

VICTA Youth Programme 2023

Grant Report - £41,500

VICTA Youth Programme 2023. **Empowerment –unlocking potential & feeding ambition.**

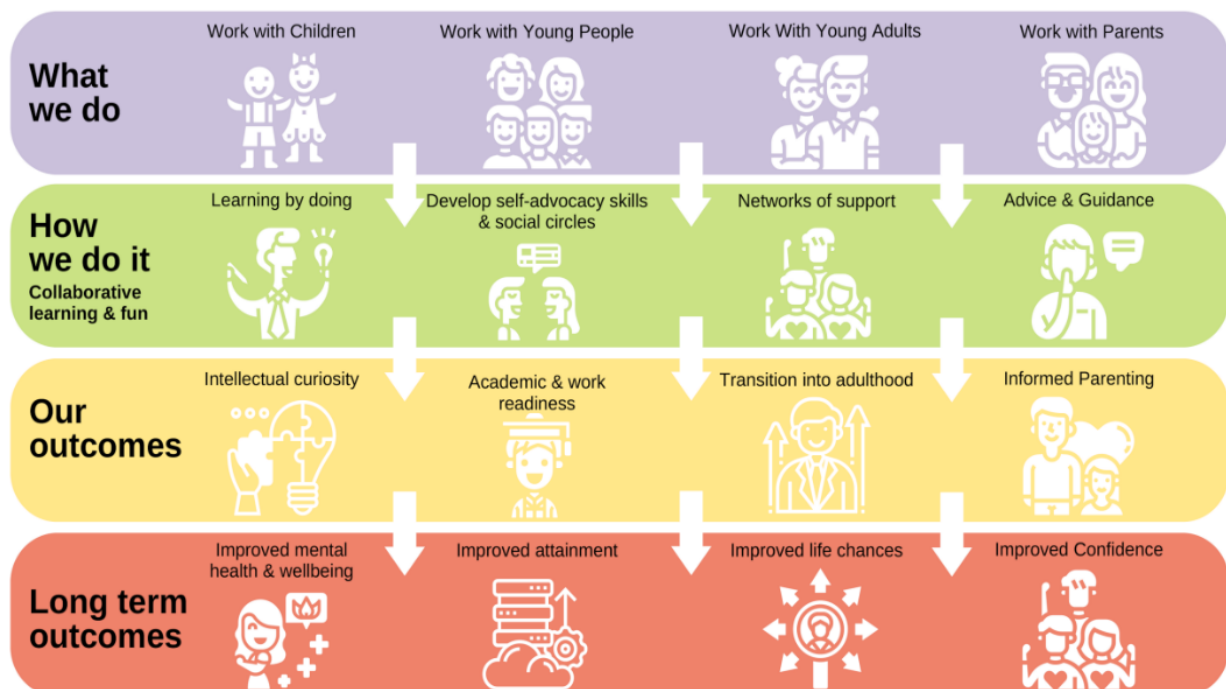
With the support of the Vinchel Foundation, VICTA delivered a youth programme for students aged 14 to 17 with a vision impairment. Together we delivered a series of activities, residential camps and expeditions that focused on preparing students for academic and workplace readiness by strengthening social and academic confidence through teamwork and collaboration, fostering positive self-evaluation and self-advocacy, and engendering strong communication skills, resilience, and a good work ethic.

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

Aware that feelings of isolation and loneliness are dominant within the world of vision impairment, we focus on activity-based learning as a positive setting for social interaction and personal growth. Constructivist models of learning are those in which young people are seen as active participants in the processes of seeking out knowledge, making sense of their experiences and gaining intrinsic satisfaction from learning and solving problems. Constructivist learning is seen to be a transformative experience which creates opportunities for further learning as students gain greater depth of understanding and increasingly flexible ways of representing their knowledge and dealing with new information. Related to this approach is social constructivism. Here a young person's active role in learning is set in the context of their membership of social groups which jointly create knowledge through their engagement in purposeful and valued activities.

VICTA's theory of change



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
- financials
- 2024 plans and aspirations.



Raft Building, Doncaster, VICTA Summer Camp, 2023

Partnering with the Vinchel Foundation

Within our original proposal we had an ambition to engage with 132 young people, it is pleasing to note that we exceeded this, directly supporting 137 vision impaired young people aged 14-17. 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. Our activities bring together vision impaired young people from across the UK, facilitating collaborative learning, which enables a group to learn and teach each other, growing from each other's shared experiences and stories and celebrating success together. Vitrally, our activities develop high-level thinking, communication, self-management and leadership skills in a safe peer-to-peer environment. Our partnership placed the wellbeing of the young people we support at the centre of what we do, with tailored self-care (sleep and haircare) and upskilling (Spanish language) workshops. Moreover, all awards, competitions and participation in activities are saved digitally on the 'Vault', an accessible online passport - a database which our young people can access and contribute to at any time, to recognise their achievements and personal development. As and when they come to prepare and write their personal statements for a move into further or higher education, or indeed the workplace, they have all the

information and evidence they need to build interesting and meaningful statements about themselves and their achievements. We want them rather than their disability to stand out.

We provided opportunities for young people to develop greater communication skills and increased confidence, strengthening their ability to self-advocate. Throughout the year of our partnership, students aged 14-17 had the opportunity to receive up to 3 nationally recognised award schemes. The Arts Award inspires young people to grow their arts and leadership talents through the participation in a variety of art forms, such as fashion, digital art, pottery and poetry. With the help of the Vinchel Foundation, we were able to provide creative opportunities for young people, often activities which people have assumed they cannot participate in, to create a sense of accomplishment and help them to manage mood and regulate stress. The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on encouraging awareness and responsibility for the natural environment. With your support we were able to inspire greener living and environmentally friendly lifestyles that support increased well-being. The Duke of Edinburgh Award allows young people to demonstrate commitment, resilience, perseverance, personal growth, and leadership, and how they have turned potential into accomplishment. Through supporting this programme, we have helped young people achieve the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, a fantastic award which is recognised and favoured on personal statements, scholarships and CVs. The award gives them an opportunity to talk about themselves and their passions outside of formal education. Vivaly, receiving these awards allows them to show that their sight loss did not get in the way of their achievements.

We helped young people challenge limitations presumptions that they and others have about their abilities, and to build a sense of self-accomplishment. The connections and shared experiences gained on our activities provide unique opportunities for social connectivity and peer-to-peer support and encouragement. The variety of backgrounds and experiences of those who attend our activities from across the UK, provides a unique experience which exposes young people to sets of views and behaviours outside their 'norm', broadens their perspective, reduces their feelings of isolation/loneliness and allows them to learn about themselves.

Activity	Young People Supported	Breakdown
4 Online Competitions	34	Braille Art Competition, VICTA Science Fair, CNIB Creative Writing Competition, Christmas Decoration Competition
2 online workshops	10	ONCE Online Spanish Lesson, Sleep Workshop for Teenagers
8 day-time activities	42	Moorvision Joint Surfing Day, Hair & Care Workshops, Wild Harvest Day, Family Day: Willen Lake (in partnership with Stargardt's), Sherlock, Bear Grills, Family Day: Duxford Air Museum, Skydiving
4 residentials	51	RNC Arts Camp, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Training Weekend, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Bronze assessed expedition, VICTA Summer Camp



The reality of young people with sight loss

There are an estimated 41,000 blind and partially sighted children and young people in England and Wales, 10,000 of whom have severe visual impairment (RNIB, 2023). These young people face social, educational, and financial challenges. Many report being unhappy with their life because of their sight loss, they are more likely to be bullied, and the majority of their parents are worried about their ability to learn at school.

Mental health impact

- Evidence has found that people who are blind or partially sighted are two to three times more likely to be depressed than people who are not vision impaired (English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, 2008).
- The Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health who in 2018 presented research that showed how children aged between eight and 11 years old who live with a vision impairment are three times more likely to develop a mental health problem than children with no vision impairment. And a third of these children are at high risk of anxiety or mood disorders with around half showing difficulties in quality of life or adaptive behaviour (Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, 2018).
- There is a consistent pattern of lower wellbeing and poorer mental health reported by the parents of teenagers with vision impairments at age 14, and by the young people themselves at age 17. At age 14, vision impairment teenagers are more than twice as likely to often be unhappy, downhearted or tearful (46% vs. 20%). At age 17, vision impaired teenagers are more than six times as likely to say they feel hopeless all or most of the time (46% vs. 7%). Half report feeling depressed all or most of the time compared to less than 10% of sighted peers. The 'Campaign to End Loneliness' report found that those aged between 16-29 are over two times more likely to report feeling lonely often (RNIB, 2023).

Educational impact

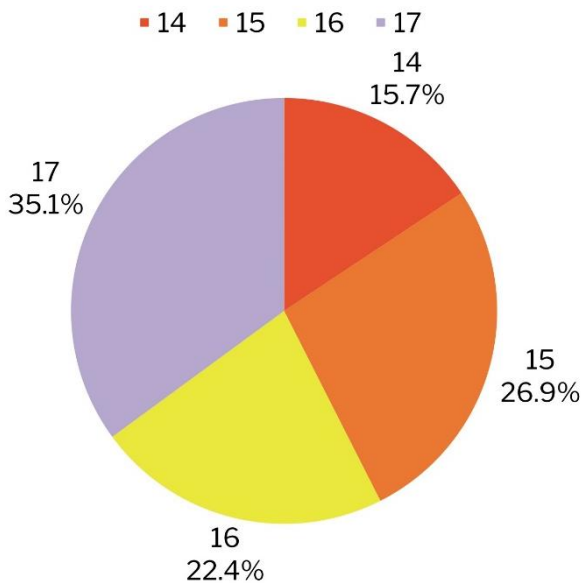
- Young people with vision impairments have lower educational attainment than those without special educational needs (SEN). In Key Stage 4 (14–16-year-olds) where students are completing their GCSEs, there is a 21% attainment gap (RNIB, 2022).
- While young people with vision impairments appear to remain in education for longer than their peers (according to the Labour Force Survey, 36.2% of 16-25 year-olds were students compared with 25.8% of all 16-25 year olds (25)), this extra time in education is not necessarily being used productively (Labour Force Survey, 2023).
- There is evidence from the Birmingham University longitudinal transitions research, of young people with vision impairments in further education 'churning', i.e. repeating years in college, or repeatedly taking courses at the same level (or even lower levels) and failing to progress (University of Birmingham, 2021).

Economic impact

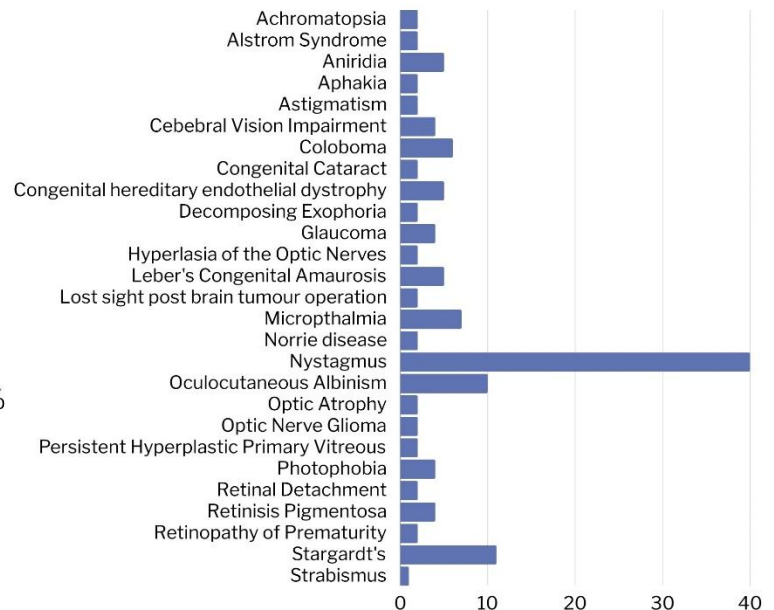
- Blind and partially sighted people with a degree or higher still only have the same chance of getting a job as someone with no qualifications in the general population (RNIB, 2017). The employment rate is 76% for the general population and 27% for people registered blind and partially sighted. Blind and partially sighted people with no qualifications have an employment rate of 8% (RNIB, 2020).
- Young people aged 16-25 with sight loss are almost twice as likely as the general population to be in neither employment, education or training (20% vs. 12%). The employment rates for young people aged 16-25 with sight loss are lower than those of their age peers (25.6% vs 54.0%), and the difference is not accounted for by the higher proportion of vision impaired students in education (RNIB, 2020).
- Overall, only 62% of young people with vision impairments aged 16-25 were in education or employment compared with 80% of the general population of 16–25-year-olds (University of Birmingham, 2021).

Who we supported

Age Breakdown



Eye Condition Breakdown



VICTA Summer Camp

The VICTA Summer Camp is the highlight of the Youth Programme. It is an 8-day residential which this year supported 25 vision impaired young people. The camp provided these young people with an opportunity to take part in adrenaline inducing and problem-solving outdoor activities such as raft-building and climbing. They were able to interact with and investigate the natural world and earn the John Muir Award. The John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme focused on wild places. It is inclusive, accessible and non-competitive and encourages awareness and responsibility for the natural environment through a structured yet adaptable scheme, in a spirit of fun, adventure and exploration.

We have a range of students from different background and educational settings join our Summer Camp, the majority of whom attend express a desire to expand their social network and challenge themselves.

As Miriam, mother of Tamzin explained:

There are so few activities or clubs available for my daughter to participate, the availability so many activities for her to be included in, is the best thing about Summer Camp. She had a wonderful time, it was a huge step outside her comfort zone to attend and the activities challenged her both mentally and physically. The activity day has given her a much-needed boost to her self-esteem and confidence. Many thanks to everybody involved.

Matthew's (a 16-year-old with Bilateral Microphthalmia, Coloboma & Nystagmus) mother explained before attending our Summer Camp this year:

Matthew has very limited social opportunities (outside of school), particularly with other vision-impaired peers. He struggles to initiate conversations with unfamiliar peers. We hope his general confidence will improve.

After attending camp, we asked Matthew about his experience, he explained:

I had a fun week, there's lots of great people to be around, especially if it's your first time away from home. It was a brilliant boost for my independence and I learned how to age a tree!

He reported feeling that his negotiation, decision-making and communication skills had improved and has plans to join an accessible theatre club in his local area.

The positive impact of VICTA's Summer Camp can be showcased by feedback we received from the variety of young people who attended:

I feel more independent and more motivated than before I went. My Mum said she has really noticed the difference in me since coming home.

(Amy, aged 17)

I am able to adapt to new experiences, look after myself.

(Josh, aged 14)



Nightline, Doncaster, VICTA Summer Camp, 2023

Case studies

Lily's story

Lily is a 16-year-old young person with Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy (LHON), who has attended VICTA activities since the age of 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." (Lily's Mother).

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."

Sarah's story

Sarah is an 18-year-old student with Achromatopsia 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, 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 exciting to enjoy a sport. A few months after camp, I joined a club and got to meet European and World VI Medallist 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

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 Northeast. 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 Para-climbing and quickly went on to join the GB Para-climbing Team. To date Abbie has won seven international gold medals, including three 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 100 list, 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.



Abbie Robinson, VICTA Patron



Ben Andrews, Disability Power 100 List

Working in Partnership: National Youth Agency

This summer was the second time the NYA joined VICTA to deliver a workshop on 'Design Thinking' at the VICTA Summer Camp, which took young people through ideas around innovation and problem solving. They were tasked first with innovating the design of a day-to-day product which included mobile phones, food packaging and gaming controllers... The group were encouraged to think about the kinds of support young people need on their journeys to adulthood and explore ways they can support them through an interactive and accessible website, the group then presented their designs and the winners were awarded with shopping vouchers. We were joined on the day by a young person named Emmy who was introduced to the amplifi programme via VICTA. Emmy has played a pivotal role in the design and development of the amplifi programme and shared her experiences on the day with young people. Emmy's confidence has grown immensely over the past 2 years and her experiences and contributions are hugely valued - helping us to shape better, more accessible and more engaging youth work opportunities for young people.

Bex Perry, Digital Youth Work Development Manager



National Youth Agency Workshop, Doncaster, VICTA Summer Camp, 2023

Social impact

VICTA's 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, focussing on individual wellbeing as a determinant for social impact. The HACT calculator measures our social and environmental impact through improvements to wellbeing and savings made to the state.

We use the information to:

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

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



Alastair Tulloch, Doncaster, VICTA Summer Camp, 2023

Insights from 2023 Youth Programme across 18 daytrips, workshops, 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 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.

The power of transition

- 33% of students within our Pre-Teen 2023 Programme will transition into our Youth Programme in 2024.
- 35% of young people within our 2023 Youth Programme will transition into our Young Adults Programme in 2024.

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.



iFly Indoor Skydiving, Milton Keynes, 2023

VICTA financial information

Funding sources	We receive no statutory funding
Total income in 2022 financial year	£677,254
Total expenditure in 2022 financial year	£529,836
Unrestricted Reserves carried forward from 2022	£117,915
Designated funds carried forward from 2022	£324,700 (these funds are designated at the end of each financial year to cover the costs (including staffing) of delivering the activities confirmed for the following year)
Total amount of funding expected for the programme	£52,500
Amount of funding received	£41,500
Amount of funding spent	£41,500
Total Project Cost	£51,027

Partnership breakdown

VICTA Youth Programme 2023			
Activity Date	Activity	Vinchel Grant Allocation	Delivery Cost
January	Braille Art Competition	£50	£265
January & February	VICTA Science Fair	£50	£290
February	RNC Arts Camp	£2,250	£3,622
May	ONCE Online Spanish Lesson	£50	£720
May	CNIB Creative Writing Competition	£50	£255
July	Moorvision Joint Surfing Day	£400	£1,025
July	Duke of Edinburgh's Award Training Weekend (Bronze & Silver)	£2,250	£3,691
July	Sleep for Teenagers	£50	£240
August	VICTA Summer Camp	£31,000	£31,917
August	Wild Harvest Day	£400	£428
September	Duke of Edinburgh's Award Bronze assessed expedition	£3,150	£3,406
September	Family Day: Willen Lake (in partnership with Stargardt's)	£100	£582
October	Sherlock	£700	£718
October	Bear Grills	£400	£830
October	Family Day: Duxford Air Museum	£100	£516
November & December	Hair & Care Workshops	£50	£1,229
December	Indoor Skydiving	£400	£986
December	Christmas Decoration Competition	£50	£307
Total:	18 Activities	£41,500	£51,027

2024 plans and aspirations

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 residentials, daytrips, online competitions and workshops.

2024 will be a growth year for VICTA's Young Adults programme with more than a third of the Youth programme transitioning into adulthood. In preparation for this transition, VICTA and Royal National College for the Blind (RNC) launched their pilot three-month Ofqual regulated employability course in October 2023. The *Get Workplace Ready* course was introduced to eight unemployed young adults, identified as being one-step removed from the labour market, at a six-day residential at RNC in Hereford on 30 October. Using cognitive behavioural group approaches and coaching, the programme is designed to help participants (re-)discover their career goals, tackle fear of failure, increase self-confidence and improve their wellbeing, in order to take first positive steps towards the labour market.

Why the Young Adults Programme was developed

- Unemployment has a detrimental impact on mental health, as does poor quality employment. Unemployment, not having a job and actively seeking work, has consistently been found to have a negative impact on a range of health outcomes. There are several mechanisms by which unemployment could harm health:
 - through stress and reduced self-esteem arising from the loss of the day-to-day structure of work or the stigma associated with unemployment
 - as a result of financial hardship, insecurity and reduced future earnings potential, leaving people with stress (which damages health).
- The relationship between mental health and unemployment is bi-directional. Good mental health is a key influence on employability, finding a job and remaining in that job. Unemployment causes stress, which ultimately has long-term physiological health effects and can have negative consequences for people's mental health, including depression, anxiety and lower self-esteem.
- Unemployment is not distributed evenly across society.
- In January 2021, 43% of unemployed people had poor mental health. This was greater than for people in employment (27%).

Get workplace ready

Our employability course delivered over 10 classroom-led and four activity-based, friendly, and interactive sessions in combination with targeted 1:1 support, to allow attendees to learn how to become aware and take control of their inner dialogue and rediscover their personal strengths. Participants explore basic (self-)coaching skills and receive employability coaching for a further three months to support sustainable outcomes. Young people are encouraged to think about themselves as peer mentors to each other thereby building a support network that will exist beyond the duration of the programme and further support positive outcomes.

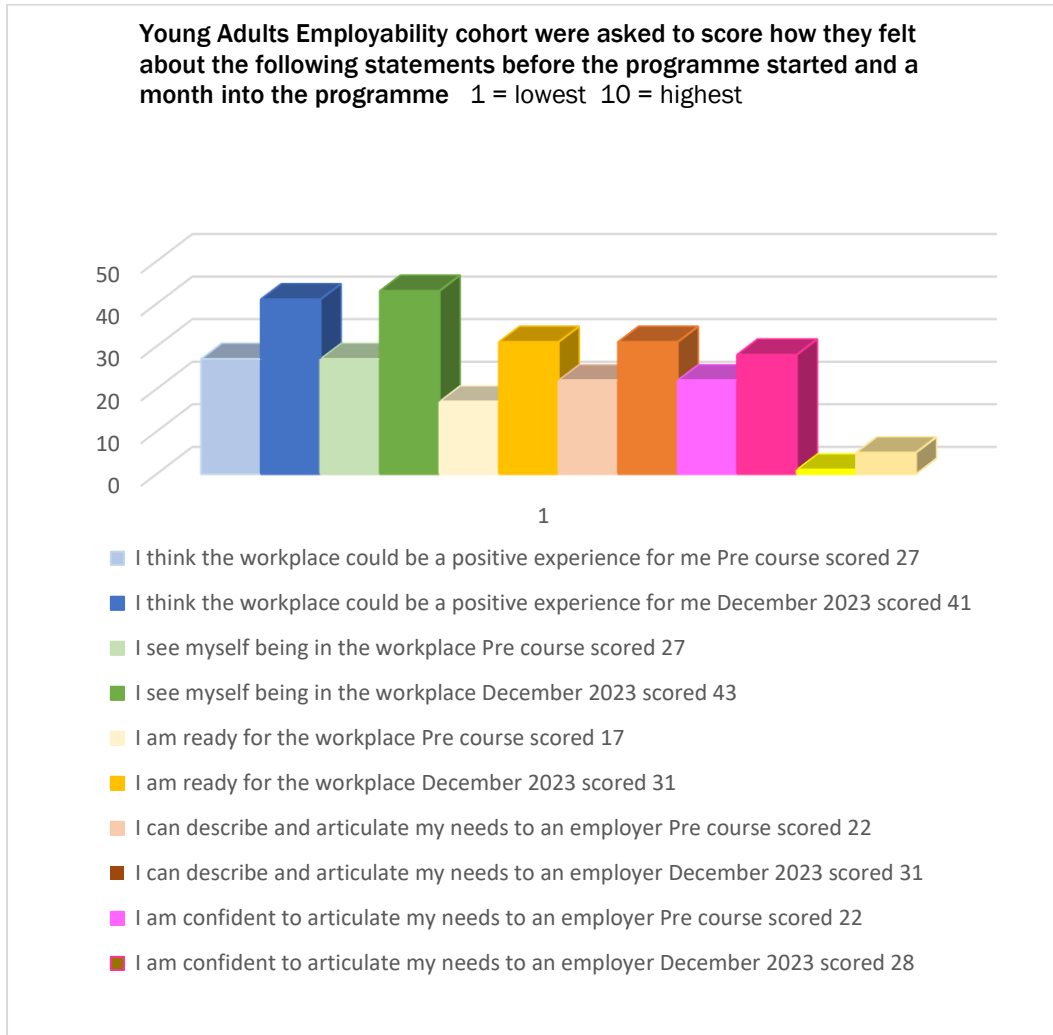
I didn't know what to expect. I'm happy about us connecting in and outside of teaching, we all get along without hierarchy. I feel confident that I have learnt more about VI in work and now understand how time management impacts work. This is the first time I feel I have learnt as an adult. (Daisy, aged 19)

I didn't know what to expect having been in university with people talking at me This training is more inclusive, the awareness of getting things wrong as a VI student makes you feel not good enough, so I didn't volunteer answers. This smaller situation made us feel on par with everyone including other VI people, this made me feel comfortable participating. We know each of us has our own limitations, but we give each other the space to explore. WE are all here for the same reason. (Thomas, aged 21)

Get Workplace Ready has been shaped to create a unique learning opportunity for participants to acquire such skills as working with others, understanding self, communicating, making decisions and leadership,

all framed within the context of a move into the labour market. Achieving the qualification has the potential to boost confidence and self-esteem of all participants.

We will monitor distance travelled each month for the duration of the programme and record progression destinations post programme. Participants on the programme are keen to provide feedback and have share the following:



Although I have had work experience it has had a negative emotional impact and left me apprehensive. Being in a supportive environment within this programme have provided me with the reset I needed.

(Oliver, aged 22)

I can easily explain my VI and what I need but don't have the confidence in explaining in the right way without feeling I'm being picky!

(Romina, aged 21)

Since the course I have secured a voluntary role providing media support to my local football club to gain experience in a work environment and to build my confidence in articulating the support I need, I do get nervous. My application for Camp Leaders summer events is progressing and I have attended UCFB open day to support my UCASS application which I've submitted and feel good about.

(Freddie, aged 19)

Why your support is so vital

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.

Change and innovation can follow periods of crisis such as the pandemic: change is synonymous with new ideas and new perspectives which can drive innovation and growth. It's fair to say that at VICTA we used the experience of the pandemic as an opportunity to do just that: we re-imagined what's possible and the Vinchel Foundation allowed us to remain focused on delivering against our objectives.

When we discuss children with disabilities, there is often a huge push for inclusion. Inclusion means mixing children with disabilities with children without disabilities. This happens in schools frequently. We put so much emphasis on this goal though that we often forget that a child growing up with a disability needs a community of individuals that look like them as well.

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.

This is best exemplified by our Summer Camp. An eight-day residential camp for 30 students with sight loss. We piloted the first such camp of its kind in 2022 and the Vinchel Foundation award allowed us to embed the Camp within our 2023 Activities Calendar and that of the wider VI sector. Themed around empowerment, the camp is designed to strengthen social and academic confidence through teamwork and collaboration, foster positive self-evaluation and self-advocacy, and engender strong communication skills and resilience.

*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.
Thank you.*



Nick Schofield
CEO