

# Evaluation of Ambition's Action-Up Programme

Date:  
April 2015

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## Contents

Section	Title	Page No
i	Executive Summary	2
ii	Background and Information	4
Stage 1	Audience	4
Stage 2	Inputs	5
Stage 3	Activities	5
Stage 4	Short Term Outcomes	6
Stage 5	Long Term Outcomes	9
Stage 6	Goal	11
iii	Comparative Outcomes Data	12
iv	Recommendations	13
Appendix 1	Action-Up Theory of Change	16
Appendix 2	SiTV Action-Up Case-Study	17

## i. Executive Summary

Action-Up was supported by the Cabinet Office Youth Social Action Journey Fund aimed at increasing the number of young people aged 10-17 engaged in high quality social action and support them to go on to take part in NCS at age 16 or 17.

The programme adopted a four stage model;

1. Residential or Sessional Programme aimed at developing team-building and leadership skills [OCN level 1 Leadership Accreditation]
2. Delivering community based Social Action
3. Use creative and digital media skills to produce social, digital and traditional media to promote their project Social Action and NCS
4. Young people use their promotional media to attract and inspire peers to participate in social action and replicate the model

Ambition's programme, adopted a youth club based approach to engage **755 young people across 6 locations**. The programme set to inspire young people to lead quality social action projects in their communities using team work, leadership and social enterprise.

The programme was successful in attracting almost equal figures of male and female participants with a ratio split of **47% female to 52% male** engaged young people. [1% gender not recorded]

**528 young people achieved OCN Level 1 in Leadership** and as such increasing their accredited educational achievement and improving their employability

**80 distinct social action projects** were delivered, each seeking to improve the communities and lives of the people they reach.

The Central Outcomes<sup>1</sup> we recorded for the participants included;

- **Increased regular volunteering**  
60.5% of participants stated that they regularly volunteered at the end of the project compared to 45% at the start
- **Increased Empathy**  
49% of young people stating that they would be more likely to feel bad when somebody gets their feelings hurt after attending the project
- **Improved personal problem solving**  
53% of participants felt more confident that they could work out their own problems at the end of their project involvement
- **Improved teamwork skills**  
56% felt more able to compromise and resolve differences of opinions
- **Stronger emotional resilience**  
53% of young participants more able to bounce back and carry on if something goes wrong
- **Improved communication skills**  
59% of young people feeling more confident about explaining their ideas clearly at the end of the project than at the beginning

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<sup>1</sup> Based on pre and post intervention self-administered questionnaire data from 79% of all Action-Up participants

- **Improved self-perception**  
47% of participants felt more strongly that they were a hard worker at the end of the project
- **Heightened sense of value in the community**  
58% felt more motivated to take action on issues in their community after completing the project
- **More positive future aspirations and goals**  
48% felt more positive about the range of different career options open to them once they finished the project

The overarching organisational outcomes recorded for the participating projects included;

- The upskilling of staff to deliver accredited social action and thus increasing future capacity and delivery options
- Increased knowledge of social media marketing and communication to promote the work of the projects
- Improved skills and knowledge to monitor progress of participants and evidence outcomes and impact
- Forging new ongoing partnerships with local schools and other key agencies

## ii. Background and Introduction

Action-Up was supported by the Cabinet Office Youth Social Action Journey Fund aimed at increasing the number of young people aged 10-17 engaged in high quality social action and support them to go on to take part in NCS at age 16 or 17.

Ambition's programme, adopted a youth club based model working with a target to engage 635 young people across 6 locations. The programme inspired young people to lead quality social action projects in their communities using team work, leadership and social enterprise.

In order to tell the story of the Ambition's Action-Up Programme we are using their Theory of Change model which will allow us to consider each component, or stage, in turn against its distinct evidence base. The Theory of Change model was developed between Substance and Ambition and is guided by programme development learning and reflection. [See Appendix 1 for the TOC diagram]. Various research methods were deployed over the fifteen month programme to allow a rich and robust story of programme activity, inputs, outputs and outcomes to be relayed. The central research methods used include;

- Programme wide deployment of the Views monitoring tool to all Action-up programmes to allow them to gather and store project based data and outcomes
- Pre and Post intervention participant questionnaires
- In-depth Case-Study research at two of the five locations including observation, interviews and follow-up consultation with staff, volunteers and participants.
- Interviews with all key staff at each project
- End of Project Partner Questionnaire

### Stage 1: Audience

Action-Up was targeted to work with young people between the ages of 10 and 17 and particularly, but not exclusively, from disadvantaged communities.

The projects delivering Action-Up were spread across England and covered both rural and urban projects across Somerset; Berkshire; Wiltshire; Tees Valley; Northumberland and Buckinghamshire.



In the last quarter of delivery [January 2015 – March 2015] Ambition was tasked with extending the delivery with the new target rising from the original 635 to 755 engaged young people. Project management data collected in Views it is clear that the programme has exceeded its original audience target and met the revised target by engaging 755 young people in social action activities. The projects acknowledged that all young people benefitted from the skills development and contribution towards improving their communities. The age eligibility was increased to include 18-25 year old young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The programme was successful in attracting almost equal figures of male and female participants with a ratio split of 47% female to 52% male engaged young people. [1% gender not recorded].

## Stage 2: Inputs

Ambition used the Action Up programme to provide a bridge between the UK Government Cabinet Office and young people. Delivery partners were supported with a range of inputs to allow them to effectively deliver leadership accreditation and support youth-led social action. The central inputs of the programme are;

- Access to the Government's Youth Social Action Journey Fund [Cabinet Office]
- Learning from the National Citizens Service
- Access to Social Action Training and the Ambition Leadership [Ambition]
- Access to social action resources [Ambition]
- Replication Support. Print, digital and social media support to promote Action-Up [The Mix]
- Monitoring and Evaluation Support. Views access and support. [Substance]

## Stage 3: Activities

Through accessing the support, training and resources made available to them the project leads were able to provide an appropriate learning experience for their young people. The four stage model of project delivery was adapted where necessary to accommodate learning needs and situations.



Once the group of interested and committed young people is formed a range of formal and informal activities took place which provide the young people with the skills and knowledge to develop and contribute to a social action project. The chart below depicts the four stages of Action-Up activities;



The Mix project based in Stowmarket were tasked with providing Replication Support. At the outset of the programme the Mix consulted with the delivery partners to gauge their existing social media and wider communications strategies. From this they aimed to tailor the support against project needs.



Replication work was aimed at building the capacity of the delivery partners and demonstrate effective practice. The Mix developed and circulated a social media resource kit, helping projects to promote their services online through social media and video.

This four stage process is illustrated through descriptive case-study narrative in Appendix 2 which describes the process at one of the two case-studies 'Safe in Tees Valley' (SiTV).

### Stage 4: Short term outcomes

Action-Up participants were asked to completed pre and post intervention questionnaires to allow us to gauge movement in outlook, skills and confidence as a result of their involvement in the programme. In total 79% of all participants engaged with Action-Up (599) completed both pre and post questionnaires. We will consider some of the practical and methodological issues associated with these questionnaires in the recommendations section of this report.

When asked if they had taken part in regular volunteering in the six months prior to the project a total of 45% [316] stated they had with 18% [126] volunteering at least once a month and 27% [190] volunteering at least once a week. This figure increased when the young people were asked the same question at the end of their involvement with Action-Up with 60.5% [367] stating that they **regularly**

**volunteered**, 32% [194] at least once a month and 28.5% [173] at least once a week.

Questions relating to emotional intelligence and community awareness pointed to an **increase in empathy** for a large proportion of participants with 49% [292] stating that they would be more likely to feel bad when somebody gets their feelings hurt after attending the project and 48% [289] felt they were more likely to try and understand what other people go through. This increased empathy was illustrated by one young girl from the Thornaby project who told us how her confidence and actions to help others had improved personal relationships in her life;

My mums noticed that I've become more confident and helpful because my Nan has been getting quite ill recently so I've been helping her around the house a lot.

*[Are you feeling happier with yourself now?]*

Yes because I'm being able to help other people. [Young Female. Age 16. SiTV. 24.01.15]

**Personal problem solving** was also a short-term outcome for many participants with 53% [317] feeling more confident that they could work out their own problems at the end of their project involvement and 48% [285] felt more knowledgeable about where to go for help with a problem. 54% [322] of participant's completing the pre and post questionnaire were more frequently able to figure out different ways of doing things at the end of the project than the beginning. 47% [282] more confident that they can do most things if they try and 48% [289] felt more confident about having a go at new things at the end of the project.

**Teamwork skills** were similarly improved with 51% [307] of participants feeling more able to work with someone who has different opinions to themselves and 56% [338] feeling more able to compromise and resolve differences of opinions. 44% [265] found it more enjoyable to work together with other students their own age as a result of the project. The notion of improved communication and networks between young people was observed at our case-study group at SiTV. The project brought together two distinct cohorts from different areas. The two groups not only bonded well on the residential but remained in contact through Facebook and intended to continue to socialise together. One of the young men from Thornaby told us about their forthcoming visits, *"They're supposed to be coming down this weekend or next weekend coming to youth club, go play footie or something."* Communication and friendship was also noted as a positive outcome from the residential for the participants at the Action4Youth case-study. These younger participants were pleased that the older participants were comfortable with the groups age-range and interacted as friends; *"Meeting the friends in the dorm, just some people are so great. They're all older than us, they're year 11 and they didn't mind. That was cool."* (Young Participant. Action4Youth.)

**Emotional resilience** also improved with 53% [318] of young participants more able to bounce back and carry on if something goes wrong and 50% [299] more likely to finish a task once they have started it. 56% [335] felt more able to continue to work on things despite distractions

**Improved communication skills** were observed across the majority of participants with 59% [354] of young people feeling more confident about explaining their ideas clearly at the end of the project. This was an outcome we observed in both case-studies. With the SiTV group it was clear that the young people had adopted the

various leadership styles they had developed whilst on the residential and put them to use during their social action evening. One young girl noted;

*I was never good at communicating, I built up my confidence while I was there so then I could be confident. So if someone was doing something wrong I could tell them that they were doing it wrong and explain how to do it and how they've done it wrong. [Female Participant. SiTV. 24.01.15]*

Many young people observed an **improved self-perception** with 47% [281] of participants more in agreement that they were a hard worker. Wellbeing and happiness improved with 45% [269] feeling more satisfied with their life at the end of the projects and 43% [260] feeling happier. 47% [282] of young people were more in agreement that things in their life were worthwhile and 43% [260] felt less anxious.

There was also an improved **sense of value in the community** for the participants with over half, 54% [326] feeling more able to have an impact in the world around them at the end of the project and 58% [347] feeling more motivated to take action on issues in their community. Staff at one of our case-studies felt that the act of creating a community social action project was an opportunity to showcase the positive actions of young people to the wider community;

*It has definitely not only helped myself understand what effective leadership is but it has also helped a number of young people transfer these skills into clubs that they attend... The social action element of the programme has definitely introduced young people to this area who haven't done it before and has helped raise their profile of the positive things that they can do and also what they can give back to their community. (Action4Youth)*

The creation of new community links and the benefits that can be offered by the partners were noted to be the highlights of the project for some. One partner notes a highlight has been the “*outcomes of young people's social action projects, such as regeneration of waste land, fundraising for and increasing the profile of local charities.*” (Youth Action Wiltshire)

**Future aspirations and goals** were improved with 42% [252] of young people feeling that they had a goal or plan for their future and 48% [290] feeling more positive about the range of different career options open to them. 89% [543] felt that as a result of participating on Action Up they had a good understanding of the NCS programme with 82% [499] feeling that they were now more likely to join the NCS. Through being involved in Action-Up and as a result of the achievement felt through obtaining an accredited qualification, 42% [252] felt that studying to gain a qualification was more important to them at the end of the course than it was at the beginning. All these skills and aspirations increase the young person's employability and life chances. When we spoke to one young person after their social action evening at SiTV they illustrated this point concisely;

*And what's changed my behaviour is, hearing what it can do for me and stuff. And obviously like qualifications. The most important thing for me is my CV. I need my CV. [Male Participant. SiTV. 24.01.15]*

Accreditation was also a notable pull for many of the young people engaged in the Action4Youth case-study project as illustrated through one young girl's comments;

What attracted me to attend? Because you get a qualification out of it and I'm finishing school soon so it would be quite good and because I'm not the most confident people but being here it's nice being with these people they all

listen, some of them are loud but they all listen and understand.” (*Female Participant. Action4Youth*)

Ambition were tasked with referring 60% of participants aged 16 and 17 to NCS. 52 NCS graduates were used across the five locations to promote their NCS experience as part of the Action-Up programme. The programme saw 112 new NCS registrations (aged 10-17 year old) in the total project (achieving 53% of target). 34% of those old enough to participate signed up to the NCS. Ambition anticipate this figure to increase as more young people sign up to NCS during the summer months.

Many of the young people we got to know through our case study research had indeed signed up for NCS or at least were hoping to do so even if their understating was not always entirely accurate;

*NCS, I'm going to go. You get a certificate from the Prime Minister 'Sir David Cameron' It's basically just a load of activities I'm taking sport, enterprise and music - you go rock climbing, indoor football. You be making like a product and trying to sell it and it starts in the summer holidays. (Action4Youth)*

## Stage 5: Long Term Outcomes

As illustrated in the Action-Up Theory of Change document, there is a growing consensus around the role that the development of personal and social skills play in the achievement of positive life outcomes, including educational attainment and employment status<sup>2</sup> and wider social participation<sup>3</sup>. Evidence, as summarised in ‘A framework of outcomes for young people’<sup>4</sup> shows that all young people need to develop ‘clusters of capabilities’ to help them achieve the outcomes that they, and others, will value right now, and for their future. The skills we help young people to develop through Action Up align with the factors that NPC’s JET framework has identified as contributing to their long-term employability, whilst also fostering their sense of community and capacity to have a positive role within it.

The short-term outcomes illustrated in stage 4 provide evidence of the immediate increased in personal and social skills following on from involvement in the Acton-Up project. It was important for us to gain a sense of the residual nature of the new skills and aspirations following a period of time after completing the courses. In January 2015, four months on from the initial residential we met again with the SiTV young people to understand if there had been any mid-longer term outcomes from their involvement, especially relating to educational attainment and employability.

One of the young men involved in the project told us about his new career aspirations which he had developed as a result of his involvement on the project and his new leadership qualities gained through Action-Up and his subsequent NCS involvement;

*Well I wanted to play football, but now I want to be coaching. So now I've got better leadership, then I decided to do some more coaching things, rather than practical football.*

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<sup>2</sup> Heckman, J, Stixrud, J and Urzua, S (2006) The Effects of Cognitive and Noncognitive Abilities on Labor Market Outcomes and Social Behavior NBER Working Papers 12006, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc

<sup>3</sup> Gorard, S et al (2012) The impact of attitudes and aspirations on educational attainment and participation York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<sup>4</sup> McNeil, B., Reeder, N. & Rich, J. (2012) *A framework of outcomes for young people*, London: The Young Foundation

[So are you actually doing different courses now than you would've done...?]

*Yeah, on Monday I'm starting a coaching course. It's Street Football and it's like teaching young people football, getting more ideas for the football and getting more facilities and more stuff brought into football. ...I changed my idea as soon as I got back off the NCS, straight away, because I liked what I'd done there. I thought well I liked that, so why don't I do it? There's nothing to stop me doing it when I get back. [Young Male. SiTV. Age 16.24/01/15]*

This was a positive life change for this young person who was previously not in formal education prior to his involvement with Action-Up.

One of the female participants had also completed her NCS course post Action-Up and was too enrolled to start on a new course in childcare. She explained that the increased confidence she felt as a result of her experiences with Action-Up and NCS had enabled her to reach for her goals and sign up to this new opportunity. Moreover, she had secured a work placement with the youth organisation she volunteered at during the social action project;

*It's just really helped me move on in my life... I think doing those two [Action-Up & NCS] has helped me to get the placement because I've boosted myself up a bit.*

She went onto explain how the courses had helped her improve her team working skills which would be vital to her success during her childcare placement and something which she otherwise would not have gained through the sole-study method at college;

*Because I'm not used to working in groups because I'm in college, so it's different because with the social action I was doing different activities in groups so obviously I could show those skills off through the social action. It's helped me through doing my college work because recently we've been doing group work so I could show my skills, and I could be confident and answer questions in class as well because I never used to be good at being confident. [Young Female. SiTV. Age 16.24/01/15]*

The project partners identified the **upskilling of their staff in delivering accredited social action** as an important longer-term organisational outcomes, providing a valuable legacy for their organisational portfolio. One project noted, "*The social action framework created by Ambition has been an especially useful tool and we will continue to use this in future delivery.*" Projects felt that this new skill set would increase their future capacity and project delivery options.

The increased knowledge of **social media marketing and communication** is also a valuable skill embedded by the programme, with the Mix replication support proving successful in increasing partner presence and communication methods on-line. One partner identified this new skillset, "*Support from The Mix has enabled us to think about our use of social media gain skills and use new techniques such as Storify.*"

Projects were provided with access and training to the Views monitoring and evaluation system allowing the projects to provide evidence of their projects impact. This evidence helps them to demonstrate the work they do through tracking the outcomes of the project. This data can be particularly useful to support future funding applications as illustrated by one of the delivery partners;

*Evidence on outcomes from delivery will be used to source on-going funding (we have already applied to the Character Education Fund using evidence from Action Up delivery to justify need and proposed project structure).*

In being able to now apply for this funding with this new evidence base, a new partnership has also formed between the partner and the Local Authority.

Forging new partnerships with local schools has also been a valuable outcome for the delivery partners. Their ability to deliver exciting, accredited community based social action has inspired many schools to continue working with the delivery partners, many of whom are considering continuing the social action offer, funding permitting;

*We went up the road to one of the local schools and they absolutely have gone mad for it – he's done assembly and we have been swamped with applicants and the school are delighted, the young people are going back and saying what a fantastic time they've had, and so now when we want to go in and recruit for other programmes that we're running, the school are open to pretty much all suggestions that we come up with because they think we're absolutely brilliant, so I'm delighted with that.*

## Stage 6: Goal

Action-Up has the ultimate goal 'to build young people's skills, improving communities'. We believe that young people who have become better skilled through their engagement in social action projects will be more employable and better placed to improve their communities.

Throughout its delivery the programme has successfully upskilled 528 young people through helping them achieve OCN Level 1 in Leadership and as such increasing their accredited educational achievement and improving their employability. In response to early programme feedback, Ambition developed an 'Entry Level Leadership' qualification which was far more accessible to the younger age group. The projects fed back the success of this adaptation which allowed them to support the younger age groups, particularly year 6 students through the transition period from primary to secondary school.

The programme has supported 80 distinct social action projects each seeking to improve the communities and lives of the people they reach. Ultimately the programme has succeeded in achieving most of its key milestones and as created opportunities for 755 young people to contribute to learn valuable new skills and contribute to positive social action in their communities.

For many of the participants the outcomes have impacted positively upon their educational attainment, employability, confidence and wellbeing. Action-Up has benefited young people living in rural and urban communities, across a broad age range with varying abilities and needs;

*Being able to see some of the young people go on and progress from doing Action-Up and continuing by signing up to do the National Citizen service and continuing the social action journey. From doing both NCS & Action-Up it has been great to a handful of young people to go on and become Peer Mentors for the NCS programme. Being able to support and get not only high achievers through the programme but to get more disadvantaged young people through the Leadership qualification. (Project Lead. SiTV)*

## Comparative Outcomes Data

The data from various sources including project management, interviews, qualitative case-studies and questionnaires point to the success of the programme which has exceeded many of its original targets and has had a positive impact on the participants and communities they have worked with. Ambition had a desire to understand if the outcomes achieved by Action-Up were comparable, or divergent from those of other youth-focused positive interventions.

As such we provided a non-participating young person's club with access and training to the Views monitoring and evaluation tool and embedded the pre and post questionnaires into their account in order that they could act as a quasi-control group. The project tracked a cohort of young people in 2014 who were engaged in their youth-focused sports and arts club but not a social action project on a weekly basis. The young people completed the pre and post questionnaires in the same manner as the Action-Up participants, with a similar interval [6 weeks]. Only thirteen of the quasi control group participants completed this consultation. However, this 'cohort' was similar in size to the Action-Up cohorts, the young people were of the same age group and engaged for a similar time-period.

Despite the cohort similarities, the data should still be considered with some caution due to the small sample size and limited regional spread. Nevertheless, when considering the pre-post movement figures, the Action-Up participants recorded more pronounced positive movements overall. Across 13 indicators the Action-Up results were higher, they were the same for 1 indicator and were lower for 10. Furthermore, the margin of difference for those indicators where Action-Up participants scored higher was larger compared to those where the quasi control group scored higher as revealed by the following examples:

- 49% of Action-Up participants compared to 31% [-18%] of 'control' participants stated that they would be more likely to feel bad when somebody gets their feelings hurt after attending the project
- 47% of Action-Up participants compared to 31% [-16%] of 'control' participants felt more confident that they can do most things if they try
- 59% of Action-Up participants compared to 15% [-44%] of 'control' participants felt more confident about explaining their ideas clearly at the end of the project
- 56% of Action-Up participants compared to 38.5% [-17.5%] of 'control' participants [338] felt more able to compromise and resolve differences of opinions at the end of their project
- 43% of Action-Up participants compared to 15% [-28%] of 'control' participants felt less anxious at the end of their course
  
- 54% of control group participants compared to 47% [-7%] of Action-Up participants felt more able to work with someone who has different opinions to themselves

- 48% of control group participants compared to 54% [-6%] of Action-Up participants felt more positive about the range of different career options open to them
- 61.5% of control group participants compared to 50% [-11.5%] of Action-Up participants felt more likely to finish a task once they have started it

## Recommendations

Whilst the funding period may have ended it is important to consider recommendations for improving future delivery. All delivery partners were provided with the opportunity to feedback on the delivery process, targets and outcome setting through questionnaire embedded in their Views accounts, followed up by telephone interviews. This consultation offered an opportunity for partners to reflect on the process and express some of the challenges they experienced whilst taking part in the programme.

### 1. Roll-Out of Action-Up as Licenced Project Product

All projects noted an increase in organisational capacity via the project funding however it is important to consider the legacy of the social action model which has been tried and tested in all six settings. Ambition should develop the idea of licensing the programme to partners in order for them to generate income and offer the project to their local partners;

*So in terms of the capacity, definitely the funding to be able to deliver the leadership and social action project because without it that wouldn't have happened. So that, for me, is the biggest point. Then moving forward it potentially increases our capacity in the future because we've got that tried and tested model which could potentially increase the income we're looking at and enhance future funding bids. So those are the two things are, I think, have increased in terms of capacity.*

### 2. Adapt NCS Recruitment Targets

Projects felt that the NCS recruitment targets were over ambitions for the programme due to the broad age target group, many of whom were not NCS age;

*I think the amount of young people we had to get to sign up for the NCS programme may have been a little high...*

*Because of the targets set to aim it at people more and get them ready for NCS sometimes it has been a struggle to recruit for this age group.*

It was of great value to the programme that the NCS graduates supported and promoted the NCS work to Action-Up. Any future roll-out should seek to continue to use NCS graduates as peer-mentor volunteers on the programme.

### 3. Develop Target Appropriate Questionnaires

Almost all projects reported difficulty in administering the pre and post questionnaires. The questionnaires were dictated to the programme by the Cabinet-Office and both the research team and Ambition had no input into to their development. Feedback from delivery partners has illustrated that the terminology was not appropriate for all age ranges or abilities and the length of the questionnaires was far too long;

*Getting young people to complete the questionnaires was also difficult as they were so long and repetitive.*

*The Pre questionnaires have been no problem to do but sometimes when doing the Post ones have been hard due to drop off and the Y/P not finishing the programme.*

*Project staff have found completing post evaluation questionnaires with young people challenging, due to the length and in some cases difficulty of format.*

*It's quite long, it's quite wordy. For a sixteen year old they're probably quite capable of completing that, but a ten year old? I think that's where we're stretching it. Moving forward, I think Cabinet Office should really think about, if they are going to give funding for ten to seventeen year olds, then effectively that paperwork needs to either be split up between ages or needs to be user friendly for the youngest.*

Any future roll-out should consider adapting the questions and methods to be audience specific and accurately capture the expected and unexpected outcomes of delivery.

#### **4. Clarity over Evidence Requirements**

Projects were unclear at the outset around what data was required for storage in Views and which information was a requirement for the accredited moderation process. This resulted in some projects administering data twice.

*Understanding how to manage the data both on Views and that required for the Leadership moderation process was very confusing and very time consuming.*

*I also spent a huge amount of time uploading photos from the leadership programme ready for moderation to then find out that they weren't required on Views but needed to be printed out and attached to portfolios.*

However, once staff had received training, using these services was rewarding:

*The case studies were fine and I can see the relevance of this kind of narrative recording of young people's experiences.*

*Once I got my head around completing the data on to views and this was getting completed on a regular bases it was quite easy to complete.*

One project suggested that in order to address some of these issues, Ambition could have “improved the co-creation of the programme from the very beginning of the process i.e. pre bid stage”. They suggest that through greater inclusion in the planning process some of these issues could have been avoided.

#### **5. Long-Term Participant Tracking**

For those projects successfully adopting social media communication channels with the young participants, this provides an ideal platform for future tracking of longer-term outcomes to be recorded and measured. We will work with Ambition to advise

the Action-Up projects on methods and tools which can allow them to track participant outcomes and progress post Action-Up.

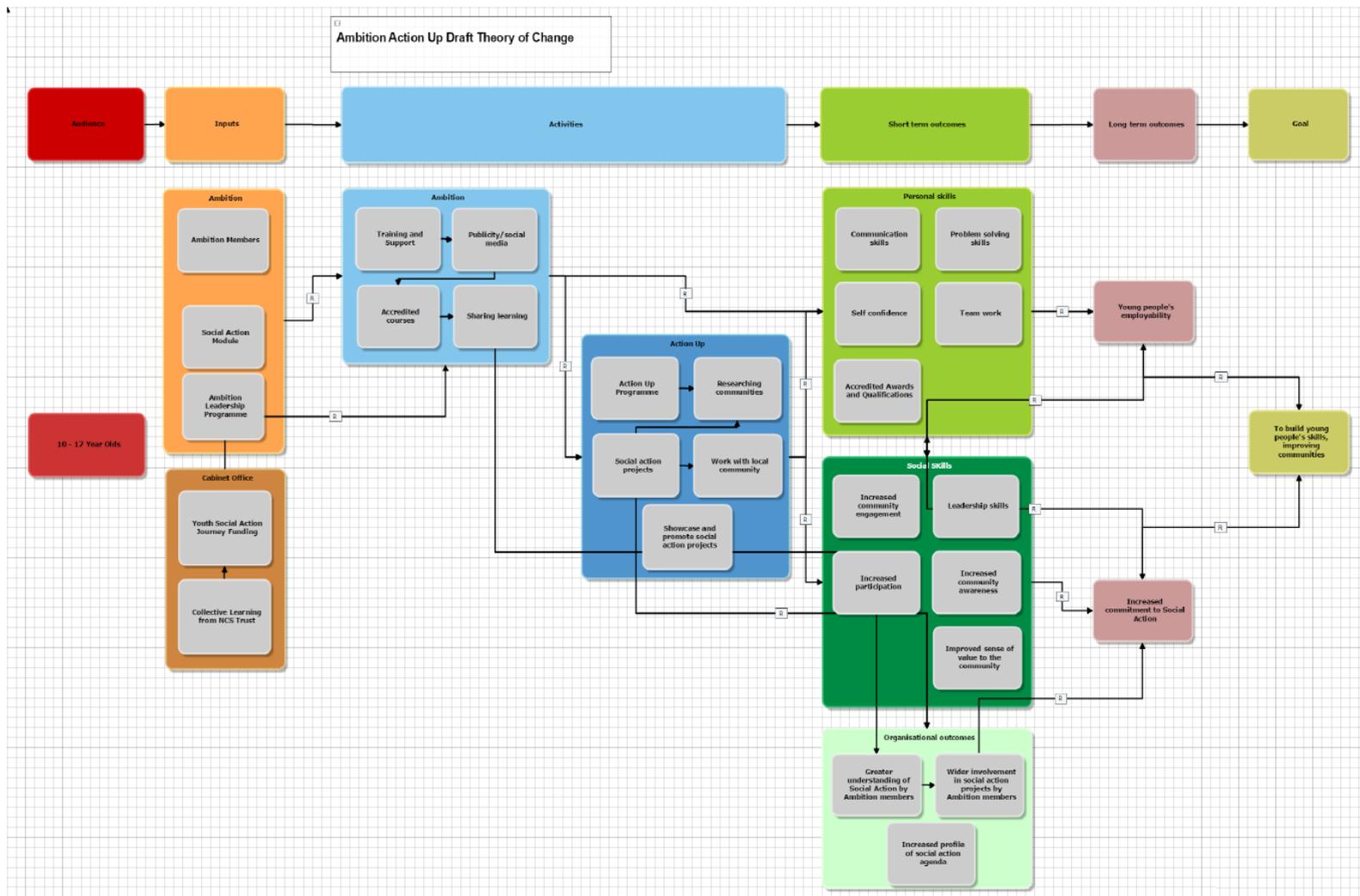
## **6. Modular vs Residential Model Testing**

The projects were free to adapt the delivery of the leadership accredited award and chose between residential model or a session based modular delivery. The modular delivery often appealed to school settings, who could dedicate time to this model. We observed the success of the residential model at both of our case-study settings, with both groups successfully bonding and responding well to the challenges. The experience of unfamiliar and outdoors environments worked well for these older groups. However, we noted a decline in active 'participation' in the actual social action exercise once back in the home communities. Ambition should seek to explore further delivery aimed at testing the successes of both models in order to shape and guide best practice.

## **7. Further Develop Control Group Methodology**

This project was the first time Ambition had attempted to engage with a control group methodology. Future roll-out should learn from this experience and seek to embed larger control groups across a similar programme time-frame.

# Appendix1: Action-Up Theory of Change Diagram



## Appendix 2. Safe in Tees Valley Action-Up Case-Study

The two day residential was set at Ormside Mill during September 2014, an old stone built mill in picturesque surroundings of Appleby in the Lake District. The group of nine young people consisted of five girls and four young men.

The course adopted a mixture of theory, practice and activities and allowed the young people to develop their leadership styles and complete the necessary modules to achieve the OCN 'Introduction to Social Action and Enterprise' Level 1 accreditation. An NCS graduate volunteer accompanied SiTV to help the team develop their social media output creating a film documenting the residential.



SiTV Social Action YouTube Promotional Film  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAKX2XI3ioc>

The lead from SiTV was calm and laid-back in his approach, treating the group with respect and support and using humour to bond with the young people. The group in turn were attentive and responsive to his instruction and guidance and were keen to pitch in with general chores such as cooking and clearing up. The group created a collective 'contract of behaviour' for the weekend which included comments such as, '*respect; make friends; help each other; don't single people out and no bullying*'. After a prompt early-morning start the group were joined by the centres activity lead who supported the group through archery tuition and problem solving team building exercises. This active session was followed by a theory workshop introducing the young people to leadership theories and debating the effectiveness of different leadership styles. The lead brought an element of fun and creativity to the session, placing images of different historic rulers on the table and challenging the group to categorise their leadership styles.

The next morning session covered the topics of 'praise and criticism' and introduced the concept of the 'feedback sandwich' to the group. The method of conveying praise, followed by criticism, followed by praise in order to motivate people was described metaphorically as "*your hands are the bread, the positive and the crap in the middle is the bit you don't like, the negative*". The young people responded well to the theory sessions and were clearly motivated to learn new skills to put into practice. The young peoples' final task of the weekend was to lead an activity. The



group carefully considered their activity, attempting to ensure the young people were confident in their role and supported them through guidance and support.

Back in the North-East the Thornaby group had devised a 'youth-club' evening as their social action activity. The young people had identified a gap in participation at the youth club,

especially from a group of non-engaged young people who had the potential to cause anti-social behaviour the weekend leading up to bonfire night.

With over 35 young people in attendance, many whom were not 'regulars' the night was a success as it provided access to the club to young people who would not otherwise wish to participate. The young people organised a pool tournament, a wall climbing challenge and a game of bingo. At times tempers were fraught and the young leaders were challenged by some of the erratic behaviour of the young people but approached the challenge with confidence. At the end of the evening the group convened to reflect upon their event.

They were surprised at how difficult the evening had been at times and felt empathy for the youth workers who perform this role on a nightly basis. The group did however feel relieved and proud of their efforts and were pleased with the feedback they had gained from the young people and other members of staff. One young person noted, *"There was loads more to do tonight than usual and you got people here who never come"*. It was encouraging to note that the group were keen to run a similar night again and continue to help out at the youth club.



On visiting the group three months on from the event, it was encouraging to discover that the group had continued to volunteer at the youth club and one of the lads regularly supported his newly created 'pool tournament'. This provides us with a clear example of how the legacy of skill development and increased confidence has led to ongoing community based engagement for these Action-Up and NCS graduates.