



# The Community Impact Fund

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# The Community Impact Fund

This report details The Community Impact Fund, in partnership with Primark, which was established to strengthen local communities by investing in grassroots youth organisations. The fund was launched to celebrate Primark's 50th year on the British high street, reflecting Primark's commitment to making a positive impact on its communities, using UK Youth's expertise of the youth sector to maximise impact.

The programme distributed year-long (from 2024-2025) unrestricted grants to 11 youth organisations across the UK. The funded organisations deliver a range of youth work provision, including open-access youth clubs, targeted support, creative activities, skills development, and inclusive provision for young people facing additional barriers.

Beyond funding, The Community Impact Fund was designed to foster meaningful local relationships. All grantees were invited to connect with their closest Primark store, creating opportunities for partnerships and support rooted in communities. This approach ensured that Primark's support was not only national in reach, but local in action.

By combining UK Youth's national reach, expertise in grant-making and youth work, with Primark's commitment to local communities, The Community Impact Fund demonstrates the power of the partnership creating change for young people within their communities.



**UK Youth expertise  
+ Primark local presence**

**Unrestricted funding  
+ local relationships**

**Lasting change for young people  
+ organisations**

# The Need

Young people across the UK are growing up against a backdrop of increasing challenges. Mental health problems among young people have more than doubled in under a decade, and youth unemployment now sits at around 17% (ONS, 2026). These pressures are felt most acutely in underserved communities - the same communities where youth services have been cut by over 70% since 2010 (UK Youth, 2025).

Yet youth work is proven to make a difference. It gives young people safe spaces, trusted adults, and the chance to build confidence and skills. Evidence shows that young people who access youth work go on to be happier, healthier and wealthier, while investment in the sector reduces pressure on mental health services, education systems and the criminal justice system (UK Youth, 2022 & 2024). Despite this, grassroots youth work remains chronically underfunded.



# Community Investment in Practice

The Community Impact Fund offers unrestricted grants, reflecting a joint commitment from UK Youth and Primark to support community-led organisations in a way that is relational and rooted in place.

Partnering with UK Youth ensures Primark's investment reaches high-quality grassroots organisations, while creating opportunities for local store teams to build genuine connections with the young people they're helping to support. Together, unrestricted funding and local engagement strengthen community infrastructure and maximise long-term impact.

The Community Impact Fund responds directly to the realities facing the youth sector, while demonstrating how national expertise and local commitment can come together to support young people, and strengthen communities..



**“After six years being a proud advocate and grantmaker of unrestricted funds, we are so thrilled to have corporate partners like Primark who have supported youth organisations in the ways they need most. These unrestricted grants acknowledge the expertise youth organisations have in delivering what young people in their local community need, in addition to supporting the costs that give young people a trusted adult and welcoming space to go to.”- Thora Eberts, Director of Network Delivery at UK Youth**



# Grantees

UK Youth ran a closed grants round and funded 11 youth organisations across the UK to fund, each within 50 miles of a local Primark store. All 11 grantees received unrestricted grants of approximately 10% of a year's income to support their organisation with everything from staff costs, utilities, direct delivery, to new initiatives or establishing more youth voice opportunities. This approach is underpinned by UK Youth's commitment to IVAR's eight principles of grantmaking, ensuring that the needs of youth organisations shape both the application process and support throughout grant delivery.

UK Youth recognises that sustainable impact depends not only on funding activities, but also on strengthening organisations themselves. To support this, the Community Impact Fund is unrestricted, enabling organisations to utilise funding as they needed for their own context. This is particularly important given that many youth organisations rely heavily on restricted funding, which can limit their ability to adapt to emerging needs (UK Youth, 2018).

Each organisation also opted to connect with its local Primark store, with two-thirds developing active relationships with store teams. The report highlights several strong partnerships that emerged between stores and grantees, alongside lessons from the barriers some organisations encountered.



# Impact

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# Impact at a Glance



**£175,000**

**distributed**  
to **11** youth  
organisations

Over

**10,000**

young people

were **supported** by  
funded organisations

**+82**

**Net Promoter Score**

This means the cohort  
were **very likely to**  
**recommend UK**  
**Youth** as a funder



**Two Thirds**

**built connections**  
with their local  
Primark store



**82%**

used their funding on  
essential **core costs**  
**to keep their youth**  
**organisation running**









**55%**

used their funding  
to either **invest in**  
**staffing and direct**  
**service delivery**

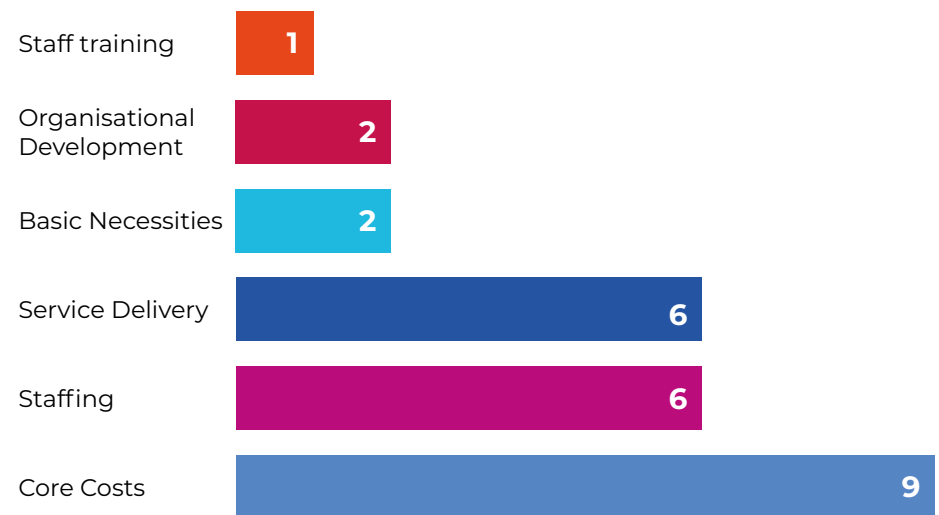
# Grantee Spend and Benefits

Grantees were asked how they used the funding, revealing common impacts across key spend areas and examples of how it benefited both their organisations and participants, which is summarised below. As noted, 'core costs' are often a key spend from unrestricted grants, and nearly all organisations utilised funding in this way.

## How the grant contributed

-  Funding strengthened staff skills in safeguarding and organisational learning.
-  Funding improved internal systems, partnerships, and organisational resilience.
-  Funding reduced participation barriers by providing essential items.
-  Funding expanded activities, improved resources, and increased delivery hours.
-  Funding supported recruitment, retention, and workforce stability.
-  Funding covered core costs, reducing financial strain and ensuring uninterrupted services.

## How organisations used funding



# Impact on Young People

The fund directly reached **10,098 young people**. Grantees reported impact across three key themes:



## Continued and widened access to safe spaces

64% of grantees highlighted the importance of providing safe, welcoming environments, with over half specifically focusing on marginalised young people or those facing additional barriers.



## Improved mental health and wellbeing

The most common impact (73%) was supporting young people's mental health, emotional wellbeing, and confidence.



## Personal development

55% of grantees described how their provision helped young people build practical skills, supporting both personal development and future employability.

# Case study: Whitton Youth Partnership

Whitton Youth Partnership used all of their funding to cover their core and overhead costs, allowing the organisation to focus on their delivery and form a successful relationship with Primark Ipswich.

As part of this relationship, Primark offered vouchers for clothing for young people in need who did not have appropriate school or winter wear, which would allow them to take a more active part in their education.



“We have built up a good face to face relationship...We have had £100 worth of Vouchers from Primark Ipswich which have been used to ensure our older cohort have been able to purchase clothing suitable for going to college or work where family finances are much stretched. In addition we have been provided with £500 worth of clothing comprising so far of gloves, hats and socks for our high school cohort...We have established good links and hope to grow them in the future.” - Whitton Youth Partnership



# Impact on Youth Organisations

Grantees reported impact across three key areas. The proportions cited are indicative rather than exhaustive. These impacts may have been felt more widely, but not all organisations specified them in their end of year reports.



## Core operational stability

The most common theme (82%), with grantees describing how funding helped maintain essential operations, improve financial resilience, and cover costs often excluded from programmatic funding, such as overheads, staffing, and compliance.



## Strengthened capacity

Cited by 64% of grantees, operational stability created foundations for future growth, whether through updating policies, strengthening financial planning, or recruiting new staff and volunteers.



## Flexibility and responsiveness

Unrestricted funding allowed organisations to respond to emerging needs, pilot new activities, diversify income, and invest in strategic development that programmatic funding rarely covers.

# Case Study: Building Bridges Breaking Barriers (4B's)

4B's used the funding to support essential governance, compliance, and infrastructure costs, including subscriptions to the Fundraising Regulator, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), Living Wage accreditation, and QuickBooks for bookkeeping, helping to strengthen their core organisational operations.

It was not just the amount/nature of the funding, but the timing that proved crucial for 4B's. The grant supported them to cover a wide array of essential back-office capacity and operations while they were seeking additional funding.

This ultimately went on to support them to unlock further funding and improve their overall organisational stability.



**“As a direct result of this stability and strengthened capacity, we successfully secured £18,000 in November 2025 from the Reaching Communities programme, providing 18 months of dedicated back-office support. This outcome would not have been achievable without the interim support provided by this grant.**

In addition, approximately £5,000 of the [Primark] grant was apportioned to our reserves, creating a small but important increase in unrestricted income for the year. This has slightly strengthened our reserves position and provided a modest buffer against financial risk, enabling us to better manage cash flow, respond to unforeseen costs, and plan more effectively.

While this does not eliminate our underlying financial vulnerability, it represents a meaningful step towards improved financial resilience.”



# Impact on Community

Youth organisations do not exist in isolation. They are part of a wider local ecosystem alongside public, private and community stakeholders, all of which influence young people's experiences and opportunities. A key ambition of the Community Impact Fund was therefore to strengthen this ecosystem by encouraging relationships between grantees and local Primark stores.

All 11 grantees opted in to connect with their local Primark store. Given the flexible, opt-in nature of the arrangement, grantee contact details were shared with stores to initiate contact where capacity allowed. Primark colleagues who engaged reported a heightened sense of purpose and pride, particularly when they could see the tangible difference their support made locally.

Grantees and Primark store teams collaborated in three key ways:



## Direct financial and in-kind support

Primark stores provided practical assistance tailored to local need. Primark Ipswich store converted funding into gift cards for young people transitioning to sixth form, donated winter essentials and organised a fundraising raffle. Primark Birmingham high street store purchased clothing and bedding for women supported by the charity and hosted an in-store awareness table. Primark Metrocentre store in Gateshead donated items through their Giving Tree initiative.



## Meaningful engagement opportunities

In Primark Metrocentre store in Gateshead, the partnership extended beyond donations to include mannequin styling sessions for homeschooled girls and plans for mock interviews to build employability skills.



## Increased awareness and understanding

Primark store managers reported that meeting grantees and hearing about their work directly increased their understanding of local need.



# Case study: The Northbourne Youth Initiative

This youth organisation described how their open-access session sits at the heart of their provision. Here, youth voice and leadership sets the agenda for the activities that the young people want to do. The youth worker noticed that mental health and wellbeing challenges were a core issue for the group.

As a result, they took advantage of the unrestricted nature of funding to plan, develop and then staff an informal wellbeing programme featuring fun trips, getting the young people active, and providing strategies and techniques for young people to address their emotional needs.

They've stated that:



**"This [grant] is a luxury that helps us respond to current and prevalent issues quickly."**



# Case study: The GINA (Grow, Inspire, Nurture and Achieve) Project

GINA used the funding to provide additional capacity/availability for their in-person/online/telephone counselling services for young people who have experience of sexual trauma.

They highlighted how accessible services are crucial for early intervention.



“When young people can easily access support, they receive help sooner. This early support can reduce the negative impacts of sexual trauma that would otherwise be endured without specialist support.”

They went on to say:



“Co-production of bespoke resources made a difference for young people by enhancing awareness and supporting healing.”

“We have found Primark Birmingham High Steet to be incredibly supportive & understanding of our cause; to such an extent that they also donated a range of wellbeing & self-care items for the women subjected to sexual violence & abuse that we support. Primark have also offered us an opportunity to go into their store and have a stall/presence as part of the ‘16 days of activism campaign to end violence against women and girls...We are incredibly grateful to Primark Birmingham High Street for their support & generosity.” - The GINA Project



# Case study: Conscious Youth

Conscious youth is a youth-led grassroots social enterprise in Kirklees, established in 2016. They work with young people aged 12–24 through consultation activities, “learning conversations,” education outreach, and their youth venue, The Corner Hub. Through these initiatives, they have engaged more than 4,000 young people to better understand local needs, reduce barriers to support, and create positive opportunities for participation and development.

They emphasised that having a visible and trusted presence in the community is key to building relationships and supporting young people over time.



**“Our continued presence in the town centre, combined with consistent engagement, mentoring and positive activity has contributed to a 35% reduction in anti-social behaviour locally.”**

They also highlighted how youth-led approaches and sustained engagement can help young people feel heard, connected, and supported - creating safer spaces and improving outcomes across the local community.



# UK Youth's Learnings & Future Recommendations



# Recommendations to Future Donors

After partnering with Primark, UK Youth's Impact team has identified the following learnings from their findings over the programme:

**The value of unrestricted funding** - This fund reinforces the importance of unrestricted funding; grantees used funds to cover core costs that restricted funding rarely reaches.

**The value of multi-year funding** - Multi-year funding gives organisations the time and space to focus on longer-term development and sustainability (IVAR,2024).

**The importance of supported relationships** - Grantees highlighted the value of building connections with their local Primark stores, and identified opportunities where additional support from UK Youth could further strengthen these relationships—such as facilitating introductions and ensuring stores had a strong understanding of each organisation's work.

*During the Community Impact Fund, seven out of eleven grantees built relationships with their local Primark store following store-initiated contact. This led to positive outcomes, including financial and in-kind support, in-store engagement opportunities, and increased awareness of the organisations' impact.*



**Where possible, funders should combine multi-year and unrestricted funding with supported relationships to strengthen the long-term sustainability of grassroots youth organisations.**

# Conclusion - The Importance of Corporate Partners

Through this partnership, Primark and UK Youth have **supported 11 youth organisations and 10,098 young people** through a grant of £175,000. This has helped ensure access to trusted adults, safe spaces, and opportunities within their communities, contributing to improved wellbeing and wider social cohesion.

The Community Impact Fund has demonstrated the transformative power of unrestricted funding for grassroots youth organisations. Across the cohort, organisations used the flexibility of the grant to stabilise core operations, retain and recruit staff, and respond in real time to the needs of 10,098 young people. The strong Net Promoter Score (+82) for UK Youth as a grant maker, alongside overwhelmingly positive feedback, reflects the value of trust-based funding. At a time of continued financial uncertainty and increasing demand, this approach has enabled organisations to remain open, responsive, and impactful within their communities.

The learning from this fund reinforces that unrestricted funding is most effective when paired with longer-term commitment. Longer-term support would allow organisations to move beyond immediate survival and invest more confidently in strategic growth and sustained outcomes for young people.



Where connections between youth organisations and local Primark stores were successfully established, they generated tangible benefits and strengthened community ties. With clearer communication, structured introductions and light-touch support, there is strong potential to deepen place-based impact and further demonstrate how corporate partners can play a distinctive and trusted role in supporting young people and the organisations that serve them.

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