



Social action toolkit

Age range: 14-16 and 16-19



Enter



About the toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide insights and tips to demonstrate how social action plays a strong part in developing a young person's skillset and what they stand for, which all help to showcase skills and personality to future employers.

The activities for students aim to support young people in understanding the range of opportunities that can provide them with transferable skills for work.

You may already have an established programme across your entire school or college to engage students in social action and volunteering opportunities, or it may be something you are looking to introduce – either way, this resource is designed so that you can tailor it to your teaching needs.

The toolkit can be used:

- In its entirety over a series of sessions for a comprehensive, step-by-step plan to get students involved with social action for the first time
- As individual, standalone activities to demonstrate to students who have already had direct experience with social action the transferable skills they are developing and where to go to continue with broader social action activities



Always start the session by agreeing ground rules with the group. For advice on this and other ways to establish a safe learning environment, download the [content guide](#).

Social action: Setting the scene for educators

This section provides key facts and insights on the social action landscape to introduce you to or broaden your knowledge of this area.

Social action is a term that covers a hugely diverse range of activities, and depends partly on the time your students are able to commit.

[This scale](#) gives examples of projects and activities that require different levels of involvement. You can also print the scale and use it as a handy guide for your students.



The scale of social action

Level of involvement	How much time should be spent?*	Example	Key skills gained:
High involvement	4-8 hours a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading peer-to-peer projects with organisations like the British Youth Council Championing causes and managing networks of volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership Proactivity Communication Networking Confidence Resilience
Frequent involvement	2-6 hours a week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundraising or volunteering for charities Becoming a school 'eco-leader' or helping to develop a skate park in your local community Helping to set up a 'Food Hub' filled with local produce 	
Regular involvement	1-3 hours every month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in a charity shop Joining a monthly youth debate panel to speak about issues you feel passionate about 	
One-off or occasional involvement	1-3 hours every 3-4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Giving one-off workshops to younger students e.g. drama/cooking classes Setting up a campaign on social media and getting others behind your cause by regularly tweeting about it and using the campaign hashtags 	

*Note that recommended time spent is a rough estimate and will vary for certain activities

Benefits of social action in developing core transferable skills

Social action helps to develop a range of core transferable skills such as communication, resilience and problem solving to help young people move forward into the world of work and showcase examples on their CV. Use the below resources to discover more about the job landscape and resources to embed these key skills into your lessons:

- [Online content for young people](#) on how the world of work is changing, which students can use in your lessons or as independent learning tasks
- [Core transferable skills lessons](#) to support you to deliver a full session on the transferable skills

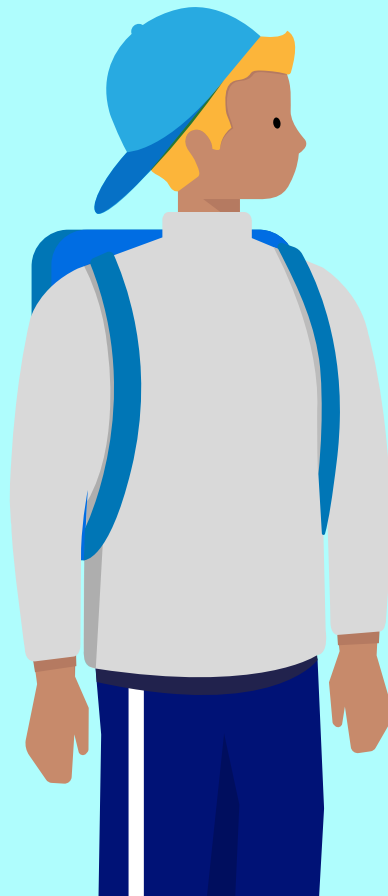


Young people and social action



74%

Young people participating in social action believe by doing so they could make a difference (74%).



19%

However young people (19%) stated there were 'few/no opportunities in their area'



52%

said they got involved through school/college

Source: [Ipsos Mori, National Youth Social Action Survey 2019](#)

Impact of social action on employability

With good quality work experience placements sometimes difficult to secure, social action can be a great way to give students access to hands-on work opportunities. Evidence suggests that taking part in social action boosts employability by expanding social and professional networks. A trial found that young people taking part in social action were:

3 x more likely to be invited to an interview if volunteering was on their CV

10% more likely to be successful in an interview

Source: [The Behavioural Insights Team, 'Does social action help develop the skills young people need to succeed in adult life?'](#)



"I created a social enterprise called Street Seminars – it's a combination of a collaborative network and a platform for young people to spread their ideas for social change in their communities. The skills gained from committing to a social action initiative like this are totally transferable to the workplace – it often brings together young people from all walks of life, encouraging them to interact and build skills like communication, passion and dedication."

Jamala

Health and wellbeing impact

Join In found that participants in sport volunteering programmes had **10% higher self-esteem**, emotional wellbeing and resilience than non-volunteers.

Source: [#iwill Health and wellbeing and social action factsheet, 2016](#)



Case study

Lots of schools have embedded successful social action programmes – why not use the case studies on the following pages as ‘tried and tested’ inspiration with your students.

“I am in charge of the British Heart Foundation [‘Heartstart’](#) programme, which offers CPR training courses. Our S6 pupils are trained to deliver this in our local primary schools. We encourage staff buy-in and high quality delivery by running instructor sessions with teachers as well.

We also run [Mentoring Violence Prevention](#) (MPV) training, helping students deal with a variety of scenarios, such as rumours and homophobia. Students were taken on a trip and completed a course; we also have an area within the school for others to come and share issues, which has been a real breakthrough as we find students are more likely to approach their peers than a teacher.

Students experiencing the programmes have shown increased maturity, reliability and responsibility, as well as developing important skills like proactivity, teamwork and leadership.

The school has been nominated for a Health and Wellbeing award by the Scottish Education Service and received a Heart Start Award.”

Greg Leighton, St Paul’s High School, Scotland

Case study



"We have successfully run the [Envision Project](#) with our Year 12 students for the past two years. We chose this project as it combines social action with employability skills. Businesses, schools, charities and volunteers deliver the project side by side which provides a really varied and practical learning experience, and enables the students to develop the skills they need to transition confidently into work. All the while, the students are developing projects which give back to their local community.

Staff across the school are involved alongside me, our deputy head of 6th Form and our careers manager. Together we work to inspire the class teachers who support the day to day running of the programme.

The programme sees our academy partnered with a local company which provides volunteer mentors. Through a mixture of weekly coaching sessions, workshops and cross-city events our students are supported to identify an issue they care passionately about and come up with a way they can help solve it.

Every student that has taken part in this programme has developed core transferable skills like communication, confidence and problem solving; they also gained valuable experience of being in a real workplace. A group of students from the programme recently went for some work experience interviews and several were offered a placement – students had drawn on their experience of social action to demonstrate their skills and abilities."

Jackie Plimmer, Handsworth Wood Girls Academy, West Midlands

Case study



"Social action in the school where I was the Principal was one of the very real ways we brought the school's mission and values to life. It helped to support students to develop the principles and character traits we felt were important for their future, going beyond the curriculum and making a bigger difference to our local and global community.

We already had established links with our local homeless shelter, and so asked students to bring in goods such as toothpaste, toothbrushes, socks, toiletries etc. We also established a toy swap with a refuge who were providing shelter to women with their young children. On a global scale we had students fundraise to help a school we had links with in Tanzania to build a canteen through bake sales, friendship bracelets and concerts.

To build further on this foundation of social action, I worked with a colleague to establish an after-school volunteering club. The club attracted students who weren't as engaged with other activities, like sport and music, or academic learning, but who wanted to make a contribution to school and community life. The club began with visits to a local old people's home, and then extended to a 'buddy scheme' to give peer-to-peer support to those having a hard time at school.

We made a conscious and strategic commitment to make local and global social action as part of our development plan. We wanted the volunteering club and the action of the teacher to be more sustained, making social action part of the norm. It brought greater social cohesion to our community, and developed important attributes that boosted students' confidence to take on future endeavours."

Helen O'Donoghue, former Principal

Case study



"We embedded social action from Year 7 to 11. All years participate in several fundraising events throughout the year, with proceeds being donated to W.I.S.H. (We Intend to Save Humanity), a community organisation established by one of our former students.

The W.I.S.H. board, which consists of staff and students at the school, decide on which causes to support each year. All of the programmes are managed by the Lister Careers team, with assistance from willing members of staff and Senior Students. The W.I.S.H. Charity now operates in more than one local secondary school, and a greater number of students are involved in community groups and activities.

Year 7 and 8 students take part in the [WE Movement](#) to design small-scale programmes to help disadvantaged members of the local community. In Year 10, all students take part in a team volunteering challenge for World of Work Week. They do this as part of a collapsed timetable, which facilitates greater staff involvement. Activities vary from re-painting park benches to renovating children's playgrounds.

One of the school's core values is that all members of the community are 'kind, polite and considerate', and social action sits well with this. We have an ever-growing proportion of the school community who are keen to be involved; largely, it is now the students who drive new developments in the programme.

The various projects have provided countless opportunities for student leadership, boosting their self-esteem and confidence. They see the product of their efforts, and come to understand that sometimes they must sacrifice individual preference for the greater good."

Simon Beck, Lister Community School, London

Crowd fund a project

If you need to get investment for your project, why not think about crowd funding a project idea through [Spacehive.com](https://spacehive.com). They have a funding platform for projects that make local places better.

For tips and guidance on ways to recognise students' success and shout about your school's achievements, see the activity "[Celebrating success](#)" in section 3 of the toolkit.



Introducing students to social action

30-60 mins

This section is designed to inspire students by introducing the variety of opportunities that the term 'social action' encompasses, and help them understand the skills that employers value.

Key learning outcomes

- Identify different examples of social action
- Recall a range of key facts and figures around social action
- Explain the types of skills that can be developed through social action
- Describe possible opportunities for social action in their local area



Icebreaker activity

- Ask students to stand up and come to the front of the room. Make it clear that one end of the room represents high involvement in social action (4 hours a week), whilst the other end represents lower involvement (1 hour a week)
- Tell them you are going to read out examples of social action, and for each they are going to place themselves along this invisible 'scale' of social action. Click [here](#) for the list of examples
- As students move along the line, ask them to justify their decision. You may find that some position themselves in very different places; encourage them to debate why the same activity may warrant more/less commitment in certain instances. Factors could be needing to balance other responsibilities, seasonality, levels of need in their local area etc.
- Remind students that big or small, depending on how much time they can realistically commit to, the important thing is to be committed to making a difference

- To gauge students' starting points and track progress, ask them to consider what they already know about social action, what benefits can it offer and what is its value to different people? They can record their thoughts as a mind map, or whole class on a graffiti wall, to be revisited later
- You may want to draw on examples from activities in your school or local community to make the exercise feel more relevant to your students
- You can use [“The scale of social action”](#) from the scene-setter section to give students a more concrete overview of the ways they can engage with social action at different levels of involvement

Icebreaker activity: Examples of social action



Got involved in a campaign to make a change in your community



Set up a peer-to-peer school 'buddy' mentoring scheme



Helped clear up an allotment down the road



Set up a 'Food Hub' selling locally sourced produce



Ran activities on sustainability for younger students to become 'eco leaders'



Organised a charity fundraising gig



Organised a Christmas carol fundraising tour of the neighbourhood



Did a 5k run to raise money for a charity or cause close to your heart



Set up a reading club for people in the community with learning difficulties



Organised a cake baking sale at school to raise funds



Paid regular visits to an old people's home to help entertain the residents

Video comprehension activity: Social action – what is it?

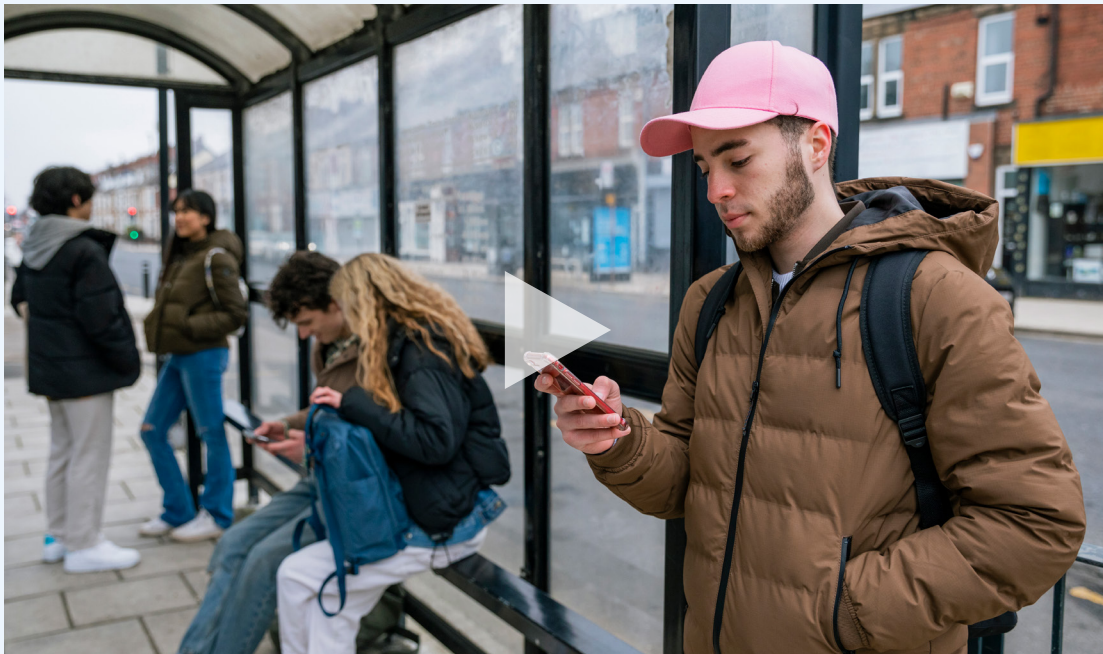
Play the video [“Social action – what is it?”](#), asking students to remember as much as they can. They can make notes if they want. Then ask the questions on the right to check for learning:



1. Name at least two of the examples of ways you can get involved in social action. Make sure the four answers below are covered:
 - Fundraising or volunteering for charities
 - Helping to improve your local area
 - Mentoring someone
 - Campaigning for issues you feel passionate about
2. What skills can you develop for your CV through social action and talk about in interviews?
 - Communication, empathy, teamwork, passion, resilience – can your students think of any others?
3. What organisations do they mention in the video?
 - British Youth Council, the #iwill campaign, The Challenge, Spacehive – can your students think of any others?

Video comprehension activity: Social action stories

Play the video [“Social action stories”](#) and ask students to take notes as they watch. Divide the class in two – one will be taking notes on Ciara’s story, and the other on Matthew’s. Then complete a comprehension exercise based on content:



1. What problem did Ciara/Matthew identify?
2. What steps did they take to get their project off the ground?
3. What did they achieve with their projects?
 - What were the outcomes/results and what impact did they have?
4. How did they benefit from taking part in the projects?
 - Focus on the two types of benefit, i.e. the social advantages for their local community, and the personal advantages that it can offer them in terms of employability skills
5. How do social action projects help to develop independence?

Does your school have any links to initiatives in your local area that you could draw on for examples of social action, to make this activity more relevant to students’ community?

The [Scale of Social Action](#) shows just how varied this could be.

Employability benefits of social action

30-60 mins

This section is to demonstrate to students the benefits of social action for the recipients, as well as their personal development and career prospects.

Key learning outcomes

- Understand how social action can build core transferable skills for work
- Understand how social action can positively change how they are portrayed by employers on social media and in interview situations
- Create their own case study of a real organisation and evaluate the important values and skills it develops through the eyes of an employer



Social action as a skill in the workplace

- Ask students to think about the skills the two people in the [“Social action stories”](#) video used and developed. Encourage them to consider the ways that the skills they have demonstrated can be transferable for work. Ask them to record their thoughts in a table, with each person as a separate heading
- Use the following slide to introduce students to the core transferable skills they can develop



Core transferable skills

Problem solving	Listening and speaking (communication)	Creativity	Aiming high (proactivity)	Leadership	Staying positive (resilience)	Adaptability
Being able to break down something tricky or challenging, discover a solution and evaluate the result. You might do this on your own or with other people.	The verbal and physical communication skills we use every day to explain ourselves to other people, and to understand what others are telling us.	Helps you complete a task or tackle a challenge in a different way, come up with new ideas and use your imagination.	Putting in your best effort, thinking ahead, and planning what to do to reach your goals.	Being able to understand how others around you are feeling so you can motivate them and make decisions to reach a goal.	Not giving up even when facing a challenge, and when things go wrong, looking for what you can learn, to improve things next time.	Getting used to change quickly and being able to do your best even when unexpected things happen.

Using social action to plan for your dream job

Get students to think about their dream jobs and the next steps they'd need to take to achieve them. Spend a few minutes getting them to map out each step in a table or flow diagram, along with:

- The core transferable skills required
- How these skills can be developed via other social action-related activities

Here's an example:

My dream job: Carpenter



Key next steps	Core transferable skills required	What social action activity can help?
Get level 1 Diploma to access an apprenticeship	Resilience, dedication/commitment	Working late after school to make some bird houses for a local gardening project, while studying hard to finish the Diploma
Complete apprenticeship	Communication skills when working with colleagues	Working as a team on a volunteering project
Interview for job in construction firm	Confidence and good presentation skills to impress at interview and communicate your passion/interests	Interviewing for a volunteering job, public speaking for a campaign you're passionate about

Using social action to plan for your dream job

My dream job: Web developer



Key next steps	Core transferable skills required	What social action activity can help?
Completing a computing/web design foundation degree	Resilience, creativity, digital skills	Getting training as part of an IT-based project e.g. setting up a funding page on a charity website and then blogging about your experience
Work experience in an IT firm	Teamwork, communication, digital skills, problem solving	Working in a charity's HQ with their tech team

Supporting resources

- Deliver the [core transferable skills lessons](#) to explore the skills employers are looking for in today's workplace, such as adaptability, creativity and leadership
- Encourage students to independently look at:
 - [‘I want insight into how the world of work is changing’](#) to delve deeper into core transferable skills
 - [‘Develop skills and discover new ones’](#) to help them think about where they've learned useful transferable skills from school, friends, hobbies etc.

For inspiration on what other organisations are doing, here's a list:

Organisation

[British Youth Council](#)

[#iwill Campaign](#)

[Spacehive](#)

[National Citizenship Service](#)

[Citizenship Foundation](#)

[National Council for Voluntary](#)

[Organisations \(NCVO\)](#)

[Vinspired](#)

[Traid](#)

[UK Youth Parliament](#)

[Scottish Youth Parliament](#)

[Jack Petchey Foundation](#)

[St John's Ambulance](#)



Why not further inspire students with this young person's advice?

"Social action demonstrates a lot of skills that exam results or academic achievements can't. Work is often a community, so being part of your community and helping others goes hand-in-hand with employment. It reveals a bit about what you are interested in and where your passions lie. Demonstrating that you have no explicit reason to engage with a project, other than your own willingness, shows genuine commitment."

Ciara

Put it into action

60 mins

For initial planning and additional days/weeks to put into action, check on progress and celebrate success, depending on the time available.

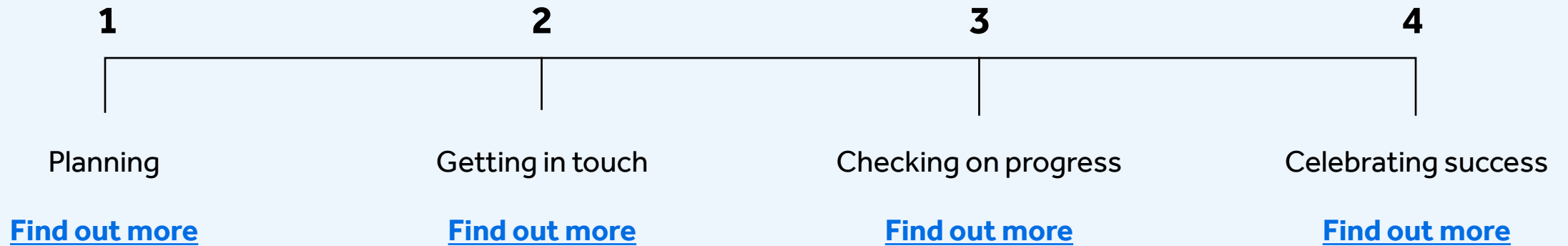
This section takes students through every step of the social action journey – taking initiative, initial planning, celebrating success and inspiring their peers.

Key learning outcomes

- Plan and implement their social action strategy
- Research and consider how to approach organisations for opportunities
- Recognise the skills and experiences gained through social action that can impress future employers
- Be able to celebrate both their success and their peers



The social action journey



Planning

Tell students that it's time to take things into their own hands and create their own social action experience. To get them inspired about being proactive and making positive changes to shape their future, show spoken word artist George the Poet's short film [Have the Edge](#).



- First, ask students to think of a cause that's close to their heart. Remind them it can be on a smaller, local scale, as much as it can be a larger or global project
- They'll need to research the cause/issue/organisation, and write down why this particular project is important to them
- Then, get them to fill in a log including:
 - Who they're supporting and why/what choice they're making and why
 - Their objectives for working towards supporting their cause or having an impact (use the SMART goals acronym)
 - Practical information (e.g. contact details of organisation, timeline, availability to do what they've set out)
 - How they will promote what they are doing through social media
 - Key next steps and milestones

Getting in touch

- Get students to draft an email making first contact and explaining their interest and level of commitment
- Ask students to partner up and review each other's emails and offer feedback
- Encourage them to make contact by sending their email or letter outside of the lesson

Supporting resources

- Use the [Communication and digital skills at work lesson](#) to help students with email tone and language
- Show students '[7 things you need to know about volunteering](#)' for tips including where to start, going to interviews and good questions to ask
- Point students to the '[Tactics for approaching contacts](#)' guide

Extension activity

Deliver an interview practice session to prepare students for applications for volunteer jobs.

The following tools and lessons on the LifeSkills site can help develop interview technique, and increase confidence:

- [Virtual Interview Practice tool](#)
- [Interview success](#) lesson plan
- [The importance of challenge](#) 10-minute activity

Checking on progress

- Set aside time once a month to check in on students' progress – if possible, schedule brief one-to-one sessions to see how they're getting on and update the log they created earlier. This could be worked on as a form time activity
- Some students may require additional support to set up their social action project and develop their independence. Why not ask them to set small, achievable goals which can be met within shorter time frames, and encourage them to check in more regularly with their teacher/peers
- To check progress, ask students to revisit any planning completed earlier (e.g. their mind map, graffiti wall, SMART goals), to see how they've done against the objectives for their specific project. This will help to identify where students still have goals they would like to meet and promote solution-focused conversations if difficulties arise

"Social action has really boosted my confidence to enter the workplace; for example, as part of a project I worked on, I was trained in public speaking and went on to lead presentations in the House of Commons."

Matthew



Celebrating success

- Organise a celebration assembly asking students to present their achievements to inspire their peers
- Hold an awards ceremony, including categories to recognise the different types of achievement, for example:
 - **Most entrepreneurial:** the person who showed greatest proactivity by setting up their own initiative and sharing it with peers
 - **Most committed:** the person who has dedicated the most hours to their social action
 - **Community engagement:** most locally-driven social action plan that has visibly benefitted people in their community
 - **Best social networking:** the social action campaign that got the most traction on social media
- Get students to write a letter to school governors, local MPs or newspapers about their achievements; this is a great writing exercise for students, helping them to understand and express the important skills they have learnt, and is a great way to get recognition from your wider community. They could also use social media to share their achievements
- Got a careers day or CV writing workshop coming up? Why not hold a special session dedicated to including the key skills they've learnt to show students how social action can really supercharge their CV. Check out the [CV builder tool](#) to help

Lola's tip

"Working towards a deadline, delegating tasks in a team, creating eye-catching campaigns... these are all skills employers look for on a CV and which can very often be developed via social action."

For older students

Get them to blog about their experience for the school or college website, or have them set up their own blog. If you're not already familiar with blogging sites, use the [educator's digital guide](#) (blog guide) for tips and support.