

# upside

youth mentoring



**Creating a world of belonging**

**ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT • Year Ending 31 Dec 2023**





**Upside is on a mission to catalyse long term change in communities through the power of mentoring.**



## ***A message from our Chair***

**Kia ora,**

There is growing recognition of the importance of early intervention in addressing mental health issues among young people in New Zealand, as rates of anxiety and depression skyrocket. Through Upside, I've been privileged to have a front row seat to a model that it is making a profound difference, as evidenced by independent research.

Our objective is to reach the kids showing early risk-factors, who most need the helping hand, and those most likely to experience poor-life outcomes without intervention. I believe this is how we greatly impact Aotearoa before last-resort measures need to be put in place.

As we face a greater demand for our programme than we can meet, Upside is rolling out our strategic initiative through 2024 to 2025 to scale up and reach more of the young people and whānau that we know are out there needing an Upside mentor in their lives.

In addition to our strategic growth initiative, Upside is continuing to share specialist mentoring experience and joint learnings with other youth-focused organisations. By expanding our partnership initiative we are able to support the growth of New Zealand's mentoring sector capacity, and increase support for more vulnerable young people.

Upside is in a pivotal position in the New Zealand early intervention and mentoring ecosystem to shift the dial. Your partnership in this endeavour will help us to achieve more – please reach out to us to discuss how you or your organisation can partner with us, we would welcome your call.

Reflecting on 2023, I am filled with gratitude for the hard work and progress achieved by Jenny and the Upside team, and for the tremendous commitment of our volunteer mentors and supporters. Our success and expanding reach would not be possible without the generosity of our supporters. Your contributions have been instrumental in our ability to stand alongside and inspire the young people we serve. Thank you.

Arohanui,

Greg Langton  
Board Chair



## ***A note from our CEO***

**Our deepest thanks to you, our supporters, who are enabling some incredible changes in the lives of the young people we work with. It really does take a village to raise a child, and we are grateful to partner with you to connect young people with a brighter future.**

Throughout 2023 our team of over 100 volunteers and nine staff were laser-focussed on getting world-class mentoring to young people in need. Our staff continued to train and support volunteer mentors, carefully matching them with young people who've faced daunting challenges. The energy and passion of our mentors is an inspiration, we are so grateful for their dedication.

Upside has achieved some fantastic outcomes over the past year, whilst continuing to deal with a difficult climate for volunteer mentor recruitment. The Anniversary Floods and Cyclone Gabrielle - off the back of extended Covid lockdowns - resulted in a 20% reduction in volunteerism across the Auckland charitable sector in 2023, impacting our organisation. There are early signs of sector recovery and Upside has continued to proactively work to revitalise this.

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to our dedicated volunteers and the talented Upside team for their hard work over the past year. I'm particularly grateful for our team's adaptability during the reconfiguration of some roles to optimise our performance.

The achievements shared in this report are a testament to the collective efforts of the Upside 'village'. Your support fuels our work, and together - one life at a time - we are reshaping futures and communities. Thank you so much for partnering with us!

Nāku iti noa, nā

Jenny Horst  
CEO



# Ordinary people, doing extraordinary things

Every day, in communities across Tāmaki Makaurau and beyond, the seeds of long-term change are being sown into the next generation.

At the frontline are our volunteers – ordinary big-hearted Kiwis, who turn up consistently every week to kick a ball, walk on the beach, play a board game or bake a cake with their young person. It's extraordinary what two hours of listening, laughing and caring each week can achieve across a year.

Independent analysis of our programme shows that over 12 months, the young people in our programme experience remarkable growth in confidence, courage and coping skills.

## *Key outcomes\* include:*

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



*The impact cannot be underestimated.  
We're seeing a shift in academics, school attendance,  
social interactions and within homes."*

— Joy, Learning Support Coordinator, Panama Road School



2024

98  
matches supported  
in Auckland



57%  
exceeding 12 months



5,100  
hours of  
volunteering  
in Auckland



490  
total lives impacted  
in Auckland  
(young person, mentor & whānau)



+69  
matches supported  
by our partner  
organisations





# Working strategically to shape brighter futures

*Upside is one of New Zealand's most effective youth mentoring organisations with a Social ROI of*  
**\$1:\$4.70**

Within the sector, we operate with some unique points of difference:

- We focus exclusively on tamariki and rangatahi aged 9-13, who have faced Adverse Childhood Experiences, recognising the critical need for early intervention to avert poor life outcomes.
- Our referrers are schools, largely in high-deprivation areas, and together we build an eco-system of community support around each young person.
- We involve the whānau on the mentoring journey, supporting them in their vital role.
- Through our innovative partnership model, we extend our reach beyond Tāmaki Makaurau, empowering other organisations to implement Upside's programme in their communities.

**71% of our young people are Maori/Pasifika.**




## Equipping other organisations with our transformational programme

Since 2016, Upside has successfully mentored over 1,000 vulnerable tamariki and rangatahi. By training and supporting other organisations to deliver our programme in their local community, many more young people are benefiting from this proven approach. These organisations raise their own funding to deliver the programme.

### *Benefits to other organisations and communities:*

- Reduced programme duplication (less effort, cost and risk).
- Confidence in using a proven, high-impact model.
- Access to Upside's specialist support 24/7, and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Connection with like-minded organisations in the sector, fostering shared learning and support.

Over the past year, our four partner organisations have experienced a more challenging fundraising and mentor recruitment environment, which has impacted delivery and growth. Upside is supporting these organisations to maximise available opportunities and we're excited by our shared vision of future possibilities.

 *We want to applaud the work of Upside and their professionalism in maintaining a partnership relationship with agencies like ours."*

— Stuart, National Director, Tipu Skills for Life, Tauranga



# 'The Upside Collective' partner organisations



## Springboard, North Rodney

Springboard has been successfully working with at-risk youth, aged 8-24 years, and their families since 2002. Springboard's programmes includes alternative education and a youth offender programme. Upside's mentoring programme has been added to their programme suite as an early intervention. Springboard have partnered with Upside for more than 10 years.



## Tipu Skills for Life, Tauranga

Established in 2011, Tipu Skills for Life provide long-term, early intervention for 9-11 year old girls, with a therapeutic, strengths-based approach. Through their partnership with Upside, Tipu have been able to offer a mentoring service for the girls that have completed their eight week 'Tipu Skills for Life Programme' in school. Tipu have partnered with Upside since 2019.



## Papatoetoe Adolescent Christian Trust, Papatoetoe

PACT work closely with local schools providing in-school group support for at-risk young people as well as parenting and anger management programmes, among other initiatives. Their partnership with Upside was on hold in 2023 due to funding challenges and the departure of their Mentoring Coordinator. PACT's partnership with Upside began in 2022.



## Coast Youth Community Trust, Whangaparoa

CYC has a deep connection with their local community, delivering a number of in-school and community-based programmes focussed on vulnerable youth. Upside's programme is enhancing outcomes by mobilising local volunteers to provide additional intensive support for the young people they work with. Coast have partnered with Upside since 2020.



“Upside’s feedback, input and inspiration continues to be invaluable to us. The team at Upside are regularly reviewing and improving their systems and processes, as well as generating new thinking – the outcomes of which are beneficial for us all. Our partnership gives us confidence that we are delivering an effective service.”

— Sheralyn, Mentoring Coordinator, Springboard, North Rodney  
(pictured, fourth from right)



# The impact of your investment

*“I’ve seen [my son] grow so much [because of his mentor]. He used to hold things back but he tends to express himself more. He’s less aggressive towards his younger sister. His teacher emailed me to say his behaviour has improved a lot!”*

– Mother of 9 year old boy

*“I am very blessed to have my mentor because he is so clever and wise. I hope I get to be with my mentor for a long time.”* – 10 year old boy

*“I never thought I’d be where I am today. If I hadn’t had a mentor [over the past year] I wouldn’t be a school leader now. I didn’t want to be at the top, I was too shy, too scared, too worried what other people think.”* – 12 year old boy

*“The value of Upside’s mentoring cannot be measured. I’m seeing [our students] grow, becoming proud of who they are. They can step outside and face the world. I referred Maera to Upside because of her anxiety, she couldn’t walk home. Couldn’t step outside and feel safe. For her to go out and feel safe now with her mentor is huge.”* – Learning Support Coordinator (school referrer)

*“Jackson started talking to me about not liking school and getting into trouble with his Nana and Mum, so I feel like he is starting to trust me with more personal information. Jackson shared that if he finishes high school he will be the first person in his family to do so and I said that is an amazing goal to have.”* – Mentor







*One of the many school sports, academic and leadership awards received by tamariki we mentor.*

*Insert: An Upside young person received a gorgeous ula lole - a special Kaitiaki Award at her West Auckland school in December 2023, with her proud mentor at her side.*

## School strugglers becoming award-winners!

Many of the young people that enter the Upside programme are struggling to attend school regularly or engage in their learning. Some are very disruptive in class. But mentoring is changing that! We were delighted to witness top honours at Mt Wellington's Panama Road School awarded to young people in the Upside programme. The Principal acknowledged Upside as she awarded child after child in our programme. This recognition underscores the profound influence of effective volunteer mentoring - outside of school hours - on the academic and personal development of these students.

## Building an eco-system of support

Overtime, we see families viewing the Upside mentor as a trusted member of their whānau. Research by Dr. Pat Bullen from the University of Auckland cites that Upside mentors enhance family relationships, building their social ecology.

The family feels cared for by the mentor and benefits in a multitude of ways, including the provision of weekly 'respite' from parenting, giving the parent the opportunity to destress and recharge, and focus on other children.

In collaboration with our referral schools, we create an ecosystem of support, wrapping around the child and their whānau, and ensuring the appropriate additional support is engaged where needed.

Our Mentoring Coordinators regularly visit the whānau to listen, seek feedback and assess needs. We support families in a variety of ways including the offer of parenting support through other specialist organisations, and supporting access to food banks.

We also support parents to enrol their child in after-school programmes, provide guidance on school enrolment during critical school transitions, and connect families with community events and resources through local networks.



## In the words of a parent:

### Pharryn, solo mother of three



Upside has been mentoring my son Kenneth for a year and it's brought relationship-building for [us as] mother and son. Kenneth is growing and coming back into the home and teaching us. I've learned to listen to my son. I'm recognising what I need to do and I'm growing [as a parent].

[His mentor] Chao-Fu provides opportunities I couldn't provide my son, raising that future for him. [Without his mentor] he'd be lonely, stuck in the room on a device. It sucks, but it's our reality.

[His mentor and I addressed] some learning barriers together where I felt so supported having someone to talk with about Kenneth, which has led to breakthrough moments for me as Mum. [His mentor is] teaching me new things too which I'm so thankful for.

As parents we may think we have all the answers and know what's best for our children, but having that extra set of ears, eyes, and heart has enriched my parenting skills.

I just love Upside's programme. There's substance behind what's happening with him and Chao-Fu. And that's what I really appreciate. The trust is there for Chao-Fu and me, as well as my son.

***We are so thankful for Upside, they've changed our worlds for the better, beyond what I ever would have imagined. I just hope other whānau can get to experience this too!"***





## EVENT HIGHLIGHT:

# Involving whānau in Upside's Beach Day 2023

Throughout the year Upside runs a number of dynamic events, including an high energy overnight camp, providing meaningful experiences for our matches and supporting them to feel part of a broader community.

Whānau were invited to our legendary annual Beach Day in February, where they and their children were able to experience new activities at Kohimarama Beach, surrounded by other families and young people in the programme. For some, it was their first time at the beach.

Having everyone involved is greatly beneficial for matches – both those recently matched through to those who already consider the mentor as part of the family.

More than 100 attended Beach Day, enjoying beach games, boat trips, kayaking and delicious food in a safe environment that continues strengthening relationships within families and the Upside community.



*I was so excited about Beach Day today,  
I didn't sleep all night!"*

– 11 year old boy



## CASE STUDY: SEAN & DAN

# Mentoring impacting mental and physical health

When Dan and his mentor Sean were first introduced by Upside's Mentoring Coordinator Farrely, they couldn't have anticipated the incredible journey they were about to embark on.

Dan had just turned 11 and was being bullied at his South-East Auckland school. His quiet nature had made him a target for bullies in the years leading up to being referred to Upside, and he also struggled to engage at school. The school referrer wanted to see Dan to grow in confidence and be provided with opportunities to interact with another adult who believed in him and supported him as he began his transition from primary to intermediate school.

Dan met up with Sean consistently, every week, to kick a soccer ball at the park, play games at the arcade, jump at the trampoline park, visit art galleries and museums, hike at Muriwai, try new foods, play board games, and so many other adventures - which his Mum heard all about once Dan returned home!

*Sean's passion for life proved contagious and Dan began reaping the rewards of spending time with such a positive role model every week. Sean began teaching Dan new skills like soccer, and connected Dan into the local soccer club. Dan's mental and physical health has improved significantly through greater activity and a growth in confidence.*

Research has shown that Upside's programme benefits not only the child and their whānau, but the mentor too - and this match is an excellent example: At Dan's first training with the soccer club, Sean was taken outside of his comfort zone when asked to help coach. Fortunately, he discovered a new talent of his own! In a post on LinkedIn, Sean said, "Delighted to get my NZF Youth Level 2 Coaching [Soccer] Award this week and start my coaching journey! Extra chuffed that I get to hang with some of my favourites from Upside."

Dan's confidence has grown massively, and it's most evident on the pitch! He's communicating with his teammates,

offering encouragement to his friends and taking pride in becoming a great sportsman on (and off) the field.

His family have benefited too. His mother told us that she feels less stressed and has more time to take care of herself. She is also less anxious about Dan's welfare.

*"I feel we are very lucky," says Dan's mum. "Before Sean came [into our lives] Dan had low self-esteem, and struggled to adapt to a new environment. However this has changed so much over the 12 months ... Upside has been a welcome influence in our family. Thank you for helping my son find his potential and giving him opportunities he wouldn't have received if he wasn't with Upside. I [hope] all whānau that are part of this programme get the same amazing results we have."*

Since meeting his mentor, Dan has become more ambitious - now setting future goals, getting active outside more often, and improving at school. To his great surprise and delight, he won the All-Round Excellence Award at year-end graduation!



**“ Dan’s got a big future and I truly believe he can do anything he sets his mind to. If he ends up playing striker for the Cook Islands soccer team just remember who got him his first pair of boots!”**

- Sean, mentor



# Financial review

Like most charities, Upside was not immune to the headwinds of New Zealand's economic downturn during the financial year ending 31 December 2023. However our team continued to work creatively and diligently to ensure our funding streams were sustainable. We want to express our heartfelt thanks to our supporters who have remained tremendously loyal throughout the year.

At year end, Upside Youth Mentoring held five months of funds in reserve, in line with not-for-profit best practice. This is particularly important for Upside, as we have a 12-month obligation to supervise mentors and young people in our programme.

To receive a complete set of audited financial statements, please email [donations@upside.org.nz](mailto:donations@upside.org.nz)



## Statement of Revenue and Expenses

For the year ended 31 December 2023

		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Revenue</b>	Donations, fundraising and other similar revenue	805,183.92	811,769.79
	Revenue from providing goods or services	62,785.11	57,007.95
	Interest, dividends and other investment revenue	15,489.53	4,209.91
	Other revenue	74,036.09	36,743.16
	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>957,494.65</b>	<b>909,730.81</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	Expenses related to public fundraising	63,182.77	36,629.57
	Volunteer and employee related costs	629,693.23	614,537.18
	Costs relating to providing goods and services	224,193.47	224,305.58
	Donations and grants made	796.28	1,648.67
	Other expenses	42,641.25	43,985.37
	<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>980,507.00</b>	<b>921,106.37</b>
	<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<b>(23,012.35)</b>	<b>(11,375.56)</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

For the year ended 31 December 2023

		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Assets</b>	Current Assets	198,409.17	559,589.72
	Non-Current Assets	232,638.15	28,950.00
	<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>431,047.32</b>	<b>588,539.72</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	Current Liabilities	69,450.72	203,930.77
	<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>69,450.72</b>	<b>203,930.77</b>
	<b>Total Assets less Total Liabilities (Net Assets)</b>	<b>361,596.60</b>	<b>384,608.95</b>
<b>Funds</b>	<b>Total Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>361,596.60</b>	<b>384,608.95</b>



## A massive thank you!

*We are enormously grateful to our wonderful donors and supporters for journeying with Upside. Together we have made a definitive impact in the lives of young people in need.*

To our donors in the Koha Crew, your regular donations each month have helped to provide a stable financial platform on which we've been able to plan and execute effectively. Thank you so much!

To our corporate partners - Johnson & Johnson, Simplicity, and Tax Management NZ - your encouragement and support have been invaluable, we appreciate all you invest in our mahi.

And to the organisations, trusts, foundations and corporate donors featured on the opposite page, we extend a very special thank you for your tremendous support.

**Ngā mihi nui ki a koe! You're the best!**





SERIOUS ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY







**Every vulnerable  
young person is  
one caring mentor  
away from a  
success story.**





**upside**  
youth mentoring

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