**Comic Relief**

**New programme launching on April 10th and open until** -**12th May**

**#iwill Youth Social Action Fund**

**Short text**

We're inviting proposals which effectively build relationships with young people between the ages of 10 and 20 years old from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not currently participate in youth social action in their own community, and which engage those young people in creative and meaningful youth social action.

**About the initiative**

Last year 42% of 10-20 year olds took part in meaningful youth social action like campaigning, fundraising and volunteering, spreading positive ripples around communities across the UK. For people taking part youth social action creates opportunities to learn, be recognised for their contributions, and improve networks between peers and communities. There is also evidence that it may help with employability of young people. Yet there is still a gap in the level of youth social action undertaken by young people from less affluent backgrounds.

Comic Relief has partnered with the #iwill campaign, match funding to create a £2.4m pot to target young people from less affluent backgrounds not taking part in youth social action. #iwill is a UK-wide campaign aiming to get 6 out of 10 young people involved in social action by 2020. Big Lottery Fund and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport have each invested £20 million to support young people access high quality social action opportunities.

Co-produced with young people, and championing peer to peer engagement and the importance of trust building, this scheme will fund projects to seek out young people where they are, and encourage those from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in and lead youth social action. This cohort has been identified through #iwill analysis of youth social action, creating the term ‘reluctant’ young people.

The criteria for the grants will be:

* Ability to demonstrate effective ways to build relationships with ‘reluctant’ young people in their own community
* Ability to demonstrate how they will engage those young people in creative, innovative and meaningful social action

Activity funded under this programme will reflect the Step Up To Serve 6 Shared Principles of quality social action, to be; challenging, youth-led, socially impactful, progressive, embedded and reflective.

Youth social action can include any activities around campaigning, fundraising and volunteering, all of which can create a double benefit for communities and the young person themselves.

We are keen to fund projects that will work with young people in areas of high need and deprivation, and where there are minimal services or activities available for young people. We would expect applicants to demonstrate the need of the young people they will work with, based on indices of deprivation, unemployment and other measures as they see fit.

**Engaging the ‘reluctant’ young people**

Successful projects will be expected to demonstrate they understand and have a track record of successfully engaging this cohort through a range of activity:

* Outreach – we would expect funded projects to invest time and effort in finding young people that are not currently engaged with their organisation on their own turf, whether that is in geographic locations or through targeted social media
* Prioritising peer support and staff with similar lived experience in their project activity
* Strong investment in the value of friendship and friendship groups
* Effective and innovative use of social media threaded throughout activity
* Creating and maintaining trusting relationships with the targeted cohort – whether directly or in partnership with other trusted organisation/business/enterprise
* Use of incentives to attract young people, such as activities they may not otherwise have access to
* Use of creative arts like music, or spoken word, to engage and build the confidence of young people, and help build effective relationships

**Types of projects and youth social action activity**

Youth social action should be youth led, but the young people who helped us co-develop this initiative were most interested in activity focusing on the following areas:

* Mental health
* Children in care, or those who have left care
* Homelessness
* LGBTQ+

Types of activity they proposed could sit under these topics fell into three areas, which may apply across all topics, or just one:

* Awareness and education
* Handling change
* Support at the right time

Young people expected youth social action to be developed, led, and managed by young people, and suggested activities including the following: Young people developing a local music festival with a focus on raising awareness of youth mental health or youth homelessness. The core group of young people would be involved in fund raising for the event and securing sponsorship, organising the event, volunteering, researching the social issue. This was seen as an ambitious but exciting and innovative idea which, if targeted effectively, would attract a range of young people.

* A range of creative activity providing peer support to young people in care. Ideas could include straight one to one mentoring, as well as more creative peer support through film making projects, art or spoken work events to explore issues and encourage young people in care to express their thoughts.
* A bus travelling around schools and colleges educating young people on LGBTQ+ issues. The content of the bus would include factual, helpful information and sign posting, as well as creative content about particular case studies and experiences to share and generate conversation.

Successful applications would reflect the innovative and exciting ideas young people think would be most likely to attract and engage the ‘reluctant’ young people, though we would not expect applications to show an exact replica of the ideas reference above.

**Funding available**

Funding is available for grants of between £20,000 to £50,000 per year for up to three years (with a maximum of £150,000 in total). We would expect to see a range of applicant sizes, so projects are strongly encouraged to apply for funding proportionate to their size and structure. We expect to make 15-30 grants in total. Of the total amount available £400,000 is available for grants in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In exceptional circumstances and where there is clear broader strategic value, we may consider making a larger grant of up to a total of £250,000. Requests to apply for this larger amount are welcome by invitation only and following a discussion with Comic Relief. Discussions will be held by phone on 24th and 27th April, 2-5pm and can be arranged by emailing grantsinfo@comicrelief.com. We would make no more than two of these larger grants.

**Eligibility**

Organisations applying to this initiative must meet Comic Relief’s general eligibility requirements. Please read our FAQs and Grant-making policies. In addition we will prioritise organisations that:

* Have a strong track record of working with young people in areas of deprivation and poverty
* Can demonstrate the leadership of young people in their organisation, and how young people have helped develop their applications
* Have engaged with the young people would benefit from this work and have demonstrable knowledge and experience of the communities they will be working with
* Have existing strong working partnerships with local business, enterprises, or other groups that may be able to help with the outreach and engagement of “the ghosts”

**Key dates and process**

The application process will be will a one stage process and we will be open for proposals from 11th April to midday on 12th May 2017. In the proposal form we will request a short (max three mins) film on the project.

Once we receive your proposal, we’ll initially check whether your organisation and proposal are eligible for funding under this initiative and then shortlist the strongest proposals to go through for a full assessment. Young people who have co-developed the grants initiative to this stage will help with the shortlisting process. We’ll aim to notify all applicants of our decisions at this stage in June 2017. If your proposal is unsuccessful at this stage, we’ll be unable to provide any additional feedback due to our limited resources.

Assessments on the proposals which pass this stage will take place over June and July 2017 and final decisions will be made by our Grants Committee and Trustees. We also expect that young people will conduct interviews on youth leadership during the assessment process.

We aim to inform all applicants of the final decision in early October 2017. If your proposal is unsuccessful at this stage we’ll write to you explaining the reasons why and may offer further feedback by phone.

**Applications through the Comic Relief Website - http://www.comicrelief.com**