

**In this latest episode which is a little different in its format, as Samantha Boffin takes us on a step back to listen and recall a few highlights from the first twelve months of the 'Step Forward and Volunteer' podcast.**

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer

Hello and welcome to the special episode of the popular Step Forward and Volunteer podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Samantha Boffin and I'd like to thank you for tuning in to this first episode of 2023.

If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. Through conversations with inspirational guests, Step Forward and Volunteer celebrates the positive difference that volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll hear from those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

But first, I have a favour to ask. We'd like your help in getting the word out about Step Forward and Volunteer. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co) where you will see a link to the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts and Google podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

This episode is a little different in its format, as we're taking a step back to listen and recall a few highlights from the first twelve months of the 'Step Forward and Volunteer' podcast.

In episode one we heard all about the Bolton Lions annual Christmas Toy Appeal. A year on, it's still going strong with toys and gifts distributed to 1,735 children, supporting 914 local families with help from Bolton School students who volunteer to support the appeal. Here's what students Alara and Megan had to say about the appeal.

Alara - And we all see Christmas as a time of year for family and friends, regardless of your age, or religion or where you're from, it's a time to come together. And that's why Bolton lions is great for us because it gives us the opportunity to spread this message to other people so they too can enjoy Christmas.

Megan - We always look forward to Saturday's volunteering with Bolton lions as we enjoy spreading the awareness about the charity. And it's a nice time to engage with the public and explain what the causes of the charity actually are. We also enjoy seeing people donate in the shop with toys to the charity that we are supporting and that we are raising awareness about.

Rishi - I think what the lions do is just really great for the community as a whole because they help you know 1000s of children every year with the toy appeal.

Staying with Christmas, we turn to the Boxing Day 'Walk into the Sea' organised by Paignton Lions. This fun event raises funds for charity thanks to hardy members of the public, wearing fancy dress, and watched by record crowds. Let's hear from Lions member Ian Snell and some participants.

So what made you pluck up the courage this year? I don't know, really. It was Christmas Eve and I decided that now is the time, I've got to do it. Personal challenge. So how much fun was it? Extreme fun, absolutely brilliant. I'll definitely do it again next year! Amazing. Was the water cold? Yes (Lots of laughter).

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What charity are you supporting today? I haven't actually named the charity. We are actually supporting the Paignton Lions Club.

Thank you very much (lots of laughter)

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Hello, what made you take part today?

We love doing the Boxing Day, every year, and of course, the weather is hot and the sun is shining today. We had all the family with us and it's a great thing to do for the community.

It's ideal. And how much fun was it?

Really, really, really fun.

Was the water cold?

Yes, very cold.

What charity are you supporting today?

Well, we're down here with the Lions Club supporting them and all the local charities and the local people, being together.

That's great. Thank you very much.

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What made you take part today?

It's an annual tradition, we try and do it every year.

Was it fun?

It was so much fun. Yeah.

Was the water cold?

It was so cold. It was take your breath away cold

Colder than in previous years?

Definitely, yeah. I think it's because it's sunny. Our body temperatures were already warm.

So we're blaming it on that.

Would you do it again?

I will.

Who are you supporting today?

We are supporting the Lions Club today. That's what we came down to do.

Thank you.

Also last year, Mandy Broadbent spoke with Allan Clark of Keighley Lions about the 'Lions Den' shed that has become a hub in the local community.

It started initially as an idea. What we needed to do was get more members. So we decided the only way was for us to go out and have a presence in the community, do stuff in the community. So, we were recommended to go to what was called a pop up shed in Oakworth. Within a couple of weeks, I was taking woodworking machinery up and showing them how to use machinery, a scroll saw, a bandsaw and a lathe, and Gordon was showing them how to use hand tools and sharpen chisels. So, while we were doing that, the idea was

we would try to find interested parties to join the lions. But then we met a chap from Community First Yorkshire, who asked us if we were interested in starting a shed, a Men's shed, and we didn't really know what Men's Sheds were at the time. So, we did a bit of research and found out that there was nothing in this area and we came to have a look at a place called Cliff Castle. Now there's a museum in a park. And we're actually based in what was the old nursery for the home for the museum. It was disused so when we had a look, we thought wow, this is interesting, and we decided we'd give it a go. So, there's only four of us initially, that started it, three of which were lions. So that's why we call it the Lion's Den. And that's really how the shed got off the ground. Very quickly we became a CIO and became an independent charity in our own right. If the lions want to do a project very often, we might then make that project or we might source the materials. So, we have quite a lot of links and crossovers. We've gained four members and there's probably another three or four that are interested, and the good thing is they're younger, and they're fitter, so we can get out and do more, rather than relying on other people to do it. And that's how we really started. When we first started, we literally had nothing. There was just four of us, no money, no equipment. We went to the Lions, and we said look this is an idea we're looking at; the long-term goal is to get more members and we agreed a budget of 300 pounds that would be financed from the Lions to help us buy some equipment. So, what we did we went to Aldi's and bought a scroll saw and the bandsaw just little tabletop ones. Then we went to Germany for an unbranded small woodworking lathe. Now these were small enough to be able to put into the boot of the car and go out to community centres and things. So, we put the Lions logo on, we put sponsored by Lions and then whenever we were talking about the machines in these different locations, we would say this equipment has been sponsored by the Lions, to try and just get that word out and just get us back in touch with people in the

community. So, it's not just necessarily people coming here. You go to community centres with these tools. We've always had that community spirit. We've done quite a few projects with community groups, churches, we've even got a project going with the Council at the moment, repairing and refurbishing benches out of the town square. So, we do like going out and engaging with people. We've even been to schools and work with primary schools doing bird boxes and the hedgehog homes. We've had scouts coming into the centre, again, doing bird boxes, doing their woodworking skills to get their badges and it really works well. So much so that after we'd been going for six months we were put forward and actually successful in winning an award from the Council for partnership and collaboration. So, we were very proud of that, very humbled by it.

You mentioned that you're supporting the Council on refurbishing benches. I saw something on Facebook, and they were pulling out 15 benches from the town square and they said they were getting rid of them because they weren't economical to repair. Now as a shed with guys that have got mental health issues, might be lonely, isolated, or have lost a partner. All they want to do is get hands on and do something. So, we said well, would you donate the benches to us. And they said yeah, okay. But as soon as they donated them and realised we were going to repair them because it didn't matter about the economics of it, it was an activity. They turned around and said can we buy some back. So far, we've put about five benches back out. We've actually fitted new benches for the Council. We've taken old benches out and we've got a second phase going on now. That will be about another five or six benches and that's bringing money into sustaining the shed, so we are not out of pocket and in fact, we're in a bit of surplus, which helps us maintain and run the shed.

Are these wooden benches? Yes, these are the typical park wooden benches. They are replacing quite a few now with composite plastics, but these benches are not going back into the town square, what's happened, they did a thing on Facebook saying a seat with a view and they were asking people in the town. Do you know of a spot that you feel a bench would be beneficial to see the view around us which is fantastic, the view, with the Pennines and the Dales? So, we've been placing them in new locations which is great. Where there weren't benches before, we're now putting these benches out in the community for community use and the locations have been decided by the community.

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Since our podcast, a new shed has opened at Bracken Bank in Keighley offering bicycle maintenance and repair, model railways, plastic modelling, arts and crafts and glass making, an innovation hub with activities such as IT, 3D printing and laser etching.

Another highlight of the first year of Lions Step Forward and Volunteer podcast was the Lions Roar education competition run in partnership between Lions Clubs of the British Isles and 8billionideas. It's a unique programme working with schools to inspire children, between the ages of 7 to 11 years old, to think big, dream big and change the world with their ideas.

Let's listen to feedback from Victoria Greenough of St Margaret's Primary School, members Colin Ridley and Terry Condliff from the Isle of Axholme Lions, and Sara Kelly and Holly

Benham - Teachers from Haxey CofE Primary School, and the loud roar from the pupils involved.

Having exposure to coming outside of school to actually hone presentation skills, speaking and listening skills. Experiences like today ensure that children get those opportunities to be able to hone their presentation skills because they are skills you need for life. The creative nature of the competition it lights a little spark in them, they get really, really excited about it. We approached the schools and I'm really pleased that Haxey and the Trentside Federation which involved three schools actually got involved and the way we went about it, we spoke to the Headteacher and the teacher, we then had a roadshow which Terry here went to see and got involved in and it was a fantastic experience. Well we were invited to take part by our local lions group and it ties in brilliantly to our PSE curriculum because one of the things we need to look at is finance and the world of work. So it gave the children of five and six an opportunity to see a project through from start to finish. So it was a really good chance for them to develop some of those skills that they are going to need in the world of work. All the children are so excited about getting involved in the project. Year five and six took part and we spent at least five sessions building the model and coming up with the idea. Roarrrrrrrrrrrrrr.

At the end of last year, eight winners for 2022 were named as:

Camrose Primary with 'Friendbot'

Lowe's Wong Junior with 'Moodivator'

Excalibur Primary with 'Trash it 2000'

Shirenewton Primary with 'Plantar Fasciitis'

Robert Wilkinson Primary with 'B - a friend that's always there'



Church Crookham Primary with 'Tat App'

Hamsey Primary with 'The Green Machine'

and

Landscape Primary with 'Kitty Cam'

You can learn more about the programme at [lionsdashroar.com](http://lionsdashroar.com)

Lions clubs get involved with many inspiring initiatives and one that stands out is the 'Get ahead' campaign for Harry's Hat, supporting babies affected by hydrocephalus as Yateley Lions member, Tim Clark explained...

Okay, so Harry's Hat is a charity set up by Matt and Kaz. Their son Harry was born with hydrocephalus. And they found it quite early on. And for those that don't know, Hydrocephalus is water on the brain. And Harry, within the first few months of his life, bless his heart, had a shunt put into his brain to drain the water out. So he had brain surgery at like less than two months old. And he's had multiple brain surgeries since and then every kid with hydrocephalus, will probably end up having brain surgery to drain the water from their brains and put a shunt in. So they set up a charity because they found that there was no support for families or not good enough support for families, and not good enough education. So they set up a charity. And it's a full time job for Caroline, who cares for her and a bunch of others. She now has staff. So they're getting big enough to actually go and educate families and support families nationwide, with resources and one to one mentoring about how do you deal with a kid who's got hydrocephalus? It's, you know, how do we support you? How do we educate you, that's what they're trying to do. Now, the campaign they're running at the moment is one called 'Get-ahead'. And 'Get-ahead' is all about measuring your new born baby's head with a paper tape measure. And we'll come on to

why that's important in a minute. But they have found that if you measure the baby's head regularly, you'll see if it's growing too fast, and if it's growing too fast, that's an early indicator for hydrocephalus for water in the brain. So the campaign they're running is their educating midwives and community district nurses to go and measure babies heads and give them the tools to do that. And the tool is a paper tape measure. So we've funded 10,000 paper tape measures for the Harry's hat charity to give out to midwives and community nurses and take around nationwide and start measuring new born babies heads to make sure that they're growing at the correct rate. You're probably thinking why are they paper? The reason they're paper and paper doesn't stretch. If you go to your sewing box, if you can grab your tape measure, it's made of fabric or plastic, and that stretches. So if you want a super accurate result, make it something that doesn't stretch. The safe way to do it is with a paper tape measure and they have to be calibrated really, so that you get good measurements. Which is why the tape measures that we've funded. I think they call it NHS type approved tape measures provided by a special company.

Presumably where you measure on the baby's head and then, presuming it's quite a small amount, is it in fact that that the head might be able to grow? Certainly to be really accurate? Yeah, absolutely. So the tape actually has a piece on it, where you write the baby's name. And then there's a slot where you can actually put the piece of paper through. So as you pull it through, you can then read off the measurement against the piece, you know, you get the idea. On there, we've got information about the charity, space for them to write the name and the date of birth for the child. And also, we've managed to squeeze in there, the lions logo, but all of that means that any measurements are taken with these tape measures that are going to be official.

And that's all we have time for. Remember you can listen to every episode of Step Forward and Volunteer any time. Just go to [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co) or search on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

A big thank you to you our listeners – if you are not already a member, and would like to make a difference in your community by volunteering, fund-raising, organising projects, using your talents, gaining new skills, making friends and having fun – why not join us?

Don't wait to be asked, step forward and get involved. Call Lions Clubs British Isles on 0121 441 4544, send an email to [enquiries@lionsclubs.co](mailto:enquiries@lionsclubs.co) or use the form on the website – that's [www.lionsclubs.co](http://www.lionsclubs.co)