



Durham
University

Volunteering and Outreach

Volunteering Awards 2023

Tuesday 6 June 2023

Radisson Blu Hotel, Durham

Welcome

A very warm welcome to the Durham University Volunteering Awards 2023 where we celebrate together the fantastic efforts of our volunteers whilst thanking our wonderful community partners for their continued support. We are big believers in recognising the efforts of others, whether it is giving up time to do something meaningful for the community or in the way that our community partners open their doors and welcome us in.

Benefits to volunteering in the community can be seen on so many levels, whether that be the sense of greater wellbeing and skill development for the volunteers or the camaraderie and friendships that develop between the University and community and we are excited to spend the evening with you all celebrating this.

We have received such a broad range of nominations this year which really demonstrates the diversity that exists within volunteering. We would like to invite you to learn more about the efforts of our shortlisters in this Award's Programme.

Congratulations to all of our nominees and we hope that you enjoy your evening!

Katie Binks – Volunteering and Outreach Senior Manager

Special Guests

Mrs Sue Snowdon - Lord Lieutenant of County Durham

His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant is a former teacher and Magistrate. She co-ordinated the Durham Writing Project and was a tutor for Adult Literacy and Numeracy for many years, and served as a magistrate in County Durham and Darlington for 23 years.

Much of her life has been devoted to supporting and fundraising for charities. In particular, the work of Cancer Research, both locally and nationally and Hospice Care across the Lieutenancy area.

A great supporter of communities she was one of the founding members of the Bishop Auckland Town Centre Forum. She chaired the marketing and promotion group which developed and implemented an event's led strategy to lift and raise the profile of the town and immediate surrounding areas.

As the Lord-Lieutenant, her aims are to provide a focus for identity, unity and pride; give a sense of stability, recognising achievements, success and excellence; promoting service to others; celebrating the unique history and culture of the Lieutenancy area; supporting its communities and helping to make a positive contribution to the area's future.



Running Order

19:00 Drinks Reception

19:30 Introduction to the Volunteering Awards

Welcome Speech

Host Welcome

Outstanding Newcomer

Best New Volunteering Project

Best Cultural Effort

Best Social Inclusion Effort

Best Environmental Effort

20:30 Buffet

21:00 Speech

Best Educational Effort

Longstanding Volunteer

Team of the Year

College of the Year

Volunteer Leader of the Year

Volunteer of the Year

22:10 Closing Speech

22:20 Disco

Student Nominees

Alex Vellins (Volunteer of the Year Nominee)

Juggling three part-time jobs alongside volunteering, Alex has displayed strong time-management and interpersonal skills. In pursuing the Durham Inspired Award, Alex has shown his commitment to personal growth. As a Samaritan's volunteer, Alex has exhibited great integrity and kindness, even with difficult calls. His contributions to Effective Altruism Durham includes organising the Volunteering and Sustainability Fairs, facilitating weekly discussion groups, and being the go-to person for any ad hoc tasks that need to be done. Alex has also jumped into extremely tough welfare related situations and provided calm support and solutions. Alex has been an invaluable part of the team and could not have functioned without him.



Ben Cawood (Best Educational Effort Nominee)

Ben has volunteered as a mentor at Durham Sixth Form Centre for almost two years. He has worked with the students on both a one to one and small group basis, supporting them with their A - Level French studies. He has provided enrichment sessions looking at different aspects of French Culture; provided revision sessions to increase educational attainment, and worked on a one to one basis with students to develop their fluency and accuracy within their written work. Ben has also led a talk on what it is like to study languages at university. Ben volunteers for two hours per week at the Sixth Form Centre, and is reliable, professional and hardworking. He has made such a difference to the lives of the young people he has worked with.

Charlotte Polomsky (Outstanding Newcomer Nominee)

Charlotte is a first year undergraduate student who has enthusiastically volunteered on Collingwood's Art Initiative, working with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. She has also spent time volunteering with Durham City Youth Project and with local young carers, by raising aspirations and creating art together. Charlotte has shown amazing flexibility and has been brilliant with the young people. Charlotte sits on the newly formed Collingwood Outreach Committee as Communications Officer, delivering a charity quiz which raised over £500 for Foundation Durham.

Flynn Edwards (Outstanding Newcomer Nominee)

Flynn has thrown himself into volunteering this year with his consistent dedication to environmental volunteering. He has volunteered with the Gardening Project through planting bulbs, helping Old Durham Gardens, painting fences and moving planters, as well as volunteering on numerous beach cleans. Flynn has also been heavily involved in Stephenson College's Scouts and Brownies Outreach Project, along with volunteering at Durham Park Run.

Grace Clancy (Volunteer Leader of the Year Nominee)

Grace is an active leader in Collingwood College Amateur Football Club (CCAFC) in her role as Charity Secretary. This year, Grace has gathered and led groups of volunteer students in renovating properties owned by the Charity DASH, which provide sheltered housing. Furthermore, Grace has organised activities to raise funds for the materials used in these renovations. Through Grace's brilliant leadership the group have raised over £8000 for DASH and Epilepsy Action.



Jasmine Moore (Longstanding Volunteer and Volunteer of the Year Nominee)

Jasmine has been running Durham Refugees Kid Club for three years and has worked non-stop to make sure it is a welcoming place. Everyone within the project sees Jasmine as their friend and she has played a big role in creating this small community for refugees in Durham. Jasmine also organises collections, makes presentations to town council and rotary club members asking for funding and supplies, provides information for student magazines, raises funds, distributes supplies to asylum seekers in Newcastle and has helped Syrian women begin to set up a catering business. Jasmine worked incredibly hard and does all her volunteering with care.

José Stewart (Volunteer Leader of the Year Nominee)

José has led Code Club this year and has taken the project from strength to strength. José's enthusiasm for the project is infectious, with his branded code club t-shirts and presence at every volunteering event, encouraging as many volunteers as possible to join the club. Code Club has formed partnerships with several new schools this year, and even have a waiting list of interested schools. José is enthusiastic, organised, and dedicated to Code Club, and without him the project would not be as successful as it is.

Katie Rogers (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

As Van Mildert's Outreach Officer Katie has been volunteering with Van Mildert's Young Person's Project over the last four years, even during the pandemic when the sessions were held online. Last academic year she was part of the Young Person's Project Exec, and organised the first post Covid-19 residential. This was instrumental in bringing the project back to its former glory. Katie also founded 'Mildert's for Refugees' Project this year, an outreach project in which Van Mildert students run a kids club for local Ukrainian refugees, in response to the current crisis.

Lilly Whipp (Outstanding Newcomer Nominee)

Lilly is an enthusiastic and dedicated newcomer to volunteering, who has volunteered across a variety of DUSVO projects throughout the year. She has regularly volunteered with the Creche Project, Under One Sky, Move Mates, and Beyond Boundaries, and took part in a few one-off volunteering sessions, such as Christmas crafts. Her passion for volunteering clearly shines through, and her willingness to try new things and get stuck into helping others in the community is something we should all aspire to.

Jiayu Liu (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

Jiayu is a dedicated and enthusiastic individual who has been volunteering with DUSVO over the last three years. Jiayu started by volunteering with Durham Global Schools, before becoming the project leader in her second year. This academic year, Jiayu has thrived in her position as Culture Chair on the DUSVO Exec. In addition to volunteering with the Lunar New Year Project and Durham Global Schools, Jiayu has volunteered in charity bake sales, events for the Jubilee and Durham Global Week.

Megan Smith (Best Cultural Effort Nominee)

Applying via Zoom while on a year abroad, Megan now volunteers with The Auckland Project every Wednesday, taking two buses to ensure she gets to Bishop Auckland. Megan has proved to be an amazing cultural advocate for the project and developed The Auckland Project Team Kinetic page. This enabled students to know which cultural events are happening in Bishop Auckland, and helped recruit new volunteers to the project. Megan is well respected and liked by both staff and volunteers and has been an amazing asset to us.

Olivia Gaynard (Longstanding Volunteer and Volunteer of the Year Nominee)

Olivia has volunteered with RTProjects since October 2021. During this time she has not only supported some of our clients with her listening skills but she has become an integral part of the charity. She has organised and performed at a suicide awareness concert involving RTProjects and Collingwood College. Olivia has raised a considerable amount of funds for the charity through her own initiatives, including open mic nights and charity fundraisers in the college bar. Alongside her volunteer role with RTProjects she has been an active champion to improve mental health support for students throughout the university.

Ross Plowman (Volunteer Leader of the Year Nominee)

Ross founded Under One Sky which has collected donations, published podcasts and articles, and raised money through fundraising events. Ross also leads Refugees Kids Club which tutors children in Maths, English and many other school subjects. Both projects have required time management, organisational skills, compassion to check in on the welfare of students, communication skills, and in general a great deal of responsibility.

Summer Revely (Volunteer of the Year Nominee)

Summer brings incredible enthusiasm and dedication to her role as Head of Residential for the Young Person's Project at Van Mildert. She has spent months tirelessly organising the best possible activities for Young Person's Project within the fundraised budget. Summer is exceptionally organised, a great negotiator and brings amazing energy to everything she does, especially when working with the young people to ensure their safety and fun.

Staff Nominees

Carol Bainbridge (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

Carol is involved with many volunteering projects inside and outside of work. Along with the volunteering she does with the foodbank and looking after apprentices, she also volunteers for the church, looking after their financial affairs. Carol tirelessly organises cake sales and collections on behalf of charities local and global, her dedication is inspiring.

Jack Dunn (Outstanding Newcomer Nominee)

Jack is a Finance Apprentice, who is not only eighteen months into his role, but also new to volunteering. Jack has volunteered with congregation, food banks, beach cleans and more recently on Challenge Aneka. Jack has volunteered with enthusiasm and commitment, he encourages his peers, and goes out of his way to offer lifts to those who do not have access to transport. Outside of university volunteering Jack helps local football clubs as a referee. He is a credit to staff volunteering within the university.

Jane Dove (Best Social Inclusion Effort and Volunteer Leader of the Year Nominee)

Jane has volunteered on a weekly basis since September 2020, to run Bishop Middleham Village Hall CIO, alongside a team of four other volunteers. The hall has been a community hub since the 1960s and used by a range of community groups. Jane has led on the development of the hall as a warm space hub, throughout the cost of living crisis. The hall is used for art exhibitions, food bank donation drives, yoga sessions, concert and band nights, as well as a community Christmas lunch.

Jane Fullard (Best Environmental Effort and Outstanding Newcomer Nominee)

Jane has regularly volunteered with SeaScapes Partnership on beach cleans, being passionate about the marine environment and keeping our beaches clean and litter free. Jane has become a Volunteer Beach Clean Leader with the SeaScapes Partnership and regularly takes groups out to the coast. Living next to the sea Jane is always out on her own picking litter, making it a safe place for humans and wildlife.

Judith King (Best Social Inclusion Effort Nominee)

Judith volunteers with Stray Aid, which helps local councils provide care for stray dogs. The charity has been struggling with the cost of living crisis to increase revenue. Judith conducted research into the 'market' of similar charities, made suggestions to increase social media presence, and updated volunteering opportunities with Staff Volunteering. Judith also put the charity in touch with a business consultant who has provided specific financial advice.

Judith Vincent (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

Judith has been a volunteer at St Cuthbert's Hospice in Durham for over 15 years. She has shown dedication to sifting through goods, preparing them for retail and using her amazing design skills and creativity to show them at their best. She is chatty and interested in everyone who goes into the shop. Judith will seek things out for the shop and will ensure donated items are recycled, reused and re-purposed so they can live again.

Katie Allen (Best Educational Effort Nominee)

Katie has gone above and beyond to support the work of the Engagement Team. She has volunteered her time on many occasions to work with pre-16 school students and has delivered interactive and engaging Psychology taster sessions to a wide range of disadvantaged students from across the North East. Her volunteering has inspired many students to study psychology in the future, as well as raising aspirations for accessing higher education.

Katie Stobbs (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

Katie volunteers most Friday nights with Women's Street Watch Newcastle, a female-led street patrol aimed at protecting and watching out for the safety of women at night. The group was founded by like-minded women, who wanted to take practical action following the murder of Sarah Everard. Volunteers patrol on Friday and Saturday evenings wearing their bright pink, high vis jackets, looking out for individuals, particularly females, who might be vulnerable. Without volunteers like Katie the streets would be a lot less safe for women.



Marie Thornton (Longstanding Volunteer Nominee)

Marie volunteers on a weekly basis for an organisation called The Bread and Butter Thing which runs mobile food clubs, making life more affordable for people on low incomes, aiming to build stronger communities and reduce food waste. Volunteering all day every Monday, and any other day that she is required, Marie drives the vans to collect food donations and helps out in the warehouse, sorting stock and undertaking general warehouse duties. Marie also runs one of the community hubs on a Friday; she oversees setting up the room, unloading the van and organising and assisting the volunteer team with making up the bags to hand out to service users. Marie liaises directly with service users, offering a helping hand and smile to those who are really struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Paula Willerton (Volunteer Leader of the Year and Volunteer of the Year Nominee)

Paula is an active volunteer in the community as an individual and as a team member. Paula leads the volunteering arrangements for her team, ensuring the tasks suit everyone's needs. She actively encourages new members of her team to join a team challenges and sets dates and times which are inclusive of everyone's work schedules. Paula also utilises her staff volunteer leave as an individual to assist charities such as Action for Children and ReFuse.



Team Nominees

Business and Management Charity Gala to Tackle Food Poverty in the North East (Best Social Inclusion Effort Nominee)

The team organised a Charity Gala to support the Feeding Families Charity. The event was designed to be inclusive and affordable, with one of the lowest costs on campus. There were eighteen student volunteers who sold 210 tickets. Each attendee brought a food donation, which was equivalent to a full car load for the charity. There was also a raffle and crowdfunding effort that generated £1,175. It was tremendous learning experience for all, as the students needed to engage in a very complex project management and push sales to break even.



Collingwood College Amateur Football Club (Best Social Inclusion Effort and Team of the Year Nominees)

Collingwood College Amateur Football Club have organised events to raise money to completely redecorate a 'move on' house for homeless women. This included a new kitchen, furniture, flooring and bathroom, allowing homeless women to be housed. There were funds left over to enable DASH to create a multi-functional room at our vulnerable women's project for homeless women to learn life skills and other self-development skills. This has impacted the lives of women in a positive way enabling them to become more independent and to have a space to work with professionals.



Finance and Procurement Team (Team of the Year Nominee)

The Finance and Procurement Team have volunteered for 5 sessions between September 2022 - May 2023. The Foodbank warehouse takes between 5 - 10 volunteers, and as the team have larger numbers, they alternate staff members between each session so that all have the ability assist. The whole group are very keen, hardworking volunteers and are very committed and dedicated to the cause. Without the help and support from corporate groups such as this, the Foodbank would really struggle to keep up with demand and it would put additional strain on an already difficult situation. The support the staff provide, really does make a massive difference to the local community.

Geography Beach Cleaning Team (Best Environmental Effort and Team of the Year Nominees)

The team from the Geography Department have helped to keep the North East beaches clean and litter free for a few years. They are so enthusiastic when they come out and are willing to tackle the hard-to-reach beaches. They have worked on beaches from South Shields to Seaton Carew and are always on hand to help new members on the day. Nothing seems to be a bother for the team, they help each other carrying heavy bags often in poor weather conditions. They are a great support to the SeaScapes Partnership and their efforts have helped protect our seas, beaches, wildlife and habitats.



Government Support Services Staff (Best New Volunteering Project and Team of the Year Nominees)

The relationship with the Government Support Services staff and the Foodbanks is special because, after volunteering once, they keep returning again and again. The same group of volunteers attend the session each time and they have built up a strong relationship with the Foodbank warehouse staff. They have volunteered for seven sessions so far this year. They are dedicated to utilising their staff volunteer leave solely with County Durham Foodbank. Without the help and support from corporate groups such as this the Foodbank would really struggle to keep up with demand and it would put additional strain on an already difficult situation. The support the staff provide, really does make a massive difference to the local community.

Kathryn Elwick and Natalie Costello (Volunteer Leader of the Year and Team of the Year Nominees)

Kathryn and Natalie have taken the lead as staff members to encourage their library staff to volunteer using their staff volunteer leave. They have led by example by not only volunteering with Durham Foodbank but also putting out donation boxes and circulating emails to encourage people to donate items that the Foodbank are in urgent need of. Every year, they arrange for their team to assist with the DU festive crafts sessions, which involve putting together treats which are delivered to local charities, who sell them to fundraise or give to their service users.



Linda Bosvell and Helen Drinkall (Best Environmental Effort and Volunteer of the Year Nominees)

Linda and Helen have dedicated over 100 hours combined to assist with Ushaw Historic Chapels and Gardens Community project to build a children's playpark with grant funding. The stipulation of the funding required volunteer contributions to the project and both Linda and Helen have consistently dedicated their own time to assist with the programme. From clearing the overgrown abandoned areas, to cutting down the coppice willow and constructing a four metre willow dome, this project would not have been successful without them and their devotion to supporting partnerships and providing a community space.



Scouts and Guides Group (Team of the Year Nominee)

The society members of Scouts and Guides group contribute to over sixty hours of volunteering a week throughout the wider Durham area and regularly give up evenings and weekends. Society members run events for over 500 young people over the course of the academic year. Members are highly trained in first aid and activity-specific instruction such as archery, narrow boating and climbing.

Project Nominees

Durham Global Schools (Best Cultural Award Nominee)

Durham Global Schools is dedicated to the integration and spread of cultural diversity around the world. It is a programme that welcomes all international students from Durham University to join and share the culture of their own country in primary schools across Durham. This year, Durham Global Schools is working with over twenty local primary schools and currently has fifty six volunteers participating, including students from a variety of cultural backgrounds such as Chinese, Japanese, American, Russian, Ukrainian and many more.

Durham for Refugees Kids Club (Best Social Inclusion Award Nominee)

This project creates a safe and welcoming environment for Arab children from refugee backgrounds in the Durham community. The project aims to provide educational and recreational activities to help the children integrate into the local community and build friendships, whilst promoting a sense of inclusion and belonging. The dedicated volunteers support the club through providing activities and also interacting and building relationships with the children. By providing a positive and supportive space, Durham for Refugees Kids Club is making a meaningful difference to the lives of the children, whilst making them feel valued and included in their new community.

Eco Club - St John's and St Chad's College (Best Environmental Effort Nominee)

St John's and St Chad's Eco Club at Shincliffe Primary School has quickly become a firm favourite amongst volunteers and children alike. The initiative seeks to educate young people around issues of sustainability and sees volunteers attend weekly schools sessions to assist with the delivery of indoor and outdoor activities, educating the young people about the ways in which they can make a difference to the world around them. The project has only just launched, but has already been hugely successful and has established itself as a flagship project for John's and Chad's.



Environmental Action with Durham Indoor Markets (Best Environmental Effort Award Nominee)

This group of students volunteer fortnightly with Durham Indoor Markets, to investigate and implement eco-friendly ways to reduce general waste generated in the Market Hall. The volunteers have undertaken an environmental survey to see what waste is produced and are working together to come up with solutions to reduce waste produced. This volunteering will be invaluable to ensuring the sustainability of Durham Indoor Markets for years to come.

Gardening Project (Best Environmental Effort Award Nominee)

This group have worked very hard this year to both maintain strong relationships with existing community partners, as well as forging new ones. In particular, they have established a new branch of their project called Helping Hands, where volunteers can help older local residents maintain their beautiful gardens. They are a very committed, enthusiastic group of volunteers, and work hard to make sure volunteers attend nearly every gardening session they promote. They were also highly commended by Durham County Council at their County Durham Environmental Awards, which is a testimony to all their amazing work.



Lunar New Year Schools Project - Stephenson College (Best Cultural Effort Award Nominee)

This group have worked alongside Durham Global Schools and Durham County Council to deliver a fun and exciting outreach programme, bringing the Lunar New Year to local classrooms. Students have been volunteering in a number of schools, sharing their culture and traditions through art, food, dance and music. The school children then put this into practice and performed at the Town Hall cultural celebration to welcome the Year of the Rabbit, which was open to the local community in January.

Mildert for Refugees - Van Mildert College (Best New Volunteering Project Nominee)

Mildert for Refugees was set up this year to help support the growing community of Ukrainian Refugees living in Durham. Each week the volunteers have run a Kids Club, in an effort to give the parents a break, and as an opportunity to give the children a fun experience, helping them feel at home. It has been incredible to see the impact the volunteers have had on the children and adults despite not speaking the same language, which has shown new members of our community that they are welcome in the city.

Music Outreach - Collingwood College (Best Cultural Effort Nominee)

This project saw eight Collingwood Students working closely with three local primary schools, which were targeted for being located in disadvantaged areas of County Durham. The students worked with the children weekly to teach the children the Christmas song 'Do they know it's Christmas?'. Once the children were confident performing the song with just a backing track, they were invited to the brand new Collingwood recording studio and music practice rooms to record the song in the live room. Additional student volunteers worked hard on capturing the content, which was then used to create a music video.



Primary School Project - Van Mildert College (Best Educational Effort Nominee)

Primary School Project is one of Mildert's biggest outreach projects, which makes a huge difference in schools. Students dedicate a morning every week to travel to local primary schools (often taking multiple buses), and act as teaching assistants, to children who are in need of extra help. Since many of these schools are underfunded, this project makes a huge difference to the children, giving them the support they need in the classroom.

Tutor for Ukraine (Best Educational Effort and Best New Volunteering Project Nominees)

This project provides free English lessons to Ukrainian children who recently moved to the UK, aiding their transition by giving them confidence in the language. The students need no English and the tutors need no Ukrainian. Tutors only dedicate one hour a week, with lesson plans and resources provided for all. This project has been established to be inclusive for tutors and tutees alike to try and get as much reach as possible to support those recently displaced.

Under One Sky (Best New Volunteering Project Nominee)

By definition, Under One Sky Durham seeks to break down social stigma of homelessness and provide information through an award winning podcast, features and articles. Under One Sky aims to engage with the homeless as people worthy of respect and dignity, recognising that anyone can become homeless through a variety of situations. By doing biweekly walks, Under One Sky puts theory into practise and welcomes the homeless into real friendship.

Young Person's Project (Best Social Inclusion Effort and Team of the Year Nominee)

The Young Person's Project does incredible work to support young people from the North East who come from vulnerable backgrounds, with volunteers working tirelessly to provide fun and engaging school sessions, and delivering an incredible week-long residential hosted in Van Mildert College. The project engages the whole college community, including enthusiastic alumni from decades back who still hope to get involved. The impact on the young people is immediately clear from the feedback received during the sessions and at the end of the residential.

College Nominees

Collingwood College (College of the Year Nominee)

Collingwood College continues to be committed to connecting its students to the local community and doing this in creative and innovative ways. They have worked hard to raise the profile of volunteering and fundraising efforts in the past year. Collingwood strives to involve young people from the local area through initiatives such as music outreach, art projects, football tournaments, and fundraising activities. The College JCR formed an outreach committee in January made up of five committee members, and have strived to make outreach and fundraising an even bigger part of the college. They have hosted a charity quiz raising £500 for Foundation Durham and raised £8000 for DASH and Epilepsy Action. The Charity Fashion Show raised over £30,000.



St John's and St Chad's Colleges (College of the Year Nominee)

This year the student volunteering representatives at St John's and St Chad's joined forces to establish new volunteering opportunities for all students across the two colleges. The college reps at these two colleges have worked incredibly hard to promote volunteering in their communities, establishing new volunteering opportunities including the Eco Club at Shincliffe Primary School, assisting with a Christmas Fair at Shincliffe Primary School, hosting a Christmas Craft sessions to make crafts for local charities, and holding numerous fundraisers and food donation drives for the local foodbank. Within the space of one year, these two colleges have gone from no volunteering to establishing numerous volunteering projects and opportunities for the students at both colleges.



Van Mildert College (College of the Year Nominee)

Volunteering is at the heart of everything Van Mildert College does. They have five student - led projects (Young Person's Project, Primary School Project, Mildert for Refugees, Community Visiting Scheme and Talk and Support Environmental Conservation Committee), and one fundraising committee, with over 80 active volunteers. This year, Van Mildert started a brand new outreach project, which works with Ukrainian refugees. The passion and dedication from all those at Van Mildert is admirable, and it is a wonderful thing to witness and see such a large group of students who genuinely care and want to make a difference to the community.









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Thank you for joining us!