

Starting young vital to lifelong volunteering and social action, says new research

November 27 2017

Children undertaking volunteering and service related activities from a young age, with strong support networks in place, are more likely to develop a habit of lifelong service, say researchers.

The University of Birmingham research found that participants who first engaged with service or volunteering under the age of 10 were more than twice as likely to have developed a [habit](#) of social action than those who began from 16 to 18.

Strong support networks and encouragement from schools were identified as key factors contributing to a lifelong 'habit of service' and social action.

The study, A Habit of Service, examined responses from over 4,500 young people - 3,300 of whom had been involved in youth social action programmes in the past 12 months.

It was found those within the 'habit' group were more likely to be female and they participated more frequently in a wider range of 'service' activities – such as helping their local community, volunteering or mentoring.

Dr Tom Harrison, University of Birmingham and co-author of the report, published by the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, stressed the practical importance of the research for social action providers across the country:

"These findings will help those in the voluntary sector plan and deliver youth social action programmes that support young people to cultivate a habit of service.

"The more people who contribute to the common good, the more likely we are to flourish as a nation."

The report found that the quality principles of social action, identified by charity Step Up To Serve, correlated with young people who have made a habit of service.

In particular, those with a 'habit of service' were more likely to have volunteering opportunities embedded in their school, college or university, and were more likely to feel they had the time, skills and confidence to participate.

The findings highlight the role that schools and other institutions can play in facilitating young people's engagement in social action, particularly by embedding character education and other enrichment activities.

Enjoyment of [service](#) activities was also found to be important, with participants who reported enjoying activities 'a great deal' 47 percent more likely to be in the habit group.

Those who had developed a 'habit' were also more likely to have parents and friends participating in similar activities.

Overall, friends' involvement had a more significant effect than parents," boosting participation by 14 percent within the habit group, and 12 percent amongst non-habit participants.

The report is launched in collaboration with the #iwill campaign, a

longstanding partner of the Jubilee Centre in researching youth social action.

Writing in the report's foreword, Dame Julia Cleverdon and Amanda Jordan, co-founders of charity Step Up To Serve who oversee #iwill, emphasised both the societal and the personal benefits social action can have:

"...social action not only improves communities, but at the same time it improves the lives of the [young people](#) who undertake it, developing their character and skills in the process – what we call the 'double benefit' of youth social action."

Provided by University of Birmingham

Citation: Starting young vital to lifelong volunteering and social action, says new research (2017, November 27) retrieved 9 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-11-young-vital-lifelong-volunteering-social.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--