fund?**
- **What are common theories of change**

- Youth social action is a deliberately broad term, and new. One result is that some grantees do not understand what is meant by the terms 'social action' and 'youth-led'. This implies a need to promote a shared understanding of these terms for that delivery organisations can develop viable youth social action proposition for funding.
- The most common way in which young people are able to lead youth social action opportunities is by making decisions and choices within the programme. Some opportunities enable young people to apply directly for funding, take a lead in assessing funding applications or get involved in evaluation and research.
- Youth social action is best understood by considering a range of typologies that highlight different features of the practice.
- The Information Management System also allows us to build a (developing) picture of the opportunities being supported by the #iwill Fund.
- We believe that understanding Theories of Change across funds and delivery organisations will allow us to say more about the different functions and forms of youth social action.

## What does youth social action do?

5. Which positive outcomes have been shown to be promoted by youth social action for young people, children and communities?
6. Can we say there are types or features of youth social action which increase chances of outcomes?
7. How can double benefit be managed?

- In general, the evidence base for the impact of youth social action on young people's outcomes is in the early stages of development.
- Particular areas of confidence, however, are around employment skills and civic and political engagement, where evidence suggests that youth social action can be effective in promoting positive outcomes.
- We cannot conclude from the evidence to date that participation in youth social action improves attainment in educational assessments, although there is some evidence it can affect non-attainment outcomes such as teamwork and self-confidence.
- Early insights from opportunities supported by the #iwill Fund suggest that youth social action may be able to promote young people's wellbeing by helping young people to find meaning in their life and actions.
- The evidence base for the community benefit of youth social action is underdeveloped relative to other potential benefits.
- Our analysis of Match Funder reports to the #iwill Fund identifies three mechanisms through which youth social action programmes supported through the #iwill Fund aim to achieve outcomes for young people.
  - Young people have a safe yet challenging space in which to develop practical, vocational and socio-emotional skills.
  - Young people take self-directed action which gives them a sense of purpose that contributes to their wellbeing, self-concept and self-efficacy.
  - Young people have the opportunity to engage with different communities, increasing their knowledge of others and their sense of belonging.

## How do we support youth social action for all?

8. How do we reach children and young people from backgrounds known to be less likely to participate?
9. How do we engage children and young people younger than 14?
10. How do we initiate youth social action in 'cold spots' (geographies/sectors/institutions), and how can youth social action activity be sustained?
11. How do we support children and young people to transition between youth social action opportunities?
12. What are the pros and cons of digital delivery for reaching *all* young people?

- In 2018, 40% of young people (10-20 years old) from the most affluent backgrounds took part in some form of social action compared with 30% of the least affluent.
- The #iwill Fund has supported more youth social action opportunities in deprived postcodes than affluent ones.
- The most common engagement strategy the Match Funders report supporting is *targeted universalism*, which appears to be an effective way of reaching young people from lower socio-economic groups.
- Charitable funders and delivery organisations that seek to close the socio-economic gap must be conscious of the fact that it is due to self-reinforcing patterns of behaviour and therefore requires an intentional response that is implemented consistently and with sufficient resource.
- The #iwill Fund has supported a higher concentration of opportunities in urban area, particularly in London.
- **Reports from Match Funders have mentioned being able to engage and reach a wider range of young people, with digital delivery, including those living in rural and remote areas.**
- **Factors including digital exclusion and barriers to finding an uninterrupted space to access online sessions impede on accessing digital youth social action.**

## How can we support quality youth social action?

13. What can we say about the strengths and weaknesses of youth social action providers in aggregate?
14. What do we know about how to support youth social action providers to improve?
15. How can digital delivery support the quality principles?

- Shared quality improvement challenges for the field include managing and monitoring implementation fidelity, measuring impact and learning from this and sharing learning across the field.
- Organisations within the Impact Accelerator benefitted from support to integrate youth social action into their theory of change, and to define what is 'core' and 'flex' within their programmes.
- The #iwill Campaign quality principle of youth-led opportunities can be implemented at different levels. Funders with a commitment to supporting youth-led social action should consider how to adapt all of their processes to enable young people to be part of leadership and decision-making.

<sup>i</sup> Dartington Service Design Lab (2019). *Towards a Typology of Youth Social Action*. #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

<sup>ii</sup>JLGB (2021) *A revolution in youth volunteering: Mid year report (Year 3 of 3)*. Internal Document.

<sup>iii</sup>EmpoweHER (2021). *EmpowerHER Cohort 4 Report*. Internal Document.

<sup>iv</sup>Scouts (2021). *Evaluating the scaling of early years provision in Scouting*. Internal Document.

<sup>v</sup> Dartington Service Design Lab (2019). *Community Benefit and Youth Social Action*. #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

<sup>vi</sup>OAT (2021). *Ormiston Academies Trust's #iwill programme*. Internal Document.

<sup>vii</sup> HAYN (2021). *Impact and Learning Annual Report*. Internal Document.

<sup>viii</sup> Team London Young Ambassadors (2021). *Team London Young Ambassadors (TLYA) Research & Best Practice Report*. Internal Document.

<sup>ix</sup> Dartington Service Design Lab (2019). *The Socio-Economic Participation Gap in Youth Social Action*. #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

<sup>x</sup>Virgin Money Foundation (2021). *Report to the National Lottery Community Fund on the Virgin Money foundation #iwill Take Action programme – year three*. Internal Document.