

IMPACT REPORT 2025/26

A Year of Changing Lives
Across Ipswich and Suffolk



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ABOUT US

We are a local independent charity working with individuals and communities, of all ages, but with a particular focus on people 55 plus who live-in hardpressed areas in Ipswich and across Suffolk. We offer a wide range of services and programmes that help people connect, be active, learn new skills and volunteer at our ActivHubs, ActivSport, ActivGardens and ActivSingers programmes. Our sessions provide preventative and inclusive services to support everyone to keep ACTIVE, HEALTHY and CONNECTED.

www.activlives.org.uk

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Telephone No: 01473 345350
Charity Registration Number: 1147615, Company Registration Number: 7672809



@ActivLives

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES MESSAGE

I'm pleased to be able to report to you about the continued success of ActivLives over the past year. In what is our 20th year, from when the Town & Bridge Project started, the board of trustees and I are delighted to see how our services, activities and projects have continued to reach and impact so many lives across Ipswich, Mid-Suffolk and Babergh and East Suffolk.

Last year, I reported to you about how, whilst the uncertain economic landscape continues to shift, we have been prepared to adapt to try to ensure our long-term financial sustainability, increase awareness of the charity, and to build positive partnerships and support within the community. This past year has seen much of the same endeavour, with the changes made in the organisation helping to make us more efficient and cost effective, whilst not compromising the quality of the support and services we continue to offer.

We have been open about the financial challenges which we face in this difficult economic climate, and I have found the response of my fellow trustees, our staff, volunteers and members to this "call to action" nothing less than inspiring. We all care about the sustainability of our charity, and I have felt this immensely as trustees, staff, volunteers and members have joined us to collectively approach it "head on". Examples of this have come in the form of:

- 1.offering suggestions on initiatives and ways we improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our offering, and them being implemented;
- 2.being prepared to donate and/ or raise funds for us; and
- 3.generally, being amenable to change.

One of these successful initiatives has included our newly introduced "100 Club", which is a membership club in which members donate to us £10 per month and receive a chance to win cash prizes in our monthly lottery. Thank you to those who are signed up to this, and congratulations to our winners so far! We still have space for new members of the 100 Club, so please do spread the word.

Our fundraising efforts over the last year have, so far, raised over £20,000 of much needed funds. Whilst our endeavours and initiatives must continue in this difficult economic climate, what has been achieved up to this point is testament to the hard work of, and sense of community which emanates from our trustees, staff, volunteers and members, without whom this would not be possible. For that, I would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt

Daniel Billson
Chair of Trustees



"thank you" to you all for your efforts to help us towards, not only a sustainable future, but a successful one.

On the subject of success, ActivLives have again received well deserved recognition over the past year through various awards nominations and wins. These have included:

- Mike McCarthy - BBC Radio Suffolk - Make A Difference Award 2025 - Winner
- Susannah Robirosa - ASDA Community Diamond Award 2025
- Jemma Tilley - Runner Up - Activity Champion of the Year, Active Suffolk Awards 2025
- Alfie Orvis - Runner Up - Active Unsung Hero, Active Suffolk Awards 2025
- Nicola Taylor and Evie Edwards-Hill - Runner Up - Team of the Year, Active Suffolk Awards 2025
- Julie Stokes - Leadership Award - Commended - ICS "Can Do" Health & Care Award 2025

Whilst focusing on diversifying our income generation, ActivLives have continued to proactively search out and apply for appropriate funding. Notably, in the last year, we have received funding from County, Borough and District Councils, Councillors, local and national funders and Charitable Trusts, which help support the development and delivery of a wide range of projects and services across Suffolk.

I would like to thank all our funders, whether they be longstanding or new, for their support to us over the past year.

All this leaves me to say is a big thank you to you all: our staff, trustees, volunteers, members, funders and supporters, who have helped make ActivLives what it is in this milestone year. I feel immense pride in this wonderful charity and the community that it provides to so many, and I hope that everyone who contributes to, as well as benefits from, its services and support, feels the same way too.

CEO MESSAGE

As always, I would like to start this year's Annual Impact Report by thanking our dedicated and amazing staff, volunteers and Trustees for the commitment, passion, patience and support you give to everyone at ActivLives. The impact you have on people's lives is truly amazing, and this year's Impact Report 2025-26 demonstrates just that.

I won't deny that times are tough for charities, and ActivLives is no exception. We have seen some really good charities close in recent months and this makes me even more proud of our organisation and our incredible staff who continue to battle on. They work tirelessly to apply for funding, support fundraising activities and find new ways to keep our services going.

We are also incredibly fortunate to have such generous members, families, friends and supporters who continue to fund and support our projects and services. I would also like to thank everyone who has and continues to donate to our

Julie Stokes
CEO



£100,000 fundraising campaign or joined our 100 Club. Every contribution, however large or small, makes a real difference and helps us to continue supporting people in our communities.

2026 is a very special year for ActivLives, as we celebrate our 20th anniversary. Our journey began in 2006 as a two-year funded Local Strategic Partnership project called the Town & Bridge Project, led by Dr Brian Keeble, Director of Ipswich Public Health. The project was targeted at two of the most deprived areas of Ipswich – the Town Centre and the top of Bridge Ward.

A YEAR OF IMPACT

The project was extended for a further two years, during which time some of our major projects began, including the People's Community Garden, the Fit as a Fiddle exercise programme, our community singing group Keep on Rockin', and our two Lunch Clubs at St Mary at Stoke Church and the Ipswich International Church.

In 2012, we became a charity called ActivLives. This was an important milestone, enabling us to share what we had learned with other communities and expand our work in Ipswich and into different areas of Suffolk.

Along the way, staff have come and gone, while others have remained part of our journey. I would particularly like to thank Susannah Robirosa, ActivGardens Fundraising and Development Manager, who joined me in 2008. Susannah's determination, vision and passion have helped develop our three incredible Community Gardens, alongside the staff and volunteers, past and present, who have contributed to their success.

Today, we have 46 weekly sessions, alongside a range of amazing projects and services supporting some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people aged 18+, as well as people aged 50 and over living with long-term health conditions, mental health needs, neurodivergent conditions and addictions. We also support people living with dementia, Parkinson's and stroke, together with their amazing carers.

Over the past 20 years, we have supported thousands of people across Ipswich, East Suffolk, Mid Suffolk and Babergh to keep active and connected. We have also provided volunteering opportunities that have helped people build confidence and self-esteem, develop new skills and, in many cases, move towards further education and employment.

As we celebrate 20 years, I would like to thank every member of staff, Freelance staff, Trustees and volunteers who have been part of the ActivLives journey. You have all brought different skills, experiences, knowledge, ideas, passion and humour and together you have helped shape ActivLives into the organisation we are today.

Twenty years on, our purpose remains as strong as ever: supporting people to keep active, connected and involved in their communities, while creating opportunities for people to grow in confidence, improve their wellbeing and live their best lives. I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved together – and even more excited about what the future holds for ActivLives.

This year we welcomed Alana Sewell to ActivLives to develop the Suffolk Community Foundation – Sizewell C Community Fund - ActivAble Project working with our existing sessions in Saxmundham, Leiston and Wickham Market and developing new activities in the Sizewell C area.

Every year, we also have to say goodbye to people who have played an important part in ActivLives. This year was no exception.

We said goodbye to two Trustees – Linda Hughes and Mark Ledger – and I would like to thank them for the time, commitment, guidance and expertise they brought to the governance and development of ActivLives. Their contribution has been greatly valued, and we wish them all the very best for the future.

We also said goodbye to two members of staff who have made a significant contribution to ActivLives and to the people we support.

Mike McCarthy, our ActivIpswich Development Manager, was with ActivLives for 12 years. During that time, Mike brought inclusive sport into the heart of our work, both within ActivLives and across Suffolk. He developed and supported opportunities including Boccia, New Age Kurling, Bowls, Walking Football, Ping Pong, inclusive Badminton and Short Tennis, creating opportunities for people of all abilities to take part, be active and enjoy the benefits of sport and physical activity.

We also said goodbye to Colin Baldwin, our Partnership and Fundraising Development Officer. Colin had only been with us for a year, developing relationships with corporate and local businesses and creating new fundraising initiatives to support the organisation, but is now taking a well-deserved retirement.

To Mike and Colin, thank you for everything you have contributed to ActivLives and to the people we support. We wish you both every success and happiness for the future. We will miss you.

Funding and fundraising is obviously a top priority for the sustainability of the organisation, so I would like to thank all our partners, supporters, funders, members, volunteers and their families who continue to believe in ActivLives and the work that we do. Your generosity – through funding awards, donations, fundraising, volunteering, partnership working and investment in our organisation – enables us to continue delivering the projects and services that are so desperately needed by people across our communities. Without your support, we simply could not do what we do. Over the past year these include

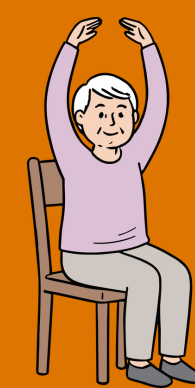
Donations in memory of people who have passed away
Rex Denny £197
Cynthia Ray £385
Sheila Gilder £152
Colin Hawes £609
Peter Baldwin £330
Lynette Coleman £244

Donations from East of England Co-op Local Giving Campaign £300 plus customer donations of £234
Breheny Civil Engineering £500 for ActivSheds
Avocet Care Home raised over the year totalling £320 for the People's Community Garden
Rotary Club of Ipswich East donated £1500 to purchase a ride on mower for ActivGardens
The Murphy-Neumann Charity £1800 for People's Community Garden
Parents of an ActivGardens volunteer - £200

St Edmundsbury Cathedral £1000, £200 from the Kosman Sanctuary and £500 from the Lodge of Perfect Friendship, Felixstowe Disability Pride event in July - £1000
A Ducks in a Row event organised by Trustee Clare Lucas raised £635
An event put on by A Good Balance raised £430
Trustee Dan Billson raised £1794 from a sponsored walk "How far can you go" campaign raised £1620 from sponsorship of members and supporters
Social event held at Trimley Sports Club raised £802

A big thank you again to all our current staff, freelance staff and volunteers for all your hard work over the year and to Cynthia, Jomel, Stella and volunteer Jean White who work tirelessly in the office to keep us all on track.

We look forward to another exciting and challenging year, but your support and being part of this great organisation makes it all worthwhile.



1,279
exercise
sessions
organised



378
sports
activities
facilitated



2,457
total attendances
at specialist hubs



40+
volunteers supporting
ActivLives

182



people were registered to
ActivGardens as volunteers
at our gardens, ActivSheds,
nature spaces and
community beekeeping
project



171

volunteers from 14
companies took part in
our Employer Supported
Volunteering programme



1,772 total members supported

1,146 women supported

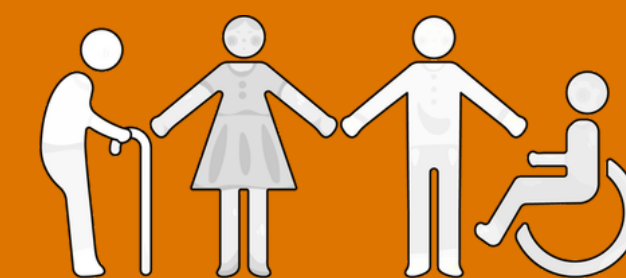
618 men supported

5 (different from gender at birth, other, prefer not to say and no data recorded)



1,499

people with different
types of disabilities
benefited from our
programmes & services



HELPING PEOPLE GROW THROUGH GARDENING AND NATURE



“ I love gardening – and liked the idea of meeting people with the same interests, getting out in the fresh air. It’s been a very welcoming group and I feel I fit right in. It’s especially nice when we sit down and have a cup of tea and a chat. ”

ActivLives has continued to respond to social need in Ipswich and Sudbury through its ActivGardens programme – enabling local people to get active, healthy and connected through gardening, food, nature, beekeeping and woodworking.

Its community sites have offered volunteering, support and learning every day of the week throughout the year – at the People’s Community Garden, ActivSheds woodworking project, ActivHives beekeeping, and Chantry Walled Garden community-run plant nursery in Ipswich, and in Sudbury – at Belle Vue Park.

Our teams of dedicated volunteers are key to our success – maintaining our gardens, nature spaces and community hubs both on the ground and behind the scenes, as well as mentoring and helping other people, supporting our projects, assisting at events, and raising funds through community enterprise and sales of plants, honey, produce and wooden items.

Our sustainable community food project - Grow Well Eat Well - entered its second year, with volunteers growing produce to send into St Peter’s Top Up Shop each week to benefit more than 65 families. We have promoted what we do in the local community, running growing/ cooking courses for residents and young people, and giving away plants and seeds to grow at home.

Three seasonal events for young families attracted 25-70+ adults and children, who explored the garden and took part in creative and fun activities with natural materials, before enjoying a healthy meal cooked by volunteers.

We ran two group visits for 30 childminders and children as part of a Department for Education early years programme. As a result, two childminders decided they would like to develop their own space on the allotment site for outdoor learning for up to 12 pre-school children.

We helped them clear the plot with Suffolk Probation Community Payback, donated seeds and plants, and offered help and guidance to get them started.

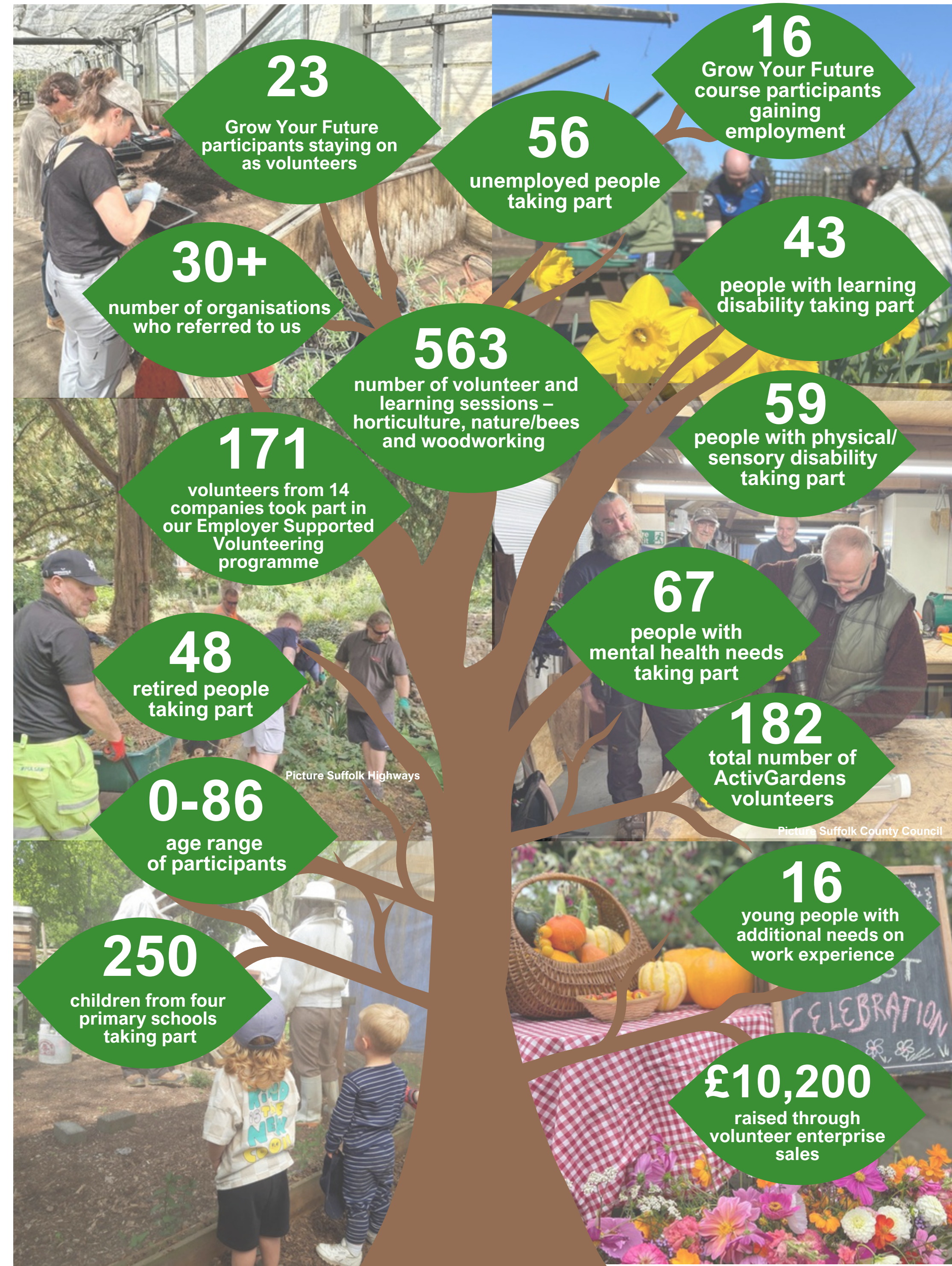
We entered the final year of Grow Your Future learning and skills programme, funded by national charity Henry Smith over three years. We have delivered a total of nine 12-week courses to 104 (target 90) people with a range of challenges including social anxiety, mental health issues, and learning differences, referred by organisations including DWP, Lighthouse Women’s Aid, Turning Point Drug and Alcohol Service, Realise Futures, Suffolk Probation, homeless projects and supported housing. 87 people completed the course, with 16 people (18% - target 10%) progressing into employment.

ActivSheds project continued to encourage confidence and creativity at two supported sessions each week, with 30 new referrals from Social Prescribing and other support organisations. Meanwhile, volunteers at the weekly men’s session have responded to the needs of the community garden as well as developing innovative and attractive products for sale. A group of 30 guides made bug hotels.

Beekeeping went from strength to strength, with a diverse group of people maintaining our hives on a weekly basis. Twenty-eight new people tried out beekeeping – including young people with additional needs. More than 100 children have watched the bees at close quarters from the safety of our viewing hide.

In Sudbury, volunteers embarked on a project to renovate areas of Belle Vue Park with new planting schemes funded by Babergh District Council Public Realm. Meanwhile, we worked hard to increase our impact, attracting more volunteers and young people through our work with Sudbury Job Centre and Suffolk County Council.

CHANGING LIVES



Visiting the gardens every week has made such a difference to my mental health and wellbeing. I love how the People's Community Garden feels like a real celebration of life and the Walled Garden feels more like a secret sanctuary - which are both so inspiring. It's great to be part of something bigger than yourself.

– **Jaime – Chantry Walled Garden Grow Your Future participant and beekeeping volunteer**



It's made a lot of difference to my life. You can't find a better bunch of lads to work with. We have a laugh about things. I have issues with speech and lose feeling in my arm. It gets frustrating when I'm concentrating and annoying when you can't do something. I got so used to it, I just laugh about it. I look forward to ActivSheds. It's opened my life up. When you have problems, it's a question of keeping yourself occupied as much as you can – getting out for a few hours. It's nice to come here and make unusual things to help the Shed. All these orders have come in from all over the place. I'm proud to be able to come here.

– **Ian – ActivSheds Thursday attendee and pioneer of the sausage dog planter**



Participating in ActivGardens has been a tremendous help for me mentally. Being outdoors, working with nature, and connecting with the other group members has given me a sense of purpose and routine. It's helped reduce my anxiety, lifted my mood, and improved my confidence. The peaceful environment and supportive community have made me feel less isolated and more positive. I've learned new skills and felt proud of contributing to something meaningful. Overall, it's created a space where I can grow emotionally and socially, helping me cope better with life's challenges. It's been more than a programme - it's been a lifeline.

– **Jason – People's Community Garden Key Volunteer who went on to gain employment at a local school.**



I found out about ActivLives at a job club at the job centre. I wanted to get out the house and improve my mental health. I was just going to the library or at home - sometimes I can be in my own head. I've learnt a lot of different skills. Especially pruning and weeding. It's not something I had done in high school. As a kid I wanted to garden. I'm enjoying meeting new people my age. I have developed my confidence to talk to new people and stopped being so quiet.

– **Grow Your Community – Sudbury young volunteer**



Before I came here I was lacking in fitness, confidence and suffered badly from anxiety. The staff are very helpful and understanding. It has been enjoyable and I look forward to attending. The programme and volunteers have helped me meet more people because before I hadn't got much of a circle of friends. I find I can communicate with more confidence. This has been the highlight of my week and I will carry on volunteering as long as I can. I would just like to say thank you to all the staff for their help and friendship.

– **Peter – People's Community Garden Grow Your Future participant -who gained employment in IBC's waste management team.**



I take my student weekly to ActivGardens and the change in him has been enormous. The skills he is learning cannot be taught in a classroom and he is benefiting from seeing things from seed to harvest and being with nature. Thank you all for having a wonderful place where people can be themselves and where skills are taught in an organic way.

– **Support assistant with Alternative Education provider**



I really enjoy my regular class and our instructor always encourages us to practice at home. It has certainly helped my mobility and the class is always fun. It is a positive fixture in my week both socially and physically.

– **Mrs. G, ReBalance Member**



The ReBalance Programme has achieved amazing results and made a significant impact over the past year. This is reflected in the many positive experiences shared by members who have participated in exercise sessions delivered across Ipswich and Suffolk.

The Keep on Moving, Strength & Balance and BreathFit sessions have helped members improve their confidence, self-esteem, physical and mental health, mobility and social connections. For people living with long-term health conditions, the programme has provided valuable opportunities to take part in inclusive physical activity within a safe, supportive and friendly environment.

Members have particularly valued the support, encouragement and guidance provided by our qualified instructors, who ensure that exercises can be adapted to individual needs and abilities. This person-centred approach has enabled people who may otherwise struggle to access mainstream physical activity to participate safely and confidently.

Throughout the year, members have reported and demonstrated improvements in their health and wellbeing, confidence and ability to remain active. The programme has also helped people build relationships, reduce social isolation and feel more connected to their local community.

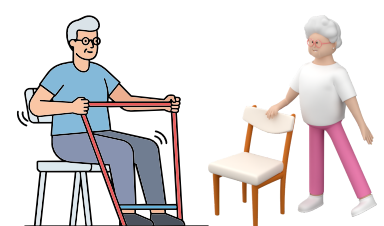
The feedback we have received from members strongly demonstrates the value and effectiveness of the ReBalance Programme.

Members have commended the programme for its positive impact, accessibility and delivery, highlighting how the combination of appropriate exercise, professional support and a welcoming environment has helped them make positive changes to their lives. Many of them felt empowered to do activities that they couldn't do before including walking without support, exercising at home and trying other physical activities.

The ReBalance Programme demonstrates the important role that inclusive, accessible and community-based physical activity can play in supporting people living with long-term health conditions to remain active, independent, connected and healthier for longer.

Key Highlights:

- Keep on Moving sessions recorded **12,754 attendances** and delivered **738 sessions**
- **321** members registered with Strength and Balance sessions & **88.56%** disclosed they have physical and mental health conditions
- **53.28%** of members reported* improvement in self-confidence after joining the programme
- **128** sessions delivered through the BreatheFit programme
- **57** exercise sessions delivered at Bangladeshi Ladies and Thomas Wolsey Place
- **Award: Jemma Tilley**, ReBalance Development Co-ordinator, recognised with Runner Up – Activity Champion of the Year, Active Suffolk Awards 2025



90.5%



of members
responded* positively
that their posture,
strength, balance &
stability have improved

14,078
ReBalance
programme
total attendances



1,353

total sessions
delivered



93.04%

members shared*
that ReBalance
programme has
positive impact on
their quality of life



99.35%

surveyed members*
agreed that the
programme is welcoming
and inclusive



56.77%



100%

over half of the
members felt less
alone or isolated after
joining the exercise
sessions

of members
believed that the
instructors demonstrated
good knowledge & skills
and supportive



* A total of 158 members of ReBalance programme responded to the survey conducted by ActivLives

The Keep on Moving sessions support people over aged 55 to keep them mobile, active and independent. In East Bergholt, we have sessions every Tuesday. Mr. C, 70 years old, is part of the group. He found out about the session through a brochure.

"I suffer peripheral neuropathy and drop foot that affects my balance. It affects the strength in my legs. I have tried numerous things and these sessions seem to be the best thing to me. I also go to the gym twice a week. I don't miss these sessions except when I have special things to do," he said.

Since joining the Keep on Moving sessions, he noticed that people have been telling him how he has improved.

"Other people notice more than I do. It's a gradual improvement. There are things I couldn't do before that I can do now and they come gradually since the time I am being here. Some people say I am walking better and standing up better," he shared.

"I haven't had a fall for quite a while since I have been coming here. Before, if I am on the ground, I wouldn't be able to get up. Now I can," he added. Being a part of the Keep on Moving session also gave him the opportunity to meet new people which has now become his support group.

"We have bonded as a group. We have fun together and encourage each other. Everybody who attends has come a long way. We help each other get on and this certainly boosted me," he said.

Mr. C mentioned that he would recommend it to other people. "I supposed some people they don't need it but for anybody that is struggling a little bit, they can definitely benefit from it. I can recommend it. It's good fun. Everybody enjoys it. It's a bit of variety," he said.



Mrs. M started going to alternative exercise but they wouldn't let her stay because they felt it was too much strain on her heart, due to her health condition.

"I joined the ActivLives New Age Kurling session first then one of the members said that the instructor is also doing an exercise session. So, I joined the BreatheFit programme," she said.

Mrs. M was trying to get as fit as she could. With her heart condition, surgery was inevitable. BreatheFit helped her recover from the surgery. "Through the programme, I was able to do things post-surgery far better than was expected and even the hospital staff couldn't believe it. When I first got out of bed, I could just stand up. I couldn't believe I could go from sitting to standing," she shared.

"I have been doing BreatheFit for 3 years and it was sort of second nature. I mean I have had difficulties but generally speaking I was prepared in the best way I could be," she said.



Mrs B started joining the exercise session at Saxmundham a year ago, few months before she turned 103 years old. She has proven that age is not a limitation to keep moving and get fit.

"I want to keep fit and I don't know any other way than learning a few exercises. I do walking at home as much as I can with a pusher", she shared. And she is unstoppable because she not only attends the weekly exercise regularly but she continues to do them at home.

"When I get home I practice them again and all throughout the week, I do a little practice. I found my balance become much better", she said. And she highly recommends the sessions to other people not only for the exercise but for social connection. "Absolutely a 100% I try and come not only for the exercise but also for the social part. Having a chat with people you don't know and finding all sorts of things you don't know as well. It's a whole thing. It's not only the exercise but it's also the social contact which is so important", she said.

“I love the community atmosphere and feeling involved. I enjoy the live entertainment and games.” -Mrs. M, ActivFriends Member

The Specialist Hubs have made an incredible difference to people's lives during the year. Through ActivFriends, Men's Hubs, St Mary at Stoke Lunch Club and ActivSinging, we have continued to provide welcoming, safe and inclusive spaces where people can come together, enjoy each other's company, have a laugh, gain support and access useful information.

Our Hubs provide valuable opportunities for people to meet others and make new friends, share experiences, socialise and build supportive relationships. For many people, particularly those who may be experiencing loneliness or social isolation, simply having somewhere to go each week where they feel welcomed, valued and included makes a significant difference to their wellbeing. The food prepared and served by our staff and volunteers is also an important part of creating a warm and friendly environment.

During the year, we launched a new Men's Hub in Woodbridge, welcoming new members to the ActivLives family. The Ipswich Men's Hub celebrated its third anniversary, demonstrating the strength and sustainability of this important service and the relationships that have developed among members.

ActivFriends continued to create opportunities for members to meet, socialise and make wonderful memories together. During the year, members celebrated Valentine's Day, Easter, VE Day and Christmas, alongside a range of activities and special events, including involvement from DanceEast. We were also delighted to welcome a very special guest to the Christmas party – the now Mayor of Ipswich, Councillor Pat Bruce-Browne.

The St Mary at Stoke Lunch Club continues to provide a valuable weekly social opportunity, catering for up to 30 people each week. Members enjoy good company, conversation and nutritious meals prepared with the support of our cook, staff and dedicated volunteers. For many members, the Lunch Club is much more than a meal; it is an important part of their weekly routine and a place where friendships and connections continue to grow.

Our ActivSinging group continues to bring people together through the enjoyment of singing and music. Singing provides a positive way for people to connect with others, lift their mood and improve their mental and emotional wellbeing. The group has created a strong sense of belonging, with members supporting and encouraging each other both within and beyond the sessions.

The ICare Connect Project also provided valuable support to 26 carers throughout the year, helping carers to access information, support and opportunities to connect with others who understand their experiences.

The impact of the Specialist Hubs extends far beyond the individual activities. They play an important role in reducing loneliness and social isolation, improving health and wellbeing, building confidence and creating a sense of belonging.

The peer support developed through shared experiences and personal stories is particularly powerful. Members support one another, share advice and encouragement, and build friendships that often continue outside of the Hub activities. This demonstrates the importance of creating safe and welcoming community spaces where people can be themselves, feel understood and know that they are not alone.

The Specialist Hubs are a powerful example of how connection, friendship, food, music, shared experiences and peer support can make a real and lasting difference to people's lives.

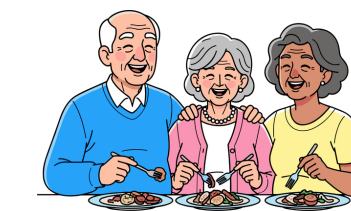
Key highlights

98.18% felt connected to their local community through the hubs and gained new friends*
100% of the members* shared that they will highly recommend the hubs to other people
96.36% of the hubs' members strongly agreed & agreed that the hubs have positive impact on their wellbeing
96.37% almost all members believed that the staff and volunteers foster a welcoming and safe environment



78.26%

lunch club members* believed that their self-confidence and self-esteem improved through the lunch club



44

lunches served for the year with 918 lunch club attendances



45

sessions delivered on ActivFriends with 699 attendances



88.24%



ActivFriends members surveyed agreed that the hub is welcoming & supportive

93.33%



of Men's Hub members* felt they are a part of a supportive and welcoming environment

80%

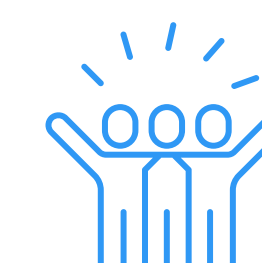


of Men's Hub members reported improvement on their self-confidence and self-esteem



84.60%

ActivSingers members strongly agreed that they're in good spirit after singing with the group



92.73%

of specialist hubs members* shared that they felt happier & fulfilled after participating in the weekly activities



*A total of 55 members of Specialist Hubs responded to the survey

Mrs P, a member of ActivFriends, was one of the first members of the hub when it started 10 years ago. She joined to support her husband who was diagnosed with dementia.

“My husband had dementia. He had six years of being here and he absolutely loved it,” she said. She shared that when they started ActivFriends there were only around 10 members.

“When we started, we are not that many, maybe about 10. But gradually word got about and now we have a lot of members joining,” she said.

She happily mentioned fond memories with her husband at ActivFriends.

“He loved everybody here, the time and the food. And he liked the draw so he can win a prize,” she said with a smile.

The hub made a big difference in supporting her and her husband. “ActivFriends has helped me and my husband because there is always someone to talk to. We also had someone from Sue Ryder who met us here to be able to talk to and that helped me and my husband so much,” she said.

After her husband died, members encouraged her to continue being a member of ActivFriends. And she is now one of the longest members of the hub and still enjoying her time with the members she now call friends.



Mr. B is a member of ActivFriends and the Men's Hub. He learned about ActivFriends through his daughter.

“I found out about ActivFriends in a stranged way. My eldest daughter works in the local hospital. On this particular day, Alison came to desk for her appointment at the hospital. The two of them got chatting and my name came into conversation because at that time I was in a bad way,” he said.

ActivFriends has become Mr. B's support group since he joined that has helped him fight isolation and loneliness through meeting and making new friends.

“Positivity for me has been somewhere regular and safe to go to where the rules are easily understood and I came into contact with people I haven't met before. It gave me the opportunity to make new friends who were familiar with the circumstances I found myself in and we helped each other to enjoy life a little more”, he said.

Attending the Men's Hub in Ipswich also gave him something to look forward to every week. “It keeps me going. And I hope to become a member for many years to come”, he said.

“The Men's Hub helps me get up in the morning. It is a gathering of men which is quite rare where we can give our thoughts and impressions and views on various subjects and interests...it helps people to get back on track and motivates people to improve their lifestyle and get active rather than just stagnating at home and thinking about everything that has gone wrong,” he said. He highly recommends the two groups to other people.

“I recommend it because it stays true to its values. It enables people to live life again, be happier, with a little more contact with the community and hopefully make new friendships again”, he shared.

Mrs. D is 76 years old and has been going to the lunch club for the past 3 years. The club has become her comfort place after being widowed. “Before Covid-19, I led a very solitary life”, she shared. After joining the lunch club, things have changed for her.

“I joined the lunch club and have made new friends. It has changed my life.” She said that she recommends the lunch club to other people.

“A big thank you to the club!” she said. She believes that attending the lunch club has had positive impact in her overall wellbeing.

Mrs. R is 70 years old and is part of the ActivSinging Woodbridge for the past 6 years and more.

“My self-esteem has certainly improved”, she shared after joining the singing group. She also strongly agreed that the sessions are well-organised. She looks forward to the singing sessions every 2 weeks.

“My confidence in singing has greatly improved”, she said.

She sees the group as a supportive and welcoming community for everyone.

The main goal of the ActivSport Programme during 2025–26 was to engage and encourage more inactive people to take part in inclusive sports and physical activities that can be adapted to suit individual abilities and needs.

The new ActivAble Project, funded by the Suffolk Community Foundation – Sizewell C Community Fund, has enabled us to develop new opportunities in the area through introductory taster sessions and new weekly New Age Kurling sessions. These opportunities have helped us reach new participants and provide people with greater choice in how they become active.

During the year, 378 inclusive sport sessions took place across Ipswich and East Suffolk, including Boccia, New Age Kurling, Ping Pong, Short Tennis, Walking Football, Badminton, Bowls and a health walk in Christchurch Park, Ipswich.

However, ActivSport is about much more than delivering regular sporting activities. It has created a welcoming and inclusive community where everyone can participate, regardless of age, disability or background. For many members, the sessions provide an opportunity to try something new, develop skills and confidence, make friends and feel part of a community.

Members have supported and encouraged one another, developed new skills, increased their confidence and experienced positive improvements in their physical and mental wellbeing. The friendships and peer support developed through the programme are just as important as the physical activity itself. Our staff, coaches and volunteers play a vital role in making ActivSport successful. Their encouragement, patience and enthusiasm inspire individual progress, promote good sportsmanship and help create an environment where everyone feels valued and included.

We would also like to recognise the important contribution made by families, carers and support workers. Their encouragement and practical support have enabled many people to participate and continue attending sessions, helping individuals to overcome barriers to physical activity.

The impact of ActivSport demonstrates that inclusive sport can be a powerful tool for improving physical and mental wellbeing, building confidence, reducing isolation and creating lasting friendships. By providing activities that can be adapted to individual abilities, ActivLives is helping more people discover the enjoyment and benefits of being active, while ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to take part.

Key highlights:

- **90.48%** of the members who were surveyed reported that the programme had a positive impact on their physical and mental health
- **251** members are registered with ActivSport & **80.47%** of members with physical disabilities, mental health conditions & special needs have been supported
- **85.71%** of health walks survey respondents agreed that the walks motivated them to get active
- **2** inclusive badminton tournaments, **1** boccia tournament and **1** festival and challenge event (bowls & new age kurling) were organised with support from Sport England, Boccia England & Special Olympics Suffolk
- **Awards:** *Mike McCarthy* (BBC Radio Suffolk Active Award), *Evie Edwards and Nicola Taylor* (Runner Up - Team of the Year, Active Suffolk Awards 2025), *Alfie Orvis*, Runner Up recognition for Active Unsung Hero.



I would definitely recommend ActivLives sport sessions especially for our age group. It's good fun to come and have few hours with other people doing sports we can do easily. There aren't much other provisions around. We are very happy with ActivLives because it doesn't only go around Ipswich but also in different towns in Suffolk like Felixstowe. -Mrs D, ActivSport Member



100%
of members surveyed* highly recommend participating in ActivSport sessions



73.81%
of members highlighted that the sports sessions helped them connect with their local community

83.33% of members* strongly believe that the sport sessions are inclusive & have a supportive environment*

76.19% of members* responded positively that ActivSport programme helped build their self-confidence in sport & physical activities



90.48%
of survey* respondents are satisfied with the sport sessions & believe they acquire valuable skills



97.61%
of members* recognised that the coaches are effective in promoting sportsmanship & a positive environment

* A total of 42 members of ActivSport programme responded to the survey conducted by ActivLives



Mr. R started playing walking football 11 years ago following a heart attack.

"Whilst I was in the hospital having exercises, I picked up a leaflet from ActivLives. And then I went along to a game at Whitton and I have been doing it ever since", he shared.

At 79, walking football has become his social group that is now one of his sources of support after experiencing a heart attack.

"I love it...It provides exercise and a camaraderie with our team mates which is great", Mr R said.

The walking football also gives him something to look forward to every week to improve his wellbeing.

"It keeps me fit. And the fact is with walking football, there should be no physical contact and no running. It's ideal for people of a certain age. We have a referee and the game is more controlled. There is less fear of injury or accidents if you have someone in control", he shared.

He also highly encouraged others to join the group.

"I recommend it 100% because if you get to a certain age instead of being a couch potato sitting at home, walking football does get you out", he said.

Mrs. C joined the short tennis and ping pong in 2018.

"I've seen it advertised locally. I started playing before Covid-19 so probably back in 2018."

She shared how she felt so welcome when she attended her first game at the Gainsborough Sports Centre.

"I turned up on my first time on the ping pong and short tennis at Gainsborough. I came on my own and was greeted very quickly by some lovely people and I have been here ever since. I also go to the Whitton sessions every Thursday afternoon."

She expressed how the session is not only about the game but is also a wonderful support group.

"We are now a social group. It's a very friendly bunch of people that get together after the tennis session."

Eight years as a member of ActivSport programme, she mentioned that people should try joining ActivLives activities.

"I would recommend any activities with ActivLives particularly the people who live on their own or would like to get back into sport. Obviously when you get older some of your joints seize up, however you need to keep moving," she said.



It is good to meet new people and have a laugh at the same time and getting a bit fitter.
- ActivSport member

Mr. O lives alone and attends the New Age Kurling sessions in Felixstowe. The weekly sport activities encourage him to go out and meet people in the local community regularly.

"One of the main things for me is to meet other people. Converse and mix with others. I live on my own. So, anything is a bonus for me. I rarely do go out."

He values the company of his fellow members and for the support that they give to him.

"Winning it's nice, but taking part that's the whole crux of the matter to me. I enjoy being with them. You know, as they are coming through that door, oh there they are again...now I have to fight with them again," he shared with a hearty laugh.

Being part of the session for a few years, he wanted others to try and join the group.

"I recommend it to anybody especially the older generation. We all have problems, but we blend in very well and we enjoy every second here," he said.

MEET THE TEAM



Julie Stokes
CEO



Cynthia Glinos
Finance & Office Manager



Alison Pearson
ActivLives Community
Engagement Officer



Susannah Robirosa
ActivGardens Fundraising
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Laura Lopez
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ActivSheds
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Alana Sewell
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Jomel Gutierrez
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Mike McCarthy
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Colin Baldwin
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Chair



Clare Lucas
Vice Chair



Mark Ledger
Treasurer



Louise Kenlock
Trustee



Rachael Scott
Trustee



Linda Hughes
Trustee



Kerry Overton
Trustee



Karen Stacey
Trustee

OUR FUNDERS

Funders for 2025-26

We are continuously grateful to our funders in supporting the valuable work we do. The organisations that helped provide this key funding during this year were;

- Ipswich Borough Council
- Suffolk County Council
- East Suffolk Council
- Mid Suffolk District Council
- Babergh District Council
- NHS Suffolk & North East Essex ICB
- Suffolk Family Carers
- Mrs L D Rope Third Charitable Settlement
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Henry Smith Charity
- Sport England
- The Belstead Ganzoni Charitable Settlement
- The Leslie Mary Carter Charitable Trust
- The Annie Tranmer Charitable Trust
- Special Olympics Suffolk
- Central England Co-op
- Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust
- Kristina Martin Charitable Trust
- Suffolk Community Foundation
 - Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner's Fund
 - Scrutton Bland Fund
 - Suffolk Carers Fund
 - Kemball Family Fund
 - Sizewell C Community Fund
 - Suffolk Sports Fund
 - Birketts Fund
 - Brooks Fund
 - Denbury Fund
 - David & Jill Simpson Fund
 - Food & Drink Fund
 - Pargiter Trust Fund
 - Harwich Haven Fund
 - Port Community Fund
 - Suffolk Giving
 - Axter Climate & Community Fund

This year has seen a continuation in the growth of our weekly activities with increased attendances contributing to a 16% increase in generated income, on top of the 15% increase last year.

As always there has been hard work from all the staff and volunteers within the organisation, looking after the gardens and promoting the cause of ActivLives, for which all the Trustees are very appreciative. For more detailed financial information, please see the Annual Accounts for 2025/26.

