

Analysis of Impacts on Participants

Young Leaders: Mentors: Ambassadors



"I enjoyed everything about being involved in the young Leaders programme. It has been completely different to anything I have done before".

"This course has certainly changed me for the better; I can now do things that I never thought I would be able to."

1. Context and background

1.1 Since its inception in 2012 the Young Leaders program has seen 79 year 10 students from across North Tyneside take up the challenge. Many of these have moved beyond the Young Leaders stage to return as Mentors and some have then gone on to become Ambassadors. Recruitment for the 2015 programme will soon begin and with it we will see our first Leaders take their place – young people who have completed all 3 earlier stages and who want to come back for more. The numbers who have so far engaged with programme are shown in the table below.

Year					Total
2012	Pilot Young Leaders Course (21)				21
2013	Young Leaders Course (24)	Pilot Mentors (8)			32
2014	Young Leaders Course (34)	Mentors (7)	Pilot Ambassadors (4)		45
2015	Young Leaders Course (?)	Mentors (?)	Ambassadors (?)	Pilot Leaders (?)	?

1.2 It should be noted that the number of participants is not an indication of demand as the Friends of High Borrans (FOHB) has to limit the numbers taking part to tie in with our ability to raise funds to cover the costs.

1.3 Initially conceived by the FOHB committee as a one year course to help young people make the next steps to employment or FE by improving their leadership and team work skills it has now evolved into a 4 year programme for those who wish to follow it all the way through. The table above indicates the pattern of take up.

1.4 The same basic elements of the original one year course are still in place i.e.

- Initial briefing meeting and presentations
- Segedumun abseil
- Residential week at High Borrans during the summer holidays
- First aid course
- Presentation evening

1.5 There have however been changes to the content within this and methods of delivery; these changes are all very much based on feedback from both the young people involved and the participating staff and volunteers. It is fair to say that there is a huge amount of review and discussion of what we do both during the courses and afterwards.



A problem solving expedition was introduced in 2014

1.6 Mentors follow the same basic pattern but have specific supporting roles within the residential week and they also complete a practical environmental project whilst at High Borrans. They do not repeat the first aid course. Ambassadors are more involved in publicising the overall programme and this year have given a number of presentations to head teachers, governors and a Learning Outside the Classroom conference. They take on more responsibility in the residential setting; in 2014 they were acting as auxiliary staff supporting a residential week for the Willington Kids Club.



In 2013 The Mentors built the new High Borrans fire circle

2. Impact on participants

2.1 Observation by staff and volunteers, especially of those participants continuing beyond the first year of the programme, clearly indicate improved confidence, ability to work in teams and ability to communicate together with rapidly developing maturity and heightened resilience as major outcomes. However as is indicated later, to simply reduce the impacts to a few areas that can be ticked off is to miss the real impact of participation, impacts on participants perceptions, feelings and in some cases being exposed to an entirely different aspects and challenges of life.

2.2 At the end of each course participants are however asked to review their experience via a feedback sheet and a form that is used as the basis of their personal statement. These sources have been used each year to identify how the participants perceive the impact of the course.

2.3 There was no initial intention to conduct a detailed monitoring programme; if there had been more thought would have been put into the structure and content of these documents and standardised procedures would have been used to administer them; that however is not what the programme is about. The questions are open-ended and thus permit a wide variety of responses. In addition to this, time available for completion and the depth of guidance given about completion has varied between the years; these factors seem to have had an impact on the depth and breadth of responses. Additional variation has been created by the diverse set of young people involved, with quite wide variations in academic ability and previous experiences, hence differing styles of completion. Given these factors it is not possible to make statistically significant judgements; however, there are some interesting common trends that emerge.

2.4 Appendices 1, 2 and 3 contain key findings together with selected verbatim quotations from the completed forms from 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively.

2.5 An overall analysis of responses to the course feedback and personal statement sheets reveal that:

- Increased confidence
- Improved communication skills
- Improved team work
- Overcoming personal fears
- Increased self-control
- Increased determination
- Improved time management
- Greater self worth
- Improved ability to make friends and being taken out of my comfort zone

Were all identified as significant benefits by the participants.

2.6 Increased self-confidence is by far the most frequently identified benefit amongst the participants. Over the 3 years almost 75% of all participants overtly identified this to be the case. Young people most frequently linked this to being better able to talk to other people, make new friends, overcoming fears and being more able to be *effective* members of a team and feeling more able to take charge of an activity. The statement below from a participant is typical of the thrust of their comments.

As a result of taking part in the award I know that I have developed a lot more self-confidence, both in talking to people I do not know and in taking part in things that I would not even have thought of doing before.



Increased confidence is the most reported impact

Increasing levels of confidence have been a key element in feedback from both mentors and ambassadors too. The personal statement at Appendix 4 from one of the 2014 Ambassadors is an excellent illustration of this, although it is often necessary to ‘read between the lines’ to pull out the true extent of the impacts.

2.7 Improved communication skills as a significant impact have been cited by 57% of all participants; often in the context of being able to talk to people they didn’t know (clearly linked to heightened self-confidence). However this also related to communicating with people in their own teams and contributing to group presentations; ‘being able to get my ideas across better’ and ‘listening better’ were also identified as benefits as indicated by the comment below.



Giving instructions and encouragement in a ‘warm up’ activity

My listening skills have also improved especially when trying to understand complex rules and tasks and I now communicate better with other people, even those who I have only just met.

For the Mentors and Ambassadors who are asked to take increasing levels of responsibility for organising and instructing groups and therefore to make far more use of these skills it is possible that they do not necessarily recognise just how such skills have developed from previous years. This would account for the reduced frequency of identification.

2.8 Improved Teamwork is the other skill area identified by over 50% of participants as having shown major improvement. This is perhaps not surprising as teamwork and leadership are at the heart of the Young Leaders programme.

I now have a much better understanding of teamwork and I was really pleased that I was able to work effectively with people I have only known for a few days.

That emphasis is continued and indeed developed further as participants' progress to become Mentors and Ambassadors and as with communication it is perhaps something that starts to become taken for granted, even by the Young Leaders and it possibly under-reported as a result.

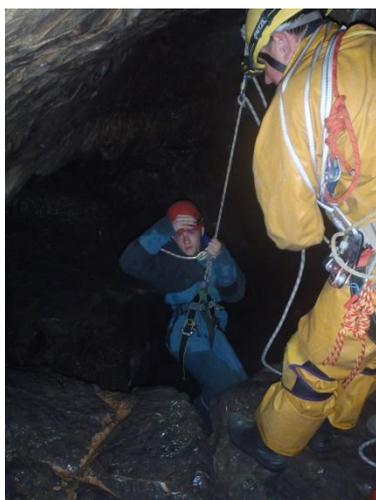


Improved team work makes for much faster progress

2.9 Other Impacts are numerous and incredibly varied, in many ways they are the most rewarding as they are clearly very personal to those who have reported them. As examples, 8 comments are provided below. Resilience, overcoming fears and broadening horizons are clear themes running through these.

This course has certainly changed me for the better; I can now do things that I never thought I would be able to.

I have certainly learned to become more independent



Overcoming fears does wonders for your confidence!

I have learned to manage my time more effectively to complete tasks and I have definitely learned that to be successful you need to keep going and not give up.

I found it very difficult but I kept pushing myself and the sense of achievement when we reached the summit was really worthwhile

I now feel that I can do anything if I try.

The course has made me want to become the best I can be and to give my all in what I do. I would also like to help others to succeed in the same way.

I have also faced and overcome fears such as caving. I have gained a lot of confidence and now realise it is good to be pushed out of your comfort zone.

I have also learned 'not to judge a book by its cover'; in the past if someone came across as not a nice person then I wouldn't include them with my friends. However after getting to know everybody on the course I have discovered that even if at first a person might not seem to be the sort of person I like they may actually be quite different

3. Conclusions

3.1 Participation in the Young Leaders programme has clearly had a significant impact on the young people concerned. This is documented above with three areas;

Self confidence
Communication Skills
Team work

standing out in the feed back and our own observations as having shown significant improvements.

3.2 It is very important however to remember that these three elements are closely intertwined and indeed interlinked in a variety of ways with other impacts. To see such widespread recognition of the improvements that the course has helped to secure is very rewarding but it is the individual impacts on individual young people that is perhaps most exciting.

3.3 When following a course a participant can write "*I can now do things that I never thought I would be able to.*" it makes you realise that it is a very worthwhile experience. And when a participant in 2012 wrote "*The course has made me want to become the best I can be and to give my all in what I do. I would also like to help others to succeed in the same way*" you might be forgiven for thinking that perhaps the Young Leaders award has something rather special about it.



Formal dinner at end of the residential course

Appendix 1

Analysis of YL 2012

Pleasingly every member of the 2012 cohort indicated that they had enjoyed the experience and many were very enthusiastic in stressing how much.

Of the 21 that took part 86% identified that they felt more confident as a result of the experience. This has subsequently anecdotally been supported by several of the cohort reporting that they have been successful in part time job interviews – partly as a result of this new found confidence an on said that before she wouldn't have had the confidence even to apply for a part time job. Those that returned as mentors on the 2013 programme were clearly displaying higher levels of confidence when working with the YLs

2/3rds also reported that they felt their communication skills, in particular their ability to listen and to get across their own ideas had improved and is again further demonstrated during mentor activity and in success rates in interviews.

An improved ability to make friends (functions of both growing confidence and improved communication skills) featured significantly in their feedback as did a significant sense of achievement – almost 40% and an appreciation that their ability to work as a part of a team had significantly improved (62%).

Interestingly 23% indicated that they had overcome significant fears (heights, water etc) and about 20% felt that they had become more determined and/or more positive as a result of the programme.

Specific quotes from YLs in the 2012 cohort

I have never done anything like that

I now feel that I can do anything if I try.

The award has made me think about my future and I think I now have the determination to go out and do something interesting.

enjoyed meeting a lot of new people and making new friends.

I found it very difficult but I kept pushing myself and the sense of achievement when we reached the summit was really worthwhile.

I now have a much better understanding of teamwork and I was really pleased that I was able to work effectively with people I have only known for a few days.

I think that I also developed my ability to push myself a lot more when things get hard,

As a result of taking part in the award I know that I have developed a lot more self-confidence, both in talking to people I do not know and in taking part in things that I would not even have thought of doing before.

My listening skills have also improved especially when trying to understand complex rules and tasks and I now communicate better with other people, even those who I have only just met.

I think I am now more confident in myself and in what I can achieve, I can communicate more easily with people and I am more able to take risks and complete challenges

The course has made me want to become the best I can be and to give my all in what I do. I would also like to help others to succeed in the same way.

Appendix 2

Analysis of YL 2013

As with the 2012 cohort every member of the 2013 course indicated that they had enjoyed the experience. A number were very enthusiastic.

Of the 24 responses 58% identified that they felt more confident as a result of the experience, one said that they felt more independent and another said that it had opened his eyes to what he could achieve whilst 17% felt that their determination and/or will to keep going had significantly improved as a result of doing the YL course.

58% also reported that they felt their communication skills, in particular their ability to listen and to get across their own ideas had improved and is again further demonstrated during mentor activity and in success rates in interviews.

An improved ability to make friends (functions of both growing confidence and improved communication skills) featured significantly in their feedback (38%). Improved ability to work as a team (54%) and greater understanding of different ways to lead a team (42%) were other key benefits identified. Interestingly one YL identified that he had shown significantly improved levels of self-control whilst 21% recognised the need and benefit of being taken beyond their 'comfort zone'.

In this cohort 29% indicated that they had overcome significant fears (heights, water, confined spaces etc.) as a result of the programme.

Specific quotes from YLs in the 2013 cohort

My confidence has really increased and I have got used to a lot of things that I have never done before

I have also faced and overcome fears such as caving. I have gained a lot of confidence and now realise it is good to be pushed out of your comfort zone.

The course has changed me by giving me a lot more confidence to do anything and to get on with people I didn't know before

I have really improved my communication skills, I was able to get my point of view across but before I wasn't able to. I have also learned that leadership is a lot about taking into account the group, not just about making decisions.

I have found out just how important good communications are

I am particularly proud of stepping outside my comfort zone, of becoming more confident and independent and of sacrificing personal success to help another member of the team to become more successful.

I am scared of heights so I am very proud of jumping from a high ledge into Ullswater, it was very high and the water was very cold! I am now a lot more confident than I was before.

The course has made me realise that it is sometimes best to take a step back and listen to what other people have to say

I enjoyed everything about being involved in the young leaders programme; it has been completely different to anything I have done before. I have also enjoyed meeting a lot of new people and making new friends

My confidence has improved a lot and I now find it a lot easier to talk to people I have never met before.

Appendix 3

Analysis of YL and Mentors 2014

As with the 2013 cohort every member of the 2014 Young Leaders course indicated that they had enjoyed the experience. A number were very enthusiastic and virtually every participant expressed pride in what they had achieved

Of the 34 Young Leader responses 79% identified that they felt more confident as a result of the experience, one said that they felt more independent and another said that it had opened his eyes to what he could achieve whilst 12% felt that their determination and/or will to keep going had significantly improved as a result of doing the YL course.

47% also reported that they felt their communication skills, in particular their ability to listen and to get across their own ideas had improved and is again further demonstrated during mentor activity and in success rates in interviews, it would seem that this is very closely linked to the reported increases in confidence

An improved ability to make friends (functions of both growing confidence and improved communication skills) featured significantly in their feedback whilst this year only 18% reported improved ability to work as a team a far higher % referred to a greater understanding of the value and importance of teamwork.

Other noteworthy comments were reports of improved levels of resilience / determination/ motivation, overcoming fears such as heights and water, improved time management, greater levels of appreciation of other people, changed outlook, becoming more trusting and being able to give support and encouragement to others

The Mentor comments closely mirrored those of the Young Leaders

Specific quotes from YLs and Mentors in the 2014 cohort

Young Leaders

I have learned that to be a leader is not all about you; quite often you need to put others before yourself.

The course has built up my confidence

I have learned that one really important thing with leadership is never to give up.

I have learned to manage my time more effectively to complete tasks and I have definitely learned that to be successful you need to keep going and not give up.

As a result of taking part in this programme I have decided to volunteer more instead of sitting around and watching life go by.

The way everybody supported other people when they had low points was really good

My biggest achievement was climbing Helvellyn because I was feeling really challenged, nervous and anxious about it, I have a real fear of heights but I overcame it.

I am particularly proud of talking to people I didn't already know and working in groups with them. I don't usually feel too comfortable getting to know new people but this course has boosted my confidence a bit more so that I feel more comfortable working with people I don't know.

My confidence has improved a lot because I have had to come out of my comfort zone and challenge some of my fears. I hated abseiling but I did it and I feel a lot more confident now knowing that I can do things I really don't like.

I have certainly learned to become more independent

The course has changed how I will build on initial relationships with people; I was cautious about talking and interacting with new people at the start but I will do things differently in the future.

I also understand a lot more just how important good communications and team work are to get things done

This course has certainly changed me for the better; I can now do things that I never thought I would be able to.

Mentors

I was particularly proud of the conservation work I was involved in. I am not very creative, so the wind chime I made was a real achievement. The pride I felt when unveiling our walkway and wood store was unbelievable.

Coming back as a Mentor has really boosted my confidence and I now feel much more relaxed about meeting new people.

The course has changed me a lot; before I started I didn't have much self-confidence and got quite worried about meeting new people. That has changed and a lot of my friends are now from different schools and it feels like I grew up with them.

I have also learned 'not to judge a book by its cover'; in the past if someone came across as not a nice person then I wouldn't include them with my friends. However after getting to know everybody on the course I have discovered that even if at first a person might not seem to be the sort of person I like they may actually be quite different

AMBASSADOR 2014

Personal Statement: Sarah Donkin

As an Ambassador, I have contributed all through the year to planning and review meetings and I presented about the Award to a meeting of North Tyneside Middle and Secondary School Head Teachers and at the Institute for Outdoor Learning's day conference for teachers at the Rising Sun Country Park. As part of the Award I raised £140 to part fund my involvement in the programme, I attended a presentation by Professor Roy Sandbach and abseiled from the roof of the Segedunum Fort Viewing Tower. I also participated, as a helper, in the Willington Quays Kids Club week at High Borrans.

During the time at High Borrans I took part in ghyll scrambling, canoeing, camping, orienteering and caving. I was also involved with leading and assisting with activities for the Willington Quays children, in particular I had responsibilities for organising some of the games, fire circle activities, an overnight camp and a part of the ghyll scramble

This year was more about helping to supervise the children from the Willington Quays Kids Club and I really enjoyed having that bit more responsibility throughout the week. I felt more like an adult, leading activities and helping out off site was very rewarding and I felt the children really looked up to us. Dealing with younger children was interesting. I certainly learned that there has to be a balance between supervising the children and letting them have some independence so that they can get a sense of achievement. The vital role of communication became even clearer to me, it is not just what you say but how you say and that varies according to the situation you are in.

I think that running the fire circle activities on our own was a great achievement; we made the activities fun and kept all the children safe, the children really seemed to enjoy it. I was surprised to find that the kids in every group followed our instructions, showed us respect and listened – which meant everything ran smoothly and everyone had a good time. Getting that success has meant that my confidence has definitely improved again, this is particularly as a result of having to get used to standing up and organising groups, giving instructions and sorting out problems

This experience has helped to confirm my ambition to become a primary school teacher. I would also like to continue to the final year of the award as it has become a big part of my life and something I am really passionate about.

Young Leader Ambassador 2014

Steve Braysher
On behalf of The Friends of High Borrans