

**upside**  
youth mentoring

**2025**

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT



# A message from our leadership

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**GREG LANGTON, CHAIR**

Young people in New Zealand are growing up in increasingly complex times. For many, these challenges are

compounded by significant childhood adversity and isolation that can profoundly impact their wellbeing and future opportunities.

Upside's volunteers and staff delivered excellent outcomes for young people in 2025. These results reflect the profound difference that one trusted adult can make in a young person's life.

As Chair, I am immensely proud of what has been achieved. Behind every young life changed is an impressive community of volunteer mentors, staff, board members, and supporters united by a shared belief that every young person deserves the opportunity to thrive.

Together, they have built an organisation known not only for its impact, but for its culture of care, excellence, and unwavering commitment to young people.

To everyone who has partnered with us, thank you!

To meet the growing need, the Upside team has been working hard to develop ambitious strategies that will expand our reach to more vulnerable young people in 2026 and beyond. Please connect with us anytime to learn more about our exciting plans and discuss how we can make a greater impact in these young lives.

Together, we are making a lasting difference in the lives of young people and their communities.

“*Every young person we support is a future employee, parent, leader, neighbour, or community member. Too often, the greatest barrier they face is not a lack of ability, but a lack of belief — belief in themselves and their future. Investing in young people is an investment in our collective future.*”



**JENNY HORST, CEO**

# With your support, we made a real impact

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545

people directly  
impacted\*



8,427

volunteer hours  
donated



94%

of matches lasting  
12+ months\*\*



\$4.2M

social value  
created



“ I used to hate school,  
now I love school.”

— Nia, aged 11

“ I believe in myself more  
because my mentor keeps  
telling me I am great.”

— Cody, aged 10

\*young people + mentor + whānau (through Upside HQ and our delivery partners)  
\*\*compared with international average of 56%

# Upside's unique model

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We focus exclusively on young people experiencing hardship – including abuse, neglect, family violence, addiction, parental imprisonment, grief, and family breakdown – providing intensive, long-term, one-to-one mentoring.

We carefully vet, train, and support our volunteer mentors, who meet weekly with young people referred to Upside by their school, for at least a year.

Together they might play board games, shoot hoops, visit a museum, or simply sit on a park bench talking over ice creams. These ordinary moments provide the foundation for something far more powerful – trust, belonging, confidence, and resilience.

Upside also supports the young person's whānau throughout the mentoring journey.

Our work is concentrated in Auckland, and two partner organisations deliver the Upside model in Rodney and Tauranga.



# Building belief. Shaping futures.



## LILY'S STORY

“ I feel more happy and not shy to talk or share my ideas.”

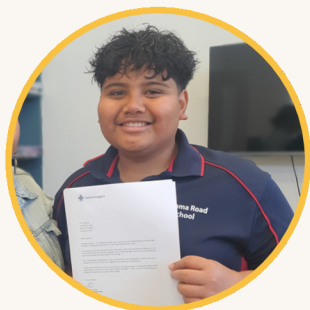
After experiencing significant grief and loss, Lily\* came to Upside as a quiet and anxious young person who struggled to speak up or feel confident in herself. Through regular time together with her mentor, Grace\*, Lily slowly began stepping outside her comfort zone – trying new activities, building confidence, and finding joy again.

\*names and photo changed to protect privacy

## KENNETH'S STORY

“ I now speak and lead in front of the school because my mentor helped me.”

Recently awarded a 75% scholarship to Saint Kentigern College, Kenneth's journey has been nothing short of remarkable. When first referred to Upside four years ago, he was withdrawn after experiencing challenging events in his early years. Through regular time with his mentor, he slowly began finding his voice, growing in confidence, leading kapa haka and pōwhiri at school, and engaging more in class.



## What's the impact?

Independent analysis of our programme shows significant outcomes for young people, including:

- Improved mental and physical health
- Higher educational attainment
- Reduced risk of addiction and family violence
- Reduced risk of criminal activity

In fact, every dollar invested in Upside generates \$4.70 of social value for Aotearoa. (ImpactLab, 2020)



## JAYDEN'S STORY

“ *He's like a bro to me.*”

When Jayden\* came to Upside, he was carrying the weight of a traumatic and uncertain home life, challenges with friendships, and big emotions for a 10-year-old to navigate. Through regular time with his mentor, Mike\*, Jayden has become more relaxed, confident and open. Recently, he proudly shared, "I haven't been in any fights lately." He has also started seeking advice about friendships, confidence and his future – a reflection of the trusting relationship they have built together.

## MELE'S STORY



*At 11, Mele\* was described by her school as “rude, loud, and fighting for attention” – disruptive in class and bullying other students. She had recently moved in with her dad and was struggling to adjust to a new school. After being matched with volunteer mentor Shelley\* through Upside, everything began to shift. Within months, Mele's grades improved, her confidence grew, and she learned healthier ways to manage stress. Two years later, she has applied to be a school leader!*

*\*Names and photo changed to protect privacy.*

“

*I see that terrible trajectory for so many of our young people, and I'm excited to see the change that can happen through Upside's programme. We trust you.”*

– Deputy Principal, South Auckland

“

*Without Upside, I know my son would either be in prison or dead. That was the turning point.”*

– Mother of Aaron who was mentored for five years

# Looking ahead: Innovative new programme to extend our reach

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As youth distress rises across Aotearoa, more young people need support than ever before.

In 2026, we are piloting **UpsideOnline** – New Zealand’s first online volunteer mentoring programme, supported by a wellbeing curriculum and a safe, controlled tech platform.

Developed in partnership with leading neuroscience educator Nathan Wallis, the programme is designed to help intermediate-aged students facing adversity to build self-belief, strengthen help-seeking skills, and develop hope for their future.

The flexible, one-hour-per-week programme will run over 10 weeks, and enables busy people to mentor during their workday, extending access to support for young people who might otherwise miss out.

“*I passionately support this programme... when it comes to what actually makes a difference in children's lives, it's really clear that mentoring is the best approach.*”

– Nathan Wallis,  
Child Development Educator



NZ-first



Tech for good



Wellbeing curriculum



Scalable nationwide



## Statement of Revenue and Expenses

For the year ended 31 December 2025		2025	2024
<b>Revenue</b>			
	Donations, koha and other fundraising activities	378,753	400,433
	General grants	246,677	316,160
	Funding received from central or local government	65,399	69,493
	Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	2,413	11,741
	Other revenue	87,964	76,384
	<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>781,206</b>	<b>874,212</b>
	Expenses related to fundraising	28,610	106,698
	Employee remuneration and other related costs	521,468	601,175
	Volunteer related expenses	15,460	18,000
	Other expenses related to service delivery	204,799	236,541
	Other expenses	41,382	43,932
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>811,719</b>	<b>1,006,345</b>
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(30,513)</b>	<b>(132,133)</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 31 December 2025		2025	2024
<b>Assets</b>			
	Current Assets	327,725	285,645
	Non-Current Assets	13,120	20,250
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>340,845</b>	<b>305,895</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>			
	Current Liabilities	141,895	76,431
	<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>141,895</b>	<b>76,431</b>
<b>Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)</b>			
<b>Funds</b>	<b>Total Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>198,950</b>	<b>229,463</b>

Because of you,  
more young people are building **belief**  
in themselves, others,  
and their future.



“Upside’s Beach Day was a good day out for me and my family and to be with our friends as well. I have never done kayaking before and it was scary but fun at the same time.”

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youth mentoring

**[upside.org.nz](https://www.upside.org.nz)**

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