



**IMPACT REPORT**  
APRIL 2011 –  
MARCH 2017

# Impact Report

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The Near Neighbours programme works to bring people together who are neighbours in communities that are religiously and ethnically diverse, so that they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in.

This is achieved through our local presence in communities across England with hubs and coordinators; a small grants fund to provide support for local projects; and a network of national partners to provide training, expertise, and resources.

Between September 2011 and March 2017:

- Near Neighbours has funded 1,433 projects across England, disbursing over £4,724,000. Over one million people are estimated to have benefitted from all small grants.
- 89% of projects brought people together from at least three faith groups or those of no faith.
- 98% of project leads agree that participants felt more connected in their local community and 95% of projects leads agree that there is a greater sense of togetherness or community spirit.
- Over 430 young people have taken part in the Catalyst leadership programme, which equips them with the skills and confidence to take on leadership roles, develop local social action, and transform their own communities.
- National partners have organised over 650 events in local areas, which have brought together over 37,000 people.





# Working in Local Communities

Near Neighbours works in Greater Manchester, East Lancashire, West Yorkshire, Midlands, Luton and London.

Each of the locations we work in is covered by a local hub. These hubs act as a focal point for much of the work of the programme and they are often existing faith-based organisations involved in social action.

A Near Neighbours coordinator is based at each hub, who uses their local knowledge and networks to bring local people together. This can include working with groups to apply for small grants, supporting funded projects with advice and guidance, and developing relationships between local faith and community groups. Recent evaluation found that local coordinators meet many new people in local areas, showing that Near Neighbours reaches beyond the 'usual suspects' and is able to engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups.



*Recent evaluation found that Near Neighbours hubs and coordinators are able to engage with 'hard-to-reach' groups.*

## Training and Workshops

Several Near Neighbours coordinators worked alongside the Strengthening Faith Institutions programme to deliver safeguarding training to faith and community groups in their local areas. Statutory services and the NSPCC were involved in running sessions to ensure that local groups were well-equipped to implement robust safeguarding policies across their work.

Fundraising workshops were also delivered by Near Neighbours coordinators. These equipped groups that had received funding from Near Neighbours with the skills and knowledge to be able to apply for external funding. These help ensure their projects become sustainable and continue to bring local people together.

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

After the EU referendum in June 2016, the Chair of Birmingham Humanists contacted the Bishop of Birmingham to propose a city-wide grassroots initiative that would encourage acts of kindness. Together, they launched the Love Your Neighbour campaign, which counteracts a growing narrative of hatred and division with one of love and reconciliation, and has spread to other parts of the country, such as the Black Country and Middlesbrough.

The Birmingham Coordinator supported the campaign by distributing banners and posters to projects funded by Near Neighbours. During Inter Faith Week and Anti-Bullying Week, the hub launched Week of Kindness, where groups and individuals all across the city were encouraged to plan and carry out acts of kindness – such as distributing chocolates and flowers in the city centre - in an intentional, united way.

# Providing Support through Small Grants

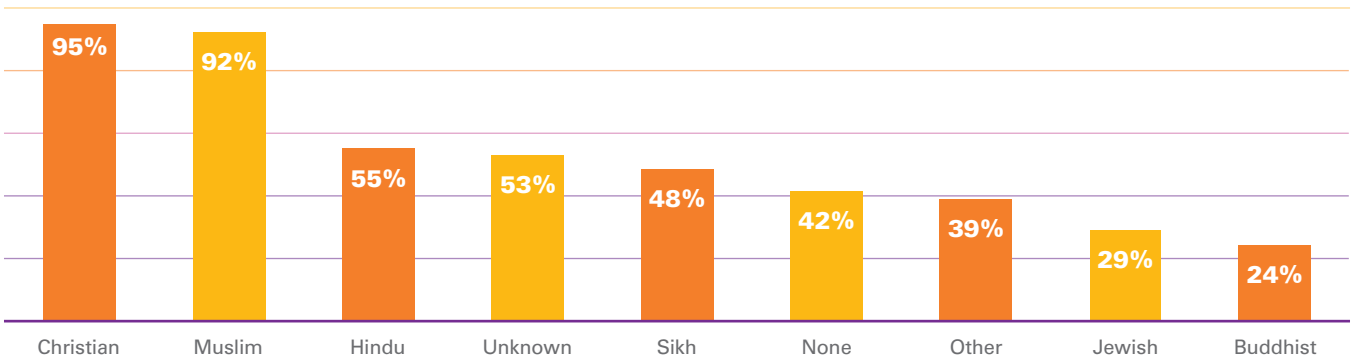
The Near Neighbours programme offers small grants between £250 and £5,000 to local groups and organisations. These grants are available for bringing together neighbours to develop relationships across diverse faiths and ethnicities in order to improve their communities.

Between September 2011 and March 2017, we have funded 1,433 projects across England, disbursing over £4,724,000. Of these, 733 funded projects were run by faith groups and 700 by secular community groups.

The application process for small grants is made as simple as possible, so that local people who are enthusiastic about making an impact in their neighbourhoods are not put off by arduous administration. 99% of projects rated the application process as very good or good.<sup>1</sup>

Local coordinators help people apply for funding, using their local knowledge to suggest partnerships and to help develop a vision into a project plan. Funded projects were grateful for the support of coordinators: 100% of projects rated the coordinator as helpful in the application process.

Participation in Projects by Faith (%)



*Local communities become stronger and participants feel better equipped to take action as a result of Near Neighbours funded projects.*

<sup>1</sup> Impact reporting based on 737 projects reporting on the outputs and outcomes of their work.

# Small Grants – What We Do

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## Social Interaction

The main purpose of projects funded by Near Neighbours is to bring local people together from different faith and ethnic backgrounds so they can become true neighbours and get to know each other. All projects must have at least two faith groups working together, but many projects have exceeded that, with 89% of projects bringing in people from at least three faith groups or those of no faith. Furthermore, 73% of projects brought in people from four or more faith groups or those of no faith, and 50% of projects from five or more faith groups or no faith.

A key principle for projects funded by Near Neighbours is that people from diverse backgrounds are involved in the planning and implementation of the activity. Involving people from diverse backgrounds has been shown to make projects more successful, with 98% of project leads agreeing that it helped to reach more people.

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## Social Action

Projects may focus on social action, where local people work together on initiatives to improve the neighbourhood. 82% of project leads agreed that as a result of funded projects, more is being done to help others and tackle local issues.

As projects funded by Near Neighbours are based in and owned by the local community, they can provide unique opportunities to engage with social groups who may be fearful or distrustful of mainstream statutory services. 50% of funded projects involved unemployed people, and a third of projects worked with refugees or asylum seekers, who may not have had any support networks. Local people may also have been concerned about the arrival of refugees, with community projects helping to break down barriers and create better relations between local people.



# Small Grants – How We Work

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## Local Focus

Certain areas may be diverse from a statistical perspective, but local people might only socialise within their own faith or ethnic group, or have simply not had the opportunity to get to know their neighbours.

A local focus is important, as initiatives that are run across whole towns and cities do not usually afford the same possibilities for participants to subsequently meet in day to day life, allowing friendships to develop.

Projects funded by Near Neighbours have helped local people feel more positive about their neighbourhood. 98% of project leads agree that participants felt more connected in their local community and 95% of projects leads agree that there is a greater sense of togetherness or community spirit.

## Leadership and Confidence

Near Neighbours is keen to invest in developing local leaders and creating opportunities for them to run projects that benefit the local community.

Through funded projects, local communities become stronger, more resilient to change, and more confident in facing challenges. 89% of project leads agreed that participants felt better equipped to take action in the local community. 87% of project leads agreed that participants were better able to cope with challenges and pressures, 96% agreed that participants felt more confident and supported, and 94% agreed that participants had improved or developed new skills.

After participating in projects, local people were keen to get more involved in similar work, with 84% of project leads reporting a rise in volunteering.

## Sustainability

Projects must show how their work will be sustainable beyond the period of funding, which would enable long-term and natural friendships to develop. 69% of projects reported that they would be continuing beyond the period of funding, with those that are unable to continue citing a lack of funding as the main barrier.

Funded projects have benefited the organisations running them as well, with 92% of organisations reporting having more knowledge and experience of fundraising or project management following the project. In addition, it made the work of the organisations more sustainable.

# Small Grants Case Studies

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## One Roof Leicester

There had been an increase in the number of people sleeping rough in Leicester and there were concerns that the local authority could not provide sufficient emergency accommodation. Several faith organisations came together with support from One Roof Leicester and funding from Near Neighbours. The funding was used to provide a winter night shelter and food, as well as organising medical checks and supporting some of the guests with more stable accommodation. The winter night shelter rotated between different faith centres, with other faith and community groups providing volunteers.

Over 11 weeks, One Roof Leicester welcomed 24 guests, serving over 1,300 evening meals and 700 breakfasts. The volunteers involved wanted to continue supporting homeless people in the local area, so One Roof Leicester has looked at other projects to build on their enthusiasm. Salma Ravat, the project lead, said “It has been a truly remarkable experience. We didn’t expect so many faith groups to come on board nor that we would have over 250 volunteers willing to give up their time to help make the winter night shelter such a success.”

## Caldmore Community Garden

In Caldmore, Walsall, a community garden has emerged as a place for local residents to grow food and meet each other. It received funding in 2015 for a project to bring people together through growing and cooking food, as well as arts, crafts, and cultural activities, which brought together over 1,300 people.

The garden received funding again in 2016 for more specialist activities to build on existing relationships. One of these was a Men’s Shed, where local men could come together to work on DIY projects. With additional funding, the group acquired a shed, which was built by a group of 19 men from White British, Iraqi, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Afro-Caribbean backgrounds, as well as installing a wood burning stove and electricity. This has now led to the group being able to offer carpentry classes for local women.

## Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat

In the Sikh faith, langar is a tradition where anyone can visit a Gurdwara or Sangat for a free meal. Shri Guru Ravidass Sangat, a Temple in Luton, used this practice to bring local people together by organising two six-week cooking courses. This created a group of dedicated volunteers that could cook and serve food from the centre. There was strong participation from the local Irish group, and participants were able to share their experiences of settling in Luton. Sanjeev Kumar, the project lead, said “It is remarkable that through the simplicity of preparing and eating a meal together, two communities can form friendships and value for each other that make such a positive impact in our diverse society.”





# Catalyst

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Catalyst is an exciting and inspirational free leadership programme for young people. It is aimed at developing creative leaders to act as positive role models in neighbourhoods and communities, and emphasises the positive contribution which multi-faith and multi-ethnic diversity makes at all levels of society.

Catalyst has three aims to help young people:

- 1 Develop a positive identity for living in a multi-faith, multi-ethnic Britain
- 2 Develop the skills and experience to play their part in building a strong civil society and enhance their employability
- 3 Develop the confidence and the commitment to act as agents of change in their neighbourhood

Since 2011, 33 Catalyst programmes have taken place, with over 430 young people taking part.

An independent evaluation of Catalyst found that:

- Lasting relationships were built, with 70% of participants staying in contact with people that they had met on the programme.
- Participants gained confidence with regards to talking to, making friends with and working with people from other faith and ethnic backgrounds.
- 91% of participants felt that coming into contact with people from different faith or non-faith backgrounds was a positive experience (none felt that it was a negative experience). Of these, 70% have seen a positive change in their attitudes to other faiths (with none of the respondents seeing an increase in their negative attitudes).
- 87% of participants feel more prepared and enabled to take on leadership roles within their community.



*"Catalyst is a leadership course that's very informative and enables me to understand a variety of different faiths and work with variety of people I wouldn't have normally worked with."  
(Catalyst Participant)*





# Partners

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Near Neighbours works with national partners who have significant experience in working with faith communities. These partners contribute to the programme with training, expertise and resources, and are developing the networks and capacity of local communities and organisations through sustainable initiatives that will continue to impact long into the future.

The partners have included Three Faiths Forum, Christian Muslim Forum, Council of Christians and Jews, Hindu Christian Forum, Nisa-Nashim, The Feast, and the Nehemiah Foundation.



## Women-Art-Belief

Three Faiths Forum worked with the Near Neighbours Coordinator in West Yorkshire on Women-Art-Belief, an exhibition that allowed women in the arts to speak in their own words about how their beliefs and identity connect with their work.

At a time of heightened religious and racial discrimination, where women's identities, beliefs and religious practices are distorted through the lens of inflammatory media and political rhetoric, these artists demonstrate the complexity of identity and belief through their creative practice.

Fifteen female artists were interviewed, followed by the launch of a collection of oral history postcards and portraits of featured women. Over eighty people attended the launch event on International Women's Day, where artists performed songs, poetry, and spoken word.

*"Women have a unique perspective and this should be represented in the arts, but we don't have that equality right now. I want to help inspire this change."  
(Women-Art-Belief artist)*

## Church-Mosque Twinning

The Christian Muslim Forum has embarked on a church-mosque twinning project to encourage purposeful and ongoing engagement between local Muslims and Christians.<sup>2</sup> Starting in South London, it has now expanded to the Black Country and Greater Manchester.

Although relationships between the faith communities existed in some areas, there was a gap at the institutional level for engagement. As trust has developed in the relationships, some have found it useful to be able to talk things over outside the immediate environment of their faith community and gain a fresh perspective. Others have been able to deepen their knowledge of their own neighbourhood through hearing stories from a different faith community based in the area.

2 Church-Mosque Twinning Programme in South West London Project Report, Christian Muslim Forum

# Common Good Fund

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The Common Good Fund was launched by Near Neighbours in November 2016 as a response to the community tensions that arose in the wake of the Brexit vote. Supported by funding from DCLG, this small grants programme invited community groups outside the traditional Near Neighbours areas to develop activities and projects that bring people from different backgrounds together.

The Common Good Fund had four key objectives:

- Creating a common agenda – local people reaching a shared vision of how to work together to improve their areas.
- Promoting a sense of personal responsibility – recognition that everyone has something to contribute and should feel ownership over local initiatives.
- Increasing levels of participation and social cohesion – the local community is strongest when everyone is involved in social action.
- Promoting an alternative to hate, intolerance, and prejudice – meaningful relationships would be able to develop where there is shared understanding, trust and respect.

Over five months, 80 projects around England received funding, with an average grant of £2,500.

The programme had a particular focus on areas where more recent waves of migration (such as from Eastern Europe as well as refugees and asylum seekers) have had an influence on the composition and dynamics of local communities. In one funded project in Peterborough, a White British volunteer, who had never interacted with people from other places, said her “eyes had been opened” to the humanity in others and referred to some of the Syrian refugees as “my family”.



*In Peterborough, a volunteer said her “eyes had been opened” to the humanity in others and referred to some of the Syrian refugees as “my family”.*







*Participants said that “projects like this bring the community together because it’s all cultures together, it’s not just one.”*

## Film Workshops

As a result of a young person being murdered in the area, tensions arose between the local Nigerian Christian and Somali Muslim communities.

On a West London estate, a project was funded to run two film workshops for young people in the area.

Following the project, people shared anecdotes of how they had felt more connected as a consequence of participating in the film project. It had helped connect the white and Somali communities on the local housing estate who traditionally had little interaction with each other.

For example, one Somali woman explained that after her son’s scooter went missing, a local white teenager who had been involved in the project had found the scooter and returned it to her. As a result, the Somali woman then felt able to start a conversation with the boy’s mother, thanking her for her son’s actions. As one participant in the focus group explained, “things like this bring the community together because it’s all cultures together, it’s not just one.”

## Sanctus St Mark’s

A support group for refugees and asylum seekers in Stoke-on-Trent received funding for community events, where local people would be invited. One of the events was celebrating Nowruz, the Iranian New Year. The events were planned and managed by refugees and asylum seekers.

It was important to the organisation that, instead of offering separate resources for different national, ethnic or faith groups to hold their own celebrations, all people celebrated together. As project lead, Rev Sally Smith explained, “If we just gave the Iranians a room they might have a nice time but we’d have learnt nothing.”



Near Neighbours featured at 'The Role of the Church in Community Cohesion' at the Palace of Westminster

An interfaith reception to celebrate the work of Near Neighbours hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury



DCLG visit to Near Neighbours projects in Luton

Interfaith coding club receiving awards at Twitter HQ



DCLG visit to Near Neighbours projects in Bradford

Near Neighbours is funded by



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BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

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