

# Variety Update

2024  
A Year in Focus





## Welcome

# Thank you for your support

### Variety, the Children's Charity, ended 2024 with an incredible breadth of impact.

In the last six months, we've reached record-levels of children and young people, with an accolade of enormously successful, Variety-led national awards, as well as in the North West.

We've put an incredible 87 Sunshine Coaches on the road this year (more than twice last) and donated 130 specialist pieces of equipment and wheelchairs to disabled and disadvantaged children.

Whether it be launching our televised Variety Disability Sports Awards and national 'Voices for Change' access to sports for disabled children campaign, to raising breaking record-breaking amounts at our Property Industry Awards, in not one but three major cities nationwide.

We couldn't be prouder, nor expect a more fantastic way to celebrate our 75th anniversary.

As Variety's new Chief Executive Officer, I have hit the ground running, with an ambitious strategy for growth to reach even more vulnerable children across the U.K at a time when the challenges faced by disabled & disadvantaged children are greater than ever.

In the last 6 months, we've published our first Theory of Change, coupled with our 'Impact Ecosystem' model. This strategic framework equips Variety to build on and scale up a co-ordinated, impactful expansion across the UK.

We are now excellently equipped to drive forward our impact for children. With His Majesty King Charles III, generously choosing patronage of our charity earlier this year, this honour truly testifies to Variety's respected role as a vital charitable institution in the U.K.

We are proud to be able to offer support to so many children and young people across the UK. As a vital supporter, we hope you are too. Thank you for helping us to achieve our mission.

**Laurence Guinness,**  
**Chief Executive Officer**





## Opening Remarks

# An update from Variety, the Children's Charity

This year at Variety, we celebrate our 75th anniversary in Great Britain.

That's 75 years of providing practical help and making an immediate difference to disabled and disadvantaged children and young people.

Every child deserves a chance to live their best life and reach their full potential. Yet today, the cost of raising a disabled child is three times that of raising a non-disabled child.

The cost of living crisis is affecting countless parents like Lucy, who only wish to meet their child's needs:



Lucy, George's Mother

It was the most horrific diagnosis I could have imagined for George. Not being able to walk. The ability to breathe independently, cough, swallow...

When he was using [his] NHS Chair, his muscles actually declined. Because it was simply too heavy.

My son's gone through so much. He's going to lose his shoulder strength just because I can't get him the [wheelchair] he needs.

The pressure is immense.



George, Advocate and beneficiary

Variety gave me this wheelchair. It's light which means I'm keeping more energy [...] I like it because, when I'm older, I'll have to do more independent things on my own.

As I get to do more and more things by myself, it's a step that feels really good to accomplish.

When I'm older I want to be an engineer, to make things that I'm not able to do accessible: so that other people can do them.

[Please watch and learn about George's story, here.](#)

- **Wheelchairs:** Over 40 manual, sport, and powered wheelchairs to foster independence.
- **Equipment:** Over 80 life-changing devices, such as hoists and medical machines.
- **Sunshine Coaches:** 87 opportunities for children and young people to explore the world.
- **Great Days Out:** 19 unforgettable experiences for disadvantaged children across the UK.

2024: A year in focus

# Variety's life changing services



**Kim Kirton,**  
Head of Programmes

“

This year, Variety's life-changing services have grown at a pace that we started at, with an exceptional level of demand.

We've received a significant growth in requests for support from children and families, schools, and organisations. To put this into context, we've experienced an almost 50% increase in requests from both families and for our Sunshine Coaches.

Our team is now also handling a growing number of urgent calls for support for specialist equipment and wheelchairs. With a dedicated team, mentioned earlier this year, now settled and in place, we are well positioned to build more effective services that are fit for the future and meet the evolving needs of families.

”



**87 Sunshine Coaches**  
on the road



**130 children given**  
equipment and wheelchairs



**Secured over 19**  
Great Days Out

## Reflections from our service team

### Special Message from Sunshine Coach Programmes Manager



**Stuart Wilcox,**  
Programme Manager

**2024 has truly exceeded our expectations, on so many levels.**

**We started the year with our ambitious goal of putting 62 Sunshine Coaches on the road to celebrate the 62nd year of the service. We've far exceeded this, with 87 Sunshine Coaches delivered thus far. We are therefore well equipped to transform the pace and scale of engagement with schools nationally.**

**With two dedicated personnel within our service, we are now excellently positioned to resource future growth.**

**We are proud to be thriving, as more and more charities in the UK pause and cancel their services. Variety is playing an increasingly pivotal role in reaching the most disadvantaged communities in the UK.**



## Sunshine Coaches

# Getting the show on the road!

This year, our flagship Sunshine Coach Programme has expanded throughout the UK.

Our team has put an amazing 87 Sunshine Coaches on the road so far, with a further 50 bought to be built and delivered next year. With even more planned and on the way!

In the last six months, we've put an amazing 36 more Coaches on the road. That's an amazing £2.4m secured from our sponsors and schools.

We've delivered more Sunshine Coaches across the UK:

**Northern Ireland**  
Coach delivered

1

**North West England**  
Coaches delivered

16

**Wales**  
Coaches delivered

4

**South West**  
Coaches delivered

5

4

**Scotland**  
Coaches delivered

5

**North East England**  
Coaches delivered

9

**Midlands**  
Coaches delivered

43

**London and South East**  
Coaches delivered

## Looking ahead

Next year, we're aiming to strengthen more Sunshine Coaches on the road! Variety is in a great position to sustain such high levels of delivery for next year.

50% more schools have requested support than last year. This shows no signs of abating and clearly evidences the growing importance of Variety in promoting community transport for children and young people nationally.

Surges in requests are strongest in London and the South East at £2.28m (2023: £700,000), the Midlands at £867,244 (2023: £200,000) and Wales at £170,315 (2023: £25,000).

2024 has proven a vital juncture for the service. We've not received (and delivered on) this extent of demand in almost 15 years.

Variety is now a critical supplier of opportunities for schools across the UK. Promisingly, we have successfully negotiated a further batch of 50 coaches, 'frozen' at existing prices. With further orders planned.

We are especially looking to support more schools, as we retain a competitive service and at prices that are rarely matched on such a scale. All at a time when many organisations are cancelling or pausing services.

## Sunshine Coaches

# Surpassing milestones with our supporters

This year, Variety proudly celebrated our handover of an amazing 87 Sunshine Coaches. It's a feat not achieved in well-over a decade, whilst reaching an amazing accolade of milestones with our partners.

## Variety's first-ever electric Sunshine Coach with DPD

In a ground-breaking move, express parcel delivery firm DPD has donated the first-ever electric Variety Sunshine Coach to Rotherhithe Primary School, marking a historic milestone in the 30-year partnership.

Presented in December, the new electric coach represents a significant step towards sustainability in the charity's fleet of vehicles.

The fully electric vehicle will not only reduce carbon emissions but will also provide reliable and comfortable transport for children to access the vital opportunities and experiences they need to support their learning and growth.



[Read all about it!](#)

Please learn more about this exciting milestone.



**Galiema Amien-Cloete**  
Executive Headteacher  
at Rotherhithe Primary



We are delighted to receive the first all-electric Variety Sunshine Coach... providing our students enrichment opportunities vital to their growth and learning. For our learners it is an example of innovation which supports environmental responsibility, cares for our planet, and provides opportunities beyond the local environment.



## Variety's 50th Sunshine Coach for St. James's Place Charitable Foundation

In September, we were delighted to celebrate our historic landmark, when the Foundation pledged their 50th Sunshine Coach to Westcroft School in Wolverhampton.

Our national report serves as a storybook for the schools we've supported together over 20 years. It demonstrates the tried, tested and uniquely trusted, special relationship we hold with schools nationwide. It further evidences Variety's ongoing commitment towards evidencing impact and showcasing how we're driving forward change.



**Scale, scope and outreach**  
St. James's Place Charitable Foundation, has supported children in 55 towns and cities across the UK. That's:

Sunshine Coaches provided to:	Count
Northern England:	14
Southern England:	21
Midlands:	10
Wales, Scotland & Northern Ireland:	10

[Learn more here!](#)

Please take a moment to hear from schools across the UK.

## Specialist equipment and wheelchairs

# Supporting disabled and disadvantaged children across the UK




So far this year, Variety has directly supported 130 families through grants to individuals.

In the last 6 months, we've delivered 24 more wheelchairs, as well as 40 specialist pieces of equipment to disabled and disadvantaged children.

That's an amazing feat of £220,160! With over £400,675 donated this year so far.


So far this year, we've provided:



## 45

### Wheelchairs

- 28 Manual wheelchairs
- 8 Powered wheelchairs
- 9 Sports wheelchairs



## 85

### Equipment grants

- ✓ 20 sleeping and safe space systems, specialist seating, beds and cots.
  - Safe space beds
  - Paediatric sleeper beds
  - Medically suitable cots
- ✓ 36 sensory, bathroom and outdoor equipment.
  - Optic lights and toys
  - Interactive projectors
  - Body massagers and weighted duvets
- ✓ 29 physiotherapy devices and accessories.
  - Spinal electrical stimulators
  - Muscular relaxation and vibrational devices
  - Hoists, harnesses and specialist car seating.
  - Walking devices.







**A snapshot of who we've helped so far**



**Izzy's Story**

Izzy was born with, what was then called diplegia cerebral palsy.

We were told when she was 22 months old that she may never walk, talk or do anything, and that it would be down to us and her [Izzy's] determination.

Variety came into our lives, many years ago, firstly when Isabelle she was really quite small. She was about 4 years old. She needed a powered wheelchair for school and now, this year, she's got a brand-new manual chair.

It just changes somebody's life. For us Variety are an amazing charity.

**Izzy's mother**



Please watch Izzy's story, [here](#).

**Judo is where my life really flourishes.**

It's a place that I can go and be the same as everybody else. Without anybody asking me why I'm in a wheelchair! I just feel really confident when I'm on the mat and just feel no different to everybody else

Without [Variety's] funding I wouldn't be able to have the wheelchairs that I've got now. I wouldn't be able to move about, be as independent and keep up with my friends.

Any wheelchair, that isn't the wheelchair I'm in now, [cannot] meet all my needs and they're tiring... whereas the wheelchair I'm in currently is bespoke. So it meets every single one of my needs.

Without Variety I wouldn't have as much Independence.



## Opening Remarks

# Stories from families

This year, we provided a specialist bed for Ohad, aged 10, from Birmingham, to help his family manage his epilepsy.

Ohad requires full assistance for everything. He has sleep issues, despite medication, and experiences frequent seizures. Communication is limited to tone, eye contact and touch as he is non-verbal.

His sleep issues persist, leading to frequent awakenings throughout the night. He relies entirely on assistance for his hygiene, wears incontinence pads requiring regular changes, and remains immobile, relying on a fixed wheelchair.

Given the frequency of seizures, continuous close proximity and monitoring are crucial. His limited response to conventional methods mean interaction primarily relies on tone, eye contact and touch, severely limiting communication.



Sam has had multiple hospital visits in the last few months for different types of surgeries. At the moment, he is recovering from a hernia.

Sam would be comfortable and the cot would give him room to play and rest without being restricted.

Having the drawers for all of Safiya's medical equipment would be very helpful as it means it is accessible when needed.

**The cot will help improve Sam's physical health and enable him to spend more time together with his family and feel less isolated.**

Ellie, Sam's mother



Obtaining this specialist bed would grant us the opportunity to reclaim our bedroom space and rest peacefully, as we are currently sharing a room to provide constant care and support to Ohad throughout the night.

The lack of sleep they are receiving has a negative impact, particularly affecting our support for Ohad's three other siblings as well. The specialist bed would allow the whole family to sleep more peacefully.

**The specialist bed will allow our family to live and rest peacefully.**

Sabrina, Ohad's mother

We also provided a medical cot for Sam, aged 18 months old.

Sam has a lovely smile and he tries to smile through all his hardships.

Sam experiences oesophageal atresia, which is a rare condition where a short section - at the top of the oesophagus - has not formed properly, so is not connected to the stomach.

This means food cannot pass from the throat to the stomach.

Shia is currently using a small cot which he has outgrown. Shia has had multiple hospital visits in the last few months for different types of surgeries.

# Great Days Out

In the last six months, Variety have secured over 19 unforgettable Great Days Out.

From Bournemouth to Manchester, across the Midlands, and up to Scotland, our Great Days Out continue to be in high demand, bringing joy and unforgettable experiences to those who need them most.

## A magical time at The North Pole Bash!

Throughout December, over 750 children from diverse backgrounds were treated to a magical day at Gulliver's Theme Park Resorts in Milton Keynes, Warrington and Sheffield for The North Pole Bash Christmas Parties!

Generously sponsored by Lumistella, home of The Elf on the Shelf, and The Michael Josephson Charity Ball, the trips offered the ultimate Christmas adventure with festive activities and special gifts to take home, including some delicious chocolates kindly donated by Together Money.

The day was more than just a festive outing – it was an opportunity for the children to bond with their peers, boost their confidence and create cherished memories.

We're so grateful just to see how excited and happy the children are and how confident they're becoming, because for some of our children taking risks and challenges is something they find really hard.

Coming here today they're seeing their friends do things and they're pushing themselves that bit further and all I've got is happy faces and children who are loving it, so thank you so much Variety!

**Teacher**  
Romans Field School,  
Milton Keynes



**Hear from the Children at Gulliver's World!**



## 6,000 Children Enjoy a Great Day Out at West Midlands Safari Park

Variety, the Children's Charity provided 6,000 tickets, donated by West Midlands Safari Park, to disabled and disadvantaged children, to visit the park with their families and carers on a Variety Great Day Out. Over two weekends, families made the most of the opportunity to spend quality time together.

“Our day at the safari park was nothing short of magical.”

I had the best day of my life!



**Watch and listen!**

Please watch our special news coverage here!

## Variety Scotland's Children's Christmas party

To mark the 50th Anniversary of Variety Scotland, more than 200 children from eight schools across Glasgow and Renfrewshire gathered at Paisley Abbey for a special carol service.

We were delighted to welcome STV News to our Christmas carol service at Paisley Abbey.

The children were very excited to be part of such a special event, and it was a wonderful opportunity to showcase our work to a wider audience.

2024: A year in focus

# Fundraising at Variety

Over the last 12 months, Variety has made fantastic headway towards re-building our national fundraising activities and meeting our target for ambitious growth.

As of November, we're on track to achieving our yearly target of £4.7m from direct donations, with income of £4.6m. This reflects a big step forward towards hitting our latest, pre-pandemic fundraising peak of £5.38m in 2019.

Variety has proved itself a resilient charity. With a brand new CEO and strategy, we've grown our fundraising income by over half since the pandemic. Variety's vibrant suite of successful events continue to expand, and so is our philanthropic income stream.

For the first time in several years, we're now in a firm position to expand and strategically lead the team.



Over £4.5m  
secured



Almost at 85% of our  
pre-pandemic peak



Efficiently expanding  
post-COVID

## Variety events and in the community

# Dazzling nights of achievement

Team Variety is delighted to report another hugely successful past six months - with an accolade of impactful fundraisers nationally.

This includes an incredibly fruitful period, following our work with our Chief Barker, for the Michael Josephson MBE Ball; PROPS North West and, our Legends of Industry Awards.

With £1,290,900 secured since January, we've exceeded our original target by c. £100,000.



Hosted by Variety, the Children's Charity, these awards evening celebrated and championed the achievements of disabled sportspeople, from emerging talents to outstanding individuals and teams.

Comedian and presenter, Adam Hills MBE, hosted the awards and was joined by inspiring sportspeople and celebrities. These included one of Britain's most decorated Paralympians, Tanni, Baroness Grey-Thompson.

We were delighted to present awards to this year's recipients, ready for broadcasted release by Channel 4.

An overwhelming success, an international audience of 300 people joined on the night.



Learn more about our Award-winners!

[Read our Press Release here](#)



## Launch of our Voices for Change campaign

In November, we launched our Voices for Change campaign at the VDSA.

Variety's Voices for Change is a grassroots advocacy campaign aimed at breaking down barriers that prevent disabled children from low-income families from accessing sports and physical activities.

We surveyed 130 children and young people supported by Variety.

Key findings include:

- 77% of families & young people surveyed rated disability sports equipment as "very difficult" to afford
- £5,500 is the median cost of adaptive sports wheelchairs. This is prohibitively high
- 85% reported increased independence



Increasing access to sport

[Please read our Voices for Change research report here](#)

Variety events and in the community

# The Variety Club Showbusiness Awards return with glittering success

The ever-popular Variety Club Showbusiness Awards returned to celebrate the success of stars across showbusiness, while raising vital funds for disabled and disadvantaged children throughout the UK.

Singer, actor, and presenter Amanda Holden hosted a night of celebration, entertainment, and exceptional talent at the Londoner Hotel in Leicester Square. Guests were treated to a three-course dinner alongside outstanding entertainment, from Alfie Boe and Marisha Wallace, supported by the Leo Green Orchestra.

Huge congratulations to all of our Variety Club Showbusiness Awards 2024 recipients!



## We were honoured to be joined by Variety beneficiary and Young Ambassador Ilias!

Ilias is taking the world of wheelchair racing by storm. He took to the stage alongside Amanda Holden to reflect on his journey in wheelchair racing and to showcase the importance of Variety's supporters.

Find out who won the awards here!



## Variety Events and in the community

# Celebrating the love of giving

In the last six months, we were delighted to host incredible fundraisers with our supporters, with a focus on the North West with our Chief Barker, Michael Josephson MBE.

## Spotlight on the North West

We are delighted to announce another record-breaking year of success for our amazing Chief Barker, [Michael Josephson MBE Ball](#)

Michael Josephson MBE raised £1,204,488.78, with Variety being one of 5 benefiting charities.

The event, which is held annually, raises money for children's and youth charities across the UK.

Celebrities from the world of sport, TV, and film attended the event including Elizabeth Hurley, Patsy Kensit, Bryan Robson, and Christopher Biggins.

There was also a performance from Tony and Grammy-winning singer and actor Alfie Boe OBE, who sang Bring Him Home.



A performance from Shooting Stars For the Legends of Industry Awards

Next, our annual [Legends of Industry event](#) honoured and celebrated those who have achieved outstanding success in their chosen fields of business and industry

Back by popular demand, the amazing children of "Shooting Stars" (pictured above) performed for over 450 guests showing that children with disabilities performing wonderful dance routines.

A young Variety Ambassador, Dante Marvin, went on stage to thank everyone who supported in 2023 children in wheelchairs like himself.

We raised over an incredible £125,000 for Variety Children's Charity in the Northwest at this event, to support disabled and disadvantaged children and young people.

[North West PROPS Awards raise over £287,000](#)

The very best of the North West property sector, companies and individuals were celebrated for their outstanding achievements at PROPS. PROPS is the UK's longest-standing property awards lunch, has truly become a national celebration.



## 2024: A year in review

# Highlights from Leadership

We end this year with Variety being excellently positioned to protect its services and long-term viability.

By the end of November, we've raised an incredible £5.9m, from all types of income generation.

£4.6m of this was raised from directly charitable donations, separately from events, and puts us on target to meet our ambitious aim of £4.7m.

This reflects growth of 20% on pandemic levels of income and a 10% growth, post-pandemic.

We're able to expand whilst protecting a healthy level of reserves.

Our ambition is to now sustainably expand our grants by a further 5% on last year - with £3.9m provided to November.

Looking to 2025, we're hoping to grow our wider charity income by 15%.

This shows how we're protecting and nurturing funding relationships that we've built over the last year.

Given the cost-of-living crisis and scarcity of funding, this is crucial news.

Such year-on-year growth is a testament to our highly lean and efficient fundraising team.

A snapshot of who we've helped so far





## Highlights from Leadership

### Variety's new CEO: A year in reflection from Laurence Guinness

This year has highlighted so many brilliant success stories from Variety. We are now excellently positioned to build on this with Laurence Guinness, who joined as Chief Executive Officer to ensure Variety meets the needs of even more children and young people going forward.

As we look to 2025, we hope to further embed ourselves across communities in the UK and to scale our work across the UK.



**There are currently 600,000 children in the UK living with disabilities and disadvantage- many face overwhelming barriers to developing their full potential.**

**The challenges faced by children demand our unwavering commitment and collective action. Through our work and the support of the Variety community of donors, we've witnessed children's remarkable resilience and the transformative power of targeted support.**

**Although the scale of need is high, we should never forget that every contribution is a step closer to a world where every child can thrive. Thank you.**





Empowering young lives every day

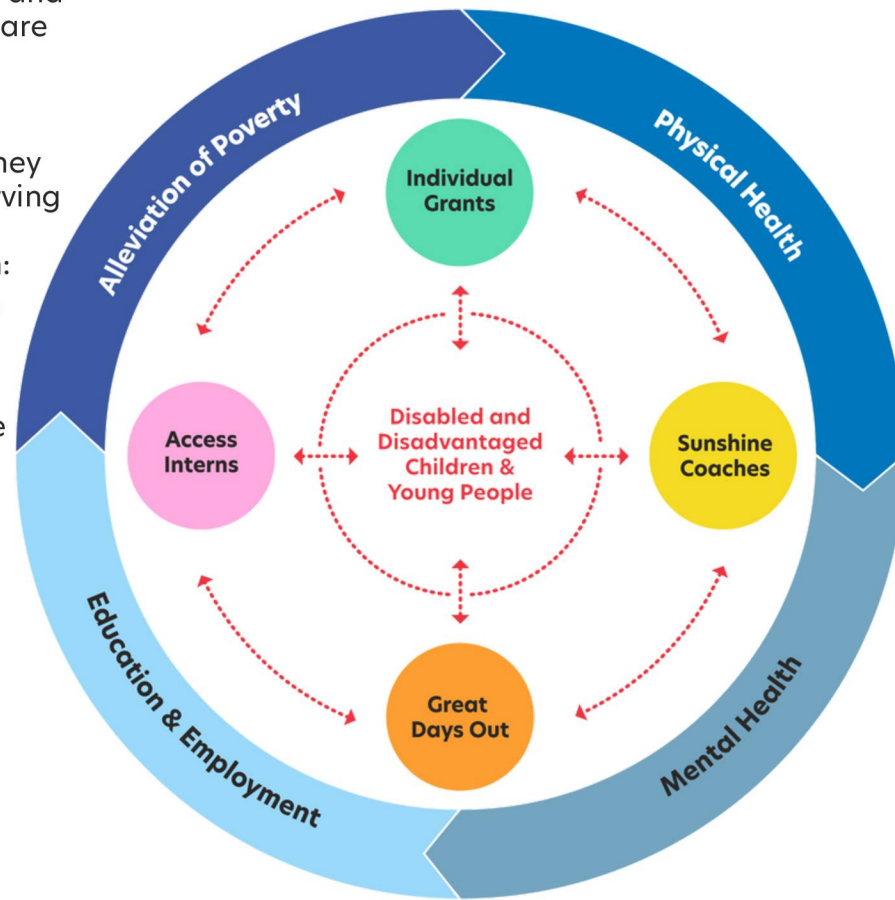
# Variety's Impact Ecosystem

Variety is now proudly announcing the release of our charity impact model. The Ecosystem illustrates how we will expand and entrench our charitable work nationally. By building on the intricate web of relationships between and across our services, across civil society we are meeting children's needs impactfully and holistically.

The 'ecosystem' enumerates Variety's journey towards expanding our impact, as is deserving of Variety's national, historic status as an institution of the children's sector. Through:

- **Sunshine Coaches:** Unlocking worlds of opportunities.
- **Great Days Out:** Offering unforgettable experiences.
- **Individual Grants:** Providing life-changing support.
- **Access Interns Program:** Enabling access to the workplace.

Together, these strategically align to improve children and young people's mental and physical wellbeing; alleviate poverty; and to support education and employment.



## Promoting lasting impact

Our services have and never will exist in isolation. The impact model visualises the the driving rationale behind how we deliver and grow our services.

In the face of growing levels of hardship and increasing needs we are more committed than ever to building partnerships and relationships that allow us to comprehensively and collaboratively improve disabled and disadvantaged children's lives.

There's huge scope to knit together and fund our services, through referrals and partnership building. Whether it be the potential for Sunshine Coaches to facilitate Great Days Out; or our ability to provide young people, in receipt of our grants, with opportunities to access work experience via our Access Intern scheme. Taken together, our holistic approach mutually supports children's physical and mental health, alleviates the effects of poverty and promotes equitable access to education and employment.



Creating change with meaningful impact

# Variety's Theory of change

Through the Impact Ecosystem, Variety promotes a broader, wider set of lasting improvements that make a real difference for children and young people. Today, our Theory of Change offers a pathway, that helps us measure the impact of the transformation we effect in children's lives.

Activities	Short Term Outcomes	Long Term Outcomes	Long Term Impact
Wheelchair & Equipment Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Mobility</li> <li>Better Quality of Life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved Health</li> <li>Increased Independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empowered &amp; Fulfilled Lives</li> <li>Improved Health</li> <li>Reduced Inequality</li> <li>Improved Social Mobility</li> <li>More Inclusive Society</li> <li>Increased Workforce Diversity</li> </ul>
Sunshine Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in educational, recreational &amp; sports opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Confidence</li> <li>Better Educational Outcomes</li> </ul>	
Great Days Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Experiences</li> <li>Social Interactions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger Social Connections</li> <li>Improved employability</li> </ul>	
Access Interns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work Experience</li> <li>Career Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better Life Skills</li> </ul>	

Moderators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good Governance &amp; Strategy</li> <li>Successful Donor Relationships</li> <li>Successful Fundraising</li> <li>Well Supported Staff</li> <li>A Good Supply Chain</li> <li>Strong Stakeholder Relationships</li> </ul>

## Looking ahead

Our theory of change brings to life how we will promote longer term change and measure the impact of our work. It illustrates how we will make a real difference, in the short and long-term and, in-so-doing, achieve wider societal change.

Variety's life-changing services help children to build greater wellbeing, independence, social inclusion, mobility and self-esteem.

By delivering these services, we help to improve children and young people's lives.

There are three areas that help to show this:

1. Health and independence. For example, improving children and young people's mobility and quality of life. Being able to embrace freedom and enable a more inclusive society.
2. Educational outcomes, employability and life skills. For example, enabling participation in learning, recreational and sports opportunities - that open up the world of work and promote social mobility.
3. Social connections and life skills. Offering gateways to the community that broaden horizons, offer role models & redress inequality.



[variety.org.uk](http://variety.org.uk)

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ROYAL PATRON: HIS MAJESTY, KING CHARLES III