

# Social Action Toolkit

### *How-To Guide*

**Title: Introduction to Social Action: Helping it thrive**

### Introduction:

Engaging young people to create positive change in their communities is a crucial step towards building a better future for all. Young people often get a bad reputation for not being as involved in their community as many adults feel they should be. However, all over the world young people are creating change both locally and globally. But, in order to help young people get involved in social activism adults need to provide them with opportunities to create change and support them in doing so. The following information will guide youth workers in supporting young people in getting started with a social action project. Young people bring an energy, creativity and passion to the table that many adults lack and it is this enthusiasm which makes them such great social leaders.

This guide includes the early steps necessary in getting a social project started and includes the ingredients necessary to getting a social action project off the ground. Use it as a step-by-step guide on how to encourage and motivate young people to take an active role in making a positive impact in their communities:

### Materials Needed:

* Flip chart paper
* Markers
* Arts and Crafts materials
* Food and snacks for the young people

| **Step 1: Create a Safe and Inclusive Space** | It is hugely important that you create an inclusive space for young people to voice their opinions and ideas in a safe way. The space must be non-judgemental and encourage all ideas. Remember there’s no such thing as a bad idea, even those that may seem unrealistic. Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to participate and that all opinions are valued. Also, don’t forget to make the experience FUN! |
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| **Step 2: Identify the issue** | First you must identify the issues that are important to young people in your community. This can be done by conducting surveys, hosting community forums, and engaging with local youth groups. But the important thing is that you ask them! Don’t assume that you know the issues that are most important to young people. By identifying the issues that matter most to them, you can then work together to create strategies to address them. |
| **Step 3: Brainstorm how you will address the issue** | Once you have identified the issue that young people want to address, it’s time to come up with a solution. Try to be creative and in groups, ask young people to brainstorm how they will address the issues they have identified. Get each group to write down their ideas (remember no idea is a bad idea!) and create a vision board with the arts and craft supplies available. Ask each group to present their creation to the rest of the participants. |
| **Step 4: Start Small** | The desire might be to start on a big project that will have a bigger impact. But it’s actually better to start small and build momentum. It might also help to organise small scale events such as community clean ups, volunteering opportunities or fundraising events where the young people can see their impact on the community immediately. Being able to see instant feedback will encourage them to keep going and give them a sense of achievement and ana desire to do something bigger next time. This can be a good way to have a trial run or practice activism as the more practice they get the more efficient they will become in managing small scale projects. |
| **Step 5: Offer Resources and Assistance** | Young people may face challenges when trying to create positive change in their community. This may be the first time that they have ever tried to do something positive for their community and others may be suspicious of their motives. Provide resources and support to help them overcome these challenges. This could include access to funding, mentoring, or training sessions that will equip them with the skills they need. Remind them that you are there also as a support and sounding board if they have any questions or need any advice. Try to link the young people with local groups and organisations to help them amplify their work. This also helps the young people become more connected to their community by working with local non-profits, businesses, and community groups to create an even greater impact. It may also empower the young people to connect in with other group in the community and engage in wider interests other than just your youth group. |
| **Step 6: Celebrate Success** | Don’t forget to celebrate success and acknowledge the contribution of the young people. This can be done though awarding the certificates at a ceremony, holding a larger community event, social media posts, or articles in the local media. It is crucial that they are recognised for their contribution no matter how small. By celebrating accomplishments, it will inspire young people to continue to make a positive impact in their community. |

### Conclusion:

* Step 1 : Create a Safe and Inclusive Space- This is the most important part of the whole guide. Support the young people involved in your project by giving them a safe, non-judgemental, and ultimately fun place to come to!
* Step 2 : Identify the issue- Before you can make an impact on your community, you need to know what the issues impacting it are.
* Step 3: Brainstorm how you will address the issue- Use a flip chart and write down as many ideas as possible. Remember, there is no such thing as a bad idea!
* Step 4: Start Small- You don’t need to change the whole world with your first project. Choose something small and local that will create real impact in your community. If you plan too big and fail it will be discouraging for the young people involved and they may not get involved in something again.
* Step 5: Offer Resources and Assistance- remember, that young people may need some support in getting their ideas off the ground. This does not mean that you take over their project and do everything! Let them know that you are in the background for when they need your support and advice but ultimately that it is their project. Try to connect them with existing projects or organisations who can help maximise their impact.
* Step 6: Celebrate Success- Don’t forget to celebrate any success, no matter how small! This may be the first time that some young people have been involved in a group project or involved in something positive that they are proud of. Make sure you celebrate to encourage them to get involved in similar activities in the future.

**Troubleshooting:**

It is vital that a safe, inclusive, non-judgemental space is created to welcome all types of young people into the project. For some young people they may not always have had positive experiences within their community. This may be the first time that they have been involved in a social action project so it important that they are supported in a way that makes them feel comfortable.

### Additional Resources:

**National Youth Council of Ireland**

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is a membership-led umbrella organisation that represents and supports young people and youth organizations in Ireland. Their website provides a range of resources, including research reports, toolkits, and training materials, aimed at promoting the development of young people and the youth sector in Ireland.

<https://www.youth.ie/resources/>

**DoSomething.org**

DoSomething.org is a non-profit organization that aims to empower young people to make a positive impact on their communities. Their website provides resources and tools for young people to take action on various social issues, such as education, the environment, and human rights. They also offer campaigns and volunteer opportunities.

<https://www.dosomething.org/>

**WE**

WE is a non-profit organization that empowers young people to create positive change in their communities and the world. Their website provides resources for educators, youth leaders, and volunteers, as well as opportunities for youth engagement and service learning.

<https://www.we.org/>

**Youth For Climate**

Youth For Climate is a youth-led movement in Belgium that advocates for climate action and environmental sustainability. Their website provides resources for young people and educators to learn more about climate change and its impact on society. They also offer information on their advocacy campaigns and ways to get involved in the movement.

<https://youthforclimate.be/>

**Further reading:**

* BBC Worklife. (2022, August 3). Gen Z: How young people are changing activism. <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220803-gen-z-how-young-people-are-changing-activism>
* Marie Claire UK. (n.d.). Youth voices: Meet the bright young activists fighting for the right to be heard. <https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/youth-voices-meet-the-bright-young-activists-fighting-for-the-right-to-be-heard>
* Funding Youth Activism. (n.d.). Building Young People’s Power. [https://fundingyouthactivism.org.uk/building-young-peoples-power /](https://fundingyouthactivism.org.uk/building-young-peoples-power%20/)

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