

UPF UK Launches the Youth Development and Leadership Programme

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Building confidence, connection and purpose among young peacebuilders

Universal Peace Federation - UK ([UPF](#)) recently launched its first Youth Development and Leadership Programme, a six-month initiative designed to help young people develop leadership skills, confidence, networking ability, social media awareness and a deeper sense of purpose.

Organised by Eva Chan, the opening session brought together young participants from diverse backgrounds, including Bangladesh, Zimbabwe, Lithuania and Austria. The event marked a new chapter in UPF - UK's youth work, building on the legacy of the Young Achiever Awards, which began in 2010 as an inspiring annual ceremony in Parliament.

From Young Achiever Awards to Sustained Youth Development

For many years, UPF - UK's [Young Achiever Awards](#) recognised outstanding young adults nominated by

[Ambassadors for Peace](#), community leaders and MPs. These ceremonies, often held in Parliament, celebrated youth idealism, service and achievement in the presence of families, friends and public representatives.

However, as Robin Marsh explained, the previous format had one important limitation: it did not always allow UPF - UK to maintain long-term relationships with young awardees across the country. The new Youth Development and Leadership Programme is designed to address this by creating a structured six-month journey of learning, service, mentoring and connection.

The programme will include both online and in-person activities, helping young people build practical skills while becoming part of a growing network of peace-minded peers and mentors.

Learning to See People Differently

Bogdan Pammar, National Director of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification - UK, shared insights from many years of youth engagement and peacebuilding work across different countries. He spoke about the importance of what he described as an "epiphany of empathy": learning to see other people not as objects, statistics or problems to be solved, but as real human beings with hearts, souls, stories and potential.

Reflecting on his own journey, Bogdan explained that early approaches to service can sometimes fall into a "helper complex," where the person offering support unconsciously sees themselves as superior to those they are trying to help. Through experience, mistakes and personal growth, he came to understand that real transformation happens through equal relationships, co-creation and mutual respect.

He also introduced participants to the Peace Designer approach, which encourages young people to observe their communities, identify what makes them feel angry, joyful, confused or inspired, analyse root problems, explore many possible solutions and then focus on one practical action they can take.



Networking: Prepare, Impress and Organise

Robin Marsh presented a practical session on networking under the theme "Prepare, Impress and

Organise."

He encouraged participants to prepare carefully before meeting people by having business cards or digital contact details ready, maintaining a professional online presence, developing a clear personal or organisational mission, and using tools such as LinkedIn, websites, email signatures and public records to understand the people and institutions they hope to engage with.

The second element, "Impress," focused on making a positive impact when meeting busy people. Robin encouraged young leaders to prepare short, inspiring introductions, research the person they are meeting, identify common ground and communicate clearly how their work connects with the other person's interests.

The third element, "Organise," focused on follow-up. Participants were advised to write notes after conversations, send follow-up messages quickly, create simple templates for emails or WhatsApp messages, and maintain a database of contacts for future collaboration.

Long-Term Relationships and the Power of Warmth

Dr Abdul Basit Syed, the Founder of World Humanitarian Drive, spoke about networking as long-term relationship building. He emphasised the importance of smiling first, listening carefully, remembering personal details such as birthdays, and treating everyone with respect regardless of status.

His message was that confidence, warmth and sincerity help break down fear and create connection. He also encouraged participants to understand networking not as a transactional activity, but as a long-term investment in people, knowledge and shared opportunity.

Social Media and Influence

The programme also featured Duchess Nivin ElGammal of Lamberton, who shared her experience of social media influence and online communication. With a large Instagram following, she demonstrated how digital platforms can be used effectively to reach audiences, communicate values and build a public presence.

Her contribution helped participants consider how social media can support leadership, personal branding, highlight human rights issues and make a positive influence when used with clarity and purpose.

Group Discussion and Reflection

After the presentations, participants broke into small discussion groups to reflect on what they had learned. These conversations gave young people the opportunity to process the ideas, share their own aspirations and consider how they might apply the lessons in their personal lives, studies, careers and community projects.

The launch event demonstrated UPF - UK's commitment to investing in the next generation of peacebuilders. By combining leadership development, networking, social media skills, empathy and service, the Youth Development and Leadership Programme aims to help young people grow not only in confidence, but also in character and public responsibility