

Engaging the North's Young Leaders

Inner city Manchester isn't often described by the metropolitan press as a centre of hope, renewal or social innovation but on Friday 23rd November over 150 young people gathered from across Greater Manchester, Cheshire and further afield to mark the culmination of a week long leadership training and education extravaganza that had involved over 1000 sixth formers from Catholic Colleges.

For a week the YCW worked in four of Manchester's Catholic Sixth Form Colleges - Loreto Hulme, Loreto Altrincham, Aquinas Stockport, and Xaverian. YCW partnered with L2C (Leaders to Come, a project part of IYLN) for the project.

A team of six spent the week dashing around between the four Colleges to talk to the students and inspire them to see how they could make a difference in their lives. The time in the Colleges included assemblies, classes and extra-curricular activities. After clocking up over 500 miles in the first four days, the team took a break from touring and on Friday held a conference for members of these four Colleges, and other sixth-form students from across the North-West. At this final day long event, held at Loreto College, Hulme they heard inspiring speakers who encouraged them

to take seriously the week's challenge to engage as young leaders.

One young participant told her college chaplain it was "the best experience of my life".

No wonder, as speakers and workshop leaders across the week included Lord Alton of Liverpool, a former special advisor to the UK cabinet on Olympics policy, a young Dutch Catholic writer and activist, and a young parliamentary officer from the Refugee Council. Nicky Pisa, former International President of the YCW, shared her inspiring story and Liz Paulhus a US citizen, and the first Global IYLN scholar (International Young Leaders Network), talked about her work in Nicaragua.

In the Friday workshop sessions the young people looked at how they could make the difference in their lives and discussed what they were going to commit to doing. The young people left the conference fired up and passionate about how they can be the leaders in their own lives and actively look for ways that they can make a difference on the issues that are important to them.

Combining personal reflection, social analysis and a plan for action the week aimed to raise aspirations, encourage

fresh vision and support the students as they looked to take a next step in terms of their civic contribution. Over 700 students made a commitment to undertake a new direction ranging from standing as a political candidate in the local elections, to becoming active in defence of asylum seekers to supporting new recycling campaigns. One participant expressed the desire to reach out to support single fathers, whilst another invited people to join him in his efforts to raise awareness and funds for sick children.

Many will go on to join YCW or the International Young Leaders Network. All will gain access to networks for civic engagement, social enterprise, career planning and spiritual support.

One teacher commented "This week has really made a difference and we have gained so much from it." Duncan Whelan, College Chaplain at Aquinas College Stockport and former Development worker for YCW said "I hope very much that YCW and IYLN will extend this initiative to other parts of the country. It is hard hitting and inspiring"

YCW in Malta- continued from page 3

a meeting in our large groups. We would discuss what was to be done for the day, and what filming we needed to do, and where. This part of the work brought us all around the island, and we got to experience much of the Maltese way of life whilst doing it.

In the evenings, things were not as hectic on the filming front, and we were given time to let our hair down! We were taken out for nice meals, shown some of the country's cities, and then we were let out to the pub (particularly to the delight of the Irish!!!). I made so many new friends, and gained invaluable experience working with an accredited BBC film production trainer. It was a very hectic eight days, but without a doubt the best experience of my life. I most certainly intend to continue to stay involved with the YCW as a result of my participation in the Malta DVD project.

Aisling, Ireland

The new YCW resources (including the DVD made in Malta) will be available in the New Year.



Danny Curtin, leading part of the day on Friday November 23rd

The YCW

The newsletter of YCW & Impact!

Welcome to 'The YCW' - a note from the President's Desk

We are the difference!

Welcome to the new newsletter for YCW and Impact - 'The YCW'.

This newsletter will be a way for you to keep up to date with what is going on in both the YCW and in Impact. In this edition we have reported on the work of our new team (page 2), our YCW trip to Malta (page 3) and our work with 1000 sixth formers in Manchester just a few weeks ago (back page). You can also read about our new resources (below) and discover details of our next national event in February.

I want to strongly encourage you to come to the event in February, either as an Impact member on Saturday 9th, or as a young adult for the whole weekend. National events are a great way to learn more, share experiences, and have your voice heard. So come along and let us know what you think YCW and Impact should be doing today.

The YCW and Impact exist to make a difference - to help solve the problems

young people face - and to celebrate where life is good.

I have been National President for nearly three years now, and I have seen things develop so much. I hope that as we expand further with our new team and new groups this newsletter will be a useful way of sharing stories, pictures and ideas for action.

Please send us your news of action and your stories of celebration. Email us at news@ycwimpact.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

We'd also like to say hello to our newest groups: the YCW group in Poplar, East London, the YCW group in Preston, Lancashire and our newest Impact groups: St Gabriel's, Castleton, St Patrick's, Rochdale and St Joseph's Nechelles, Birmingham.

Danny

New resources

The new Impact resources are now available from YCW HQ. If you have not yet received any information to your group about these resources please get in touch with us. We will come and visit your group and bring you the resource.

It contains five young leaders' magazines on topical enquiries to get

your group thinking about some of the broader issues that are faced by young people today. To accompany the magazines there is a DVD. On the DVD are clips of young people sharing their views on topics to help get your discussions started. We've also included some Scripture passages to help you in your 'Judges' on the topics. The resources will lead you step by step through the YCW method of See, Judge, Act. The booklets then go on to describe what an action

campaign is and how you would run one in your group.

To help you reflect on the things going on in your life we've included the 'Friends and Contacts Chart'. This helps you to begin to look at the issues that affect the people you know.

The resources include games and activities to help you start to see what's going on, then judge it, and act to be the difference.



YCW
The Difference is You

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News from the YCW Team

The YCW full time team work with the voluntary National Executive, who are elected by members of YCW and Impact at National Council. Everything that the team does is to help YCW and Impact develop. It is here for you, and works to put in place whatever members decide at Council.

Since the new team started in September a lot has been happening:

London and the East End

Things have been extremely busy for us in the last few months. Following on from the launch event of the London and our work in the East End (where we live), we've been meeting people and beginning to train people on how to do an Impact or YCW action campaign. Things are starting to happen, and actions will be taking place shortly.

Group visits

The team have been busy visiting different groups in the past few weeks. Here are just a few of the groups we've visited recently:

St Joseph's Nechells

On Friday 16 November, we set off from London to visit a prospective group in Nechells, Birmingham. We were made really welcome upon our arrival and spotted lots of posters (hand-made by the Impact age group) about the evening.



As we had a chat with Fr Gerry and Sr Catherine more and more teenagers and young adults arrived with other adults interested in becoming adult companions. We had a really diverse collection of ages and backgrounds (including a family from Poland who had only been in the UK for 7 weeks!)

It was inspiring and encouraging to see how committed the adults were. The young adults really got to grips with the working realities they were facing and the young people were fired up when they discovered that we know they are the experts in their own lives. To those we were privileged enough to meet that evening, many thanks for making us so welcome and responding so positively to all we discussed. We appreciated your openness during the discussions. We also have been challenged to consider the diversity of language in our parishes and will be considering translations as a possible option for the future!

Nechells, we wish you all the best for the future developments in your groups and accompaniment. We hope to see you all again soon.



St Gabriel's, Castleton

We have also recently visited a wonderful group of young people and their adult companions in St Gabriel's, Castleton. We were all reminded of the core strength in relationship building when working alongside our young people. Cardijn had a truly inspiring view of the world which firmly placed relationships at the centre of all YCW work and this group were a real testimony to this. It was refreshing to see adults and young people working together in a spirit of love and humour – the banter made us feel immediately at ease – and we valued this first opportunity to meet the group and all hope it is the first of many visits! To you all – thanks for allowing us to visit.

St Joseph's, Denbigh

We recently set out to St Joseph's in Denbigh to continue the extension of YCW in Wales. We were made extremely welcome by our host Fr Iain, and met a fantastic group of young people who are excited by the prospect that they can make a difference in the lives of their families and their friends.

We spent time exploring some of their issues and concerns and looked at ways that they could get involved to solve some of these concerns. The young people are now planning when they will meet again and begin to act to transform their community in Denbigh.

Manchester sixth forms

The team have been involved in a project working in four Sixth Form Colleges in Manchester, talking to the sixth-formers about how they can be leaders in life. The week culminated in a conference where members of these four Colleges were joined by others from across the North of England - see back page for full report.

YCW Productions - on tour in Malta

On Friday 14 September, YCW England & Wales, YCW Ireland and YCW Malta joined forces to undertake a joint project to produce new YCW resources. For a week seven participants from each country had to endure the Maltese sunshine whilst each country joined forces to produce a DVD. The DVD will be used to help young adults in all three countries form YCW groups and follow the method of See, Judge, Act, looking at issues like work, leisure time, money, faith, drugs and racism.

We asked a few members who took part to give us their thoughts on the week.



Participants from England, Malta and Ireland filming the new YCW DVD

'As we girls entered the Salesian residential school for boys and saw our dormitory (an old gym) with mattresses on the floor and no mirror, a groan of dismay erupted. Feelings of panic arose: how could we possibly ever manage the whole week without our home comforts and only one shower a day? At that point it would have been inconceivable that at the end of our stay there would have been tears and fond farewells to what turned out to be our happy home!

We worked hard all day and were rewarded with group meals out late in the evening. The Maltese were fantastic hosts and worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that breakfast and lunch were provided for us all and gave us the opportunity to sample some local Maltese dishes. The preparation they put in was phenomenal and the success and enjoyment of the work was testimony to their efforts.

It was my first experience of YCW in other countries and one I shall never forget. We met the Irish (who had arrived the day before us) and the Maltese on our first evening. The welcome they all gave us made us feel immediately at home. The next day we had an opportunity to get to know one another and start discussing different enquiry issues. The range of cultural experiences was astounding. I learned so much about what family and community meant to the Maltese and the contrast with the UK. The Irish came from quite rural backgrounds and thus their experiences were very different and gave us all lots to think about.

On Sunday night Bob (our valued filming man) arrived and from that moment on the work really started. We were no

longer just three groups from different countries, we now were a film crew, sound people, interviewers, directors and actors. Although all of the Maltese were Catholics, the Irish and UK contingent included non-practising Catholics and those from other Christian denominations too; this enhanced our enquiries on faith and Church and led to many points of discussion which benefited all.

We made some great friendships and learned so much from each other and had a really fantastic experience. I was really touched when one participant told me "I have not felt so genuinely happy for a long time." The way the participants were with each other was a really powerful witness to what it means to be 'Christian' and to actively live life. I learnt life skills and encountered experiences that will impact me forever. It was so much more than just work, although it has helped me as a new YCW worker, it was about the amazing difference YCW can have on people- it made me realise how lucky I am to work here.'

'The day before I left for Malta I didn't want to go! The day I had to leave to come home I cried my eyes out because I couldn't stand the thought of going home! I had the most amazing week. My faith in people was restored, and more importantly so was my faith in myself. For the first time since I can remember I felt part of something and it has changed my perception on life. Thank you for the experience, I hope I can one day give back what you gave me.'

'The YCW trip to Malta has been one of the best experiences of my life. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity

to participate and contribute to YCW's work whilst spending a great week with absolutely lovely people.

I have many fond memories from the trip. The work which we were assigned to do was very fun as well as a great learning experience. The opportunity to film, direct and learn new skills in such a lovely and tranquil place as Malta was brilliant. The experience also had a deeper impact on me and showed me the different ways one can get involved in charitable work.

I will always be thankful to YCW for such a fantastic experience. It was great to participate in a team whilst it also made me analyse my own life and the ways I can become a better Christian due to the kindness shown to me in Malta. I will definitely become more involved with future YCW projects at home.'

Grace, London

'I got a phone call from a friend at the end of August asking me if I'd like to do a project in Malta with YCW, which I'd never heard of before. Jumping at the chance of what I thought would just be a subsidised holiday, I eagerly accepted! It was only really when our group arrived in Malta that I got an understanding of the purpose of our trip. On the first day of our trip we were given an in-depth introduction to the YCW movement, and we learned what it was all about. We then started to brainstorm ideas to make a DVD. We were staying in a school for young boys who had nowhere else to go, and while the accommodation wasn't exactly '5 star', it made the experience all the better.

Every day we would get up early and have

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