

Proudly supporting
youth social action



Department for
Digital, Culture
Media & Sport



Supporting Youth Social Action in Schools: #iwill Fund Learning Hub Brief

This is an abridged version of a longer report, which can be accessed on the Dartington Service Design Lab website. This brief has been created for funders outside of the #iwill Fund that are interested in supporting youth social action in schools.

Context

The #iwill Fund is supporting a great deal of youth social action ('practical action in the service of others to create positive change') in schools. Evidence suggests that schools are the most effective and equitable route to reach as many young people as possible, from diverse backgrounds, to take up youth social action opportunities:

1. An estimated 59% of young people who participated in social action in 2017 got involved through their school or college.
2. School is a more important driver of participation for young people in lower socio-economic categories (C, D and E).ⁱ

But there is more to do:

1. Analysis of data collected by the National Youth Social Action Survey found that "If I could do it at school/ college/ university/ work" was the second most popular answer to the question 'what would encourage you to take part [in social action]'; the first most popular being 'if I could do it with my friends'.ⁱⁱ
2. There is a significant socio-economic gap in teacher's perceptions of their school's social action culture. 27% of Primary teachers in schools with a high percentage of pupils who are eligible for free school meals saying social action is embedded. This compares with 57% of Primary teachers in schools with a low rate of free school meals.ⁱⁱⁱ

In trying to reach more young people through schools, we have the opportunity to learn from funders, professionals and delivery organisations who have a track record in this area. In Autumn 2018, the #iwill Fund Learning Hub drew representatives from these groups to:

- Explore the barriers and enablers to increasing the amount of quality youth social action within education.
- Develop responses to these which could be taken forward, particularly by funders.

How to support quality youth social action in schools:

This work identified four principles for those looking to support quality youth social action in schools, as well as suggestions for how these could be put into practice (please read the full report for these suggestions):

Understand and emphasise benefits for schools

The term 'triple benefit' describes the potential for youth social action to have a positive effect on young people, the wider community *and schools*. Youth social action can support school improvement and is a way in which the pupils can 'do their bit' to improve a school, alongside teachers and leadership.

In addition there is evidence that youth social action can improve some of the key outcomes that schools are Ofsted-inspected on - including attainment.

Those looking to expand the reach of, and embed, youth social action in the education sector should understand and ensure that schools can see the triple benefit available.

Use peer networks

Education practitioners described having been convinced of the value of youth social action, in general or specific programmes, by peers in the field. Peer effects are crucial: either word-of-mouth or when school leads observe others they respect adopting youth social action practices in their school(s).

Those looking to expand the reach of youth social action in the education sector should use teacher and head teacher peer networks to do this.

Support clear communication with schools

Some schools will engage external providers to facilitate at least a part of the youth social action offer. Assessing which external provider is right can be challenging.

Schools want guidance about what good quality youth social action 'looks like', how to assess whether a provider can offer this, and about how to evaluate the success of what actually is delivered. They also want the full costs, including internal resourcing requirements, of working with external partners to be explicit.

Funders looking to increase youth social action in schools can undertake actions to support schools in getting this guidance.

Build capacity for in-school delivery

It is easy to think that increasing social action in schools requires delivery organisations. But schools already deliver a lot of social action and funders can also seek to build capacity within schools to deliver their own youth social action.

Quality in-school delivery requires resource. In primary schools, in particular, this would be teacher resource. Protecting this in a time of constrained budgets can be challenging for schools.

Funders can support schools to deliver youth social action themselves and, where possible, strengthen in-school delivery with ring-fenced resources.

For more information about the #iwill Fund or the #iwill Fund Learning Hub please visit the National Lottery Community Fund website.

ⁱ Money, Bartels and Hallenbrand (2017) Understanding the Drivers and Barriers of Youth Volunteering: Leveraging and Assessing Existing Data

ⁱⁱ Orlic, Knibbs and Michelmore (2017) The National Youth Social Action Survey 2017 Key Driver Analysis

ⁱⁱⁱ National Foundation for Educational Research (2017) Teacher Voice Omnibus