

# Inspiring young women and girls to lead

Launched to mark the centenary of women's suffrage, EmpowHER encourages young women and girls (YW&Gs) to use their voices for positive change. Led by UK Youth, in partnership with the British Red Cross and Young Women's Trust, EmpowHER was a three and-a-half year programme addressing the worryingly low levels of wellbeing amongst YW&Gs in the UK, supporting them to give back to their local communities with inclusive, meaningful social action.

Co-designed with young people, EmpowHER is targeted at "unusual suspects" - young women and girls with low wellbeing who may have been excluded from social action opportunities due to lack of access or the necessary skills or confidence to engage, between the ages of 10 and 20.

Twenty-one youth organisations worked closely with UK Youth to flexibly adapt elements of the programme to their local context. The youth organisations and youth workers bring incredible value to the programme through their knowledge and expertise in their local context. They reached and engaged "unusual suspects" and understand how to adapt the programme to meet the different needs of different young people. Over 1800 young women and girls progressed through a powerful journey of social engagement, social learning, social

action and youth leadership, breaking down personal barriers and used their voice to lead change in communities.

The relationships and partnerships between funders, programme partners, delivery partners and young people enable wider sector development and sharing of best practice, particularly around social action, partnership working and a 'test and learn' approach.

EmpowHER was funded by Spirit of 2012 and the #iwill Fund. The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport invested £25 million seed funding to create the #iwill Fund, supporting young people to access high quality social action opportunities.



EMPOWHER

Created by

UK YOUTH

In partnership with

BritishRedCross



Funded in partnership by





## Key findings

Over 1800 young women and girls across the country have completed the EmpowHER programme. After completing EmpowHER, young women and girls report statistically significant improvement in:

- ★ Wellbeing indicators of happiness, feeling worthwhile and life satisfaction.
- ★ Their perceptions about their own abilities and that of young women and girls.
- ★ Their ability to make a positive difference where they live and to lead change, in addition to improvements across each of UK Youth's emotional and social capabilities, with the biggest improvement in confidence.
- ★ Their perception of and trust for others.

EmpowHER shows the impact that a single-gender, small-group, long-term intervention can have on the wellbeing and self-perception of young women and girls. Using the mechanism of social learning and social action, participating in EmpowHER improves the confidence and self-esteem of young women and girls and encourages them to lead change in their communities.

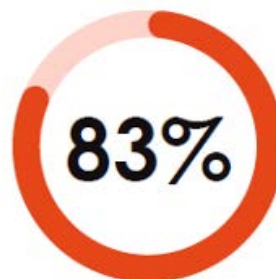


## Social action in school settings

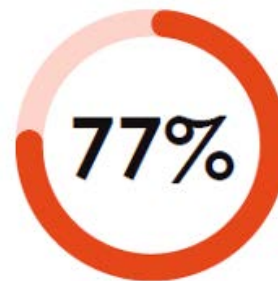
Engaging young women in quality, youth-led social action is a key feature of the EmpowHER programme. We have seen this work brilliantly in schools taking part in the programme so far, particularly when the whole school community gets involved to support the young women and girl's projects.

Social action in EmpowHER is inspired and led by the interests of the young women and girl's taking part. This has ranged projects embedded in the school community, such as championing positive mental health and first aid to their classmates or supporting younger pupils entering the school, to fundraising and collecting donations for local and national causes that they care about.

These projects give young women and girl's the opportunity to try new experiences and take ownership of their ideas. Taking part in social action is linked to an increase in wellbeing and has the double benefit of helping the school and wider community. This is in addition to giving young people a voice and increasing their confidence.



of respondents said doing social action was a good experience for them



of participants felt that social action helped people in their community



of young women and girls felt that doing social action helped them learn new things



"I would like to get more involved in local and national volunteering, fundraising and campaigning in the future as EmpowHER not only showed me how important it is, but also how fun it can be."

— Young Person

Here are some of the things we need from schools to make great social action happen:



- ★ A lead EmpowHER contact in the school who will be available to liaise with the EmpowHER delivery staff about social action plans (in-person, on the phone, or via email).
- ★ This contact will need to be able to make and authorise decisions about the plans being made. This may include authorising dates for events, the use of school grounds or equipment, or arranging for young women and girl's to be able to leave the school for trips or visits.
- ★ A clear outline of the school's policies around:
  - Holding events on school grounds or during school-time.
  - Taking young women and girl's out of school for events or visits.
  - Inviting visitors into EmpowHER sessions, e.g. to teach first aid, guest speak or deliver sessions, including whether these visitors will need to be DBS-checked.
- ★ Advance notice if sessions or events will be cancelled or poorly attended due to scheduled events such as mock-exams or school trips.

For youth-led social action to be effective within the timescale of the programme, we often need to work quickly to turn plans into actions. Commitment from schools to help us confirm dates and venues for social action as early as possible gives us more time for young women and girls to plan the best events and activities possible.