



GREEN LEADERS

SUMMARY REPORT

**Sheffield
Hallam
University**

Centre for
Regional Economic
and Social Research

GREEN LEADERS

PROGRAMME SUMMARY



PROJECT OUTPUTS

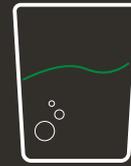
218,852 M²

OF LAND IMPROVED



39,100 LITRES

OF WATER SAVED



1,190 TONNES

OF CO₂ SAVED

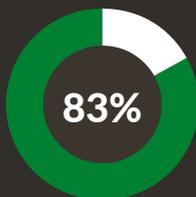


12,645 KG

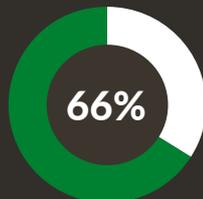
OF WASTE DIVERTED FROM LANDFILL



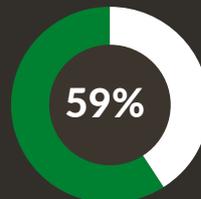
AIM 1 GREEN JOBS, TRAINING AND VOLUNTEERING



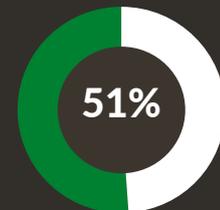
More aware
of what green
jobs are



More aware of
green job types
in the local area

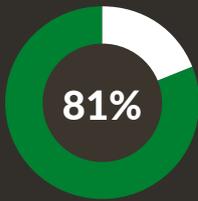


More confident
about applying
for green jobs

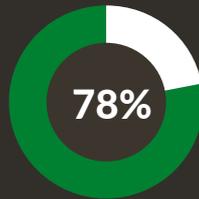


More interested
in getting a
green job in
the future

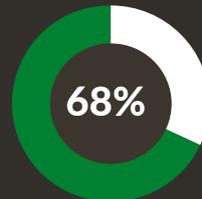
AIM 2 ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE WITH THEIR ENVIRONMENT. INSPIRING ACTION.



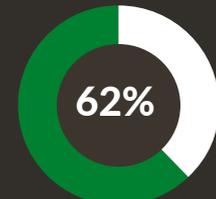
More aware of the impact of their own actions on climate change and environment



More aware of climate change and how it affects the local area

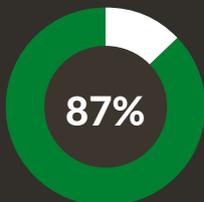


Made more effort to persuade people they know to be greener

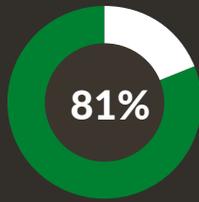


Talked more to friends and family about climate change and ways to be greener

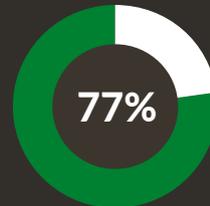
AIM 3 INSPIRING COMMUNITY COHESION & ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



Of people in the community feel more positive about young people



Of people in the community are more aware of the impact of climate change



Of people in the community are more interested in being involved in local environmental projects

I wouldn't be where I am now, or who I am now, if it wasn't for [Green Leaders], so it's impacted on my life massively, otherwise I wouldn't be in my job now.

Young people have made a big difference to the community turning an overgrown area into a very pleasant site.

AIM 4 ACHIEVING A NET GAIN IN THE BUILT & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ACROSS RURAL & URBAN SETTINGS

976 young people carried out projects across six areas with activities including: tree planting and maintenance, installing bird boxes, litter picking, local food growing, hedgerow conservation and school garden development.

Green Leaders programme evaluation: summary report

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May 2019

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Introduction

1

This report summarises key findings from an evaluation of Groundwork UK's Green Leaders programme. It provides an overview of findings over the length of the evaluation, and uses learning from the programme to suggest recommendations for policy and practice.

1.1. About the programme

The Green Leaders programme was one of 31 projects funded through the £33 million Our Bright Future portfolio managed by Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts on behalf of the National Lottery Community Fund (previously Big Lottery Fund).

The programme was developed in response to a range of challenges facing young people and local communities in the context of on-going reductions in public spending. These cuts have included stringent reductions for local authority youth services and to management of parks and green spaces. As well as reducing formal youth work provision, these cuts reduce the opportunities for young people to socialise in safe environments and affect the wider public and environmental amenity of public green spaces. The programme was set up with the understanding that there was a need for communities to 'step-in'. It was felt that young people should be at the heart of this, acting as custodians and champions for their local environment and being empowered to build aspirations and capabilities.

The programme was delivered through projects in six areas with relatively high levels of disadvantage: Leeds/West Yorkshire; Manchester; North East; Northamptonshire; Oldham and Rochdale; and Wigan. Green Leaders projects worked with local partners to recruit young people, deliver environmental projects and provide additional activities for participants such as employability advice and training with a focus on the Green Economy. The programme sought to meet four broad aims, under which sit a number of outcomes, as outlined in Table 2.2, below

Table 1.1: Green Leaders Aims and Outcomes

Aim 1	Enabling young people to gain new skills relevant to finding jobs, training, volunteering opportunities, or starting entrepreneurial projects that contribute to the green economy
Outcomes	Young people engaging with the programme will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop leadership skills through actively leading local project activity • Improve their resilience through positive changes in attitude and behaviour • Increase their awareness of the local green economy and develop employability skills
Aim 2	Engaging young people with their environment; inspiring and enabling action
Outcomes	Young people will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase their awareness of climate change issues affecting their local area and community, and how they can influence local decision-makers • Engage with their local environment through actively leading environmental improvement projects in their area which aim to mitigate the effects of climate change
Aim 3	Inspiring communities about the environment and stimulating action and community cohesion
Outcomes	Members of the community will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report increased awareness of the impact of climate change on their local environment • Express increased interest in becoming involved in environmental projects in their area • Feel more positively about young people in their area
Aim 4	Achieving a net gain in the built and natural environment across rural and urban settings
Outcomes	Physical Projects can demonstrate improvements made are likely to contribute to increasing the area's resilience to climate change.

1.2. About the evaluation

The evaluation of Green Leaders sought to understand the overall effectiveness of the programme. A mixed methods approach was taken to the evaluation, drawing together primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative datasets as follows:

- Collation and analysis of programme-level data using project plans and progress reports.
- Qualitative cohort studies – four in-depth studies of project cohorts over the course of the evaluation, including interviews and focus groups with participants, project staff, local stakeholders and local authority representatives. Results from the first two cohort studies are included in this interim report.
- Six-monthly catch-up consultations with each of the six project leads to receive project updates and identify successes and challenges throughout the lifetime of projects.
- Before and after survey of young people (designed and analysed by the evaluation team but implemented by Groundwork Trusts).
- Community survey (also implemented by Groundwork Trusts).
- Observation of Green Leaders Plus training, including interviews with participants.

How was Green Leaders delivered?

2.1. Introduction

This section explores how Green Leaders was delivered by Groundwork Trusts, outlining different approaches taken and suggesting a rough typology of delivery models. It briefly outlines some of the strengths and challenges of these approaches.

1. The overarching delivery model and targets

The Green Leaders programme was designed around a core delivery model, which also recognised that projects would be tailored based on local need.

Each project was initially allocated £118,500 funding over the course of the programme to deliver activities and fund staff time. This included £6,000 per project allocated for capital expenditure. The programme aimed to meet the following core outputs:

- Recruitment of 900 young people (150 per Groundwork Trust)
- 120 young people undertaking Green Leaders Plus training (20 per project). This involved completion of AQA 'Green Leaders' award, and the production of a portfolio to demonstrate learning and action on environmental issues.
- 36 environmental improvement projects completed (six per project)
- environmental improvements to benefit 25,000 people in local communities (4,200 per project)

2.2. Models of delivery

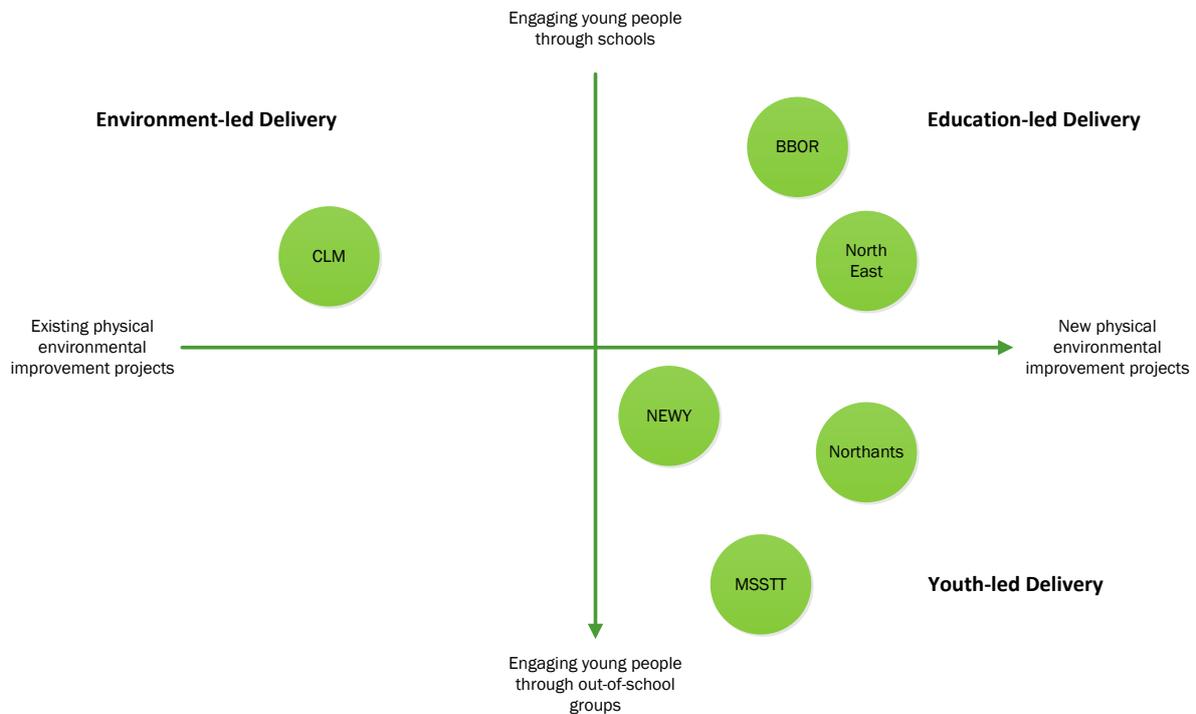
Projects were delivered in a range of ways, often related to the organisational context for each Groundwork Trust. Two notable differences between projects relate to two KPIs for Green Leaders: engaging young people and delivering physical environmental improvements. The differences between projects centre on the extent they engaged young people through schools; and the extent they delivered physical environmental improvements through existing environmental projects (independent of Green Leaders) or through developing new projects with young people. These are summarised in Figure 2, below, which shows projects falling into three different categories:

- Environment-led: use of existing projects to lead how and where activity takes place.
- Education-led: working through schools and developing projects close to schools.

- Youth-led: engaging young people through out-of-school groups (such as youth clubs), and developing new physical improvement projects with young people in their communities.

This masks a lot of variation within local projects (for example both Groundwork BBOR and Groundwork North East have worked with youth groups as well as schools), but they do serve to highlight key differences between delivery models.

Figure 2.1: Key differences in delivery models



By February 2019 **976 young people** had engaged with the **Green Leaders programme**. All projects achieved or came close to meeting the original target of 150 participants per Trust.

What were the outcomes of Green Leaders projects?

4.1. Introduction

This section summarises programme outcomes. We found strong evidence of young-people focused outcomes, particularly personal development and awareness of environmental challenges. Projects also delivered a range of environmental improvements.

4.2. Developing partnership networks

Projects successfully developed a range of partnerships networks with local voluntary sector and public sector bodies. In some instances they also managed to successfully engage with local businesses

Groundwork Trusts worked with a wide range of external organisations. These included:

- secondary schools, sixth form and further education colleges and youth-based bodies (particularly for recruitment).
- local authorities, particularly environmental and park ranger services.
- national environmental bodies (e.g., Environment Agency, Woodland Trust)
- local environmental action initiatives (including 'Friends of' groups)
- heritage-based organisations (e.g., National Trust, museums and so on.)
- police forces and youth offending teams
- parish councils, residents associations and community partnerships.
- a small number of private businesses.

Each project developed networks with a range of stakeholders both to recruit young people and to enable project delivery. Projects devoted substantial time to fostering relationships with these different organisations to enhance projects.

Recruitment networks

For Groundwork Trusts which did not already deliver their own youth activities developing relationships with other organisations was essential for recruitment.

These included working with various youth services and programmes, such as youth offending teams and NEET programmes. Four projects also engaged with schools to recruit participants and as delivery sites. Schools offered a useful way to engage a 'captive audience' for Green Leaders activity, particularly for projects that had initially struggled to recruit the required numbers of young people.

Delivery networks

Projects successfully developed partnerships and connections to enable delivery of projects. Two types of organisation were particularly important. Most projects worked with Friends groups in at least one environmental improvement location. Friends groups are in a good position to provide partnerships for physical improvement work, can help Groundwork Trusts make contacts with other local groups and key individuals and in some instances provide resources. These groups are often also an important group to engage with in order to break down intergenerational barriers between young people and the wider community, particularly older people.

Local authorities were critical to work on public land. Local authorities were often land owners and so engagement with – for example – parks and recreation teams was essential to gain permission to carry out works. In some instances the local authority supported projects by loaning equipment to Green Leaders and providing in-kind support, for instance supervising works and providing informal training. In a similar vein other environmental charities were important partners for project delivery: providing sites for improvement work.

Engagement with businesses was less prevalent but did occur in some places. In most instances this involved firms' employees volunteering alongside young people on improvement projects. Work by Groundwork MSSTT (Greater Manchester) with the multi-national agricultural business Syngenta was one marked success of the programme. Syngenta provided a 'Dragon's Den' activity. Three teams from the Green Leaders project pitched ideas for environmental enterprises to Syngenta staff who awarded a £250 prize for the winning team to develop their enterprise.

4.3. Enabling young people to gain new skills relevant to finding jobs, training, volunteering opportunities, or starting entrepreneurial projects that contribute to the green economy

Achievement of this aim for the programme is based on the following three outcomes for young people:

- developing leadership skills through actively leading local project activity
- improving resilience through positive changes in attitude and behaviour
- increasing their awareness of the local green economy and develop employability skills

Quantitative data on this aim was gathered through a longitudinal questionnaire, which young people were required to fill in after six months participation on the programme¹. The questionnaire monitored what difference participation made to skills (general skills and employability skills), attitudes and behaviour and their awareness of the local green economy. This data shows positive change across most measures.

¹ Or on exit from the programme if this is before the six month point.

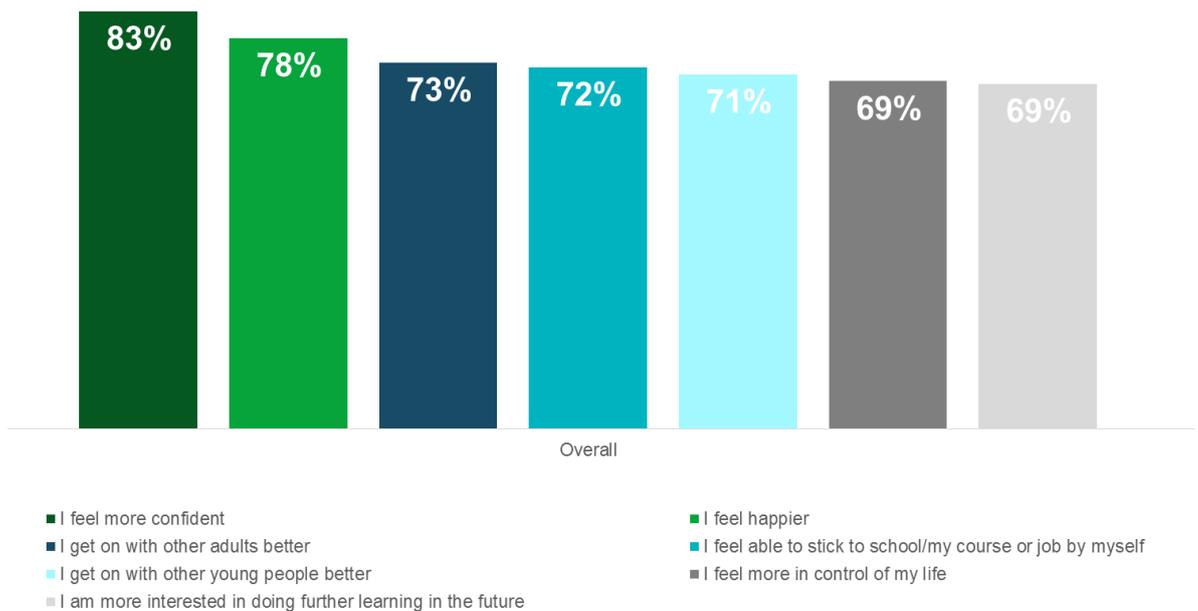
Attitudes and behaviour

Young people reported a range of improvements to attitudes and behaviour relating to their general wellbeing and lifeskills as well as in relation to environmental action.

95 per cent of young people reported improvements in at least one general attitude/behaviour measure and 90 per cent reported improvements across at least three measures

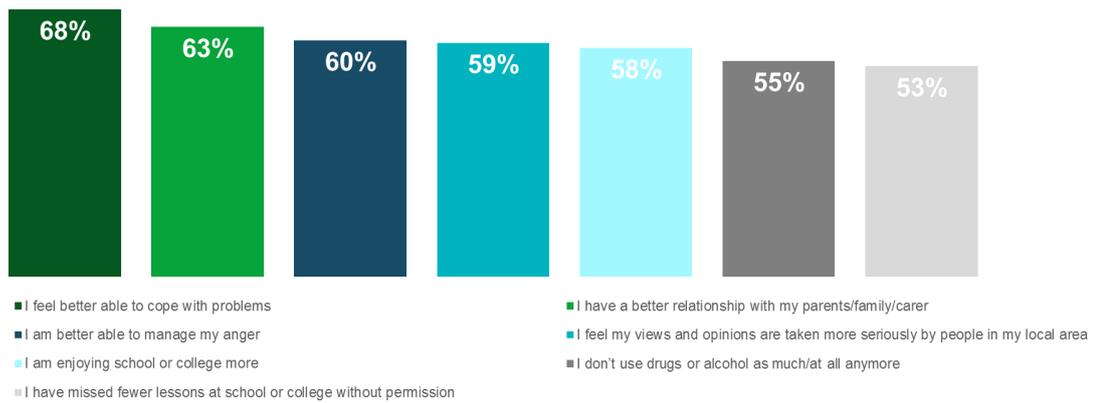
Young people were asked whether the programme had changed their attitudes and behaviour (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). On every measure, over half of participants agreed that attitudes or behaviour had improved. It is possible that some young people already felt positive about attitudes and behaviour leaving no room for improvement.

Figure 4.1: Changes in attitudes and behaviour



Base: 411-414

Figure 4.2: Attitudes and behaviour by Groundwork Trust cont.



Base: 389-413

Qualitative findings reinforce these data. Participants repeatedly talked about how involvement with Green Leaders had increased their self-esteem and confidence in a variety of situations, particularly communicating with other people in formal and informal settings. This included presentation skills and ability to engage in group discussion/debate about different topics (such as different aspects environmental protection). These outcomes were common across all cohorts and types of participant but were particularly marked among young people who were for different reasons on the margins of mainstream education.

Case study 1: Rachel, Groundwork North East

Rachel is 18 and has been working with the Groundwork North East project lead since the age of 11 through volunteering with a local youth club. She later became involved as a volunteer in Green Leaders, including attending Green Leaders Plus training. Rachel is now an apprentice at Groundwork and is qualifying to be a youth worker. Rachel always wanted to work with young people but there had been no opportunities. She had previously tried to train to be a nurse and teaching assistant but had not enjoyed those roles.

Rachel felt that involvement with Green Leaders has been transformational for her personal development:

'it's built my confidence as a person, if you ask [project lead] I was totally different to what I am now, I was really naughty, I was really shy and I wasn't confident in myself...and through the volunteering its changed me as a person'

Rachel admits she wasn't motivated by environmental issues before becoming involved in Green Leaders but that it had changed her outlook: *'I wasn't too bothered.. working for Groundwork ...it does make a massive impact, explaining to the young people how much of a difference you can make, changing one thing can make a massive impact.'*

The change in Rachel's attitude towards the environment was enhanced by participation in the Green Leaders Plus residential course which helped her understanding of issues and how to make an impact: *'it was really good, met young people from other places, it made me understand a lot more about the environment, [how to] change one thing to make such a massive impact.'*

Rachel is motivated to help young people, particularly in the community she is from, and also believes that environmental projects can help: *'Groundwork [do] good work with young people, but community environmental stuff works really well as well, [work in my community] makes me feel better to make that change because that's where I'm from and the community needs that change'.*

'I always say that from volunteering for [Green Leaders], I wouldn't be where I am now, or who I am now, if it wasn't for that, so it's impacted on my life massively, otherwise I wouldn't be in my job now'.

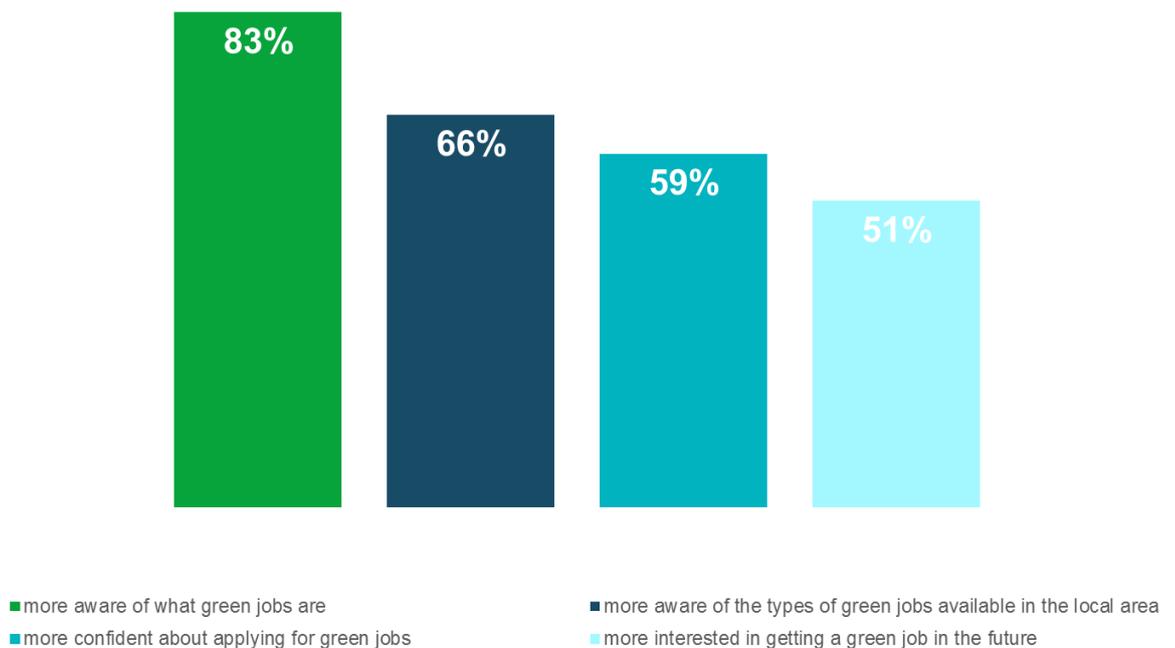
Awareness of the local green economy

Almost 70% of young people said they were more likely to get involved in groups, clubs or organisations as result of taking part in Green Leaders

25 young people found employment after taking part in Green Leaders

Despite Groundwork Trusts reporting challenges focusing on the green economy linked to local, grassroots activity awareness of the local green economy did improve among participants. Over four-fifths of young people felt they were more aware of what green jobs are after six months on the programme (Figure 4.3). Two-thirds felt they were more aware of the types of green jobs available in their local area. Almost three-fifths agreed they were more confident about applying for green jobs and one-half were more interested in getting a green job in the future.

Figure 4.3: The green economy

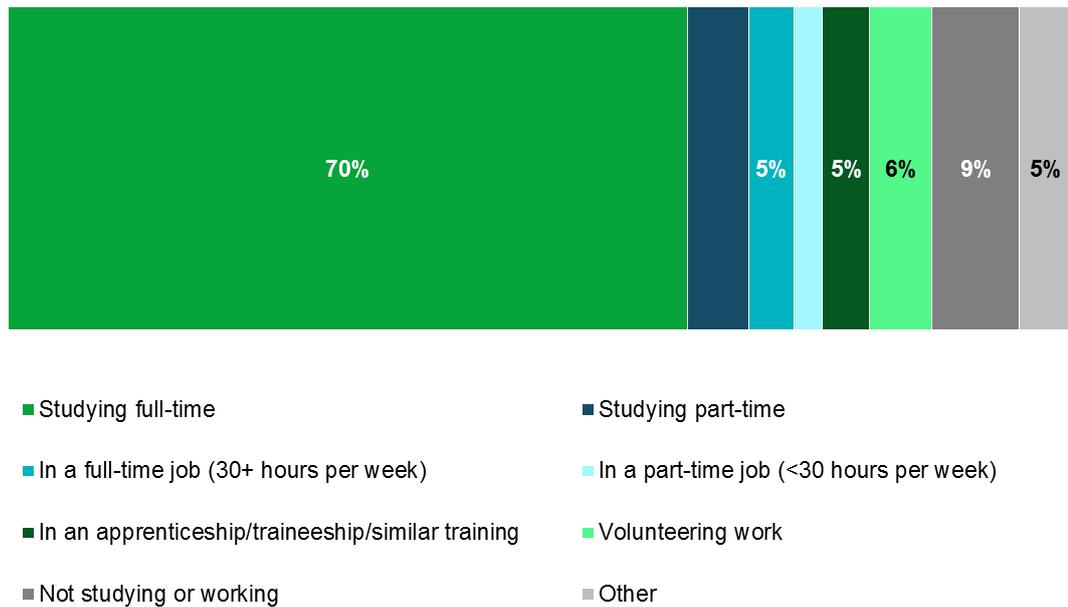


Base: 410-411

Employability and employment outcomes

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the age range of those participating in the programme, young people were most likely to be 'studying full-time' after six months on the programme (Figure 4.4): employment outcomes were correspondingly quite small.

Figure 4.4: Economic status by Trust

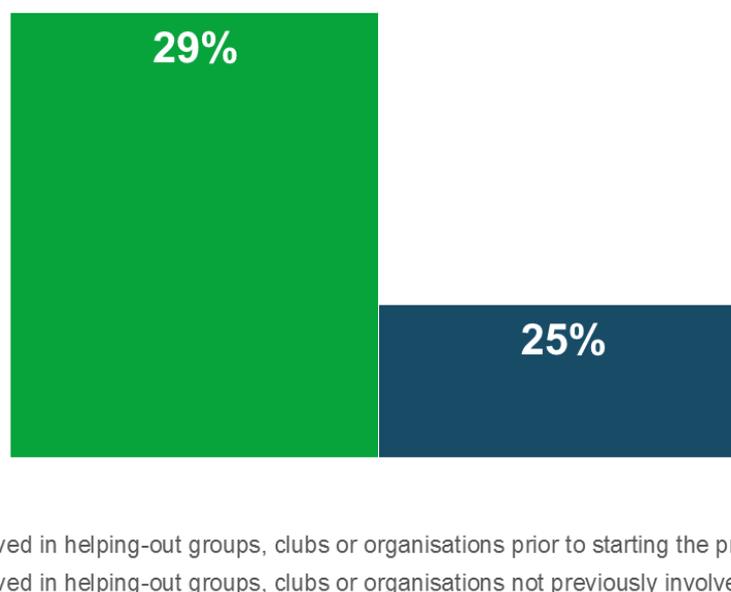


Base: 411

Eight per cent of young people overall indicated they were in either full or part-time employment. This represents 31 young people. These young people were asked if they had started their jobs before joining the Green Leaders programme. Five had done so, while 25 indicated they had found work after taking part in the programme. These 25 were then asked to what extent they thought they got a job because they took part in the programme. Nine felt it was 'completely' due to participating in the programme and four felt it was 'mostly' due to participating. For seven young people, participation in the programme was 'partially' responsible for them securing their job, while for five participants, being on the programme was 'not at all' responsible for them gaining work.

In addition, almost one-quarter of respondents stated that since taking part in Green Leaders they had taken up helping-out with groups, clubs or organisations that they were *not* previously involved in (Figure 4.5, below)

Figure 4.5: Involvement in groups, clubs or organisations



Base: 413 (Prior to starting); 412 (Not previously involved in)

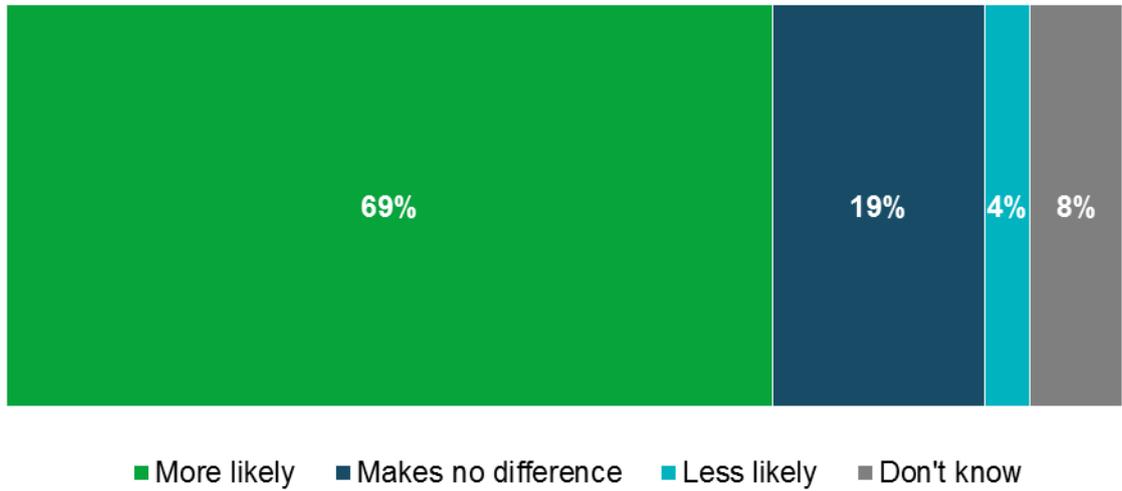
Almost seven-out-of-ten young people were more likely to get involved in groups, clubs or organisations (Figure 4.6).

Qualitative findings provide further detail on some participants for whom Green Leaders proved an important step to gaining employment for a small number of people, particularly so for young people who had taken part in Green Leaders Plus. Importantly these young people tended also to have a longer-term engagement with Groundwork Trusts, for example as part of long-running youth groups. The transition to employment was part of wider personal development, as shown in the following interview excerpt, where a participant at Groundwork MSSTT talked about his motivations to work and the pastoral support provided by Groundwork staff:

one day I got really angry and I was just lashing out and one of the youth workers pulled me aside and spoke to me and said something good's going to come your way, you have to be patient, and I'm a Muslim and in our religion patience is one of the biggest key matters so I thought I need to take that on board, so round about September I went for an apprenticeship, around December I got called back for an interview and I got the job in January as an apprenticeship, so I've been doing that and then I got a job and then I got another one and then I got a third job and now I've got a fourth one so I'm working constantly and everything's paid off cos of my experience through Groundwork and everything I've done on Green Leaders as well. (Participant, 19 Groundwork MSSTT)

This relates to an important finding across the projects: the value of Green Leaders set within longer-term engagement with Groundwork – most prominently through youth groups and longer-lasting environmental projects.

Figure 4.6: Likelihood of getting involved in any groups, clubs or organisations as a result of taking part in Green Leaders by Groundwork Trust



Base: 411

Skills

The chart overleaf (Figure 4.7) shows the proportions who felt confident/unconfident or neither at the initial (baseline) and follow-up stages. Encouragingly the proportion who felt confident is higher on every measure at the follow-up stage.

Figure 4.7: Confidence with skills at baseline and follow-up stage

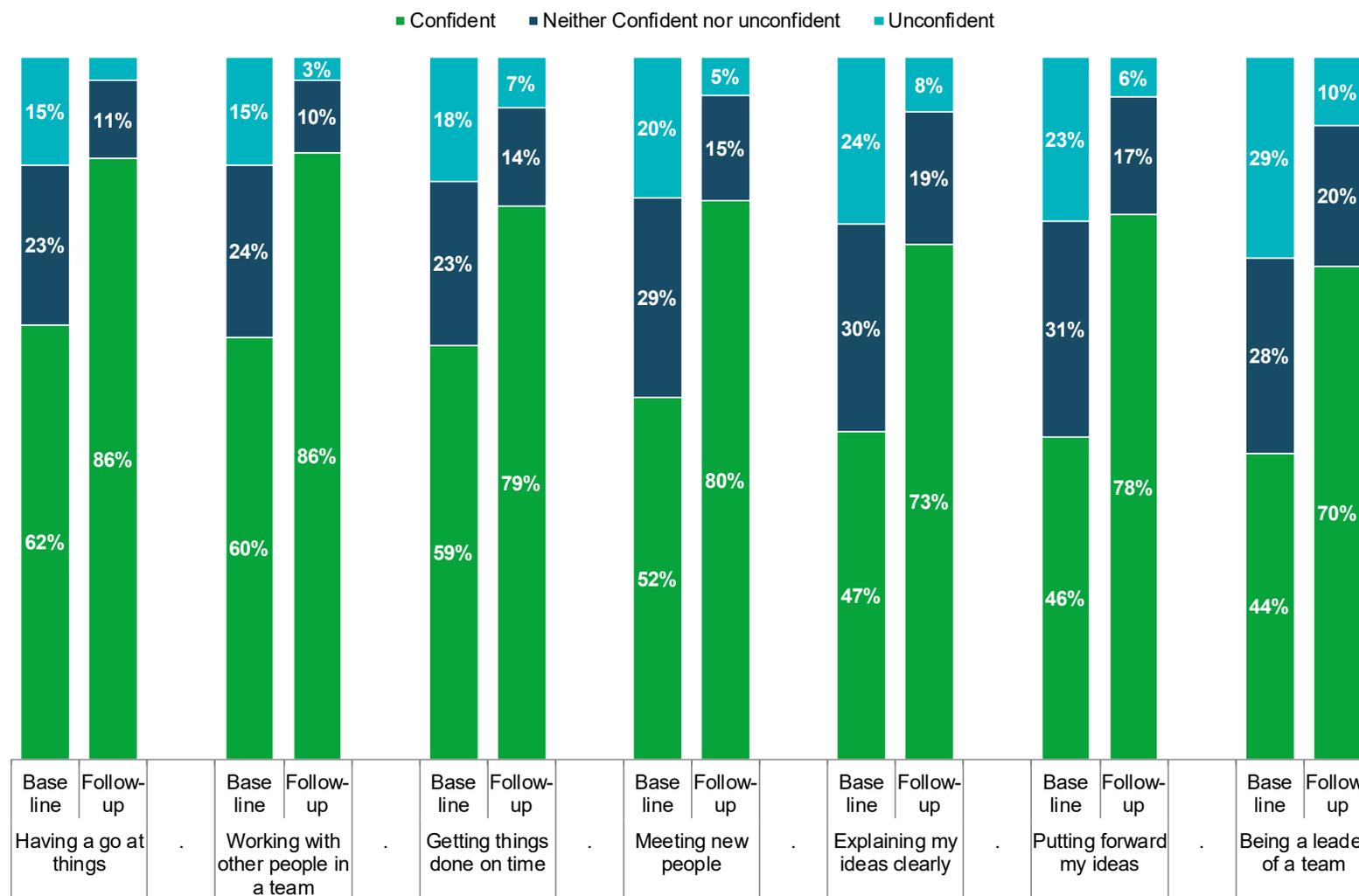
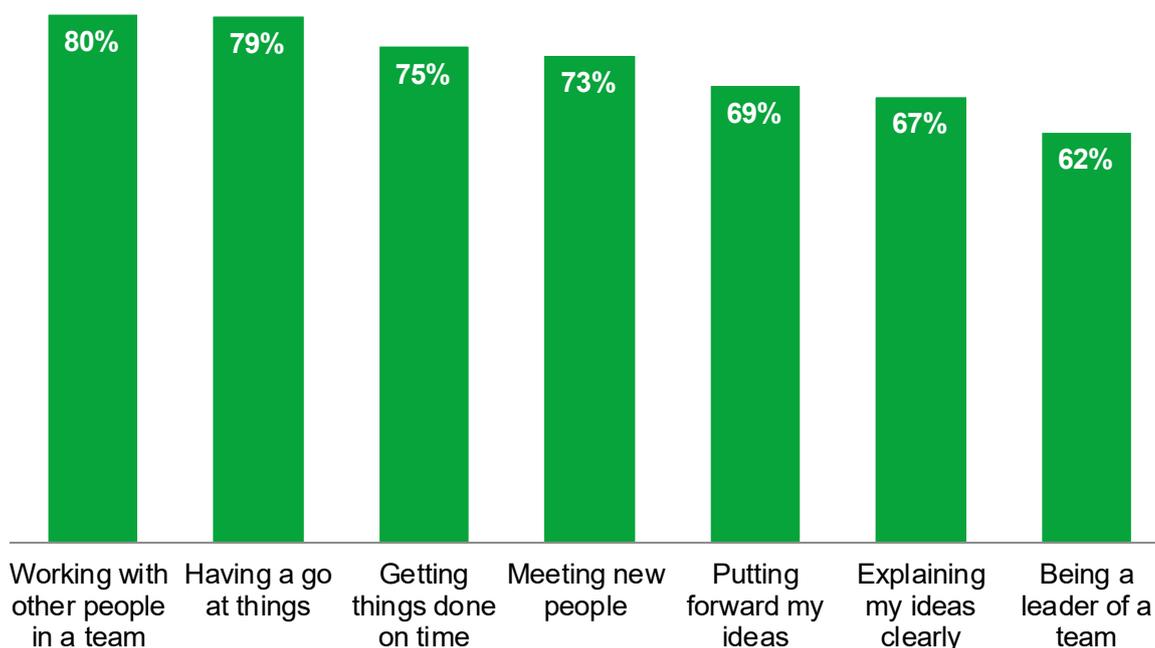


Figure 4.8: Confidence with skills at baseline and follow-up stage - proportions recording a more positive score



Base: 392 (Baseline); 388-392 (Follow-up)

The AQA Green Leaders award (see Section 4.7. for more detail) was a valuable element of the programme in this respect. It gave opportunity to consolidate learning and skills developed through Green Leaders and to gain a qualification. The AQA qualification was particularly valuable to young people who did not hold other formal qualifications or were less likely to achieve mainstream school qualifications in future.

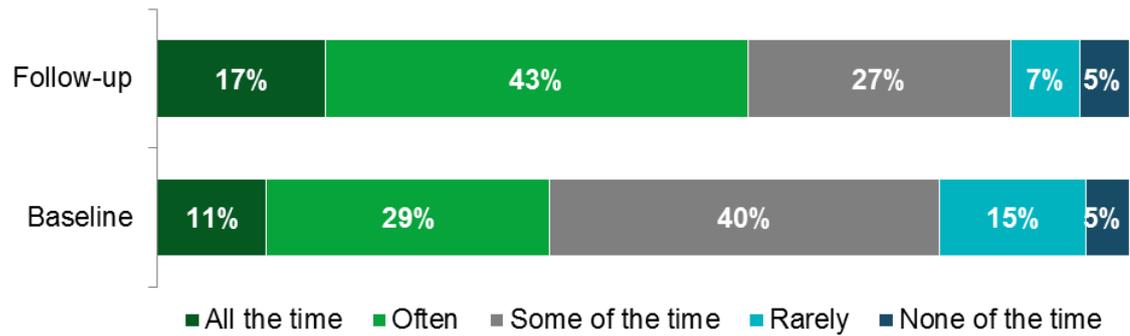
‘It works really well.. it’s another qualification for my learners’ ‘a lot of young people that we work with have come out of school with no qualifications’ (Project Lead, Groundwork BBOR)

‘you can see the difference it’s made, they like to have something to hold in their hands...it’s an achievement’. (School Teacher, stakeholder to Groundwork BBOR project)

Wellbeing

Young people were asked to consider to what extent they had been feeling optimistic about the future. Figure 4.9 below shows the results from each stage by Groundwork Trust. Results were more positive at the follow-up stage both overall and across all Trusts, excluding Groundwork Leeds where the proportion feeling optimistic about the future either all the time or often fell from 59 per cent to 50 per cent.

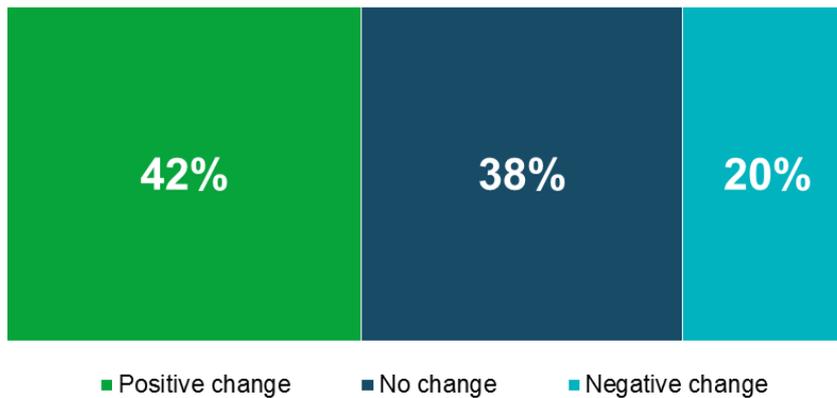
Figure 4.9: I've been feeling optimistic about the future



Base: 392 (Baseline); 389 (Follow-up)

Just over two-fifths of respondents overall recorded a positive change (Figure 4.10).

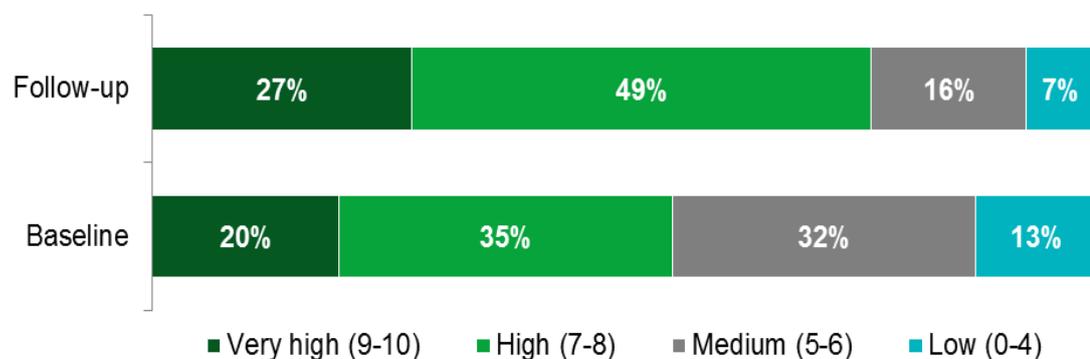
Figure 4.10: I've been feeling optimistic about the future - individual change



Base: 389

Young people were also asked to consider how satisfied they were with their life. As Figure 4.11 shows results were again more positive at the follow-up stage

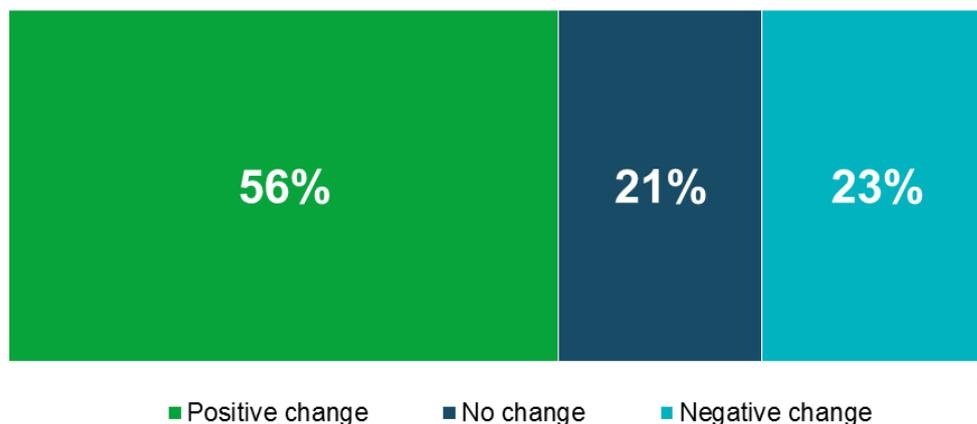
Figure 4.11: Satisfaction with life nowadays by Trust



Base: 390 (Baseline); 390 (Follow-up)

Over half of young people overall recorded a more positive change (Figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12: Satisfaction with life nowadays - individual change by Trust



Base: 388

Of course young people's lives (like any person's life) are complex and any change in life satisfaction will unlikely be attributable solely to the Green Leaders programme. However, triangulating this evidence with evidence on attitudes and behaviour, and on wellbeing, suggests that the Green Leaders programme did impact positively on participants' lives and personal development. One participant spoke of how Green Leaders had helped them to make new social connections: *"I don't get friends easily, and that was just a good way to meet people, and socialise a lot more - because I don't really don't do that much"* (Young Person, 15, Groundwork BBOR); another spoke of *"understanding myself better"* (Young Person, 16, Groundwork MSSTT) as a result of being involved in the programme.

4.4. Engaging young people with the environment; inspiring and enabling action

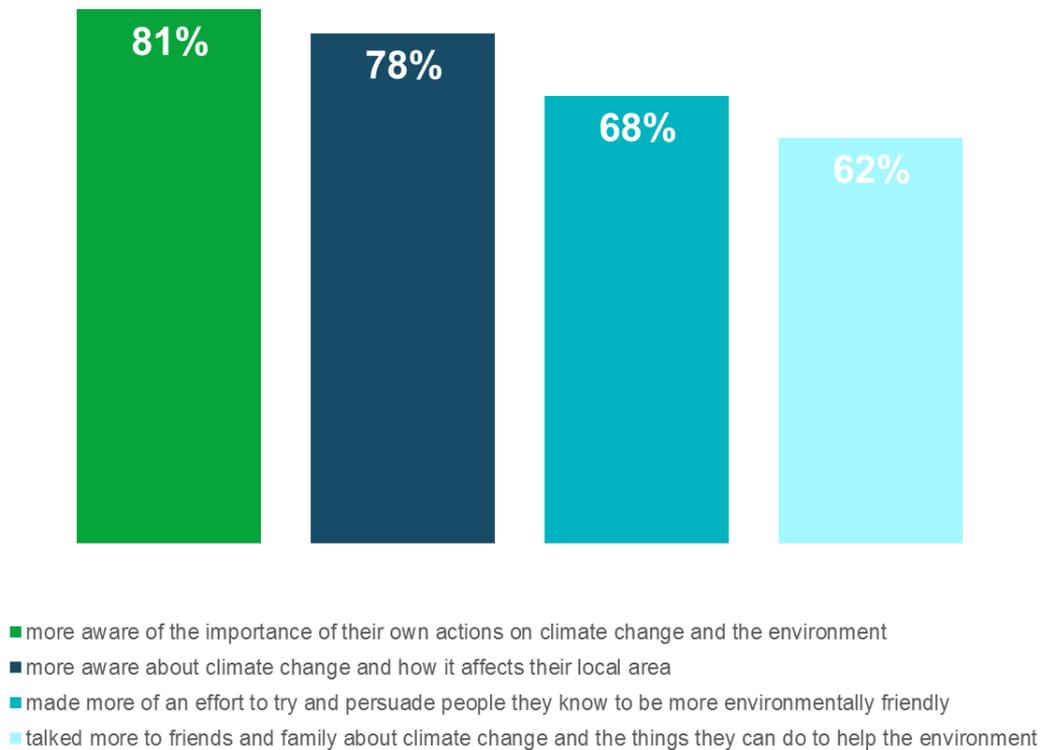
Over 80% of young people said they were more aware of climate change and the impact of their own actions as a result of Green Leaders

Over 60% of participants had taken action to encourage other people to act

There was good evidence of young people engaging with the environment as a result of their involvement with Green Leaders.

Young people were asked whether they agreed with a series of statements about their awareness of climate change and actions they might have taken. Encouragingly over three-fifths of participants overall reported greater awareness around climate change and had made positive actions (Figure 4.13).

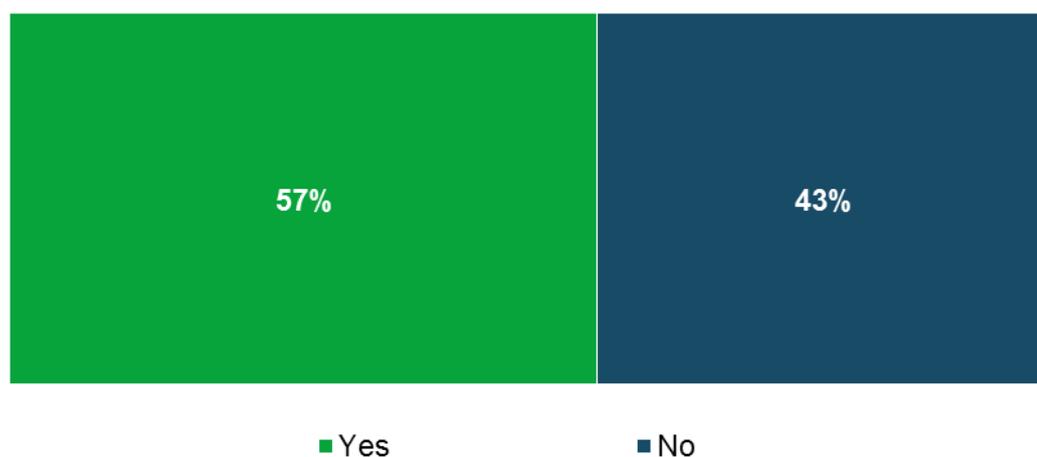
Figure 4.13: Climate change issues - awareness and actions



Base: 412-414

Almost three-fifths of young people also agreed that as a result of taking part in the programme they had suggested making improvements at their place of study/workplace/home to make it more environmentally friendly.

Figure 4.14: Suggested making improvements at place of study/workplace



Base: 371

The qualitative evidence adds some nuance to these findings, with young people explaining how Green Leaders had made a difference to how they think about the environment and the actions they had taken as a result. In some cases this was

relatively small – talking to family about recycling, or litter picking – but others had developed their environmental awareness and leadership further.

Case Study 2: improving environmental awareness in the North East

Aimée tells her story as follows:

'I joined the youth club when I was 12, and since then everything that [project lead] has done – any project she would ask us and we would do it.....We've done quite a lot of litter picks around our area ...because they're young kids and they don't care and they throw rubbish. The police helped us to do them, and it builds trust with the police. Green Leaders gave us skills: I think it gave us skills in how to be more sustainable with things that we have, not using much water, recycling things to the correct places, basic life skills that we can pass on to others...I think it was worthwhile.'

And Groundwork has provided an opportunity to become involved in more environmental focused work: *'I am actually a Green Champion and this year I'm working with Northumberland Water and were going to Stanley and giving people information on how they can be more sustainable with water The launch day is the 23rd of June'*.

Aimee was about to begin sessional work with a Groundwork team on a water saving awareness project. She had also started an apprenticeship as a child minder. She felt that volunteering with Groundwork strengthened her CV to help her get the apprenticeship: *'they liked the fact that that I had extra-curricular things, because not many people do, and I think that kind of gave us a bit of an edge'*

4.5. Inspiring communities about the environment and stimulating action and community cohesion

Community survey respondents overwhelmingly viewed Green Leaders as having a positive impact on how they viewed young people (87% of respondents); their awareness of the local impacts of climate change (81%); and personal willingness to get involved with local groups (78%)

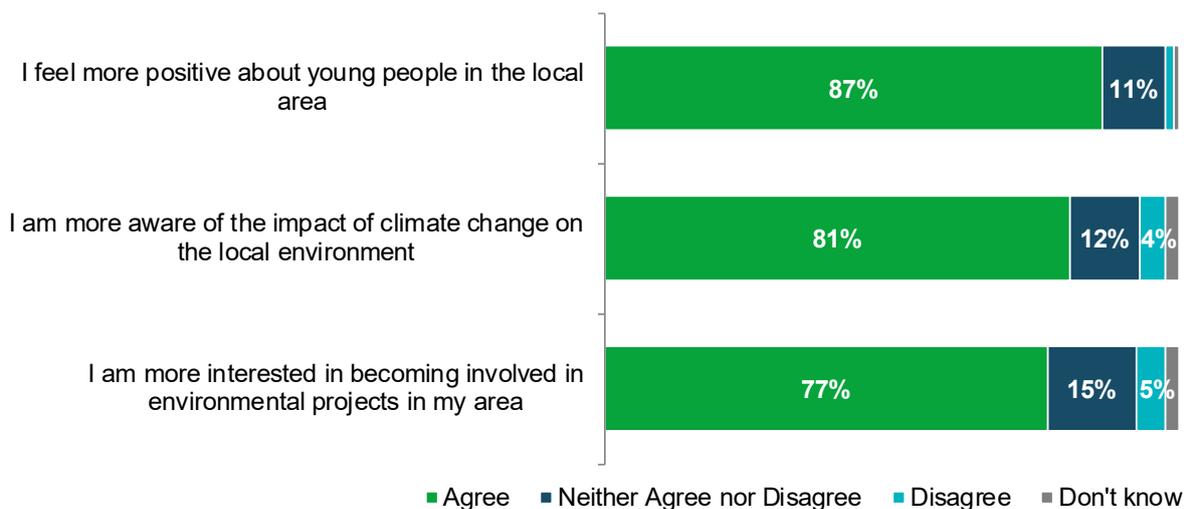
By planning young people-focused activities so that they also engaged with local communities, projects engaged with communities in a range of different ways..

Physical improvements to local green and blue space is itself an act of community engagement; improving shared community assets such as local parks and waterways which people in the local area benefit from. Examples included:

- improvements to pocket parks in Corby and Northampton (Groundwork Northamptonshire)
- improvements to two community parks in Crumpsall, Manchester (Groundwork MSSTT)
- improvements to riverbank and walkways in Consett (Groundwork North East)
- development of a community garden space at a community hall in Counden (Groundwork North East).

A short community survey was designed to assess progress on community-related outcomes. Figure 4.15 shows the responses, which were overwhelmingly positive.

Figure 4.15: Community survey results



Base: 477-478

And physical improvements were generally highly valued by community members, which is reflected in comments provided in a free text box in the community survey, including the following comments:

The project has helped to improve an area which has been neglected for some time (Community survey respondent, Groundwork CLM)

Young people have made a big difference to the community turning an overgrown area into a very pleasant site (Community survey respondent, Groundwork CLM)

The involvement of young people in improving the physical environment around them connects young people to their surroundings, strengthening their ties to the local area. Projects not focused on publicly accessible spaces (e.g. centred on schools) found it harder to engage with wider communities. Visibility of projects and the people carrying out the work was seen as critical to making communities aware of work being carried out.

Each of the projects also conducted the community surveys with local resident and users of the spaces they were improving, which in itself provided points of contact with communities. Creating opportunities for ad hoc and informal discussion about the work is an important part of community engagement..

Working to inform and consult with formal community groups develops networks within communities and improves the perceived legitimacy of projects, as well as creating potential for collaborative working. In Corby (Groundwork Northamptonshire), the project team and young people spent a lot of time visiting community groups, including the Parish Council and Friends groups. It was felt important to engage with the Parish Council to smooth the way for improvement work to take place. This engagement – for example formally presenting to community groups - can be challenging for the young people and the community groups themselves but can be rewarding in overcoming intergenerational preconceptions. In Corby it was felt to have successfully raised concern for the local environment among key stakeholders.

4.6. Effectiveness of Green Leaders Plus training

10 per cent of participants completed Green Leaders Plus (AQA award) training. All stakeholders found the AQA awards very relevant across all groups and for all abilities. The awards were challenging for school groups with challenging educational needs or young people who have left school without qualifications (such as through the Princes Trust), but were also motivating.

The AQA course was relatively easy to deliver and administer. The AQA award helped young people applying for employment or further education, including developing confidence for going into an interview situation. Some young people with AQA awards went on to find employment, and the young people said it had improved their knowledge, skills and confidence. Groundwork Trusts thought that AQA was a valuable tool and reported also using the project materials or elements of them in other projects as well as Green Leaders. It was also seen as a useful resource to include in future funding bids.

4.7. Achieving a net gain in the natural and built environment



Green Leaders projects helped improve 281,852 sq. meters of land: equivalent to 40 football pitches. They have also led to a reduction in 1,890 tonnes of carbon emissions, 12,645 kilograms diverted from landfill and 39,100 litres of water saved. It is worth noting here that only a small number of projects provided figures for waste, carbon dioxide and water savings and so these figures are potentially underestimations of total reductions across Green Leaders projects. The headline figures also mask substantial variety between projects. For instance projects focused on different types of space including:

- Woodland;
- River catchments;
- Parks;
- Community gardens;
- School improvement;
- Churches and religious spaces.

This also masks the wide variety of activities undertaken in different places, which included diverse activities such as tree planting, beach reclamation, waterway improvements, building and installing bird boxes, litter picking and food growing. The scale of improvement works also varied quite significantly.

While some projects became involved in large-scale environmental projects (see case study 3), this was harder for other projects. In some places there had been early ambitions to carry out larger scale works by linking up with local partners' capital works, but wider constraints on public sector finances meant that in most areas there was little capital activity taking place. More ambitious works also take a long time to work through and in some instances were only just starting to bear fruition at the end of Green Leaders projects. One issue was the requirement for councils (as landowners in many instances) to maintain capital works after they have been installed, which created some problems for Trusts in gaining permission to carry out works. More broadly, if an aim of the programme was for projects to be at least partly young-person led, there is some conflict between what young people might want to do and what resources, timescales and capabilities allow for.

Case study 3: Environmental impacts in Cheshire, Lancashire and Merseyside

Groundwork CLM worked well to integrate Green Leaders activities with a range of on-going environmental improvement projects, including Tawd Valley Park in Skelmersdale and Wyre Estuary Country Park.

In Skelmersdale, at Tawd Valley Country Park Groundwork worked with approximately 10 students from West Lancashire High School who came to the park every Tuesday from 10 to 12 to maintain and improve the Park. The students were a class of young people aged 16 to 19 years old with special educational needs including learning difficulties and physical disabilities. Groundwork and the school developed a work-plan of suitable activities including litter picking and clearing access. The students did not work alongside other community members, but were working to improve a local community park and wildlife area in line with a masterplan for the park, working together with the local council Park Ranger. Groundwork supported the students obtain John Muir Discovery awards and the students were currently working towards the Green Leaders Plus awards.

At Wyre Estuary Country Park, Groundwork worked with an existing wildlife group (Teen Rangers) to improve the local environment including a local beach habitat through removing invasive species and during the evaluation team's visit the team were maintaining a sensory garden at the Wyre Estuary Country Park, working with the local council Park Ranger. Wyre Estuary Country Park is a widely used park that does not have a Friends Group and the Park Ranger relied on the continuous inputs of Groundwork and the cohort. At Wyre Estuary Country Park the group were also working to develop interpretation boards for an environmentally important saltmarsh area. There were four or five regulars and two or three others who attend occasionally. During the evaluation team's visit four young people were involved although it was in winter and the weather was poor.

The Teen Rangers removed invasive species, removed litter, cleared woodland, maintained a sensory garden and conducted a survey of saltmarshes with a view to increase education and conservation. In Tawd Valley Park there was a strong focus on reducing overgrowth, removing invasive species, improving accessibility to the park and litter picking. Both these cohorts are also contributing to local authority management and conservation of parks and open spaces.

Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

This report presented the final findings from the Green Leaders programme. It found that the programme had successfully achieved what it set out to do, meeting its output targets and producing outcomes across each of the outcome areas identified in the original evaluation brief. This is impressive during a period of significant turbulence in most local areas, with public spending cuts creating a challenging context for partnership-working and project delivery.

6.2. Key Successes

Overall the Green Leaders programme has been a success. Projects delivered a range of activities with young people, who valued the experience. Participant outcomes relating to skills, self-confidence and understanding environmental challenges were strongest. This was well evidenced through both quantitative and qualitative findings, with young people finding Green Leaders a personally enriching experience. To summarise:

- Young people enjoyed participating Green Leaders
- Young people experienced positive outcomes, including improved confidence in a range of skills and self-esteem. They were also happier.
- Young people were more aware of the green economy and a small number of young people either already had begun steps towards (either through education or employment), or were considering a future career in environmental sectors.
- Young people became more aware of environmental challenges and in many cases were inspired to act on this awareness in some way.
- Projects made a range of environmental improvements to local areas, with some evidence that this was noticed and valued by communities.
- Green Leaders Plus provided opportunities for some young people to progress further with leaderships skills and personal development; and the AQA award provided a resource that can be used in future within Groundwork and potentially as a product to market to other organisations – as is already the case in Manchester.

6.3. Lessons learnt and recommendations for future delivery

The programme was ambitious, aiming to achieve a range of outcomes and requiring projects to develop relationships with a variety of different local organisations and stakeholders. The ability to do this has long been a strength of Groundwork Trusts, which have a history of working in local communities to deliver social and environmental change. Nonetheless the Green Leaders programme created challenges for all participating Groundwork Trusts. Many of the lessons learnt from

the programme have been addressed during delivery and have also been highlighted in previous evaluation learning reports, but key points include:

- Importantly Groundwork Trusts have used different delivery models for their projects and this comes through in the variety of different types of outcomes. This is a strength of the programme in that it allows for context-sensitive delivery and experimentation. It does also mean that different projects have been stronger at achieving some outcomes than others, including environmental outcomes.
- The evidence on whether engaging young people through schools or through out-of-school clubs leads to better outcomes is mixed. Our work suggests that working with young people with special educational needs through schools is one way that working with schools can deliver benefits less easily attained by delivery in out-of-school settings. In other situations some of the most positive stories have come from young people engaged through out-of-school settings. However the local context is important. If youth provision is limited or not well attuned to participation with Green Leaders (as was suggested by one project lead) then working through schools offers a pragmatic alternative. The 6-month cohort model initially set out for the programme has in reality been much more fluid. It was accepted by Groundwork UK and Groundwork Trusts that young people and activities do not easily fit this model, leading to a more fluid model after the first year of delivery. This should be accounted for in youth programme design.

Recommendation: build-in flexibility and fluidity of participation to project design.

- A focused approach to environmental improvements seems to work well. Groundwork's Future Proof Parks initiative is an example of this, with the scope of projects' physical improvement work set out clearly in advance.

Recommendation: design projects around relatively focused environmental projects, with scope for young people to co-design elements within the projects (rather than starting with a blank page)

- A central element of the Green Leaders programme was to catalyse community activity on environmental protection. This seems best achieved by carrying out work in community spaces – near residential areas – and through groups that are embedded within communities geographically and institutionally. This can include schools but the evidence here is that delivery outside of schools appears to correlate with greater engagement with wider communities. Urban parks and community gardens are ideal in this sense.

Recommendation: deliver improvement works in community spaces accessible to all

- Embedding projects within communities also helps to foster stronger engagement from young people as they also benefit from positive change to the local area. This creates some challenges for recruitment however as the geographic scope is more limited.

Recommendation: ensure that recruitment and project delivery are embedded in communities to achieve buy-in from young people as well as other local residents

- The AQA award has proven to be a successful addition to Green Leaders and something that projects and young people valued.

Recommendation: embedding light touch formal qualifications and related resources (or relevant elements) in programmes can create additional outcomes and be a useful tool for engaging funders

- In the current context of limited public sector resources and stretched budgets across the voluntary and community sector, there is a case for programmes to be tightly defined and focused on specific sets of outcomes to aid focusing resources.

Recommendation: ensure that future programmes have tightly focused deliverables and account for the challenges of drawing in support from other organisations in the present funding climate