

### **How will you prioritise empowering young people, particularly those from low economic or ethnic minority backgrounds, to volunteer and take social action?**

The Junction grew out of a piece of local community action research and has been shaped by the community ever since. Many of the young people we work with face multiple barriers to participation. However, our focus on creating a safe and welcoming environment, building relationships with young people and recognising their diversity helps young people to engage with us. We have a nested provision model which means there is not a set path through our services and young people can use them in a way that suits them. We therefore also offer different opportunities for social action. This includes having conversations with young people on the street about issues affecting them, one-off digital consultations and a regular volunteering commitment. Part of our process going forward is to review our listening practice which includes all these different ways young people have a voice. The review will involve asking young people how well they think we're doing and what the barriers are. We'll check our listening practice for bias and how representative it is. We also plan to put more focus on letting young people know about the changes they have been involved in creating. We hope this will help to inspire young people to get involved as they see that we genuinely listen.

### **How will you open up your decision-making structures to young people, particularly those from low economic or ethnic minority backgrounds?**

The Junction Youth Advisors [JYAs] is our inclusive, supportive volunteer role. It is open to young people who live, work or study in the local area and as well as to young people who have used our support services. The JYAs are involved in planning our services to make sure they will work for young people and meet their needs. The JYAs are also involved in planning ways to make sure the voices of other young people are heard.

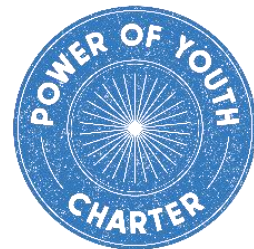
Informal consultation with young people who use our services through conversations. We let young people know that we've heard them and will follow-up on what they've said. We have dedicated space within our weekly Project Worker Meetings to share and use this learning.

Outreach sessions enable us to have conversations with young people who do not come into the building for support. We do these through street outreach, school stalls and community group sessions.

Our annual formal consultation helps us to connect with young people in the wider community by sharing it with local schools, youth organisations and on social media.

### **How will you work in partnership with young people & organisations to support youth social action & volunteering?**

We support young people we work with to get involved in social action and volunteering. This involves letting young people know about different opportunities such as joining the Junction Youth Advisors or taking part in a survey or focus group with another organisation. Young people can sign up to our contact list so they hear about opportunities even when they are no longer actively involved in our services. Our group of Junction Youth Advisors is made up of young people who attend different schools, colleges, universities etc. They provide a link between the Junction and other



organisations. This creates a flow of information and raises awareness of opportunities for participation or issues young people think need addressed. We are part of several networks and associations. This gives us a platform to share the work of our young volunteers and the experiences of other young people. It helps us keep up-to-date with what other organisations are doing and we are keen to find ways to work together more.

### **How will you evidence the benefits of youth volunteering and social action?**

We have created a new set of evaluation tools to use with young people. These evaluate our work against our Theory for Change. Our Theory of Change describes our approach to working with young people: - We use an assets based approach to working in partnership with young people – we recognise that young people are experts in their own lives and valuable contributors. - We honour the diversity of young people and offer a range of ways they can engage - We listen to young people and work with them to generate and share learning In addition, our Theory of Change includes Youth Participation as one of our key outputs. We will use our evaluation tools to ensure that young people are consulted with, inform service delivery and advise us on wider issues. Our evaluation tools will capture and measure the benefits of this approach and practice. We will also carry out an annual review of our listening practice through a survey for young people and a self-assessment carried out by a cross-organisation group. This will capture any additional examples of the benefits of youth participation.

### **How will you recognise and celebrate young people's impact?**

We currently recognise and celebrate young people's impact by:

- Sharing the JYA's work with our board in quarterly reports, Staff Team Meetings, on social media and our Annual Reports
- JYAs are also supported to apply for the Saltire Award which certifies their volunteering commitment.
- Project workers do annual 1 to 1 reviews with our JYAs. This is a chance to reflect on their learning, achievements and goal setting.
- We hold social events with the JYAs to say thanks for their input.
- We use social media, board reports and the annual report to share what we have learned from young people as a result of consultations etc throughout the year. This also gives us a way to recognise the differences there involvement has contributed to.

### **Any other comments:**

Young people's voices are already at the heart of our work. We have worked with the Listening Fund over the last two years to look at how well we are listening to and involving young people and where there is room for improvement. This will be an ongoing process for us. Our current priorities are around young people being part of developing our services as we face ongoing challenges following the pandemic. Where there is capacity, we hope to work with young people on wider social action around young people's health and wellbeing. This will certainly be an ongoing journey for us all and we look forward to what we will learn and achieve together.