

Youth social action is a critical lever in boosting social mobility

Youth social action is young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change.

1. Social action **transforms character & improves well-being**, developing the kind of **21st century skills** that employers are calling for, as well as **boosting access & success in FE, HE and employment**.
 - a. Getting involved in social action that embeds the [6 quality principles](#) led to robust improvements in character qualities like **empathy, cooperation, resilience, problem-solving and sense of community**ⁱ.
 - b. Social action is also associated with improved levels of well-beingⁱⁱ and reduced anxietyⁱⁱⁱ.
 - c. 85% of employers said they prioritise character & attitude over academic results^{iv}.
 - d. A CIPD survey (2015) reported 67% of employers say candidates with social action experience demonstrate better employability skills^v.
2. Young people participating in social action have **stronger personal networks and higher life satisfaction**
 - a. Young people who participate are more likely to 'definitely agree' that if they needed help, there would be someone there for them (84% vs. 62% never done social action).ⁱⁱ
 - b. Average life satisfaction score (out of 10) for those participating is 8.6, compared to 8.1 for those not. Similar to the difference between permanent employees who are happy with their job and those who don't have a job and are seeking work.ⁱⁱ
3. Yet those from **less affluent backgrounds** are significantly **less likely to be participating** than their wealthier peers, but the gap appears to be **narrowing**.
 - a. There is a persistent socio-economic divide. In 2014, 51% of young people from the most affluent backgrounds participate versus 31% from the least affluent^{vi}, compared to 2016 when the gap appears to have narrowed to 49% vs. 40%.ⁱⁱ
4. **Schools and colleges are crucial** for helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds participate, yet **those serving the most** young people from low-income families are **least likely** to have a **culture of social action**.
 - a. 69% of young people doing social action get involved through school or collegeⁱⁱ, moreover teachers are the biggest motivator for young people from the least affluent familiesⁱⁱ.
 - b. Secondary school teachers increasingly see social action as part of their school's culture & practice (49% in 2016 vs. 68% in 2017), but under 25% say over half their student participate regularly
 - c. 82% of Secondary School teachers working in schools with the lowest proportion of young people receiving Free School Meals (%FSM) say that social action is part of their culture & practice, compared with just 55% of teachers working in the schools with over 25% FSM^{vii}.
 - d. The biggest barriers for schools serving the highest %FSM to embedding social action, are a lack of awareness about the benefits of youth social action and a lack of recognition from DfE and Ofsted that youth social action is valued.
 - e. 81% of secondary school pupils in England want their schools to do more to support them^{viii}.



5. **Head Teachers** from schools and colleges who have a culture of social action **say there are four simple steps** any education leader can take to do the same^{ix}:
1. Put youth social action at the heart of your school or college.
 2. Inspire and reward youth social action.
 3. Empower young people to lead their own social action.
 4. Build strong partnerships locally & nationally.

The #iwill campaign is led by over 700 cross sector organisations whose goal by 2020 is to close the socio-economic gap in social action participation whilst reaching over 60% overall participation among 10-20 year olds across the UK. Step Up To Serve is the charity that coordinates the #iwill campaign.

Appendix:

- Case studies of schools working in areas of low social mobility (according to the social mobility index) and who serve a high % of students who are eligible to receive Free School Meals
 - o [North Ormesby Primary Academy - Middlesbrough](#)
 - o [Victoria Academy - Barrow-in-Furness](#)
 - o [Haywood Academy - Stoke-on-Trent](#)
 - o [East Kent College - Broadstairs](#)
- Ofsted resources: [Social action: good examples from schools and colleges](#)

ⁱ Behavioural Insights Team (2016). *Evaluating Youth Social Action*.

ⁱⁱ Ipsos MORI. (2016) *Youth Social Action in the UK*

ⁱⁱⁱ Behavioural Insights Team. (2016). *Evaluating Youth Social Action*.

^{iv} CBI & Pearson (2015). *Education and Skills Survey*.

^v CIPD and YouGov (2015). *Learning to Work Survey*.

^{vi} Ipsos MORI. (2014) *Youth Social Action in the UK*

^{vii} NFER (2017) *Teacher Voice Omnibus*

^{viii} Ipsos MORI (2015). *Schools Omnibus Survey*.

^{ix} Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at the University of Birmingham with Step Up To Serve. (2015) *Transforming Young People and Communities*. Education.iwill.org.uk