

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS





Annual Impact Report 2024



An introduction from two of our volunteers

At Volunteering Matters, volunteers drive place-based change, helping to create stronger, more connected communities. Their voices are at the heart of everything we do, sharing lived experiences and unique insights into the social challenges communities face.

Hear from two inspiring volunteers here:

Through volunteering, I've supported many people and it makes me feel good.

I started volunteering in February after having 1-2-1s with the project, starting because I needed my own help around relationships. I thought the project was fab. It was really fun and I learnt so much, I love helping others and this seemed like a perfect way.

As a volunteer I go into the colleges and help them understand things such as relationships, meeting friends, consent and social media safety. Doing this helps me feel confident in making my own decisions and I get to meet new people. Seeing people laugh about something pretty embarrassing is pretty cool too. Spending time with other people, creating community that feels like a family is part of why I love it.

Have a look at volunteering, to see what you think. " It's really rewarding. It's all about team work!

"

I think volunteering is important, SAFE creates a safe space for us the talk about things that I have never talked about before. I learn a lot from those attending the sessions. It can be dangerous, not doing relationships or consent correctly, its scary. This way we can talk and even question each other on our views.

I think my volunteering time has supported many people and that makes me feel good. Helping people is important which makes volunteering important. It has a positive impact, keeps me positive.



Tom Volunteer on SAFE, Wales

Volunteering helped me connect with the community and develop belonging

I have been a volunteer since I was born. I come from a country where people face many social challenges and I often joined my parents in their volunteer activities.

When I arrived in the UK, I knew I wanted to continue volunteering and I quickly engaged with various volunteering opportunities. This helped me connect with the community, develop a strong sense of belonging, and make friends, all while improving my communication skills in English. It has been incredibly beneficial for my mental health as well. While I missed my family and friends, I found relief in supporting others.

I am a Clinical Psychologist and a lecturer in Clinical Psychology. Through Volunteering Matters, I volunteer with the Family Mentors project. The immediate impact of my volunteering is felt both by myself and my family, as they benefit from the positive emotions and improved mood I gain from engaging in volunteer activities. Additionally, those I support through my volunteering also benefit from my positive, proactive presence.



To other people thinking of volunteering, I'd say don't wait for life to fall completely into place to start. The world needs us to believe that we are daily changemakers - and to act accordingly.

To funders, please know you are multiplying powerful possibilities with certain and lasting results. Volunteer-led projects harness human potential, build communities, and create longlasting, meaningful outcomes—all while maximising the value of every pound invested.

" and walk alongside more and more people on this journey.



Liliane

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share my perspective and philosophy of volunteering. It's always a pleasure to meet

Volunteer, Family Mentors, Southend

"



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VOLUNTEERING>MATTERS



About **Volunteering Matters**

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Volunteering Matters brings together supporters, including volunteers, funders, partners, and beneficiaries, to drive positive change at both local and national levels. We leverage strategic funding, partnerships, and local engagement to foster meaningful social change and community development.

Volunteers are the heart of our work and are critical to achieving our mission to build stronger communities through the power of volunteering.

We provide the necessary infrastructure to support and manage volunteers through place-based projects in England, Scotland and Wales. This includes providing insurance, a robust policy framework, communications, marketing, and public affairs support. We also influence both national and local policies to create an enabling environment for impactful volunteering.

At its core, Volunteering Matters champions social action—a process of uniting people to drive meaningful change. This is achieved through awareness-raising campaigns, training initiatives, and activism to advocate for community needs and improvements.

Partners

"Our partners include delivery partners and those offering support or referrals. They play a critical role in connecting the charity with those who need support. These partnerships amplify the reach and impact of our projects, ensuring greater community benefit."

Funders

"Funders, including local governments, major donors, players of The Peoples's Postcode Lottery, health boards, and the National Lottery Community Fund, supply the financial resources needed to drive our initiatives. Their funding aligns with local and national strategic priorities, enabling us to achieve our mission."

Our impact

We make a tangible impact in communities by addressing critical challenges and improving lives by:

• Reducing social isolation and loneliness:

Volunteering helps people stay socially connected, reducing feelings of isolation and enhancing community ties.

• Improving mental and physical health:

Participation in social action has been linked to enhanced wellbeing, reduced depression symptoms, and improved physical fitness.

• Building skills, confidence, and opportunities:

Volunteering develops leadership and professional skills, fostering personal growth and employability for both young and older individuals.

Engagement and volunteer support

"Our staff members are pivotal in making the charity's efforts successful. They are responsible for building relationships at the local level, training volunteers, coordinating activities, troubleshooting issues, and ensuring volunteers have a safe and positive experience."

• Facilitating communities to lead change:

Local and community-driven projects empower grassroots solutions to societal challenges, fostering inclusivity and equity.

• Creating cost-effective solutions for communities: Volunteering reduces reliance on statutory services,

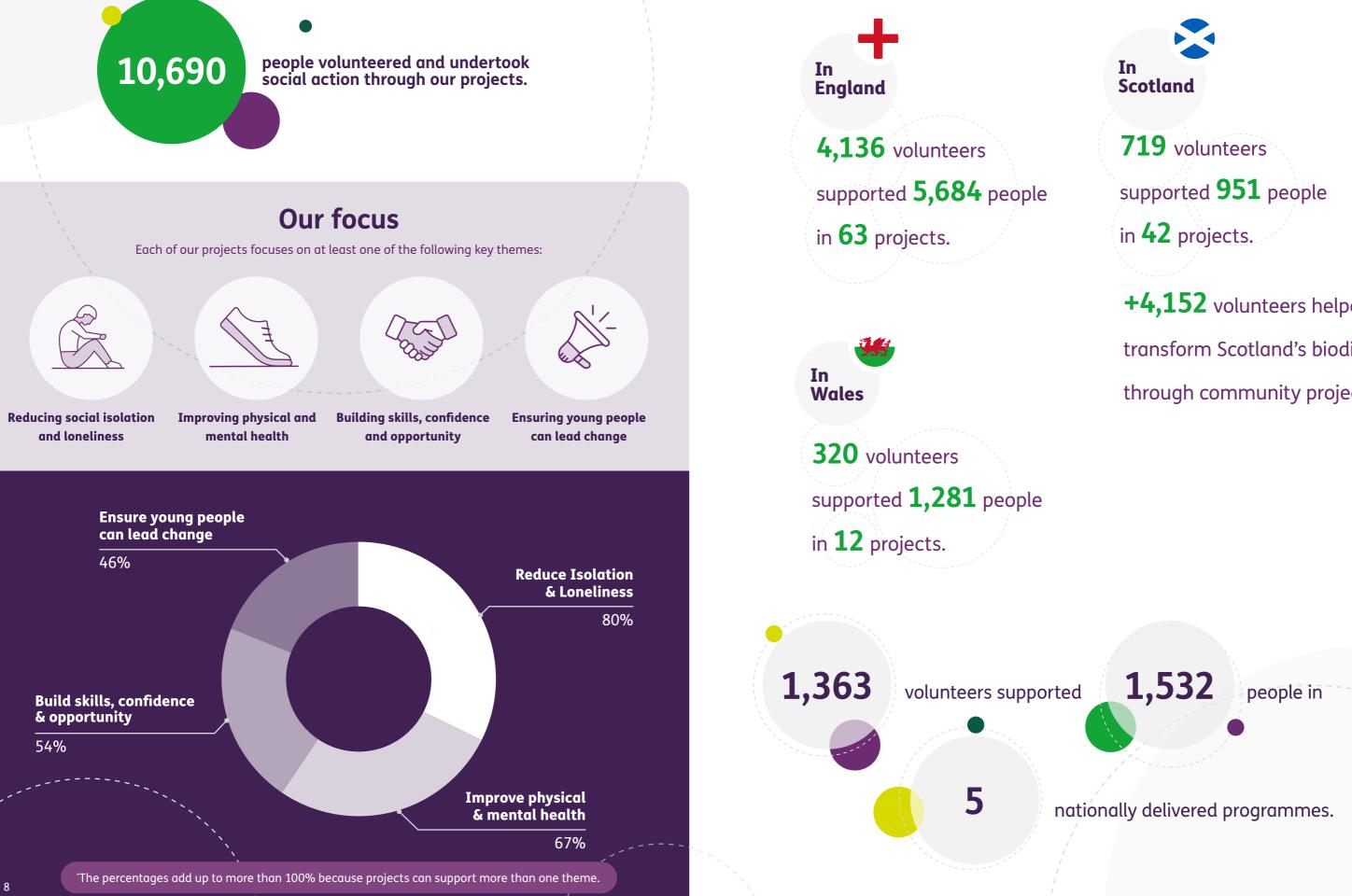
supporting preventative health and fostering independence.

• Encouraging cohesion and diversity:

Our projects promote understanding and tolerance across different communities and individuals, fostering cohesive and inclusive communities.

Our Impact: A Snapshot

*We collate data across the charity within a financial year. This is for the period from April 2023 to March 2024.





+4,152 volunteers helped transform Scotland's biodiversity through community projects.

Spotlight on some of our projects

425

family members were supported by 99 volunteers.





supported 234 people through Volunteering Matters Befriending Projects.

Through our Grandmentors programme 286 volunteers supported 240 care experienced young people in **15 locations**.

Through our

Family Mentors and

Family Supporters programmes



We undertook the Volunteering Matters Volunteer Snapshot Survey to gather feedback from our volunteers including on the impact of their volunteering. of volunteers said: 95% of volunteers said: 73% of volunteers said: 95%

Feedback from our volunteers

"they were having a positive impact on people's lives."

"volunteering with Volunteering Matters has developed or increased their skills."

"they were making a difference."

Volunteer and social action in England

Family Mentors Southend

Family Mentors supports families with social care involvement, helping to reduce the number of children at risk of going into care by preventing and de-escalating issues. Once again this year, Family Mentors Southend recruited, trained, matched and supported volunteers to mentor and support families in Southend. The volunteers supported families to make changes in their lives, which included support with budgeting, reducing isolation, building self-esteem, and offering advice with parenting.

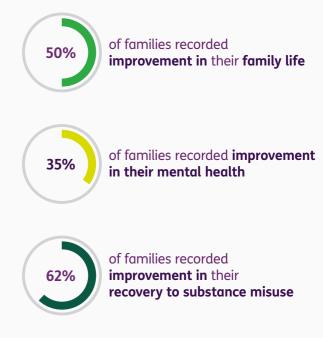
The project helped to keep families together and crucially worked across the community, linking with other organisations and universal services, to give the family the very best outcome.

Volunteers supported



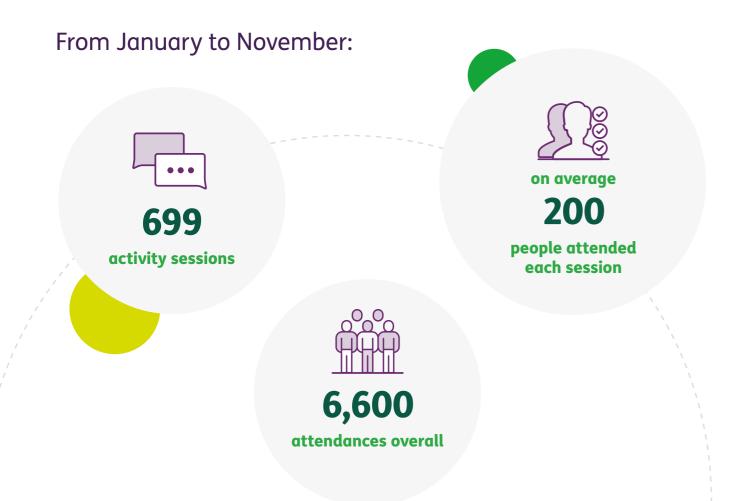








Through Lifelines, Volunteer-led activities reduce social isolation and loneliness and improve health and wellbeing. Activities are hosted online and in person at senior housing schemes, community centres and church halls. Wherever people have space to meet.





The focus of sessions this year ranged from:



World Culture:

International students delivered sessions on their nation's culture, food, seasons & events, including refreshments and activities and games. The sessions helped to improve connectivity across different cultures and generations.

Tech Tutors: Digital support drop-ins, 1-to-1 volunteer support, and loan/donation of tablets.



Healthlink:

1-to-1 volunteer support to health appointments, and related activities. This included direct GP referrals.

A Senior Housing Scheme Manager, said about Healthlink:

"It has been absolutely invaluable for him having somebody " to take him and the volunteer has been brilliant... he had the same person going so he got to know her. He ended up having his operation, she went with him and waited with him and brought him back and it was a great success. It's absolutely life-changing because it was affecting him."





15

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Match and Mentor Norfolk

Through Match and Mentor, people with a learning disability or additional support needs take part in personalised, supported volunteering opportunities and other community-based activities.

Chad, a volunteer with autism, told us how Match and Mentor connected him with the community and boosted his confidence.

Starting in August 2023, Chad's involvement with Match and Mentor, particularly through activities like Dungeons and Dragons, offered him a rewarding sense of making a difference and personal fulfillment.



Growing up in care, I know the value of 66 life and reassurance. I love being involved and recommend volunteering, especially with Match and Mentor which has been " just as effective as therapy for me.

- Chad

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RSVP West

Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Bath & Northeast Somerset

Driving and Befriending

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP) provides volunteering opportunities for the 50+ age group to use their skills and experience by volunteering for the benefit of their local communities. Led by the volunteers themselves, RSVP West provided important community action and volunteers reported benefits to their own health and wellbeing.

RSVP West covers Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire and Bath & Northeast Somerset. Through one of their many projects, volunteers provided driving and befriending services to enable people to attend health appointments and reduce social isolation and loneliness. In doing so, they:

Reduced non-attendance for surgery appointments

Reduced home visits for surgery staff

Reduced isolation and loneliness of patients (Befriendees)

Reduced patients' 'social visits' to surgeries

Improved physical and mental health of patients

Prevented loneliness amongst the volunteers by 'feeling useful, making new friends and feeling appreciated'

I was new to this area and did not know anyone. Befriending a " me as well as eventually she agreed to leave her house with me. We both got to know and become part of our local community.

- Befriender

RSVP West has 105 volunteers driving and befriending patients from 12 Surgeries.

There are also 185 drivers being organised by 8 independent (not surgeries related) Driving Group Organisers in North Somerset.

housebound, lonely patient from the surgery was a great boost to

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Youth Social Action

Ipswich

In Ipswich, youth social action brings young people together to improve lives and address important issues within their community. This includes a bespoke Ambassador Programme for 16-17 year olds, in-line with the National Citizen Service (NCS) framework.

During the year, the programme:



- understanding and challenging bias and in teamwork skills
- ✓ work readiness and employability skills
- life skills and independent living

"

[The experiences] definitely made me feel more confident and has boosted my self-esteem. The team encouraged me to do things that I would normally avoid or that are out of my comfort zone, such as public speaking. I've found a community where I fit in and my views and opinions are always listened to and never turned down.

- Jamey

"

"

Through our main medium of Hackathons we have influenced action which has been taken on by organisations, which has led to more youth consultation, more solutions by young people being taken onboard, and real recognition for the issues that young people face.

> - Abi "

The Youth Social Action Team was nominated for the Young People's Champion Award at the ICS 'Can Do' Health and Care Awards 2024 and received a commendation for their outstanding contribution.

Sporting Chance Stockton on Tees

Through the Sporting Chance Project, men over the age of 50 are able to reduce their isolation and loneliness, sometimes just to get out of the house at a difficult time.

The project is led by 14 older male volunteers and enables men to make healthy lifestyle choices and improve their overall fitness and wellbeing.



Since 2016, 381 men have joined the project, with many continuing for the duration.





52 men joined this year.

100 men are currently 'active'

The project has connected to other support in the community such as Cancer Support and Blood Pressure Checks. The project has also raised funds and provided toys and selection boxes to other local charities.

Sporting Chance is good for the soul... It is a great " group of lovely people who all look out for one another. - Steve





4,217 activity slots over the past 12 months

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Volunteer and social action in

Scotland

Brighter Futures Edinburgh

Through the Brighter Futures programme, young people have been supported to volunteer. The project has supported pupils at St Thomas of Aquin's High School in Edinburgh, focusing particularly on pupils struggling to engage with the school curriculum.

Pupils are encouraged to consider their current skills and attributes and what they want to gain from a volunteering placement with a local charity partner, enabling them to experience their first steps in work-based learning. Pupils gain skills and confidence in a new environment within the wider community, promoting a sense of belonging, whilst extending horizons and aspirations.



15 pupils fully engaged with the program and completed a **minimum of 6 weeks** volunteering.

10 pupils in S5 and S6 volunteered with the NHS as welcome guides for a period of three months.



of pupils said that their confidence had improved through their volunteering



"

of the young people **agreed** to a mentor match

B's behaviour had been challenging in school. Giving her responsibility within a football setting was a perfect opportunity to help support her. It has opened her eyes to a career in coaching/development, something that she has spoken about in the past being a future career for her.

- School teacher



Inspire Dundee

Once again this year, the Inspire Project has supported New Scots aged 16+ in Dundee by offering supported volunteering opportunities, mentor engagement and employability skills.

The project has supported refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into their community, building personal and professional networks, gain local volunteering experience, and develop skills to support them in their journey.



Over the last year, we have supported 54 young people through Inspire. Many needing pre-volunteering support such as language skills and we have worked with them to access this. Volunteering then becomes a fantastic way to practice English and meet new people.

Supported Volunteering Dumfries and Galloway

People with complex barriers including additional needs, poverty, low-self esteem and mental health were supported to gain confidence, identify and remove barriers and gain practical experience through a tailored volunteering opportunity. This helped them participate in their communities and to take the next steps into moving into employment, education and training.

110 people were supported

- **60** people volunteered with local partners
- **30** people have already reached a positive destination

My son was put in touch with Morven through the job " centre. He didn't enjoy meeting new people and putting himself out there, due to his ASD and anxiety. He now does 2 days volunteering with The Usual Place and is doing amazing. He's chatting to other workers/volunteers and thoroughly enjoys getting out and about. Not only has this helped him but it has helped the whole family, watching him grow and become more independent and confident.

- Person's mum



"

Before joining this project I was afraid to speak with anyone in English because I didn't have anyone outside the Syrian community to talk to. After meeting Shanti my confidence built up and now I have friends at college and I'm not afraid to speak over the phone either!

"

- Ali



"



Action Earth

Volunteering Matters Action Earth is an environmental grants scheme that supports volunteers across Scotland in improving local green spaces for nature. The project also creates healthier communities through outdoor activities providing physical exercise and improving mental health and wellbeing.

Funded by NatureScot, grants of £250 were available for the purchase of plants, tools & materials.

1,845 volunteers were aged 25 or under

Å 12,171 trees were planted

4,152 volunteers undertook 134 environmental

projects

1,046

volunteers were people with disabilities or defined health conditions

48% of projects were in 20% most deprived

areas in Scotland

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Your grants have made a big difference to " small local projects. We cannot thank your team enough for all the hard work they do.

- Shettleston Community Growing Project

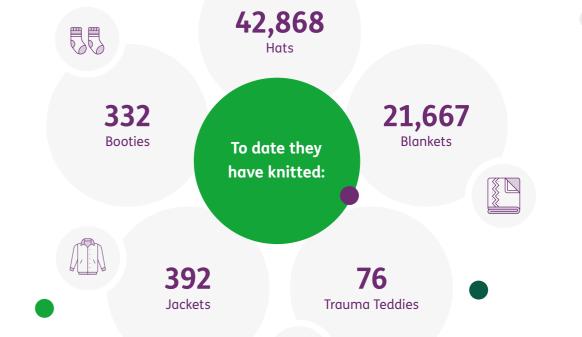
Glasgow Knitting Group Glasgow

Glasgow Knitting Group has continued to provide an opportunity for older people to connect with others locally, utilise their skills and give back to their community.

The group has been running for over ten years and the knitters meet up usually on a quarterly basis, in Glasgow City Centre, in order to socialise, catch up, donate their knitted items and receive wool. The social interaction has an overall positive impact on their overall health and wellbeing.

Whilst supporting each other's health and wellbeing, the focus is on knitting items for the maternity ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Glasgow. They knit baby clothes along with trauma teddies that travel with the children in ambulances.













Volunteer and social action in



Retired and Senior Volunteer Projects

Blaenau Gwent and Flintshire

Older volunteers led activities in two local authority areas in Wales, using their skills, interests and experience to tackle community-identified needs and gaps in provision.

This included knitting groups, sports reminiscence events and intergenerational reading support.

There was also a thriving lunch club in Mostyn for up to 20 local older people to catch up and eat together, fostering relationships, improving wellbeing and addressing isolation and loneliness.

> I found the experience of being a reading volunteer " immensely rewarding. Over the course of the summer term, I saw children with whom I was reading on a weekly basis gradually increase in confidence as readers.

- Helen, School Reading Volunteer, Ebbw Vale



1394 volunteer hours between April 2023 and March 2024



51 volunteers helped to run activities in both counties

"

71 volunteers and beneficiaries say being involved has improved their wellbeing



Welcome Friends

Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf

Welcome Friends reduces loneliness and isolation in people over 50 living within Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf. During the year, volunteers were matched with socially isolated people with common interests. They often visited people in their own homes once a week for a cuppa and a chat, and where appropriate encouraged people to leave their homes and get out into the community.

PIVOT (Pembrokeshire Integrated Voluntary Organisation Team)

Pembrokeshire

Through the PIVOT project, volunteers supported the health service to enable a reduced length of stay in hospital by supporting patients to be discharged from hospital even though they did not have a local support network of family and friends. Volunteers provided company and help with practical tasks to enable people to stay in their own home.

> Volunteering basically saved my life. After nursing and " losing my husband, I felt my life was over too. Through volunteering, I met some great people and more importantly, felt like I had a purpose again

> > - Brenda, PIVOT volunteer









'matches' made between April 23 and March 24 38 people had regular home visits 9 100% people received telephone of people were satisfied befriending **48 Volunteers** provided support

68

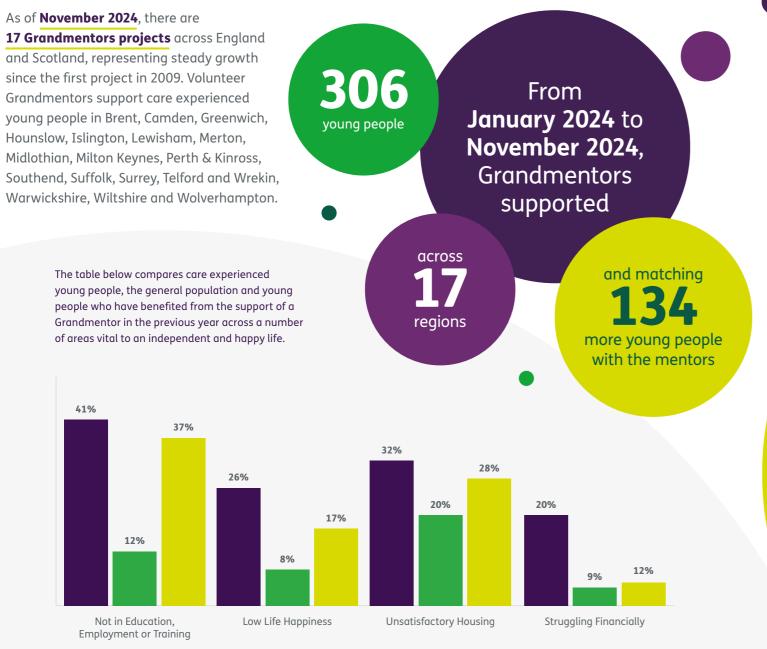
This also prevented readmission into hospital. Having a volunteer check in regularly enabled problems to be spotted early, and referrals made to other agencies if needed. Loneliness and isolation were eased, and confidence built to allow people to live independently again.

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Grandmentors

Our Grandmentors programme **transforms the lives of young adults** through emotional and practical support from volunteer mentors. Grandmentors provide a vital link for young people as they navigate life after care. Trained volunteers aged 50+, forge trusting and positive relationships that support, challenge and empower care experienced young people to unlock their own skills and to shape their own futures.



Feedback from Mentees

"

My mentor has been like the engine to my car, motivating and pushing me to accelerate and do better.

"

"

I've worked so much better with people who have given me their time [for free] as opposed to professionals like peers or social workers, and it's been so much more helpful just having somebody to relate to me, have a relationship, develop a relationship with me, and just be honest and real about adulthood or what needs to be done. I feel like in the system, you can get so trapped in tick boxes.

Care Leavers

"

My mentor allows space for me to be open and honest with her, and for her to provide me with practical support and just being able to relate as an adult.

"

It's important to have someone who chooses to support you, who gets nothing from it, and that builds trust.

"

"

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#iWill Movement

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, #iWill amplifies young voices to take an active role in transforming their communities.

Volunteering Matters and UK Youth have a partnership to coordinate #iWill. 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.

At least 60 Ambassadors are recruited every year.

Key achievements this year

This year, #iWill Ambassadors supported Ipswich and Manchester as Towns and Cities of Youth Social Action to continue to progress and develop their journeys of sharing power with young people. Blackpool also became a coast of social action, with new #iWill Ambassadors recruited from the community being platformed across the UK, amplifying the work they are leading locally. #iWill's annual Power of Youth day was celebrated with an in person event in Blackpool centred on the campaign slogan #BeThatPerson, encouraging organisations to stand up for local young people and sign the Power of Youth charter.

The #iWill movement was also a key partner in the Give an X campaign, led by My Life My Say, which aimed to give young people the space to represent their diverse opinions across the UK during the 2024 local and general elections. The campaign focused on amplifying young voices to encourage voter registration amongst young and first-time voters. During the campaign, #iWill Ambassadors participated in interviews with national, regional, and local media outlets about the importance of voting.

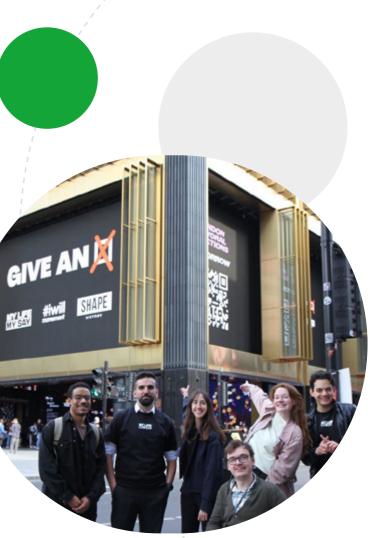
Key activity

Inspired by the election year, Ambassadors shaped the annual #iwill week campaign in November around democracy, participation, and power. Key activity included the launch of 'Pier to Peer: a seaside sisterhood' a short film with Blackpool Ambassadors, 'Politics and Poetry' live event, led by Ambassadors in partnership with My Life My Say and Young Manchester, the #iwill Movement Assembly, focusing on organisations' responsibilities to enable youth leadership, and the launch of two reports - 'Can you see us', and 'Show me, Don't tell me'.



63 new Ambassadors recruited **112** young people/ambassadors volunteered in opportunities **1722** volunteering hours undertaken by ambassadors 40 partners signed up to the Power of Youth Charter





Employee volunteering

Once again, this year, our employee volunteering team delivered collaborative and impactful employee volunteering projects and programmes to businesses across the UK. They helped employers, and their workforce to use their skills, energy, and time to create lasting impact across the UK.

Employee volunteers supported community partners, such as a charities, community groups and schools, through practical and environmental activities or by sharing their professional skills. This was through short-term and longer-term relationships as both individuals and as collective teams.

Examples of volunteering included supporting the Harris Academy Bermondsey, a secondary school for girls in Southwark, London. Volunteers were matched with students to provide academic or pastoral support to help boost their educational attainment, confidence and future prospects.

The mentors are highly effective; so we do see these benefits sustained for an extended period – and sustained outside of the intended mentoring sessions.

"

- Nomso Oranu, Teacher of Business and Business Mentoring Lead)





Peta Foxall CBE

Chair of Trustees

Looking ahead

As we set our sights on the future with a five-year strategy, due to be unveiled in 2025, the charity is embarking on an ambitious journey to enhance its impact across the UK. This new phase prioritises diversifying partnerships and funding streams, strengthening Government connections, and solidifying its role at the heart of civil society sector development.

A seat at the table

Recognising the transformative power of advocacy, we play a central role in shaping the national dialogue on volunteering. As co-chair of the **Vision for Volunteering**, the charity is reimagining how volunteering can adapt to a rapidly changing world. We continue to lead the **#iWill** Movement, with partners across the UK, supporting young people to build towns and cities of youth social action, one community at a time, and enabling young people to lead the nationwide **Power of Youth Day** and **#iWill week** each June and November. It also actively contributes to initiatives such as **Shaping the Future for Volunteering** and the **Big Help Out**, which amplify the importance of volunteering during critical moments. In Scotland, we strongly support the **Volunteering Action Plan**, which aims to enable everyone to volunteer throughout their lives.

Leadership and advocacy

Our active participation in the government roundtable on civil society underscores our commitment and dedication to influencing policy and practice. By engaging with policymakers, the charity champions volunteer-led solutions that address the unique challenges faced by communities, ensuring that local voices drive national strategies.

Empowering voices to drive change

Central to our ethos is the belief that **lasting change starts within communities.** Drawing from extensive experience in place-based delivery, we amplify the stories of volunteers, people they support and local leaders. By elevating these voices, we not only empower individuals but also shape broader societal changes and inform policy decisions that reflect people's reality.

Inspiring the future of civil society

With a collaborative mindset, and an unwavering commitment to our mission, we are poised to redefine the future of volunteering in the UK.

Together with its partners, we aren't just preparing for the future—we are actively **shaping** it, one community, one volunteer, and one transformative act at a time.



Amanda Naylor OBE Chief Executive Officer

We also believe in leadership from communities and enable #iWill Ambassadors from across the UK to meet directly with Government Ministers on shaping policy, most notably the new National Youth Strategy, either in Parliament itself or through facilitation of community based best practice visits.



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.



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