What did we learn?
1880
Young women and girls completed

A programme addressing low wellbeing amongst young women and girls through supporting their involvement in inclusive, meaningful social action.
Just one in four young women and girls (YW&G) between the ages of seven and 21 described themselves as “very happy” – down from 41% in 2009 (Girlguiding 2017)

Girls were found to have higher depressive symptoms than boys their age and were twice as likely to self harm, with the risk increasing for those from lower income households (Children’s Society 2018)

On average, the emotional difficulties of girls increase by 17% between the ages of 11 and 14 (Headstart 2020 - pre pandemic report)

A worsening picture... For those who already had poor mental health, 80% said the pandemic had made their mental health worse and 87% had felt lonely or isolated (Young Minds, 2020)
Of 10,000 young people surveyed by NCVO 77% agreed volunteering had improved their mental health (2019)

When young people were asked how social action benefits them, the single most common response was improved confidence and self-esteem (44%) with this response increasing to 50% for those in a transitional age range (National Youth Social Action Survey, 2019)

But..

Whilst 84% of young people want to help others, only 52% believe that they can make a positive difference in their communities (RSA, 2018)

Throughout history we’ve seen the spark of events and the power of connection in galvanising YW&G to effect radical change, indeed EmpowHER marked the centenary of women’s suffrage.
Reach and engage unusual suspects
YW&G with low wellbeing who may have been excluded from social action opportunities due to lack of access, skills or confidence.

Social Learning
The emotional and social capabilities we all need throughout life – here developed through themes of rights, resilience, empowerment and meeting relatable role models.

Inclusive and meaningful social action projects.

Youth leadership
Opportunities to become peer mentors and EmpowHER Ambassadors

Celebrate success!
What did EmpowHER feel like?

Sadie's EmpowHER Journey

Social Engagement

Social Learning

Social Action

Legacy

Social Leadership

Peer Engagement

One year on Sadie is a role model on EmpowHER – delivering talks and workshops to YW&G across the country, and is also volunteering in her local community.

With her youth worker's encouragement, Sadie becomes an EmpowHER ambassador, supporting EmpowHER groups across the country.

Sadie takes part in a leadership workshop delivered by Young Women's Trust.

Sadie becomes an advocate for the programme, encouraging her friends and siblings to get involved.

Sadie and her group secure funding for their project by pitching their idea at a social action pitch day.

Sadie starts to see what she is capable of.

Sadie's EmpowHER journey:

1. Social Engagement
   - Sadia lives in one of the most deprived areas in the UK.
   - Sadia has a difficult home life and faces a range of personal barriers to progression.
   - Sadia has never taken part in social action.
   - Sadia is going to be staying with family members further away for a few weeks and gets anxious on public transport, the youth worker organises transport from the access fund.
   - Sadia is encouraged to come along to try the youth centre.
   - A detached youth worker builds up a relationship with Sadia and her friends, spending time with them in their local area.
   - Sadia begins to learn about a range of female-specific issues, including the suffrage movement.
   - As her confidence builds, Sadia volunteers to lead a discussion on women's rights.
   - Reflection: Reflecting with her youth worker, Sadia feels a sense of success and accomplishment for the first time.

2. Social Learning
   - Sadia's group starts small with creating affirmation cards and then plans a bigger project, gaining tips from the British Red Cross.
   - A visit from a relatable role model gives Sadie a confidence boost.

3. Social Action
   - Sadia's group secures funding for their project by pitching their idea at a social action pitch day.

4. Peer Engagement
   - Sadia and her group secure funding for their project by pitching their idea at a social action pitch day.

5. Social Leadership
   - Sadia becomes an advocate for the programme, encouraging her friends and siblings to get involved.

6. Legacy
   - With her youth worker's encouragement, Sadie becomes an EmpowHER ambassador, supporting EmpowHER groups across the country.

Sadie's journey is an example of how EmpowHER can empower young women and girls by providing them with support, skills, and opportunities to engage in social action and leadership roles.
Who did we bring together?

Local knowledge and reach

UK Youth's Movement of over 7,000 organisations

Youth workers with deep roots into the community

Expert national partners

British Red Cross – unique social action opportunities and insights

Young Women's Trust - expertise on female empowerment

Funding

Funded by Spirit of 2012 and the #iwill Fund. The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport have invested £25 million seed funding to create the #iwill Fund

Co-Design

EmpowHER was designed, and developed, together with young people and youth workers – listening, learning and changing throughout the programme
So, what happened?

Who did EmpowHER reach?

- 83% of YW&G had 1 or more personal barriers
- 19% of YW&G had a disability
- 23% of YW&G were from the UK’s top cold spots for social mobility
- 28% of YW&G were from racialised communities
- 91% completion rate

*Disability includes poor mental health, Emotional Behavioural and Social Difficulties and Special educational needs and disabilities and physical disability*
What did the YW&G achieve for their communities?

| Social action projects | £8,879 raised | 20,009 people in communities reached |

“So, what happened?”

“I learnt the importance of getting involved in the community and that if you’re passionate about something, the impact you can have on other people is huge. I’ve never had the opportunity to do something for my community and EmpowHER gave me that”
Inspired by their own social learning the one group at Integrate focused their social action on supporting young women and girls in their school; leading a day of PSHE sessions for year 7 students, covering period poverty, mental health, social media usage and body image. The group gave students mental health badges to help destigmatise mental health in their school as well as care packages. The group also started a mentoring programme – each pairing with one student - to help the young people build healthy coping mechanisms.

“...It makes you excited, like you’re making a change and the world will one day be better because you’re doing something about it”
Through EmpowHER, Fay discovered a passion for empowering and motivating young women, girls and non-binary young people to speak out about issues affecting them. Finishing EmpowHER confident and inspired, Fay decided to volunteer as a peer mentor for the next cohort at her youth club, Preston Impact, supporting the group to get as much out of EmpowHER as she had.

Fay wasn’t finished there, in the next cohort she became an EmpowHER Ambassador, providing encouragement to EmpowHER participants across the country! Fay has now helped groups prepare for social action pitch days, supported partners with campaigns on wellbeing and women’s rights, been an EmpowHER role model, a pitch day judge, given a keynote speech at a national EmpowHER celebration event and SO MUCH MORE!

With her exceptional skills and drive for change Fay has now successfully secured an internship with the British Red Cross, where she will be supporting an exciting new EmpowHER Climate Change pilot. We can’t wait to see what Fay’s future holds.
Impact on the young women and girls?

WELLBEING

53% of YW&G reported increased levels of happiness
55% reported increased levels of life satisfaction
57% increased sense that things in their life are worthwhile

“The most amazing thing that I’ve seen through EmpowHER is that the young women don’t realise the significance of sisterhood, until they’re in it, and then by the end they do! And the love they have for each other at the end is phenomenal!”

*Change in all 3 ONS wellbeing indicators found to be statistically significant, measured using t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means (p<0.05).
Outcome data was only available for cohorts 1, 2 and 4, because a pre/post was not conducted during cohort 3, due to disruptions caused by the pandemic.
Impact on the young women and girls?

CONFIDENCE

63% of YW&G reported an increase in confidence

REDUCING LIMITING PERCEPTIONS

Percentage of YW&G reporting limiting perceptions before and after EmpowHER

- Around their gender:
  - Before: 28%
  - After: 15%

- Around their self-efficacy:
  - Before: 58%
  - After: 36%

*“limiting perceptions” means a candidate scored themselves between 0-6 out of 10 for the metric.*
Enablers: what made EmpowHER work?

What enabled the increase in wellbeing?

- A safe space to share
  - Relaxed atmosphere
  - Same gender group
  - Small group size
- Flexible curriculum
- Strong youth worker relationships (building trust long before the first session)
What enabled the YW&G to challenge and change limiting perceptions?

- Long term programme – it takes time!
- Social learning - exploring topics of women’s rights and stereotyping
- “I can do this” experiences – accessible social action opportunities
- A safe space to share and challenge limiting perceptions

What supported YW&G to identify and lead change?

- Being part of something bigger
- Exposure to relatable role models “people like me can lead”
- Opportunities – to lead, to speak, to achieve
Enablers: what made EmpowHER work?

What was driving improvements in social cohesion?

- **Learning** - deepening community understanding through social learning
- **Meeting new people** – spending time with peers, role models and members of the community
- **Social action** – opportunities to engage with community (works both ways!)

What are the enablers to creating long-term, youth-led social action habits?

- **Spark something** – deliver sessions that enable YW&G to identify causes they feel passionate about
- **Dare to be different** - encourage non-mainstream social action
- **Build belief** - increase confidence through challenging limiting perceptions
- **Get going** - instill positive feelings through quick, accessible social action early on
- **Time to develop** - build a social action skillset, get more ambitious!
- **So what’s next?** Harness the enthusiasm and connect to social action in your local area
CONFIDENT, INSPIRED, HAPPIER YW&G READY TO LEAD CHANGE

79% of YW&G reported that they were “quite likely or very likely” to take part in volunteering in the next 12 months.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

- **54%** YW&G feel a greater sense of trust in their local community
- **47%** YW&G feel they are more ‘often meeting’ people that are different to themselves
- **47%** YW&G feel more accepted by people they spend their time with
- **73%** of youth workers expressed that the programme improved links with local organisations

*Change in all 3 social cohesion indicators found to be statistically significant, measured using t-Test: Paired Two Sample for Means (p<0.05).
2022-23 will see UK Youth, in partnership with Spirit of 2012 and over 50 youth organisations, test bold approaches to embedding local social action that lasts.

Programme resource and knowledge now available to the sector through the digital EmpowHER Toolkit

Youth organisation’s utilising EmpowHER evidence and profile to draw down funding through demonstrating the programme’s power to local networks and funders.

And this is just the start!
Programmatic enablers

How do you fund change that lasts?

- An open honest funder/fundee relationship – a willingness to do things differently
- Multi-year funding
- Pauses to embed learning
- Fund thinking and learning time – not just delivery
- Talk about the end from the beginning and think about the tiny things that build sustainability
- Give space to build the evidence of the intervention
“Keep at it. Things might go wrong along the way but you have the power to change the world”

- Macie, 16 EmpowHER Ambassador
Thank You
UK YOUTH

UK Youth London Office, Kings Building,
16 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HQ

Avon Tyrrell Outdoor Activity Centre, Bransgore,
Christchurch BH23 8EE

Website: www.ukyouth.org
Telephone: 0203 1373 810
Company Number: 05402004
UK Youth Registered Charity Number: 1110590