

Volunteering and social action among teenagers

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This research briefing explores the involvement of teenagers (13 to 19 year olds) in volunteering and social action. It brings together research carried out in 2015 with teenage Sports Leaders and new analysis of Ipsos Mori's 2014 Youth Social Action Survey. The briefing provides a snapshot of volunteering and social action among teenagers; levels of participation, benefits, and factors that would encourage their involvement.

The drive to increase the participation of young people in volunteering and social action continues apace. The #iwill national campaign to engage 10 to 20 year olds in social action and the expansion of the National Citizen Service for 15 to 17 year olds are just two examples of initiatives seeking to involve more young people in local communities. Other projects have focused on engaging teenagers, such as the Asda Active Sports Leaders programme. This looked to upskill and empower teenagers through Sports Leaders UK leadership courses and volunteering. As part of this programme, research explored the impact of courses on teenagers' interest in volunteering and social action and the factors that would encourage more involvement. The findings are summarised here.

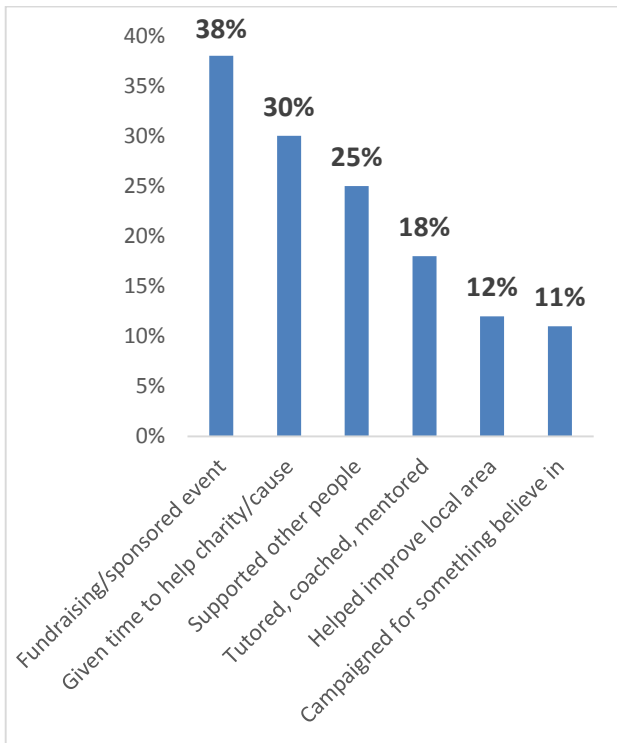
Levels and types of participation

Fifty five percent of teenagers are involved in volunteering and social action in the UKⁱ. These are activities which are unpaid and benefit other people or the environment. They include fundraising; helping improve local areas; campaigning; tutoring, coaching or mentoring; giving time to help a charity/cause; and supporting other people who aren't family or friends. New analysis of the 2014 Youth Action Survey (1274 teenagers) found that the most common activity is fundraising/sponsored events, with nearly two in five teenagers (38%) saying they did this in the past 12 months. One in five (18%) reported that they had tutored, coached or mentored someone (see figure 1).





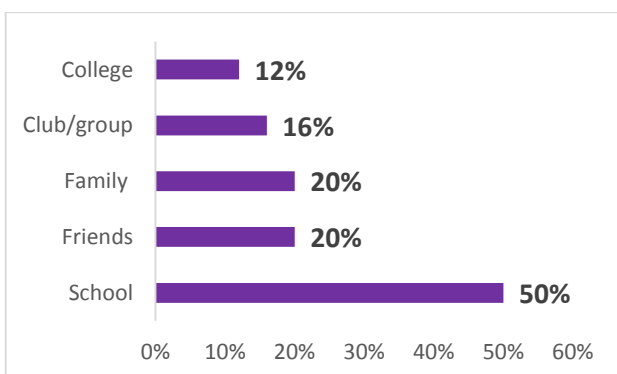
Figure 1: Types of volunteering among teenagers (n = 1274)



Amongst these volunteers, 45% are involved regularly, at least once a month in volunteering and social action. Nearly one in three (32%) participate only once or in a one off activity.

Half of teenagers (50%) get involved in volunteering and social action activities through school and 16% through a club or group (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Top five routes in (n = 1274)



Benefits of volunteering

Teenage volunteers identify a wide range of personal benefits from their participation in volunteering and social action. The enjoyment of helping others (66%) and having fun (39%) are the most commonly cited benefits (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Benefits of volunteering and social action (n = 1274)





The impact of a leadership course

The Sports Leaders UK awards and qualifications aim to develop confidence and leadership skills amongst learners so they can help others to get more active in their communities. The courses include a certain number of volunteering hours to support others in sport or physical activities. This might include, for example, helping to run a primary school's sports day or coaching a local football team. A key focus of the courses is on encouraging teenagers, in particular, to get involved in their communities through volunteering and social action. Over four in five teenager learners (83%) who completed at least one Sports Leaders UK course said that they were more likely to help the community in the future because of their course. Most learners (87%) felt inspired to do more to get others active:

"It made me more confident about leading a group, so I was later able to sign up to the Duke of Edinburgh's award and volunteering. I worked at my local play centre. It was brilliant so I kept volunteering afterwards and it actually led me to a paid playworker job for the summer"

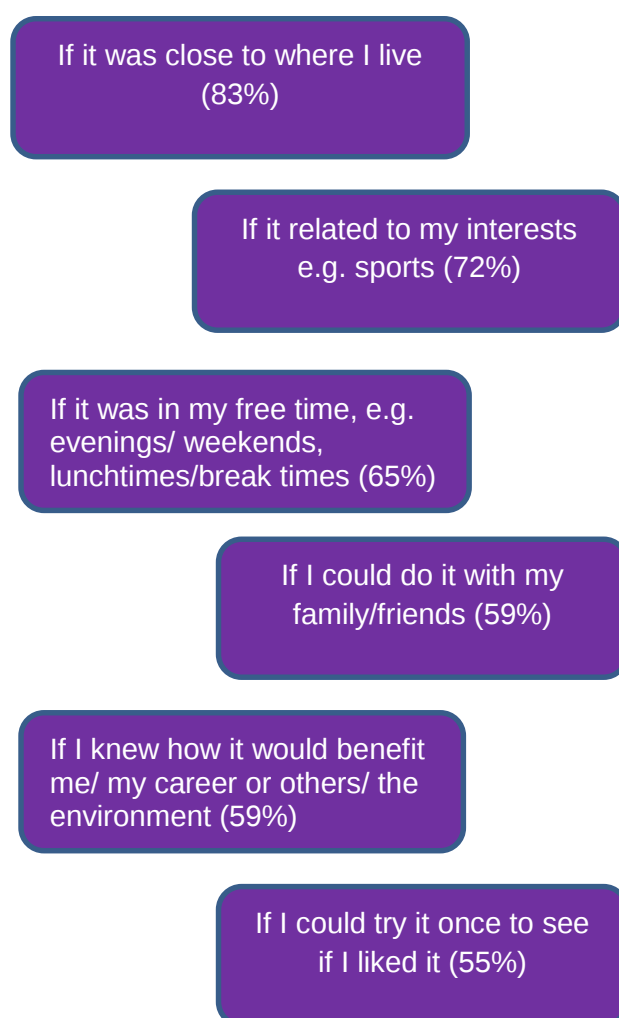
"I became the sports ambassador of the school and helped others become fit and more healthy!"

Encouraging further participation

Teenage learners were asked to reflect on the factors which would encourage them to get involved further in volunteering and

social action. Being able to volunteer close to where they live and getting involved in activities which relate to their interests e.g. sports, were the most commonly cited factors (see figure 4). Only 2% of learners said that there was nothing that would encourage them or that they were not interested in getting involved in volunteering and social action.

Figure 4: Factors that would encourage participation (n = 455)





Harnessing the enthusiasm

The research suggests that leadership programmes which include volunteering and social action activities can make a difference to teenagers' interest in getting involved in their community. To help harness his enthusiasm, the following is important:

For schools, colleges and course providers:

- Signposting teenagers to volunteering and social action opportunities during and immediately after their leadership courses, including do-it.org and joininuk.org and providing support to help them transition into new opportunities.

For volunteer involving organisations, clubs and groups:

- Providing flexible opportunities including 'taster' sessions and activities with family and friends. Many teenagers say they would get involved if they could do in their free time and if they could try it once to see if they liked it.
- Highlight to potential volunteers how their volunteering will benefit a particular cause/help people and how it will benefit them. Having fun, meeting new people and being able to make a difference are key benefits highlighted by teenagers in the research.

About the Asda Active Sports Leaders Project

The Asda Active Sports Leaders Project started in April 2014 and aimed to build on Sports Leaders UK's programme of providing awards and qualifications in sports leadership. It looked to upskill and empower young people through Sports Leaders UK training whilst raising the amount of volunteering delivered by teenagers across the UK. The partnership programme brought together Asda, ukactive, Sports Leaders UK and the Spirit of 2012 Trust.

About the Sports Leaders Research

Research was undertaken by IVR to explore the impact of the Asda Active Sports Leaders project. The second year of research during 2015/16 involved a survey of 707 learners who have completed a Sports Leaders UK course, a survey of 255 tutors, case studies and interviews with Sports Leaders. For further information see www.ivr.org.uk

About the Youth Action Survey

In 2014 Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Cabinet Office and Step up to Serve undertook a face to face survey of 2,038 10 to 20 year olds. IVR undertook further analysis of responses to this survey for 1274 teenagers.

ⁱ Based on further analysis of the Youth Action Survey 2014, available from <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>