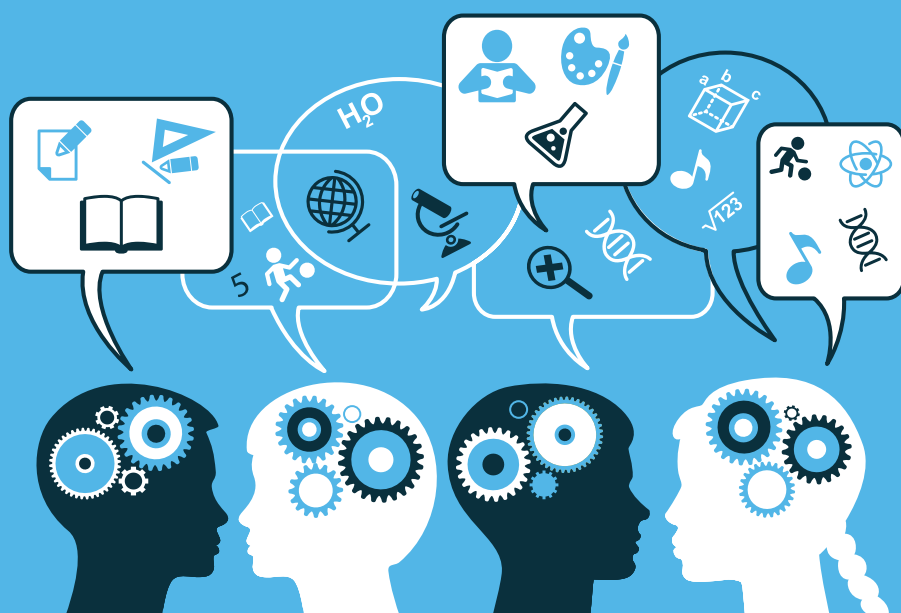


# O<sub>2</sub> Think Big 2013 Programme Evaluation

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*Telefónica*

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O2 Think Big is a proud recipient of the following national awards:



# Foreword

**Ronan Dunne**

CEO, Telefónica UK (O<sub>2</sub>)



I'm proud to introduce our latest Think Big youth programme evaluation report, which reflects our continued commitment to independent research on the impact of our investments in young people.

The Think Big programme continues to demonstrate our deeply held belief in the power and potential of young people to be a positive force for social change. Young people want to make a positive difference, they want to be change makers, they want to use their energy, passion and creativity to reach out and help others. Social action offers exciting ways to harness young people's talents to transform communities and change lives.

Our Think Big programme has funded and mentored over 6,000 youth social action projects in the last 4 years, helping young people to develop new skills and capabilities while building their confidence and personal resilience to navigate uncertain times. I'm especially proud of our record in engaging diverse young people from all backgrounds to participate in our programme, including those with fewer opportunities.

I'm also proud of our partnership with National Youth Agency, UK Youth and over 80 youth organisations across the UK that work with us to deliver a high quality youth social action opportunities. I extend my personal thanks to our partners for their continued efforts to inspire a generation of young people to start small, Think Big.

In addition to our contribution through Think Big, I am honoured to be a trustee of Step up to Serve, and O<sub>2</sub> is proud to stand alongside 14 other major UK organisations as pioneer business partners of the #iwill campaign, demonstrating the positive role that business can play in supporting and championing youth social action.

I applaud the growing momentum and support for youth social action, and call on leaders from all sectors to join us in building a social action movement, powered by the talent and potential of young Britain.

# The O<sub>2</sub> Think Big Programme

Think Big is a long-term youth programme, established in 2010, to provide young people with opportunities to set up social action projects to make a difference to their own lives and to drive positive change in communities across the UK. The Think Big programme is Telefónica UK's flagship youth programme and forms part of the company's broader investments in young people, which sets out a public goal to support 1 million young people to gain skills for life and lead community projects by 2015.

The programme encourages young people to develop ideas and solutions to key social issues, and provides funding and support to enable young people to put their ideas into action. Moreover, the programme sets out to engage with adults, through campaigns, to think differently about the positive role young people can and do play in their communities.

Think Big aims to benefit young people who lead projects or actively take part in them by: increasing aspirations, hope and confidence; providing new experiences, and acquiring new skills; improving employability and entrepreneurial skills; and, developing the leadership potential of young people. The programme currently has two principal levels:<sup>1</sup>

- **Think Big** projects are awarded to young people who submit ideas to fix a problem or challenge in their local community. They receive £300 in funding together with some other incentives to do their project and are given information, training and support along the way.
- **Think Bigger** projects get more funding: £2,500, and it is expected that they are larger in terms of scope, reach and ambition. Think Bigger is also accompanied by support and more in-depth training together with some further incentives to get involved and stay committed. Young people who apply to Think Bigger are required to complete a Think Big project first.

The programme is delivered by a number of organisations working in close partnership. The **Think Big core partnership** includes contributions from:

- **Telefónica Foundation** (the primary funder of the programme, providing strategic oversight, direction and advice on programme delivery)
- **Telefónica UK (O<sub>2</sub>)** (additional programme investment, overseeing programme quality, website development and operations, campaigning, media and communications, providing and incentivising employee engagement and mentoring support for young people);
- **National Youth Agency** (programme management, programme delivery including management of other delivery partners, recruiting and engaging Think Big national and regional partner organisations, providing opportunities for employee volunteers);
- **UK Youth** (coordinating training and mentoring for Think Bigger project leaders and employee volunteers).

There are four other sources of support for Think Big which has helped to embed the programme's successes. Think Big has established a network of over 80 **Youth Partner Organisations**: including small local organisations and large national partners based across the UK. **O<sub>2</sub> Helpers** are employee volunteers from Telefónica UK who provide, amongst other things, support for young people as mentors who are doing Think Bigger projects.

The programme has continually been supported by **community stakeholders** including individuals (family, friends, community champions) and organisations (such as non-partner youth organisations, faith groups, schools and colleges) who encourage young people to apply and give support to the projects. Finally, the programme is supported by **Think Big Alumni**. In 2013, 87 young people who have completed Think Big projects played an active role as programme ambassadors; supporting and inspiring other young people to take part and progress.

## Evaluation methodology

The programme has been evaluated by Durham University using the following techniques between 2010-2014:

- **Qualitative methodologies** which assess impact through in-depth interview and observation of the young people, practitioners and community stakeholders who are associated with interventions.
- **Quantitative methodologies** which collect evidence on the biographical characteristics and social circumstances of young people and the employment of research instruments to test how attitudes and behaviour have changed across the life-time (and beyond) of the project.
- **Impact assessment measures** (drawing upon either or both qualitative and quantitative evidence) which produce indications of the wider social benefit of the programme to society.

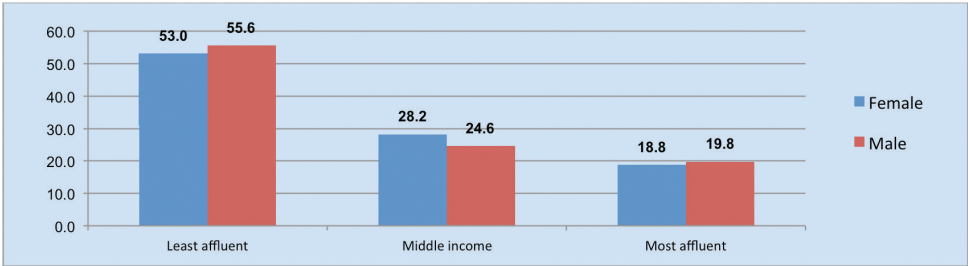
This was a well resourced social evaluation project which is now in its fifth year.<sup>2</sup> The objective of the evaluation was to monitor and analyse programme progress on the indicators and targets set. The research also aimed to demonstrate the impact of the programme in bringing new opportunities to young people, building resilience and enterprising activity whilst also helping to challenge negative stereotypes. The action research element of the evaluation has involved close integration into the programme in order to help enhance and deepen the impact of the intervention.

# An inclusive programme

A central objective of the O<sub>2</sub> Think Big programme is to be socially inclusive. As an open programme, this means that nobody should be excluded from participating either because of their personal characteristics or where they live. It is also open in the sense that young people decide, within the broad parameters of the programme's objectives, what they want their project to be about and define how they want it to help their community.

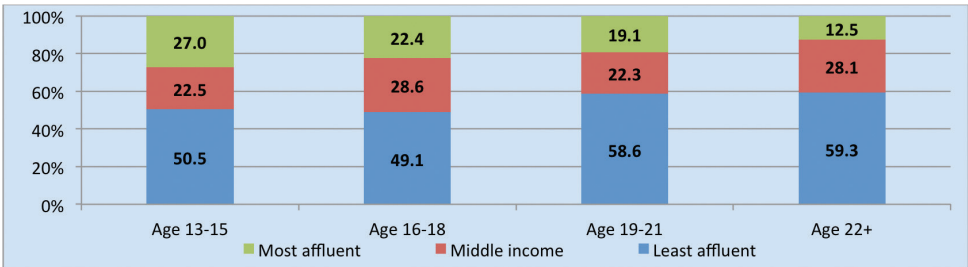
Throughout its life, the reach of the programme has been closely monitored. Key indicators of social inclusion are: *gender, age, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic area, nation and/or English region*. The gender balance of participants has been broadly similar throughout the life of the programme: in 2013, 53% of females and 47% of males entered the programme. As Figure 1 shows, the proportion of males and females is also broadly similar by socio-economic area.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1 Gender and socio-economic area of participants (2013)



The age balance of the programme has remained broadly similar throughout the life of the programme with highest levels of participation amongst the 16-18 and 22-25 age groups.<sup>4</sup> In 2013 this was also the case with: 10% of participants aged between 13-15 years, 34% aged 16-18 years, 19% aged 19-21 years and 37% aged between 22-25 years. As Figure 2 shows the age distribution in the programme by socio-economic area is relatively consistent with between 49-59% of participants from the least affluent communities irrespective of age. It is also apparent, that the proportion of participants from the most affluent communities falls progressively as the age of participants rises.

Figure 2 Age of participants by socio-economic area (2013)



The Think Big programme has attracted applications from young people with disabilities or limiting illnesses in broadly similar proportions, at about 5%, through the life of the programme.<sup>5</sup> Think Big has consistently been successful in reaching young people from all ethnic minority groups throughout the life of the programme. In 2013, this also proved to be the case where a larger proportion of ethnic minority participants have entered the programme than would be expected when compared with UK population estimates.<sup>6</sup> As Figure 3 shows, the proportion of participants from ethnic minority groups is much larger in London than other regions.

**Figure 3 Percentage of participation by ethnic minorities: UK Nations & English Regions (2013)**

English Regions	Asian	Black	Mixed	Other	White	N=
East	4.3	4.3	7.8	1.7	81.7	117
East Midlands	6.8	14.5	6.8	0.0	71.8	234
London	13.0	38.9	10.5	6.3	31.3	447
North East	3.8	2.8	0.9	1.9	90.6	106
North West	10.7	4.7	2.8	0.0	81.8	126
South East	13.2	5.6	3.4	3.4	74.4	115
South West	4.0	3.0	4.0	0.0	89.0	319
West Midlands	14.8	14.8	5.2	4.5	60.6	234
Yorkshire and Humberside	11.9	7.1	5.6	0.0	75.4	155
England	13.2	5.6	3.4	3.4	74.4	1,719
Northern Ireland	1.6	0.0	3.2	0	95.2	80
Scotland	2.5	0.0	1.3	1.3	95	102
Wales	0.0	0.0	1.9	1.9	96.2	72

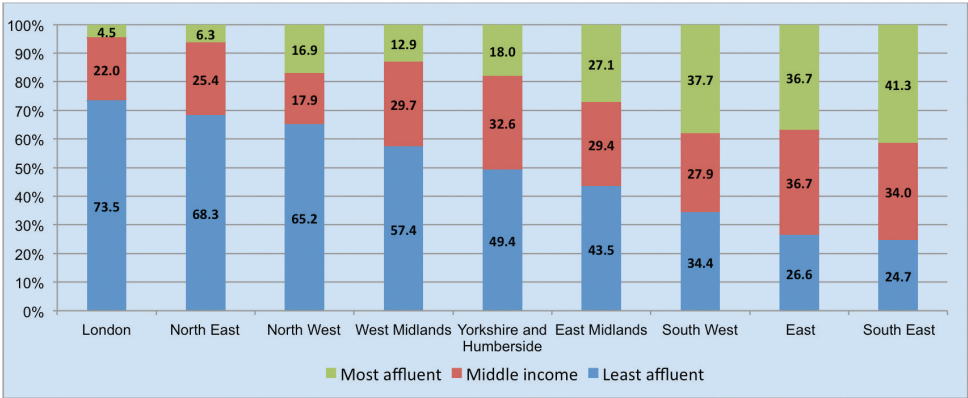
As Figure 4 shows, white participants are much more likely to come from more affluent areas, whereas, participants in the programme from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely live in less affluent areas. This is largely due to the socio-economic profiles of different ethnic minority groups. That stated, despite strong efforts, the programme has always found it most difficult to engage with white young people from the most economically disadvantaged areas.

**Figure 4 Ethnicity of participants by socio-economic area**



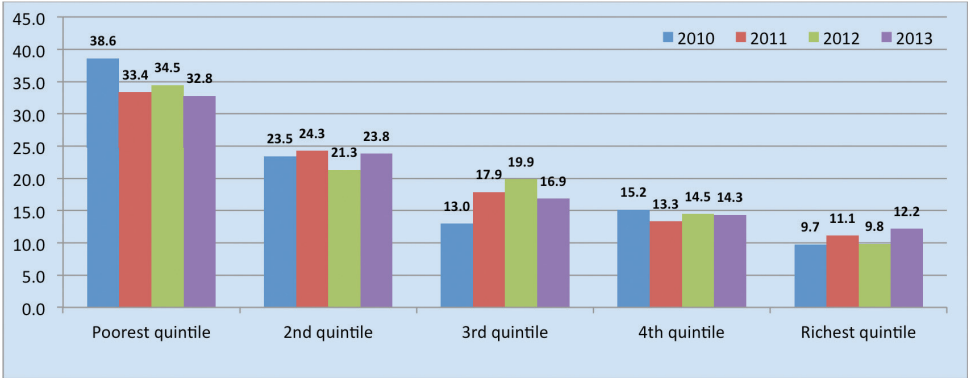
English regional differences in the relative affluence or deprivation of participants are shown in Figure 5. In some regions more than half of participants are the least affluent areas: London (73%), North East (68%), North West (65%) and West Midlands (57%). In other areas, the proportion of young people from the most affluent areas is much higher, particularly so in the South West (38%) the South East (41%) and East of England (37%).<sup>7</sup>

Figure 5 English regional distribution of participants by socio-economic area (2013)



As Figure 6 shows, the programme has consistently exceeded its target of reaching more than 50% of young people from less affluent areas (that is the first and second quintile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation).<sup>8</sup>

Figure 6 Participants by socio-economic area 2010-2014



## Think Bigger

Think Bigger is the second level in the programme. At this level young people are expected to deliver projects on a larger scale and/or be more ambitious in scope. The number of Think Bigger projects undertaken has grown through the life of the programme from 70 in 2011, 170 in 2012 and 150 in 2013.



Although there are far fewer Think Bigger projects, the indications are that the programme remains inclusive at this level. There is a slight gender imbalance with only 46% females and 54% males. Participants tend to be older, with the majority aged over 21. Black and minority ethnic participation is achieved with 11% Asian, 14% Black, 10% mixed-race or other and 66% White. Just above 5% have disabilities or limiting illnesses.

Think Bigger participants tend to have achieved higher levels of educational qualifications than in the first level of the programme: 29% have a diploma or degree and 23% have A levels (many of whom will be undergraduate students). Higher levels of achievement in this cohort of Think Big, is largely due to the fact that participants are older rather than being a product of the selection criteria for applicants.

## Volume of activity and social impact

By the end of 2013, as shown in Figure 7, the programme reached nearly 600,000 young people through 3,009 Think Big projects. This includes 5,436 young people as project leaders; over 95,000 young people as active participants in the delivery of projects; and nearly half a million young people as benefitting participants (489,240).<sup>9</sup> In 2013, 1,500 Think Big projects were delivered, with an estimated 26,975 active participants and a further 135,000 beneficiaries.

Figure 7 Volume of activity in the Think Big programme 2010-13

Year of programme	Number of Think Big projects started at Level 1	Active participants	Benefitting participants	Completions	% of projects completed	Total young people engaged in the programme
2010	338	5,915	30,420	28	8.3	36,335
2011	1,370	23,975	123,300	284	20.7	147,275
2012	2,228	38,990	200,520	1,401	62.9	239,510
2013	1,500	26,250	135,000	1,296	86.4	161,250
Whole programme 2010 - 2014	5,436	95,130	489,240	3,009		584,370

Analysis of the value of the social investment has been undertaken to indicate the impact of the programme using financial proxies. The methodology has been devised to calculate realistic estimates of the equivalent financial value of time voluntarily invested in the programme,<sup>10</sup> and to assess the 'added social value' by reaching marginalised or socially disadvantaged young people in the programme. The analysis includes several inputs into the programme such as the time invested

by young people, by Telefónica UK employee volunteers, time voluntarily given by youth partner organisations and by Think Big alumni.

Given that the programme has projects of many types which operate on different levels of depth and scale, it is difficult to estimate the average amount of time invested per project. Consequently, three estimate values are given: lower, medium and higher. While higher estimates would seem to suggest significantly more social value, this should not be automatically assumed. Some projects are run by a small number of young people to very few beneficiaries but have a very big social impact. Others operate with many more volunteers and beneficiaries, but the impact is less notable. Nevertheless, the % added value ratios do show that the programme produces rather more social value than would be achieved without a significant voluntary contribution of time.

Figure 8 Return on investment of the programme in 2013

Estimate of time invested by young people <sup>11</sup>	Value of time invested by young people <sup>12</sup>	Value of time invested by Telefónica UK employee volunteers <sup>13</sup>	Value of time invested by partner Organisations <sup>14</sup> & O <sub>2</sub> Think Big alumni <sup>15</sup>	Total equivalent financial value of time investment	Average value weight for reaching deprived/ marginalised young people <sup>16</sup>	Total social value of investment	% value added against actual financial investment in programme <sup>17</sup>
Lower	£2,843,073	£254,970	£198,492	£3,230,660	£1,830,815	£5,061,475	311.2
Medium	£3,210,874	£254,970	£198,492	£3,598,460	£2,039,247	£5,637,708	346.6
Higher	£3,500,440	£254,970	£198,492	£3,888,026	£2,203,344	£6,091,371	374.5

The social return on investment analysis shows that for every £1 invested by Telefonica a social return is gained of between £3.11 and £3.75.

## What is O<sub>2</sub> Think Big achieving?

Over the years, Think Big has been shown to have a substantial impact on young people’s lives. Since the programme was established, there has been a growing interest in government in the development of young people’s social action programmes beginning with the establishment of the National Citizen Service<sup>18</sup> and more recently through investment by Cabinet Office in the Social Action Fund<sup>19</sup> and Youth Social Action Journey Fund.<sup>20</sup>

In recent months, much work has been undertaken by Cabinet Office, Institute for Volunteering Research, NCVO and the Young Foundation to consolidate thinking on the evaluation of the quality and impact of youth social action programmes.<sup>21</sup> This analysis has been underpinned and bolstered by a broad analysis of current and recent research on the impact of youth social action in the UK undertaken by DEMOS.<sup>22</sup>

The scoping framework has emphasised the importance of establishing a definition of social action that can be brought into common usage. On the basis

of the exploration of the literature and a stakeholder consultation the following definition has been arrived at:

*“Young people taking practical action in the service of others in order to create positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young person themselves.”*

This definition sits closely with the ambitions of the Think Big programme in the sense that it embraces the idea that positive social action needs to be understood in the context of young people’s developmental needs as well as the actual impact it has on the wider community.

Figure 9 Comparing frameworks of outcomes for young people

CBI	Young Foundation	Step up to Serve	Community benefit
Optimism	Communication Creativity	Challenging: stretching and engaging, exciting and enjoyable	Can be wide ranging, from civic participation, health, educational engagement - to safer communities, sustainability, voting, resilience and employability
Determination	Confidence and agency	Youth led: owned and shaped by young people	
	Planning and problem solving	Progressive: to other programmes and activities	
	Resilience/grit	Embedded: becoming the norm in journey to adulthood	
Emotional intelligence	Leadership	Socially impactful: creating positive social change of benefit to wider community	
	Relationships		
		Managing feelings, self control	

The new scoping framework also highlights the importance of young people’s agency in the development of social action programmes, by which it is asserted that effective programmes should be ‘youth led’. Again, this aligns with the objectives of the Think Big programme which, from the outset has subscribed to the principle of youth led social action. Extensive analysis of the Think Big programme, over its first three years of operation, clearly demonstrates the importance of individual agency in the design and delivery of youth led programmes.<sup>23</sup>

The benefits of current principles and practice in ‘positive about youth’ programmes, such as those pioneered by Think Big, have been recognised in the recently launched **Step up to Serve** campaign.<sup>24</sup> The campaign, which has cross-party support, aims to double the number of children and young people involved with social action by 2020. Cabinet Office Minister Nick Hurd said “We want to make sure that young people develop the skills, values and confidence they need as they move into adulthood.”

The campaign’s key objectives, shown in Figure 9 above, fit closely with the aims of O<sub>2</sub> Think Big and are adopted to underpin the programme analysis below.

It is encouraging to note that the O<sub>2</sub> Think Big programme is already meeting the objectives of the Step up to Serve campaign, and as such, can be seen as a good practice example of youth-led social action. In this analysis, evidence is used from the evaluation of the Think Big programme in 2013 using established techniques that have been consistently used through the life of the intervention. Additionally, an online survey was undertaken in May 2014 to find out how the Think Big programme had impacted on the lives of young people who had completed their projects some while ago.<sup>25</sup> Taken together, these data sources provide interesting insights on the way social action programmes such as Think Big can have a lasting impact on the attitudes of young people.

## Challenging:

Qualitative research on the Think Big programme has consistently demonstrated that young people are challenged by their participation in the programme. As an open programme with diverse groups of participants, it has been recognised that the levels of challenges differ for young people. Older, well qualified young people from affluent areas tend to have a head start in developmental terms and are equipped to tackle more complex and ambitious projects. Younger, less well qualified young people (and especially so if they are from less well off areas and have had fewer opportunities) tend to have fewer skills and shorter horizons – but this does not mean that their projects have a lower impact on them or the people they seek to benefit.

There is general consensus that setting a rigorous definition of what constitutes a ‘challenging’ project could act to exclude some young people, who may perceive the challenge to be too great. Similarly, the evaluation has shown that measurement of benefit for project leaders or their communities needs to be sensitive to the starting point of individuals involved and the likely distance which will be travelled by young people in their social action journey. Small steps, in short, can represent giant leaps in developmental and confidence terms for some young people.

A common view drawn from their experience of the programme is that most young people feel stretched and engaged by the programme, and many find it exciting and enjoyable.

*“Think Big really helped us kickstart something exciting. We are still working on it and are all actively engaged in our communities in other ways too. We will definitely stay linked to the Think Big project, it’s been awesome.”*

By the end of the programme, most young people feel that they have strong skills in a number of areas as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 10 Self perceptions of skills and confidence at end of the Think Big (whole programme data)



## Youth-led:

At the outset, Think Big embraced the principle of developing a youth-led programme. This involved the programme investing considerable levels of trust in young people by letting them define the objectives of projects which they felt were important for their communities. And further, trust was invested by giving money directly to young people to help them resource and deliver their project ideas rather than being controlled or mediated by others. Young people on the programme have been appreciative of this investment of trust.

*"The great thing about Think Big is its generality. It is a resource that can be used to facilitate all sorts of different things. Its strength is the fact it can help anyone."*

*'I think the fact that it's youth led, especially by someone like myself that's come from [names place] and grown up there I just feel that it gives other young people someone they can relate to and the things that they do just gives them an opportunity to let them know they can make something of themselves and it just exposes them to other young role models which they may lack at home or the local community.'*

*"O<sub>2</sub> Think Big was an amazing opportunity and I was so proud of what we achieved in our initial project. The backing of O<sub>2</sub> also helped us find more sponsorship. I am now starting my Think Bigger project which is very exciting."*

The application process was designed to be relatively simple and quick in order not to put off socially marginalised young people (especially if they were from less advantaged communities).

But this does not mean that young people were left entirely to their own devices. Support was given by the programme delivery team, through training and with mentoring offered by youth partner organisations and Telefónica UK employee volunteers.

# Socially Impactful:

Think Big is effective in creating positive social change that is of benefit to the wider community as well as to the young people themselves.

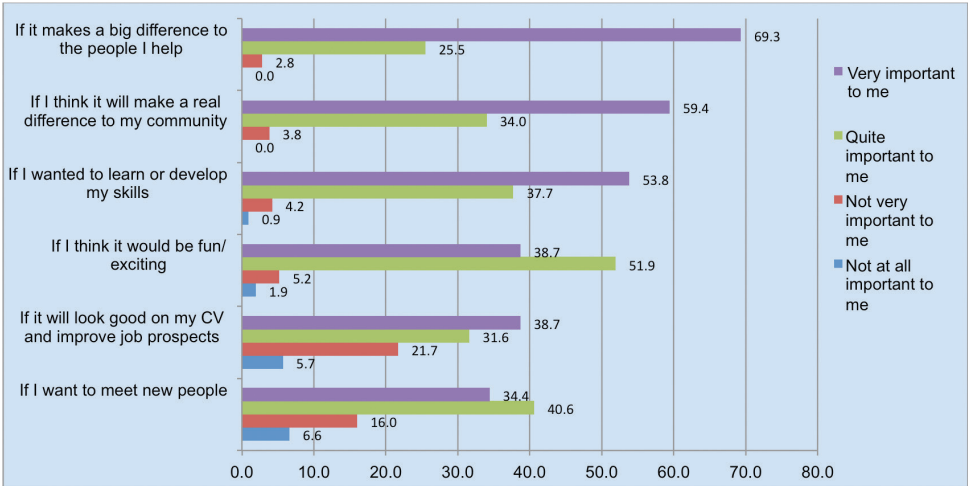
*"It is an excellent programme and one which allows people from even the smallest community (such as mine!) to make a difference."*

*"The O<sub>2</sub> think big scheme not only developed me but it helped my community. I took 20 children to an outdoor centre in the south-east and went climbing. This gave the children an opportunity that they would have had! they enjoyed it thoroughly and if children are not exposed to new and exciting things like this they get bored, who knows, one of those kids may go on to be a talented climber and may teach other kids some-day! Opportunities like this have a huge knock-on effect throughout communities, especially poorer communities where opportunities to do anything are limited!"*

Figure 11 indicates that social impact is the key driver for the majority of young people who have finished the Think Big programme. Indeed, nearly 70% say that social action is very important to them because it makes a big difference to the people they want to help and nearly 60% say it is very important to them to make a difference to their community.

Think Big also recognises that social action projects should also enable young people themselves to accrue benefits in terms of skills development, increased networks, improved resilience and leadership capability. Most young people say that it is 'important' or 'very important' that: they had developed skills (91%); that social action is fun and exciting (90%); that it should help them to develop their CVs (70%); or, that it should help to widen their horizons through meeting new people (74%).

Figure 11 What is important when choosing to get involved in social action (2014)



## Embedded:

Many young people who took part in Think Big continue to engage in positive social action, demonstrating the role that early engagement in social action plays in making it more of an integral part of young people's lives.

*"I enjoyed the O<sub>2</sub> Think Big Project because I met new people and it increased my confidence. It made me realise that I enjoy talking to and informing the public, and especially helping my local community. This subsequently gave me the confidence to volunteer with the National Trust, and this has helped me realise that this is something that I want to pursue as a career in the future."*

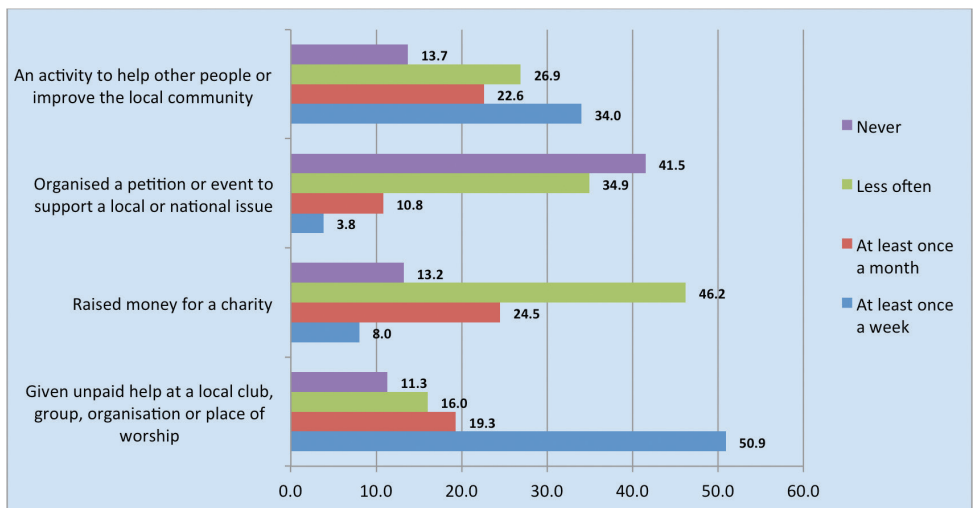
*"I found this a great experience and it helped be build up my confidence and self-esteem. I have also encouraged my friends to apply for projects they are doing in their communities."*

How much voluntary social action do young people commit to after being involved with Think Big? As Figure 12 shows, many young people make a significant contribution through social action, continuing to take positive action in their communities. Some types of activity are more popular than others.

- Over 56% of young people took part in activities to strengthen their local communities at least once a month (and 34% did so weekly)
- Over 70% gave support to local charities or groups at least once a month (and 51% did so weekly).

Less direct aspects of voluntary work were less popular such as charitable fundraising (only 32% did this once a month, and only 8% on a weekly basis). Similarly, overt political forms of social action, such as organising a petition, were done more rarely (15% on a monthly basis, but less than 4% on a weekly basis).

Figure 12 Social action following Think Big? (previous participants)

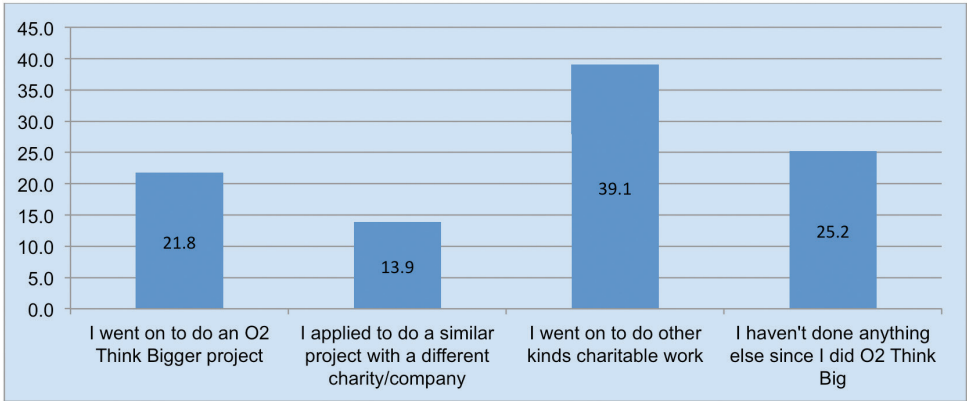


Taking all different kinds of contributions young people can make to their communities, the evidence shows that almost 75% of young people who took part in O<sub>2</sub> Think Big go on to give their time to social issues at least once a month after they have completed the programme.

## Progressive:

About three quarters of participants in the Think Big programme go on to do other forms of voluntary social action, as shown in Figure 13. Many progress directly to Think Bigger, the second and much more demanding level of the programme. About 14% went on to do a similar project with another charity or similar corporate social responsibility programme. About 39% of young people who had completed Think Big went on to do other kinds of charity work.

Figure 13 Progression to other programmes and charitable work (previous participants)



Support is available to young people as they exit the programme, enabling them to take part in other youth initiatives supported by Telefónica UK, such as GoThinkBig.co.uk, the work experience and skills platform which offers thousands of work skills opportunities to young people aged 16+. Advice and signposting is also offered to other youth programmes, such as National Citizens Service or UnLtd, which support young people to continue developing their skills and capabilities.

## Reflective:

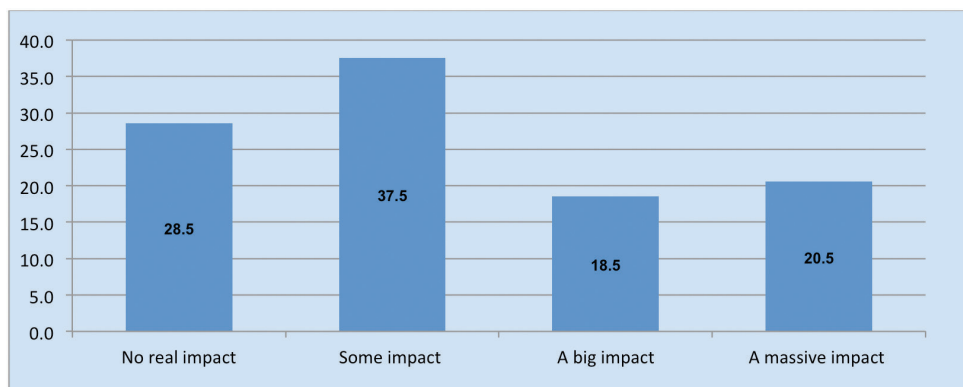
The Think Big programme has always placed a strong emphasis on learning and personal development – encouraging young people to reflect on the ways in which their own skills and capabilities have developed during their social action project. This is a critical part of young people’s experience within programme, helping them to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of running a project, and to focus on their own learning journey, as well as the impact of their project on the local community. The research programme has also consistently collected evidence on young people’s progress throughout their period of involvement and



has shown, using both quantitative and qualitative data, how they reflect upon and articulate the benefits they have gained.

It is important not to overstate or exaggerate the impact of relatively short-term projects such as Think Big. But it is equally important to recognise, as shown in previous evaluation reports, that ‘ephemeral events’ in young people’s lives can have an impact on pro-sociality and future participation in social action. As Figure 14 shows, 39% of former Think Big participants felt that the programme had a big impact on the likelihood of future volunteering – of whom, more than half said this was a substantive, or ‘massive’, impact.

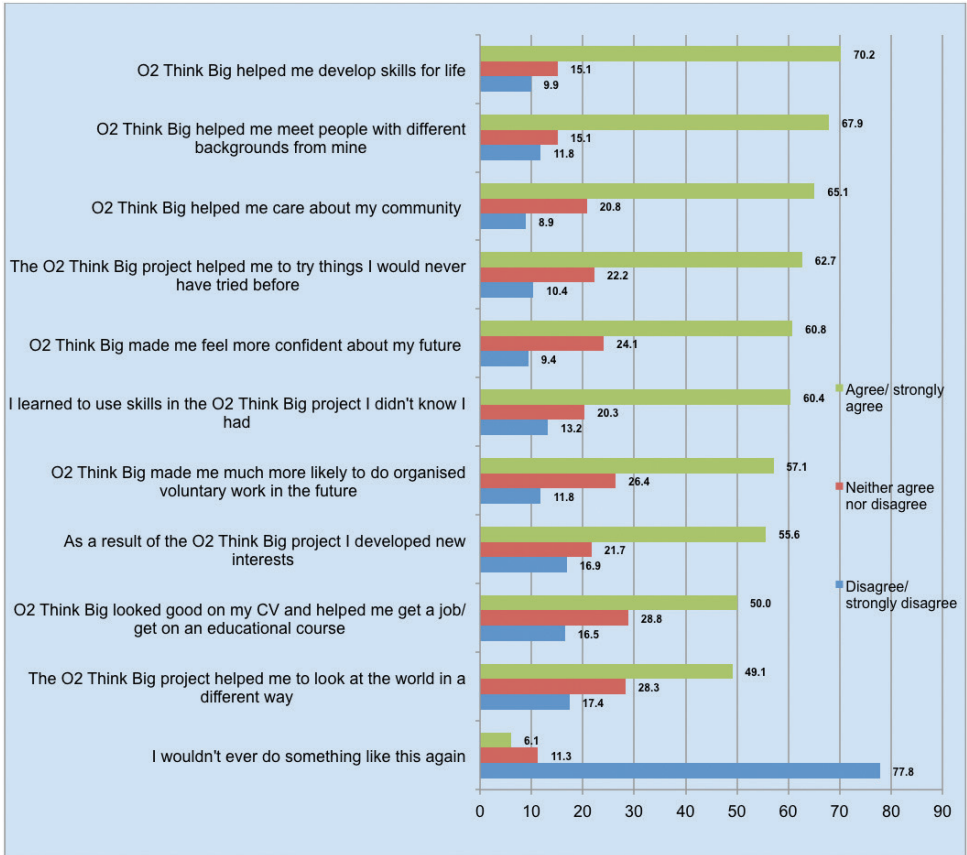
Figure 14 Impact of Think Big on sustained social action (previous participants)



Throughout the period of research evaluation, beginning in 2010, it has been demonstrated that young people report strong personal benefits from their involvement in the programme. This shows that they are reflective about their practice in positive social action programmes.<sup>27</sup> As Figure 15 shows, only 6% of previous participants say that they would not do something like this again – showing that the vast majority identify real benefit.

Many young people are effusive about the impact of the programme for them personally: 70% say the programme helped them develop skills which they could use in later life; 68% say their horizons have been broadened by meeting people from different backgrounds; and, 65% say they now care more about their communities. Similarly, over 60% of previous participants feel that they have developed new skills, tried new things and built their confidence.

Figure 15 Reflection on the impact of the programme (previous participants)



The strong indications that young people feel that they have benefitted from the programme is reflected in their assessment of the support they gained throughout their involvement. Such support came from the core Think Big team at the National Youth Agency; from Telefónica employee volunteers, youth partner organisations and the Think Big alumni.

*'My O<sub>2</sub> helper was fantastic and I couldn't praise her enough on how she helped me...[keep in touch] at least once a week and quite often twice a week, I went to her office in Leeds and did a presentation to her team so we met up there, it's tailored off a bit now but that's because my milestones are finished.'*

*'I got a really good guy and I used to contact him quite regularly in the beginning stages and he offered us a lot of opportunities for young people to come over to their building in Slough.'*

In 2013 the Think Big team made significant progress in developing appropriate ways to celebrate the successes of young people. The strategy adopted was based on research evidence from previous evaluation reports where it was shown that, while many young people wanted their achievements to be appreciated in various ways, events had to focus on their own achievements rather than the achievements of the programme as a whole. The programme team have now successfully trialled several approaches which can be tailored to the needs of individuals.

The Think Big team continue to explore how young people progress through regular monitoring during projects and through exit interviews which are explicitly designed to encourage young people to reflect on their experiences.

# Summary

The findings from this evaluation shows that young people's participation in social action programmes such Think Big can lead to a stronger sense of commitment to future social action. This is especially clear for young people who expressed clear opinions on issues surrounding pro-sociality, self-confidence and commitment to specific aspects of social action.

Qualitative work on the Think Big programme between 2010 and 2013 demonstrate that the programme is having a beneficial impact. The Think Big evaluation research shows that much of the benefit is gained through the development of new skills as young people tackle the inevitable challenges of running social action projects. The experience of taking part in the programme and the skills gained or enhanced as a consequence may bring real advantage to young people as they apply for jobs, training and apprenticeships, or for further or higher education courses.

Many young people recognise that the programme produces instrumental benefits: helping them to get a foot on the career ladder or gain access to higher education, for example. Think Big also helps young people to develop problem-solving skills, building their personal resilience and capability to navigate uncertainty. Programmes which are 'youth led', in the sense that the programme team are not prescriptive about the structure or focus of the social action project, but instead allow young people to identify the challenge and design the solution, seem to be particularly successful.

In the Think Big programme it is assumed that young people can work out ideas for themselves and be doubly energised by the freedom the programme gives them to lead and develop projects in their own way. That stated, Telefónica UK employee volunteer mentors, Think Big alumni and youth partner organisations can and do help young people to build core skills including: communication, team work, creativity, project management and leadership skills. Those who support the programme may also be able to recognise that young people have different starting points in experiential terms, and that for some, relatively limited achievements or 'small steps' can represent 'giant leaps' in developmental or confidence terms.

The Think Big programme demonstrably provides young people with a safe environment within which to generate and test their ideas, take positive risks and manage problems and disappointments in the process of running their projects. This is important for young people, especially when life chances

are more restricted due to economic factors that have severely limited labour market opportunities. When opportunities are limited, research evidence shows, young people are more likely to become fatalistic – to trust in luck – rather than rely on their own abilities.

The Think Big programme is effective because it helps young people to become more resilient and feel more in control of their destiny. What really makes a difference for young people, whatever their backgrounds, is the trust invested in them to make good decisions and to be responsible for allocating the money invested in their projects wisely. In this regard, Think Big helps to deliver enterprise education, supporting young people to identify unmet needs, devise creative solutions, and use limited resources to deliver positive social change. As a consequence, the programme may usefully complement initiatives proposed by Lord Young to promote enterprise education in schools, further education and higher education.<sup>28</sup>

As a social programme, Think Big has wider ambitions than merely to promote the personal interests of individuals. Unlike programmes which concentrate wholly on meritocratic advancement, Think Big promotes positive interactions amongst diverse groups of young people and the communities within which they live. It also widens social horizons, contributes to social cohesion and increases levels of empathy and tolerance.

Think Big achieved these objectives by involving young people from all backgrounds and with different levels of capability and confidence. And that by promoting pro-sociality and social action (in addition to the development of individuals' personal capability and confidence) there is a strong likelihood that young people will continue to make a positive contribution to their communities specifically, and to society more widely in the future.

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# Notes and references

<sup>1</sup> In 2013, a third level was piloted in partnership with UnLtd, the largest entrepreneur support network in the UK. Think Big UnLtd offered young people between £5,000-£10,000 to develop their projects into serious social ventures, helping them to create sustainable social businesses or prepare for further investment or acceleration. This part of the programme was not included, however, in the evaluation process and cannot be reported on here.

<sup>2</sup> The evaluation is currently continuing via an extension to the original evaluation programme by Durham University in 2014 and through the Social Action Journey Fund project run by the National Youth Agency until Telefónica Foundation re-establish full evaluation of the UK Think Big programme in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Socio-economic status in the programme is measured using area-based assessments of average levels of affluence or deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) provides a generalised predictor of socio-economic status. The IMD was chosen to assess relative affluence to avoid the use of intrusive questions for young people entering the programme. There were two reasons for this decision. First, it was felt that detailed questions may dissuade young people from the least affluent backgrounds from applying to the programme. And secondly, for ethical reasons, it was thought to be inappropriate to ask young people about socio-economic status as this may affect their confidence and sense of personal worth. Categories are defined as follows 'Least affluent' = IMD 1-4, 'Middle income' = IMD 5-7, 'Most affluent' = IMD 8-10.

<sup>4</sup> These data refer to all project leaders in 2013 including those who applied to join the programme in 2012 but were still active in 2013 in delivering their projects. This applies to all tables in this section of the report.

<sup>5</sup> In 2013, the proportion recorded was lower, at about 2%, but this may be accounted for by a change in the way data were collected where applicants were not obliged to answer questions on disability or limiting illness as part of the application process.

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed analysis see the substantive final report of the programme review: Chapman, T. and Dunkerley, E. (2014) *Opening Doors: developing young people's skills and raising their aspirations*, Durham: St Chad's College, Durham University. [http://community.dur.ac.uk/chads/opening\\_doors.pdf](http://community.dur.ac.uk/chads/opening_doors.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Due to the smaller number of participants in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, analysis was not undertaken on relative affluence or deprivation. Furthermore, the categorisations of deprivation in these countries is defined differently from England and are not directly comparable.

<sup>8</sup> The target group of IMD 1-4 was broadly defined, at the outset, to include young people from the most deprived areas (IMD1) but also from those areas where average economic resources were limited. The purpose of the programme was to provide encouragement to young people, particularly, who were often overlooked by programmes which target the least affluent or attract more affluent middle class young people. For a full explanation see Chapman and Dunkerley (2014) *ibid*.

<sup>9</sup> Full details on the methods of calculating the number of participants is provided in the full evaluation report. See Chapman and Dunkerley (2014) *ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> Full details of the approach to the analysis can be found in Chapman *et al.* (2013) *Building Young People's Resilience in Hard Times*, Durham: St Chad's College, Durham University: available at this web address: <http://community.dur.ac.uk/StChads/prg/Building%20young%20people's%20resilience%20in%20hard%20times%20an%20evaluation%20of%20O2%20Think%20Big.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Estimates for time given in planning projects is the range 10-20 hours for project leaders, and 18-35 hours for actual voluntary social action multiplied by two leaders; for active participants, estimated at 3 hours per young person for voluntary social action.

<sup>12</sup> These estimates are based on minimum wages for young people by age (as current in May 2014): for participants aged 21 and over = £6.31; for 18-20 year olds = £5.03; for 16-17 year olds = £3.72; for younger participants the apprentice rate is used = £2.68.

<sup>13</sup> Estimated value of employee supported volunteers' engagement by 3,113 Telefónica staff is standardised at £20 per hour x 12,750 hours = £254,970 using the London Benchmarking Group methodology.

<sup>14</sup> Estimated by average income (plus employers' National Insurance and Pension on-costs) at £31,215 per annum. Assuming 125 working days at 8 hours per day = £17.34 per hour. Estimated 2 hours per paid employee and 6 hours of voluntary/employee time in support/training/mentoring = 8 x £17.34 (£138.72 per project). 956 projects were supported by partner organisations (including those participating in the Social Action Fund programme run by the NYA in conjunction with O2 Think Big for the Cabinet Office) which equals a total monetary value of time invested at £132,616.32

<sup>15</sup> A total of 87 O2 Think Big Alumni are estimated to have contributed an average of 120 hours to Think Big (10,440 hours x minimum wage @ £6.31) = £65,876.40.

<sup>16</sup> Producing a multiplier to assess the added benefit gained by reaching young people from less affluent backgrounds cannot be monetised in a formulaic way. Similarly, it is not easy to assess benefit against other

forms of social marginalisation or exclusion. A rough estimate is therefore taken which assumes that the average additional value to the programme is enhanced by  $\times 0.5667$  - representing the progressive value of reaching more seriously disadvantaged young people. The methodology for reaching the multiplier is available in the substantive programme review document: see Chapman and Dunkerley 2014, *ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> The average unit cost of delivering a Think Big project is estimated at £1,084.46. This does not include setting up costs such as the development of the Think Big website, initial programme development costs, etc. and excludes investment in Think Bigger, Think Big School or Go Think Big.

<sup>18</sup> The Government's flagship youth support programme, the National Citizen Service (NCS), is the principal policy intervention to strengthen young people's aspirations, build skills and confidence and encourage young people to connect and engage with civil society. For an evaluation report of the NCS programme, see NatCen (2012) *Evaluation of National Citizen Service Pilots (interim report)*, London: National Centre for Social Research, May.

<sup>19</sup> Think Big, in partnership with the National Youth Agency participated in the Social Action Fund initiative. A full explanation of the scope of the intervention is discussed in detail (together with an evaluation of the project) in Chapman, T. and Dunkerley, E. (2014) *Young People and Positive Social Action: an evaluation of the NYA Cabinet Office Social Action Fund*: Durham, St Chad's College, Durham University: available at: <http://community.dur.ac.uk/chads/NYA%20report%202013.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> The Cabinet Office financed Social Action Journey Fund targets young people prior to and following engagement in the NCS. Think Big is currently participating in this programme in partnership with the National Youth Agency. The programme is being evaluated by Policy&Practice, St Chad's College, Durham University.

<sup>21</sup> The Campaign for Social Action (2013) *Scoping a quality framework for youth social action*, London: Cabinet Office (with IVR, NCVO and Young Foundation).

<sup>22</sup> Birdwell, J., Birnie, R. and Mehan, R. (2013) *The state of the service nation: youth social action in the UK*, London: DEMOS.

<sup>23</sup> Chapman, T. and Dunkerley, E. (2013) *Opening doors: developing young people's skills and raising their aspirations: an evaluation of O<sub>2</sub> Think Big 2010-2012*, Durham: St Chad's College, Durham University

<sup>24</sup> Details on the Step up to Serve 'Generation Citizen' programme, launched and supported by the Prince of Wales, can be found at this address: <http://www.stepuptoserve.org.uk/introducing-generation-citizen/>

<sup>25</sup> A survey was launched using Bristol Online Survey in May 2014 which was open for two weeks. A sample of previous applicants and awardees in the Think Big programme were contacted by email. By May 24th 2014, 258 responses had been returned including 39 respondents who had applied to Think Big but were not awarded a grant. The survey incorporated questions from the Cabinet Office Social Action Journey Fund evaluation specifications and these data will be published in 2015 together with evaluation of the Think Big/NYA project which is currently underway. Additional questions were developed to assess the long term impact of impact of Think Big – selected data from this analysis are published here.

<sup>26</sup> Percentages do not round up to 100% due to a small number of non-responses.

<sup>27</sup> Extensive qualitative reportage on self reflection can be found in Chapman et al 2013 *ibid.*, and Chapman and Dunkerley, 2014 *ibid*.

<sup>28</sup> See Young, D. (2014) *Enterprise for All: the relevance of enterprise in education*, London: Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

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