



EMPLOYMENT: SKILLS AND NETWORKS

There is a growing consensus of understanding the “**double benefit**” of youth social action.

There is some good evidence on **young people’s development of employability skills, personal networks, and the confidence to seek work** as a result of involvement in social action.

Organisations such as the CBI for example, have been highlighting the need for these skills.¹

In some cases, social action can help address some of the current limitations of formal education, when it comes to adequately **preparing young people** for the challenges of the 21st century labour market. However, there is not enough clarity on which programmes are achieving these results well.

IMPACT



There is a stronger evidence base in the **US** than in the UK on social action and employability, particularly on full-time service models:

22%
Higher

- National & Community Service report found that volunteers in programmes like AmeriCorps had a **27% higher** likelihood of finding a job than those who had not participated in the programme.²

- Research on AmeriCorps’ impact also shows that **social action can lead to higher wages and increased job satisfaction** on a longitudinal basis.

The evidence base in the UK is not as developed or conclusive. Full-time social action programmes such as schemes run by City Year, Volunteering Matters (formerly CSV) and vInspired indicate that they have **similar positive outcomes** on employability:



90%
vTalent

94%
City Year
Corps

- **90%** of vTalent participants and **94%** of City Year corps members who completed their placement went into **employment, training or education** on completing the programmes.

- An experiment by the Behavioural Insights Team found that there was some evidence, albeit limited, that taking part in social action boosts employability.³ In particular, social action was found to increase empathy, cooperation and some measures that contribute to social trust, which can have a real economic impact.⁴

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE

Self-reported evaluations of UK social action programmes show young people consistently feel more confident about securing a job in the future after taking part in social action (source: NCS³, Student Hubs⁴, Envision⁵ and UpRising⁶).

Social action programmes targeting NEET young people, including London Youth’s Build-it, suggest social action can help young people who are NEET move into employment or training.⁷

NCS evaluations found that **92% of participants felt that NCS had helped them develop useful skills for the future**. Other metrics included **feeling more capable** than previously thought, and **more confident** about seeking a job.⁸

Post-NCS social action opportunities (from age 16 onwards) have focused more on **linking social action to employment and training** (e.g. UpRising Fastlaners, HeadStart, UnLtd Awards, Student Hubs) with positive results: **47%** of students at one of Student Hubs’ 10 universities **changed their career plans as a result of their volunteering**.⁹

There is some evidence that social action opportunities benefit employability by **expanding social and professional networks**, which is particularly important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Re:action and De Montfort University (2009)¹⁰ found that **66% of young people with experience of volunteering in national or international settings, and 44% of young people** volunteering in neighbourhood projects, felt that their **education and employability** had benefited from **meeting new people** as part of their volunteering.

British Chamber of Commerce’s 2014 Workforce Survey¹¹ found that **88%** of respondents felt that school leavers were **not sufficiently prepared for work**. Of these businesses, **57%** felt that **a lack of soft skills**, such as **communication, team-working and resilience**, was a **key reason for this lack of preparedness**.

GAPS IN THE RESEARCH

There is a gap in UK data on the relationship between social action and employability; to fully understand this, longitudinal research is required. It would be interesting to explore the role social action can play as part of wider interventions to support young people into employment.

Currently, there is a reliance on self-reported measures around employability. Further research is needed into whether making young people 'feel' more prepared/confident in employment does translate to increased employability.

AMBASSADOR CASE STUDY



Saeed Atcha set up Xplode Magazine with the aim of increasing the positive press surrounding young people. Saeed recognised that what the press fails to highlight about young people is their enthusiasm, drive and talent. All of these are skills and attributes which need to be celebrated – particularly in terms of employment. Saeed now manages a team of hardworking and talented volunteers who work together to raise awareness of how amazing young people are, and why they should be given a chance.

References

- ¹ CBI, [Raising Ambition for All](#)
- ² National and Community Service report - [Volunteering as a Pathway to Employment: Does Volunteering Increase Odds of Finding a Job for the Out of Work?](#)
- ³ National Citizen Service [2014 Evaluation](#)
- ⁴ Student Hubs – [Impact & Outcomes](#)
- ⁵ Envision – [Impact](#)
- ⁶ UpRising – [Our impact](#)
- ⁷ NEET [report 2016](#)
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Re:action – [The Impact of Volunteering on Social Capital and Community Cohesion](#)
- ¹¹ British Chamber of Commerce's [2014 Workforce Survey](#)