

NEAR NEIGHBOURS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



Catalyst Evaluation 2016 Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Catalyst is an interactive, leadership programme for young people between 16 and 30 years of age. The Programme has been delivered 25 times (April 2011-March 2016) in a range of locations across England and a total of 313 young people have completed the Programme at the time of writing. Catalyst brings together young people from different faiths and backgrounds, providing training, dialogue and experiential learning on a range of topics related to leadership, social action and interfaith relations. The core content is accredited by Leicester College and upon completion alumni are awarded a qualification equivalent to an NVQ Level 2.

Catalyst has been a partner of the Near Neighbours Programme since 2011 and is primarily provided to people aged 16 to 30 years old. The Programme fulfils in part the ambition of Near Neighbours to invest in the development of young people around the themes of leadership, social action and social interaction. Catalyst's work with the 16-30 age group also compliments the Near Neighbours portfolio of work, including its partnership with The Feast, a charity which covers similar themes in its work with 11-16 year olds.

This report presents the findings of evaluative research based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The research methods used attracted 24 responses to an online questionnaire circulated to all Catalyst alumni, 31 telephone interviews with Catalyst alumni and 7 interviews with internal stakeholders at Catalyst and Near Neighbours. The data collected has allowed a thorough analysis of how the programme runs, how it is perceived internally and externally and, most importantly, the impact that it has had on the attitudes, confidence and life of those who have graduated from it.

Catalyst is run by two partner organisations across two different geographical areas and is delivered differently in each area. What remains uniform across both Catalyst areas is the positive impact that the programme has on the young people who take part. This evaluation found that:

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

This evaluation has found a wealth of evidence and examples to show that Catalyst is meeting its aims as well as those of Near Neighbours. The methods used have built strong relationships between alumni and have been successful in preparing people to live and work effectively with people of different faiths and backgrounds. The investment in enhancing leadership skills has enabled a group of young people to not just feel more prepared to lead but to take on roles that reflect their new skills and confidence. The Programme's successes in creating meaningful relationships, breaking down barriers between faiths and cultures and preparing leaders has been shown to ultimately increase levels of involvement in social action; more young people take a more active role in enhancing their local areas and communities as a result of attending Catalyst. Against a national backdrop of community tensions and calls for an enhanced role for faith-based actors in tackling social issues, this is an important and timely intervention in the present and future of our communities, faith-based or otherwise.

To grow and enhance the Catalyst Programme's future success, this report presents the following recommendations.

- A single delivery structure should be implemented across the Programme to ensure that a more consistent and coherent approach is taken to the delivery, communication, marketing, evaluation and monitoring.
- This single delivery structure should provide a strong degree of flexibility in how the Programme is delivered, allowing Catalyst – like Near Neighbours – to continue to respond to local capacity and local need.
- Within the single delivery structure, the methods used by the Catalyst team in the North of England in building relationships between delegates, including the residential approach and follow-up work after each course, should be applied wherever viable across the Programme.
- Greater links should be built between alumni and Near Neighbours Small Grants Scheme to encourage more alumni to apply for funding for social action.
- An evaluation and monitoring system should be created for Catalyst which captures baseline data, immediate impact data and longer-term impact data – this should be integrated with Near Neighbours' wider approach to evaluation and monitoring.
- The Programme should retain some form of accreditation.
- The marketing activity, including online presence, should be reviewed and a more standardised approach to marketing and communication should be implemented as a result.
- There should be a more coherent and strategic programme of alumni activities, both locally and nationally. This could include events to showcase work done by alumni and a greater degree of aftercare and follow-up work to assist with and record the progress of alumni.