

# Embedding inclusive practices in opportunities for youth social action

A report of a study into “what works” in enabling the full participation of all young people in youth social action

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We would like to thank everyone who has taken part in this study - sharing examples, information, personal stories and insights with us and commenting on various drafts and interim paper.

# Executive summary

This report shares the lessons and findings from a study of the evidence about “what works” in enabling the full participation of children and young people who risk being excluded from opportunities for youth social action.

The main outcome of this study is a set of evidence based lessons and practices that #iwill campaign partners can use to embed inclusion within everything they do – in the design and delivery of opportunities for youth social action, in supporting all young people to fully participate in those opportunities and in evaluating the outcomes and impact of that support.

The study was undertaken by the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi), a not-for-profit organisation concerned with promoting inclusion and equality for people who risk exclusion and who need support to lead a full life. For more information go to <http://www.ndti.org.uk/what-we-do/community-inclusion>

It was commissioned in response to the campaign’s desire to undertake a focused piece of work to help ensure that all young people aged 10-20 are able to participate in meaningful social action without any barriers to their participation. The aim was to highlight important lessons from current approaches that are working well; and to identify the key principles and associated practices for promoting young people’s inclusion and participation in social action.

At the time that this work began, there was a significant body of work concerned with considering how organisations that are fundamentally service-based organisations (i.e. working with young people who are disabled, excluded or whose voices not heard) can take action to help ensure the people they work with are included in social action and decision-making. However, there was less consideration of how what might be termed community or mainstream organisations - including naturally emerging community networks - can act and operate in ways that ensure they are being fully inclusive. This work has therefore also served to help plug that gap.

A four phase scoping review was designed to identify examples of positive practices and inclusive initiatives across the UK that are successful in supporting young people to take part in social action. This review included a desk based search of existing evidence on inclusive approaches; a call for information and examples of innovative inclusive practices; and a learning exchange inviting respondents to this call to an interactive workshop to share approaches and identify what makes these work well and for whom.

## Findings and lessons

A number of cross cutting themes and examples of what works in enabling the full participation of all young people were identified from the study’s findings, the result of an analysis across all elements of the work outlined above.

Four inclusion lessons for ensuring the full participation of all young people in social action were identified from this analysis, which can be thought of as “critical success factors” for ensuring inclusion.

## Four Inclusion Lessons

1. Reach out and engage young people who are often left out of, excluded from or don't engage in social action
2. Empower and equip in ways that increase the confidence, self-esteem and skills of young people, to ensure they engage and are supported to participate fully
3. Personalise and enable young people to take control and shape their involvement in youth social action through tailored support to contribute effectively and learn from their experiences
4. Acknowledge contributions and ambitions so that young people recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute.

Organisations providing opportunities and support for young people to participate in youth social action have highlighted these lessons as being the most important factors in enabling the full participation of excluded young people. In turn, the evidence points to social action being a key lever for ensuring young people are fully included in society – in terms of involvement at school and in education, in local communities and civic participation, in wider society and in job and career prospects. It is important therefore, to see these four areas as the key drivers for promoting inclusion in social action, whilst also seeing social action as a key enabler for inclusion in family, education, employment, community and civic life.

Whilst each of these lessons could be said to be relevant to all young people, eight key messages and examples of inclusive practices were also identified as being essential for supporting excluded young people to participate in youth social action. It is at this detailed, practical level that specific interventions or approaches are necessary to enable the participation of young people whose involvement is rarely seen, whose voices are seldom heard and whose contributions could be missed.

## Eight key messages from young people

1. Seek me out and find me, it might take a while but it will be worth it. You'll find me on my turf, not yours!
2. Make it easy for me to get involved and play a part (e.g. ask me what help I need); I might need extra help and/or time to do this.
3. Involve me in discussions about what's possible and how to make it happen
4. Help me to find out what I'm interested in and passionate about, and to work on the things that matter to me
5. Work with me to find out what I'm good at and bring as well as what I can gain through my involvement.
6. Use my talents, experiences and ideas; and stretch and support me to develop new talents, gain different experiences and be confident in my own abilities.
7. Recognise and celebrate my success and help me realise my aspirations and ambitions, but remember...
8. Tailor and adapt what you do to enable me to make change happen; personalise the opportunity for youth social action and my experience of it

A new Inclusive Youth Social Action Resource is shared in Section 3.3 of the main report – combining the #iwill quality principles for youth social action with these inclusion lessons and practices that promote inclusion in youth social action. This set of Lessons and Practices for Success is designed to be useful in all aspects of providing and promoting opportunities for and support to participate in youth action. It can also be used as an evaluation tool to determine how well organisations are doing in embedding and promoting inclusive approaches in everything they do.

## Recommendations

Quality principles for inclusive social action	Successful inclusive practices that ensure...
<b>Youth-led</b> - Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision-making	Opportunities and support to participate, and experiences of participation, in social action are tailored to take account of the circumstances, needs, experiences and interests of each young person
<b>Challenging</b> - Stretching and engaging as well as enjoyable and enabling	Young people are supported and encouraged to increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills; and are stretched whilst being supported to participate and make a difference.
<b>Socially Impactful</b> - Having a clear intended benefit to the community	Young people can create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to themselves
<b>Progressive</b> - Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities	Young people can use their experiences of youth social action to grow and develop in all areas of their life
<b>Embedded</b> - Accessible to all, and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life	Support and opportunities to participate in social action reach out and integrate social action within young people's lives now and in their future.
<b>Reflective</b> - Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning	Young people's contributions and ambitions are acknowledged to help them recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute

November 2014 marks the first anniversary of the iwill campaign, with #iwill week running from Monday 24 to Friday 28 November. This report has been published as part of the anniversary celebrations, as a resource for campaign partners to help embed inclusive approaches and practices in national and local opportunities for youth social action. To help #iwill campaign partners think about, adopt and promote the findings and the Inclusive Youth Action resource in their own organisations and beyond we have recommended five areas for action to make inclusion in youth action a reality for all young people.

### **Five Areas for Action**

1. Embed inclusive practices in everything you do
2. Facilitate access to different types of support
3. Create inclusive cultures through enabling attitudes and behaviours
4. Focus on organisational resourcefulness
5. Promote and encourage inclusive practices to ensure their adoption

# 1. Introduction and summary

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Four inclusion lessons for ensuring the full participation of all young people in social action were identified from this analysis, which can be thought of as “critical success factors” for ensuring inclusion.

NDTi ([www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)) worked with Step Up To Serve and the Pears Foundation to identify and learn from approaches that enable all young people to fully participate in youth social action.

The study was part of the #iwill campaign's portfolio of work on inclusion, which seeks to inform the on-going work of partners and others involved in youth social action.

**In November 2013, HRH The Prince of Wales and the UK's three party leaders launched the #iwill campaign. The campaign's collective goal is to make participation in social action the norm for 10-20 year olds across the UK by 2020.**

**The campaign aims to inspire and empower leaders from across society to enable every young person to take part in social action that helps others as well as their own development, creating a habit for life.**

**Over 100 organisations have already given substantive pledges of support towards the campaign's goal. For more information visit: [www.iwill.org.uk](http://www.iwill.org.uk)**

**The campaign's definition of youth social action is: Young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change**

A number of key definitions and terms were identified during the early stages of this work, and an explanation of key terms such as "youth social action" and "excluded young people" were circulated to inform a search for evidence and call for information and examples from campaign partners.

These terms generated a dialogue about which young people typically get left out of opportunities for youth social action, and how their exclusion can be tackled to ensure the full participation of all young people in current and future opportunities. Part of this debate centred on the need for caution in using terms such as "excluded" or "at risk from exclusion" and whether generic approaches designed with everyone in mind or those targeted to specific groups or experiences are most effective in overcoming the barriers that some young people face in their lives. These issues are explored in Section 3.

Key definitions adopted for this study are explained below.

#### Definitions / criteria

- By "youth social action" we mean practical action undertaken by children and young people in the service of others, which is of benefit to the community and young person/s involved.
- By "all young people" we mean people aged 10-20 years (in some case up to 25 years) with a particular focus on those who experience disadvantage and/or exclusion; who therefore may not have had access to opportunities to participate.

Examples of the kinds of situations, experiences or groups of children and young people include those...

- Who are disabled, have long term conditions, are terminally ill and/or have special educational needs (including those with mental health problems, eating disorders, substance use issues etc.)
- Who are looked after, or previously looked after (e.g. care leavers)
- Who are caring for another person e.g. a parent/sibling/grandparent
- From diverse faith and / or cultural backgrounds
- Who are or have been excluded from school
- Who have offended or are at risk of offending
- Living in poverty and deprivation
- From black and minority ethnic communities
- Who are gay, lesbian and/or transgender
- Living in very rural and isolated communities
- Who are unaccompanied or accompanied asylum seekers
- Who are homeless or living in temporary accommodation

- By “full participation” we mean approaches or initiatives that enable young people to access and take up good quality, meaningful opportunities for youth social action that are of a significant frequency and/or duration (e.g. more than one day a year).

- By inclusion we mean an environment where everyone has an opportunity to fully participate and where each person is valued for his or her distinctive contributions, skills, experiences and perspectives. Miller and Katz (2002) defined inclusion as:

*.. a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best.*

It is also about valuing all individuals, giving equal access and opportunity to all and removing discrimination and other barriers to involvement .

Examples and quotes from all those involved in the study are included throughout this report - highlighted in orange boxes - to illustrate key points and share successful approaches to inclusion.

## 2. What we did, how, with whom & how

### **There were three main elements to the Inclusion Study:**

- A scoping review of the evidence on inclusive approaches that enable all young people to fully participate in youth social action. A total of 33 items met the criteria for this search, the details of which are summarised in an evidence grid which is available on request from Step Up To Serve and NDTi.
- A call for information and examples of effective approaches for enabling young people's participation in youth social action. Over 45 detailed responses were received, providing a wealth of information and insights from diverse organisations, groups and networks involving in youth social action. The log of responses including case studies, stories and examples is available on request from Step Up To Serve and NDTi.

The findings from the review and the call were used to draft a set of "inclusion principles and practices" which could be used both to inform local and national developments and opportunities for youth social action; and as an evaluative guide to determine whether young people's experiences and aspirations are shaping local opportunities for their full participation. This draft was consulted on widely towards the end of the study, and a final set of inclusion lessons and practices that take account of all consultation responses forms section 4 of this report.

- We invited 9 organisations to take part in a one day Learning Exchange on 14 July 2014. These were a mix of small, medium sized and large organisations providing a range of opportunities for youth social action where there were either general or targeted initiatives to ensure the full participation of young people typically excluded. For example, The Scouts Association where specific projects and initiatives target excluded young people to encourage them to join the scouting movement. 25 participants came together to share their different approaches, and to test the draft inclusion principles and practices. A photographic note of this event was shared with participants, and a summary record circulated more widely through the campaign's fortnightly newsletter, to encourage comments and feedback on emerging lessons and themes.

## 3. Findings and Outcomes from the report

This section summarises the key findings, lessons and messages from all elements of the inclusion study.

First we share the cross cutting themes and examples of what works in enabling the full participation of all young people identified across the evidence review, call for information / examples and learning exchange. Next we identify the central lessons and messages from those involved in this study about the most effective approaches for embedding inclusive practices at all levels of youth social action. Finally, we introduce the Inclusive Youth Social Action Resource, comprising the quality principles and lessons for inclusive practices.

### 3.1 Cross cutting themes and examples of “what works”

Whilst the focus of this study is on the practical lessons and examples of inclusive practices provided in section 3.3., the study also identified a number of cross cutting themes from looking at and analysing the findings from all elements of the work. These themes are helpful in providing the context for the specific lessons and practices shared later; they are the rationale if you like for why these particular approaches and examples have been included in this report.

- Creating potential through diverse opportunities
- Understanding barriers is the first step to overcoming exclusion
- Youth social action is highly valued by a diversity of young people
- Young people must be in the driving seat
- A sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than yourself
- The benefits and tensions of general and targeted approaches
- Effective partnerships and networks
- Measuring and demonstrating impact

#### Creating potential through diverse opportunities

We have found that opportunities for youth social action are hugely diverse and wide ranging – but that not everyone knows about them or how to access them. This is both individuals and families, but also schools, groups and organisations supporting or working with young people, and wider community organisations and networks.

This wealth of opportunity is a huge potential but the lack of awareness about them is a key barrier for young people in general and excluded young people in particular. The evidence review highlighted the lack of knowledge and low levels of awareness as a specific barrier for different groups of young people typically excluded from such opportunities.

The social action charity Envision develops partnerships with SEN schools to reach young people with SEN to become social activists. In an environment with which they are familiar and feel comfortable, they can begin to explore growing their experiences and stretching themselves:

“What I found hardest was meeting the strangers in the college because it was difficult for me ...I felt more confident after I was done talking to them.” Aqib, 2013-14 Envision student.

The young people from SEN schools then participate in wider regional Envision events with their peers from mainstream education.

The review and the call for information also identified that excluded individuals and groups/ communities benefit from targeted outreach activities that are designed to raise very local or specific awareness (i.e. of particular audiences) in order to engage and generate interest in opportunities that do exist and also to develop new opportunities tailored to specific interests, circumstances and/or needs.

We brought together young people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds in a unique National Citizen Service [NCS] that better engages these young people to access high quality youth provision that does not compromise their individual cultural or religious beliefs and values.

We wanted to create an NCS programme that helped to remove barriers so that all young people could participate - but the NCS participants achieved so much more than that - they created a community!

United together after a week of adventure team building, social cohesion seminars and then empowered and enabled through skills development and social action planning, almost 90 young people used their new talents to make a tremendous impact and a positive contribution to their local community and have showed us all how young people can be true active citizens in our society.

This is not interfaith NCS, it is just NCS – how it should be!

*Neil Martin, JLGB Chief Executive*

Understanding barriers is the first step to overcoming exclusion

Understanding the barriers to participation is crucial; you can't focus on “what works” unless you know what's getting in the way for different young people in diverse circumstances and situations.

**The most typical barriers identified in the evidence review included:**

- Organisational barriers, including the organisation, institution or environment not being inviting / being exclusive in the design of their opportunities for participation and the ways in which these are communicated.
- A lack of relevant and interesting opportunities, and specifically the lack of tailored opportunities where someone's personal circumstances and/or interests and experiences are not known or harnessed in order to promote their involvement in social action.

It's important to get the message out there about what young people are doing and what opportunities there are  
*Learning Exchange Participant*

- Physical/practical barriers including time, timing, money, limited opportunities to interact in public life for some children and young people, lack of information, and the extent of other things going on in some young people's lives.
- Perceptions including the stigma of volunteering, lack of appreciation of benefits of social action, general poor attitudes and prejudice towards young people, misconceptions about the impact on welfare benefits, and some more formal types of social action not being familiar to or acceptable in the culture of some communities (e.g. participating in opportunities with mixed faiths/cultures and/or genders for some very orthodox communities).

I get involved because I enjoy it, not to get recognised  
*Learning Exchange Participant*

- Individuals' self-perception including lack of confidence, fear of rejection, lack of self-efficacy – i.e. feeling that they can't make a difference or that they don't belong (for example) as part of a certain movement/organisation.
- Recruitment activities including the problem of 'cloning', whereby the biggest method of recruitment to social action (word of mouth/peer/being asked directly) has the effect of merely recruiting more of the same rather than valuing, ensuring and actively seeking diversity.
- A range of specific barriers including different groups having different barriers - e.g. some are hard to locate/get in contact with, others are hard to motivate, others may observe specific religious or cultural requirements that don't fit with mainstream opportunities for youth action.

If you are a young person with multiple problems engagement is only part of the solution and dealing with the other problems (e.g. substance misuse, abuse, etc.) must also be included or we may be setting some young people up to fail. This becomes particularly relevant in relation to young people who are volunteering; the host organisation may have to manage problems and over time this could cause them problems.

Whilst we should focus on 'where people are going to', for some people the journey is much further and the support need much greater and the forgiveness and support when things go wrong are extremely important.

*PS Nick Healey, Devon & Cornwall Police; National VPC Programme Manager*

Youth social action is highly valued by a diversity of young people. Opportunities to participate and the experiences gained from youth action are highly valued by a cross section of young people. Those who took part in this study told us that they particularly value organisations that:

- Help them find their passion and their voice
- Help them find channels to influence social change and make a difference in small and big ways
- Help them use this to improve their lives too
- Help them with career and life planning.

### **Team NAADES – a youth social action project undertaken through the interfaith National Citizen Service Programme**

Team NAADES was a single gender (female) group of young people who worked together during a social action skills week run through the interfaith National Citizen Service (NCS) programme. They spent the week travelling around Redbridge and London searching for affordable sports and arts activities for young people. They set up a stall in Ilford to promote these activities to young people from the borough. They ran a competition to help get people even more involved and had music, dance and refreshments to bring people in.

Individual achievements: Some of the less confident girls really came into their own and were happy to dance in public and talk confidently to strangers. They really believed in their cause and were very proud of their achievements.

Group achievements: Feedback from the day suggested that most young people in Redbridge were not aware of the range of activities available to them, and they found the stall informative. One member of the police thanked the girls for their information, which she hopes to pass on to some of the young people the police have had issues with in the past.

See <http://www4.jlgb.org/downloads/JLGBNCSReport.pdf> for more details.

### **Young people must be in the driving seat**

Related to the above theme is a key finding about the importance not only of personalised approaches to providing support to young people to be able to fully participate in youth action – but more crucially the need for young people to be in the driving seat of their own engagement and contributions. For some young people this takes time, extreme care and sensitive support and expert knowledge and understanding of the specific issues that the young people may have or be encountering. The key point here however is that the focus must be on the choice and control of each young person in shaping their own involvement and contributions however long that takes and whatever support they need. A recent blog on the #iwill website by Dr Justin Davis Smith, Executive Director, Volunteering and Development at NCVO reinforces this finding:

Whatever the barriers, we know what success will look like: all young people having the opportunity to contribute to society in ways that they determine and for causes that they believe in.

### **A sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than yourself**

Feeling like you belong is at the heart of inclusion and feeling included (see <http://www.ndti.org.uk/what-we-do/community-inclusion>). What most of us want more than anything else is to live the life we want in our community of choice, with a home, a job, friends, a sense of belonging and support to achieve the things that are important to us. This belief was echoed by many involved in the Learning Exchange and those responding to the Call for Information and Examples.

The Achievement for All schools programme works to support the engagement of pupils with SEND in wider activities (sport, music, drama, cookery etc.). Evidence shows that when schools invite and enable pupils at risk of exclusion to participate and engage in wider activities, their aspirations, self-esteem and outcomes improve, and barriers to participation are removed.

See <http://www.afa3as.org.uk/> for more details.

For some people however, this can be difficult to achieve. These issues have been at the heart of NDTi's work for many years, through which we have learned that:

- People who receive support from health, social care and/or education agencies are often excluded from many positive roles and relationships in society
- Health, social care and educational agencies tend to want to build and support community inclusion but often, through their operation, staffing and policies, they do not achieve this. They are more likely to achieve this through building strong partnerships with a wider range of organisations than their immediate sector (e.g. community and voluntary sector organisations, businesses and those offering opportunities to participate in social action)

- Communities, societies and families themselves can exclude and marginalise people who are different or need additional support to lead their every-day lives
- Promoting inclusion therefore means working with the person and the wider community beyond services and organisations whose mission it is to support people in one way or another. It involves combating ignorance, discrimination, hate crime and working positively to improve access to a wide range of opportunities and resources. It means supporting participation, not just being present; being a contributor, not just a consumer; belonging, not just attending
- Inclusion results in people having better, happier lives. It also often results in cost savings for organisations and services as people access a fuller range of community resources and wider opportunities for participation.

It is important to stress the need to remove barriers to social action – make sure programmes can flex to meet young people’s needs and accept that the challenges some young people face will often be very stressful and make demands on time, health etc. This will often mean their involvement in social action may have to take a back seat or come to an early end and that this should not be seen as failure.

Often it is small steps that these young people are making. We need to ensure we are celebrating and sharing stories of small actions as well as big leaps!

*Emma Kirkbride, National Youth Agency, Project Manager Social Action Journey Fund Programme in partnership with O2 Think Big*

### **The benefits and tensions of general and targeted approaches**

A number of large, established organisations run a range of different, discrete and varied projects designed to reach out and engage different groups of young people who may not otherwise have access to volunteering and other forms of social action. Such programmes are often time limited and funded through specific grants on a short term basis to set up, pilot or roll out targeted approaches for example 1:1 support or outreach work with very isolated and vulnerable young people. However, the review of evidence and responses to the call also highlighted that often when these projects end the learning and practices are not always integrated within mainstream opportunities. Some call respondents also felt that very targeted approaches could inadvertently exclude or isolate young people further, rather than enabling their participation or overcoming barriers to participation on an ongoing basis.

A number of small, locally focused and targeted organisations and groups (i.e. those supporting a particular community or working on behalf of the needs and aspirations of certain groups) also described how they can be very flexible and personalised in their approach to support individual young people to get involved, improve confidence, develop skills and experiences and make contacts and connections with others who both share and have different experiences and backgrounds.

### Participants in the interfaith NCS Programme sharing their experiences

Christian young woman participant: “I like the fact that they have a praying room – because I’m quite religious and I like to take time out to pray.”

Muslim young woman participant: “The information and texts were good to reassure parents. I’ve texted my mother to tell her that I can fast. I knew it was interfaith but I didn’t know it would be so accommodating – I didn’t believe that they would lay on food at 3 am.”

Some small organisations and community specific groups shared that they struggle to make ends meet, lack infrastructure to do all the things they would like to do and in particular lack capacity to continually promote and demonstrate their impact to current and potential future funders and partners. Those that survive have established effective partnerships (see also below) and developed a niche profile for themselves e.g. in brokering participation with larger mainstream organisations and opportunities for youth action (e.g. as in the case of JLGB and the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award).

Having a mix of approaches was identified as being the most effective way of both reaching young people and supporting them to participate over time. For example, most of the organisations responding to the call and those involved in the learning exchange make extensive use of social media and other online routes to reach their audiences, promote opportunities and put people in touch with each other and the organisations who can help them. A small number were planning further online developments e.g. protected forums and private online spaces for young people to share experiences and ideas for future action. Some organisations supporting young people through digital activities are also exploring more opportunities for young people to meet and engage in opportunities on a face to face basis.

### YouthNet - digital volunteering opportunities for young people

YouthNet is a digital charity which aims to reach 16-25 year olds across the UK by providing support digitally and opportunities for young people to help deliver those services in the form of digital volunteering opportunities.

The nature of digital allows opportunities to be accessible and inclusive and we are therefore able to engage with a diverse range of young people from different backgrounds. We do not target any groups specifically but through our monitoring information we know that we engage a higher percentage of young people with mental health issues, disabilities and from other disadvantaged groups than the national average.

One of the types of social action promoted through YouthNet is peer-to-peer support, where young volunteers offer peer support and signposting to other young people who are struggling with particular issues / situations, through volunteer roles such as Moderators and Relationships Advisors. All volunteers are supported and managed by YouthNet staff. The digital peer-to-peer model is inclusive as it enables young people from all backgrounds to become involved; volunteering opportunities are flexible and accessible, enabling young people with mental health issues, disabilities and those who live in rural areas, to name a few, to get involved.

Participation takes place online but volunteer management and support is also offered on the phone. There are also opportunities to get involved offline.

Some of our volunteers were service-users and having benefited from the support YouthNet offers, have a desire to give back. They have developed their skills in giving peer-to-peer support as members of our online communities and want to develop these further and take a more formal role.

Young people benefit from hearing about the experiences of their peers and from their relevant, informed advice; and the young people offering advice and support benefit from doing this, developing their listening, empathy and communication skills.

### Rachel's story

Rachel joined TheSite as a service user in 2012 and in the first live chat session she came to, she talked about the difficulties she was experiencing living in a Foyer. She ended up homeless after her mum passed away and doesn't have a lot of family support. Since then she has moved into her own flat and while she's been keen to make the best of it and embrace her independence; the place is very basic and there are lots of maintenance problems as well as issues with the interior. This means it's been very difficult for her to settle and be happy there. Rachel struggles with a range of health issues and has to take a cocktail of drugs every day including painkillers for fibromyalgia and anti-depressants for ongoing mental health difficulties. She has always provided amazing peer support to others on our discussion boards and in our live chat sessions, even whilst receiving support for her own issues. Through providing support for other young people informally she has developed friendships as well as her confidence and the ability to be empathetic.

Rachel has since become involved in more formal volunteering opportunities including our Leaders programme and Job Squad which recently included talking to attendees at a YouthNet event about her experiences. She also continues to offer excellent peer support to others and in recognition now moderates a fortnightly general live chat session. Over the years Rachel has vastly improved her confidence through being accepted and appreciated through the online communities she is part of, using this confidence to attend offline events and now being able to talk confidently in front of an audience about her story.

*Laura Lewis, Head of Volunteering and Training, YouthNet*

*Website: [www.youthnet.org](http://www.youthnet.org) Facebook: [www.facebook.com/youthnet](http://www.facebook.com/youthnet) Twitter: @YouthNetUK*

### Effective partnerships and networks

As indicated above, a wide and diverse range of #iwill partners exists from large, established household names (The Scouts Association) to small, community based organisations (Aylesbury Youth), online organisations (YouthNet) and specific third sector organisations working with and across other organisations to achieve integration and change (JLGB). Some partners are membership organisations themselves (Generation Change). A common theme from various interactions with different partners is the need for and importance of effective

partnerships and networks, including opportunities to work together, share experiences and resources to achieve the aims of the campaign and their own #iwill pledges. This is even more important when considering the challenges and benefits of enabling the full participation of all young people including those who risk exclusion from youth action.

### **WWV – working in partnership in the North West and Midlands**

WWV works with disadvantaged young people in the North-West and East Midlands, using volunteering as a way to help young people connect more with their communities, improve mental and physical well-being, and build employability skills. They support young people to find appropriate volunteer placements with local charities that match their interests and help build their confidence and skills. This project works with around 120 disadvantaged people under the age of 25, including young carers, young people leaving care, young people struggling with drug and alcohol misuse, and young people with disabilities. These are young people who would not normally think of getting involved in something like volunteering or social action, and who need extra help and support to overcome challenges and get involved. The project has been running for approximately 5 years, and over this time WWV has built up established referral routes with diverse agencies including Leaving Care teams, local councils and other charities such as Action for Children and Barnardos.

*We build trust, focus on the positives and realistic possibilities and work together with the young person to overcome their fears and barriers, perceived and real, in order to start them on a volunteering placement. We offer a wide range of support which includes preparation, teasing out what is important to them and which causes they feel strongly about, identifying a quality placement, building their CV and a personal statement and completing the application process which in some cases is quite daunting. We match expectations, hand-hold or cajole so they can reach their goal and gain satisfaction from their achievements. It is by participating and achieving that they are able to build confidence and life satisfaction and a desire to do more. We are flexible in our approach and meet young people at a time and place that best suits them. The programme builds on young people's strengths and focuses on where they would like to be and uses voluntary work as a stepping stone to gain the skills and accomplishments needed to achieve these aims. We aim to integrate people on the fringes of society to feel they belong and can contribute using volunteering as a vehicle to transform lives, which changes their own attitudes and how they are viewed and treated by others.*

As a result of these experiences, young people make new friends, learn different ways to tackle everyday problems and access new opportunities opened to them through their newly formed networks.

*There is an interesting volunteering opportunity to suit all interests and our skill is to find the one that is cause specific for each individual and acts as the catalyst for change. Working with established referral organisations in each sector, we motivate young people to try volunteering, and focus on those who feel that volunteering could provide a route out of their current situation and produce real, sustainable, life change*

### Aziz's story

Aziz (16) is an unaccompanied asylum seeker from Pakistan, supported by Action for Children's Extra Mile Leaving Care team. His first foster family moved out of the area without him and he was forced to live with another family on the other side of the city, away from all the friends he had made at the school in which he had settled. He has been with his current family for 2 years, but found settling into a new school very difficult. Aziz is currently waiting for the decision on his immigration status and could face the possibility of having to move back to Pakistan when he is 18, which is naturally causing him a lot of anxiety. He first heard of WWV through his social worker after he had expressed an interest in volunteering. A member of staff, Sheri, arranged a home visit to meet Aziz and his foster parents and talk about volunteering and his interests. After researching the local area Sheri re-visited him to discuss possible volunteering opportunities. Aziz chose to volunteer at his local Oxfam shop where he has been volunteering every Monday evening for 2 hours since. Aziz says: Doing volunteer work had great impact on my life. Sheri comes to help me every week and she also ask me if I need proper job that she will help me to make my CV. Sheri has recently been back to help him write his CV as he is now applying for Saturday jobs, hoping that his experience at Oxfam will help him stand out from the crowd. Volunteering has given Aziz a greater sense of belonging to his local community and, as well as increasing his confidence, he has gained new skills and improved his chances of gaining employment in the future.

*Mike Silvey, Director, WWV. [www.wwwv.org.uk](http://www.wwwv.org.uk)*

### Measuring and demonstrating impact

Through the call and learning exchange, and in the consultation on the draft lessons and practices, we found significant interest in adopting creative ways of measuring, capturing and sharing impacts and outcomes, beyond the "numbers" and box ticking monitoring activities that many funders require. However, such methods are not yet widespread and more work could be done to provide resources and tools for achieving this by #iwill partners, including an online space for partners to share their successful approaches with each other.

### UpRising's Approach to Assessing and Measuring Impact

UpRising is a UK-wide youth leadership development organisation whose mission is to open pathways to power for talented young people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds. UpRising offers a range of leadership and employability programmes for 16-25 year olds. Their flagship is a nine month leadership programme providing 'access behind the scenes' training sessions with some of the UK's most senior leaders across the political, private, public and not for profit sectors. Each participant is individually matched with a coach and a mentor who supports them on a one to one basis throughout their time on the programme. They also work with other UpRisers to design and deliver a social action campaign on a local issue they are passionate about. A range of UpRising Programmes are now available in London, Bedford, Luton, Birmingham, Stoke-on-Trent, Manchester, and Liverpool; there is a growing alumni of over 650, and 2,000 young people are participating in these programmes during 2014/15 alone.

An NCVO independent evaluation in 2011 found that: “UpRising brings together diverse groups of talented young people and equips them with skills, knowledge, confidence and perceptions to help them turn their ideas and passion into actions to improve society and their communities”. This evaluation also found that:

- 100% of UpRisers expanded their social networks and 83% took action to develop these contacts
- 95% of UpRisers believe they have gained skills to change issues affecting them and their local community
- 79% of UpRisers are contributing to communities or trying to influence social change.

UpRising are currently working with Demos as an evaluation partner to:

- Evaluate programmes operating in 2014/2015 and develop an on-going framework for monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate impact to a Level 3 standard consistent with NESTA's Standards of Evidence ([http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards\\_of\\_evidence.pdf](http://www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/standards_of_evidence.pdf))
- Progress towards demonstrating impact to Level 4 and 5 Standards of Evidence through the development of their curriculum ‘toolkit’ and supporting expansion and licensing of the programme
- Explore the impact of UpRising’s programme on its ‘theory of change’ indicators – knowledge, networks, skills and confidence – and increase understanding of how these relate to positive outcomes for participants
- Identify potential indicators that can help predict the likelihood of successful progression of alumni into positions of power 10 to 15 years from now

In addition to these kinds of outcome and impact measures, it is increasingly important for #iwill partners to determine the economic impacts that their opportunities and support for youth social action have on a range of stakeholders and services. Our evidence review identified just three examples of economic analyses of youth social action in the published literature; all large scale evaluations of major national programmes where the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model was the method of choice. Whilst useful in some contexts, this method is not the best fit for more complex economic evaluations, where a number of different variables need to be considered, costed and assessed. As a result, SROI is not always regarded as providing the most robust evidence by commissioners / funders who need persuading of the need for continued investment. Other methods therefore need to be explored and tested, particularly for those interventions and approaches that are time intensive and multi-faceted, such as supporting the full participation of excluded young people in youth social action.

In addition to objective outcome measures and economic assessments that indicate the return on investments made in youth social action, it is important to capture and share personal stories and experiences – both to illustrate what matters to young people and demonstrate how organisations have achieved or contributed towards positive outcomes for all young people involved.

### **WW's approach to evidencing "what works" in youth social action**

WWV has developed an evidence-base of the impact that volunteering can have-. Many young people do not know how they can improve their circumstances and escape from poverty. They try for employment but are not successful. In such a competitive world they need evidence that they are capable and reliable, and volunteering provides a great opportunity to demonstrate this, whilst at the same time contributing to improved well-being and community integration. Most of the young people they support have flimsy CVs, no work experience or references. Volunteering enables them to learn what they like doing and are good at. Voluntary work looks good on CVs, but also has been shown to contribute to improved well-being and health, reduced mental health problems and increased life satisfaction and focus.

Our work has shown that volunteering builds self esteem and feelings of self worth which reduces domestic violence and bullying. Young mothers we have supported have reported that through building their confidence through volunteering, they are better able to engage and be an active parent to their children.

### **3.2 Lessons and messages about embedding inclusive practices**

Four inclusion lessons for ensuring the full participation of all young people in social action were identified through the analysis of findings from each of the elements outlined in Section 3. These lessons are set out below.

#### **Four Inclusion Lessons**

1. Reach out and engage young people who are often left out of, excluded from or don't engage in social action
2. Empower and equip in ways that increase the confidence, self-esteem and skills of young people, to ensure they engage and are supported to participate fully
3. Personalise and enable young people to take control and shape their involvement in youth social action through tailored support to contribute effectively and learn from their experiences
4. Acknowledge contributions and ambitions so that young people recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute.

These lessons can be thought of as "critical success factors" for ensuring inclusion. Organisations providing opportunities and support for young people to participate in youth social action have highlighted these as being the most important factors in enabling the full participation of excluded young people. In turn, the evidence points to social action being a key lever for ensuring young people are fully included in society – in terms of involvement at school and in education, in local communities and civic participation, in wider society and in job and career prospects. It is important therefore, to see these four areas as the key drivers for promoting inclusion in social action, whilst also seeing social action as a key enabler for inclusion in family, education, employment, community and civic life.

Whilst each of these lessons could be said to be relevant to all young people, the accompanying messages and examples of inclusive practices outlined below are those that are most likely to be successful in supporting excluded young people to participate in youth social action. It is at this detailed, practical level that specific interventions or approaches are necessary to enable the participation of young people whose involvement is rarely seen, whose voices are seldom heard and whose contributions could be missed.

### **Eight key messages from young people**

A number of messages were identified from across all components of the study which highlight the specific issues and/or approaches that young people consistently identify as making a difference to their participation in social action. They believe that organisations providing opportunities for social action should focus on these issues if they want to support excluded young people well and ensure their ongoing involvement in social action beyond a specific project or one off experience.

When these messages were shared and tested with young people who are actively involved in youth social action, the response was positive; they agreed that these are the key ingredients to successful engagement and participation.

#### Eight key messages from young people

1. Seek me out and find me, it might take a while but it will be worth it. You'll find me on my turf, not yours!

Caroline relocated to North Wales from Plymouth in a final attempt to break her drug habit. She was referred to Natalie from WWV by her family support worker. As Caroline lives in a rural area, Natalie initially struggled to find a suitable volunteer opportunity but eventually linked Caroline up with the WRVS who run a café in the local hospital. Natalie helped Caroline attend the interview and Caroline began volunteering at the café in February. I've got 2 shifts this month and I am going to do any sick cover I can, everyone is so nice and friendly, I'm enjoying it already. Staff at WWV have seen a huge boost in Carol's confidence levels and communication skills, and that volunteering in the café allows her to focus on a positive future.

2. Make it easy for me to get involved and play a part (e.g. ask me what help I need); I might need extra help and/or time to do this.

*When I first started the programme I found it hard and wanted to give up but what made me carry on was the encouragement I got from staff who were so understanding and just kept telling me that I could do it. Without that support I don't know where I'd be right now.*

Carol, a member of Vinspired

### 3. Involve me in discussions about what's possible and how to make it happen

When Sam, 23, joined Build-It (a construction project run by London Youth) he was under pressure from the job centre who were asking him to attend daily appointments while also threatening to take his money away because he had been unemployed for 3 years. I felt depressed because they were threatening to take my money away and I was trying my best and doing everything they wanted me to. When he joined the Build-It programme, he disclosed that he has Dyspraxia which he feels impacts on his ability to read and write, asking for help and making decisions. He worked with a Delivery Officer from Build-It to increase his confidence and focus on getting an administrative job (rather than pursuing work in the construction industry). After 12 weeks on the programme, during which he gained practical experience, completing job applications and sticking to a routine, his delivery officer supported him to attend an interview for a year-long apprenticeship scheme with Wates as an Administrative Assistant - and he was successful.

### 4. Help me to find out what I'm interested in and passionate about, and to work on the things that matter to me

*I went on the (police cadet) course because I felt that I wanted to make a change in the way people see extremism.....I felt I was out of my comfort zone, however once I started to get to know everyone I became more confident in myself.this experience was by far the best experience I've ever had and I hope there are other cadets who will take part in these amazing projects. Mohamed Wadud Miah (20, volunteer police cadet)*

### 5. Work with me to find out what I'm good at and bring as well as what I can gain through my involvement.

Lily, 16, is a young carer with huge responsibilities at home supporting her mum and her two brothers. After taking part in a WWV group volunteering activity, Lily's confidence grew and she felt ready to volunteer independently. She told Sheri (WWV) that she enjoys helping people and hopes to go onto a Health and Social Care course but that she was concerned she might not get into college. Sheri matched her with a volunteer placement at a local hospice where she can choose her own volunteer hours (to fit in with responsibilities at home). She has recently been successful at interview for college: they were really impressed when I told them about the volunteering I do, so its thanks to Sheri's help I got into my college course.

### 6. Use my talents, experiences and ideas; and stretch and support me to develop new talents, gain different experiences and be confident in my own abilities.

*I've learnt sawing and cutting. I feel more confident and I enjoy it. I have met new people.* Zoe, an Avon Wildlife Trust Student with a learning disability, talking about her experience on an Avon Wildlife Trust conversation project she was linked with through her college.

### 7. Recognise and celebrate my success and help me realise my aspirations and ambitions

The Green Bunch is a conservation project run by Essex Wildlife Trust working with young people aged 11-18 years. They worked with the Open College Network (OCN) to provide a model of certification for young people involved in conservation work. After considerable effort a group of teenagers were successful in gaining certification and an award ceremony was held to celebrate their achievements, a real highlight for young people, their families and staff supporting them.

### 8. Tailor and adapt what you do to enable me to make change happen; personalise the opportunity for youth social action and my experience of it.

*It was by working with the Youth Rangers that I really found out that I wanted to work in nature conservation. Being outdoors, doing something that was useful, it all just made perfect sense and it was the time that Renzo and the team gave to me that made all the difference. Now I'm on a course in Countryside Management at Plumpton Agricultural College and I'm loving it. Indiana, Sussex Wildlife Trust.*

The #iwill campaign has consulted on and agreed a set of principles for quality youth action: that it should be youth-led, challenging, have a positive social impact, allow progression to other opportunities, be embedded in a young person's life, and enable young people to reflect on their social action experiences and recognise their achievements.

#### Six Quality Principles of Youth Social Action

<b>Youth Led</b>	- Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision-making
<b>Challenging</b>	- Stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling
<b>Embedded</b>	- Accessible to all and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life
<b>Progressive</b>	- Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities
<b>Socially impactful</b>	- Having a clear, intended benefit to the community
<b>Reflective</b>	- Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning

The lessons and messages from the Inclusion Study are clearly aligned with these principles. The main difference is an explicit focus found in the study on the need to reach out and engage with young people at risk of exclusion from youth action. This could be addressed within the "Embedded" principle, so that social action becomes the norm for young people and reaching out to all young people becomes the norm for programmes and opportunities for youth social action.

The Volunteer Police Cadets (VPC) actively encourage involvement in Social Action as one of their underpinning principles; all Police cadets should volunteer a minimum of 3hrs per month in support of local communities, as part of an agreed framework adopted by all Police Forces

The aims of the VPC are to:

- Promote a practical understanding of policing amongst all young people
- Encourage a spirit of adventure and good citizenship
- Support local policing priorities through volunteering, giving young people a chance to be heard
- Inspire young people to participate positively in their communities

Each Cadet Unit should:

- Engage with young people between 13 and 18 years old
- Have 25% of their membership from a “vulnerable” background
- Support their Cadets to volunteer 3 hours a month assisting in community and crime prevention events
- Have a body of Cadets that represents the diversity of their Service Area

[www.NationalVPC.org](http://www.NationalVPC.org)    Twitter: @NationalVPC

The following description of 6 principles for high quality, inclusive social action takes the existing quality principles and expands the description of each one using the study’s four inclusion lessons.

### **Six guiding principles for high quality, inclusive social action**

1. Youth-led: led, owned and shaped by young people’s needs, ideas and decision-making

Ensuring that opportunities and support to participate, and experiences of participation, in social action are tailored to take account of the circumstances, needs, experiences and interests of each young person

2. Challenging: stretching and engaging as well as enjoyable and enabling.

Ensuring that young people are supported and encouraged to increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills; and are stretched whilst being supported to participate and make a difference.

3. Socially Impactful: Having a clear intended benefit to the community

Ensuring that young people create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to themselves

#### 4. Progressive: Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities.

Ensuring that young people can use their experiences of youth social action to grow and develop in all areas of their life.

- Embedded: Accessible to all, and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life.

Ensuring that support and opportunities to participate in social action reach out and integrate social action within young people's lives now and in their future.

- Reflective: Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning.

Ensuring that young people's contributions and ambitions are acknowledged to help them recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute

#### Jemma's story

When Jemma was 14 she took the highly unusual step of going to social services and begging to be taken in to care, unable to cope with her Mum's violent and unpredictable behaviour any longer. Although she had been on the Child Protection List for several years due to her Mum's alcoholism, social workers appear to have missed just how bad things got. Jemma was placed with a loving foster family, managed to achieve a few GCSEs and at 16 went on to study Travel & Tourism at the local college. A few months into the course, Jemma began to skip classes and didn't seem able to see the point in the course she was taking any longer. Jemma was then referred to Natalie at WWV by Knowsley Social Services. Natalie and Jemma met several times to discuss the various careers that her travel and tourism course could lead her to and looked at a range of organisations in the area which could provide her with the real life experience she needed to help her to refocus on her education. Jemma chose to apply for Williamson Tunnels Heritage Centre in Liverpool and Natalie supported her to apply for a placement, attend an interview and helped her with travel arrangements to and from her weekly volunteer placement. She was trained to give guided tours of the tunnels to school groups and members of the public. After a couple of weeks at the placement, Jemma told Natalie: I really love it there, it's fun! I definitely want to work with people in the future.

After completing several months of volunteering, Jemma took a break to concentrate on her studies but hopes to return on a temporary basis over the summer holidays. Volunteering helped Jemma to refocus on her studies and look positively on her future. She said, It's easier to understand what the tutors are talking about, about customer service and things, because now I've tried it out for myself, actually helping people.

The combined set of principles, inclusion lessons and practices shared in Section 3.3 takes account of these expanded principles to form a comprehensive resource for #iwill partners and others providing opportunities for or supporting participation in youth social action.

### 3.3 A Resource for Inclusive Youth Social Action – Lessons and Practices for Success

The following table sets out the interlinked principles for quality youth social action, inclusion lessons and evidence based practices identified from this study. The table format is intentional, to illustrate how this information and practical examples can be used as a toolkit to inform, develop and review local and organisational practice opportunities for youth social action in order to ensure that young people at risk from exclusion are engaged and supported to fully participate.

<b>Quality principles for inclusive social action</b>	<b>Successful inclusive practices that ensure...</b>
<b>Youth-led</b> - Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision-making	Opportunities and support to participate, and experiences of participation, in social action are tailored to take account of the circumstances, needs, experiences and interests of each young person
<b>Challenging</b> - Stretching and engaging as well as enjoyable and enabling	Young people are supported and encouraged to increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills; and are stretched whilst being supported to participate and make a difference.
<b>Socially Impactful</b> - Having a clear intended benefit to the community	Young people can create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to themselves
<b>Progressive</b> - Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities	Young people can use their experiences of youth social action to grow and develop in all areas of their life
<b>Embedded</b> - Accessible to all, and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life	Support and opportunities to participate in social action reach out and integrate social action within young people's lives now and in their future.
<b>Reflective</b> - Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning	Young people's contributions and ambitions are acknowledged to help them recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute

## Inclusive Youth Social Action: Lessons and Practices for Success

The first part of the table provides more information about overarching lessons about, and examples of successful practices for, reaching out and engaging young people who are or may be at risk of exclusion from youth social action.

<p><b>Reach out and engage young people who are left out of, excluded from or don't engage in social action</b></p>	<p><i>Reach out and find me, it might take a while but it will be worth it.</i></p> <p><i>You'll find me on my turf, not yours.</i></p>
<p>Ensuring that programmes and opportunities actively seek and reach out to young people who are excluded from or don't engage in social action involves.....</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make yourself visible using clear, accessible ways of promoting opportunities and possibilities from the point of advert/campaign onwards</li> <li>• Produce materials with a warm, encouraging tone in different formats and mediums – visual, audio, easy read, sign language, different languages, using social media etc.</li> <li>• Share positive images of young people typically excluded from social action who are making a difference. These positive images and messages about what worked will be passed on and around between young people, families to families, teachers to teachers etc.</li> <li>• Emphasise your tailored approach (e.g. you'll be supported to work on the things that matter to you)</li> <li>• Adopt a targeted and broad approach to recruitment using accessible recruitment and induction processes/materials that have been co-produced with young people</li> <li>• A coordinated, mixed approach based around a small number of simple, practical messages is more effective than a pick &amp; mix approach using a bit of everything to reach as many people as possible. E.g. combine a targeted use of social media with opportunities to meet people face to face; go to places where excluded young people live, attend school/college, worship or hang out; match the message and messenger to the people you want to reach.</li> </ul>	

The remainder of this table introduces the 6 principles of high quality, inclusive youth social action, and the practices that are most likely to be successfully in enabling the full participation of excluded young people.

## Youth-led

Led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision-making

Ensuring that opportunities and support to participate, and experiences of participation, in social action are tailored to take account of the circumstances, needs, experiences and interests of each young person

*Involve me in discussions about what's possible and how to make it happen*

*Tailor and adapt what you do to enable me to make change happen - personalise the opportunity for social action and my experience of it so I get the support I need*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- Tailoring and personalising youth social action has 3 key components:

(1) opportunities for social action are shaped by each young person; (2) their direct involvement is tailored to accommodate their unique circumstances and needs; (3) their support is personalised to enable them to take part in ways that make sense to them and work for everyone

- Through support provided, enable young people to explore their own ideas and make choices about the kinds of social action they want to pursue and participate in, providing genuine opportunities to influence and make decisions about what's available and what's possible for them to do

- At the same time, flexibility in the type of opportunities and time available is crucial, as is the chance to co-design the opportunity or social action that the young person is involved in or wants to do

- Established person centred thinking and planning skills, practices and tools are effective here, for example to find out what is important to the young person, what good support looks like and matching staff or volunteers. One page profiles are a really useful way of gathering, capturing and sharing information about interests, what's important to and for each young person, and how best to support them to realise their goals for social action and beyond

- The central component for making this happen is the relationship between the young person and those supporting them to get involved and fully participate. The evidence shows that providing tailored, targeted support to excluded young people requires skill, experience, confidence and consistency. Those involved in this inclusion study emphasise the quality of engagement, the time required to build and sustain a relationship, the quality and intensity of 1:1 and peer support, and the importance of adopting an empowering individualised approach throughout

## Youth-led - Continued

### Successful Inclusive Practices

- This means that the nature and experience of support provided to excluded young people may be intensive, over and above the core or general support provided to volunteers or other young people involved in social action
- The kinds of support arrangements that have been found to work most effectively (though this varies for specific groups and communities) include buddy systems, mentoring arrangements (both professional and peer mentors) and peer support
- Respondents to this study also recognise that in all groups of young people there will be those who are excluded in some way, that this may change over time and that young people should not be 'labelled' as this could further exclude them; inclusive practice is necessary in all situations, whether young people are defined as 'excluded' or not
- Different approaches to managing and supporting volunteers may be needed to engage and work with excluded young people. Be flexible and open to new approaches and ideas, ensuring that organisational systems and processes can flex and be adapted to enable this to happen.
- Those involved in the Inclusion Study highlight the need to "not overpromise" in all of this, and for having clear and realistic expectations including what happens at the end of the period of engagement / involvement (if there is an end).

## Challenging

Stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and engaging.

Ensuring that young people are supported and encouraged to increase their confidence, self-esteem and skills; and are stretched whilst being supported to participate and make a difference.

*Use my experiences and ideas, and stretch and support me to gain different experiences, develop my skills and be confident in my own abilities*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- Feedback from young people highlights the importance of not assuming that young people have nothing to offer or no talents to contribute if they are not immediately obvious. These may take time to emerge, and are most likely to surface as a result of trust and confidence in the person who is supporting their involvement
- The evidence highlights the importance of clear but interactive structures and boundaries around each young person's role(s), interactions with others, their engagement and involvement, their achievements, feedback and recognition
- Those involved in this study emphasise that knowing the young people you are working with is one of the most valuable tools to limit exclusion. Prepare for an individually paced, gradual approach to engage and involve each young person on their terms and in their own time
- This may require intensive 1:1, skilled support (e.g. peer mentors/recruiters also need support), which may be in-house or external (i.e. think about staff and volunteer development needs to enable them to deliver this kind of support)
- Think about additional or specific resources you may need to do this well; for example to cover the costs of skilled and experienced staff and volunteer support; resources needed to reach out and engage individuals and communities living in deprived areas (including transport costs); covering the costs of placement based opportunities, allowances and/or bursaries; and paying for any special equipment people might need e.g. assistive technology

## Socially Impactful

Having a clear intended benefit to the community.

Ensuring that young people create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to themselves

*Help me to find out what I'm interested in and passionate about, and to work on the things that matter to me*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- Ensure that opportunities for social action are diverse and relevant to the young person/specific groups – e.g. a local issue, something related to their community or faith, an issue which affects young people, an issue which affects a particular group with shared experiences, problems or circumstances
- Opportunities need to inspire the young person's passions and interests, be engaging, stimulating and fun. Young people value organisations which help them find their passion and voice on a topic or issue that matters to them
- Having a mix of different time and energy commitments is important: short term and one-off opportunities can enable outcomes and achievements to be readily identified and realised and increase confidence and self-belief. Longer term opportunities can help those young people who need a lot of support and a slower pace to find their way and commit to a cause, issue or task; or the issue that they want to work on and are passionate about may be complex and multi-faceted, needing to be broken down into smaller, practical and doable steps over a period of time
- Some young people may not have had opportunities to think about what's important to them; provide opportunities to raise awareness of different issues and opportunities

## Progressive

Sustained, and providing links to other activities and opportunities.

Enabling young people to use their experiences of youth social action to grow and develop in all areas of their life.

*Show me how social action can help me develop and get the job and future I want*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- The benefits and outcomes of social action for young people have been identified as increased self-worth, confidence, sense of purpose and feeling valued and belonging; plus valuable experience, useful additions to CVs, routes to work and development of new skills and sometimes qualifications. All of these are helpful to highlight in promotional materials and activities
- Build on what each young person brings to further develop their skills and experience – e.g. digital presentations, motivation and mentoring, leadership, community knowledge and know how (etc.)
- Young people at risk of being excluded from social action are likely to face barriers to other life chances; think about how the opportunities for social action that you provide may contribute to removing some of these barriers and work with others who have a role in addressing other barriers that you or the young person identify.

## Embedded

Accessible to all, and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life.

Ensuring that programmes, support and opportunities to participate in social action reach out and help to integrate social action within young people's lives now and in their future.

*Make it easy for me to get involved and play a part (e.g. ask me what help I need); I might need extra help and/or time to do this.*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- Young people, families and everyone who works with them need to know that social action is possible and positive for all young people, and there are things that everyone can do to make it work well
- Work in partnership with organisations who already work with excluded young people (youth clubs, religious/faith based and cultural groups, all schools and colleges, pupil referral units, sports clubs etc.); and families, guardians and carers of excluded young people to raise aspirations and share information through local Family Forums
- Some young people may need opportunities that fit with school time and/or holidays; others may be able to accommodate or integrate their social action with their education and learning. Work with schools and colleges to make this happen
- Partnerships that work both ways are important; schools and organisations providing opportunities and support for young people to engage in social action will have their own priorities and constraints. Finding common ground and points of mutual accommodation is important to make this work well for young people
- Remote and/or virtual opportunities for social action are as or more important for some young people: for example, to minimise physical accessibility issues; where stigma and discrimination is a common experience; where someone is at risk of harm for example through abuse or bullying
- For organisations, this means having a range of effective partnerships in place e.g. between formal and informal networks, between specialist providers /opportunities and mainstream providers / opportunities, between schools, colleges and employers, and with family and community networks.
- Ensure that initiatives/projects designed to reach certain communities or young people with particular experiences (often funded through short term grants) are integrated into your mainstream work so that the learning and approaches developed through such ventures are not lost and inclusive practices are embedded in everything you do
- Use the experience and skills of young people who are already involved and enjoying what they do e.g. as role models/peer recruiters and mentors, ensuring that there is a good match with the young people you're trying to reach
- Listen to what is working and not working for young people engaged in social action work, so that changes can be made where needed and great practice can be spread

## Reflective

Recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning.

Ensuring that young people's contributions and ambitions are acknowledged to help them recognise and take pride in their achievements, understand their impact and continue to contribute

*Recognise and celebrate my success and help me realise my aspirations and ambitions.*

## Successful Inclusive Practices

- Celebrate short and long term achievements; opportunities where outcomes can be identified and then celebrated is key – this in itself encourages a sense of self-worth, self-esteem, achievement, pride and reward
- Young people value explicit, on-going encouragement and a sense of achievement throughout their experience /involvement in social action
- Young people involved in social action want to use their experiences to develop and get the job and future they want, and they need other people to be concerned about their futures too
- There are mixed views and evidence about the role and importance of formal acknowledgements, which can take many different forms (e.g. references, write ups, credits towards qualifications or courses, thank you letters, financial rewards or tokens), but published evidence suggests that the use of incentives and rewards does work for some groups. This inclusion study however found that most young people want feedback on how they're doing, a sense of their own achievements (making a difference) and support in what to do next, ie that their involvement doesn't just end but leads onto other social action and/or their own personal development and career opportunities.

## 4. Recommendations

### Recommendations for embedding what works within local and national programmes and opportunities for youth social action

In this section we share our recommendations, five areas for action that we believe will enable #iwill partners and others to use the findings, lessons and inclusive practices shared in this report. They include what #iwill stakeholders, mainstream organisations (e.g. schools) and young people's organisations can do to embed inclusive practices in youth social action; to champion and promote inclusive practices within their own and other organisations; and to share the findings and practices more widely.

The five recommendations address specific issues and priorities for consideration by national and local programmes offering opportunities for youth social action, including those who already enable a wide range of children and young people to fully participate.

#### 4.1 Embed inclusive practices and approaches in everything you do

- Recognise there are both common and specific barriers faced by children and young people at risk from exclusion to opportunities for youth social action, and that understanding these is the first step towards dismantling or overcoming them
- Adapting and applying the table of inclusive social action principles and practices to meet particular needs and circumstances of your target audience will help ensure that transferable examples of good practice are adopted whilst also developing tailored approaches to meet particular needs and priorities of diverse individuals and communities/groups
- Consider wider resources on inclusion that are available to increase understanding, knowledge and skills of staff and volunteers – e.g. resources available at <http://www.keystoinclusion.co.uk/what-is-inclusion-2/> and <http://www.ndti.org.uk/what-we-do/community-inclusion>
- Provide support to adopt the principles of quality youth social action and inclusion practices shared in this report. For example, networking opportunities for those delivering programmes and opportunities for youth social action; learning exchanges to facilitate shared problem solving and cross fertilisation; individual and organisational mentoring and peer support; and tools for #iwill partners to self and peer evaluate
- Support the use of impact measures by partners operating at different levels (local, regional, national, international) to assess the outcomes achieved and return on investments made in youth social action.

#### **4.2 Facilitate access to different types of support**

- Recognise the difference between the kinds of support that young people need to participate in youth social action, and other forms of support they may need to address other issues going on in their life - and identify where the latter is coming from
- Ensure close connections and links are created and maintained between these different kinds of support, with the young person's permission and involvement.

#### **4.3 Create inclusive cultures through enabling attitudes and behaviours**

- Ensure all staff and other volunteers are trained in, and respectful of, equality and diversity issues and how to promote inclusion (e.g. disability equality/awareness, how to reach and support different groups of young people with diverse needs well)
- Focus on developing an enabling and supportive organisational/programme culture, where everyone (staff, managers, trustees, other volunteers, funders/commissioners) welcomes and supports the idea of involving excluded individuals and groups; and that different parts of the same organisation learn from each other

#### **4.4 Focus on organisational resourcefulness not resources**

- The diversity of partners, young people and approaches examined in this study confirms the rich array of youth social action experience, expertise and opportunity that exists.. Across this range, the need for and importance of a clear, underlying commitment to young people, inclusion and social action has been highlighted. This ethos has proven to be more important than size, capacity, high tech approaches and even volume of resources available. This isn't to say that financial resources and infrastructure are not important; they clearly are. But #iwill partners need to think first and foremost about their resourcefulness rather than just the amount of resource they need to reach out, engage and support young people at risk from exclusion
- In particular, organisations need to think carefully about what human resources (type of people/ volunteers) they have and need, including whether these can be found or developed in-house or if they can be accessed reliably through partnerships and networks with other organisations and freelance staff. For example, there may be a need for specialist staff with particular experiences, knowledge and understanding in working with particular individuals, groups or communities
- As a result, they need to consider and calculate the costs and resources involved in adopting approaches to providing personalised support to young people at risk of exclusion for a variety of different reasons, including how to best develop existing staff and volunteers, employing people with specific expertise and skills or working in partnership with organisations who can share or exchange this resource

- These resources need to be reflected within organisational /programme running and infrastructure costs if inclusive practices and approaches are to be successfully embedded, i.e. seen as part of the process of developing full cost recovery budgets for youth social action. Remember that the evidence shows that adopting inclusive approaches can result in improved performance and efficiencies in the medium to longer term
- Ensure that outcome measures adopted by your organisation can track and show both the impacts and economic gains achieved, rather than just focusing on costs alone
- For the wider campaign, consider the need for a future, focused study on effective resource allocation and use ie which approaches are the most cost effective in enabling the full participation of all young people in youth social action?

#### 4.5 Promote and encourage inclusive practices

The following specific recommendations highlight the courses of action that the #iwill campaign could usefully focus on in order to share and promote the use of the study's findings and key messages in order to facilitate the adoption of inclusive practices.

**Share the report's executive summary highlighting the key lessons and messages about inclusive approaches/practices. For example, the need to understand the barriers to participation in order to overcome them and be confident that the measures and practices you develop and /or adopt will be effective in dismantling these barriers for your target audience of young people.**

**Promote the framework of principles, lessons and inclusion practices as a practical tool that can be used to adopt/embed positive approaches for ensuring young people at risk of exclusion are engaged and supported to fully participate in youth social action.**

**Show what's possible through a range of resources and illustrative examples, including those shared through this study. For example:**

- Visual and audio images of possibility and stories of success – not just written case studies, video clips, promotional and training materials that tell a story. Communicate about and share what worked for young people and #iwill partners, what happened, what worked, how others could achieve this
- Identify a cohort of young people prepared to speak out and talk about their experiences and personal achievements/outcomes
- Share and celebrate hidden social action i.e. the less formal, less conventional kinds (e.g. online, social media or virtual social action; very local, neighbourhood based action; creative messaging e.g. through street art/theatre) that some young people at risk of exclusion from more formal opportunities are doing and/or could contribute towards. Show that these are equally valued and valuable to more traditional and familiar examples such as volunteering.

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