



POWER OF YOUTH CHALLENGE
‘Listen to Use, Work with Us, Invest in Us

FEEDBACK REPORT

(Feb – Dec 2020)

James Cathcart

Introduction

"I have been a supporter of the Step Up To Serve #iwill campaign for youth social action since it was launched seven years ago, specifically its expectation that social action should be youth-led, and its growing emphasis on the campaign itself being youth-led, increasingly amplifying the young voices of #iwill ambassadors in later years. So Young Voices Heard was keen to accept their final 'Power of Youth' challenge in February 2020, to “Listen to Use, Work with Us, Invest in Us”. Meaningful youthvoice participation, according to standards set by young people, requires both feedback and credit to young people. This report is my attempt to do that, and I would invite others to do the same. Let’s all follow up the charters and pledges with more reporting back to young people what happened next.

This report also includes a wider agenda of proposals to support the youth empowerment movement. It was discussed and shared with a range of stakeholders, and funders in 2020 and a copy was sent to the #iwill team as part of the Step Up To Serve consultation process for #iwill's legacy project from January 2021 (now being delivered by Volunteering Matters and UK Youth).

Young Voices Heard is committed to playing a role in networking, reporting and sharing good practice and research, and calls for more investment in these proposals like these to support a vibrant and growing movement of self-empowered social action in the coming decade.

To this end Young Voices Heard is launching a new CIC in 2021 to continue channelling investment and pro bono time on some of these proposals. For more information, please get in touch."

James Cathcart, Director Young Voices Heard

Power of Youth Challenge - Young Voices Heard Report Feb - Dec 2020

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1. PROPOSALS to plug in and connect the Power of Youth 2021-2031, arising from a year of listening to, working with and investing in young people, and calling on others to do more of the same. If you would like to ‘invest’ please get in touch.

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Each of the proposals below has been worked on and informed by young leaders and draft funded pilot projects have been shared with a number of funders.

- 1/ An Independent YVH Quality Mark curated by young leaders: pilot and roll out
- 2/* Directory of Good Practice Organisations, Service providers and Resources
- 3/ Directory of Young Trustees on Boards
- 4/ Commission research into impact of youth participation/leadership on decision-making, within organisations and society in generally, measuring the added value and mapping existing evidence.
- 5/* Visibility: ‘Youth Voice Now’: sharing sector-wide news, recognition and opportunities between organisations, young people and supporters.
- 6/ Recognition: National Awards (youthled) / Sponsored.
- 7/ Creative Space: Festival/ Hackathon Innovation – youthled & allies - setting the agenda.
- 8/ Reflection: Safe space/Take Stock/Looking Forward: new normal Youth Voice Movement
- 9/ Mentoring changemakers to self-empower through non-directive peer and allies support and shared learning. (#YoungGen aged 18-29) to #NextGen (14-24)
- 10/* Networking and connecting young leaders, allies and supporters through the YVH network.

* piloted at Young Voices Heard.

Supported by:

1.
 1. An accredited training and learning course for youth-voice and social action leadership
 2. Stronger, inclusive processes to determine WHICH issues young people care about the most.
 3. Broader media coverage, include youthled/ trained young journalists . YouthVoice Radio; TV and Podcast. dominated by two or three key players in the youth sector, leading to a lack of variety/diversity.
 4. Diverse outreach; greater focus needed on providing a platform for working class, LGBT, BAME young people.
 5. A hub for a Youth Voice and Participation Movement – similar to the Young Trustee Movement hosted by the Social Change Agency.

National Academy /Foundation for YouthVoice, Participation and Leadership

1. A national centre/academy of good practice where there is open access to host/sponsor many of the outcomes/outputs supporting youthvoice.
2. Resources (free online)
3. Training for adults and organisations in supporting YV&P
4. Hosting of spaces for debate, new ideas and good practice

5. Opportunities bulletin board
6. Directory of good practice (updated)
7. Directory of YV&P support service providers (paid) and peer consultants (paid)
8. Commissioning and publishing of research

Accredited Training courses: for youth voice, participation, leadership and changemakers: skills for change, turning passion into a plan, campaigning and media skills.

2. FEEDBACK

2020 Power of Youth Challenge - Activity Summary

In early 2020 ‘Young Voices Heard’ pledged to accept the challenge of **listening, working with, and investing in** young people and between Feb 2020 and Dec 2020 completed the following activities.

A/ LISTENING TO - young people – you said, we did.

1. Published a series of six individual Youth Voice Now interviews* between May 20 and Dec 20, providing a platform to a sample of young leaders to share their experience, advice and inspiration to others. Harry Twohig, Dan Lawes, Katrina Lambert, Gabrielle Matthews, Patrick Cantellow, and Keanna Leader <https://youngvoicesheard.org.uk/category/blogs/youthvoice-interview-blogs/>
2. Conducted a Zoom ‘group interview’* with the Young People in the Lead (YPIL) panel at The National Lottery Community Fund
3. Researched and consulted a wider group of young people on proposals to support the #youthvoice movement from a young persons point of view.

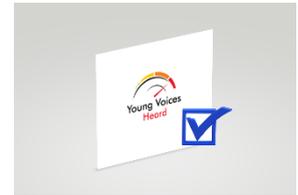
B/ WORKING WITH - young people

1. **Power of Youth Explained** – working with #iwill ambassadors in the iwill subgroup on ‘Top Tips for Youth Participation and Leaders in Organisations’ The final guide, [Power of Youth Explained 3: Youth Voice](#) was published in January 2021 – featuring the outcomes of YVH research into top tips (see below for YVH Charter 2020 and Top Tips)
2. **Quality Mark** Project - working with young people, #iwill ambassadors and other young leaders in Zoom calls, interviews and research to contribute towards the [YVH Quality Mark project](#). A list of draft standards/tips is included in this report. Notes from a group session with #iwill ambassadors was posted in April 2020.
3. **#YPIL (Young People In the Lead)** followed up to their call to promote their key messages to wider audiences by featuring their guide to organisations on youth participation on our Twitter feed and on the Young Voices Heard Resources page. [Young Participation and Leadership in Organisations - Young Voices Heard](#) (below)
4. **Offered mentoring** to young shadow/trustees.

C/ INVESTING IN – young people

1.
 5. In 2020 Promoted **youthled and youth-inspired proposals** to a range of funders to commission in 2021. The full agenda is reproduced below but Young Voices Heard is committed to prioritising.:
 6. *Researching impact on decision-making in organisations;*
 7. *Launching 'Youth Voice Now' online magazine reporting news, research, opportunities and developments in the field of youthvoice and participation.*
 8. *Rolling out a new independent assessed quality mark award for organisations.*
 9. Reviewing and republished the **Participation Works Participation Charter 2006** and created **Youth Voice, Leadership and Participation Charter 2020** (completed - see Resources page)
 10. Collating and publishing resources, guides and articles on YouthVoice in a new Resource section on YVH website. [Resources - Young Voices Heard](#)

3. QUALITY Mark Project - Standards and Top Tips to organisations looking to promote youth voice, participation and leadership.



Quality Mark Standards

1. **State the purpose and intended impact** for your organisation – why are you doing it, what is the end goal, what is your commitment to do?
2. **Plan, but include youth views from the start** by making space for young people to input or lead your plan, from operations to board level.
3. **Be transparent and visible** about how, when and what youth voice, participation and leadership activities and opportunities are. (in a visible format that young people and stakeholders, in and outside of your org). Make your work easy to find.
4. **Allocate roles and opportunities** – to deliver the plan and achieve its purpose. These will be inclusive, diverse and accessible, progressing from being consultation to making decisions/governance.
5. **Delegate power** – with resources to take decisions and deliver projects, campaigns, decision-making, grant giving, recruitment, project management – within your structure
6. **Count every voice** – be inclusive, diverse and accessible – including to those with special needs, on the margins.
7. **Invest, value and reward** the work by allocating a budget and staff to provide support, training and skills. Ensure young people are in voluntary or paid roles equivalent to adults.
8. **Give feedback to young people** about the impact their views and leadership are making.
9. **Evaluate impact and celebrate achievement** not just giving feedback but publish how you achieved your purpose, lessons learnt and whether young people felt they were heard - on your website/social media/to the board/funders and in your annual report/accounts.

Tips (collated and included in the [Power of Youth Explained - 3. YouthVoice](#))

1. Have an informed discussion at board level, informed and if possible, in dialogue with those young people already available to you, or in your network, about the purpose, benefit and impact of promoting youth voice, participation and leadership in your organisation – making sure you are clear you distinguish between listening to and engaging young people in roles. Revisit regularly be open to external review/scrutiny and benchmarking.
2. Refer to other organisations good practice, read good practice guides, talk to staff and young people in organisations you know, or commission advice and research what works. Invite youthvoice pioneers to take part in your training of staff and aspiring youth people.
3. Appoint a youth voice/participation champion on the board and in your staff team, and be careful not to stereo type this role to a young person.
4. Customise your plan to your needs relative to you starting point. Don't try to do everything in one go, and follow a logical sequence of steps that prepares, equips and empowers young people to succeed in their roles. Take your time and embed this as normal as inclusion and diversity policies. It's a commitment not a project.
5. Beware of tokenism and window dressing. Focus on change not just process. Be wary of not being just “seen to be participating” – but record and publish content, commitments and results – to live up to ‘meaningful participation’
6. Involve young people early, not after you have decided why what and how, or, if you are starting out with a trial/pilot ensure that young people are empowered to question, review and amend.
7. Address barriers to participation – from travel to time – taking feedback from young people on what these barriers are and ways to overcome them. There are some great ideas around digital participation, co-production and peer-to-peer mentoring.
8. Be transparent and communicate externally why and what you are doing, including new opportunities and, most importantly results. Remember what the purpose was – to help the organisation, to address issues, to benefit young people who are beneficiaries, to help young people in the participation process.

4. YOUTH VOICE on Quality: Quotes from former #iwill ambassadors/leaders

Question: If you were visiting or assessing an organisations youthvoice friendliness – what would you be looking for, e.g. to rate them five star?

Harry Twohig

“Id be looking for whether Projects/Programmes were co-designed with young people”

“If Young people aren’t just asked their views, but that young people shape what the programme is from day one”.

“Whether there is a clear ‘Feedback loop’. If young people provide a service/advice to an organisation, they should find out what happens as a result of them giving their time.

Dan Lawes

“The first thing I always look for is – how many young people are involved in the management of the organisation. Are there young people on the team? Is there a youth advisory board? Are there young trustees? If not, why not. For an organisation to be truly ‘youth friendly’, young people should be having an influence within its internal structures. The only way you can ensure that the interests of young people are being addressed, is if you invite them into the boardroom and ask them first-hand. Don’t see them as a problem, see them as a solution.”

Katrina Lambert

“I think that the key to successful youth engagement is that young people are engaged throughout the entire process. For example, young people should not just be brought in at the end of a piece of work done internally to give it a ‘youth approved’ stamp, but instead should be involved in designing it from the beginning, have equal sign-off, and clearly know what the next steps are. Co-creation and the handover of power is absolutely essential.”

For full interviews go to: <https://youngvoicesheard.org.uk/category/blogs/youthvoice-interview-blogs/>

5. Whats My Line?

Model of youthvoice, participation and empowerment, drafted by James Cathcart 2020

This journey planner, based on the train-line map, intends to show the various stakeholders as equal, each starting their journey and sometimes partnering up to inform and influence each other, to come to point of change, before moving on. There are dead ends, tokenism and the possibility of going around in circles! Where is the power? Where can you get support? Where can your journeys coincide with like minded people? This is a first draft of what I hope will evolve (what about a skills stop?) into a useful new way to looking at youthvoice, empower and leadership that is less 'by invitation' and 'power' and more about equality, self-empowering and partnership. What do you think? Whats your line?

