

**B B C**  
**CHILDREN  
IN NEED**



**IMPACT REPORT**

**April 2026**



## Report Contents

- > **Introductions**
  - > Foreword
  - > About this report
- > **Our foundations**
  - > Driven by Change for Children
  - > Positive relationships: the golden thread
  - > Children and young people at the heart of our work
- > **Our areas of focus**
  - > Mental Health
  - > Poverty
  - > Social Inequality
  - > Family Challenges
- > **Young Leaders' reflections**
- > **Thank you**

> Click the arrows to jump to each section in the report

NW LEVEL  
PIOT TEAM  
VERS: 250.002  
THE FURE VIBE



# Introductions

- > **Foreword**
- > **Welcome**
- > **About this report**

## Foreword

Across the UK, children are growing up with challenges no one should have to carry alone. Families are feeling the strain of rising costs, young people are under more pressure than ever around their mental health, and too many childhoods are shaped by unfairness, instability or a lack of opportunity. Yet even in the hardest circumstances, children's courage and resilience remind us exactly why our work at BBC Children in Need matters: not just to help them cope, but to give them the chance to thrive.

Because we know this to be true: positive relationships aren't a nice-to-have, they are the foundation for every child's potential.

It's the coach who believes in you. The youth worker who notices you're struggling. The trusted adult who listens without judgement. These moments might seem small, but they shape how children see themselves and what they believe is possible.

Positive relationships help children feel safe, build confidence and stay connected when life gets hard. They don't remove every challenge, but they make those challenges easier to face. And without them, those challenges can quickly stack up.

That's what BBC Children in Need funding makes possible. We fund the people in communities across the UK who show up, day after day, to be alongside children who need it most. Providing somewhere to go, something to do, and most importantly, someone to talk to.

Every year, in support of BBC Children in Need, we come together as a nation with generosity and hope. People from every corner of the UK stand up for children in their own communities. We take that trust seriously. It's our responsibility to make sure that support goes where the need is greatest, backing brilliant grassroots organisations who are building these relationships and changing lives.

We are incredibly grateful for the BBC's role in helping us shine a light on this work. Through its storytelling, journalism and programming, the BBC enables the nation

to see both the scale of the challenges facing children and the extraordinary people meeting them. This partnership ensures children's voices are heard, their experiences understood, and the importance of these relationships recognised on a national stage.

This report shares the difference your generosity has made. You'll read about projects that wrap around children and young people with care and consistency, and the youth workers, the play workers, counsellors and support staff who show up with empathy and belief. These relationships create moments of connection, stability and joy that can transform a child's life and help them build the skills and confidence they need for the future.

Behind every statistic is a child with hopes, fears, talents and potential. Their experiences guide everything we do. Through initiatives such as our Young Ambassadors and Youth Leadership programmes, young people are helping to shape how we listen, respond and improve.

We are proud of what has been achieved this year, but we know the need is growing. For many families, life feels close to breaking point. That's why our commitment remains firm. We will continue to listen to young people, invest in communities and back the people and relationships that make the biggest difference.

None of this would be possible without the kindness of people across the UK: the fundraisers who give their time and energy, our partners and donors who stand alongside us, and the dedicated organisations and trusted adults delivering life-changing work in local communities every single day. Most of all, we are grateful to the children and families who trust us with their stories and inspire us to strive for better.

Together, we are making a real, tangible difference in the lives of children and young people - by making sure that no child has to face life's challenges alone.

Thank you for everything you do, and for the unwavering commitment you've shown to BBC Children in Need.



**Claire Hoyle**  
Interim CEO



## Welcome to BBC Children in Need's Impact Report

We are Young Ambassadors and eight of us work together with BBC Children in Need. As representatives of young people, we help BBC Children in Need create spaces where they feel heard, supported and valued, no matter their background, identity or circumstances.

Coming from diverse backgrounds, we bring honesty and open perspectives. We celebrate one another's successes, support each other through challenges and share a first-hand understanding of adversity - and of why the work of BBC Children in Need truly matters.

Being Young Ambassadors has made us feel part of something bigger: a community where we are accepted for exactly who we are. Working alongside one another, we have become true friends. We uplift and empower each other and have had so much fun on this journey. Through this experience, we've learnt that everyone is unique and deserves to be their own authentic self.

As part of our role, we have proudly contributed to BBC Children in Need's work through:

- **Advising on key programme areas** including sharing our experiences and recommendations within the Positive Relationships Advisory Group.
- **Representing young voices in national conversations** on mental health, inclusion, identity and youth wellbeing.
- **Collaborating with partners and experts** to ensure children and young people's lived experiences shape policies, projects and future priorities.

- **Participating in national events** including the ASDA fashion show, the charity's Night of TV and sector roundtables.
- **Sharing our stories** to help other young people feel seen, supported and understood.
- **Championing accessibility, representation and equality** across media, youth services and charity spaces.
- **Visiting decision-making spaces** such as the House of Lords to elevate youth voices in discussions about the future of youth work.

We're proud to represent an organisation that puts children and young people at the heart of everything it does. We will keep striving for more so that they feel valued and understood. We will keep showing up and we cannot wait to see what's next for our team.

### Lauren and Roisin C on behalf of Young Ambassadors



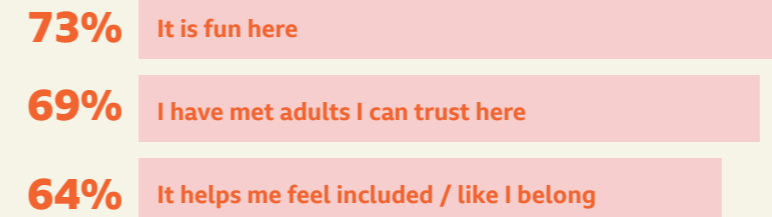
## About this report

We gather data and insight all year round about the difference that is being made to children and young people right across the UK, thanks to your support and the incredible projects and organisations it enables us to fund.

In this report you will read about the difference made for children and young people based primarily on what we funded and learnt in the grant making year ending June 2025. Data is gathered from annual reports submitted by our grantees along with commissioned learning, evaluation and research reports.

Throughout 2024/25, we helped to change the lives of over 363,000 children and young people aged 18 and under across the broad range of challenges they are navigating.

We know that support is making a difference. In our recent 'Spotlight Survey', which featured a sample of over 1,500 8-18 year olds supported by BBC Children in Need funding, 98% reported feeling happy at the project setting they attended. The top 3 reasons they gave were:



This report will outline the way we work to make that difference, with a spotlight on four key areas of focus for change.

### Key grant statistics

As of January 2026,  
BBC Children in Need funds

**1,600**  
projects to the value of  
**£96.1m**

In the last grant year,  
we supported

**363,000**  
children and young people.

### Through the projects we fund...

 **117,000**  
children and young people  
enjoy better relationships

 **124,000**  
have stronger emotional wellbeing

 **116,000**  
have stronger self-belief

 **80,000**  
have increased essential skills

 **48,000**  
are more empowered

 **38,000**  
have better physical wellbeing

 **40,000**  
are safer

**I feel safe and listened to.  
I have a safe community  
where I feel like I fit in and  
am accepted.**

**I've been calmer, a lot less  
stressed, and they've given  
me so many opportunities.**

Spotlight Survey participants



# Our foundations

- > **Driven by Change for Children**
- > **Positive relationships: the golden thread**
- > **Children and young people at the heart of our work**

## Driven by Change for Children

### **Our Change for Children framework**

BBC Children in Need is uniquely placed. We're a trusted national brand with public reach, deep community connections and a legacy of supporting grassroots organisations. However, today's children live with mounting and increasingly urgent pressures.

BBC Children in Need recognises this. That's why we have carefully planned our impact to respond to the challenges faced by young people with boldness, empathy and long-term commitment. A vital element of this approach is our **'Change for Children' framework**, which will guide everything we do to ensure **we create a measurable, meaningful and positive difference** in the lives of the children and young people we serve.

### **Change for Children is the focus and driver of our work**

Our Change for Children framework helps us to prioritise the most critical issues facing children and young people and allows us to respond to their direct needs. It clearly defines our aims and objectives and ensures that we are funding the most effective charities, creating the most compelling stories, presenting research based on the strongest evidence and always investing in programmes supporting the greatest positive change for the UK's children and young people.



## Positive relationships: the golden thread

At BBC Children in Need, we believe that trusted **positive relationships** can transform a child's life. That's why they sit at the heart of everything we fund.

**Positive relationships counterbalance the pressures in children's lives.**

When a child has someone in their corner, whether that is a youth worker, mentor, support worker, friend or family member, they feel seen, valued and able to navigate the challenges around them. These connections help children to build skills, strengthen their emotional wellbeing, form friendships and unlock opportunities that help them get on in life. They provide an essential foundation for them to reach their potential.



**The connections I get to make with the people here is definitely a highlight. They are people that I will take forever on into my life.**

Young person<sup>1</sup>



**The first time was at bowling, where we had a meeting to talk. By the end, we played a game and ending up being silly and lying on the floor. We quickly became friends and it felt like you could be yourself.**

Young person<sup>2</sup>



## The Power of Youth Work

**BBC Children in Need x McDonald's UK's Makin' It Youth work** provides us with an incredibly powerful way to build and support those positive relationships that are so vital to a young person's life. However, despite its hugely positive impact, the UK's youth work sector has continued to decline in the last decade.

Many youth organisations have closed and talented youth workers have moved on, leaving young people without a safe place or any links to trusted adults and peers.

Through all of this though, BBC Children in Need has remained completely committed. For example, in 2024,

we partnered with McDonald's UK to launch **Makin' It**, a nationwide programme designed to deliver life-changing youth work. We played a key role in connecting our funded youth organisations with their local McDonald's restaurant, who provided a safe and accessible place for youth workers to meet young people where they are.

So far, more than 235 of these organisations have delivered youth work in McDonald's restaurants and the partnership overall has helped support 52,000 young people. Through inspiring collaborations like this, we can offer more opportunities for access to safe spaces and positive relationships, with support rooted in care, respect and understanding.



## Championing youth work beyond funding

In June 2025, the Centre for Young Lives launched a report titled **"Ambitious for Young People"**, setting out a bold, costed vision for transforming youth provision across England. The report, supported by BBC Children in Need, outlines a practical and progressive model to make sure every young person has access to safe spaces, engaging activities and trusted adults in their community.

BBC Children in Need hosted a successful launch of the report with an Expert Panel Roundtable Discussion in the Council Chamber of BBC London Broadcasting House. The proposed model includes:

- The introduction of 1,000 new or refurbished youth centres to address the closure of youth facilities since 2010

- 10,000 new trained youth practitioners
- A year-round programme of activities for young people

Crucially, it demonstrates that, for every £1 invested, society would see at least £2.40 in returned value through improved mental health, reduced crime and better educational outcomes.

BBC Children in Need invited sector leaders and policy-makers along with youth workers and young people from its funded projects. As the UK's largest independent funder of youth work, we will continue to support and champion grassroots organisations that meet young people where they are: in youth clubs, in parks or on the High Street, through the BBC's platforms and partners.



## Case Study

### Spiral Skills, London

BBC Children in Need connected Spiral Skills CIC to a local McDonald's restaurant to deliver youth work and employability training. The McDonald's Outreach Programme, led by Spiral Skills, has transformed a challenging space in Brixton into a safe, youth-focused hub aimed at school-aged young people. Running every Monday afternoon, it offers a welcoming environment where young people can connect, feel secure and take part in meaningful activities. Developed with community input and supported by local safeguarding teams, the programme fosters trust, encourages positive interactions and provides links to opportunities in the surrounding area.

Local specialist organisations are regularly invited to lead topical discussions and raise awareness on key issues such as violence against women and girls, career guidance and mental health, ensuring young people are informed, empowered and connected to further support.

“You can feel that they really care about us.”

“It's nice to have a space where we can meet people and feel part of something.”

“I feel safer coming here knowing there are activities for us and people to speak to.”

Young People

The investments made today help to strengthen futures tomorrow. By harnessing this impact, we are creating conditions in which children will not only cope, but flourish.

## Children and young people at the heart of our work

**BBC Children in Need is committed to engaging children and young people in our work in a variety of ways. Their participation is essential to ensuring that our support truly reflects their needs and experiences.**

By involving them directly, we can develop work that is relevant, inclusive and impactful. This not only strengthens our effectiveness, but also empowers young people by giving them opportunities to build skills and confidence.

### **We listen and learn.**

We consult with children and young people who have first-hand experience of the types of need we address, enabling us to sense-check programmes in development and to gather their insights. We are extremely grateful to the organisations who partner with us in this work.

Our recent Spotlight Survey engaged over 1,500 attendees from BBC Children in Need-funded projects all over the UK. Its findings provide a snapshot into what life is currently like for the children and young people with whom we work.

Our funded projects play a valuable role in offering support and safe spaces where children and young people can be themselves and have fun.

Read more about the findings of our Spotlight Survey [HERE](#).

## Our SPOTlight survey of 1,500 children who attend BBC Children in Need funded projects has found that:

**Those who attend our projects are more likely to worry about mental health and discrimination and are more likely to be unhappy at school than their peers.**

### **In particular, children with additional needs...**

- feel challenges more acutely
- find it harder to make friends
- worry more about being bullied
- feel more anxious and lonely at school

**...than those without additional needs**

**It's really hard to make friends. When I come up to someone, they just don't notice me.**

Spotlight Survey Participant

### **We co-create with children and young people.**

Another of our recent initiatives was the **Young Grantmakers programme**, during which we trained young people living in London to be participatory grant makers, assessing applications made to our Under £15k grants programme. 10 young people worked in partnership with Camden Giving and BBC Children in Need to assess 40 applications, awarding 24 grants in total to the value of £940,000.

The **Young Grantmakers** drew on their personal experiences of attending similar projects to share their individual preferences, observations and insights, bringing practical context to the discussions and developing a wide range of skills including confidence, grantmaking, communication, critical thinking and collaborative working. We intend to continue our commitment to young people's involvement in our grant-making.

**I always felt like I could share my views and that they were being taken seriously, genuinely felt like I am making a difference...we are actually changing the entire life for some young people, so I felt very motivated to contribute and do my best...**

A Young Grantmaker



**We amplify** young people's stories, supporting and encouraging them to share their experiences.

The **Young Ambassadors** programme provides opportunities for young people from BBC Children in Need-funded projects who have gone on to feature in the charity's broadcast content; something that has helped them to continue their journey.

These Young Ambassadors play a unique role in the organisation. They are highly skilled communicators and speakers who are able to give others a glimpse into their own daily lives and their sometimes challenging experiences. They talk clearly and passionately about being involved with BBC Children in Need and the difference this has made, as well as delivering important reminders that many children still live with pressing challenges. They also reflect the need to champion wider groups of children and young people experiencing issues and difficulties.

BB

**'Being a Young Ambassador for BBC Children in Need has shown me that my voice matters, that I can speak with confidence and conviction. Younger me would be proud'**

**'Being a Young Ambassador for BBC Children in Need has shown me that anything is possible. It has taught me that no goal is out of reach if you face it with the right mindset, determination and positivity'**

Young Ambassadors

DD



**We empower** and support children and young people to drive positive change in their communities.

The **Youth Leadership Programme**, part of BBC Children in Need's wider commitment to Youth Social Action, was a one-year pilot funded through the charity's Youth Social Action Fund and the We Move FWD Programme, designed to support 14 young people recruited from projects across the UK.

The participants experienced a structured personal development journey, building their leadership skills and deepening their understanding of Youth Social Action. Through collaboration and assistance from an expert participation agency, they designed and delivered work in their local communities, figure-headed **BBC Children in Need's first-ever youth-led #iWill Week Campaign** and shared valuable insights and examples of lived experience to help inform and shape the charity's work.

BB

**'I've learned to use my voice more - and to be an advocate.'**

**'Silence is dangerous. You might not have to be the loudest; even if you whisper, it can still make an impact.'**

**'Leadership isn't about having a title or being the most authoritative person in the room - leadership is more about creating a space for everyone to be heard and to have a responsibility.'**

Young Leaders

DD





# Our areas of focus

- > **Mental Health**
- > **Poverty**
- > **Social Inequality**
- > **Family Challenges**

## Mental health

**Children and young people face a growing mental health crisis, with far too few getting help when they need it most.**

Rising anxiety, long waits for services and the pressures of poverty, trauma and loneliness mean many are struggling alone.

**BBC Children in Need funds early support that strengthens emotional wellbeing, builds resilience and prevents crises before they take hold.**

### The scale

- **76%** of children supported by BBC Children in Need-funded projects say that they worry about mental health issues affecting them
- Around **1 in 5** children and young people have a probable mental health condition
- **500 children a day** in England, one every three minutes, are referred to mental health services for anxiety; over double pre-pandemic levels
- The UK's **15-year-olds report the lowest life satisfaction** in Europe
- **75%** of young people with mental health needs face long waits or cannot access treatment at all

### How we make a difference

**Mental health struggles are often shaped by other issues** such as deprivation, trauma, discrimination, disability, loss and family adversity. That's why a high proportion of our mental health-related projects also support children living with **poverty (43%) or family challenges (29%)**, making sure those living with multiple pressures receive the right help.

We focus on **early action, prevention and lasting impact** powered by trusted positive relationships. We support local organisations that offer counselling, therapeutic support, mentoring, creative expression and peer connection.

We champion **trauma-informed, inclusive and culturally responsive approaches**, reaching children living with disabilities, neurodivergent children, care-experienced children and those affected by bereavement or abuse.

**Our funding aims to provide:**

- **Safe, supportive spaces:** youth clubs, after school groups and holiday sessions where children can manage emotions, connect with others and build coping strategies

- **Therapeutic and trauma-informed support:** counselling, group therapy, play therapy and crisis support delivered by trusted professionals
- **Creative, physical and outdoor activities:** arts, music, drama, sports and outdoor adventures that reduce anxiety and build confidence
- **Targeted mentoring and personal development:** trusted adults that show up consistently to help children manage their feelings, build resilience and set goals
- **Specialist support for neurodivergent and disabled children:** tailored wellbeing sessions that meet diverse needs



In 2024/25, we awarded grants to

**333**

projects totalling

**£15.5m**

**41%**

of our grant funding supported the improvement of young mental health and wellbeing

We supported

**119,000**

children with their mental health and emotional wellbeing, with

**57,000 (58%)**

reporting feeling emotionally well after engaging with BBC Children in Need funded projects

**50%**

of the projects we currently fund support marginalised children, including those affected by disability, ethnicity, gender or sexual identity

“There is always a need that cannot be 100% matched. BBC Children in Need strives to make that gap smaller.”

Project Worker<sup>4</sup>

## Case Study

### Families in Grief, Barnstaple, Devon

2024 was tough for 14-year-old Lauren from Devon. First, her beloved Grandma died, shortly followed by her Grandad just six months later. She was very close to both her grandparents and losing them so close to one another was very difficult for her.

She began to find day to day life and school hard to deal with whilst trying to process her big emotions.

Thankfully, in February 2025, Lauren found Families in Grief, an organisation supported by BBC Children in Need. Here, she was able to have one-to-one counselling and attend group activities at an outdoor centre, where she met other young people who had also experienced loss. They were able to have fun whilst sharing their memories, which helped her cope.

Lauren is a budding singer and represented the Southwest in the 2025 BBC Children in Need choir, performing Coldplay's 'Yellow', the same song she sang at her grandma's funeral.



## Case Study

### Stitch the Gap, Scotland

12-year-old Autumn from Scotland is a registered young carer for her mum, Hazel, who has Multiple Sclerosis. This means her mum suffers from fatigue, has falls and sometimes struggles to talk. Autumn is always ready to step in to help her younger sister, to help cook dinner or just generally support her mum.

However, there's a place where Autumn can go for support and be with other young people. Stitch the Gap, which is part funded by BBC Children in Need, is a project that helps children and young people with their mental health whilst they enjoy sewing with upcycled materials. Through these activities, Autumn develops her skills as well as building her confidence and self-esteem. She meets other young people in a relaxing environment, all whilst putting her craftsmanship to good use creating costumes for shows; something Autumn really enjoys as a fan of musical theatre.

“One of the young people who suffers massively with anxiety and doesn't like standing up in front of people came to the assembly that we did and sat in front of a school full of children and turned the pages for me, so I could see where I was on the presentation. That's massive.”

Project Worker<sup>5</sup>



### Space to Grow

Space to Grow is a UK-wide partnership between The Children's Society, Children First and MACS, funded through BBC Children in Need's A Million and Me (AMM) award and jointly sponsored by The Health Foundation, Impact of Urban Health and The Children's Society.

The programme offers free early support for children aged 8-13, helping them to feel happier, better-supported, healthier and safer. This assistance is chiefly provided for children from commonly underrepresented groups within wellbeing and mental health services in each nation, such as children from the global majority, young carers and those from the LGBTQ+ community along with others.

Space to Grow aims to offer early accessible support before problems reach crisis point. In the first year following its launch, the partnership reached over 6,000 children, 1,300 parents and carers and 1,000 professionals. 82% of participating children have reported improvements, showing the strength and long-term impact of timely help.



## What we have achieved through communicating

### Heaviest Backpack and Pudsey's Pause

At BBC Children in Need, the difference we make doesn't just stem from grant-making but can also be achieved through broader communication: our superpower.

In May 2025, we re-ran our **Heaviest Backpack campaign**, using an oversized backpack to represent the mental and emotional challenges carried by the UK's children and young people. With the help of clinical psychologist Dr Julie Smith, we also created **Pudsey's Pause**, a valuable resource to help parents teach their children how to manage their feelings in three simple steps: Pause, Spot and Share.

The social content of these two campaigns, promoted through our channels and those belonging to the BBC, reached almost 5 million people, with 35,000 people visiting Pudsey's Pause on our website.



# Poverty

**Poverty reaches into every part of a child's life, from health and education to confidence, relationships and a sense of belonging.**

Today, **4 million children (28%)** are growing up without the basics, whether that's a warm, secure home, enough food, clean clothes or a safe place to sleep. This can leave them feeling isolated or ashamed, cutting them off from stability, vital opportunities and enrichment access.

**BBC Children in Need funds support that restores dignity, strengthens confidence and opens doors**, helping children to:

- Feel seen and valued
- Build positive relationships
- Access essentials without stigma
- Take part in joyful developmental activities that nurture skills, friendships and aspirations
- Poverty may shape the barriers children face, but, with the right support, it doesn't have to define their futures

## The scale

- **4 million children** are growing up in poverty in the UK
- **7 out of 10 children** living in poverty have at least one parent in paid work
- **A third of children** under five are living in UK homes where there is not enough access to healthy and nutritious food



**The impact of poverty continues to be an emerging need. We have never before had to prioritise food poverty and seeing so many children and young people turn up unfed.**

BBC Children in Need applicant<sup>6</sup>



## How we make a difference

Our approach tackles the immediate pressures of poverty and specific systemic barriers that hold families back, such as a lack of affordable housing, limited opportunities and reduced access to services.

Through locally trusted organisations, we support children to feel safe, confident and connected.



Our young peer coordinators are moving from when they joined us towards positive destinations. They are stepping up from where they used to be, which was being at home with no work, no university, nothing. Now they are going to university.

Project Worker

### Our funded projects provide:

- **Enriching and developmental activities:** fun, creativity, play and learning that builds confidence, broadens horizons and creates friendships
- **Safe, inclusive groups and 1:1 support:** spaces where children can feel they belong, find ways of strengthening their identity and building coping skills and social connections
- **Advocacy and voice:** enabling children to be heard, influence decisions and feel empowered in shaping their own lives
- **Support for immediate needs:** providing essentials such as food, beds, clothing and crisis support with dignity and without stigma
- **Building resilience and wellbeing:** offering support for improved mental and physical health alongside trusted relationships that reduce isolation and nurture self-belief
- **Expanding opportunity and equity:** skills-building, employability and cultural opportunities that expand life chances, boost employability, support cultural opportunities and break cycles of disadvantage
- **Targeted place-based work:** investing in communities to develop sustainable, locally-led solutions, moving beyond emergency relief to long-term change



Community Recording Studio is a safe space for [my daughter]. She can learn new skills and socialise with friends and, most importantly, it is free.

Mum of a girl (8), who attended Community Recording Studio, Nottingham

In 2024/25, we awarded grants to

**367**  
projects, investing  
**£20.6m**

to support children affected by poverty

**60%**  
of children supported were from Black, Asian or minoritised communities

**30%**  
were disabled and

**24%**  
identified as LGBTQ+

We provided assistance to  
**172,500**  
children affected by poverty

**65,000**  
children reported feeling more self-belief (45%) after engaging with BBC Children in Need-funded projects



## How we make a difference through partnerships

### Emergency Essentials

Since 2019, BBC Children in Need's Emergency Essentials Programme has provided vital support to children and young people across the UK who are living with poverty or facing circumstances like domestic abuse, disability, poor health in the family, homelessness or crisis situations.

Delivered on behalf of BBC Children in Need by Family Fund Business Services, the programme supplies vital items that meet a child's most basic needs, like beds and bedding, cookers and kitchen appliances, furniture and household items, clothing, baby equipment and other resources to support physical and emotional wellbeing while helping to reduce family stress.

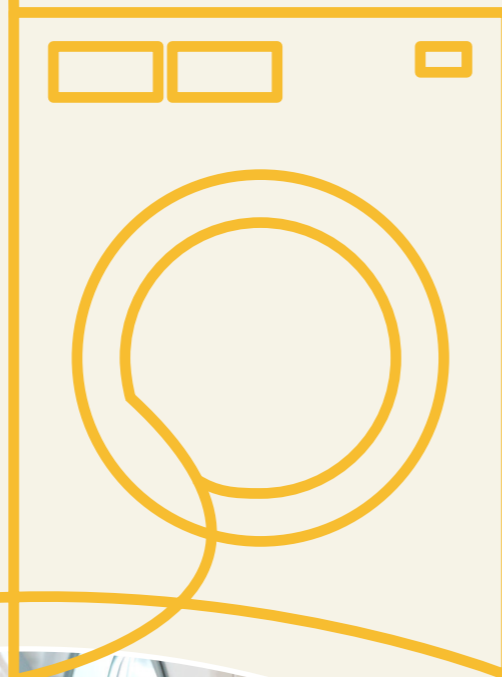
### Case Study

Jessica\*, a mum with a young daughter with additional needs as well as a baby son, was living in rented accommodation. She could only afford to buy an old second-hand washing machine, which soon broke and started leaking water all over the kitchen floor. Jessica found it hard to cope; her children needed clean clothes every day and she couldn't cover the cost of a new machine. Her support worker applied for a new washing machine through BBC Children in Need's Emergency Essential programme and it was delivered within the week.

Jessica says "It was stressful because the washing was just piling up. It was affecting me mentally and making me anxious. The new washing machine has made a big difference".

Now Jessica's daughter can go to school in a clean uniform and the baby always has freshly washed bedding in his cot.

\*not her real name



### Communities for Children

**Communities for Children is our long-term commitment to reducing the impact of child poverty.** Working in partnership with City Bridge Foundation, The Hunter Foundation, the National Lottery Community Fund and Pears Foundation, BBC Children in Need is investing in ten communities across the UK, supporting local partnerships to design and deliver solutions shaped by the people who know their area best.

This place-based change programme seeks to prioritise, engage and amplify the voices of children, young people and families, shifting the narratives surrounding poverty and advocating for new approaches. It will enable local partnerships to meet and collaborate while gathering powerful evidence for future learning.



## Social inequality



Across the UK, too many children are still affected by barriers shaped by discrimination, exclusion and inequity. These can be linked to ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual identity or migration status and they influence every part of a child's life, from wellbeing to education, opportunity and confidence.

**Inequity should not, and does not, define a child's potential.**

**BBC Children in Need invests in organisations that help children to feel seen, valued and empowered**, challenging structural barriers that prevent them from accessing opportunities.

Together, we're building communities where every child can belong and be their best.

### The scale

- **32%** of families with a **disabled child** live in poverty
- **46%** of children from **global majority communities** grow up in poverty, compared with 26% of White British children
- Race-related hate crimes accounted for **70% (98,799)** of all police-recorded hate crimes in the year ending March 2024
- Our Spotlight Survey highlighted that children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) are significantly more likely to struggle with making friends (**59%**), being unhappy at school (**47%**) and worrying about being bullied (**66%**)

### Our response to social inequality

**Our goal is simple: every marginalised child should have an equitable chance to achieve their potential.**

We fund organisations that create inclusive, safe spaces where children feel they belong, are seen for who they are and can access opportunities without fear of discrimination.

Through these organisations, children gain confidence, build skills and find a sense of belonging. Communities grow stronger, more connected and more inclusive.



I saw it was about giving young people voices, uplifting them and giving them a platform to showcase experiences through their music.

Young Person<sup>8</sup>



It gives me responsibility and it makes me feel like I'm doing something, like I'm making a difference... being able to share my ideas is something that's really good.

Young Person<sup>9</sup>



In 2024/25, we awarded grants to

**441**

projects, investing

**£21.6m**

into supporting children experiencing social inequality

**48%**

of our funded projects also addressed poverty, reflecting how inequity overlaps and compounds this issue

We supported over

**200,000**

children experiencing social inequality, with 65,000 (39%) children developing stronger self belief and 52,000 (31% reporting having gained essential skills and opportunities after engaging with BBC Children in Need funded projects

**58%**

of our total spend focused on social inequality, improving access to resources for those who need it most



## How we make a difference

Through inclusive spaces, advocacy and support for organisations that challenge systemic barriers, we help children become confident, build connections and increase engagement with opportunities so that they can thrive.

### Our funded projects

- **Address structural and educational barriers**, offering mentoring, supplementary education, skills development and transition support
- **Amplify children's voices** through youth leadership, social action, rights-based advocacy and social action-based advocacy
- **Create inclusive spaces** for Black and Asian children, Roma and Traveller communities, LGBTQ+ young people, disabled children, refugees and asylum-seeking families
- **Build belonging and social connection** through arts, culture, group activities and sports
- **Provide safe spaces in underserved areas**, ensuring equitable access to joy, opportunity and support

## Case Study - Triangular CIO, Newcastle upon Tyne

Fourteen-year-old Bethel lives in Newcastle; her mum and dad moved there from Ethiopia just before she was born.

Bethel attends Triangular CIO which is a BBC Children in Need supported project which offering support to refugees. Bethel takes part in their Podcast Project. She loves music and performing.



“

One of the main and most fulfilling things I've learned is leadership - being able to pass on the knowledge and inspire others through music and motivation and to help create the safe and supportive environment that I received coming into these sessions.

Young Person<sup>10</sup>

”

“

Bethel enjoys meeting other young people at Triangular CIO. She feels valued when contributing ideas and projects and she loves being an active part of the community.

Bethel's Dad

”



## Family challenges

As we know well, families across the UK are navigating domestic abuse, bereavement, mental ill health, substance misuse, caring responsibilities and the impact of poverty, often concurrently. Experiences like this can shape a child's wellbeing today and their opportunities tomorrow.

BBC Children in Need funds life-changing support that strengthens family relationships, builds emotional safety and helps children develop the confidence, stability and positive connections they need for brighter futures.

### The scale

- **Over 800,000** children and young people are young carers in the UK
- **Around 36%** of families with a child under 5 are living in poverty
- **An estimated 160,000** children in England are currently living in households where domestic abuse is taking place
- There are **almost 100,000** children and young people in care across the UK
- There are an estimated **192,912** children with a parent in prison

### How we create change

Our funding helps children experiencing family-related challenges to feel safer, more supported and better connected. Across early years groups, youth projects, therapeutic services and specialist programmes, we help children:

- **Enjoy stronger family relationships** through parenting support, home visiting and early years sessions
- **Feel safer and more secure** when facing domestic abuse, instability or trauma
- **Reduce isolation** through safe groups, clubs and positive activities
- **Develop confidence and coping skills** through counselling and emotional support
- **Access targeted support** as young carers, care-experienced or bereavement-experienced children, or children affected by parental imprisonment or substance misuse

The babies and children we support have previously experienced, or are currently experiencing, a wide range of family trauma. Without support, the impact of this can increase in severity over time. That's why we fund a diverse selection of work responding to their current and future needs.

We also aim to target areas where families may struggle to access the support they need, such as rural or isolated locations.

### Case Study - St Clare's Hospice Echo Connect, South East

Gracie (10) was very close to her dad Simon – the two of them loved football and both were big West Ham fans. When Gracie was four, her dad was diagnosed with a rare cancer in his thymus gland. He died when she was seven.

St Clare's Hospice runs a BBC Children in Need-supported project called Echo Connect, which offers counselling for children and young people who've lost someone they love. Gracie has been going to the project for over three years, making friends who are going through similar experiences and receiving support from counsellor Chloe.

I go to St Clare's hospice every two weeks to a group that has other people like me who have lost a loved one... My mummy and sisters and nanny and grandad were always so sad I felt I needed not to talk about me being sad in front of them.

Echo Connect has helped me (and my mummy says it's helped her too) in this sad time I have had.

In 2024/25, we funded

# 242

projects addressing family-related challenges, totalling

# £12.7m

# 34%

of our grantmaking budget is spent in this area

# 16%

of these projects specifically support children aged 0-5

# 49%

of projects responding to family challenges also addressed poverty, social inequity (43%) and mental health (39%)

We supported

# 116,000

children experiencing family-related challenges, with 42,500 (44%) of responding children reporting having developed positive relationships and 16,500 (17%) feeling physically safe after attending BBC Children in Need-funded projects

## Case Study, Sandwell Young Carers, West Bromwich

13-year-old Akaalroop says that for as long as he's been able to look after himself, he's also been caring for his little sister, Rosie. Rosie is now nine years old and has Downs syndrome. She is non-verbal and needs 24-hour supervision. Akaalroop helps his mum and dad to look after her, feeding her, giving her water and often just keeping an eye to make sure she's safe. While their mum and dad are there for them both, their dad has to go to work and has recently had spinal surgery, rendering him unable to help at all.



I like Sandwell Young Carers as I have no responsibility there.

Also, Rosie loves to make noise and I like calm. Sandwell Young Carers is somewhere quiet for me to go where I can do arts and crafts, which I love.



## What's Next? Our Early Years strategy

As humans, our first 1,001 days have a significant long-term impact on our lives, affecting everything from our physical and mental health to future relationships and even earning potential. At BBC Children in Need, we believe that all children have the right to the support and opportunities they need to be their best from the very start.

In July 2025, the Government announced the **Best Start in Life strategy**, which aims to help 75% of 5-year-olds to reach a 'Good Level of Development' by the end of their Reception year at school.

Looking ahead, our refreshed Early Years strategy aims to strengthen the support babies and young children receive from birth to the start of school, where positive relationships have the greatest potential to make a difference in the long term.

Using this strategy, BBC Children in Need will:

- **Increase investment** in early years family support and play-based interventions
- **Target provision where it's needed most**, addressing inequity and making sure all children have access to the opportunities they need
- **Champion early years learning and evidence**, raising awareness of the positive, lifelong impact of caring, supportive relationships between babies, children and trusted adults in early childhood
- **Grow equity-led early years partnerships** through We Move FWD: Foundations (explored in the next section) and other funding programmes
- **Collaborate with key partners** to extend opportunities for babies, young children and families experiencing a range of challenges in their lives

## We Move FWD: Foundations

Developed in partnership with BBC Radio 1 Xtra, We Move FWD is our 10-year commitment to the creation of opportunities for Black babies, children and young people across the UK.

Together with the Henry Smith Foundation, we are now delivering the We Move FWD: Foundations programme, which is a further initiative to invest £1m to strengthen support for Black children and families during the earliest and most formative years of life.

Grounded in the belief that "it takes a village to raise a child", the programme will fund 30 Black-led organisations to deliver culturally responsive early years support for babies, young children and their families when, where and how they need it. This targeted investment will build local leadership and strengthen community support networks.

We Move FWD will make a lasting positive impact by telling the stories of Black babies, children and their families, shaping public conversation and influencing more inclusive policy and practice.





# Young Leaders' reflections

## Our Young Leaders reflect on their leadership training journey

In the last 12 months, fourteen of us took part in BBC Children in Need's Youth Leadership Programme, facilitated by Hudl. We each joined with different experiences and motivations, but we shared a common purpose: to learn, grow and make a difference in our communities.

From the beginning, the programme gave us space to explore who we are as leaders, how we want to show up for others and what kind of change we hope to create. Being surrounded by like-minded young people was incredibly motivating and made for a supportive environment where we could learn from each other, share ideas and grow together.

Over the year, the programme encouraged us to expand our understanding of leadership. Meeting a wide range of leaders showed us that leadership isn't about perfection or having all the answers. Hearing from Simon, BBC Children in Need's CEO at the time, about his own struggles with public speaking helped us see it as something human, achievable and grounded in honesty. Sessions with visiting facilitators challenged us to reflect on our values, including how sustainability and social responsibility can shape the projects we take on now and in the future.

Developing confidence was a key part of the journey for many of us. The programme helped us recognise the strengths we already had and gave us practical ways to use them. We grew more comfortable speaking in groups, sharing ideas and contributing in new environments. We also improved our organisational skills by planning projects, managing responsibilities within a team and contributing to structured discussions about how we could create positive change. These changes have followed us into school, university and our wider communities, helping us participate more fully instead of stepping back due to shyness or anxiety.

Just as importantly, the programme helped us redefine what leadership means to us. Meeting people with different styles and backgrounds taught us that it is not limited to one image or stereotype. We learned that leaders can be thoughtful, reflective, supportive, curious and still make a real difference. We don't have to stand at the front of a room giving orders; we can lead in ways that feel authentic and true to who we are.

As we look ahead, we feel ready to take what we've learned back into our communities. We want to use our new skills, confidence and insights to recognise where change is needed and help make it happen. We know that the future will be shaped by young people, and learning from those who currently hold decision-making roles has prepared us to step into those spaces ourselves. We now feel equipped not only to identify challenges but to help build solutions with intention and care.

**Together, we leave the programme more confident, more connected and more determined to help shape a better future for ourselves and for the young people around us.**

**Ethan, Nadia, and Samuella on behalf of Young Leaders**





# Thank you

**In a time when so many families and children need support, we continue to fund our key projects in local areas, providing help and assistance. We are incredibly grateful to our supporters for their incredible efforts to raise money for BBC Children in Need and we hope that this report shines a light on the true resulting impact and the difference we can make to the lives of the children we support.**

<sup>1</sup>We Move Evaluation Report

<sup>2</sup>YSA Evaluation Final Report

<sup>3</sup>Makin' It Evaluation Report

<sup>4</sup>BBC Children in Need Grantee and Applicant Survey 2024

<sup>5</sup>YSA Fund Evaluation Interim Report

<sup>6</sup>BBC Children in Need Grantee and Applicant Survey 2024

<sup>7</sup>We Move Evaluation Report

<sup>8</sup>We Move Evaluation Report

<sup>9</sup>We Move Evaluation Report

<sup>10</sup>We Move Evaluation Report

