

Social Action TOOLKIT

DESIGNED TO GIVE YOUTH WORKERS, PRACTITIONERS
AND LEADERS THE ABILITY TO DELIVER SOCIAL
ACTION PROJECTS WITH THE GROUP OF
YOUNG PEOPLE THEY WORK WITH.



VOLUNTEER **NOW**
connect • build • change

Social Action promotes youth advocacy and empowerment, encourages community participation and shares the same values as volunteering.

This toolkit has been created to give youth workers, practitioners and leaders the ability to deliver social action projects with the group of young people they work with.



Contents

Social Action Introduction	4
Volunteering, Social Action and Issues	5
CRED and Issues Discussion	6
Pitch and Project	7
Roles and Responsibilities	8
Planning and Preparation	9
Social Action Happens	10
Evaluation and Celebration	11

Social Action Introduction

Social Action promotes youth advocacy and empowerment, encourages community participation and shares the same values as volunteering. It is activities and action that young people plan and take part in to make a positive difference. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as fundraising, volunteering and carrying out awareness campaigns.

Social action can challenge opinions in a fun and relaxed environment, allowing young people to learn about different cultures, communities and social justice issues in the world. Young people have the power to be make a positive impact within their life and community and this toolkit should enable them to do so. Social action allows young people to take small steps to make a big difference and they can do this for a variety of causes.

Young people will develop leadership skills which will allow them to become leaders within their community/organisation who have compassion, empathy and the skills to make a difference. Young people will develop character, confidence, a variety of skills and gain valuable experience that they can use in their future. Organisations and the community will benefit as a result of the project because of the knowledge and impact of the young people involved.

The #iWill campaign (<https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/youth-social-action>) believe that "All young people should be supported and empowered to be active citizens." That is why they believe that social action should have the following principles embedded in every project:

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Week 1

Volunteering, Social Actions and Issues

Welcome to the next eight-twelve weeks of social action. If the group know each other then they can focus on why they want to be involved. If they do not know each other, spend more time getting them to introduce themselves, who they are, what they enjoy and why they are involved in social action. General conversations as they arrive will help them to settle.

Icebreakers: Doing some games will help the group get to know one another and feel more comfortable with each other. Use icebreakers that you already know, look online for some that you can use, play board games or contact us at youth@volunteernow.co.uk for some ideas.

Group Contract:

Respect

Participation

Empathy

Before the group puts the contract together, focus on the three words in red. Start the conversations with open ended questions to see their understanding of each word. The group contract can now be created. To give you an example of what could be included:

- Confidentiality amongst the group
- Teamwork
- Everyone has a voice

Once the contract has been created, everyone should sign it (including the youth worker).

Volunteering and Social Action:

"Volunteering is when you choose to give your time and energy to benefit other people without being paid for it." (NI Volunteer Strategy).

"Social Action is a youth led project that enables young people to take the lead with the aim to make a positive contribution to their community about a social issue that impacts young people and their community." (Volunteer Now).

"Social Action is activities that young people do to make a positive difference to others or the environment." (#iWill Campaign through Step Up to Serve, <https://www.iwill.org.uk/>).

Facilitating a discussion using the definitions above will give young people the opportunity to explore the two ideas. This should naturally lead into discussions about helping the community and perhaps how they have done so already. It will also lead into some issues to explore.

Issues:

Leading on from the above discussion, it is time to start thinking about the issues for the social action project.

"What issues do you think young people face today?"

This question will open up discussions and it will allow young people to begin exploring the issues that they or others face. Let the conversation flow naturally but in the next session, the group can explore the issues further and narrow down their choices. Encourage the group to take ownership of their learning for the next session and read or watch the news, keep up to date on social media and do some research so that they are more informed.

Week 2

CRED and Issues Discussion

The main aim of session two will be on Community Relations, Equality and Diversity (CRED) as well as the issues that were discussed in session one.

Sessions on CRED can be sourced externally, you may already have your own resources that can be used. Please also feel free to contact youth@volunteernow.co.uk for more ideas for a CRED session. The main aim of CRED within this session is to explore the different backgrounds that they may come from (or others come from), but that they are still able to work together to make an impact within their community.

Just as you are beginning to explore the issues from the last session, it is important to remind the group of their contract from session one. Some of the issues could have had an impact on members of the group and it is important that the group respect each other. Go through each of the topics and start discussions by asking what they already knew and then what they researched during the week. If the worker found out some information, this could be used to start a debate. For example, a group we worked with were focussing on image for young people and some of the research stated that some young people thought that their image was more important than their health. An agree/disagree debate was used to explore why some people might think this. It allowed them to learn from other point of views, as well as lean on their own experience of the issues.

Once this conversation has come to a natural end, it is time to narrow down the choices to three (maximum). When agreeing what topics should be considered, it is important for the group to consider:

- **How is the group going to vote?**
- **How will the results be decided? Will the issues need to have a majority or should they be unanimous?**
- **If the group decides on three, could they explore some of the issues or incorporate them in anyway?**

Once the group narrows down their choices to three, the youth worker can start to consider which organisations they can bring in for the next session. As this project belongs to the group of young people, if they know of any groups that could come in, make sure they are considered for the next session.

Week 3

Pitch and Project

Whether an organisation comes in to work with the group is optional, depending on the needs of the group. However, it is recommended that even if they aren't going to partner with them they can facilitate a session to learn more about their three subjects. If they decide not to partner with an organisation, they will still have more information and will be able to make a more formed decision.

Pitch and Partner:

The three organisations can attend this session to talk to the group about their topic, to give them some more information as well as provide a mini workshop if this is something that would be of interest to them. They can also come in to pitch their organisation to the group. Give them an allocated time slot of twenty or thirty minutes each where they can cover the following:

- **Introduction to the organisation and topic.**
- **How the group can partner with them – fundraiser, create hampers, social media campaign and more.**
- **Questions from the group – ask questions that will enhance their project.**

Once each organisation has spoken, they can leave as the group now needs to make their decision and they can contact the organisations when needed. In session two the group agreed on how they were going to vote (majority or unanimous) and this can be used for this decision as well. They may want to vote by:

- **A show of hands**
- **Having a debate about their decision**
- **Putting their vote in a hat**
- **Other**

Firstly, the group need to decide on which issue their social action project is going to focus on. The information and pitches from the organisation may have helped them in their decision. Secondly, the group should now decide whether or not they are going to partner with the organisation of their chosen topic. If they are going to partner with them, allow the young person to contact them through a phone call or email to let them know. If not, they can still let them know that they decided not to work with any of them.

Project:

Now that the issue has been decided, it is time to focus on the project. The group can put together some ideas and then vote on their project in the next session. The following are just some examples that your group might do:

- **Coffee Morning**
- **Social Media Campaign**
- **Create Hampers**
- **Family Fun Day**
- **Sponsored Walk/Run**
- **Bucket collections**
- **Car wash**
- **Resources created (pop socket, leaflet)**
- **Video**
- **Bag Pack**

Week 4

Roles and Responsibilities

Chosen Project:

Another decision needs to be made and the group now need to vote on the project that they would like to focus on. Once the group decide on their project, they can create their checklist. For example, if the group were going to do a coffee morning, they might start to put together a list like the one below:

- **Location**
- **Audience**
- **Promotion**
- **Charity**
- **Resources**
- **Date and Time**
- **Permissions**
- **Health and Safety**
- **Dietary Requirements**
- **Funding**
- **Roles on the Day**
- **Set up and Layout**

This is a simple checklist, but each aspect will need to be broken down so that the group can plan the project. If they were considering promotion, they would need to think about the following:

- **Social Media**
- **Emails within college**
- **Notice board**
- **Creating and printing leaflets**
- **Distribution**
- **Advertising Cost**

Each of these can be broken down and this will help the group plan a manageable project as well as make sure they have considered everything they need to.

Now that the project has been decided upon and the checklist has been created, it is time to consider everyone's roles and responsibilities within the group. Using flipchart and post-it notes, think about the tasks that the group need to do to make it happen and group them into themes and roles and agree role titles.

- **Project Leader**
- **Finance team**
- **Communications and PR**
- **Fundraising team**
- **Community and organisation contact**
- **Spokesperson**
- **Co-Ordinator**

Depending on the project, there will be different roles and responsibilities for the group to take part in. When the young people are considering the roles that they are going to take on, they should try to go outside of their comfort zone. However, not so far out of their comfort zone that they are unable to take part and do not feel like they will ever be able to make an impact. Depending on the size of the project, the group could team up on certain roles so that they are able to work together.

Week 5 and 6

Planning and Preparation

The topic has been chosen, the project has been decided and the roles and responsibilities have been delegated. It is now time to plan the project which can be done within the sessions, as well as outside if the young people are willing to work on it on their own time. Depending on the size of the project, it may take more than two sessions but this can be considered throughout. There may also be some tasks that can't be done in the session. If you meet in the evening but need to co-ordinate with a business who works in the day, the group can prepare what is needed but carry out this action on their own time.

When planning and preparing, use flipchart paper and the checklist to consider the following:

WHO WHERE WHAT WHEN WHY HOW

Along with the checklist, this will help the group to focus on everything that should be considered for the project at this stage.

Top Tips:

- Plan ahead
- Adopt a positive outlook
- Stay focussed
- Seek help, advice and partnerships
- Create a budget
- Establish a timeline along with deadlines

Whilst every project is different, here are a few things to consider when the group is planning:

- **How will the project be funded?** If the group need resources for their project (e.g. material for a hamper) then they could either arrange a bag pack or work with local businesses to see whether they would donate anything.
- **Charity Champion:** They are the people to contact within a big organisation for supplies. Some big companies would prefer to provide supplies rather than money and the champion would be able to help with this.
- **Do you need a permit for your project?** If you are doing a street bucket collection, a police permit will be required. If you are working with a charity, this can be done through them.
- **Consider whether you need any other types of permission.**
- **Make sure the project doesn't conflict with the issue.** If the project raises awareness of the environment consider the eco-friendly ways your project can be carried out. If you are doing an awareness campaign for mental health, make sure the language used is appropriate for the project.
- **What equipment is needed to plan and carry out the project?** If you need laptops, can you visit the library? If you need a camera, do you know someone who would provide this for you?

Again, there are many things to consider when planning a project. Please contact us at youth@volunteernow.co.uk for more support in this stage.

Week 7

Social Action Happens

Today is the day. Whether the project is an event or resource, it is important to have a date that the project takes place or launches. Make sure the group have their checklist, so they know what is happening. There are a lot of things to consider on the day and the following will help the group to focus:

- **Revisit the WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT, WHY and HOW list.**
- **The group know what time they need to meet.**
- **A team meeting before the project would be helpful to run through any last minute needs.**
- **Social Media Coverage – is there a hashtag that can be used and promoted?**
- **The group needs to be clear on their roles and responsibilities for the day.**
- **Teamwork will be key to the project.**
- **All the necessary equipment and resources are available for the group.**
- **Is weather going to be an issue e.g. outdoor fun day? Is there a back-up in place?**
- **Consent forms and permission slips if needed.**
- **Charity banners or materials if partnered with them.**
- **Meeting afterwards would help the group to recap briefly while it's fresh in their mind.**

Depending on the project there are a variety of things to be considered so it is important that the group has a copy of the checklist and a running order if the project is an event.



Week 8

Evaluation and Celebration

Now that the social action project has taken place, it is time to evaluate and celebrate the impact the young people have had throughout their experience. By evaluating their project, from planning to implementing, the young people gain a better understanding of the skills they have developed and the difference they made.

Evaluation Stations:

It is important for the group to reflect on their experience. This could be completed through posters, stations or whatever suits the group. Consider the following:

- **Enjoy:** What did you enjoy and not enjoy about your social action experience?
- **Change:** What would you change about your social action experience?
- **Learn:** What did you learn throughout your social action experience?
- **Quote:** Tell us about your volunteering and social action experience.

The WHY is so important to find out more about their answers. It is all beneficial in the reflection of their project.

Skills/Qualities Development:

On a scale of one to ten, rate where you think your skills/qualities are now that the project has come to an end. Hopefully you will have seen growth from week one.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> • Teamwork | <input type="checkbox"/> • Dependable | <input type="checkbox"/> • Time Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> • Negotiation | <input type="checkbox"/> • Respectful | <input type="checkbox"/> • Organisation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> • Confidence | <input type="checkbox"/> • Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> • Understanding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> • Creativity | <input type="checkbox"/> • IT | <input type="checkbox"/> • Considerate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> • Problem solving | <input type="checkbox"/> • Leadership | |

Celebration

Once the project has been evaluated, it is important to recognise the young people for their commitment. This can be done through the Millennium Volunteer Programme and a Celebration Event suited to the young people.

Millennium Volunteer Programme: Recognising the commitment of young volunteers completing social action allows them to see the impact they have made throughout several hours. If they fill out the booklet, they can see the skills they have developed, and the experience gained. As the project was youth lead, they were able to see the power within them to create positive change.

Celebration Event: A celebration event can take place in many ways, depending on the young people you work with and their interests. A few ideas could include:

- **A BBQ and games**
- **Family fun day**
- **Pizza and games night**
- **A trip somewhere**

There are other ways to celebrate young people for their commitment, base it on the young people.

Volunteer Now works to promote, enhance and support volunteering across Northern Ireland. Volunteer Now is about connecting with individuals and organisations to build healthy communities and create positive change. We provide training, information, guidance and support to volunteer-involving organisations on issues of good practice and policy regarding volunteering, volunteer management, safeguarding and governance.

For further information on Social Action projects and support for young volunteering contact the Volunteer Now youth team: 02890232020 or youth@volunteernow.co.uk

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