

AFK

working with disability
creating opportunities

2025-26 IMPACT REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Katie Cavanagh, Chief Executive since August 2026

This year marked the first year of AFK's three-year strategy, and I am proud of what our team, volunteers, partners and supporters have made possible.

In 2025–26, AFK supported 724 disabled and neurodiverse children and young people, and their families, to move towards greater independence. For some, that meant a specialist trike, buggy or powerchair.

For others, it meant travelling safely to school, college or work, building confidence through a placement, starting paid employment or developing their own business idea.

Behind every number in this report is a young person with their own goals, strengths and aspirations.

Our role is to listen, understand the barriers they face, and work alongside them, their families and our partners to remove those barriers in practical ways.



This has also been a year of growth and transition. We launched new services, including our Supported Internship programme and Disability and Neurodiversity Training Services, whilst continuing to deliver our core mobility and employment support.

Thank you to everyone who made this work possible, from our dedicated staff team and volunteers to our trustees, funders, partners and the people who donated, fundraised, ran, raffled and supported AFK this year.

Together we are helping disabled and neurodiverse children and young people build independence, confidence and opportunity, in the ways that matter most to them.

In 2025-26:

724

children and young people supported

164

children and young people supported through specialist mobility equipment

Over

150

young people supported towards paid work and volunteering, increasing their confidence and independence

11

young people travel trained to independently attend school, college or work

8

young people supported to set up their own business

Why our work is needed

Disabled and neurodiverse children and young people should have the same opportunities as anyone else to learn, work, travel, build friendships and live with independence. Too often, the barriers they face are created by the world around them.

At AFK, we follow the social model of disability. This means we focus on each young person's potential, aspirations and choices, not the barriers placed in their way. The social model says people are disabled by negative attitudes, inaccessible environments and exclusion within society, rather than by their impairment or condition.

This is different from the medical model of disability, which focuses on the functions of the body and whether they fit what society has decided is 'normal'.

We believe disabled and neurodiverse young people are not the problem. The problem is a society that too often makes it harder for them to take part, move freely, access education, build skills, find work and be recognised for what they can do.

That is why AFK works to address and remove disabling barriers. We provide specialist mobility equipment, travel training, education and employability support, self-employment guidance, work placements and inclusive workplace training.

Each part of our work is designed to help young people move towards greater independence, confidence and opportunity.

Ivy, 7 from Brighton, who received a specialised trike from AFK in 2026



What removing barriers looked like

In 2025–26, AFK put the social model of disability into practice through practical, targeted support for disabled and neurodiverse children, young people and their families. For some families, removing barriers meant help to access the right mobility equipment sooner.

This year, our Mobility team saved £58,000 through advocacy, family fundraising support and negotiation with suppliers. We also gave in-depth support to 17 families and helped 27 families with powered wheelchair repairs, servicing and maintenance. For young people moving towards work, removing barriers meant building confidence and experience in real settings.

This year, 39 young people completed external work placements, whilst 65 young people still in education took part in employability support alongside their studies.

For others, independence meant being able to travel safely and confidently, with 11 young people signed off as able to travel independently to and from school, college or work.

We also supported different routes into employment. Through We Mean Business, 125 young people attended self-employment workshops, with 19 receiving one-to-one mentoring to develop their business ideas.

Together, this shows what removing barriers means at AFK: helping young people and families navigate systems, access support, build confidence and move closer to independence.

Kerone, 28 from London, who was supported by AFK has been continuously employed by the same business for over seven years



Specialist Mobility Equipment

For many disabled children and young people, the right mobility equipment can change everyday life.

It can mean more freedom, safer journeys, family days out, time with friends and greater independence at home, school and beyond.



Read Katherine's story on page 8

Specialist Mobility Equipment

17

families given in-depth
advocacy and
fundraising support

27

families helped with powered
wheelchair repairs, servicing
and maintenance

164

children and young
people supported
through specialist
mobility equipment

A 7% reduction on the previous year due to rising equipment costs

£229,000

total value of specialist mobility equipment provided

£58,000 saved through advocacy

Behind every item of mobility equipment is a young person gaining more freedom, safety and independence. This year's figures show how AFK helped families access the right support, kept vital equipment working and made funding go further.

Specialist Mobility Equipment Case Study

Katherine, 23, from the Wirral

Katherine, 23, from the Wirral, has Ehlers Danlos Syndrome. A condition causing chronic pain, fatigue, and mobility challenges that affect multiple joints throughout her body.

Katherine's world had dramatically shrunk over recent years. In 2022, a severe symptom flare-up left her practically housebound, forcing her to abandon her BTEC course with no qualifications beyond GCSEs.

The NHS wheelchair she received in January 2023 was inadequate for her complex needs, actually causing further damage to her shoulders and wrists and progressively limiting her mobility even more.

What had once been an active life attending local youth theatre and gaming tournaments became impossible. Essential journeys required assistance from her lodger, as Katherine's mother – also a wheelchair user – could no longer help with the physical demands of managing heavy equipment.

Katherine's world became increasingly isolated, with social contact limited to the occasional comic convention when support was available. The situation placed enormous strain on her entire family.



Specialist Mobility Equipment Case Study

Katherine, 23, from the Wirral

Her mother worried constantly about Katherine's safety and isolation while managing her own mobility needs.

Simple pleasures like library visits, Pokémon tournaments, and days out together, once cherished family activities, had become impossible.

”
**Having my new
chair has honestly
been life-changing**

AFK's mobility team knew the importance of providing Katherine with a new bespoke wheelchair and Smartdrive power attachment, specifically chosen to address her complex needs and restore her independence.

Katherine recently attended MCM Comic Con completely on her own for the first time in over two years, navigating the challenging venue and outdoor terrain without any assistance.

"Having my new chair has honestly been life-changing," Katherine reflected. "It has given me a level of freedom and independence that I haven't been able to have in over two years, and I finally feel able to keep up with my friends."



Katherine and her mother can now enjoy outings together again, both using their mobility aids without the physical strain of inadequate equipment.

Her mother no longer lies awake worrying about Katherine travelling safely alone.

Pathways to employment

For many disabled and neurodiverse young people, moving into work is not about ability or ambition. It is about access, confidence, experience and the right support at the right time.

AFK's Employment & Skills programme helps young people explore careers, build workplace skills, complete placements and take steps towards paid employment in a way that works for them.



Read about Diyar's story on page 14

Pathways to employment

98

young people supported by
employment coaches across
North London

39

young people completed
external work placements

25

young people started paid
employment

82%

of young people who moved into paid
work were still employed 12 months
after leaving the programme

11

young people signed off from Travel Training, able
to travel independently to school, college or work

Pathways to employment

Employer visits

Chiltern Railways

Chiltern Railways welcomed AFK young people to Marylebone Station for a careers insight day, funded by the Chiltern Railways Community Investment Fund.

Employees from across the company gave their time to lead a guided tour of the station and back office, giving the group a behind-the-scenes look at how a busy London station runs day to day.

Young people learned about the range of roles available across the rail industry, from customer-facing station work to operations and support teams, and heard more about the skills, experience and qualities that can help someone start a career in the sector.

The group also learned how the station and wider line operate, stepped onto a brand new Mark 5A train, asked questions, collected careers advice and left with new knowledge, goody bags and cupcakes.



Pathways to employment

Employer visits

Mount Anvil

Six young people from AFK's Employment & Skills and Supported Internship programmes visited Mount Anvil's headquarters in Barbican for a hands-on careers insight day.

The visit gave the group a first-hand look at the worlds of interior design, architecture, marketing and construction. Young people explored miniature building plans and models, walked through full-size apartment showrooms, and experienced future developments in Mount Anvil's immersive VR room.

They also took part in an interior design workshop, styling an apartment to meet a client brief, and learned about building schematics, including floor plans, sections and elevations.

Mount Anvil staff shared their own career journeys and helped young people understand the range of roles available across the industry. Two young people also stepped in front of the camera with Mount Anvil's in-house photographer to share their feedback on the day.



Pathways to employment

Case Study

Diyar, 23, from London

In March 2026, Diyar secured a paid role as an Expert with Lived Experience Co-Trainer with the Oliver McGowan team at Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Diyar now schedules shifts and works closely with the Oliver McGowan team to deliver training sessions to NHS staff and healthcare professionals.

It is a role that reflects his long-standing interest in healthcare and gives him the opportunity to use his own lived experience to support better understanding across the sector.

AFK supported Diyar with onboarding, travel training, preparing his presentation, and the advice and guidance he needed to secure and maintain the role.

This milestone followed years of tailored employment support.

Diyar was first introduced to AFK's Employment & Skills programme in 2021 whilst studying at Haringey Sixth Form, one of AFK's education partners.

After finishing college and completing a Supported Internship with West Lea, he continued working with AFK to build his confidence, explore different workplaces and prepare for paid employment.

During his time with AFK, Diyar attended employer visits, took part in interview practice, completed a short-term retail placement with Tottenham Hotspur, volunteered at the Royal Free Hospital enquiries desk, and completed a paid work placement with CareTech, building the experience and confidence that helped him move into paid work in healthcare.

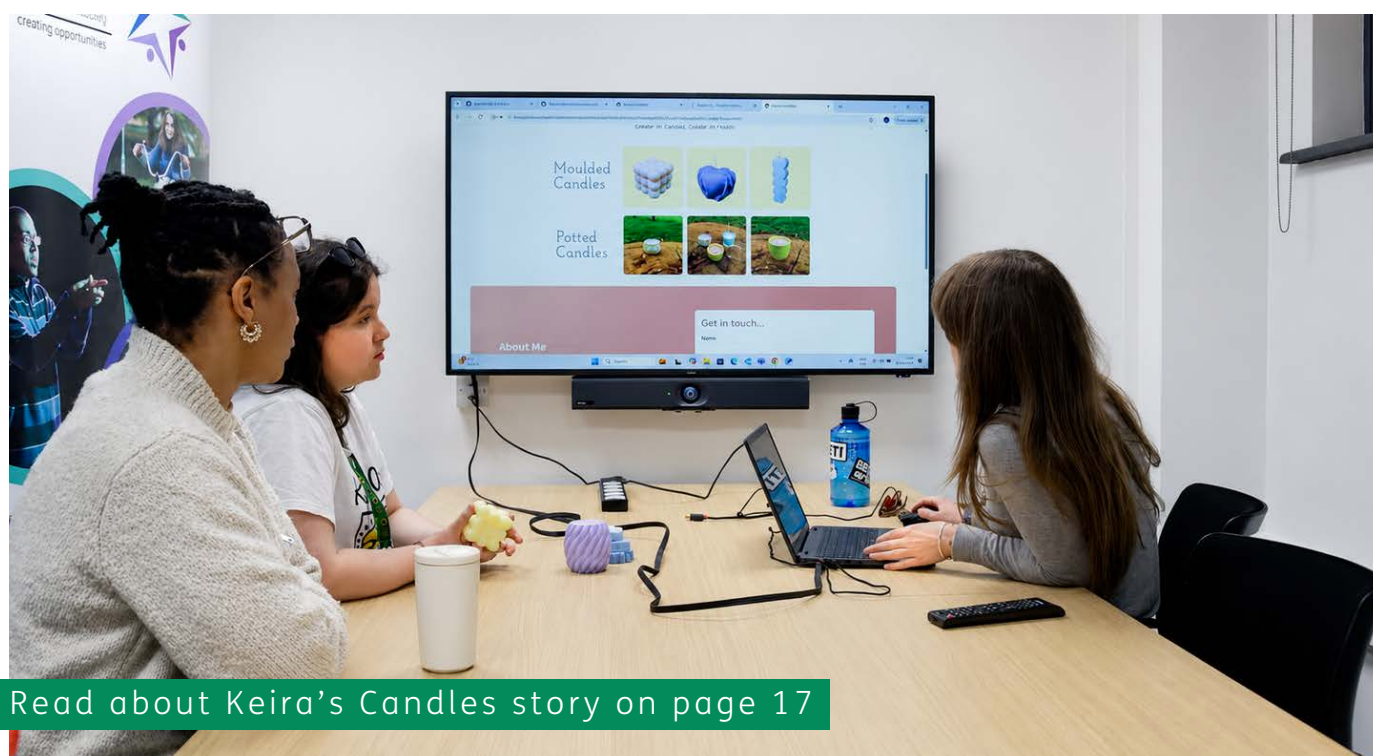


Self-Employment

The 'We Mean Business' Programme

Self-employment can give disabled and neurodiverse young people a flexible route into work, helping them build confidence, develop their skills and shape a future around their own ambitions.

This year, AFK's We Mean Business programme supported 144 young people, a 48% increase on last year. Workshop attendance also grew by 62%, helping more young people explore self-employment as a real route into work.



Read about Keira's Candles story on page 17

Self-Employment: We Mean Business

144

young people supported through the self-employment programme

125

young people attended workshops introducing self-employment as a career pathway

19

young people received one-to-one mentoring and support to develop their business ideas

8

young people supported to set up their own business

Self-Employment: We Mean Business

Case Study

Keira, 19, from London

Keira's love of candles started long before she thought about running a business.

"I used to get quite anxious sometimes, and candles grounded me and gave me a sense of relaxation," she says.

"For every birthday and Christmas, for as long as I can remember, my parents always bought me a Yankee Candle."

For her 18th birthday, Keira's dad bought her a candle-making kit. That gift helped spark an idea. Keira began making candles and giving out free samples at school, before joining AFK's We Mean Business programme to turn her passion into a real business.

With tailored support, Keira gained the confidence to sell her handmade candles at markets, build her own Instagram profile and website, and take practical steps towards becoming a young entrepreneur.

 keirascandles.com

 [@keirascandles2025](https://www.instagram.com/keirascandles2025)

"What I've learned about the We Mean Business self-employment programme is that there are people out there who are passionate about helping you with your business, and will do pretty much anything for you, as long as you're willing to put in the work."

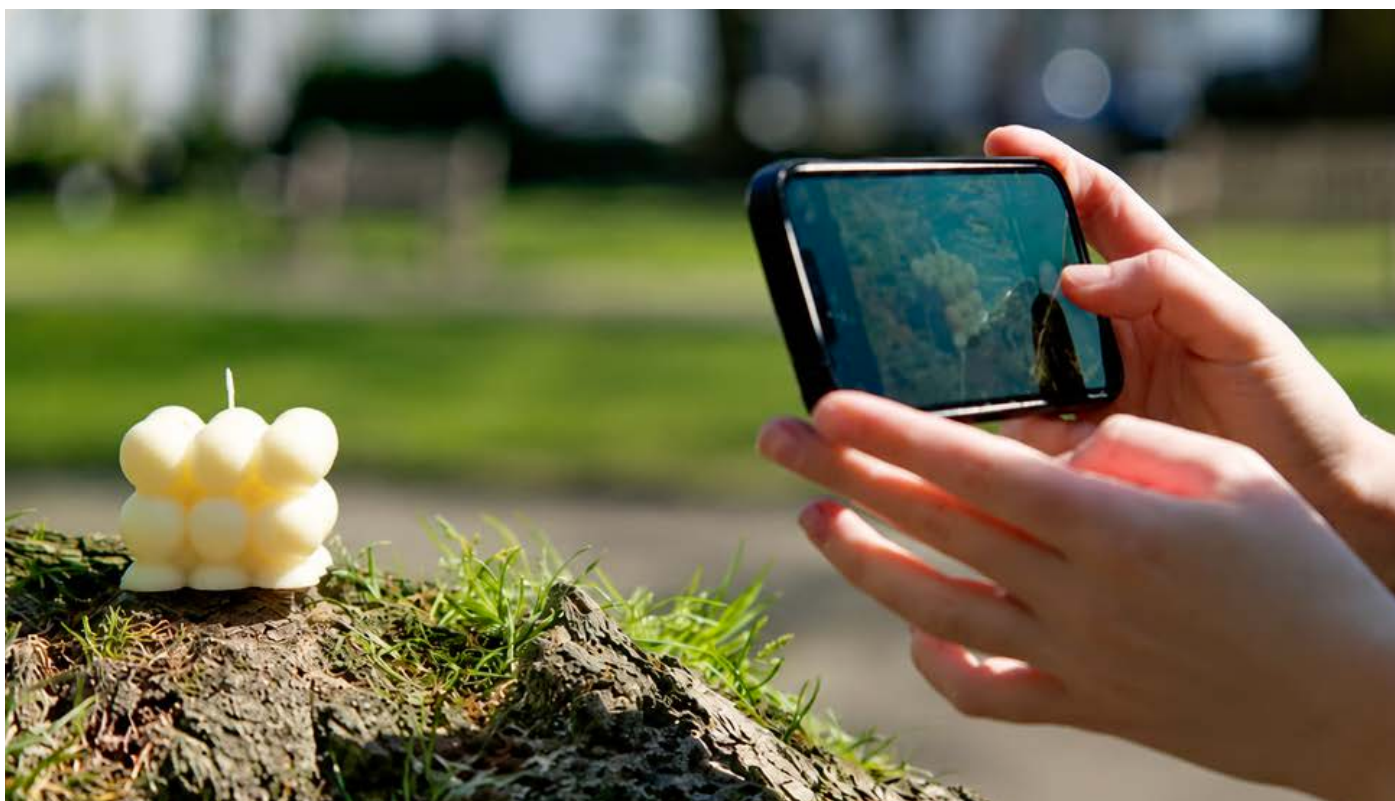
For Keira, self-employment has become a way to share something she loves, build confidence and inspire others.

"It makes me feel inspired and honoured, because I get to share my love for candles with everyone else, as well as inspiring young people to start their own business too."



Self-Employment: We Mean Business

Case Study | Keira, 19, from London



Community and fundraising highlights

Community support is a vital part of AFK's work. This year, our fundraising and events brought people together through sport, inclusive family activities and local partnerships, raising vital funds whilst helping more people understand the barriers disabled and neurodiverse children and young people face.

Our Big Give mobility campaign hit its target, raising £22,563, whilst seven London Marathon runners raised more than £20,000 between them.

We also saw wonderful support from people close to AFK. Julia, our former Mobility Manager, hosted a street party fundraiser, raising over £7,000.



Community and fundraising highlights

Neurodiversity Cinema

AFK trialled a neurodiversity-friendly First Films screening of Dog Man at the ArtHouse in Crouch End.

The event explored whether adapting our usual screenings could create a genuinely inclusive and welcoming experience for neurodivergent children and their families.

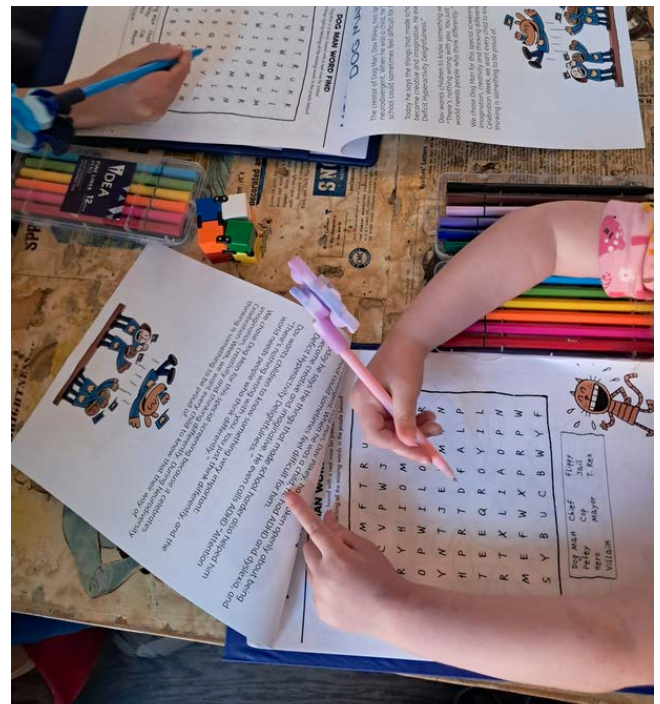
As the screening took place on Mother's Day, donations from the Women in Business Network enabled us to provide every mum with a hot drink. Children also received a themed activity pack, colouring pencils or crayons, and a fidget pen to take home.

Dog Man was chosen intentionally, as its creator Dav Pilkey has spoken openly about his ADHD and dyslexia as superpowers.

Feedback from families was overwhelmingly positive. Parents told us the screening removed the anxiety they usually experienced at the cinema and created an environment where their children felt comfortable, understood and welcome.

For one child, Finn, it made his first trip to the cinema a wonderful and stress-free experience.

The trial demonstrated the difference thoughtful adjustments can make, giving families the confidence to enjoy an experience that may otherwise feel inaccessible.



Community and fundraising highlights

AFK Beach 2025

AFK Beach was back in Canary Wharf for 2025, bringing a full-sized beach volleyball court to Union Square, Wood Wharf for a month of tournaments, coaching, court hire and team-building.

Across the month, 1,149 players took part, alongside 29 companies, four community groups, 25 volunteers and two young people employed through the event.

From corporate teams and elite athletes to schools and community groups, the court became a lively space for people to play, connect and support AFK's work.

The event raised over £70,000 in unrestricted funds, helping AFK continue to support disabled and neurodiverse children and young people with the equipment, skills and opportunities they need to move towards greater independence.

It also helped introduce AFK to a wider audience, with more than 100,000 Instagram views during the event and strong engagement from companies and the local Canary Wharf community.

A huge thank you to everyone who played, volunteered, donated, hired the court, cheered from the sidelines or helped make the event happen.



Cultural Ambassadors Programme

I Am Festival

AFK's Cultural Ambassadors programme, delivered in partnership with A New Direction, gives deaf, disabled and neurodiverse young people a gateway into careers in the arts.

This year marked six years of the partnership. Working with five professional artists and 35 London schools, the programme culminated in the I AM Festival at Tate Modern, where young people explored this year's theme, "Journeys".

Across the festival, young people shaped installations, co-created gallery moments, experienced sensory encounters and digital works, and contributed in a public, joyful and carefully supported space.

The festival showed what inclusion can look like in practice: young people leading, performing, creating and being themselves in a major cultural venue.

Cultural Ambassadors is one of four programmes delivered by AFK's Impact and Innovation Team, helping disabled and neurodiverse Londoners explore employment opportunities whilst still in full-time education.

Together, these programmes supported 253 children and young people this year.

Cultural Ambassadors Programme: I Am Festival



Thank you to our supporters

We are deeply grateful to every individual, family, community group, corporate partner, trust and foundation that supported AFK this year.

Your generosity helps disabled and neurodiverse children and young people access the equipment, skills, confidence and opportunities they need to move towards greater independence.



Become an AFK fundraiser:

www.afkcharity.org.uk/fundraise

Thank you to our supporters

Our partnership with Berkeley

Throughout 2025/26, our partnership with Berkeley continued to combine fundraising, volunteering and practical support, creating new opportunities for disabled and neurodivergent children and young people.

By the end of the first two years of the partnership, Berkeley colleagues had raised an incredible £205,861*. Teams took on challenges including the London Marathon, Dragon Boat Race, Wine Challenge, Golf Day and Question of Sport, alongside supporting AFK through payroll giving.

This funding has supported AFK's core work, including providing and maintaining specialist mobility equipment, delivering employment and skills workshops and helping young people build their confidence and independence.

***£297,323 raised so far -
August 2026**



More than fundraising

Berkeley colleagues have shared their time and expertise to help young people explore careers, develop business ideas and build confidence.

Employer visits introduced students to construction roles, whilst support for AFK's self-employment programme and pop-up shops gave young entrepreneurs practical experience.



Thank you to our supporters

Trusts and foundations

- City Bridge Foundation
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Genia Marzec Trust Fund
- Henry Smith Foundation
- Julia Rausing Trust
- London Freemasons' Charity
- St. James's Place Charitable Foundation

Corporate partners and foundations

- AJ Bell Futures Foundation
- Berkeley and The Berkeley Foundation
- Candis
- Central District Alliance
- CareTech Charitable Foundation
- Forvis Mazars Foundation UK
- Great Western Railway Outreach Fund
- Medicor Foundation
- The Bloomfield Charitable Trust
- The Chiltern Railways Community Investment Fund
- The Derwent London Community Fund
- The Motability Foundation
- The Moulding Foundation
- The Openwork Foundation
- The South East Consortium
- The Wellington Management UK Foundation

Join our journey

Every young person deserves the chance to move forward with confidence, independence and choice.

You can help us make that possible.

By supporting AFK, you can help remove the barriers that stand in the way, and create more opportunities for disabled and neurodiverse children and young people to build futures shaped by their own goals, strengths and ambitions.

Donate, fundraise, leave a gift in your will, play our seasonal raffles, volunteer...

www.afkcharity.org.uk





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