



VOLUNTEERING  **MATTERS**

Annual Impact Report 2023



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Forewords

“I volunteer as a mentor on ProjectScotland’s Inspire Project supporting New Scots aged 16-35. Through the project, refugees and asylum seekers build personal and professional networks and also develop skills and confidence to support them in their life journey.

I started to seriously consider volunteering during the pandemic. Working as a GP it was clear to see how much of an impact the pandemic was having on people’s mental health and emotional wellbeing. Much of the support I provided was in short bursts and usually when a crisis occurred. I hoped, as a volunteer mentor, I would be able to provide more in-depth support over a sustained period.

I began my volunteer mentor role in February 2023. So far, I’ve supported two New Scots. Already I have seen the genuine difference it has made to individuals, and this will only have a positive effect on the community. My first mentee is now at college and gaining further skills to increase his options. This is positive for him as an individual and for the community. It is such a change from when we first met as he would hardly speak in front of people he did not know. Over time his confidence improved significantly, and he would attend social events and chat with people he had just met.

Aside from having an impact on other people, volunteering also helps me. I have met so many lovely people I would not have met otherwise and become more aware of what is going on in the local community. We see so many terrible things in the news/social media which at times can leave you feeling hopeless. Volunteering is a practical way of making a small but significant difference and it has helped me to feel a little more positive. I would (and do) encourage others to volunteer. On hearing me talk about my experiences my husband has been inspired to volunteer too!”



Shanti Das

Volunteer, Inspire Project, ProjectScotland, Edinburgh

“I am a volunteer with the Young Ambassadors and Youth Switching On Ipswich. I help to cultivate the minds of others by accessing ideas and new ways of thinking about solutions and developing youth social action.

I started my journey earlier in the year as a volunteer, but I was passionate about change long before, focussing on equality, diversity and inclusion in services and education. By joining Volunteering Matters and #iwill, I hoped to meet like-minded people and be in rooms where I can get others to reconsider their ways of thinking about these topics and how we solve them.

This led me to play a leading role with others in Youth Switching On Ipswich, to design and deliver a Hackathon, where we explored effective solutions and defeated negative narratives about young people. Organisations pledged to look into their own decision-making structures and to listen to youth-led solutions. I also teach the Young Ambassadors program and I initially wondered what impact I could have on Year 5s, if they would be receptive to me and if I could create safe spaces. I’m approaching the end of the programme and I have an amazing group of excitable young people passionate about no-hate. A group who stood in their agency and had the courage to say Young Ambassadors had given them confidence, to a room of professionals. I was able to create a safe space where they could ask judgement free questions about topics they didn’t understand and share things they had seen. As a group we all taught each other and gained the skills and knowledge to call out things like unconscious bias and create youth social action.

Volunteering has changed my view, in all aspects of life because it’s all intrinsically linked. It has given me an avenue to expand my way of thinking as it’s introduced me to so many inspiring people with a shared goal of change. Volunteering has taught me the importance of actionable information and that even in my youth, people will still listen!”



Abi Abidoye

Volunteer with Switching on Ipswich and the #iwill Movement



About Volunteering Matters

At Volunteering Matters we bring people together to overcome some of society's most complex issues through the power of volunteering. This builds stronger communities and enables everyone to thrive. We work with local partners, turning local knowledge and energy into action and progress and because we are a national charity, we do this at scale.

We work with volunteers to make a real difference on the issues they care about, from immediate responses to fostering long term change. We enable volunteers to use their local knowledge and life experiences and collectively we tackle complex issues.

We support the future of volunteering. We are a proud partner of **The Vision for Volunteering**, which aims to create a diverse, innovative, ambitious, equitable and person-centred future for volunteering.

In Scotland, we strongly support **The Volunteering Action Plan** which aims to create a Scotland where everyone can volunteer, more often, and throughout their lives.

We are a signatory and advocate of **The Power of Youth Charter**, an expression of the power young people have to lead positive change.

Our Impact: A Snapshot

Our Volunteering in Numbers*:

Across England, Scotland and Wales:



people volunteered
and made a
difference in their
community

18,360



people were
supported by
volunteers

Across 156 projects and over 60
different partnerships

*We collate data across the financial year. This is for the period from April 2022 to March 2023.

Our Impact: A Snapshot

In England:

1,497

volunteers supported

9,318

people

In Scotland:

3,745

volunteers supported

1,766

people

In Wales:

321

volunteers supported

2,119

people



volunteers supported 5,337
people in our nationally
delivered programmes

302

Volunteers involved in our
Grandmentors Programme

249

care experienced young people
supported through Grandmentors



750

family members were
supported by **189**
volunteers through
the Family Mentors
and Family Supporters
Programmes

1,083

people aged 50+ made a difference in their
communities through the RSVP Programme

330

#iwill Ambassadors - young people
aged 10-25 - led and influenced the
#iwill Movement and inspired others
to be involved in Youth Social Action.

1,000+

Voluntary and Community Groups were
supported through Volunteer Centre Newcastle

*We collate data across
the financial year. This is
for the period from April
2022 to March 2023.

Our Place Based Approach

At Volunteering Matters we believe that communities have the power, knowledge and energy to improve themselves from within and that we are most effective when we work with people, not on their behalf – and we achieve this with local partners.

Social action involves people coming together to improve their lives and solve the problems that are important in their communities. At Volunteering Matters, this is through volunteering, community organising and simple neighbourly acts. In doing so, the projects work towards the following aims:

- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Improve mental and physical health
- Build skills, confidence and opportunity
- Ensuring young people can lead change.

All our projects are firmly place based, here are just some of the examples of the impact volunteers have had in their local communities.

If you would like to support our work visit [our website](#).



Youth Social Action, Ipswich

In Ipswich, Town of Social Action, our Youth Social Action projects have enabled young people to use their agency to make positive changes to their community or environment.

Young people have campaigned and lobbied for change in policy and practice in areas such as White Ribbon Day to end violence against women and girls.

Youth Switching on Ipswich

A Youth Social Action group of 12 Youth Ambassadors, aged 15-19, have created a series of Hackathons to bring people together to explore innovative ideas for change. This includes an event focusing on young peoples' points of transition in their lives involving commissioners and change makers in Education and Public Services across Ipswich. The #iwill Movement and Volunteering Matters worked in collaboration with the Youth Ambassadors to put youth voice at the heart of decisions being made in the town.

Young people created a programme for children transitioning to high school. This is part of Ipswich Borough Council's Annual Community Safety Programme for all schools in Ipswich. The Crucial Crew project offers young people a chance to interact through drama with the WASSUP characters Astra, Patrick and Kay, who are navigating through risky behaviour. The workshop highlights tactics that are used to coerce young people into criminal exploitation.

A Teacher said:

“Pupils engaged and had positive reactions. Some pupils who don't normally take part did, which was great.”

1,400

young people completed the programme, which also included material to support teachers with tricky conversations that may occur after the workshops.

Survival Stories and Perspectives, Ipswich

Through Adult Social Action projects like Survival Stories and Perspectives, the asylum-seeking communities at the hotels in Ipswich participate in multiple innovative and creative, user led activities to share their stories, develop skills and integrate with the local community. This has helped them strengthen their voice, recognise their own resilience, improve mental health and wellbeing and break down barriers across the area. The interventions include therapeutic theatre and art workshops, gardening and cooking days, group walks, coached sporting provisions and volunteering opportunities.

This also included volunteering in local facilities such as local libraries, the Suffolk Show and at Suffolk Archives.

Faraz said:

“I didn’t even know that as an asylum seeker I could volunteer. Then one day, Volunteering Matters urged me to volunteer and explained how I could volunteer. Then I started volunteering and it really helped me mentally and physically. Furthermore, I also gained experience. Now that I have got refugee status and I’m allowed to work, I got a job because of that experience and my skills. I’m very thankful to Volunteering Matters.”

30

adults from the hotels volunteered in their local community

Match and Mentor, Norfolk

Through Match and Mentor, adults with learning disabilities and other support needs undertake volunteering opportunities and other social activities in their local community. Supported volunteering placements at community cafes, charity shops and local allotments, enables the adults with learning disabilities to make a difference in their community in the areas they care about. At the same time creating environments in which everybody in the community can learn from each other.

This also means that their families and carers can spend some time doing what they want to do, knowing that their family member or dependent is safe and supported.



38 adults with learning disabilities volunteered and took part in social activities



What do you enjoy about going to Match and Mentor?

“Helping other people makes me feel good.”

How has Match and Mentor helped you in your life?

“Improving my skills.”

“Makes me more confident.” - Participant of Match and Mentor



Connect+Go, Warwickshire

Connect+Go is a volunteer transport service that reduces loneliness and isolation in the community of Warwickshire.

Funded by the Department of Transport, the project runs hand in hand with our Grandmentors project supporting young people in care from Warwickshire Council's Asylum and Leaving Care team. Using our energy efficient minibus, Connect+Go volunteers drive people to social and educational events, which helps to increase their community inclusion and well-being.

Asylum seekers, refugees and care leavers regularly use the service which prevents them from becoming isolated.

Nahed is a volunteer on Connect+Go. As a Syrian refugee settled in UK, Nahed, has first-hand experience of the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers, plus vital contacts to help make valuable connections locally. Nahed also developed an Arabic Womens' Coffee Morning, called Bloom, which is a social hub and safe space for women to take part in activities, to be included in community-based information and to get their voices heard by public bodies.

Nahed was announced as the winner in the Community Support category at the Northern Warwickshire Volunteer Awards 2023, organised by Warwickshire Community and Voluntary Action (WCAVA).



Nahed, Volunteer said:

“Connect+Go has been an important part of the coffee morning in providing regular transport for our ladies who live the furthest away and where transport becomes a barrier for them. Allowing them access to this enables them to attend the coffee morning regularly and they can benefit from the help provided by the community and the other participants in the group. It helps to reduce the feeling of loneliness and isolation.”

1,418 passengers

2,832 single trips by volunteers
made to **279** destinations



A Staff Member from Warwickshire County Council Leaving Care Service said:

“The freedom that the minibus gives the young people to travel to and from these events is so needed and a valuable resource. Without it, they could miss out on these opportunities and the great benefits of being able to socialise and participate.”



Driver's Service, Milton Keynes

In partnership with Milton Keynes City Council, the Milton Keynes Driver's Service provides essential support to individuals across the area.

Where children have been displaced from their families and rehoused in a different area, Volunteer Drivers help ensure that the children are not displaced from their normal lives completely. The drivers transport the children to school or to contact appointments.

The Volunteer Drivers also transport older people who struggle to access transport to medical and social appointments.

A Social Worker said:

"I just wanted to thank your service & your drivers for your support and flexibility with the changes for Freya & providing some stability through the tricky times she has had recently."

The Daughter in law of Pete said:

"Can I take this opportunity to say what a valuable service this is for Pete and it has improved his quality of life no end. Thank you so much to you and the team."

2,444 journeys undertaken

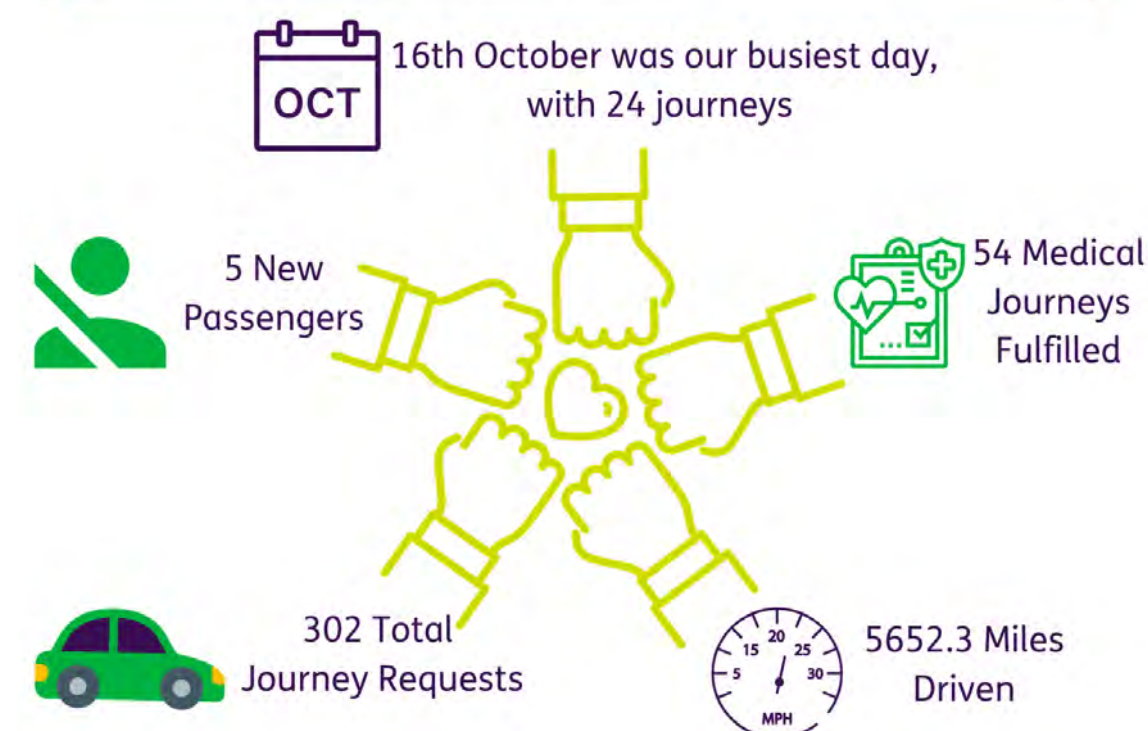
2,986 passengers transported
(201 different passengers)

61,132 miles driven

31 volunteers involved

About our Journeys

October 2023



London Young Ambassadors, **London**

Through our London Young Ambassadors (LYA) programme, and with support from the Greater London Authority and the #iwill Fund, we partner with schools across London so that students can design and deliver their own social action projects over a 6-week period.

Our focus is on Alternative Provision schools and Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND) schools as young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and with disabilities are less likely to have access to meaningful social action activities.

The young people undertake social action on topics of importance to them. In doing so they meet and interact with new people they would not otherwise have. They also become more active in their local communities.

Post age 16 students from Springhallow successfully worked with partners to raise £800 to support the community. They pitched to the local Mayor of Greenford, and the first project is a large waste bin adjacent to the college on Cow Gate Lane.

30 young people from The Complete Works came together to create mental health care packages that they distributed to a local school and within the local community. Students from Phoenix School created and delivered 60 care packages to Suffra, a local food bank.



A Teacher said:

“It has opened their eyes to the benefits of volunteering. Two of our 6th formers have ended up volunteering one day a week after working on this project. One at the British Heart Foundation and one at Oxfam.”

A young person said:

“I was really excited as it has always been my dream to help the homeless. Finally I am doing it, you made my dream come true.”

**33 schools engaged across
22 London Boroughs**

**294 young people were
involved and we created
43 wider partnerships**

**29 x £500 grants for
Youth Social Action**

**3 schools attended the
Young People & Community
Conference at City Hall**



Health Inequalities and Community Development Network, **London**

Working in partnership with the Greater London Authority and Volunteering Matters, the London Health Inequalities & Community Development Network is a network of individuals and organisations working across public health, local authority, voluntary and community sectors throughout London with the shared goal of improving health inequalities.

Volunteering Matters facilitates the Network and Planning Group of 10 members (from across NHS, local government and the community and voluntary sector) who help us to design and deliver quarterly, in-person events. These events have brought individuals and organisations together to examine key themes, sharing ideas and best practice to support each other. All to embed community involvement into strategic decision making, shaping practical action that can be taken forward and helping build the agency to do so.

We held 4 network events, across London. The themes of these events were cost of living, effectively co-designing, isolation and loneliness amongst young people and the environmental injustice facing black and brown men.

Damien, from the Felix Project said:

“The last meeting was such an eye opener and a great chance to meet people and organisations considering and implementing alternative approaches to addressing health inequalities.”

Volunteering Collaboration, **Newcastle**

On behalf of the sector, Volunteer Matters, manages Volunteer Centre Newcastle, which promotes, supports and celebrates volunteering across the Newcastle upon Tyne area.

The Centre provides an infrastructure for any group or organisation that needs support recruiting volunteers and guidance on volunteering best practice. The project offers a brokerage service to people wishing to apply to voluntary roles offered in the Newcastle Upon Tyne area and wider Tyne region.

Volunteering Matters also manages **Volunteer Passport Scheme Newcastle** which provides a single set of recruitment and training procedures delivered by Newcastle City Learning. The Volunteer Passport enables volunteers to access a wide range of volunteering opportunities with multiple charities and organisations across Newcastle. This approach gives volunteers flexibility and charities can meet their aims and ensure volunteering thrives across Newcastle. Volunteer Centre Newcastle supports over 1000 Voluntary and Community Groups.

The strong collaborative approach has also resulted in **Home from Hospital**, a multi-agency volunteer service that supports patients discharged from the Royal Victoria Infirmary and Freeman Hospital. Community Responder Volunteers, from several charities, support people over the age of 55, often living alone, on their return from hospital. Support includes help with transport home from hospital, collecting pensions and prescriptions, help with food shopping, wellbeing checks, ensuring the safety of the patient's home and signposting to events in the local community and charities. Support is free and lasts for 6 weeks. Referrals for patients can come from either the hospitals or community support.

145 Volunteers took advantage of the Passport Scheme

33 Partners offered volunteering opportunities through the scheme.





Inspire, Dundee and Edinburgh

The Inspire Project provides support to New Scots aged 16-35 by offering supported volunteering opportunities, mentoring relationships and employability skills development. Refugees and asylum seekers are supported to integrate into their local community, build personal, professional networks and develop skills and confidence to support them in their journey.

A true community focused project, Inspire fosters collaboration with local partners. In Dundee, partners supporting volunteer placements include Feeling Strong, Uppertunity, Action for Children and the Maxwell Community Centre. In Edinburgh, partners include Turing Trust, Volunteer Edinburgh Capital City Partners and Edinburgh Sponsorship Circle.



Maryna, participant on the Inspire Project, Edinburgh said:

"I have now found a job in a restaurant, and I feel more confident in my English and that is because of him. It is still a hard situation, but after I meet with Niall my mood is always better."



Maryna, Edinburgh

Maryna originally joined the Edinburgh Inspire project in March 2023 and was being housed on the ship accommodating asylum seekers in Leith. Referred to the project through the Ukrainian Coordinator at Volunteer Edinburgh, Maryna was very keen to improve her English, make new connections and explore options for part time work that she could fit around English classes and volunteering at the local Ukrainian Community Club.

Maryna was matched with Niall, a mentor who had experience as an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) teacher and had also lived in many new places so understood what it was like to get used to a new area. Niall has been supporting Maryna with English learning, job applications and navigating local services. The pair meet up weekly and sometimes this takes the form of interactive English lessons. They are also exploring career planning to utilise Maryna's skills and passions.

Ali, Dundee

When Ali started with Inspire in 2023, he wanted to improve his English language skills. He wanted be more involved in his local community and spend less time in his flat alone.

Ali was matched with a mentor – Shanti - who initially focused on supporting his English. Shanti consistently arranged meetings with Ali every week, they went together to the local library to read English books and they together joined a conversation cafe. As Ali's English gradually improved, Shanti then started to focus on exploring the city with him and finding groups and activities he might like.

In the meantime, Ali's confidence has also improved. He secured a place to study English full time at the Dundee and Angus College and obtained a taxi license.



38

people have been
supported by Inspire

15

Charity partners host
volunteering placements



Schools Projects

ProjectScotland supports young people in year groups S2 to S4 across Edinburgh secondary schools, who have started to disengage from school, pupils who are care experienced, or those facing numerous barriers to achieving their goals. Many of the young people are experiencing social isolation, mental health issues, low confidence, uncertainty about their futures and complex learning support needs. Some of the pupils live in some of the most deprived areas of the city.

The young people are given a wrap-around support package. Time is spent building understanding and trust between each pupil and our Youth Engagement Manager, before young people are matched and supported into a bespoke volunteering placement with one of our Edinburgh charity partners. Each pupil is also offered the support of a positive and empowering volunteer mentor.

Mike, volunteer mentor for ProjectScotland said:

“I enjoy helping young people to find their way by listening, guiding and encouraging.”

At Castelbrae High School 21 pupils engaged throughout the school year. In total they completed over 200 hours of volunteering through a wide range of charity partners.

At the end of the programme:

55% said they had increased confidence

44% felt they had better communication skills

33% had improved their connections within the school community

55% felt more confident about their futures

All pupils are offered mentoring support. This helps provide them with emotional support and guidance to face challenges in their daily lives, as well as signposting them to other services and resources.

R (aged 13) – volunteer at Edinburgh Settlement Projects said:

“I like leaving school and doing something active. It makes me feel relaxed and ready for the rest of the day.”

A Pupil Support Tutor said:

“I deeply appreciate the programme’s influence on their personal growth and its positive effects on their engagement with learning and school life.”

Alan, volunteer mentor said:

“Since 2022, I have been mentoring a young person Sam. When we met, he was experiencing a range of challenges and had withdrawn and disengaged from school. We meet every week and over time the transformation has been incredible. I’ve discovered he has a wide range of interests and deep understanding of subjects. When he finishes school he wants to be a mechanic and I know he will be a success. For now, I’m supporting him find some volunteer work to gain experience and skills.”

At St Thomas of Aquin’s RC High School 27 young people took part in volunteering placements over an 18 month period, during this time they undertook 278 hours of volunteering across 14 charity partners.

The evaluation showed that:

100% said they had enjoyed their volunteering placement

82% said that they had improved confidence

60% said they had improved communication skills

55% said they felt more confident about their futures



Retired and Senior Volunteers (RSVP), **Blaenau Gwent and Flintshire**

A new project was launched for volunteers aged 50+ in Blaenau Gwent and Flintshire. The volunteer-led activities are based on needs identified by the local community. The activities take advantage of volunteers' skills and experience whilst promoting social inclusion.

The project already includes a volunteer-led knitting group in Abertillery library and a lunch club. The knitting group meets every week, with a passionate, committed core of volunteers and others joining less regularly. The Lunch Club meets weekly in Mostyn Community Centre and is attended by 16-20 individuals.

This project is already going from strength to strength, including a partnership with United Welsh Housing to develop volunteer activities to support their most isolated residents. Volunteers have also begun helping pupils of Ebbw Fawr Learning Community (primary school), encouraging them to read and building their reading ability and confidence.



The Holway Community / Cymuned Holway Project, **Flintshire**

The Holway Community Project brought together children and young people with older volunteers also living on the Holway estate in Flintshire. Dedicating their time, compassion and experience, the volunteers developed skills, improved wellbeing and helped create new bonds along with a sense of pride across the Holway estate.

Older volunteers engaged with young people through a shared interest in community gardening to inspire the next generation with an interest in growing produce and caring for a free-to-access community asset that is a benefit to all residents. The Holway's residents have grown several fruits and vegetables over the past year.

Working in partnership with Flintshire County Council's Alternative Education Team and Eleni, a community dance company, we engaged the Holway's residents with the Dancing with Dinosaurs initiative, teaching parents and carers of young children useful facilitation skills while their children learned to work together and perform in a live performance with a "real-life" dinosaur.

Volunteers also supported the Friends of Holway group to facilitate Snack Attack, providing an opportunity for at least 50 residents, individuals and families to come together at the end of the day for food and friendship – and to access additional support.

Edna said:

"It helped me connect to the community as previously I only knew my immediate neighbours."

13

Volunteers from the Holway Estate supported in excess of 58 residents

Sexual Awareness For Everyone (SAFE), **Gwent**

Sexual Awareness for Everyone supports 16-35 year olds with additional learning needs to empower them to lead conversations around relationships, consent, internet safety and sexual health. Through the project, volunteers with additional learning needs develop, produce and co-deliver workshops in schools, colleges and youth centres across Gwent.

People are much more likely to engage with their peers as there is a mutual understanding based on similar experiences. This project has increased the autonomy of people with a learning disability by equipping them with the tools of knowledge around sex and relationships. Many people with a learning disability have the same aspirations for loving relationships as those without a learning disability. Delivering programmes like SAFE, alongside respected host organisations within communities, is a successful and effective way to mitigate risks – and importantly to enable the young people involved to have the fulfilling and enjoyable lives that they deserve.

Shaun said:

“When I started volunteering for SAFE I was a little bit scared because it is not a topic I have spoken about before. Once I was happy to volunteer Eden worked with me to get confident in speaking and even getting on a bus. I think it is especially important to talk about pornography because it is bad for the brain. It isn’t real and is often very aggressive. I believe this needs to be talked about more. I now help train other volunteers, get on the bus on my own and talk to my family about my relationships.”



Projects in Wales







Brenda receiving a Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services
2023 Award, presented by Mathew Rickard, Pure West Radio

National Programmes with a Local Focus



Family Mentors/ Family Supporters

Volunteering Matters works with families involved with social services. Volunteers are trained and supported by staff, before providing tailored weekly support to the family, empowering the family to be self-sufficient, de-escalated from their child protection plans and to set and reach their own goals.

This includes helping to improve living standards, support with housing, budgeting, healthier eating, routines, improved school life and behaviour, access to health and wellbeing support, and introducing parents to community resources. Progress is measured through our bespoke impact tracker approach.

Family Mentors provide their support in Southend, Greenwich and Waltham Forest, with Family Supporters operating in Edinburgh.

The Smith Family, Edinburgh

The Smith family got in touch with Family Supporters Edinburgh after finding the service through One Parent Family Scotland. The young person in the family was having significant problems at school leading to detentions and exclusions, which was also combined with mental health issues. Mum felt like there was insufficient support, which was leading to the situation spiralling out of control. It was having a significant toll on her health and her ability to handle the situation in the way she would like.

Family Supporter volunteer, Tom was matched with the family in July 2022. He started by building a relationship with both the mum and the young person based on mutual respect and trust, holding out a neutral helping hand to them both. Tom provided a listening ear, emotional and practical support, and consistency and commitment to the family for 12 months.

During this time, the young person was able to improve their attendance and behaviour at school and then went on to attend college. In discussion with the family, Tom sought external support from other charities, helping the family connect with U-evolve for mental health support, specialising in the development of young people.

In Edinburgh, amongst families taking part, there was a:

53% improvement in accessing further opportunities

74% improvement in mental health

53% improvement in school life and behaviour

58% improvement in self-care and nurturing skills



Grandmentors

The Grandmentors Programme is an intergenerational mentoring programme for care experienced young people. This group of young people are amongst the strongest and most resilient in any community. Through the skill of mentoring, care experienced young people are supported to be autonomous, capable, and empowered adults. A mentor is typically aged 50 years or over and a mentee is a young person typically aged 16-24. This programme recruits older volunteers who use their life experience and skills to provide emotional and practical support to young people transitioning from the care system to independent living.

Established in 2009, Grandmentors now runs in the following 15 locations across England and Scotland:

Brent, Hounslow, Islington, Lewisham, Merton, Midlothian, Milton Keynes, Perth & Kinross, Southend, Suffolk, Surrey, Wandsworth, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Wolverhampton.

With the help of their Grandmentor, care experienced young people work through goals and/or concerns, usually around the areas of employment, education and training, housing and finance and health and wellbeing. Grandmentors are encouraged to schedule regular contact with their young person and to plan some fun activities that will offer them new opportunities and broaden their horizons.



188 Care Experienced Young People successfully matched



302

Volunteers supported

249

people

Working together, the mentor and mentee track their progress, using our bespoke impact tracker. As of October 2023, for 163 care experienced people, the completed impact trackers showed that:

59%

were independent or stable in sustaining education, employment, or training, this increased from 45% when asked at the beginning of their mentoring experience.

62%

were independent or stable in terms of their own wellbeing, this increased from 37% when asked at the beginning of their mentoring experience.

75%

were independent or stable in their housing stability, this increased from 66% when asked at the beginning of their mentoring experience.

We also surveyed our Grandmentor volunteers and found that:

84%

agreed or strongly agreed that they were making a difference as a mentor.

84%

agreed or strongly agreed they felt they are having a positive impact on their mentees' life.

62%

agreed or strongly agreed they felt more connected to their local community as a mentor.



Impact Snapshots

Shaun & Sue, Wolverhampton

Shaun and Sue were matched in 2022. Through having Sue as his mentor, Shaun has:

- Benefited from having someone to turn to for relationship advice.
- Built his self-esteem through positive conversations.
- Had guidance around the interview process for jobs.
- A new job role as a Customer Support Advisor.
- Improved his mental and physical health.

Marilyn & Amara, Islington

Amara and Marilyn were matched in 2021. Amara was referred to gain support in transitioning into independent living. Since being matched with her mentor Amara has:

- Had someone to talk to and help make friends when feeling lonely as an individual new to London.
- Had someone she could feel safe opening up to.
- Attended chapel with her mentor and gained insights in religion.
- Experienced London enrichment opportunities.
- Felt more confident in her academic studies, and future career opportunities.
- Applied for and been offered places to study Bio-Medical Science at university.
- Gained volunteering experience with a refugee charity supporting refugees with their medical issues.



A mentee said:

“Having someone else apart from your social worker helping you to deal with your problems is fantastic and being able to get support from someone who has been living here for a long time feels amazing.”

The Grandmentors programme provides a true place-based approach, recognising that the challenges young people face is different in each location. Each individual programme is tailored and managed accordingly. Both the Grandmentors and the care experienced young people become more active in their own local community, which fosters relationships between individuals and promotes awareness to wider audiences of the issues faced by care experienced young people.

Grandmentors were invited to be one of the community groups involved in this year's Milton Keynes International Festival which took place over summer 2023. The care experienced young people were invited to help create one of the art installations for the festival called “The Place Between” which was on display from mid July 2023.

In Wolverhampton, the Grandmentors team collaborated with the Council to provide support with events for care leavers such as Ramadan/Eid afternoon and refugee week celebration.





The #iwill Movement aims to make participation in social action such as volunteering, fundraising, mentoring and campaigning - the norm for young people aged 10 to 25 years old. In doing so, amplifying their voices to take an active role in transforming their communities.

Volunteering Matters and UK Youth have a partnership to coordinate #iwill, which is now at its 10-year anniversary. As the #iwill Movement, we collectively invest in young people's passions, talents and skills and they in turn, challenge systems and encourage decision makers to share power. As such, the #iwill Movement has an impact both within communities and within the young people themselves.

To celebrate the 10-year landmark, and to co-launch the new partnerships structure for the movement, we hosted the first #iwill Movement Assembly in November, at the House of Commons, during November's #iwill Week.

Following the lead of Young Manchester launching themselves as a City of Social Action, and Ipswich Social Mobility Alliance launching as a Town of Social Action, in 2024 we will be working to support and activate more places across the UK to commit to becoming a place centering Youth Social Action as a catalyst for change.



405

young people registered as #iwill Champions between April & September

70

new organisations signed up to the Power of Youth Charter. To date, 341 organisations have signed the Charter.

63

new Ambassadors were recruited in July, making a total of 330 Ambassadors.

Power of Youth Day trended across X (formerly Twitter) on 6th June and reached 13 million people on the platform.

The Ambassadors Spring Survey (2023), showed how young people's skills and wellbeing have improved since becoming #iwill Ambassadors.

- 98% reported having learnt something new.
- 94% feel more confident in taking the next step towards their goal.
- 83% reported feeling more positive about the future.



Retired and Senior Volunteers Programme (RSVP)



Ann May, trustee and volunteer said:

“The volunteers we have are a stalwart bunch who give their all for the Matthew!”

Linda Brown, volunteer and organiser said:

“It was a wonderful display of the work that has had such an impact over the years.”

Running for over 32 years, The Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP) provides volunteering opportunities primarily for the 50+ age group to use their skills and experience by volunteering for the benefit of their local communities. The Project Organisers are themselves volunteers – developing and managing local projects, utilising their life experience and local knowledge. In essence RSVP provides important community action whilst the volunteers themselves also report benefits to their own health and well-being.

RSVP West covers Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath & Northeast Somerset. Their motto is “Volunteering is serious fun”.



Bob with his BBC Award

Over 1,083 people aged 50+ made a difference in their communities through the RSVP Programme

Their projects include drivers and befrienders groups, knitting, reading in schools and lay assessors in care homes and within home care.

RSVP West volunteers have been actively involved with the Matthew Trust and project over the last 25 years to advance its educational aims. The Matthew is a modern reconstruction of the original Matthew that John Cabot sailed to Newfoundland in 1497. After a winter of maintenance, the Matthew ‘Season’ 2023 commenced including several school trips and filming for Italian TV. It now has a great new learning resource and a new documentary telling its story.

The Archie Project is an intergenerational dementia awareness project linking local schools with care homes. This helps to dispel the fear and stigma often associated with dementia and create more dementia friendly communities. RSVP West volunteers have engaged with children from St Saviours Junior School, Bath to enable the children to first learn about dementia and then, in small groups, visit Oriel Lodge Care home to communicate with residents and join in with their activities.

“Both children and residents learnt from each other how to play games like ludo,

snakes and ladders and dominoes. Through play they started to communicate and soon began asking each other questions and learning about their life experiences.”
Karen Boutland, volunteer

In October, RSVP West’s Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Bob Maggs, was recognised at the BBC Make A Difference Awards.

RSVP Volunteer Knitting

There is a long history of RSVP volunteer knitting groups. This includes the Glasgow RSVP Knitting Group which meets quarterly in a central cafe to hand in the baby garments they have knitted from wool distributed at the previous meeting. The garments are then delivered immediately to the Baby Unit at Glasgow’s Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Some people also knit lap blankets for local care homes.

Norfolk Knitters and Stitchers celebrated 15 years of knitting and stitching for many different charities. With over 127 groups, many items such as blankets, hats, gloves, socks and scarves, trauma teddies, hand puppets, toys, and mascots and much more are distributed to charities. A Carnival of Colour was held in Wymondham Central Hall to celebrate their fifteenth birthday and raise funds to continue their community action.



Volunteering Works

Volunteering Works provides employers with one-off or ongoing high impact employee volunteering programmes, to create lasting change in their community and workforce.

This includes “Support My Future”, organised in partnership with Deutsche Bank for the past 20 years. Focusing on young people aged 11-18 from secondary state schools, volunteers assist students with English as an additional language, students below their academic targets needing an extra push, or students with a high motivation to improve.

Volunteers provide weekly or fortnightly coaching on areas such as literacy, numeracy or employability. The pupils develop their skills, raise their aspirations, and confidence, and have increased access to opportunities. In this way, volunteers help the students to reach their full potential and in doing so break a cycle of youth unemployment.



A mentee said:

“Now I have more options to consider and feel more positive about my future.”

A maths mentee said:

“I learnt the concepts in maths that I had trouble with during lessons. The numeracy sessions have given me the confidence and skills to ask questions in class.”



Amy Zhang, employability coach said:

“The most enjoyable part of my volunteering work is to empower those curious and ambitious students to take ownership of their education and career.”

During the year, Volunteering Works have:

Worked with 149 Community Partners

Enabled 1,676 people to volunteer during team days

Supported 110 people to volunteer individually

Created 9,992 Volunteer hours in total

Afterword

Understanding the difference we've made, how we can do things better and support more people more effectively are all tangible outputs of our impact work. Together, they are helping us make real changes in how we do things, so we can do them better. I am so pleased that we are an organisation that is flexible enough to make those changes and also that we are willing to do so.

As ever, and on behalf of the Trustees, I would like to thank everyone involved in the Volunteering Matters family, whether they be volunteers, our staff team, funders, partners, or the communities with whom we work. Thank you for your continuing effort, dedication and energy - this report shows just why that commitment is worth it.

A special thank you for the support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, awarding funds from Postcode Support Trust, which has supported our work across England, Scotland and Wales.



Anne Heal
Chair of Trustees



volunteermatters.org.uk

T: 020 3780 5870

X (formerly Twitter): @volunteering_uk

Volunteering Matters, The Levy Centre,
18-24 Lower Clapton Road, London E5 0PD

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