



York Cares 2024 Impact Report

Making York a better place
through employee-volunteering

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On behalf of the York Cares team, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has been involved with York Cares this year - our members, our volunteers, our partners and our Board of Directors. For a small, local charity, our success is very much rooted in the strength of our partnerships.

This year has not been without its challenges but we have met these head on and are entering our 20th year determined to ensure the long-term sustainability of the charity.

I am incredibly proud of all of our achievements this year but, in particular I would like to highlight the growth of our Aspirations programme which has seen a huge resurgence in activity; the sheer volume of items our members have donated for those in need; the success of the Big Community Challenge in bringing together people from across the city in a shared goal and the sheer joy of attending Shimmer and Shine and celebrating with older and younger neighbours.

I am hugely excited to see what 2025 has in store in our 20th anniversary year.

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Holly Hennell,
Manager, York Cares

What did we achieve in 2024?



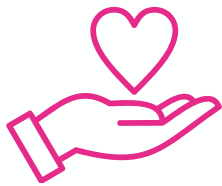
Over 1,990
employee-volunteers
gave their time



Employee-volunteers
gave more than 9,150
hours through our
programmes



Collectively, our
members gave over
1,220 working days to
making a better York



Across our
campaigns, over
6,200 items were
donated



More than 1,500
pupils took part in
Aspirations activities



110 teams took
part in a
Community Challenge



We hosted 28
Social Clubs to help
reduce loneliness
and social isolation



“ If you are a local business, charity or organisation in York and aren't already working with York Cares, I would highly suggest you make contact to see how they could help – they're a fabulous organisation! ”

*Katy Ridsdill Smith,
Chief Executive, Community Furniture Stores*

Aspirations

Our Aspirations programme brings the world of work to life through a variety of encounters with people at work. Through these encounters, we aim to inspire people about possible futures and empower them to succeed. The people we work with may have limited access to role models, professional networks and opportunities and limited or no experience of higher education and/or employment.

In 2024, we have continued our partnership working with The Place, supporting the development and delivery of the employability strand for the centre. Alongside this work, we have delivered a range of activities in schools and organisations across the city supporting the theme of raising aspirations. Our longest running programme, Right to Read continues to prove successful with employee-volunteers and schools alike.

In total, over **235** employee-volunteers gave over **1,300** hours delivering activities designed to raise aspirations. In total, over **1,500** pupils from **20** local schools and through The Place benefited from activities delivered through the Aspirations programme.

“ I know the children will remember this week forever - it was lovely to see them doing real science and developing skills. There aren't enough superlatives for how great it has been.

Thank you to you all for making it such an amazing experience for our children.

*Teacher,
Westfield Primary Community School*



Aspirations in Action

“I didn't realise that GCSE Engineering could lead me into a job like this.”

A quote from one pupil who visited Portakabin that encapsulates why opportunities to visit workplaces are so important.

On 26 September, we celebrated National Manufacturing Day with a visit to Portakabin for a group of pupils from Millthorpe School. Our amazing employee-volunteers at Portakabin welcomed a group of Year 10 pupils onto their site for a behind-the-scenes look at their manufacturing facilities. Decked out in PPE, they toured the site viewing their full product range and gaining insight into every step of the manufacturing process. One pupil shared: *“It was so amazing to see the machinery in use and see how structures are put together!”*

The tour highlighted the wide variety and breadth of career roles and skilled job opportunities available in the sector.

After observing the manufacturing of Portakabin’s modular buildings from paper plans to full buildings, the pupils were challenged to use their new knowledge to design and draw a plan for three portable cabins incorporating a variety of additional features for a school with a specific set budget. The young people embraced the task coming up with some excellent and creative responses!

The whole morning offered a window into the world of manufacturing here in their own city. In a fast paced labour market and ever-changing career landscape, opportunities like this are crucial; offering pupils the necessary concrete and practical insight into potential futures available to them. A huge thank you to our volunteers at Portakabin who facilitated and delivered this opportunity. We look forward to celebrating National Manufacturing Day 2025 with more opportunities!



Big Community Challenge

This year we hosted our 16th Big Community Challenge. The Big Community Challenge ran between 16 September and 11 October. During the four weeks, over **480** employee-volunteers from **16** local employers and both universities volunteered over **1,360** hours of their time to change landscapes, connecting communities in the North, South, East and West of York through nature.

We hosted **48** volunteering sessions across **33** sites working with **28** partners.

During the challenge employee-volunteers weeded, dug, raked, scythed, built a pond dipping platform and boardwalk, picked litter, sowed **6** kg wildflower seed and planted around **17,800** plants and bulbs to improve the sites.



“ Both sessions were a really good opportunity to improve the local environment and as they are very near where I work I will be able to watch them grow. It was also great to be able to work with some people I know and some that I don't. The final event, the boat trip was a great way to finish the challenge and view what we had done. ”

Employee-Volunteer

Big Community Challenge in Action

For this year's Big Community Challenge (BCC), our focus was on connecting communities with nature through both practical and creative opportunities, enhancing the environment whilst nurturing social connections. Our projects spanned across York, linking to St Nicks' York Green Corridors project. Volunteers worked on sites all over the city, with routes leading into the city-centre and culminating in North Street Gardens which is a key site in a longer-term project funded by Nature Hubs and the Aviva Community Fund.

In partnership with City of York Council's ECO Team, the Councillors for Environment and Climate Emergency, St Nicks, and the University of York, we carefully selected sites that play a crucial role in preserving and improving biodiversity across the city.

Our teams dug in deep to plant over 17,800 plants and bulbs, sow wildflower seeds, and install new features like benches in North Street Gardens. This collaborative effort not only supports York's biodiversity but also strengthens the community's connection to these green spaces, making them places for everyone to enjoy.

We couldn't have achieved this without the incredible support from our partners. Together, we made significant strides in turning these green corridors into thriving ecosystems that connect our city in more ways than one. This year's BCC showed the power of community action in changing our landscapes for the better. We're excited to continue these efforts, and we know that the work done this year will have a lasting impact on York's environment and its people.



Campaigns

Based on feedback from our employer members, in 2024 we expanded our Christmas Collection and carried out collections throughout the year.

We kicked off with an Easter Egg collection for those living in Independent Living Communities in the City aiming for **500** Easter Eggs. Our members donated a whopping **905** Easter Eggs meaning that we were also able to donate over **400** to children's charities across the city.

The next collection supported the Hygiene Bank, and once again we were blown away by the support from our members as we collected a total of **700** items.

These items were donated to help reduce hygiene poverty in the city.

Over the summer, we collected items for Westfield Primary Community School and York High School. Westfield Primary Community School asked for items to support the expansion of their outdoor learning provision. York High asked for breakfast bars to ensure that all pupils have access to breakfast as well as stationery supplies. For this collection, a total of **1,345** items were donated.

In 2024, our new year-round Collection Campaigns saw a whopping **2,950** items to support causes across the city. An incredible **15** employer members backed the collections through donating items.



“

These donations from you will make a huge difference to our local community. We couldn't do this without the help from people like you.

”

*Vicky Hardwick,
York Hygiene Bank*

Work Wardrobe

Our Work Wardrobe was established to support University of York students by providing them with free work appropriate clothing. In a fast moving and evolving work world, it's hard to know what *is* work appropriate or what to wear for an interview.

Pass this hurdle, and one must then have the time and money to purchase the appropriate garments. Collecting lightly used work wear from our members has provided a new sustainable way for them to contribute to the community and removes one barrier to employment for many students.

Some of our members, such as Aviva and Fera have established permanent rails at their sites, giving employees the opportunity to contribute as and when suits them. We collect from these rails when they are full, and this has facilitated our presence at the University of York and York St John University Careers Fairs and other employability events; giving professional clothes a new lease of life and supporting local students and young people to prepare for the world of work.

In 2024, **764** items of lightly used work wear were donated by our employer members and other local businesses.



“ I've got an interview this afternoon so these [shoes] are perfect. ”

*Student,
University of York*

Christmas Collection



Our Christmas Collection is a staple in the York Cares calendar. The Christmas Collection brings together donations from our members of essential items as well as Christmas gifts and treats. These vital and greatly appreciated donations are then delivered to charities supporting vulnerable and isolated people in York at Christmas.

This year the Christmas Collection supported **13** organisations in the city including Kyra, Door84, Refugee Action York, the Peasholme Centre and Spirit of Christmas. In total, **2,515** items were donated by **13** of our employer members and other local businesses.



“ Sending a huge thank you from us all at Kyra for the Christmas gifts donation. All so beautifully wrapped too. What a wonderful contribution!

”
*Briony Grassie,
Volunteer Coordinator, Kyra*

Environment & Sustainability

Our Environment & Sustainability programme offers a diverse range of opportunities to contribute to the city's urban green spaces through Community Challenges. This programme provides opportunities for teams to connect, thrive and be motivated. The programme positively contributes to well-being, whilst also making a difference in the community. Collaborating with 20 voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations, we directly support their goals by providing vital hands-on assistance.

In 2024, over **110** teams gave their time to support our local environment at **39** sites across the city. **18** employer members took part in Community Challenges.

A total of **1,146** employee-volunteers gave over an incredible **6,000** hours. This equates to a total of **811** working days all spent on improving much loved and needed green spaces in the city.



“ We had such a great time working in the gardens – made even better by the lovely weather we had during the session. We were all in great spirits, taking care of a space that we all use on a regular basis. It felt so good to get stuck in rather than assuming that someone else would instead.

Employee-Volunteer ”

Social Connections

Our Social Connections programme aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation amongst York residents through bringing together older and younger people in the city. By providing opportunities for younger and older people to share time, laughter, new experiences and friendship we aim to improve people's connections and sense of belonging and thereby well-being.

In 2024, we worked with our community partners and employer members to host **28** Social Clubs. All of these Social Clubs brought people together over an activity; such as Chop and Chat where older and younger neighbours make and enjoy a shared lunch; our regular Coffee Mornings at York Community Furniture Store as well as other activities such as Clay and Cake, foraging, and games.

We were delighted to be able to run our festive Social Club, Shimmer and Shine for the second year running which brought together over **90** people to share festive activities. In addition to this, we hosted our first Summer Sparkle Social Club at Hiscox which saw **48** older and younger neighbours and employee-volunteers come together for a summer soiree.

In total, over **230** older and younger neighbours in the city have benefitted from over **500** hours given by over **130** employee-volunteers in 2024.



“ I loved it – and enjoyed circulating and talking to everyone who came, as well as handing out teas and coffees and mince pies.

What a great event – I think everyone thoroughly enjoyed it.

Employee-Volunteer

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Social Connections in Action

Our Social Clubs are designed to help reduce loneliness and social isolation for people in the city. In a world marked by increasing loneliness and isolation, our initiative aims to reduce these issues and to create meaningful bonds between generations.

Our Social Clubs, which are now into their second year, have been making a positive impact by bridging the gap between older and younger individuals. One remarkable example unfolded during our first Chop and Chat Social Club where older and younger neighbours in the city came together to make and enjoy a shared lunch. Younger neighbours from Aviva volunteered their time to support the session and helped to encourage participation in the Social Club which was hosted at the Spurriergate Centre.

It was during this event that we encountered Stan. Walking into the session without knowing anyone, Stan's openness to connect led to a fascinating revelation that he used to be a drummer in a band that had played alongside Jimi Hendrix. This piece of information quickly circulated among the volunteers, catching the attention of Rich. The two bonded over a cup of tea, sharing their love for music. As the session concluded, they pledged to meet again at the next Chop and Chat in February. What made this session particularly special was the promise of a musical jam session in March, with both Stan and Rich bringing along photos and memories of their bands.

Stan's story is just one example of the magic that unfolds at our Social Clubs on a monthly basis. We are determined to continue bringing generations together to combat isolation and loneliness across York.





Get Involved

Whether you've volunteered with us and would like to share your story through writing a short blog, or if you'd like to find out more about becoming a York Cares member, we'd love to hear from you.

Email us at info@yorkcares.co.uk.

Follow us on social media:



Visit our website at www.yorkcares.co.uk.

