

YOU
LONDON2025
Annual Report

YOU London 2025

2025 was a busy and productive year. In addition to the now well-established regional events, YOU London facilitated events to commemorate VE / VJ Day 80, ensuring uniformed youth organisations played a visible role in honouring these significant anniversaries. The year also saw a renewed emphasis on localism, with borough-level engagement and community-driven activity becoming an increasing focus.

YOU London has continued to consolidate its position as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, following its registration in August 2024. Fundraising has been a struggle competing against so many pressing needs; however, the charity secured approval to receive Gift Aid in April and became a JustGiving charity partner in June. During the year, the CIO Trustees convened on two occasions.

Despite funding challenges, in 2025 YOU London successfully delivered a leadership development weekend, two community networking receptions, two youth enclosures at Trooping the Colour, a float in the Lady Mayor's Show and a conference on employee volunteering. Two adult volunteers accompanied the Vice Lord-Lieutenant in her carriage in the London New Year's Day Parade and 55 adult volunteers were nominated to attend a Buckingham Palace Garden party.

Two newsletters were produced during the year, in June and December, and YOU London contributed to two sector reports on volunteering. Letters were sent to every Mayor, Representative Deputy Lieutenant and several Members of Parliament, providing details of the uniformed youth groups within their respective boroughs or constituencies.

YOU London in 2025

The 12 YOU London partner organisations (Army Cadet Force, Boys' Brigade, Combined Cadet Force, Fire Cadets, Girlguiding, Girls' Brigade, Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade, RAF Air Cadets, Scouts, Sea Cadets, St John Ambulance Cadets and Volunteer Police Cadets) account for over 76,000 young people supported by almost 20,000 adult volunteers within Greater London.

YOU London continues to provide a central administrative function. Quarterly meetings provide an opportunity for the YOU partner organisations to get together to share best practise, exchange information and co-ordinate activities. A central database of borough-level contacts for each organisation is maintained to support effective communication and, in a new initiative this year, adult volunteers in five London boroughs have been connected via WhatsApp groups to encourage and help deliver greater collaboration. One of YOU London's enduring strengths remains the co-ordinator's behind-the-scenes ability to connect partners, signpost opportunities and facilitate meaningful introductions.

At borough level, the London Borough of Croydon continues to uphold the 'gold standard', delivering a YOU Croydon Challenge each year, courtesy of Royal Russell School. Demonstrating the value of sustained collaboration, Croydon VPC now holds it's weekly meetings at Royal Russell School, and changes in personnel are swiftly integrated to ensure continuity of relationships and ongoing partnership working.



The YOU London Co-ordinator attended Deputy Lieutenant certificate presentations in the London Boroughs of Islington, Kingston and Westminster, with representatives attending in Croydon and Bexley.



The YOU London Co-ordinator continues to raise the profile of YOU London and provide effective representation on the Lord-Lieutenant's Occupation Council, Lord-Lieutenant's Culture and Heritage Council, the London Volunteering Strategy Group and Youth United Foundation regional meetings among other forums.

In March, the Co-ordinator briefed a national meeting of Lord-Lieutenants on the concept of YOU and subsequently provided support to the counties of Kent, Somerset and Surrey as they work to establish their own regional partnerships.

YOU London in 2025

YOU London consistently highlights three key themes at all its meetings, events and in its communications, which serve as guiding principles for its mission and daily operations.

1. Uniformed youth organisations across London present young people with affordable, yet transformative experiences. These groups can be found throughout the city, offering a wide range of activities and programmes that help shape the lives of participants. The opportunities are designed to be life-changing, equipping young people with valuable skills, confidence and a strong sense of community.
2. A significant challenge faced by these organisations is the need for more adult volunteers. All the groups currently maintain waiting lists for young people eager to join but are unable to accommodate them due to a lack of sufficient volunteer capacity. Increasing the number of adult volunteers is essential for enabling more young people to benefit from these opportunities.
3. Collaboration among the organisations is vital, especially when time and resources are increasingly limited. By working together, groups can amplify their messages, minimise redundant efforts, and strengthen their overall impact. This collective approach ensures that resources are used effectively and that the benefits are shared by all involved.



Promotional Video

A summary of YOU London's aims, activities and outputs has been brought together in a short promotional video, which can be [viewed via this link](#). The film was recorded in the youth enclosure at Trooping the Colour and during the annual leadership development weekend, and was first shown at the East London community networking reception in December.



London New Year's Day Parade

Millie Celeste from LFB Fire Cadets and Jake Orros from London Region Scouts joined the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, Colonel Jane Davis OBE QVRM TD DL in a carriage at the London New Year's Day Parade on 1 January 2025. Alongside 8,000 other participants, they braved the wind and rain to watch live music, marching bands, dancers, cheerleaders and acrobatic displays.



City Volunteering Conference

On Wednesday 23 April, in partnership with the Lady Mayoress of the City of London, Florence King, YOU London delivered an inspiring conference on employee volunteering in the City, generously hosted by the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers. The conference explored both the barriers and benefits associated with employee volunteering, and examined ways to more effectively articulate the benefits of uniformed youth groups to society.



"It was great to network and to speak on barriers which are impacting each of us at varying levels. I came away feeling encouraged and inspired to progress and develop what we are doing!"

Tiernan Routledge, Youth Services Volunteer Manager, LFB Fire Cadets

"It's inspiring to see initiatives like YOU London's Volunteering in the City Conference bringing together businesses and youth organisations to tackle the volunteer shortage. Hopefully, with continued collaboration and support, more young people across London will be able to benefit from the invaluable experiences these uniformed groups provide." **Comment on Lord Mayor's post on LinkedIn**

"Thank you for organising a brilliant conference this morning. I thought it was very engaging and came away with new contacts and lots to think about."

Katie Jackson, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Scouts

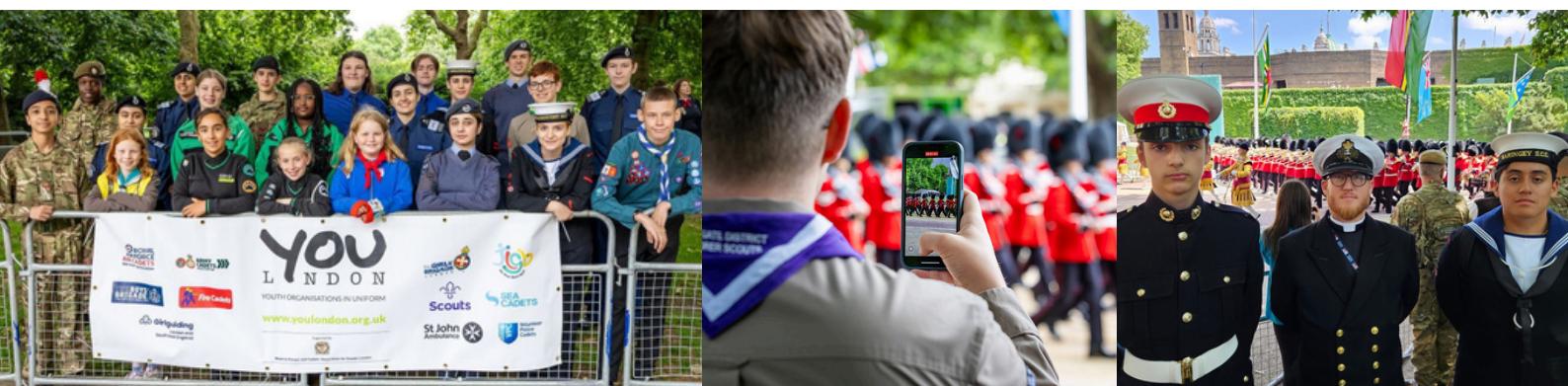
VE / VJ Day 80 Commemorations

Young people in uniformed youth groups from around the UK played a pivotal role in helping the country mark 80 years since VE and VJ Days, the end of the Second World War in Europe on 8 May 1945 and in Asia on 15 August 1945. YOU London worked behind the scenes with the various event organisers to facilitate young people's participation.



Trooping the Colour Youth Enclosures

On Saturday 7 June and Saturday 14 June, young people from across the country were given the opportunity to watch Trooping the Colour – the King's Birthday Parade – and the full-scale dress rehearsal, the Colonel's Review. On each date, almost 500 young people viewed the parade and ceremony from a safe, dedicated youth enclosure located at the corner of The Mall and Horse Guards Road. The Metropolitan Police Service and Volunteer Police Cadets did a fantastic job of managing the enclosures and a highlight is always 'The Mall Movement', during which the groups are escorted up The Mall and encircled in a protective ring in front of Buckingham Palace to safely view the balcony appearance and fly-past.



"Trooping the Colour is a fantastic experience, being able to see the military marching, the cavalry and the Royal Family. It is something that many cadets would not have the opportunity to see if it weren't for the youth enclosure." Greenwich VPC

Trooping the Colour Youth Enclosures



Volunteering Reports

In 2025, YOU London contributed to two volunteering reports:

1. The 'London Vision for Volunteering', launched in March 2025, provides a blueprint for developing volunteering in London. The YOU London Co-ordinator facilitated Dwayne Fields, the UK's Chief Scout, to write the foreword for this report and Margaret Casely-Hayford CBE, Patron of Girls' Brigade Ministries to provide a quote.
2. 'What if everyone stopped volunteering?', launched in September, looks at the impact on our health system, the environment, education and young people, law and justice, democracy, heritage, community, resilience, emergency response and our communities if people stopped volunteering. YOU London is quoted on pages 46 and 49 of the report. The YOU London Co-ordinator facilitated the contributions from Girlguiding, Scouts, Sea Cadets, Met Police, Ulysses Trust, Youth United Foundation, Youth United Derbyshire and Youth United Hertfordshire.

London Vision for Volunteering

A blueprint for developing volunteering in London





What if everyone stopped volunteering?

Understanding the reality of how important volunteering is to our society

Report by Dominic Pinkney
Works4U
with contributions by expert stakeholders across the UK
SEPT 2025



Leadership Development Weekend

The annual YOU London Leadership Development Weekend brought together over 100 participants each day from 11 organisations – Army Cadet Force, Boys' Brigade, Fire Cadets, Girlguiding, Girls' Brigade, RAF Air Cadets, Scouts, Sea Cadets, St John Ambulance Cadets, Trinity School CCF and Volunteer Police Cadets. Delegates took part in an inspiring programme of speakers and practical activities designed to strengthen their leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

The event was hosted by Trinity School in Croydon over the weekend of 1-2 November. Across the two days, participants undertook a range of challenges, including a trek-cart slalom race, creatively bridging across platforms, blindfold and memory tests, building a vertical structure, CPR training (including how to use a defibrillator), conducting a mock forensic search, and searching for an indeterminate number of casualties in a smoke filled room with zero visibility. The stand activities were delivered by the Metropolitan Police Service Volunteer Police Cadets, London Fire Brigade Fire Cadets, Army Engagement Team, Royal Navy Attract Team, St John Ambulance, Scouts and Trinity School CCF.



Conference speakers shared valuable lessons on personal growth and resilience. Hubert Mensah, Firefighter, First Aid Trainer and former Police Cadet, spoke about the importance of resilience and the value of strong support networks. Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE, Lord-Lieutenant of Greater London, offered an uplifting message on positivity and maintaining perspective. Mark Dean, Guinness World Record holder and former Nigerian Rugby Manager, encouraged delegates not to define themselves solely by their careers, but to remain open to future possibilities.

"I definitely improved my leadership and communication skills."

"I've gained knowledge on other organisations and how they work and leadership skills in communication and logical thinking."

A number of visitors, including Natasha Irons MP, and both the civic and elected Mayors of Croydon, visited the event to observe the activities and speak with the young people between tasks. All those who visited commented on how impressed they were by the event and by the energy and enthusiasm of the participants.

Images from the weekend can be viewed here: [YOU London Leadership Development Weekend photographs](#).

"I learnt a lot about how the other organisations help in their local communities as well as important life skills such as first aid."

"It was very enjoyable, informative and well-structured. The staff in charge were kind and helpful."

Borough Events: Croydon

The YOU Croydon Challenge was held at Royal Russell School in Croydon on 1 June. Over 60 young people from Girlguiding Croydon, Royal Russell School CCF, 66 (Croydon) Squadron RAFAC, Croydon Scouting, Croydon Sea Cadets and Croydon VPC competed in mixed teams to undertake a number of challenges including a police area search, moving objects from one place to another without touching them, crossing a 'minefield' and completing to construct the tallest tower (using the STEM kit provided). The winning red team were presented with Gold YOU London pin badges by the Civic Mayor of Croydon, Councillor Richard Chatterjee.



Borough Events: Lambeth and Southwark

YOU London, in partnership with the Lord-Lieutenant's Occupation Council hosted a community networking reception in Southwark Cathedral on Monday 8 September to raise awareness of the life-changing opportunities community-based uniformed youth groups in the London Boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark provide and to celebrate the invaluable contributions of adult volunteers.

Held by kind permission of the Dean, the reception brought together civic leaders, youth representatives and volunteers to highlight the transformative impact these proven organisations can have on young people's skill development, social inclusion, social mobility, employability and mental health.

Guests, including Joanne McCartney AM, the Deputy Mayor of London, heard powerful testimonies from young people and adult volunteers who spoke movingly about their experiences with these organisations, and the skills and benefits they have gained whilst making a positive difference to their local community.



Borough Events: Newham

YOU London and the Lord-Lieutenant's Occupation Council hosted a community networking reception at Kingsford Community School in Beckton on Monday 1 December to raise awareness of the opportunities provided by uniformed youth groups in the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Newham and Redbridge, and their ability to change lives. The evening brought together youth organisations, community leaders, policy makers and local supporters to promote and celebrate the beneficial impact of uniformed youth groups, to celebrate the invaluable contributions of adult volunteers and to raise awareness of the continual need for more. Professor Richard Hazenberg, co-author of [The Impact and Value of School-based Cadet Forces in the UK](#), presented the findings of his report which concluded that pupils who are members of CCFs do better at school, have improved attendance and behaviour and are more likely to go to university.



Lady Mayor's Show

YOU London was proud to participate in the City of London's first ever 'Lady Mayor's Show' on Saturday 8 November. Over 80 young people and adult volunteers from 11 partner organisations proudly waved flags with the logos of their organisations, showcasing co-operation, strength in numbers, organisational pride and community spirit. We were delighted to have a live BBC interview en route.



"Thank you for the once in a lifetime /amazing opportunity to be part of the show on Saturday. It was truly incredible, and thank you for all the hard work you and your team put into this event, as well as all the other wonderful events your run!" Volunteer Police Cadet

Deputy Lieutenant Certificates

In 2025, 258 Deputy Lieutenant certificates were awarded to young people from London's uniformed youth groups, an increase of 45% from 2024. Deputy Lieutenant Certificates are awarded to young people aged 15 or over to give recognition to their achievements within their organisation and to create an awareness of their contribution within the community. A breakdown by organisation and borough is below.

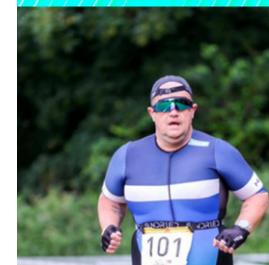
Organisation	No of DL Certificates Awarded
Army Cadet Force	48
Boys' Brigade	1
Combined Cadet Force	14
LFB Fire Cadets	24
Girlguiding	2
RAF Air Cadets	60
Sea Cadet Corps	22
Scouts	17
St John Ambulance Cadets	23
Volunteer Police Cadets	47

Barking & Dagenham 2, Barnet 17, Bexley 21, Brent 5, Bromley 11, Camden 4, Croydon 12, Ealing 18, Enfield 6, Greenwich 6, Hackney 4, Hammersmith & Fulham 5, Haringey 7, Harrow 13, Havering 3, Hillingdon 11, Hounslow 5, Islington 6, Kensington & Chelsea 5, Kingston 12, Lambeth 4, Lewisham 8, Merton 7, Newham 6, Redbridge 9, Richmond 4, Southwark 6, Sutton 7, Tower Hamlets 6, Waltham Forest 4, Wandsworth 19, Westminster 3.



Sponsorship fundraising

Thank you to Major Norman Fontaine-Thompson, Officer Commanding 15 Company, South West London Army Cadet Force, who raised £475 in sponsorship for YOU London by taking on the London T100 Triathlon on Sunday 10 August. This demanding Olympic-distance triathlon involved a 1.5km swim in Royal Victoria Dock, a 40km cycle past iconic landmarks like Big Ben and Tower Bridge, and a 10km run through the Docklands. Well done on completing the triathlon in 2 hours 58 minutes.



YOU London in 2026

All activities delivered by YOU London are free for young people and adult volunteers. Fixed event costs remain low; the charity's primary expenditure is the salary of the part-time co-ordinator, whose work underpins the day-to-day co-ordination, communication and partnership building that make the collective impact possible.



Much has been achieved in 2025 despite significant funding challenges, including the co-ordinator who took a substantial reduction in salary to ensure YOU London continued to operate and prioritise its core activities. This situation, however, is not sustainable. Securing the funding necessary to safeguard YOU London's continuity and impact must be the central focus for 2026.

Other priorities for 2026 include cultivating and strengthening local YOU partnerships in the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Hillingdon, Islington, Kingston, Lambeth, Newham, Redbridge, Southwark and Westminster, and refreshing the YOU London website, which was originally created in 2016. Subject to funding, the co-ordinator also aims to develop a searchable map for the 'What's Near You' page, providing a user-friendly tool to help young people, families and professionals locate uniformed youth groups in their area.



H M Purcell O.B.E. DL
Chair YOU London

D C Wilkinson DL
YOU London Co-ordinator