**No embargo**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**17th November 2021**

**Step Forward Tees Valley participant is runner up at Catalyst Achievement Awards**

**Vadims, who volunteers with Step Forward Tees Valley, is a runner up in the Volunteer of the Year category at the Catalyst Stockton Achievement Awards.**

Vadims, who takes part in the employability programme to improve his confidence and learn new skills, was recognised for outstanding contribution he makes to his local community by volunteering.

When Vadims joined Step Forward Tees Valley in 2021 he was shy, reserved and isolated. With the programme’s support, Vadims grew in confidence and he chose volunteering as a way of continuing this growth.

Speaking about his achievement, Vikkie Wilkinson, Step Forward Tees Valley Programme Manager, said: “Vadims gives so much to volunteering in the Stockton area and we’re so proud of him for being shortlisted in this category.”

“Thanks to funding from the European Social Fund and The National Lottery Community Fund, and support from all our delivery partners, we’re able to make a real difference to the lives of people like Vadims”.

Step Forward Tees Valley supports local people like Vadims, in Stockton and across the Tees Valley, by offering a range of community volunteering opportunities, as well as helping people improve their health and wellbeing, learn new personal and work skills and ease money worries.

Since the programme began in October 2016, it’s supported more than 3,500 people across the Tees Valley. It’s thanks to the programme's partnership working that they’ve been able to help people overcome a range of barriers to training, volunteering and work.

In Stockton, Step Forward Tees Valley works in partnership with Humankind, Groundwork North East & Cumbria, Changing Lives, Mental Health Concern and Stockton District Advice and Information service.

For more information about the support that Step Forward Tees Valley offers, you can visit their website at <https://sfteesvalley.co.uk/> or call one of their local navigator hubs for a friendly, informal chat:

Darlington: 01325 525 100
Hartlepool: 01429 363 108
Middlesbrough: 01642 245 895
Redcar & Cleveland: 01642 681 785
Stockton: 01642 607 028

**Image: Vadims, Step Forward Tees Valley participant at Catalyst Achievement Awards**

ENDS

**NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. Step Forward Tees Valley is more than just an employability programme.  We help people across the Tees Valley overcome barriers to work or training so they can move forward with their lives. All programme participants have at least two or more barriers to employment.

Step Forward Tees Valley is part of the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme, and is jointly funded by the European Social Fund and the National Lottery Community Fund. Our lead partner is Humankind.

We have navigator hubs in Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton, delivered by Humankind and Groundwork North East & Cumbria.

We also have a range of delivery partners that provide specialist support to help people improve their:

* Physical and mental health and wellbeing
* Digital skills
* Financial wellbeing
* Volunteering and work placement opportunities
* Employment opportunities

Our specialist delivery partners are:

* [Citizens Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/) ([Darlington](http://darlingtoncab.co.uk/), [Hartlepool](https://citizensadvicehartlepool.org.uk/), [Middlesbrough](http://cab.middlesbrough.gov.uk/), [Redcar & Cleveland](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/redcar-cleveland/) and [Stockton](http://www.stockton-cab.co.uk/)
* [Changing Lives](https://www.changing-lives.org.uk/)
* [Groundwork North East & Cumbria](https://www.groundwork.org.uk/press-and-media-ney/)
* [Hartlepool Mind](https://www.hartlepoolmind.co.uk/)
* [Mental Health Concern](https://www.mentalhealthconcern.org/)
* [Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency](https://mvda.info/)
* [Morrison Trust](https://www.morrisontrust.org.uk/)
* [Redcar & Cleveland Mind](https://rcmind.org/)

More than 75% our participants leave the programme having achieved one or more positive outcomes. And almost 70% of those have achieved five or more outcomes. Positive outcomes include improved health and wellbeing, improved digital and job specific skills and moving participants into work-related volunteering.

We’ve supported almost 400 local people who were furthest from the labour market into a job. And more than 500 people have started education or training. In addition, nearly 300 people who were previously economically inactive are now searching for a job.

[Website](https://sfteesvalley.co.uk/)           [Twitter](https://twitter.com/SFTeesValley)            [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/stepforwardteesvalley)        I[nstagram](https://www.instagram.com/stepforwardteesvalley/)         [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/stepforwardteesvalley/)

For more information about Step Forward Tees Valley, please contact Sarah Pearson:
**sarah.pearson@humankindcharity,org,uk**or 07866 192 545

1. Humankind is committed to reducing deprivation and exclusion and to improving people’s well-being. Humankind is a company registered in England. | Registered Company No. 182 0492 and a Registered Charity No. 515755 | VAT No 334 6763 43

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) 4713 | Head Office Humankind, Inspiration House, Unit 22 Bowburn North Industrial Estate DH6 5PF

[Website](https://humankindcharity.org.uk/)           [Twitter](https://twitter.com/Humankind_UK)            [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/Humankindcharity)         I[nstagram](https://www.instagram.com/humankindcharity/)        [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/humankindcharity/)

1. The National Lottery Community Fund is the largest community funder in the UK – we’re proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Since June 2004, we have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people. We’re privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

[Website](https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/)  [Twitter](https://twitter.com/TNLComFund)  [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/TNLCommunityFund)  [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/TNLCommunityFund/)
2. The Building Better Opportunities (BBO) programme has received over £10 million of funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund as part of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Fund Growth Programme in England. The Department for Work and Pensions is the Managing Authority for the England European Social Fund programme, Established by the European Union, the European Social Fund helps local areas stimulate their economic development by investing in projects which will support skills development, employment and job creation, social inclusion and local community regenerations. For more information visit <https://www.gov.uk/european-growth-funding>