

Final Report on the Evaluation of The Challenge Programme 2009

for

The Conservative Party

by

**Innovative Routes to Learning and the Applied Educational Research Centre
at the University of Strathclyde**



Background

Innovative Routes to Learning (IRL) at the University of Strathclyde, in conjunction with the university's Applied Educational Research Centre (AERC) carried out an evaluation of Waves 2 and 3 of the 2009 The Challenge programme.

The Challenge is a Civic Service programme aimed at 15-16 year olds at the end of Year 11 in school. The young people work in groups to complete three distinct phases of the programme;

The Personal Challenge: A five-day residential programme at an outdoor pursuits centre

The Team Challenge: A five-day residential programme, based at a university campus in which participants take part in a project based around a personal interest

The Real Challenge: Groups design and implement a programme aimed to address an issue that they have identified in their local community. Groups spend one week identifying the issue they wish to focus on and then meet once a week for approximately ten weeks to develop the programme.

This evaluation aimed to assess what impact the programme had on participants in the following areas:

- Social Mixing
- Transition to Adulthood
- Leadership
- Communication
- Community Involvement

This report will focus mainly on the impact of the overall programme and in particular, the third part of The Challenge, the Real Challenge.

Key Findings

The following findings and recommendations come with the caveat that the low number of responses to the University of Strathclyde's final questionnaire (see 'Issues') meant that no meaningful analysis could be undertaken as to the significance of the quantitative data gathered. These findings and recommendations are therefore mainly based on qualitative data.

- The programme appears to have been very successful in its goal of encouraging social mixing, with participants having opportunities to meet people that they would not normally and this seems to have gone some way to challenging the young people's pre-conceptions about others. However, there is an issue about whether participants have **sustained** their contact with people from other backgrounds.
- The programme seems to have been effective in developing the leadership abilities of the majority of participants. The level to which participants were willing to take on responsibility and a leadership role within their group appears to have been dependent to some extent, however, on the background of participants, with more middle-class participants appearing more likely to be more pro-active in this regard.
- The programme seems to have been very successful in developing team-working skills, though there appears to have been a mixed level of success for different groups with regard to team-work during the Real Challenge element of the programme.
- In general, participants believe that the programme has allowed them to improve their communication skills, in particular with regard to giving presentations and speaking to groups.
- With regard to community involvement, the majority of participants appear to be motivated to become more engaged with their community but there seems to be varying levels of belief among them with regard to how possible it is to make a genuine positive difference within the community and whether they now feel more a part of their community. There is some sense that these different levels of belief are related to which area participants come from, with those from 'rougher' areas perhaps less likely to feel a sustained positive impact is possible.
- With regard to aiding the transition into adulthood, there is a strong sense that the experience of taking on responsibilities and working in a group has had a very positive effect on many participants with regard to developing more confidence in taking on responsibility and working with others in a mature fashion. There is also evidence that some participants now feel better equipped with 'real life' work skills and feel a greater sense of control over their circumstances, although these last two areas may again be more relevant to the more 'pro-active' participants on the programme.
- Participants, in general, appear to feel a strong sense of engagement, enthusiasm and ownership of the project, which would seem to relate to the fact that they have a large element of control over the content of their project.
- Some participants perceived a lack of direction and structure in the Real Challenge part of the programme. This, coupled with a lack of sustainability in some groups' community projects and the lack of a clear impact on the community from these projects, led to a level of de-motivation among some participants.

- The Real Challenge appears to have been successful in developing the young people's abilities in terms of communication, team-work, leadership and taking on responsibility. There is a sense among some participants that they will be able to learn from their experience and in the future be in a better position to work more successfully in their community. This is counterbalanced by a certain amount of de-motivation among participants as a result of their project not having the impact on the community **now** that they had hoped for.
- The parents and guardians of course participants believe overall that the programme has had a very positive impact on levels of confidence, responsibility, social mixing and, to a slightly lesser extent, community involvement.
- Among the Champion Teachers, who act as recruiting agent for The Challenge within schools, there is a strong sense that the programme should **not** be made compulsory due to the negative effect that that being forced to take part could have on participants' motivation.
- The programme appears to have a large number of different aims, leading to some confusion among stakeholders as to what The Challenge's main areas of focus are.

Recommendations

- The Challenge should look for ways to allow the Real Challenge aspect of the programme to be more inclusive; to increase the level of engagement and participation across **all** participants. It would appear that some participants are more proactive than others and some may require more support and guidance in order to engage more fully.
- Looking at ways to make the third phase projects more sustainable might help to enhance and sustain some participants' motivation over a longer period of time. This could perhaps be done through making stronger links with organisations working in relevant areas or through Challenge participants doing more research into the issues they hope to address.
- There perhaps needs to be a better balance drawn in Phase 3 between allowing groups the independence to develop their own project and providing more structure and guidance. The control that participants have over their programme is a positive for many but the lack of support is felt by others to have a detrimental effect on the perceived success of the third phase. It is perhaps down to group mentors to play a more proactive role in the community aspect of The Challenge.
- With regard to Phase 3, some clarification of goals could be beneficial; is the aim of the third phase to provide genuinely effective civic service or is it to provide the participants with the skills, abilities and confidence to go on to make a positive difference in the community in the future? If it is the first option, then perhaps the young people need more structure and guidance to help them complete their project successfully.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation consisted of:

- Three quantitative questionnaires for course participants
- One qualitative questionnaire for course participants
- Qualitative interviews with some participants from Wave 3
- Parent/guardian questionnaires
- Questionnaires for the link teachers (Champion teachers) who worked with The Challenge to recruit pupils from their schools on to the programme

Original Evaluation Timetable

Date	Action
19.07.09	Base-line Questionnaire administered to second wave
07.08.09	Second Questionnaire administered to second wave
09.08.09	Base-line Questionnaire administered to third wave
August 2009	Qualitative interviews in London of third wave participants
26.08.09	Second Questionnaire administered to third wave
September 2009	Questionnaire sent to Champion Teachers in schools
December 2009	Third questionnaire administered to Cohorts 2 & 3 upon completion of The Challenge programme
December 2009 to February 2010	Second round of qualitative interviews carried out by telephone
January 2009	Questionnaire sent to parents/carers
March 2010	Final Report completed

When designing evaluation questionnaires and choosing specific questions to analyse for this report, the University of Strathclyde took into consideration the important areas of focus for the Conservative Party funders of this evaluation and the stated programme aims of The Challenge Network which were clarified with Strathclyde before the programme evaluation began. While obviously overlapping greatly, the stated aims/areas of interest from these two stakeholders were different.

The main areas of focus for the programme funders:

- Greater social mixing
- Easing the transition into adulthood

Challenge Network aims focussed on in this report:

- Improving leadership skills, with an emphasis on the ability to motivate others to achieve a shared goal
- Greater involvement in the community
- Improved communication skills, with a focus on verbal skills; the ability to articulate in a persuasive fashion in presentations, meetings and one-to-one situations
- Increased aspiration with regard to further or higher education and the type of career path participants wish to follow

For our evaluation of The Challenge programme, elements that are taken as indicators of a move into 'adulthood' are; a greater sense of personal responsibility, greater engagement with the community, greater confidence, greater sense of control over one's circumstances and a better ability to form mature relationships with others, including working relationships.

Quantitative Questionnaires

The Quantitative questions that featured in both the baseline and final questionnaires were designed to address;

- Leadership, Team-working, Communication Skills and Self-Esteem
- Locus of Control
- Social Mixing
- Community Involvement
- Internet Use

The second questionnaire featured questions on only the first three of these categories as it was considered that three weeks was too short a time to measure a change in behaviour with regard to the final two.

While not yet impacting on behaviour, it was thought that the first three weeks of the programme could have a measurable impact on how young people view their friendship groups and so the social mixing questions were included in the second questionnaire.

There were also qualitative questions on the second and third questionnaires that asked participants directly about their experience on The Challenge and the impact they thought it had had on them.

For some of the questions that relate specifically to how participants felt about the programme the responses from Wave 1 participants who filled in the final questionnaire have also been included.

The baseline, second and third quantitative questionnaires were administered to participants in the second and third waves of the Challenge programme 2009. The baseline questionnaires were administered before the programme began, with the second questionnaires completed once participants had finished the first three weeks of the project, which incorporated the Personal Challenge, the Team Challenge and the first week of the Real Challenge. The final questionnaire was administered once participants had finished the entire programme. It was available for participants

to fill in from the beginning of December 2009 but some of those who completed it did so in January and February 2010. A deadline of the 26th February was drawn for completion of the final questionnaire in order that too much time should not elapse after the end of the programme. The first two questionnaires were administered in paper form. The final questionnaire was put into electronic form by The Challenge staff in London for participants to fill in online.

107 participants filled in the baseline questionnaire. 47 of these were from the second wave and 60 from the third wave.

47 participants filled in the second questionnaire. Out of these, 6 were from the second wave and 41 from the third wave.

21 participants filled in the third questionnaire. However, only 9 of these were participants from the second and third waves who had previously completed the baseline and/or second questionnaires. Only 6 completed all three questionnaires and this has made any analysis of significant differences between the first and third questionnaires or the second and third questionnaires impossible.

This report will therefore look instead at the areas where there were **significant** statistical differences between the **first** and **second** questionnaires, as well as describing some trends from the three questionnaires.

Leadership, Team-working, Communication Skills and Self-Esteem

There was no significant difference in scores for self-esteem between the first and second questionnaires though there was evidence, with regard to communication, to suggest that participants were now more likely to share their opinion more freely, even with people that they didn't know well. There is also evidence that participants showed an increase in self-awareness with regard to their own abilities.

Locus of Control

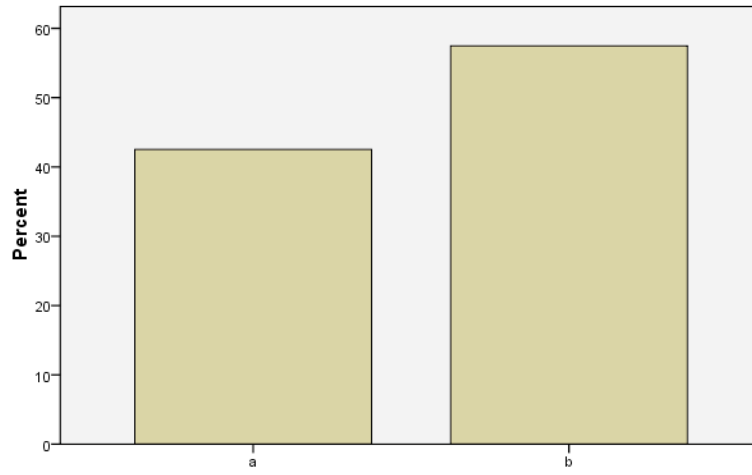
This section aimed to evaluate how much control participants felt that they have over their lives and how much they felt responsibility for the things that happen to them. Over time, we would imagine that participants on The Challenge would feel more control over their lives and more able to make a difference in their community. This would be indicative of an overall change in attitude towards being less passive and more proactive and would perhaps suggest a more 'adult' relationship with one's surroundings, bearing in mind that with greater control over one's circumstances comes greater responsibility.

Participants were asked to indicate which of a pair of statements they agreed with most. The following are areas in which there were significant differences. For each, two graphs are provided, one for the baseline questionnaire and one for the second questionnaire.

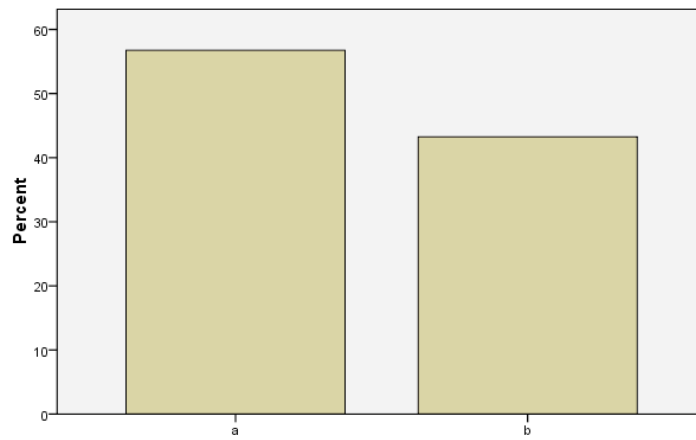
a. In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world.

- b. Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard they try.

Baseline Questionnaire

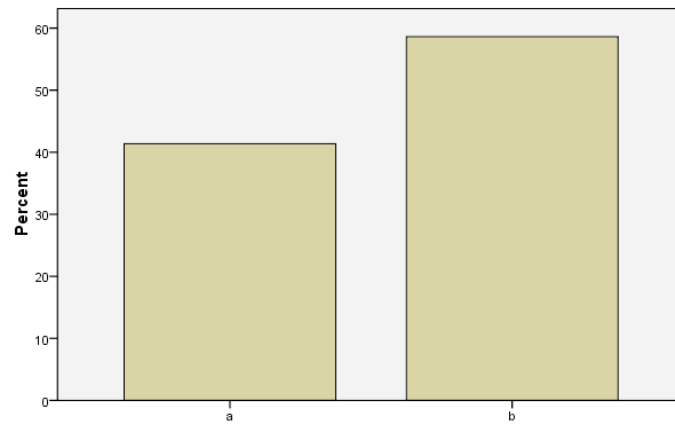


Second Questionnaire

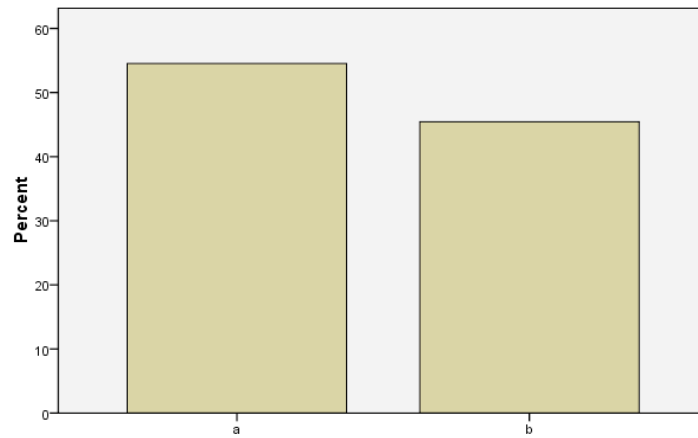


- a. The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.
- b. This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much ordinary people can do about it.

Baseline Questionnaire



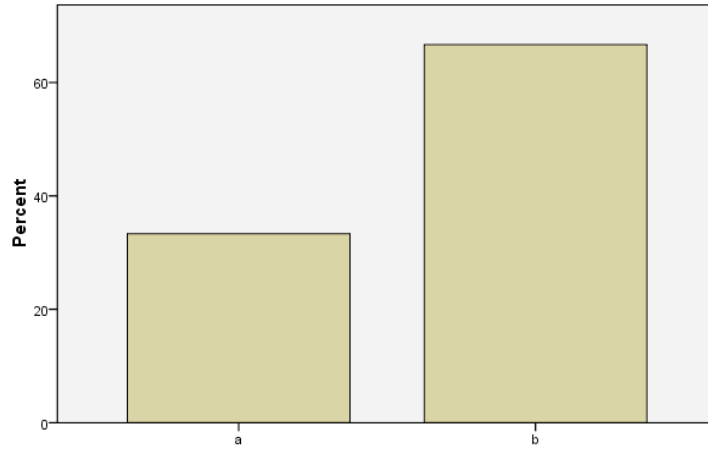
Second Questionnaire



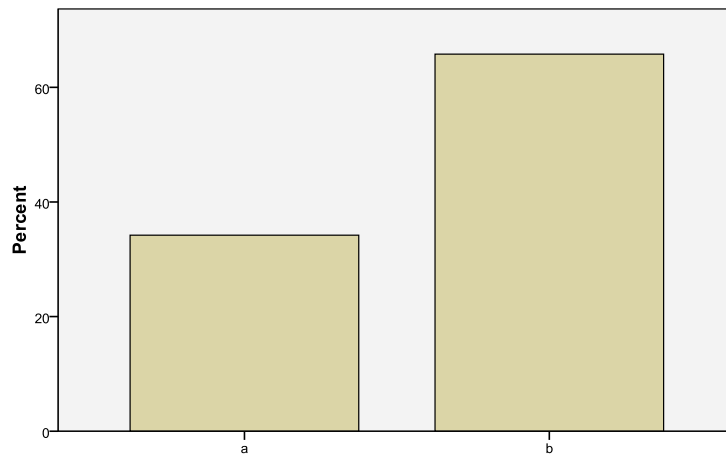
- a. People are lonely because they don't try to be friendly.

- b. There's not much use in trying too hard to please people, if they like you, they like you.

Baseline Questionnaire



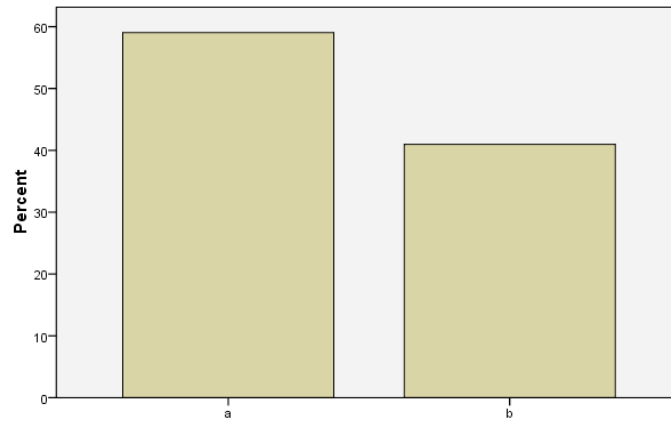
Second Questionnaire



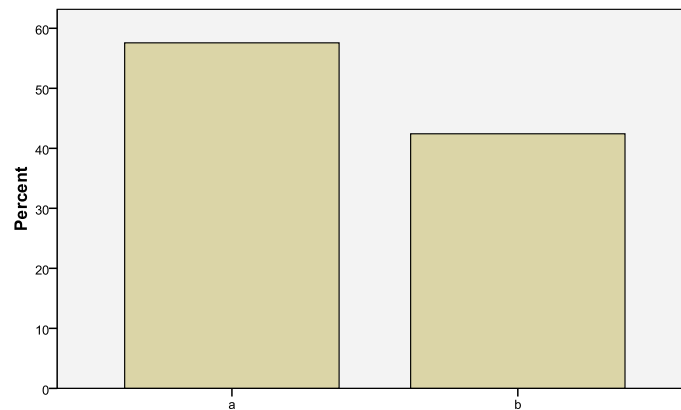
- a. Most of the time I can't understand why politicians behave the way they do.

b. In the long run the people are responsible for bad government on a national as well as on a local level.

Baseline Questionnaire



Second Questionnaire



In all of these areas there is a significant movement from feelings of external to internal control with participants feeling more of a sense that they can have a meaningful influence on society at a local and national level and that they can influence what others think about them.

Social Mixing

This section looked at the make up of the social groups that participants are part of and how mixed these were with regard to ethnicity, culture, age, geographical area and gender. Greater social

mixing is one of the key stated aims for the programme and it was also focussed on in qualitative interview.

Participants were asked to grade the statements on the following scale;

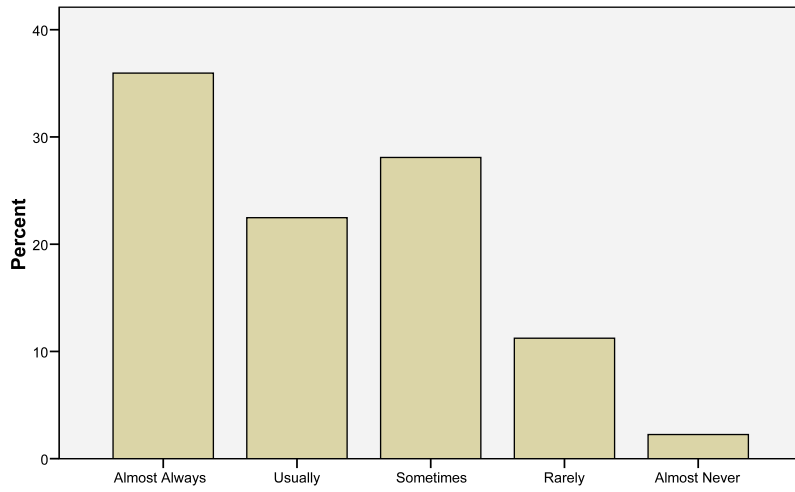
Almost always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost never
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Although it is not possible to properly analyse changes over time with the data received, it is worth noting that, from the baseline questionnaires, participants seemed to already mix to a significant degree with people from different backgrounds before the programme began. However, there is still a trend, shown in the three graphs below, towards progressively higher levels of mixing with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and with people from different areas.

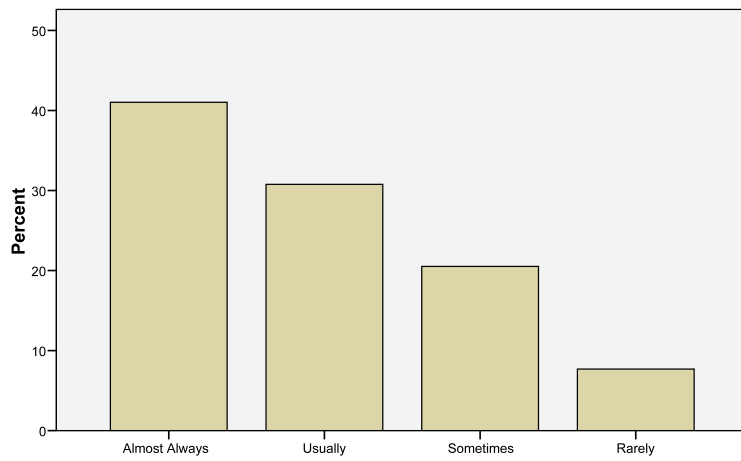
On the graphs used to illustrate responses, 'Almost Always' is represented as 1. For each item three graphs are provided, one each for the baseline, second and third questionnaires.

People I usually hang out with are from different cultural/ethnic backgrounds

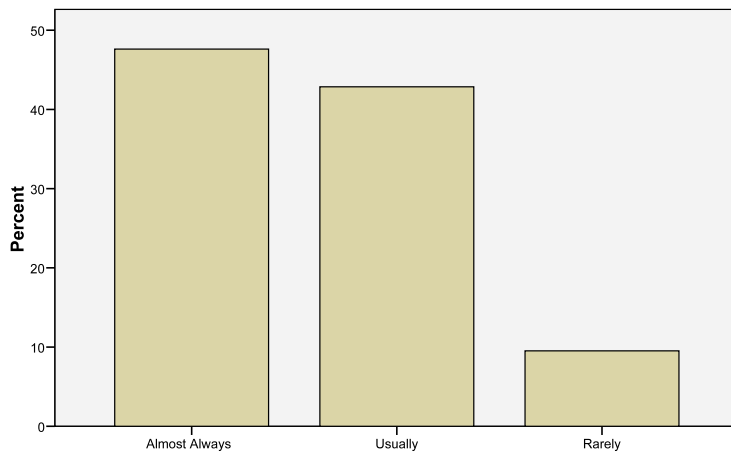
Baseline Questionnaire



Second Questionnaire



Third Questionnaire

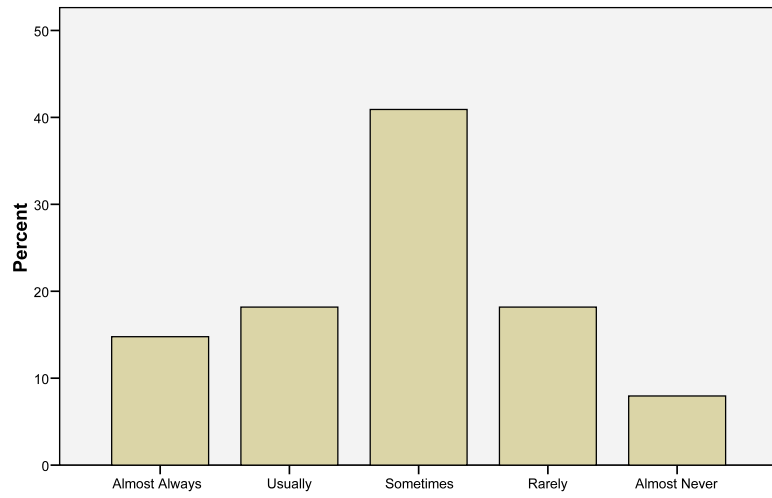


People I
out with are

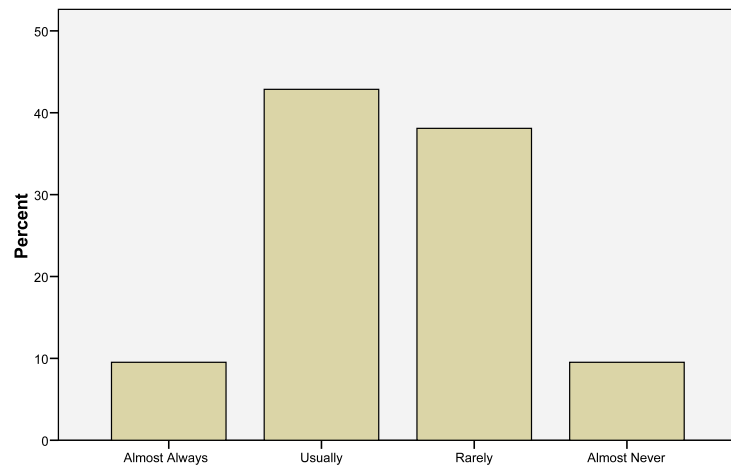
area

usually hang
from my local

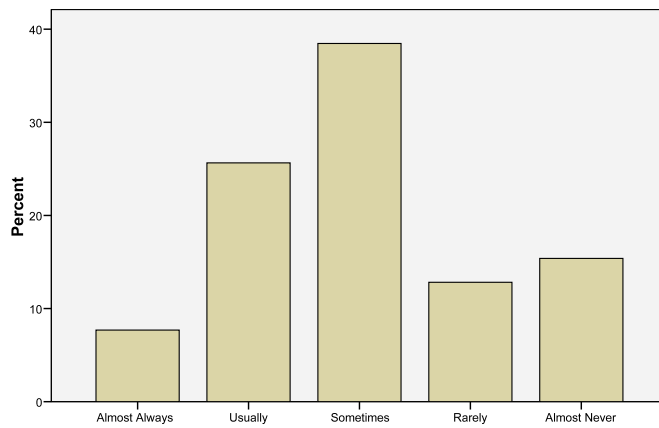
Baseline Questionnaire



Second Questionnaire



Third Questionnaire



Experience on The Programme

Challenge

The participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed with each of the following statements with regard to their experience on the programme. The responses of all 21 participants who completed the final questionnaire are noted here, including those from Wave 1.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I developed my team-working skills a lot	17	4			
I was not given a lot of responsibility		2	4	6	9
I mostly had positive new experiences	13	8			
I was generally treated like an adult	9	8	2	2	
I made friends with people that I would not normally	16	2	2	1	
We did not make a positive change in our community	2	2	2	10	5
I now feel more a part of my local community	6	6	6	2	1

The belief that their team-working skills had developed on the programme was particularly strong amongst these respondents. It is worth noting that this is how these respondents felt at the end of the programme, having worked together for a number of weeks in order to achieve an end goal, and not just after the elements of the programme, such as the Outward Bound experience, that perhaps had a more deliberate focus on team-work. This is supported by many comments in both the first and second qualitative interviews;

“we tried our best to help each other, you understand?”

“you have to make sure that whenever there was an event that you were all there on time and you looked like a proper team”

“Yeah- it learnt you a lesson for working as a team and like listen to other people’s opinion, and not arguing but debating on what to do. And to listen to everyone’s opinion and that.”

“We was all putting in the same effort – it just weren’t one person doing it – we was all doing it.”

Social mixing also scored very highly here. And this is strongly supported in interviews and in parent/guardian questionnaires;

“In terms of the new people that I’ve met, who I wouldn’t have met before then yes- I suppose in a way I’ve never been friends with anyone from that kind of background before, so in terms of community in that sense then, it’s not that my perceptions has changed, it’s that I’ve become more aware, because I just hadn’t met people like that before.”

“ I met lots of different people like, different cultures and that, and we all got on well and you had to put your trust in them, and we had to put our trust in other people so it helped us get along with other people and not like, you know the saying ‘don’t read a book by its cover’ – it’s the same, don’t read a person because you don’t know them. Get to know them before you read them. It was just like that.”

The statements about community involvement and whether the programme had had an impact in the community showed the widest spread of responses. This reflects the feeling among some participants, discussed later, that the community phase of the programme perhaps needed more structure and direction in order to have a stronger and sustained impact. It also reflects the doubts of some interviewees about the possibility of really making a difference in more deprived, ‘rough’ areas.

These responses also perhaps show a varying degree of success among the groups for the civic service part of the programme and also that some projects may lend themselves more easily to showing results that were an indication of success;

“it might not feel that we’ve made a particularly big difference, but, I think, if we had had a project geared towards something that was more quantifiable then you could definitely have made a difference. Because you know, even if it was something quite minor even if it’s helping one person, at least you’re like supporting them, one of my friends was on a separate wave, and .. she did a project that was workshops for kids at different schools, and she was going through that, and she was, and because you can see the kids improvement and you see them everyday.... if it was something like mentoring then you could really see a marked improvement in kids.”

Do you think The Challenge programme could be improved?

Response	Number
Yes	13
No	8

If yes, how?

Responses to this question could be divided into three categories; Positive, Negative and Administrative/Logistical.

Positive

Positive responses with regard to improvements centred around the length and depth of the programme. These participants felt that if the programme were lengthened and expanded it could achieve more, both in terms of individual development and impact in the community.

“More weeks!!! Because it was great.”

“More funding, so they can do more and push people even more.”

“A longer time between the end of the summer programme and graduation, so that we could have done more and maybe had a bigger impact on the community.”

“Giving more opportunities for the real challenge to be continued after the graduation”

Negative

The majority of suggestions that addressed perceived serious flaws in the programme were to do with the third part of the programme; the Real Challenge.

Some participants would appear to feel that there was a loss of motivation over time during this part of the programme, which in turn led to inconsistent attendance at meetings and some participants dropping out. The ability of some groups to work together effectively seems to have suffered somewhat during this time.

“The meetings leading up to our main event resulted in many people dropping out and arguments etc as some people did not turn up”

Several answers suggested that this situation would be improved by more focus and direction being given to the groups, in particular by the group mentors;

“week 3 needs to be more organised; mentors should try and stay with the groups throughout the whole Challenge, and members of the groups should be more dedicated and attend every meeting, making them very productive.”

“More direction during the real challenge especially how to approach the dragons question on the day.”

This is backed up somewhat by some responses in the parent/guardian questionnaire;

“my son found that when the group was left on their own they did not pull together, became less effective and lost interest towards the end”

“Frustrated at times that some members did not engage and commit to the same extent”

The problem with sustaining motivation and focus would appear to be connected with the time frame of the Real Challenge i.e. meeting once a week over several months. Some participants suggested that spending this little time together is hard to sustain over a long period of time and

offered conflicting solutions; either fewer weeks of the same programme or another session of sustained contact;

“the time we had to do the real challenge needs to be shortened so that we have the same drive to complete it that we had at the beginning and this may prevent people from dropping out.”

“I think that instead of meeting once every week etc for one hour, we could perhaps have an additional week etc to sort it all out”.

It is recognised, however, that, as the programme aims to have young people take a more proactive role within their community and to do this in an independent, adult fashion, that the point of the Real Challenge element of the programme is that the young people are to carry out this task themselves. One answer acknowledges that this responsibility lies with the group;

“our event wasn't terribly well organised and there was a poor turnout. I realise that was down to us, and had we been more organised, we may have succeeded”

These issues are discussed further later in this report.

Administrative/Logistical

“Tell people to bring More Money, Fabric Conditioner and More Socks.”

“I think practical things like food were real problems during the first week especially”

“The food, if possible.”

The issue of food was also mentioned in the second questionnaires and, as stated previously, would appear to be a very common complaint among residential youth programmes.

The main logistical issues would seem to be making participants aware of the conditions they will face in the Personal Challenge and that they have all the relevant equipment. This re-enforces similar answers in the second questionnaire regarding necessary kit during the first week;

“more information about the whole course e.g. bring allergy tablets, bite spray”

8. On the following scale, from 0 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend The Challenge programme to a friend?

Circle the appropriate number for how you feel. 0 is extremely unlikely and 10 is extremely likely.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Response	Number of Responses (3 rd Questionnaire)	Number of Responses (2 nd Questionnaire)
10	14	16
9	6	9
8	1	5
7		2
6		1
5		1

This gives an average score of 9.6 from the third questionnaire, which is a very firm indicator that participants enjoyed their time on The Challenge and viewed it as worthwhile experience. This is supported by the fact that 62% of respondents in the questionnaire strongly agreed that they had 'mainly had positive new experiences' with the remaining 38% agreeing.

Again, this positive score should perhaps come with the caveat that it is possibly the participants who are most enthusiastic about the programme that have filled in the final questionnaire and so the average of 9.6 is a perhaps slightly inflated figure with regard to talking about how **all** programme participants feel.

Champion Teacher Evaluations

In November 2009, evaluations were sent out to the teachers who had acted as the contact within schools for The Challenge programme. There were 15 'Champion Teachers' who were sent the questionnaire and five completed evaluations were received. Any disparity between number of respondents and number of responses to questions is due to teachers giving multiple answers.

1. What do you know about what the programme entails? What are the programme's aims?

All the teachers seemed knowledgeable about the programme content, in particular the three distinct phases of The Challenge. None made mention of what the programme's aims might be.

2. How was the programme advertised within your school?

Response	Number
Meetings with Challenge staff	3
Assemblies	3
Posters	2
Emails	1
Meetings with those who were interested	1
Focus Groups	1

3. Who was the target group for the programme?

All respondents said that they targeted Year 11 within the school. There was, however, some difference of opinion as to who the exact target group within this year was;

"Those who would be positive contributors and those showing an interest in a unique opportunity."

"Pupils on free school meals."

4. Were there any barriers to young people applying for the programme?

Response	Number
No	2
Timing – many had already planned their summer	2
Initially cost but this changed when price was reduced`	2
Uncertainty as to what was involved	1
Time away from home	1

5. On the following scale, from 0 to 10, how successful do you think the programme was in recruiting a good mix of pupils (mixture of race, gender, economic background, academic achievement)?

0 is strongly **disagree** and 10 is strongly **agree**

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Response	Number
10	
9	
8	3
7	1
6	
Too small a sample size from my school to comment	1

Responses suggest that teachers thought a reasonably good balance had been achieved, although there were some qualifications;

“Mix of race, economic background and some mix of academic achievement.”

“Probably more high-achieving pupils needed for a better balance. Again, timing is the factor here.”

Presumably the suggestion in this second response is that high –achieving pupils are more likely to have their summer planned out in advance.

6. If there are young people in your school who have been on the programme and returned for sixth form, do you notice any difference in their attitude or performance in school?

Again, there were some very positive reports from schools about the impact on pupils, with regard to confidence, focus and motivation;

“some visited and said it was great – increased motivation and confidence.”

“More focussed and able to organise themselves.”

“One student has returned. She feels very confident. She has recently delivered a presentation for the Challenge to attract more support from business and politicians.”

These were not universal, however, with some teachers expressing qualifications;

“Not yet.”

“Slightly less volatile.”

*“They were mostly self-starters in any case and this was re-enforced in most, but **not** all of them.”*

7. Do you think the programme could be marketed to pupils more effectively? If so, how?

The teachers here gave very similar responses to the participants in the second questionnaire i.e. to use the pupils who had already been on the programme as a resource.

“We will use our student to speak to our present Year 11s to encourage them to apply. This was the first year so students were concerned about the commitment.”

“Student-led presentations/performances”

“During Personal, Social, Health & Economic Education classes.”

“Earlier in the year and through the graduates, as we have done this year.”

8. When is the best time of year to start recruiting for the programme?

Below is shown the number of times each box was ticked, with one teacher ticking more than one box.

September - December	January – March	April - June	Other. Please Specify
1	3	1	1 (March/April/May)

On the following scale, from 0 to 10, how much do you agree that The Challenge should be made mandatory for every pupil?

0 is strongly **disagree** and 10 is strongly **agree**

Response	Number
0	2
1	
2	1
3	1
4	
5	1

These responses are not indicative that the teachers involved think the programme is not worthwhile. Indeed, their other responses suggest the exact opposite. However, all the teachers were quite unified in their feeling that making a programme compulsory brings with it a specific set of problems, with regard to the effect that being ‘forced’ to do something has on pupil motivation;

“One more compulsory aspect of the curriculum is not needed. It will cause resentment and difficulty in fostering initiative and willingness to enter fully into the programme.”

“I think it is excellent but we cannot force anything during term-time. Holidays, but we use the whole of summer term to improve Btec/GCSE/Level 2+ qualifications.”

“While I think it is a fantastic opportunity, I would think the success of it is because students want to be on it rather than being ‘made’ to be there. I would expect it to be a project that will grow year on year as word spreads. Making something compulsory is often a red rag to a bull for teenagers who like to feel they have choices.”

“Not all pupils would want to. Their negativity would hinder the overall success and affect other participants. It would seem like an extension of school.”

Qualitative Interviews

The original interviews took place in London with Wave 3 participants after the first week of their programme. These were group interviews.

Individual follow-up phone interviews were then carried out in January and February 2010 with four of the participants from the groups that were previously interviewed, after they had finished the entire programme;

Interviewee 1: White, female, middle-class. Attends a private school. Studying for A-levels. Will take a gap year after school as is unsure what to study at university.

Interviewee 2: White, female, working class. Studying in 6th form but wants to leave to enter employment or do an apprenticeship. Plays football in a league. Describes her local area as rough.

Interviewee 3: White, female, middle-class. Studied at a mixed school until 6th form; "some people have three yachts and some work on a council estate". Now attends a private school to study A-levels. Wants to study to be a vet upon leaving school.

Interviewee 4: Black, male, working-class. Studying a B-tech at college.

The distinction in class between participants appears to have some significance in terms of levels of engagement, responsibility and leadership on the programme. It also has some bearing on the length and detail of interviewees' responses, with more middle class participants providing much longer and more detailed answers and being able, to some extent, to look at the bigger picture of what The Challenge aimed to achieve.

Interviewee 1 was in the music group on The Challenge which worked on an event themed around the idea of 'Respect'. The other three interviewees were part of the sport group which organised events with the residents of an old people's home.

Both groups began with 12 participants. The interviewee from the music group describes how between 5 and 8 people regularly attended meetings. The sports group had 10 people remaining at the end of the programme although the sense from interviews is that there was a mixed level of participation throughout the Real Challenge.

The individual interviews were semi-structured and designed to address what impact the programme had had on the following areas;

- Social Mixing; had participants made new friends from backgrounds (race, class, geographical area) that they would not normally? Were they still in contact? If so, how?
- Community; did participants now feel more a part of their community? And how did they define what community was?
- Project Impact; had the project made a difference to their community? How empowered did participants now feel about being **able** to make a difference in their community?
- Responsibility; did participants now feel more able to assume responsibility?
- Adulthood; did participants feel more like adults now? What does adulthood mean to them?

- Leadership & Teamwork; did participants feel they had developed these areas? What did they feel made a good leader? What other skills had they developed?

Adulthood and Responsibilities

There is a clear connection, among interviewees' responses, between adulthood and responsibility; that being an adult and becoming more mature is linked with assuming a greater amount of responsibilities;

"I think adulthood is being able to make your own decisions and having responsibility maybe for the younger people in your community- like if you're a parent then you have the responsibility for your children and an adult is putting somebody else first before yourself so that you're always looking out for the other people instead of thinking of your own and what you wish to have."

Yeah – you've got to be mature and you've got to be able to take on responsibilities and you've got to take on what hits you and that."

"I define it as a person who's working and earning money and has a lot of responsibilities."

Interviewees 2 and 4 both link the idea of responsibilities and adulthood with looking after relatives. These more working class participants clearly have more responsibility already in comparison with their middle class counterparts, in particular with regard to family;

Interviewee 2: "I'm like one of the oldest out of all my mates so I've always been mature and that, cos my mum and that she's disabled and that – and I've been helping my nan out so I had to mature quite fast so I felt like I'm old – I feel like I'm three years older than all my mates.."

Researcher: "And do you have a lot of responsibilities in your own life now?"

Interviewee 4: "Yeah- like dealing with money – my school work, look after my little sister, looking after myself."

It is worth noting that these participants who have more responsibility in their every-day lives appear to have taken on less responsibility during The Challenge. There is a sense that having extra responsibilities in their lives may hamper somewhat their fuller participation in the programme. The final quantitative questionnaire appears to support these conclusions with some participants agreeing very strongly that they had been given responsibilities on the programme while others, though smaller numbers, disagreed with this.

Both interviewee 2 and 4 also link adulthood to having money.

It is clear that participants felt that the responsibilities they were given on The Challenge helped them develop; to feel more confident, pro-active and able to take on responsibility;

Interviewee 1: "I think there's a difference between being an adult and being 18. Because I suppose I would think of an adult as being more mature, and more responsible than I would consider myself to be and I think that the Challenge definitely helped me getting responsibilities and experience..."

Interviewee 3: "I think you feel more like an adult because you've got more responsibility because as a child you're seeing you're not able to really make a difference- you're always being told this is how it's going to be and you just really have to do it, you have to go along with it. As this organisation has brought it out that you can actually make a difference and you have got a chance to make a difference within your community and have more responsibility"

Interviewee 2: "(The Challenge) helped us to become responsible for yourself, and like working with others, and build your confidence up.

I: Yeah – Do you feel more like an adult now that you've been through that experience or did you feel like that before?

R: I felt a little bit older, but not necessarily adult – like a young adult.."

Some responses elucidate how having a responsibility to the group, to making sure the team is on the right track, ensured that they took their own personal responsibility within the group seriously;

Interviewee 1: "And, about responsibilities, I think because we were in a group, and we were all meeting up every week and we all wanted to have something to show for the next meeting of what we've done, and I think that definitely helped to give people responsibilities and they were more inclined to do that because they knew that the peer pressure of the group were gonna be annoyed if you hadn't done something. So I think that helped make people do things. It gave people responsibility."

Interviewee 2: "and also the weekly meetings where you're able to share your ideas and lead them sometimes – that helped you to gain more confidence and feel like you were taking a bit of charge."

One response detailed how this experience of taking on responsibility within a group had had an immediate positive effect on her future plans, feeling that the responsibilities she had undertaken on the Challenge had a direct relevance to her application for the role of prefect;

Researcher: "you've been able to handle responsibility?"

Interviewee 3: Yeah – I think so – definitely. Cos you have to go to the weekly meetings, you have to make sure that whenever there was an event that you were all there time and you looked like a

proper team – so you have to take responsibility of your time keeping and how you were going to act when you were there so that you'd actually make a difference. You had to be very responsible in the whole process I think.

Researcher: And do you have to be responsible for those kind of things outside of the Challenge in your own everyday life?-

Interviewee 3: well there's this thing- I'm applying for prefect now and exactly today I handed in the application and for that I was talking about the Challenge how it had given me more responsibility in my community and it gave you leadership skills in the weekly meetings- so you've really just caught me on the right day.

Researcher: So you've been able to list off like the skills you've got.

Interviewee 3: Yeah cos it helps you – especially in prefects because you're taking more responsibility for it – taking more responsibility in the community and it's changing it for the better – so it really does link I think.”

Interviewee 1 described how the role she had responsibility for within the group had required her to work more within the adult world of work. She details how this differs from school and how this helped develop 'real world' skills;

Organisational skills, yep definitely. Getting stuff done to time, I think partly, because usually with work loads, I can leave things til the last minute because school obviously to some extent teaches you to deal with dead lines, but with phone calls the companies would be shut on Sundays at 5pm, after working hours so you've got to work around them and you've got to make sure that you'll be able to call them in time for that. And obviously it was quite hard doing it around school hours because there'll be the same as their opening hours – so I had to fit it around that. Yeah – I think that helped. Yeah- so helped me with organisational skills and that kind of thing”

With regard to adulthood, the following is an excellent description of a mature team-working process that interviewee 3's group went through to choose the focus of their community challenge. It also highlights how The Challenge appears to have had a positive response from participants with regard to engagement and enthusiasm through allowing groups to choose their issues rather than telling them what to do. It is worth noting, however, that this quote, as with the previous one, is from one of the more middle class participants whose levels of engagement and willingness to take on responsibility within the programme appear higher;

Interviewee 3: “ We had a day where basically our mentor said to us that we started off with 3 ideas – we said about elderly and young people, we said about soldiers and we had one other idea but I don't remember what it was- I think it was something like knife crime or something - and we did these big tree diagrams and said – what sort of things- so we'd write down all the problems that we'd want to solve – then we'd write down all the solutions then we looked at them and we said which ones would be the easiest and our mentors would go out the room and then say 'OK your

group has to go through this now – you have to make a decision’. So we’d go through – we’d discuss like the benefits and the – opposite – what’s the opposite?”

Researcher: “Like drawbacks?”

Interviewee 3: “yeah drawbacks – of each project and which one would be most beneficial to the community so we basically spent a day planning and after we’d planned it we we saw – we’d think how would we go through each step so we drew a big house and we said – from the bottom ‘this is us now’ ‘how we going to get to where set up a scheme?’ so we went through – we said ‘we’re going to have to contact an organisation, put out flyers to recruit people, then go talk to the organisation to see if everything’s OK’ and we basically just had a big group discussion for the day.”

Researcher: “So did you enjoy all that process?”

Interviewee 3: Yeah – it was really good because you got to contribute ideas and actually say what you’d like to change. Instead of being told OK if we hadn’t been able to decide our projects just been told ‘OK you’re going to work with young people on something’ it was good to be able to make the decision of what you thought was the most important thing to change.”

Leadership

All of the interviewees said that they thought the programme had enhanced their leadership skills, through becoming either more confident or more proactive in taking charge of groups. Often this seems to be due to the format of the programme building in an opportunity for all participants to take a turn in a leadership role;

Interviewee 1: “I think because I was given team leadership because I didn’t think I could do it, but then someone said that I should, I think that might have helped a bit because then I knew then that people would listen to me, so I kind of gained confidence a bit.”

Some interviewees mentioned that that groups assigned leaders to different areas, with participants taking responsibility for different roles and how this connected with being part of a team;

Interviewee 3: “How some people – like I think I started off quite quiet and then throughout the weekly meetings, that kind of gave you confidence and you were able to take more of a leadership role and begin to not control the group but just lead in different parts- and everyone had started to pick up their roles I think more through the weekly meetings.”

Interviewee 1: “Yes- I think I have because I’d never really been put in a position where everyone trusted me to do all that organisation by myself, because I’m not really an extrovert so I’m not really chosen for leader or anything and obviously I wasn’t really a leader in that sense, but I was given my own responsibility which I had to do so in that sense – I think I learnt leadership and I think I got better at commanding people’s attention really”

Interviewees were also asked to provide their own definition of what makes a good leader;

Interviewee 1: "Somebody who can command people's attention without being seen too domineering or annoying."

Interviewee 2: "Someone that's confident and that's got a lot of ideas. And it's got to be someone that can speak in front of a big audience. And got to have confidence in yourself as well."

Interviewee 3: "I think you've got to be able to look at the qualities the advantageous qualities in each team member and bring out those to the most potential, you've got to inspire your team members and make sure everyone's contributing- it's kind of like a machine might give if every cog isn't working in the machine – it doesn't matter whether you're the leader or the person writing down the notes, if everyone isn't working then the machine isn't going to work so – the leader has to – it's kind of like the button – they have to press it so the machine starts working and then everyone compatible together and making sure everything is working together."

Interviewee 4: "A person who speaks out – expresses his own ideas, knows how to take control of matters or to take control when things are going wrong"

The third quote echoes several responses in the first qualitative interviews, after Week 1 of the programme, in which good leadership was described as the ability to ensure a team works well together.

"last week wasn't really about leadership, it was about sticking together.."

"Project manager, keep the group together basically,"

With regard to leadership, The Challenge puts an emphasis on the ability to 'motivate others to achieve a shared goal' and this ties in with some extent to the interviewees ideas on leadership and teamwork.

There is a definite difference, however, between the working class and middle class participants in the description of roles that they took on in the community element of The Challenge. The middle class interviewees would appear to have taken on more pro-active leadership roles. Interviewee 4, on the other hand, describes how his behaviour changed from usually sitting back and not inputting in group discussion to becoming involved;

Interviewee 4: "Well basically –normally when I was in a group before I wouldn't really put my idea forward, but now I would put them forward and wanting to get involved. So the Challenge helped me wanting to get involved.."

Researcher: "So before – maybe you would just kind of sit back"

Interviewee 4: "Just sit back and let others do the work – yeah"

For interviewee 4 that is the noticeable change, whereas for interviewees 1 and 3 the focus was on developing the confidence to lead the group through certain activities.

Communication

Under the over-arching aim of improving communication, The Challenge put emphasis mainly on verbal skills; the ability to articulate in a persuasive fashion during presentations, meetings and when speaking one-to-one. All of those interviewed expressed the opinion that they could now communicate better, in particular with regard to speaking to groups;

“Interviewee 2: I got more confidence- I weren’t able to like talk in front of a group of people and stuff like that so I’ve got more confidence.

Researcher: “And do you feel like you can do that at school – or it’s got to be with a certain people you know- or?”

Interviewee 2: “No – I reckon I could stand up and talk in front of a group of people that I don’t know now. “

Interviewee 2:” I want to become a teacher and if I needed to be a teacher I need to be able to talk in front of a class and that helped. And that helps you to become more confident and yeah – it made me feel older – yeah.”

Interviewee 3: “Yeah I think definitely – because even our mentor said that I was quite shy at the start and then I started getting more bossy in the end, and I think it just gives you more confidence to change things that you don’t always have to say yes to things and it doesn’t have to be that way – and you can make a difference, and I think my confidence has improved a lot with talking in groups because you had to contribute to meetings..”

It is worth noting that some interviewees considered that making their opinion heard was indication of improved communication skills. Sometimes, however, this was achieved in an almost forceful manner:

Interviewee 2 “cos when I knew I had something to say I made everyone be quiet and listen to me.”

Interviewee 3: “our group was terrible at listening – you had to kind of make yourself heard if you were passionate about something and that’s how it got in the end- I was getting passionate about it – so you had to speak up and say ‘this is what I want to do’ and ‘do you agree with me?’”

This way of almost compelling other participants to listen would not appear particularly compatible with effective team-work and interviewee 4 makes the point that good communication in his group was also down to listening;

“Yeah- it learnt you a lesson for working as a team and like listen to other people’s opinion, and not arguing but debating on what to do. And to listen to everyone’s opinion and that.”

Social Mixing

With regard to whether they had met, through the programme, people from backgrounds that they would not normally, the interviewees were unanimous;

Interviewee 3: “Yes- definitely, I wouldn’t usually have met any of the people at the Challenge.....they were all really nice so yeah definitely.”

Interviewee 1: “It’s just literally that I’d never really come into contact with anyone from a really really different background from mine and say - but now that I have like, it’s not that my perception has changed or anything, it’s just, now that I know them, I know that they’re really nice, and really supportive and it was really great to meet them”

Researcher: “Yeah – so it’s just sort of given you the opportunity for a different experience..”

Interviewee 1: “yeah basically”

Some responses did make mention of the fact that their perception had changed;

Interviewee 3: “Yeah - I think because a lot of the people were - I went to quite a – there’s been a lot of bad things happening with my secondary school like there was a lot of stabbings and stuff. But with this group of people – they’d gone to also schools where it had been quite rough – now I’m going to a better school – one of the top end- public schools – but it was quite nice to meet different people. I wouldn’t really – if I’d seen them in the road I would have thought ‘oh they look a bit like – not dodgy – but I wouldn’t really speak to them’ but yeah – everyone was really nice and I think it was good to meet people from the different backgrounds and see how they’d been getting on and what they were going on to. So it was nice to see how people developed throughout the project.”

Others expressed the idea that they had realised that there were people from other backgrounds who were similar to them and who had similar interests;

Interviewee 2: “it’s not like just because they lived somewhere else that they’re different people. Or you should treat them differently – they’re just same sort of people.”

Interviewee 4: “I never knew them but we all had the same interests – we all living in the same area... it wasn’t really different”

This would indicate that there was, in some participants, the change in young people's perception of others in the community who are different from themselves that The Challenge aimed to achieve.

However, it is interesting to note that in terms of **still** being in contact, participants were communicating to some extent with each other through social networking websites but not physically meeting up with each other.

Interviewee 4: "But I talk to some of them on facebook but I don't see 'em."

Community Involvement

With regard to community involvement, The Challenge put an emphasis on young people feeling more of a part of their community and understanding their place in it.

The participants on The Challenge obviously enjoyed the opportunity to do positive works and their awareness was clearly raised about social issues;

Interviewee 2: "Yeah – well I feel like old people don't get a lot of help and that, and I reckon they should get, I thought they should get more help and that more people that can't get out their house, and they get people to go shopping for them, they get their food delivered, I reckon they should get more help with all that stuff."

Interviewee 2: "It aint really safe round here for old people to walk around cos there's muggings and that and they don't really go out – they're scared to go out. So we was trying to show them not every teenager is the same."

To some extent, however, answers regarding community involvement were dependent on where participants lived. Those from 'rougher' areas, while enjoying the opportunity to make a positive impact, still expressed some reservations about feeling more a part of their community;

Researcher: "do you feel safe in your community?"

Interviewee 2: "Sometimes, like during the day I do but not at the night and that, I don't really trust a lot of people."

Researcher: "so has it changed what you think you might do within your community?"

Interviewee 2: "Um – not really, because of my nanna and that, that I go shopping for and so I'm used to helping a lot of old people, but it helped me get to know other old people and how they live in the people's home and not in their own home."

It is also worth noting that Interviewee 2's project did not actually take place in what she would describe as her local area.

Researcher: "do you feel more part of your community now?"

Interviewee 4: "A little bit – "

Researcher: "In what kind of ways there?"

Interviewee 4: "Cos like I help other people – because other people saw me do that they want to help others as well, so I thought that I helped make the community a little bit better."

Researcher: "Yeah? If you were to define community- what does community mean to you?"

Interviewee 4: "Everyone coming together and making it a better place."

The more 'middle-class' participants seemed to feel a stronger sense that what they had done had benefitted their community and that this would give them more motivation and confidence to take part in programmes working in their community in the future;

Researcher: "Do you feel more part of your community now you've done this?"

Interviewee 1: " Yeah. I think definitely helping out with a community project, because I'd done odd bits of community service but nothing, not a project that I'd really helped come up with so I think actually saw through the project, and being all the way through with it, and doing it, definitely gives you a sense of being more involved with the community. "

Researcher: "Do you feel more part of your community now?"

Interviewee 3: "Yeah I do – cos there's more things now that I wouldn't have recognised before – like I think going with the elderly people you were able to see that there were actually problems in your community instead of watching on the news about something that's happening thousands of miles away – there was some things happening in your community that you could actually help – and now – I see schemes on the internet and stuff like that – and I'm more willing to join up to them – because I think you've already gone through like one of the most extreme sides you could go to so anything now would kind of just be more developing of those skills."

Researcher: "And have you got an idea about – how would you define your community?"

Interviewee 3: "I think it's made up of a mixed vary of people and they don't always – and people are often very isolated in their community which I think is a problem but some of the schemes that are running seem to bring people together like the Challenge was very good at bringing younger kids together and showing them that they were able to achieve something. I'm not really sure how to define it."

Sense of empowerment to make a difference

Interviewees were asked whether they now felt it was possible to make a difference within their community. Again, there seemed to be a difference in answers depending on which area the young people lived in, with those from rougher areas less optimistic about their ability to influence their community in a positive manner. There is a sense in all participants, even those who are more positive about their abilities to make a positive impact, that it is difficult to do this without a structure being in place that allows this to happen. Some felt that without the structure that the Challenge provided that it would be hard to envisage making a positive change;

Interviewee 1: "That's given me the impression that you can change the community? Well I think that I knew before I came on the Challenge that you can improve the community, like help even in some little way. But I think taking part in the Challenge meant that I could, that I really had the opportunity to do that with other young people, and yeah- because you're on it. If I was to launch an initiative I don't know, to do mentoring with kids in another school, I think I would be a bit reluctant to get into it and I wouldn't have the constant pressure of 'by next meeting, by next week you've got to have rung these people..' So definitely being on it made me actually do something. And because we had to come up with a community project then we did. Where as you know, if it's on your own bat then people aren't necessarily going to actually do that. So I think it's definitely a positive thing that you like..."

Researcher: "So it provides you with a kind of structure and.."

Interviewee 1: "Exactly."

Researcher: "And do you think it's possible to make a difference in your community? Do you think it's possible for young people to do this normally if you didn't have 'The Challenge' there?"

Interviewee 2: "Naar – cos some people in the community are just – like some young people are horrible and that and like they just go round and beat people up for no reason and that so I don't reckon that we'd be able to do it without The Challenge."

Researcher: "So the Challenge sort of gives you the structure or the opportunity to.."

Interviewee 2: "Yeah"

In other responses, however, there is a feeling that this structure could be provided by other community organisations and among some interviewees there is a sense of willingness to join other programmes.

Interviewee 3: "I think before the Challenge I wouldn't have thought that I'd actually be able to do anything that would actually make a difference I thought OK maybe I could go – I didn't realise there were actually projects out there that could do something for the community like you know about"

them but you didn't really believe that they would do it but this one- it kind of gives you the confidence that your – like if you put your mind to something and you organise the right sort of project – like you can do – like you can solve any problem in your community if you just keep at it. Yeah- I think I would personally be able to make a difference now."

Did the programme have an impact on the community?

With regard to whether the interviewees thought that their group's Real Challenge had had an impact on the community, there is a feeling among interviewees that it had made more of a difference to participants' perception and awareness of issues, and their own skills and abilities, as opposed to a tangible impact within the community, although there is undoubted enthusiasm for wanting to carry on the programmes and have them make a more sustained impact. This brings up issues of the organisation, structure and sustainability of phase 3 that are explored later in this report.

Interviewee 2: "more opportunities for the real challenge to be continued after the graduation"

Interviewee 1 "I'm not sure that any of us had really done that kind of thing before either, so I think that in itself – then it's changed us, it's been really positive, really good. But in terms of the actual event of what it achieved I honestly don't think that it made an impact."

Interviewee 3: "Yeah – I think so – I think if we'd had more time maybe we would have been able to further it on cos we were asked if we wanted to continue but I think everyone by that point they were kind of thinking – because we were all really struggling with our A-Levels at that point trying to keep on top of the work that everyone was kind of just thinking we need to get into work now but we did want to bring it out to recruit teenagers – but we didn't achieve that in the end – so if there was anything we could do to improve that – I think it would just be getting more people involved and would have kept the project running for longer."

There is a sense, however, among the group who worked with the elderly that they had been successful in altering the old people's perceptions of teenagers.

Interviewee 2:" Em – ooo – yeah – it made a difference to them so that they know that everyone aint the same and they don't judge young people, like they said they aint gonna judge young people any more – until they get to know them and that. Yeah – so I reckon it made a difference to them."

Researcher "And so in terms of your project – do you think it made a difference in your community?"

Interviewee 4: "Oh yeah- because we made people in our community feel happy – yeah- we made them feel like they weren't alone like the elderly people so we could we could talk to them and they could talk to us."

The Success of Phase 3

When analysing the programme, it would appear to be useful to distinguish between the process of how the groups work during the Real Challenge and the actual end results of this work.

The first two weeks of The Challenge programme seem to aim to develop participants' team-working, leadership and communication skills so that they then have the ability to go on and work independently as a team during the Real Challenge in order to have a positive civic service role within their community.

It seems clear that, in general, the process does help to develop young peoples' abilities with regard to communication, leadership and, in particular, team-work;

Interviewee 4: " we was all putting in the same effort – it just weren't one person doing it – we was all doing it."

Interviewee 3: "It was a really good charity. I really enjoyed it because it really pushed me to my limits. I wouldn't have thought I'd be able to do half the things I did within it. And it'd be really good if it carried on for the next couple of years I think"

As discussed previously, some participants also make mention of how they were called upon to assume responsibility and were given some experience of a real-life work environment. This connects with the programme goal of easing the transition to adulthood;

Interviewee 1: "Personally, yes, I definitely got something out of it because I was mainly, my job was to be manning- to ring up all the companies and ask them to come and I'd never really done anything like that before so I hadn't really had any experience of how frustrating it can be. So yeah – that was really helpful cos I'm sure I'll have to do that kind of thing later on. I just had to be really persistent."

The skills and abilities developed are obviously of great benefit to participants and would help them in the future if taking part in similar programmes or in the world of work. They would also be able to learn from mistakes made during The Challenge and be more effective and efficient in the future;

Interviewee 1: "I feel that I can do more now, now that I've had that experience and therefore am more experienced I suppose I feel that I could do that more easily – well not easily, well I could do it again, and if I had the chance again I could make improvements, I could plan out a better event next time now that I know what's gone wrong."

However, it would appear that The Challenge needs to clarify whether the main aim of the programme is that young people develop themselves and their abilities for the future or whether the

programme is about having a successful, sustained impact on the community through civic service on the actual programme itself.

There is a sense from both interviews and questionnaire responses that Phase 3, the community element to the programme was not as fully realised as many participants had envisaged at the start. The common reasons that young people gave for this were connected to a lack of structure and direction which resulted, in some cases, to a loss of motivation and groups not being organised enough to properly fulfil their aims;

Interviewee 1: "But I think if we had organised our event a little bit more, a little bit better to be able to incorporate that, and yet still have, you know, a way of communicating to people what we wanted then it would have been much better attended and I think actually it could have made a difference."

"week 3 needs to be more organised; mentors should try and stay with the groups throughout the whole Challenge, and members of the groups should be more dedicated and attend every meeting, making them very productive."

"More direction during the real challenge, especially how to approach the dragons' question on the day."

"I don't feel that we made a great impact but I think we had the potential to do so if our idea had been geared towards a really worthwhile project. if the challenge could somehow make this happen, for example encourage the teams to do something they are good at, like teaching underprivileged children music, since we were the music group, this may work better, since we had no experience of planning an event, so it wasn't a success."

There is a sense that perhaps, after three weeks, the groups were not quite in a position to act completely independently and that more guidance and structure would have helped attain the outcomes the groups wanted.

Several participants make mention that they would have liked their programmes to continue but that this was not feasible. Designing and implementing a programme while putting in place a means of making it sustainable would appear to be a lot to ask within the programme's time frame and this led to some participants not feeling that they had achieved their aims or switching focus to develop one-off **events** rather than programmes that could be sustained.

The lack of a clear structure and direction, and in some cases a satisfactory end product, seems to have had a de-motivating and negative effect on some participants, including irregular attendance and some dropping out.

"...when the group was left on their own they did not pull together, became less effective and lost interest towards the end"

"Frustrated at times that some members did not engage and commit to the same extent"

“Yeah- cos I think a lot of people started to drop out because of the weekly meetings you had to be there and I think they had either other priorities or they thought it wasn’t really for them in the end.”

Interviewee 1 “There were 12 but in most of the meetings there were a maximum of 10 people.”

Researcher: “ That’s pretty good though”

Interviewee 1: “No definitely – it’s really good that there were that many people but some of them were only 5 or something, but yeah –“

Interviewee 2: “I think there was about 10 of us – but it slowly got smaller as the weeks got by because people stopped coming but I think it was about 8 or something that was very regular people.

It should be stated, however, that feedback about numbers attending was not all negative and that out of 104 young people who began Waves 2 and 3 of the programme, a relatively high number, 87 graduated;

Interviewee 3: “well, a couple of people dropped out completely. Like a couple of people weren’t able to make it on a fairly regular basis. But I think mainly when people could, they did turn up which was really good. I mean most people were generally quite late but I think punctuality definitely improved over the time. So I think people really did make an effort to get in. And I was quite impressed with that.”

There appears to be a need to balance, to some extent, the aims of developing pro-active young people who can act independently in becoming engaged in a positive way in their communities and providing more guidance and structure during the third phase of the programme to prevent loss of motivation among some participants.

Interviewee 1 states this need for some kind of equilibrium between the two quite succinctly;

“ yeah – but I think part of the reason that we chose the event that we did was basically because we didn’t know what to do so we went for a really wide ranging theme and at first our event sounded really good but inevitably I suppose, it didn’t pan out quite as we’d hoped because people weren’t willing- our budget wasn’t big enough to do what we wanted and our ideas were a bit too unrealistic. So I think in some ways – the Challenge doesn’t want to constrain the process too much and allow us to be creative, but I think if it was maybe even more structured – like some ideas of what other people had successfully achieved before and examples of that – that kind of thing- just ideas and that might help a bit more.”

Researcher:” I guess if they do this again – some of your comments or experiences could feed in.”

*Interviewee 1:” Yeah – because it was really good that they gave us free reign to do exactly what we wanted but equally we hadn’t really had any experience of what works and what doesn’t. So – you know... I think to **balance** that they maybe – give us more structure- more ideas.”*

The balance that she mentions would appear to be a balance between realism and idealism and structure and independence. This is perhaps not an easy balance to obtain as there is a sense, as stated earlier, that some participants engaged to a greater extent because they had some control over their project rather than being told what to do.

Some mentors did appear to have helped provide structure and a greater sense of what was practically possible to the groups. This was done by, among other means, helping the group scale down the size of their project's ambitions and helping them make connections to other agencies.

Researcher: "And so how did the weekly meetings go? How was that?"

Interviewee 3: "They were really good because our mentors were really good they were Eve and Johnan and so we – they were really good in helping us organise it"

Making connections with other organisations seems to have helped give guidance and structure to some groups and some responses suggested that links like these might be a way of making projects more sustainable;

Interviewee 3: "But it did make a difference and it made a difference to us how we can – we see people in our community I think – and now we've built up that – bond sort of thing – relationship with Age Concern – we'd be able to go back in now and talk to the elderly people again and maybe organise an event if we wanted to."

Stronger connections with organisations and perhaps more research into, and therefore greater understanding of, the issues that the groups are focussing on could lead to the creation of programmes with a longer-lasting and greater impact.

Parent/Guardian Questionnaire

Methodology

The Parent/Guardian questionnaires were sent out in January, following the completion of the Real Challenge in December.

22 parents/guardians filled in and returned the forms. For many questions, however, there are more than 22 responses due to the fact that many respondents gave multiple answers to questions.

The questions on this questionnaire were intended to ascertain what impact that parents perceived the programme had had on their young people with regard to the programme aims of improving confidence, greater community involvement, greater social mixing and aiding the transition to adulthood. This questionnaire also looked to ascertain how aware parents were of the aims and content of the programme.

The responses for each question are given here.

Where appropriate, responses to the questionnaire questions have been supplemented by information taken from qualitative questions that were a part of the second questionnaire filled in by participants and from the qualitative interviews with participants from Wave 3 of the programme that took place during the second week of their experience and upon completion of the programme.

1. What do you know about content of the programme? What are the programme's aims?

Response	Number
To improve team-working abilities	12
To improve confidence	7
To improve leadership abilities	4
Make young people focus on the future	3
Give young people business experience	2
Teach new skills	2
For young people to have a positive impact in their community	2
Teach life skills	1
Look at how we fit into our communities	1
To try out different activities	1
To improve on weaknesses	1
To educate and provide activities for young people	1
To challenge participants mentally, socially and technically	1
To meet other people	1
To get young children	1

It is interesting to note that there was a wide range of responses to this question which may reflect, to some extent, a lack of clarity as to the aims of the programme. The most popular response, 'to improve team-working abilities', is not actually a stated aim of the programme though there is a very large element of team-working implicit throughout the course. Improving confidence is not one of the stated aims either although it could very much be argued that it is a by-product of the

development of leadership and communication abilities and a positive sign with regard to a successful transition into adulthood.

It is worth noting that confidence and leadership **are** stated aims on the parents' section of the Challenge website.

With regard to social mixing, only one parent thought an aim of The Challenge was to meet people, although more thought that this was a reason why their young people chose to go on the programme. None of the parent specifically mentioned, however, that the programme aimed to encourage young people to mix with people that they wouldn't normally.

It is understood, however, that all the aims of the programme organisers may not be made clear to all the stakeholders in the programme or that, just because the aims are not clear to everyone, does not mean that they are not achieved. As seen in question 4, the parents clearly **do** believe that there has been a lot of social mixing in the programme.

Only two responses made mention of the civic service aspect of the programme. No responses mentioned adulthood although three parents made mention of focussing on the future.

Some parents made mention of the fact that the aims of the programme were vague but that the opportunity to meet Challenge staff before the programme had been useful in clarifying what the programme was about;

"Well-informed by pre-meeting and had the chance to ask questions."

"Until the evening I attended, I had not heard of the Challenge, but the evening was very informative."

"The info on the web and leaflet was very vague but after talking to staff it became clearer."

2. Why did your son/daughter decide to go on the programme?

Response	Number
It sounded interesting/exciting	8
To make friends	4
Wanted to challenge his/herself	4
Develop team-working abilities	3
To gain confidence	3
Wanted to keep busy during summer	3
Develop leadership abilities	2
Didn't have job/No other plans	2
To develop independence	2
Wanted to do something constructive	2
To get out of the area	1
It was promoted by the school	1
Friends were going	1
To increase the chances of going to uni	1
Something useful for CV	1
Preferred this to getting a job	1

To develop social skills	1
Learn news skills	1

It is interesting to note that, given The Challenge’s focus on civic service, one parent thought their young person used the programme as an opportunity to get **away** from their local area. This echoes the responses of two participants in the second questionnaire who said the same.

Several responses related to the need for the young people to do something to occupy them during their holidays. This ties in with answers from the participants’ second questionnaire where having ‘nothing better to do’ was the most popular reason that the young people themselves gave for coming on the programme;

“I don’t know, I just came cos i know that if I don’t come here, I’d just be doing something stupid or like I don’t know.”

“I just know that my summer was boring already, I didn’t have much to do.”

Some parents believed their young person had come on the programme in order to improve their future prospects with some mention of new skills, CVs and going to university. More parents, however, stressed the idea of personal enjoyment; that the programme seemed exciting and challenging.

3. What parts of the programme did your son/daughter enjoy most?

Response	Number
Week One / Trip to Wales	12
Week 2 / Exposure to Uni	6
The Real Challenge / Ongoing meetings since summer	2
All aspects	2
Acting	2
The Art Programme – drawing the elderly in their home/Project with the elderly	2
Media – BBC	1
New things	1
Team-work	1
Singing	1
Activities	1

The Week One, Outward Bound part of the programme, with its “fun but also challenging activities”, was by some way the most popular response to this question. Three parents made mention here of problems with motivation and loss of focus in the third part of the programme;

“At times frustrated that everyone didn’t engage equally.”

“Found that when left alone in third part they did not pull together and lost interest at the end.”

“Families do need to get behind the young people in order to keep their interest up once the three weeks are up.”

4. What impact did the programme have on your son/daughter? Please tick the most appropriate box for each question:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. He/she seems more confident	11	10	1		
2. He/she is more involved with activities in the local community	5	9	8		
3. He/she has made new friends from different backgrounds	17	3	2		
4. He/she seems more responsible	7	10	5		
5. He/she has a clearer idea of what he/she wants to do in the future	7	6	9		

The two areas where the programme seems to have had the most discernible impact, as far as parents were concerned, are confidence and social mixing, although there was also an overall very positive response to questions regarding community involvement, responsibility and future plans.

76% of parents strongly agreed that their son or daughter had made new friends from different backgrounds. This matches exactly the percentage of young people in the final questionnaire who strongly agreed that “I made friends with people that I would not normally.”

While 62% of parents agreed to some extent that their young people had become more involved with activities in the local community, 38% neither agreed or disagreed. This concurs somewhat with the fact that only 57% of participants themselves said that they now felt more of a part of their local community. It also concurs with interviews where the young people expressed doubts about the **long-term** sustainability of engaging in positive work in their community.

95% of parents either agreed or strongly agreed that their son or daughter was now more confident.

5. Do you think it has changed your son/daughter’s plans for the future?

Response	Number
Yes	9
No	13

While 62% of parents said that the programme had not changed their young person's plans for the future, 62% also said the programme had given them a clearer idea of what they want to do in the future;

"She always wanted to work in the community and doing this has hardened this plan."

Some also mentioned the general benefits of the programme with regard to future prospects, as opposed to specific career paths:

"He thinks clearly like an adult and no more behaving like a youngster."

"It has made my son more aware that in life if you don't put in 100% you will not get the effect that you want out of life."

"She has become more confident and more positive of what she wants in the future."

"She's more confident and outgoing."

"In a way- she's now more involved in local things round the area to help the community. She wasn't like that before."

Among the responses from parents who said their young person **had** changed plans for the future due to The Challenge programme were;

"He would like to be an associate mentor"

"She wants to take a gap year volunteering"

"The Challenge gave him the chance to experience a wide variety of activity and he came away confident that Radio and Music was what he wanted to do but understands the need to keep his sports skills and coaching up to date to fall back on."

Extra Information

Some parents wrote extra information/messages on their forms. These were mainly very positive;

"May I take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for a very well-organised event. The staff involved are great people – enthusiastic and organised and Hannah really enjoyed her time with all of them. She is definitely more confident and has made new friends through the Challenge network.

I have been recommending you to all my friends/colleagues who have children coming up to 15/16.

Many thanks to everyone. Keep up the good work – it really is appreciated!"

“I think Hammersmith’s targeted schools were approached a little late to get a good mix of backgrounds. More info should have been sent out to youth and sports/media groups in the voluntary sector and pupil referral and early intervention groups should have been approached around Christmas in order to get parents to look at summer holiday schemes.

The mix of Hammersmith & Fulham and Lambeth kids was risky but I think worked really well as they quickly forgot the postcode stuff when stuck on the Outward Bound stuff and many are still in contact.

It was a good way for the young people to see ‘Uni’ from the inside as well. Made it a real target for achievement for them.”

“I would like to say that this is a great programme and should become available to all young people in the U.K. Well done.”

Issues

Questionnaires

There was a delay in receiving completed second questionnaires due to some groups not having the questionnaires administered to them at the end of the first three weeks. This meant that some participants may have filled in the questionnaires some time after the end of the initial three week programme.

The large majority (41 out of 47) of participants who completed the second questionnaire were from the third wave which would appear to point to some administrative problem with the dissemination of the second questionnaire to the Wave 2 groups.

Certain issues arose from the fact that The Challenge was carrying out its own evaluation of the programme concurrently with the University of Strathclyde evaluation. This meant that participants had to fill in a significant number of paper questionnaires. Bearing this in mind, the University of Strathclyde tested its baseline questionnaire with groups of young people of a similar age to those who were taking part in The Challenge. On average, it took these young people approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

Following reports from Challenge staff that the Strathclyde questionnaires were taking participants in London up to an hour to complete, the third, and final, questionnaire from Strathclyde was made considerably shorter than the previous two. A note was attached to the front of it, acknowledging that participants had filled in a lot of questionnaires but emphasising the importance of the information they gave to help develop the programme for the future. After discussion with Challenge staff about the best ways of administering the questionnaire, Strathclyde asked that Challenge staff could administer a paper version of the questionnaire and monitor it being filled in, feeling this was the best way to get a significant number of questionnaires completed.

Challenge staff put the third Strathclyde questionnaire into a digital form for participants to complete online. Several reminders were then sent out to participants by Challenge staff about this. Unfortunately, only twenty one participants completed the online version. Out of these, nine were from Waves 2 and 3 and had therefore filled in previous questionnaires. We feel that the fact the questionnaire was put into an electronic version and its completion was not monitored has led to this small number of responses. This small sample size has, in turn, made it more difficult to speak with certainty about the effect that the programme has had with regard to data from the questionnaires and therefore the emphasis in this report is on qualitative data.

There is also perhaps a danger that more 'pro-active' participants filled in the online questionnaire and that this has led to a perhaps more positive overall picture of the programme than if more participants had completed it.

Conclusions

There follows a summary of conclusions drawn from the available data as collected by the methods shown above. Some of these conclusions also appear as Key Findings at the beginning of this report.

Overall Programme

- Overall, participants would seem to rate the programme very highly. They generally appear to have found it an enjoyable, worthwhile and beneficial experience.
- The first phase of the programme, the Personal Challenge residential week in Wales, seems to be, by some distance, the most popular aspect of the programme among participants.
- A lack of opportunities, both recreational and work-related, in the young people's local areas during the summer is a major factor in many deciding to come on the programme. While some participants come on the programme recognising the benefits it might have with regard for their future career prospects, the majority come on the programme for reasons connected to personal enjoyment or challenge.
- The level of responsibility participants assume during the programme seems to perhaps be affected by the amount of responsibility that the young people already have in their lives. Those with high degree of other responsibilities, perhaps more likely to be more working class participants, may be less likely to take on as much responsibility during the programme.
- The programme appears to have been successful in raising participants' confidence, largely through developing a stronger belief in their abilities such as communication and leadership.
- The programme seems to have been effective in developing the leadership abilities for the majority of participants. The level to which participants were willing to take on responsibility and a leadership role within their group appears to have been dependent to some extent, however, on the background of participants, with more middle-class participants appearing more likely to be more pro-active in this regard.
- The programme appears to have been very successful in its goal of social mixing, with participants having opportunities to meet people that they would not normally and this has gone some way to challenging the young people's pre-conceptions about others. However, there is an issue about whether the young people have **sustained** contact with people from other backgrounds.
- The programme seems to have been very successful in developing team-work skills, though there appears to have been a mixed level of success for different groups with regard to team-work during the Real Challenge part of the programme
- In general, participants believe that the programme has allowed them to improve their communication skills, in particular with regard to giving presentations and speaking to groups.
- With regard to community involvement, the majority of participants appear to be motivated to become more engaged with their community but there seems to be varying levels among them with regard to belief on how possible it is to make a genuine positive difference within the community and whether they now feel more a part of their community. There is some sense that these different levels of belief are related to which area participants come from, with those from 'rougher' areas perhaps less likely to feel a sustained positive impact is possible.

- With regard to aiding the transition into adulthood, there is a strong sense that the experience of taking on responsibilities and working in a group has had a very positive effect on many participants with regard to developing more confidence in taking on responsibility and working with others in a mature fashion. There is also evidence that some participants now feel better equipped with 'real life' work skills and feel a greater sense of control over their circumstances, although these last two areas may again be more relevant to the more 'pro-active' participants on the programme.
- Participants, in general, appear to feel a strong sense of engagement, enthusiasm and ownership of the project which would seem to relate strongly to the fact that they have a large element of control over the content of their project.
- The programme appears to perhaps have a large number of different aims, leading to some confusion among stakeholders as to what The Challenge's main areas of focus are.

Parents and Guardians

- The parents and guardians of course participants believe overall that the programme has had a very positive impact on levels of confidence, responsibility, social mixing and, to a slightly lesser extent, community involvement.
- The majority of parents and guardians do not think the programme has **changed** their son or daughter's plans for the future but many do think it has made them think more clearly about their future and has had a positive impact with regard to developing skills that will have an impact on positive future career paths.
- There is some confusion among parents as to what the programme aims are. For some the information available about the programme was unclear, though the opportunity to speak with Challenge staff before the programme helped clarify certain issues.

Champion Teachers

- There is a strong sense among Champion Teachers that the programme should **not** be made compulsory due to the negative effect that that being forced to take part could have on participants' motivation.
- Some clarification is perhaps needed for the teachers as to whom the target group for The Challenge is and this may help to provide a good mix of participants.
- In general, teachers have noticed positive effects on most, but not all, of their pupils who went on the programme, with regard to confidence, focus and motivation.
- Teachers would seem to consider January to March the optimum time to recruit young people for the programme.

Phase Three

- Some participants perceived a lack of direction and structure in the Real Challenge part of the programme. This, coupled with a lack of sustainability in some groups' community

projects and the lack of a clear impact on the community from these projects, led to a level of de-motivation among some participants.

- The Real Challenge appears to have been successful in developing the young people's abilities in terms of communication, team-work, leadership and taking on responsibility. There is a sense among some participants that they will be able to learn from their experience and in the future be in a better position to work more successfully in their community. This is counterbalanced by a certain amount of de-motivation among participants as a result of their project not having the impact on the community **now** that they had hoped for.
- The design and implementation of a sustainable programme would appear to be a lot to ask off the groups, given the time-frame of Phase 3. Groups were maybe more likely to produce one-off events rather than a sustainable programme and a greater balance is perhaps needed between allowing groups the freedom to run their own programme and a more proactive role by Challenge staff in providing greater structure and focus.
- There was a lot of enthusiasm among participants for making the Phase Three projects more sustainable but many felt that this was very difficult to organise. This could perhaps be made more possible through greater connections with other agencies, e.g. Age Concern, and more research by groups into their chosen areas of project focus.