



**Rooted in
Hope
Rising in
Purpose**

**Our
Impact
in the
community**

**Annual Report
2024-25**



About us

The BlueHouses exists to walk alongside young people, families, and communities - creating safe spaces, nurturing trusted relationships, and offering opportunities for lives to be transformed through faith, hope, and love. We prioritise presence over programmes, investing in long-term connections and delivering holistic support that meets social, emotional, spiritual, educational, and physical needs. Our commitment is to see the worth and potential in every person and help communities flourish through reconciliation, belonging, and purpose.

We've achieved much, but there is more to do. By working in partnership and pursuing bold ambitions, we aim to help young people, families, and communities reach their full potential through Jesus.

Join us in building belonging and transforming lives across Ballysillan, North Belfast, and beyond.

Acknowledgements

Our vision is only possible because of the people who make it happen. We extend heartfelt thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers for their unwavering commitment, and to our funders and partners whose invaluable support in 2024-25 has enabled us to walk alongside young people, families, and communities.

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Rooted in hope, rising in purpose!

A joint message from our Chair and Centre Director

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Community Members,

As we reflect on 2024-25, we are deeply grateful for all who have walked with us. For over three decades, the BlueHouses has stood as a beacon of faith and transformation in Ballysillan - creating safe spaces, nurturing trusted relationships, and offering opportunities for lives to be changed through faith, hope, and love.

This year has been a powerful reminder of why we remain rooted in hope and rising in purpose. In the heart of the Silverstream Estate, we have seen challenges met with courage and grace. Behind every statistic lies a story of resilience

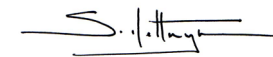
- from isolation to belonging, anxiety to confidence, and curiosity to faith.

Together, we engaged 779 young people, delivered 185 counselling sessions, mentored 23 individuals, and trained 14 young leaders. These numbers tell part of the story; the real impact is seen in lives transformed and futures reclaimed, some of which we've attempted to capture in our annual report.

As we look ahead to delivering our new five-year strategy from 2026 onwards, we are committed to deepening holistic support, amplifying community voices, and building a resilient organisation. None of this would be possible

without you - our staff, volunteers, funders, and partners. Your belief turns vision into reality.

Thank you for standing with us. Together, we are building belonging and brighter futures for generations to come.



Simon Hetherington
Chair



Peter Thompson
Centre Director

Our Impact in 2024-2025

Rooted in hope, rising in purpose

For over three decades, the BlueHouses has been a beacon of faith, resilience, and transformation in Ballysillan. This year, we continued to walk with young people and families - helping them move from isolation to belonging, anxiety to resilience, and uncertainty to purpose. Outlined below is a brief outline of what we've done and the difference we've made in providing hope and purpose.

At a glance



779 young people engaged

(497 centre based, 344 engaged weekly)



75 women engaged through dedicated programme delivery



110 young people in mentoring and targeted groups



801 youth work sessions (65% increase) and **307 community work sessions** (25% increase)



185 counselling sessions supporting emotional wellbeing



472.5 volunteer hours from 14 young leaders - a 64% increase



7 first time Christian commitments and many more moments of spiritual curiosity



24 acts of community care (12 family hampers + support for 12 rough sleepers)



The difference this made

These numbers represent young lives strengthened through trusted relationships, fresh opportunities, and a community that believes in them. This year we saw young people:

- **Grow in confidence and resilience.**
- **Step into leadership and service.**
- **Access timely emotional and mental health support.**
- **Experience faith in action through compassion and care.**

A place where hope takes root

The BlueHouses remains a sanctuary of belonging - here young people are seen, supported, and encouraged to rise in purpose. Together, we are nurturing a generation ready to shape their future and strengthen their community.



What we do

For over 30 years, the BlueHouses has been a beacon of faith, resilience, and transformation in Ballysillan. Our mission is simple yet powerful: to walk alongside young people and families, creating safe spaces, trusted relationships, and opportunities for lives to be changed through faith, hope, and love.

Operating in a community shaped by generational trauma and inequality, we believe in the extraordinary power of presence and authentic connection. Through our open-door drop-in centre and holistic support, we offer not just services - but sanctuary, belonging, and belief in every individual's potential.

We deliver impact through three core streams:

1. Youth development

Our Youth Development work centres on long-term, relational support - walking with young people as they grow in confidence, resilience, and purpose. This year, more than 500 young people took part in 21 programmes that helped them feel seen, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential.

Across 2024-25, we delivered a wide range of activities including football coaching, RE, three weekly drop-ins, and targeted groups for P7, Year 8, Year 12, Year 9 girls, and Year 10 girls. Mentoring, faith-based discipleship, and our Youth Committee offered deeper opportunities for guidance, involvement, and leadership.

Our Young Leaders pathway, CHAMPS cross community work, and school partnerships - such as Boys Model lunchtime sessions and SU/Alpha groups - built skills, empathy, and positive connections across the community. Further experiences, from homelessness awareness to international work in South Africa, helped widen horizons and encourage compassion.

Together, these programmes form a strong, hopeful foundation, giving young people the relationships and opportunities they need to thrive.

2. Academy

The BlueHouses Academy continues to unlock the creative potential of young people through practical, skills based training in music, production, and hands on trades. With a focus on small group and one to one learning, the Academy provides a supportive environment where young people can explore their talents, build confidence, and take meaningful steps toward future careers.

In 2024-25, more than 100 aspiring artists and makers took part in our Academy programmes through three core strands: the Music Academy, Educational Support, and the Joinery Academy. Across 8-10-week courses during term time, young people developed technical skills, creative expression, and real-world discipline - all guided by trusted adults who invest in their growth both relationally and practically.

Whether it was recording tracks, building furniture, improving literacy and study skills, or discovering new passions, the Academy helped young people recognise their abilities and see new pathways open before them. This work continues to be a vital part of how BlueHouses nurtures confidence, ambition, and opportunity in the next generation.

3. Community development

Our Community Development work is rooted in long term, relational support for the whole community - women, men, parents, and

families. We journey alongside people at every stage of life, helping them build confidence, strengthen wellbeing, and realise their full potential. This work is central to creating a neighbourhood where relationships flourish and resilience grows.

Throughout 2024-25, we delivered 10 key programmes that brought people together, reduced isolation, and offered practical and emotional support. These included counselling, mums and tots, women's fitness, drop ins, and a women's Bible study, alongside friendship groups and detached youth and community engagement. Each space provided connection, encouragement, and a trusted adult presence for those who needed it most.

Our one off community events - such as the annual Fun Day and Carol Service - continued to bring the wider neighbourhood together, building shared memories and a stronger sense of belonging. Volunteer development also remained a vital strand of this work, empowering local people to give back, grow in skills, and play an active role in shaping their community.

Together, through our programmes we are strengthening families, deepening relationships, and building a community where every person in Ballysillan is seen, valued, heard, understood, believed in, and transformed by the hope and love of Jesus.



Why we do what we do

Our work begins with the realities of Ballysillan - a community shaped by post-conflict legacies, high deprivation, and systemic inequality. Home to over 5,000 people, with nearly 40% under 25, this area faces challenges that demand urgent, compassionate action: generational trauma, low aspiration, and barriers to education, health, and opportunity.

The challenges we strive to address include:

- **Child Poverty** - Affecting 1 in 3 children, limiting access to education, nutrition, and safe spaces.
- **Mental Health & Wellbeing** - Rising rates of anxiety, self-harm, and suicide ideation, compounded by isolation and poverty.
- **Substance Misuse & Anti-Social Behaviour** - Drugs, alcohol, and paramilitary influence impacting 20-25% of young people.
- **Educational Disadvantage** - 24% of residents have no GCSEs, with NEET rates above the NI average.
- **Sectarianism & Racism** - Persistent barriers to inclusion and belonging for minority groups.
- **Family Breakdown & Housing Instability** - High lone-parent households and poor housing conditions.

These realities fuel our mission: to create safe spaces, nurture trusted relationships, and offer hope through holistic support and faith. We believe every person deserves to be seen, believed in, and transformed by the power of Jesus' love.



Transforming scepticism into faith: the journey of mb at bluehouses

In a world where many young people wrestle with doubt and loneliness, MB's story shines as a stunning reminder of what can happen when a young person finds a place where they are genuinely loved and believed in. When she first arrived at BlueHouses in October 2021 at age 10, MB was certain: **there was no God**. Growing up in an environment resistant to faith, she kept her guard high and felt uncomfortable with anything spiritual. Yet beneath the scepticism was a young girl quietly longing for safety, belonging, and understanding.

What began as tentative involvement soon grew into a rich journey of connection. MB became part of Drop-Ins at every level, Girls Groups, one to one mentoring, the Music and Joinery Academies, and summer programmes like Summer Madness. Initially, the team worried that Summer Madness might overwhelm her - but instead, it cracked something open. She returned calmer, softer, and surprisingly at peace. Months later, during mentoring, she shared words that stunned her leaders:

"I now believe there is a God."

Her growth didn't stop there. As the year unfolded, MB spoke openly about how she was changing:

"I'm not angry anymore... I'm more open to others. I used to judge people."

When asked what sparked this transformation, she pointed directly to BlueHouses. With a shy smile she added,

"I kinda believe in God! Someone had to create us..."

From certain disbelief to gentle, searching faith - her journey unfolded naturally within an environment of unconditional love.

Today, MB is flourishing. As she shared in 2025:

"It's a safe space where I can be myself without being judged. I love the leaders, the activities, the talks, the trips - literally everything."

She added:

"I have way more confidence now. I struggled to connect with people, but now I have more friendships, and I understand people better - and they understand me."

MB's story is a beautiful picture of what BlueHouses exists to do: create a place where young people can breathe, belong, and slowly come alive. Through patience, relationship, and love, doubt softened into openness, and a guarded heart blossomed into confidence, connection, and hope.

Together, we turn challenges into opportunities - building resilience, fostering belonging, and shaping brighter futures for generations to come.

The difference we've made

1. Unlocking potential

Enhanced Personal Capabilities

Our work strengthens personal capabilities - building confidence, empathy, and resilience in every young person we support. At BlueHouses, young people discover their voice, grow in self-belief, and develop foundations that help them thrive. Through consistent presence, trusted relationships, and a safe place to belong, they cultivate the skills that enable them to rise with purpose and navigate life's challenges with greater strength and assurance.

Quantitative impact

97% reported increased confidence.

97%



100% feel able to be themselves at BlueHouses.

100%



94% demonstrated improved empathy.

94%



97% strengthened coping and resilience.

97%



80% of juniors consistently feel safe to be themselves.

80%



Qualitative impact – distance travelled

Young people facing trauma, neurodiversity, anxiety, and behavioural challenges moved from isolation to participation, and from self-doubt to leadership. We witnessed remarkable journeys - like young people who once avoided crowds finding the courage to perform on stage, or those struggling with boundaries stepping into responsibility. These stories reflect our core belief: when hope takes root, young people rise into who they were created to be.

Voices of change

“I would be quite a shy person... but at BlueHouses I don't need to be shy.” – LS

“I feel three times taller leaving here.” – P6 boy

JR (15) **grew from boundary struggles at drop-in to weekly volunteering, contributing towards 472.5 leadership hours**

Growing empathy – strengthened understanding and compassion

Empathy emerged as one of the most significant areas of growth within CHAMPS this year. As young people explored identity, culture, and difference, their understanding of one another deepened - and compassion began to take root in new and powerful ways. Through shared experiences, honest discussions, and cross community friendships, they learned to look beyond stereotypes and connect with genuine curiosity and respect.

Through programmes like CHAMPS, young people strengthened understanding and compassion:

60% reported improved attitudes toward other cultures.

“I have learnt not to judge others and be more accepting.”

“I used to think they were weird, but now we’re friends.”

These reflections show a meaningful shift - from seeing difference as something to fear, to recognising it as something to value. Whether supporting a peer, challenging a first impression, or building friendships across divides, CHAMPS participants demonstrated that empathy is not simply taught - it is lived, practiced, and shared.



2. Building healthier, happier lives

Improved health & wellbeing

Rooted in hope and rising in purpose, the BlueHouses wraps around young people and families with holistic support - nurturing mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing. Through safe spaces, trusted relationships, and timely help, we foster resilience, reconciliation, and healing that lasts.

Quantitative impact

97% say BlueHouses supports their wellbeing.

97%



94% feel able to be themselves at BlueHouses.

94%



94% demonstrated improved empathy.

94%



185 counselling sessions delivered to 17 young people and families.



23 young people in mentoring; 87 receiving targeted group support.



Qualitative impact - the distance travelled

Through counselling, mentoring, and group discussions, young people built practical coping strategies for anxiety, grief, bullying, school stress, and family breakdown, as well as navigating ADHD/ASD and other neurodiverse needs. With steady accompaniment - listening well, responding early, and persevering - young people moved from overwhelmed to stability, from isolation to belonging, and from crisis to growth.

Voices of change

“When I’m feeling low and overwhelmed, I think about here.” - MR (15)

“He was anxious in the first week - now he runs into play.” - Tots parent

“Ladies Fitness kept me going through a tough time.” - Participant

“BlueHouses makes me feel calm.” - young person, 14

“This is like family.” - young person, 16

What this means

Wellbeing grows where care is consistent, community is real, and hope is lived. At the BlueHouses, we meet young people and families

exactly where they are - walking with them toward healthier choices, stronger coping skills, and a deeper sense of peace and purpose. This is faith in action: nurturing whole person wellbeing so every individual can rise in purpose and flourish.

These truths come to life through the people we support. Their journeys show what happens when compassion, consistency, and hope take root.

Healing Hearts, Strengthening Homes: Elaine & Jack's Journeys

In 2024-25, the BlueHouses deepened its counselling and family support to meet rising wellbeing needs across Ballysillan. Sessions increased by 87%, enabling us to walk alongside almost 40 individuals - including eight new clients - through psychodynamic therapy, CBT, DBT, and group work. Women's programmes also flourished, with fitness participation rising by 81% and steady engagement across Mums & Tots, Bible study, and drop-ins. The impact was clear: 96-98% of participants reported improved mental health, increased confidence, and a renewed sense of value



and belonging. Even initiatives like the Belfast City Marathon relay helped build resilience, community, and hope.

Among those transformed was Elaine, a lifelong resident who first encountered the BlueHouses through her daughter. Initially reluctant and isolated by anxiety, she tentatively joined our women's fitness classes - where a warm, non judgmental welcome became a turning point. With consistent counselling and support, Elaine learned to manage anxiety, set boundaries, and advocate for her family. Today, she volunteers with Mums & Tots, attends programmes regularly, and even completed the marathon relay to raise funds for the BlueHouses.

"Everyone made me feel like I mattered... I am forever grateful to God and to all of you for accepting me without judgment."

Our support also reaches men like Jack, now 29, connected to the BlueHouses since childhood. Battling addiction and life instability, he



describes our support simply: **"I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for the BlueHouses. You saved my life."**

These stories reflect the heart of our mission: relational, faith informed care that strengthens mental health, nurtures belonging, and empowers families to flourish. This foundation is central to our five year vision—renewing wellbeing, restoring hope, and rebuilding community life for generations to come.

3. Creating connections, strengthening communities

Peer group engagement & community contribution

Rooted in hope and rising in purpose, the BlueHouses creates spaces where young people feel safe, connected, and valued - places where belonging grows and responsibility takes shape. Through shared experiences, supportive peers, and meaningful opportunities to give back, young people learn that they are not only part of a community - they are vital to shaping it.

Quantitative
impact

Junior attendance increased by 28%
(150 young people).

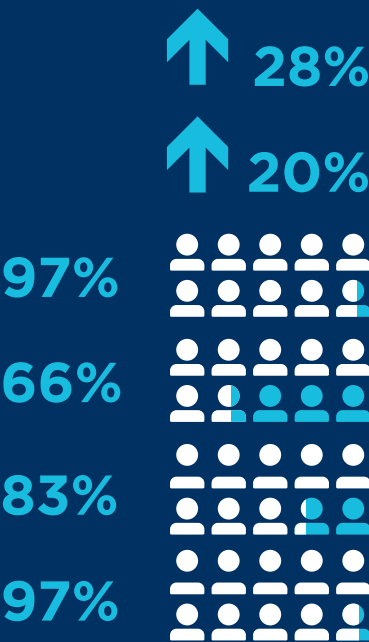
Intermediate attendance increased by 20%
(159 young people).

97% improved peer relationships.

66% improved family relationships.

83% improved relationships with teachers.

97% improved relationships with adults in the
community.



Qualitative impact
- the distance
travelled

Many young people began the year socially isolated, anxious, or unsure where they fit. Through BlueHouses' consistent presence and relational approach, they found acceptance, friendship, and purpose. As confidence grew, so did connection - young people stepped into new friendships, contributed to group life, and discovered that they had something meaningful to offer.

They moved from standing on the edges to standing beside one another.

Voices of change

MR grew from withdrawn to performing a solo on stage at the talent show.

"I haven't laughed as much in years... I felt accepted without judgement." - Volunteer residential participant

"I didn't know anyone when I came and was shy but now I know everyone and can be myself and be confidence." - young person, 14

These moments show the power of belonging: when young people feel seen and valued, they rise.

Community contribution

This year, young people didn't just benefit from community - they built it. Their service demonstrated compassion, leadership, and a growing sense of ownership over their neighbourhood.

Social Action Week:

500 leaflets delivered, 200 plant pots created, 100 care packs assembled, 57 bags of litter collected



Christmas outreach:

12 family hampers delivered



Homeless support:

6 young people served 12 rough sleepers with dignity and care



Empowering families: Tracy's legacy of love and service at the BlueHouses

Tracy is a shining example of what happens when God's love takes root in a family and flows outward into a community. A devoted mother of six, she has long found in BlueHouses a place where her children are seen, supported, and encouraged to grow in who God created them to be. Out of this gratitude, Tracy now serves faithfully on our social action team, giving a full week each year - with her youngest three beside her - to bless the neighbourhood through gardening, cleaning, painting, and sharing Christ's love in practical ways.

BlueHouses has been a lifeline through many challenges. As Tracy puts it:

"You get a warm heart from the minute you walk through the door... The BlueHouses is the only thing that kept me in Belfast. You wouldn't get the help and support for your children anywhere else and now I am getting it first-hand myself."

Her own journey of faith has deepened through our women's programmes - spaces where she has discovered her worth in God's eyes and experienced friendships marked by encouragement and grace. She reflects:

"I didn't realise what proper friendship was until I began coming here... Here is

wholesome and encouraging and leaves you feeling lighter."

Tracy's story shows the ripple effect of Christ centred community. As she receives love, she gives love. As her family grows stronger, the whole neighbourhood is strengthened. Her life is a living testimony that when God transforms one heart, He often transforms many more through it.

What this means

When belonging takes root, young people step forward with purpose. BlueHouses helps nurture this transformation - turning connection into confidence, and confidence into contribution. Through peer relationships, community service, and shared experiences, young people are discovering that they have the power to bring hope to their own streets and shape a stronger Ballysillan for the future.



4. Celebrating diversity, embracing difference

Appreciation of difference & diversity

Rooted in hope and rising in purpose, the BlueHouses creates spaces where young people and families encounter one another with openness, curiosity, and respect. We challenge stereotypes, nurture understanding, and help build bridges across cultures, beliefs, and identities - so that difference becomes a source of richness rather than division. In a community shaped by history, this work brings healing, reconciliation, and renewed connection.

Quantitative Impact

98% speak more respectfully about difference.



98%



100% took part in belief challenging activities.



100%



60% of CHAMPS participants reported a positive shift in attitudes toward other cultures.



60%



Qualitative impact – the distance travelled

Through cross community projects, CRED programmes, and shared experiences, young people moved from assumptions to understanding, from stereotyping to genuine friendship. By listening to each other's stories, celebrating cultures, and exploring difficult questions together, they discovered that connection flourishes where curiosity and compassion replace fear.

These changes weren't abstract - they were lived daily as young people laughed together, worked together, and stood up for one another across lines that once divided.

Voices of change

"I used to be judgemental... now I treat everyone equally." - young person, 15

"I made friends and understand different religions." - young person, 12

"I am Hindu and have been made to feel so welcome here." - Tots parent

These reflections show a community learning to see difference not as a barrier but as a blessing - evidence that when hope takes root, respect and relationship take hold.

What this means

Appreciating difference is more than a programme outcome - it is a way of rebuilding community life. From early years to teens, the BlueHouses nurtures a culture where everyone belongs, everyone is valued, and everyone is invited to rise in purpose together.

Overcoming challenges: Alivia's journey of growth and belonging at the BlueHouses

When Alivia first burst into the Junior Drop-In in 2023, her joyful energy filled the room. Fun, quirky, and irresistibly bubbly, she threw herself into everything - cooking, crafts, football, and board games. Wherever the action was, Alivia was at the centre of it, eager to connect and full of curiosity.

But behind the bright personality were real challenges. Living with ADHD meant Alivia often struggled to focus, regulate emotions, and accept boundaries. She carried the weight of feeling misunderstood - at school, in friendships, and on the streets where she was often teased. Many Thursday evenings ended with her sitting on the hall floor beside mentor Louise, finding the safe space she needed to breathe, talk, and reset.

It was through this steady support, patience, and genuine love that Alivia began to flourish. At the BlueHouses, she felt seen - truly seen - for who she is. Her confidence grew, her emotional awareness deepened, and the spark that made her special became a strength rather than a struggle. One milestone revealed just how far she'd come: from impulsively running off down Newcastle Main Street on a residential, to managing three joyful, incident

free days at Disneyland Paris with the Champs group. Her progress was nothing short of remarkable.

In her own words:

“When I first moved to Ballysillan, I found it really hard. I have ADHD and it impacts me, and I got bullied and teased a lot when playing out on the streets. I didn't like it. My mum told me to come here and that changed everything. It was different. It was the first time I felt welcome in Ballysillan. It felt like a home.”

Alivia's journey is a powerful reminder of what young people can achieve when they are met with compassion, consistency, and belief. The BlueHouses didn't just offer activities - it offered belonging. In that sanctuary, challenges became stepping stones, confidence took root, and a young girl discovered that she truly has a place in the world.



5. Growing leaders for tomorrow

Life & leadership skills development

Rooted in hope and rising in purpose, the BlueHouses equips young people with the practical skills, confidence, and character they need to lead well - in their families, friendships, workplaces, and community. Through hands on learning, encouragement, and real opportunities to serve, young people discover their potential and step into leadership with courage and purpose.

Quantitative impact

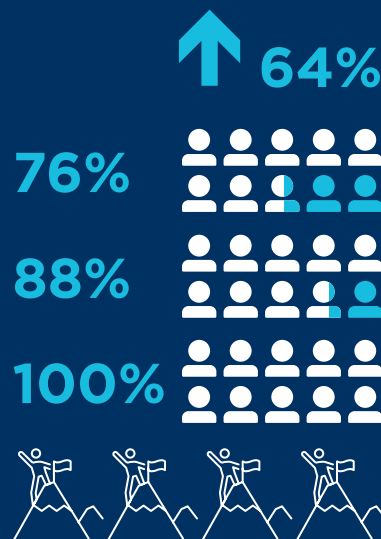
14 trained young leaders contributed 472.5 volunteering hours - **a 64% increase.**

76% developed leadership skills.

88% improved teamwork.

100% gained new practical skills.

4 young people achieved OCN Level 2 Youth Leadership.



Skills developed

Our young people gained a wide range of life enhancing and future shaping skills, including:

- Cookery
- Baking
- Crafts
- Music & DJing
- Sports Coaching
- Teamwork
- Communication
- Event Management

These skills don't just prepare young people for opportunities - they create them.

Qualitative impact - the distance travelled

Many young leaders began the year unsure of their abilities or hesitant to step forward. Through consistent encouragement, mentoring, and meaningful responsibility, they grew into dependable role models - helping lead sessions, supporting peers, and contributing to community events. What began as small steps of confidence became pathways into purpose.

Voices of change

“Young Leaders helped me talk confidently to people.”

“I’m more confident making decisions.”

“I can now speak in groups.”

These reflections show what happens when leadership is nurtured through belonging: young people realise they have something valuable to offer - and the courage to offer it.

What this means

Leadership at the BlueHouses is not about titles; it’s about transformation. It’s about young people learning who they are, discovering what they can do, and rising with purpose to make their community better. Through every skill learned and every hour volunteered, a new generation of hopeful, capable, compassionate leaders is emerging - ready to shape tomorrow.

From determination to leadership: Charlie’s inspiring journey at the BlueHouses

Charlie first came to the BlueHouses in 2022, turning up week after week to a full after schools group simply because she longed to belong. That persistence opened the door - and God used it to plant her in a community where she would flourish. What began as a determined teenager waiting for a space quickly became a young woman growing in confidence, purpose, and faith.

The BlueHouses soon became her “second home,” a place where she felt known and deeply valued. Her natural kindness, humour, and “mother hen” heart made her a peacemaker among her peers, and leaders quickly recognised God given gifts of empathy and leadership in her. Invited into our Young Leaders programme, Charlie stepped up with joy - leading cookery sessions, supporting younger members, and becoming the much loved **“Cookery Queen”** who made every child feel seen and loved.

Her growth didn’t stop there. Blending her BlueHouses experience with her passion for basketball, Charlie secured a coaching role with Peace Players NI - an opportunity that helped her discern God’s calling.

“BlueHouses has helped me realise youth work is where I want to be,” she says.

What she treasures most is the Christ centred community she has found:

“It’s become one big massive family I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

Charlie’s journey shows what God can do when a young person is welcomed, nurtured, and believed in. From waiting at the door to leading from within, she embodies the hope, purpose, and transformation that sit at the heart of the BlueHouses.



6. Faith at the heart of our transformation

Faith development

Rooted in hope and rising in purpose, the BlueHouses nurtures the spiritual journeys of young people and families - creating space to explore faith, encounter Jesus, and discover the depth of God's love. Through gentle guidance, honest conversations, and opportunities to reflect and pray, participants grow in confidence, purpose, and identity.

Quantitative impact

7 young people made first time Christian commitments in 2024.

55 R.E. lessons in Primary Schools engaging 220 young people.

14 women's bible study sessions.

Increased engagement across through Alpha, mentoring, drop-in prayer rooms and residential camps.



Qualitative impact - the distance travelled

Faith development at the BlueHouses often begins with simple curiosity - questions asked quietly, stories shared honestly, or a moment of peace that sparks deeper reflection. Over time, many young people and adults moved from exploring faith to embracing it personally, finding hope, direction, and healing through Jesus. This year we witnessed lives strengthened, perspectives shifted, and hearts restored as faith took root.

Voices of change

"I now believe there is a God." - young person, 13

"Encountering God and giving my life to Jesus." -LS (22)

"I now know how much God loves me." - young person, 14

Women's programmes:

"The Bible makes sense now."

"I have peace here."

These words reflect more than belief - they reflect transformation, belonging, and renewed purpose.

Prayer culture

Prayer continued to shape the heart of our community. What began in small groups has grown into a rhythm woven throughout drop-ins, mentoring, residentials, and women's Bible studies.

“Transformation of a Tuesday night... small groups couldn't happen last year.”

Prayer has become both a foundation and a lifeline - drawing people closer to God, to one another, and to hope.

What this means

Faith is not an add on at the BlueHouses; it is the soil where transformation takes root. Here, young people and families encounter Jesus in ways that bring identity, courage, peace, and purpose into focus. As faith grows - gently, gradually, and often unexpectedly - lives begin to rise stronger, steadier, and filled with hope for what lies ahead.

This comes to life most clearly in the journeys of those who are exploring faith for the first time. Our Alpha work is one example of how these seeds of curiosity can become moments of genuine transformation.

Case study: Finding faith, finding home – the Alpha boys journey

In 2024-25, Alpha Boys Model continued to open a doorway for young people to explore faith in a real, honest, and accessible way. Meeting weekly - even with a short pause for exams - the group ran three sessions this month, each engaging around **25 boys** in open conversations about life, belief, and purpose.

The topics - Welcome to the Conversation Around Faith, Who is Jesus? and What is Real Love? - created space for questions, curiosity, and meaningful reflection. For many of these young people, Alpha became the first place where they felt safe to express doubts, share personal experiences, and consider faith in a way that felt genuine and relatable.

A moment of transformation

One of the most powerful moments came when a young person from North Belfast made a personal commitment to faith, choosing to give his life to Jesus. This step, taken quietly yet courageously, marked the beginning of a new journey. With support from the Alpha leaders, he has already connected with a local church and youth ministry, ensuring he has a community to walk with him as he grows.

This single story reflects a wider truth: faith conversations are resonating. Young people are not only engaging - they are encountering hope.

Growing curiosity, deepening connection

Across the sessions, the boys showed a genuine appetite for learning and sharing. They asked bold questions, challenged ideas respectfully, and supported one another as they wrestled with big themes like forgiveness, identity, and purpose. Alpha has become a place where faith feels accessible, not distant; where young people discover they can explore spirituality without judgement; and where seeds of belief are planted gently, consistently, and with care.

What this shows

Alpha Boys Model embodies the heart of the BlueHouses' faith work: creating spaces where young people can explore Jesus in ways that are rooted in hope and open to transformation. From conversation to commitment, these moments reveal how God is at work - quietly changing lives, building community, and guiding young people into deeper purpose.

The journey is still unfolding, but already the impact is unmistakable: **faith is taking root, and young people are rising in purpose.**



Our financial overview

2024-2025

Rooted in financial stewardship and transparency, the BlueHouses maintained a strong position in 2024-25, enabling us to deliver transformative programmes amid Ballysillan's challenges. Our total funds stood at £1,044,572 at year-end, with a net surplus of £10,578 reflecting prudent management and growing support. Cash reserves increased to £192,300, providing resilience for future impact.

Key financial highlights

Total income:

£269,770

Grants and donations:

£264,886 (98%)

Trading activities (shop income):

£4,884 (2%)



Total expenditure:

£259,192

Charitable activities:

£259,192 (100%)

Direct programme costs:

£64,414

Support costs

(including staff wages & salaries £194,778):

£194,778



Net surplus:

£10,578

Funds at year-end:

Unrestricted:

£93,182

Restricted

(including tangible assets):

£951,390



Our generous funders and partners

We are deeply grateful to our funders and partners whose steadfast support turns vision into reality. Key contributions in 2024-25 included:

Education Authority	£52,176
PCI Urban Mission Trust	£30,000
Ardbarron Trust	£25,000
Donations (General) £77,359	£77,359
Fundraising	£16,810
W & M Trust	£14,400
Gift Aid	£12,652
TBF Thompson	£10,000
Benefact Trust	£7,000
Irish Youth Foundation	£4,000
Kit Aid	£2,600
Victoria Homes Trust	£2,500
Belfast City Council Summer Play Scheme	£2,500
Housing Executive	£3,045
Belfast City Council	£1,000 (plus Good Relations Fund £1,000)
Tesco Community Grant through Groundwork UK	£1,000
Hedley Foundation	£500
King George Foundation	£500
Glendalough Trust	£500
Garfield Weston Foundation	Their 2023-24 contribution bled significantly into this year's spend.

This funding empowered



779

young people and families

aligning with our strategy to amplify voice, visibility, and viability while building a future-ready organisation.

Thank you for believing in Ballysillan's transformation through faith, hope, and love.

Our people: the heart of BlueHouses

At the BlueHouses, our dedicated team and volunteers are the true beacons of faith, resilience, and transformation, walking alongside young people and families through every challenge and triumph. The 2024-25 year was an absolute roller coaster - tough and strange yet filled with God's unwavering control amid chaos.

Despite difficult situations, we adjusted our sails, prioritising quality over quantity, availability,

connection, creativity, and exploration. This commitment ensured we continued turning presence into possibility, even as we navigated profound losses and changes.

Grace's legacy, one year on

The passing of our dear friend and full time volunteer Grace was one of the hardest moments our community faced. Yet, even in the sadness of June 2023, we chose to remember her life with gratitude for the kindness, joy, and wholehearted service she shared with everyone she met.

Over nine years, Grace formed remarkable relationships with our young people and their families. Her influence was deep and lasting, and the community felt her loss profoundly.

In the months that followed, something beautiful emerged. Young people, volunteers, and leaders supported one another, sharing memories, finding comfort, and continuing the compassion Grace modelled so naturally. Her passing also opened important conversations about mental health and wellbeing - conversations that continue to shape our work today.

Grace's impact lives on in the way we care for one another, creating a legacy of love, support, and hope that continues to guide us. Here in this beautiful video you will find Grace talking about her illness, how she continued to have incredible hope, joy and peace in the midst of it all because of her faith, and how she fell in love with Ballysillan and all the people that live there.

View the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I6IPmdCjfAc>



Staff transitions and resilience

The end of 2023 brought significant change, with the departure of two much-loved staff members, Bean in October and Jamie in November. While both moved into roles that were exactly right for the next stage of their journeys, their absence left a noticeable gap. Yet even in this transition, we remained rooted in hope - strengthening relationships, adapting with openness, and allowing new purpose to take shape within the team.

In January 2024, we welcomed Stephen, whose enthusiasm, creativity, and heart for young people immediately breathed fresh energy into our work. Despite major surgery in March, his resilience and talent - especially in media and design - have helped spark new ideas and possibilities. In the latter half of the year both

Josh and Owen joined us, and their boundless energy saw our engagement with males increase 33% through centre work and 66% overall (centre and schools). Key has been the boys' groups, sports camp, larger football camp and school partnership.

Sarahanne, our dedicated Family Support Worker, also faced major surgery and periods of recovery as we headed into 2024, yet her courage and commitment reflected the spirit of a community that keeps rising in purpose even through difficulty. The consistency and rhythm of this work saw counselling grow from 99 to 185 sessions (86% increase) and community work from 246 to 307 sessions (25% increase).

Through every shift and challenge, our team demonstrated hope, perseverance, and

unwavering faith in one another - bringing stability in times of change and continuing to ignite transformation across Ballysillan.

Our staff team (2024-25):

- Peter Thompson, Centre Director
- Louise Hanna, Senior Youth Worker
- Lydia Neish, Youth Worker
- Stephen Beck, Youth Worker
- Sarahanne, Counsellor and Family Support Worker
- Josh McCracken, Part time youth worker
- Owen Daniels, Part time youth worker
- Laura McCartney, Part time youth support worker
- Rebecca Hayes, Part time youth support worker
- Elaine Ross, Cleaner



Guided by our board

Our work is steered by a committed Board of Trustees, providing strategic oversight and ensuring alignment with our mission. Their wisdom and dedication enable us to build a resilient, future-ready organisation.

Our board members (2024-25):

- Simon Hetherington, Chair
- Doris Dickison, Secretary
- Chris Kinghan, Treasurer
- Heather Dickey
- John Rodgers
- Jamie Macdonald
- Mark Smyth

Together, our people - staff, volunteers, and board - embody the unrelenting power of Jesus' love, declaring that every person in Ballysillan deserves to be seen, believed in, and transformed. Their passion fuels our progress, creating sanctuary and belonging for generations to come.



GET INVOLVED

In 2024-25, the BlueHouses made a real difference - boosting confidence and resilience, improving wellbeing, strengthening community ties, celebrating diversity, developing young leaders, and deepening faith. Together, we've touched 854 lives and created a ripple effect of hope across Ballysillan.



VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Join our team and walk
alongside young people and
families.



PARTNER WITH US

Collaborate to deliver
programmes and create lasting
impact.



DONATE TODAY

Every gift helps us build safe
spaces and transform lives.

Visit www.thebluehouses.org or contact us at ballysillanyfc@thebluehouses.org to get involved.
Together, we can build belonging and brighter futures for generations to come.



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<https://www.tiktok.com/@thebluehouses>

The BlueHouses is part of the wider Youth For Christ NI family

