



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 - 2024



A word from our Chair, Claire Warren

It is a privilege to introduce myself as the new Chair of York Neighbours' Board of Trustees.

I am so excited to join a charity whose work, and kindness makes life less lonely, less isolated, and just simply more doable, for hundreds of older people across our city.

I am already impressed by our skilled and committed team; from our staff through to all of our volunteers. I look forward to us all continuing to move the charity forward, so we can help many more of York's aging local population.

I would like to express our gratitude to our previous Chair, David Caswell for his years of dedicated service to the charity. Under his (and the wider Board's) stewardship, the charity sustained itself, and rapidly evolved, including through the exceptional circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic - which significantly amplified the relevance of York Neighbours' work.

I am really looking forward to meeting more of our volunteers, Neighbours and key partners, as well as supporting our plans to mark our tenth birthday! In the meantime, I hope you find this report an interesting and positive read.



A brief recap on who we are, and our roots

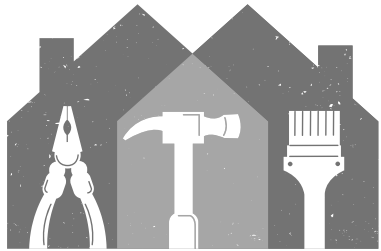
York Neighbours are a volunteer-led charity working to reduce loneliness, tackle isolation, and prolong independent living for older people in our city aged over 65.

We were established as a charity in 2015 following the success of the informal “Belfrey Neighbours” initiative, set up by members of the St Michael le Belfrey Church. This group supported older people in the community who fell “between the gaps” of pre-existing services.

Today, as York Neighbours, we describe our service-users as our “Neighbours” and, through our organised gestures of neighbourliness that many of them otherwise go without, we achieve our aims for them in three main ways...



Help with one-off tasks and errands



From changing lightbulbs, taking down curtains, shopping, support with digital devices, basic gardening, assembling furniture - and anything else suitable for a volunteer to help with.

Regular wellbeing phonecalls



Providing people (who ordinarily go many days without speaking to others) the opportunity to chat with someone who cares, and can flag up to our staff if they need further support.

Group and individual social outings



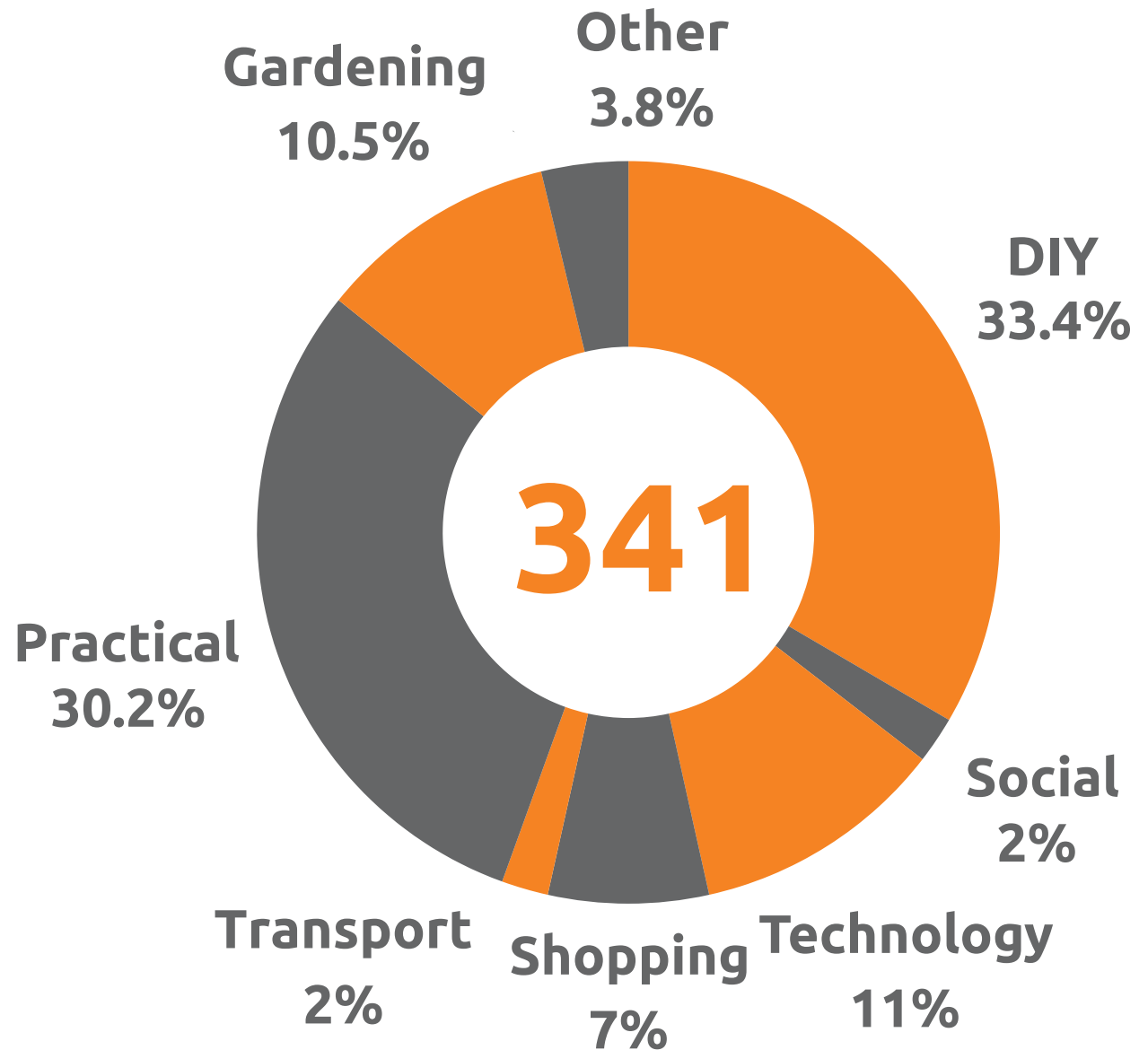
Offering opportunities to meet new people and make new memories, these range from meals out to games of bowls, seasonal celebrations, visits to schools and places of personal meaning and remembrance.



Help with one-off tasks and errands

Across our 2023/24 year, our volunteers completed 341 one-off tasks and errands for our Neighbours.

The types of asks that we receive for these vary considerably, but they all allow our Neighbours to keep living independently with peace of mind, prevent needless risks at home or outside, and avoid the uncertainty (and sometimes prohibitive costs) of some tradespeople for what are usually very small odd-jobs.



Regular wellbeing phonecalls

This year, we completed 2420 wellbeing phonecalls - totalling up to 26 days of continuous chatting!

These opportunities to chat with somebody who cares help our Neighbours feel less lonely, have a route to seek support if they need it, and simply enjoy conversations with people who want to speak with them - for no other reason than because they just want to speak with them.



2420

Monthly calls



Fortnightly calls



Social Outings

For what can be our Neighbours' only chance to go out, meet new people, see new places, and make new memories, we were really pleased to be able to take over 100 of them to an increased number of outings this year, and other local events, including (but not limited to) the following....



Christmas at
Bootham, Dec 2024

Thompsons Fish and Chips
Bootham School Christmas
Celebration

Naburn Waterfront Cafe

Boccia and lunch at New
Earswick Bowls Club

Bootham Junior School

Spring Party

Murton Park

Allerton Castle



Boccia at New
Earswick, April 2024

Reflections from our Neighbours

“

It's mentally knowing that you are there that makes all the difference. Instead of feeling desperate, I know that I can call you and you will be there, that someone will answer the phone.

”

The volunteers are wonderful. I used to be able to do the jobs that they do for me, but because of my ailments, I can't do them anymore.

I don't know what I would do, mentally, especially if they weren't there to help me.

Jeannette, from Copmanthorpe

“

I am very grateful to Joan accompanying me to my eye appointment. I get very anxious. Having her there was a great relief.

”

Doreen, from Poppleton



Other ways we support our Neighbours

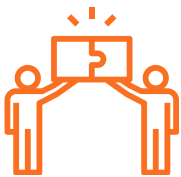
On top of our three main services, we also do lots of other things to support and keep in touch with our Neighbours, such as:



Signposting and referrals to other services offering different or additional support outside of our remit, as our Neighbours needs change over time.



Birthday and Christmas cards to let them know that somebody is thinking of them at special, but sometimes even lonelier and more isolating, times in their lives.



Team up to work with others when opportunities arise; such as the resident-led "Xmas Presence" project which gives meals and hampers to those spending the Festive Season alone.



Assisting with general queries on things like bus schedules, road closures, opening hours for shops and services, and more.



Quarterly newsletters to keep them informed about our work, remind them how we can help, as well as key information about local services and consultations.

...And the people who make it all happen!

At the end of the 2023/24 year we had 60 brilliant volunteers active with us.

All of their contributions vary; from helping with tasks and errands, making wellbeing calls, driving Neighbours to our outings, delivering cards, serving as Trustees, or a combination of those, and more.

With them coming from all walks of life - from students seeking work experience right up to those retired - the flexibility we offer them, with no minimum or regular time commitment required, works well around their lives.

Without our volunteers, there would be no York Neighbours, and hundreds of older people across York would lose their independence, feel lonelier, and be more isolated.

Our volunteers gave a total of 1615 hours worth of help for our Neighbours.



...That's an average of nearly 4 and a half hours a day, every day for a year, all over York!



Reflections from our Neighbours

“

Wendy and Colin were very kind, very nice, and I really appreciate their help. The freezer has been cleared and is still working.

”

York Neighbours are the only ones keeping me going. I'm really grateful for you being there.

Alyson, from Osbaldwick

“

You pop in on occasions when I need you, and that's been very useful especially for people like me with no relations - that's the difficult one.

”

Michael, from Tang Hall

The extent of need across our Neighbours

While each is distinguishable on its own, the issues of loneliness, isolation, and reducing independence overlap. They are also a matter of wide subjectivity, often deep sensitivity, and can vary as circumstances change. This makes evidencing them a challenge.

However, based on what our Neighbours have shared with us we can look at numerous indicators of these things to have confidence that we are serving the types of people we exist to support.

Below is a snapshot of some of these indicators, and how many of our Neighbours have told us that they apply to them.

Lives alone - 417

Widowed - 90

No or distant family - 23

Mobility issues - 290

Sensory impaired - 244

Caring commitments - 25

Physical and/or mental

Health issues - 472

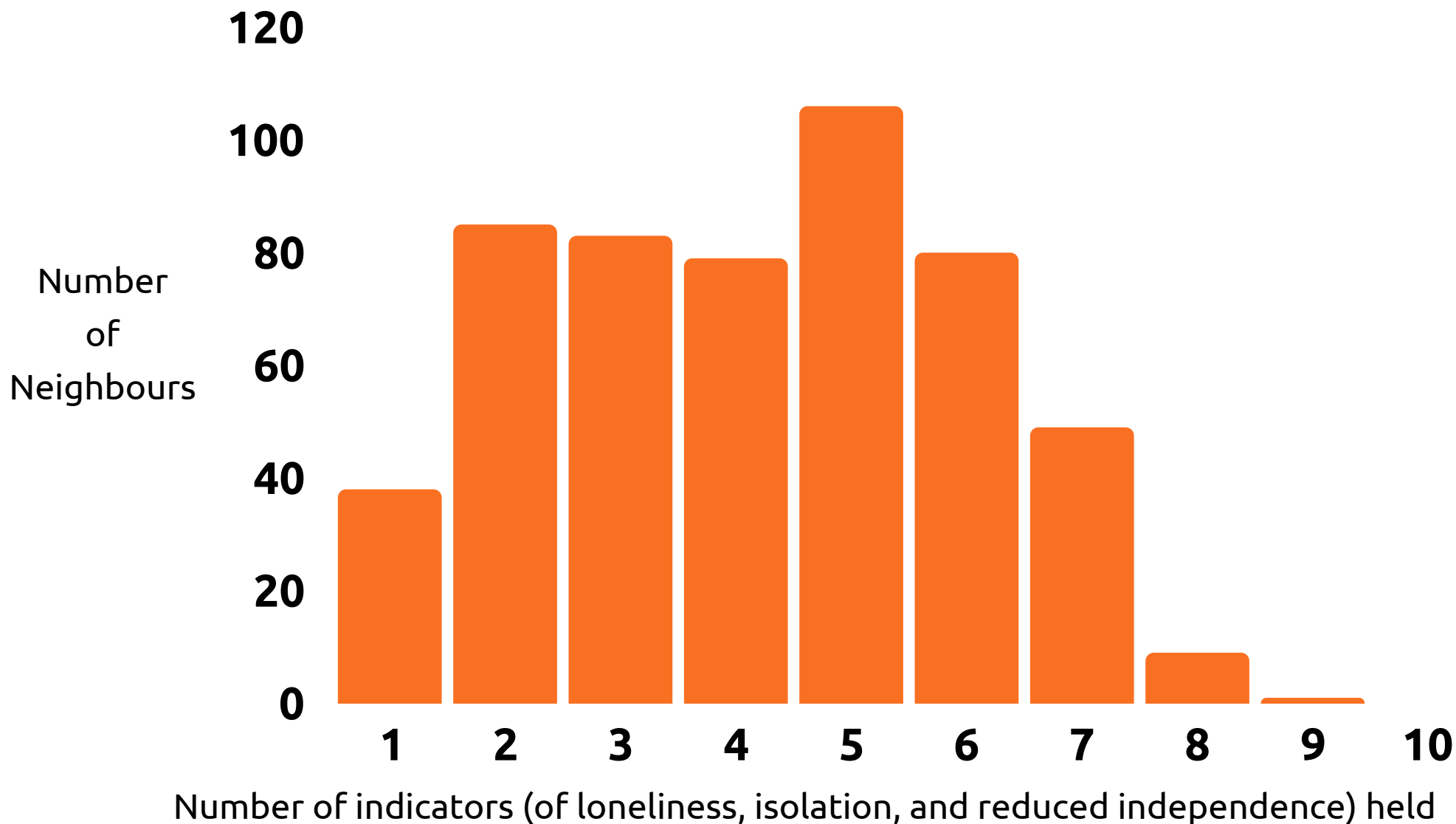
Use warden call system - 209

No access to, or unable to use, the internet - 395

Asked for help with getting out due to isolation - 209



This chart illustrates the number of these indicators held by our Neighbours. It is stark, although not surprising, how many individuals have so many applying to them.



Reflections from our Neighbours



Thank you for arranging for Chris to come and replace a piece of skirting board. He did a good and painstaking job, with different angles etc.

It's really helpful having an organisation of volunteers to do these jobs that the 'No job too small' professionals won't do.

John, from Clifton



Thank you ever so much for today. I was all over the place this morning. Everybody else I called went to answer phone. Trevor was so helpful and it turned out he used to work with my brother at the University, so it was nice to talk to him about that.

This has been the best day I've had in quite some time thanks to you.

Janet, from Badger Hill



Overview of our journey this year

Outside of the numbers, we wanted to give a sense of what's going on behind them, our challenges, plans, and direction of travel...

Pressures on our services continue to rise against the same staff resource, of just over the equivalent of 2 full-time staff members. **In 2018 we had 78 Neighbours. Now we have 540.** That we are still able to deliver for our Neighbours and support our volunteers is something we are grateful for.

The share of York's population aged over 65 is increasing, and the gaps in provision for older people widening as other services reduce or change, so we know demand is only going up. Without a significant boost in funding to keep pace with this, we must take care to not dilute our service to those already with us. **We hoped a large grant application to the National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund would allow us to do this but (along with around 80% of other applicants) were unsuccessful on this occasion.** This was still a really helpful exercise, and provided valuable learning for how we organise our data and show our impact in the future.



Putting our desire to grow to one side, as with many small charities, even raising the funds to continue operating at all is a constant challenge.

With this in mind, it was much to our relief - *and with huge thanks to a wide range of small to medium-sized grant-makers and individual donations* - we managed to **cover our running costs** this year. While positive, our limited reserves see us remain vulnerable.

In parallel with the financial challenge, we are **working through various back-office functions to see how we can work more efficiently, including better use of technology, to direct even more time to support Neighbours and volunteers.** While this, in itself, impacts our short-term capacity we are making progress.

We also want to develop our community fundraising work - and were delighted to have **secured a grant to cover a part-time role in this area** for the year ahead.

This fund was quite timely, as we also moved offices. We are still at the Raylor Centre but in a slightly larger space. This allows us to accommodate the extra staff member. It also gives more flexibility for when we can have volunteers helping in the office, too.



Reflections from our Neighbours

“

Calls help me because I am a people person. I'm a chatterbox, but I don't go out because of my OCD - I haven't been out for years and if I haven't spoken to anyone that day your calls really cheer me up, my day seems brighter.

”

Christine, from the city centre

“

The outings are fantastic, getting people together. I have been to some lovely places, like the Balloon Tree, that I could not have got to without you. It brightens peoples' lives. You have good conversations.

”

Your volunteers are so kind, so helpful it's a joy to be with them. You are the tops with everything!

Sheila, from Dringhouses



What our volunteers say - Pete

A friend shared York Neighbours' vision and story at York Community Church and I loved the idea of being able to give a little bit of time to help make sure nobody feels forgotten. I really liked that volunteers don't have to commit a huge amount of time and was really impressed with how friendly and organised the team were.

I've loved hearing stories about people's past. I only make two calls each week but it's a privilege to get to chat to such a variety of interesting and friendly people.

In my job as a teacher, some of the phone calls I make aren't all that well-received (!) so it's really refreshing to ring someone just for a chat, hear a bit of their life story, talk about what they're reading or watching - and not to have to tell anyone off!

If I could summarise York Neighbours in three words, it would be *“Community Support Lifeline”*.



What our volunteers say - Danielle

I was drawn towards York Neighbours because I am passionate about providing support and making a meaningful difference in people's lives. York Neighbours' dedication to these values inspired me to get involved.

I most enjoyed forming meaningful connections with our neighbours. Hearing their stories, providing companionship, and seeing the positive impact of this was really rewarding.

I have learnt the importance of empathy and active listening. My interpersonal skills have improved, and I have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by senior community members.

After university, I aspire to continue my dedication to community service, potentially pursuing a career in counselling. I hope the skills and experience gained from York Neighbours will help to make a meaningful impact in communities.

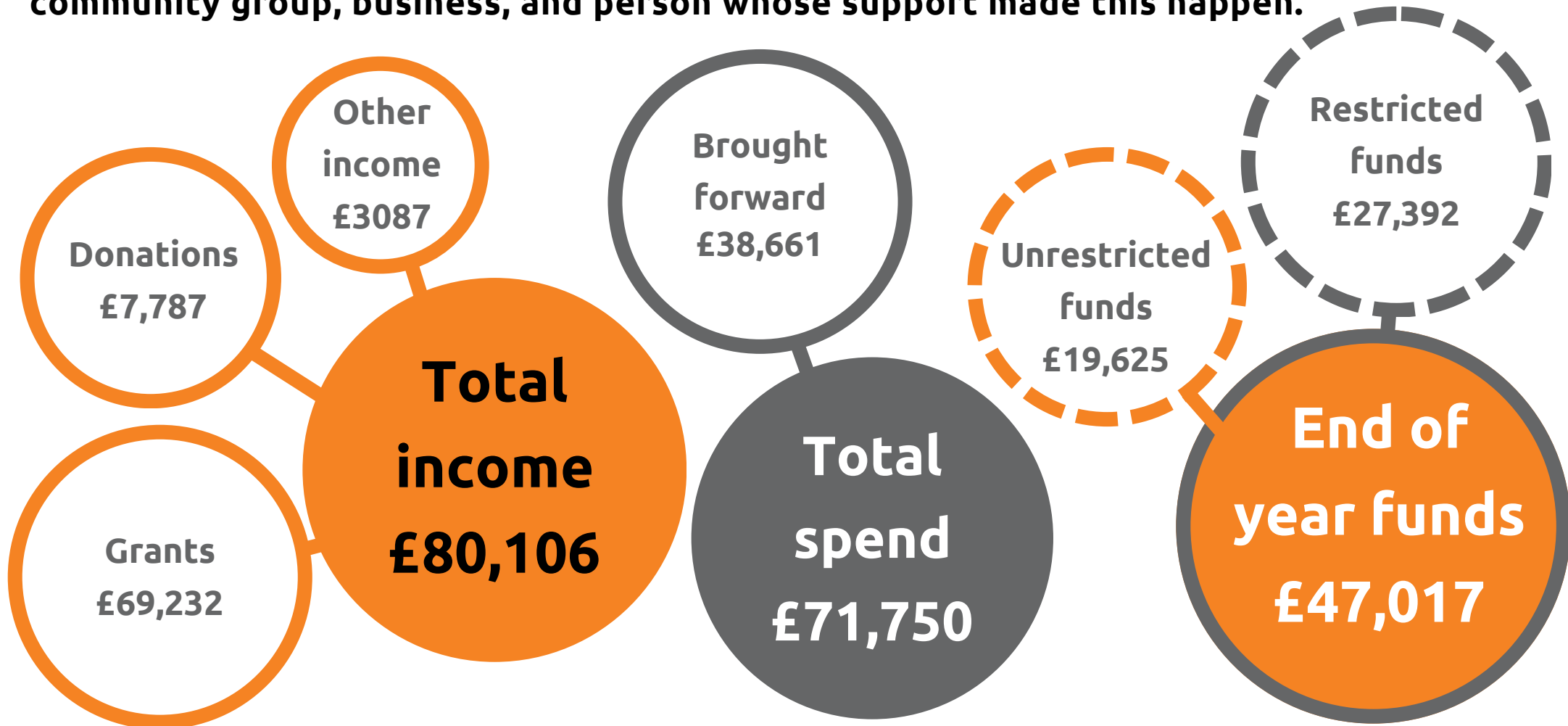
If I could summarise York Neighbours in three words, they would be *"Compassionate, supportive, and dedicated"*.



Summary of accounts

While six months without management and fundraising capacity last year saw us previously run at a significant deficit we are pleased to report that, this year, we covered our costs.

We are hugely appreciative to each and every trust, foundation, public agency, community group, business, and person whose support made this happen.



In closing - because we are stronger together - we want to say thank you to all of the brilliant local services, businesses, and community organisations we have worked with this year.



YORK **Neighbours**

York Neighbours • The Raylor Centre • James Street • York • YO10 3DW

www.yorkneighbours.org.uk • 01904 891 627 • info@yorkneighbours.org.uk



York Neighbours



@YorkNeighbours



@York_Neighbours