

#iWill Learning Fund Impact evaluation

Interim Report

This report presents the first interim summary of the #iwill Fund impact evaluation and learning contract.

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Table of Contents

<i>Executive summary</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Methods</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Young Evaluators Network</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Data portal</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Case studies</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Value for Money.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Appendix.....</i>	<i>50</i>

Executive summary

The #iwill Fund is an England wide joint investment. The funding involved bringing together £66 million in funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and The National Lottery Community Fund to create a central investment pot. This is then matched 1:1 by Match Funders to increase the investment in YSA programmes for 10–20-year-olds and encourage collaborative working and targeted investment. These programmes create opportunities for young people to take part in high-quality Youth Social Action (YSA) opportunities across the country, from all backgrounds and areas and to reach those who have not previously taken part in sustained YSA.

In addition to funding projects directly, one of the key purposes of the #iwill Fund is to create a learning environment which develops a collective understanding of YSA, quality provision and impact. The aim of this work is to build an organisation's capability and capacity to use evidence to inform their delivery. This is seen as a key in supporting the delivery of high-quality provision and in facilitating the sustainability of YSA in the longer term.

This report is an interim progress update on the progress of #iwill Fund impact evaluation which runs from 2022 to 2027. This report builds on a one year feasibility and set up phase underpinning the #iwill Fund impact evaluation which detailed the initial project set up, methodological details and timelines. As data collection is at an early stage at the time of writing this first interim report (June 2024), this report summarised progress to date across each work strand separately, with further details on early findings provided in the body of the report.

The evaluation gathers and appraises evidence for the influence of the #iwill Fund and associated YSA activities on young people taking part, communities who benefit from YSA activities, and organisations who support young people to undertake YSA. The #iwill Fund impact evaluation is being conducted by a four-member consortium including Dartington Service Design Lab, Ipsos MORI, YMCA George Williams College and Renaisi (now Renaisi-TSIP). It is supported by a steering group comprised of Match Funders, The National Lottery Community Fund and DCMS staff, sector experts, and also a Leadership Board which additionally includes young person representatives.

The evaluation is guided by the following questions:

1. What were the different types of YSA opportunities young people engaged in during the programme period? What was the profile of the young people involved (e.g. age, background, geographical area), how many took part and with how much intensity?
2. What was the impact of #iwill Fund projects on young people and their communities?
3. What were the benefits experienced by young people e.g. socio-emotional, employment, educational, civic-societal etc?
4. What was the impact on Match Funders and delivery partners from the #iwill Fund's convening and other support?

5. What is the added value of funders collaborating to fund and deliver YSA programmes?
6. What benefits were experienced by Match Funders and delivery partners as a result of engaging with the #iwill Fund?
7. What was the overall value for money of the #iwill Fund?

These questions are being addressed through the triangulation of evidence from:

The impact data portal (led by YMCA George Williams College) - captures organisational monitoring information and survey data on young people's outcomes (research questions #1,2,3 and 7).

Case studies (led by Renaisi-TSIP) – 15 qualitative case studies in total (5 per delivery phase) collect data at different levels of the Match Funder ecosystem, to deepen understanding about the impact of YSA on young people, communities and other local actors as well as how and why, and in what contexts these outcomes arise (research questions #2-6).

Cost effectiveness analyses (led by Ipsos MORI) - this strand explores the measurement of community outcomes and possibilities for future economic analysis of these, as well as evidence for the current cost-effectiveness of different types of YSA (research question #7).

These work strands are underpinned by the Youth Evaluator Network (YEN, led by YMCA George Williams College) - a panel of young people who are involved in all elements of the impact evaluation.

Research questions 2-6 are being addressed through an established theory-led approach to evaluation, contribution analysis. This appraises whether, how, and for whom a particular initiative has contributed to a set of outcomes (as opposed to attribution-focused approaches such as quasi-experimental or experimental methods). While this approach aims to generate a credible narrative for the causal link between components of the #iwill Fund and outcomes for young people, communities and organisations, it also produces a detailed description of 'how' - the causal process that generates these outcomes. In doing so, it provides greater explanatory power to help better understand how to create the conditions for quality YSA, the ways in which YSA influences outcomes, and to appraise how this is affected by the context in which YSA is delivered.

The evaluation is taking place over three phases, in line with the iterative nature of contribution analysis. At the end of each phase, a 'pause and decide' process is undertaken to reflect on learning so far, and to refine the focus of the next phase. This report reflects the progress made in evaluation phase 1 (2023-2024).

Progress to date

Young Evaluators Network (YEN) - 11 young people were recruited to join the YEN, led by YMCA George Williams College. Engagement has been maintained through monthly online meetings, regular one-to-ones, and two “residentials”. These multi-day events, where young people come together in person, have supported skills development in research methodology and interview skills. YEN members fed into the development of research materials and sampling for the qualitative case studies. At the time of writing, YEN members have joined online interviews and two have been involved in site visits. A small number have also been involved in blog writing about their experience of the project, taken part in learning strand activities and project strategic meetings. There have been challenges in maintaining engagement with changes to initial project timelines and coordinating with other demands on young people’s time and several mitigations to address these are detailed in the report.

Impact data portal – this has been built by YMCA George Williams College, in close collaboration with Match Funders, evaluation consortium partners, and The National Lottery Community Fund. This involved developing a shared set of measures, testing the survey and the portal with young people and Match Funders, and then onboarding Match Funders onto the portal. As of June 2024, two Match Funders have submitted data for multiple opportunities and participants. The ‘opportunity survey’ records basic data about the opportunity, type and setting, and the extent of participant engagement. The ‘young person survey’ records demographic data, perceptions of social action, socioemotional skills and life satisfaction, as well as some bespoke questions added by Match Funders. The survey is administered at the beginning and end of any opportunity, to capture change in the participants’ outcomes over time. Emerging findings from baseline surveys linked to two Match Funders are presented later in this report.

Case studies - five Match Funder organisations were sampled in phase 1 capturing diversity in organisation type, level of familiarity with YSA, regional coverage, grant size, and types of children and young people they engage/type of social issues they target. These were: the #iwill Movement, Bite Back 2030 2030, Clarion Futures, Diana Award and Global Action Plan. Research materials were co-designed with the YEN, aiming to capture organisational, young person and community perspectives. This is being achieved through a series of scoping interviews with all Match Funders, site visits to delivery organisations, in person and online interviews with young people and staff, and interviews with community members. At the time of writing, Renaisi-TSIP (alongside the YEN) have engaged 12 staff members, 31 young people, and two community members.

Value for Money (VfM) – Initial scoping work explored the possibility of monetising the direct benefits of youth participants in a robust way. From this, it was decided that the #iwill Fund should explore alternative approaches which meet Match Funder and delivery organisations’ needs, while providing useful evidence for the assessment of the #iwill Fund in value for money terms. Following the feasibility phase and Leadership Board feedback, the VfM assessment will demonstrate the return on investment of the #iwill Fund across a range of outcomes that cover all age groups of participants instead of ‘Value for Money’. This involves 1) cost-effectiveness analysis and 2) developing a bespoke tool to capture community benefits using social value analysis that could be

used for economic evaluation. Progress towards the latter has involved synthesising existing literature on the relative social value created by different types of programmes, combined with guidance on how these values can be incorporated into future economic evaluations. This tool will be designed to support Leadership Board decision making and inform programme design in future projects. This will help to ensure optimal use of #iwill Funds on those social action activities which provide the most benefits to communities as well as enabling ongoing monitoring and assessment of three sets of outcomes, as outlined in the VfM section below: (1) Loneliness in communities (2) Improving the local environment and (3) Encouraging participation for sport and cultural activities.

What we know so far

The findings at the time of writing this report are very early stage, reflecting the fact that data had just started to be collected following an extensive project set up phase. This means it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions or recommendations because they may be misleading without further supporting evidence. However, a summary of emerging findings relevant to the research questions is provided below.

What are the different types of YSA opportunities young people have engaged in and what was the profile of the young people involved, how many have taken part?

Not all programmes had started delivery at the time the data included in this report were collected. Only two Match Funders had begun to upload information to the Data Portal. These were both school-based initiatives, one focused on campaigning for food standards and nutrition, and one on mentoring. Ages of participation ranged from 11-17 years, of which a small majority identified as female (52-55%), and larger majority as white (68.76%). Data available suggested opportunities were fairly spread across levels of area deprivation with some indication of a skew towards more deprived areas. A total of 366 young person surveys had been returned. This does not reflect the number who had taken part, as further surveys as well as data on numbers participating were forthcoming at the time of writing.

What was the impact of #iwill Fund projects on young people and their communities? And, what were the benefits experienced by young people e.g., socio-emotional, employment, educational, civic-societal etc?

Pre-post survey data were not yet available to appraise the influence of YSA on young people's outcomes. Available data indicates that there was a lot of variation between young people taking part in the opportunities offered by these two Match Funders in baseline levels of neighbourhood belonging, life satisfaction and attitudes towards social action. Further information on context and pre-post comparisons will help to explore this in more depth. Case study data to date identified that as a result of their YSA young people felt empowered to make a positive difference, as well as a sense of purpose and achievement linked to making tangible change. They also spoke about developing new practical, teamwork, communication, and leadership skills linked to their activities. Last, there was variety in the extent to which YSA activities involved engaged with wider community groups and therefore understanding of how young people felt able to engage in their 'community' varies. Further work will explore what contexts and circumstances shape the influence of YSA activities on young people and their communities.

What was the impact on Match Funders and delivery partners from the #iwill

Fund's convening and other support? And, what benefits were experienced by Match Funders and delivery partners as a result of engaging with the #iwill Fund? And, what is the added value of funders collaborating to fund and deliver YSA programmes?

Due to their overlap, these questions are addressed together though further case study data will allow for greater nuance. Match Funders appreciated that The National Lottery Community Fund and DCMS were flexible in understanding and supporting changes to plans and approaches which allowed them to be responsive to local and national contexts. Some Match Funders and delivery organisations felt the Match Funding model enabled them to expand their reach in new ways, providing connections with new partners and unlocking additional investments. However, they also felt that more opportunities to collaborate, share learning and create a sense of collective movement would be beneficial.

Relationships between Match Funders and Delivery organisations were key. For Match Funders, recruitment and initial set-up of an external delivery partner could present challenges where they had no prior relationship to #iwill Fund, requiring more time to familiarise and align partners with the Fund and core YSA principles. Delivery organisations felt that collaborative and reflexive relationships that were more equal and mutually beneficial partnerships rather than 'top-down' relationships with their Match Funder were key to successful YSA. Larger Match funders can also offer strategic leverage for smaller community organisations and facilitates their working together to achieve more than they might have the capacity to alone.

What was the overall value for money of the #iwill Fund? (scoping feasibility of addressing this question)

Initial scoping work explored the possibility of monetising the direct benefits of youth participants in a robust way. Based on this scoping work and an assessment of feasibility, the VfM assessment is not feasible and will instead aim to demonstrate the return on investment of the #iwill Fund across a range of outcomes that cover all age groups of participants. This involves 1) cost-effectiveness analysis and 2) developing a bespoke tool to capture community benefits using social value analysis that could be used for economic evaluation. This requires a method for assessing the indirect benefits of the project on groups of beneficiaries of social action in social value terms. This report sets out our progress towards the second product, to develop a bespoke tool to enable the estimation of community benefit of volunteering in monetary terms. The report provides details of testing the approach using hypothetical scenarios.

Introduction

The #iwill Fund is an England wide joint investment. The funding involved bringing together £66 million in funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and The National Lottery Community Fund to create a central investment pot. Funding is distributed by working in partnership with a collaborative group of Match Funders, who match DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund funding £1:£1, to increase the investment in YSA programmes for 10-20 year-olds and encourage collaborative working and targeted investment. These programmes create opportunities for young people to take part in high-quality Youth Social Action (YSA) opportunities across the country, from all backgrounds and areas and to reach those who have not previously taken part in sustained YSA.

In addition to funding projects directly, one of the key purposes of the #iwill Fund is to create a learning environment which develops a collective understanding of YSA, quality provision and impact. The aim of this work is to build an organisation's capability and capacity to use evidence to inform their delivery. This is seen as a key in supporting the delivery of high-quality provision and in facilitating the sustainability of YSA in the longer term.

The #iwill Fund impact evaluation is an evaluation established by The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), spanning six years from 2022 until 2027. The aim of this interim report is to provide an update on the first year of the impact evaluation and learning contract for the #iwill Fund during 2023/2024 (building on the feasibility phase) covering initial set up and methodological planning that was undertaken between 2022 and 2023.

The evaluation gathers and appraises evidence for the influence of the #iwill Fund and associated Youth Social Action (YSA) activities on outcomes for young people, organisations and communities. The #iwill Fund impact evaluation is being conducted by a four-member consortium including Dartington Service Design Lab, Ipsos MORI, YMCA George Williams College and Renaisi (now Renaisi-TSIP). It is supported by a steering group comprised of Match Funders, The National Lottery Community Fund and DCMS staff, sector experts, and a Leadership Board which additionally includes young person representatives.

The current #iwill Fund impact evaluation follows a previous #iwill Fund Learning Hub project. The [Learning Hub project](#) included the development of a [shared definition of "Youth Social Action"](#) (YSA) and clarity around the essential components of YSA activities. It also collated [evidence on types of outcomes of YSA activities](#), including outcomes for young people, organisations, community and wider society (see Table 1), as well as the core mechanisms through which YSA activities influence those outcomes. Lastly, it identified ways to [enhance the accessibility of YSA](#), as well as a set of [six "Quality Principles"](#) underpinning and defining what 'high quality' YSA looks like. This offered examples of what the quality principles may look like in practice, and identified the need for greater understanding about how the quality principles could be implemented in different contexts and settings. Based on findings from the #iwill Fund

Learning Hub, an iteration of a high-level Theory of Change was developed. This was to be used as the basis for a theory-led approach (detailed below) to evaluating the influence of YSA opportunities for young people, organisations and communities. During the feasibility phase, the consortium initially set out a proposed methodological approach to the evaluation.

The evaluation specifically addresses the following initial questions:

1. What were the different types of YSA opportunities young people engaged in during the programme period? What was the profile of the young people involved (e.g., age, background, geographical area), how many took part and with how much intensity?
2. What was the impact of #iwill Fund projects on young people and their communities?
3. What were the benefits experienced by young people e.g., socio-emotional, employment, educational, civic-societal etc?
4. What was the impact on Match Funders and delivery partners from the #iwill Fund's convening and other support?
5. What is the added value of funders collaborating to fund and deliver YSA programmes?
6. What benefits were experienced by Match Funders and delivery partners as a result of engaging with the #iwill Fund?
7. What was the overall value for money of the #iwill Fund? The initial phase of the evaluation aimed to scope the feasibility of addressing this question.

There are five workstreams that feed into addressing these evaluation questions, three of which have been designed to generate and appraise research evidence:

Impact Data Portal (led by YMCA George Williams College) - the data portal captures organisational monitoring data and information on young people's outcomes for the #iwill Fund. It enables delivery organisations and Match Funders to upload YSA opportunities monitoring data and send out surveys to young people to capture outcome data.

Case studies (led by Renaisi-TSIP) – 15 qualitative case studies will be undertaken over three study phases. The case studies collect data at different levels of the Match Funder ecosystem, to deepen understanding about the impact of YSA on young people, communities and other local actors as well as how and why, and in what contexts these outcomes arise or not.

Value for Money (led by Ipsos MORI) - this strand explores the measurement of community outcomes and possibilities for future economic analysis of these, as well as evidence for the current cost-effectiveness of different types of YSA.

These are underpinned by two further work strands:

Young Evaluators Network (led by YMCA George Williams College) - the Young Evaluators Network (YEN) is a panel of young people who are involved in all elements of the impact evaluation. The YEN aims to keep young people at the core of the evaluation so that the evaluation is informed by young people with lived experience and enhance youth voice. Details of the YEN recruitment and engagement plan were outlined in the feasibility phase.

Learning Strand (led by Dartington Service Design Lab) - the Learning Strand enhances the overall #iwill Fund impact evaluation by creating shared spaces where the quality principles can be explored and refined over time. It also supports the learning needs of Match Funders and broader stakeholders working toward systemic change. Details of the Learning Strand and findings from the first phase are provided in a separate report.

Methods

The evaluation draws on evidence from each of the five work strands outlined above. During later phases of the evaluation, findings from each of these will be triangulated and synthesised to address the evaluation questions using a theory-led approach (see below).

As data collection is at an early stage at the time of writing this first interim report, we will at this time summarise initial findings emerging from each work strand separately and offer further methodological details within each section. More detailed methodological information was detailed during the feasibility phase. As more data become available to address them, subsequent reports will be arranged around the evaluation questions. First, we outline more detail about what we mean by a “theory-led approach”, and the type of approach taken in this evaluation.

Theory-led approach: contribution analysis

As outlined in the #iwill Fund Impact and Evaluation feasibility phase, the #iwill Fund impact evaluation (in particular, research questions 2-6) is being undertaken using contribution analysis, an established theory-based evaluation method used to consider whether a particular initiative has contributed to a set of outcomes (as opposed to attribution-focused approaches such as quasi-experimental or experimental methods). Contribution analysis is an approved approach for evaluation set out in the government's Magenta Book. While this approach aims to generate a credible narrative for the causal link between components of the #iwill Fund and outcomes for young people, communities and organisations, it also emphasises the need to produce a detailed description of the causal relation or process that generates the outcome(s) being explored. In other words, to explain *how* the outcome(s) actually come about, rather than just looking at whether or not there is an observed change. In doing so, it provides greater explanatory power and offers insights that can be used to understand the workings of the programme of interest, to help improve it and to appraise whether/how it might be extended to other areas or contexts.

Contribution analysis focuses on building a credible and robust theory for how activities lead to desired outcomes and focuses on gathering and appraising best available evidence. This helps to assess the extent to which those narratives hold up. The 'theory' aspect of contribution analysis is based upon mapping how and why outcomes may happen using literature and robust research on the specific outcome. By using evidence of 'what works' the factors leading to outcomes can be mapped backwards through incremented stages, forming a plan of action, or a theory for what might work, depicted in a 'Theory of Change' (ToC). Contribution analysis therefore relies on the development of a robust ToC so that the proposed causal links between activities and outcomes, as well as the assumptions underpinning these links, are clearly articulated. The presentation of barriers and enablers to change, help define the contextual environment of YSA activities and can offer further evidence for contribution (if there is evidence that barriers were overcome to achieve impact).

The #iwill Fund impact evaluation and learning contract allows for multiple different sources of information to be collated and synthesised to appraise the contribution claims and assumptions and clearly communicate findings through the development of plausible causal narratives. These narratives are generated based on drawing together multiple sources of evidence for change in the outcomes of interest, as well as how and why change occurred (or otherwise), and for whom¹.

Contribution analysis does not generally aim to quantify the share of/amount by which an outcome can be attributed to a particular programme (e.g., an 'effect size'). Approaches to quantifying the size of contribution have been suggested² but deemed unsuitable for this project. This is because the causal relationships underpinning the #iwill Fund Theory of Change are complex, with multiple factors operating in combination to influence outcomes rather than alone³. Relative importance can be appraised qualitatively in terms of stakeholder perceived importance, how the causal factors operate (their role in influencing change) or the capacity for those factors to effect change (e.g., considering the barriers affecting any causal factors likelihood of influencing change)^{1,2}. These factors can be assessed through examining qualitative data, for example, about how a specific activity triggered change from the perspective of

those benefitting from outcomes, or how an organisation is delivering support rather than the type of support they offer.

¹ Mayne, J. (2019). Revisiting Contribution Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 34(2): 171-191

² Ton, G., Mayne, J., Delahais, T., Morell, J., Befani, B., Apgar, M. & O'Flynn, P. (2019). Contribution analysis and estimating the size of effects: Can We reconcile the possible with the impossible?

³ Magenta Book 2020. Supplementary Guide: Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e96c98ed3bf7f412d7f7bb0/Magenta_Book_supplementary_guide_Handling_Complexity_in_policy_evaluation.pdf

However, in developing evaluation questions based on a ToC, it can simplify what is highly complex, emergent and non-linear in practice by imposing a degree of linearity between 'cause and effect'. Also, where relationships between outcomes and drivers are complex or distant, data collection can be time consuming and resource intensive, requiring prioritisation⁴. To mitigate against these factors and enhance the utility of the evaluation, we draw on Apgar and Ton's (2021)⁵ approach which recasts the six-steps of contribution analysis into an iterative cycle (Figure 1). In line with the approach to learning in this contract, this describes a ToC as a 'facilitated reflexive process' and learning tool for adaptation, rather than as a static definitional representation of the #iwill Fund initiative.

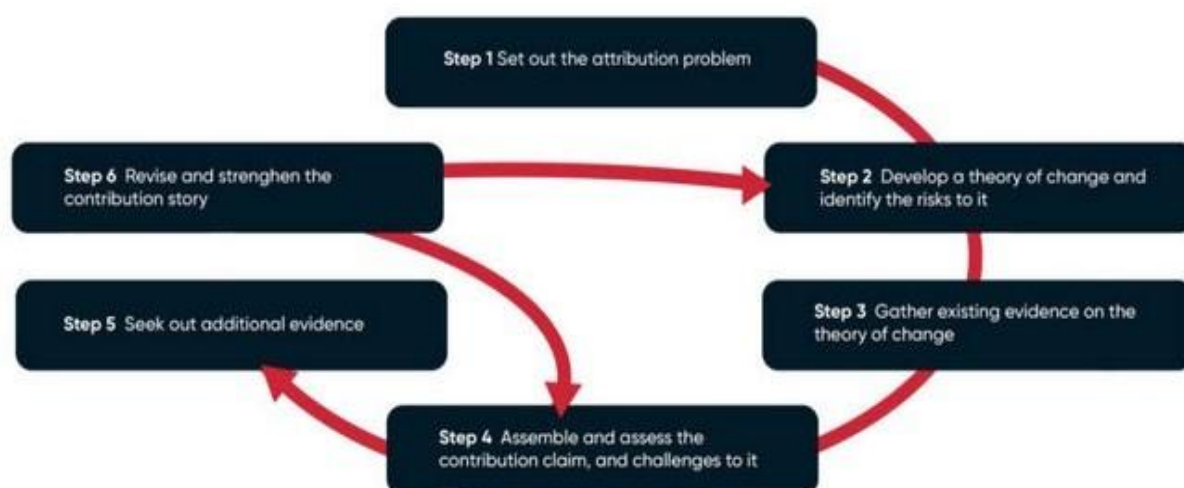
Also, we draw on Mayne's approach to identifying and focusing on 'causal hotspots' rather than to try and evaluate each and every component of the ToC. Apgar and Ton (2021) define causal hotspots as "*where there is most value in undertaking evaluation to contribute to theory and practice....where there is simply an obvious gap in evidence.....[and] the area in the ToC that is emphasized by one or more stakeholder in the evaluation.*"⁵ They recommend that approximately three hotspots allows for diverse stakeholder interests, with additional evidence being collected to check key challenges and assumptions. These challenges and assumptions are captured in the nested ToCs while remaining pragmatic to resource constraints. This approach also helps evaluators to avoid 'getting lost' in the multi-level 'jungle of causality' in evaluations of complex initiatives and helps ensure that the ToC being evaluated is robust and detailed enough but also feasible /amenable to evaluation.

This approach also serves to ensure that the evaluation focuses on aspects of the ToC which are least well evidenced currently and of most interest to stakeholders, within the resource and time available. Thus, gathering preliminary data and identifying and prioritising hotspots are key goals of phase 1. The #iwill Fund impact evaluation has developed steps to be conducted at each phase of the evaluation. The evaluation this far has completed step 1 and completed one round of work through steps 2-5. Steps 2-5 will be ongoing to exemplify the iterative nature of the contribution analysis, ensuring that crucial findings can update the evaluation process. See [Box 1](#) for an outline of the contribution analysis steps against the three #iwill Fund impact evaluation and learning phases.

⁴ Magenta Book 2020. Supplementary Guide: Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5e96c98ed3bf7f412d7f7bb0/Magenta_Book_supplementary_guide_Handling_Complexity_in_policy_evaluation.pdf

⁵ Apgar M. & Ton, G. (2021) Learning through and about Contribution Analysis for impact evaluation. Available: <https://www.ids.ac.uk/opinions/learning-through-and-about-contributionanalysis-for-impact-evaluation/>

Figure 1. Contribution analysis as an iterative process



Source: Apgar, M., Hernandez, K, and Ton. G (2020). Contribution Analysis for Adaptive Management, ODI.⁶

Note on 'alternative' or 'rival' explanations

Previously, contribution analysis guidance included the appraisal of the role of external influences on outcomes of influence, such that a contribution claim for an initiative could be made if other factors did not also impact significantly upon these outcomes^{7,8}. However, later guidance⁹ acknowledges that this is only the case if the evaluation question asks about the relative contribution of a given intervention compared to other external factors. As the evaluation question is asking a narrower question about whether (and how) the #iwill Fund made a contribution to the impact on young people, organisations and communities, the external factors are not a major focus of analysis. This is because, *"external causal factors are usually not alternative or rival explanations. They are simply other causal factors at work....A robust ToC sets out the intervention as a contributory cause. Empirically verifying the ToC allows the contribution claim to be made."* (Mayne 2019, p. 175)

⁶ Apgar, M., Hernandez, K. and Ton, G., 2020. Contribution analysis for adaptive management. Briefing Note.

⁷ Mayne, J. (2011). Contribution analysis: Addressing cause and effect. In R. Schwartz, K. Forss, & M. Marra (Eds.), *Evaluating the complex* (pp. 53–96). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

⁸ Mayne, J. (2012). Contribution analysis: Coming of age? *Evaluation*, 18(3), 270–280. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389012451663>

⁹ Mayne, J. (2019). Revisiting Contribution Analysis. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* 34(2): 171-191

Box 1 Contribution analysis steps for the #iwill Fund evaluation

#iwill Fund IELC Phase 0

- Step 1: Define attribution problem
- Completed through the feasibility phase.
- The updated version of the ToC was developed during this stage.

#iwill Fund IELC Phase 1

- Steps 2-5 are ongoing.

Step 2: Develop ToC and identify risks to it

- Refining the earlier version of the ToC/splitting into four nested pathways, updating the assumptions.

Step 3: Gather existing evidence on the ToC

- Identifying existing evidence for ToC pathways/assumptions from ToC developed after the #iwill Fund Learning Hub, initial Portal and Case study data, and Learning strand initial findings.

Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution claim and challenges to it

- Re-look at initial contribution claims and revise them.
- Decide what part of the causal pathway holds the claims we will examine in more detail through additional more focused data collection in phase 2 and 3 based on identification of 'causal hotspots'.
- Prioritise approx. 3 causal hotspots to take forward to phase 2 and 3.

#iwill Fund IELC Phase 2

- Step 5: Seek out additional evidence
- Revise and tailor case study materials to focus on causal hotspots.
- Analysis of evidence for refined ToC links, assumptions, barriers and enablers including external factors influencing what is in the programmes' direct control/influence and indirect influence.
- Step 6: Revise and strengthen contribution story then return to step 2 or 4.

#iwill Fund IELC Phase 3

- Steps 2-4, and 6: Repeat as necessary/appropriate

Theory of Change

The feasibility phase developed an updated ToC (Figure 1), developed using learning from the previous #iwill Fund Learning Hub activities. This brought together information

reported by the previous cohort of Match Funders and the existing evidence base. It focuses, in line with the requirements of the impact evaluation and learning contract, on exploring the relationship between #iwill Fund activities and the hypothesised outcomes.

This version aligned with the revised definition of YSA, and it included the #iwill Fund's key investment drivers. Importantly, it was also an initial attempt to address some gaps in the previous ToC iteration. These included: (i) a need for clear mechanisms of change to show 'how' activities lead to outcomes (ii) inclusion of the quality principles for YSA (iii) clarification of the activities that Match Funders and delivery organisations undertake to support outcomes, as well as any quality principles that might be identified from the #iwill Fund Learning Hub's outputs, and finally (iv) a clearer sense of the reflexive relationship between the benefits for young people and organisations, and wider society. 'Reflexive' refers to the idea that benefits accrue not just directly from taking part in YSA (e.g., taking part in campaigning), but that the YSA activities themselves lead to changes that in turn benefit young people, organisations and society (e.g., changes in public awareness of an issue as a result of a campaign). The table below summarises the types of outcomes referred to in the ToC.

Table 1 Types of outcomes linked to Youth Social Action (YSA)

Outcome	Specific outcomes include
Direct community benefit	These include outcomes to the 'beneficiaries' of volunteering, mentoring, local environmental work or campaigning.
Societal benefit	Benefit to society as a result of young people taking part in YSA – e.g., more civic engagement in the population.
Reflexive benefit	Benefit to young people as a result of changes brought about by YSA e.g., changes brought about by campaigning, or by improved public spaces.
Organisational benefit	Benefit to social purpose organisations which enable youth social action – e.g., YSA helps them create more impact on their goals and strengthens the organisation.
Young person benefit	Benefits to young people as a result of taking part in YSA – e.g., improved well-being, confidence or change agency.

The feasibility phase detailed the initial assumptions underpinning the updated ToC (Figure 1), as a result of the Learning Hub project. This version reflects a high-level depiction of cause-and-effect relationships found during the [#iwill Learning Hub](#) between the #iwill Fund and the various outcome domains. This is necessary for communication purposes and for building shared understanding about how key concepts such as quality principles and triple benefit relate together. The 'quality principles' refer to the agreed upon criteria for what good [quality youth social action](#) looks like, and the concept of '[triple benefit](#)' refers to the benefits of YSA which accrue to young people, the community influenced by YSA activities, and the organisations supporting the delivery of YSA activities. This ToC formed the basis for the initial contribution claims, as well as the contextual barriers and enablers to those assumptions.

ToCs are meant to be iterative, they are refined as relevant new practice-based and research/evaluation evidence is generated. High level ToCs can be broken down and each process within the ToC can be presented independently. For meaningful contribution analysis and aligned with the steps outlined in [Box 1](#), there was a need to create more detailed ToCs, or 'sub-theories' for particular components of the causal pathway that are nested within the overarching ToC (see Appendix). This supports the collection and analysis of data for the appraisal of contribution around the identified causal hotspots. These "nested" theories of change (see Appendix) and refined assumptions have been developed, comprising four causal pathways at each level of the YSA ecosystem:

Match Funder: The influence of #iwill Fund investment, funding and learning environment on the availability of quality youth social action activities which reach young people at a younger age and groups who are under-represented in YSA (e.g., in socioeconomically deprived areas).

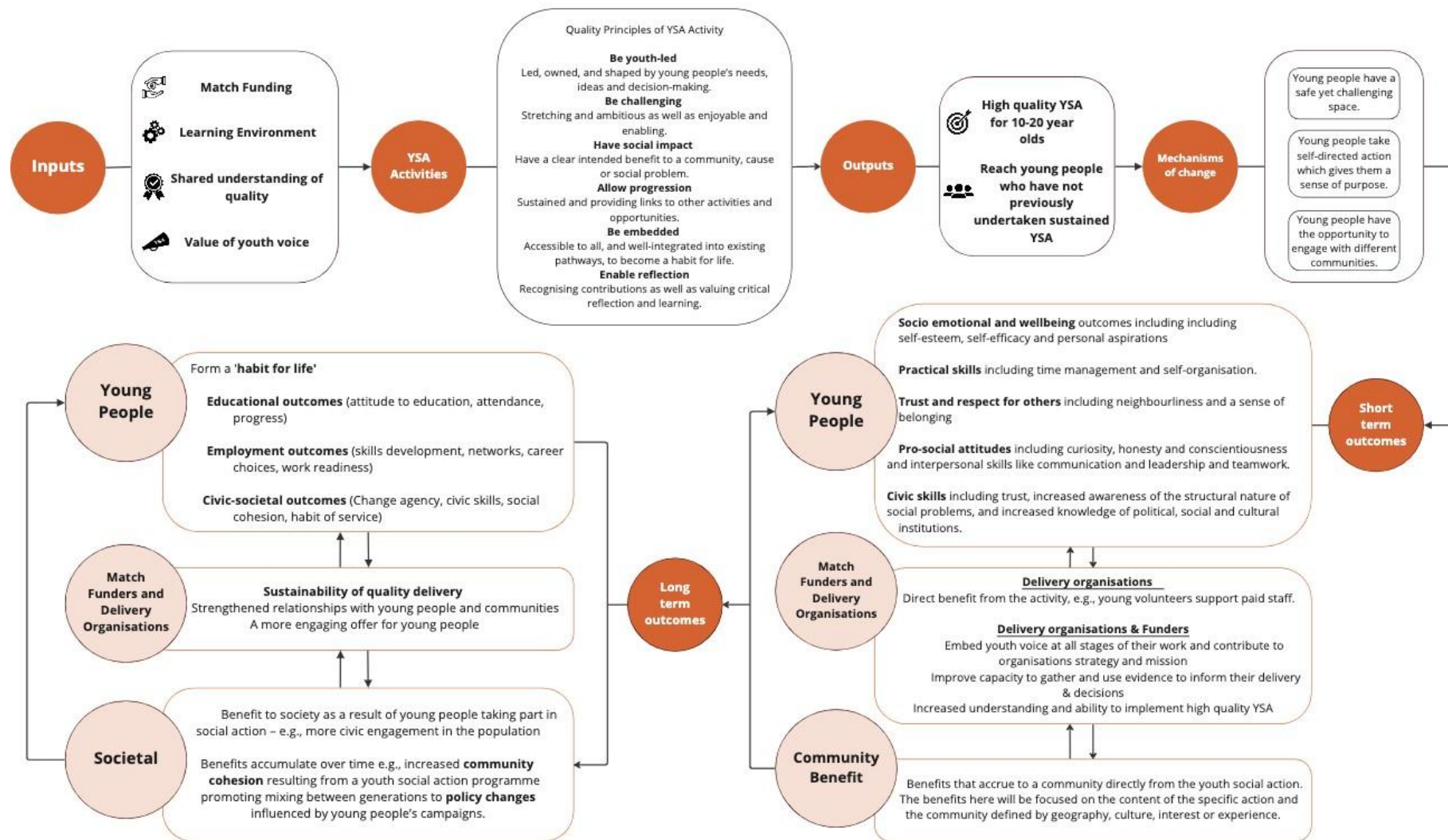
Delivery organisation: As above, plus, the reciprocal influence of youth voice and leadership on the delivery organisations themselves (a small number of Match Funders also deliver activities themselves).

Young people: The influence of access to quality YSA activities and youth leadership opportunities on young people's socio-emotional, education and employment outcomes, and on developing a habit for life.

Communities: The influence of YSA activities for the communities they serve, and the reciprocal benefit to young people from changes to communities.

These were supplemented by the development of an outcomes map to understand how the different types of outcomes, mechanisms and quality principles are related to one another with an indication of the evidence base linked to each. This is detailed in the Appendix.

Figure 1#iwill Fund high level Theory of Change



Causal hotspots

Eight contribution claims were set out in the feasibility phase. However, some of these were better (or less well) evidenced through the #iwill Learning Hub and wider literature. Moreover, several of the claims spanned multiple causal steps across different levels of the ecosystem (#iwill Fund, Match Funder, delivery organisation, young person, community). Therefore, the current impact evaluation aimed to focus on and refine those claims that required further evidence gathering, and/or where multiple causal mechanisms may be at play. Using the nested ToCs (see Appendix) as a guide, we carried out a process of mapping the evidence base against each component of the ToC (see Appendix), building on the summary reports and evaluation from the previous #iwill Fund Learning Hub, to identify the following evidence gaps:

- Limited understanding /‘testing’ of links between quality principles, mechanisms and outcomes, and the context/circumstances influencing them.
- Limited understanding of how to create the conditions for quality YSA (especially ‘being embedded’ and ‘allowing progression’)
- Limited understanding of how/under what conditions a ‘habit for life’ can be influenced, or for whom
- Mixed evidence for the mechanism around ‘self-directed action’
- Community and societal outcomes less well evidenced
- Education and employment outcomes for young people linked to the YSA participation less well evidenced.
- Reflexive benefits (benefits to young people as a result of - changes brought about by YSA e.g., changes brought about by campaigning, or by improved public spaces) less well evidenced.
- Limited understanding of whether/how the #iwill Fund and how it’s convened influences MFs, DOs, and the quality of YSA activities.

Based on feedback from the Steering Group, The National Lottery Community Fund and the YEN, we identified the following causal hotspots:

- Understanding how, and to what extent, the *quality* of YSA activities influences outcomes for young people, delivery organisations and communities (including reflexive benefits), and how the quality of YSA links to each of the proposed and additional mechanisms of change.
- Understanding how, and to what extent, the #iwill Fund creates the conditions for quality YSA, and how this could be enhanced.
- Further understanding of and evidence for the reflexive and community benefits of YSA, as well as the underpinning mechanisms and contextual contingencies.
- Getting a deeper understanding about the contexts in which, and for whom, YSA activities become a habit for life.

In line with the approach to contribution analysis detailed in [Box 1](#) (steps 3-4), we refined the following contribution claims to be explored and elaborated upon through the analysis of phase 1 and further phases of data collection. Specifically, in this further exploration and refinement, there is a need to examine evidence about 1) the

assumptions underpinning these causal links, 2) the mechanisms linking activities to outcomes and, 3) the contextual factors which may influence whether and how YSA activities influence the outcomes of interest:

1. The *quality* of YSA activities influences outcomes for young people, delivery organisations and communities. This is because YSA activities that are aligned with the six quality principles are more likely to influence the core mechanisms linking YSA to outcomes. The core mechanisms are: 'providing a safe yet challenging space', 'encouraging young people to take self-directed action', and 'allowing them to engage with others'.

2. The #iwill Fund is contributing to high quality youth social action opportunities. This is being achieved through a range of causal factors, including: a robust funding model underpinned by relevant investment drivers, evaluation requirements, the creation of a learning environment, and embedding youth voice.

3. The YSA activities that young people engage in create various benefits to communities and society. In turn, young people reflexively benefit from these community outcomes.

This depends on the quality of the YSA activities.

4. The YSA activities that young people engage in encourage them to develop a habit for life. This is being achieved through a range of causal factors, including investment in activities which reach young people at a younger age and focus on transition points, involvement in youth leadership activities, signposting to other opportunities in their community, as a result of civic societal outcomes of YSA for young people (e.g., change agency, civic skills, social cohesion, habit of service), aligning YSA activities with the six quality principles.

The following sections summarise early findings from each of the work strands in turn. Due to the limited amount of data at the time of report writing, meaningful analyses of the evaluation questions are precluded. As described above, later reports will be arranged around the evaluation questions and refinement of contribution claims and the underpinning causal narrative.

Young Evaluators Network

Purpose and scope

The Young Evaluators Network (YEN) is a panel of young people who are involved in all elements of the impact evaluation. The YEN aims to keep young people at the core of the evaluation so that the evaluation is informed by young people with lived experience and to enhance youth voice. The YEN is comprised of young people with experience of YSA, who play an active role in the evaluation by analysing existing evidence, undertaking the collection and analysis of primary data to bolster the evidence base, and supporting the development of the final reports and best practice guidance. The YEN are being supported to undertake face-to-face and online qualitative data collection with Match Funders, delivery organisations, and other young people as part of the case studies.

Progress to date

YMCA George Williams College initially recruited 11 young people to join the YEN. Regular engagement with the YEN has been built in, including monthly online meetings, regular one-to-ones, and two “residentials” (multi-day events where young people come together in person) to date. The residentials aimed to support young people in understanding the aims and purpose of the evaluation, and to share knowledge and skills in research methodology. The first residential (July 2023) focused on introductions to the group and to the evaluation. During this, the YEN supported the development of study materials, for instance, commenting on draft surveys (and at different versions before/after the residential as well), leading to changes in these materials. For transparency the YEN were informed that some of these measures had been validated/tested already, so their scope to change items already consulted on by other young people was in some case limited. The second residential (October 2023) involved Renaisi-TSIP supporting the YEN to think critically about different approaches to delivering qualitative research. Renaisi-TSIP introduced ethnographic and participatory research methods, and discussions covered issues such as the ethics of peer research.

YMCA George Williams College has worked with Renaisi-TSIP and the YEN to arrange case study visits to Match Funder sites. At the time of writing, YEN members have joined online interviews and two have been involved in site visits between February 2024 to June 2024. Young Evaluators have been supported to develop their research skills. They have personal development plans and use a diary to track their learning and reflection throughout their journey. As well as the training during residentials, Young Evaluators have been offered interview skills training. YMCA George Williams College is also training and supporting young people to write project-related blogs. These quarterly blogs will cover engagement in the evaluation, feedback loops, reflecting on data analysis, and reflecting on what evaluation means for youth social action to provide an account of how the evaluation is progressing, and how the YEN are developing their skills.

The Young Evaluators have contributed to many of the project resources. Working with Renaisi-TSIP, the YEN have fed into the topic guides for the Match Funder scoping calls and field work. Some Young Evaluators have also taken part in the scoping calls used to select case study sites as well as to scope logistics and availability for site visits. Renaisi-TSIP have also developed fieldwork tools for the case studies based on discussion guides designed by the YEN. The YEN have provided feedback on the young person's learning survey and accompanying privacy notice. Content from Young Evaluators on why organisations should include young people in their research and evaluation was promoted publicly on Power of Youth Day on 4 June 2024.

Challenges, mitigations, and key learning

There were delays in scheduling case study visits to Match Funder sites which made it challenging to schedule with young people's availability, particularly during summer. This had a significant impact on YEN activities. As a result, some Young Evaluators did not carry out in-person field work, which was a significant risk to their ongoing engagement. To mitigate this risk, YMCA George Williams College and Renaisi-TSIP developed additional engagement sessions for the YEN in summer 2024. YMCA George Williams College is also maintaining communications with the YEN regarding the dynamic nature of the project.

The rescheduling of the project has also contributed to two Young Evaluators dropping out of the group as the dates did not align with their availability or expectations. However, despite challenges, Young Evaluators speak highly of the project and those who remain involved are very engaged.

Updates to timelines

The activities under the YEN project have been postponed by about five months, due to challenges in arranging field work visits with Match Funders. The fieldwork is taking place in summer 2024 (rather than winter 23/24 as planned) and the analysis residential has consequently also been pushed back (to September 24).

Next steps

Communications with YEN have increased significantly following the end of the exam season. The next residential (planned for September 2024, after being postponed from April 2024) prepared the Young Evaluators to analyse qualitative data from Match Funder site visits, and the data portal. Sessions considered the next steps for qualitative data collection. Two Young Evaluators have collaborated on the first blog and YMCA George Williams' College staff worked with the authors of the blog to refine it ahead of publication. YMCA George Williams College have scheduled a meeting between the YEN, DCMS and The National Lottery Community Fund so YEN's experiences can be heard.

Data portal

Purpose and scope

The data portal captures organisational monitoring data and information on young people's outcomes for the #iwill Fund. The portal enables delivery organisations and Match Funders to upload surveys that capture monitoring and outcome data. The portal presents information visually in a dashboard which allows for an immediate overview of the information collected from users. In doing so, it provides data to support the following evaluation questions:

- What were the different types of YSA opportunities young people engaged in during the programme period? What was the profile of the young people involved (e.g., age, background, geographical area), how many took part and with how much intensity?
- What was the impact of #iwill Fund projects on young people?
- What were the benefits experienced by young people e.g. socio-emotional, employment, educational, civic-societal etc?

In addition, it offers data to support the financial calculations developed as part of the Value for Money Strand detailed further below.

Progress to date

The data portal has now been built by YMCA George Williams College, in close collaboration with Match Funders, evaluation consortium partners, and The National Lottery Community Fund. The process included developing a shared set of measures, testing the survey and the portal with young people and Match Funders, and then onboarding Match Funders onto the portal. Delivery partners and Match Funders are now able to complete surveys (see below) with the results recorded on the portal. Regular communication with Match Funders has kept them (and delivery partners) informed about the data portal. As of June 2024, two Match Funders have now submitted data on the portal for multiple opportunities and their corresponding participants (see the emerging findings section). Bespoke dashboard views for The National Lottery Community Fund, the evaluation consortium, Match Funders, and delivery partners, allow these organisations to track their progress with data collection.

The surveys

The 'opportunity survey' records the following data:

- Basic data about the opportunity (project name, start and end dates, location).
- The type and setting of the opportunity, captured using several typologies to categorise and describe the opportunities (e.g., *fundraising in schools on crisis and poverty causes*).
- The extent of participant engagement with the opportunity (e.g., time spent on the opportunity, whether and how the opportunity is youth led, how many young people have engaged).

The 'young person survey' records the following data:

- Demographic data (age, gender, and ethnicity).
- Data on social action to understand whether taking part in the #iwill Fund has given participants the platform to make positive change to help others, whilst also feeling listened to and a sense of belonging.
- Data on the socio-emotional skills that underpin education, employment and other longer-term outcomes (based on six questions from the Young People's Survey (YPS)¹⁰ to cover the domains of emotion management, empathy, problem solving, initiative, teamwork, and responsibility).
- A question on neighbourhood belonging.
- A question on life satisfaction (based on question 1 from the ONS Well-being measures).¹¹

Match Funders have also been allowed to add a few of their own questions to the 'young people' survey; seven of ten Match Funders have done so.

¹⁰ [Young People's Survey | YMCA George Williams College](#)

¹¹ Personal Well-being ONS4 measures – Evaluating wellbeing (measure-wellbeing.org)

The 'young person' survey is to be administered at the beginning and end of any opportunity which is at least 12 weeks long, to capture change in the participants' outcomes over time.

Challenges, mitigations, and key learning

During the process of building the portal and the surveys, it has been necessary to make several amendments to these products. Amendments were anticipated, with real usage of the portal inevitably being the key test of its functionality. One factor that has been particularly resource intensive in portal development has been giving Match Funders the opportunity to add their own questions to the survey. Each Match Funder who has taken up this opportunity has brought specific requirements which has necessitated plenty of discussion internally and externally. Another challenge has arisen in relation to the capacity to send surveys to individual young people due to the nature of some of the Match Funders' opportunities. For example, where Match Funders are working in schools where young people are not able to access digital surveys, or there is inadequate internal infrastructure to add all individuals to the portal where very large numbers of young people are involved. Following discussions, YMCA George Williams College has implemented a system whereby group data can be submitted. This will allow Match Funders to submit data that has been aggregated across different opportunities and points of time. With the added use of a quasi-identifier (participant initials) in this group, it is hoped that pre- and post-intervention survey results will be matched. This will allow for longitudinal analysis based on changes in individual scores.

The combination of the above challenges with other factors that have delayed the project timeline means many Match Funders are yet to record real data on the portal. However, we know that all Match Funders are now ready to record data for upcoming

opportunities. YMCA George Williams College is also working with Match Funders to ensure that opportunities for the 2023-24 academic year are recorded on the portal as soon as possible.

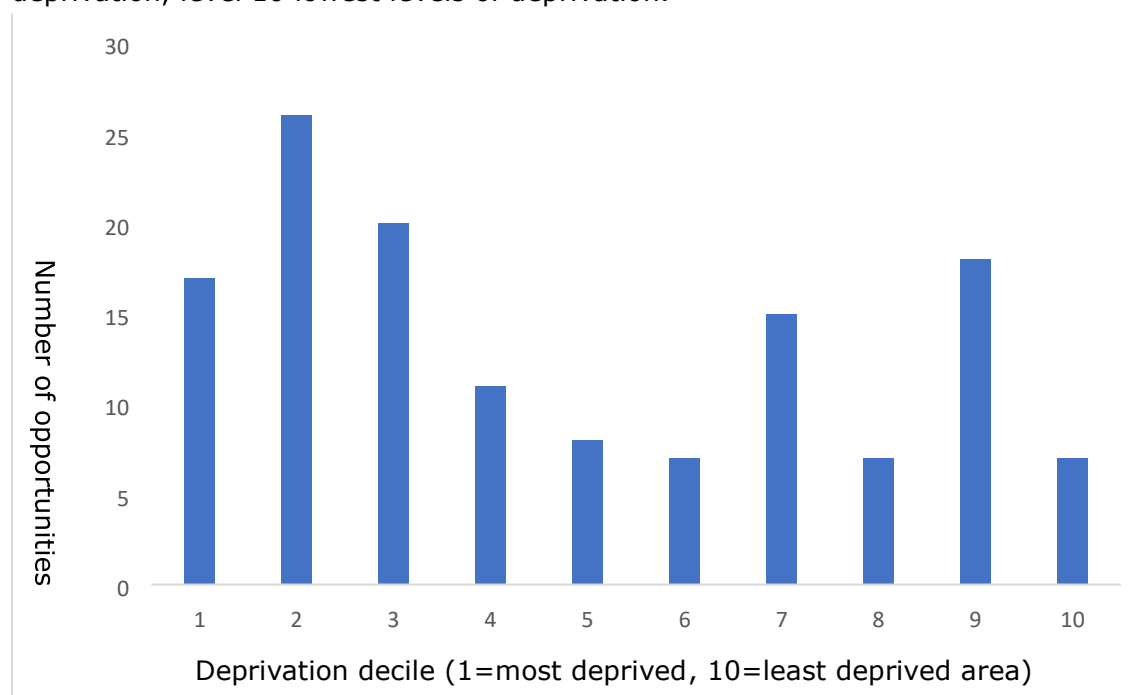
Emerging findings

Bite Back 2030 has submitted opportunity data and both Bite Back 2030 and Diana Award have submitted young person data. The findings from this very early-stage data are summarised below using descriptive statistics (frequencies, unweighted percentages).

Bite Back 2030

Bite Back 2030 is a movement campaigning for food standards and nutrition, which is entirely centred around youth-led campaigning and has a youth board. They run two programmes through the #iwill Fund, a school-based project (School Food Champions) and Community Food Champions. The opportunities delivered by Bite Back 2030 showcase youth-led elements that feed into answering the extent to which young people engage with the opportunity. At the time of writing, Bite Back 2030 has registered 57 opportunities, all of which involved campaigning in schools. The opportunities were spread fairly evenly across Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles (level 1 reflects highest levels of deprivation, level 10 lowest levels of deprivation).

Figure 2 Bar chart illustrating the spread of YSA opportunities across area-level deprivation (Index of Deprivation (IMD) decile). Level 1 reflects highest levels of deprivation, level 10 lowest levels of deprivation.



Participant responses

There were 250 analysable survey responses from Bite Back 2030 (thus $n = 250$ unless otherwise stated), which came from 27 schools, each accounting for between four and 16 participants. This contributes to the evaluation question about the extent of participant engagement with the opportunities so far. However, there is still limited understanding of the time spent on the opportunity. This will be addressed as the evaluation progresses and further opportunities data are collected. Demographic data are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Demographic characteristics of young people at baseline (Bite Back 2030)

Demographic characteristic	n	%
Age (years) (n=243)		
11	45	18.5
12	106	43.6
13	64	26.3
14-17*	28	11.5
Gender (n=249)		
Female	136	54.6
Male	100	40.2
Non-binary	7	2.8
Other/unknown/not given	6	2.4

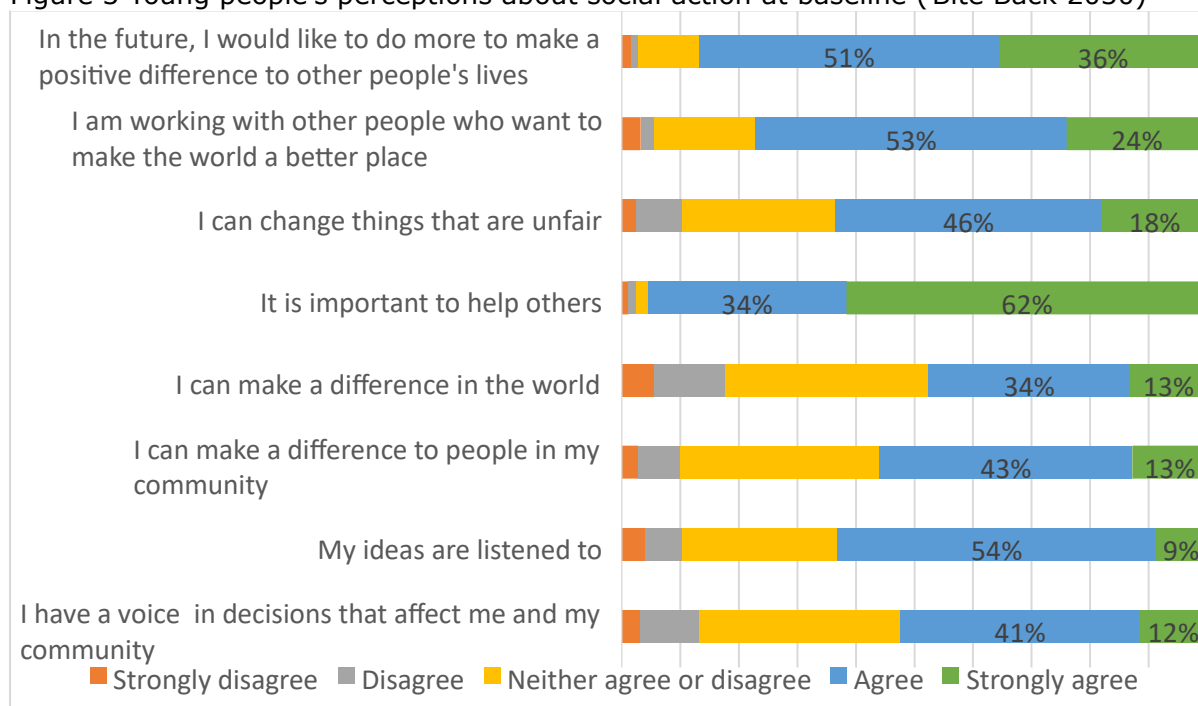
Ethnicity* (n=226)		
Asian or Asian British	12	5.3
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	12	5.3
Mixed, multiple or any other ethnic groups	10	4.4
White	172	76.1
Prefer not to say	20	8.8

*Grouped due to small numbers to preserve anonymity

Social action

Respondents were asked about the extent of their agreement with a series of statements related to social action. For seven out of eight positively worded statements, most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

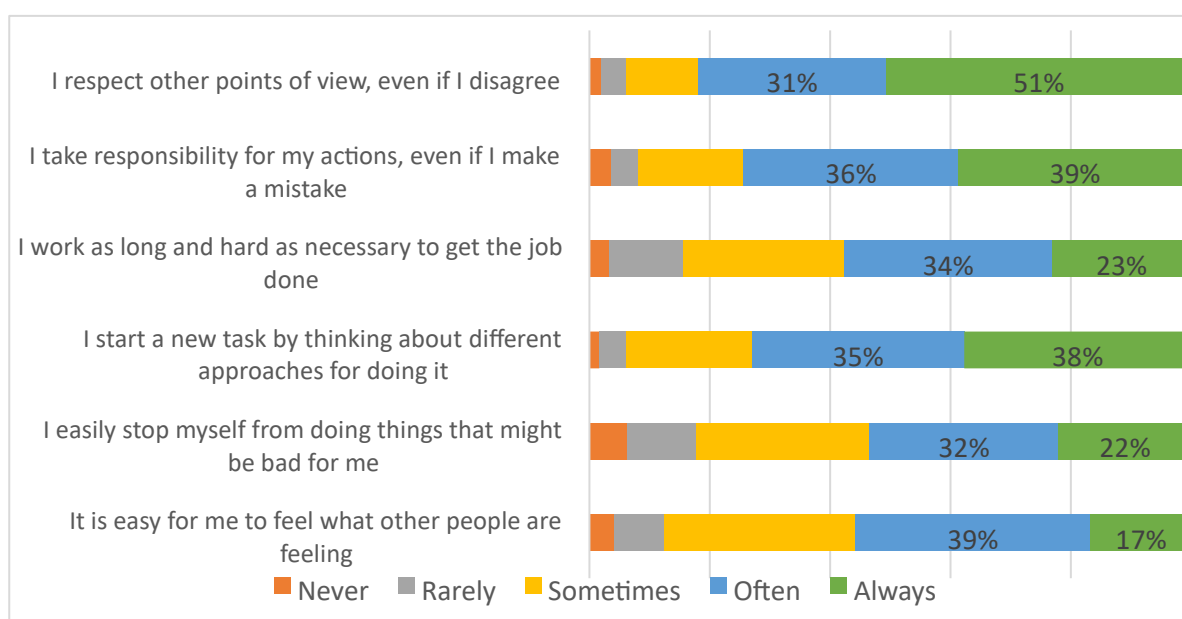
Figure 3 Young people's perceptions about social action at baseline (Bite Back 2030)



Socio-emotional skills

Respondents were asked about the frequency with which they acted on a series of statements related to positive aspects of socio-emotional skills. Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with all statements.

Figure 4 Young people's socio-emotional skills at baseline (Bite Back 2030)



Other

Regarding **neighbourhood belonging**, 82% of respondents felt fairly strongly or very strongly that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood.

Regarding **life satisfaction**, 23% rated it very high (9-10 on a 10-point scale), 40% rated it high (7-8), 23% rated it medium (5-6), and 14% low (0-4).

While the perception of youth social action is positive overall, more information would be beneficial in understanding the typologies of youth social action present in these opportunities to address the evaluation question surrounding types of youth social action that young people are engaging with.

Diana Award

There were 117 analysable responses from the Diana Award, which came from seven schools, each accounting for between five and 40 participants.

Table 3 Demographics of young people survey respondents at baseline (Diana Award) (n = 117)

Demographic characteristic	n	%
Age (years) (n=116)		
14	59	50.9
15-16	57	49.1
Gender (n=116)		
Female	60	51.7
Male	56	48.3
Ethnicity		
Asian/Asian British	11	9.4
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	12	10.3
Mixed, multiple or any other ethnic group*	9	7.7
White	80	68.4
Unknown/missing	5	4.3

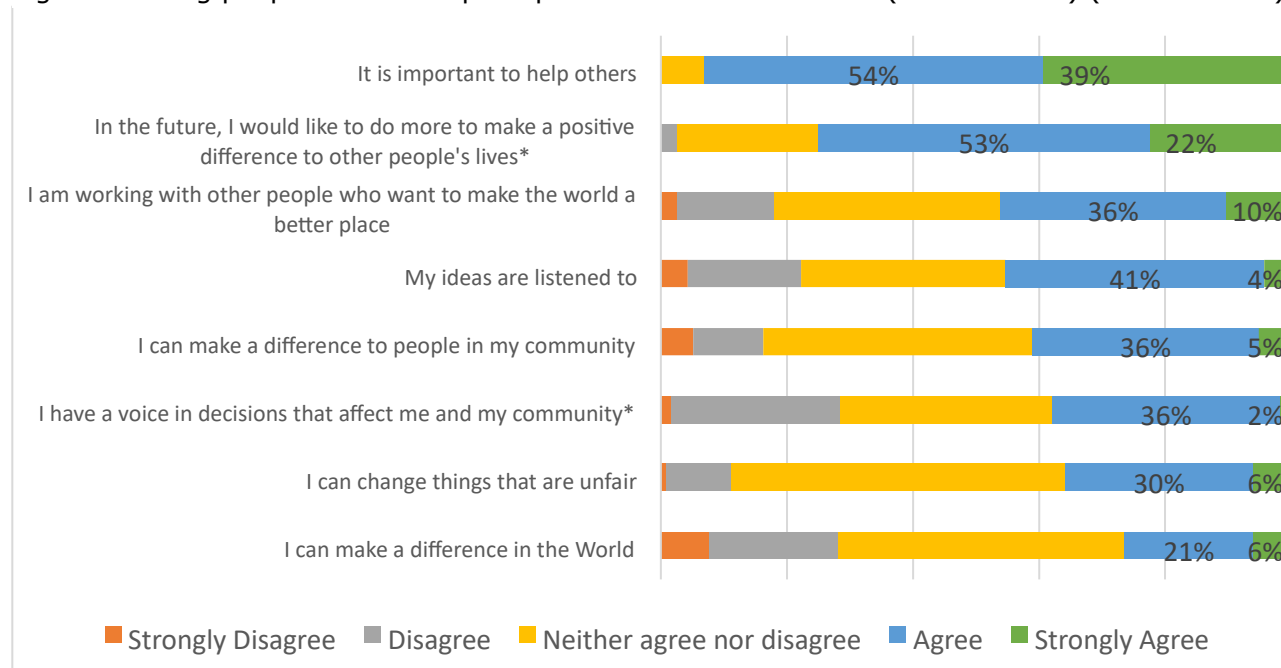
*Grouped due to small numbers to preserve anonymity. NB data were omitted where cell numbers are <5 and it is not possible to group

Social action

Respondents were asked the extent of their agreement with a series of statements related to social action. Contrasting the findings with Bite Back 2030, it appears that a lower proportion of young people taking part in Diana Award projects agreed or strongly agreed with these statements at baseline. These emerging findings provide interesting context that will be useful for future analysis to determine overall change. However current findings are not conclusive enough to draw conclusions as differences may be

accountable to external factors prior to participating in the opportunity. Pre and post group data gathered moving forward should provide a more detailed picture for analysis.

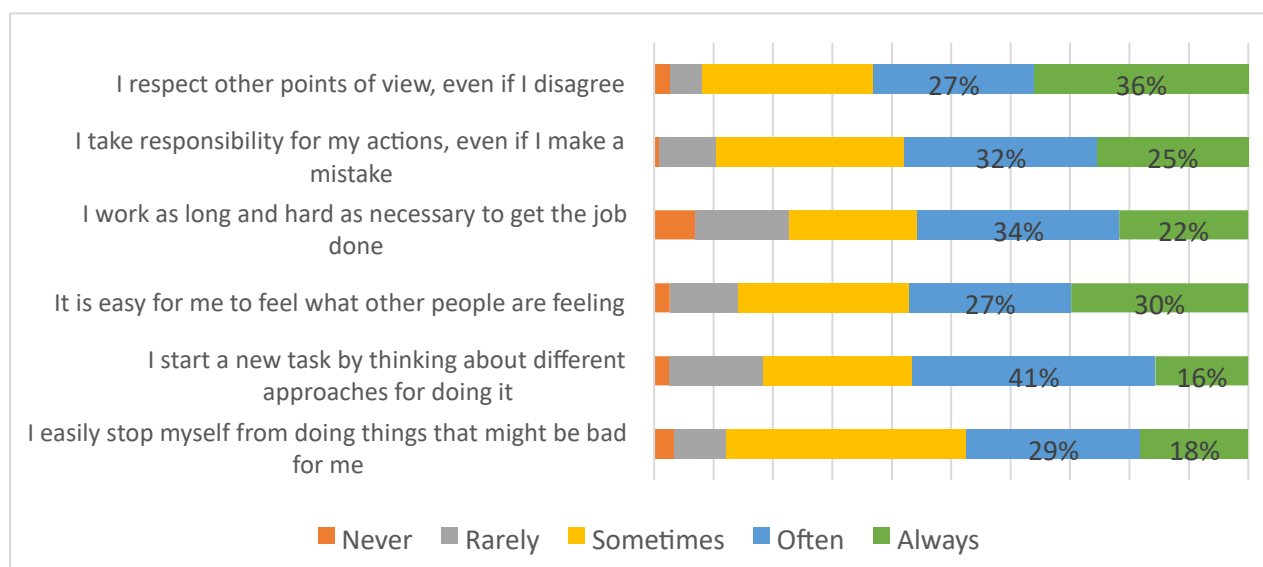
Figure 5 Young people's baseline perceptions about social action (Diana Award) (n = 116-117)



Socio-emotional skills

Respondents were asked the frequency with which they acted on a series of statements related to positive aspects of socio-emotional skills. For five of six statements, most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

Figure 6 Bar chart of socio-emotional skills responses (Diana Award) (n = 111-116)



Other

Regarding **neighbourhood belonging**, 48% of respondents felt fairly strongly or very strongly that they belonged to their immediate neighbourhood.

Regarding **life satisfaction**, 8% rated very high (9-10), 31% rated high (7-8), 37% rated medium (5-6), and 24% low (0-4).

As with the social action questions, the baseline levels of belonging and life satisfaction appear to be lower among Diana Award participants compared to Bite Back 2030 participants. This will be explored in more detail in subsequent analyses and with reference to the context of the two projects.

Next steps

YMCA George Williams College is working with Match Funders to add their opportunity and survey data to the portal. Ongoing dialogue with Match Funders (and delivery partners where necessary) will address any barriers to using the data portal. Plans for analysing the data to understand the impact of YSA on young people's outcomes and to explore any differences by demographic characteristics and type of YSA opportunities have been developed. Insights that emerge from future analysis may trigger further probing during case studies to understand the data more clearly. As a result, there will be further interpretation of what the emerging insights may indicate.

Case studies

Purpose and scope

The case study findings will continue to be used to support the refinement of contribution claims as detailed in the contribution analysis section above. In particular, providing qualitative information to add depth of understanding to the following evaluation questions:

- What was the impact of #iwill Fund projects on young people and their communities?
- What were the benefits experienced by young people e.g. socio-emotional, employment, educational, civic-societal etc?
- What was the impact on Match Funders and delivery partners from the #iwill Fund's convening and other support?
- What is the added value of funders collaborating to fund and deliver YSA programmes?
- What benefits were experienced by Match Funders and delivery partners as a result of engaging with the #iwill Fund?

In addition, findings on community beneficiaries will be used to support the analyses on social impact being planned as part of the Value for Money strand (see details below).

The evaluation framework ensures these are embedded as foundational to the learning and evaluation questions going forward. It also ensures we collect data to understand the **six quality principles, investment drivers and other requirements for Match Funders**. In these case studies, we will be building a holistic picture of the Match Funder

'system', how they perceive YSA and the impact the programme has had for them. Our research process directly involves members of the Young Evaluators Network (YEN) through co-design of research materials, peer research on core research activities and co-analysis sessions. A detailed plan of our evaluation framework has been developed with further methodological details set out during the feasibility phase.

Progress to date

Phase 1 of this work involved selecting five Match Funder organisations (see below) to explore as case studies.

#iwill Movement – originating from the #iwill campaign, the movement is a partnership between Volunteering Matters and UK Youth. The programme connects individual #iwill ambassadors with a range of opportunities.

Bite Back 2030 – a movement campaigning for food standards and nutrition, which is entirely centred around youth-led campaigning and has a youth board. They run two programmes through the #iwill Fund, a school-based project (School Food Champions) and Community Food Champions.

Clarion Futures – the charitable foundation of Clarion Housing, who joined the #iwill Fund as of 2018. As well as the Community Ambassador Programme through delivery organisations, they conduct direct delivery through their Intergenerational Social Action programme (Young Ambassadors).

Diana Award – a charity built to empower young people which, through #iwill Fund projects, run a 12-week in-school mentoring programme which combines career skills, mentoring, and youth social action. Young people involved in this can then apply to the 6-month accelerator programme, a monthly commitment where they have a small budget per group to develop their ideas with mentors.

Global Action Plan – an environmental charity with a focus on mobilising people and organisations to take action. They are now on their third iteration of #iwill Funding and run multiple youth-led YSA projects based in schools across Kent and Essex. Criteria used for selecting these Match Funders consisted of capturing the spread of different types of organisation, level of familiarity with youth social action, regional coverage, grant size, and the types of children and young people they engage/type of social issues they target. As part of our data gathering, we have conducted scoping interviews across these organisations between February – March 2024 to select a balanced spread of organisations with variations of the above criteria.

Fieldwork design

We co-designed our research materials with the YEN through two co-design activities. Currently we are working flexibly with different organisations to capture insights most relevant to them. Overall, we aim to capture **organisational, young person and community perspectives** to contribute to evaluation questions detailed above.

This is being achieved by:

- Scoping interviews with all Match Funders, and with the YEN on hand to help. This supported the choice of five Match Funders to base case studies on in the first round of fieldwork and develop an understanding of Match Funder's work.
- Site visits to delivery organisations to observe the activities taking place.
- In person interviews with young people conducted on site visits.
- In person interviews with staff conducted on site visits.
- Online interviews with young people and/or staff where site visits aren't possible.
- Interviews with community members (such as community leaders).

Table 4 summarises data collected at the time of writing.

Table 4 Case study fieldwork data collection summary

Match Funder	Fieldwork conducted	Upcoming fieldwork
#iwill Movement	1x online interview with Match Funder	1x site visit scheduled for July 24
Bite Back 2030	1x online interview with Match Funder 2x online focus groups	
Clarion Futures	2x online interviews with Match Funder 2x in-person site visits plus follow-up interviews with delivery staff	
Diana Award	1x online interview with Match Funder 1x in-person site visit plus follow-up interviews with delivery staff	1x site visit TBC for June 24
Global Action Plan	2x online interviews with Match Funder	1x site visit scheduled for July 24

We have engaged approximately:

- 12 staff – roles ranging from Creative Programmes Manager, Programme and Partnerships Lead, and Programme Development, in addition to Facilitators and Youth Activators/Youth Responders.
- 31 young people:
- Ages ranging from eight to 18 years.
- From the demographic information that was voluntarily offered by young people within our sample, we have spoken to:
- Young people who have self-identified as part of the LGBTQ+ community.
- Young people who have disclosed their SEN status.
- A small number of community members (detail of the communities engaged per project are defined below, numbers redacted to preserve anonymity).

Challenges, mitigations and key learnings from the fieldwork

So far, we have encountered the following challenges:

Scheduling delays - There were delays to scheduling of site visits due to logistical challenges of finding dates convenient for delivery organisations/Match Funders and the Young Evaluators' Network (YEN), as well as broader delays in the delivery of some projects. To mitigate this, we organised online interviews with staff from each of the five Match Funders in March and April 2024 to begin data collection and plan fieldwork activities. Members of the YEN joined as peer researchers for some of these online interviews.

Involving the YEN - Due to initial delays in scheduling, initial site visits took place in May and June 2024, when most members of the YEN were unavailable due to exams, as a result these early site visits did not involve YEN. To mitigate this, we will hold a coanalysis session with members of the YEN, including those who have not yet joined any live fieldwork, in summer 2024 to enable the YEN to feed into the analysis for the case studies.

Emerging findings

We are part-way through the fieldwork and so have emergent learnings, which we will develop iteratively throughout the work and in time for the final report. As these are very early-stage findings at this point we deem it inappropriate to form actionable recommendations from them. This is to avoid flagging recommendations that are not supported or could be further refined by later analyses as more data are collected. The second interim report (2025) will draw on data collected in the remainder of phase 1 as well as phase 2, to suggest interim recommendations.

For Match Funder organisations What worked well

Relationship with schools

Where the Match Funder delivered directly through schools, rather than via a delivery organisation, active engagement from at least one teacher or administrator at the school played an important role in the success of their project, and particularly in the sustained engagement of young people. In the case of Bite Back 2030, for example, school-led delivery was supported by an initial assembly, in which the project is presented by a Bite Back 2030 Ambassador. Bite Back 2030 then provides clear and straightforward project content and guidance to participating schools.

Relationship with #iwill Fund (funder)

From our conversations with Match Funders, they appreciated that The National Lottery Community Fund and DCMS were flexible in understanding and supporting changes to Match Funder plans and approaches for youth social action opportunities, which they felt enabled them to feel supported to react to both local and national contexts.

"What's been really positive about the partnership is that [the funder] have really believed in the work that we do [...] every time we've iterated our model, they've been really supportive of it." -**Match Funder staff**

Relationship with delivery organisations

Match Funders hold different positions in terms of the delivery of #iwill Fund projects. For example, some are both Match Funder and delivery organisation (Bite Back 2030, Diana Award), some are funder to multiple delivery organisations (Clarion Futures). In general, Match Funders found that the delivery process can be more fluid when it is run through an externally sourced delivery organisation, with staff skilled in facilitation and sufficient capacity.

Match funding model

There was a perception from some Match Funders (also shared by some delivery organisations) that the Match Funding model enabled them to expand their reach in new ways, providing connections with new partners and unlocking additional investments.

What worked less well

Relationship with schools

Match Funders who were engaging with or facilitating direct delivery in schools described the challenges they faced in finding school staff with capacity to deliver the activities. "Teachers don't often have time to implement our programme.... It's lower on the priority list." **-Match Funder staff**

Programme structure

Some Match Funders felt that more opportunities to collaborate across the Match Funders, to share learning and create a sense of collective movement, could be beneficial to the programme as a whole.

Relationship with delivery organisations

Match Funders found that recruitment and initial set-up of an external delivery partner (as opposed to delivering internally) could present its own challenges, with external delivery organisations often having no prior relationship to #iwill Fund. This meant more time was needed to familiarise delivery partners with the #iwill Fund, including core YSA principles.

For delivery organisations What worked well

Approaches to facilitation

An active and engaging facilitator appears to be a main feature of successful and enjoyable activities for young people. Many individuals involved in delivery of YSA programmes have described their own experiences of similar community-funded and social action-focused initiatives. Staff noted that Youth Responders, or those in similar roles, who have previously engaged in the same or a similar kind of social action, often embody a unique level of commitment and empathetic approach to facilitation that is grounded in their own lived experience.

Match Funding model

A collaborative and reflexive relationship with their Match Funder has begun to emerge as a key element of successful YSA. In particular, one delivery organisation described their relationship with their associated Match Funder as an "equal partnership", and as a key collaboration with a large organisation that provides strategic leverage for them, as

a smaller community organisation, and enables them to work together to achieve more than the sum of their parts. A reflexive approach that focused on sharing learning was key to this, as opposed to what could be considered a more typical top-down funding approach.

“Through the match funding model, we have a mutually beneficial partnership, playing off our own strengths.” - **Delivery organisation staff**

Relationship with schools

Our emerging findings suggest that a positive relationship between schools/teachers and the delivery organisation plays a key role in ensuring sustained engagement from young people in the YSA activities. Initial findings indicated that delivery organisations may find that an external facilitator, who was not associated with the school they were working in, could sometimes be a more effective way to engage students, as they were seen as different to a teacher.

Measuring impact

Some projects lend themselves more easily to straight-forward measurements of tangible change achieved by young people. For instance, an achievable goal such as adding a water fountain to their school canteen was not only a bonus to the young people, who felt a sense of achievement, but also a change that is relatively easy to measure as a result of YSA. This means that collecting data on impact works well with projects that measure tangible change, facilitating reporting on the impact of youth social action or learning best practices in doing so.

Recruitment and outreach

Recruitment works most well with young people when recruitment strategies are based on their needs and experiences (for example, multiple exclusions or difficulties in the learning environment) – this said, young people are often motivated to engage based on practical reasoning, such as the opportunity to add new skills to their CVs and university applications.

Youth-led approaches

Giving young people clear opportunities for leadership experience within the framework of their programme, such as leaders and co-leaders, appeared to support delivery organisations to implement a youth-led approach. This allows delivery organisations to develop opportunities that are more attuned to what young people want and allows young people to develop leadership skills that they can carry beyond the youth social action.

What worked less well

Match Funding model

One thing we identified was that it can be difficult for delivery organisations to be aligned on YSA concepts and the #iwill Fund principles. While Match Funders undergo onboarding and training in these as part of #iwill Fund, the delivery organisations that are separate to the Match Funders may not receive this. And Match Funders may not have the ideal amount of time to facilitate getting them up to speed. Alongside this, different time scales of delivery between organisations can be tricky to balance. For

example, different organisations are at different stages of delivery which means capturing data at the same time was not possible. Also, there was a greater demand associated with the need for support to use the data portal which required more time consuming individualised bespoke support for particular organisations rather than being able to support organisations in groups.

Relationship with schools

In some cases, recruitment and activities appeared to be reliant on the effort and engagement of individual teachers and schools. This generates a potential barrier to engaging students in schools where teachers do not hold this capacity.

Measuring impact

Some delivery organisation staff have described the challenges they face in measuring “soft” skills such as confidence and public speaking, which they recognise as nonetheless important factors in young people’s lives. This highlights the variability in how “soft” skills may be measured across organisations, consequently making it more difficult to consistently measure across #iwill Fund sites and thus underestimating the impact of YSA activities on young people.

Maintaining engagement

While recruitment appears to work well, consistent engagement can be more difficult to maintain. Some children drop out due to boredom or exam commitments.

For young people

Through the case study data collection to date, we have identified ways in which young people experienced the following outcomes:

Empowered to make a positive difference

Many young people involved in YSA projects across the sites we visited described feeling enabled to make a positive difference, including feeling as though they had a sense of purpose or achievement through the project.

In particular, the achievement of tangible and accessible changes, such as successfully campaigning for a particular utility to be available in their school, appears to support young people to believe in their ability to make a difference.

One facilitator told us they felt that young people on the programme had developed a greater awareness of how they can address social issues.

New skills and knowledge

Young people spoke to us about new skills they had developed through their YSA projects, including woodworking, saw use and survey development.

Many young people have told us about the confidence they have developed, for example from new experiences of meeting to communicating ideas and campaigns to key individuals, such as headteachers.

Young people also appear to have developed teamwork skills – the experience of working in a project group appeared to support young people to grow their understanding of how to reach collective decisions.

Young people have suggested that they felt able to take self-directed action and lead their YSA project, especially in comparison to the involvement of adults (teachers/facilitators) which appears to have had positive outcomes in terms of their leadership skills. This appeared to be especially the case for those designated as leaders of their group, some of whom then signed up to new socially focused roles in their school, such as supporting younger pupils.

Engaging with communities

There were varying degrees and means in which groups of young people participating in the YSA projects **engaged with different community groups**. As a result, our understanding of how young people felt able to engage in their 'community' is defined by the specific YSA activity implemented through delivery partners across the fund – see more below.

For communities

To date, some information has been collated surrounding community impact of youth social action as part of the #iwill Fund Learning Hub. However, there are intricacies that are not well understood, that the impact evaluation aims to investigate further. For example, shifting contexts and priorities within and between different communities involved in various types of YSA leads to great complexity in identifying and measuring outcomes. We are looking into this in more detail during the case study visits, with a focus on building up an understanding of the specific community relevant to each Match Funder. For each of the Match Funder projects, we define the emerging community and outline our key learnings to date below. These are being iteratively shared with Ipsos MORI to inform the Value for Money strand in real time.

Table 5 Emerging case study findings about community benefits

Match Funder	How the work engages the community	How do we define the community?	What have we learned so far?
Bite Back 2030	Young people campaign for nutrition-based changes in their school, engaging with other pupils through data collection (e.g., focus groups, surveys).	Pupils in the school who are not directly engaged in the Bite Back 2030 programme, including from other year groups.	Through their YSA projects, young people participating had achieved tangible improvements to the school canteen environment. This ranged from the acquisition of a water fountain to an increased rota for cleaning staff, as well as changes to the menu to increase the range of nutritious options available.
Clarion Futures	The intergenerational programmes connect children and young people with older members of their local community, through visits to care homes and day centres.	Older members of the local community, including visitors to day centres (e.g., Age UK centres) and residential care homes.	In our conversations with community members attending an Age UK day centre, who are visited by young people aged 8-10 through a local club, the older people were keen to communicate the enjoyment they get from meeting with the young people. These sessions combat both social and emotional loneliness.
Diana Award	The Diana Award encourages the young people chosen for this to collaborate with students who are not directly involved in the programme, as well as students from other schools.	Pupils in the school who are not directly involved in the programme, as well as social groups outside the school, who become involved in projects.	Through their current programme delivered in a school, YP are tackling a two-fold issue, challenging the heteronormative construct of the gender binary by designing gender-fluid clothing while addressing the environmental implications of fast fashion through upcycling, thrifting, borrowing, and repurposing existing clothing. The young people are pulling together skills and knowledge across fellow students and friends to present a social media campaign addressing their YSA causes.

Next steps

Moving forward, the consortium leading the impact evaluation will complete phase 1 of the evaluation, defining the attribution problem and prepare for phase 2, developing/refining the ToC and identify risks to it.

In the remainder of case study phase 1 we will focus on:

- Upcoming site visits, with the Diana Award, Global Action Plan and the #iwill Movement.
- Analysis to pull out themes across our fieldwork data, including input from the YEN.
- Continued mapping of the primary data.
- Linking these findings to the contribution claims.
- Feeding into the Value for Money strand work on community benefits.

To prepare for phase 2, we will:

- Update research materials.
- Update analysis framework based on data and continued learnings from site visits.

Value for Money Purpose and scope

As part of the #iwill Fund impact evaluation contract, we were asked to scope the feasibility of addressing the question, “what was the overall value for money of the #iwill Fund?”. Full details of the process of this scoping work and updates to methodology were outlined during the feasibility phase. The Value for Money (VfM) assessment will demonstrate the return on investment of the #iwill Fund across a range of outcomes that cover all age groups of participants instead of ‘Value for Money’. This will require an assessment of the indirect benefits of the #iwill Fund to the beneficiaries of social action in social value terms. The UK government defines social value as the additional economic, social, and environmental benefits generated by public spending beyond the goods or services being procured. It's about ensuring that procurement positively impacts people and communities. Social value analysis involves measuring and demonstrating social impact by quantifying the effects of an organisation's actions on stakeholders and communities, moving beyond simply recognising social value to quantifying it. This measurement enables organisations to demonstrate the value they create to funders, partners, and beneficiaries, strengthening their business case and attracting investment. It also helps organisations understand their impact and make better decisions to improve well-being. To deliver this social value assessment and support future assessments, Ipsos has proposed to produce two products:

1. **Undertaking cost-effectiveness analysis (CEA)** to help understand which projects/interventions are more cost-effective – in other words, by determining the cost per unit, CEA will be used to compare projects.
2. **Developing a bespoke tool to capture community benefits using social value analysis that could be used for economic evaluation.** A community benefits tool which can be used to estimate the monetary value produced by #iwill Fund-funded social action. This includes differentiating the relative social value created by different types of activities, to provide more evidence of the activities which provide most social return on investment.

The two products will provide important evidence of the social value produced by different strands of the programme, relative to the costs allocated to deliver them. This can be used for internal planning, programme optimisation and policy design and can provide an indicative social return on investment (SROI) figure for reporting. However, given the lack of counterfactual we cannot be sure of the additional value that the volunteer activities are making. For example, we do not know what other services are operating in the areas where #iwill Fund volunteer YSA activities are happening which could be providing similar benefits. Similarly, we do not know if volunteers would have identified other volunteer opportunities without the #iwill Fund. This should be made clear when interpreting any analysis using these estimates.

Progress to date

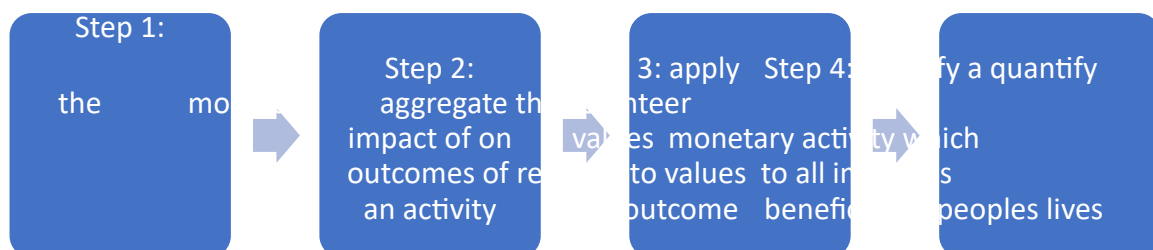
This report sets out our progress towards the second product, to develop a bespoke tool to enable the estimation of community benefit of volunteering in monetary terms. The tool will use findings from the existing literature to calculate a per person value for those supported by volunteering (e.g. communities visited by volunteers, local households benefitting from YSA in the environment etc) which can then be aggregated to a total social value. This tool will be designed to be used to support Leadership Board decision making and inform programme design in future projects, to ensure optimal use of #iwill Funds on those volunteering activities which provide the most benefits to communities as well as enabling ongoing monitoring and assessment. The tool will include a range of unit values which can be applied to data collected by volunteer programmes to measure social value in monetary terms.

Logic chain

The following diagram outlines the logic chain as to how the value of volunteer activities can be monetised using existing literature. The first step is to identify how a volunteering activity benefits people e.g. volunteers who spend time with people feeling isolated can reduce loneliness in those communities. The next step is identifying literature which relates the benefits to individuals into a quantifiable outcome. For example, we can equate levels of loneliness to wellbeing outcomes. The third step is applying monetary values. In our example we use the monetary values associated with an increase in wellbeing known as WELLBYs. The outcomes from combining the assumptions from steps 2 and 3 provide unit values which will become the key source of information in the tool. Step 4 aggregates the unit values across the population of beneficiaries i.e., the people

benefitting from the actions of the volunteer activities. This step is reliant on data specific to the example which the use of the tool will need to collect. We will provide advice within the tool on how to aggregate these tools in line with HM Treasury Green Book principles (see section “Further guidance on application of methods” for more details).

Diagram 1: Logic chain of social value calculations



Challenges

The #iwill Fund supports volunteers to do an enormous range of activities which improve the lives of a variety of people in different ways. It is therefore not possible for the tool to include a bank of values for every type of activity, outcome and community group. The tool will therefore attempt to include a variety of outcomes to cover as much of the range of volunteer activities as possible. The number of unit values included in the value bank will be dependent on identifying relevant and accurate assumptions from the existing literature (see steps 2 and 3 of Diagram 1).

Illustrative Examples

To show how monetary values can be estimated and aggregated, we have set out some of our progress in identifying relevant social action activities and estimating monetary values using three illustrative examples. The examples have been chosen to align with one of the five broad types of social action which can be appropriately measured as part of a HM Treasury Green Book consistent methodology:

- (1) Supporting people/ groups in the community: reducing loneliness
- (2) Improving the local environment: litter picking
- (3) Tutoring, coaching and mentoring: Encouraging participation in sport and cultural activities.
- (4) Campaigning for a (non-political) cause: Deemed not appropriate for VfM given breadth of possible causes
- (5) Fundraising/ sponsored activity: Not appropriate for VfM as economic transfers should not be included in social value measurement.¹²

¹² Transfers of resources between people should be excluded from the overall estimate of Net Present Social Value (NPSV). Transfers pass purchasing power from one person to another and do not involve the consumption of resources. Transfers benefit the recipient and are a cost to the donor and therefore do not make society as a whole better or worse off. (see section 6.3 of the HM Treasury Green Book)

¹³

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/602fcb91d3bf7f72154fab3/Loneliness_monetisation_report_V2.pdf

The examples use hypothetical scenarios with fictional assumptions made on the numbers of people supported by the volunteering activities, the period of time over which the volunteering took place and communities benefitting from the volunteer activities. These assumptions are not based on any real examples and therefore when applying to a real-world example this information will need to be collected. The three outcomes are designed to provide transparency on the type of methods that can be used to estimate social value in the context of the #iwill Fund, however, we would look to expand this list to cover a wider range of activities during the evaluation.

Outcome 1: #iwill Fund volunteers help reduce loneliness in their communities Young people taking part in social action often spend time with communities at risk of loneliness. For example, the #iwill funded Intergenerational Linking project linked together young people aged 5-14 years from schools and youth organisations with older people living in care homes across England.

There is a range of research showing the positive impact that reducing loneliness can have on people's health and wellbeing. In particular, research commissioned by DCMS and produced by Simetrica-Jacobs¹³ estimates the change in life satisfaction when people reduce their feelings of loneliness. For example, moving from "Severe Loneliness" to "Moderate Loneliness" was associated with a 0.7-point improvement in life satisfaction

score on a scale of 0-10¹³. We can take these findings and apply the latest monetary value estimates for a 1-point increase in subjective wellbeing for one year, known as a WELLBY¹⁴ (Wellbeing-adjusted Life Year). The use of WELLBYs in appraisal is suggested as part of the HM Treasury Green Book and is commonplace in economic appraisal. The central estimate of a WELLBY is £13,000 (lower bound £10,000 and upper bound £16,000). Upated to 2023-24 financial year prices using the GDP deflator (following HMT best practice), this equates to £14,641. The calculations set out above are included in the table below and can be used to estimate the benefits of #iwill funded activities. The unit values included in the table will be included in the tool.

Table 6 Estimating social value example 1: #iwill Fund volunteers help reduce loneliness in their communities

	Moving from "Mild loneliness" to "Lack of Loneliness"	Moving from "Moderate loneliness" to "Mild loneliness"
Impact on life satisfaction on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all satisfied with life and 10 is extremely satisfied with life	0.44-point improvement in life satisfaction on scale from 0-10	Between 0.58 and 0.7-point improvement in life satisfaction on scale from 0-10

¹³ Severity of loneliness is defined in the DCMS report based on responses to the loneliness question in the DCMS Community Life Survey: Mild loneliness refers to 'hardly ever', moderate to 'occasionally' or 'some of the time' and severe to 'often' or 'always' lonely

¹⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005389/Wellbeing_guidance_for_appraisal_-_background_paper_reviewing_methods_and_approaches.pdf

Unit Value: Annual wellbeing benefit per person from improving life satisfaction	$0.44 \times £14,641$ $= £6,442$	$0.58 \times £14,641$ $= £8,491$ $0.7 \times £14,641$ $= £10,248$
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As the unit values are annual, we can divide by 365 to estimate a daily unit value for each level of loneliness improvement:

	Moving from "Mild loneliness" to "lack of Loneliness"	Moving from "Moderate loneliness" to "Mild loneliness"	Moving from "Severe loneliness" to "Moderate loneliness"
Day wellbeing cost from loneliness per person	$£6,442/365 =$ $£17.64$	$£8,491/365 = £23.26$ $£10,248/365 = £28.07$	$£10,248/365 =$ $£28.07$

Example of aggregation using a hypothetical example

Now we have the per person unit values (which will be provided as part of the tool) we can use a hypothetical example to show how the unit values could be used to estimate the total value of a particular YSA activity. In our hypothetical example, a group of volunteers make visits to local care homes to spend time with 150 elderly individuals. We need to make an assumption on the level of loneliness – we therefore assume they have moved on average from moderate to mild loneliness for the day. The calculations are included in the table below which estimate that the social value of the volunteering activity is between £3,489 and £4,211.

Table 7 Estimating social value example 1: example of aggregation

Number of participants	Change in Loneliness	Value
150	Moderate to mild	$150 \times (£23.26 \text{ to } £28.07) =$ $£3,489 \text{ to } £4,211$

Outcome 2: #iwill Fund volunteers improve the local environment

YSA to improve the environment is a key pillar of the #iwill movement (receiving #iwill Fund investment). This includes taking part in environmental volunteering such as litter picking or planting pollinator-friendly flowers, fundraising to maintain or enhance green spaces or campaigning for the zero plastic waste agenda - amongst other activities.

It is therefore important that we provide values which can capture the value volunteers make towards improving the quality of people's local environment. A range of evidence shows that people who are proud of their local area are happier. This research often refers to "Amenity" which is a term used to refer to a bundle of services including aesthetic and visual benefits, tranquillity, and recreational opportunities. Litter and flytipping are common examples of "disamenity" where amenity is negatively affected by the condition of the local area. Interventions that address disamenities can generate benefits to local people by removing negative effects. Research commissioned by

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and conducted by eftec¹⁵ finds that local households are willing to pay to avoid accumulation of litter in their local area:

Table 8 Estimating social value example 2: #iwill Fund volunteers improve the local environment

Type of disamenity	Value willing to pay per local household to improve local area (2020)	Unit Value: Value willing to pay per Household to improve local area (uprated to 2023 prices)
Remove litter in residential areas	£75 per year	£84 per year
Improve water environment	£65 per year	£72 per year
Remove litter in recreational areas	£55 per year	£61 per year
Improve business areas	£20 per year	£22.45 per year

Example of aggregation using a hypothetical example

We now use an example to illustrate how these values could be applied to value the benefits of volunteering. A group of volunteers might identify a local park with significant build-up of litter which they work to remove. Anecdotally, it takes one week for litter to accumulate again in the park. The park has around 200 houses in the immediate local area.

Table 9 Estimating social value example 2: Example of aggregation

Steps	Calculation
Per household value of their local park being free of significant levels of litter for a week	$£61 / 52 \text{ weeks} = £1.17$
Value for 200 households	$£1.17 \times 200 = £234$

Outcome 3: #iwill Fund volunteers help communities participate in sport, culture and heritage

Engaging people in sports and culture is a key part of the tutoring, coaching and mentoring broad category of YSA. Engaging people in sports and cultural activities, both as an audience member and participating, has been shown to improve health outcomes for individuals. To estimate the value linked to these types of activities, we use findings

¹⁵ <https://randd.defra.gov.uk/ProjectDetails?ProjectID=20652&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=eq0126&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

from research commissioned by DCMS¹⁶ which estimated the social impact of engaging with culture and sport. The research found that those who participate in sport are 14.1% more likely to report good health than non-participants while arts audience members are 5.4% more likely to report good health than non-audience members.

Research, conducted by Simetrica in 2014, uses the findings from the research commissioned by DCMS to estimate an association between self-reported health scores and medical service usage rates in the UK alongside. These usage rates were combined with average GP costs to estimate the cost savings from engaging with sport and culture.¹⁷

Table 10 Estimating social value example 3: #iwill Fund volunteers help communities participate in sport, culture and heritage

	Probability of reporting good health per person	NHS cost savings per person annually (based on 2014 data)	Unit Value: NHS Savings per person annually (updated to 2023 prices)
All sports	14.1%	£97.71	£125.68
All audience arts	5.4%	£37.42	£48.13

We can use these estimates to work out how much a singular session of participation is worth in social value terms. In the sports participation context, the definition of “regular” sports participation is playing sport three times a week¹⁸, divided into three 45-60 min sessions). For simplicity, we assume the same holds for cultural activities.

Table 11 Estimating social value example 3: #iwill Fund volunteers help communities participate in sport, culture and heritage, value per session

	Value per person per week of regular sports participation	Value per person per session of regular sports participation
All sports	£125.68/ 52 = £2.41	£2.41/3 = £0.80
All audience arts	£48.13/ 52 = £0.93	£0.93/3 = £0.31

Example of aggregation

We can now apply a hypothetical example to show how these unit values (which will be part of the tool) can be used to estimate the social value of YSA activity. In our

¹⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7e463640f0b62305b81ef6/Quantifying_the_Social_Impacts_of_Culture_and_Sport.pdf

¹⁷ The results below are considered conservative given they do not account for a range of other benefits which come from participating in sport and being an audience of the arts including better educational outcomes, higher earnings and greater civic participation.

¹⁸ (based on UK guidelines of 150 minutes of moderate activity per week.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/physical-activity-guidelines-for-adults-aged-19-to-64/> ²⁰
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-incentral-government/the-green-book-2020>

hypothetical example, a group of volunteers organise an hour of sports activities for a group of 30 individuals. The calculation in the table below shows that the estimate for the social value produced by the session was £24.00.

Table 12 Estimating social value example 3: example of aggregation

Steps	Calculation
Value sports activity with 30 people	$£0.80 \times 30 = £24.00$

Further guidance on application of methods

As part of the tool, we will include guidance to help practitioners use the unit values to aggregate to a total value for a YSA activity. We suggest that any calculations follow the principles set out in the HM Treasury Green Book²⁰. Some of the key points to follow to ensure consistency with the HM Treasury Green Book are included below:

Avoid double counting - Although some volunteer activities are likely to meet multiple objectives it is important to choose one method only. This is because some methods will capture value from other outcomes. For example, organising a trip to the local theatre could reduce loneliness and improve health of individuals. However, because the benefits of reducing loneliness are calculated through improved subjective wellbeing, it is likely that health benefits would be at least partially captured in the wellbeing valuation. Therefore, adding the values from reduced loneliness and improved health are likely to produce an overestimate.

Account for deadweight – because the methods set out above do not include a counterfactual there is no way of knowing whether some of these outcomes would have happened anyway (leading to ‘deadweight’ loss). For instance, in our hypothetical example, there may have been alternative activities in place at the Age UK centre had the volunteers not visited which could have also reduced loneliness. Following guidance produced by the Homes & Communities Agency (2014)²¹, that identifies key areas of an intervention to assess against the current economic, social and environmental context, we suggest applying a deadweight of 19% to all estimates.

Discounting - allows costs and benefits with different time spans to be compared on a common “present value” basis. The public sector discount rate adjusts for social time preference, defined as the value which society attaches to present, as opposed to future, consumption. It is based on comparisons of utility (as termed in economic analysis or defined as wellbeing more broadly and in social value analysis) across different points in time or different generations. The discount rate of 3.5% (suggested within HM Treasury Green Book guidance¹⁹) should be applied to any analysis over multiple years to account for the preference for utility now over utility in the future (in other words, the fact that

¹⁹ See section 5.4 of HM Treasury Green Book Guidance available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-green-book-appraisal-and-evaluation-in-centralgovernment/the-green-book-2020>

people would prefer a £1 benefit now to a £1 benefit in a years' time, a time preference factor which should be accounted for to be consistent with HMT Green Book methods).

21

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ec4b9e5274a2e87db1c92/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf

Conclusions

The progress and emerging findings at the time of writing this interim report indicate that the #iwill Fund impact evaluation has been successfully set up and rolled out across all work strands. This represents a considerable effort to implement a multi-site/sub-site evaluation, with a large number of delivery organisations linked to several Match Funders, supporting a range of different types of YSA activities. Findings are very early stage, reflecting the fact that data had just started to be collected following the extensive project set up phase. This means it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions or recommendations because they may be misleading without further supporting evidence.

Pre-post survey data were not yet available to appraise the influence of YSA on young people's outcomes. Available data indicates that there may be a high degree of variation in baseline levels of neighbourhood belonging, life satisfaction and attitudes towards social action among young people taking part in opportunities. Further information on context and pre-post comparisons will help to explore this in more depth, and to appraise any change over time. Case study data to date identified several positive outcomes for young people taking part in YSA. For instance, feeling empowered to make a positive difference and a sense of purpose and achievement; developing new practical, teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. Further work will explore this in more depth, and examine what contexts and circumstances shape the influence of YSA activities on young people and their communities.

In terms of the impact of the #iwill Fund and how it is organised, Match Funders appreciated the flexibility afforded to them which allowed them to be responsive to local and national contexts. Feedback indicated that the Match Funding model created the opportunity for organisations to expand their reach in new ways, providing connections with new partners and unlocking additional investments. They also identified a desire for more opportunities to collaborate, to share learning and create a sense of collective movement. Despite initial challenges with engaging external delivery partners, requiring more time to familiarise and align them with the #iwill Fund and core YSA principles, the Fund appears to be facilitating collaborative and reflexive relationships that were more equal and mutually beneficial partnerships rather than 'top-down' relationships. Initial scoping work explored the possibility of monetising the direct benefits of youth participants in a robust way.

Based on this scoping work and an assessment of feasibility, the VfM assessment is not feasible and will instead aim to demonstrate the return on investment of the #iwill Fund across a range of outcomes that cover all age groups of participants. This report sets out our progress towards developing a bespoke tool to enable the estimation of community benefit of youth social action activities in monetary terms, which will be further detailed based on real life case study findings in the next interim report.

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Appendix

Mapping outcomes, mechanisms and quality principles against the evidence base

Table 13 Evidence base for young people's outcomes from Youth Social Action (YSA)

Outcomes	Examples	Evidence	Top reported improvements
Civic-Societal	Change agency, civic skills, social cohesion, habit of service	Moderate- Strong Evidence (n= 42) Mixed Methods	Social cohesion Change agency Civic Participation
Socio-emotional	Wellbeing, self-concept, interpersonal skills, pro-social attitudes	Strong Evidence (n=132) Mixed methods data (mix of validated measures and non-validated)	Wellbeing Interpersonal skills Self-concept
Employment	Skills development, career choices, work readiness* Achievement of accreditations Shaping career aspirations *Employment outcomes may have not been relevant to YP participating in YSA under the age of 14	Low-moderate evidence (n=13) Qualitative data	Changes in employability skills
Education	Attitude to education, attendance, progress* *Some educational outcomes arguably extended from socioemotional outcomes. For example, Ormiston Academies Trust (n=14,000) reported that, at the endpoint, participating pupils reported statistically higher average scores across all three social-emotional learning domains than pupils who hadn't participated in #iwill-funded activities.	Low evidence (n=5) Mixed Methods (Teacher reports)	Behaviour in school Improved academic performance

Table 14 Evidence base for organisational, community, societal and reflexive benefits of Youth Social Action (YSA)

Outcomes	Examples/description	Evidence	Top outcomes
Organisational Benefit	Benefit to social purpose organisations which enable youth social action – e.g., youth social action helps them create more impact on their goals and strengthens the organisation.	Strong Evidence Mixed Methods	Young people contributing skills, capacity and time to organisations. Allowed for a better understanding of young people more broadly. Benefit of embedding youth voice in organisations and shaping organisational activity and strategy.
Direct Community Benefit	These include outcomes to the 'beneficiaries' of volunteering, mentoring, local environmental work or campaigning	Low-moderate evidence Mixed methods (Case studies, reported measures)	Influenced support, services, or spaces in their community. Resident of the community reported being happier after YSA
Societal Benefit	Benefit to society as a result of young people taking part in social action – e.g., more civic engagement in the population	No evidence	

Reflexive Benefit	Benefit to young people as a result of changes brought about by youth social action e.g. changes brought about by campaigning, or by improved public spaces	Low evidence (more research needed) (n=1 study)	Interviews with school and care home leads highlighted that youth social action opportunities not only offered intergenerational linking and added to the care home residents' happiness, but in turn, residents shared skills, knowledge and stories with the young people
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Table 15 Evidence base for mechanisms and links to outcomes

Mechanisms	Evidence base	Types of Outcomes	Mechanism interactions
Habit for Life	Promising evidence of effectiveness ²⁰	Civic-societal benefit	Quality principles
Young people have a safe yet challenging space in practical, vocational, and socio-emotional skills	Promising evidence of effectiveness Civic-Societal benefit	Reflexive benefit Socio-emotional benefit	Unknown which to develop
Young people take self-directed action which gives a sense of purpose that contributes to their well-efficacy	Evidence of effectiveness still emerging	Civic-societal benefit Socio-emotional benefit being	Unknown them self-concept, or self-

²⁰ <https://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/project/a-habit-of-service/>

Young people have the opportunity to engage with different communities, increasing their knowledge of belonging

Promising evidence of effectiveness

Civic-societal benefit

Unknown

Socio-emotional benefit others and their sense of

Draft sub (or 'nested') theories of change

Figure 7 Sub-theory of change - match funder pathway

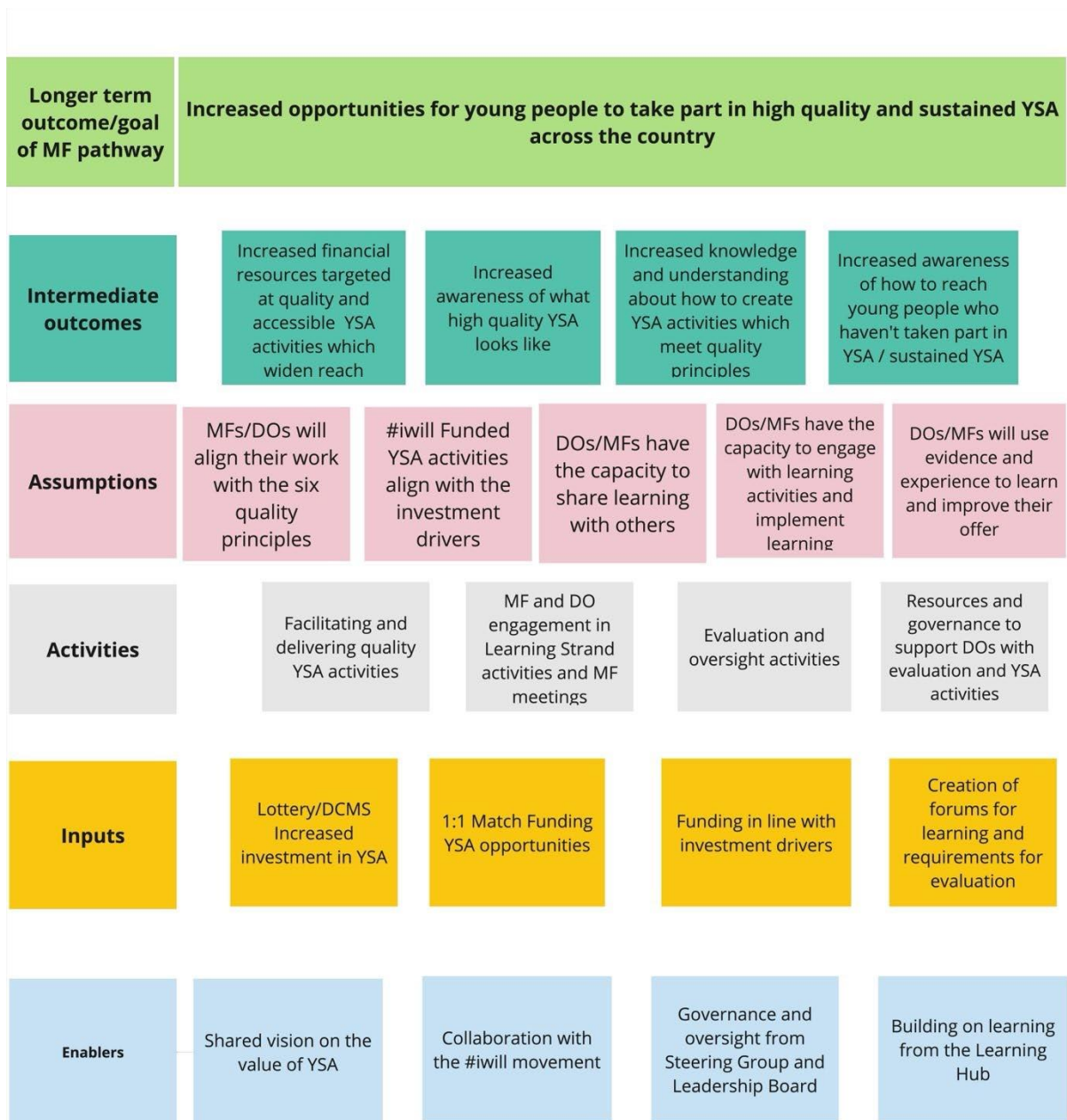


Figure 8 Sub-theory of change - delivery organisation pathway



Figure 9 Sub-theory of change - Young person pathway

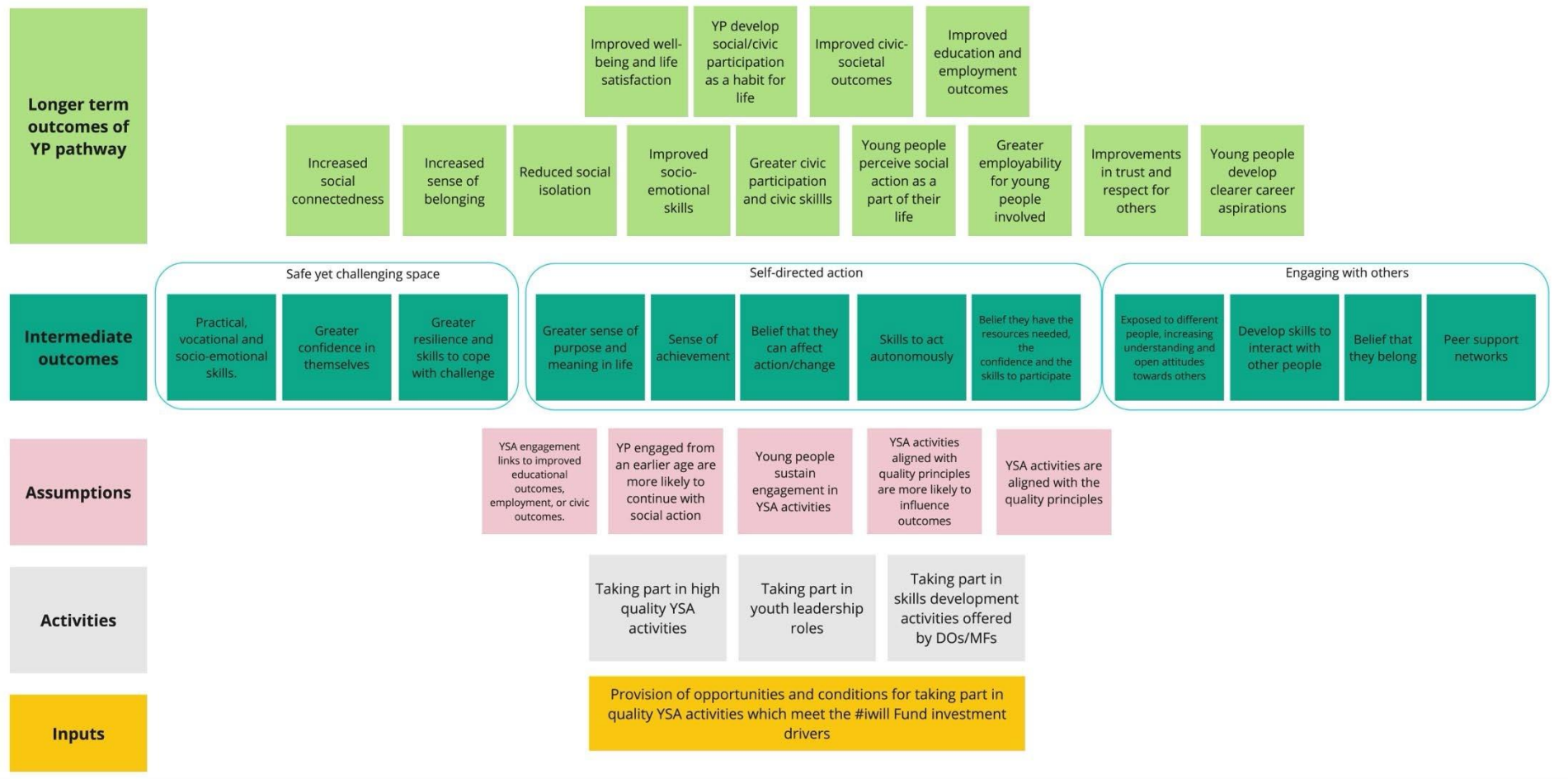


Figure 10 Sub-theory of change - community pathway

