



EMPOWERING
BLIND
CHILDREN
YOUNG ADULTS

2023 Youth Programme Impact Report

In partnership with



**Vinchel
Foundation**





Vinchel Foundation

The Foundation aims to bring about lasting change to people's lives by unlocking and enabling potential.

The Vinchel Foundation works to improve life chances for children and adults who are blind or partially sighted both in the UK and internationally.

Founded by Mikhail Vinchel in 2015, the Foundation seeks to transform the lives of people facing or living with sight loss by funding organisations that support



EMPOWERING
**BLIND
CHILDREN
YOUNG ADULTS**



Empowering children and young adults from 0 to 29 years who are blind or partially sighted

Instilling confidence

promoting independence

Combating isolation

Developing employability skills

Building support networks

victa.org.uk

@VICTAUK

@VICTAUK

Charity Registration No: 1065029

A Word from our CEO

'We believe in empowering children and young adults who are blind or partially sighted. Our activities are designed to instil confidence, promote independence, and build social networks to share information and reduce isolation. In getting children and young people involved with our activities, we're giving them a lifeline. They get the opportunity to explore, learn skills and develop confidence, and help each other toward a more positive future. We are honoured to partner with the Vinchel Foundation.'

- Nick Schofield
CEO VICTA



Welcome

Welcome to our impact report for VICTA's 2023 Youth Programme delivered in partnership with the Vinchel Foundation.

VICTA's mission is to empower children and young adults who are blind or partially sighted. We support families from the point of a child's diagnosis through significant milestones and key transitions, right up to the age of 29 years old. We are a national charity which offers lifechanging support to families across the UK.

Over the past year we have connected with over 2,250 people through our online competitions, workshops, in-person events and activities. Our activities are underpinned by the constructivist model of learning, where people are encouraged to gain knowledge and find meaning from both personal and group experiences. For our young people, this promotes a sense of belonging, encourages peer-to-peer support and increases self-belief and confidence. After receiving support, many parents and young people decide to volunteer, intern, and even fundraise for us, forming part of the almost 15,000 members of the VICTA community who all help to fill the gap in services for young people with sight loss.

We were fortunate enough to begin our partnership with the Vinchel Foundation in 2023. Working together to support vision impaired young people aged 14-17 across the UK.

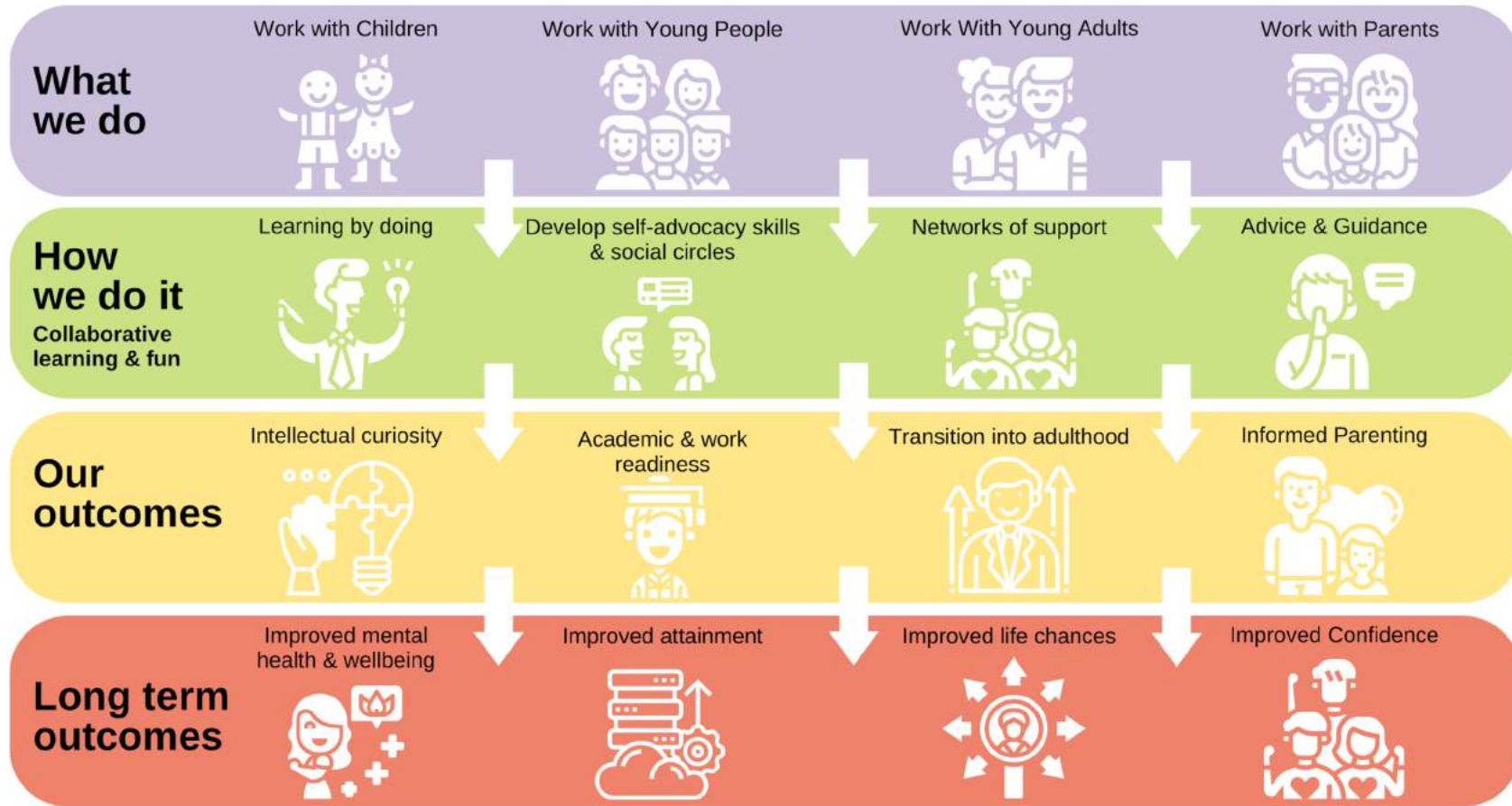




This impact report provides:

- An overview of our partnership with the Vinchel Foundation in 2023
- Summary of support provided within VICTA's Youth Programme
- Case Studies
- Insights from 2023
- 2024 Plans and Aspirations

VICTA's Theory of Change



Partnering with the Vinchel Foundation

During this year's partnership together, we have directly supported 137 vision impaired young people. We supported young people across 18 in-person and online activities, delivering day and multi-day residential which provided them opportunities to build confidence and make connections without family members present. Throughout the year of our partnership, young people aged 14-17 had the opportunity to receive up to 3 nationally recognised award schemes. The awards provide an opportunity for young people to talk about themselves and their passions outside of formal education. Vitally, receiving these awards allows them to show that their sight loss did not get in the way of their achievements.

For every £1 the Vinchel Foundation invested into our Youth Programme, we evidenced return of £11.20, which equates to £464,685 of social impact in 2023.



VICTAs impact model applies recognised methods and values from tools such as Welbeck Edinburgh Mental Well Being Score and The UK Social Value Bank, HACT calculator, focusses on individual wellbeing as a determinant for social impact. The bank measures your social and environmental impact through improvements to wellbeing and savings made to the state, and use the information to:

- improve services
- enhance decision-making
- increase the impact you make





VICTAs Youth Programme

VICTAs Youth Programme is designed to improve emotional, social and living skills. Young people can take part in a range of experiences which are both fun and meaningful, from outdoor activity breaks to international educational trips.

We empower those who are blind or partially sighted to lead independent, active lives and chase their dreams. Our activities bring students together to have fun, play, connect with others and demonstrate that people with sight loss can do anything. We create opportunities for students to learn the knowledge, social and emotional skills, and independence to achieve their full potential at school and as they transition into adulthood.

Outdoor adventures, educational and arts-based activities in the UK and overseas, expose students to skills building activities and experiences that support academic learning, communication, independent travel, social networking and career choices. For example, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award creates an opportunity for participants to challenge themselves physically and mentally raising self-confidence and emboldening them to believe in their own limitless potential.

John Muir Discovery Award – 23 students



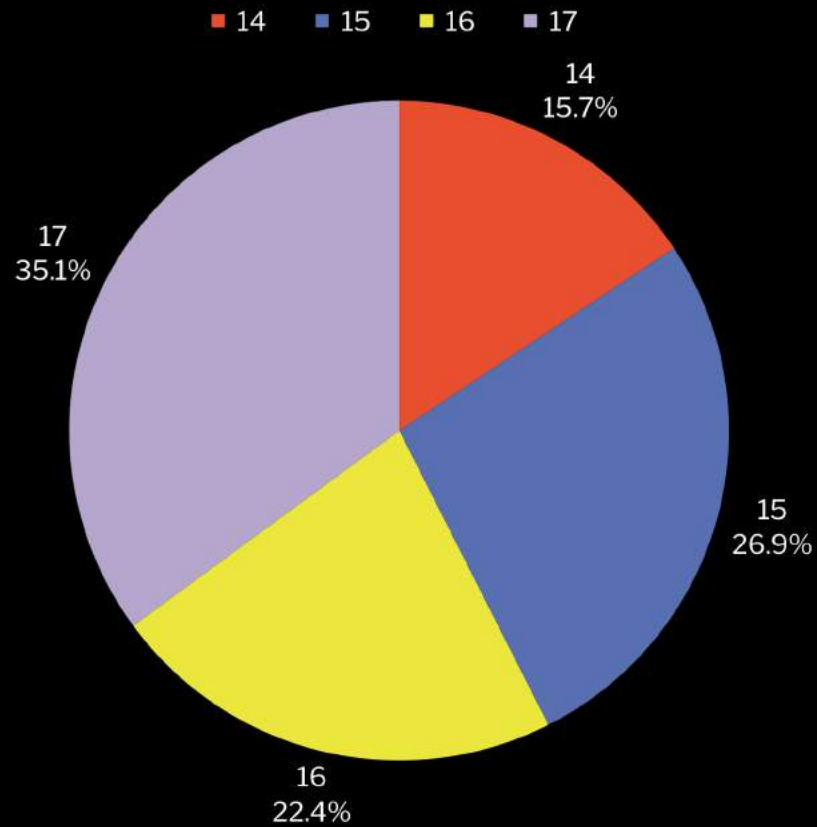
Arts Award Discover – 35 students



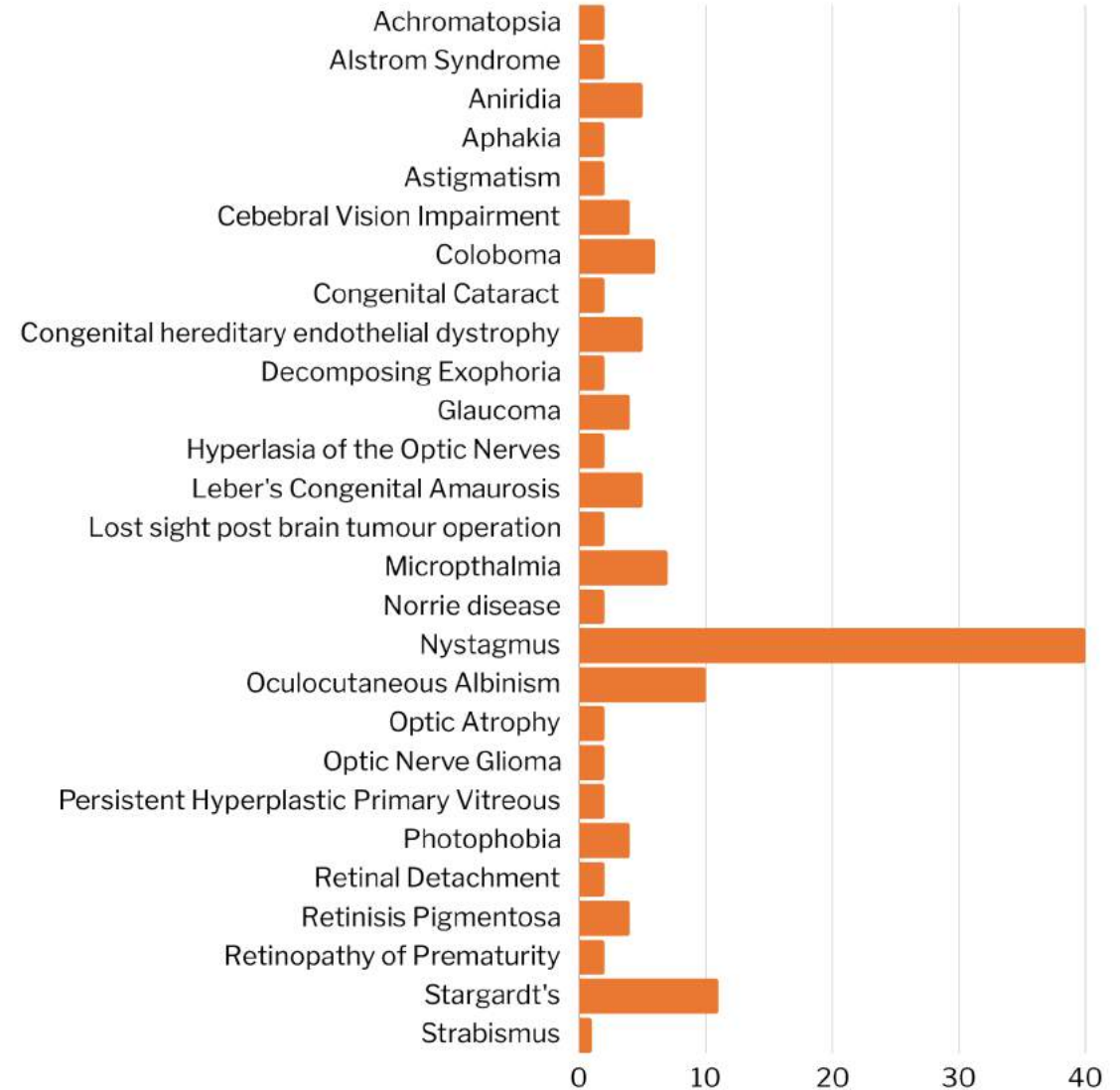
Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award – 7 students

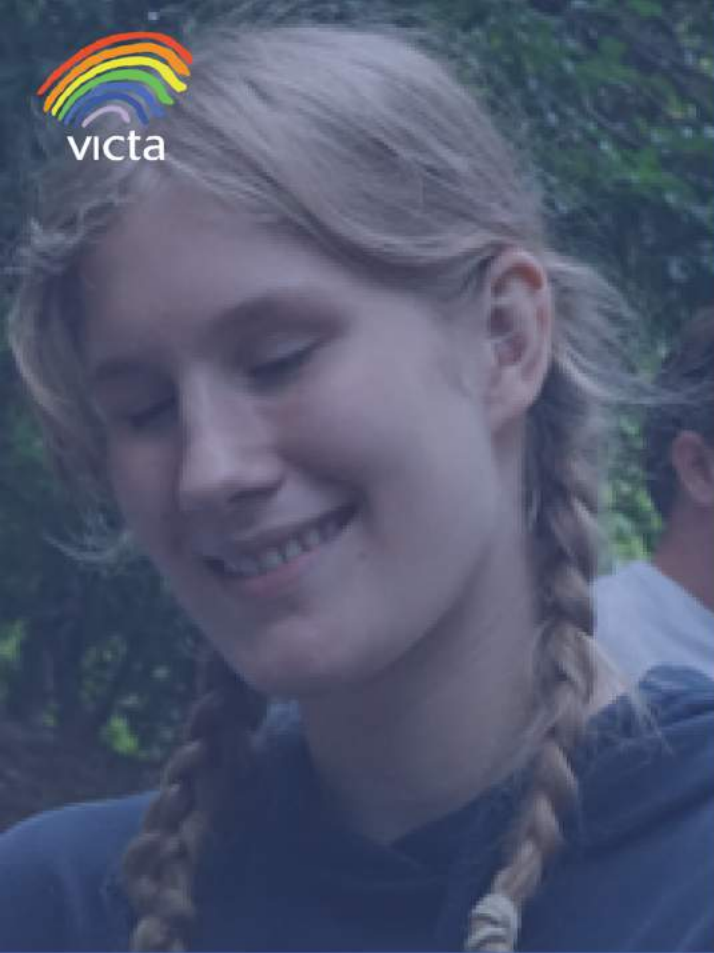


Age Breakdown



Eye Condition





Case Study - Lily's Story

Lily is a 16-year-old young person with Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON), who has attended VICTA activities since she was 10 years old, she is now on the GB paralympic development team for skiing. ***"At my first VICTA activity, I felt really nervous, because I get anxious about meeting new people. I was really worried about not meeting anyone or connecting with anyone. Since taking part in VICTA activities, I've made a dozen or more friends, I've met so many amazing people and it just really boosts your confidence to have loads of lovely people around you. VICTA has just been a place that I could go to connect with people who were just like me, who I could share a load of experiences with. It was a place to get away, because I go to a mainstream school and so it is nice to be around people who are going through the same thing as me. It's a safe place."***

Lily's story would be incomplete without understanding the impact VICTA has had on the whole family, as put by Lily's mother: ***"My teen is very isolated in her mainstream school, and she has no friends – at VICTA, she hangs around in a gaggle of teens and does everything a teen should be doing. She is more independent, and she laughs! She gets to meet up with friends, meet new ones, she is around people who understand and can take part in activities without feeling she is being watched."***

Case Study - A family's Story:

Steve, father of Tom, a 16-year old with Stargardt's: ***"VICTA has been instrumental in supporting my son's learning by providing various technology when he was younger to allow him to read and learn with specific software. My son is visually impaired and registered as partially sighted and without the work of various charities throughout his life, he would not be in the fantastic position he is now preparing to take his GCSE's. He would have been quiet and timid and scared to speak up but since he has been given amazing support with his education, he has moved to Grammar school and is absolutely flying."***

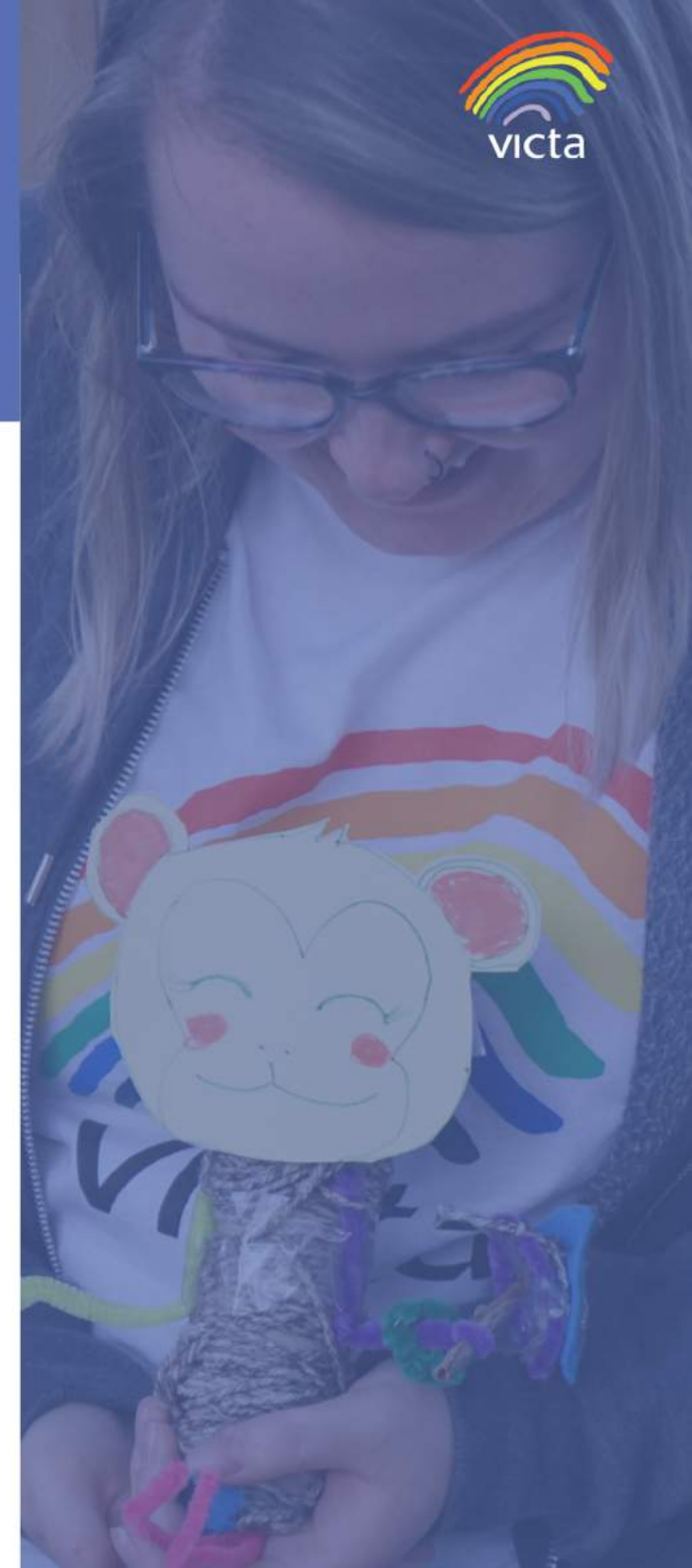


Case Study - Sarah's Story

Sarah is an 18-year old student with Acromotopsia from North Wales. As a child, she attended activities delivered by charities such as RNIB and Sense. At 13-years-old, she became a 'Young Leader' at Sense however in 2018, Sense suspended its activities for younger people with sight loss, this left 14-year-old Sarah isolated, as there were limited local opportunities available for her. When she turned 17-years-old, she was recommended to VICTA, joining our 8-day Summer Camp in 2022. ***"What sets VICTA apart from other organisations is that it feels like a community. I had never stayed in touch with people after activities, but I now have two best friends! I'd tried archery before with my brother and to be honest, I found it really frustrating. At camp, we were able to try it in an accessible way, I never considered myself sporty, so it was really exciting to enjoy a sport. A few months after camp, I joined a club and got to meet European and World VI Medalist Nick Thomas! This December I'm going to part in my first competition! I wouldn't have picked up archery if I didn't attend camp"***

Sarah was invited back to Summer Camp this year as a Young Leader, providing guidance to the camp's attendees: ***"Having the opportunity to come back to camp as a Young Leader and meet friends again was great. You get to watch people at the beginning who are really shy and see their transformation into really chatty and confident people. At the beginning of camp, I had a long conversation with a girl who was really scared about going 'fully blind', which are thoughts I have struggled with myself. At the end of camp, she came up to me told me how I'd really helped her and that she was sleeping much better now!"*** Sarah now attends University and is keen to volunteer for VICTA again in the future.

We are incredibly grateful that the Vinchel Foundation partners with us to deliver the VICTA Summer Camp, with their support this initiative will continue to provide more life-changing opportunities for vision impaired youth learn new skills, connect with others and grow in confidence every year.



Role Models Summer Camp

The 2023 Summer Camp was designed to introduce attendees to a range of inspiring role models. We invited young adults to speak with camp participants encouraging them to share their journeys with sight loss, including the challenges they've faced, along their road to success. This inspires our young people to strive to meet their goals, stay motivated, increases their confidence and ultimately raise their aspirations for the future. It helps young people understand what is possible.



Abbie Robinson

Abbie is a competitive climber from the North East. Having grown up an active, adventurous person, Abbie started indoor climbing when she was 13 at her local climbing wall in Sunderland. At 17, she was diagnosed with Stargardt Macular Dystrophy and registered legally blind. It was then that she was introduced to the world of Paraclimbing and quickly went on to join the GB Paraclimbing Team, so far securing 7 international gold medals, including 3 consecutive world championship titles. Having initially struggled to come to terms with the label of being 'disabled', Abbie is passionate about showing the world that disability does not have to be a barrier to success, independence or adventure. Abbie attended this year's Summer Camp to share her story, encouraging campers with her story, with the hope that they too can find the same freedom, confidence and strength through sport that she did.



Ben Andrews

The author Ben Andrews has Retinitis Pigmentosa, a degenerative visual impairment, and grew up around family members with the same condition. Named as one of the Shaw Trust's most influential disabled people in the Disability Power, Ben is exploring creative ways to encourage a change in policy and practice to reduce the barriers. Ben attended this year's Summer Camp, inspiring camp attendees to challenge themselves and become agents of change.

Insights from 2023 Youth Programme across 20 daytrips, residentials and competitions



- 80% reported an improved ability to empathise and work with others
- 60% reported an improved ability to negotiate
- 80% reported an improved decision making and problem solving skills
- 80% reported feeling more resilient
- 70% reported feeling improved leadership skills
- 80% reported an increase in personal motivation to achieve their goals
- 98% felt they had made new friends

Parents feedback:

- 100% reported witnessing their vision impaired child feeling good about themselves after attending an activity
- 90% reported witnessing their vision impaired child have increased confidence
- 90% reported witnessing their vision impaired child feeling more positive and optimistic about the future
- 80% reported witnessing their vision impaired child have a new/renewed interest in meeting new people

What's next for our young people?

- 100% expressed their aspirations to continue in Education (GCSE, 6th form or college to receive qualifications)
- 70% expressed their aspirations to enter University
- 100% expressed their aspirations to start a career
- 100% expressed their aspirations to be a role model for others
- 100% expressed their aspirations develop strong relationships with a variety of people
- 70% expressed their aspirations to join a club (sports, theatre, youth)
- 90% expressed their aspirations to volunteer in the future
- 33% of Pre-Teen 2023 Programme will transition into our Youth Programme
- 56% of 2023 Programme will transition into our Young Adults Programme

Power of Transition – Alex’s Story

Alex, a student with aniridia and cataracts turned 18 in 2023. Whilst aged 17 he attended the Arts Camp Residential and the VICTA Summer Camp. After attending his first activity of the year he explained:

“I had an absolutely amazing time - the challenges were fun and hard and it was awesome meeting other young people with VI and relate to each others experiences!”

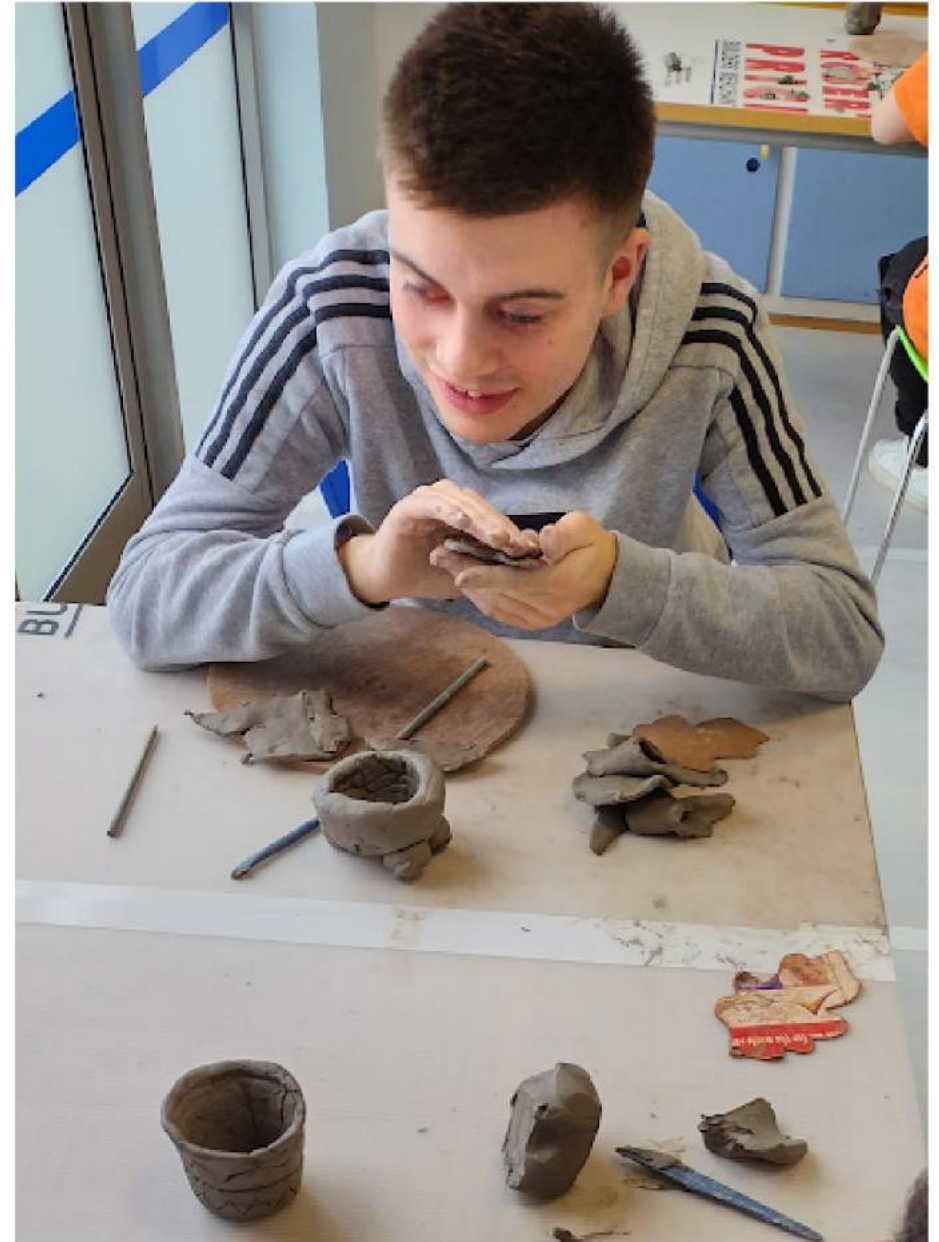
Summer Camp enabled his confidence to grow:

“I now know where my weaknesses are, and I can change them into strengths. I also realised that I am fearless and have the willpower to do the activities of which I liked during the 8 days.”

After turning 18 in September, Alex deciding he wanted to expand his professional development by signing up as a VICTA volunteer. In October, he volunteered on his first activity. He explained:

“I had a great first day as a volunteer and will definitely be volunteering again. I felt welcomed and included from the start to the end of the day.”

He reported feeling that his leadership, decision-making and communication skills had improved and has plans to continue volunteering both for VICTA and in his local area.







EMPOWERING
BLIND
CHILDREN
YOUNG ADULTS

In partnership with the Vinchel Foundation we will continue to deliver our Youth & Young Adults Programmes in 2024, offering life-changing support to 260 vision impaired young people aged 14-29, allowing them to take part in 25 activities across the year including residential, daytrips, online competitions and workshops.

“The pandemic tested us in ways that could never have been anticipated. And as with many charities, the level of disruption we endured was more significant than anyone might have predicted or prepared for. It delivered social and emotional upheaval, and economic uncertainty. As such, the importance of our relationship with the Vinchel Foundation cannot be understated. The grant awarded for 2023 afforded us the financial confidence to launch our 2023 Youth Programme.

Young people helping and learning from each other is at the heart of our programmes. Research and experience tell us that co-operative learning improves a student’s achievements, persistence, and attitudes. We see how collaboration with fellow learners increases motivation and helps students take responsibility for their own and their peers’ learning.

We appreciate that our bold ambitions go beyond what we can achieve alone. We’ve recognised more than ever the power of partnerships and collaboration, which enable us to multiply the impact of our work and create new and meaningful experiences and opportunities for our young people. Our relationship with the Vinchel Foundation provides testimony to this. Together we can continue to empower young people who are blind or partially sighted. “

— Nick Schofield CEO VICTA