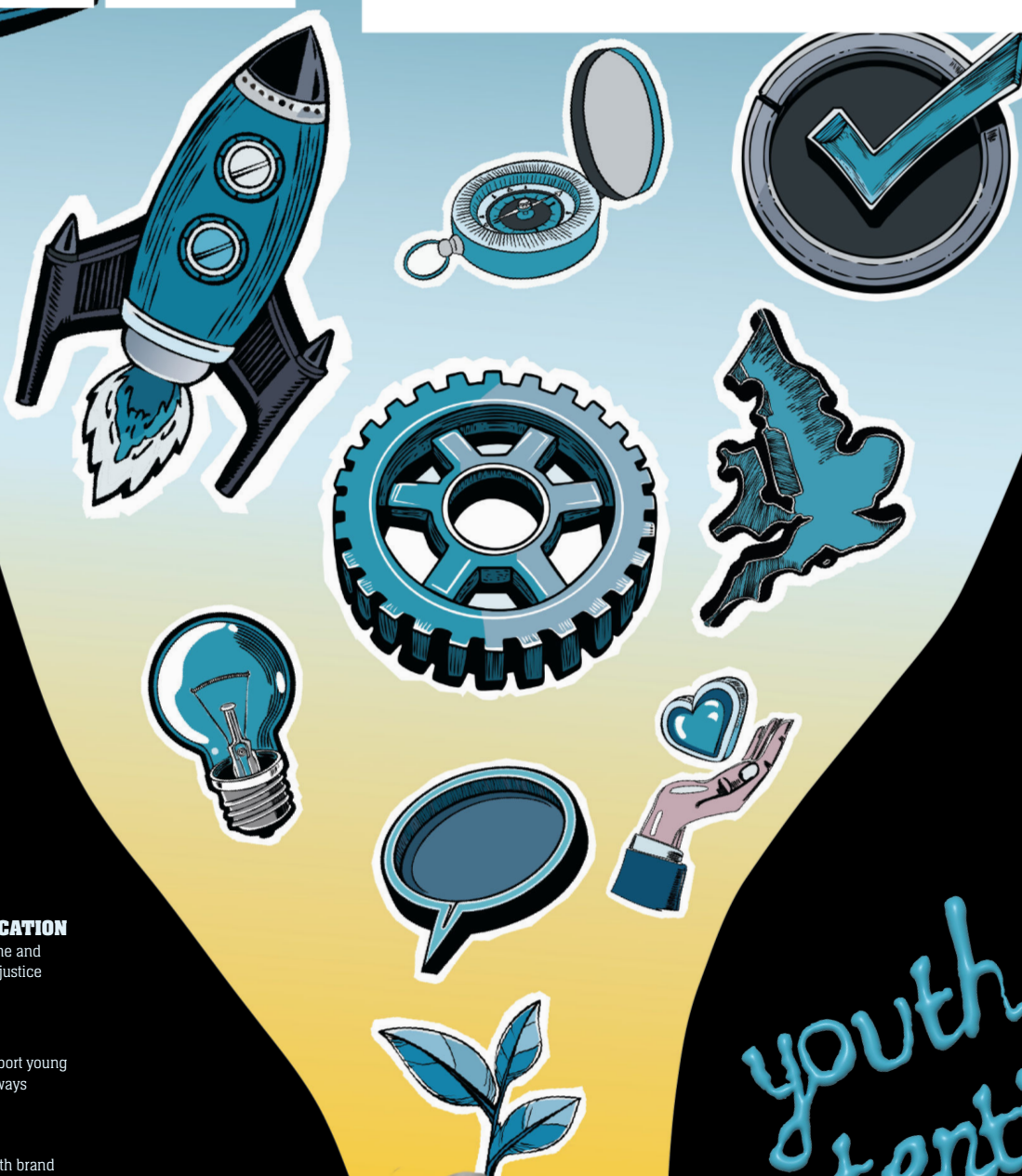


# catch 22

# zine



## **JUSTICE AND EDUCATION**

Supporting victims of crime and offenders with restorative justice

## **EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS**

What we are doing to support young people into creative pathways

## **YOUTH BRAND**

How we are using our youth brand to help young people feel seen and heard

## **YOUNG PEOPLE, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Uncovering the use of harmful coded messaging that exists online

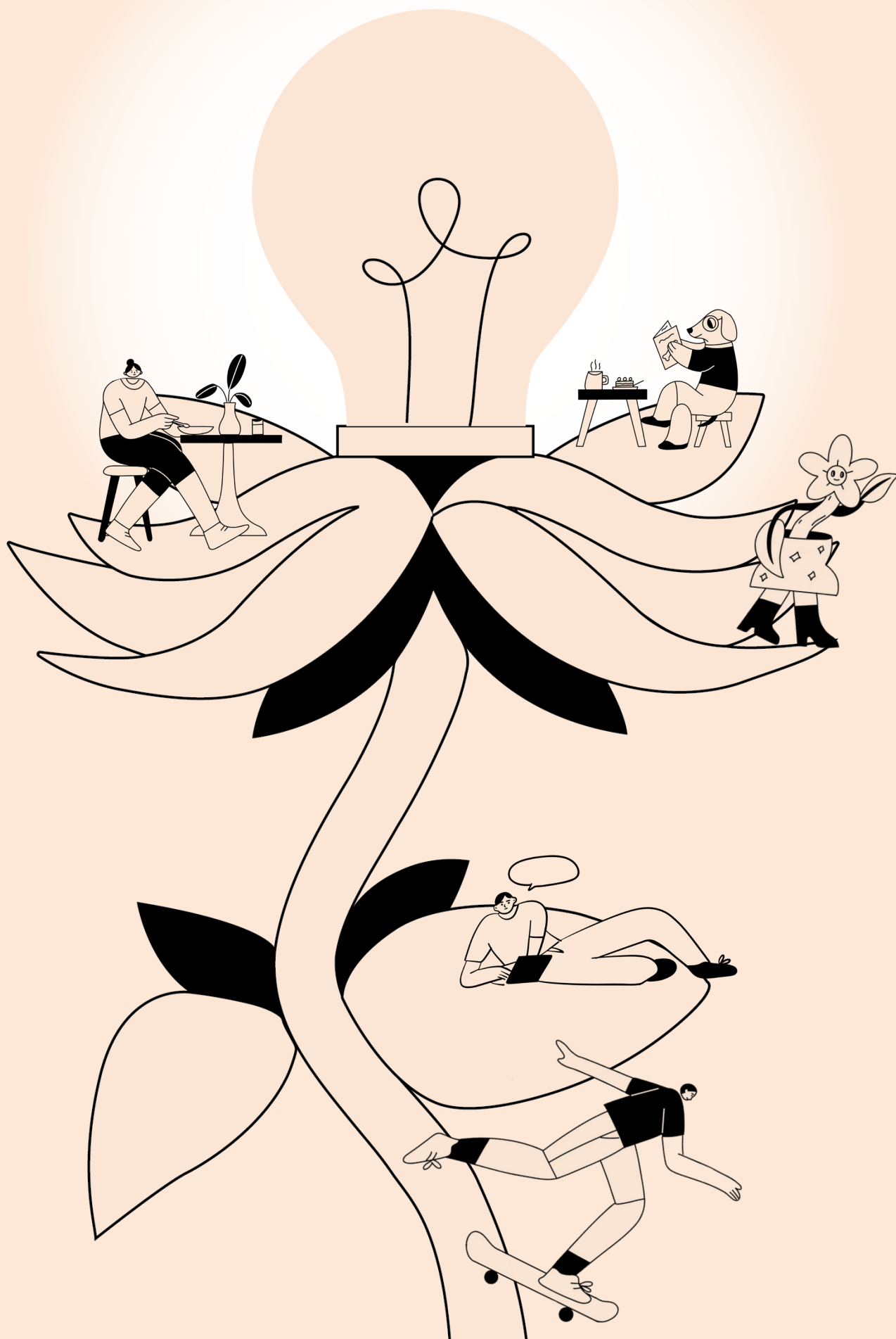
**THE YOUTH  
Issue**

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youth  
potential

*Our mid-year review, Issue 3*

August 2025





**Catch22Zine** is an annual publication designed to give you a flavour of the depth and breadth of what we do across our organisation. It allows us to share the latest achievements and successes across our hubs, giving a deeper insight into how our work improves the livelihoods of individuals across the communities within the UK. With this people-focused zine we explore how our services and programmes have helped individuals build strong support networks, secure safe places to live and work, and find their purpose in life. We hope you enjoy and get to know Catch22 a little better.



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Ugorji'.

**Prince-Oke Ugorji, Editor**  
DESIGN AND COMMUNICATIONS

# HIGHLIGHTS



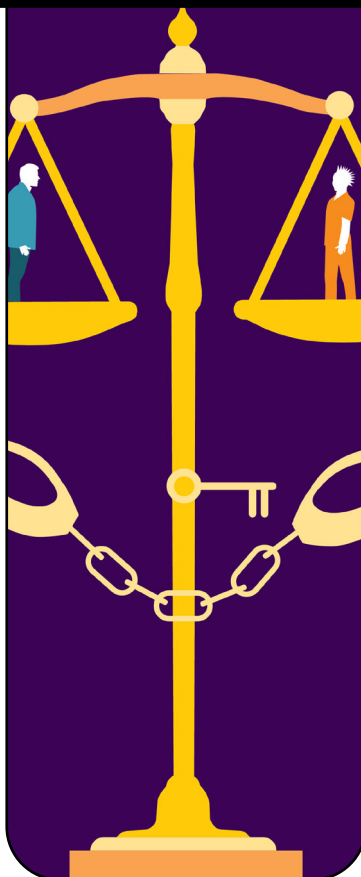
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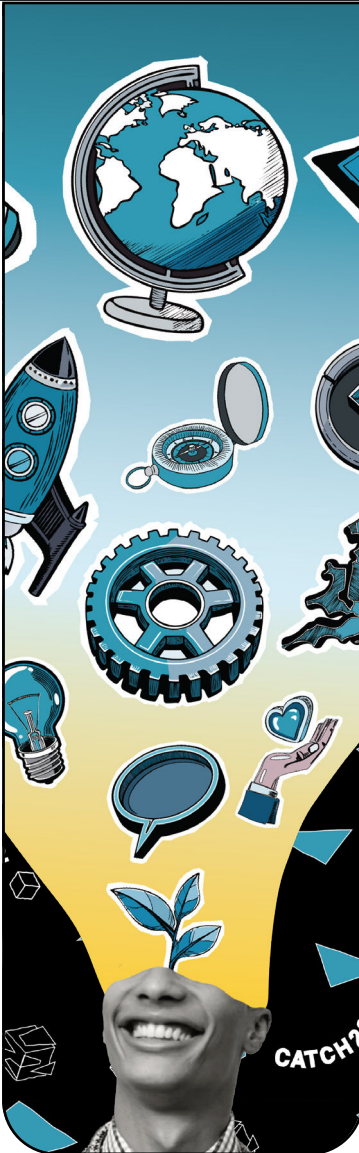
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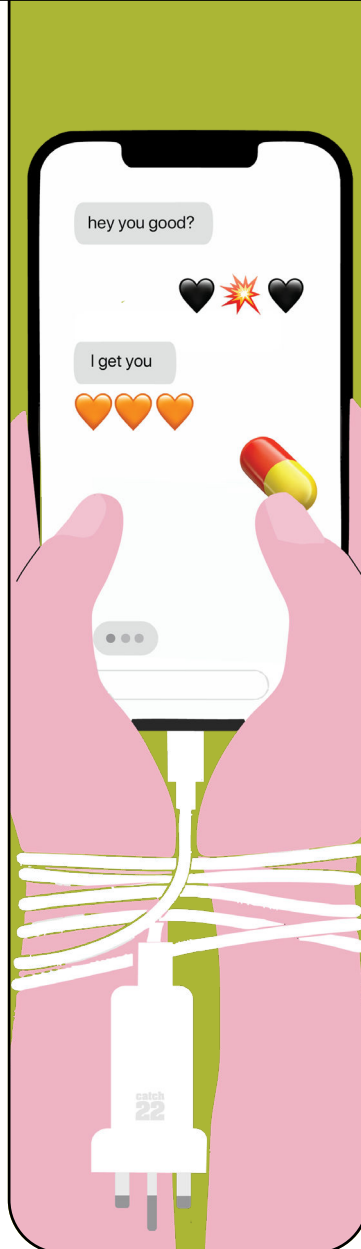




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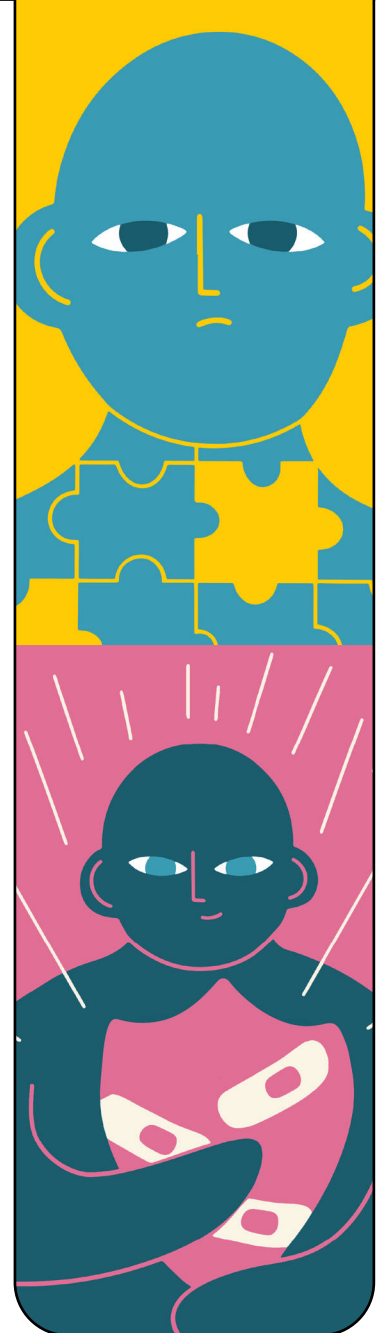
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## EDITOR'S PICKS



Taking in the learnt experience from our frontline delivery practitioners, the impact generated in our communities to drive meaningful policy change has to be at the heart of any public service agenda. Our Chair, Terry Duddy speaks.

**T**his latest mid-year review is a showcase of the expanse of our activity in the year thus far. We have supported hundreds of young people who are victims of exploitation, helping them get their lives back on track. We've helped thousands of ex-offenders rebuild their networks and regain control of their finances. We've raised awareness amongst Newham residents about the importance of health screening, and we've given hundreds of people furthest from the job market secure sustainable employment. Our schools and colleges continue to flourish, with all our provision now being rated 'good' by our regulators. And we are continuing to support innovation with our GoodTech Ventures programme, opening up opportunities for new business support for effective delivery of public service. While the success stories of the people we've supported are remarkable, it is tough to see just how badly the services we, and others working in similar fields, are needed.

In particular, there appears to be no let up in the numbers of young people affected by violence. Indeed this year, we welcomed the charity Redthread into the Catch22 family through a merger. Over the last year, Redthread has continued to raise the profile of its youth violence intervention work through policy and public affairs activity and media engagement. Redthread do brilliant work, supporting young victims of violence in hospital settings – including Emergency Departments and Major Trauma Centres. With their areas of delivery complementing the work already done by Catch22 in the sphere of child exploitation, we're looking forward to building on and delivering even more impactful work in this space.

**Redthread.**  **PROUD TO BE PART OF** **catch 22**

# “NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT OUR EXCELLENT COLLEAGUES AND OUR BROAD NETWORK OF PARTNERS. THANK YOU TO YOU ALL.”

WORDS BY NAOMI HULSTON, CEO

This year thus far, Catch22 supported over 12,500 individuals, families, and communities across our holistic wellbeing services. Our free legal, housing, debt, and social welfare support reached more than 1,400 people, unlocking access to over £2.1 million in entitlements and support.

The results speak volumes:

98% of those we worked with reported feeling safer.

95% felt more able to enjoy life.

91% achieved a positive outcome through our services.

These aren't just numbers—they're lives changed, confidence restored, and communities strengthened.

Our employability and skills programmes are designed to help people not just find jobs—but find purpose. In 2024, we supported 4,243 people through our programmes, with over 2,100 completing our four-week employability courses. From this, 1,073 individuals moved into paid employment, and 308 took steps into further education. After engaging with Catch22, 90% of participants felt more motivated to enter the job market.

In our education programmes: 417 students were on roll at our colleges. 219 progressed into positive destinations.

We also delivered 7,516 NCS open-to-all experiences across the West Midlands and Greater Manchester—expanding horizons and building community among young people from all walks of life.

Our work within the justice system remains one of our most far-reaching areas of impact. This year, we supported 11,729 prison leavers through Commissioned Rehabilitative Services, with 97% rating their experience positively. Beyond the prison walls, we reached over 45,000 victims of crime, 99% of whom reported improved health and wellbeing after our support.

Key highlights from our gangs and violence reduction work include: 97% of participants in our Gang Awareness Training rated the programme as 'excellent' or 'very good'. 87% reported a positive change in attitude following engagement with our targeted interventions. These outcomes reflect a deeper change—reduced reoffending, increased safety, and renewed hope for a better path forward.

Our education services continued to provide nurturing, supportive learning environments for young people who may not have thrived in mainstream education.



All of our schools inspected by OFSTED this year achieved a 'Good' rating. Among our school leavers: 84% moved on to positive destinations. 97% achieved their Mathematics qualification—a testament to the support and structure Catch22 offers every learner.

## Looking ahead

Catch22's Public Service Reform agenda is deeply embedded in our history and is central to our mission moving forward. It remains a key area of focus; taking the learning from our frontline delivery and the experience of practitioners and the people we work with to drive meaningful policy change. But above all, Catch22 is delivery organisation. High quality delivery is at the heart of what we do. Many of our services and programmes have won awards, been recognised and accredited as industry-leading and have been rated highly by regulators. This is testament to the hard work of Catch22 colleagues and partners, alongside our constant desire to improve.

As we reflect on the year to date, we're proud not only of the outcomes—but of the stories behind them. Whether it's a young person finding confidence, a parent accessing support, or someone leaving prison and finding stability, every number represents a step towards a stronger society. Our mission is to build resilience, promote inclusion, and help every person we serve feel surrounded by opportunity and purpose. In the year ahead, we remain committed to that mission—with energy, empathy, and an unwavering belief in what's possible.



## The continued support of our royal patron

**H**HRH The Princess Royal, visited our specialist service supporting young people in Hampshire affected by substance misuse. She met with our interventions team, heard inspiring stories from the young people who have used our service to overcome challenges, and learned about our community-focused approach. Catch22 were honoured to welcome our royal patron with additional visits to our Redthread Youth Violence Intervention Programme at St Mary's Hospital and Include School in Ipswich earlier this year. During her visit, HRH met with students and teachers engaged in a variety of activities, including the Eco Warriors project, where pupils creatively learned about recycling by crafting bird feeders from reusable materials. HRH also unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the visit which now hangs proudly in the school's entrance.







**"I'm proud that this visit has allowed us to showcase to our patron, The Princess Royal, the fantastic place Include Suffolk is now in, having just received our Ofsted GOOD rating. The visit is testament to the brilliant efforts of our staff and students in building Include Suffolk's supportive and collaborative learning environment"**

**WORDS FROM DARYL BATES,  
HEAD TEACHER**



# Restorative justice - the prison system unlocked?

From supporting victims of crime to cope and recover, to helping perpetrators to lead pro-social lives, Restorative Justice has proven to be a valuable tool that extends beyond traditional approaches in helping people move forward. We'll explore how implementing it across public services can build stronger and safer communities.

**R**estorative Justice (RJ) is an approach to addressing crime and conflict, with a focus on resolution and accountability. It involves a form of communication between parties with a stake in a specific offence, working collectively to move on. Irrespective of the age, background and setting, within Catch22's work across the criminal justice sector we've seen RJ be a proven approach that helps our services drive meaningful rehabilitation, support victims, and ultimately create safer and more positive environments. In settings such as HMP Thameside, in which Catch22 delivers the Offender Management Unit (OMU), the application of RJ demonstrates its potential to transform the culture within custodial environments.

In March 2024, Catch22 launched the RJ pilot programme in response to feedback from service users expressing a strong interest in understanding and practising restorative approaches. The initiative engages both staff and prisoners in building a rehabilitative culture rooted in accountability, conflict resolution, and relationship repair. What sets this approach apart is, as well as the direct delivery of RJ, the pilot's commitment to tailored training and support. The key initiatives include:

**Training staff and peer mentors**  
Equipping staff and voluntary Restorative Practice Champions, who have demonstrated skills in managing conflicts proactively and promoting positive relationships, with the foundational knowledge they need to practice restorative approaches.

**Collaboration with departments**  
The pilot programme works closely with various teams within the prison to ensure a cohesive approach to violence reduction and support for restorative practices, that isn't just siloed to certain parts or processes within the prison.

**Conflict resolution and mediation**  
The pilot delivers direct support for resolving conflicts and mediating issues, which helps maintain a safe and respectful environment for everyone involved.

Out in the community, Catch22 works to upskill a wide variety of its services in RJ, such as its colleges and community rehabilitation services and through its Gangs and Violence Reduction Training offer; a training series aimed at supporting and developing professionals who engage with people affected by violence.



Words from trainee recipient: " I strongly believe that using a restorative approach will help us get to the root causes of certain issues so that we can reduce violence and create a more positive community within our establishments."

## JUSTICE AND EDUCATION

After recognising the benefit that RJ could provide with this cohort, this training has been developed to include Restorative Practice and Restorative Justice Facilitator training to a Level 2 standard, a three-day course, which gives participants the tools to execute the restorative justice process from beginning to end. This includes the initial assessment, including risk assessing and support for both parties, possible face-to-face restorative conference or shuttle conferencing and letters, supporting parties to decide the right outcomes for them and aftercare. Following the course, participants feel more confident in resolving smaller conflicts through restorative principles and conversational techniques and supporting service users with any conflict either through the restorative justice process or offering support alongside it. 9/10 participants said the training was very good or excellent. 100% participants left the training with a good understanding of Restorative Practice techniques and how they can improve service users relationships.

### RJ through victim services

Delivery of RJ across Catch22's victim services – where the term and practice is probably the most familiar – has been critical in helping our services achieve positive outcomes for those they support. Catch22's victim services in Leicestershire and Hertfordshire are transforming how crime and conflict are addressed. Through these services' RJ offer, victims have the opportunity to share the impact of crime in a safe, structured environment guided by trained restorative justice caseworkers. Simultaneously, the process allows harmers to take responsibility for their actions, whereby the services work with offenders in prisons to facilitate RJ interventions.

Jas Purewal, Specialist Restorative Justice Caseworker at Victim First, tells us about restorative justice, the benefits, and how Catch22 is putting it into practice. He has managed many complex and sensitive cases involving murder, sexual and domestic violence. "Whatever the crime, I can see the overwhelming benefit of this restorative approach. It really allows people to move on even if there are no answers to questions such as 'Why did you do this?' It allows closure through the process of being listened to, and speaking openly about their experience and the impact the crime has had on them," he says. There is overwhelming evidence that victims who have their voices heard have greater satisfaction with the justice system as a whole. Not only this, but a restorative approach can work to reduce court hearing and sentencing times – and therefore reduce costs.



**“Catch22 are working with prison managers to recruit, train and support prisoners to be restorative practice champions”**

WORDS FROM  
INDEPENDENT  
MONITORING BOARDS,  
HMP WANDSWORTH

**imb** Independent  
Monitoring  
Boards



Whether addressing anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood disputes or other offences, restorative justice offers an alternative to punitive measures. This can also include work with families where the impact of an offence has caused a breakdown in relationship. This year, Leicestershire Victim First will be starting a programme to promote and implement restorative practices in schools, particularly aimed at those who have been, or are at risk of becoming, excluded. Restorative interventions will involve working directly with a young person to help them manage conflicts with others (such as other students or staff members) and facilitating restorative work such as circle discussions and meetings, letter writing etc. This programme will offer schools an alternative, restorative way of thinking about addressing discipline and resolving conflict, as well as shift their approach away from punishment and towards repairing harm and rebuilding relationships.

At Catch22, we believe that reflection is beneficial at any stage in the criminal justice system and we've ensured our harm reduction programmes are underpinned by restorative practice. Our Gang Workers help prisoners break the cycle of violence by contextualising violent actions, working on decision making skills and finding new responses to familiar situations. And it works: since the service was introduced in 2013, the peer-on-peer gang related violence rate has reduced by 50%. Resolving the conflict quickly and definitively is essential for any prison community to function. While serving a custodial sentence, people live in incredibly close quarters and see the same individuals every day, so a failure to address issues is often what causes the situation to escalate and cause serious harm. In this sense, prisons aren't all that different from society as a whole.

In 2019, Catch22's Victim Service staff met *Elizabeth*, a woman who lost her husband *Max* to a murder by two friends, following an argument between them. She wanted to use restorative justice, where a meeting between the victim and the offender is organised, as a way of dealing with the aftermath of the crime. This was facilitated through a conference in prison between two harmers; *Richard* and *Sally*. *Elizabeth* was able to ask questions and tell *Richard* the impact the offence had on her and her children and listen to *Richard*'s responses. "Restorative justice is not as hard as you would think it would be; it's the wait that is the hardest part. Since taking part in restorative justice, my anxiety has reduced, and I feel that a weight has been lifted from my shoulders," she says.

### Across the communities

Whilst we know that strong and connected communities improve the quality of our lives, we're not naïve. All communities have a degree of disorder, and it's how we respond to those incidents and to individuals involved that ultimately makes our communities resilient. Through our work across the justice sector, we know that those who experience the restorative process are less likely to reoffend than those who are punitively punished. That's not to say that we think of it as a replacement, more that we believe it can enrich a sentence and greatly aid the rehabilitation process. Helping someone to understand the impact of their actions is a significant deterrent, and can stop the often repeated cycle of crime. It can heal rifts in relationships and in communities, and foster a greater sense of empathy and understanding. Investing in and promoting restorative justice for both victims and offenders benefits us all.



# Building bridges for bold creatives

In March of this year, the government announced a new package of support for the future of the creative industry, a creative education boost to support young people in high-quality arts.

**R**eaching the highest level in the past 11 years, almost one million young people in the UK are currently not in education, employment, or training (NEET) something which we are actively tackling in our employability and skills programmes. However, it is well known that disadvantaged young people face significant barriers to employment and career progression – and entering the creative industries is no exception. Whilst the government's announcement sets out promising plans for the future, in April, we celebrated what we are already doing in this space.

For the past three years, we have delivered TikTok Creative Academy, which supports young people furthest from the job market into careers in the creative industries. On the 3rd of April, in partnership with Factory International, we brought together hundreds of talented young minds and industry leaders under one roof at the iconic Aviva Studios, Manchester, to grow skills, networks and to celebrate the impact of our work. So far, TikTok Creative Academy has supported over 2,200 young people and is on the way to achieving 1,000 job outcomes. Our success was reflected in the Creative Careers Festival with over 500 people registering interest and attendance.

The event included a speed mentoring, which was fiercely popular, with over 100 attendees taking part and 14 creative professionals offering bespoke advice in one-to-one sessions. There was also a pitching masterclass, delivered by Flematu Sessay, a British-Sierra Leonean interdisciplinary creative and cultural producer. She focused on helping attendees build confidence in articulating their work and personal stories across various formats, including job interviews, funding applications and creative pitches. We ensured the event bridged the gap between young creatives looking for work and employers actively recruiting and offering work experience opportunities.

Employers and training providers were invited to host stalls in a marketplace-style area, where attendees could meet and speak with over 20 creative organisations. We know this is a particularly impactful way of supporting young people, who often lack not only confidence, but also the network and knowledge to successfully navigate creative opportunities by engaging employers in the need to support the future of Manchester's creative economy. As a result, the energy and atmosphere of the event were electric – it was busy, vibrant and full of exciting opportunities to explore.






**“We are about  
to mark the  
1,000th person  
supported into  
work, training  
or further  
education”**

Adeola Adelakun

John McGrath

Ronke Jane Ade



**“This event, which celebrates our third year of delivering the programme, has opened up pathways for Manchester youth”**

WORDS FROM HILDA DOTSEY, TIKTOK CREATIVE ACADEMY SENIOR SERVICE MANAGER

The Creative Careers Festival is just a small part of the main employability and skills programme. TikTok Creative Academy offers tailored, wraparound support focusing on the creative industries which aligns with each young person's interests, supporting the government's mission to break down barriers to opportunity and build an inclusive and thriving labour market where everyone has the opportunity of good work. Many of the young people we support are passionate about digitally creative roles, such as social media management, running small online businesses, graphic design, photography and filmmaking. We encourage them to develop skills and confidence in tech and AI, explore how it's shaping industries, and learn how to work alongside these advancements to enhance their skills and opportunities.

Furthermore, our digital employability programmes are designed to provide opportunities for people from excluded groups to get working in specifically digital or tech enabled roles. Whatever the industry a young person wants to get into, we work with them to realise their ambitions, set meaningful goals and provide the ongoing support and skills building they need to achieve, thus contributing to the governments long-term ambition to achieve an 80% employment rate and invest in the creative industries.

Code4000 is another programme that addresses the barriers to accessing tech enabled roles, by working with women in the community to provide entry level training in coding and employment support. The programme consists of flexible online training with a one-to-one tutor.

For the past two years, we at Catch22 have collaborated with The PA Foundation to develop an innovative programme supporting women in London, who have criminal justice experience, to develop the skills and support needed to access entry level jobs in the tech industry.

**“My experience with the Code4000 training was nothing short of transformative”**

WORDS FROM RACHEL, PARTICIPANT OF THE PILOT PROGRAMME





Not only do participants learn the latest and essential coding skills, on completion of the programme participants continue to receive support from Catch22 to improve their CV and interview confidence, as well as support to find relevant roles or access further training. Furthermore, graduates from the programme have been collaborating with volunteers from PA Consulting and members of their Women In Tech Network to receive additional mentoring with a number of participants joining a Python short course to further refine their skills. Code4000, now in its second year, will now be taking referrals beyond Greater London to a national level, allowing women with criminal justice experience, from all over the country, to gain access to free training in coding and support to find a role within the tech industry.

## Expanding nationwide

Senior Operations Manager at Catch22, Kimberley Owen, shares “We are thrilled to see Code4000 expand to supporting women nationwide, allowing our team to reach even more women who will benefit from improving their tech and employability skills. The Code4000 programme uniquely delivers high-quality entry level coding skills to women with experience in the criminal justice system from various communities. Not only does the programme empower our learners, but it also opens up opportunities in the digital skills sector while breaking down multiple barriers associated with criminal justice experience. We are excited to see where year 2 will take our learners!”

This programme will also be improving the mentoring offer, giving more opportunities for programme graduates to be mentored directly from professionals in the tech industry to build their career. With this new funding, we are particularly looking to support individuals with the following experiences:

- Women with previous criminal convictions
- Women in custody who are due to be released
- Women who have been released on licence
- Parents with children who are engaged in criminal activity
- Women whose spouse or partner may be engaged in criminal activity.



# The future of the tech sphere

**Is there a need for more people to move into the digital/tech sphere? What challenges will young people face in finding tech jobs?**

**A**longside tech roles such as digital marketing, project management and web design, there is an increasing demand for skilled professionals who can drive digital transformation forward and organisations are starting to rely more heavily on digitised tools including cybersecurity, data analysis and software development. They therefore need a workforce that is technically skilled and adaptable and with this digital skills gap, it can be a struggle to find qualified candidates in a rapidly expanding industry.

Click Start, a programme developed by the Institute of Coding and funded by Nominet offering digital, tech and employability skills support, sees learners often come onto the programme with poor mental health, lacking self-belief from facing multiple job rejections and even educational burnout after leaving college or university without the support for next steps.



Additionally, some of our learners are seeking refuge as they have recently moved to the UK and are facing barriers setting up a life here – including financial difficulties and housing constraints. Yet there remain some fundamental skills barriers to finding work too, including how to write a strong CV, interview confidently and where to start with developing a portfolio of work. Whilst these barriers and challenges lie at the feet of our learners, there also remains a lack of opportunities in the education and labour market. Many roles require work experience and we see that there is a significant gap in hands-on work experience opportunities in real-world settings, to develop core skills, such as digital marketing, UX/UI, IT support and web development.

**CLICK  
START.**



Click Start by Bath Spa University helps learners become knowledgeable, skilled and “work ready” digital and tech professionals. Click Start offers the skills for young people to enter a fast-growing sector that offers sustainable career progression, development, and job security, through working on progressive, forward-thinking projects. The 8-week technical course delivered by Bath Spa University comprises of three principal areas:

- Web development covers HTML, CSS and bootstrap.
- UX/UI explores ideation, fundamentals of colour, typography, wire framing and prototyping.
- Digital marketing which looks at SEO and different strands of content and email marketing.

So far, 313 learners have started the course since May 2023 and over 69% of our learners that have moved into employment are in a digital career, including roles such as Digital Analyst, DevOps Engineer and Marketing Researcher.

One of our learners, arrived in UK as a refugee seeking asylum, with his wife and newborn baby and saw the opportunity of Click Start as a chance to build a life for his family. They faced significant barriers such as limited financial support and were living in a hotel at the time. Through Click Start, he worked on developing his CV, received support with completing job applications and interview preparation and did some work around resilience, and positive reframing strategies.

He faced a lot of rejection from interviews whilst simultaneously undergoing interviews for asylum status. We witnessed a huge growth in his confidence throughout his time on Click Start and he has now been awarded the right to stay in the UK and has secured a tech job with the NHS in Bristol. “The most positive aspect of my experience with Catch22 was with my Career Coach and how she supported me during an incredibly difficult and emotional time. She reached out unexpectedly when I was stressed, and calmed me down, offering guidance. She helped me build the confidence to apply for jobs and attend interviews on my own. Her continuous support has empowered me to handle the process independently,” he says.



# Fueling youth potential

## A bright start, to a brighter future!

**C**reating a brand that truly resonates with young people means putting them at the very heart of its design—and that's exactly what Catch22 did. The new Catch22 youth brand wasn't simply created for young people, it was built with them, through a co-creation process involving over 120 individuals aged 13 to 21 from across the UK.

This inclusive, collaborative journey ensured the brand speaks authentically to the experiences, aspirations, and values of young people today.

The project started with a clear goal: to develop a youth-facing brand that felt genuinely owned by those it represents.

We didn't want a top-down approach with adult assumptions about what young people want.

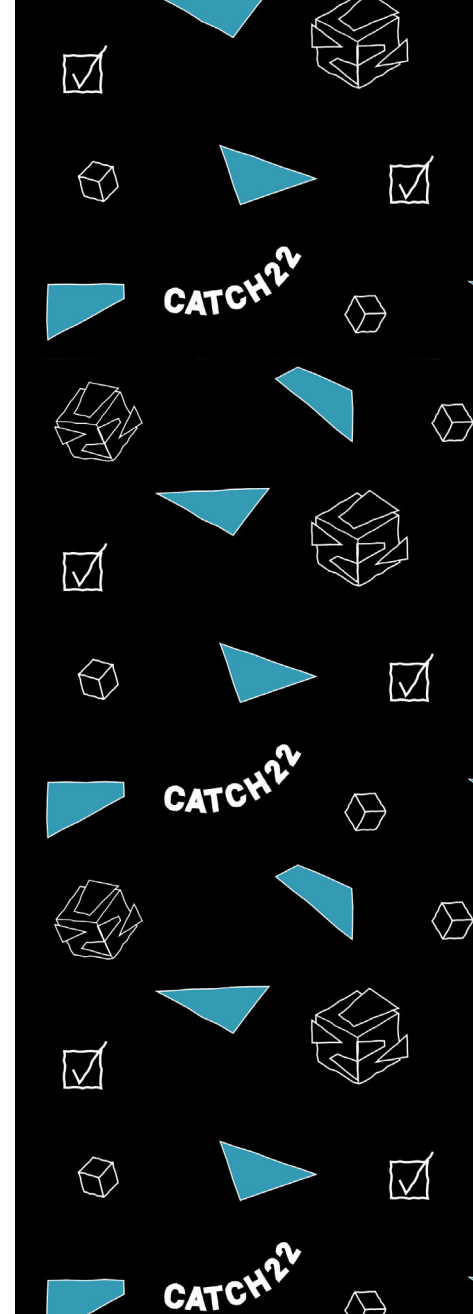
Instead, we asked the young people themselves. Through a series of workshops, one-on-one interviews, design labs, and online forums, participants were invited to explore big questions—What does opportunity mean to you? What makes you feel seen or heard? What does support look like in your world? What emerged from the process was a brand rooted in authenticity, boldness, and inclusion. Young participants described wanting a space that felt welcoming, hopeful, and real—

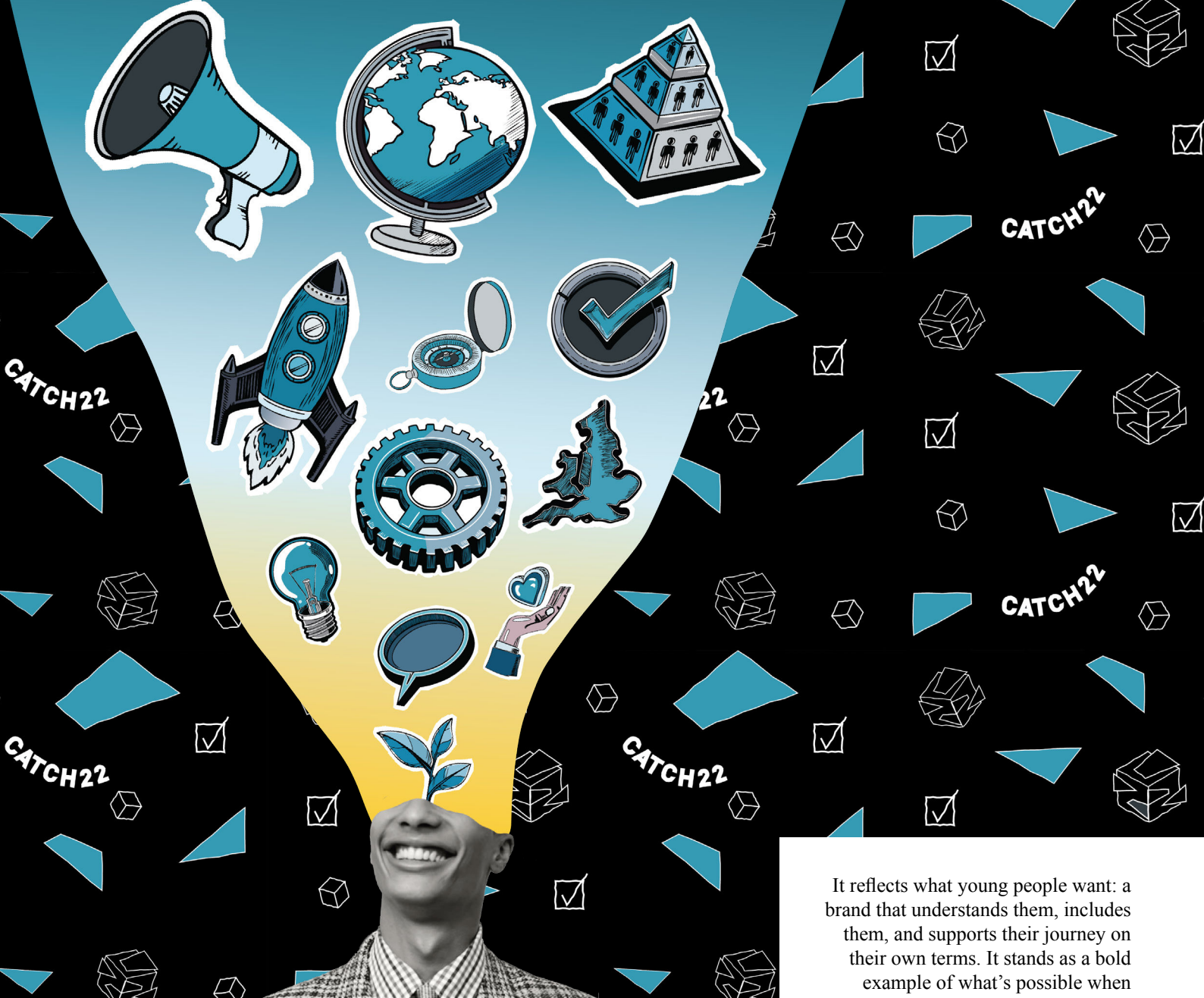
not sugar coated or corporate.

They wanted something that acknowledged their struggles while highlighting their power to shape their own futures.

Importantly, co-creation wasn't a one-off event.

It was an iterative, evolving process over several months.





## The Catch22 youth brand is a way of making the young people we help feel seen and heard.

WORDS BY NAOMI HULSTON, CEO

Feedback was gathered at every stage, with the young co-creators regularly returning to test and refine ideas. This gave them ownership and allowed their ideas to shape the outcome in a meaningful way—not just ticking a consultation box, but truly designing the brand together. The impact of this process went far beyond the visual identity. Many young people involved reported feeling more confident, empowered, and listened to.

For some, it was their first experience being asked for their opinion in a formal setting—and being taken seriously. For others, it sparked an interest in design, communications, or social impact careers. The process itself became a platform for growth. The final brand is a powerful reflection of the process that built it. It feels fresh and modern, but more importantly, it feels real.

It reflects what young people want: a brand that understands them, includes them, and supports their journey on their own terms. It stands as a bold example of what's possible when organisations genuinely trust young people with the creative process.

Our youth brand is now more than a logo or a campaign—it's a living identity shaped by the voices of over 120 young people. It shows what co-creation can achieve: not just a better product, but a stronger, more authentic connection to the people it's meant to serve. And most importantly, it's a brand that young people proudly call their own.

**"I really like that it looks hand drawn, makes me think we're more on the same level"**

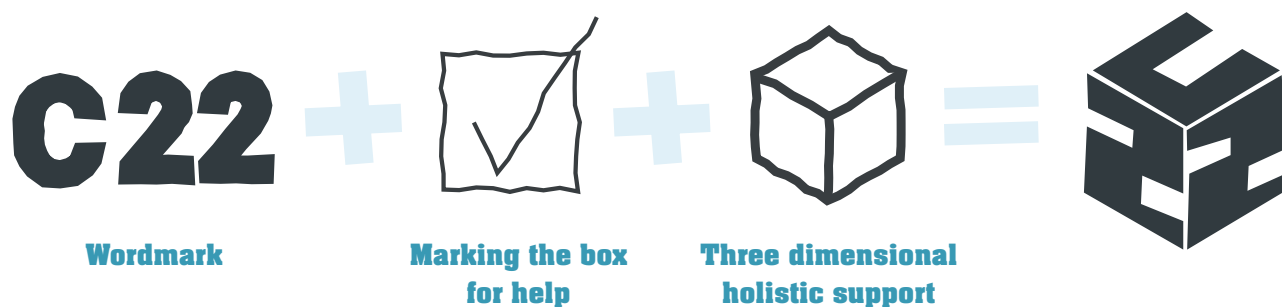
WORDS FROM YOUNG PERSON





**I**n March 2024 we began developing the Catch22 youth brand. The aim being to increase self-referrals to our youth services such as employability and substance misuse and have more of a presence on youth facing channels such as TikTok and Instagram. It was important to include young people in the creation of this branch of our brand from the start of the project, after all, they are the people who it will be designed for. We conducted interviews with staff, key stakeholders and, most importantly, the young people we support. We learnt a lot.

The workshops we ran for young people were integral in learning about what they look for in a brand, specifically determining what the Catch22 brand means to them and how we can best communicate with the younger generation. Tasks in this workshop included writing taglines, choosing their favourite existing logos and even designing their own. This was integral to the youth brand project, the findings from these workshops were both incredibly insightful and surprising.

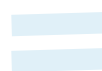
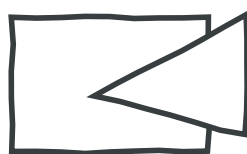






These youth workshops have formed a blueprint for the project going forward. In conversations with the young people, it became clear that expression and motivation was preferred over explanation when it comes to logos. Rather than having a logo that you can look at and understand everything we do, they want a logo that will make them feel like they want to be part of something. This added an extra level of complexity because emotions differ from person-to-person.

However, at this point the penny dropped – they didn't want a typical teen brand with jaunty angles and childish typeface, they wanted something that oozes cool, that they will be proud to display on social media or even a t-shirt. This ties in with the initial finding that showed they did not want to be talked down to. The idea of an aspirational, rather than juvenile logo also slots in perfectly with Catch22's values – the desire for improving their lives and invigorating them with the motivation to do so.



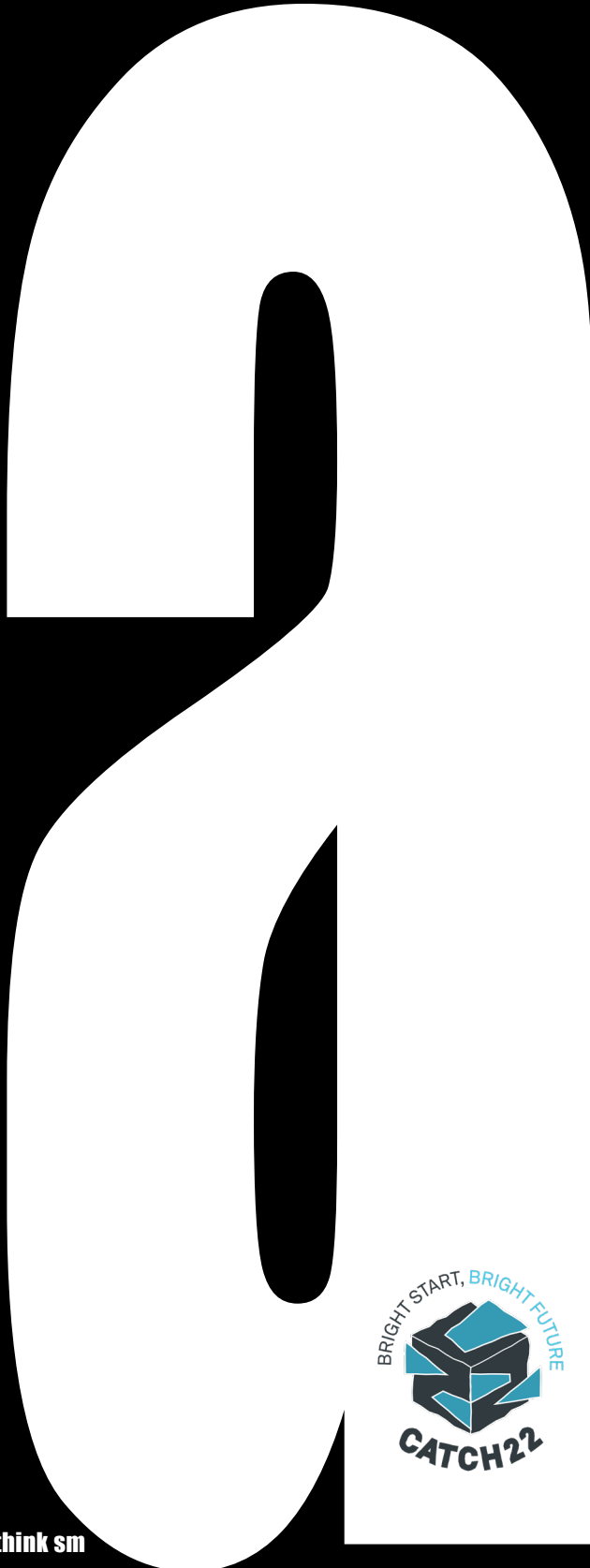
**Thinking outside  
the box**

**CATCH22**



## THE YOUTH BRAND

Catch22 recently brought its youth brand to life with a dynamic photoshoot featuring four young people. The shoot captured not just the visual identity of the brand, but the energy and authenticity behind it as these young people are inspired to dream bigger and shine brighter.



All four participants—aged between 17 and 20—expressed how much they loved wearing the new brand. “It doesn’t feel forced or cringey like some youth stuff does,” said one. “It actually feels like something I’d wear, not just a logo slapped on a hoodie.” The clean, modern designs and bold colours reflected the brand values they helped shape—real, inclusive, and empowering.

What stood out most was how proud they felt to be part of something made with them, not for them. The photoshoot wasn’t just about taking pictures—it was a celebration of youth voice, creativity, and ownership. The relaxed, collaborative atmosphere gave each young person space to express themselves and showcase the brand on their own terms.

This shoot is just one example of how we continue to put young people at the centre of our work—showing that when youth are involved from the start, the results are more authentic, meaningful, and truly reflective of their world. With the launch of our youth brand,

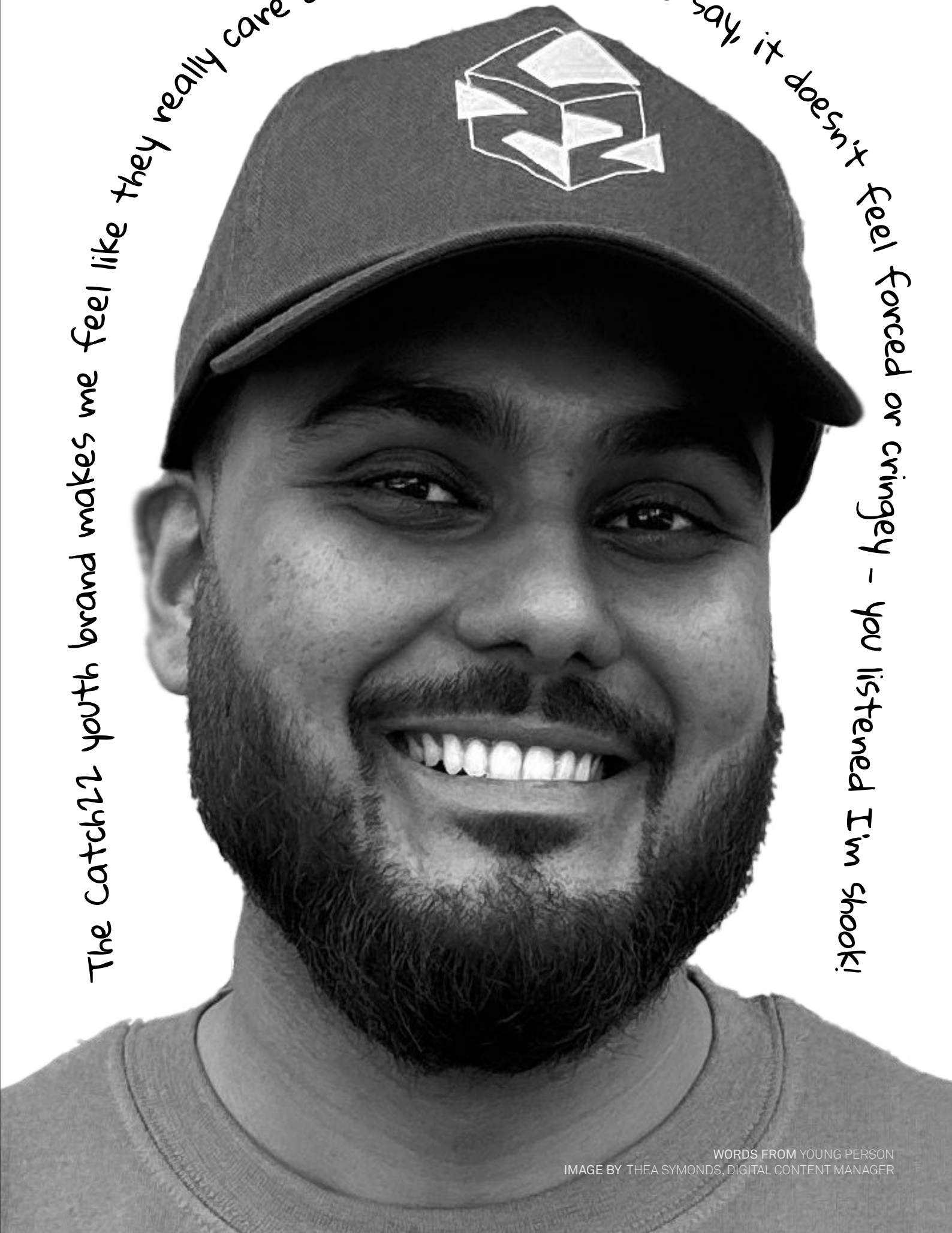
co-created with over 120 young people aged 13–21, Catch22 has laid the foundations for a bold, authentic identity—one that reflects the real lives, voices, and values of today’s youth. But this isn’t the end of the journey; it’s just the beginning. The next phase is about embedding the brand across everything we do, ensuring it continues to evolve with young people at every step.

In the future, the youth brand will become a key platform for amplifying youth voice—not just within our services, but in wider conversations about education, employment, justice, and social change.

There are also plans to expand the use of the brand across our youth-facing programmes—whether that’s through on-the-ground services, digital platforms, or national advocacy work. Wherever young people interact with Catch22, the brand will act as a consistent, relatable presence—something they can recognise, connect with, and trust.



The catch22 youth brand makes me feel like they really care about what I have to say, it doesn't feel forced or cringey - you listened I'm shook!



# “IT ACTUALLY FEELS LIKE SOMETHING I’D WEAR”

**At Catch22, we see branding as identity.**

**To truly engage Gen Z—digitally savvy, socially conscious, and authenticity-driven youth, we’ve developed a youth brand that speaks their language. By tackling issues like social justice, education, employment, and mental health, we aim to build real connections and lasting impact.**

**W**hether it’s through merchandise, storytelling projects, or youth-led events, the brand will serve as a vehicle for building community and creating spaces where young people feel seen, heard, and valued. Ultimately, the future of the Catch22 youth brand is about sustainability and impact. It’s not just a campaign or a marketing asset—it’s a long-term commitment to co-creation, youth leadership, and authenticity. By continuing to put young people at the centre, we are building something far more powerful than a brand—we’re building trust, community, and a platform that can grow alongside a generation that are supported by our new services.



Building on Catch22’s experience delivering support to victims of all ages in Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, and Greater Manchester, the Young Londoners’ Victim Service will provide young people with trauma-informed, personalised emotional and practical support, and advocacy.



With over ten years of experience supporting victims of child exploitation across England, the Support Through Exploitation and Prevention Service (STEPS) is bringing this expertise to West Mercia to provide both preventative support and specialist care for children affected by child criminal and sexual exploitation.



Our navigator and tailored support service in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire offers holistic support to children and young adults at reachable moments—such as after hospital discharge or release from police custody—to identify risks and explore support options. We work closely with professionals in police custody, hospitals, and other healthcare settings.



# The power of emojis - when symbols hide harm

Netflix's *Adolescence* exposes the secret world of emoji-coded language—an online shorthand used to hide harmful conversations in plain sight. But what do these emojis really mean, and how can we spot them? Ellie Leacy from Social Media and Marketing speaks.

**Content warning: This article contains discussions of a sexual nature, violence towards women and incel culture.**

We often see the use of secret emoji codes in online spaces to evade detection and hide harmful content. Social media platforms use algorithms to monitor and remove posts containing explicit or dangerous language, but emojis provide a subtle workaround. By replacing words with symbols, users can discuss sensitive or harmful topics without triggering content filters. This coded language is particularly prevalent in online subcultures, where individuals seek to avoid scrutiny - ranging from those advocating harmful ideologies to those involved in illegal activities. Secret emojis also plays a role in online harassment, where they are used to disguise threats or harmful messages that might otherwise be flagged and removed. For parents and those working with young people, understanding these hidden meanings is crucial.

What might seem like harmless symbols can carry coded messages about violence, self-harm, or extremist views. By recognising these patterns, we can better protect ourselves and others from online harm.

## **The explanation of secret emojis**

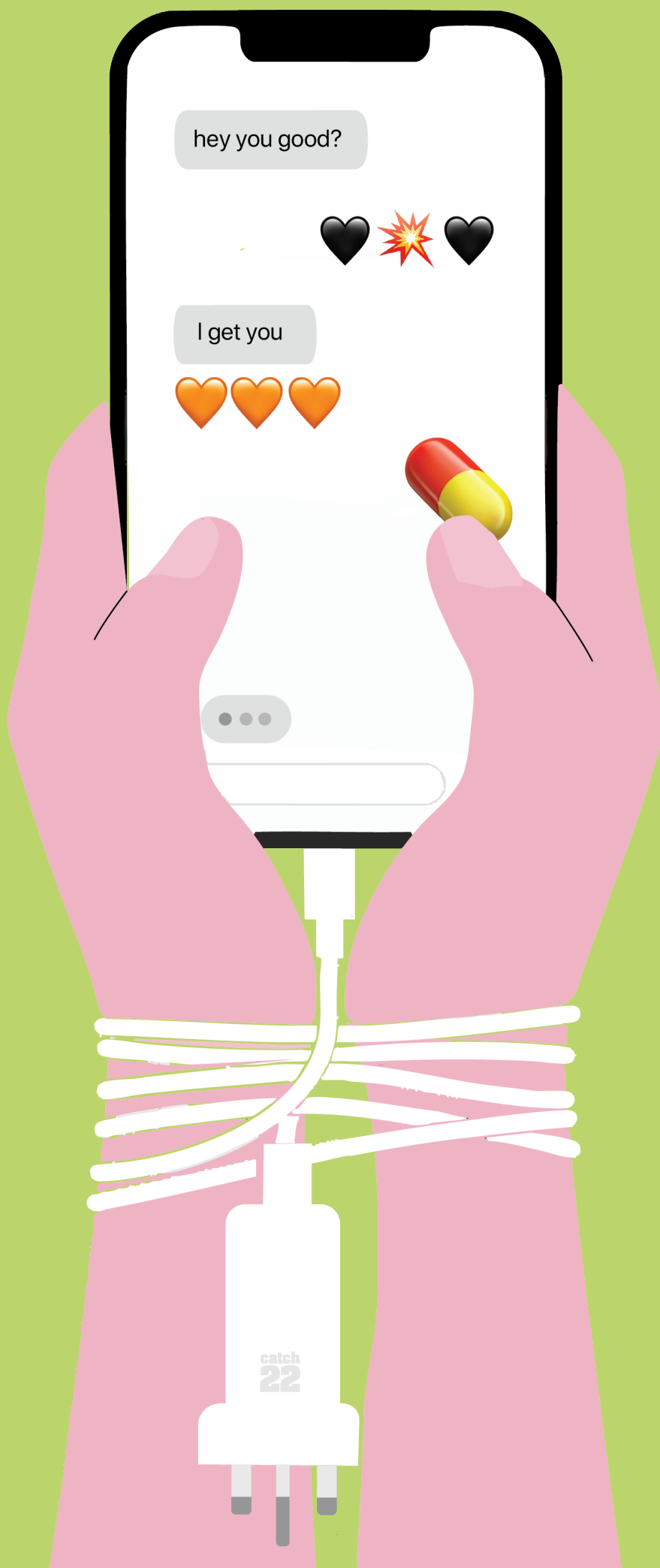
**Red Pill Emoji:** Symbolises the belief of awakening to certain ideologies such as the manosphere, often associated with misogynistic views.  
**Explosion Emoji:** Represents pent-up frustration and explosive ideas or actions, often in a violent context and particularly related to involuntary celibacy (incel) communities.  
**100 Emoji:** Indicates adherence to specific beliefs regarding gender dynamics and attraction theories prevalent in certain online communities.

**Kidney Bean Emoji:** Used within incel communities for self-identification, carrying derogatory connotations towards women.

The series also explores coloured heart emojis and their meanings.  
**Black Heart:** Can symbolise nihilism, depression, or rejection of societal norms, often used in incel or extremist contexts.  
**Red Heart:** Represents love; however, it can also be used manipulatively in emotional contexts.  
**Purple Heart:** Suggests sexual attraction or horniness.  
**Yellow Heart:** Indicates interest, often flirty but can also imply superficial engagement.  
**Pink Heart:** Expresses interest but suggests a desire for emotional connection without sexual implications.  
**Orange Heart:** Offers reassurance, such as “you’re going to be fine,” but can also imply platonic affection.

The use of coded messaging is extensive, as it is being used to covertly discuss political subject matters and social groups whilst hiding in plain sight.





***“Adolescence is like a film trailer to get people interested in the sinister world of incel culture and misogyny in society.”***



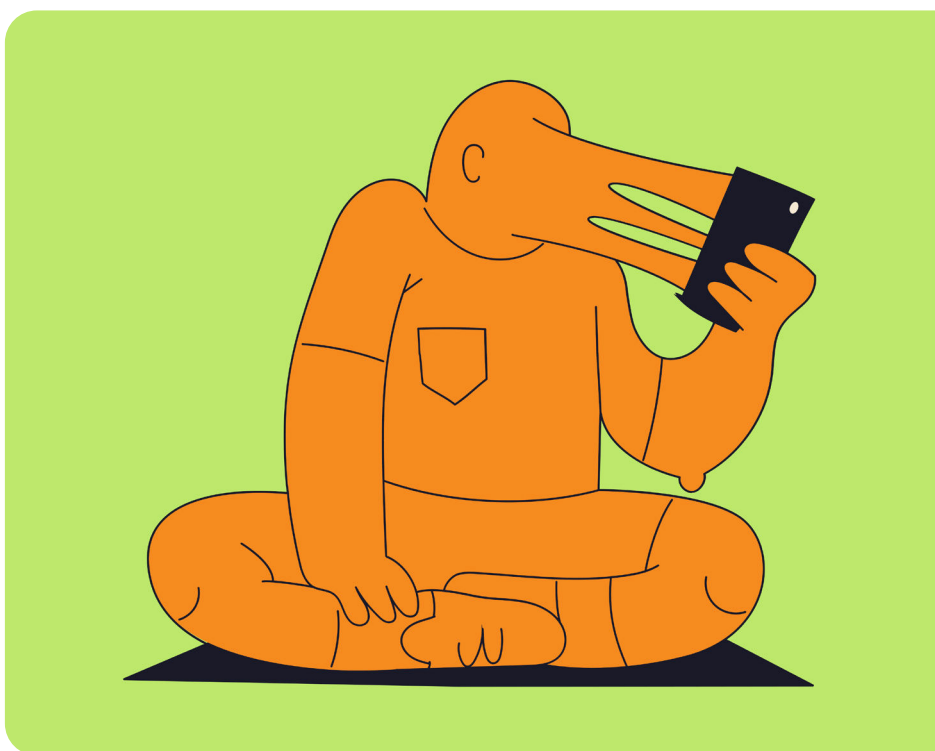
**Alien Emoji:** Typically represents extraterrestrial life, it can be used negatively to refer to undocumented immigrants.

**Black Flag:** Associated with anarchist movements or extremist groups.

**Igloo Emoji:** Used by members of the Boogaloo movement, known for advocating a second civil war or societal collapse. The igloo is a play on the term “Big Igloo,” a phonetic twist on “Boogaloo”.

**Hammer Emoji:** Can be used to reference the Hammerskins, a white supremacist skinhead group. Its usage in certain contexts may signal affiliation or support for this organisation.

**8-Ball Emoji:** Can be used as a covert reference to “88,” which stands for “Heil Hitler” (H being the 8th letter of the alphabet). This subtle usage allows individuals to signal neo-Nazi affiliations without overtly displaying prohibited symbols.



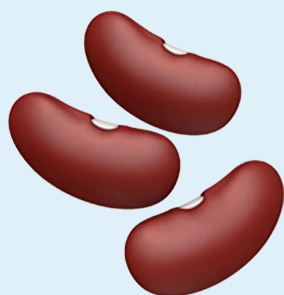
## Spotting the signs

Understanding the coded language used online isn't just about staying informed - it's about safeguarding young people and empowering families and professionals to step in early when online harm is happening below the surface. It all starts with learning the language, the acronyms and symbols that legitimise violence.

## Open conversations

Create judgment-free spaces for young people to talk about what they're seeing online. Asking, “What does that emoji mean to you?” or “Have you ever seen people using codes like that online?” can spark open dialogue without shame or suspicion.





**The reality is, social media brings both opportunities and risks.”**

WORDS FROM YOUNG PERSON,  
SOCIAL SWITCH AMBASSADOR

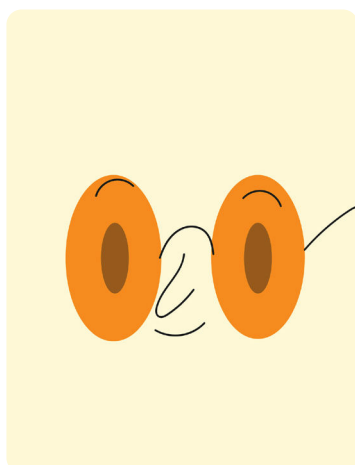
## Affects of online harms

At Catch22, we are particularly concerned about how social media exposes children to crime and exploitation. *Johnny Bolderson*, Senior Service Manager in County Lines Support and Rescue for Catch22, described social media and online gaming as the “foundation of county lines recruitment,” making it easier for criminal gangs to exploit young people. Although we agree that this issue needs confronting, we do not support a ban for under-16s from social media as a blanket solution. Instead, and alongside stricter regulation of online platforms that is robustly enforced, we advocate for a more empowering approach: equipping young people with the knowledge, tools, and support to navigate the digital world safely and confidently.

The Social Switch Project provides training to parents/trusted adults, schools and professionals that children come into contact with. We believe that education and engagement are far more effective than restriction alone. The Times, Crime and Justice Commission report released earlier this year, notes that cybercrime now accounts for about half of all crime affecting people in England and Wales and recognises that it causes not only financial but also emotional and psychological harm. Emojis can be harmless fun, but used in the wrong context, they can carry serious weight. By having open conversations, and using the support available, we can create safer online spaces for young people - and challenge the hidden online harms.

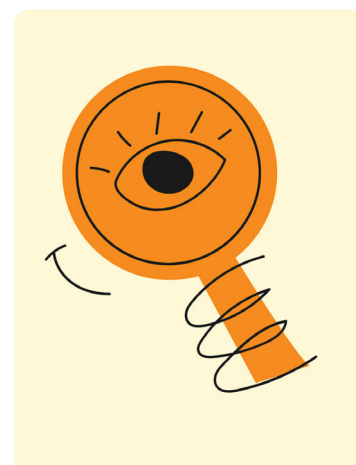
## Don't rely on filters alone

Content filters and parental controls are helpful, but they don't catch everything. Harmful messages are often disguised or shared through closed networks.



## Look beyond the emoji

A single symbol isn't always a cause for alarm - but repeated patterns, sudden secrecy, or a change in how a young person uses their phone can be.





# Why we need youth policy to safeguard young futures

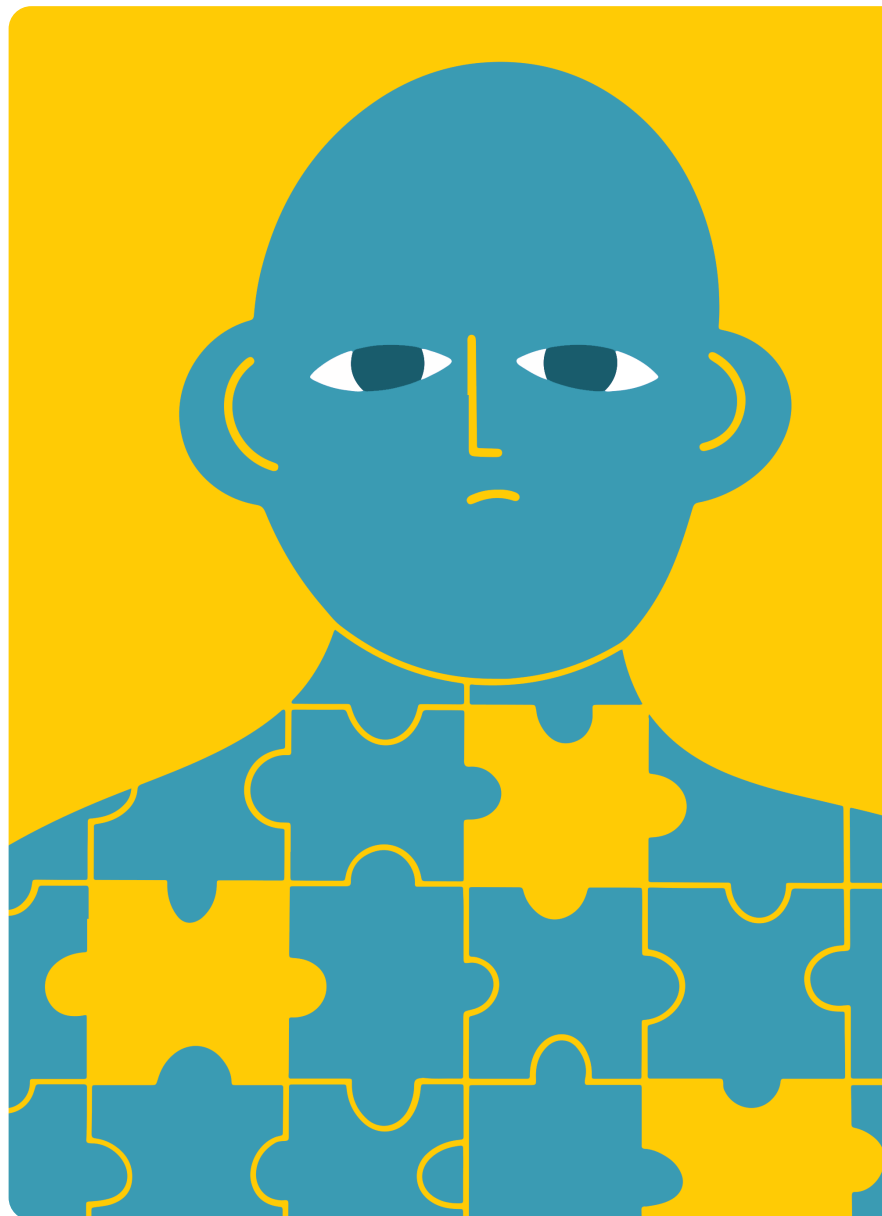
**At Catch22, we believe that doing our work well creates lasting change—especially for the young people that face the greatest challenges. Marike van Harskamp, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, speaks.**

**T**he scale of challenges for young people becomes clear when we look at the statistics:

- Nearly 1 million 16-24 year olds are not in education, employment, or training (ONS, May 2025)
- Over 25% of young adults have a diagnosable mental health condition (NHS England, June 2025)
- 20% of 13-17 year olds were victims of violence in the past year; and 67% of teenagers fear becoming a victim (YEF, 2024)
- Nearly 84,000 children are being looked after by their local authority (DfE, Nov 2024)
- Child poverty continues to rise – with nearly a third of children living in households that struggle to afford essentials like food, clothes, and beds (DWP, May 2025)

## **Influencing change for young people**

At Catch22, our vision is a strong society where everyone has a good place to live, a purpose, and good people around them. These sobering stats have only boldened our commitment to this vision and our hard work in safeguarding the futures of children and young people.



We want to:

- Draw the line on the exploitation of children and the violence they experience.
- See youth provision that truly delivers in giving children and young people a better, safer, healthier start in life.
- Make sure that young people leaving care no longer have to face the barriers and disadvantages compared to their peers growing up with their families.
- Ensure that every child and young person has support to be in education or training, and get a good quality job.
- End the stark health inequalities experienced by millions of children and young people, who have a life-long impact on life expectancy, wellbeing, and social mobility.

In this mid-year review, we've highlighted key services supporting children and young people across Catch22 and England—showing how our innovative work leads to better outcomes. But how can we prevent them needing our services in the first place?

## Collectively, we have a louder voice, a wider reach and a bigger impact”

WORDS FROM MARIKE VAN HARSKAMP,  
HEAD OF POLICY AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

This is where our best practice sharing, policy, and influencing work comes in. As part of our reform agenda, we use our learning, evidence, and expertise to improve the wider systems that children and young people come in contact with. We advocate for changes that enable better service outcomes, to then scale up and share the innovation so more young people can benefit. We collaborate with and influence local and national government to improve legislation and public sector provision to meet the structural challenges for children and young people.

There is no magic wand in safeguarding young futures - no quick fix in turning around child poverty, years of cuts in youth services, or the children's mental health crisis. There is now, however, more political will, a firm economic imperative, and plenty of cross-sector expertise and collaboration to draw on. These are some of the levers we're using in our policy activity on youth provision, youth justice, youth employment, and violence and exploitation impacting children. Practically, we try to align the different parts of the organisation; our policy, operational, leadership, development, communication, and data and insights teams all play a role in pushing for the changes that we know children and young people need.

In the last year alone we have held regular meetings with the Home Office, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education, and Department for Culture Media and Sports. We have hosted visits from Ministers, MPs, and government department policymakers to our schools, violence prevention projects, county lines and exploitation services, and youth employability programmes. We engaged political and policy stakeholders at a local and regional level, which is now even more important as decision-making powers are becoming increasingly devolved. In the media, on our social channels, and in policy meetings, we tell the stories of young people's experiences and the impact of our support - sharing statistical evidence to show the bigger picture.



# Positive futures - achieving change together

At Catch22 we use our data, operational insights, and best practice to respond to government calls for evidence, and consultations about youth employment or tackling knife crime. Increasingly, we focus on amplifying youth voice, such as via our Switch Board youth ambassadors project. We are especially excited to launch our very first integrated campaign this year, in which we plan to ‘draw the line’ of violence and exploitation impacting children.

## **Partnership**

We can’t be in all the spaces all the time – and we can’t do it alone. True to our Catch22 value of collaboration, we seek to work together with others across the sectors to achieve the changes young people want to see.

In 2025 we have, for instance, teamed up with other youth charities to try to make sure that pending new legislation around children’s social care and child criminal exploitation will be fit for purpose. We support the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition in our collective drive towards better mental health provision and preventative ‘Young Futures Hubs’, and add our expertise as a ‘friend of’ the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Youth Affairs. We worked with Youth Employment UK to champion secure, sustainable jobs for young people—particularly those furthest from the workforce. We also help to shape violence prevention policy as a member of the government’s Knife Crime Coalition.

But youth policy isn’t simply about Westminster, the overcrowded committee rooms in the Houses of Parliament, or online meetings with policy advisors in Whitehall government departments. Achieving change in local and national systems and strategies affecting young people is an everyday, and an often-invisible activity that runs through all that we do. After all, public sector reform is about innovation, developing approaches to meet emerging needs for young people, such as our Social Switch Project on online harms or our restorative justice programmes. It’s about the impact of conversations of our leadership team members with strategic stakeholders and decision-makers.



It's about the impact of a safeguarding professionals' meeting about an individual child that may result in more effective local multi-agency work, or referral pathways for our young victims service, embedded youth work in A&Es, or our schools.

The data may look grim, but we have every reason to stay upbeat. We see that wider change is possible when we work together. That's what we do, and what we'll keep doing. With young people, for young people. And maybe, with you too. Don't be shy—get in contact with us if you'd like to help safeguard young futures. [policy@catch-22.org.uk](mailto:policy@catch-22.org.uk).

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