

NEAR NEIGHBOURS

BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



**IMPACT REPORT
2022/23**

What we do

Since 2011, Near Neighbours has been building stronger, more cohesive communities in which people of all backgrounds can belong, connect, and contribute. Supported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (**DLUHC**) Near Neighbours works in diverse areas across England that have been impacted by segregation, economic inequalities, racial and cultural tensions, and social fragmentation.

Near Neighbours' programmes advance social integration at three levels:

- 1. For individuals:** we break down barriers of mistrust and prejudice to foster resilient relationships in diverse neighbourhoods.
- 2. For grassroots groups:** we equip and connect local leaders to collaborate on issues of joint concern.
- 3. For civil society:** we link community groups and local and national decision makers to deepen mutual understanding, trust, and partnership.

In 2022/2023, Near Neighbours:

- **Awarded £105,078 in small grants** to local projects supporting vulnerable groups and improving social cohesion.
- **Mobilised 3,446 volunteer hours**, investing skills and energy to improve local communities.
- **Equipped 1,941 grassroots leaders** with skills, connections, and confidence to make a bigger difference in their neighbourhoods.

A recent (2023) external evaluation conducted by Common Vision identified four defining features of Near Neighbours' work that drive our impact in communities:



- 1. Emphasis on piloting and testing new partnerships and collaborations**
- 2. Building sustained relationships**
- 3. Understanding faith and cultural nuances**
- 4. Iterative development**

Near Neighbours Hubs:

Strengthening community infrastructure

Our six hub coordinators play a significant role in supporting local organisations to apply for **small grants, coordinating leadership training, facilitating community conversations, and supporting Places of Welcome**. Hub coordinators possess a wealth of local expertise and strong relationships with both grassroots organisations and statutory bodies.

Our hub coordinators also understand important cultural and religious nuances that enable them to facilitate conversations and partnerships in an informed and sensitive way.

2022/23 NN Hub areas:

- **Birmingham**
- **East London**
- **Lancashire**
- **Leicester**
- **Luton**
- **West Yorkshire**

Near Neighbours achievements 2022/2023

- **Supported 102 faith and voluntary groups with mentoring**, building their capacities in project planning, grant writing, evaluation and engaging with local authorities.
- **Coordinators also facilitated 107 new partnerships between faith and community organisations.** For example, in East London, our coordinator fostered a partnership between a Catholic church and a mosque to jointly develop and run a youth leadership programme.
- **Mobilised 518 volunteers** who contributed their ideas, energy, practical support, and social capital to increase the effectiveness and reach of local initiatives.



Near Neighbours training and events:

Equipping emerging leaders

Leadership for Effective Change (LFEC)

For over a decade, Near Neighbours has developed and facilitated leadership training that is accessible, contextual, and practical. We place a special emphasis on equipping young people, women, and UKME individuals to confidently take on leadership roles in their communities. A series of six LFEC sessions equips a cohort of emerging leaders with the skills of storytelling, partnership building, 1-2-1 meetings, campaign design, collective leadership, teamwork, and negotiation.

Near Neighbours delivered LFEC in East London, Lancashire, and Birmingham, reaching 39 participants.

Near Neighbours LFEC 2022/2023

Participant survey response data reported:

- **97% of participants** had a conversation with someone of a different faith or ethnicity, who they didn't already know.
- **94% said** the training boosted their confidence that they can make a difference in their community.

The individuals who participated shared a number of things they had learned through the training series, including the: *"importance of listening", "the importance of 1-2-1 meetings", "negotiation", "that collective working as a community is very powerful", and "sharing my story."*



Catalyst

Catalyst trains young people (aged 16-26) for confident and collaborative leadership in a diverse society. Through a series of creative, interactive sessions, Catalyst students are equipped in four main areas:

1. **Developing a positive identity** (integrating faith and ethnicity)
2. **Exploring leadership**
3. **Building skills in media and communication**
4. **Planning social action for positive change.**

In 22/23 Near Neighbours ran three Catalyst courses in West Yorkshire, East London and Luton, engaging a highly diverse group of young people.



Near Neighbours Catalyst 2022/2023

End of course student impact surveys found:

- **88% agreed that** *“participating in Catalyst improved my understanding of how to influence decisions in my local area.”*
- **91% agreed that** *“participating in Catalyst gave me a more positive view of diversity.”*
- The percentage of students agreeing that they are very comfortable talking to people of different backgrounds **increased from 30% to 71%.**
- The percentage of students agreeing that *“I am confident leading a team”* **increased from 35% to 74%.**
- The percentage of students agreeing that *“I am confident planning a project to make a difference in my community”* **increased from 53% to 79%.**

Near Neighbours small grants:

Investing in community-led projects

Alongside our investments in people through leadership training, mentoring, and networking, Near Neighbours also invests directly in grassroots projects. Our well-established small grants programme offers seed funding for local groups and organisations who are contributing to social integration.

Near Neighbours awards grants of up to £5000 to projects that:

- **Bring together people** of two or more faiths and/or ethnicities to build relationships of trust.
- **Work locally**, enabling people from the same street, estate or neighbourhood to come together.
- **Work sustainably**, nurturing long-term relationships.
- **Work to make the community a better place to live.**
- **Involve people from multiple faith or ethnic groups** to plan and implement the project.

In 2022/2023, Near Neighbours **awarded £105,078 to 35 projects** across England. Projects took a range of creative forms, including multifaith cooking groups, bike rides and day trips for asylum seekers, storytelling workshops, and intergenerational music sessions.

For the organisations that received grants in 2022/23, project leads reported that:

- **100%** have developed new partnerships with other local organisations
- **86%** feel they now have more project management and fundraising experience.
- **91%** feel they are better prepared to respond to future challenges.

Through in-depth qualitative research, the Common Vision evaluation team found that small grants have contributed to greater *“trust, inclusion, and social cohesion”* and also *“greater community resilience in times of turbulence or crisis.”* These outcomes have resulted from building individual relationships as well as fostering partnerships across diverse communities towards social action.

Facilitating difficult conversations:

Real People Honest Talk

Real People Honest Talk (RPHT) creates spaces to discuss difficult issues about how to live together well. Started in 2018, the programme has run in 11 regions across England. Through a series of 'Small Conversations' followed by a 'Big Conversation', RPHT brings together small groups of people from a local neighbourhood where there are differences in culture, attitudes, and beliefs. The goal of RPHT is to foster deeper understanding between groups or individuals, and to support groups in identifying actions they can take together to respond to challenges in their neighbourhoods.

During the 2022/23 year Near Neighbours:

- **Facilitated 24 small conversations reaching 151 individuals** from diverse backgrounds who discussed issues that matter to them, including mental health, litter, cultural barriers for girls, social media, cost of living, and concerns about drug use.
- Including the two **Big Conversations**, **RPHT engaged 587 people, including 292 women**. At the Big Conversation in Birmingham, Near Neighbours invited Positive Youth Foundation, who have followed up with participating youth to contribute to the violence reduction agenda with the West Midlands Police.



Places of Welcome:

Offering hospitality

Places of Welcome are a simple yet powerful embodiment of Near Neighbours' aim to connect people in their local communities.

Places of Welcome provide a regular space where people of all walks of life can enjoy free refreshments and good conversation, contribute their own talents and skills, and get plugged into other local activities. Places of Welcome are hosted in churches, village halls, temples, community centres, and libraries. The Near Neighbours central team and hubs provide ongoing support to Place of Welcome coordinators through periodic trainings and opportunities to share good practice.

There are now over **700 Place of Welcome venues** across England. According to the Places of Welcome survey (Oct/Nov 2022), we estimate that Places of Welcome are **reaching over 14,000 people** and **mobilising approximately 2800 volunteers**. These valuable community spaces are engaging and building relationships between people of different ages, genders, and ethnicities.



Beyond tea and biscuits

Many Places of Welcome are offering a range of additional activities including dance classes, drop ins for social prescribers, a baby club, and other forms of support. One coordinator shared: "A young asylum seeker has begun to attend and we have helped him enrol at college. He is only 19 and very isolated, but one of the volunteers' teenage sons has been helping him learn English and Maths while he waits for a college place."

Our Impact:

For 12 years and across 11 regions, Near Neighbours has worked hard to build trusting relationships, catalyse and support social action, and develop emerging leaders in a diverse society.

Over the last 12 years* Near Neighbours has:

- Generated 2,353 new community partnerships
- Mobilised 14,387 volunteers
- Reached 97,817 people through leadership events
- Disbursed 2,674 small grants to support local projects, totalling £8,269,445
- Equipped 1,406 young people with leadership skills through Catalyst
- Helped 3,430 people have difficult but honest conversations about what matters to their communities.

*Some data only available from 2016

The 2023 Common Vision evaluation concluded:

“Ultimately, by encouraging mixing and integration, and building relationships and alliances in the community, Near Neighbours leads to greater trust and inclusion within a neighbourhood, alongside tackling specific community needs.”

The researchers also concluded that by breaking down barriers of mistrust, facilitating conversations around critical issues, and connecting local people to public leaders, Near Neighbours is building longer-term community resilience.

We are proud of all that we have achieved in partnership with diverse communities across England, and are grateful for the generous support of DLUHC in catalysing social transformation.








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