



Wooden Spoon

The children's charity of rugby

WOODEN SPOON

FIVE YEAR BUSINESS STRATEGY

2024-2029



www.woodenspoon.org.uk



ABOUT US

VISION

Through the power of rugby, every child and young person has access to the best life opportunities.

MISSION

To positively transform the lives of vulnerable children and young people through the power of rugby.

VALUES

- Fun
- Passion
- Teamwork
- Integrity

OUR NEXT 5-YEAR STRATEGY

To be rugby's children charity – helping the next 1 million children

Forty years since our founding and Wooden Spoon has grown from a small group of rugby fans to 38 regional groups across the UK and Ireland. Our volunteers have raised over £31 million, funding more than 1,465 projects.

Over those 40 years 1,500,000 children living with disabilities, disadvantage or disengagement have benefited from projects that have enabled them to play sport, re-engage in education, overcome mental health, receive respite from challenging

environments or benefit through sensory stimulation such as specialist play facilities. Wooden Spoon is truly changing and improving lives.

Now in 2024 Wooden Spoon's support is required as much today as it was in those beginnings.

The demand for our grants outstrips the funds we raise with only 1 in 3 projects being able to be funded.



CHILDREN NEED US MORE THAN EVER

- 66% OF UK FAMILIES** say the cost-of-living crisis had negatively impacted their family
- 30% OF CHILDREN** are living in poverty
- 11% OF CHILDREN** in the UK have a disability
- 99,000 FAMILIES** in the UK are caring for seriously ill children
- 20% OF CHILDREN** in the UK have a probable mental health disorder
- 1 IN 3 CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE** with a diagnosable mental health condition get access to NHS care and treatment

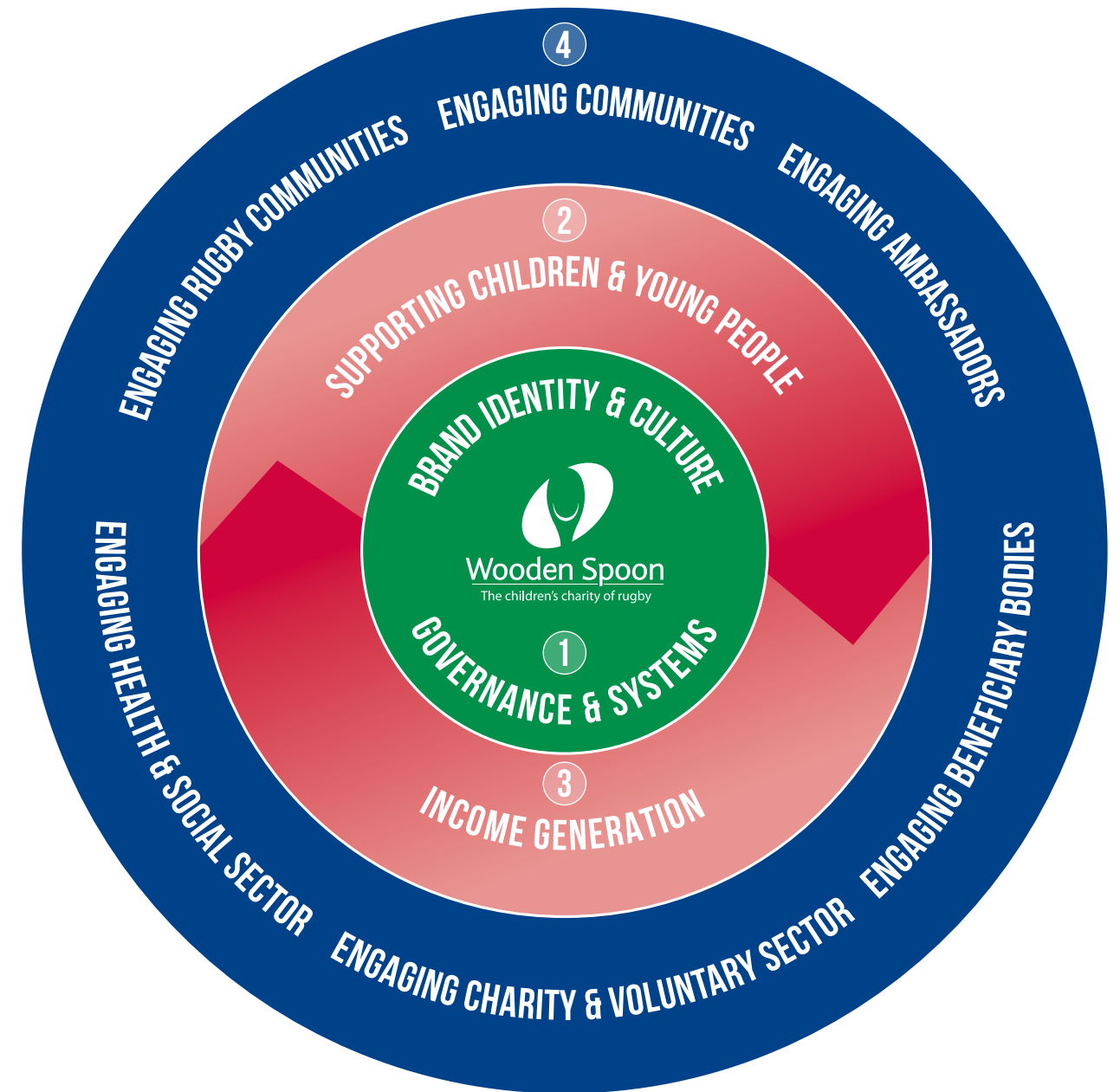
SOURCES: Scope (2021) / Together for Short Lives (2022) / House of Commons (2021) Health and Care Research Wales (2022), Scottish Children's Services Coalition (2022), Mental Health Ireland (2022) / Child Poverty Action Group (2021) Social Justice Ireland (2022) YouGov survey commissioned by Unicef (2024) NHS Survey Mental Health in Children and Young people in England (2024).

THINKING AHEAD

To be rugby's children charity – helping the next 1 million children

Wooden Spoon has set a new 5-year strategy which aims to raise our profile and with the support of the rugby community raise the funds necessary to help the next 1 million children over the coming 5 years.

Our strategic vision encompasses four key areas each designed to compliment and mutually reinforce each other.



This comprehensive strategy reflects our dedication to making a meaningful difference in the lives of young people through the power of rugby. We are excited about the future and confident that, with the continued support of our members, donors, and volunteers we will achieve our ambitious goals.

1 GOVERNANCE

At the heart of our strategy is a commitment to governance that guarantees our operational excellence. We aim to provide unparalleled support to our staff, volunteers, and grant recipients by equipping them with the correct tools and systems. This enables us to demonstrate both our efficiency and our excellence in financial management and overall operational conduct.



Specifically we will:

Oversight and reporting

Create a suite of topline shareable, transparent organisational metrics to monitor our impact, show our financial performance, compliance, and quality assurance levels.

Digital First

Review and audit our use of digital technology in volunteer support, grant processing and fundraising to develop a roadmap of future investment for the best use of systems and processes to ensure maximum return and best value.



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Alongside the needs assessment and research being carried out by our grants team to ensure that our grants are focussed on where they are most needed, we will ensure our charity is welcoming to all – staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries – by setting benchmarks and educating the entire organisation.

Best in class working environment

To enhance our ongoing commitment to volunteers and staff, we will review our volunteer engagement and recognition programs, ensure compliance, and evaluate our pay and award strategy to attract and retain top talent for the charity's mission.



2 SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Our aim is to be respected and recognised for our professional expertise in funding projects that significantly impact the lives of children and young people that need it the most. By engaging with experts in health and social care in the field, our goal is to support initiatives that really address the current problems faced by young people and children today.



Specifically we will:

Research led grant targeting

Children and young people's needs remain the same as in recent years, but demand for grant funding currently outstrips our supply. New issues include online mental health problems, educational gaps from COVID-19, and the cost-of-living crisis worsening debt and food shortages. We will engage more with beneficiaries and health organisations to better understand needs and adapt our funding criteria to ensure the size and type of grants that we award are the most effective.

Additionally, we will gather insights from authority reports, health assessments, socio-economic data to map needs across the UK and Ireland. This targeted approach ensures our grants address the greatest needs and demonstrates to supporters that Wooden Spoon uses their donations effectively.

Impact and Outcomes

To ensure funds are used where needed most, we will engage with projects to understand their impact on children and young people. Using surveys, interviews, and digital tools, we will gather and share evidence of outcomes and best practices with other grant applicants, our regions, and supporters, without burdening the projects we support.

Targeted campaigns

Better understanding of needs and impact will enable us to tailor fundraising for specific causes. Alongside our traditional open grant pot, we will create proactive campaigns to focus donors and corporate partners on key projects that might not have generated the required support.





3 INCOME GENERATION

Our aim is to reinforce Wooden Spoon as the authority in raising funds with the rugby community for children and young people. We strive to be known as a trusted and aspirational rugby charity, one that attracts diverse and robust income streams.



To achieve our aim of meeting the demand for grants we need to grow our income year on year, trebling our income by the end of our strategic period in 2029. We will do this by diversifying our income streams, creating fundraising products and platforms for individual and corporate support.

Specifically we will:

Membership

With over 7,500 members, our supporters are vital to the charity. Membership income helps us support our 38 regions, raising over £1 million annually for local communities. We will enhance communication with members, showing how their donations transform lives, maximise Gift Aid collection, and offer rewards and experiences to strengthen our membership proposition.

Legacy

Many of our supporters have been on the last 40-year journey with us. We will develop a legacy programme for those who are able and wish to continue to support the charity in their memory.

Challenges

Our research shows that supporters want Individual fundraising challenges like marathons, long-distance bike rides, or coastal treks. We will offer exclusive entries to popular UK and Ireland challenges and provide dedicated resources for fundraising support. Additionally, we will develop a Wooden Spoon mass participation event to galvanise the wider rugby community.

Corporates and major donors

Wooden Spoon benefits from the generous support of many UK and Ireland businesses through employee engagement, fundraising, corporate donations, and sponsorship. We will increase staff resources to promote our sponsorship platforms whether it be supporting our expanding range of Rugby participation festivals or bespoke funding of particular projects and causes.

Regions

Last year, we invested in additional support staff to help our 38 regions organise their events – with publicity, auction prizes, and online ticketing. We will continue sharing best practices across the regions, negotiating better rates, and exploring cost-effective online fundraising ideas to bolster regional fundraising. Additionally, we will identify specific causes and projects to fundraise for alongside building our general grant fund.

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4 ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

We aim to be the most respected and recognised children’s charity within the rugby community. By deepening our engagement and building stronger connections with communities, we aim to increase our supporter base to attract a wider breadth of fundraising opportunities from individuals and corporate and from the rugby, charity and health sectors, ensuring that more children and young people benefit from our initiatives.



Specifically we will:

At the heart of the rugby community

The rugby community has long supported Wooden Spoon and many of our volunteers in regions have grown from the playing fields into post-match activities, post-retirement fundraising activities with us. We need to maintain and feed this pipeline but in turn supporting clubs and players making Wooden Spoon a true partner of their rugby.

We will review and refresh our partner club offer to create clarity, with reciprocal benefit and to create an aspiration for all clubs and Wooden Spoon to work hand in hand. We will go where rugby is rather than ask it to come to us. Beyond club rugby we will refresh our offer to rugby in schools, community setting and socials park rugby.

This year we have funded the building of sensory room at Twickenham, home of the RFU. We will re-invigorate our relationship with all of the unions in the nations and the British & Irish Lions men’s and women’s touring sides to engage the widest audiences and look at joint projects to benefit even more children and young people.



Awareness, Engagement and Action

Rugby is also about fun and pushing boundaries, Wooden Spoon continues to support teams both abled and disabled to play rugby, created fun and engaging fundraising activities which have even seen our supporters break Guinness World records with games of rugby played in the Arctic and on Everest. We will build on our success of festivals – Disability Tag, Vets and Corporate. We will also look at higher profile events that engage both public, media and supporters.

Ambassador engagement

Engagement and promotion of our cause by celebrities and rugby stars is crucial for us to reach out beyond our traditional audiences towards the twelve million spectator, leisure players and armchair rugby fans.

We recognise that this engagement and respect is earned by the other areas within the strategy – having activities that are relevant and engaging, showing the impact of our work, by being forensic in where we grant our funds and showing our efficiency, so the maximum of every pound raised goes to where it’s needed – in support with the children and young people.

Communicate, communicate, communicate,

We will create a wrap around communications plan to show our success and promote our activities via traditional media- national and local, within the rugby press and across social media platforms.

“Beyond club rugby we will refresh our offer to rugby in schools, community setting and socials park rugby.”



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Wooden Spoon Society (A company limited by guarantee and having no share capital)
Registered Number: 01847860 Charity Number: 326691 Scottish Charity Number: SC039247
Our Patron: HRH The Princess Royal



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