

# How involvement in Youth Social Action benefits young people

Lessons from the #iwill Youth Social Action Fund



Proudly supporting youth social action



Department for  
Digital, Culture  
Media & Sport



COMMUNITY  
FUND



wavehill™  
social and economic research

## What is Youth Social Action?

Social action involves activities such as campaigning, fundraising and volunteering, all of which enable young people to make a difference in their communities as well as develop their own skills and knowledge.

### Introduction to the #iwill Youth Social Action Fund

The #iwill Fund was made possible thanks to £54 million joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action. In 2017 Comic Relief partnered with the #iwill Fund to create the #iwill Youth Social Action Fund - a £2.4million fund that would provide opportunities for underrepresented young people to participate in social action.

The #iwill Youth Social Action fund provided support to sixteen organisations (funded partners) to deliver youth social action projects. These projects targeted young people from groups who are commonly underrepresented in YSA.

Based on the experiences of funded partners and young people, this short summary sets out effective methods and common challenges encountered in engaging underrepresented groups in YSA.

### The Funded Projects

The #iwill Youth Social Action Fund created more than 5,500 opportunities for young people to participate in youth social action projects, through projects delivered through 16 organisations ('funded partners').



The 16 funded projects engaged with a wide variety of groups who are underrepresented in youth social action. This included young people from the following groups:

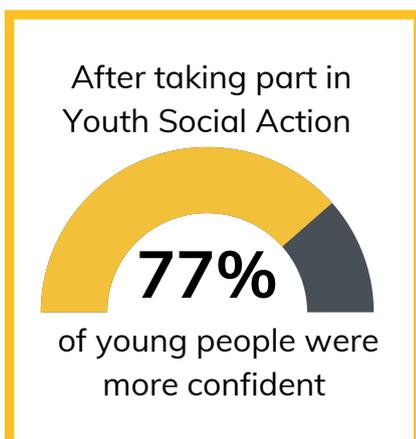
- Men
- Socio-economically disadvantaged young people
- Young carers
- Care experienced young people
- Disabled young people
- Young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- Asylum seekers and refugees.

## How can Youth Social Action benefit young people?

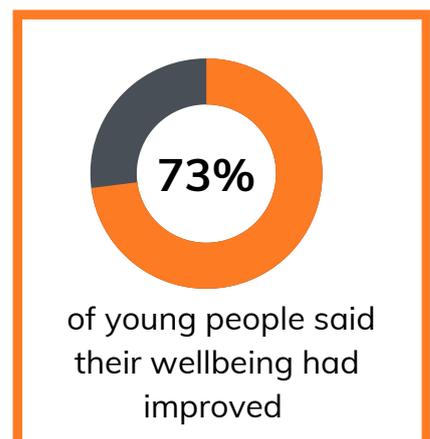
Involvement in YSA can benefit young people's development in a number of ways. It can:

- Help young people to find belonging and a sense of community
- Increase their confidence
- Increase their sense of agency and self-worth
- Support young people to widen their aspirations and improved employability skills
- Provide opportunities to improve mental health and wellbeing
- Contribute to development of skills; and
- Further young people's involvement in social action by giving them the confidence they can make a change.

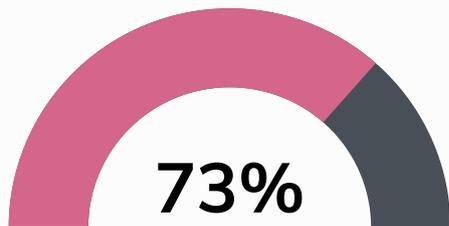
In this short summary we have set out how involvement in YSA supported the development of young people who had been involved in YSA projects funded through the #iwill Youth Social Action Fund.



“ It gave me more confidence. I can now speak about issues and not be second guessing myself. It helped me to see issues from another angle, beyond my own lived experience. ”



## Agency & Self belief

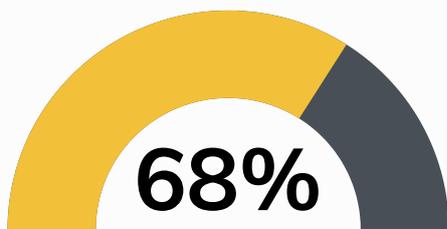


of young people had increased agency or self-belief

Involvement in YSA helped young people to see that their voices were valued, and had contributed to improvements in self-belief.

This highlights the benefit of a Youth Social Action model where organisations are supporting groups who may have experienced disempowerment. YSA has the potential to show young people they can bring about and influence change.

## Widening Aspirations



of young people had developed or widened their aspirations

“

When we first met them they were completely quiet. Had strong ideas, but didn't know what to do with them or didn't think they were useful. [...] Now we have 3 young people who have gone off to university, who never thought they'd be able to do that. [...] through the project a lot of young people have realised that their mental health doesn't define them and it doesn't mean they can't do what they want to do.

*Project delivery staff*

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## The confidence to make change

Involvement in YSA had given young people access to opportunities where they were listened to. This had helped participants to see that their voices were valuable and that they could bring about change.

71% were confident they could bring about change in their community



“

The team are always reflecting on what we're wanting, and what could change. And it's not tokenistic where you ask us and you don't do anything. Everything gets actioned on. It makes you feel like you have a lot more power. And that helps outside, coz you know that people listen to you.

*Young person*

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