

## SUPPORTING YOUTH LED CHANGE

### SCOPING RESEARCH - PROPOSAL

#### Background to the research

The Blaggrave Trust is a focused youth sector funder with a particular interest in initiatives that amplify young people's voices on issues that affect them. We have recently appointed a policy manager who is working alongside our existing grants programme (funding organisations that support young people facing disadvantage to successfully transition to adulthood) and the Listening Fund (supporting youth organisations to embed feedback and listening practices into their work with young people).

Through our developing policy work we want to identify and pursue improvements to policies that impact the transition to adulthood for young people facing disadvantage. Consistent with our [broader moves towards being a youth-led funder](#), our board has recently agreed that we do this in a way that:

- Is led by young people (particularly those that have directly experienced the issues we exist to help tackle)
- Helps us understand what effective youth led change looks like
- Helps us understand how young people can best be supported influence and work with decision makers, managers and policy and research professionals
- Tangibly contributes to knowledge about youth led change in the funding/youth sectors and offers guidance on how to support this well.

We are now seeking a researcher/adviser who can help us (and potentially others via a published report) learn where young people are leading policy or structural change, what this change looks like and how we can best support it as an independent funder.

#### Context

There is a long history and extensive experience in the social sector of youth (or 'user) voice being a feature of policy making. We are interested in the kind of structural change that might result in a reversal of the power dynamic that even this work implies: what change we might see if we, as a funder and as policy professionals, completely follow the lead of young people who are experiencing the issues we work on, and want to see the reality of those issues change, for themselves and others.

Digital platforms are enabling issues to rapidly rise in public consciousness and young people to mobilise around them at a scale that has not previously been possible (environmental campaigning, adolescent mental health, and US gun laws all being very recent examples).

We know that young people who are willing, able and ready to lead change may or may not be engaging with charities and other (adult-led) organisations as they mobilise, and we want to be able to learn from and support them regardless of this.

Our primary focus will be on the impact of working with young people with lived experience of inequality and difficult transitions to adulthood, though we are interested in the dynamics and effectiveness of youth-led change more generally.

We are working closely with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We are keen to build upon the scoping research and early learning from their [Act for Change Fund](#), and in the medium term, to support the development of shared objectives and framework of understanding in this field in the UK.

Ensuring we develop on PHF's work rather than duplicating it, we will be particularly keen to learn what youth led change (particularly activism, advocacy and campaigning) looks like as distinct from other forms of youth engagement and participation, and implications for funders interested in supporting individuals as well as organisations.

#### *Working definitions*

- For the purpose of this work we define young people as aged 14 – 25
- By youth-led change we mean where young people determine the objectives and the process of their work, mobilise others behind the cause, determine the type of support they would like (if any), and feel accountable for any change that results; and where they are aiming challenge the root causes of social problems by shifting public opinion or affecting policy or systems change.

#### **Research questions and outputs**

- What do we already know of the youth-led change 'field' – what evidence is there in the UK and what does it tell us (building on background research and bibliography from Act For Change Fund scoping research, to be provided)
- Where are young people already leading change in and beyond their communities? (change to be understood in terms of policy or public opinion)
- What methods are they employing to drive change and how or to what extent are they different from methods employed by adults?
- How might we understand 'success' of youth led change – what are potential indicators of success?

We are also keen to explore the following questions, though anticipate that these may need to be addressed through an additional second phase of research:

- What enables and hinders success?
- What are the potential benefits and risks of supporting youth-led change as opposed to more traditional / conventional forms of policy development?
- What are the practical and legal implications for Blagrove, including of funding individuals directly?

The scope of the research is primarily within the UK, but notable international examples might be cited.

We want this to be research-in-action, with the adviser sharing findings and working with us as they go. These questions should also be addressed in a short final report that can be shared publicly.

### **Specification**

We are seeking a researcher/adviser with direct experience of activism, who is well connected to networks of grassroots activists, and who already holds, or can build, relationships with a broad range of organisations and individuals in this space to inform their findings. Ideally, they would also have knowledge and/or experience of disadvantage and inequality affecting successful transitions to adulthood.

We would like emerging findings to be available to inform funding decisions to be made in July 2019. The adviser should be willing to travel across the UK to meet with young activists, as well as to work closely with Blagrave's policy manager.

### **Timing**

- Activists/researchers invited to express interest (28<sup>th</sup> March – 10<sup>th</sup> April)
- Interviews and development of proposals (w/c 15<sup>th</sup> April)
- Confirmation of researcher (w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> April)
- Fieldwork and informal sharing of findings (starts w/c 22<sup>nd</sup> April)
- First draft of findings and meeting with Blagrave team: (w/c 27<sup>th</sup> May or w/c 17<sup>th</sup> June, to be agreed)
- Published report (if relevant) and decision on second phase (by end July)

### **Budget**

Up to £18,000 including VAT. This is based on:

Up to £11,000 (including VAT) for initial research, scoping and first report (by end June 2019), based on a day rate of £450 per day and 20 days' work. Up to £3,000 for travel and additional costs including potential involvement of young activists in developing ideas. An additional £4,000 for publication.

### **Next steps**

Please email [Philippa.knott@blagravetrust.org](mailto:Philippa.knott@blagravetrust.org) to express interest by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> April, with a short (up to 600 words) overview of how you would approach the project, your skills and credentials and details of two referees. If we would like to proceed, we would request an initial conversation, followed by further written detail on:

- Your approach to answering research questions, including methodology
- Experience of activism and campaigning, particularly led by young people
- Research experience and credentials
- Your approach to our key milestones and budget.