



UKCF #iwill Fund Evaluation Report

2nd February 2022, v1.1

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1. What is the #iwill Fund?

The #iwill Fund is designed to give young people the chance to lead change and make a positive contribution to their communities. In 2019 UK Community Foundations (UKCF) opened the #iwill Fund alongside the [Big Lottery Fund](#) and the [Department for Culture, Media & Sport](#). #iwill is a UK-wide campaign aiming to get 6 out of 10 young people involved in social action by 2020. Big Lottery Fund and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport have invested £20 million each to the #iwill Fund to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities.

Social action involves activities such as campaigning, fundraising, and volunteering, all of which enable participants to make a positive difference to their communities. The concept behind #iwill is that social action develops the skills and knowledge of young people that employers look for.

The #iwill Fund was released through the UKCF network of 43 Community Foundations across England.¹ (with the exception of the Greater Manchester area, where [Forever Manchester](#) was the sub-contractor of the Youth Social Action Fund for the area).

2. Introduction to this evaluation

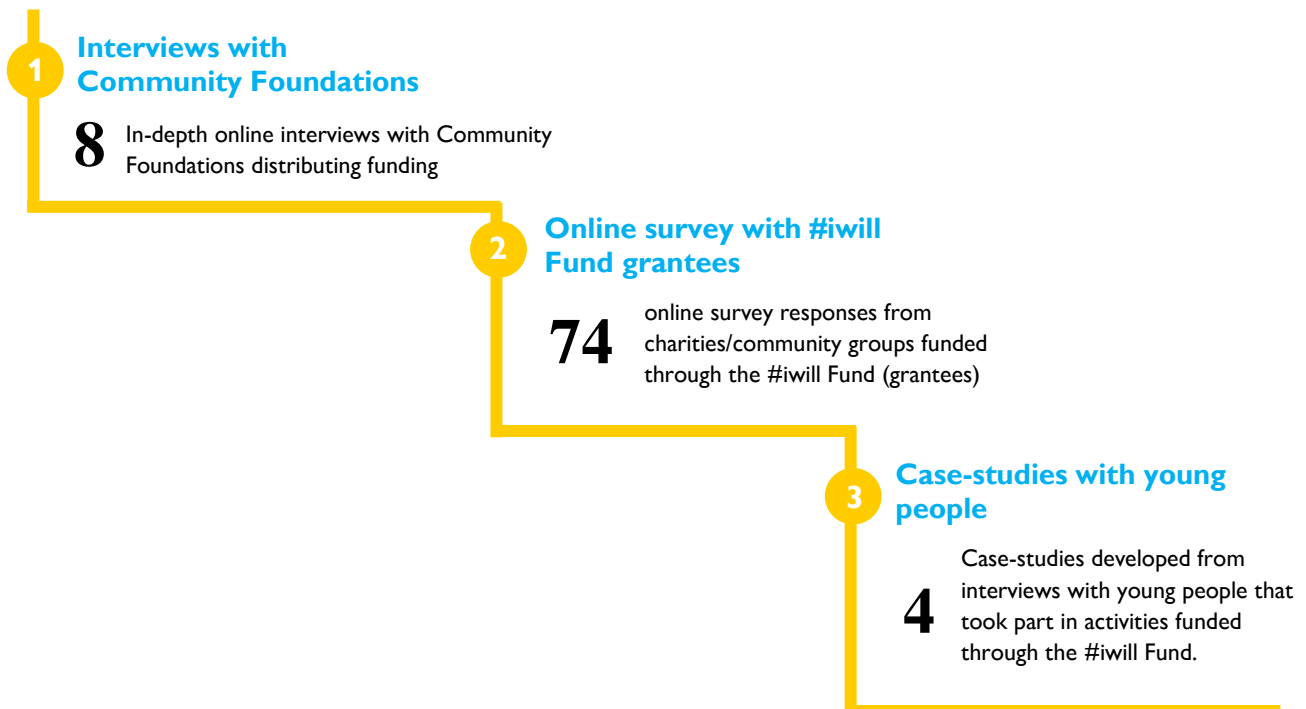
2.1 Overview of the evaluation

The evaluation of the #iwill Fund was conducted by the UK-based consultancy inFocus Consulting (inFocus). inFocus originally engaged with UKCF on the evaluation of the #iwill Fund in 2019, alongside an evaluation of the UKCF Tampon Tax Fund, starting out by developing the overall evaluation approach, agreeing the approach to ethics, and safeguarding, and preparing baseline surveys. Staff changes within UKCF, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, led to the postponement of work on the evaluation and inFocus were reengaged by UKCF in August 2020, re-starting the evaluation in September 2021. This has led to the evaluation naturally taking a more retrospective and qualitative approach, without the use of a baseline (see limitations below) or monitoring data from projects, although with a strong response to the online survey from #iwill Fund grantees there was sufficient data available to compile this report and generate findings. A summary of the sources of data for the evaluation, and a summary of the limitations to the evaluation approach, follows below.

¹ Modified from the description at <https://www.ukcommunityfoundations.org/news/iwill-fund-launched-help-boost-youth-social-action>

2.2 Sources of data

The final report for the UKCF #iwill Fund was compiled by the inFocus team with primary data from the following sources:



2.3 Evaluation limitations

Every evaluation, regardless of the resources available, experiences limitations to evaluation design and implementation. While there were particular strengths to this evaluation, such as the online survey responses from grantees, there were also a number of limitations to take into account:

- ▶ With the evaluation effectively starting in September 2022, there were no agreements in place to collect data from the #iwill Fund grantees as part of this evaluation. inFocus therefore focused the input from grantees on completing the online survey, rather than asking them to collect survey responses from the young people. As an alternative, the inFocus team instead provided incentives (£10 Amazon vouchers) for young people to join evaluation interviews, although the engagement in relation to this (with 4 respondents) was lower than anticipated.
- ▶ As described on the previous page, it was not possible to set a baseline for the project, so all data collection was focused retrospectively where respondents were asked to think back across the period in which their projects took place. It was also more qualitative by nature (which infers advantages as well as limitations, e.g. uncovering unexpected outcomes).
- ▶ #iwill Fund grantees highlighted that there was additional data that they had provided, potentially either as part of their reporting to Community Foundations and/or to feed into the national evaluation of #iwill, this data was not available for this inFocus evaluation.

3. The UKCF #iwill Fund in numbers*



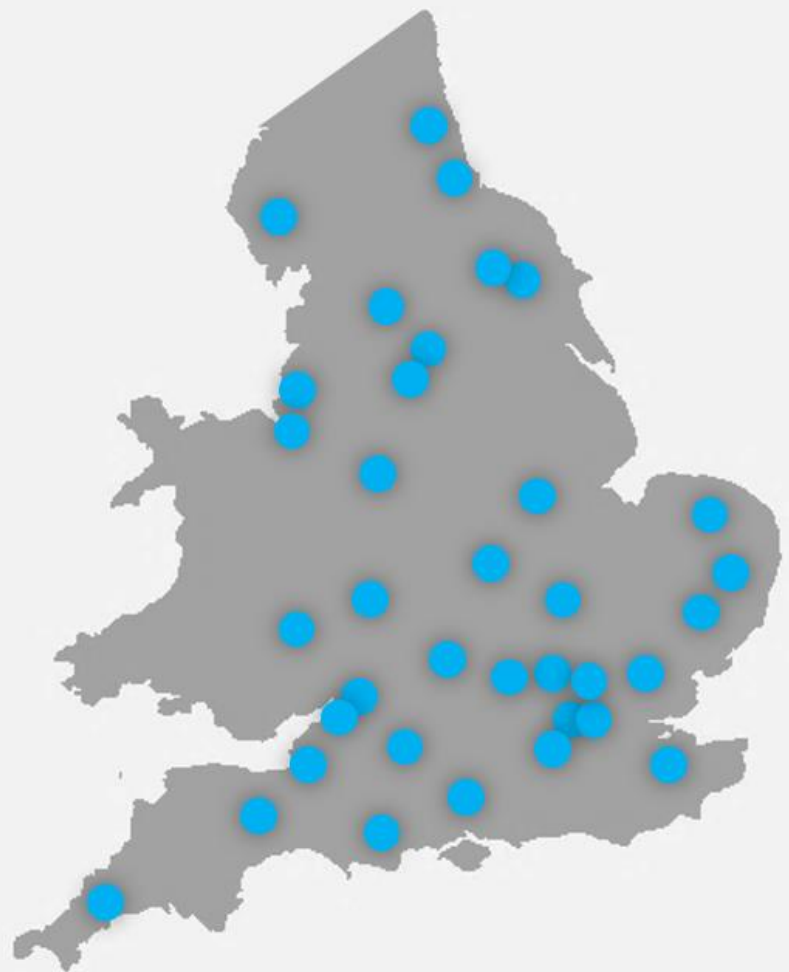
£3,057,662
in total grants



573 grantees
(organisations receiving funding)



53,050
beneficiaries



BLCF 6 grants totalling £36,980, 1422 beneficiaries	County Durham 54 grants totalling £354,716, 5011beneficiaries	Essex 17 grants totalling £91,981, 1074 beneficiaries	Kirklees 57 grants totalling £80,496, 1832 beneficiaries	Northamptonshire 28 grants totalling £127,374, 2893 beneficiaries	Staffordshire 7 grants totalling £31,226, 280 beneficiaries	Wiltshire 11 grants totalling £50,363, 662 beneficiaries
Buckinghamshire 9 grants totalling £41,209, 479 beneficiaries	Cumbria 35 grants totalling £168,331, 6641 beneficiaries	Gloucester 4 grants totalling £20,000, 97 beneficiaries	Lancs and Merseyside 30 grants totalling £145,000, 4073 beneficiaries	Nottinghamshire 16 grants totalling £76,000, 1143 beneficiaries	Suffolk 24 grants totalling £130,746, 2010 beneficiaries	Worcestershire 7 grants totalling £35,000, 317 beneficiaries
Calderdale 11 grants totalling £50,001, 771 beneficiaries	Derbyshire 8 grants totalling £38,000, 257 beneficiaries	Hampshire 21 grants totalling £93,489 1523 beneficiaries	Leeds 21 grants totalling £58,598, 715 beneficiaries	Oxfordshire 5 grants totalling £20,000, 410 beneficiaries	Surrey 8 grants totalling £42,669, 1241 beneficiaries	
Cambridge 12 grants totalling £25,000, 3879 beneficiaries	Devon 5 grants totalling £24,921, 590 beneficiaries	Herefordshire 5 grants totalling £25,000, 817 beneficiaries	London 57 grants totalling £511,686, 2986 beneficiaries	Quartet 7 grants totalling £34,790, 210 beneficiaries	Sussex 9 grants totalling £40,549, 635 beneficiaries	
Cheshire 11 grants totalling £53,776, 1855 beneficiaries	Dorset 11 grants totalling £45,000, 288 beneficiaries	Hertfordshire 8 grants totalling £40,012, 394 beneficiaries	Milton Keynes 2 grants totalling £7,496, 124 beneficiaries	Somerset 16 grants totalling £100,000, 1206 beneficiaries	Two Ridings 12 grants totalling £51,703, 1533 beneficiaries	
Cornwall 22 grants totalling £101,228, 1260 beneficiaries	East End 9 grants totalling £25,000, 1775 beneficiaries	Kent 3 grants totalling £25,000, 64 beneficiaries	Norfolk 14 grants totalling £60,110, 697 beneficiaries	South Yorkshire 11 grants totalling £51,513, 530 beneficiaries	Tyne and Wear 17 grants totalling £78,165, 1356 beneficiaries	

*The figures above relate to data compiled by UKCF at the start of the #iwill Fund. The updated figures will be sent through to Big Lottery Fund with the end of grant reporting.

4. Findings: #iwill Fund Grantees and Young People

This section outlines the key findings from the evaluation in relation to the 74 #iwill Fund grantees completing the online survey, alongside input from the four case-studies relating to the young people interviewed as part of the evaluation.

4.1 Motivation to apply for the #iwill Fund

Grantees of the #iwill Fund identified a range of motivations for getting involved in the #iwill Fund, summarised in this section:

- ▶ As might be expected #iwill Fund grantees applied to the fund to provide opportunities for young people to engage in volunteering, gain new skills (particularly around leadership and social action), find their voice, and be exposed to varied development opportunities based on their needs.

“#iwill's core investment drivers spoke to our organisation profoundly as we are always looking for new ways to connect young people to their communities in a positive way, encourage leadership and inspire creativity. This particular fund provided the opportunity to provide high quality arts opportunities to local young people specifically”
#iwill Fund grantee

“It seemed an exciting opportunity to help local young people engage in positive activities and find their voice” #iwill Fund grantee

Several grantees also described how the fund helped them to support young people from disadvantaged or less affluent socio-economic backgrounds, or areas where there were a lack of activities available to young people. For one grantee it was an opportunity to open up new ways to communicate directly with young people, most of whom attend activities for short periods, before ‘vanishing’.

- ▶ Many #iwill Fund grantees identified that they already had existing activities/programmes in place that aligned with the six principles of Youth Social Action at the core of the #iwill Fund², for example, one grantee stated that; “...because our Young Leader's programme fitted in so well with the aims of the fund and our project has vulnerable young people of our city at the heart of social action, and we felt our project addressed the six principles of Youth Social

² Be youth-led, Be challenging, Have social impact, Allow progression to other opportunities, Be embedded in a young person's life, Enable reflection about the value of the activity - <https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/youth-social-action>

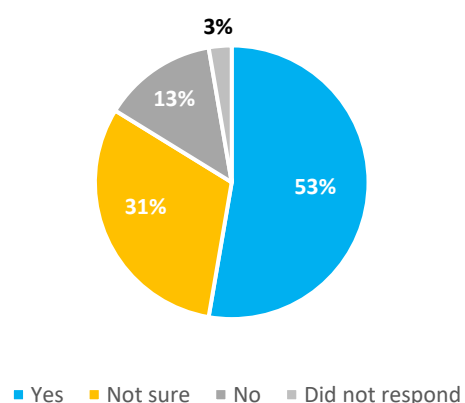
Action". This included projects already focused on social action, for example, one grantee had recently expanded their work into more social action projects through the UK Youth's Change Squad programme and felt that the #iwill Fund was a good option for expanding this further. For some #iwill Fund grantees this also included activities that were not explicitly linked to social action, but that they felt were a strong fit with the #iwill Fund. For example, one grantee wanted to build on their work with disabled people and ensure they had a 'strong voice', while another was committed to promoting citizenship as part of their programme and felt the #iwill Fund would be an 'excellent fit'.

"Engaging young people in being part of their community and other social action themes have always been part of our youth work so applying for #iwill funding was a natural next step to help us organise this and develop what we did with young people." #iwill Fund grantee

For other grantees, the #iwill Fund was an opportunity to fund new projects, in some cases directly driven by the young people themselves, as described by one of the grantees: "...our team of young advisors expressed a desire to raise awareness of a challenging social problem and the #iwill Fund seemed like a perfect partner for their project." #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ Several grantees also identified that the #iwill Fund was a strong fit with their organisational values and approach. For example, one grantee responded that their aims and values are all about engaging young people in volunteering and this was a strong fit for the #iwill Fund.
- ▶ As shown to the right, over half of the grantees (53%) were not aware of programmes that were similar to the #iwill Fund.

Are you aware of other funding programmes similar to the #iwill Fund in the community/communities you work in?



4.2 Activities supported through the #iwill Fund

As might be anticipated, grantees described activities (in response to an open survey question) in the context of social action and how young people were supported to engage in volunteering opportunities that aimed to support local groups and people in their communities. These community projects covered a range of activities:



Activities related to the environment, the outdoors and the natural world e.g. in relation to local conservation, recycling and wildlife.



Sports and fitness activities, e.g. one group facilitated an inclusive sports session that equipped young people to teach others with varying abilities.



Activities providing young people with work experience opportunities or insights into working life to improve their life chances and employability.



Activities using creative approaches including music, art, theatre, or film to affect positive change in the young people themselves or within the young people's communities, on topics they cared about, such as LGBTQ+ rights, climate change and food poverty.



Activities that focused on the personal development and resilience of young people, the themes mentioned that were covered included leadership, confidence, self-esteem, as well as mental and emotional health.



Workshops and events that focused on older people where younger and older people spent time in-person or online. Two out of six of these organisations used technology to provide virtual support or to teach IT skills.



Activities that utilised young people's lived experience and brought them together to collaborate and share, in two cases young people were trained to become mentors for others in their communities.



Activities that support work and work experience for vulnerable groups of young people, as well as for young people with additional needs including disabilities, complex needs, and mental health needs.



Activities were compromised due to challenges presented with the Covid-19 restrictions, however each organisation who mentioned this also stated how their project foci shifted or were adapted to support young people during the pandemic.

The majority of the grantees advised that they placed young people at the ‘heart of the project’, shaping projects as decision-makers and leaders in various areas from the design phase to planning and implementation. For one grantee, this involved the young people being supported to manage the project and develop as leaders by compiling budgets, making action plans, and delivering community events. Another grantee supported this and explained how:

“The young people took full part in discussing and deciding how the youth cafe was run and what else they wanted to do. This involved forming a constitution, formulating rules and being responsible for various activities during it, e.g., recording who came, helping to run the cafe element, what they would concentrate during the session, clearing up tasks afterwards and future planning.” #iwill Fund grantee

The ways and extent to which young people were involved in leading projects varied, examples included conducting research and interviewing community members, deciding the focus of the project as a group (e.g. as part of a youth forum), acting as role-models for other participants, and developing proposals for funding the projects. One grantee stated:

“The young people thought of an area in the community they wanted to change - social or environmental. They then developed their own project focusing on the change they wanted to make. They planned it, fundraised, marketed, promoted, presented their idea to a ‘Dragon Den’ style panel to gain a slice of the funding pot. And most importantly, they carried out their projects and saw the impact they made on their community.” #iwill Fund grantee

Young people were supported by staff from grantee organisations in various ways; engaging in conversation and asking about their experiences within services, to understand how they helped the young people, and to assess what could be changed and how their needs/wishes could be better addressed. Other grantees described how staff supported grantees to take a lead on projects: “Staff were there to facilitate the ideas and discussions of the young people, ensuring that young people had ownership of the project and the direction of the work. For the social action element, again staff supported young people to design projects which were realistic and safe, but it was young people who designed and carried out the social action.” #iwill Fund grantee

4.3 Successes and challenges in running activities funded through the #iwill Fund

In the table below, the feedback from grantees is summarised in relation to what went well and where there were challenges in running activities through the #iwill Fund.

What went well?		Challenges?	
✓	Grantees generally found that young people were highly engaged in the projects, many of which were focused on the environment and their local communities.	✗	The Covid-19 pandemic and the associated restrictions had an impact on project delivery that resulted in activities being moved online, and a more limited number of young people being reached than anticipated; this was due in part to some young people being put off by online sessions and caps on group numbers for safety purposes.
✓	Many grantees found that young people's self-esteem, confidence, and enjoyment levels were boosted, and their potential was realised through their engagement in activities and their abilities to lead in youth/peer led roles.	✗	A number of grantees would have liked to see higher levels of engagement from and more contact time with young people, including beyond the formal deadline of the projects.
✓	The funding to provide the activities/interventions for young people and to pay for staffing, allowed projects to continue and expand, without which it would have been very difficult for the organisations to implement the projects (particularly with the impact of Covid-19).	✗	Some grantees would have liked to see higher levels of engagement from parents and greater buy in from the local community, including more advocacy about the positive impact the young people were making for their communities.
✓	Young people gained employment opportunities or made progression towards personal development goals because of the skills they learnt on the project.	✗	For four grantees, issues with funding including delivery extensions and a lack of long-term funding (to help with meaningful development and to embed programmes locally) were a challenge.
✓	Grantees identified the adaptations, perseverance, and flexibility during the Covid-19 pandemic as a success; utilising online tools helped to widen the scope of the projects and enabled them to support young people through the lockdown.	✗	Some grantees found it challenging to bring together older and younger people in a social setting; this was made more of a challenge by the pandemic and the subsequent concern about the group's safety.
✓	Connecting youth to one another via youth groups and social events where they could share issues and work collaboratively was another success identified by grantees.	✗	Several grantees advised that more support and innovation around how to support young people with their mental health would be helpful.
✓	Some grantees built strong relationships with either schools or universities once the institutions had seen the value of the work being done on a project for the young people; these new relationships were seen as helpful for future funding and partnerships.	✗	Practical challenges with weather and transport, illness, and absence, as well as an underestimation of required management capacity caused delays to certain project activities.

4.3 Outcomes for young people

Grantees of the #iwill Fund identified a range of benefits for the young people following their involvement in #iwill Funded projects.

- ▶ Two thirds of #iwill Fund grantees referred to how young people had achieved a sense of **wellbeing** as a result of the funded activities; observing an increase in **confidence and/or self-esteem**. For example, several grantees revealed how the young people had developed more confidence in social situations, such as when making friends or engaging with others. When responding during an evaluation commissioned by a grantee following a workshop one young person stated: "I now feel more confident sharing my views with others and giving them advice when working in groups." Grantees also referenced how young people had achieved **goals** due to an increase in confidence which allowed them to 'face fears': "The main difference this project has made was to the confidence of the young volunteers taking part.... we've seen quite a few participants come out of their shells and overcome fears (a good example was the young person who had a fear of heights but still climbed most of Snowdon!)". #iwill Fund grantee

Other #iwill Fund grantees stated how the young people's involvement in the project and their subsequent increase in confidence and/or self-esteem helped to generate '**ambition for the future**'. Grantees also revealed how young people had developed motivation to engage with other activities in future: "I feel strongly that the centres the young people attend and the young people themselves now feel confident to go to other activities again. It has given a degree of reassurance that they will be ok going out into the real world again". #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ According to #iwill Fund grantees the second most common benefit of the funded activities related to young people increasing their employment, education, and training opportunities because of the new skills they acquired on the project. Young people were inspired to transition into education and employment because of the funded activities and were able to include skills, experience and knowledge on their CVs and applications. Two grantees explain:

"One of the young people that has been regularly volunteering since July (with his mum) has just got his first job. He was able to use his volunteering activities on his CV". #iwill Fund grantee

"One young person was so inspired by the experience that they returned to college, having previously been NEET. They are now at University studying film production, largely inspired by this project". #iwill Fund grantee



Case Study 1: Media-based workshops

Social action the young person was involved in

The young person was one of a group of young people who organised media-based workshops for children during half-term, for example, using a camera to film and make stop motion videos. The participant helped to decide on the content of the workshops, develop materials and write press releases to promote the sessions.

Why they got involved?

The young person found out about it through accessing an Arts Award through [Prime Theatre](#). They were asked if they wanted to participate and because they enjoyed the media focus and were interested in getting involved in something else, they agreed to sign up.

Benefits of getting involved

The young person enjoyed being part of the workshops and seeing all of their work come together. They also enjoyed the creative process of collaborating with others to bounce ideas off each other. Overall, they felt it was beneficial to be taken out of their comfort zone and try something different: *“It kind of makes you happy that doing this has made me do things that I never would have done before”*.

They also reported an increase in confidence since taking part: *“I guess it was just nice to get me in a way out of my comfort zone because I’m not usually good with like working in groups like that and it feels like since joining it, my confidence has gone up really high”* and they are currently working on a workshop and plans to continue for another year.

The experience was positive for them, and they could also see the benefits for the children they were organising workshops for: *“I’ve definitely enjoyed it, I’m kind of glad I’ve done it. And I think I’ve done a lot of good things for people who probably haven’t done anything during lockdown.”*

Ideas for how to improve the activity

Improved sign-up for the online workshops (the workshops were moved online due to COVID-19 to reduce the risk of fake sign-ups).

8

The young person gave a score of 8 out of 10 when asked whether they would recommend the event to a friend or colleague (the ‘Net Promoter Score’)



Case Study 2: The Monday Night Club

Social action the young person was involved in

Helping to organise the [Monday Night Club](#) – a social club for adults with a learning disability and / or autism, which includes organising activities such as drumming sessions. Every time a newsletter is produced for the Monday Night Club, it is run past the young person to make sure that the language is accessible and that there are no mistakes.

“I’d say I’m the chief volunteer.”

Why they got involved?

The young person found out about the Monday Night club from a couple of friends. They decided to participate to improve their communication skills:

“I started volunteering because I thought it would help me improve on the skills such as communication, all that.”

Benefits of getting involved

An increase in confidence and improvement in skills: *“I am more confident now. I met friends every week. I improved my cooking skills. We did a first aid course. And then I went on and did the FA playmaker course.”*

The young person has also been nominated for the High Sheriff Award for their volunteering as part of the #iwill campaign.

“I’d have to think about it (in response to whether they would go on to run other activities) because I would probably feel like I’m betraying the Monday night club if I went and did anything else!”

The support worker of the young person stressed that volunteering is a very important part of their life. They explained that the young person cannot work, so volunteering effectively is their work, which is a very important aspect of their life.

Ideas for how to improve the activity

“There’s nothing to change really.”

20!

The young person gave a score of 20 out of 10 when asked whether they would recommend the event to a friend or colleague (the ‘Net Promoter Score’)

- ▶ Many young people were able to apply newly acquired skills to support other **young people in peer-led roles** one #iwill fund grantee stated how: “a young lad who had been supported by us due to his county lines exploitation, gaining support through the court system, to the extent the court recognised his case was severe modern slavery. He was acquitted and he trained as a mentor with us and now delivers sessions to young people about exploitation and county lines”. #iwill Fund grantee. The peer-to-peer support also inspired young people to take a specific direction with their training and extra-curricular interests as a result of their experiences on the projects, as an #iwill grantee explains: “one young carer has gone on to do health and social care at college as a result of being able to support the younger members of the group, the experience gave her the confidence to apply. Others have gone on to join other groups which they would not have done without the support of the buddies”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ Another key outcome for young people who engaged with funded activities was their **heightened knowledge and understanding of specific areas and topics**; #iwill Fund grantees referenced an increase in knowledge around the environment, dementia, campaigning, speech and language, leadership, literacy/writing, and performance.
- ▶ #iwill Fund grantees reported that young people were more engaged or felt **more connected to their local community** and they witnessed an increase in involvement in wider community activities as a result of the funded activities that were seen to improve community relations, a grantee states how: “they felt a greater sense of inclusion and belonging, both within the Youth Club environment and also within the local community”. Through the increased contact with the community young people gained a better understanding of the needs of people within the community which gave some them the ability to generate and implement their own ideas of how to help their communities. One grantee reveals how the young people: “started coming up with their own ideas as to how to help the community as shown in them doing the Pop Up Cafe to provide afternoon tea for people who had helped their community through the pandemic”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ Some #iwill Fund grantees also identified that the funded activities that were designed to improve the mental and physical health of young people were effective in **addressing their health and wellbeing**. Young people expressed that the activities helped to reduce and manage feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and negative self-talk. Their emotional wellbeing has been supported as issues have been addressed in a safe environment and grantees stated how young people felt able to talk openly about their vulnerability and that the: “staff have offered wrap-around support and progressed young people onto mental health support, mentoring, or other support when needed”. Some young people also started to think about their own approaches to Mental Health and how they would apply what they learnt to their lives in future: “I found it really helpful, and I will definitely remember what I’ve learned about mental health and try to take it forward with me”. Young person on an #iwill funded project



Case Study 3: Leadership workshops

Social action the young person was involved in

The young person was already the Executive Director of Volunteers for [Hoby UK](#) and had been involved with the organisation since 2017. They felt this meant they were well positioned to get involved in social action as part of #iwill. In this volunteer role, they have organised three workshops to date and had another two planned. The workshops focus on teaching young people about personal leadership: who they are as a leader, how they can incorporate leadership in their school life and their daily lives, and how they can go out into their community. The workshops also explored how mental health links with their leadership and what benefits they can gain from that as well.

100%

“I couldn’t recommend it more”

The young person gave a score of ‘100%’ out of 10 when asked whether they would recommend the event to a friend or colleague (the ‘Net Promoter Score’)

Why they got involved?

The young person had already been involved in volunteering for four years with Hoby UK (and more generally had volunteered since they were seven) and appreciated how much this had benefitted them. They therefore wanted to get involved in #iwill to give back: *“It’s really cheesy, but I just wanted to give back. Like, because I saw the impact it had on me, I just wanted... other students to do that.”* The young person could also see a two-way benefit to taking part, and how the activities could support their own personal development: *“Teaching them is really important, but also learning at the same time, I think, is such a nice thing to do.”*

Benefits of getting involved

Gaining experience in problem solving, listening, and incorporating others’ ideas into workshop design and building on existing skills: *“It allowed me to appreciate the different skills that I needed to have, and how to build on the ones I already did.”*

Using volunteer examples in job applications but also:

“Applying the skills that I’ve learned because it’s everywhere isn’t it, leadership is even in the house? So yeah, I think it’s just, it has developed me as a person.”

Ideas for how to improve the activity

Improved marketing and greater awareness. The young person has been creating an e-leaflet for parents because they are aware that parents may be interested in their child volunteering for different reasons to why children themselves want to volunteer.



Case Study 4: Arts workshops

Social action the young person was involved in

Helping to organise a series of workshops. It was originally planned to be a big arts event but COVID-19 restrictions prevented this, so the event was turned into a series of workshops instead.

Why they got involved?

The young person became involved in September 2020 and heard about it through someone from Prime Theatre. The young person was on their gap year at the time and was looking for something to do. They had not really done any events management before, so learning this skill was appealing.

“Sometime during my BTEC, I was thinking what am I gonna do with my life? And then he was like, ‘do you want to try this?’”

Benefits of getting involved

The young person found the whole experience to be positive and supportive:

“I think I just enjoyed all of it, like emailing and getting things ready. The planning process.”

They gained practical skills in event management, for example, time management, patience, and the importance of promptly replying to emails:

“You get the skills of event management. You actually get to do it rather than if you're at school and then get told to do it and then do an assessment on paper rather than actually doing it. And also, the support that they give you alongside it so that it doesn't feel like you're just being chucked in the deep end.”

The young person participant is now the Head of Marketing at their university radio, so is needing to put these acquired skills of time management and online communication into action.

Ideas for how to improve the activity

“I think once we completely get rid of COVID restrictions that would be the only way to improve it.”

10

The young person gave a score of '100%' out of 10 when asked whether they would recommend the event to a friend or colleague (the 'Net Promoter Score')

4.4 Outcomes for grantees from taking part in the #iwill Fund

Grantees identified a range of outcomes for themselves and their organisations following their involvement with the #iwill Fund.

- ▶ The most common outcome identified by #iwill Fund grantees related to adapting and changing the way they worked because of insights gained from the project they implemented. In particular, this revolved around taking a more ‘young person friendly’ approach and using ‘co-production’ to ensure young people were now at the centre of project design, planning and implementation. In some instances, they also learnt to better incorporate the lived experience of young people into the co-production process. Grantees revealed how the overall process of having young people as leaders and decision makers had the following benefits on the staff and volunteers:

“The staff that took part were impacted by the power of giving responsibility to young people and creating opportunities for action in their community”. #iwill Fund grantee

“It has helped our staff and volunteers to practice relinquishing control and consulting more closely with young people, establishing them as the experts on the project and developing their ‘youth voice’ and leadership skills”. #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ #iwill Fund grantees also now have a better understanding of Youth Social Action principles and on how to engage young people in positive social and environmental action, including in activism and volunteering. Grantees shared how:

“The project has made us think more about radical campaigning and how we amplify voice amongst young people”. #iwill Fund grantee

“We have focussed more this year on engaging young people with positive environmental action, rather than just using the woodland for their own wellbeing and benefit”. #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ #iwill Fund grantees stated that the timing of the #iwill Fund within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic led to them learning to adapt approaches to engage and work with young people. Grantees stated how a key example of this was how organisations moved services and projects online to ensure that they could still take place: “The way we work with young people had to change because of the pandemic. Before coronavirus we recruited, trained, and supported young people to visit lonely elderly people, many with dementia, living in care homes. Since the first lockdown, we have ‘pivoted’ so our young people now support the elderly ‘virtually’”. #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ The #iwill funding was also a necessary resource that allowed them to survive or to plan to do more for a broader spectrum of young people through the implementation of a wide variety of activities, grantees revealed: “It has enabled us to recruit a new Youth Worker which has enabled us to increase the number of young people who can attend the activity sessions. It has enabled us (to acquire) the resources to be able to purchase equipment and materials to support the young people in developing skills of their choice”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ #iwill Fund Grantees learnt that there were large gaps in services and support for young people within society which has also served as a motivation for them to continue to work with young people moving forwards. Grantees stated how: “The programme has taught us so much. We need to offer young people more, not less”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ The importance of being adaptable, flexible, and compassionate with young people to support them to complete tasks and to engage in activities was also highlighted as a key learning amongst some grantees: “most of the young people were limited by their own anxieties. For example, making phone calls was a big deal that we had to do some work on. On reflection it's made me realise that the emotional wellbeing of a young person is debilitating to what we as workers might see as simple tasks”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ For one grantee, there was also a need for activities to take place more frequently on a rolling basis and to offer more specialist groups e.g. for females only, in order to fill the existing gaps: “this project has highlighted the need for future female only programmes in the area as unfortunately many of these young participants have come from broken and disadvantaged backgrounds”. #iwill Fund grantee
- ▶ Several grantees have learnt about what is important to young people, including learning new skills, making friends and looking after their mental health. Organisations reveal how they have been able to apply learnings across programmes and within communities:

“We are now delivering this project in other schools and community settings and organisations are purchasing these materials”. #iwill Fund grantee

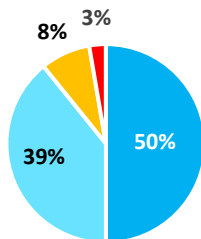
“We have learnt that it is important that children are given the opportunity to have a break as a carer, to be with people who understand them, to offer help and support to young people. We have introduced the ‘wish list’ to all groups and now continue to ask young people what they would like to do”. #iwill Fund grantee

- ▶ Some grantees who responded to the survey also realised the importance of getting ‘active input’ from parents/carers for the projects to be a success, which was due to young people’s reliance on their parents/carers. For organisations who were working with young people who had complex needs the grantees reported working ‘very closely’ with parents, which again was a point of learning for workers on the project.
- ▶ Two organisations reported that their participation in the #iwill Fund resulted in them gaining a quality mark or status that they did not have prior to the funding, two of these included the ‘Investing in Children’ quality mark and the ‘Arts Award Champion Status’.

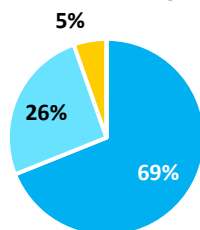
4.5 Feedback on the running of the #iwill Fund

Overall, grantees rated the process of applying for the #iwill Fund, the communication with their Community Foundation, and the monitoring and reporting for the grant highly (89%, 95% and 82% respectively reporting scores of 4 or 5).

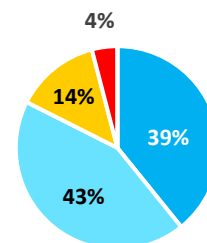
How would you rate the following (where 1 is the lowest rating, and 5 is the highest) - Process of applying for the fund



How would you rate the following (where 1 is the lowest rating, and 5 is the highest) - Communication with your Community Foundation across the course of the grant



How would you rate the following (where 1 is the lowest rating, and 5 is the highest) - Monitoring and reporting for the grant



■ Five ■ Four ■ Three ■ Two ■ One ■ Five ■ Four ■ Three ■ Two ■ One ■ Five ■ Four ■ Three ■ Two ■ One

- ▶ In total, 78% of #iwill Fund grantees felt that the **monitoring and reporting for the #iwill Fund** was proportionate to the value of the grant, although several grantees expressed how they thought the reporting requirements were high for the funding amount granted given the time constraints to implement the project and to do the reporting. One grantee suggested that a more gradual approach with reporting stages would have been helpful rather than in one ‘chunk’ at the end. Other grantees expressed frustrations with the 1-year length of the funding, especially as the Covid-19 pandemic hit, was not enough time for the fund to have an impact on the young people and the organisation. Grantees stated how the pandemic also further complicated the reporting stage due to changes in organisational programmes enforced by Covid-19 lockdowns and restrictions.

Others suggested that monitoring forms could have been shorter and more 'straightforward' to ensure that project workers were spending most time away from the forms and with the young people.

- ▶ In relation to whether the [support provided through the #iwill Fund could be improved](#) 63% answered 'no', 31% were 'not sure', and 6% answered 'yes'. #iwill Fund grantees who suggested improvements referred to a need for the long-term sustainability of funding to provide necessary services for young people and/or resources in the form of specialist workers.

5. Findings: Community Foundations

This section relates to the in-depth interviews with eight Community Foundations from around the UK that were responsible for the distribution of the #iwill Fund funding. Community Foundations in Worcester, Kent, North & East Yorkshire, Dorset, Northumberland, Leeds, Suffolk and Durham & Darlington were interviewed to gain insights on their experiences in the participation with the #iwill Fund. Those who were interviewed worked closely on the #iwill Fund for their foundation and were based in either the grants or programme departments within their respective organisations. Each Community Foundation varies significantly in size in terms of current resources and capacity within the team, for example the Worcester Community Foundation is one of the smallest in the network with just one full-time staff member, compared to the Suffolk Community Foundation who have 10 staff members in the grants team. The endowments and grants of the Community Foundations also vary significantly with endowments up to 18.8 million pounds and up to 300 different funds annually. A number of the foundations advised how the Covid-19 pandemic led to the highest funds ever received which is seen to be a pivotal point and there is an opportunity for them to invest in extra capacity and grow sustainably.

4.5 What activities did Community Foundations support?

Section 4.2 of this report provides a detailed overview of the activities that Community Foundations supported with the #iwill Fund and that were subsequently implemented by the grantees.

Community Foundations shared some key points of learning below that emerged with regards to the activities that they supported.

- ▶ Community Foundations described how they had to provide additional support to grantees at the application stage given the specification about 'Youth Social Action' within activities, which wasn't often referenced by prospective grantees. One CF explained that: "[It could be something like a youth project that they want funding for, but young people haven't actively been involved](#)

in, they've just applied to #iwill for the funding for a project and there's been no co-production or anything". Community Foundation

Community Foundations were in some cases able to take an active role in addressing grantees lack of insight on youth-led projects through allocating team members to talk with groups through their project activities and the concept of 'Youth Social Action' rather than just having an open call and people apply. The foundations themselves also made efforts to incorporate youth-led approaches within their programme activities, one example of this was a Community Foundation including young-people on panels during events.

- ▶ Community Foundations found that putting in place structures to encourage youth-led activities was also an important learning amongst grantees and increased empowerment amongst young people was achieved through: "the setting up of structures that could really kind of push the young people's point of view across and empower them to take things forward". Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations reported during the interviews how the young people themselves were supportive of a youth-led approach and were keen to be upskilled in order to respond to scenarios where they were able to support other young people. One young person spoke to a CF at an event and explained: "People are already coming to me with their problems. The problem is, I don't know how to deal with it, or what, what I should be doing. So how much better is it for me to have that appropriate training". Young Person at Community Foundation Event
- ▶ The grant opened up long-term opportunities for groups and charities to continue their project activities beyond the timeline of the project and to embed learning from participating in the #iwill Fund into future projects. From the Community Foundation's perspective: "that small grant went a really long way, and youth volunteering is now just embedded in that organisation in everything that they do. So, it kick started a big piece of work for them really". Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations described how other grantees came back to apply in the second round, requested extension funding, or started their own fundraising initiatives because of the positive experiences they had in the first round. Community Foundations felt this represented a desire to extend existing youth-led activities that had been initiated by the #iwill Fund.
- ▶ Community Foundations stated how projects and the associated activities such as fundraising activities or campaigns in local communities weren't always a success but regardless of this the young people were still able to learn from them: "we're funding the opportunity that's given and it is about what they learned through doing it". Community Foundation

- ▶ For the Community Foundations a key challenge for them was to get funders to match funding for youth social action activities: “you see what I mean, we had projects that already had this [youth social action], element in it. But I'd say the biggest stumbling point was getting the funders to match it”. Community Foundation

Process of providing funding & working with groups

- ▶ From the Community Foundation's perspective, they felt that the application process for the #iwill Fund was 'tangible' in comparison to other national funds, and that the 'Youth Social Action' pillars were made clear with examples. However, as above it was reported that during the first round, they were slightly under-subscribed, so Community Foundations had to take an active approach to recruiting groups and charities to apply: “We ran a couple of workshops as well and were like, right, let's do some face to faces and get people through that way”. Community Foundation

Community Foundations stated that for the #iwill Fund in comparison to other programmes, there were more requests for pre-application advice than on an average programme and it was more time intensive, which they attributed to the challenges of doing a 'genuine' youth action piece and the need for them to explain the principles of youth action and youth led work. Community Foundations shared the feeling: “It was definitely more time consuming I'd say, giving advice to applicants to make sure that they were putting in something that was going to be eligible. But the positive thing was that we definitely had applications from youth clubs, that on the basis of the advice and the conversation we had applicants, wrote their proposal, they were using the grant to try out a new way of getting the children more taking the lead in the youth clubs”. Community Foundation

- ▶ As a result of the flexibility of the fund (to fund organisations of different sizes) Community Foundations explained how they have formed long-term partnerships with certain grantees and have maintained a relationship where they have been granted funding multiple times: “The flexibility of a National Fund means that so there's an organisation on here with a million-pound turnover, we wouldn't usually fund them. But because it's national funding, we can go “we know what you're doing is really good and fund them”. Community Foundation
- ▶ A number of Community Foundations mentioned how grantees were not able to spend the money, however they related that this is often a challenge within charities or local groups where it doesn't always run smoothly: “Often you'll have one person who maybe writes the grant application has the idea, but then something happens and they get diverted on to something else, or they leave”. Community Foundation This was more common during the pandemic when Community Foundations were receiving a lot of questions from grantees about unspent

grant money and extensions of projects asking: “can we change this? can we do this? can we have a call about this?” One Community Foundation advised how some grantees had to give money back, because they just couldn't run the projects or activities because of the Covid-19 restrictions.

Impact of Covid-19

Community Foundations were asked about the challenges that emerged as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This section details the impact of Covid-19 and the way in which the Community Foundations and the grantees responded.

- ▶ Community Foundations stated that in most cases grantees were able to adapt to the restrictions and still tried to deliver services but had to do so differently, predominantly through online service provision utilising video calls for sessions and groups: “they couldn't do face to face delivery anymore, but they were still doing skills development and just doing video calls instead”. Community Foundation

Due to the switch to virtual service delivery many charities had to change the content of what they planned to deliver all together, Community Foundations explained how: “they were delivering sessions on periods and exploitation, knife crime, all those sorts of things as well, which were things that they might not have done, had they been in person”. Community Foundation

In other instances, Community Foundations explained how the grantees not only changed the focus of their content but also the way in which they worked with the young people, for example by reducing group sizes to do necessary face to face sessions: “if they could bring one person into their office, they would just bring in one person and do it that way instead”. Community Foundation

Community Foundations stated how it became evident that online service delivery did not always meet the needs of the young people on the projects for several reasons, including that not all young people had the equipment to be able to participate including, access to devices and broadband. They explained how: “There were challenges with digital exclusion, especially for some of the kids that they were looking to support. Were potentially, you know, children and young people that didn't have access to internet or laptops or anything regularly that they could then engage on online systems”. Community Foundation. This was reported as particularly challenging in more rural areas where internet broadband was significantly less reliable.

Community Foundations found that grantees often delivered the final part of the projects (where possible) face to face, especially in the case where groups were given an extension, due

to the young people feeling fatigued with 'logging on' all the time for school, counselling, and any other activity.

- ▶ For the Community Foundations who were in close contact with grantees they were able to respond by supporting charities and groups through offering them flexibility to adapt and change their services, as well as to grant them extensions when required. Community Foundations made public announcements to grantees to offer them support, one example of this was when they: “sent out a statement and was like, we're doing flexibility when you know what it is that you want to do, send us an email then or ring us then and we can work with you”.

Community Foundation

It was not uncommon that charities used the money that was granted initially within the normal timeframe but for something alternative, one Community Foundation stated: “I think we've been pretty flexible within our remit on repurposing grants and supporting organizations to make the adaptations that they need to still be able to deliver”. Community Foundation

Community Foundations stated how they felt that by working closely with the grantees through such a challenging period allowed them to build a trusting relationship, in particular when they were granted an extension or needed to repurpose the grant: “I think once you give a group an extension, and they kind of realise, yes, we can trust, you're working with us and that relationship is there”. Community Foundation

- ▶ Community Foundations explained how grantees in some instances were not affected by Covid-19 in anyway as some rounds of funds and projects were completed by 2019: “I can't remember the exact dates but all that money, I think was well spent. We reported back on it before Covid”. Community Foundation

When projects did take place within the period of the heightened Covid-19 restrictions Community Foundations found that when they could not find any other alternative there were several projects that were either cancelled or postponed which caused ongoing problems for project timelines: “it's postponed once in the first lockdown, and it's due to take place after that, then another lockdown comes. So, it's had to be moved, you know, it's just constantly moving the projects or the programs because of the, you know, continuing problem with Covid”. Community Foundation

5.1. Motivation to get involved

Community Foundations provided the following motivations for their involvement with the #iwill Fund.

- ▶ The most common response amongst Community Foundations was that they wished to give opportunities to young people that placed them in decision-making and leadership roles within social action projects and this ethos of the #iwill Fund was attractive to them. As a concept Community Foundations felt that these types of projects had the potential to have more of a positive impact on the young people: “Let's just say a scout group, for example, where you're just involved as a team, it takes it to the next step if you'd have a few of them in, let's just say, the committee decision making”. Community Foundation They also felt that ‘Youth Social Action’ was an opportunity to go beyond activities and allowed young people to engage in ‘volunteering and campaigning’ and to therefore contribute to something bigger.
- ▶ Nonetheless, Community Foundations also felt that there were not many examples of successful ‘Youth Social Action’ projects given that several of the grantees were applying for what they felt were instead adult-led youth projects: “A lot of organisations are used to doing youth activity, doing youth counselling, doing lots of relevant things, but doing a model where you allow a group of young people to design their own product or service and run with it, we had less examples of that. So that yeah, that that was the biggest challenge”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Overall, many Community Foundations agreed that the fund was an opportunity to provide necessary support for young people that did not exist within local communities by encouraging young people to do ‘Youth Social Action’ work: “North Yorkshire is quite a rural area. So having stuff for young people to do anyway can be quite limited, but especially volunteering opportunities”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations reported that the drive to provide support and opportunities for young people were also an existing global priority and that their programmes were mapped against the United Nations SDGs: “What we've done is give you a couple of case studies where we've had endocarp monitoring in, so we've assigned the UN SDGs”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations also felt that the #iwill Fund had a good reputation or gave off a good impression to provide authentic, purpose-driven programmes, which also acted as a motivation for them to be involved with it: “I think initially it was it was we, as a as a Foundation, we do embrace sort of programmes that come through UK Community Foundation, because usually they're good programmes. And there's, there's actually sort of a reason behind them, rather than just sort of generalized funding”. Community Foundation

With regards to funding Community Foundations widely reflected on how the #iwill Fund provided the opportunity to obtain larger quantities of funding, which are said to provide a ‘boost’ to annual grant making, especially for the smaller foundations. When Community Foundations could obtain ‘match funding’ with ease it was also seen as an opportunity and a

motivation to be involved due to the large positive impact the funding can have and which has proved to be a valuable base to build on for communities. One Community Foundation revealed: “Some of our match funding let us do £100,000 in one area, like in Scarborough, which was brilliant, because we managed to bring on like loads of groups just in one area, fund them. And then that's kind of built and we've now a Scarborough children and young people's fund”. Community Foundation

- ▶ Other Community Foundations stated how the lack of sustainability in terms of funding at the point the programme came available meant that they were open to accepting all types of funding: “we would take every programme available to us, because it was all about gaining traction. It was about having funding any sort of size or shape”. Community Foundation

5.2. Challenges faced in distributing #iwill Funding

- ▶ A key challenge experienced by Community Foundations was the overall engagement from young people across the programme, with engagement levels lower than expected or planned: “some struggled to engage with young people, or as many young people as they may be thought. So, lots of just lower numbers than expected”. Community Foundation
Community Foundations did share the feeling that this was the nature of programmes that involved young people and was nothing out of the ordinary in terms of fluctuations and changes in attendance: “that's just young people, isn't it? They can be really enthusiastic at first and then other things happen in their lives”. Community Foundation
- ▶ #iwill Fund grantees who were non-youth based had a greater challenge engaging the young people through their projects, and Community Foundations reported how they supported these organisations to persist, and they encouraged them to adapt by trialling different engagement strategies: “they said, right we tried this, and this didn't work. So, we tried the school's thing that didn't work, let's put posters up in the local area, or try social media. As a funder, enabling them to keep going and just keep trying different things. I think that is important, I think, if they're learning from what hasn't worked”. Community Foundation
- ▶ As above, another common point of feedback throughout the evaluation was that the ‘Youth Social Action’ criteria was a challenge for charities and groups at the application phase leading to several funding rejections: “They weren't showing sufficiently that they were youth led projects, it was more about adults providing a project for young people and that was also an issue”. Community Foundation It was also a challenge for the projects to fulfil this criteria given the requirement of the young people to be under the age of 14 which required the willingness of young people, as well as their skills and confidence to lead on projects which

Community Foundations felt was not always realistic: “You know what it's like with kids at that age, I mean, I've got a 15 year old son, and actually getting him to take a project forward and go, yeah I'll lead on this, that would be really quite something”. Community Foundation

“What we found there was obviously one of the main premises of the programme was for the activities or projects to be run by the young people. And obviously, the younger you get, the less likely the young people are going to have the skills or the confidence, or the knowledge, we felt to be able to do that”. Community Foundation

- ▶ Another challenge that Community Foundations reported was how grantees ran into issues when their project was a partnership with or was related to schools, it was thought that this was due to the period of time where the projects were taking place where schools were facing ongoing challenges due to the pandemic: “I think schools we're going through a bit of a period of we don't know what we're doing and how we're doing it and it's difficult enough just getting classes done, that trying to bring them to the organisation in to run online sessions was impossible”. Community Foundation
- ▶ A final challenge raised by the Community Foundations were the government requests for monitoring information that came in without any notice and after the period that the parameters had been set. Often the grantees were not able to provide the requested information as they either did not have it or did not have the resources prepared to deliver it: “The government come back and say ‘we want to know about this’, ‘we want to know about that’. And that's really hard to go to an organisation that's been running the project for nine months, working against a set of criteria to say, ‘oh, we want information about this as well’”. Community Foundation

5.3. Outcomes emerging from #iwill Funding

- ▶ A key outcome reported by the Community Foundations was how the #iwill Funding has generated positive examples of youth led projects and approaches in local communities: “that was a great thing because it really was a youth thing or youth service at the lead with adults there to support them”. Community Foundation

In some instances, young people led on projects which are seen to be ongoing and some which Community Foundations felt will have a long-term positive impact. In one instance the young people researched information about a local airbase, discovered unknown details about it and created a film about it: “Most of these young people, I think, are still at school. But are expanding their knowledge, local knowledge, and knowledge in the community as well. I think they've had, you know, quite an impact”. Community Foundation

- ▶ Community Foundations also stated how the youth-led projects were having a ‘knock-on’ effect in reducing antisocial behaviour and that they were becoming valued as part of the community as a result of their involvement in the #iwill Funded project: “they actually saw that the young people were trying to do something positive in their community, which they felt reduced antisocial behaviour, they felt that they were more valued”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Other young people were also keen to be involved in local projects after seeing their peers’ involvement and other young people becoming more visible in the community which in some cases had led to an increase in the number of young people who engaged. One Community Foundation explained: “this is not about young people taking part, there's actually young people being in the community, which is probably sort of what you really want to see in a program more than anything else”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundation’s felt that off the back of the project successes, it has also demonstrated the ongoing need for youth-led projects, as well as the desire amongst young people to have them continue: “I think building a whole programme on youth volunteering from this one grant shows that there's still a need in the area and there's that want from young people to be doing this”. Community Foundation
- ▶ There were also several benefits that emerged for the young people as reported by the Community Foundations including an increase in their skills for personal development purposes and that they could use for their CVs and potential education, training and employment opportunities. “Young people were offered quite a lot of support around employment, and how they could get into the radio business. They did script writing and interviewing and all this other stuff that comes with being a radio presenter”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Another outcome for the young people was an increase in their confidence and self-esteem, as well as a ‘youth voice’. Community Foundations have widely stated how: “The end of grant reports were definitely showing improvements to self-esteem and competence and ability to assert their ideas and opinions”. Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations also reported how young people were driven to be more active and look after their health and wellbeing because of the #iwill Fund.

Sustainability of outcomes

- ▶ Community Foundation's widely reported how the ethos of the #iwill fund has a 'sustained legacy' in that the youth-led element often becomes integrated into the work of the groups and charities: "There's an organisation in Scarborough that does advocacy work for young people, and they've got a whole youth council setup now from the initial 2017 #iwill funding". Community Foundation
- ▶ Since the start of the #iwill Fund one Community Foundation also reported how the benefits of youth-led work are now more widely appreciated across the youth sector, which is reflected in funding applications: "It's not just about doing to young people, it's about helping them have a voice. And you see that that type of language in funding applications to other programmes that we run now, more than we used to". Community Foundation
- ▶ Despite this, there were some Community Foundations who did raise that working with young people was an ongoing challenge and given their age bracket it is difficult to sustain their involvement and therefore impact: "You know what I think it's difficult with young people because young people grow up, don't they, and they move on". Community Foundation
- ▶ Another important challenge that was reflected on by several Community Foundations was how the types of charities they fund do not have access to long-term, sustainable funding which puts many grantees in 'survival mode' and prevents the space for a long-term vision and strategy: "They're always struggling to find funding for anything, and they seize on these opportunities. But I don't think because they're so busy doing, they don't have a chance to really look very long term". Community Foundation

"In my eyes, the types of charities we support as a Community Foundation are never sustainable. And if they were, if they had the next three months costs in the bank, we wouldn't be funding them anyway". Community Foundation
- ▶ Other Community Foundations stated how it is difficult to make a judgement on whether the outcomes are sustained as for many there isn't enough resource to monitor or follow up on what happens to the projects: "How would you know, unless you put in place proper longer term evaluation, and went back and did loads of questionnaires and went to visit them and all these things, how would you know?" Community Foundation

5.4. Working with UKCF

- ▶ Community Foundations reported that overall, the experience working with UKCF was 'straightforward' and that they enjoyed the human element to their relationship in their willingness to listen to feedback and adapt: "If we have feedback then they do listen, and they do try and adapt criteria and make things clearer for applicants". Community Foundation
- ▶ The challenges that Community Foundations experienced working with UKCF related to the reporting requirements, including how the #iwill Fund requests the monitoring forms to be completed so long after the project ends: "We like to send out any monitoring forms right at the beginning so when we process the payment, we go, this is this is what you're going to be asked for, at the end. So they know this is the data they need to collect and it hasn't quite been that way with #iwill." Community Foundation
- ▶ In terms of the funding some Community Foundations felt that there were 'quick turnarounds' with funding deadlines which did not leave the time or space for the Community Foundations to actively recruit charities and groups to apply for the fund: "In an ideal world, which doesn't always happen, you want a nice lead into a piece of funding so you can really promote it properly, get people's thought processes, perhaps go out and proactively promote it and support organisations to start thinking about it". Community Foundation
- ▶ Community Foundations reported that another challenge with reporting was finding young people who would be willing to share their experiences as part of the evaluation of the programme (for example, in a case-study) and how to ensure that it is not just the most confident young people that provide input.
- ▶ There was also uncertainty amongst the Community Foundations with regards to the continuation of funds from UKCF, which prevents them from being able to plan or to assure grantees about the prospect of future funds and therefore partnerships.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section explores some of the key learning that can be drawn from this evaluation of the UKCF #iwill Fund, from the perspectives of the inFocus evaluation team.

6.1 Considering the strength of evidence

It is always important to take into account the strength of the evidence on which the conclusions and recommendations are based when deciding on what next steps to take as a result of an evaluation. This takes us back to the limitations of the evaluation on page four. There have been challenges with the evaluation, particularly around collecting data from young people and the lack of a baseline (which is not a standard part of every evaluation but would have been helpful in this context). However, the strong response to the #iwill Fund grantee survey (particularly in the context of grantees already submitting monitoring forms and outcomes data outside of the context of this evaluation) and in-depth interviews with a smaller group of Community Foundations and young people have provided some rich findings. Although with the collection of mainly qualitative data it is not possible to generalise and apply findings to the wider populations of grantees and young people taking part in UKCF funded #iwill activities.



Recommendation: we recommend reviewing the process of sharing monitoring and evaluation requirements as part of initial discussions with Community Foundations so that they and grantees know what to expect from the various parties asking for data (e.g. inFocus, any national #iwill evaluators on behalf of Big Lottery Fund and DCMS, or UKCF). From some of the responses from Community Foundations and grantees it was potentially not clear who was asking for data from whom and when, although this could have been down to the original team working on the evaluation at UKCF leaving and the impact of Covid-19 on UKCF's work after this.

6.2 Why grantees applied for the #iwill Fund

#iwill grantees primarily applied to the fund to support the young people they worked with to engage in volunteering, gain new skills in relation to leadership and social action, and 'find their voice'. For some grantees, the fund was an opportunity to support existing projects/activities that they felt aligned to the #iwill fund and/or principles of Youth Social Action, while for others it was an opportunity to develop new projects, for example, where young people had an idea for new initiatives.

Interestingly, Community Foundations interviewed as part of the evaluation advised that they needed to provide additional support to grantees around what was meant by 'Youth Social Action' as reference to this was missing from the description of activities in several proposals/applications from grantees. This was also reflected in higher levels of requests for pre-application advice than on an average programme.



Recommendation: If running a Youth Social Action project again there could be a greater focus on communicating what is meant by Youth Social Action, along with examples of what this looks like (e.g. in the description of a project or funding application).

6.3 Why Community Foundations got involved in the #iwill Fund

Community Foundations felt that the focus on young people taking decision-making and leadership roles could mean that #iwill may have more potential to make a positive impact with young people, and that supporting young people to get involved in 'volunteering and campaigning' helped them to contribute to 'something bigger'. Although linked to the above points around the application stage, some felt that some of the funded activities were more adult than youth-led and, while still a relevant activity for young people, were not all applying Youth Social Action approaches.



Recommendation: It could be interesting to explore where the 'boundary' lies between adult-led and youth-led projects/activities. For the Community Foundation above, they felt that there were not many examples of 'Youth Social Action' projects and several projects funded through #iwill were 'adult-led'. However, grantees feeding into the evaluation described providing support to young people to get involved in the project, depending upon their needs, and some Community Foundations found that it was unlikely that younger children would take a lead in running a project and would need support. There could be young people that might find it challenging to take the overall lead (so this involves an adult coordinating) but take the lead on a specific activity (e.g. research or promotion). Would this still be an example of Youth Social Action?

6.4 The impact on young people

While the findings below in relation to outcomes are based on the collection of qualitative data, so can't be used to explore the *extent to which* these outcomes are occurring across all young people engaging in #iwill activities, however, given the size of the sample responding (and the level of detail from grantees) it does give a strong indication that the outcomes were likely to have taken place.

The majority of #iwill Fund grantees described how young people got involved in planning and organising community projects (e.g. compiling budgets, making action plans and delivering community events) which covered a wide range of topics, from local conversation to sport and fitness activities to music/art activities. Grantees and the four young people interviewed for the case-studies identified four main outcome areas:

- I. Increases in wellbeing, confidence and/or self-esteem
- II. Broadening opportunities in employment, education and training and supporting others
- III. Increasing knowledge and understanding of specific areas and topics. This covered a wide range of concepts including the environment, dementia, campaigning, speech and language, leadership, literacy/writing, and performance.
- IV. Feeling more engaged or connected to the local community

Community Foundations also advised on whether they felt the outcomes from the #iwill fund would be sustainable. While there was a general feeling that the youth-led element of the work could start to get integrated into the wider work of the #iwill Fund grantees, and there could be a wider appreciation of youth-led work across the sector, there were also some potential challenges with this. This included

challenges with sustainable funding, ongoing engagement with young people, and resources to measure whether outcomes have taken place in the longer term.



Recommendation: the evaluation did not explore the sustainability of the projects in detail however there were indications from grantees, young people and Community Foundations (as above) that there would be an appetite to continue the activities beyond the end of #iwill funding. As funding is one of the main challenges one recommendation could involve working with the Community Foundations to see if there is any support (e.g. with fundraising) that could be sourced for grantees or young people directly, to continue with Youth Social Action.

6.5 The impact on #iwill Fund grantees and Community Foundations

The vast majority of #iwill Fund grantees themselves also reported that they benefited from accessing the #iwill Fund, in most cases providing details of how they benefited. By far the most common response related to the grantees understanding the benefits and processes behind taking a 'young person friendly' approach and using 'co-production' to ensure young people are at the centre of project design. Other grantees learnt about the benefits of including the lived experience of young people into co-production and how Youth Social Action principles can support their work. For some grantees, the funding from the #iwill Fund was critical to providing activities/interventions for young people and to contribute towards staffing, particularly with the impact of Covid-19.

For the Community Foundations, their main outcome related to the development of examples of youth-led projects in their local community, in some cases observing that this could have a knock-on effect on anti-social behaviour, youth engagement (in the project activities) and community cohesion. In addition, some Community Foundations also found that the #iwill fund provided an opportunity to obtain larger quantities of funding, which could provide a significant 'boost' to annual grant-making, especially for smaller foundations, although one Community Foundation identified that getting match-funders was a challenge for youth social action.

6.6 The impact of Covid-19

As could be anticipated, the Covid-19 pandemic caused significant disruption to grantees running activities funded through the #iwill Fund. As with many organisations around the country, most grantees adapted their approach to incorporate online services, although they faced challenges around digital exclusion where some young people did not have access to web-enabled devices or internet access. In general, the pandemic may have contributed to the lower numbers of young people engaging than expected from the perspective of the Community Foundations.

Some grantees were given extensions to finish their projects later after Covid-19 restrictions impinged on activities, and this led in some cases to grantees finishing the grant with face-to-face activities, which was particularly helpful as they found that some young people were feeling fatigued with 'logging on' and accessing digital services. Community Foundations generally related that they had been flexible in supporting grantees if they needed to change the focus of the funding and adapt activities, or if they required extensions. It is unclear if this was the case with all Community Foundations, or the extent of the flexibility, as one reported that some grantees returned funds as they were not able to run activities because of Covid-19 restrictions.

Both grantees and Community Foundations did also identify positive aspects emerging from the Covid19 pandemic, for example, for one grantee utilising online tools helped to widen the scope of the projects and enabled them to support young people through the lockdown. For one Community Foundation, providing flexibility around the grant scheme, and working closely with a grantee in relation to this, really helped to build a trusting relationship.

6.7 Feedback on the running of the #iwill Fund

In general grantees found the process of applying for the #iwill fund, the communications with their Community Foundation, and the monitoring and reporting of the #iwill Fund were highly rated in their feedback. While around two thirds of grantees answered that they could not think of ways in which support provided through the #iwill Fund could be improved, there were recommendations to ensure that the monitoring and reporting process is proportionate to the size of the grant, and also requests that the funding last for longer than a year to ensure the activities are more sustainable (and it is also easier to measure impact).

There was interesting feedback from Community Foundations in relation to working with UKCF. Overall, the eight Community Foundations interviewed found the experience of working with UKCF, and the overall relationship positive. Their main challenges revolved around reporting requirements (as explored above), quick turnarounds with funding deadlines, and uncertainty around continuation of funding.