



Near Neighbours Small Grant Fund 2016/17 Evaluation

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Based on both survey and interview data, this report explores the impact of Near Neighbours' Small Grant fund as administered in the 2016/17 funding cycle, on both individuals and the community. In particular, it relates these impacts to two of the grant's key criteria of bringing together people of different faiths and ethnicities to build friendships or relationships of trust, and people working together to make their communities a better place to live.

On an individual level, the findings suggest that in addition to developing practical new skills, participation often helped engender more relational or interpersonal skills and attributes, such as confidence and self-esteem. More than 81% of survey respondents said that they felt 'more confident and able to cope with challenges in life' because of their involvement with a project. Furthermore, particularly among projects working with young people, the qualitative data shows that these projects helped develop aspirations and a sense of responsibility.

The research also identifies that the projects provided opportunities for people to meet members of their local community who were of different faiths and backgrounds, often through a shared common activity. Significantly, more than 97% of survey respondents agreed that they got to know local people or neighbours from different religions or ethnic groups. These projects often created environments where trust and greater understandings, as well as friendship, could develop.

Furthermore, the research shows that through participation in a Small Grant-funded project, many participants developed a greater sense of belonging to their local neighbourhood (or city), with more than 93% of survey respondents agreeing that they felt 'more connected' to their community. In addition, the qualitative data revealed that some projects helped develop a democratisation of space, opening up participants' horizons and relationships with the city. Although some projects helped improve the physical environment of their local area, for others the idea of enacting change in the community was understood to develop through changes to society, such as by breaking down barriers between different faith and cultural groups.

Finally, the report identifies that two of the most ubiquitous findings from the research were that, firstly, organisers appreciated that Small Grant funding was not driven by quantitative targets (and that this allowed more relational impacts for individuals and communities) and that secondly, people felt that participation in these projects enabled them to understand that we have 'more in common than that which divides us', as the late Jo Cox MP said.

1. Introduction

In the 2016/17 funding cycle, Near Neighbours administered over £1 million through its Small Grant programme.¹ This fund offers grants of up to £5,000 to help support or launch local projects in England that, broadly speaking, aim to bring communities together and increase people's understandings of each other. In the 2016/17 funding cycle, 311 projects were awarded grants, with the average grant totalling £3,391.

This report is based on qualitative research conducted on a sample of these projects and the results of a survey completed by 581 participants of projects across England.² The qualitative research comprised 12 case studies and telephone interviews with the organisers of 16 further projects. All of the projects that formed part of the qualitative research were based in one of three Near Neighbours Hubs: East London, East Midlands and West Yorkshire.³ Section 3 outlines the case studies while Appendix 1 offers profiles of the projects included in the telephone interviews.

The Small Grants fund has a number of key criteria:

1. Bringing together people of two or more different faiths and/or ethnicities, to build friendships and develop relationships of trust
2. People who live very locally coming and working together on a project
3. The development of sustainable projects and long-term and natural relationships that last beyond the period of funding
4. People working together to make their communities a better place to live
5. Involving people from diverse backgrounds (faith or ethnicity) in the planning and implementation of a project.⁴

¹ The total amount awarded was £1,054,598.62.

² An online survey was sent to organisers of all projects funded in 2016/17, requesting that they forward the survey to participants. One disadvantage of this method is that some people would be excluded from being able to complete the survey (because of language or lack of internet connectivity, for example). However, within the scope of this evaluation, this was considered to be the best way of enabling a broader response to some key questions.

³ The projects consulted for the qualitative research were chosen as follows: firstly, three of the nine Near Neighbours geographical hubs were chosen, one each from the North, the Midlands and the South. The evaluator then chose four case studies from each region, aiming for a diversity of project themes, types of grant-holders and intended beneficiaries. Further projects from each Hub were then sampled for phone interviews. The evaluator did not have knowledge of those projects prior to sampling. Later on in the evaluation, due to a lack of response from some projects, three projects were sampled on the basis of recommendations that the organisers of those projects were quick at communicating. Otherwise, the projects sampled were chosen by the researcher.

⁴ These objectives are instrumental to Near Neighbours' key overall aims, which focus on:

- Social interaction – developing positive relationships in multi-faith and multi-ethnic areas (i.e. helping people from different faiths and ethnicities to know and understand each other better)
- Social action – encouraging people of different faiths and of no faith and of different ethnicities to come together for initiatives that improve their local neighbourhood.

This report begins with an outline of the survey results before summarising some of the key findings from the qualitative research, focusing on the impact of the Small Grants programme on individuals and communities.

2. Participant Survey

Who responded?

As identified above, 581 responded to the survey.⁵ The data clearly identifies that these projects were reaching a diverse group of people. More than 13% of respondents identified as Black and 37.3% identified as Asian. The majority of respondents were of ethnicities other than White British, with this ethnic group comprising 31.3% of respondents. Figure 1 offers more detail.

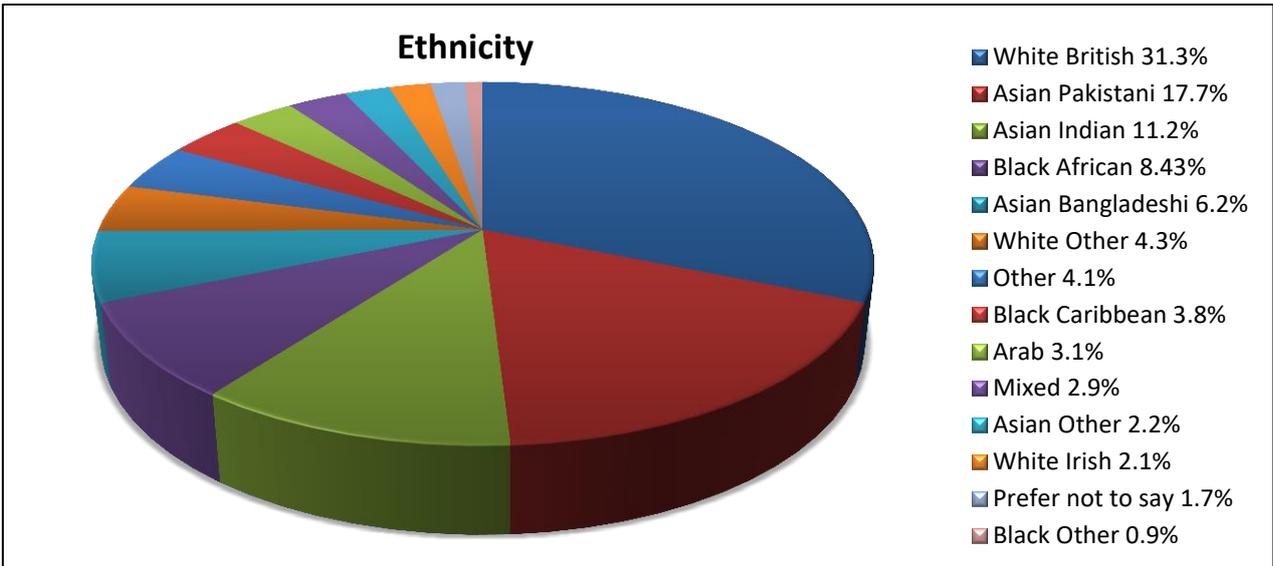


Figure 1. Results to the question ‘What is your ethnicity?’

The survey also indicated that the projects were reaching people of diverse faiths. As Figure 2 shows, the majority of respondents identified as Muslim (39.1%). Relatively fewer numbers of people identifying with other faiths were represented in the cohort of survey respondents but considering that Islam is the largest non-Christian religion in the U.K.⁶, it is not surprising that this would be represented in greater numbers.

⁵ All survey questions referred to in this report were obligatory and therefore each was answered by 100% of respondents (581 people).

⁶ UK Census 2011

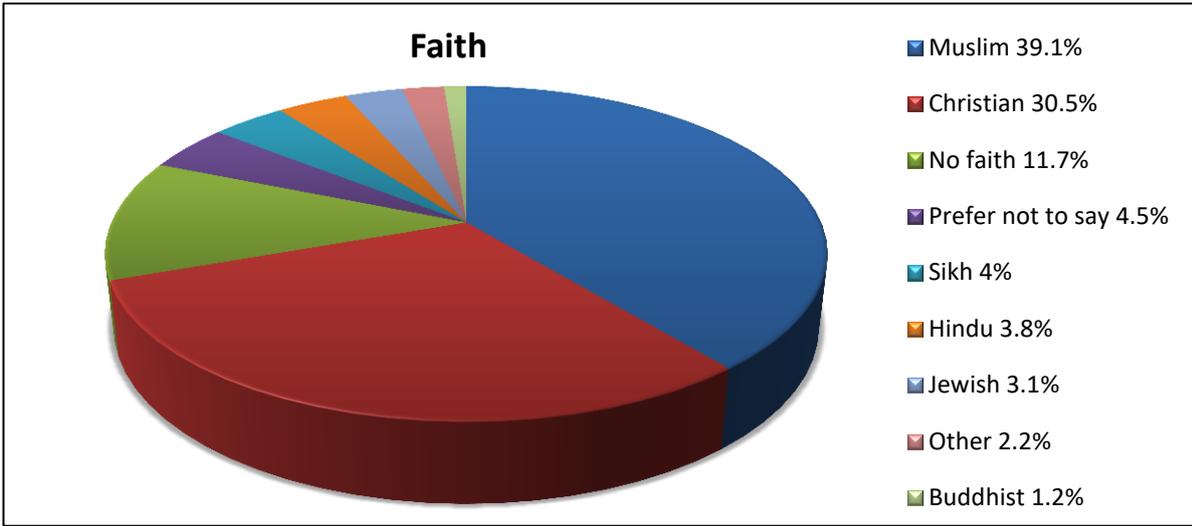
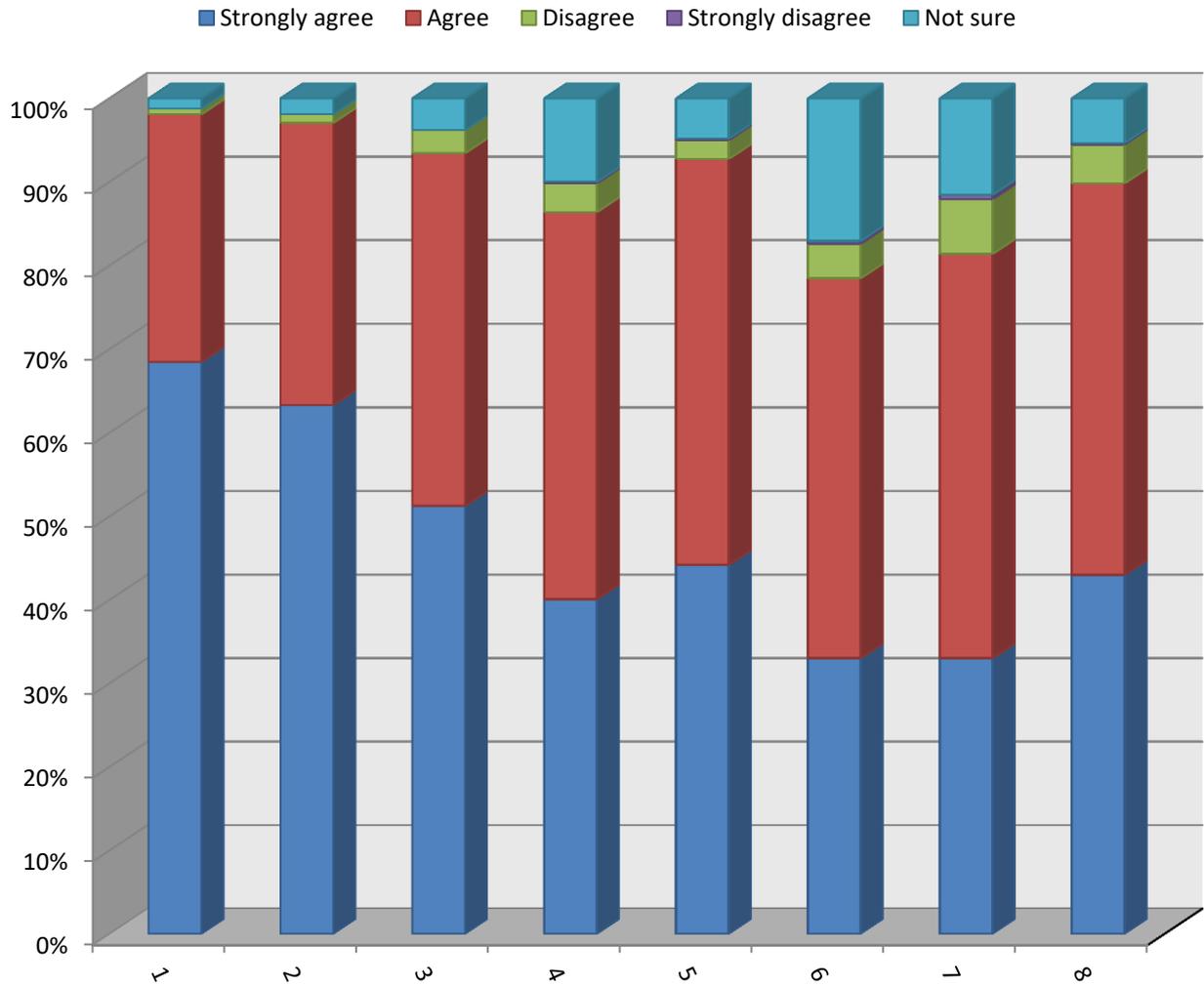


Figure 2. Results to the question ‘What faith group do you belong to, if any?’

Respondents’ reflections and experiences

The survey asked respondents to answer a number of Likert scale questions about how participating in a Small Grant-funded project made an impact on their lives. These questions focused on issues such as meeting new people, understanding people of different ethnicities and faiths, a sense of investment in the local area and the generation of new skills. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with a strong majority answering that they ‘strongly agreed’ or ‘agreed’ with a number of positive statements. The most salient results of this report are outlined below (Figure 3).

Impact of the project - survey results



X Axis legend

1. I met new people through the project.
2. Because of the project, I got to know local people/neighbours who are from different religions or ethnic groups.
3. Because of the project, I now feel more connected to my local community.
4. Because of the project, I now feel I trust people in my local community more.
5. Because of the project, I feel I understand people in my local community who are from different religions or ethnic groups better.
6. Because of the project, I now feel I have the skills and knowledge to try to change things in my local community.
7. Because of the project, I feel more confident and able to cope with challenges in life.
8. Because of the project, I improved or developed new skills.

Figure 3. Key results of the online survey.

3. Project Profiles – case studies

West Yorkshire Hub (Leeds)

The Syrian Kitchen (All Hallows Church)

The Syrian Kitchen was a pop-up café project organised by a Church of England vicar and a Syrian community leader. All Hallows church already houses a junk food pay-as-you-feel café operating twice a week and with their Small Grant award, a group of Syrian asylum seekers and refugees took over the running of the café for a number of months, serving mainly Syrian dishes (again using mainly waste food) and assisted by non-Syrian volunteers. The food was served, again on a pay-as-you-feel basis, mainly to Syrians and people who lived locally (including students, elderly white British residents and some Muslims) as well as some homeless people. A local Jobcentre worker also attended, to help the Syrian refugees find work.

Although the project has not continued, it did rejuvenate the café's international pop-up 'bistro' evenings, in which organisations serve dishes from other countries. Future collaborations between the church and the Syrian community are also being planned.

People consulted: three organisers, five service users and one partner. In addition, the researcher participated in lunch at the 'pay as you feel' café, talking to some guests who also visited the Syrian Kitchen project.

The Crossing (The Grief Series)

The Crossing project dealt with the planning of end-of-life arrangements and celebrations through two related activities: the creation of a beautifully illustrated resource box that could be used by those needing to consider end-of-life plans and funerals (including relatives and friends) or as a tool to foster greater understanding of the diversity of end-of-life celebrations and practices, and a series of events in community cafes and other venues where the resource box was used to kick-start conversations. These events were predominantly one-off workshops with diverse groups of people involved, including the elderly, asylum seekers, working-class White British men, youth living in deprived areas and members of the LGBTQ+ community. The resource box was also created by a diverse group of people, with celebrants from many different faiths (and none) consulted.⁷ Marie Curie are now in discussion with the organiser about rolling out the resource box to their palliative care wards across the country.

People consulted: one organiser and two volunteers/service users.

⁷ Including Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Humanist and interfaith celebrants.

Volunteer Development Programme (CATCH)

CATCH Leeds is a volunteer-led, award-winning youth and community development charity in Harehills, a deprived and ethnically-diverse inner city area. At the heart of CATCH is the Ark, a building which hosts youth clubs twice a week. CATCH was founded by Asad (Ash) Razzaq MBE, a local Police Officer of British-Pakistani heritage. Those who manage and use the project are ethnically and religiously diverse. Volunteering is central to their work and the line between volunteer and service user is intentionally a blurred one. The Small Grants fund enabled the development of their volunteer training programme, supporting their volunteers to continue to take ownership over CATCH and their local community and to develop their skills and knowledge. Those involved in the planning and execution of the project mainly reside in the local neighbourhood and are from very different backgrounds, including Pakistani (or British-Pakistani), White British and Eastern European (predominantly Roma, Czech and Polish).

People consulted: one founder, two organisers and five volunteers/service users. The researcher also visited an evening youth session, which enabled informal conversations with other volunteers and service users.

Craft Workshops (Pavilion and Meeting Point)

Pavilion, a community arts organisation, partnered with Meeting Point, a support service for asylum seekers and refugees, to organise collaborative craft workshops hosted in Christ Church Armley (an Anglican church which hosts Meeting Point's regular weekly outreach activities). The project brought together a diverse group of asylum seeker and refugee women (from Eritrea, Pakistan, Syria and Zimbabwe, among other countries) with White British women who are members of traditional heritage craft groups. The two groups of women shared crafting skills as well as conversation. The project also hosted poetry and art workshops, led by professionals. These culminated with the asylum seeker and refugee women's work being exhibited in a local museum, and the women visiting the museum and exhibition launch.

People consulted: one organiser and four service users. In addition, the researcher visited one of Meeting Point's weekly outreach sessions.

East Midlands Hub (Leicester and Nottingham)

Stay-and-Play Sessions (Roseberry Pre-school, Leicester)

Roseberry Pre-school is a Sikh-run nursery housed in the same building as a large gurdwara and Sikh community centre. The Small Grant helped fund a series of weekly free-to-use 'stay and play' sessions for parents and children (aimed at those aged two and under). These drop-in sessions were designed to

help child development through enabling children to socialise with one another and engage in English-speaking games, stories and crafts, and also to be a supportive resource for parents (particularly stay-at-home mothers who might feel isolated).⁸ The project became a place for these parents to pick up parenting tips, connect with each other and participate in workshops and visits. These included workshops on yoga, cooking, FGM (female genital mutilation) and domestic violence (led by a Community Police Officer) and trips to other places of worship. The stay and play sessions were predominantly planned and attended by Sikh Punjabi women but Punjabi speakers of other faiths (Hindu and Muslim) and Gujarati-speaking Muslims also attended.

When the parents who attended the stay and play sessions were told that the funding was coming to an end, they asked the organiser “what can we do to help?” Between them, the pre-school and parents have managed to continue with the sessions, partly through parents becoming more involved in volunteering.

People consulted: one organiser, two volunteers and five service users. In addition, the researcher observed one of the weekly stay and play sessions.

Winter Night Shelter (One Roof Leicester)

One Roof Leicester, a secular charity which supports the homeless (predominantly through medium-term temporary accommodation in shared houses), identified a growing need for winter night shelter provision due to an increase in rough sleepers, year on year. A Small Grant award helped pay for a three-month night shelter which operated from late November 2016 through to February 2017, providing hot meals (dinner and breakfast) and a safe, warm place to sleep for 10 rough sleepers each night. Based on the Housing Justice model of seven churches opening up their places of worship one night each week, One Roof Leicester adapted this to reflect the diversity of Leicester and the night shelter was operated by three Church of England churches, one Roman Catholic church, one Muslim community centre, one Hindu community centre and one synagogue, with other groups (including Muslim, Sikh and Methodist communities) assisting in other ways (such as cooking and providing food). The project was not only about providing material support for these homeless men but also attempted to make their ‘guests’ (not ‘service users’) feel valuable and respected. Hundreds of volunteers from different ethnicities and religions worked on the project – people already part of the faith communities involved in the project and other individuals – and a community of volunteers was developed.

Some of the guests from the winter of 2016/17 were able to secure longer-term temporary accommodation through One Rood Leicester or were offered a place in rehab. The project has now

⁸ Although open to all parents, the pre-school acknowledged that it was nearly always only mothers that attended.

continued this winter through a variety of funding sources, including direct fundraising and support from local businesses. Many of the volunteers in Leicester have returned for the second winter of volunteering and friendships are being rekindled and new ones formed.

People consulted: three organisers and six volunteers. In addition, the researcher was present in the evening of one of the overnight shelters, observing the check-in process at a Methodist church in the centre of Leicester before travelling to a Catholic church where she shared an evening meal, played dominoes and had informal conversations with service users and volunteers.

Singing for the Brain (Suhaani Yaadein, Leicester)

Suhaani Yaadein, which means 'Sweet Memories' in Hindustani, is a singing club aimed at elderly Asian members of the community, particularly those who are suffering from dementia, and was founded because although other singing groups for the elderly were available in Leicester, the music sung was less familiar to Asian residents. Fortnightly sessions are held at a local Age UK day centre and attended by the centre's service users as well as others. Led by an Indian folk musician and a community organiser, the sessions use songs and music from the Indian subcontinent that were popular when project participants were younger, to aid memory and help improve confidence and wellbeing through singing. The songs also kick-start conversation between the group members, who often feel a sense of nostalgia for their youth and life back in India or Pakistan. Hindu, Muslim and Sikh participants attend, and they speak Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Gujarati and Sindhi. The group has been able to continue to offer the singing sessions, voluntarily giving their time.

People consulted: Two organisers, one co-founder, one Age UK care centre manager and one service user. In addition, the researcher observed one of Suhaani Yaadein's fortnightly singing workshops.

Girls will get Respect (Breaking Barriers / Building Bridges, Nottingham)

Breaking Barriers / Building Bridges works with young people from deprived areas on a number of projects that attempt to reduce violent crime, conflict and prejudice, and encourage healthy relationships and respect. The Small Grant-funded project 'Girls will get Respect' worked with teenage girls, many of whom live 'chaotic' lives in dysfunctional family units with few positive male role models, a background which means, according to the project organiser, that "they find it hard to know what love is" and which has often led to the young women having low self-esteem and making choices which negatively affect their well-being. The project was about empowering young women to make 'positive choices' in their lives, focusing on increasing the girls' self-esteem, feelings of self-worth and self-determination through workshops which openly discussed such topics as body image, sexual relationships (including issues of coercion), involvement in gangs, domestic violence, healthy eating and

education. The organisers also helped the young women with CV writing and finding part-time jobs, and took them on trips to places they would not have considered going to before, such as art galleries, to expand their horizons. The participants were mainly from Black, mixed-heritage and Eastern European backgrounds, and included Muslims and Christians (and those of no faith).

A knock-on effect of the project was that the organisers dealt with some issues of racism between new migrant communities (including Polish, Syrian and Roma) and well-established Black communities living in the area, directly addressing this issue with parents and children.

People consulted: One organiser

East London Hub

The Right Hook (Limehouse Boxing Academy)

The 2016/17 Small Grant awarded to Limehouse Boxing Academy was one of a number of Near Neighbours grants that have been awarded to this community-led boxing club. The 2016/17 project combined boxing training with workshops on employability and personal development, using the 'hook' of boxing to help develop the wellbeing and futures of young people. They trained some young boxers to become junior coaches, giving them transferable skills in leadership and teaching as well as the opportunity to secure voluntary and paid work. The focus on employability and personal development helped participants consider their future plans and work towards gaining meaningful part-time employment whilst they studied (not only in the sports sector). The Academy was able to secure voluntary work experience placements with Spotlight, the creative youth space that was the venue for the boxing sessions, and local businesses.

The young people who attended the project activities were, although predominantly male, from diverse backgrounds and included people of Romanian, Bangladeshi, Moroccan and Afro-Caribbean heritage. The organisers explained that prejudice is rare in the boxing community but as part of the project, they did launch a campaign about the misuse of social media, in response to a member who had shared a post by a far-right group. The project also helped kick-start a new 'Knock-out Racism' project.

People consulted: Two organisers and two volunteers/service users. In addition, the researcher observed part of The Right Hook's weekly advanced boxing training session.

Community Café (Applecartlive)

Applecartlive is an arts charity which focuses on community theatre and is based in an old Methodist church in Plaistow. The Small Grant helped the charity renovate a dilapidated space within the building to create a community café; a place for people to spend time together and a new hub for community

events (and which has since hosted events such as poetry readings, art exhibitions with local schoolchildren and BAME artists, parent and baby groups, craft events for children and quiz nights). People using the space include the different tenants of the building (which include youth groups, religious groups, artists and potters), a local grassroots choir (which includes refugees) and local residents. In an area with few healthy eating options or more pleasant places to have coffee and conversation, the café, although only open part-time, has created an alternative, welcoming community space. The volunteers who help run the space are ethnically and religiously diverse (including Somalis, Eastern European and White British people). Since the opening of the café, there has been a significant rise in people volunteering.

People consulted: Two organisers and two volunteers/service users. The researcher also visited the community café and, although not open at the time, was able to observe how the café relates to the other tenants in the building.

Immigration Advice Workshops (St. Peter the Apostle Church, Woolwich)

Woolwich is an ethnically diverse area of south-east London, with larger minority populations from West Africa (particularly Ghana and Nigeria), Nepal, the Philippines and Somalia. Father Michael and his colleagues at the Roman Catholic St. Peter the Apostle Church were becoming “overwhelmed” by the number of worshippers who were approaching the clergy expressing their despair, frustration and concern about their immigration status and the process of regulating their lives in the U.K. with the authorities. Some had little accurate knowledge of the immigration process and others had been the victims of unscrupulous immigration advisers or solicitors. The church, in conjunction with Citizens UK, hosted two workshops in which solicitors (who were members of the congregation and specialists in immigration law) discussed the facts and myths of the U.K. immigration law and process. The second of these two workshops was held in a local Black-led Apostolic church. Different stakeholders were involved in the planning, including members of the Apostolic Church. Anglican church leaders (and some of their congregation) from neighbouring areas also attended one of the workshops. Although the organisers felt the workshops were very helpful and allowed the audience to find out about reputable sources of legal advice, the organisers were disappointed that there was not more diversity amongst attendees. In particular, they were unable to successfully reach out to the Muslim community in Woolwich and admitted that the majority of the workshop participants were predominantly Nigerian and Ghanaian. In addition, there were plans for the project to establish an ongoing ‘immigration champions’ scheme, which would offer peer-to-peer support for the congregation of St. Peter’s, but unfortunately, this did not happen.

People consulted: Three organisers and one volunteer, in addition to an informal conversation with Father Michael.

Housing Awareness Project (South Poplar and Limehouse Action for Secure Housing)

South Poplar and Limehouse Action for Secure Housing (SPLASH), based at St. Matthias Community Centre on Poplar High Street, just across the tracks from Canary Wharf, has been advocating for housing rights in this neighbourhood for more than 30 years. With their Small Grant award, they tried to spread awareness of housing issues that could negatively affect residents, especially through reaching out to members of the community that they understood were less likely to attend public meetings, including some migrant communities. In addition to workshops to discuss housing and residents' concerns and a community fun day, SPLASH produced a community newsletter to highlight some of the planning and housing issues in Poplar and have started the process of forming a Neighbourhood Planning Forum. These forums are Government-backed initiatives to allow communities to have more of a voice in local planning issues.

People consulted: Two organisers.

4. Discussion – key themes

Building skills and competencies

90% of survey respondents agreed that they had developed or learnt a new skill through participating in a Small Grant-funded project (see Figure 3 above) and indeed, the qualitative research also identifies that a number of projects helped participants develop practical skills. For example, the Recycle, Repair and Renew project in Tower Hamlets taught women how to use sewing machines to upcycle old saris to make clothes for their children; children in the Gardening Club in Dewsbury learnt how to identify, grow and harvest vegetables; and other participants took part in formal training in practical skills such as safeguarding, food hygiene or leadership (including CATCH and the Syrian Kitchen). Some projects assisted young people with their employability, helping them write CVs and secure valuable voluntary or paid work (including Limehouse Boxing Academy and the Girls will get Respect project) and others worked with young people to help them continue their education: the young women who participated in Girls will get Respect have all now applied to college and the teenage Syrian refugees participating in Nottingham Health and Education Support's project are now thriving in school, getting their GCSEs and aspiring to continue their education further.

However, as important as these more practical skills are, many projects also engendered other, more diffuse, competencies and strengths which can support participants as they navigate their (often deprived) socio-economic circumstances and, it could be argued, lead to greater resilience and representation. For example, a key theme in the qualitative data was that Small Grant-funded projects often helped participants feel they have more confidence in their own abilities and courage to consider new experiences and pathways. Case Study 1, about Yabal, a refugee from Somalia, is one such example (see also Sameera’s story in Case Study 3).⁹ These findings are also reflected in the survey data: Figure 3 indicates that more than 81% of respondents felt ‘more confident and able to cope with challenges’ due to their participation in a Small Grant-funded project.

Yabal, a refugee from Somalia, had been living in Plaistow, London, for two years. After a friend introduced him to Applectrlive, he started volunteering for them, helping out with the shows, issuing tickets, greeting guests and tidying up. He’s learnt a lot from volunteering, including customer service and language skills, and some of the other volunteers have helped him navigate bureaucracy and complete forms. Nowadays he’s busy with three part-time jobs but he still volunteers about three days a week because he loves the café. He comes in to have a coffee, use the Wi-Fi, improve his English by chatting to people and to “see society”. He’s also a member of the community choir and has discovered he has talents in music and drama, something he is now pursuing as a potential career. It was other people at Applectrlive that could see he had these skills. “I can’t see it but other people can”, he explained. When the weather allowed he would help maintain the courtyard garden of the café, describing how the neighbours would be happy when they saw him gardening, thanking him and telling him what an improvement it was. Yabal mentioned that the café helped people meet each other, that it was much more open to the public now - “our home to enjoy,” he explained. He found the café and the centre to be a “safe place” where people were ‘calmer’ than in other venues.

Case Study 1: Yabal, Applectrlive.

The projects working with young people, in particular, also helped develop a sense of aspiration and responsibility. For example, by teaming up with local university students, the Syrian refugees who were part of the Nottingham Health and Education Support project, began to have ‘dreams’ of what their future might look like. To Parvez, the organiser, this was an essential part of making the transition from having to focus on the immediate, very often disturbing, issues of fleeing conflict and being a refugee, to being able to think beyond that, to the future and a positive life in the U.K.

In terms of responsibilities, across projects working with youth, there was a conflation of the roles of participant and volunteer. The young people involved were encouraged to take on responsibilities and ‘ownership’ of projects, learning new skills in leadership and teaching and developing a sense of purpose and achievement. This was certainly the case in Limehouse Boxing Academy (see Case Study 2,

⁹ Participants’ names are pseudonyms.

below) and also at CATCH Leeds, where the Small Grant helped fund volunteer development and in which young people took responsibility for running activities, supervising younger participants and the maintenance and administration of the centre.

Raafid and Sadiq are both in their final year of A-levels and keen amateur boxers at Limehouse Boxing Academy. Raafid, who is of Moroccan heritage, explained how by being part of the boxing club, he had moved from being angry, having 'trigger' issues and getting into 'silly fights' at school, to becoming calm and dedicated, both in his training and studies. He described boxing as a way to let out his frustrations. "My negative energy is now turned into positivity," he explained. Bangladeshi-born Sadiq had previously been shy and unconfident at school but was now able to speak up in class and was finding his voice, explaining that "I am not just an observer in class now – I participate."

Both young men had been trained in coaching and had secured paid work as boxing coaches, assisting the Academy in teaching the younger members. Raafid and Sadiq had also found voluntary work experience (in finance) through their participation in the club and their renewed dedication to school had meant that they had both recently applied to go to university. They loved being such an important part of the boxing club and having the skills and confidence to train the younger novice boxers.

Furthermore, these young men had also made strong, enduring friendships, sometimes with people who they acknowledged they probably wouldn't have otherwise met, including people of Romanian and Afro-Caribbean heritage. Sadiq explained that being part of Limehouse Academy was like being "part of a family."

Case Study 2: Raafid and Sadiq, Limehouse Boxing Academy.

Bringing people together

98% of respondents to the survey said that because of participating in a Small Grant-funded project, they had met new people and 97% said they had met people who were from different faiths or ethnicities (Figure 3). These survey results were, in general, reflected in the qualitative data – certainly we can see that Yabal, Raafid and Sadiq all had positive interactions with people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds through being involved in these projects – however, there are a few caveats. Firstly, some projects afforded fewer opportunities for people to really get to know each other, even if there was diversity among project participants. This was predominantly found in projects where getting people together was not central to the aims of that project (for example, the immigration workshops organised by St. Peter the Apostle church). Secondly, what people mean by 'diverse' can differ from context to context. For example, nearly all the participants of both Roseberry Pre-School's stay and play sessions and the Suhaani Yaadein singing group were of Indian subcontinent heritage. However, these participants spoke different languages and came from different cultures and faiths, and therefore, the organisers of these projects understood this as diversity. It could be helpful to understand these more

nuanced definitions of difference when considering whether project participants are from diverse groups.

“I cannot think of any other circumstance which would have led to my engaging, conversing, and sharing fun and laughter with such a diverse group of people in my community.”

However, despite these caveats, what also became clear was that, for many of the projects, successfully getting people of diverse backgrounds and faiths together was centred on developing shared activities that different people wanted to participate in, whether that be through sewing, football, gardening, painting, boxing, building a campfire, creating a storybook, watching films, cooking, volunteering, writing poetry, sharing historical memories or singing. For example, Omar from the Manor Park Outdoors Forum explained how a common physical yearning for nature gave different people a reason to come together in activities that were “not polarising”. Likewise, participants explained to Aisha, the organiser of the Sheba Project, that they were meeting people they wouldn’t normally know and finding commonalities between each other, expressing that: “we are finding that we are all girls at heart – we like a cup of tea and a chat and we have things in common even though we are from different backgrounds.”

Building friendships, relationships of trust and understanding

Through these shared activities, then, participants in these Small Grant-funded projects not only met new people but also had more opportunities to understand people of different cultures and faiths and also, at times, build friendships and relationships of trust. This can be seen in the cases of Yabal, Raafid and Sadiq but similar stories were heard in other projects that were part of the qualitative data collection. For example, at CATCH, volunteering enabled positive cross-cultural friendships to be made as well as opportunities to challenge stereotypes and misunderstandings about people from different faiths and cultures, as can be seen in the case study of Sameera (Case Study 3), below.

Sameera had only been coming to CATCH for about six months but it was clear that being part of the youth group had made a big impact on her. Born and raised in Harehills to a Pakistani family, Sameera had previously been suffering from acute low confidence, not talking at home and being bullied at school.

She became involved after helping her Aunty prepare for a wedding one day. Ash, the founder of CATCH, saw her helping out and encouraged her to visit The Ark (the home of CATCH). Soon after she started attending the youth club, she was identified as having potential and she joined the volunteer development programme. Since then, she's progressed in many ways.

Whereas before she wouldn't interact with other children and thought that people didn't like her, she is now making friends. Through CATCH she has become close friends with a Czech boy (also from Harehills), a young girl of Irish heritage and another Pakistani girl who speaks Punjabi (Sameera's family speaks Urdu, although now Sameera is learning Punjabi). Sameera explained that through volunteering at CATCH she has also learnt a lot about the Eastern European communities living in Harehills (particularly Roma and Czech) and this has overturned some negative assumptions she had. She had previously heard rumours that the Roma are violent and the Czech rude. "But this is not the case at all!" she explained. Sameera was now educating her friends and family about the different people she had met at CATCH and how nice she found them: "I tell my friends, 'you haven't seen the real world! Well, I haven't either but I've seen half of it at CATCH!'"

She thinks people have got a lot of love at the project and that it feels like a "big family". Even if she's not on the rota to volunteer, she comes down and if she needs things, she always turns to CATCH. As a volunteer she helps out in the café, learns about food hygiene and supervises the younger children. This volunteering has helped her gain her confidence. She's now represented the organisation at an event at Leeds Beckett University and to a Home Office representative and is looking forward to going up to the next volunteer level when she's 16. When she got her red badge for her recent volunteer training, she said, "I felt so powerful. I thought I could make a change."

Sameera explained that this confidence has extended to her home and school life. She said that whereas before she would not make eye contact with people but would bury her head down and "shut down the world," now she can't stop talking. Whereas before she would eat on her own in the back room of her house, she now eats dinner with the family. At school, she used to fear speaking in class but now puts her hand up and talks. Her grades have improved and she now loves history and geography in particular.

Case Study 3: Sameera, CATCH.

Longer-lasting friendships were not always possible. One challenge was that of language, something evident in the Syrian Kitchen project. In other projects, people would only meet during project activities and not making longer-lasting connections. However, there was often a sense of camaraderie during such project activities that participants felt was psychologically supportive. This was apparent among the Punjabi-speaking women in Roseberry Pre-School's stay-and-play sessions, who often spoke little English and felt isolated at home, and among the asylum seeker/refugee women participating in The Pavilion's craft workshops. For example, Harriet, a young Christian woman from Zimbabwe, explained

that although she had often felt lonely and isolated, through participating in the craft workshops, she felt much more welcome in Leeds and appreciated the chance to “talk, laugh and have a proper conversation” with the other women (including talking about religion with Muslim and Orthodox Christian participants). Indeed, in a number of projects, participants created WhatsApp groups which were used to chat and share useful information about things they had in common (for example, mothers talking about breastfeeding and refugees talking about available support).

There was a sense, then, that being able to get together during the project was valuable in itself, not only to connect with people but also to understand more about other cultures and faiths. The survey data supports this, with 93% of respondents agreeing that ‘because of the project, I feel I

“I used to see a Muslim as a potential bomber. Now I think that in the community there are just normal people living a normal life”
Survey respondent

understand people in my local community who are from different religions or ethnic groups better’ (see Figure 3). Indeed, from speaking to a group of homeless British people using the pay-as-you-feel café at All Hallows (which had hosted the Syrian Kitchen project), it became clear that, despite communication being tricky because of language difficulties, they had helped develop a greater understanding of the Syrian culture. As one of these people expressed it, “the more people get to know they are not all terrorists is good!” The vicar of All Hallows, Reverend Heston Groenewald, explained that many of the White British residents in the local neighbourhood live in a “parallel universe” to their Muslim neighbours and that those regulars to the existing church café had engaged in new conversations because of the Syrian Kitchen project. To Reverend Groenewald, the regular presence of the Syrian refugees “invited comments, invited questions, invited conversations”.

In general, most of the organisers explained that identifying whether participation in a Small Grant-funded project meant that people trusted each other more was a difficult thing to evidence, even if they did perceive that this was happening. However, it was also understood by many organisers that it was through these comments, questions and conversations that Reverend Groenewald referred to that increased understandings of each other and, subsequently, increased trust became possible. Indeed, this is supported by the survey data, in which 86% of respondents indicated that ‘because of the project, I now feel I trust people in my local community more’ (see Figure 3). As Nadeem from the Muslim Community Organisation of Nottingham (MCON) expressed it, to generate trust and respect between people, “you need that personal connection to enact change”. Nadeem felt the Small Grant project enabled participants who had assumed that MCON was just for Muslims to “come in, trust us, feel comfortable” and that in light of what he perceived to be a greater incidence of Islamophobia in recent years, this was essential work.

Connecting people and place: safe spaces and new spaces

Throughout the qualitative research, projects were frequently referred to offering 'safe spaces' (something that is reflected in the case study of Yabal) and it is this sometimes-physical and sometimes-psychological development that seems to be key to enabling friendships and cross-cultural understandings. In the Girls will get Respect project, for example, the female-only workshops, in which sensitive and difficult issues were often discussed, also became a safe space for participants. As the organiser, Maxine Cockett, explained it, the workshops were "a space for their voice, where they could share their uncertainties; a supportive space, where they could also laugh."

Furthermore, the relationship between participants and space is a key theme that arose from the qualitative research data and relates to the earlier discussion of the more relational competencies that participants often developed. In addition to participants feeling that projects offered 'safe spaces', in a number of projects, people were encouraged to enter public spaces which they had previously thought were somehow out of bounds and 'not for them' for reasons of religion, class, ethnicity or other socio-economic or cultural markers of identity. The examples are numerous: Society Links in Tower Hamlets took (predominantly Muslim) women to the local recycling centre, a place that none had previously considered going to. Through this visit, many have now embraced recycling in their households. In the Girls will get Respect project, the young female participants were taken to places "completely outside their comfort zone" - to art galleries, city centre cafes, the theatre - and in doing so, they increased their self-esteem and opened up their horizons, to feel that these places were for 'people like them' too, that young Black and dual-heritage urban women could also enter such spaces. In Bradford, two projects were also democratising space. The UNESCO City of Film project took its participants (which included new migrants) to the City Hall, the National Science and Media Museum, local churches and other venues. Shapla Community Initiative took Asian women into Bradford City FC stadium, a venue located right in the heart of these women's neighbourhood but one that they thought was completely out of bounds on the basis of cultural heritage, religion and gender.

"I was always curious and fond of seeing all the Jewish ladies near my area, but it seemed hard to actually access and approach them. I am so happy that through this project I've met many Jewish ladies and broke barriers that probably were once there and visited synagogues and was able to have a look into their secluded world to see they're just good down to earth people too."

Survey Respondent

In Stamford Hill in London, Interfaith Matters organised a multi-faith tea party at a local vicarage. In advance of the event, a member of the Chief Rabbi's staff checked that the food and preparation were kosher, enabling Orthodox Jews to feel welcome. Steve Derby explained that by "making something incongruent, congruent" this kind of event was a way of "normalising these

kinds of relationships”. The same could be said about many of the examples above, not least the group of South Asian women that have continued to cheer on Bradford City FC at their home games, sharing home-made samosas and pakoras with the predominantly White British male spectators as they do so.

A sense of belonging and pride

There was also evidence that these new connections were helping people feel a sense of belonging and connectedness. The organiser of Shapla Community Initiative explained that the women who attend Bradford City football matches are now feeling more connected to their local area. He said, “It’s a big stadium right in the middle of their neighbourhood but...it was intimidating to them. Now it’s seen as a place for them too and they feel comfortable there.” The Director of UNESCO City of Film said he uses the word ‘empowerment’ with confidence - by being welcomed into these alternative spaces, he explained, the Sudanese participants he worked with are more connected to civic society and more involved in the life of the city outside of their immediate ethnic group.

Such examples are reflected in the survey results which indicate that 93% of respondents said they felt ‘more connected to their local community’ (see Figure 3) because of involvement in a Small Grant-funded project. It should be noted that this sense of belonging or connectedness might be to a neighbourhood or a larger area. Although the participants of some projects

“I feel more connected with my community, I don't go out much due to mobility and health issues, but I always come home happier. I am building my confidence as I used to get very nervous prior to attending this group.”
Survey respondent

were mainly from the locality vicinity (e.g. CATCH, Girls will get Respect and SPLASH, amongst others), the majority of projects drew together people from across wider areas to participate in a project. However, local community connections were being made. For example, Omar from Manor Park Outdoor Forum explained how an elderly participant had been feeling depressed for a number of years, since the death of her husband, and with her children living further away, she had felt very lonely and isolated. Being part of the project had made her feel more part of the community, she had explained to Omar, and had connected her to neighbours. As seen earlier, Applectlive’s community café in Plaistow had also helped make Yabal feel more connected to the local community, as well as developing new friendships and skills. In some cases where a greater sense of belonging was evident, people sometimes talked about feeling like they had become part of an alternative ‘family’. This was the case with participants of the memory café project run by MCON in Sneinton, Nottingham. The adults involved (both Muslims and Christians) have now been meeting regularly for two years, far longer than the initial Small Grant-funded phase of 10 weeks. “It’s rekindled pride in Sneinton,” Nadeem explained, both for those born here and those from overseas.

Also in Sneinton, children from different backgrounds (including new migrants) who participated in the Sneinton Town FC project developed a real sense of pride to be part of both the football club and their local area. David Jones, the organiser and coach, explained that the football club was a really positive outlet for a sense of territorial identity, as opposed to ‘postcode’ wars and gang membership. At CATCH in Leeds, Ash Razzaq recognised that there was often a stigma attached to Harehills, the more deprived area of the city where CATCH was located, explaining that young people from the area can sometimes be embarrassed to acknowledge that they live there. However, the pride that service users and volunteers feel about CATCH is reflected in their recent decision to change the name of the organisation from ‘Community Action to Change Harehills’ to ‘Community Action to Create Hope’. The young people were asking “we live here – why do you want to change it?” and in doing so, expressing a more positive sense of belonging and personal investment in their local area. The intrinsic value of community is present at every level of the work of CATCH and is exemplified by their new Little Helpers scheme which encourages their younger service users to get involved by helping out around the Ark. As Uddin, an 18-year-old British-Pakistani volunteer explained, CATCH is a “spark of light to make things brighter” both for individuals and the community.

Enacting change in the community

“The community loves the clean-up. It makes them feel that someone cares.”
Survey respondent

Applecartlive’s community café project is a great example of how a Small Grant helped enact change in the community, potentially becoming this ‘spark of light’. Before Applecartlive took over the Methodist church that

it calls home and the renovation of the café was made possible, its courtyard area was known locally as ‘the fight pit’, a place where gangs would meet and an intimidating place for local residents to walk past, especially at night. Local people had expressed how happy they were that the space was now inviting and open to the community. Applecartlive explained that the café had given “a heart” to their overall mission, which was to help develop social cohesion in the area.

In some cases, the idea of people coming together to improve the physical environment of their community was an explicit focus of the project itself (including SPLASH, Manor Park Outdoors Forum, Lees Moors Tenants and Residents Association, and Building Pride in Braunstone). In others, there was an understanding that they might be able to enact change in the community through more diffuse, longer-term impacts on society, by breaking down barriers and increasing knowledge and understanding of people from different faiths, cultures and outlooks. And indeed, it does seem that getting people together, often with a common purpose or activity, does not only increase a sense of belonging but also sets in motion future positive change: 79% of respondents to the survey felt that

being part of these projects gave them greater skills or knowledge to try to change things in their local community (see Figure 3).

Sustainability – project continuation

A number of projects that were funded by Small Grants in 2016/17 have managed to continue through securing further funding (including One Roof Leicester, UNESCO City of Film, Shapla Community Initiative, The Braunstone Residents Network, Muslim Community Organisation in Nottingham and Sneinton Town FC). Others found a way to continue with projects without further funding (including Roseberry Pre-School, Suhaani Yaadein, Equality for All CIC, and the Muslim Community Organisation in Nottingham). Others still have received funding for new projects and acknowledge that the Small Grant funding was helpful in making that happen, by inspiring new ideas or by being an example of good practice in grant applications (including Breaking Barriers / Building Bridges in Nottingham, Applecartlive, The Sheba Project and Limehouse Boxing Academy).

In many ways, then, the impact of these Small Grants continues in diverse ways, even if the initial project is no longer active in the same form. At CATCH, volunteers who had participated in the Small Grant-funded development programme were now creating their own projects and training others. For example, Uddin helped create 'Super-Catch', a programme to help 9 to 15-year-olds develop their own skills. Furthermore, a local app developer is voluntarily creating a 'Super Star' volunteer development app for CATCH to use, to help further motivate and engage their volunteers. For many other projects, then, although funding has finished, new networks and connections created through the Small Grant projects are enabling new collaborations and future plans. At All Hallows, the Syrian community is planning to fund and host parties at the church to mark various religious holidays (including Christmas, Eid and Diwali), as a way of thanking the church for the welcome they received during the Syrian Kitchen project. They also plan to develop part of All Hallows' outdoor space into a 'Syrian Garden', complete with tomatoes and olive trees (to make us "feel at home," as the Syrian organiser explained), a place where they can host Syrian-style barbecues in the summer for local neighbours.

Furthermore, some of the projects were instrumental in helping to develop professional relationships and partnerships. For example, at the launch night for The Crossing project, which was held in an arts venue which identifies as LGBTQ+ friendly, Imams and Rabbis, local community Police Officers and Queer cabaret singers, amongst others, were all present. These links enabled new collaborations, including plans for a public conversation about LGBTQ+ people within the Muslim community in Leeds. Applecartlive's Community Café has become the 'face' of the organisation, allowing space for partners

to visit and see that “the team has the capability and vision to deliver.” Indeed, Applecartlive is now working on a new project with Newham Council on tackling radicalism and extremism in the borough.

In addition, it is promising that nearly 50% of the survey respondents indicated that because of their involvement with a Small Grant-funded project they have since started volunteering in other community projects.¹⁰ The impact of the Small Grant thus ripples throughout communities, not only through real practical outcomes for some of the beneficiaries and increased knowledge and respect for people of different beliefs and backgrounds but also through partnerships formed, friendships made and future investments in local communities made possible through further volunteering and further projects planned.

5. Concluding remarks

There are, finally, some additional findings from the qualitative data that are worth mentioning. Firstly, a number of project organisers understood that many of the impacts discussed above are not quantifiable and they appreciated Near Neighbours funding for enabling scope for these more ‘fuzzy’ outcomes that cannot be reduced to numbers to be developed. For example, the organiser of the UNESCO City of Film project explained that they liked Near Neighbours funding (in comparison to other funders) because it did not request they track numbers or personal data of participants. Allowing people to just drop-in to their film screenings without signing up, for example, helped the organisers build trust with the beneficiaries, many of whom were refugees and asylum seekers who had a distrust of forms of governmentality.

Likewise, the organiser of the Eat Well for Less project also appreciated how Near Neighbours funding was not so target-driven. The Near Neighbours grants are “quite life-giving”, she said, “they allow some things to happen that can’t be recorded.” In her opinion, they allowed projects to ‘flourish’ and relationships to develop precisely because they are not driven by quantifiable indicators of impact. Instead, as seen in this report, the impact of the grants is often more abstract and relational. As John Greensmith of the Jason Spencer Trust in Nottingham explained, much of the work they do cannot be measured in the way that some other funders would like to see. John asked, “How do you quantify that someone tied their shoelaces that day, that they opened their curtains, that they want to see the moon shine or the stars shimmer?”

¹⁰ 47.7% of the survey respondents answered ‘yes’ to the statement ‘Because of the project, I started volunteering in other projects in the local community.’

Secondly, it was often expressed by organisers of these Small Grant-funded projects that the post-Brexit socio-political climate made these projects that brought people together all the more important. What was particularly striking was that, in talking to both organisers and participants of these projects, people who were dedicated to making a difference in their communities, the same phrase kept being heard: ‘we have more in common than

“By taking part in the project I was able to gain confidence and work with people that I would not have before. I learned a lot more about other religions and cultures. I feel there is lot more that we have in common than what differentiates us.”

Survey Respondent

that which divides us’ (or a version of this phrase). The late Jo Cox MP was not specifically referred to but the legacy of her words seems to have become something of a rallying cry for those working in some of the most deprived and diverse communities in England. And it seems that although these Near Neighbours grants are small, due to the dedication of both organisers, volunteers and participants, the more relational approach afforded by many of the projects enable a difference to be made, both for the individual and the community level. As Nadeem from Nottingham expressed it, “small successes do shine brightly”.

Appendix 1

Project Profiles – telephone interviews

For each of the cases below, one organiser was interviewed over the phone.

West Yorkshire Hub

Eat Well for Less project (The Anchor Project, Bradford)

The Eat Well for Less project brought together women, including asylum seekers, from diverse backgrounds (including British-Pakistani, Albanian, Congolese and Iranian, among others) living in a more deprived part of the city, to share recipes, cook healthy dishes together and also learn about budgeting with regards to food shopping. In addition to the regular women's meetings, the project had a few sessions for men (predominantly Nigerian and Pakistani). The project was participatory in its planning, responding to the wishes of the women involved. Although there were language barriers, friendships were made and the more informal structure of the sessions allowed for conversations on more sensitive cultural issues to arise, including the wearing of the hijab among some of the women. Although the project has not continued beyond the grant funding period, it was popular and they hope to use its success to help kick-start future projects on food and healthy eating.

Art Workshops (Equality for All CIC, Bradford)

Equality for All, a community interest company which operates projects assisting people living with disabilities and mental health issues, identified a lack of provision in supporting people who had been discharged from mental health facilities. They had previously been offering art therapy workshops within inpatients, who had found them very helpful, and so with a grant from the Small Grants fund, they were able to offer art therapy sessions for those who had been discharged, to aid them in their recovery and rehabilitation. Other people with mental health issues were also welcome. Those who attended were mainly of Asian heritage in addition to White British people and some of the sessions focused on art and symbols from different cultures. Although Equality for All acknowledged that initially, there was hostility amongst the group but that after people got to know each other, friendships were made and people started connecting outside of the art group, going to each other's houses for cups of tea, for example.

Equality for All worked with two other charities, using their facilities to host the workshops, which has since led to further collaboration with these partners, and two beneficiaries of the project have gone on to continue to regularly volunteer with one of these charities. The group was able to extend the project

for six months after funding period, but unfortunately, the sessions have now come to an end due to a lack of further funding.

Gardening Club (Lees Moors Tenants and Residents Association, Dewsbury)

Lees Moors TRA has received a number of Near Neighbours grants. The fund they were granted in 2016/17 supported 'Phase 2' of their community garden project. This phase was all about getting children into growing their own fruit and vegetables on the community allotment and then being able to share their harvested produce with their friends and neighbours. The local area is quite deprived, with little recreational open space and with many gardens paved over. Being part of the gardening project has opened up new experiences for some of these children, increasing their understanding of where fruits and vegetables come from and how they taste. The gardening beds allocated are all oversubscribed as they have a waiting list of children wanting to be involved. Most people involved in the garden are of Asian heritage and White British. Lees Moors TRA operates a number of other projects, including adults gardening plots, multi-ethnic football teams and community events such as BBQs. Thus Phase 2 has enabled more children (and their parents) to be part of this wider community initiative, a place that instils pride in local residents and where people talk to each other.

South Asian Women and Sport (Shapla Community Initiative, Bradford)

Central to this project was encouraging local Asian women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage to not only think about healthy eating and cooking (through cooking workshops where they shared food from their countries and regions) but also to help break down the barriers between public sports events and these women. To this end, Shapla Community Initiative took groups of women (and their children) to home matches at the Bradford City FC stadium, which although right in the heart of their neighbourhood, it was a place that the women had thought wasn't for them. The group of women brought with them plenty of home-cooked samosas and pakoras for half-time, sharing them with other people they didn't know (predominantly White male). They were welcomed and their presence and interactions at these matches started to break down preconceptions on both sides. Some of these women and children are now more regularly involved in the Bangla Bantams Bradford FC supporters group, take an interest in football along with their husbands and children, and even pray for Bradford FC's success at each match! Some women were also able to join Shapla at a World Cup qualifier at Wembley Stadium. News of the project spread and the organiser was featured on BBC's One Show, talking about both the Bangla Bantams and the women's project.

Other activities that were part of this project included a *pitha mela*¹¹ 'bake-off' competition, where women competed to make the best pitha which they then sold. They are hoping to make this an annual event. The women also visited a local Anglican church, which led to a conversation about the role of Asian people in World War II. Shapla Community Initiative now plans to do further projects to include more Asian representation at remembrance events. Through being involved in this project, the women also became involved in Bradford City Council's 'unheard voices' project which brought together memories about the large fire in the city in 1985.

The community group were able to secure more funding to help continue to take women to the home games and through this and the Bangla Bantams group, further connections have been made possible with Bradford City FC for inter-ethnic community football teams and matches, in addition to community projects with the British Army cadets.

Let's Tackle It (UK Youth Parliament, Leeds)

The UK Youth Parliament in Leeds wanted to create a campaign in response to the annual UK Youth Parliament 'make your mark' survey, in which young people across the country are asked what they think the most pressing issues are facing youth in the U.K. In 2016, in both the country-wide vote and local Leeds vote, the issue that came out on top was tackling racism and religious discrimination. The Members of Youth Parliament in Leeds then created the 'Let's Tackle It' campaign. Incorporating existing suggestions on how to spread awareness, the group held a one-day event for young people from across Leeds, in addition to a social media campaign. In the one-day event, existing pairs of young people were coupled with two others they wouldn't know and each group had to move from room to room completing different tasks, all raising awareness of racism and religious discrimination. One of the rooms had a panel of faith leaders (Pagan, Christian, Muslim and Jewish) and the young people were encouraged to ask 'difficult' questions. The social media campaign was launched on the day and managed by young people, incorporating some of the media (such as photos and videos) from the day itself, and encouraging people to use the hashtag #letstackleit on Twitter. They also created a video which was uploaded onto YouTube and a report which was shared to schools and youth groups.¹²

Bringing Communities Together Through Film (UNESCO City of Film, Bradford)

The Bringing Communities Together Through Film project was the first phase of what has now become the three-phase Neighbourhood Film Project, organised by UNESCO City of Film.¹³ Phase 1 worked with

¹¹ A festival (mela) of pitha, a northeast India / Bangladeshi type of sweet or savoury snack made with batter from rice or wheat flour.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ZYWgbrHkKc&feature=youtu.be>

¹³ An overview of the whole project can be found on their website: <http://bradford-city-of-film.com/enjoy/neighbourhood/>

community members to choose and screen a series of six films as an opportunity to bring people together and kick-start discussion. Each film was shown in a different space, including Bradford City Hall, enabling diverse groups of people to enter and feel welcome in places that were new to them and that they might not have considered entering before.

The project was based on working with the residents of City Ward in Bradford, a deprived area with a relatively high number of new migrants in addition to more settled communities. A number of different nationalities, faiths and cultures took part, including Syrians, Sudanese, Afghanis and Eastern Europeans. The films chosen were often those that were made in countries some of the participants came from or those that particularly resonated with them, including *Wadjda*, the first Saudi Arabian film by a female director, *Leave to Remain*, about asylum seekers in the UK, and the film *Suffragette*, which was screened on Women's Day. After each film, the group would have tea and cakes and allow a space to talk about some of the issues the films brought up.

Most of the film groups were aimed at adults, but one screening coincided with school and the project showed *The Jungle Book* in a centre that was situated between a predominantly Asian Primary School and a predominantly white Church of England school, bringing both groups of children together.

This first Near Neighbours grant for Phase 1 then led onto further phases. The group was able to secure Big Lottery funding to work with the Sudanese community that had participated in phase 1, on a film project about their lives in Bradford, in conjunction with an ethnographic film-maker. They have also since been granted further Near Neighbours funding to put on a 'Uniting Communities Film Season' in 2018. They also found that, after Phase 1, some of the families they met were coming along to a family cinema project they were running in City Park in Bradford, further connecting people.

East Midlands Hub

Building Pride in Braunstone (The Braunstone Residents Network, Leicester)

This project was based on the results of a biannual neighbourhood consultation in this area of Leeds, which indicated that the primary concerns of local residents were anti-social behaviour, the loneliness of the elderly and litter. In response to this, the Braunstone Residents Network initiated a project to help deal with litter, primarily through organising community clean-ups but also encouraging local shopkeepers to keep their shops and surrounding areas clean and free from litter and also through engaging with children (in schools and local parks) to think about the importance of keeping their local environment clean.

Although the project saw positive results from engaging with shopkeepers and children, with many children helping to clean up the area around their school following the project workshop, despite

people acknowledging that litter was a problem in the area, the group did find it difficult to encourage enough people to continue to help with the community clean-ups (at least after the initial sessions) and also found it a challenge to ensure those who did engage were from diverse backgrounds or faiths.

However, the Near Neighbours fund was able to kick-start the project and through this, they were able to secure further funding to continue the project across a whole year. They are also now planning more projects to improve the well-being of the residents of Braunstone, including a healthy eating project in conjunction with local shopkeepers and have already got a variety of people from different backgrounds involved in that.

Support and Counselling (The Jason Spencer Trust, Nottingham)

The Jason Spencer Trust is a charity that supports people (both family and friends) who are grieving the loss of a loved one who died as a result of murder or manslaughter, primarily in the Nottingham area but also in other parts of the Midlands. Part of this work includes trying to help avoid reprisals as well as helping those grieving through memorials, the courts and dealing with the media. The Near Neighbours Small Grant they received helped pay for a number of group counselling meetings to aid recovery and grief, which is, understandably, a long process. This was a key way of helping people who were suffering deal with loneliness and help them make simple but important steps such as being able to leave the house or get on a bus. Violent crime affects people of all backgrounds and faiths, and this was reflected in those who came to the group meetings, which were able to help connect people into support networks that could continue outside of the time and space of the sessions.

Memory Café Project (Muslim Community Organisation, Nottingham)

The Muslim Community Organisation of Nottingham instigated a 'memory café' project – My Memories of Sneinton - in which residents of Sneinton in Nottingham shared their memories of the neighbourhood. This was initially a ten-week programme which brought together people from different backgrounds and faiths to discuss their history and experiences of the area. They worked primarily with two groups – the first was a group of adults who met once a week and the second was a group of primary school children, who worked with their teachers, exploring a different theme each week (for example, food, health and education). Later on in the project, the two groups met to share their stories and the resources they had produced about their memories of Sneinton, creating a scrapbook and a small exhibition. The photographs were much better than they expected and so the group then decided to publish a small booklet, which will be in the British Library, local libraries and schools.

The organisers were able to secure funding for another 10 weeks and since then, the adult group has continued to meet weekly, despite the lack of further funding, because they have found the experience

to be so valuable. As a group, these participants are now planning for a future stage of the project and a collaborative art project focused on Sneinton.

Community Projects (Nottingham Health and Education Support)

Responding to the presence of new immigrant groups in the areas of Nottingham where they work, particularly Syrian refugees, Nottingham Health and Education Support focused on helping teenagers settle in the community and their schools. They worked with students from a local university, using both sport and classroom activities to help these new members of the community with their English and communication skills. In part, this was achieved by encouraging these young migrants to become volunteers themselves, helping out with interpretation, sports and supporting the younger children in their activities. Such volunteering helped build self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

Through these activities, the young people had support with their assimilation and acculturation in the U.K. education system and helped them access other services, such as libraries, as well as offering a warm place where they could meet and friendships could be fostered.

The organisation has continued to receive funding from Near Neighbours for further phases of the project, including working with new migrant parents.

Local Football Clubs (Sneinton Town FC, Nottingham)

Sneinton Town FC is a local football club in a deprived area of Nottingham which tries to bring together children and young people from diverse backgrounds and faiths. The Near Neighbours Small Grant helped fund the creation of a new under-10s football club which included Gambian Muslims, British Pakistani Muslims, Slovak and African Catholic boys, amongst others. The area of Sneinton has a lack of playing fields in local schools and the neighbourhood more generally, so the football club is meeting a need for places to play and get exercise as well as bringing together young people who are new to the area (there are many different new migrant groups in the locality). The coaches work on encouraging integration and team spirit, tackling issues of cultural stereotyping and ignorance and helping with discipline and responsibility. In informal ways, whilst going about training and travelling to tournaments, the group has conversations about tackling racism and prejudice.

Sneinton FC has since received further funding for other phases of their project, including a new men's team incorporating local Polish and Roma players along with British Asian men. In general, once a team has been set up, there is some level of sustainability, with each player playing subs (although if families are unable to pay they are still welcome).

Hate Crime Research (Interfaith Matters)

Steve Derby of Interfaith Matters conducted research about hate crime targeted at Jewish people in Stamford Hill, which was shared with the Department of Communities and Local Government. The research focused on members of the Jewish-Christian Forum of Stamford Hill, although others, including some Muslims, were also consulted. His report concluded that antisemitism was accepted and tolerated, that reporting rarely happens, that if antisemitism is reported is not dealt with, and that amongst the Jewish community of Stamford Hill there was a fear of causing trouble with the authorities.

As part of the project, Interfaith Matters also organised a multi-faith tea party at a local vicarage which a number of Chasidic Jews attended. In preparation for this, the organisation arranged for a person who worked for the food supervision authority of the Chief Rabbi to inspect the event preparations to ensure that the setting and food were kosher and thus suitable for the Jewish guests. It was acknowledged that this allowed some of the more reclusive members of the Jewish community to be comfortable and able to attend. There are already plans in place to extend these inter-faith get-togethers with a tea party at a local synagogue and hopefully at a mosque.

Family Reading Project (London Muslim Centre)

Heightened fear and an increase in hate crime targeted at Muslims post-Brexit, coupled with an awareness that negative images of Muslim women were sometimes used as part of Islamophobic attacks led to the London Muslim Centre considering ways to bring people together and break down some of the stereotypes about Islam and Muslim women in particular. One way they did this was to organise the Family Reading Project, bringing together people through a shared love of reading. The project consisted of a number of elements. Firstly, they held an intergenerational workshop called 'Our Shared Stories', in which elder members of families shared a story from their youth and then in their family groups, they created a storybook. Secondly, project volunteers held a number of assemblies in local primary schools about Ramadan and reading. At these assemblies, the volunteers encouraged children to enter a competition in which they designed their own bookmark. These schools included a Church of England school, a Catholic school and a school with a majority of Muslim pupils. And finally, the project culminated in with a 'Celebration of Reading' event in which a number of emerging female Muslim authors and poets shared their work and they had a 'carousel' of activities about books for children to take part in. At this final event, the winners of the bookmark competition were announced.

At the Our Shared Stories workshop, about 50% of the families that took part were Muslim and 50% from other faith (or no faith) backgrounds. More than 100 people took part in the Celebration of Reading project. The project has been a springboard for the female Muslim authors – one of whom is still a teenager – to be able to network with each other. In addition, they are still hoping to continue with the project, although they need to secure funding, and are planning a ‘Herstory’ event to coincide with both International Women’s Week and Reading Week. They are also planning an ‘Our Shared Treasures’ event with a local Church of England church that they linked with through this project. The planning team has also now held team meetings with a local Anglican church and a Sikh temple to discuss future collaborations. Furthermore, one volunteer went on to organise an Eid celebration event in her local area and people from the project went along to that.

Outdoor Activities (Manor Park Outdoors Forum)

Manor Park Outdoors Forum was driven by an acknowledgement that there is a desire amongst people living in cities to connect with nature and that unfortunately, contemporary lifestyles did not always afford the opportunity. They thus organised a series of cross-generational outdoor activities in Wanstead Flats, aligning them with the school holidays. They hired a trainer who worked with participants to explore the flora and fauna of the area and learn outdoor skills such as bushcraft. They found this was possible even in smaller urban open spaces. They also held a residential in Chigwell, in which the adults were trained on day one and then used these new skills to teach the children on day two. People attended from different faith and cultural backgrounds. They identified that, in general, most families who attended were those on low incomes. The activities would allow time for sitting down and socialising – for example, around a campfire with some simple food – which became an opportunity for people to get to know each other. They also organised some clean-ups around the local neighbourhoods.

The organisers found that there was a real demand for the activities and they are now planning some follow-ups, including a camping trip as well as training individuals to run a forest school. Their trainer came down from Birmingham, so the idea is to help train individuals to do these kinds of activities themselves.

Community Activities (The Sheba Project)

The Sheba Project has had a number of Near Neighbours grants. Funds they received in the Small Grant funding cycle of 2016/17 funded banner-making and dance workshops, which culminated in those involved taking part in a procession as part of a local community festival. People involved predominantly came from Hindu, Muslim and Christian faiths. Different cultural and faith symbols were

used in the design of the banner, which became a talking point, enabling discussions around difference and similarities cross-culturally.

One of the Sheba Projects' earlier Near Neighbours grant helped fund a successful community crochet club which has continued to be self-sufficient since funding finished and which has a history of bringing together women from different cultural and faith backgrounds (and helping to alleviate loneliness, particularly amongst the elderly). These women have become friends, going out for dinner together and supporting each other through difficulties (including issues of domestic violence). By having a stall at the festival, some participants who were involved in the Small Grant-funded activities in 2016/17 met women from the crochet club and are now regularly involved in that group.

Recycle, Repair and Renew (Society Links)

The Recycle, Repair and Renew project at Society Links in Tower Hamlets came about as a response to requests from some of the women who frequent their centre, for access to sewing machines and sewing lessons. Many of the women who use Society Links' services are reliant on social welfare in some way and find it difficult to make ends meet. The Near Neighbours Small Grant fund paid for sewing machines and sewing lessons so that the women could learn how to upcycle older textiles and turn them into clothes for their children, and also how to properly mend clothes so they could last longer. In addition, extending the focus on repairing and renewing, Society Links incorporated the issue of recycling and waste management into the design of the project. As part of this, they visited the local recycling centre and discussed recycling and what to do with household waste, especially considering the fact that many of the women live in flats with little space for storing waste for recycling. These discussions led to cross-cultural conversations about what people do 'back home' in some of the countries the women came from. The women came from different countries, including Somalia, Bangladesh, Sudan, Iraq, India and Pakistan.

The sewing machines are still in use by women who come along to Society Links for other activities (including ESOL classes, IT classes, Zumba, childcare professional training and to use their vegetable market) and they are hoping to secure more funding to continue with further sewing lessons, potentially as part of a larger 3-year programme.