

# Impact Report 2025





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**"My year in Thailand has equipped me with life-changing confidence. I've had the chance to explore a new side of myself, experience the world of work and recognise my resilience. I cannot thank Project Trust enough for believing in me."**

*Dyani, Thailand Volunteer 24/25*



**"Project Trust has broadened my global awareness and helped me understand the importance of connecting with others. I now find it easier to speak to people, especially those from another culture, to begin building meaningful connections."**

*Elsa, Honduras Volunteer 24/25*





# Executive Summary

Ingrid Emerson

**Project Trust empowers young people to think critically and engage with the world around them as active global citizens, able to understand different perspectives.**

In an increasingly divided world, the need for empathetic, informed and globally aware individuals has never been greater. Young people are seeking opportunities to develop essential employability skills and gain a broader worldview, while employers report a growing gap in communication, resilience and problem-solving among Gen Z. Society needs young people who can think critically and engage with the world around them – not just academically, but as active global citizens able to understand different perspectives.

Project Trust responds to this need by offering long-term international volunteering placements. Young people live and work within another

culture, taking responsibility and navigating real-world challenges while making meaningful contributions to host communities. As the UK's most experienced educational charity specialising in international youth volunteering, we know these experiences develop confidence, resilience, communication and leadership skills that remain with our Volunteers long after their placement ends.

Project Trust survived the Covid-19 pandemic, despite a forced year-long pause in operations and the repatriation of over 200 Volunteers. While these unprecedented challenges reduced our capacity, they also created space to reassess and strengthen our model.

Today, we operate with smaller numbers, supporting 102 Volunteers across nine country programmes in 2024/25, but with a stronger focus on sustainable, community-led placements that deliver mutual benefit for both host communities and young people.

We have also invested in strengthening the support available to our Volunteers, recognising that high-quality placements depend on young people feeling safe, supported and able to thrive. Alongside robust safeguarding frameworks, we have expanded our mental health and pastoral support to ensure Volunteers feel equipped to overcome challenges and have access to consistent guidance and care throughout their placement.

Widening access is a core priority for Project Trust, and we are committed to ensuring that a young person's future is shaped by their potential, not their finances.

Through our partnership with The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, we have awarded £138,794 in Access Fund bursaries to 59 young people since 2021, including 20 volunteers in the 2024/25 cohort. This year, we also secured our first fully-funded placement, a significant milestone in our mission to ensure that financial barriers do not stand in the way of a life-changing experience.

As this report demonstrates, the need for our work remains clear and pressing. Young people are seeking meaningful opportunities to develop skills and a global perspective, while host communities continue to value long-term, ethical volunteering partnerships. Looking ahead, we remain focused on delivering inclusive, sustainable and high-impact volunteering opportunities that develop globally aware young people who contribute positively to their communities, both abroad and at home.

**Ingrid Emerson**  
Chief Executive





# The Project Trust Experience

A supported volunteering experience,  
built for long-term impact.



# Introduction

## Project Trust: Empowering young people through life-changing international volunteering placements

Since 1967, Project Trust has empowered young people to realise their full potential through global volunteering. We offer long-term, immersive volunteer placements that equip **young people aged 17-25** with essential life skills.

Our international volunteering placements provide a real-world, empowering experience that fosters personal growth, whilst actively supporting positive mental health and wellbeing.

Offering **extended placements of up to 12 months** allows Volunteers to truly immerse themselves in their host communities.

These experiences not only strengthen independence and

adaptability but are also designed to develop five core competencies:

**confidence**

**resilience**

**global awareness**

**leadership**

**communication**

In our 59-year history, we have empowered over **8,600 young people** to become responsible and active global citizens, creating lasting impact in communities around the world and shaping lives far beyond the placement experience.



# Our Model

## Ethical and Sustainable Volunteering

Working with partner organisations around the world, our projects are carefully chosen to ensure that our Volunteers' skills are put to good use in their host communities. Placements are designed to meet community needs, ensuring they add value and never take work away from local people.

The long-term structure of our two programmes, the **Immersive Placement** (10-12 months) and the **Focused Placement** (6-8 months), enables Volunteers to integrate fully into their host communities and make a meaningful contribution.

This time fosters a profound and lasting cultural exchange through the opportunity to learn the language, participate in the culture and embrace the rhythm of everyday life.



**'The impact that a Volunteer has is massive, they not only provide hope but they help the community to feel seen and not forgotten. It creates a sense of joy and provides knowledge about a different walk of life.'**

*Rose, Malawi International Representative*

# Volunteer Support

With almost 60 years of experience working with young people, we know that meaningful development depends on the right balance of independence and support. Project Trust placements are designed to stretch Volunteers, helping them build responsibility, confidence and resilience through real challenge, whilst ensuring support is available whenever it is needed through a robust three-tiered system:

**Country Coordinator:** A UK-based member of the International Programme team who provides pre-departure support, ongoing guidance throughout the placement, and an in-country visit focused on wellbeing, project progress and learning.

**International Representative:** An in-country contact who understands the culture and language, supports

arrival and logistics, and provides emergency assistance.

**Project Host:** A local community member who offers day-to-day guidance and local knowledge.

Every Volunteer lives and works with another Project Trust Volunteer, their **Project Partner**, providing mutual support as they settle into and learn from their new environment.





# Volunteer Journey

A Project Trust placement is far more than time spent volunteering abroad; it is a structured, two-year journey that invests in each young person's personal growth. From initial engagement to returning home, every stage is designed to build confidence, resilience and leadership skills, with extended support and monitoring across six key steps:



1

## Initial Engagement

Young people learn about our opportunities at school talks and local careers fairs.



2

## Selection Course

Applicants take part in a 2-day online selection course, featuring information sessions and aptitude assessments.



3

## Fundraising

With support from dedicated staff, Volunteers fundraising for their placement, building independence, accountability and confidence along the way.



4

## Pre-Departure Training

Volunteers attend a 4-day residential course to prepare for their host country and project.



5

## International Placement up to 12 months

A long-term placement offers Volunteers a chance for full cultural immersion to learn about the world and build essential life skills.



6

## Debriefing Course

On return to the UK, Volunteers attend a 2-day residential course to reflect on their experiences and celebrate their achievements.



# Our Volunteers

The difference Project Trust made to  
our young people in 2024/25.



# 102 Volunteers

## 9 Country Programmes

### 45 International Projects

Our 2024/25 cohort of Volunteers consisted of **102 young people** from across the UK (98%) and the rest of the world (2%). Volunteers ranged in age from 17 to 24, bringing a wide mix of experience and motivations to their placements.

The majority of the cohort came from **state-educated backgrounds**, and 20 Volunteers received bursary support. This plays a vital role in widening access to international volunteering, ensuring that participation is based on potential and commitment rather than financial means.

In total, 66 Volunteers completed Immersive Placements, while 36 embarked on Focused Placements.

Across nine country programmes, our Volunteers supported 45 teaching, youth development and social care projects, playing a vital role in the learning and well-being of children and young people worldwide.

In 2024/25, our Volunteers contributed:

**48,865 hours**  
**volunteering**  
**supporting 13,890**  
**young people**  
**worldwide**



# Skills Development

Young people are facing reduced opportunities to develop essential life skills beyond the classroom. Volunteering with Project Trust equips them with the skills they need to thrive.

Volunteers reported the extent to which Project Trust's core competencies had improved after their placement:

Project Trust's long-term placements create the conditions for **sustained skills development**. Young people take on real responsibility, adapt to unfamiliar environments and navigate challenges independently.

Volunteers consistently reported greater global awareness, stronger interpersonal skills and a deeper understanding of their own values.



**97%**  
strengthened  
their ability to  
problem-solve

**100%**  
developed  
greater self-  
reliance and  
independence

\*based on 42 responses



# Personal Development

## Confidence, Perspective and Growth

Living and working in another culture reshapes how Volunteers see themselves and others. Many described a profound increase in confidence, empathy and openness, particularly when navigating language barriers or unfamiliar environments and social norms.

“ *My experience will impact everything I do. It has greatly increased my self-confidence, my understanding of others and my perception of my life and privileges. Overall, it has fundamentally changed who I am for the better.* ”

**Bella, Senegal Volunteer 2024/25**

We asked our Volunteers to summarise their international placements:

- Life-changing
- Transformative
- Eye-opening
- Confidence-building
- Positively impactful
- The best thing I've ever done



\*based on 42 responses

# In their own words...

These reflections were shared during the end-of-placement Debriefing course, which gives young people space to reflect on their experiences and learning. As a learning organisation, we value these insights and use them to strengthen and improve our programmes.



# Jamie's Story

One of our key priorities in recent years has been improving accessibility, so that any young person with the motivation and potential to benefit from a Project Trust experience can have access to this life-changing opportunity. In response to low engagement and high levels of child poverty in the North East of England, we launched a regional partnership to raise awareness, reduce financial barriers and support more young people into our programmes. Jamie joined Project Trust through this initiative.

## A Journey from Northumberland to Thailand

From his Selection course in March 2024 to his Debriefing course in September 2025, we have seen Jamie's remarkable journey of self-discovery. As one of the first Volunteers to join his project in Thailand, he approached this experience with curiosity, openness and a genuine commitment to cultural exchange. In his own words, Jamie reflects on his experience and the impact it's had on him:

### “ ——— Training: July 2024

**I've been interested in travelling my whole life. I've always wanted to get out there and see the world but I didn't have a way to actually do that. It was all just talk and ideas until I heard about Project Trust in an assembly at school. None of my friends or family have ever done anything like this but they have been really supportive of me. I am so excited to begin my placement in Thailand and see what positive impact I can have on my host community.**





## “ — Thailand: February 2025

I can't believe I've already been at Pathum Ratchawongsa for six months - it has been an incredible experience. My project partner and I have built some truly amazing connections, especially with Noom (pictured centre left), one of the teachers who has warmly welcomed us into the community. He has introduced us to local customs and places, giving us a deeper understanding of Thai culture. I really feel that we are making a meaningful impact on the wider community. With exciting trips planned soon, I'm determined to make the most of every moment!

”

## “ — Debriefing: September 2025

It's difficult to put into words how I've changed as a person. In my mind, I feel completely different after this experience. It's given me a much better mindset towards work. Seeing how hard Thai people work with so few resources really struck me - they put in such long hours and are so dedicated to their craft. I've taken huge inspiration from that and have developed a stronger work ethic for my future. I'm really looking forward to getting stuck into whatever comes next.



”

Upon returning from his placement, Jamie successfully secured an IT apprenticeship in Newcastle on his first application. His enthusiasm for his Project Trust experience is infectious, and he has since become a valued ambassador for our work in the North East of England. Jamie now visits local schools and community groups to share his story, openly reflecting on his journey and acting as a relatable role model for other young people from the region considering a similar step.



# Access Fund Bursary

Making life-changing opportunities  
accessible to all young people.

# Award Recipients



Within the 2024/25 cohort, **20 young people** received an Access Fund Bursary. Delivered in partnership with the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust, this means-tested award enables Volunteers to take up a life-changing Project Trust placement and access opportunities otherwise out of reach.

The Access Fund Bursary provides a substantial contribution towards international placement costs for young people who meet defined criteria.

In total, **£47,566 was awarded** to 20 recipients from a wide range of backgrounds, including care-experienced young people, those from low socio-economic households, and young people whose families experience mental or physical health difficulties.

In September 2025, we asked some of our recipients to reflect on their achievements and the impact of their Project Trust experience.



**Max**  
**China Volunteer**

“As a young carer for my older brother, there was often a lot of responsibilities that had to come before fundraising. The bursary was a massive help. I’ve come home as the best version of myself. It’s been such an amazing year and I’ve learned so much, not only about myself, but about the world around me.”

## Dyani - Thailand Volunteer



"I was really relieved to receive a bursary. I worked hard at my fundraising but felt others had opportunities I didn't. Having access to the bursary showed me that Project Trust recognised how much harder it was for me. My experience in Thailand has changed my personality in so many ways. I'm already much more confident speaking up for myself, and overcoming challenges allowed me to explore new sides of myself. My biggest learning was that you can learn self-awareness through someone who is completely different to you."

**Leo**

## Ghana Volunteer



"This whole experience has had a profound impact on me. Living in Ghana was not easy, for example not having running water or navigating language barriers. But I learned how to persevere and that failure is an important part of improving. I think if the Access Fund wasn't a thing, I wouldn't be here."

Fundraising remains a significant barrier for many young people, with **one in five Volunteers** applying for an Access Fund Bursary in 2025. We are committed to ensuring our placements remain accessible, regardless of financial circumstance.

Thanks to the support of our charitable trust partners, we are proud to offer our first ever fully-funded placement for a young person in our 2026/27 cohort, opening the door to a truly transformative opportunity.

*Coming in 2026*  
**Our first fully-funded placement**



# Our Impact

Where an international placement is  
the beginning, not the end.

# A Unique Placement

Project Trust is the only UK charity offering long-term, fully immersive international placements for young people aged 17–25. Our projects span teaching, youth development and social care, shaped by the needs of communities across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Each placement offers distinct opportunities for growth, enabling young people from diverse backgrounds to bring their unique skills, experiences and perspectives to their host communities.

The following summaries offer a snapshot of typical placements, the roles Volunteers take on, and the impact they create:



Ghana

- Teach students aged 4–18 in English, Maths, Science, ICT, and Life Skills.
- Run extra-curricular clubs in sport, creative arts, reading, and homework support.
- Live in rural communities on shared compounds, often with basic conditions, outdoor communal kitchens, and no running water.
- Learn the local language Ewe.



Cambodia

- Support vulnerable children aged 6–18, acting as a positive role model and assisting with English language skills and personal development.
- Lead extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, and cultural exchange workshops, to foster youth development.
- Attend local festivals and celebrations to engage with host culture and build meaningful relationships.



Honduras

- Teach English as a second language (TESOL) to students of various ages, supporting their language development.
- Lead community projects such as English speaking classes or organising sports and cultural activities.
- Live in rural towns with fellow teachers, building fluency in Spanish through interaction with the local community.



# Alumni Journey

**“A year with Project Trust is a crucial way to learn things that you are not going to find in a book. Since my time in Sudan, I have been in situations, testifying before Congress, sitting on government panels. Project Trust did not mean I had done it all before – just that there was no reason to think I couldn't do it.”**

**Gary Younge (Returned Volunteer 86/87)**

Journalist, Author and Sociology Professor at the University of Manchester.

The long-term impact of a Project Trust placement is reflected in the journeys of our alumni. Volunteers return with broadened perspectives, increased confidence and a deeper understanding of global issues – qualities that continue to shape their lives long after their placement ends.

Our **8,600-strong alumni network** includes leaders and changemakers across journalism, academia, the arts, and social action. Alumni include Gary Younge, award-winning actor and activist Tilda Swinton, Zahid Torres-Rahman OBE, founder of Business Fights Poverty, and Rebecca Mayhew, co-founder of Go Ape.

This impact is already visible among alumni from the 2024/25 cohort. Since returning to the UK, Volunteers have shared their experiences in local schools and communities, delivering workshops and assemblies that encourage other young people to engage with global issues and see themselves as active global citizens.

*Inspiring the next generation...*





# Join Us

As we look ahead to our 60th year, our purpose remains clear: **to empower young people to become responsible, active global citizens.** The world young people are entering is increasingly complex and divided. Our response focuses on deep community partnerships that allow for real learning, develop essential employability skills and prepare a generation of globally aware young people ready to make a difference. Whether you are a young person, an educator, a supporter or a partner, **there is a place for you in the next chapter of our story.**

## Prospective Volunteers

### Begin the journey of a lifetime

Apply now or book onto an information evening

[Learn more →](#)

## Teachers & Youth Leaders

### Host a recruitment event

Arrange a visit from our team to inspire your young people

[Email us →](#)

## Supporters & Funders

### Support life-changing journeys

Invest in our young people and programmes

[Contact us →](#)

## Alumni & Partners

### Champion our work

Partner with us or share our opportunities

[Get involved →](#)



# Impact Report 2025

## *For Further Information*

Email us at [info@projecttrust.org.uk](mailto:info@projecttrust.org.uk)  
or visit [projecttrust.org.uk](http://projecttrust.org.uk)

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