Social Impact Report 2025/26













Creative Optimistic Visions

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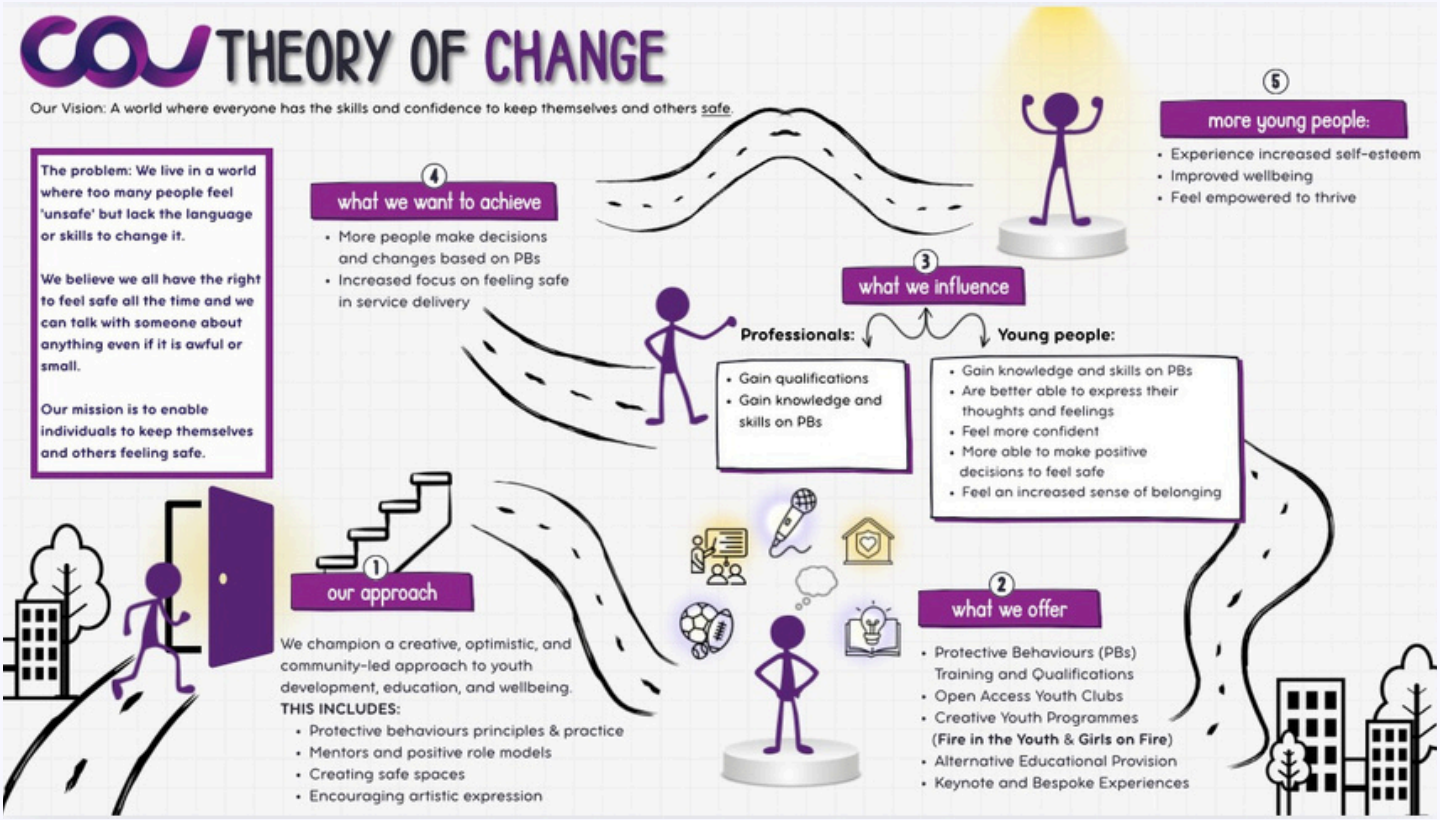
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Introduction

We live in a world where too many people feel 'unsafe' but lack the language or skills to change it. We believe we all have the right to feel safe all the time and we can talk with someone about anything even if it is awful or small. Creative Optimistic Visions (COV) wants to change that. Our mission, as a Community Interest Company, is to enable individuals to keep themselves and others feeling safe. We are passionate about delivering high quality services through the lens of the **Protective Behaviours Process**, and we do this by offering alternative education, training, mentoring, youth and community services.

As our work has evolved, we have updated our Theory of Change to better reflect how we drive lasting change. This refreshed version highlights our two primary routes to impact: delivering transformative benefits directly to individual young people, and equipping professionals with the specialised training they need to offer deeper support. Ultimately, these parallel paths ensure that even more young people are empowered to feel safe, increase their self-esteem, and truly thrive.

This social impact report highlights our key achievements and journey over the past financial year (2025/26). By aligning closely with our updated Theory of Change, COV ensures that we consistently achieve our core aims and outcomes - all while firmly championing our foundational belief that *"we all have the right to feel safe all the time."*



Message from Our Board

After celebrating our 10 year anniversary last year, we are now entering a further period of development and growth for *Creative Optimistic Visions* (COV), enabled by our successful application to *The National Lottery Community Fund*. Another huge achievement was winning the Partnership Working Award with The Integrated Care Board & Positive Directions at The Children's and Young People's Awards. These awards celebrate the dedication, compassion, and innovation shown by individuals, teams, and organisations working with children and young people in the UK.

Whilst maintaining our existing programmes, 2025/26 has also been a year of change. We have refreshed our Theory of Change, opened up an allotment space, and further developed our *Girls on Fire* project. The allotment space aims to introduce children and young people to the concept of open, green, growing spaces and *Girls on Fire* encourages girls to develop their musical skills and give them the confidence to take the stage with live musical performances including our Fire in the Youth Open Jams.

We have also moved premises to the Canal Basin in Coventry which allows our staff and young people to experience being by the water, surrounded by barges passing by and beautiful wildlife. In addition, we moved our youth provision from Stoke Park Youth Centre to St Alban's Church and have received a very warm welcome.

Building on the success of last year's Social Impact Report, we're excited to include more evidence about how our work is supporting more young people to thrive. It shows that at the heart of all this growth and transition are the unique journeys of the young people we walk alongside.

Dr Jane Osmond, Chair
Amber Taroni
Muzi Nduna
Dr Sarah Learmonth
Stacey-Jade Mason
Subah Rasab


Stacey picking up the award




Shelby entertaining us all

Highlights of Our Year

2025/26 has been a period of change for COV:

- We celebrated the retirement of our Operations Manager Karen Smith, whose dedicated work over the years has made a huge difference to us and the young people in our community. Thank you, Karen.
- We successfully secured critical funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to expand our activities, secure an allotment space requested by young people and secure our future core offer.
- We have been through two moves: bidding a fond farewell to Stoke Park Youth Centre and relocating our youth space to St Alban's Church. Our Headquarters has moved to the Canal basin.

Together, these milestones mark the close of an era and the beginning of an exciting, sustainable chapter for us.



















Our Year in Numbers



Sessions and Events

The number of sessions and events has decreased since last year - this is mainly due to us moving premises and having no space for youth clubs between July 2025 - January 2026. 25% of our service delivery is one-to-one mentoring support. 30% of our activities involved delivering education, and 45% is us hosting community events and services, such as holiday activities and open access youth provision.



Contact Hours

This is the sum of all our contacts with young people throughout this year, including all session delivery and events. Building on the 61% growth we saw last year, we've increased our contact hours by 10%, from 5777 in 2024/25 to 6355 this year. This is impressive given that we have moved from both of our premises.



Participants Engaged

This is similar to how many people we worked with last year (386), and shows that we have managed to sustain the growth from the previous year (56% increase). This number also includes 238 new participants, who have attended one or more sessions, mainly through Holidays Activities and Food (HAF) programmes.



Attendance Rate

Our average attendance rate has risen slightly, up from 95% in 2024/25. Our data also show that the majority of young people have attendance rate of over 91%. This consistency reflects that we continue to provide responsive, youth-led programming that keeps young people engaged and invested.

Measuring Progress

COV is very proud of all the people we work with and the staff who deliver our work. We have all worked very hard to improve our youth, community and development skills. We employ a robust evaluation approach to evidence the impact of our work. The outcomes we measure are aligned to our Theory of Change, and they shape the evidence we collect. Our approach is centred on a commitment to understanding and demonstrating the positive changes experienced by the young people we serve, as well as identifying how we can learn and improve.

Key Achievements 25/26

We met our aims for this year, namely by:

- Sustaining the delivery of core youth and community services, one to one mentoring & bespoke programmes, despite having no space for youth clubs from July 2025 - January 2026
- Securing 4 year funding from the National Lottery Community Fund, which has enabled us to increase the delivery of open access youth provision with outdoor spaces (e.g. allotment) as well as our core offer Fire in the Youth including Girls on Fire
- Investing in young people's progression routes
- Increased our sales revenue
- Expanding our reach, inviting new people to take part in our services







Our Aims for 26/27

Over the coming year we will focus on:

- Ensuring that we are delivering consistent and quality services. This includes recruiting a new youth worker, as well as embedding new rhythms and consistency in our delivery time table
- Strengthening our media and communications, with an emphasis on storytelling
- Growing our online reach and engagement through various social media channels
- Reviewing our data collection tools with young people, ensuring that they are fit for purpose
- Continuing to invest in young people’s progression routes

Young People's Feedback

Every quarter, we invite young people accessing COV Youth's open access youth provision to complete a feedback survey.

Key findings from our 2025/26 data (n=12):

100% feel safe at COV Youth

100% think we provide enough activities

75% feel a sense of achievement at youth

83% feel empowered to make a change

100% feel they belong at COV youth

100% value our youth service

Young people consistently have a positive experience with COV Youth and the activities we run. 100% of respondents feel safe and trust the staff and volunteers and also feel trusted by staff and volunteers. Everyone feels valued as an individual and that they get the help and support they need.

> *I enjoy having the space to do my own thing and try different activities like drumming or learning to play pool*

We continue to deliver quality work. 100% believe the projects and services are of good quality and that they value COV Youth as an organisation. Around 8 out of 10 (83%) feel empowered to make positive changes in their lives with our support.

We've made progress to increase participant voice and involvement. This year 75% of young people feel like they have a say as to how services at COV Youth are run, this is up from around 60% last year. However, this still means that one in four young people think that there is room to improve here. We will continue to pay attention to this in 2026/27.

> *It's good, there is a good atmosphere in COV Youth and all the adults are amazing at what they do*

Our Impact in Numbers



Of participants report a meaningful positive change in their wellbeing.

This is a smaller proportion than last year (54%). However, this year all of our participants were 13-15 years old, and we know that young people face a range of external pressures at this time in their lives. Read more about this on **page 9.**



Average increase in wellbeing scores, using Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

This is similar to our findings in 2024/25 (+3). However, we know that amongst this age group (13-15 years old), achieving substantial shifts in wellbeing is a longer-term journey.



Reported an increase in their confidence after participating in our Flourish programme.

Many of these young people also reported small improvements in their self-esteem (read more on page 10).



Feel empowered to make a positive change in their lives with the help of COV.

Young people participating in Flourish gave lots of positive feedback about their experience and how it had helped them. Data show high levels of trust and safety, demonstrating that young people got the support they needed.

Our Impact: Wellbeing

We collect wellbeing data from young people who participate in mentoring and other educational projects. We use the Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to understand progress. In 2025/26 we had 16 complete responses so we can compare pre and post-scores for those individuals. This year, everyone was aged between 13-15 years.

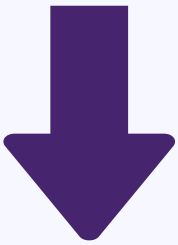
Key Findings from our 2025/26 data:



Overall, our alternative education programmes and mentoring continue to deliver a measurable and meaningful increase in overall wellbeing. The average (mean) wellbeing score increased by 3 points, from 18.3 to 21.3. This shows a clear, quantifiable improvement in young people's overall sense of wellbeing.



Unlike last year, **our data this year show some differences between genders.** Typically girls have lower wellbeing scores to begin with (mean average = 16.7) and at the end (mean average = 19.3). Whereas boys have higher average scores (23.2) at the beginning and see bigger average increases in wellbeing of +4.5, compared to +2.6 for girls.



We significantly reduce low wellbeing. 76% of young people reported low wellbeing scores at the beginning, which reduced to 56% by the end of the programme. Such data show that we make a positive contribution to young people's wellbeing. The case study (pg. 13) also provides further qualitative evidence of how our mentoring contributes to improving individual wellbeing.



Positive impact on wellbeing is not guaranteed for every single participant, our programmes and courses need to take this possibility into account and have realistic expectations for what can be achieved. Individuals have unique life circumstances, mental health histories, and personal challenges that can affect how they respond to a course or programme. Sometimes external factors have a bigger impact on overall wellbeing than a single course or programme.



Data limitations. It's worth noting that while the SWEMWBS tool provides a useful snapshot of mental wellbeing, its reliance on a rigid, standardised rating scale can struggle to capture the highly volatile, day-to-day emotional shifts typical of teenage life. A short checklist cannot fully reflect the nuanced, deeply personal breakthroughs our young people experience that don't neatly fit into a standardised score. Furthermore, some young people that we are mentoring don't have post data as we are still working with them.

Partnership Spotlight: Positive Directions & COV

Through our partnership with Positive Directions, six young people accessed our AIM and Bolt-On programmes, receiving tailored support to improve confidence, wellbeing and future aspirations.

The programme delivered measurable improvements in emotional wellbeing and self-esteem. Participants demonstrated increases of up to 16% in self-esteem, while wellbeing scores increased by as much as 11 points on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS). Several young people progressed from low to moderate wellbeing, with no participants showing a significant decline in wellbeing during their engagement.

Alongside improved emotional wellbeing, young people developed stronger social communication skills, increased confidence and greater independence. Four participants successfully completed personalised progression plans, including applications for social prescribing support, employability preparation through CV development, and practical life-skills goals to support their next steps.

The success of this partnership demonstrates how collaborative, relationship-based support can help young people feel safer, more confident and better equipped to achieve their aspirations.
Outcomes at a glance

- Self-esteem improvements of up to 16%
- Wellbeing increases of up to 11 points
- Young people progressed from low to moderate wellbeing
- 80% of Bolt-On participants achieved personalised progression goals

> ***"I met new people and I grew more confident.***
> ***– Young Person***

> ***I got to meet new friends and it helped me with my confidence improvement.***
> ***– Young Person***

Our Impact: Flourish

Flourish is our Alternative Provision (AP) service. AP refers to local authority or school-arranged education outside of mainstream school settings. It is designed for young people who require extra support due to behavioural needs, exclusion, illness, or short / long-term social, emotional, and mental health challenges.

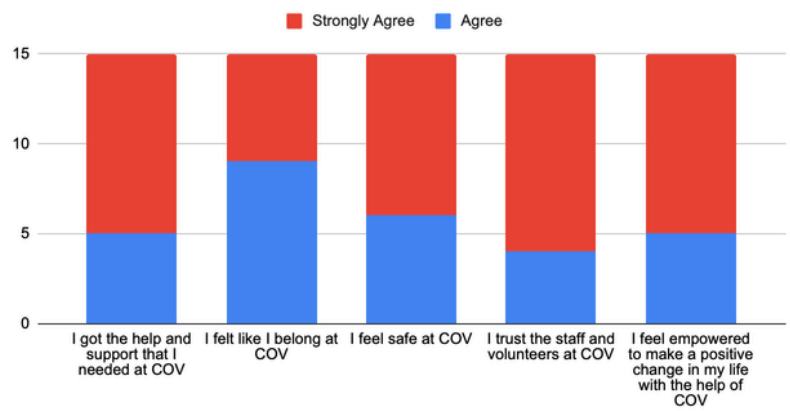
Nationally, the demand for AP is increasing. Recent Department for Education (DfE) data reveal that **the number of children and young people entering AP has risen sharply**. For example, the number of young people in local authority funded (i.e. non-state-funded) AP increased by 156% from 2017/18 to 2024/25. In 2024/25, over 230 young people in Coventry accessed local authority funded AP, up from 59 in 2017/18.

Locally, Coventry City Council has responded to this pressure through their Coventry Alternative Provision (CAP) strategy that encourages schools to seek targeted early interventions to support young people through challenging moments in their lives.

Our Flourish programme fits in this space of early intervention and targeted support, offering young people the space, mentorship, and routine they need to discover their personal strengths and skills through a protective behaviours lens.

We collect a lot of data relating to skills, confidence and feelings of safety and belonging - 15 young people answered these questions (Figure 1). We also work with young people to reflect on their self-image, where it is now and where they would like it to be. Together these data points allow us to understand young people's progress, celebrate their achievements and also spot areas where they may need additional support. We also collect self-esteem data, using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE), but due to a small sample size, we decided not to include that this year.

Figure 1. Overview of how young people participating in Flourish felt about their experience with COV (n=15)



22 **Young people took part in 2025/26**

75% **Reported an increase in their confidence**

100% **Feel empowered to make a positive change in their lives with the help of COV.**

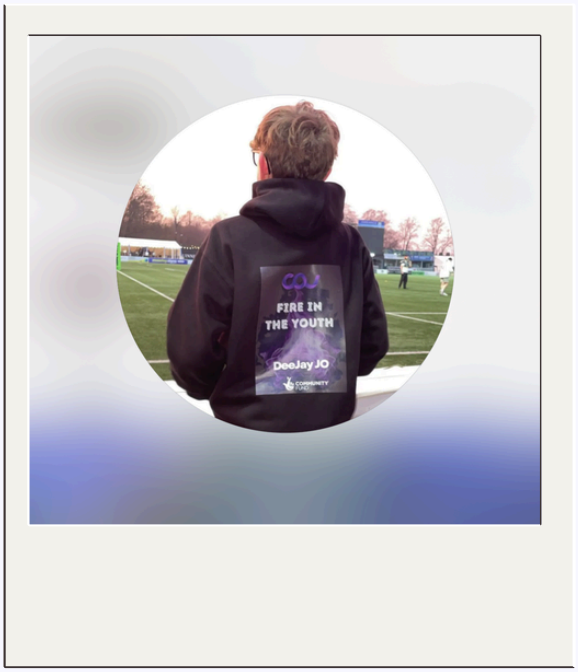
Top 3 areas young people report progress in:

1. Their ability to to set and achieve goals

2. Knowing how to keep themselves safe

3. Their ability to acknowledge the feelings and thoughts of others when making a decision

Fire in the Youth: Impact Story



What is Fire in the Youth?

Fire in the Youth is an urban arts and music project, which gives aspiring young music artists aged 14-24 a platform to showcase their talent, develop personal skills, and raise their profiles through open jam sessions, a persona development programme and live showcases

Jayden's Story

Jayden first engaged with *COV Youth* through the *Holidays Activities and Food* (HAF) programme in 2023 before progressing into regular COV Youth & *Fire in the Youth* sessions. Initially quiet and lacking confidence, Jayden quickly developed a passion for DJing through consistent support, mentoring and opportunities to perform.

Working alongside DJ Callum, himself a former young person at COV who has progressed into mentoring others. Jayden attended DJ workshops and Open Jam sessions where his confidence and skills continued to grow. After only a short period of engagement, he began performing live at community events and later showcased his talent as part of Coventry Music Hub festival, performing to wider public audiences.

Thanks to support from partner organisation Coventry Music, Jayden has also been loaned a set of FLX4 DJ decks from Coventry Music to continue developing his skills outside of sessions, helping him build both confidence and technical ability at home.

Now performing under the name "DEEJAYJO", Jayden has developed his own mixes of old school garage, DnB and House Music continuing to grow in confidence, both socially and creatively. His parents have proudly spoken about the positive changes they have seen in him, and remain hugely supportive of his journey.

Jayden continues to be an active part of the Fire in the Youth community and will support future events and performances, helping to inspire the next generation of young people coming through the project.

Spotlight on: Our Community Work

In December 2025, we secured funding from The National Lottery Community Fund to expand our existing offer to include:

- Expanding our open access youth provision
- Creating opportunities for young people to connect with outdoor green spaces (e.g. allotment)
- Delivering ‘Girls on Fire’, targeting young women and girls in Coventry

The project will directly support at least 76 individuals aged 11–25 annually and indirectly benefits 168 others across the city

Key Outcomes

Through the lens of the Protective Behaviours process, this project empowers and enables young people to keep themselves and others safe while achieving concrete milestones:

- **Emotional resilience & safety:** Young people learn to manage stress, understand their emotions, and use Protective Behaviours to stay safe in everyday life.
- **Accredited qualifications:** 80% of participants complete the programme with Level 1 AIM qualifications, directly boosting their future education and employment opportunities.
- **Confidence through creativity:** Participants gain independence and self-esteem through live public performance opportunities - with a dedicated focus on increasing the representation of young women and girls.
- **Environmental connection:** Through hands-on access to an allotment space, young people learn to grow their own food, pick up practical environmental skills, and understand climate challenges.
- **Stronger communities:** By increasing COV's presence at live city-wide events, the project brings people together and drives better community cohesion.

How We Will Evidence Success

We will evidence our progress towards these outcomes with both quanitative and qualitative data. We use standardised academic wellbeing tools (like the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and SWEMWBS) alongside youth portfolios, scrapbooks, and informal feedback.

Our Training

In 2025/26 we delivered Protective Behaviour (PB) training sessions to 30 professionals. The aim is to equip people with the knowledge and skills about PBs, so that they leave with the confidence to apply their learning within working practice.

Our survey data show that:

80%
Feel confident using Protective Behaviours

Over
90%
Are likely to use PBs in their work

100%
would attend another PB training session

The feedback on our courses is overwhelmingly positive - people often describe the content as *"engaging", "straightforward", "useful"*. They appreciated the way that the course is delivered and the safe learning environment that is created.

One participant said:

"Stacey was really engaging with the content and gave us opportunities to reflect on personal experiences. Being able to get a better understanding of the difference between feeling safe and being safe was also very helpful."

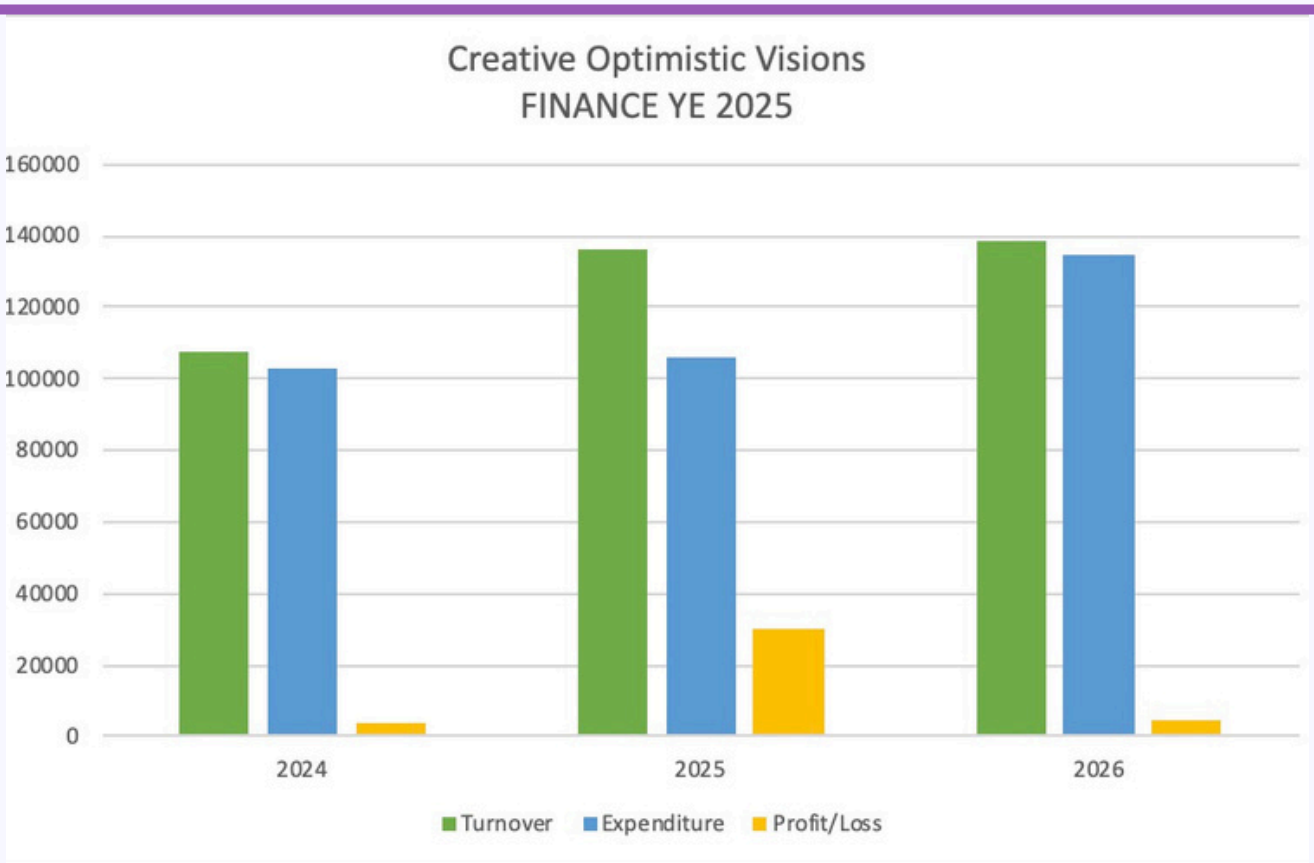
Additionally, people valued that the course contained a balance of theory of practice, and that there was time to reflect and focus on actions.

The course was really informative and gave lots of new knowledge and ideas as well as giving reassurance about work already done in setting being in line with this.

Excellent content and delivery... Now confident to explore and implement opportunities around Protective Behaviours with our children and families.

Finances

As a Community Interest Company (CIC), Creative Optimistic Visions generates income through a combination of grants, commissioned services, training and consultancy. During 2025/26, we continued to strengthen our earned income, achieving an increase in sales revenue as demand for our specialist services grew. This approach supports our long-term sustainability by reducing reliance on grant funding alone and enabling us to reinvest unrestricted income into free youth and community provision. Alongside this growth, securing a multi-year National Lottery Community Fund award has provided a strong foundation for the future, allowing us to protect core services whilst continuing to develop innovative training, education and support programmes that meet the needs of our communities.



COV continued to strengthen its financial resilience during 2025/26, increasing earned income by 27%. Whilst the organisation experienced significant inflationary and operational pressures (with programme delivery costs increasing by 36% and operational costs rising by 22%), careful financial management enabled us to remain sustainable and continue investing in the communities we serve.

COMMUNITY FUND

Next Steps

As we look ahead to the future, our priorities remain firmly rooted in the needs and aspirations of our community:

1

Enhancing quality & consistency

We will continue to strengthen our core delivery by recruiting a new youth worker, alongside establishing new rhythms and core delivery offer, ensuring that we are delivering quality and consistent services. We will put processes in place so that young people have access to the right opportunities at the right time to support their longer term progression. This work will also include the development of our new allotment project.

2

Evolving data & evaluation tools

Collecting good data has been at the heart of our success. We use standardised tools like SWEMWBS and Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale to help us track the individual progression of young people and compare across different services. However, these tools only ever tell part of the story. This year, we want to review our approach with young people to ensure they are fully fit for purpose, balancing standard tools with ones that capture deeper impacts and human stories.

3

Amplifying impact through storytelling

We want to make the most of the funding we have secured to bring in media and communications expertise to amplify the impact of our work through storytelling. We will focus on bringing together the data we collect with powerful personal stories. Part of this work will include expanding our online reach and engagement across various social media channels.

Conclusion

As a Board, we look back on 2025/26 as a remarkable year of transition for Creative Optimistic Visions (COV), and we are proud to share even more robust evidence of how our work supports young people to thrive.

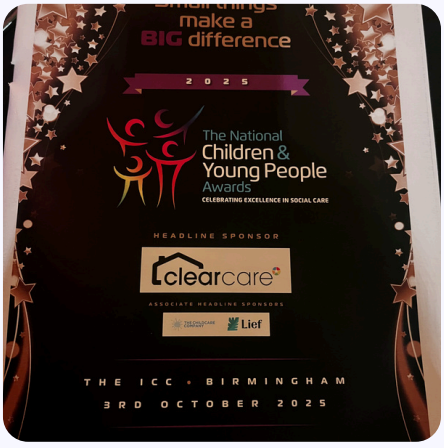
Ultimately, this year has been a powerful testament to COV's resilience. Despite facing significant transitions - including Karen's retirement and navigating two office moves - we have not only maintained our core operations but truly excelled. We want to express our deep gratitude to everyone who has been part of this journey - our dedicated staff, volunteers, partners, funders, and above all, the young people who make our work meaningful.

The year has also been defined by a successful application to the National Lottery Community Fund, propelling us into an exciting new chapter. Looking ahead, we are ready, and excited (!) to build on this momentum to strengthen the quality and sustainability of our work.













Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the people and organisations who provided advice, guidance, and support of their skills and or financial contributions. We are especially grateful for St. Albans Church for providing our new youth space.

As well as our partners (see logos below) we also wish to thank those committed to our projects, including:

- The COV Team (staff, volunteers & activity providers) and the Board of Directors
- Coventry Youth Partnership
- Coventry & Warwickshire Intergrated Care Board
- To all those who have took part in our training and community projects
- To all the people of our community for making it all worth it
- Taylor Cottrell, Communications Officer & Storyteller
- Jami Dixon, Social Impact Consultant
- Kate Ricketts - Engage Accountancy
- Jaguar Land Rover for supporting the new allotment space hands on.



Contact

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Contact Us

Ready to make an impact with us?

Whether you are looking to fund our next chapter, partner on a project, or access our training for your team, we would love to connect.

If you are a young person ready to take the next step with us, we are here for you too.

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