



Free to Be Kids
Growing **children's** emotional health

2018 Impact Report

“Free to Be is a very good thing. You get to experience new things. It lets you unlock things that you didn't know about – like, I never knew that I had so much courage.”

- Jamie, age 11

About Free to Be - for those new to our work

We believe that all children deserve to experience joy and adventure within their childhood, whatever other difficulties they face.

Many children referred to us grow up facing real hardships - many experience poverty, unstable housing, bullying, the loss of a family member, emerging difficulties with emotional health, or are growing up in families where parents have difficulties with drugs, alcohol, or mental health. As a result many have very limited views of their own potential, and of who they can be in the world.

Our projects, are carefully structured to create opportunities for particularly disadvantaged children to experience feeling brave, adventurous, proud and successful, often for the first time in a long time. Children develop a much richer view of themselves, helping them grow in confidence, increase social skills and believe that they can achieve much more than they had thought.

The majority of our work takes place through our Thrive Outside programme which creates immersive, horizon broadening residential respite projects in outdoor environments, helping children create lasting positive childhood memories. All of our work supports children who are particularly disadvantaged and Thrive Outside is particularly successful at engaging children and families who might not otherwise access more traditional forms of support. For these children, our projects open up a whole new world. Everything we do is aimed to support children to develop their sense of who they are, and in turn to create changes in confidence, resilience and self-belief which help children do better at school, at home, and elsewhere. Schools tell us the impact of Thrive Outside is evidenced by lasting changes in educational engagement, improved emotional health, and real growth in children's belief in what they can achieve.

Beyond our main Thrive Outside work, we also run a small Flourish Programme focussing on work in and after school, and a developing Young Leaders' programme, coaching, training and supporting children to return on our projects as young volunteers, directly supporting children facing similar difficulties to their own.

If you'd like to read more about what we do and how we do it, please visit our website: www.freetobekids.org.uk



An Introduction from our Leadership Team

The end of another year at Free to Be and, once again, it's so heartening to look back and realise the huge leaps we've taken as an organisation. We're proud to share this year's Impact Report with you and hope you will enjoy reading about our developments and successes.

This year, as well as growing our work, both the breadth of our projects and the numbers of children we support, we've also developed significantly as an organisation - strengthening our fundraising, developing our governance and receiving independent accreditation for our work through the London Youth Quality Mark scheme. Most significantly, we've also been able to begin paying a salary to our Leadership Team (who were previously running the charity as volunteers), thanks to generous funding from the Potterspurty Lodge Trust and the Imagine Foundation. Excitingly, further funding from the Mayor of London's Young Londoner Fund and The Fore Trust means we'll be recruiting early in the new year for a third employee, allowing us to reach more of London's most vulnerable children and young people over the coming years.

“We believe in childhood, muddy trainers, new challenges, self expression, and real human relationships. Our aim is to open up a sense of adventure, freedom and possibility for children who are struggling, whatever life's circumstances.”

-From our website

Nothing we do would be possible without the immense dedication, energy and skills of our talented, and ever growing, team of volunteers, friends and supporters. To those who work directly with our children on projects, and those who support us with specialist skills, knowledge and funding - thank you - we're eternally grateful. The biggest dedication though, must go to the children and young people we have worked with this year - we are constantly inspired and energised by their courage, vibrancy and sense of adventure and we know we speak for the whole Free to Be team when we say what a joy it is to spend time alongside them as they develop and grow.

Rachel & Mike



A Summary of what we've achieved in 2018



129 children and young people attended our projects this year.

75 volunteers gave their time to support or work alongside our children

99% of children reported positive indicators of improved self-esteem, confidence and resilience

“Free to Be is like a second home. It just feels really nice and good. Cosy. They always give us a good bed and we wake up in the countryside. I just hope I get to go again!”

-Taylor, 9

100% of referrers providing feedback reported demonstrable improvements in children's confidence and belief that they could achieve more than they had thought after the project

88% of children reported trying something they had previously not thought possible whilst they worked with us this year



This year, we benefitted from over **9,026** volunteering hours



“The children came back positively glowing about their experiences on Free to Be. They all had nothing but positive things to say about the activities they had tried, and their enjoyment was clear to see from the beaming smiles on their faces. For some children, we have seen that they appear more confident in the playground and show better negotiation and problem-solving skills in social situations. Parents have been very pleased about the difference they have noticed in their children after the project.”

-Head Teacher

This year, we provided **175** project places for children and young people



Had we paid this year's volunteers at the London Living wage rate, it would have cost us over **£95,000**

The Need

Currently 700,000 young people in London, that's 37% of the capital's children, are growing up in poverty - the highest child poverty rate of any English region (*HBAI Statistics, DWP, 2018*). Poverty means that children miss out on things they should be able to take for granted - adequate clothing, nutritious food and space and opportunities to play and have fun. As a result, children do less well at school, have poorer physical and mental health and reduced life chances in general (*K Stewart, in Improving Children's Life Chances, J Tucker (Ed.) CPAG, 2016*). Similarly, other adverse childhood experiences, like neglect, abuse or trauma, without significant protective factors, also have wide ranging negative impacts, leaving children 4.5 times more likely to develop depression and 14 times more likely to attempt suicide (*70/30 Trust 2017*).

From referral data, we know that virtually all of the children we supported in 2018 are dealing with significant adversity in their lives and we know that growing up with such difficulties alters children's stories about themselves and their potential. This often leads to struggles, at home, in school and with peers, as children become increasingly entrenched in negative self-narratives around being 'broken', 'bad' or 'unworthy'.

Our work recognises that the young people we support need different and specialised opportunities in order to experience feeling successful, realise they can achieve more than they thought and eventually, develop a healthier story about themselves. On all of our projects, we strive to provide opportunities for children to feel special, talented and give them a sense of belonging. We know that the most in-need children require ongoing support in order to help changes to take root and so we have been focusing hard this year on building our model to ensure more continuous support for those children and young people who need it most. We'll continue to focus on this area of development over 2019.

Based on 2018 information from referrers and parents

The Need for our work



97% of children attending are from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds

including living with parents with addiction or mental health difficulties, facing homelessness or other housing instability, acting as young carers or living in poverty.



51% have a history of, or concerns around, potential abuse or neglect.



94% are experiencing emotional, social or behavioural issues.



57% are either at risk of, or have experienced, an exclusion from school, or have been the subject of a referral to Social Services in the last year.



81% would have no holiday this year without our support, or have no safe access to appropriate spaces to play at home.



For 31% of children, their break with us this summer was their first ever holiday.



From our referrals

The following excerpts from referral information illustrate the challenges faced by some of the children on our projects this summer. As with all children mentioned throughout this report, names and some personal details have been changed to protect identities.

Sophie (11) and Riley (9) are the eldest of 5 children. Their mother experiences long-term and significant mental health difficulties which include depression, anxiety, paranoia, and hearing voices. She has been taken to hospital by ambulance as a result of mental health crises multiple times in the past few months. She also regularly uses class A drugs, which have exacerbated her mental health difficulties and exposed the children to threats from local drug dealers, including attempts to kick down the door to the family home to seek repayment of debts. There have been three deaths of extended family members within the past few years, including one murder, which in turn has exacerbated mum's mental health difficulties and been extremely traumatic for the children. Mum talks to the children about fears that they are at risk from individuals in the community and at other times has suddenly brought individuals to live in the house. At times this has combined to create an atmosphere of paranoia and chaos within the home and the children's confidence, self-belief and capacity to express themselves has been significantly affected.

The family are severely affected by poverty and the children's school have been in regular contact with Social Services to pass on concerns regarding neglect, with the children arriving at school in smelly or dirty clothes, seeming exhausted and sometimes stating they haven't got enough food at home. Both children have experienced bullying as other children notice their presentation. When a Social Worker visited the home, they discovered that the children were sleeping on bare mattresses, with no curtains in their room, and there were few boundaries around bedtimes, with the elder children sometimes putting the younger ones to bed. There is no hope of any other holiday or break for the children.

“ The days are full of activities. It makes me feel good because I'm away from my dad and everything that's going on at home. I can just be free and not really worried. ”

- Tiyanina, Age 10



Katie (10) and **Emma** (8) have been witnessing violence and instability since birth. Following many incidents of domestic violence, their father was imprisoned for assault and the children were present during this traumatic incident. On a number of occasions, the police were called to the children's home, because they had been left alone. The police found the home to be in a chaotic state with uneaten food on plates, broken furniture and a strong smell of cannabis. The children were later placed into foster care, where Katie disclosed that she was shown pornography by an older child at the same placement. The children returned to live with their father and half brother two years ago and the family have been experiencing severe overcrowding, living in a one bedroom flat. Emma has an ADHD diagnosis and the lack of space and privacy is particularly hard for her. Due to a lack of financial resources, the children have few positive experiences - they do not access any after school clubs or holiday activities and when Katie's social worker interviewed her about what she did last summer, she only stated going to Nando's and McDonalds.

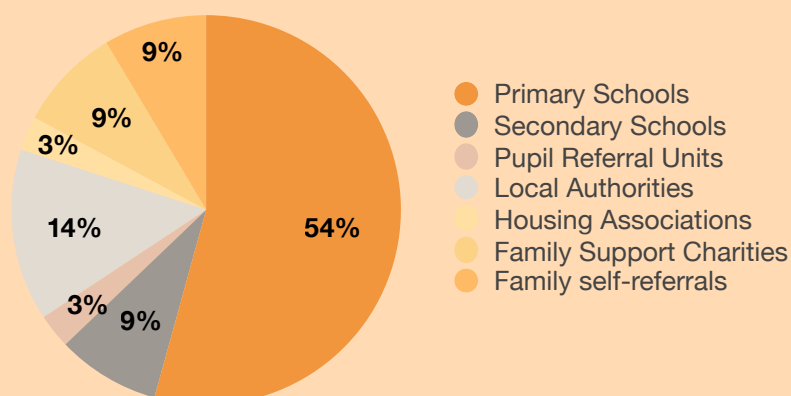
Last year **Dylan** (9) told teachers that he and his mum were living in a derelict building with no water, electricity or heating, and that he was being hit with a belt as punishment when he was naughty. His mother has no recourse to public funds and was supporting the family through ad-hoc cleaning jobs and church donations and there were concerns around her fragile mental health. Recently, Dylan's behaviour has become very challenging in school and at home. He and his mum have been re-housed in 4 different addresses in the last year and currently live in one room with only a double bed to share. They share a communal kitchen space and have no table and chairs to eat or work from or outside space for Dylan to play. Due to the lack of finances the family live on very cheap food and have little access to fresh fruit and vegetables. There is no money for trips or leisure activities.

Where our referrals came from:

Our referrals this year came from 33 organisations based in 9 London boroughs. Of the boroughs we took children from this summer, eight fall within the ten most deprived in London, based on rankings from the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Over half of our referrals were made by primary schools, with the others reaching us from secondary schools, specialist education providers, social workers within local authorities, housing associations and charities working with vulnerable families.

A small percentage of referrals (9%) came from families who self-referred children to us directly, having found out about our projects through word of mouth or via internet searches.



Thrive Outside Programme - the Model

We've been developing our residential project structure over many years of work with particularly vulnerable children. It's designed to support children who struggle to engage with or manage more traditional interventions, such as talking therapies, group work or less tailored residential trips. The five core elements of our Thrive Outside projects are what help children to build relationships and engage with our work, compared to more generalised provision. These principles are at the heart of all of our residential projects:

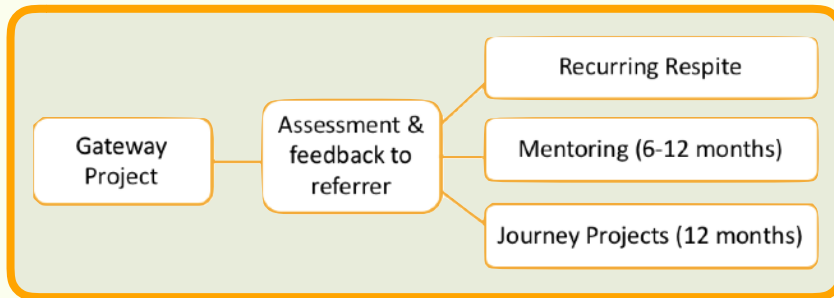
“They give us a really good chance to try new things. Like, I've never done canoeing in my life or stayed in tents before. I've never been to do the big things that I've done on these trips.”
- Prince, Age 9



Our model allows us to quickly build a powerful sense of belonging and trust with children who often struggle with these concepts. It also gives us a unique opportunity to really get to know them - every child on a Free to Be project benefits from over 50 hours of direct and intensive therapeutic support from the same, responsive, psychologically minded adults, equating to over a years' worth of weekly clinic or home visits from social workers or other agencies. Through being alongside children and young people as they work together to build a raft, encourage each other to reach the top of a climbing wall, or overcome disagreements as they play together, we gain a better understanding of who they are and how they navigate social situations. We're then able to feed these insights about children's strengths, passions and challenges back to referrers and, where we feel there are particular needs that we can support with, use them as a starting point for longer term work.

Longer Term Support: The Journey Programme

Over the last few years, we have been continually struck by the numbers of children who, whilst struggling with every other type of support they are offered, engage deeply and powerfully with Free to Be when they attend one of our Thrive Outside projects. For these children there is a real need for ongoing support and, as a result, in 2018 we have developed, launched and piloted our Journey Programme to aim to meet the needs of these children.



“The project was such a heart-opening and valuable experience for both volunteers and children, evident through the sheer joy shown on their faces during the whole week. Reflecting upon the project gives a real sense of perspective to the lives that the children are living every day, and the importance of the project – it has a massive impact upon their confidence and self-esteem.”

- Volunteer

On our Easter and Summer Gateway Projects, a child will typically take part in 20 different outdoor activities, designed to capture their imagination, sense of excitement and provide access to a diverse range of new skills/experiences. Following this, we identify which children and young people need ongoing support and match them to:

- Recurring respite projects once or twice a year - designed to top up and sustain the positive changes they have made with us and provide a break from home for children to look forward to throughout the year.
- Weekly/fortnightly mentoring with an adult volunteer that they already know and trust, having worked with them on their Gateway project.
- A series of Journey Projects, spread over a year, specifically targeted to support young people with particularly deeply entrenched negative self-narratives and in need of a longer-term intervention.



Thrive Outside: Gateway Projects

This year, our Gateway Projects over the Easter and Summer holidays provided a much needed break for 112 children who otherwise wouldn't have access to horizon broadening experiences or safe spaces to play. All places were provided free of charge to families, with children picked up and dropped back to their door, to minimise financial and practical barriers which would otherwise have prevented many from taking part. Our referral data shows that, for almost a third of the children, this project was their first ever holiday.

“Free to Be helpers make you laugh. They have fun with you and make themselves involved a lot.”

- D'andre, Age 11

Activities included: pony trekking, cycling along forest trails, meeting and caring for animals at the farm, swimming, paddling and rock pooling at the beach, firelighting and wilderness survival sessions, tree top high ropes courses, kayaking and canoeing adventures, hilltop hide and seek, arts and crafts, pond dipping, cooking dinner over a campfire, sleeping out under the stars whilst wild camping, torch-lit night walks, treasure hunts and den building in the woods.

Case study: Meena (11)'s mum struggles with mental health issues. Meena has no contact with her father and her elder brother is in prison. Earlier this year, she sent a text message, saying she wanted to commit suicide. Although attending counselling as a result, she would clam up, unable to speak, and school described her as regularly presenting as sad, alone, defiant and angry. Meena struggles with body image, and gets very little exercise. Both Meena's mum and school had reached a point where they felt they could no longer support her.

Meena agreed to come on one of our Gateway Projects in August. On the first night she was too shy to join in a game of tag because she felt the other girls would laugh at her for not being able to run far. By the end of the week, the group cheered her on when she ran with them from one side of the football pitch to the other. It took our volunteers over half an hour to coax her into a kayak, but when she eventually risked it and paddled out into the lake, she was grinning from ear to ear. Immediately afterwards, she asked to phone home and proudly told her mum all about it. At the end of the week, Meena told us she had pushed herself to try so many new things and couldn't believe what she had managed to do. We're now working with Meena's school to arrange for her to return on next year's Journey Projects, to build on the progress she's made so far.



Children and parents told us:

"You can just be yourself around people you've never met and just chill out with them. If you don't get along, you can try another day. It's really fun and it's exciting to know you're allowed to be on Free to Be because it makes you feel wanted."

Jasmine, 12

"All the helpers and the children are very friendly and nice. It makes me feel excited and happy inside. I've been camping, canoeing, swimming and rock climbing. Its different to school trips because with Free to Be, you get to know new people and be adventurous with them." **Joseph, 11**

"My three love Free to Be so much - they come back so happy and talking about it. It's good that its 5 full days - you can see in their faces when they come back that they've just had a really good rest. Its great for the children, because they need the time away to do new things - all the marshmallows on the campfire and going canoeing and that - but its also good for us mums to have some time for a break too. There's nothing else like this available to the kids in the Summer - there used to be more things, but as they've got older, there's very little. Mine have really grown to trust Free to Be now, so even though they're a bit older, they still really want to go." **Parent**

" The children benefitted from the opportunity to try new experiences. Free to Be lets children expand their frame of reference, seeing what Britain is like outside London and experiencing a different physical environment. It allows them to push themselves within a group that is supportive, helping them to build resilience. Every child I spoke to wanted to come back because they'd enjoyed themselves so much."

- Volunteer



Thrive Outside: Journey Projects

Over 2018, we've been designing and piloting our Journey Projects. These projects are tailored to work with the most in need young people over a longer period of time, to support them with specific challenges that they and their referrers identify.

The same group of young people attend a sequence of carefully structured residentials, (all with the same mix of engaging outdoor activities and adventures as the Gateway Projects the children have experienced), over a 6 - 12 month period, combined with other interventions like home visits and school liaison.

Journey residentials are purposefully much smaller in scale than our gateway projects, with a maximum of ten young people and approaching one to one staffing. They have a much more overt focus on using activities and experiences to help young people develop much richer senses of their own capacities.

“Throughout the projects, the children are constantly surrounded by a positive atmosphere and ethos from both adults and children, which allows them to develop such a strong sense of identity and self-worth in a way many have never had before.”

- Volunteer

We began work with our first cohort of 8 Journey children in March and completed a final project with them in October. All children attended the full sequence of projects, each receiving 150 hours of therapeutic support. We're still working to evaluate and hone the projects, but it's clear that the model holds huge potential and that the children involved have benefitted hugely from the opportunity to undertake extended work with trusted adults on the challenges they have identified within their lives. Parents, schools and social workers have remarked on how useful our insights are, fuelled by the amount of quality time we spend with young people on these projects and our capacity to continue working on issues each time the child comes to us.

Places for our two cohorts of Journey Projects across 2019 are already full and we're looking forward to developing this exciting work further over the course of the year.



Thrive Outside: Mentoring

2018 also saw us launch and grow our Mentoring programme, which matches children who have attended our Thrive Outside Gateway Residentials with volunteers who worked alongside them. Pairs spend regular time together in London building on the shared experiences they had on our residentials. We find this approach, which ensures common ground even before the mentoring starts, overcomes many of the difficulties which lead to pairing breakdown in more traditional mentoring models. Two young people have now fully completed their mentoring with us and a further eight pairings are in progress. Sessions run weekly or fortnightly for 6 months, with pairs working together on particular social and emotional goals, which they set, with input from parents and referrers. Mentors are supported throughout by monthly clinical supervision with Free to Be's Leadership Team.

Activities undertaken by mentor pairs this year have included: theatre performances, sessions to improve swimming skills, trampolining to build fitness, museum visits, a river cruise and a trip on the London Eye.

Case study: Jade (12) witnessed serious domestic violence whilst younger, has no contact with her Dad, and a very difficult relationship with her Mum. She had no friends other than online acquaintances, hadn't left the house socially in over a year and had only attended school for 20 days in 2017. Despite her difficulties, last summer, we persuaded Jade to attend a week's residential. Whilst with us, she was part of a group for the first time in a year. She learned to canoe across a lake and when she capsized, her new friends helped her out of the water. Instead of feeling stuck, angry and alone, she was helped to feel adventurous, included, purposeful and successful. By the end of the project she was smiling much more and had made a good group of friends. Our volunteers supported her to have fun, challenge herself in ways which felt manageable and begin to talk through challenges rather than avoid them.

Having begun to feel differently about herself and the world, Jade agreed to work with one of her Group Leaders back in London. Having built trust on the residential, the pair of them have been meeting each fortnight. Together, they have been to the theatre, conquered an Escape Room and even found a local youth group near Jade's house. Over the last month or two, supported by her mentor, Jade has begun spending time at the youth group independently too - a huge step for her.



Thrive Outside: Recurring Respite

We ran two recurring respite trips this year, supporting 17 children who we felt would benefit from ongoing respite during the school holidays.

The first of our two projects, Under the Stars, was a camping trip, based in the idyllic surroundings of Willowbrook Farm on the edge of the Cotswolds, near Oxford. The children helped the farmers, Ruby and Lutfi, to feed the animals, searched for eggs (which we used to make chocolate brownies, cooked in hollowed out oranges on the campfire) and spent hours playing hide and seek on the woodland adventure trail. The weather was perfect and the children particularly enjoyed trips out for a refreshing wild river swim and exploration of the ruins at Minster Lovell and a shady treasure hunt in the woods. The break provided much needed respite, safe spaces to play and opportunities to feel brave and adventurous. One child, who barely speaks back in London, spent the whole time laughing, joking and asking questions. On their end of project feedback forms, children told us they felt 'happy', 'believed in', 'listened to' and 'special'.

Our second project, October Outdoors, took place at Longridge Activity Centre in Buckinghamshire, thanks to kind sponsorship from The Berkeley Foundation. The weather was quite different, (with even some flurries of snow during our night walk!), but the children braved the cold water in canoes, conquered the climbing wall, worked in teams to build their own trebuchets and complete the orienteering course and enjoyed some bonfire night sparklers at the top of a hill.

A parent, who emailed us after the trip told us: *"Jamal was very excited to be included in this trip. He said he really enjoyed his time with you and did some great activities. He told me about them and spoke very enthusiastically! I'd like to say a big thank you to you and all the Free to Be team for making this holiday possible for Jamal and giving him a great time! He will always remember it, as he did so many 'out of the ordinary' things!"*

“I take the experience that I get from Free to Be back home with me and I'll think over the things that I've done and I'll go through them in my head. It makes me feel very excited and happy and that I need to come again.”
- Nathan, Age 11



Flourish Programme: Create & Cook

We ran a Create and Cook Group at Robert Browning Primary School in Southwark during the summer term. The school referred 8 children to be part of the nine week programme, working alongside our volunteers to build teamwork, social skills and problem solving abilities.

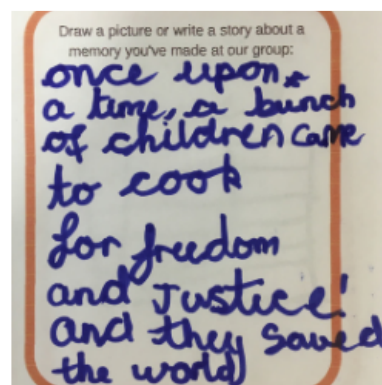
Every session started with time for the children to update their personal recipe books, sticking in recipes and photos from their last session together to create a lasting record of their achievements, before cooking in small groups to produce a nutritious meal. After cooking, children and volunteers ate together round the table, with the volunteers facilitating reflective conversation and supporting children to share their thoughts and feelings.

Recipes chosen & cooked by the children included: pizza, fruit salad, cannelloni, chocolate and raspberry brownies, homemade spaghetti and meatballs, veggie burgers, naan breads, chicken tikka and raita, flour tortillas, fajita filling and guacamole, gingerbread, cheese and tomato quiches, spring rolls, bread and butter pudding, rainbow salads and fruit smoothies. We were hugely impressed by their delicious creations and culinary skills!

Robert Browning's Head Teacher told us:

"It has been an absolute pleasure to welcome Free to Be and their extremely professional, kind, caring and courteous volunteers into our school community. I have been wowed by their attention to detail and passionate enthusiasm in ensuring that the disadvantaged children we targeted with the intervention receive the highest quality experiences, week on week. When one pupil displayed an interest in spaghetti and meatballs, the team went the extra mile and taught the children (who would never, ever get this experience) to make their own pasta from scratch. I cannot heap enough praise on the team and over-emphasise the impact their work and time has on the education and pastoral well-being of our pupils!"

“The bonds children formed between themselves and with the adults was clear. Interactions were really equal and generous, and the kids made it clear they felt comfortable in the space. Sessions felt like secure spaces for the children to share and be in an unrestricted way. What a privilege to spend time with such amazing kids and a great group of volunteers!”
-Volunteer



Our Impact

100% of referrers providing feedback told us that our projects benefitted young people's education, emotional health and capacity to fulfil their potential. Feedback from schools showed that the opportunities we provide translated into observable improvements in confidence and self-belief in the classroom, and that this was still the case when measured at the end of the term after children had attended.

Referrers told us:

"Free to Be gave the children a chance to step outside of the daily strain of elements of their life in London, in a way which they experienced as positive, safe and enjoyable. They reaped the benefits of the pastoral care and opportunity to meet new kids." **Head of Year**

"The children had the opportunity to make new friends without them being in a situation where others had pre-conceived thoughts about their abilities: socially, emotionally or developmentally. This was a wonderful experience where they could explore, experience new things, and be the people they wanted to be whilst still feeling safe and secure." **Social Worker**

"We really appreciated the depth of feedback Free to Be provided after projects. It helps us work with children and their families to extend their experiences with Free to Be into their day to day life at home and at school." **SENCo**

A key priority over coming years is to continue to grow our capacity. Demand is very high amongst our referrers, with schools telling us that they needed much more of what Free to Be can offer. Of those we surveyed, every school told us they need at least double the number of places we currently provide. On average, schools suggested that they would like three to four times the number of places we can currently offer.

Based on 2018 evaluation information from children, volunteers and referrers

The Impact of our Projects

99% of children who attended reported positive indicators of improved self-esteem, social confidence and resilience, including feeling believed in, trusted, adventurous and special.



88% of children reported trying something they'd previously not thought possible whilst with us.



Project workers reported that 98% of children showed improvement in terms of their self-belief and social confidence over the project, with **82%** of children showing very significant improvement.



99% developed or learnt new social skills on our projects, including making and keeping friends, relating better with trusted adults and managing frustration and challenge more constructively.



100% of referrers providing feedback reported positive change in the child's emotional wellbeing and/or behaviour after our project, including being more positive, having better interactions with others, managing when things go wrong and having a stronger sense of self.



Organisational Achievements

Following growth through 2016-18, this year we've been working hard to significantly restructure and strengthen Free to Be to ensure our work is sustainable for the long term:

- In January we grew and restructured our Board of Trustees. The expanded team now comprises of 7 Trustees with expertise in: charity management, accountancy, philanthropic giving, family law, therapeutic work, impact evaluation, communications and clinical psychology.
- In March we gained the London Youth Bronze Quality Mark - a badge of excellence which involved independent examination of our policies, and procedures. We're now working on the Silver Level.
- Over 2018 we grew our pool of volunteers to 125. 75 of these actively worked to support our children this year, contributing over 9026 hours, (which, paid at the UK Living Wage, would equate to £95,224).
- In June 24 volunteers attended our Advanced Helper Training Weekend, which was generously funded by London Youth and included sessions on: managing and responding to challenging behaviour, First Aid, handling complex conversations with vulnerable children and weaving emotional literacy and reflection into work on our projects. Sessions were led by a mix of experts from within Free to Be's team and external trainers.
- In July our Leadership Team of Rachel Nichols and Mike Gee were able to move into salaried roles, after 2.5 years of leading our work voluntarily. This change will enable them to focus more on our sustainable growth.
- In September we discovered we were one of 36 organisations to be funded through the first phase of the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's high profile Young Londoner's Fund. Together with match funding from The Fore Trust, who identify and incubate exceptional early stage charities, this will allow us to appoint a new staff member to join our team in early 2019, helping us to reach more vulnerable children and young people.



“I felt thoroughly supported throughout my volunteering. There is undoubted support from the coordinators, they give you their time whenever you need help, (including lovingly waking you up every morning!). The other volunteers also gave me lots of reassurance during my first week and checked in with each other at the end of the day. Everyone on the project was so friendly and approachable - so despite being a new volunteer I felt like I'd known everyone for years.”

-Volunteer



Photos from our Advanced Helper Training Weekend

Supporters

Our work this year wouldn't have been possible without the kindness and support of large numbers of generous individuals, groups and organisations. There are far too many to list here, but to all those who donated their birthday money, added us to their wedding gift lists, hosted cake sales and karaoke on our behalf, helped sort and carry equipment, wrote letters, stuffed envelopes, bought gifts from our Christmas list, or helped in any other way, we'd like to say a huge and very heartfelt **THANK YOU**.



A big thank you to the team at mtn-i, who continue to support our work - from funding our projects, to gifts in kind, practical help with our administration and staff volunteering on our projects.



Booker Wholesale continue to generously donate all non-perishable food and homewares for all our summer projects, dramatically reducing our catering costs and ensuring healthy and tasty meals for all our children.



ABC Self Store, now Shurgard Self-Storage, continue to support us by providing clean, dry and secure storage for our equipment outside of projects. Their support ensures our overhead costs are kept low and our equipment is safe and kept in the best possible condition.



Stalbridge Linen supported us by laundering our linen and sleeping bags between our projects. We're grateful for their support in helping to make the children's sleeping arrangements as comfortable as possible.



101 Consultants have provided generous funding towards our residential projects for the third year running. We're so grateful for their ongoing support.



Gift Your Gear provides us with valuable tents, camping equipment, clothing and footwear donated by generous outdoor brands and members of the public. Their support ensures our children are properly kitted out for their adventures in the outdoors.



The fantastic team at Cody Dock welcomed our volunteers to their amazing space on the banks of the River Lea and generously hosted our training days.



The wonderful Radwan family at Willowbrook Farm in Oxfordshire, who supported our Under the Stars Respite project this summer and allowed our children to explore and be part of their farm.



Last but not least, a very big thank you to Janet, Anthony and the rest of the team at the Kids Farm Trust, for once again welcoming our children and volunteers to their idyllic Sussex campsite and hosting two of our Journey Projects this summer.

Special thanks also to: St Hughs & Lincoln College JCRs for their funding towards our projects, Vicki Read for providing free First Aid training to our volunteers, Hallam Mills & all of the team at Bisterne Manor Farm for hosting our Art Weekend in Partridge Barn again, Oxford Royale Academy for loaning us their gazebos as shelter from the sun on our Under the Stars Project, Bill Spectre for visiting our campfire to tell spooky ghost stories, GP Batteries who supplied us with power banks so our children could call home whilst camping, Eve, Henry & Katy at Kantar TNS for facilitating our vision and strategy workshop, George the Farmer who helped many of our children to have their first taste of camping in one of his fields this summer, Rosker Ltd who sent us two top of the range fire pits for our children to practice campfire cooking on and everyone else who helped us with free and discounted products and services this year.

Grants and Charitable Trusts

We are particularly grateful to the following grant giving bodies and charitable trusts for making our work this year possible:

The Potterspurty Lodge Trust

The Keith Rae Trust

The Zennor Trust



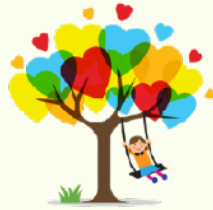
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