

# Social action case studies



Young People's  
Health Partnership

## Introduction

The Young People's Health Partnership (YPHP) is a seven-strong consortium of organisations working with the Department of Health, Public Health England and NHS England as strategic partners to raise the profile of the health agenda across the voluntary youth sector.

We believe that young people have the right influence decision making that affects them and create positive change in their own lives, their local communities and on a national level.

We support and empower young people to lead their own social action projects respectively within our organisations and collaboratively as a partnership.

## What is 'social action'?

According to The Campaign for Youth Social Action, the definition of social action is:

*Young people taking practical action in the service of others in order to create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young person themselves<sup>1</sup>.*

In the research paper 'Scoping A Quality Framework For Youth Social Action' it is asserted that a social action project:

- **Enables young people** to positively impact upon their communities and to develop personally and socially;
- **Is owned and led by young people**, addressing issues that are important to them;
- **Benefits communities** at local, regional, national, global or virtual levels;
- **Includes a wide range of activities**, which depend on the needs and abilities of participants;
- **Creates connections**, including between people from different backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Scoping a quality framework for youth social action', The Campaign for Youth Social Action, June 2013

The Campaign for Youth Social Action has produced the following set of principles which define great youth social action. When supporting a young person or group of young people work in partnership with them to ensure that these principles are met:

Challenging	Stretching and engaging, as well as exciting and enjoyable.
Youth-led	Led, owned and shaped by young people.
Socially impactful	Creating positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young people themselves.
Progressive	Progressing to other programmes and activities.
Embedded	Becoming the norm in a young person's journey towards adulthood and a habit for life
Reflective	Valuing reflection, recognition and reward.

The following case studies illustrate recent youth social action projects.

### **Elsie – Consent social action project**

Peer educator and research student Elsie Whittington applied to O2 Think Big for funding to run two workshops on consent with other young people.

*The idea was that I ran two workshops with young people on what is consent and what we think about it.*

*Consent is not something that we talk about in a positive and open way. This has meant that we only talk about it as something that is black and white. These workshops were designed to go beyond 'yes means yes' and 'no means no' and to explore the grey area of consent. To try and think about consent different – and have fun doing it.*

*In the workshops we did lots of brainstorming, body mapping, and a consent continuum. We looked at what's passive consent, what's active consent, what's non-consent. We developed some games thinking about consent. We also created individual definitions for consent and brought them together.*



For Elsie, the workshops helped her to learn new skills and develop her PhD research project, but she also hopes that the project has been useful for other young people that she has worked with.

*I've engaged with lots of different young people and got some interesting feedback. For some of them it was the first time they were ever thinking about consent and for others it has developed their thinking.*

*It has been good for me to talk about it and learn new things. These workshops have fed into my PhD research and helped me work out which methods and activities to use. It's been good for me to go through the experience of completing the application form and applying for funding. It's also developed my ability to collaborate with someone else and to adapt ideas.*

### **Lee – The Beck**

Lee's volunteering role initially involved supporting participants within sports sessions and promoting the sports sessions to people within the local community. Lee's passion for volunteering meant that he quickly progressed into a Senior Volunteer; taking on a lead role within sessions, and planning events. He then delivered his own Social Action Fund project, including the development of a nutritional cookbook and a multi skills fitness programme for beginners, which successfully attracted 14 new members, many of whom have not taken part in sports before and many have learning difficulties and health problems.



Lee, who recently won the 'Unsung Hero' award at the StreetGames Young Volunteer Awards 2014, says that volunteering makes him feel '*proud and happy.*' The main things that Lee gets out of volunteering are '*increased confidence, meeting new people, making new friends, gaining qualifications and the experiences.*' Lee has overcome many challenges to get to where he is today, including continuously overcoming peer pressure and opportunity to make bad choices.

## Lucinda – The love tree

20 year old Lucinda applied for an O2 Think Big grant for her local participation group set up *The Love Tree*:

We set up a stall in the town centre and asked the public to think of different ways of showing someone that you love them, without having sex. We had a big piece of MDF and painted a tree on it. We asked people to write their ideas on a sticky note and stick it on the tree. Afterwards we showcased the tree in the clinic.



We were interested in people's ideas and it also seemed like a good way of promoting the service. We were trying to get delay messages out there and to get people talking. Some parts of the project were difficult – like having to get the confidence to go out there and get a market stall. In the end we got a free stall.

On the day we all helped set up and get everything ready. I was nervous at the beginning but then I got into it. We were worried that people wouldn't take part but it all worked out ok. We got loads of responses – One hundred people wrote on a sticky note in just one day. We covered the whole board. We also gave out key rings and information about the clinic drop in and asked people if they knew where we are.

A lot of parents came and took leaflets for their kids – and some grandparents too! Some people stopped and looked at the stall and laughed saying 'It's about sex' but no-one was horrible or offensive. People are more open than you think – and nicer than you think!



It's nice to see people's attitudes and to see if you can change their attitudes. It's a way of trying to start a conversation about things that are difficult to talk about. I'd like to think that people thought about it or saw the signs and thought about it.

It was fun being part of it – helping plan and arrange it. It was nice being in control of our own project. As a group we all supported each other and our group leader Dan, he helped us get the ball rolling and carried the big piece of MDF for us! We had help from Dan but it felt like the project was in our hands. We were involved as much as we wanted and felt like we had the



freedom we needed.

Afterwards we went to London and gave a presentation about the project. The whole process made me more confident and learning skills – a lot of people have commented on that saying –‘you were so shy before’. Now I’ve got a job as a receptionist and I’m the first person people see when they walk through the door! I would never have had the confidence to do this job before.

### **Laura – UsGirls Alive**

Laura began volunteering as a way to ‘keep involved in sport’ after leaving college, and became passionate about working with non-sporty girls and getting them involved in sports and fitness activities in a fun way.



*‘I wanted to make girls aware of other sports besides the regular ones. I was very nervous at the first session, but I learned a lot from the coaches. I get everyone involved, demonstrate, encourage and build confidence. I plan some non-sporty sessions such as body awareness, drink and drug awareness. I plan schedules of the sessions and promote by word of mouth and on social media. I feel as though through*

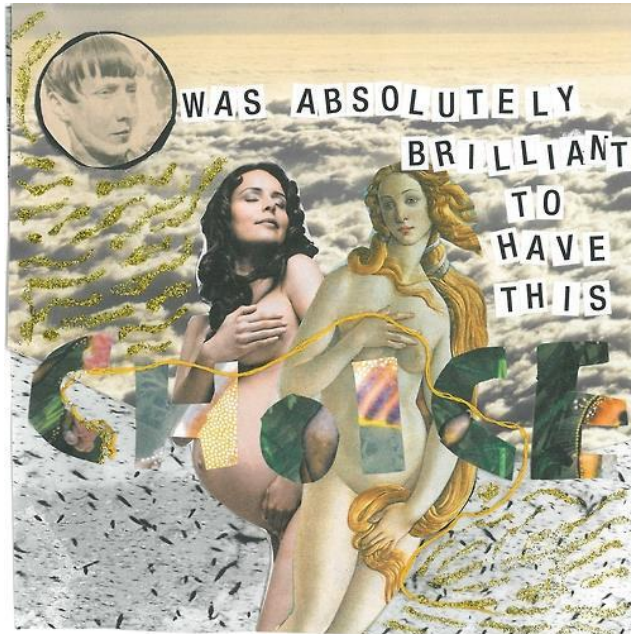
*volunteering I have developed communication skills which enable me to deal with different people in different ways... being friendly and remaining professional at the same time.’*

*‘After being on two residentials and loving both of them, I wanted to try something new and be on the other side and help to plan an amazing residential that other young volunteers could enjoy. I also wanted to improve my knowledge of what it takes to plan such a big event for so many people and work on my confidence in talking to large crowds of people. Most of all I wanted to have fun and meet some amazing people that I could possibly learn from and also create links with for the future.’*

*‘It was interesting, challenging and enjoyable... I really enjoyed my time as a young advisor and would love to do a similar role again in maybe a different event. It gives you the best feeling when young volunteers come up to you and want to say thank you and have a picture with you because you know then you’ll be a big part of their memories of the event.’*

## Holly – Education for Choice

Holly was part of a youth advisory group who decided that they wanted to make a zine about people's experiences of abortion. They wanted to bust the myth that all women regret having an abortion and see it as a mistake.



The group created an online survey that asked people about their experiences of abortion and sent it out on social media via all their friends and personal networks. As a result they got about 30-35 stories and used these to put together and publish a zine.

*We wanted to create something that would be a conversation starter - something visual and myth busting. We decided that everything would go in – not just the stories that supported our argument or campaign. We wanted to show that every woman's experience of abortion is different.*

*Abortion polarises people which means that people close off. We wanted to show the human being behind the story – real life stories stop people thinking about abortion as an abstract, ethical debate and make it real.*

## **Brogan – Cakes and condoms**

*The idea started because we needed more people to sign up for the c card scheme. The aim of our social action project was to get 300 people to sign up for the c – card scheme and every time they signed up they would get a cake and some condoms.*

*We went to youth centres in Luton and advertised the projects in some high schools. It was hard sometimes to get young people involved in the project because they get embarrassed about things to do with sex. So we would try and explain it to them and try and get them to understand that sex isn't embarrassing and that using condoms is so important.*

*We managed to do it – to get 300 people to sign up!*



*It made me realise that a lot of people are interested in sexual health but are often too embarrassed. I also learnt a lot about how to work in a group and manage a group project. Brook helped us get into youth clubs and schools by giving us contacts, but other than that it was our idea and our project. The project encouraged people to use more condoms, which reduces the teenage pregnancy rate. But the project also educated people about sexual health.*

*It's important because people need to have protected sex, to protect against STIs and pregnancy.*



## **Brogan – Sexhibition**

Brogan's local participation group were talking about what issues needed addressing for young people and decided that they needed to do something about the stigma and stereotyping of women.

*We thought that what a lot of young guys have to say about women wasn't right and that we needed to prove them wrong! We wanted people to know that women have rights too. And that women are equal to men.*

The group set up an exhibition at their local Brook clinic in Luton called Sexhibition. They created poems, collages, paintings and drawings. They also got local school children involved.



*All the things we created were showing that women are equal to men and should be treated like that and not get called certain things just because we are women.*

*It was on for 3 – 4 days. The challenge was getting people to come to the exhibition – we were so pleased with the number that came.*

*We had people from the news, family, friends and people from the public. We gave out some leaflets and advertised in the clinic but mostly it was word of mouth.*

*We wanted to make people be more positive about women. We got feedback from people and I think we did it! People's attitudes changed.*



## **James – Love is love**

James and Shelby were both volunteering at Brook Wirral when they decided to run their own social action project to raise awareness of LGBT issues in Wirral.

*'Growing up in the Wirral we were very aware of homophobic attacks. Shelby was the victim of an attack and I was bullied. Our aim was to raise awareness of LGBT issues in the Wirral and to educate the generations below us with the hope that people would be more accepting when a friend came out – instead of being disgusted they could offer support.*

*We had worked with [a Brook staff member who] told us about the O2 Think Big funding. She came down to see us and talk through the project and help us apply for funding.*

*There were two stages to our project. In the first stage we created badges, pens and business cards to hand out to young people. They had an image of rainbow people in a line and the message 'Love is love' and then Brook Wirral's telephone number. We went into schools and handed them out – so did other young people from our LGBT group.*

*In the second part of the project we went into schools and did a presentation in assemblies. Our presentation was hard hitting. We wanted to get people thinking and make them think about the bigger picture.*

*We decided to turn anti-bullying week into anti-homophobia week. Shelby did lots of work with the education workers, arranging to go into schools and I took care of the social media side of things.*

*The project definitely brought about change – we could see that it made people think. We always said, if you want to talk then call Brook or come and talk to us. After one particular assembly a young person stayed behind. They broke down and said – "I've been really nasty to a friend who came out as gay, it's cos I'm gay". We were only there for one hour and we managed to change things round for that young person. That made me think – maybe the project really works and people really do go away and think.*

*Going into schools and speaking to young people and seeing the affect that took place made me feel confident and gave me hope. I was going through a bad place at the time, not feeling good about being gay. It gave me hope. Brook gave us lots of support to get into schools and we could use all their resources – the offices, computers, and everything. And in the participation team were always there for help and advice. I knew that I could email or call whenever I wanted. I couldn't have asked for more support. '*