



# Annual Report 2022

“ *Prison is a hard environment for everyone. And you have no idea the incredible positive impact of a stranger showing you a bit of humanity, kindness and encouragement when all we are surrounded by is damaged people. From my heart and soul, thank you.* ”

# Foreword

The feedback from people in prison (like the quote below) provided the inspiration for New Bridge volunteers to resume visits with renewed enthusiasm in 2022 and this was an inspiring year for everyone at New Bridge. With the Covid restrictions of the previous years finally starting to abate, more of our volunteers have been able to visit the people that they support across many prisons in England and Wales.

“Visits act as an incentive to remain positive, following prison rules instead of being troublesome to the authorities. Visitors help to remind one that we are not monsters, but human beings. They give us hope, a purpose for living in this hell waiting for that next visit. Their ‘positivity’ helps to keep me sane.”



We were also able to hold our Volunteer Conference once again, for the first time since 2019 – an opportunity to bring new and experienced volunteers and supporters together to hear from a range of speakers connected with our work, including a former prisoner who benefitted from our service in the past. The conference was the first public engagement for our new President, Michael Spurr CB, former Chief Executive Officer of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), who we were delighted to appoint to role in September 2022. He brings with him a vast array of experience across criminal justice and unique insight into HMPPS. Michael said of his appointment: “*New Bridge Volunteers do an amazing job. They give up their time to support prisoners who have lost contact with the outside world and are struggling to cope. Through correspondence and visits they demonstrate our common humanity and provide hope. It is a huge privilege to become their President.*”

However, against the backdrop of positive progress for staff and volunteers, we know that the experiences of those in prison continued much the same, with the very slow return to pre-Covid routines hampered by staffing shortages. The number of people in prison began to rise in the second half of the year as the covid-induced court backlog began to ease, and people serving IPPs (Imprisonment for Public Protection) saw no response to calls for reform. **We saw another increase in demand for our services, and more depictions of the impact of loneliness and isolation behind bars.**

“ for those who have no one or who feel alone, isolated and need to hear from a friendly ‘voice’ – it means the world. ”

We therefore spent the summer and autumn convening staff, Trustees and a small group of volunteers to work on our new strategy, for 2023-2025. **Our main goals were to find ways of being able to support more people, and to ensure that the support we do provide is truly impactful.** We were delighted to finalise an ambitious three-year strategy which sees us looking to double the number of people we support by the end of 2025, alongside developing deeper insights into our work and a clearer impact measure. You can read more about the strategy in this report.

At a time when many charities have been struggling to recruit volunteers, we have been overjoyed with the number of new volunteers who would like to make a difference to someone else’s life. 2022 was also a year where our volunteer community inspired us with their continued dedication, compassion and empathy. We were also humbled by their tenure: we presented long-service awards at the Volunteer Conference to 3 people who have been volunteering with us for 20 years, and 1 person for an astounding 30 years! We simply could not operate without the wonderful community of people who make up New Bridge,



Ann with her 20 year service award

“ It has given me hope in society for when I leave. I didn’t have that before. ”

and we’d like to formally thank every volunteer and member of staff for all that they do, and to celebrate their contribution throughout 2022 and beyond.

*Helen Boothman*  
Chair

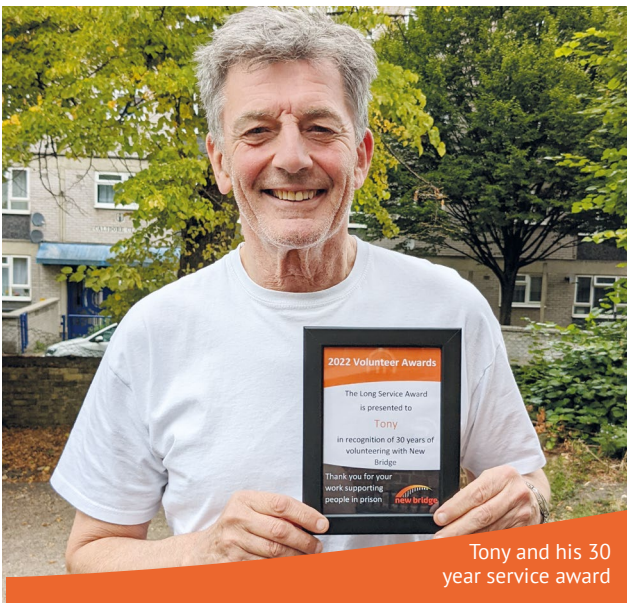
*Lucy Ball*  
CEO

# About New Bridge

## Our history

The New Bridge Foundation is a charity which was founded in 1956 with the intention of using volunteers to support people in prison to resettle back into the community after release, by prominent prison reformer Lord Longford. Over the years we have run a variety of additional projects to support people to this end, including Through The Gate programmes and family support programmes. However **our core offering since our inception has been a befriending service delivered by volunteers, which we continue to run today.** For over 65 years, our volunteers have offered a bridge to the outside world to people serving prison sentences across England and Wales by offering non-judgemental social contact.

We are proud to have Michael Spurr, CB (former CEO, HMPPS) as our President, and Professor David Wilson (criminologist, author and former prison governor) and Reverend Jonathan Aitken as our Vice Presidents, as well as a royal patron in HRH Princess Alexandra.



Tony and his 30 year service award

## What we do

We support people in prisons in England and Wales, who are often some of the most isolated and marginalised people in society. We help to reduce their isolation and loneliness by matching them with a trained volunteer, with whom they communicate through letters or emails. Once they have been writing for at least 6 months, the volunteer can start visiting the person in prison, making 3-4 visits per year.

After being trained, every volunteer joins a Volunteer Support Group, which is Chaired by an experienced volunteer. Each group meets once per month and members attend to discuss their correspondence and visits, giving them the opportunity to raise any concerns about the relationship or the prisoner's welfare in a friendly and encouraging atmosphere. Support groups are spread across the country, with volunteers choosing whether to join one which meets in person locally, or meets online via videoconference.

“ It has given me hope in society for when I leave. I didn't have that before. ”



Jamie, former prisoner, speaks at our volunteer conference



## Our vision:

Every person in prison feels a meaningful connection to the outside world.

## Our mission:

We match people in prisons with trained volunteers who offer long-term support through a combination of correspondence and visits. This provides people in prison with a bridge to the outside world, along with an increased sense of value and potential for their future.

## Our values:



### Non-judgemental

We believe every person has value.



### Inclusive

We accept applications from any person in prison, and any volunteer who shares our values.



### Independent

We are wholly separate from and not influenced by the criminal justice system.



### Prisoner-led

Our volunteers shape their support, correspondence and visits around the needs of the person they support.



### Constant

We provide a reliable connection between those inside and outside prison.

“ I was always a negative person who believed and thought of myself as a failure and not worth anything but because of them they have shown me that there is more to life than we realise and I am a good person who can be good again if I try. ”

Hi . Just a quick note to say its officially a week left today 19/10/22. I want to thank you for all your lovely letters over the last 2 years, hearing about your life and following is Journey has been lovely. Thank you for all your support through my tough times and the extra cards from the holidays. Youve been a great help and Ive loved the updates through this time. Take care of yourself and your family. Cherish every day.

Pre release thank you note to volunteer

# 2022 in Numbers

**6,561** 

hours were spent  
volunteering  
(up from 6,113 in 2021)

We supported  
**1,035**  
people across  
**78** prison sites

★ We received  
**103**  
applications  
from volunteers

★ We received  
**196**  
applications from  
people in prison ★



**768**  
people in prison  
connected with a  
befriender



**292**  
volunteers  
worked with us



**470**  
phone calls  
were made



**9,884**  
letters and emails  
were exchanged between people  
in prison and their volunteer

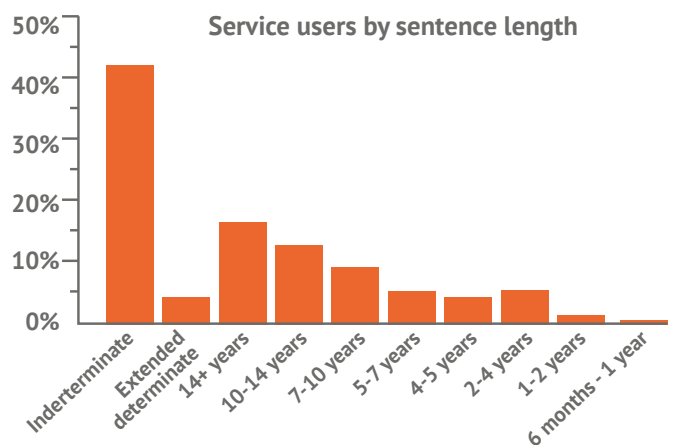
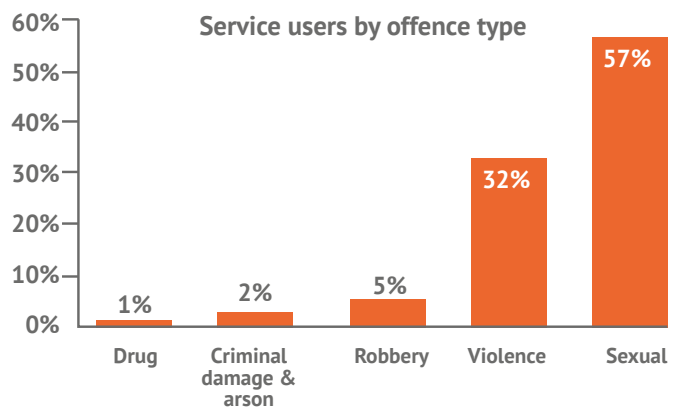
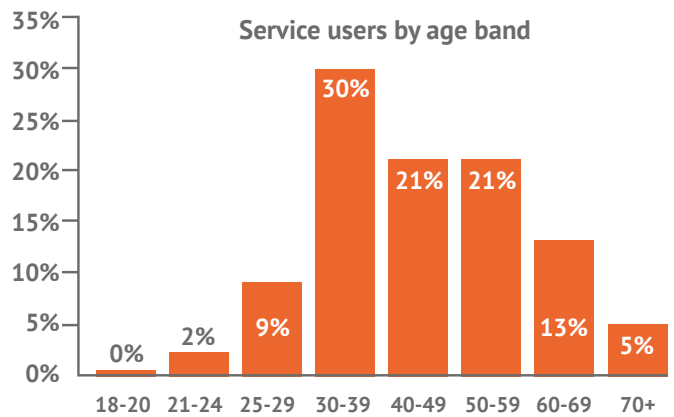
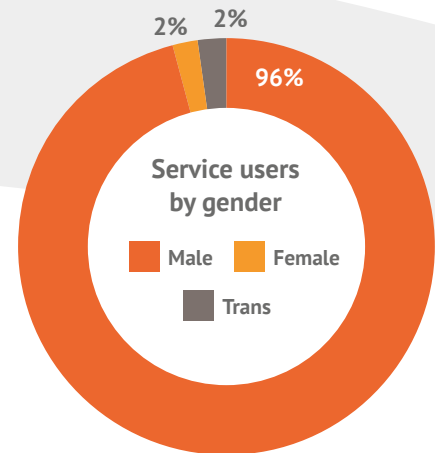
“ I would recommend this service to others because it has done me the world of good by not only staying in touch with the outside world but has opened me up on my trust issues and communicating with peers my own age. ”

# Service Users

Our service is person-centred rather than place-based, so we accept applications from any person in any prison in England and Wales. During 2022 we received new applications from 196 people in prison, and over the course of the year we made 170 new matches with volunteers.

We know that our service users value having a befriender, and the connection that our volunteers provide. They are also happy to recommend us to others: around 40% of the people we support heard about us through another person in prison.

Once a person has applied to join our service, we are committed to supporting them for the long-term. Whilst they are on the waiting list for a volunteer we will send them regular letters, along with birthday and Christmas cards. If a service user's befriender decides at any point that they are no longer able to volunteer, then we will match them up with a new befriender as soon as possible.



Initial analysis of our 2022 service evaluation indicates that the people we support feel better or much better about the following since being matched with their volunteer\*:

**83%** Getting through their sentence

**78%** The future

**75%** Their connectedness to the outside world

**77%** Themselves

\*Data is still being analysed, and final results will be available in our service evaluation report, which will be published on our website.

# Volunteers



Support group locations

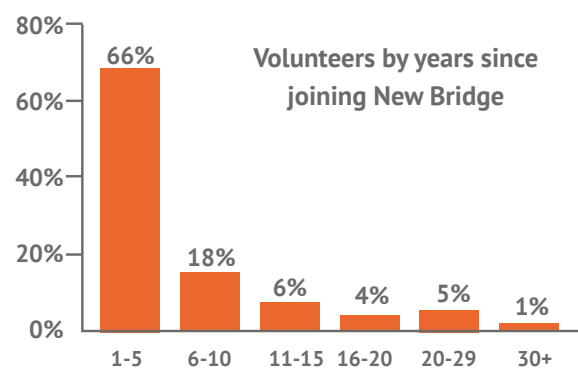
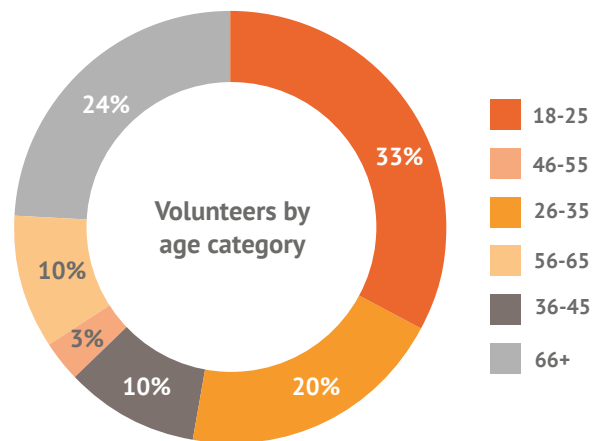
“It’s part of my social life; it’s widened my social circle; I get real letters delivered by the postman, to break up the constant stream of emails and texts. And if I get excited at the sight of an envelope on the doormat, how must a prisoner feel?”

**Our volunteers come from all walks of life, but have one thing in common: a belief in our mission.**

Our volunteers are on the frontline of our work, delivering constant, reliable support to people in prison. They give their time and compassion through the highs and lows experienced by the people they support.

In turn, we ensure that our volunteers are supported: each person is a member of a volunteer support group which meets once per month and provides the opportunity to discuss their correspondence and visits and raise any concerns about the relationship or the person in prison’s welfare in a friendly and encouraging environment. Support groups are spread across the country, with a mixture of virtual and in-person settings.

Our volunteering offer is very flexible, with letters and visits being organised around each volunteer’s own schedule. **This flexibility has helped people to continue in their role for long periods of time, fitting it in around their work, studies and personal lives.** We gave out long service awards in 2022 to 3 volunteers celebrating 20 years with us, and 1 who had reached 30 years! This long service is testament not only to the flexibility of the role, but to the enjoyment that volunteers draw from building long-standing social connections with the people they support. Reflecting on her 20 years of volunteering with New Bridge, Ann said “*I think we can either be vengeful as a society or we can try to help, and it seems to be that befriending really does help reduce reoffending*”.



We recruit and train volunteers all year round. If you are interested in volunteering with us (or know someone who might be) then you can find more information and our online application form: [newbridgefoundation.org.uk/volunteer-with-us](https://newbridgefoundation.org.uk/volunteer-with-us)



# Our Supporters

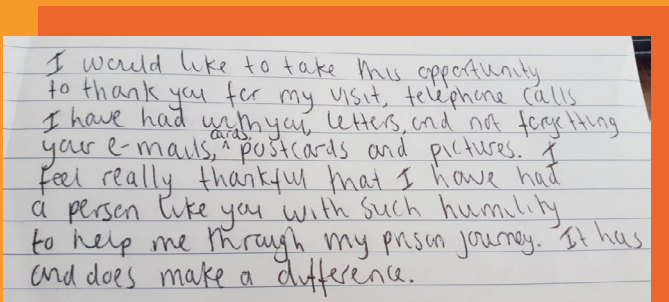
“ Getting a New Bridge befriender was the best thing I’ve ever done in prison, they have helped me develop as a person and in the way I see the world. They are amazing and would like to say a big thank you to those who take time out of their lives (even if it’s just 5 minutes to write a letter) to support someone in prison. Real stars. ”

We couldn’t exist to impact lives in the way that we do without the generous financial donations of our supporters.

**Last year we were grateful to receive donations of over £1,000 from the following grant making trusts:**

- 1772 Charity
- 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- Albert Hunt Trust
- Allen Trust
- Carr Gregory Trust
- Christopher Rowbotham Charitable Trust
- Dischma Charitable Trust
- Drapers Charitable Fund
- Eleanor Rathbone Charitable Trust
- Enterprise RAC UK Ltd
- G M Morrison Charitable Trust
- Lord Faringdon Charitable Trust
- Michael & Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust
- Mirianog Trust
- Oak Trust
- Peter Stebbings Memorial Charity
- Robert Gavron Charitable Trust
- Shanly Foundation
- Sir James Reckitt Charity
- Sir James Roll Charitable Trust
- Vandervell Foundation
- Zochonis Charitable Trust

We are keen to build further partnerships in 2023. If you are interested in supporting our work, please get in touch via [info@newbridgefoundation.org.uk](mailto:info@newbridgefoundation.org.uk)



Pre release thank you note to volunteer

“ We are pleased to support New Bridge Foundation and its important work in supporting some of society’s most marginalised people. When prisoners are isolated, with no visitors and confined to their cell for much of the day, correspondence or a visit from one of the charity’s trained volunteers gives hope and purpose. ”

Worshipful Company of Drapers

# Volunteer Profile

How did I get involved with New Bridge? It wasn't initially what I thought I was looking for. I'd long had an interest in prisons since a friend, in the 1980's, spent months in jail and I saw the negative impact on his mental health and in fact, on the rest of his life. I'd had some involvement in prison-related activities but in recent decades hadn't found ways of being involved.

During lockdown I heard an excellent short radio series where a woman spoke of her experience as the wife of a man imprisoned for fraud. This reignited my motivation to improve life for prisoners and I searched for ways of getting involved in prison reform. I found that as a

*“ other than donating money there seemed little I could do, so I searched online for other prison-related activities. That was how I found New Bridge. ”*



600 Christmas cards signed and sent out to people in prison

volunteer, other than donating money there seemed little I could do, so I searched online for other prison-related activities. That was how I found New Bridge.

Things about New Bridge that attracted me were the promise of thorough training; the personal challenge of setting aside judgement and building and maintaining a connection with someone I might not initially like; commitment of and to a local support group; and – for me especially important because I'm often away from home – flexibility in when and where I honour these commitments. Whether our local monthly support group is meeting face to face or online, connecting via zoom is always an option so I can receive and offer support wherever I am.

The online training gave me plenty of facts, guidance and challenges to consider. Before choosing a prisoner to befriend I attended – online – a local support group meeting where members' accounts of their recent contacts with the person or people they support brought to life the words and concepts from the training. Now I was ready to select my first 'befriender'. This took place about a year ago.

Writing my first letter I was aware that I might not get a response. I was touched by the reply I received, so full of appreciation and readiness to connect. Initial letters were introductory, listing interests and experiences, searching for connections and topics to explore. Over the year it feels our confidence has grown so as well as 'safe' topics of shared interest we can now express and to some extent debate our very different political views.

Visits give a big boost to the sense of connection and prompt more personal exchanges. I was concerned before my first visit that I'd be a disappointment and

“ Following my second visit I left the prison with such a sense of elation, of the wonder that as humans we can make meaningful connections in the most unlikely situations, that I decided I was ready to request a second ‘befriender.’ ”

that we might struggle to fill the time. The exact opposite happened: time flew and we ranged over past, present and future in our conversation, some of it quite personal and all adding to a sense of mutual enjoyment of conversation and connection. Letters flow more easily after visits.

Following my second visit I left the prison with such a sense of elation, of the wonder that as humans we can make meaningful connections in the most unlikely situations, that I decided I was ready to request a second ‘befriender’. This too has been a joy and has highlighted for me the different ways people respond to prison as well as the differences within different prisons.

No two prisoners will be alike just as no two New Bridge volunteers will be. I feel I’ve been lucky with the two people I write to: both are very responsive and very appreciative. I guess it’s inevitable that over coming years we might have dull or difficult times with letter writing, but I feel we’ve made a very positive start and I’m committed to continuing for as long as it’s what the ‘befriendees’ want.

I’ve been surprised that something I started doing from a sense of moral outrage has turned into a genuine heartfelt pleasure. I feel real joy when I hear



Letters from people in prison to be redirected to their volunteer

good news from ‘my’ prisoners and when they trust me enough to tell me something meaningful to them. Like all real relationships, yes, it’s a commitment but again, like all real relationships it makes me know I’m alive and it feels like one of the most constructive and rewarding uses of my time.

## Anthea



# Strategy 2023-25

**In the time since New Bridge was founded, the prison population has risen from around 20,000 to over 80,000 today. It is expected to rise to almost 100,000 by 2026.**

It is widely accepted that having social contact whilst in prison improves a person’s mental health as well as helping develop pro-social attitudes which are known to drastically reduce the likelihood of reoffending on release (c.39% higher for those with no visits). The proportion of people in prison with no family or friends visiting them is estimated at 31%: currently c.24,800 people, rising to c.31,000 in 2026 on current projections.

The need for services like New Bridge is expected to continue to rise, both in line with the general rise in prison population, but also with the rise in specific groups more likely to need our services. 17% of the prison population are aged 50 or over (there are now more than three and a half times more people aged over 60 in prison than there were in 2002), and 43% of men aged over 50 are serving sentences for sexual offences. We know that older people in prison

and those with convictions for sexual offences can experience the most isolating sentences of all, so we expect the increases in these populations to lead to higher numbers of applications for our service.

*“ I’m very grateful to New Bridge for providing me with an activity that I find very worthwhile and a new group of colleagues with whom I can share experiences and whom I can learn from. For anyone considering volunteering I highly recommend New Bridge. ”*

## Strategic goals

Our new strategy focuses on improving our service and expanding our reach, so that more isolated people in prison can experience the benefits of a befriender.

**Our 3 key strategic goals are:**



**1. Scale Up**



**2. Understand and deepen impact**



**3. Increase and diversify income**





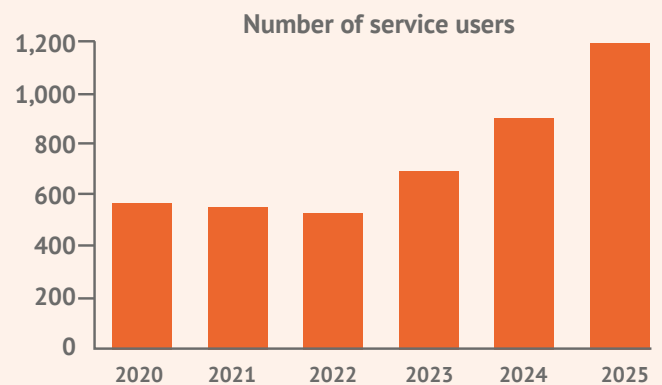
## 1. Scale Up

We want to double the number of service users by the end of the strategy. This will help us to meet the existing demand we see, with new applications arriving from people in prison every week, as well as prepare us to meet the increased demand we expect to see as prison numbers grow.

- We will raise awareness of our service amongst the prison population, so that more people who would benefit from a befriender are aware of who we are and how they can join us
- We will recruit and train a high number of committed volunteers from a broad range of sources, and make the recruitment and training process easier for people to access



Michael Spurr, keynote address at our volunteer conference



## 2. Understand and deepen impact

We want to learn more about the impact our work has on our service users, so that we can enhance these benefits. We also want to explore whether there are ways we need to develop or refine our offer in order to better meet the needs of people in prison.

- We will partner with an external academic institution to help us conduct high quality annual service evaluations, allowing us to see how we are performing against our new impact measure
- We will review all of the data we collect, to form hypothesis about the potential support needs of our service users in the future, in light of broader changes in the criminal justice system

Our new impact measure seeks to identify how a person in prison's experience of being befriended by a New Bridge volunteer has affected:

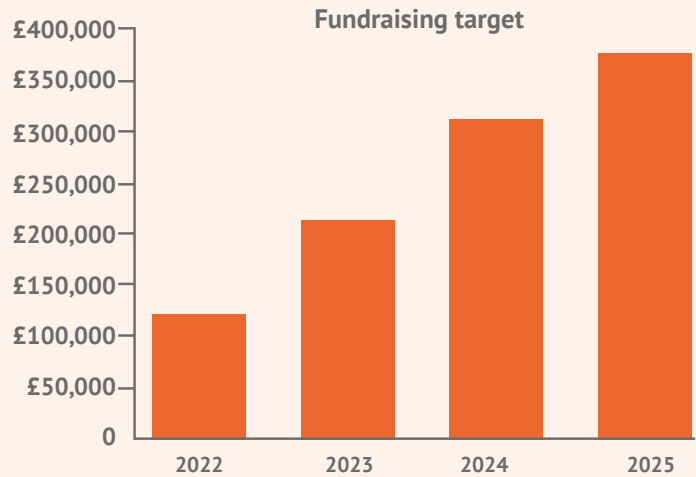
- Their ability to get through their sentence
- Their feelings about themselves
- Their feelings about the future
- Their connectedness to the outside world



### 3. Increase and diversify income

We want to develop new funding streams and multi-year income sources to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of New Bridge to continue its long history of delivering services.

- We will raise funds from large Grant Making Trusts (in addition to our existing small Trust supporters), and seek to secure multi-year funding agreements
- We will develop an individual supporter fundraising stream, to steward individuals through the process of making a gift, and recognise their huge contribution



enquired how things are going with my befriender. Anyway, you report that things are really good, there's an ebb and flow, trust, confidence and humour in our letters. I enjoy her letters, she's very supporting. I'm happy to be sincere and genuine, not to mention interesting. You really have the knack of finding the right connections and you should be proud of what you do. As you're aware I have no family or friends outside, receive little mail, other than legal, and have zero visits since my parents passed many many years ago. So to get a letter from a befriender is brilliant, especially as I love to write. Its one of the many things and I have in common and writing without effort is a gift.

We've shared with honesty and I feel relaxed and open, as I did when I wrote to my previous befriender. suggested she visit me sometime in early 2023 which will be great, nice to put a voice and face to a pen as it were. I'm mindful of the time and finance of a visit and feel guilty as I cannot buy a coffee in return!

Right, time to post this, but before I go Pauline, thank you for all you and Newbridge do. I really value it, and yes, it makes a real positive difference, removes loneliness, keeps me abreast of real values and provides the greatest gift - warmth and kindness. Long may it continue.

Feedback letter from person in prison

## How will we get there?

To reach our strategic goals, we will need to focus on the following:

- **Raising our profile:** we need to get better at telling our story, and to new audiences, in order to attract more potential service users, volunteers and funders
- **Embedding a culture of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion:** we need to attract and be able to offer tailored support to a broader range of people in prison and volunteers, so that people from all backgrounds and with diverse needs are able to participate, in order to better represent the communities we support and work with. We also need to seek out ways to diversify the make-up of our organisation at all levels as we grow over the next three years
- **Effective management and governance:** we need to closely monitor our progress over the next three years to help us reach our strategic goals, finding ways to modernise systems and processes so that the cost per service user goes down as we scale up (by c.40% by the end of 2025). This will require full commitment from a skilled Board of Trustees, and strong performance management by senior staff

“ At New Bridge I found my new community and focus. The monthly support groups the befrienders attend provided contact with people with whom I now shared a common goal. People otherwise I wouldn't have met. The reports from each member of the group helped me to gain in confidence and I now write to four people. ”

## How can you help us deliver our strategy?

- **Help spread the word about what we do, to raise our profile:** could you share this report with someone who may be interested in our work?
- **Join us as a volunteer,** or share our volunteering opportunity with people who may be a good fit [newbridgefoundation.org.uk/volunteer-for-us](http://newbridgefoundation.org.uk/volunteer-for-us)
- **Donate:** every donation helps us to reach more isolated people in prison [newbridgefoundation.org.uk/appeal/donate](http://newbridgefoundation.org.uk/appeal/donate)
- **Help us build corporate volunteering partnerships:** we provide bespoke in-house training and quarterly reporting for organisations who help us recruit their staff as volunteers



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New Bridge Foundation



*I've always felt I wouldn't be able to cope on the outside world as I've been locked up for 13 years and in/out since 13 yrs old. But my volunteer tells me that I've got qualifications, I can work, I can get help with my mental health and live within the community.*

