#iwill Fund Learning Hub
Systems Workstream

Exploring Integration of Youth Social Action and 'All-Ages' Social Action
Dartington Service Design Lab
May 2019

About the #iwill Fund Learning Hub

This is a report by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub. The #iwill Fund Learning Hub was commissioned to support, and build on, the activities of the #iwill Fund. It has two strategic objectives:

1. To inform the strategic and investment direction of the #iwill Fund. This will ensure that the Leadership Board and #iwill Fund delivery partners are able to target funds into the right areas, ages and approaches, where it is really needed.

2. To strengthen and connect the youth social action sector by enabling and facilitating the sharing of learning, data and insights across delivery partners, including what does and doesn't work. Sharing key insights and learning more broadly within the wider youth social action sector.

The Learning Hub has developed three workstreams which will support its objectives. This will allow us to support funders in making decisions about how to support youth social action now, and to capitalise on the evidence generated through the #iwill Fund to create a legacy of evidence to support funding and delivery in the future.

1) Systems

This work will develop our understanding of barriers and enablers in building and strengthening sustained youth social action. It will support the identification of emerging practice and the testing of potential new solutions as well as to help guide investment decisions.

(a) Systems Mapping
Co-production workshops, supported by research briefings, will build the understanding of barriers to, and opportunities for, embedding and sustaining youth social action in three priority themes: education, place, and the relationship between youth social action and 'all-ages' social action. Workshops are attended by Match Funders, invited grantees, and other invited stakeholders. (Sept 2018 – Mar 2019)

(b) Funder Collaboration
A series of 'Lab Storms' will be offered to Match Funders to enable a collaborative approach to identify common challenges, and to find and share actionable responses to them. The Lab Storms will support Match Funders to fund as effectively as possible (April 2019 – April 2021).

2) Sector Evidence Plan

This work will build our understanding of what youth social action achieves, how to reach under-served groups, and how to sustain youth social action (Aug 2018 – ongoing). It will draw on these four information sources to develop and evolve answers to key questions:

- Intra-fund evaluation aggregation
- Extra-fund research aggregation
- Match Funder returns to the Fund #iwill Fund and data from Information Management System
- Results from other workstreams.

3) Quality Practice

This work will deepen our understanding of what it takes to deliver quality youth social action. It will illustrate how delivery organisations define 'double benefit' and how they attempt to both achieve and measure it. This work will support delivery organisations to improve their offer (September 2018 – ongoing). 'The Impact Accelerator', delivered by Generation Change, is an intensive process of impact support, challenge and development – up to 30 organisations will take part in this. Learning from these organisations will be shared more widely to spread knowledge about improvement across the youth social action landscape.

Introduction

The Systems Mapping workstream was developed in response to the fact that many Match Funders are interested in supporting new and sustainable ways to increase the number of youth social action opportunities available to young people. This depends, at least in part, on youth social action being integrated into, or collaborating with, existing settings and institutions.

Within the #iwill Fund Learning Hub, we are looking at how youth social action can be integrated into, or collaborate with, three 'systems' – education, place and the wider 'all-ages' social action system.

In doing this we are relying on existing research, the views of experts and delivery partners, and particularly the views of Match Funders. There are two aims of this work:

1. We are seeking to understand Match Funders' experiences of collaborating with these 'systems', and the barriers and enablers they have observed.

2. We then seek to go beyond this to develop 'responses' to these things. **Responses may be ways of funding and collaborating which increase the chances of success – or they may be 'big ideas' that could form the heart of a funding approach.**

These responses, and the work with funders that underlies them, can inform the ongoing development of proposals and decisions by the #iwill Fund Leadership Board and Match Funders. Beyond the Fund, we hope to reach other funders and delivery organisations which are also interested in the same aims: of increasing the number of youth social action opportunities in these systems in sustainable ways.

This report was written by Dartington Service Design Lab. The audiences for this, and all, Learning Hub Papers are the #iwill Fund Leadership Board and Match Funders of the #iwill Fund, other funders interested in youth social action, delivery organisations, and researchers working in this space. We want this work to support their decision-making and their commissioning of further research.

In 'Aims, Methods and Definitions' we set out the aims underlying this piece of work, the methods we used to carry out the research and provide some definitions of the terms we use in this report.

In 'Findings' we set out the findings from our research, including how interviewees described the difference between youth and 'all-ages' social action, the potential costs and benefits of different types of 'integration' and the challenges to doing this.

In 'Conclusions and Recommendations' we look at how funders and delivery organisations can draw on this work to consider whether integration – and which type – would help them to make impact. We make some recommendations for funders about how they could support integration for (potential) grantees in the name of increasing the number of high-quality social action opportunities for all young people.

Aims, Methods & Definitions

Aims

This report draws conclusions on

- what, if anything, distinguishes youth social action from social action which is not targeted at, or restricted to, young people (described as "'all-ages' social action" in this report);
- whether there might be benefits to 'integration' between the types of social action, and what form integration might take;
- the challenges that funders or delivery organisations might encounter in pursuing integration;

- opportunities for supporting integration available to funders.

The impetus for this work came, in part, from the fact that youth social action defines its target participants in its name, in a way that wider social action doesn't. We wanted to explore whether this was because having participation exclusively by young people was pivotal to reaching the intended aims of youth social action, or whether a broader participant base could help achieve these aims. The aims of youth social action – and indeed social action in general - are varied, not least because of the 'double benefit': the aim to make impact on both participant and community. It may be that a more heterogeneous participant base can help achieve one part of this double benefit, but not the other part – or even make it harder to achieve.

We were also aware that the #iwill Campaign and the #iwill Fund have raised the profile of youth social action – an unintended consequence may be to create an impression that it is a very different thing to other types of social action, without this being intentionally the case.

Methods

There is very little literature addressing any of these questions. To carry out the research we relied extensively on conversations with those with deep experience in funding, delivering, and evaluating youth and 'all-ages' social action. This was done through eight qualitative interviews, and a three-hour roundtable. Interviewees and attendees (all described as 'interviewees' in this report) are listed in the Appendix.

Limitations include that due to the time available for this research we were not able to interview a broader range of people - delivery organisations are under-represented, and no social action participants were interviewed. Follow-up work could address this.

Definitions

A consequence of a lack of existing literature means that the terms we use are imperfect, and we cannot rely on a shared understanding of what we mean, particularly by 'integration' and "'all-ages social action". Here we offer definitions, and explanations, informed by our research, with the purpose of making this report easy for the reader to understand.

Social action is defined by the Office for Civil Society as follows:

Social action is about people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can broadly be defined as practical action in the service of others, which is (i) carried out by individuals or groups of people working together, (ii) not mandated and not for profit, (iii) done for the good of others – individuals, communities and/or society, and (iv) bringing about social change and or value.' [i]

'**Youth social action'** – this has been defined by the #iwill campaign as 'young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change' (young people are defined by the #iwill campaign as between 10 and 20 years of age).

Specialist providers of these opportunities include the National Citizen Service, the Scouts and Guides, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and a host of smaller organisations, including many focussed on supporting youth participation in, and leadership of, campaigns for change on local, national, or global issues. Youth social action can also be enabled through schools, places of worship, and institutions like hospitals.

"'All-ages' social action" – we are defining this as activities which aim to create impact for communities or social change where participation is not restricted or led by age. Either intentionally (for legal reasons around who is allowed to take on certain roles) or unintentionally, these activities tend to be taken up by those over-18. Most of these opportunities are offered and supported by organisations focussing on a specific issue and using volunteers or other forms of social action to achieve these. Examples include The National Trust, Shared Lives Plus, the Royal Voluntary Service, Goodgym, and Scouts and Guides leaders. The authors of this paper have created this term as part of the research and, as far as we know, it has not been used before.

'Integration' – we are defining integration as organisations or programmes which enable youth social action or 'all-ages' social action taking steps to intentionally develop a more age-diverse participant base in order to increase their chances of making impact.

'Integration', in this report, does *not* refer to social action activities that believe their primary community benefit resides in bringing together people from different generations to, for example, build inter-generational understanding. These might be described as 'acts of integration' rather than 'integrated action', which is the focus of this report.

Findings

In this section we summarise the main findings from our research.

1) In what ways are youth social action, and 'all-ages' social action distinct?

It is difficult to draw firm conclusions, due to a lack of literature, but it seems unlikely from our research that the *types* of things young people do as social action are radically different from those older people do. The table below lists those activities commonly funded by the #iwill Fund and the

nine types of social action defined by NEF/DCMS as part of the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund in 2017.[ii]

Youth Social Action Activities (taken from the #iwill Fund Information Management System)

Volunteering
   - With people
   - In the community
Campaigning
   - on a given issue in a youth-led way
   - on an issue a young person chooses
Tutoring/mentoring/coaching
Helping to improve the local area/environment
Fundraising/Sponsored Events

'All-Ages' Social Action Activities (taken from 'A Description of Social Action')
Formal volunteering Advocacy and Social Movements Peer Support Community Asset Ownership Co-production Co-operatively owned services Community organising Befriending & helping Time Credits

Both 'types' encompass a broad range of activities (and thus a broad range of aims), but there is considerable crossover. Given that a stated aim of the #iwill campaign is to build a 'habit of service' in young people that can continue over the life course, it is unsurprising and welcome that activities appear largely similar, at least superficially. It is evident that there are some activities in the lower box that are harder for under-18s to participate in: where the action requires ownership of, or liability for, assets and services (though it should be noted that organisations such as Young Lambeth Co-op have found ways to meaningfully involve young people in the commissioning of services).

We also looked at whether the two types of social action had differing political or philosophical antecedents. Both have extremely long histories (including student volunteering since the 19th century), but we focussed on the uptick of political interest in both since 2010. The Big Society agenda led to the creation of the Centre for Social Action within the Cabinet Office (and now within Department for Culture, Media & Sport) and the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund as well

as the creation of the National Citizen Service. It also created a receptive atmosphere, and political support, for the creation of the #iwill campaign, and later the #iwill Fund.

However, interviewees did see a difference in the political agendas around 'all-ages' social action and youth social action. For the former, political and funding support were more heavily predicated on the basis that participants brought *assets* (time, skills, knowledge) with them that could be brought to bear on a specific issue e.g. academic attainment via tutoring, homelessness, or loneliness. For youth social action, participants were regarded more as beneficiaries with specific *needs* (personal development, social mixing, civic-mindedness) that require intervention.

This point is related to another: interviewees agreed that the key and significant distinction between youth and 'all-ages' social action is one of 'impact focus', rather than a totally separate concept or field. By this they meant that supporters and enablers of youth social action were felt to be chiefly concerned with the numbers of young people taking part, and on the contribution that social action can make to their personal development (which is widely defined). Here, social action is primarily making an impact on its young participants. By contrast, supporters and enablers of 'all-ages' social action were felt to be chiefly concerned with, and making impact on, the causes or social problems they were tackling, and thus with recruiting the *right types* (i.e. with the right skills and motivations) of participants. Here, social action is primarily making an impact on issues. This does not mean that the benefits of social action for 'all-ages' participants are unrecognised or unimportant.

'We are delivering social outcomes and other things, like outcomes for participants, are a bonus'
(Healthwatch)

We identified three ways in which this distinction could be seen. Firstly, **funding**: The #iwill Fund and previously the National Youth Social Action Fund, makes funding available for youth social action across an undefined spectrum of issues. It could be said to be issue-agnostic. Many, though not all, the organisations funded by the #iwill Fund have a historic focus on youth wellbeing or development and have developed a social action programme in support of these aims.

Funding for 'all-ages' social action is more likely to be funded on the basis of the issue they are tackling (though funding support for other age-specific social action issue exists, including for older people). As one interviewee from a social action delivery organisation said *'['All-ages' social action organisations] are not funding their work on the basis of the social action, they're funding their work on the basis of the issue' (Oxford Hub)*

Secondly, **evaluation**: The Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund evaluated over 30 projects, Overwhelmingly the focus of these evaluations was on the outcomes participants were working to influence. Those working on this fund were not unconcerned about the impact on participants but this was not the focal point of the Theory of Change and therefore not the focal point for

evaluation. Instead they focused on testing the hypotheses that harnessing people's skills and experiences could positively impact 'big issues' like health conditions, loneliness, and educational attainment. Volunteers' experience was not absent from evaluations, but was a secondary focus.

Conversely, as demonstrated in previous #iwill Fund Learning Hub work[iii] the 'community benefit' is secondary to the participants' benefit in most #iwill Fund evaluations. This is both in terms of research questions and the amount of resource dedicated to those questions. This is also the case in the most methodologically robust evaluation of youth social action programmes to date – the 2016 Randomised Controlled Trials carried out by the Behavioural Insights Team[iv]. The outcomes measured were all to do with the development of skills and capacities within young people.

Thirdly, **delivery:** Some interviewees felt that as youth social action's intended impact was more focused on outcomes for young people, that greater focus in delivery was put on attracting and retaining young people on the basis of the benefits they could gain. Some reflected that young people approach social action with different motivations to older people, and that organisations or programmes had to respond to that. Motivations mentioned included the desire to develop skills that would be useful to the young people themselves, and the desire to spend time with their peers. This may not just mean their peers by age group, but also people experiencing the same issues as them.

This was contested by others who felt that 'all-ages' social action organisations also put large amounts of efforts into attracting and retaining participants, as they were also core to their impact model, albeit as a means to achieving their intended impact on an issue or cause, rather than as the beneficiary of impact in their own right. Others still argued that young people are *not* especially attracted to social action on the basis of developing skills or competencies: *'Of those who transition into further social action, the number one motivation is that they care about the issue, two is that they like the organisation they're working with, and three is their own personal development, and what they can get from it.' (National Citizen Service)*

The first #iwill Fund Learning Hub Impact Accelerator Insights Paper reports that, for the first Impact Accelerator cohort of youth social action organisations, the Theory of Change for community benefit outcomes is frequently less well-defined than that for young peoples' outcomes. It is argued that this leads to less focus in delivery in ensuring community outcomes[v].

In conclusion, interviewees felt that youth social action could be described as 'participant-focussed' – that is, led by the benefit to young people in terms of funding motivations, evaluation focus, and to some extent delivery. 'All-ages' social action could be described as 'issue-led' on these dimensions. It should be noted that there will be examples that do not neatly fit into this scheme.

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2) What are the opportunities offered by integration?

Interviewees identified three potential opportunities for integration of youth social action and 'all-ages' social action which could help them make greater impact in a variety of ways.

a) Greater participation of young people in 'all-ages' social action could increase the community benefits achieved.

Some interviewees felt strongly that young people could make a distinctive contribution (one that older people couldn't make) to almost any cause or issue. This might be due to being closer in age to the intended beneficiary where they are young people (e.g. in mentoring, tutoring, or peer support) or quite the opposite (e.g. children spending time with older people). It might be to do with the fact that schools can deliver youth social action in large groups, or to do with the types of thing young people enjoy doing. 'All-ages' social action programmes or organisations which can identify specific roles for young people can expand their participant base and increase their impact through providing different types of support.

The Pears Foundation, an #iwill Fund Match Funder, is supporting thirty NHS Hospital Trusts to integrate young people into their 'all-ages' social action programmes – they describe this as providing support to allow hospitals to really think about the difference young people could make, and then how they need to change to give them the opportunity to do so.

Another example is the Woodland Trust – their Young People's Forest programme uses the creation of an entirely new forest as a way to draw young people into forest-planting and maintenance. Benefit to the environment will always be the Trust's primary focus, but they see action on this issue by young people as a new way they can meet their impact goals – and develop the next generation of volunteers and supporters.

'There is scope in all types of social action to design opportunities that are youth friendly…A student couldn't be a long-term mentor to a child in care… [but] maybe that child needs help with reading - a university student can go to their school and do after-school reading club, individually, one-to-one.' (Oxford Hub)

b) Greater participation of older people in youth social action organisation/programmes could increase the community benefits achieved.

Some youth social action opportunities are focussed on making an impact on a specific issue in a specific space – community gardening was an example provided by one interviewee. Young people have many practical limitations around the times of day and year they can participate. There may also be tasks crucial to a community garden which may be physically too demanding, or require great experience.

In these cases, either relaxing their restrictions on participation or connecting with 'all-ages' social action organisations to access their participants can have a clear benefit in allowing a youth social action organisation to make greater impact on community outcomes. This is particularly relevant for those social action organisations which have a clearly defined area of focus for their community benefit. An interviewee from an organisation which has transitioned from youth social action to an all-ages participant base said, *'We're much more in it for the community benefit, and if you think about the community benefit, [exclusively] youth social action does not make any sense.' (Oxford Hub)*

c) Sustainability of young people's participation in social action

The issue of sustainability was discussed in two different ways. **Firstly,** the fact that young people 'age out' of youth social action. Developing a habit of service is important to many supporters of youth social action and some interviewees were worried about a cliff-edge where young people are not supported to transition into all-ages opportunities or find them very different in ethos to what they're used to. Even light-touch integration (e.g. referrals, meet and greet or taster events) could be explored to support transition into older-age social action.

Secondly, there is an opportunity for the #iwill Fund to create a broader base for youth participation within 'all-ages' social action that could outlive the Fund. For 'all-ages' social action with a focus on a specific issue to be persuaded to integrate young people, their participation must be cost-effective. This means that the benefits young people bring to the issue must outweigh any cost incurred through integrating a new group of participants – young people.

This has yet to be proven but at least one Match Funder – Pears Foundation - is supporting all-ages programmes to test this. If these programmes feel they see a valuable youth contribution to their issue, they are likely to preserve this integration beyond the Fund's support. The result of this could be a sustainable increase in youth participation in social action.

In conclusion, interviewees could not speak about a wide variety of examples of integration, but all felt that there could be sound impact-led reasons for integration – but that these would be dependent on the *type* of impact an organisation was trying to make.

3) Risks presented by integration

Two significant risks posed by integration were raised by interviewees - one affecting youth social action and one affecting 'all-ages' social action.

a) Losing the 'youth focus' in youth social action

A risk to youth social action posed by integration is that it will lose at least some of its ability to be led by young people. Many felt that this element of leadership (which is one of the six #iwill Quality Principles) is a key way in which social action can positively affect young people's development, and that this would be hard to maintain if adults and young people were participants on equal terms – adults were likely to assert themselves and overwhelm young people's voices.

As a counter to this, it was pointed out that 'youth-led' does not always have to mean 'youth leading alone'. It may be harder to ensure that young people participate and shape activities on equal terms with adults, but if it is done well, and adults sometimes take a lead, this doesn't necessarily mean young people have had their power and agency removed. They may benefit from making decisions *with* adults, and it is fair to say that where there is a diverse participant base, all voices should be heard. It would be valuable to hear of instances where this is already happening.

Interviewees also felt some youth social action organisations or programmes legitimately focus on drawing in young people with shared needs and that it is this shared need that motivates them to come together and act. This could be around race, sexuality or gender issues, or around specific changes they want to see in the world that they feel are particularly relevant to 'young people like them'. The more marginalised a group is, the more important it might be to draw them via a shared identity, and any attempt to recruit a more diverse participant base could undermine this.

'We asked [campaigning] grantees about working with big, established campaigning organisations. They were keen to find out more from expert campaigners. But grantees were also wary that big organisations could muffle the voices of young people with lived experience speaking truth to power' (Match Funder)

Some interviewees questioned whether hesitation around 'integrating' youth social action programmes with all-ages programmes was actually a hesitation around 'integrating' older people into youth development programmes. Some of the organisations funded by the #iwill Fund are historically 'specialists' in youth development who have developed a newer youth social action element, as a route to youth outcomes. Anecdotally, we know that staff in some of these organisations are likely to judge the quality of their work by the quality of the relationships they have with young people – a traditional measure of quality in youth work.

These organisations do not naturally have another 'issue' focus for community outcomes (instead they are usually led by the young people's interests) that could be supported by a broader participant base. Neither would developing outcomes for older participants be on-mission for them. These organisations are sometimes under-developed on the community benefit side, and the question of how well they fit into youth social action as opposed to more traditional youth development work remains.

b) A focus on being youth-led may be a blunt tool for issue-led organisations that need to consider a range of different stakeholders to achieve impact.

Some interviewees picked up on the quality principle of being youth-led for youth social action. They felt that this could justifiably deter issue-led 'all-ages' social action from integration. As one interviewee with a lot of experience in supporting 'all-ages' social action said '*if you're going to co-produce, you'd want to do that with volunteers but also those with lived experience [of the issue being addressed] and an understanding of the context and the wider picture. I don't know how that fits in with the characteristic that it has to be 'youth-led' (Nesta).* It makes sense for organisations whose primary focus is on achieving impact for young participants via social action to be led by them, but not for organisations with a primary focus on a specific issue. These organisations may wish to be led by those affected by that issue rather than their participants. However the interviewee went on to say that there is an opportunity to experiment with co-production alongside youth leadership in an 'issue-led' setting.

In conclusion, the risks raised by interviewees related to the need to preserve the different areas of focus for the different types of social action, and the danger that integration could undermine these.

4) Challenges to integration

Interviewees were convinced that there were, in the right circumstance, positive impact-focussed arguments for integrating young people into 'all-ages' social action, or vice versa. However, they also pointed out challenges to this – as well as some ways to mediate them:

(a) 'All-ages' social action has a history of inadvertently excluding young people

Interviewees identified three ways in which nominally 'all-ages' social action could inadvertently exclude even young adults, as well as under-18s.

Firstly, **programme design.** Interviewees felt that, by default, 'all-ages' social action opportunities excluded young people because they were not designed with them in mind. They may ask for commitments (either to training, or the social action itself) at times of the day or year which make them inaccessible to young people. Many mentioned the ageing profile of volunteers in the UK and suggested this inadvertent exclusion as a factor.

'In many Big Local areas, the people that got involved [in Big Local, a place-based programme] early on decided upon committee style monthly meetings and decision-making processes, they designed things in that way because that's what they were used to, but in a way, they've designed out any way of getting young people involved' (Renaisi)

Secondly, **marketing:** Again, if marketing is designed without explicit consideration of young people, it is likely to be designed and deployed in formats and places that appeal to an older target group.

Opportunities that are on paper open to everyone may not have been inclusive and open to young people, perhaps by design sometimes ... and it's not just design of the opportunity, sometimes its design of the communications, the recruitment message, how you make it appealing to people' *(Nesta)*

Thirdly**, recruitment:** Many 'all-ages' social action opportunities use informal 'word of mouth' networks to recruit their participants – although rarely exclusively. This becomes self-perpetuating, with the people carrying out social action recruiting people who are like them and so on. In the words of an interviewee: '*Volunteer recruitment is often done where if you know someone, you're more likely to get involved in that opportunity … those things can reinforce how it's always been done, and it can mean you get volunteers who are quite similar in their experiences'. (Nesta)*

Another reflected on the experience of Hospital Trusts in integrating young people into their volunteering programmes:

'Initially, many of the Trusts thought this would be about adapting the adult volunteering offer. In hindsight, they'd say you need to put young people at the heart of it and build it around them … the word 'volunteering' doesn't always resonate with young people.' (IVAR)

It should be noted that recent research by The National Lottery Community Fund has found that older people can also be put off by the word 'volunteering'[vi]. This suggests that issues which may seem specific to one age group can actually be cross-cutting.

(b) Legal/regulation challenges

One interviewee shared experiences trying to make popular social action available to a younger group. Goodgym is a highly scaled social action opportunity, which is restricted to adult participants only. The Head of Commissioning (Early Intervention, Prevention and Community Development) City of York Council proposed relaxing the age restrictions, but the organisation felt that safeguarding legislation prevented them from doing so. Anecdotally, we have heard a number of organisations that have faced similar challenges.

'My son is 17, and he said to me, with his mates, 'Dad, why can't we do Goodgym, we'd love to take part.' Reflecting our relationship with Goodgym nationally we explored this and they said, 'well we can't currently because of how the programme is set up, reflecting insurance for people

under 18 and consideration of safeguarding issues for coach runs, but we are open to explore possibilities ' … there are lots of other examples associated with legislation barriers that young people face' (Head of Commissioning, City of York Council)

'We're working with the Rotary club: their "youth" wing Roteracts starts at 18+ and as we were talking, they realised themselves it was an arbitrary bottom line. We are now working together on looking at what they would need to adapt to lower this to 16.' (NCS)

Safeguarding is crucial – but there may be opportunities for organisations and funders to reflect on whether regulations are being understood and applied in the right way. The #iwill campaign has worked with the British Health & Safety Council to identify and debunk some myths around health and safety legislation being a reason why young people cannot be involved in social action[vii]. The support provided by Pears Foundation and the #iwill Fund to support Hospital Trusts to integrate young people into their volunteering in part goes towards helping them safely dismantle legal and safeguarding barriers to the participation of under-18s.

(c) 'Place' as a potentially helpful lens

Some interviewees mentioned that where 'place' was a principle around which social action was organised, it was less likely to inadvertently exclude young people, and more likely to see them as an asset. The Head of Commissioning at York City Council is leading York's 'City of Service' initiative, which requires collaboration to increase participation in social action, with York residents of all ages seen as the target population. Although he felt that originally the initiative did not give enough consideration to young people as an asset, he also had the ability and power to rectify this.

A potential piece of integration work is being explored as part of this initiative, with NCS exploring how to make the Goodgym programme available to younger people.

'[Due to Cities of Service] The model provides an approach to work cross-sector on how you reimagine social action in a city, and in a way that shares power and creates space for others to step into. …where the [Cities of Service] model has been sustained you'll generally have somebody of a senior level that understands the model deeply and applies shared leadership and co-production in its approach.' (Head of Commissioning, City of York Council)

In conclusion, interviewees felt that many all-ages organisations were culturally unprepared to recruit and retain young people, and that they needed support and challenge to consider how to integrate young people well.

Conclusions

This report examines a subject which interviewees agreed has not previously been addressed. One implication of this is that there was no specifically relevant literature for us to draw on, and we are relying heavily on experienced interviewees. Nevertheless, this work has allowed us to:

(a) Identify an important difference between youth social action and 'all-ages' social action as they are usually delivered (with youth social action being focussed more on change for participants, and 'all-ages' social action on change for community beneficiaries), and how this affects whether or not they can be 'integrated'. It should be noted that this is the difference that is *perceived* by stakeholders with a great deal of experience of supporting and observing social action.

(b) Conclude that although this difference was widely identified across interviewees, youth social action and 'all-ages' social action can be extremely similar in terms of their activities, (some of their) aims, and what motivates participants. It is possible that strong focuses on youth benefit by individual organisations or funders can create an impression that the two types are more distinct than they are.

(c) Identify potential impact-led rationales for integration for both organisations or programmes with a youth focus (youth social action), and with an issue focus ('all-ages' social action). The rationales interviewees provided mainly focussed on the ways in which integration could support community benefit. However, some interviewees did also remark that working alongside trustworthy adults was a key part of how they understood youth social action to be beneficial for young people, and that while these adults were usually understood to be enablers of the social action, they could also be participants on equal terms.

(d) Identify some ways in which 'all-ages' social action excludes young people. These may not be insurmountable, but it would require an organisation to have sufficient motivation.

The question of motivation is key – there are organisations whose overriding impact focus will mean that building a broader participant base is never a priority. In particular, interviewees felt this applied to organisations with more of a specialism in youth development, and particularly in targeting young people from particular marginalised groups to build skills or social-emotional competencies. For these organisations, community benefit (as a rationale for integration) could never override benefit to the young people and, indeed, serving a broader participant base could feel contrary to these organisations' aims.

However, for organisations which are focussed on enabling young people to make the most difference they can to issues they care about, integration should be considered as a potential facilitator for more impact. And for 'all-ages' social action focussed on making a difference to a particular issue, the imperative is to consider whether young people can make a distinctive contribution – and how this can be enabled. As well as supporting impact, these organisations can also build the next generation of their supporters and more broadly, of active citizens.

As we have reflected in this and other #iwill Fund Learning Hub papers, youth social action can sometimes be underdeveloped in terms of community benefit. It is noticeable that the opportunities for integration identified by interviewees largely focus on the potential benefit for young people to make more impact on the issues they care about, beyond their own development. We know this is a big motivator for young people to become involved in social action – what remains to be tested (a) is whether the benefits to their development are as likely in 'all-ages' social action as they are in youth social action, and (b) whether, despite the potential community benefit gains, young people are less likely to participate in social action which includes older people.

We would also note the role of funders. Youth social action existed before the #iwill campaign and #iwill Fund as the primary activity of some organisations, as a secondary activity for others, and outside specific organisations altogether. The #iwill Fund seeks to increase the number of youth social action opportunities available – as a result it sets criteria around young people's participation which may (inadvertently) discourage more 'all-ages' opportunities being supported, and incentivises more 'youth-only' opportunities. The context of cuts in funding for youth development services is likely to have increased the number of 'youth development specialists' being drawn to #iwill Fund support. For these organisations a broader participant base is unlikely to be appropriate.

Recommendations

We make three recommendations. The second two are applicable to #iwill Fund Match Funders, while the first can be carried out as part of the work of the #iwill Fund Learning Hub.

1) As a first step, we recommend further work be carried out to map the recipients of #iwill Fund support to understand which might be defined as 'youth development' specialists that have developed youth social action opportunities as a route to outcomes for young people, which are 'issue' specialists that have developed youth social action opportunities as a route to impact on an issue; and which are purely 'youth social action' specialists – organisations which have always had youth social action at the heart of their model and are closer to having both benefit for young people and benefit for the community as their impact focus.

Bearing in mind the likely unsuitability of integration for the first group, this would allow us to get a stronger sense of where the #iwill Fund is already supporting integration (the 'issue' specialists) and what we can learn from this, and where integration might be a viable route for increased impact and scale (the 'youth social action' specialists).

2) Funders can support 'all-ages' social action programmes tackling specific issues to integrate younger people. Interviewees were enthusiastic about the idea that young people can often make a unique contribution to social action on specific issues. But understanding what the right role is for them, and what extra support would be needed to integrate them takes resource. The #iwill Fund presents a particular opportunity to fund organisations to test how to involve young people, to establish the different social action sectors in which the benefits of doing so are likely to outweigh the costs, and to determine the conditions that are likely limit or facilitate these benefits and costs.

If organisations do reap benefits and find the resource required sustainable, this could lead to an increase in the number and variety of social action opportunities available to young people. It could also embed the idea of youth social action in large organisations with wide influence. An example of a particular issue mooted by one interviewee was social care. They pointed out that many young people require some social care support – from domiciliary help to befriending. There are large 'all-ages' social action organisations providing this – as well as place-based schemes – young people could play a unique role in providing some of this support to those close to their own age.

'Sometimes organisations need headspace and time to focus on young people, what contribution they could make, and how they could be brought about' (Match Funder)

A related point is that it is desirable on many levels for 'all-ages' social action organisations to be supported and challenged to develop a broader participant base – one reason being that we want young social action participants to be able to transition, as they age, into organisations that feel welcoming.

3) Youth social action organisations and programmes can be supported to partner with 'all-ages' organisations dedicated to the same cause, or in the same places, as a type of exploratory integration. The National Youth Social Action Fund explicitly supported organisations to develop new partnerships and an unpublished evaluation describes some of the benefits as (a) working with a wider range of young people (b) developing a fuller offer with better resources and (c) supporting young people's progression into further social action, (d) strengthening the organisation itself[viii].

These partnerships were largely with schools and local authorities. There is an opportunity for funding now to support organisations to explore and develop partnerships with 'issue-based' social action organisations. This could be led by an existing overlap in organisations' community focus. An added benefit might be that that youth social action organisations (which tend to be 'underdeveloped' in terms of programme design and evaluation of community benefit) could learn from 'issue-based' social action organisations, and strengthen these areas. It could also be led by young participant interest – which issues do they want to tackle, and which 'all-ages' social action organisations could help them get involved in this?

Alongside an issue-focus, 'place' can also be a useful lens for brokering partnerships between youth and 'all-ages' social action – it makes no assumptions about participant age and unites participants around a shared location. An earlier #iwill Fund Learning Hub paper provides examples of how to develop a place-informed youth social action offer, which could be adapted to draw in a broader participant base[ix].

Acknowledgements & References

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Interviewees in February and March 2019

Carrie Deacon Head of Social Action Innovation, Nesta

Joe Micheli Head of Commissioning (Early Intervention, Prevention and Community Development, City of York Council

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Alex Daley Head of the Centre for Social Action, Office for Civil Society

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Roundtable Attendees on 25th March 2019

Vivienne Jackson, Act for Change Fund

Kristen Stephenson, Sport England

Catherine Hobbs, Comic Relief

Haroon Ahmed, #iwill Fund Leadership Board

Helen Whyman, The National Lottery Community Fund

Rania Marandos, Step Up to Serve

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Sara Fernandez Director, Oxford Hub

John Hitchin, Renaisi

Jenny North, Dartington Service Design Lab

Bridget McGing of the Pears Foundation could not attend but spoke to the report's author subsequently.

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