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#iwill Fund Learning Hub Systems Workstream

Organisations Delivering Youth Social Action within the
#iwill Fund

Dartington Service Design Lab
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Introduction

This paper is part of the #iwill Fund Learning Hub's Systems workstream. It follows on from an earlier publication by the Learning Hub, which explored the relationship between youth social action and 'all ages' social action, and particularly the context of the organisations which deliver social action opportunities¹. In that report, we identified that some organisations delivering youth social action with support from the #iwill Fund had a long history of precisely that – youth social action. Others had track records of supporting young people's development (often via youth work) and had developed a social action offer as part of this work. We identified another category of organisations which had a history of using social action to achieve social impact, for example via volunteering by adults. They were developing a youth focussed offer to engage new 'social actors' and increase their impact on the issue they cared about. We described this distinction as organisations having different areas of 'impact focus'.

The #iwill Fund Leadership Board felt that was a useful categorisation, and one that might deepen our understanding of the different ways in which organisations could support youth social action, and make impact. However, although the #iwill Fund Learning Hub was aware of examples of organisations in each of the categories, we did not have a picture of how it applied across the Fund. We wanted to know how many grantee organisations across the #iwill Fund fell into each category. This would allow us to understand more about the ways in which the #iwill Fund is creating new youth social action opportunities, where there might be opportunities for further funding, and consider possible implications for the quality of delivery and the sustainability of what has been funded longer term. This analysis can also enable further collaboration and sharing of information, particularly between Match Funders focussing on the same categories of organisations.

This report sets out in some more detail why these organisational type matters. We then share how we categorised grantee organisations and the results of this categorisation. Finally, we draw some conclusions and make recommendations for the #iwill Fund Leadership Board and Match Funders.

Why does organisational type matter?

Our earlier work helped us to identify three 'types' of organisation being funded under the #iwill Fund:

- 1) Organisations which have always had youth social action as a key component of what they do, possibly alongside other elements, and as at least part of their 'impact focus'.

Examples of this type are Girlguiding UK and First Give.

¹ Dartington Service Design Lab (2019), Exploring Integration of Youth Social Action and 'All-Ages Social Action'

- 2) Organisations which have a 'impact focus' on young people's development and wellbeing, and which have now developed a youth social action offer as a way of supporting this focus. Examples of this type are Barnardo's and Football Beyond Borders.
- 3) Organisations which have an 'impact focus' on a social issue, and have traditionally used social action (carried out by adults) to make impact on this issue. They have now developed a youth-focussed offer to involve young people and make more impact in their chosen area. Examples of this type include volunteering teams housed within Hospital Trusts and The Woodland Trust.

Our initial motivation for understanding what has been funded was to understand more about where the #iwill Fund's support has gone, and to assess whether there might be untapped opportunities to fund organisations in the third category and expand the number of organisations offering youth social action. As we have carried out this work we have reflected on this, and identified other ways in which these organisational types might matter:

Quality of Delivery

Organisations develop knowledge and expertise in the areas in which they focus. For an organisation which has a track record in supporting young people, it is to be expected that this expertise will lie in engaging (and retaining) young people, and supporting them, particularly through additional challenges. They may not be experts in *specifically* supporting young people to lead, and they are also unlikely to have a track record in achieving impact for the community – the other part of youth social action's 'double benefit'.

This is supported by findings from the Impact Accelerator for the #iwill Fund Learning Hub². Having assessed the strengths and weaknesses of a cohort of organisations delivering youth social action, the majority of whom were youth-focussed organisations which had a newly-developed youth social action offer, the author reported that they 'do not see social action as their primary offer as an organisation' and that they felt they were stronger and more expert in their primary activities. These organisations were rated as weaker during the Impact Accelerator process on programme design and understanding impact than organisations with a track record of delivering youth social action.

On the other side, organisations without a history of working with young people can struggle to engage them, or to create opportunities that they want to do and which fit with their lives – as well as allowing them to lead. This was reported in the #iwill Fund's Learning Hub previous report looking at integrating young people into social action³: interviewees reported that social action opportunities which were not specifically created for young people could end up inadvertently excluding them via programme design, and recruitment processes.

² Generation Change (2019), Impact Accelerator Initial Insights

³ Dartington Service Design Lab (2019), Exploring Integration of Youth Social Action and 'All-Ages' Social Action

This should matter to both delivery organisations and funders – increasing the number of organisations delivering youth social action is difficult to justify without a focus on quality. Being aware of what types of organisation they are funding allows funders to be aware of where there may be gaps in expertise, and support organisations to consider and address these. Delivery organisations may need additional support – financial or otherwise – to do this.

Double benefit

‘Double benefit’ is a key principle of youth social action – both the #iwill campaign and the #iwill Fund highlight it as a defining feature. This means that youth social action opportunities must intend to benefit both the young people, and the community. The #iwill Fund Learning Hub’s paper on ‘community benefit’ shows that both ‘community’ and ‘benefit’ can be understood in diverse ways⁴. We consider that this diversity is welcome and there is not necessarily a right way to pursue, or assess, community benefit within youth social action.

However, as our previous report on integration showed, an organisation’s focus will determine the weight it gives to community benefit versus young people’s benefit. They are unlikely to be given equal weight. An organisation which has traditionally used social actors (e.g. campaigners or volunteers) to impact on a particular social issue will see that issue as its primary ‘impact focus’, and will be interested in whether young people taking part in this a social action can increase this impact.

By contrast, an organisation which has traditionally focussed on outcomes for young people will see these outcomes as their ‘impact focus’. They may be convinced that social action is an invaluable way to build certain competences, experiences, and habits, but lack expertise in how to support young people to deliver community benefit. The initial report from the #iwill Fund Learning Hub’s Impact Accelerator programme reflected that ‘Many providers see these [community] outcomes as incidental or of less significance than the outcomes to young people’.

Again, this issue should matter to funders. They can be clear about how they expect grantee organisations to balance the two benefits, and acknowledge the reality that equal balance is unlikely. They can also help organisations develop similar clarity, and stronger Theories of Change about exactly what benefit they intend to bring to young people and communities, and how.

A recent ‘LabStorm’ for Match Funders facilitated by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub considered this issue: participants agreed that funders had more to do to communicate to youth-focussed grantees that they value community benefit, and to support organisations to develop their plans to achieve and assess community benefit⁵.

⁴ Dartington Service Design Lab (2019), Community Benefit and Youth Social Action

⁵ Centre for Youth Impact (2019), Report on the first #iwill Fund Learning Hub LabStorms

Sustainability

When we refer to 'sustainability' in this paper we mean whether and how the new youth social action opportunities created will be sustained after the end of the #iwill Funding. We think that whether and how organisations decide to sustain new youth social action opportunities will depend, in part, on their impact focus.

Organisations with a focus on social issues are likely to consider whether involving young people are helping them to create impact, and whether this will be sustainable long term. If so it is plausible that the costs of this activity can be integrated into their 'as usual' fundraising to raise resources to tackle their particular social issue. They may also find new sources of funding open to them as a result of integrating young people.

Organisations with a focus on young people's outcomes are likely to consider firstly whether youth social action is helping them support young people's development and adding value to their activities, so that they would not want to stop providing it. If this is the case, they will also need to consider whether there are funders who specifically support youth social action in itself, or which are open to supporting it as a route to outcomes around young people's development. Without these opportunities, organisations will be less able to sustain youth social action. Youth social action opportunities that have not been integrated into an organisation's 'main' programme(s), but are a separate strand of work, are particularly vulnerable.

The sustainability of what they fund is typically of concern to funders. Two of the outcomes in the #iwill Fund's overall Theory of Change are that funding for youth social action be continued beyond the #iwill Fund, and that high-quality youth social action opportunities be 'embedded' in organisations – which suggests the organisational ability to deliver over the long-term. We believe that the role youth social action is playing in an organisation's mission will be intimately linked to considerations of whether, and how, they will continue to embed and seek funding for it in the future, as will be the external funding environment.

Method

We analysed and categorised the grantees of 12 Match Funders within the #iwill Fund – this includes all those who have, as of August 2019, made publicly announced grant-funding decisions. We excluded Ormiston Trust, UKCF, WE Charity, and Vinspired, and our reasons for this are given below.

All of Ormiston Trust's grantees are schools within the Ormiston Academy Trust. It was concluded that schools, though undoubtedly focussed on young people's development, do not fit well into any of the categories above. Previous work by the #iwill Fund Learning Hub has also led us to conclude

that questions of quality, double benefit, and sustainability are different for schools than for delivery organisations⁶. As a result of this decision, we also excluded schools and colleges within other Match Funder's portfolios.

UKCF's grantees were excluded because they are Community Foundations which have, in turn, made micro-grants to hundreds of community organisations. We have insufficient information to analyse and categorise these organisations.

WE Charity and Vinspired were excluded as they funded only their own delivery.

Of the remaining 12 Match Funders, the #iwill Fund Learning Hub initially sought information on grantees via the Fund's Information Management System, and Match Funder websites. We carried out an initial categorisation, including visiting individual grantees' websites to make a judgment on their traditional area of impact focus, and came to a categorisation.

These results were then assessed by the #iwill Fund's Funding Officers. Where necessary, they re-categorised grantees, although this happened in fewer than ten cases.

Finally, the Learning Hub shared these results and undertook phone interviews with four Match Funders. This was in part to 'test' our categorisation decisions, but also to understand whether and how Match Funders are already thinking about the different organisational types within their funding, and the implications of this.

This is not a perfect method – for an even more precise picture, we would need to talk to every Match Funder and grantee organisation. This is not possible within resource. Further we would argue it is not necessary to do this to provide a picture of what types of organisation the Fund has supported, and from this to reach some conclusions and recommendations for the Leadership Board and Match Funders.

It should also be noted that there are other Match Funders within the #iwill Fund, who have been excluded as they have yet to make grants, or announce these publicly. Some of the Match Funders included in this analysis will also make further grants. The information within the #iwill Fund's Information Management System will increase, and further analysis may be possible in the future. In addition, the number of organisations included in this analysis cannot give any indication of the 'reach' of the #iwill Fund, due to the exclusions detailed above. It should be noted that some organisations may provide many more individual 'opportunities' than others, but we were not able to attribute the number of opportunities to categories in this analysis.

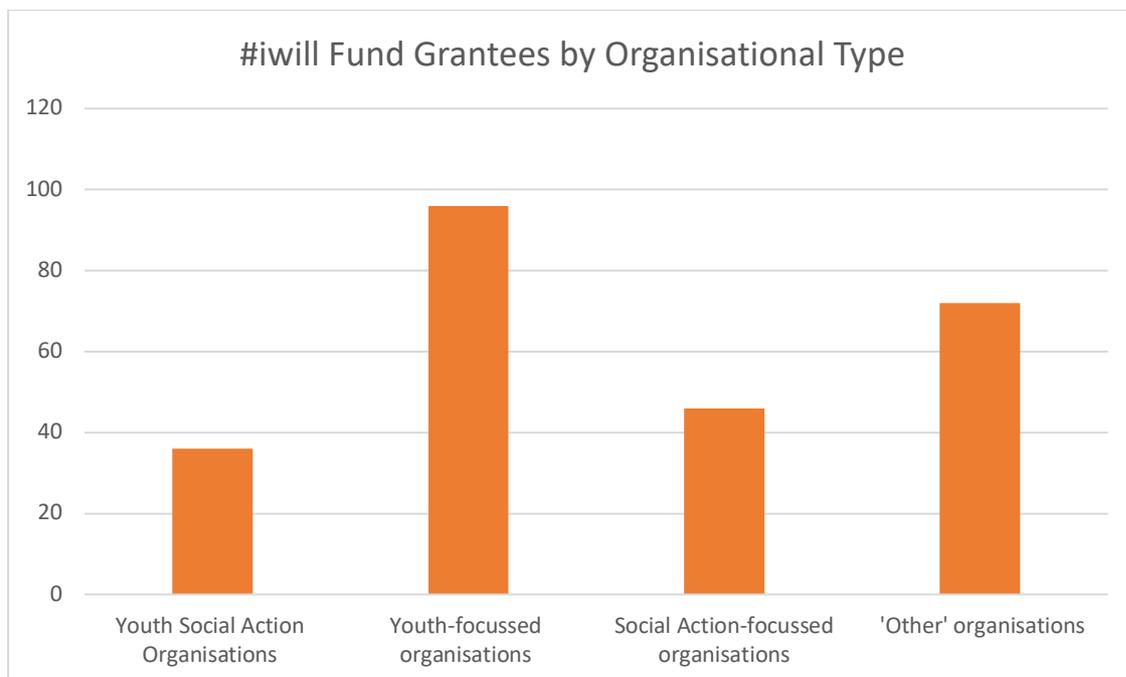
⁶ Dartington Service Design Lab (2019), Supporting Youth Social Action in Schools

Findings

In total we analysed, and included in our categorisation, 250 organisations. We had expected to assign them all to one of the three categories described above. However our analysis revealed the need for a further category, resulting in four categories:

- 1) Organisations which have always had youth social action as a key component of what they do, possibly alongside other elements, and as at least part of their 'impact focus'.
- 2) Organisations which have an 'impact focus' on young people's development and wellbeing, and which have now developed a youth social action offer as a way of supporting this focus.
- 3) Organisations which have an 'impact focus' on a social issue, and have traditionally used social action (carried out by adults) to make impact on this issue. They have now developed a youth-focussed offer to involve young people and make more impact in their chosen area.
- 4) Organisations which don't have a historic 'impact focus' on young people's development or a track record of using social action to make an impact on their area of 'impact focus', but which have developed a youth social action offer.

The results of the analysis can be seen in the table below.



Organisations that have an 'impact focus' on youth development are the largest category. This is perhaps unsurprising given that many of the Match Funders also have a traditional focus on young people, and many are deliberately evaluating youth social action to see if and how it promotes outcomes for young people. Others feel that 'youth work' should integrate social action into their offer for all young people (for example, because experiencing opportunities to lead is crucial to development) and see their funding as supporting this long-term integration.

Organisations that do not traditionally have an 'impact focus' on young people or use social action in the service of another focus are the second largest category. This was an unanticipated category created during analysis, and is unsurprisingly broad. It includes arts organisations, housing associations, organisations supporting specific Black and Minority Ethnic groups, and community groups.

Organisations which have a traditional 'impact focus' and use social action to achieve impact are the third largest category. One Match Funder contributes over half of the total, through their funding of NHS Hospital Trusts, or their associated charities, to develop youth social action opportunities. This is in contrast to the funding of traditionally youth-focussed organisations: no one Match Funder dominates that category.

Organisations which have youth social action as a key part of their mission, and have done for some time, or always, are the smallest category. It seems likely that this reflects the small size of this sector, rather than there being many youth social action organisations which have not received funding from the #iwill Fund.

Seven Match Funders funded at least one organisation in all four categories, meaning five did not. Of this the most commonly unfunded category (by four Match Funders) was the first category – those organisations which traditionally focus on youth social action. This suggests that our conclusions and recommendations are relevant to most of the Match Funders we have included in our analysis.

Conclusions & Recommendations

These findings show that the #iwill Fund has taken youth social action well beyond its already-existing base of organisations focussed on this area – those in the first category. We can say that many of the new opportunities will have been created by organisations new to youth social action, and some new to social action itself, representing a huge expansion in organisational capacity to deliver it. We can also assume increased awareness and understanding of youth social action in these organisation's networks, including their other funders.

This expansion may be due to the #iwill Fund's structure, unique in England. By bringing together diverse Match Funders (some experienced supporters of youth social action and some new to the field) with diverse aims the #iwill Fund may have achieved a broader reach than it would have done as a traditional 'centralised' fund.

We can also conclude that the majority of this expansion has been driven by organisations with a traditional focus on youth development – whether this is because of Match Funder's existing individual interests, or because the funding opportunity was particularly attractive to these organisations it is not possible to say.

The relatively small number of organisations falling into the third category suggests there may be untapped potential, and opportunity here. Our previous report made the case that organisations using social action could improve their impact by developing specific opportunities for young people. Match Funders supporting this type of work are enthusiastic that organisations will see the value of involving young people if they are supported to take the first steps.

Bearing in mind these conclusions, and the reasons we have set out earlier in this report for why organisational type matters, we make the following recommendations for the #iwill Fund Leadership Board and Match Funders:

- 1) In considering whether youth social action opportunities will be sustained, the Leadership Board and Match Funders should consider the organisations which enable these opportunities. It is they that will make the decisions about whether they want to continue delivering them, and can fundraise to do so. Given the large number of traditionally youth-focussed organisations which that have already been funded, it is sensible in particular to consider the perspective of these organisations. Firstly, do these organisations now want to commit to delivering youth social action long-term as a part of delivering their mission of supporting developing young people?

Where the answer is yes, the second question is what support, in terms of funding and infrastructure, do they need to continue? They will need a route to funding – whether public or philanthropic – that also recognises the value of youth social action, and wants to support it.

Where organisations do not see themselves delivering social action long-term, it is important to understand why. Are there barriers to quality delivery, or do they now see it as not a priority for the young people they serve? Understanding this can help funders better target future support at organisations that are committed to youth social action as a way of making impact.

Conversations with Match Funders show that youth-focussed organisations are already thinking about the sustainability of their social action activities in a variety of ways – taking in account their missions, their other activities, and the external funding environment. As #iwill Fund support comes to an end, it will be important to understand from these organisations (via Match Funders) whether and how they plan to sustain youth social action opportunities.

- 2) Match Funders supporting youth-focussed organisations to deliver social action now and in the future should be aware of the potential weaknesses in design and delivery of youth social action – particularly around community benefit. The quality of delivery by these organisations is particularly important given the significant support they have received from the #iwill Fund.

These organisations can benefit from a more developed understanding of the types of community benefit they can intend to produce, and ‘critical friend’ support to integrate these into their programme design, delivery, and monitoring. Funders can provide this directly themselves, or through improvement efforts such as the Impact Accelerator, where there is also a group component, so organisations can share ideas, insights, and practice. Committing to continuous improvement on delivery should go hand-in-hand with trying to sustain delivery, as described in the first recommendation.

- 3) Expanding youth social action into new organisations beyond the youth sector can be seen as a significant opportunity – both for the #iwill Fund, and for any other funders committed to youth social action. Some Match Funders which have more recently joined the #iwill Fund are addressing this, but there is likely more untapped potential to ensure that the whole spectrum of social action is open to young people. This could include building relationships with individual organisations supporting social action on a large scale to help them to integrate young people. It could also look like identifying sectors or institutions where youth social action is less embedded (e.g. arts and heritage, or local regeneration), to understand how young people might best make an impact in these areas, and then finding opportunities for them to do so.

There are examples of both approaches within the #iwill Fund already (volunteering within the NHS and the environmental social action) which can be learnt from. This could be taken forward by individual Funders, or could become a part of the Leadership Board’s effort to create a legacy for youth social action beyond the #iwill Fund. Institution-specific funders, as opposed to funders with a general focus, or focus on young people, could be suitable partners for this work.

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 #iwill Fund Learning Hub has developed three workstreams that 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 'LabStorms' - a collaborative approach to problem solving - 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 LabStorms 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; and
- 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, previously delivered by Generation Change and now by the Centre for Youth Impact, 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.