



# Impact Report

2021/22

**NEAR**  
**NEIGHBOURS**  
BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER



# What we do.

**Near Neighbours builds stronger, cohesive communities in which people of all backgrounds can belong, connect, and contribute.**

For eleven years, Near Neighbours has been working in some of the most diverse regions of England to facilitate social integration.

We bring people together across lines of ethnicity and religion to build trusting relationships, collaborate on neighbourhood projects, and strengthen civil society.

## Our 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

**Near Neighbours has a strong track record of supporting and mobilising grassroots leaders. Our local coordinators make this work happen through in-depth contextual knowledge and diverse networks of relationships across 11 regional hubs.**

## THE REACH OF NEAR NEIGHBOURS' 11 REGIONAL HUBS IN 2021-22



**Awarded £204,280** in seed funding for community projects fostering integration

**Facilitated 442 new partnerships** between faith and community organisations.

**Mobilised 1180 volunteers** in communities where we work who invest energy, creativity, relational and practical support.

**Equipped 5625 grassroots leaders** with practical skills and confidence to make a bigger difference in their neighbourhoods

*Near Neighbours is generously supported by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC),*





## Equipping emerging leaders.

**Training local leaders – particularly women, young people, and UKME individuals – is a key investment in our communities. We offer training that is accessible, contextualised, and geared towards practical action.**

Participants in Near Neighbours leadership training go on to contribute to their communities with confidence, and in partnership with those from diverse backgrounds.

### Diverting to Digital

One of the innovative developments of our programme during the Covid-19 pandemic was the launch of Diverting to Digital. This course equips faith and community leaders with digital skills to more effectively communicate with and provide support to their communities.

**In 21/22 Near Neighbours delivered 12 sessions to 188 participants of whom 70% were women. The programme successfully engaged women and men (65% were over the age of 50) as well as people of UKME heritage (81%). At the end of the course, 76% of participants said they were more confident using digital communication methods.**

### Leadership for Effective Change

Leadership for Effective Change (LFEC) has also been a highly successful recent development within Near Neighbours leadership programming. Through a series of six sessions, participants develop skills in storytelling, building partnerships, designing effective campaigns, leadership, and teamwork.

**In Peterborough, Near Neighbours focused on training of leaders from African and Caribbean communities. Given the increased attention to issues of racial injustice brought to light by the Black Lives Matter movement, it has been important to focus resources on building the capacities and amplifying the voices of Black leaders.**



**When asked what next step they planned to take after the Peterborough LFEC course, participants said: "build bridges with people of various faiths, ethnicity & backgrounds"/"share my story"/ "work together for my community to make a difference in Peterborough".**

# Catalyst.

Aimed at young people aged 16–26, Catalyst trains young people for confident and collaborative leadership in a diverse society. Through a series of dynamic, interactive sessions, The course engages a highly diverse group of young people, many of whom have not previously participated in a leadership development programme.



Catalyst students are equipped in four key areas:

- 1 Developing a **positive identity**
- 2 Exploring **leadership**
- 3 Building skills in **media and communication**
- 4 Planning **social action** for positive change.

Last year's cohort was 71% female, 97% UKME, 22% first-generation immigrant, and 73% of parents who do not have a university degree.

## What do our Catalyst participants think?:

- 80%** agreed that “participating in Catalyst improved my understanding of how to influence decisions in my local area”
- 83%** agreed that “participating in Catalyst gave me a more positive view of diversity”
- 89%** agreed that “I am confident talking openly about how my faith or ethnicity shapes who I am” (64% before Catalyst)
- 74%** agreeing that “I am confident delivering a presentation in front of people” (28% before Catalyst)



The Central Foundation Girls School feedback:

'This programme differed greatly from others as it was immersive, inclusive and interactive not to mention genuinely enjoyable. It challenged us and our views of leadership and identity and made us understand how we as young individuals can create an impact for something we believe in'

Sarah Year 12







## Small Grants.

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.



**£204,280 awarded to 89 projects across England.**

Led by diverse and committed teams, these projects supported refugee and migrant integration, connected with vulnerable women and young people, and engaged communities that were otherwise isolated. Community projects were varied and creative, including arts workshops, cooking and storytelling sessions, mental health support, interfaith dialogue, and exercise classes.

Near Neighbours awards grants of up to £3000 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.**

For organisations that received a small grant, project leads reported that:



**90%** have developed new partnerships with other local organisations

**90%** feel they now have more project management and fundraising experience.

**93%** feel they are better prepared to respond to future challenges.

# Small Grants.

## Case Study: Treasure Boxing Club

**With funding from Near Neighbours, Treasure Boxing Club brought together children from diverse backgrounds to make new friends, learn new skills, and improve physical and mental wellbeing. Children aged 6-13 from Black, Asian, and white backgrounds learned together in a relaxed and supportive environment.**

*Many of the children participating were from low-income families who might not otherwise have access to such good equality facilities and activities. More than half of the children had never boxed before this project, and a significant number of girls participated and grew in confidence. For Ashley the project lead, the project has also strengthened his partnership*

*with the Southall gym and inspired him to continue running similar activities for low-income families in the community. The support from Near Neighbours was valuable to Ashley in articulating his vision and connecting with a gym in Southall. For Nicole (age 11), the boxing project has helped her to make friends with people of different religions and ethnicities, who she probably would not have met otherwise. Nicole plans to stay in touch with the friends she has made and to keep up her boxing training. Reflecting on what she had learned through the project, Nicole said: "You should always try new things even if you think you might not like it because you might love it."*



## Case Study: The Feast

**With Near Neighbours funding, The Feast designed and delivered a project engaging young people on issues of climate change. The project brought together youth (aged 13-22) of different ethnic and religious identities to learn about climate change, develop creative ideas of what they could do locally, and build relationships.**

*Raheed and Ulrike, the project leads, were inspired to develop this project to educate young people about how their own community – Luton – contributes to and can respond to environmental concerns. The group had the opportunity to consider the economic drivers and impacts of climate change, including issues around the Luton airport and the*

*design of low-income housing and green space. Raheed and Ulrike observed that the young people all grew in confidence and in listening skills over the course of the project. Emily, shared that she has met people from different backgrounds and also learned about what it takes to listen well and have a good dialogue. She says she also feels more connected to Luton and has a greater desire to improve Luton, as a result of participating. Another participant, Ashraful, said that he feels his voice is heard at The Feast and in the context of this project. He reflected that there is a lot of value in speaking to people who have different opinions, and that being part of the group has helped him to believe that people can actually enact change in their local area.*





# Real People, Honest Talk.

Real People Honest Talk creates spaces to discuss difficult issues about how to live together well. Through facilitated conversations, RPHT brings together small groups of people from a local neighbourhood where there are differences in culture, attitudes, and beliefs.



**23 small conversations reaching 252 individuals in 21/22**

Of the diverse set of individuals we reached, 25% were young people and 69% were women. RPHT groups discussed issues that mattered to them, including racism, mental health, tackling anti-social behaviour, and strengthening relationships between families and local schools.

96% of participants agreed that their group had an open and honest conversation, and 73% said they had a conversation with someone of a different faith, whom they hadn't previously met. Particularly in neighbourhoods that experience high levels of segregation and distrust, these are signs that RPHT is helping people to have positive encounters across lines of difference, without shying away from difficult issues.



Small conversations are followed by a 'Big Conversation', where participants share their stories and ideas with a wider group including statutory services, MPs, faith leaders, and other community institutions.

Participants in the Big Conversation in Nottingham said they valued:

**"sharing our ideas and listening to other people's ideas"**

**"meeting and talking to local MPs"**

**"BIG thank you to everyone who participated and organised this. That really makes a difference to us as Muslim women to empower, feel safe, and talk and meet others."**



# Places of Welcome.

Places of Welcome is a growing network of local community groups providing their neighbourhoods with places where all people feel safe to connect, belong and contribute. Places of Welcome are hosted in a variety of community venues, including places of worship libraries and community centres.

Near Neighbours provides training and support to Place of Welcome coordinators around communications, safeguarding, social prescribing, and supporting those with mental health difficulties.



The network now has over **500 locations** across England. Venue coordinators, volunteers, and participants continue to describe Places of Welcome as an important place for them to belong, contribute, and connect with others.

## Each Place of Welcome commits to embody the 5 P's:

**Place:** an accessible and hospitable building, open at the same time every week

**People:** open to everyone regardless of their circumstances or situation, and staffed by volunteers

**Presence:** a place where people actively listen to one another

**Provision:** offering free refreshments (at least a cup of tea and a biscuit) and basic local information

**Participation:** every person will bring talents, experiences and skills that they may be willing to share locally.

## Story: POW Combatting social isolation/ Intergenerational activities

*Social workers referred Jim to us looking for a way to connect him with some other, local citizens, because he was very isolated, lonely and vulnerable. We visited him on mobile coffee morning so he knew who we were and invited him along to our POW. We organised transport to get him to the group because he doesn't travel alone. He has been coming for a few weeks now and is a regular on the pool table - although he complains that it is slanted! It's been lovely to watch him get to know people, especially a teenage boy who comes to the group because he is currently out of mainstream education. They play pool together and there are a lot of smiles and laughing- POW West Midlands*



# Impact.

Across our eleven regions, Near Neighbours has worked tirelessly to build trusting relationships, provide opportunities for people to participate positively in their communities, and develop leaders for a diverse society.

Over the last **11 years\***, we have:

- Generated **2246 new community partnerships**
- Mobilised **13,869 volunteers**
- Reached **95,876 people** through leadership events
- Disbursed **2648 small grants** to support local projects, totalling **£8,164,367**
- Equipped **1343 young people** with leadership skills through Catalyst
- Helped **2852 people** have difficult but honest conversations about what matters to their communities



## Looking ahead.

As we have begun to recover from the pandemic, its effects are still with us. War in Ukraine and the recent emigration of Afghans, Hong Kongers and Ukrainians, means that our communities are continually being reshaped. It is an ongoing work to build trust and cohesion in our communities, and the cost of living crisis we are in, will impact on community relationships, as well as events abroad, as we have seen this year in Leicester.



The work of Near Neighbours is never complete, and it is a long term building up of networks, emerging and established leaders, change makers, and small organizations, who are making a difference where they live. We are using the assets of communities, and faith communities in particular, to strengthen community infrastructure, equip emerging and established leaders, Invest in community-led projects through our small grants, enable honest conversations, and make places of welcome.

\*Some data only available from 2016

# NEAR NEIGHBOURS

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