RENAISI

THE CENTRE FOR YOUTH IMPACT

Act for Change Fund: Youth social action for social change

End of Phase One Report

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Proudly supporting youth social action #iwill

Department for Digital, Culture Media & Sport

COMMUNITY FUND

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Preface

Campaigning has been viewed as part of youth social action (YSA) from an early stage by the #iwill Campaign, set up in 2013. Act for Change Fund, launched in 2018, is the most prominent example to date of a youth social action fund which specifically supports young people to take action to change systems and address issues that young people themselves identify as underpinning social injustices and inequalities, based on their lived experience. This report, originally completed in 2019, came out of an initial period of insight gathering and research within Act for Change Fund in Winter 2018-2019. Guided by learning partners Renaisi and The Centre for Youth Impact, the Fund embarked on understanding what new dimensions, or even possible tensions, youth changemaking might bring to youth social action, and what commonalities are shared.

The research aimed to build a picture of the current context of youth-led social change activities, including learning and insights from the #iwill Fund, and to explore and inform the next phase of the programme - including the criteria for Act for Change Fund's second round of grant-making. The findings and recommendations provided a basis for Act for Change Fund to consider how to best make grants to support young people in the UK making change in view of their lived experience of inequalities and injustice. The report also guided the Fund how to continue to learn with, and build the programme to support, funded organisations.

Since this report was written, both the internal and external context for youth social action have evolved. Firstly, there has been an evident upswell – and greater recognition - of young people taking action for change around the global climate crisis, Black Lives Matter campaigns, and many issues beyond. Secondly, the #iwill Fund's own Learning Hub has continued to gather, refine and interpret further evidence about youth social action. Some of the information here, statistical or qualitative, was current at the time of writing rather than publication; more up-to-date data may now be available.

Act for Change Fund is sharing this early report now in order to contribute to debates and conversations with other funders, young people and those working with them about youth social action's developing relationship with changemaking, and how best to support young people who draw on their own experiences to speak truth to power and take action for change. We will continue to share insight and learning as we move forward with our activity and support 32 organisations active in this space during 2020 and 2021, including disseminating further findings.

Acknowledgements

The Act For Change Fund learning partnership would like to thank everyone who generously gave their time to be interviewed for this report. Further details of the organisations included in the research are provided in the Appendix. The support of the Act For Change Fund team at Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation has also been invaluable in terms of shaping both this report and the wider learning around the Fund. We have appreciated the opportunity to work closely together throughout to share learning and insights.

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1. Introduction to Act for Change Fund

Act for Change Fund (the Fund) is a £3.6 million partnership for organisations supporting young people working for change. The Fund will provide resources for young people to challenge social injustice, find ways of overcoming inequality and give voice to issues they are experiencing.

A joint initiative between Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (the Foundations) in partnership with the #iwill Fund, Act for Change Fund will promote the potential of young people with experience of disadvantage to devise and develop activities and programmes to shape the world around them. The Foundations believe young people play a critical role in delivering social change. By prioritising support for those with experience of disadvantage, the Fund aims to create a more diverse group of social, cultural and political leaders for the future.

The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport are each investing £20 million seed funding to create the #iwill Fund. Both foundations are acting as Match Funders and are awarding grants in partnership with the #iwill Fund.The Fund will be delivered in two phases.

The first round opened in July 2018, and a selection of organisations already supported by the Foundations were invited to apply. These organisations have a track record in helping young people lead change and funding will focus on strengthening their impact and sustainability. Building on the learning from Round One, the second round was open to any organisations working in this way with young people. Act for Change Fund has now made grants to 32 organisations supporting young people who are leading change based on their lived experiences of injustices and inequalities.

In 2018, Renaisi and the Centre for Youth Impact were commissioned as a Learning Partner to work with the Foundations over the lifetime of the Fund. The aims of the partnership are:

- Build a greater understanding of the small but growing “youth-led social change sector” (e.g. the individuals and organisations working with young people and the activities that take place), its context, opportunities and challenges.
- Capture and share learning to deepen understanding of impact, grow sustainability and encourage collaboration.
- Analyse and share learning to inform future needs and strategies.

1.1 About the Fund

The high-level outcomes of Act for Change Fund are:

- More opportunities for young people with experience of disadvantage to lead social change.
- A greater understanding of how youth-led social change impacts individuals and their communities (geographical or community of interest).

- Organisations supporting young people to lead social change are in a more sustainable position.

1.2 About this report

This report brings together academic literature, evidence emerging from the #iwill Fund activities, scoping interviews with staff from campaigning and youth service organisations, examples of practice gathered from Act for Change funding applications, and direct engagement with organisations who were awarded funds in the first round of the programme. This report presents findings from this research and is structured as follows:

Section 2: A background to youth social action and social change

Section 3: The strengths, opportunities and challenges for social change

Section 4: Conclusions.

2. A background to youth social action and social change

2.1 The context of this report

The #iwill Campaign (the Campaign) is a UK-wide campaign that aims to make social action part of life for as many 10 to 20-year-olds as possible by the end of 2020. The #iwill Fund was announced in November 2016 and brings together £40m of seed funding from Government and the National Lottery Community Fund in support of the Campaign's goals in England. It distributes its investment through working with other funders who have joined the #iwill Fund by match funding the investment.[1] Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation are acting as match funders and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.

The Act for Change Fund aims to provide resources for young people to "challenge social injustice, find ways of overcoming inequality and give voices to issues they are experiencing". The Fund will broaden the usual parameters of youth social action, by opening and extending opportunities for young people to campaign and influence, which widens the boundaries of what has constituted most of the activities funded through the #iwill Fund to date, although #iwill has always positioned campaigning as part of youth social action. Through the Fund, the Foundations want to explore what difference it makes to both individuals and the community when young people play a critical role in delivering social change.

To understand the wider context of the youth-led social change 'sector', it is necessary to first understand how it fits within the wider youth social action agenda that underpins the #iwill Campaign and #iwill Fund; then explore what particular features social change might bring into the youth social action model, and the implications for learning and practice. The key questions that underpin this report are:

- How does social change fit within the social action agenda?
- What does engagement in social change look like?
- What factors drive young people's engagement in social change?
- What does a supportive infrastructure for social change look like?
- What is the impact on individuals and the community when young people play a critical role in leading change?

Given that Act for Change Fund's Learning Partnership will be exploring these questions over the next two years, our exploration here will provide preliminary insights. By asking these questions, the aim is to share early learning to support those working with young people to deliver social change, and offer the right support to those who have not yet benefitted from youth social action funding to date.

[1] For a list of #iwill matchfunders, see: https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/iwill-fund#section-2

2.2 Trends in young people's social action

The current social action agenda within the youth sector originates from the push for the 'Big Society', pursued under the 2010-15 coalition government. The National Citizen Service was created in 2011 and a year later, following a review into how to increase the quality and quantity of youth social action (Cabinet Office, 2013), the #iwill Campaign and Step Up to Serve coordinating group were created. During this period, a series of other youth organisations with a specific social action focus were also independently founded, including Generation Change, City Year UK, and Student Hubs. Across these organisations, the definition of social action had a focus on the idea of service, captured succinctly in the 2012 review as "practical action in the service of others".[2] In the case of Generation Change, social action is defined as "practical activities to help others; such as befriending an elderly neighbour, mentoring a peer, or standing up to bullies". The #iwill Campaign has since extended this definition, so that for social action to be meaningful it must create a 'double-benefit' to both communities, *and* the young people involved . In addition, #iwill has also set out six principles of quality youth social action: reflective, challenging, youth-led, embedded, progressive and socially impactful.

The rise and promotion of the social action agenda is a highly significant moment in the youth sector, with more than 900 organisations having made #iwill pledges and half a million young people having taken part in the NCS.[3] [4] Since it was set up, the Government has invested £634m between 2014 and 2018, accounting for 95% of government spending on youth services.[5]

The emergence and recent rise of the current social action agenda should be seen within its wider political and social context. Perceptions of this context underpin both positive and critical reactions to youth social action, as well as the ongoing development and transformation of youth social action practice over time. Closely associated with questions about the Big Society agenda more widely, social action is sometimes criticised for a pedagogy that places increased responsibilities on society at a time when social services are cut. For example in relation to youth services, the Local Government Association has argued that funding for NCS has come at the same time as millions have been cut from local authority and community youth provision. According to the Local Government Association, council spending on local youth services has fallen by about 40 per cent from 2010 to 2017.[6] Furthermore, youth social action is often a time-

[2] Social action is defined by The Office for Civil Society as 'people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. It can broadly be defined as practical action in the service of others, which is (i) carried out by individuals or groups of people working together, (ii) not mandated and not for profit, (iii) done for the good of others – individuals, communities and/or society, and (iv) bringing about social change and or value.' (Cabinet Office, 2015).

[3] https://www.iwill.org.uk/iwill-pledges

[4] https://www.ncsyes.co.uk/what-is-ncs

[5] https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-national-citizen-service-funding-should-be-devolved-local-youth-services

[6] Ibid.

limited intervention in young people's lives whereas community youth provision is a year-round service.

Others point to resonances between neoliberal or austerity politics and some iterations of the youth social action agenda. For example, Murphy (2017) argues that the current social action agenda represents the emergence of a distinct form of 'active citizenship', informed by individualistic conceptions of society that is accelerating the demise of young people's entitlement to universal service provision.

However, youth social action (YSA) has also been taken up and absorbed in particular ways into the youth sector, leading to shifts in practice. Youth and community worker practitioners have consistently argued for restoration of universal local youth services, questioning whether targeted youth schemes can replace "open" youth work as an endeavour that starts with the needs of young people themselves (see, for example, Doherty and de St Croix, 2019). Against this background, organisations working with young people have partnered with #iwill Fund match funders, and through the delivery of their social action projects, have practically adapted and transformed YSA to work in a variety of different settings. The emphasis on young people's agency and leadership, and creative potential to make change around them has supported organisations to tackle some persistent issues within some youth work. These issues include the prevalence of adult-led services, and the use of a 'deficit lens' to understand the needs of young people, rather than, for example, young people's strengths, knowledge and experience. As the UK looks set to move out of austerity – albeit without youth services as a state funded priority – the emphasis of and evidence about youth social action on young people's leadership and agency may have a lasting impact on the way that quality youth work is understood.

2.3 Young people's engagement in social action and social change

Current understandings of social action differ somewhat to the ways in which young people have taken action historically. Following the history of student voluntary action, Brewis (2010) demonstrates how the concept of social action has changed overtime. In the late-nineteenth century student voluntary action was closely linked to religious movements, most notably through the settlement movement where students would spend vacations volunteering to keep clubs, classes, services and programmes for people in need running. This movement extended to overseas both before and after the First World War until the 1930s when student volunteerism became criticised for providing escapism to students, rather than creating social change. This was accompanied by two decades of greater social and political activity, accompanied by a new wave of action on international and domestic issues in the 1950s (e.g. refugee students and the antinuclear movement). Subsequently, older models of student social service (e.g. clubs, camps and settlements) gave way to new-style youth clubs and university social service groups.

By the mid-1960s students at some universities were pressing for students to be more actively involved with community problems, marking a transition from traditional social 'service' to community 'action'. Community action remained the dominant model of student volunteering through the 1980s and into the 1990s. Finally, post-1990s a shift-occurred, partially fuelled by technology, with student unions playing the role of a brokering service between students and the community, placing individual volunteers with local organisations (Conn et al., 2014; Brewis, 2010).

In today's youth social action agenda there are a breadth of activities that fall under the umbrella of 'social action'. The New Economics Foundation (NEF) and DCMS developed guidance for 'Enabling Social Action' and in doing so proposed nine types of social action. This typology demonstrates the wide range of activities and opportunities social action presents (The Behavioural Insights Team, 2013): formal volunteering, time credits, peers support, advocacy and social movements, co-production, community asset ownership, cooperatively owned services, community organising, and befriending and helping.

Many aspects of this typology extend to activities that are unlikely to include young people, especially around the ownership of assets or services. Consequently, the #iwill Campaign's website suggests a more limited list of the ways in which young people can get involved in social action: 'through school or work, setting up their own project or getting involved with one of the many excellent programmes that already exist around the country'.[7] While #iwill funding partnerships have not always foregrounded campaigning and advocacy and organising, over time 'campaigning' has taken a more prominent place in lists of youth social action.[8]

2.3.1 Limitations of social action

A limitation of the social action literature is that while constituting a broad range of activities, these activities have not always been well defined, limiting the ability to research and measure them consistently. For example, in the evaluation of Uniformed Youth Social Action, young people's attendance at Remembrance Day parades and participation in associated activities were classified as 'campaigning' (Tyler-Rubinstein et al., 2016a, 2016b). In this case, the term 'campaigning' had little relevance to how it is conceived of in social action.

Due to these inconsistencies in classification, it was necessary for this report to broaden research to include concepts that could be considered 'proxies' for social change engagement that include campaigning but also use others referents such as activism, civic and political engagement. The aim was to identify types of activities or engagement that are associated with social change and then explore to what extent social action and social change share a conceptual 'space'.

2.3.2 Identifying the means of engagement in social change

In the academic literature, youth activism is often understood as the formal and informal means through which young people engage in politics. Formal engagement is defined as participation in elections and membership in political parties, whereas informal engagement includes activities such as protesting, consumer boycotts, and signing petitions.

The literature points to changing trends in relation to young people's engagement in formal and informal activism. It has been argued that over time, young people have been engaging less in formal politics and engaging more in informal politics, although the 2016 EU referendum and 2017 General Election seems to suggest another shift towards more formal politics in recent years (Grasso, 2013; Henn and Foard, 2012; Norris, 2004; Fieldhouse et al., 2007). Research

[7] https://www.iwill.org.uk/faq

[8] https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/youth-social-action/#what Accessed 03/12/2019. See also material for The Power of Youth, #iwill week 2019.

found that while the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds voting in general elections had fallen from over 60% in 1992 to an average of 40% between 2001 and 2015, this age group had an approximate average vote of 60% across 2016 and 2017 (Sloam, 2018) [9].

Young people's participation in formal politics has been closely linked to feelings of political efficacy and trust in democratic institutions, but low participation in elections does not mean that young people are disengaged from politics entirely (Sloam, 2018; Pontes et al, 2018; Hart and Henn, 2017). Earl et al (2017) argues, for example, that young people have long been important to social movements and are actively involved in their own political socialisation through engagement in protests, participatory politics, and other forms of noninstitutionalised political participation. To better understand this, many researchers have developed alternative typologies of political engagement which demonstrate the diversity of young people's participation. Two examples of these alternative typologies include:

- Verba and Nie's four types of participation (1972): voting, participating in campaign activity, contacting public officials, and participating in cooperative or communal activities.

- Teorell et al.'s five types of participation (2007): electoral participation, consumer participation, party-based activity, protest activity, and contact activity.

There is a further body of research which connects the structural and psychological effects of neoliberalism with youth political engagement. This body of research argues that decades of neoliberal policies since the 1980s have led to a decreased role of the state, shifting the onus of social responsibility onto the market-place and the individual, which has subsequently resulted in a decline in feelings of "political efficacy" (Allsop et al., 2018). As one interviewee from the scoping research put it: "decades of neoliberalism has constrained young people's political discourse and action through enhanced inequality and depleted individual and collective liberty, and reduced the idea of collective action and consciousness raising".

Young people's engagement in social change has changed in response to this seeming incapacity of the political sphere to address their concerns (Kryoglu and Henn, 2017), and the effect of this can be seen in the rise of consumerist methods of political engagement such as boycotting and 'buycotting' (deliberately purchasing a company's product in support of their policies or to counter a boycott), and the increasing use of online forms of activism often referred to as 'slacktivism' (Pontes et al., 2018).

More recent literature argues for a further distinction of political engagement that reflects a new kind of critical citizenship. Research by McCartney et al. (2013) conceptualises political engagement as that which involves participating in and seeking to influence the life of a community. As an example, they contrast participating in a community recycling programme with working to enact community laws regarding recycling. They argue that both involve civic engagement but only the latter involves political engagement. Political engagement therefore can be defined as "politically oriented activities that seek a direct impact on political issues, systems and structures" (Pontes et al., 2018).

9 These percentages are for registered voters only.

Another example of this distinction is the 'systems change not climate change' movement, which describes itself as an anti-capitalist, ecosocialist movement campaigning for sustainability and against ecological degradation. The movement believes the current ecological crisis results from the capitalist system and the solution to the crisis requires a fundamental change in the social and economic system – i.e. it requires political action as opposed to environmental action.[10]

Recent political developments, with coverage in the UK and social media, show that young people are organising collectively: albeit not always within the traditional social and political movements of the past such as trade unions or political parties. A key question for Act for Change Fund is what kind of movements, organisations and groupings, issues and tactics are currently used by young people acting for change.

2.3.3 Insights from community organising

Insights from the field of community organising provides another angle through which to view young people's engagement in social change. The advantage of viewing young people's engagement in social change from this perspective is that it reveals a pathway towards increasing agency, political/civic efficacy, and collective influence. Research from Edleston and Smith (not published, 2018) for Paul Hamlyn Foundation on youth leadership and civic participation is one example of a framework that borrows from a model developed by the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organising (FCYO). FCYO combines community organising and positive youth development (asset-based approach) to understand youth organising as beginning at the end of a continuum of youth engagement. FCYO views youth organising as having a commitment to systemic change and social justice.[11]

Edelston and Smith's version has been developed specifically for the UK and was developed to help inform the design and development of future youth engagement initiatives. The framework aims to help identify and build a better understanding of how young people are supported to engage in social change. The four means of engagement in the Edleston and Smith framework include:

- Youth development: including skills, capacity and confidence
- Youth leadership: including social action and campaigns
- Youth voice: including representation, dialogue and advocacy
- Youth organising: including grassroots mobilising and building collective power

10 https://systemchangenotclimatechange.org/about

11 Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organising. https://fcyo.org/

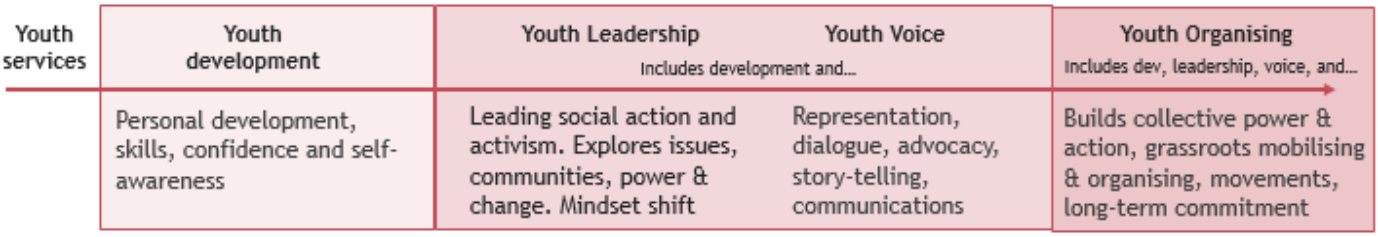

Figure 1: Approaches to youth engagement in leadership and civic participation. Produced as part of research for Paul Hamlyn Foundation by James Edleston and Daniel Smith, 2013.

2.4 How practioners use terms such as social action and social change

To build a clearer picture of the ways in which social change fits into, or brings new dimensions to, social action it was necessary to capture the views of the practitioners whose work involved forms of social change. This also involved an analysis of the content from applications to Act for Change Fund's first grant-making round.. Both data sources shed light on how practitioners conceptualise and describe their work and whether they self-identify as existing in the social action or social change space, and to what extent it informs their practice.

Findings from this research suggest that organisations are positioned in one of three ways:

1. Focused on social change and not generally aware of the social action space

Some individuals considered themselves to operate in the social change space as campaigners or activists, and had not engaged much with the debate around social action because they did not see themselves as part of the youth sector, self-identifying as campaigning organisations rather than youth providers. For one campaign organisation, social change was a more meaningful term than social action as the focus of their work was to bring about social change.

> *"It's something we definitely see the need for in terms of young people being able to work on the kinds of things they find important, in their own way to feel they have ownership over that. But equally to be supported to do that so they are actually making a difference." (Interviewee)*

Similarly, another interviewee stated that their work is "about the social, not the action – it's the outcome that matters", suggesting that they prioritise change over the activities used to get there, whether or not these activities constitute 'service'. This position – that change might be more important than meeting the needs of others - is potentially a divergence with early conceptualisation of youth social action, which conceptualised youth social action as 'practical action in the service of others'.[12]

[12] Cabinet Office, 2015.

1. **Focused on social action, prioritising 'being in service of others' and its potential to develop young people above the ultimate change that could be achieved**

Some individuals saw themselves as operating in the social action space and placed less emphasis on social change. One interviewee felt that their organisation tends to use the words social action over social change. This view suggests that some recognise that there are limits to young people's agency and influence and therefore they felt that the process and the journey that young people go through is as important as the product.

"[Social action] is things within the agency of those young people to do. Social change involves a lot less agency [for] those young people. You can only influence and advocate so far." (Interviewee)

"The process can be as important as the product." (Round One application form)

2. **Both social action and social change are relevant to their work**

There was some nuance with regards to how some individuals saw these terms relating to one another, with some believing that the two are related but distinct, while others believed they were interchangeable.

For example, one interviewee felt that although the two concepts are distinct, social action tends to feed into change and neither one should be prioritised. Action encourages young people to share their stories and explore "how using voices can lead to social change". Another interviewee stated that social action and social change meant the same thing and therefore they did not think of them differently.

"If you don't take the action you can't make the change." (Interviewee)

It is important to note that these categories may not be representative of all the views on the subject. The lines drawn simply illustrate the range of views presented in interviews about how these terms are used.

Analysis of the applications forms of organisations that were awarded funding in the first round revealed useful insights into how they described "youth-led social change". They often described *ways of working or principles* rather than activities. Common themes included:

- Recognising young people's collective power to achieve social justice
- Holding power to account
- Seeking wider reform
- Using social action as a vehicle for raising issues that are important to their community and their peers
- Handing over ownership and decision-making to young people
- Transferring knowledge, and building skills, capabilities and leadership

In conclusion, neither social action nor social change is particularly consistent or well defined concepts in theory or everyday practice. The terms are often conceptualised differently by different people, depending on their agenda**.** They have expanded to include such a wide array of activities that it has been difficult to research and measure these terms consistently. However, from the research discussed above, it is possible to see more clearly how the two concepts are inter-related, but distinct. There is some overlap between social action and social change. Social action, for example, can be a useful vehicle for engaging young people in local issues. It can also be a useful mechanism for building confidence and skills and creating networks of peers. These can be meaningful steps in a journey towards harnessing young people's collective power. However, there is also something very distinct about social change, and changemaking activities, that take unjust systems or the root causes of inequality as their starting point that has not yet been captured within the mainstream discourse of social action. By using the body of research on political engagement and community organising, and by tapping into the experiences of those on the coalface, a clearer definition of youth-led social change begins to emerge. While social action to date has perhaps best seen as a blend or hybrid of campaigning, volunteering and service to others, social change is more about power and the disruption of socioeconomic conditions that cause injustice and inequality. Perhaps truly youth-led social change has its roots in community organising, which is based on common principles of developing local leaders, mobilising groups of people, and taking action for change.[13]

For the remainder of the report, youth social action and youth-led social change will be treated as distinct concepts so we can understand what they have in common and what has been distinct in practice until now. Youth social action will be framed as service to others (e.g. volunteering or fundraising), whilst youth-led social change will refer to activities of organising young people around an issue to influence change. Consequently, sections of this report that discuss social action will mostly focus on what can be learned from research that has been conducted in association with the #iwill Campaign, and explore the strengths and limitations of applying this learning to youth-led social change.[14]

[13] https://youngfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Growing-Community-Organising-FINAL-V3.pdf

[14] For a more recent review of youth-led social change in the UK, see: https://www.blagravetrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/youth-led-change-landscape-and-possibilities.pdf

3. Strengths, opportunities and challenge for the sector

An aim of this report was to gather learning and insight to shape the second round of Act for Change Fund grantmaking, ensuring that the Foundations' investments enable this work to grow and become more sustainable in the future. Therefore, this research also aimed to understand more about the strengths and challenges of engaging young people in social change, including barriers to engagement, the infrastructure required to do this work well, and the benefits for individuals and communities because of young people leading change.

3.1 Measures of participation from the #iwill Campaign

The starting point for this section is measures of participation from the #iwill Campaign. Although social change can be seen as distinct from social action (as discussed above), it is useful to start here because there has been consistent data collection over the last few years which provides some insight into the scale of youth participation.

- From the outset of the #iwill Campaign Ipsos MORI, on behalf of DCMS and Step Up to Serve, has conducted annual surveys into young people's experiences of youth social action. The 2017 survey provides a summary of the current state of social action participation (Knibbs, 2018):
- Most young people have taken part in some form of social action over the last 12 months, and 68% say they are likely to take part in the future.
- However, only 39% take part in what is termed 'meaningful' social action. Meaningful social action means that the young person recognises the benefits to themselves and others and participate regularly throughout the year.
- This is a slight decline from 2016 but relatively steady across years since the baseline survey in 2014.
- There continues to be a gap in meaningful social action participation between the most and least affluent young people. Young people from less affluent backgrounds, particularly those aged 16-20, take part significantly less than in 2016.
- While appetite to participate in the future is still lower amongst less affluent young people, over half say they would like to take part in future.
- There appear to be key transition points affecting young people's participation, with involvement in meaningful social action dropping off post-primary school, post-GSCEs and after age 18.

What the figures from the social action survey suggest is that although participation has been steady, participation has been unequal over time. Social action programmes tend to attract a certain 'type' of participant: females, young people who practice a religion, young people from a white background, and young people who are more affluent (social grades A and B). Evidence from the 2014 National Youth Social Action Survey found that the predominant social action activities involved fundraising (43%) and "giving time to a charity" (32%). Only 10% of the young people surveyed had been involved in a campaign (Pye et al. 2014). The evidence from the National Youth Social Action survey also raises questions about whether the #iwill Campaign will

meet its participation target by 2020, and how to involve more young people from other backgrounds not covered above in social action that they find relevant

3.2 Factors that influence participation

This section explores the factors that drive or hinder young people's participation in social change. The evidence in the section draws from a wider literature review on participation in youth activism and social movements, and participation in social action more broadly. Therefore, this section looks at broad themes identified from the literature which were then explored further in interviews with practitioners.

3.2.1 Young people's motivations

In 2017 Arthur et al. surveyed 4,518 16- to 20-year-olds in the UK, to investigate which factors help to encourage young people to make 'a habit of service'. A young person was defined as having a habit of service if they had taken part in service in the past 12 months and confirmed they will definitely or very likely continue participating in the next 12 months. Internal motivations for young people noted in this research included:

- Young people can connect activities to moral or civic values.
- Young people believe they have the time, skills, opportunity and confidence to participate.

As discussed above, however, a habit of service may have different motivations to a habit of activism or action for social change, and therefore it is not clear whether these findings can be applied to social change. In research on youth activism, Rainsford (2014) argues that there are three central characteristics of young people who are politically active: they are committed and motivated to participate in their cause, their participation is initiated and sustained by social networks that mobilise them, and they consider their participation to make a difference. Research by Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett for The Guardian with young people who engaged in political activism highlights how young people become activists because of discrimination, feeling excluded from politics, or difficult personal circumstances or experiences.[15]

In interviews with practitioners, individuals often referred to 'making a difference' in terms of the difference young people's participation could make to their own lives and the lives of people like them. One interviewee stated that young people are likely to feel they are the only one facing a challenge for a long time before finding a community who are struggling through similar challenges. As a result, they quickly move from wanting to resolve a problem in their lives to fighting for the lives of their peers to be better too. Another interviewee described the young people they work with as going on a journey in terms of recognising the discrimination they experience as part of something wider, and starting to participate in social change as a result.

[15] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/20/parliament-thought-cleaner-young-activists-changing-british-politics

"First, they discover other people who have been going through what they're going through, and they learn that it's not their fault. Then they learn about the policy context, about racism and xenophobia, about the structural issues that affect them. That's when they get involved in the change work." (Interviewee)

It was also acknowledged that young people tend to become activated quickly in reaction to something in the news, or because of making a new friend. In this vein, a successful model of youth-led social change is one that is "agile, able to respond to wider cultural shifts and smaller community ripples" (Round One application).

3.2.2 Socio-economic background

When conducting research about the #iwill Campaign, Bamburova (2018) found that parents of less affluent families would; express that there were more pressing concerns than young people's engagement in social action (e.g. financial issues); did not see the benefits to social action; or had negative perceptions of it. For example, one parent from the research commented "Why should my child work for free?"

In a wider exploration of the causes of youth disengagement in political activism in the UK, Rainsford (2017) found that "traditional inequalities of voice are maintained in the younger generation"'. This points towards the depth of the challenges facing organisations who wish to use youth activism as an agenda for change among communities with low levels of social capital (MacDonald et al., 2005).

On the other hand, research by Earl et al. (2017) found that minority young people are increasingly involved in political activity due to policy changes resulting in increasing incarceration rates for young people of colour, and social concern which often depicts them as inherently criminal. They also state that, "when resources (to reflect political representation) are taken into account", researchers have found that minorities "over participate" in politics (Earl et al., 2017).

Interviews from the scoping research highlighted the issue of the intersection of multiple types of injustice or inequality, where the presence of one type often makes someone more likely to experience another.

"Many mental health disorders have been associated with social influences including housing, family pressures, cuts to local services and the move to Universal Credit." (Interviewee)

Experience of multiple types of injustice can have differing effects depending on the young person. Either these experiences prevent them from participating in social change activities, or it makes them more likely to participate, as they witness the way different types of discrimination intersect in their own lives and are moved to act. Interviewees suggested that this could have differing effects depending on the young person.

The role of place is also important. For example, in a literature review of young people and volunteering, Davies (2017) found that deprived or low-income areas correspond with limited volunteering infrastructures. Consequently, while a young person may wish to volunteer, they will struggle "without access to the necessary conditions to do so" (Davies, 2017). This corresponds with Hogg's (2016) finding that volunteering is "highly situated within the rhythms

and relations of everyday life". Research for the #iwill Campaign also supports this finding. In their 2017 National Youth Social Action Survey, #iwill found that 51% of the most affluent young people participate in social action, compared to 32% of the least affluent young people (Knibbs, 2018).

The survey went on to explore the reasons why this gap exists. Those from less affluent backgrounds cited a lack of interest and understanding as reasons for non-involvement:

- They did not have enough time.
- They were not interested.
- It never occurred to them.
- They did not know how to get involved/no-one asked them.

The idea that young people with certain backgrounds often do not have enough time to dedicate to social action (and similarly, social change activities) was reflected by several interviewees, who acknowledged the extra pressures placed on young people whose families often do not have the resources to support them. One interviewee stated that 20% of the young people they work with had caring responsibilities, meaning that "intense work with them is hard".

Overall, the research on the influence of socioeconomic background does not appear to be straightforward. Few conclusions about the extent to which a young person's background influences participation in social change can be drawn.

3.2.3 Schools

Both the academic literature and the youth social action surveys commissioned by the #iwill Campaign highlight the role of schools in influencing youth engagement.

In the 2016 National Youth Social Action Survey, 62% of young people reported that they got involved through their schools (Pye and Michelmore, 2017). This is an increase from 2014, when just over half of young people (56%) said they got involved in social action through school. 43% of young people also reported being encouraged by teachers to participate in social action, and those from different socio-economic backgrounds reported similar levels of encouragement (ABC1 43% vs C2DE 41%).

Attending a school that promotes volunteering or has civic-mindedness has also been identified with enhancing pupils' chances of volunteering (Davies, 2017). In 2014, 81% of secondary school pupils said they would want their school to do more to help them participate in social action opportunities (Pye et al., 2014). Research also suggests parental engagement is key to encouraging young people to engage in social action, and inviting parents to school-led presentations, awards and celebrations of young people's social action achievements was identified as a big motivational factor for students getting involved (Davies, 2017).

Research has found some contradictory results for the role of schools in overcoming the demographic differences between young people, however. Partridge et al. (2018) argue that young people from less affluent backgrounds need their schools' encouragement for participation as they can be less likely to be "encouraged by their parents to take part in social action". Also, the influence of friends and parents or guardians has been found to decrease as

young people aged, while encouragement from teachers was found to rise as young people got older (Davies, 2017). Hogg and de Vries (2018) argue, however, that the influence of schools on volunteering by young people is not straightforward. During Key Stage 3 the influence of schools as a pathway into volunteering is strong for all socio-economic groups, and there is little difference in engagement between young people from different backgrounds. But the role that schools play as facilitators of volunteering diminishes in Key Stages 4 and 5, as exam and other pressures loom larger. At this stage, groups and organisations become more significant and socio-economic differences re-emerge.

It is important to note that this body of research is mainly focused on the culture of civic-mindedness and therefore it is not clear how this crosses over with forms of activism and social change. The only insight into this for this report are interviews with practitioners. Two individuals interviewed stated that schools were an important part of their engagement strategy. One described how they run political education courses in schools which have become an important component of their work, as it has provided them with access to young people who have a lot of potential but do not see politics as being a space for them. They have been able to widen young people's horizons and have seen participation in their youth activism programme grow as a result.

However, some interviews also shed light on the ways in which schools and the processes surrounding them can cause young people to disengage or contribute to young people's experiences of inequality. One interviewee stated that it is at school where young people with disabilities are separated from those without, and is a main reason why so many misperceptions around disabilities exist. Several interviewees named exams and the general pressure associated with school as key factors leading to non-participation. One interviewee stated that school makes young people "stressed and busy".

In line with the evidence on the influence of socioeconomic backgrounds on participation, the role and influence of schools also does not appear to not be straightforward.

3.2.4 Family and peers

The role of peers in influencing young people to participate in social action is noted in several studies. The involvement of peers in volunteering and social action can encourage young people to participate; however negative peer-pressure can reduce young people's confidence in volunteering (Ellis, 2004). These effects differ by gender, with females more likely than males to report that friends encouraged them to volunteer (Davies, 2017).

The overall effects of family and peers were also highlighted in the 2017 National Youth Social Action Survey, which found that 96% of young people who have participated in meaningful social action have family and/or friends that also take part. This was echoed in the scoping research by one interviewee who suggested that this effect takes place because young people are "inspired by others that have gone before them".

However, the scoping research revealed a more complicated relationship between families and participation in social action. Analysis of Act for Change Fund Round One applications suggests that families can also contribute to youth disenfranchisement, which has implications for young people's habits later in life.

"Even day to day decisions within families…are made without consulting young people, perpetuating a civic alienation which can be hard to shake when they are given the keys to adulthood." (Round One application)

Peer relationships are also important within social action spaces. Interviewees reinforced the idea that young people often get a social benefit through the opportunity to meet like-minded people and work collectively towards a common goal. If these peer relationships are missing or young people do not "see themselves represented" in the group, they may become disengaged in the activities. One interviewee suggested that this could be as simple as a young person feeling intimidated if most of the group is significantly older than them. Evidently, peer relationships should not be overlooked as a component of sustainable youth-led social change.

While the research on young people's social action and social change highlights several factors that influence participation, the interaction and relative importance of these factors is not clear cut. This is a question that might be worth exploring further as part of Act for Change Fund's Learning Partnership inthe next phase of the programme.

3.3 The infrastructure required to support youth-led social change

Another important aim of the Fund is to use its investment to ensure that organisations supporting young people to lead social change are in a more sustainable position. The literature review and scoping research aimed to identify factors that might contribute to sustainability, including the funding environment and the infrastructure that supports this work. The literature review did not generate any significant insights into aspects of sustainability, but common themes that appeared in the scoping research are summarised below.

3.3.1 Factors that influence sustainability

In their research for Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Edleston and Smith (2018) found that the following external influences, many of which connect to infrastructure, were identified by organisations engaging young people in social change activities. The research identified positive and negative factors from both external influences and the funding environment. The findings from this research are summarised in the table below.

	External influences	Funding environment
Positive	• Public optimism for change • Rights and justice issues in the public eye • Cohesive, collaborative communities • Diversity of actors involved in change conversations • Support for a plurality of approaches • Young social entrepreneurs • Funding, especially for inclusion	• Independence from funders • Access to the right networks • Moving beyond money as a central driver • Face to face dialogue with funders • Visibility of funders and opportunities • Organic collaboration

Negative	• Divisive, negative media environment • Negative perception of young people • Democratic gap between old and young • Reliance on (shrinking) youth work structures • Capacity for legal, personnel and data issues • Social justice language appropriated • No community history of change • Lack of sector expertise, especially in organising • Lack of physical space	• Focus on big numbers, low cost • Getting buy-in for innovation and emergent process • Lack of funding for communications • Limited capacity to research and write applications, especially collaborative bids • Dilution of young people's power through the funding process • Small value start-up and innovation funding • Modest sized funding, even for scaling proven work • Risk averse and politically conscious funders

Table 1: Factors that contribute to sustainability. Reproduced from research by James Edleston and Daniel Smith for Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2018.

Several of the influences highlighted in Edleston and Smith's research were also identified by interviewees in the scoping research and in applications from the first round of funding. Common themes that appeared are discussed in the following sub-sections.

3.3.2 Lack of physical space and other material resources

Physical space, and other material resources, are essential when it comes to facilitating young people's involvement in social action. One application stated that "young people need space (mental and physical) and support (human resources and financial) to engage fully in the process". Challenges relating to resources are more prevalent when it comes to engaging young people who would not normally participate. For example, one interviewee claimed that targeting young people who would otherwise not put themselves forward had "made a lot of demands on how we manage space, staff team, how we run and think about how we recruit and train outreach staff in different cities."

3.3.3 Reliance on shrinking youth services structures

It was widely stated in the scoping research that the dismantling of youth services and the loss of skills associated with youth work (such as coaching and outreach) have meant that for many young people, opportunities for supported social change have been eroded. According to one Round One applicant, the existence of youth services structures is important for social change because it is in these spaces that "young people can test and play, then reflect, then test again - all the while being held within our infrastructure". Another argued that work with young people was effective "when dedicated youth workers support young people directly". The funding cuts to the youth sector have meant that an important mode for activating young people has been reduced, and there is less space for young people to experiment with different types of activities, taking risks in the knowledge that they are in a safe environment. One interviewee recognised that this effect is exacerbated for some young people, "where barriers around accent and geography still remain key obstacles to gaining access to decision makers, and being both heard and taken seriously".

3.3.4 Lack of sector expertise, particularly in organising

Scoping research highlighted the importance of campaign infrastructure in enabling effective youth-led social change to take place. Many interviewees stated that they made a lot of effort to teach the young people they worked with about the sociological concepts underpinning change work.

"We're explicit about power upfront, and talk about intersectionality, especially race and class. It means the change is systemic." (Interviewee)

One interviewee gave an example of how they put these theories into practice during leadership training: "We map out power, how we think about who are the powerful people and how we work with them". Ultimately, expertise around organising and a knowledge of how the political system works were thought to be crucial enablers for young people becoming activated and sustaining their engagement, as well as increasing the effectiveness of the change work in question.

3.3.5 A role for skilled adults

Although it is important for social change work to be 'youth-led', and for young people to be the decision-makers in the process, there is still a significant role for skilled and experienced adults in this work. Interviewees in the scoping research stressed that there is a really important role for bringing experts and skilled adults around the table with young people. By definition, young people tend to be inexperienced in certain domains, such as political campaigning , or lack social networks of influence. Adults can add the needed social capital and links to people with power, including local activists and other advocates.

"Young people need specialists around the table, so they can learn from each other and come up with a solution, otherwise these systems are detached from actually influencing change. More investment from everyone makes change more likely to happen." (Interviewee)

In fact, many interviewees stated that they use terms such as 'co-production' and 'co-design' to describe the way that adults and young people collaborated within their organisations to achieve common goals.

"First and foremost, it's co-designed. Our community [predominantly 16- to 30-year-olds in and around Birmingham] have ownership, but we underwrite the risk, meaning they can experiment with social change in a way that is iterative." (Interviewee)

This was emphasised further in Round One applications where organisations described the importance of trusted relationships in enabling young people to participate in social change. For example, one individual stated that the methodology of staff members working on youth-led social change projects is key to establishing those trusted relationships. This methodology includes: staff recognising their role as facilitators rather than experts, staff understanding and seeking to minimise their influence on young people, staff believing in the potential of every young person to contribute at different levels, whether that means leading or not, and being transparent about the limits of youth decision-making power.

Moving forward into the second round of funding, it will be important for the Foundations to consider how they can address some of the negative influences of the current funding environment on sustainability, and consider to what extent funding models need to adapt to create a supportive infrastructure.

3.4 The impact of youth-led social change

This section of the report focuses on research on the impact of participation in social change activities on individuals and the community. The question of impact is central to the concept of youth social action. For something to be true youth social action, there must be a 'double benefit'. The double benefit is explained by the #iwill Campaign as:

> *"When young people take part in social action, everyone benefits. They do – because they build their skills, character and wellbeing – and communities do – because they're healthier, more integrated and socially mobile. This is what we call the 'double benefit' of meaningful social action and why we want more young people to take part in it."*

Ultimately, the double benefit is perceived to be what makes youth social action unique and distinguishes it from other youth services. However, if it is acknowledged (as argued above) that social change may bring distinct features to social action, questions remain about how or to what extent the double benefit model is relevant to social change by young people. This section starts by exploring some of the existing literature on impact and then discusses some of the opportunities and challenges that arise.

3.4.1 Impact on young people

Understanding the impact of engagement in social action on young people has been core to the #iwill Campaign, with surveys collected every year, and to the wider youth social action community in general. This research has found that there are a series of benefits to young people who participate in social action. For example, those participating in meaningful social action are more likely to feel a range of benefits, reporting they do more sport and exercise, have higher life satisfaction and perceive that they have improved job prospects (Knibbs, 2018; See et al., 2017). However, it is important to note that the research also found that only 39% of the 58% of young people who are taking part in social action, are taking part in meaningful social action (i.e. they recognise the benefits to themselves and others and participate regularly throughout the year).

The 2016 National Youth Social Action Survey included a wider range of data than the 2017 report and it distinguishes young people who felt a double benefit had occurred, even if they had not participated in social action regularly throughout the year (Pye and Michelmore, 2016). Of these young people, the following was reported:

- Almost all young people participating in social action felt a double benefit (94%).
- Girls were more likely than boys to state that they felt this benefit (60% of girls compared to 49% of boys).
- Those from more affluent backgrounds were more likely to recognise the double benefit compared to those from less affluent backgrounds (58% compared to 49%), suggesting that the double benefit is not always equally felt.

- Eight in ten young people (81%) reported that they had benefited a lot/fair amount, and a much smaller proportion reported they had only benefited a little or not at all (16%).

- Young people from more affluent backgrounds were more likely to say they felt a personal benefit compared to those from less affluent backgrounds (83% vs 77% respectively).

- In the only two randomised control trials that have been undertaken for social action in the UK, 20% of young people taking part in social action said it made them more likely to volunteer in the future and 16% felt a greater sense of community (#iwill, n.d.).

The social and emotional development that can arise because of young people's participation in social change were emphasised in the scoping research, including interviews with practitioners and Round One applications. The benefits observed included a positive effect on mental health and well-being, building resilience, increases in confidence and leadership abilities, and a heightened self-belief which stems from young people harnessing their identity and experiences for the greater good. It is important to note, however, that these are perceived benefits rather than benefits that have been measured directly.

"This can be particularly powerful when working with young people who are seldom heard." (Round One application)

"[Through change work] they realise that not just their story has currency…their insight has value too." (Interviewee)

Many of the applicants who were awarded funding in the first round have established evaluation approaches to demonstrate the impact of their work on young people which means that the evidence of impact on individuals could improve over time.

The Advocacy Academy, for example, evaluates their work through three lenses: the impact of their pedagogy, the strength of their community, and lasting change in the world. Impact of pedagogy refers to knowledge, skills, networks and active citizenship of their participants and strength of community refers to their alumni community. Their approach also touches on the real-world impact that Advocates have by following what happens after they leave the fellowship.

Another example of an evaluation approach includes Uprising. Their Theory of Change includes improvement in skills, confidence, networks and knowledge of young people. Their evaluation looks at short-term impact through a pre/post survey with participants, but it also captures long-term impact through an Alumni survey and a "10-year impact project" in 2018 which was a retrospective study on Uprising beneficiaries over the last 10 years.

While most Round One applicants and interviewees from the scoping research had some impact evaluation in place, they acknowledged that it was a challenge for their work and there was some uncertainty about whether they were using the right measures and were interested in learning more about tools that could help them build evidence. At the Cohort Learning Day hosted by the Foundations in January 2019, a few individuals expressed concern that funders were "interested in advocacy as a concept" but were reluctant to invest because of lack of long-term research on impact. Measuring impact long-term requires resources and capacity that most of these small organisations do not have.

Furthermore, some individuals highlighted that the impact of social change participation upon young people may not always be positive. This was thought to be particularly relevant to young people who experience injustice. The intensity of the work and the fact that young people often have a personal connection to the cause have the potential to put their physical and emotional safety at risk. Examples given included young asylum seekers risking their future immigration status by speaking up, or young black men putting themselves at risk of police brutality by demonstrating collectively in public. Problems can also arise when opportunities to participate in social change are not sustainable.

"Taking disadvantaged young people who have never been listened to, and giving them so much voice…what do they get out of that afterwards when the voice is taken away? Their lives can be at stake." (Interviewee)

For some, these risks are at the crux of what it means to do truly youth-led social change. That said, interviewees reinforced the message that support structures must be in place to manage expectations and safeguard young people against avoidable harm.

3.4.2 Impact on communities

Research into the benefits of youth social action and youth-led social change from the perspective of 'end beneficiaries' or communities is limited. A small amount of evidence on the impact of social action from this perspective comes from the evaluation of the Uniformed Youth Social Action Fund (Tyler-Rubinstein et al., 2016a). This research found that social action can help end beneficiaries to meet new people they would not otherwise have met.

- This research also demonstrated that youth social action has the potential to improve end beneficiaries' views of young people, and help them feel more engaged with their communities:
- 75% of end beneficiaries surveyed considered the social action they experienced to be very worthwhile and 80% said they felt prouder of their local area because of the activities.
- Most end beneficiaries surveyed claimed they were more likely to take part in social action themselves because of the activities they saw young people carry out.
- More than three quarters of end beneficiaries surveyed said they had a more positive impression of what young people contribute to their local communities because of the social action activities.

It is important to bear in mind that because the dominant activity in this form of social action is "service to others", the 'community' is often a group of individuals that are at the receiving end of that service. This means that the community in this context is easier to define to some extent than more diffuse activities and audiences that tend to characterise some social change work.

Tyler-Rubinstein et al. (2016a) make a claim that activities aimed to improve the local environment directly were more likely than other forms of social action to improve beneficiaries' opinions of what young people contribute to the community – perhaps obviously. According to the report, 86% of beneficiaries of activities that aimed to improve the local environment said their opinion of what young people contribute to the local area had improved (Tyler-Rubinstein, I. et al. 2016a). Litter picking and community gardening – which this evaluation focused on – are

not the forms of youth social change that Act for Change Fund seeks to support, where the focus is on young people's social action for change based on lived experiences of inequality and injustice.

The #iwill Campaign acknowledges that evidence of community impact remains more limited, and this is possibly because of the varied scope of what 'community benefit' means. Evidence is perhaps weakest in terms of the impact of youth social action on wider members of the community, as opposed to direct beneficiaries. There remains a need for further robust and well-resourced research – including use of RCTs and comparison groups – on the impact of youth social action on targeted beneficiary communities, considering a wider range of areas (#iwill, n.d.). However, it is not clear how such methods could be executed in practice.

Contrary to youth social action, youth-led social change activities rarely have a defined community of beneficiaries. Terms like 'community' are particularly nebulous and if 'community' is conceived of in relation to 'place' (as opposed to a community of beneficiaries) it becomes especially problematic. In a recent essay on the concept of 'place' in policy, Hitchin writes:

> *"The simple challenge of place as a useful concept in policy is that it is always invented. We are never talking about real terrains, but boundaries of different scales around them. There are lives and activities going on regardless of whether that boundary is there. Place, as a concept, is created, which means it is contested". (Hitchin, 2018)*

The very same issues exist if we replace the term 'place' with the term 'community' itself. The issue of defining what community benefit means is also something which practitioners struggle to understand. Working in social change, interviewees tended to refer to issue-based communities (e.g. the 'LGBT community') rather than the local, geographical communities commonly discussed across other parts of #iwill.

One interviewee who works with young people with disabilities and learning difficulties to lead social change illustrated this, saying: "it's not just going to be this small group of young people who see a benefit, it will benefit the wider community of young people with disabilities, in Coventry or nationally". This is an example where the 'end beneficiaries' are young people themselves; both the activists, and their peers beyond.

In the youth-led social change space, it seems that the boundaries between 'participant' and 'beneficiary' can become blurred, as young people may be campaigning on issues and policies that they themselves are affected by, meaning they would be among the beneficiaries of any shifts that come about because of their work. Participation in social change may also inspire a sense of community among participating young people and community benefit could therefore be understood as one of the positive impacts for the group itself.

> *"[Through this work] young people are empowered to create their own community." (Interviewee)*

A specific example provided by an interviewee involved young migrants attending their peers' appeal hearings and Home Office meetings, leading to individuals feeling part of a wider support network.

Additionally, youth-led social change differs from other more immediate types of social action, in that it tends to centre around extremely ambitious goals that may only be achieved in the distant future because of a broad range of factors aligning. Alternatively, as is often the case with social change, the action may fail to bring about any change. These factors make it difficult to fully understand or even identify the community benefit.

> *"It is hard to say to what extent [anything] leads to social change, as many micro actions develop a culture change over time." (Interviewee)*

As with the impacts on individual young people, the potential negative consequences of social change upon communities should not be overlooked. One interviewee stated that young people getting involved in social action of this kind can sometimes bring about conflict in communities in the short-term, although they ultimately had faith that the work would "bring about solidarity" in the long term. Another interviewee acknowledged that an important part of this work is changing people's perceptions of what young people are about, and that one impact could be disrupting current power dynamics. This disruption may bring with it a certain level of controversy. If young people leading social change does involve some conflict and disruption, it could be argued that this can disrupt the 'double benefit' model significantly.

In an environment where funding is increasingly outcomes focused and funded organisations are being asked to "prove" the benefit of youth-led social change (possibly because social change is conflated with social action), the double benefit poses a significant challenge for the sector. If, as argued above in this report, social change is a distinct part of social action, the double benefit might be best termed 'community impact' when applied to youth-led social change, in recognition of the multifaceted understandings of 'community', as well as the probability of conflict and resolution: that different members of a local or national community may have contrasting views about the change – which may evolve over time.

Section 4: Conclusions

This section brings together the literature review and scoping research to discuss where the potential opportunities lie for the youth-led social change sector to grow and strengthen, where challenges remain, and the gaps that require further research and exploration.

4.1 Youth-led social change through a "place-based" lens

An increase in interest in place-based funding where charitable objectives are pursued by focusing on place is a unique opportunity for the sector. Place-based approaches seek to deliver more holistic and collaborative solutions to social issues in an area by bringing together businesses, local government, charities, funders, and residents.

One example of place-based funding for social action is The Place Based Social Action (PBSA) programme, a joint £4.5m programme between the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and The National Lottery Community Fund.[16] Initially working with 20 places around the country, the PBSA programme aims to enable different place-based partnerships to address local priorities through social action. The aim of this programme is to test new approaches that support people in a local area to take action on issues they have identified as being a priority. In the PBSA programme there are examples of local areas that have brought together youth organisations, community development foundations, and other local experts to address issues that are important to young people, and with an emphasis on creating change.

Place-based initiatives operate in multiple spaces including community development, social action, youth work, and activism, and commonly have community organising principles at the heart of what they do. This way of looking at youth-led social change work resonated with many practitioners who described borrowing tools from community organising and community engagement

> *"[Community organising involves] mapping out power, how we think about who are the powerful people and how we work with them. Thinking about our connections and who we need to connect with. Who are the people we already have on board?" (Interviewee)*

The growing interest in place-based approaches presents an opportunity for the youth-led social change sector in terms of funding opportunities, and an opportunity for funders in terms of approaches to investment. These approaches to funding encourage cooperation and partnership, emphasise a shift in power and influence, and are rooted in local communities rather than 'sectors'.

[16] https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/-/media/Files/Programme%20Documents/Place%20Based%20Social%20Action/prog_pbsa_guide.pdf

4.2 Skills-sharing between youth and campaign organisations plays a crucial role in the ecosystem

Adults with specialist skills, knowledge and networks are an important part of the youth-led social change infrastructure. This includes skills and expertise in campaigning and influencing as well as youth work and youth organising. Having knowledge and experience of the tools and tactics of social change are important because the activities that young people engage in are influenced by (and can be limited to) the skills and capabilities of staff. As one application from the first round of the Fund explained:

> *"We don't do a lot of coalition building and mobilisation. This is harder to do because of staff and their skill set. Some of these require more sophistication as an organisation." (Round One application)*

On the other hand, organisations with expertise in campaigning may not have the skill set to work with young people. Being a youth-led organisation may not be the priority for these organisations, but young people are increasingly becoming an important asset to them, especially for those campaigning on issues that have strong youth support such as climate change. Improving the skills and capabilities of staff to engage young people is becoming increasingly important for these organisations.

> *"We set up our youth network two years ago. As an organisation that's been around for a few decades and in common with other organisations that have been around a while, you get an ageing membership. We were finding that young people were coming to our meetings but they didn't necessarily hang around. I think they felt it's 'not quite a space for me'". (Interviewee)*

Although formally partnering with large campaign organisations was not seen as desirable by many youth organisations, out of concern that they would dictate the agenda, the people we spoke to recognised that many working in youth-led social change could benefit from the knowledge and skills these organisations have, and felt it was important to encourage collaboration and skill sharing.

NB: Skills sharing will be a key feature of Act for Change Fund

4.3 Progression and on-going support for youth-led social change

The sustainability of a campaign or movement is a major challenge for youth-led social change. The transitional nature of young people's lives, the demands of family and school life, and the intensity of social change work means that young people may need to dip in and out of the process over time. Social change can be a long and slow process and it can be a challenge maintaining young people's momentum and stamina. Therefore, youth-led movements and campaigns must strike a balance between resources that are agile, reflecting the spontaneity of this work, and infrastructure to support activities beyond the life of the funding programme, to ensure the effort does not dwindle away.

Research from the literature review suggests that high levels of participation in social change requires structure and dedicated people that can keep the effort in place, and this is especially the case when a lot of the participation is online (Lemotte, 2007).

- Scoping research and engagement with organisations awarded funding in the first round at a Cohort Learning event in January 2019 identified several ways that investment can help address these challenges:
- Establishing links between youth-led campaigns and local organisations, community groups, or activists that can give the campaign a 'home'.
- Creating more paid roles for young people in youth organisations and campaign organisations to use the skills they gain to mobilise other young people.
- Providing physical spaces for young people to meet and organise or taking over underused spaces owned by the local authority.
- Seed funding for groups of organised young people to sustain their campaigns beyond the life of the programme.

O2's Think Big is an example of seed funding for young people. The Think Big Fund offered 13-25 year olds funding of up to £500 to help bring ideas to life, using tech for good and encouraging innovation.[17] Lloyds Banking Group's Money for Life programme, which has been running since 2011, also awarded groups of young people up to £400 to develop ideas aimed at improving financial capability in their community.[18]

NB: A focus on sustainability will be a key feature of Act for Change Fund, including funding Peace First and Beatfreeks to provide rapid response funding for youth led social change work at a hyper local level and digitally as an exploration of how this may develop further support for on-going work starting at a grass roots level that may link to local, regional, national and global agendas for change.

4.4 Youth-led social change post 2020 and Step Up to Serve

Step Up to Serve's closure in 2020 creates an opportunity to make youth-led social change more commonplace within the broader youth social action space. However, there are some arguments to be considered first about whether and how youth-led social change and youth social action do or indeed should occupy the same 'space', or whether they remain separate and distinct. There is a potential risk that if youth-led social change becomes more mainstream it will become 'co-opted' or diluted by agendas that are perceived as less risky and less political Organising for change, compared to social action, is about challenging the relationships of power which lead to unjust and unfair systems for young people. Therefore, there is a desire among many practitioners for youth organising and youth-led social change to be more commonplace, but to remain closer to the 'margins', rather than become mainstream. This will be a critical tension for both funders and organisations to consider and manage.

[17] http://www.fundingforall.org.uk/funds/o2-think-big/

[18] https://www.moneyforlife.org.uk/community-challenge/

4.5 The ‘double benefit’

As discussed above, the #iwill Campaign acknowledges that evidence of community impact is limited, and there is more effort being invested to gather evidence on community benefit.

Proving the impact of youth social action upon communities will continue to be a challenge, however, because there is no way to establish a counterfactual and so attribution becomes impossible to establish. Impact is also often diffuse, multi-level, and could be cumulative. Furthermore, it is difficult to define ‘community’ in a meaningful way when organisations are working on different issues, at different scales (e.g. local, regional, national) and the pace of change varies (e.g. some changes can take decades). Does it matter if the action fails to make conclusive change? Some campaigns might not be successful in terms of bringing about a change in policy, but there may be other benefits such as raised awareness, increased solidarity and increased community cohesion. There could also be negative effects on some aspects of the community, which result from trying to redistribute power or resources or when the campaign challenges deeply held and culturally entrenched beliefs (e.g. the transgender rights movement). These are all important questions and implications to consider.

Furthermore, it might be challenging to draw meaningful conclusions from social action research and evaluation that can be applied to youth-led social change. The current evidence is based on social action in its broadest sense and does distinguish between different types of action and whether certain types of action are more meaningful or impactful than others. Given that the definition of ‘double benefit’ emerged from the conception of social action with emphasis on ‘service to others’, it may make more sense to use an ‘impact’ lens in exploring what consequences youth social change work has beyond individual young people.

This presents an opportunity for the Act for Change Fund and Learning Partnership to work towards developing a model that is more meaningful and relevant. This could help to achieve two things: 1) articulating what youth-led social change is and is not, and 2) creating a framework for thinking about the benefits and value of this work.

As a starting point for discussion, a useful model for youth-led social change has been presented in the diagram below (see page 32). In this model, the two outer circles represent young people’s motivational ‘entry’ points (i.e. the reasons why they get involved) and the inner circle represents the mechanisms through which young people are mobilised to take action. Young people can enter youth-led social change at either point, but for youth-led social change to be effective and impactful, both ‘ends’ would have to be fulfilled - through the means in the inner circle. This is only a starting point based on the Learning Partner’s reflections while carrying out the research for this report.

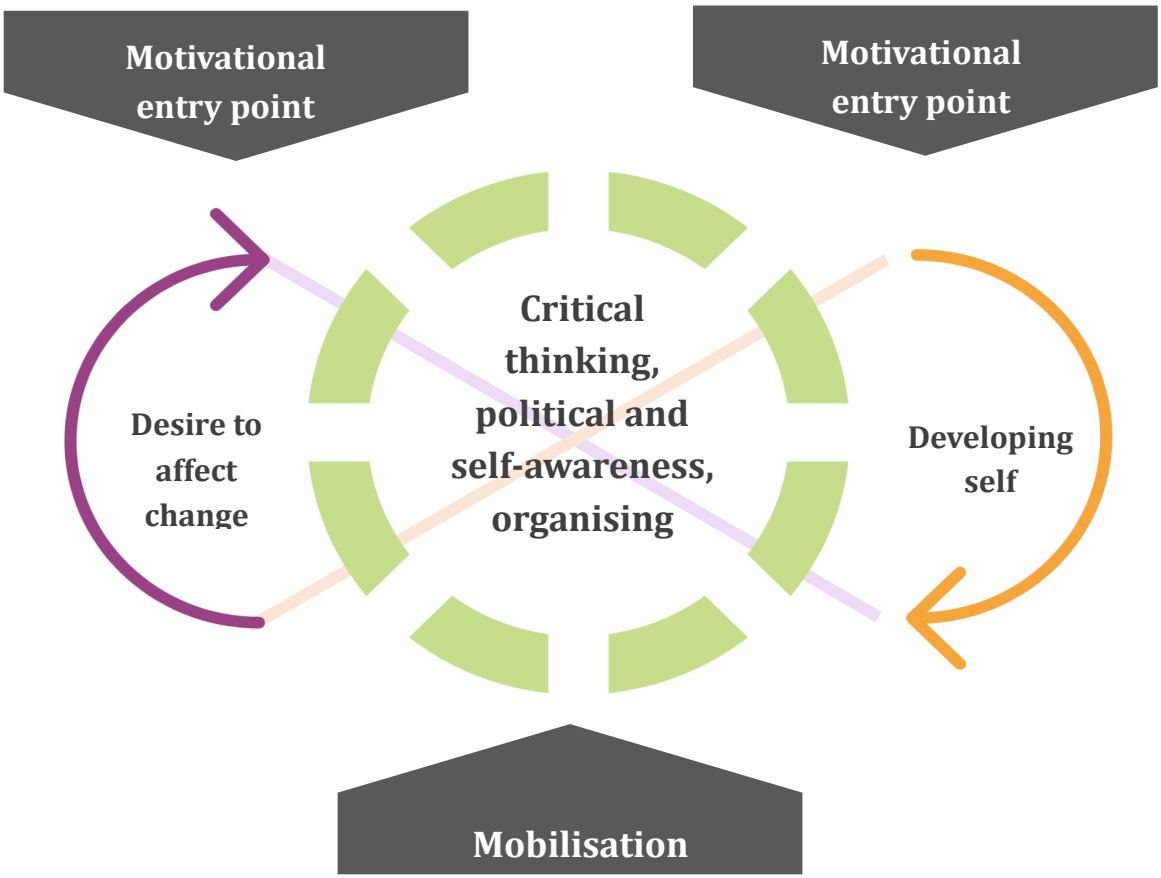

Figure 2: Learning Partner "model" for youth-led social change.

NB: Exploring community impact will be a key feature of Act for Change Fund

4.6 Balancing the political versus the apolitical

We heard differing views between organisations about whether youth-led social change is explicitly political in nature. In Round One grant applications, one organisation stated that social change is about "addressing an issue that is personal and making it political". Another applicant expressed that youth-led social change is about "politicising" young people. On the other hand, one applicant stated that their organisation works in a way that is independent of political agendas.

Even when actions are perceived by the young people leading them as being 'neutral', the issues they seek to address exist within a politicised context. Social justice issues can often be split along political lines and this means that it can be difficult to restrict them to a 'neutral' space, even if that is what is intended by the young people leading the campaign. Furthermore, the term 'social justice' itself can be perceived as embodying a progressive agenda.

Organisations engaged in this work reported in interviews and in discussions at the Cohort Learning event that funders can be nervous about funding social change activities as they can be perceived as being too political. Interviewees described some funders as being frightened of "no outcomes", and distrustful of words like "justice" and "power". Ultimately, they felt that this type of work does not fit the traditional model of funding because it challenges norms and

requires some funders to be more open-minded than they are at present. At the Cohort Learning event, some participants expressed that there is sometimes a lot of work to do internally to make their own boards and directors comfortable with this kind of activity, and some amount of culture change still needs to happen within the youth sector as well. Youth-led social change means that individuals cannot set out a list of topics that are 'safe' for young people to campaign on and those that are not.

A key challenge for those funding and delivering social change activity is striking the right balance between being 'agenda-driven' (political) and 'youth driven' (apolitical). How can organisations balance these outcomes for maximum impact, and shift their focus when necessary?

4.7 Strengthening youth 'voice'

A potential challenge for the sector going forward is considering ways to strengthen and clarify the role of 'voice' in social change. In both rounds of funding, there were organisations that just missed out on funding due to not being able to demonstrate how they would go beyond 'voice' to action for change. Organisations working with young people with experience of the care system in particular fell foul of this. 'Voice' still has a critical role to play in social change, and constitutes advocacy and awareness raising, which are important tools in the social change tool kit, but how can it be strengthened? In this case, there may be a role for building partnerships between care advocates and organisations that are more experienced in campaigning or youth organising.

4.8 Gaps in provision

There has been some aspiration in this phase of the programme to map the youth-led social change landscape, identifying geographical and thematic gaps, as well as groups of young people who have had fewer opportunities to participation in social change. Mapping the landscape of youth-led social change is a far more complex process than could be achieved within the scope of this report; however a recent report from the Young Foundation (2018) on 'philanthropy cold spots' could provide a clue to where funding could be targeted.

In their report, *Patchwork Philanthropy: Philanthropic and public spending blind spots and the Brexit vote,* the Young Foundation revealed that the areas where a majority voted to remain in the EU during the 2016 EU Referendum not only tended to be less deprived, but on average also benefited from more funding and expenditure from public and philanthropic spending than areas where a majority voted to leave. For example, the report highlighted that the average amount of Trust and Foundation spending per head in areas that voted Leave was £11.29 compared to £19.14 per head in areas that voted Remain. Meanwhile, average public spending per head in Leave areas was £456 compared to £618 in Remain areas.

The top ten 'philanthropy cold spots' (i.e. areas of low spend and high deprivation), according to the report, were primarily in the East of England and the Midlands regions. All ten of these areas voted Leave in the referendum. The findings revealed that although the North of England is the most deprived area in England overall, the Midlands has seen the highest levels of deprivation and lowest levels of funding and expenditure combined.

The Young Foundation argue therefore, that “the fewer resources and provisions available to a community, the more likely they are to want to vote for change”. These findings demonstrate how communities experience social and economic trends in very localised ways. What will be needed is a responsive and thoughtful framework that helps decision-makers think critically about addressing issues in a community, rather than a framework that tries to create something that is universally appealing.

Act for Change Fund: next steps

Act for Change Fund will work with the 32 funded organisations and our Learning Partner (Renaisi and the Centre for Youth Impact) until the end of 2021. During this time, the Fund will provide support for the cohort of organisations to build up skills and capabilities around youth-led changemaking. We aim to continually share insight and learning that emerges from our activities with other #iwill matchfunders and colleagues, the youth sector and beyond, contributing to debate and discussion around young people with lived experience of inequalities and injustices leading change. We very much welcome others who are interested to be in touch.

Appendix

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Information on interviewees for this report

Eight people were interviewed as part of the background research for this report. These individuals were employees of organisations identified as experts in youth work, campaigning, or youth organising.

1. Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire
2. YoungMinds
3. Global Justice Now
4. Brighter Futures
5. Free Radicals Beatfreeks Collective
6. NEON
7. Just for Kids Law
8. Proud Trust
9. Reclaim

Background research also included transcriptions from two interviews carried out as part of previous research conducted last year on behalf of Paul Hamlyn Foundation which were shared with Renaisi. The people interviewed have since moved on from the organisation and their views do not necessarily represent the views of the organisation. For this reason, the organisations' names have not been used.

Act for Change Fund: Funded organisations (Rounds One and Two)

42nd Street
The 4Front Project
The Advocacy Academy
Beatfreeks
Children and Young People's Empowerment Project (CHILYPEP)
Comics Youth
The Hummingbird Project
FORWARD
Grapevine Coventry and Warwickshire
Irise International
Just for Kids Law
Kent Refugee Action Network
Leonard Cheshire
MAP (Mancroft Advice Project)
My Life My Choice
My Life My Say
Peer Power Youth
Newport Mind
Northern Ireland Youth Forum
Off The Record
Peace First
Phoenix Education Trust
Voices that Shake! (Platform London)
Praxis Community Projects
RECLAIM
TCC Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru/Together Creating Communities
UpRising
Voice of Young People in Care
The Warren of Hull
The Winch
West End Women and Girls
Youth Access

Background information on the Cohort Learning Event

Act for Change Fund held a Cohort Learning event on 30th January 2019 with the seven organisations that were awarded funds from the first round of the Act for Change Programme. Cohort Learning events will be convened throughout the programme to provide funded organisations an opportunity to network, share learning and practice, and contribute to the broader learning aims of the programme. The event in January was the first to be convened and the purpose was to introduce the aims and objectives of the learning partnership, provide an opportunity for networking, and to get their views and feedback on the key themes and questions raised in this report.