

Who are Youth Focus: North East ?

Founded in 1989, Youth Focus North East (YFNE) is a regional charity, with bases in Gateshead and in Middlesbrough, working with local communities across the twelve local authority areas that make up the North East region. Our overall mission is to improve the lives of young people, with work rooted in the values of good quality youth work, to help young people to have the best start in life. Collaborating with a range of partners across the region, Youth Focus North East provides high quality programmes for young people covering a range of themes, including; employability, social action, improved mental health, heritage and culture, youth isolation and loneliness, wellbeing, and intergenerational work.

Working together with young people, programmes are developed that seek to tackle some of the big issues in young people's lives. Young people are placed at the heart of seeking solutions. Supporting the meaningful involvement of young people is one of the fundamental principles of Youth Focus North East, with a variety of approaches; a programme youth board, advisory boards for internal and external pieces of work, steering groups of young people for each project, training programmes for young people so they can evaluate the services they receive and improve the support available to them, and much more. In partnership with NE Youth we secured funding from the National Lottery to develop the North East Youth Alliance (NEYA), now marking our fourth year. The NEYA was created to support the development and sustainability of the people, and the organisations working to improve the lives of young people across the region. With more than thirty years' experience and impact in working with young people, Youth Focus North East looks forward to the future.

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Tom Adams, Interim Chair of Trustees

It is with great sadness and pride that I have to introduce this report on the fantastic work of the Youth Focus North East team and the Board of Trustees, during 2023, with recognition of the tragic death in September of Pete Stout - our Chair of Trustees since 2014. Pete was a founder member of the Board since 1989 and throughout his 34 years as a Trustee, the last ten as Chair, championed the hopes, wishes and aspirations of young people locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally through good times and bad. Pete was a man of the utmost integrity equally able to give his time to young people, his colleagues and policymakers. Pete was an inspirational colleague, who lived his beliefs and values and led quietly from behind – an example to all of us who hold this precious organisation and its work in our hands. We will miss him greatly.

Youth Focus North East has two major themes in its work – direct action to improve the lives of young people and the creation of supportive infrastructure to enable the individuals who make up the youth work sector to work in the

most difficult, yet rewarding, circumstances that face young people today. Both of these themes can be developed in isolation, but YFNE knows and demonstrates through its approach to work with young people that working with other organisations and the young people themselves, sharing and learning together, produces better results.

Last year Pete wrote:

“This Annual Report is testimony to what is achievable when you listen to young people, provide the right kind of structures, provision and support, assemble the resources to make a difference and most importantly bring together a team of highly skilled and qualified staff who are motivated to enable things to happen”.

This vision remains the basis of the work of the Trustees and staff and this 2023 Annual Report demonstrates that this drive to create ways to support and develop opportunities for young people to grow and make use of their talents is alive and well – it merits close reading!

“If you’re going to live, leave a legacy. Make a mark on the world that can’t be erased.”

Maya Angelou

Kevin Franks, Chief Executive Introduction

2023 was a significant year for us here at Youth Focus North East. We worked with a greater number of young people than we have ever before, we significantly grew our staff team, and achieved impact on a local, regional and national level.

Our Workforce Development Offer, delivered primarily through the North East Youth Alliance, continues to be diverse and vibrant for the sector. It is based on providing what the sector has asked for and by taking advantage of partnership opportunities when they arise. Although we weren't ultimately successful, we were thrilled to have been shortlisted in the prestigious Children and Young People Now Awards; providing us with great recognition and acknowledgement of our support to the sector.

The development, sustainability and growth of Local Youth Partnerships continues to be high priority and we are now involved in facilitation of these models of localised collaborative working in 6 of the 12 Local Authority Areas within the North East. Organisations working in isolation can achieve their own small impact, however better coordination has the potential to increase this impact, and to make a real and lasting difference to young people. We are better and stronger together, not only for the young people we serve but also for our own collective sustainability.

The first Peer Action Collective (PAC) project ended successfully early in 2023 and I am delighted to report that YFNE and our regional partners NE Youth have been successful in securing an additional 2.5 years' funding to be the lead partners for the North East region for the PAC 2. Our direct delivery programmes in Middlesbrough and Gateshead continue to grow and I encourage you to explore this in more detail within this report.

Losing Pete Stout so tragically in September was devastating and our thoughts remain with his family at this time. Pete had been

involved with our organisation since its establishment in 1989. Over the years his contribution was immense, not only across the North East region, but also nationally and internationally. His life touched the lives of thousands of young people, workers and organisations; his memory will continue to live on in what he stood for, campaigned for, and believed in. He was a huge support to myself, our organisation, youth work and young people. He was a man of the utmost integrity and commitment, and a great colleague and friend. We will miss him greatly.

Looking forward to 2024 sees us in a healthy position to sustain our achievements. With the recruitment of four new Trustees, in December 2023, our Board is in an excellent position to support the organisation moving forward. We will be producing our new Business Strategy over the coming months, which will give us a firm foundation to build on over the next five years. A key area we will be developing is our training offer via the Engage Training & Consultancy service we launched last year.

We know there are many challenges currently facing young people. Over the last few years, they have been faced with the impact of Covid, the Ukraine War, the risk of online harm, the dangers of exploitation, and the cost-of-living crisis. The youth work sector also faces many challenges. The funding environment continues to be a complex, demanding and time consuming environment and the recruitment and retention of staff is a major issue. However; we do not see these challenges as being insurmountable and working together we believe we can meet them head on and help provide effective solutions.

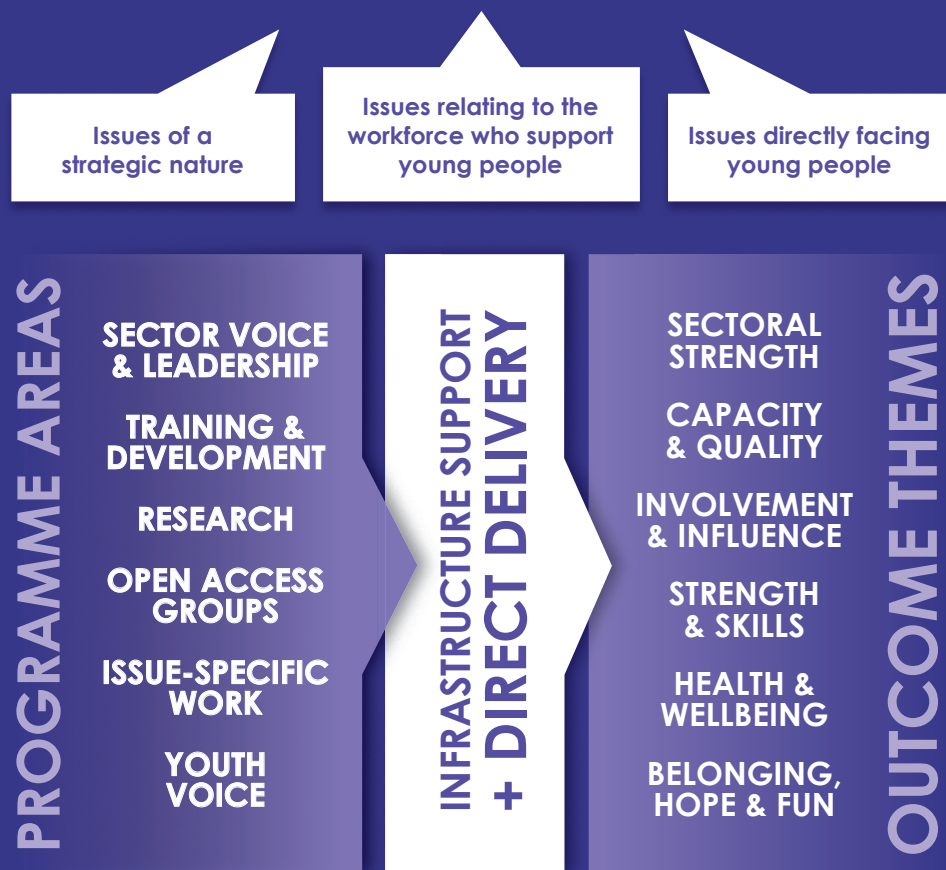
As Chief Executive, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all our staff, partners and supporters for their contribution to everything we achieved in 2023. I look forward to working with you all in 2024, on our shared aim of 'improving the lives of young people through high quality youth work'.



Middlesbrough Office Move

After four successful years the Middlesbrough Team moved from their office at Pallister Park to a bigger space in Brambles Farm also in East Middlesbrough. The move was a sign of us growing as an organisation and will allow us to continue the great work we are doing within the TS3 area of Middlesbrough. We continue to deliver our very well attended Pallister Park Youth Club on a Friday, and are planning to add to our provisions with one based at Brambles Farm in the coming year.

Our new **Theory of Change** organises our work around 3 groups of issues concerning young people and the youth sector



We operate as both an infrastructure support body and a direct deliverer of services to young people and communities. Positive change results from activities and is tracked via measurable indicators grouped within outcome themes. Programmes achieve multiple outcomes, which are monitored using a combination of 30 specific indicators.

Our focus is young people and our vision is to improve their lives through **high quality youth work**.

Our Staff

Chief Executive
Kevin Franks

Director of Youth Work
Laura Bush

Director of Youth Programmes
David McCreedy

Regional Youth Development Manager
Heather Insull

Training and Development Officer
Zoe Jackson

Operations Manager
Caroline Garrity

Office Manager
Amy Randall

Administration Officer
Barry Flux
Denise Bennett

Programme Manager
Rebecca Harrop

Communications Support Worker
Judith Bennett

Lead Youth Worker
Clair Jackson
Emma Abbott
Hannah Potter
Helen Kennedy
Jodie-Leigh Foster
Katy Dawes
Laura Bennett
Mark Lowdon
Megan Stratton
Samantha Logan
Simone Banks
Tilly Stephenson

Sessional Youth Worker
Adele Buttery
Amelia Bradley
Ann Hanratty
Bethany Risker
Bradley 'Chief' Matufa
Caitlin Stephenson
Daniel Trewin
Elizabeth Race
Kelvin Hutton
Liani Weston
Lindsay Wayman
Lucy Hopkinson
Marie Dorman
Mark Risker
Sarah Porteous
Sue Todd

Our Board of Trustees

Chair, Pete Stout OBE
Rest easy, Brother

Chair, Thomas Adams
Norma Tullock
Marc Mason
David Hesselberth
Mark Bagnall

Karen Marshall
Robert Laycock
Nathan James
Jennie Frankes
Michelle Atkinson



Co-op Spaces & Celebration Event

In December, we had what can only be described as the most humbling, fantastic and enjoyable night to celebrate the end of four amazing years of the Co-op Spaces projects.

As part of this project we were given small pots of funding to help benefit community spaces. We did this with the young people from our local youth clubs, schools and community groups who excelled with some brilliant ideas that were brought to life. The projects ranged from community gardens in residential homes, creating a new waiting area in a children's ward at James Cook University Hospital and giving out hampers over Christmas to the community. The list goes on and on.

It was such a special project that staff in Middlesbrough wanted to thank the young people and organisations that were involved. The celebration event which was held at The Dickens Inn in Middlesbrough, was a wonderful occasion where each group was presented with certificates of appreciation and awards were handed out for 'Project of the Year'. There was a singing performance from one of the groups, 'Grassroots Music' who stole the show and had everyone up dancing. It was a really well attended event with guests including **Deanne Dixon** Funding and Partnership Manager of the Co-op Foundation, **Steve Turner** Cleveland Police Crime Commissioner, and **Chris Cooke** Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough. A massive well done and thank you to all involved.

Tees Valley Youthwatch

Tees Valley Youthwatch was a 12 month pilot project between YFNE and every relevant Healthwatch (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees) from across the Tees Valley Region.

Together we actively encouraged young people aged 13 to 25 to speak up on health and social care issues which mattered to them. These included; sexual health, LGBTQ+ rights and how to access GP support services.

We ran a series of online and face to face sessions, and were able to have external agencies come in and support our learning and understanding of particular topics, for example: sexual health services. The young people that took part in this project respected the opportunity they had to be able to talk about topics which are personal to them in a safe space. All the findings from the young people were sent to each individual Healthwatch to shape their delivery.

North Ormesby Big Local

Our North Ormesby youth provision provides a weekly safe and fun space for young people aged 10 to 18, to develop friendships and life skills. Our provision supports young people from getting involved in risk taking behaviours and giving them opportunities to raise their aspirations and hope for their futures. Having this safe space is important to the young people as they are all collated into an overall assumption that they are bad. However, a lot of young people are doing positive work within their community and show respect to their area. It is these young people that we are advocating for as well.

Our sessions include a range of activities chosen weekly by the young people; cooking is a huge part of their learning in North

Ormesby, they spend time learning about each other's cultures through food and also through areas such as music and art.

Young people from the area also had the opportunity to speak with Channel 5 News about the cost of living, the impact it has on them and their families and why having a space to attend weekly has supported them and their families during this difficult time. Members of the public were blown away by their honesty and how well they spoke about such a difficult subject for many. Following their appearance we received generous donations to go towards our youth provision, which allowed the young people to enjoy a well deserved trip out.

Park End - Pop N Drop

Beginning November 2023, our Pop N Drop project has been operating from inside the Local Family Hub building in the Park End area of Middlesbrough, before this we delivered from the skate park located at the heart of the ward.

During our sessions the young people have; enjoyed getting to participate in nature themed activities and have created their own social action project around them, enjoyed getting involved in arts and crafts, joined in

on cooking opportunities, and participated in sports events. The young people have especially liked the recent moving indoors element of the youth club as this means they no longer have to brave the elements!

We can have anywhere between 20 to 40 young people attend the session each week. The coming year we look forward to putting more physical activities into our sessions, and participating in more engaging activities that the young people come up with.

Go Green Together

Go Green Together is an environmental project funded by VONNE that aimed to produce climate action projects with young people across different areas. This project worked in two areas, Saltburn and Stockton-on-Tees. We worked with over 20 young people aged 11 to 18 across the areas, but were able to make a further impact into their communities through their projects.

The project in Saltburn working with "The Cut Back" was a campaign to Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council to ask them to ban or reduce their use of Glyphosate; a harmful chemical used by the council to kill weeds in their area. The young people produced a petition and held a presentation to Councillors where an agreement was made for a plan to be in place to reduce glyphosate use down to zero and stop its

overall use by the council by December 2024. The project in Stockton working with Hart Gables, an LGBTQ+ group of young people, was also a campaign, with the aim of educating the local community on their carbon footprint. Over months of hard work the young people put together a workshop, where they challenged the audience on their carbon footprint, in addition to offering great explanations into how slightly adapting different everyday behaviours can impact their Co2 emissions.

Throughout both projects the young people maintained a passion towards what they wanted to achieve, and were determined through their hard work to make a positive change within their community for the benefit of their future and the environment.

Arts Council

2023 saw the final funded year of working as a Youth Advisory Board with Youth Focus North West and Youth Work Unit - Yorkshire and Humber.

The board supported 23 board meetings, across the life of the project, with four of these being overnights. 25 young people have been involved as board members during the journey of the programme, with an average of 42 hours per young person.

The young people were involved in:

- Advising staff at Arts Council England and stakeholders on key policy area
- Making recommendations by speaking at National Council meetings and presenting thoughts on key policy areas
- The opportunity to engage in arts and culture across the country whilst developing their skills, knowledge and network

Dulverton Trust

This was a multi-generational, community based social action project with young people living in the rural areas of Redcar & Cleveland and Gateshead. People of all ages were recruited from the local community to plan and deliver a social action project to benefit the wider community.

The outcomes we achieved were:

- To improve mental health and wellbeing of young people and that of the wider community
- To increase people's understanding of isolation and loneliness by addressing this topic
- To improve community cohesion between the different generations
- To increase the voice of the local community

Two examples of the kind of social action projects we delivered are; a tea party for a care home, and a community event for local residents.

Amplify

Youth Focus North East and Musinc worked in partnership to run four music projects across Middlesbrough. Each project ran for six weeks and the young people worked with a local musician and youth worker. We met with young people in a space that was familiar to them, gave them the space to talk about things that are of interest to them, worked together with them to build on their music interests, and think about how music affects our well-being, and created opportunities for young people to voice their views about where they lived and how their community may see them.

Young people who were part of the Safer Streets project wanted to write about how people's perceptions of them are different to what they think. They wrote about the reasons why they hang out near the local shops and shared about what they do. We then worked with Community Ventures in Thorntree to give a group of five young people the opportunity to explore music and what it meant to them; they used this space to write their own poem/rap about something that was important to them. During our collaboration with Linx in Coulby Newham, one young person spent the full six weeks with us to create their own poem to perform.

The final project took place in a YFNE led youth club in Thorntree. One young person wrote about their experience of being bullied and the way that it made them feel, they then worked with another young person to add music to the piece and performed it for the rest of the youth club.

Life in Boro

By Young Person

*Life in the Boro could seem so scary,
Coming to the block got to be weary,*

*Houses getting raided, people joining gangs,
Young kids rapping like Jordan McCann,*

*Chilling with my friends by the shops,
And they are always calling the cops,*

*Good kids always doing wrong,
Just trying to find a reason to belong,*

*Life in Boro isn't always bad,
Sometimes they confuse being tough as mad,*

*When things go left, people have your back,
Lots of running space, to keep you on track,*

*People think it's poo, but that ain't true,
Call us a gang, but it's just the crew,*

*They try to paint us as bad on the media,
Doesn't make life for us any easier.*

Story About Love

By Tarlin McDonald

*(Verse) This is my story about love
I flew high just like a dove
But it doesn't feel right in my heart
And I just feel like I need a new start
She's backstabbed me like a dart
She's driving me mad like a cart
Some are evil
I thought we were equal*

*(Chorus) Man, why she gotta be a snake
Why she gotta be fake
Why couldn't she see the true love
Man this is what it feels like to have a
heartbreak*

*(Verse) To be honest I'm drowning in my tears
I don't think I'll fall in love again for years
Now losing time, love is my new fear
Oh I used to call you sweetheart
But I guess I wasn't that smart
That smart to see your true part
The day you told me it left my heart
But now the two of us are apart*

(Chorus)

*(Verse) So we had no romance
Was it all just a trance
So you said you loved me and gave me a hug
But you really thought I was a bad bug
You are such a snake full of poison
You are sour like a lemon
I thought you had some passion
You bombed with evil like a canon*

(Chorus)

Springwell

Earlier this year we began working in the Springwell area on a social action project aimed to reduce knife crime in the area. The young people we work with sadly lost their friend Tomasz to a knife crime attack in October 2022. These young people decided they wanted to tidy up the community garden in Tomasz' memory, and they also wanted to petition Gateshead Council to have street lights erected on 'the lines' on the estate where Tomasz' attack took place.

Through their dedication and enthusiasm the petition gained over 800 signatures and Gateshead Council agreed to meet and discuss the petition.

Since then we have continued to work with the young people of Springwell on Thursday evenings, and will continue to support them and the community as best we can.

Great North Children's Hospital

YFNE have expanded our local youth offer by appointing a new Youth Worker, Hannah Potter, at the Great North Children's Hospital (GNCH). Hannah's role is to work with and support patients within the GNCH, promoting the social development of young patients, providing emotional and practical support to young people.

means working with young people not only within the hospital but also support in accessing community services and activities, examples of this so far are supporting patients transitioning to college and supporting the families of transplant patients to halfway houses.

Working in the hospital Hannah promotes the advocacy for groups of patients who may be currently under represented, assists in the transition to adult care, accompanies young people to hospital appointments and undertakes advocacy work on the wards. Bringing youth work to this setting

Work has also been carried out alongside researchers and consultants to support the Young Persons Advisory Group and the Youth Forum, both of which seek to include young people and young patients in clinical research projects and give them a voice within healthcare.

Rowlands Gill

Our youth provision in Rowlands Gill started in February 2023 as a youth space for young people aged 10 to 18 to attend every Tuesday evening. At each session the young people would be provided with many different activities of their choice ranging from arts and crafts, sports, games, cooking, baking and a safety session in Newcastle.

people at Christmas time. The young people worked hard making homemade Christmas cards, decorating/painting mugs, making reindeer hot chocolate pouches and much more to put inside Christmas bags.

Between September and December the young people worked hard on creating a social action project of their choice in which they wanted to make Christmas bags to deliver to the local elderly care home in order to tackle isolation and loneliness in elderly

By December the young people had created 50 Christmas bags, taking them to the care home to hand deliver the bags to the residents. We received many responses from the residents including "This has made my day", "I have never met children so generous and kind" and "You have no idea how much this means to me".



Young Person Case Study

When this young person started our provision they were quite heavily involved with antisocial behaviour and crime within the local community. They would regularly attend our provision and always be the first person at the door ready to come in, despite this they were still causing nuisance within the local area. Over their time in the youth club, local police officers from the area started coming into the sessions to engage with the young people, and to also bridge that gap between police and the local community. This young person was quite resistant to their presence at the sessions, but eventually warmed up to them as the weeks went on and they realised that the police would get involved with things they were interested in during youth club such as sport.

To encourage this young person's behaviour to be positive overall, and not just in youth club, we created a reward system and praised them for improvements that we not only we saw in youth club, but also what we heard about them outside within the community. During these sessions, one of our youth leads provided one-to-one meetings with this

young person; supporting them to recognise the impact of their negative behaviour and the effect it has not only on them, but on those who surround them. We worked with other services to ensure their voice was being heard around issues they were experiencing, together with this young person we built a list of opportunities that they were interested in, and things that they could be supported with to surround themselves with a more positive outlook and behaviour. Since these things have been implemented the young person is; continuing to engage well with the youth provision, behaving while out in the local community, and doing well in school. The young person recognised the youth club as their safe space, that the staff could support them to have a more positive outlook, and their aspirations were more than achievable. Informal education was instrumental to this young person thriving, and ensuring that all their decisions inside and outside of the youth club were for their benefit. It's great to see the change, and they have even encouraged their mates to come along to benefit from our youth club.


Children in Need - Positive Pathways

Funded by Children in Need, Positive Pathways is a community project based in the Pallister Park Centre for young people of East Middlesbrough, of which is ranked 27th out of 7522 wards in level of deprivation. Positive Pathways provides weekly open access provision and one to one support. We offer a safe and fun space for young people aged 10 to 18 to develop friendships and life skills in an informal educational manner.

Just by living in Pallister Park young people are immediately disadvantaged due to negative stereotypes held by many from outside this community. They are referred to as the 'Pally Mafia' due to the perceived associations with anti-social behaviour. Other terms we hear about these young people are 'Hard to reach', 'Disadvantaged', 'Lacking Aspiration'. These judgements are a deficit model about communities. They don't inspire any hope or belief in the young people. They feel trapped and ignored, and unfortunately are less likely to make a positive transition into adulthood.

This is why our provision is so successful and has such a positive impact on the young people that attend. Themed interventions are delivered around the personal challenges young people face, including; deprivation, employability, risk taking behaviour, and improving their mental wellbeing and physical activity. Young people have told us how hard this year has been and we want to create a space that is both educational and fun. Delivering a healthy mix of activities and workshops we aim to raise their aspirations to reach their full potential, allowing them to better themselves for their future. Examples of activities we have offered are; wheelchair basketball, skateboarding, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), graffiti, cooking workshops, which has enabled the young people to be themselves and enjoy their time with their peers.

The young people have also taken part in social action projects which have benefited the local community such as; community fun days, stress awareness boxes, Christmas food hampers and much more. This has allowed young people to make new positive relationships within the youth club setting, and also for community members and professionals to see young people in a positive light. Young people recognise our youth club as a safe space for them to enjoy on a weekly basis stating that when they come to us 'We feel like family' which is credit to the staff who run this project.



“We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.”

Mary Mcleod Bethune

Young Boro Champions

The Young Boro Champions project has worked with different young people in their communities across Middlesbrough. This could be the local community or the school community. Through these projects the young people have engaged with hundreds of people; organising fun days, multicultural picnics, arranging food hampers at Christmas, organising a Serious Youth Violence project in a local school, making Christmas Eve bags, and redesigning a skate park.

The young people enjoyed taking part in the projects and whilst doing so their attendance

and behaviour in school improved so they could carry on the projects. They learnt how to work as a team, budget their money, shop for food and other items, and have a sense of belonging and pride in their work. We made sure to learn from any disadvantages we came across, to make sure they didn't happen again. As a result of the project we are able to reach out to the wider communities and work further afield. We are looking forward to working with new young people and communities we haven't previously worked with.

Safe Space

Funded by the Mental Health Transformation Fund, Safe Space is a project where we offer young people space where they can explore their mental health concerns in a creative way. Working with link workers from the Rawling Road GP surgery in Bensham to offer social prescribing support, the mental health development team to offer targeted mental health support, and a dedicated

writer provided by New Writing North to host creative sessions. Young people have the option to take part in creative activities or if they prefer; just to chat. They can access support during sessions. We have been able to collaborate outside of the project and ensure individuals suffering mental health issues are supported and referred to the correct places and organisations.

Rooted in Nature

This project delivers nature-based social action sessions across Middlesbrough. This experience has been a great chance for young people to have their say, and be directly involved, in something that is important to them.

We worked with young people, who access drug and alcohol services, to create a safe space for other users of the service. These young people worked together to; pick welcoming colours to paint the wood fencing and seating, spoke to staff about creating a discreet memorial space for those who have passed away from addiction, picked out a variety of plants so there was colour throughout the year, and picked out some ornaments which were placed in the garden area.

In addition to this, we also worked with a local school where young people wanted to create a welcoming garden space for their peers to enjoy. The area they picked was accessed by students with additional needs, who prefer a quieter space at break times. They worked together to make the space feel warm and welcoming, concluding with a small opening ceremony, inviting their peers and teachers to see the space.

Young people who attend a local youth club wanted to host an environmental-based fun day for their local community. The group picked out a variety of activities that residents could take part in, including crafting items to take home that would support the local wildlife as well as improve the environment where they lived.

Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)

Holiday Activity Fund awarded Youth Focus North East £55,878 of funds to deliver vital services to young people over the Easter, summer and Christmas period. During these opportunities we engaged young people in sports, arts and crafts, dance, wheelchair basketball, trips out over the summer with their peers and also delivering 100 food hampers over Christmas to the families we regularly work with. This has been a great opportunity to keep young people still engaging in our activities throughout the year, especially during these holiday periods when we know money can be difficult for many of the communities we support. Young people and parents comment that they find having youth provision still available and their child being able to access a hot meal is amazing. We have had new young people joining us for their first time over these periods and they now are regular attendees of our youth clubs, no matter the time of year.

KFC Foundation

In partnership with KFC Foundation - Youth Focus North East delivered a range of workshops for young people in the local community throughout the six week holidays.

Using our Pop N Drop model we delivered cooking workshops, meanwhile focusing on certain topics such as food hygiene, balanced healthy diets, how to prevent food waste and much more.

This project was delivered across Pallister Park, North Ormesby and Thorntree with young people gaining valuable experience to support them with life skills which young people we work with are so passionate about developing.

HAF Young Inspectors

Within this project we have recruited 18 young people from across Middlesbrough and Redcar to become Young Inspectors of the Holiday Activity Fund provision in the South Tees Area. So far the young people have inspected a total of 24 HAF projects and shared their findings with the local council and the Mayor of Middlesbrough across Summer 2023, Winter 2023/24 and Easter 2024.

The young people were trained to recognise what makes a good inspector and were given the opportunity to reflect on what skills they already have to be able to do the role well, with support from us. They looked at the quality assurance document provided to us by the HAF and developed their own set of questions to ask when going to visit the other provisions in the area. The young people also co-designed a report template with staff, that they used when going round the different provisions to help them document and summarise their findings.

The team of young people are retrained on a six monthly basis to refresh their knowledge of the role, develop new skills and participate in team building activities. This training helps them to feel confident in their roles and ability to speak to different staff and young people, identify their own key findings, and write up high quality reports after each inspection they carry out.

PAC

PAC is an amazing peer research and social action project that we were thrilled to be chosen to lead again following on from the success of the North East PAC in 2022. This time we will be focusing on youth violence in educational settings and how we can reduce violence caused by, or within, the education system.

In September, we recruited 10 young people to work on PAC 2; eight as Peer Researchers and two as Social Action Leads. The team is split geographically with half being based at the YFNE Middlesbrough office and the other half working for our partner organisation NE Youth in Gateshead, coming together as a whole team as often as possible.

We kick-started PAC with a bang, getting together for a weekend of activities and training at Dukeshouse Wood in Hexham. The group connected while tackling high ropes challenges, taking on the 3G swing and learning bush craft skills. There was a lot of fun and laughter, and the group bonded quickly. They also spent time getting to grips with what research and social action are, and how their jobs could create positive and a lasting impact in their community.

After this, it wasn't long until the whole group were back on the road together for an even longer trip. We went down to Lincolnshire to stay at PGL Caythorpe for the weekend as part of the national PAC plans. They met and worked with PAC teams from across the country, learning about PAC on a national scale and how the North East fits into a much bigger picture. The weekend left the group feeling passionate and excited to get going. They had lots of ideas for what they wanted to research and potential social action plans that could come from it.

The year ended on a high with plans for a pilot project in the New Year coming together, collating questions about all of the topics they were interested in and thought would be important to their peers. Based on the learning from the pilot the group will develop a main research project which will be taken to local schools and youth groups, allowing young people to get their voices heard—we can't wait to hear what they have to say!



YMCA Wearside

A number of young people living at the YMCA Wearside worked together to come up with different ideas on what they felt would be a good resource that the YMCA should have but didn't currently. After a number of sessions of coming up with different ideas, the young people settled on a 'Welcome Guide' for newcomers which would be created by current residents.

The young people wanted new residents to have something useful and comforting for them to read, while also reassuring them that

they are in a good and safe place to live.

After many sessions of hard work, brainstorming, baking, cooking, getting creative, and researching we were able to put together a well presented 'Welcome Guide' in which they aim to provide all residents new and existing with. The booklet includes introductions to the YMCA, shared experiences living at the YMCA, cooking recipes, links and support to local services for mental health, sexual health, education and much more.

Safer Streets

After running a community consultation within the Pallister Park and Berwick Hills areas of Middlesbrough in March 2023 on behalf of Middlesbrough Council, we stated that we would use the findings from that report to work with local service providers and organisations to put together a variety of opportunities for young people in the area.

Each project chosen ran for six weeks, with one of our Lead Youth Workers and a Sessional Worker supporting young people to attend sessions, with the aim of the young people continuing the activity after the mini projects ended and becoming active members of the local community in a more positive way.

We ran a series of music workshops for the young people through our Amplify project; we paid for the young people to access their local boxing gym during the six weeks holidays and engaged with healthy cooking activities outdoors, we ran an outdoors sports and obstacle course with the support of our What a Racket Sports Coach, and we also paid for young people to access the local gym for three sessions, as well as undertaking detached youth work in the local area.

Over the course of the project we engaged with a total of 48 young people, most of whom attended multiple sessions throughout the duration of the project.

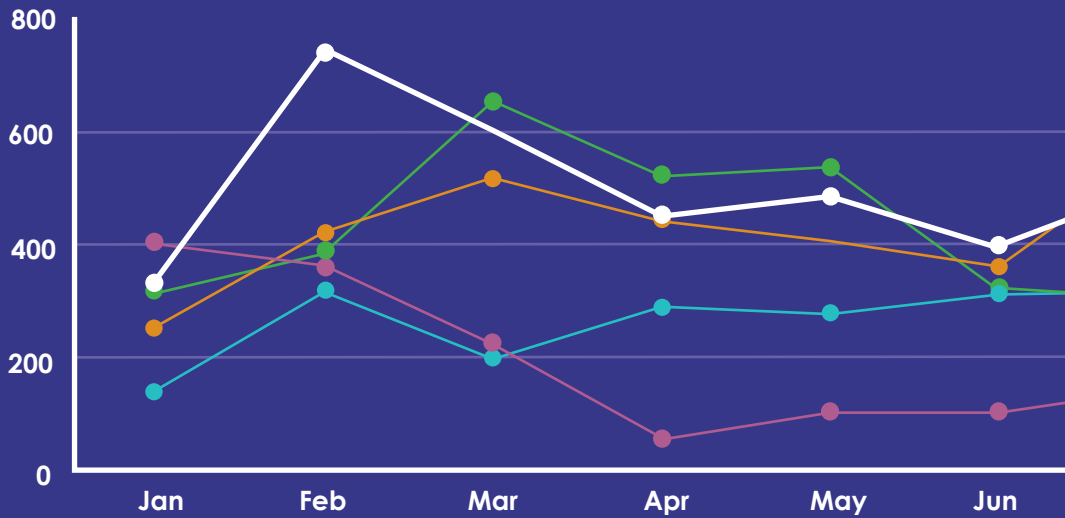
Free Space

Free Space is a safe and open space where young people can explore topics which they identify as important to them without facing prejudice or judgment.

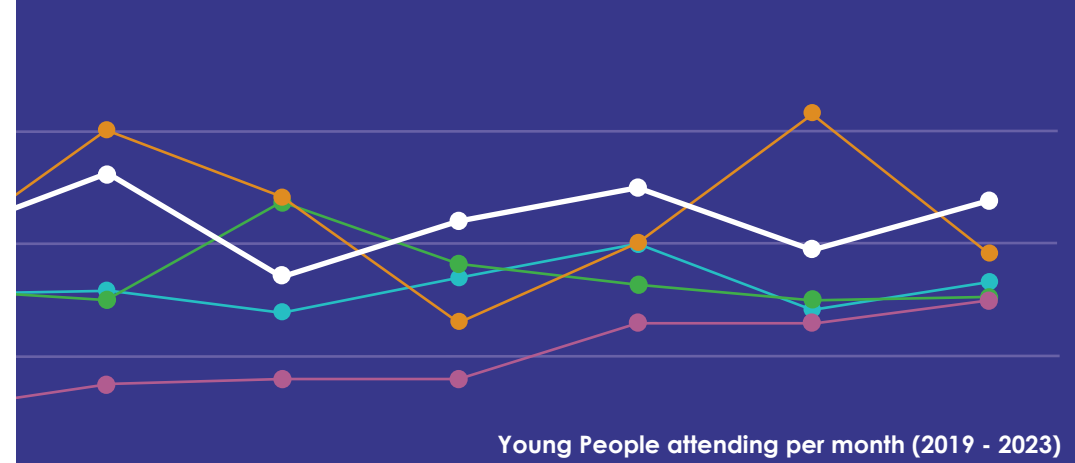
During the last year we have explored topics such as healthy relationships, sexual health, gender stereotypes and isolation & loneliness, as well as contributing to research work on child poverty, and identifying gaps and areas for improvement in mental health services of which were presented as part of a visionary

panel to over 200 health professionals. The group also contributed to a local environmental project 'Bees of Bensham' where they explored bee habitats through art work, and took part in a first aid workshop delivered by the British Red Cross.

This group also operates as a safe space where young people are able to access support, referrals, and signposting for a vast array of issues linking to their mental health and wellbeing.



Hours of Session Delivery per Project 2023



Young People per Local Authority (2021-2023)

Big Local	Springwell	Children in Need Pallister Park	Co-op #iwill Spaces	Holiday Activity Fund
214	155	148	136	133
Thorn tree	Pop N Drop	Engage Training	Rowlands Gill	Belong
111	108	106	63	62
Free Space	Musinc	Young Boro Champions	Young Inspectors	Safer Streets
61	45	43	41	32
Safe Space	Make that Change Dulveton Trust	GGT Stockton	Rooted in Nature	NEYA
32	24	22	22	20
GGT Saltburn	Sunderland YMCA	Youthwatch	KFC Foundation	British Youth Council
20	20	19	18	16
HAF Young Inspectors	Paul Hamlyn	Streetlaw	Youth International	
16	12	8	5	

Month	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
January	250	404	136	315	335
February	419	366	313	380	746
March	520	220	194	659	607
April	441	54	287	520	459
May	405	97	273	536	489
June	358	101	312	323	402
July	607	152	318	301	526
August	487	159	281	481	344
September	261	161	343	366	442
October	401	264	407	329	505
November	636	259	287	302	395
December	385	308	335	305	474

2021	1312	54	188	25	115	15	11	5	8	2	6	3	28
2022	1400	337	203	83	64	41	27	24	14	12	6	4	5
2023	1984	140	92	58	203	32	34	4	254	19	40	7	1

Newcastle Law School

Since 2011, we have had the pleasure of working with Newcastle University to support their own Street Law project. Street Law involves law students going into schools and youth groups to inform young people about legal issues using practical and interactive teaching methods. YFNE delivers bespoke

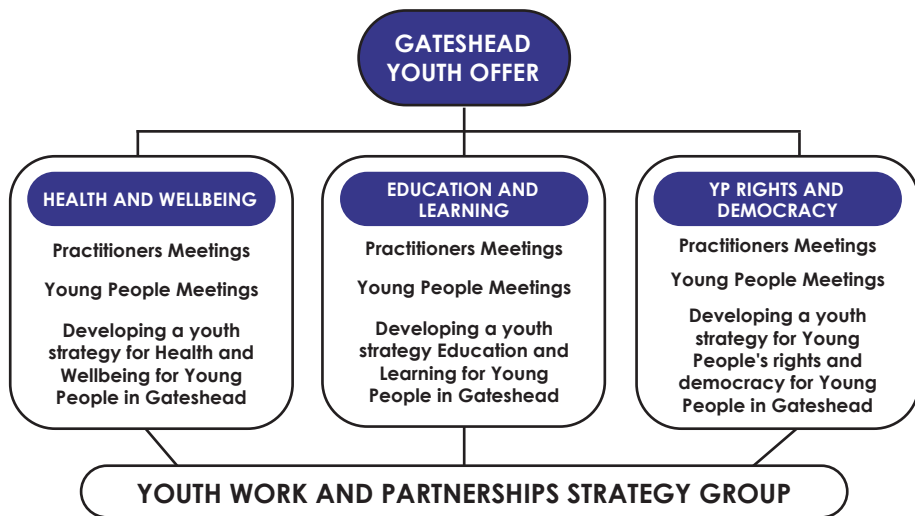
interactive training sessions to undergraduate students from Newcastle Law School on effectively working with young people. The training enables them to become Street Law Ambassadors, delivering discussion and awareness sessions to groups of children and young people in the North East.

Paul Hamlyn

This year, the priority was to develop the three main themes within the "Gateshead Youth Offer". These were the following:

- Health and Wellbeing
- Education and Learning
- Young People's Rights and Democracy

Within each of the three main themes the priorities included developing practitioners meetings and young people's meetings with the focus of developing a youth strategy for each theme for young people in Gateshead. Underpinning all of this is the development of the Gateshead – Youth Work Partnership Strategic Group.



Through this funding, it has allowed YFNE to create a strategic group for Gateshead which will underpin all of the themes, and will be the focus of creating a youth strategy for Gateshead. During the last year we have seen this project grow from strength to strength. We have seen the increased expansion of programmes and projects across the area.

British Youth Council

Through our work with the British Youth Council (BYC) we collaborate with Local Authorities and young people from across the North East. Young people from the North East have been elected by their peers to run as Members of Youth Parliament (MYP) for their Local Authority. MYPs are elected into their role for two years and run several campaigns in this term, these campaigns are based on outcomes from the Make Your Mark campaign and local needs. The MYPs must represent the voice of all young people in LA.

Over the last year, MYPs have worked on a campaign called Food for Learning. MYPs have been to the House of Commons to debate on key themes that have come from the campaign and have been working on a Bill to put to the Government.

After the current MYPs step down in March 2024, we will be inviting them to be part of our youth voice work moving forward and linking to the results of Make Your Mark 2024.

Culture Bridge

Our Culture Bridge programme is a two year programme supporting the building of partnerships between the youth and cultural sector, YFNE is a partner of this programme. The initial phase of our work has been building and developing the steering group. The group has taken ownership of the programme and created a terms of reference. A networking event was held later in the year

which was incredibly well attended and provided valuable feedback to help us move the programme forward. The event provided a perfect platform to begin building relationships and exploring collaborative opportunities. The steering group has since met and developed a comprehensive plan for 2024.

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future”

Franklin D. Roosevelt

North East Youth Alliance

The following draws the work of the NEYA together for 2023 and is presented under the three main themes of:

- > **Workforce Development**
- > **Youth Voice**
- > **Local Youth Partnership Development**

We firmly believe that the foundations achieved in the first three years of the NEYA in regards to our three original stated aims and ambitions (below) are now reaping reward across the youth sector in the North East and the information provided in this report clearly demonstrates this.

1. Relationships and status

[CHANGING CULTURE]

Including:

- Bringing greater sectoral unity to support more effective collaborative working.
- Efforts to improve the status and sustainability of youth work.

2. Including and supporting young people

[DEVELOPING DELIVERY]

Including:

- The inclusion of young people in development and decision-making (Youth Voice).
- Work to improve the quality of co-ordination of services via locally-based alliances.

3. Infrastructure support

[STRENGTHENING SUPPORT]

Including:

- The delivery of workforce development i.e. training.
- Work to transform funding for youth work in the North East.

In addition to the three main themed areas of work we have increasingly been developing, facilitating and delivering a number of **Wider Sector Developments** and **Cross-Sector Collaborations** which we have included at the end of this report.

> Workforce Development

Our workforce development offer continues to be diverse and vibrant for the sector. It is based on a combined offer of providing what the sector has asked for and by taking advantage of partnership opportunities when they arise.

In the first six months of this monitoring year, NEYA provided 20 workforce development opportunities which have ranged from designated safeguarding officer training through to a conference focussed on bringing the youth and creative sectors together to strengthen collaborative working - Some quotes from attendees:

Thought-provoking | I've enjoyed the day – really got me thinking of how I can improve my youth work to benefit the young people I work with. | Thank you for delivering this programme. It has hugely benefited myself and my organisation. | Great atmosphere in the room: light, fun and inspirational event.

CHILD POVERTY NETWORK

NEYA worked in collaboration with the North East Child Poverty Commission to host a roundtable event for the youth sector which was aimed at supporting the development of a wider child poverty strategy for the region.

During the event it was very evident that the individuals in the room were not only passionate about the topic, and were witnessing the impact of child poverty throughout the course of their work, but also wanted to come together to do something collaboratively to support the cause. This has prompted NEYA to develop a Child Poverty Network for the youth sector. Our aim is for the network to compliment and feed into the wider structures already in place across the region.

> Youth Voice

JUNIOR CAMPAIGNERS

In July we worked with a group of young people in Durham who had finished school for the summer and were looking to; develop their skills, build confidence, and make a change. The group worked together identifying issues that they thought people experience around

the world, and then identified that the topic they wanted to focus on was mental health. The group decided to advocate for the significance of checking in on friends and being attentive to warning signs.

Their dedicated efforts led to them; researching mental health statistics of young people, identifying mobile applications which can be used by people to support their mental health, and writing and filming a script. This activity developed their confidence in their abilities, talking in front of people, and also learning new skills such as video editing. The video produced is now being shared through social media. Junior campaigners will be working on creating a magazine with a group from all over the North East on the issue of domestic violence and the support services available to those in the LGBTQ+ community.

YOUNG INSPECTORS

Our Young Inspectors Programme gives young people the skills to positively evaluate the services they themselves access. The Young Inspectors provide recommendations to these organisations and ensure the voice of young people is heard within them.

Young people have undertaken inspections with 10 organisations and have more lined up. The purpose of these inspections was to ensure that organisations were carrying out the activities and providing food as agreed in their respective funding applications.

As part of our offer through the Local Youth Partnerships Development, we will be offering to deliver train-the-trainer sessions for youth workers alongside training young people to become young inspectors.

YOUTH POP

NEYA were approached by the Humanity Project UK to run a 'Popular Assembly' with young people. The Humanity Project is currently running assemblies across the country and wants to gain and include the views of people on the topics of the Cost of Living and the Climate Change Crisis. They have contacted us to run a North East Assembly with young people, as this is not something they had done previously and have been recommended to speak to us as

experts in the field of youth voice. The Local Assemblies will feed into a National Assembly, which will in turn feed the information and solutions from these events to the central Government, with the aim of influencing change at a national policy level.

Our North East Young People's Assembly, entitled 'Youth Pop' aimed to bring young people from across the region together to explore the two issues above. Young people heard from experts in these fields and took part in a range of interactive workshops, designed to enable them to have their voices and opinions listened to and recorded for inclusion in the national debate happening in February 2024. Our first Youth Pop was in the south of the region and the second will happen in the North of the region and run in January 2024.

> Local Youth Partnership Development

The development, sustainability and growth of Local Youth Partnerships continues to be high priority for the NEYA and we are now involved in facilitation these models of localised collaborative working in six of the 12 Local Authority Areas within the North East:

> **County Durham** YouthPrint Durham

> **Northumberland**

> **Gateshead** Youth Work and Strategic Partnership Group

> **Sunderland** The Sunderland All Together Consortium

> **Stockton** Youth United Stockton Alliance

> **Middlesbrough** Middlesbrough Youth Mutual

WIDER SECTOR DEVELOPMENTS & CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIONS

The NEYA continued to engage the Youth Sector to encourage and develop cross-sector collaboration. At the heart of this is The Youth Sector Leaders Group which provides space for the sector to share information, have a voice and discuss key issues for young people. Recent developments have included;

> **Youth Sector and Funders Collaborative Group**

> **Youth Work and Creative Practice Event**

> **Youth Work in and Out of Schools**

> **Youth Endowment Fund – Peer Action Collective**

Belong Collective

UK Youth has been collaboratively working with YFNE to build on learnings of how to tackle youth loneliness and isolation. Support from Astra Foundation and Co-op Foundation has helped us to further develop the work of the Belong Collective; a cross-sector network of youth groups and other stakeholders working together to develop vital resources, share learnings, challenges, and good practice to tackle youth loneliness and isolation.

Summary of activities throughout the year include; attending and supporting events,

Engage Training and Consultancy

Through our accredited training centre "Engage Training and Consultancy", we are now offering Level 2 Award and the Level 3 Certificate in Youth Work along with our accredited programme Access Unlimited. As a training centre, we are getting more youth work practitioners keen to gain a qualification to support their practice with young people. To date, we have had 124 learners gain a qualification with us, with more cohorts starting in the coming months.

"This course has educated me to work with young people and give them the best outcomes in their lives. It has been a pleasure to be fortunate to work on this course. The staff Laura, Zoe and Denise have been amazing. I'd love to work with them again in the future and will pass the positive feedback to my other peers too. Thank you for allowing me to take part in this amazing course."

Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC)

In 2023, we began to deliver our training programme called Access Unlimited. This is for the youth sector to support professionals to develop their skills and confidence in supporting young people who are visually impaired. This training is accredited by the Skills and Education Group and is open across England. The training is online for three hours and will continue to be delivered during 2024. During 2024, we will have two training dates a month for people from across England to join and gain an accreditation.

Any enquiries, contact Engage Training and Consultancy
email us on training@youthfocusne.org.uk

delivering "Train the Trainers" sessions locally and nationally, and producing resources with partners and young people.

YFNE have partnered with City Year UK to deliver training sessions for their volunteer mentors and staff members. City Year UK is an education charity which places young full time volunteers in schools for a year, where they then act as mentors to students providing pastoral and educational support.



"I definitely have a better understanding of youth work and building relationships with young people. I will be able to have a better working relationship with young people after learning to understand them better and how as a youth worker to move forward and build professional relationships with the young people I work with and will be engaging with in the future."

"This course has already benefited my career as it has given me an outline to plan my sessions, renewed my processes of safeguarding and developed my engagement and communication skills. After each session, I am able to adapt my learning into my practice. This reflection then evaluation has allowed for our youth provision at my workplace to grow and we are now supporting more young people."

Statement of Financial Activities (Including Income and Expenditure Account)

For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Notes	General Unrestricted Funds £	Designated Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2023 £	As restated Total Funds 2022 £
Income from:						
Donations and Legacies	4	-	-	-	-	1,352
Charitable Activities	5	66,142	-	1,025,863	1,092,005	857,168
Other trading activities	7	1,924	-	-	1,924	1,899
Investments	6	3,234	-	-	3,234	1,578
		<u>71,300</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>1,025,863</u>	<u>1,097,163</u>	<u>861,997</u>
Expenditure on:						
Charitable Activities:	8	119,831	-	941,649	1,061,480	768,006
		<u>119,831</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>941,649</u>	<u>1,061,480</u>	<u>768,006</u>
Net Income (Expenditure)		(48,531)	-	84,214	35,683	93,991
Transfer Between Funds	18	(55,932)	19,305	36,627	-	-
Net Movement in Funds		<u>(104,463)</u>	<u>19,305</u>	<u>120,841</u>	<u>35,683</u>	<u>93,991</u>
Reconcillation of Funds						
Total Funds brought forward		<u>246,239</u>	<u>66,101</u>	<u>198,500</u>	<u>510,840</u>	<u>416,849</u>
Total Funds carried forward		<u>141,776</u>	<u>85,406</u>	<u>319,341</u>	<u>546,523</u>	<u>510,840</u>

All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised during the year.



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