



ANNUAL

REVIEW

2022



Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund



The Fund's flagship programme supporting young people in the RAF Community



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# WELCOME FROM PAUL



**When the RAF proposed what is now Airplay, we could not imagine how successful the programme would become and how much benefit it would have on the lives of the RAF's children and young people and the positive effect on their parents.**

Reenergised and modernised, the new contract with One YMCA has genuinely supercharged the provision. After their first year in the role, the energy, passion and commitment behind the scenes and on the ground to get things right and evolving is palpable and tangible. Airplay Connect is now a vital part of the provision, designed to extend the reach of Airplay, so that those children and young people who live away from an RAF station or overseas, also have the opportunity to benefit from the service. It will take a while yet for Airplay Connect to be fully built out, but great progress has been made already.

On the ground, many staff have been with the programme since day one, and I want to pay tribute to them for their enormous contribution and commitment. And it is great to see how children and young people themselves have grown and matured within the programme. This is most clearly seen at the annual Youth Forum, where we have heard and then responded to what the children and young people have to say, not least in supporting wellbeing.

A tad self-indulgent, but as I leave the Fund, I could not be prouder of what has been and is being achieved on the ground. A lot of the funding has come direct from the Fund, but I would like to thank sincerely those individuals and trusts who support Airplay directly, and for those interested in supporting us, there is room aplenty!

This new annual report rightly celebrates a tremendous 2022, and I commend it to you.

**Paul Hughesdon**  
Director Grants, Services and Programmes  
RAF Benevolent Fund



# WELCOME FROM GUY



**I am delighted to introduce the Airplay Annual Review 2022, full of stories, stats and soundbites of how Airplay has supported children and young people from across the Royal Air Force.**

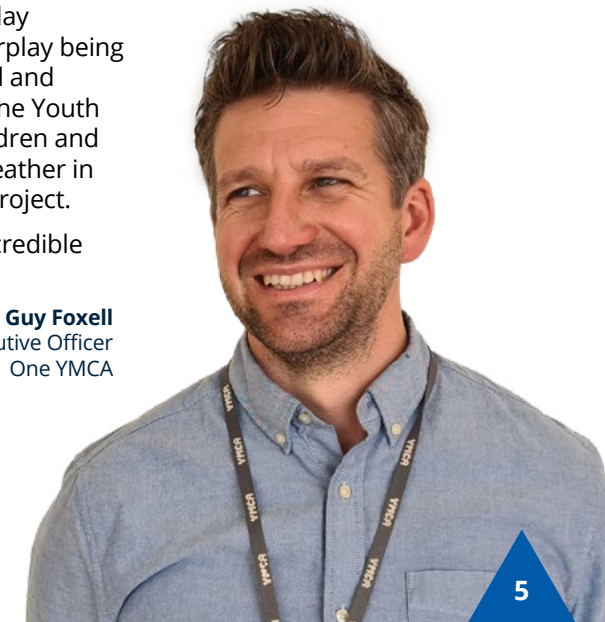
2022 saw our society emerging from the grip of the pandemic, and the Airplay projects able to reopen their doors to children and young people on a more regular basis. It has been wonderful to see the level of engagement increase through the year, as well as begin to build the mechanisms for Airplay to engage further with the diaspora. The Airplay team's achievements in ensuring they are fostering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for young people to return to have been remarkable.

Huge gratitude goes out to all of the YMCA Airplay teams, RAF Community Development and Support Teams, partners, volunteers, and youth leaders who have gone above and beyond over the last year to provide amazing opportunities and high-quality activities for our Airplay members. And of course, to the RAF Benevolent Fund for their continued commitment to children and young people from RAF families.

It has been wonderful to see the Airplay programme recognised nationally. Airplay being shortlisted for a Youth Matters Award and receiving the Highly Commended in the Youth Work category at the prestigious Children and Young People Now Awards is a real feather in the cap for all those involved in this project.

This Annual Review celebrates the incredible impact the project has had in 2022.

**Guy Foxell**  
Chief Executive Officer  
One YMCA



# ABOUT AIRPLAY

**Airplay is the RAF Benevolent Fund's flagship youth support programme for children and young people in RAF families.**



**The programme is delivered by a consortium of YMCA across England, Wales, and Scotland in conjunction with RAF Community Support at each site.**

Airplay sets out to fulfil the vision of the RAF Benevolent Fund that everyone in the RAF family gets support in their hour of need. It does this by creating a community where young people can belong, contribute, and thrive and develop their full potential in body, mind, and spirit.

Young people in RAF families face a unique set of challenges, often experiencing frequent change of home, school, and friendship groups. Additionally, there is the challenge that comes with having parents out of area for long periods of time or on overseas deployment.

Airplay is now in its twelfth year supporting young people through these challenges by providing safe, consistent, and exciting play and youth work activities across 24 RAF Stations and now online through Airplay Connect. Wherever a member's journey takes them Airplay is there to provide much needed continuity and a trained team of supportive and fun youth workers.





# LOCATIONS

## ONE YMCA

- RAF Benson
- RAF Brize Norton
- RAF High Wycombe (including Medmenham)
- RAF Halton
- RAF Henlow
- RAF Valley

## YMCA TRINITY

- RAF Honington
- RAF Wittering
- RAF Wyton

## YMCA LINCOLNSHIRE

- RAF Coningsby
- RAF Cranwell
- RAF Digby
- RAF Scampton
- RAF Waddington

## YMCA FAIRTHORNE

- MOD Boscombe Down
- RAF Odiham

## YMCA BLACK COUNTRY

- RAF Cosford
- RAF Shawbury

## YMCA NORTHUMBERLAND

- RAF Boulmer

## YMCA NORTH TYNESIDE

- RAF Leeming

## YMCA SCOTLAND

- RAF Lossiemouth

## YMCA NORFOLK

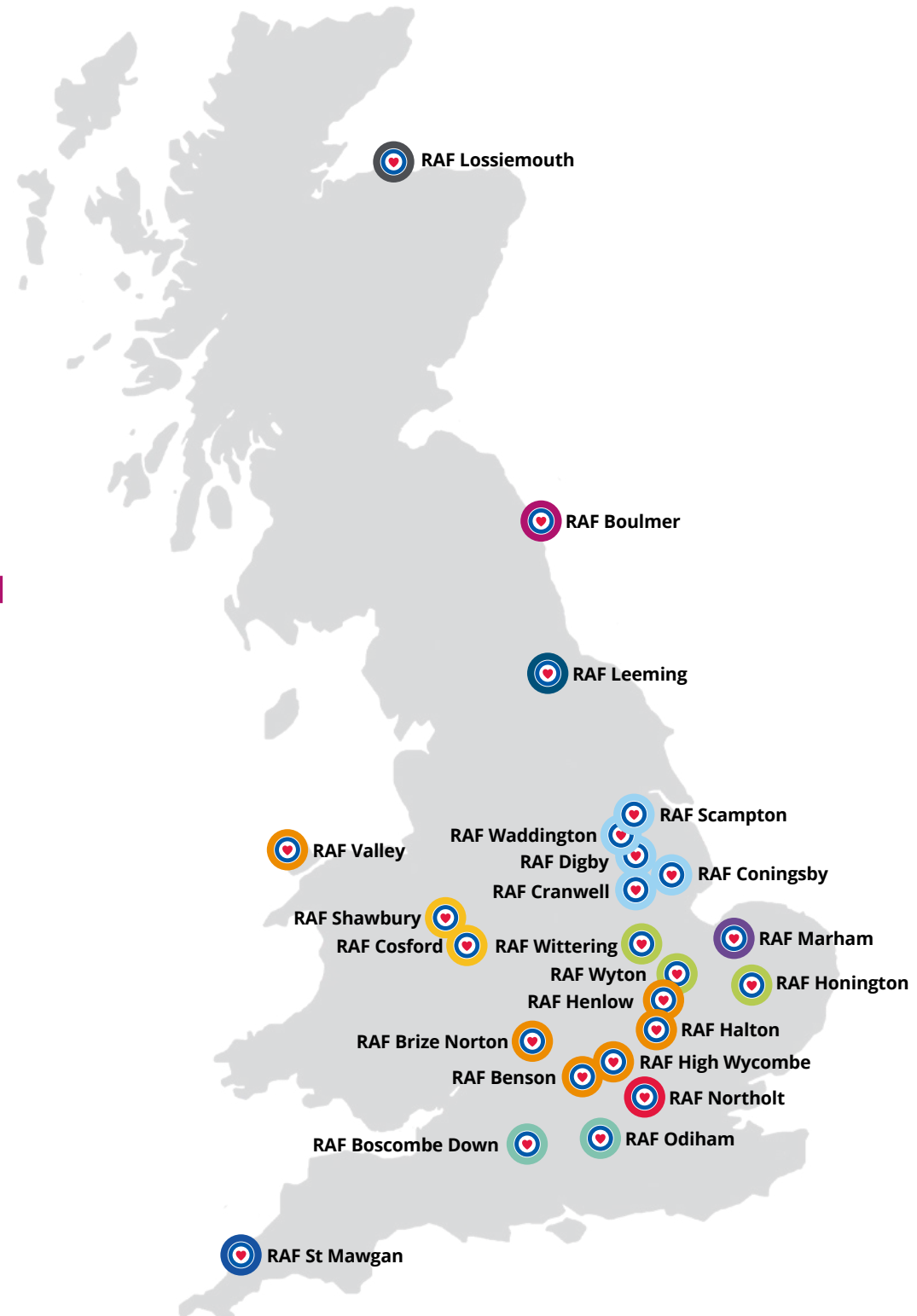
- RAF Marham

## YMCA ST PAUL'S GROUP

- RAF Northolt

## YMCA CORNWALL

- RAF St Mawgan



# 2022 KEY STATS



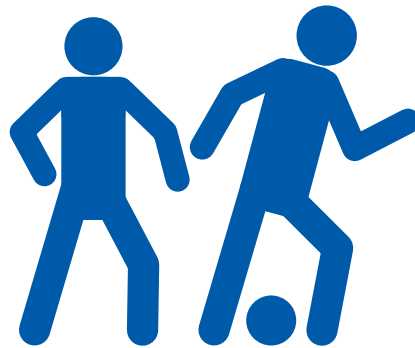
**2,350**  
children and young  
people registered as  
Airplay members



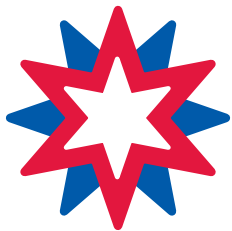
**3,037**  
sessions delivered



**6,264**  
hours of  
activities



**31,600**  
attendances at  
Airplay activities



Airplay  
shortlisted for  
**2** national youth  
awards

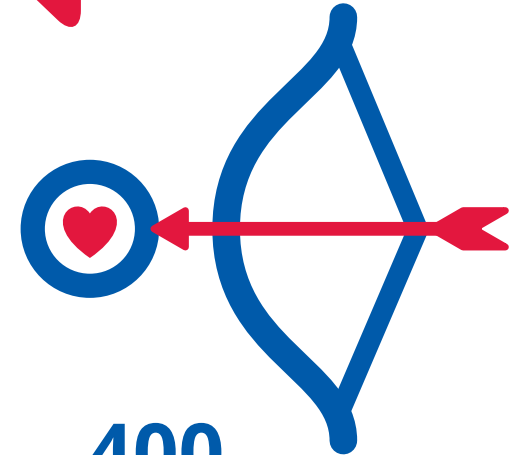
**110**

youth forums empowering  
members to have their  
voices heard



**150**

young people  
directly involved  
in the applications  
for Airplay Special  
Projects funding



**400**

attendances  
at residential  
experiences

Parents rated Airplay  
**4.7** out of **5**



## Key Aim 1

# BE HEARD BELONG

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Launching the Airplay Connect online platform making Airplay services available to members regardless of where they are based.

**93%** of parents agree that Airplay gives their child somewhere they feel they can belong.

**652** attendances at youth forums, where members are able to shape the project.



**“It’s great that young people get to talk to members from other camps and make friends. This support for forces children is fantastic. It gives young people opportunities to help in the local community and further afield and it’s a great focus for them.”**

– Airplay Wittering parent

**Wittering supporting local foodbank**

### Increase in Online Activity

2022 took Airplay online with the launch of Airplay Connect, a bespoke digital platform providing members access to regular virtual activities, information and support. This platform saw online activities like the Gamer Group and Virtual Youth Forums connect members from across the UK. Airplay projects got busy making videos, games and challenges online to share though Airplay Connect - like the How To videos from Scampton and Waddington’s interactive online gameshow.

**1800** members received their Airplay Connect logins in 2022 giving them access to **22** virtual sessions since launching in October.

**“What I like most is that I can make new friends with people I never would have had the chance to make friends with before.”**

**Airplay Coningsby member, aged 11**

### Increase in Youth Social Action

Airplay members created positive changes in 2022 by campaigning, fundraising and improving their local community. They got involved by running bake sales, shoe box appeals, community fun days and collecting donations - raising awareness and financial support for both global causes and local initiatives that matter to them.

**85%** of members feel that Airplay is helping them to work better with others.

**“We’re developing a quiet area for the young people to be together in small groups. This will help with confidence building and mental health issues just by having a quiet space to think and chat.”**

**Airplay Benson member, aged 15**

### Increase in Youth Forum Participation

Airplay delivered 110 youth forums where members discussed the things that matter to them and developed their leadership, critical thinking and negotiation skills. These groups help to shape Airplay from the ground up and are the catalysts for future developments.

**84%** of members agree that they have a say in what happens at Airplay.

**“Being part of the forum helps to boost my confidence and give me skills that I can use later on.”**

**Airplay Wittering member, aged 14**

## BELONG Case Study

# REECE

Reece joined Airplay aged 8. A few years into his time at Scampton the youth workers noticed that he wasn't quite himself. After speaking to Reece, they found he had lots going on in his world. He was experiencing bullying at school, had some changes in his home life and was finding it difficult to connect with some of the other young people in his age group.



Reece, aged 10, getting an Airplay sports award at Scampton



The team asked if Reece would like to become a 'helper' at the junior age sessions. After speaking with Reece and his mum they agreed this responsibility could give him a positive focus.

“Airplay were there when things were a bit hard for me at school. I really enjoyed being able to help out at sessions.”

Reece has become a fantastic volunteer, leader and positive role model.

“Airplay has been there for Reece for many years now. They supported him when he was struggling and also with his volunteering...They've made a difference to him.”

Reece's mum Liz

Reece, now 15, is confident, outgoing and the first to jump on the karaoke at Airplay.

“Airplay has given me opportunities like visiting France and Wales on residentials, sleeping over in an aquarium, going to theme parks and learning new things. It has helped me to grow in confidence and to connect with other people.”



Above: Reece, aged 15, preparing to MC for the 'Airplay Juniors got talent'



## Key Aim 2

# BE INVOLVED CONTRIBUTE

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**93%** of parents agree that Airplay is helping their child to be more confident.

**96%** of members feel Airplay provides a good range of activities.

Members rated Airplay **4.6** out of **5**

**“The confidence Airplay has given my son has been incredible! He loves going and it is building his independence brilliantly. We cannot praise Airplay enough. Absolutely fantastic!”**

Airplay Boscombe Down parent

Scampton and Waddington volunteering at Oasis Community Garden



### Improved Confidence and Self Esteem

Airplay delivered 3,037 sessions in 2022 including weekly clubs, trips, forums, and holiday activities. 168 members took part in residential experiences through Airplay. From Lossiemouth's outward bound in Scotland to Scampton's visit to Disneyland in France, members have been challenging themselves, learning new skills, developing their independence, and building in confidence.

Members showed a **25%** increase in their confidence from attending the Airplay residential

**“Airplay helps me to be myself and has really brought my confidence up since starting to come. It is something to look forward to if I am not feeling my best.”**

Airplay Boscombe Down member, aged 15

### Increased Sense of Belonging

Airplay provides a year round community for it's members. On average each member took part in 15 activities in 2022 with one record holding Waddington member attending 94 sessions!

Airplay's Youth Workers received Authentic Human Connection training in 2022 demonstrating a commitment to creating groups that connect and empower.

**94%** of members agree that Airplay provides somewhere they feel they can belong.

**“The best thing about Airplay is that I belong, that I can be myself. I have friends outside of school. The staff support me and let me be myself.”**

Airplay Coningsby member, aged 14

### More Optimism About the Future

Airplay members showed a real passion for environmentalism in 2022 with multiple groups volunteering at local community and RAF remembrance gardens. Others took part in litter picks and wildlife protection activities. One project even saw it's members write their own eco policy to present to the Station!

**84%** of members agree that they have a say in what happens at Airplay.

**“We also want to aim for making our community at Cranwell more inviting and environmentally friendly. We want to watch the plants grow and our membership will hopefully grow too!”**

Airplay Cranwell member, aged 12



## CONTRIBUTE Case Study

# JORJA

**Jorja started attending Airplay at Lossiemouth aged 14 after getting to know other members through a residential experience.**



Jorja started volunteering at the end of 2021 helping to plan and run activities for younger members.

“When I came along to Airplay it was good to meet different people of my own age from a variety of schools in our area. Without Airplay we would never have met up. It helped with my confidence and made me think about the wider community.”

**Jorja leading a game as an Airplay Worker at Lossiemouth**

“I learnt from volunteering how younger minds think, how they act and how to adapt sessions when there are children who do not interact.”

In 2022, aged 17, Jorja was successfully appointed to a paid role as an Airplay Worker. She is now undertaking her Professional Development Award in Youth Work.

“Airplay has helped me to adapt to different situations without stressing. I feel more confident within myself and will hopefully be able to show this when attending my university interviews.”



## Key Aim 2

# BE SUPPORTED THRIVE

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

**98%** of parents agree Airplay provides a safe space for their child.

**65%** of Airplay members said that Airplay has directly helped them with doing things outside of their comfort zone.

**96%** of parents agree that Airplay provides good value for money.

Airplay encourages healthy activities to improve resilience and wellbeing

“Staff are amazing with the children. Really dedicated to getting to know each child well and very supportive of their well-being, especially when parents are deployed”

Airplay Lossiemouth parent



### Improved Mental and Physical Wellbeing

Health and Wellbeing was identified as the top support need by Airplay members in 2022. From abseiling to yoga, healthy eating to mindfulness Airplay has provided access to a range of activities that have supported young people in mind, body and spirit.

**85%** of members agree that Airplay helps them to feel good about themselves.

“Our cookery project brought us all together into more of a community that before, it gave us space to get away from school stuff and was very therapeutic.”

Airplay Boscombe Down member, aged 13

### Reduction in Stress

Airplay has been there week on week supporting members through transitions and change. Like at Marham where Airplay helped ease the move to high school by running a buddying programme.

Airplay has helped parents too, providing regular affordable activities during a year where pockets have been hit by the cost of living.

**82%** of young people said Airplay had helped them to make new friends.

“It’s just fun to go and have a good time without any nagging”

Airplay Wittering member, age 12

### Increased Sense of Safety

Airplay youth workers have delivered issue based activities around topics like anti bullying, on-line safety and exam support providing members strategies and confidence to speak out, keep safe and manage stress.

From random acts of kindness to sign language classes, Airplay provided activities that promoted positivity, acceptance and diversity.

**98%** of members feel that Airplay provides somewhere they feel safe.

“The staff are friendly, approachable and communicate clearly with parents. It provides a safe space for my son to play with his friends and puts parents’ mind at ease that their children are safely playing too”

Airplay Leeming parent



## THRIVE Case Study

# AIRPLAY FIRST AIDERS

Members at Digby noticed new defibrillator machines around their local community. This led to a discussion with their Airplay Youth Workers around high-profile medical incidents from sports. They wanted to be better prepared to help others in an emergency successfully applied for Airplay Special Project funding for a Youth First Aid training course.



“ Christian Erikson, the footballer who had a heart attack during a match, wouldn't have lived if the people around him didn't know what to do. And that can happen to anyone. Having the knowledge and skills can help us to feel confident enough to help people ”

Airplay Digby member, aged 14

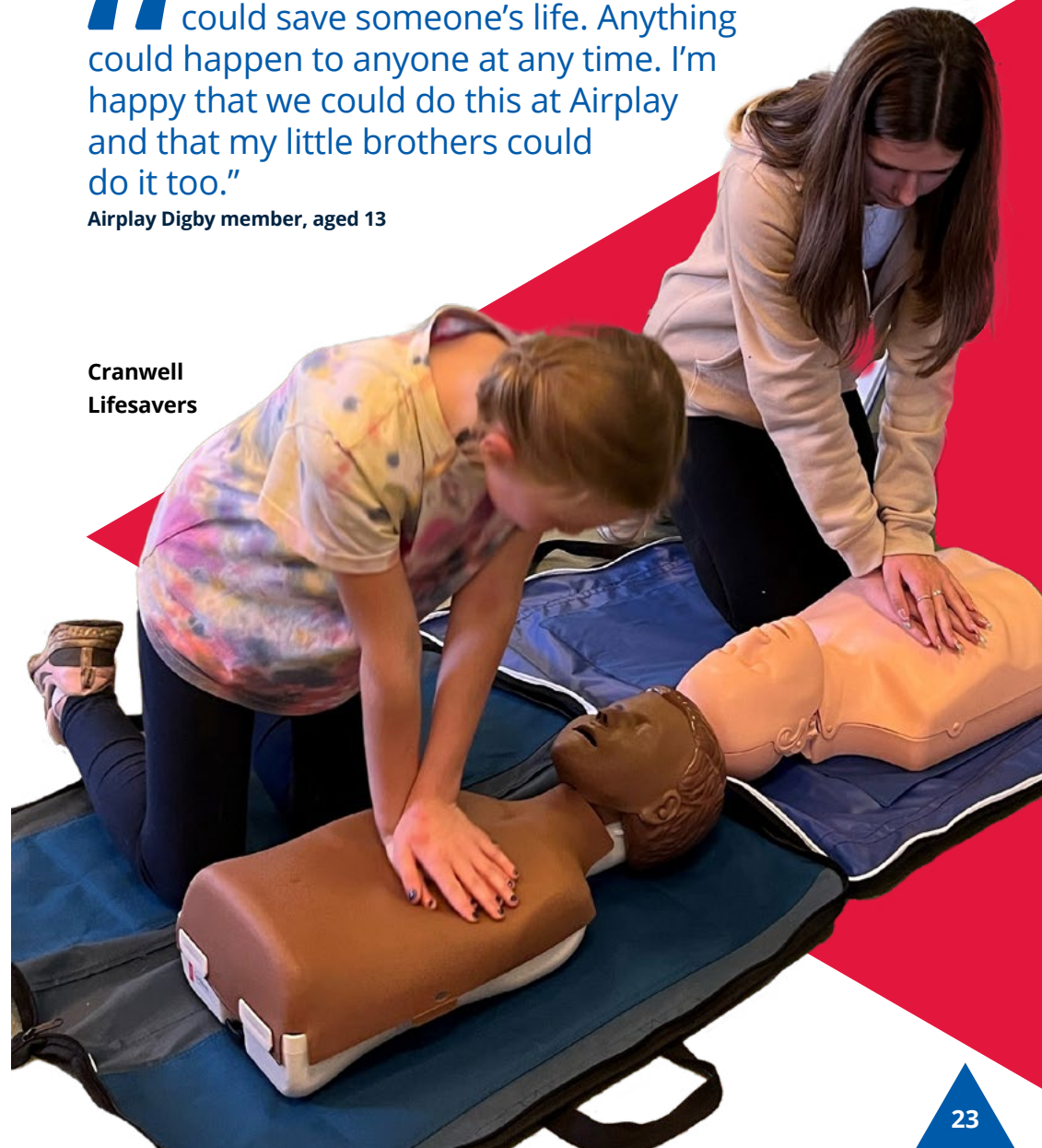
Digby Lifesaver

Members learnt how to identify risk, deliver first response, and get help. They also gained confidence to stay calm in the event of an injury to themselves or others.

“ It was good to remind myself of skills that could save someone's life. Anything could happen to anyone at any time. I'm happy that we could do this at Airplay and that my little brothers could do it too.”

Airplay Digby member, aged 13

Cranwell Lifesavers



# SPOTLIGHT ON AIRPLAY SPECIAL PROJECTS

**2022 saw the Airplay Special Projects Fund introduced. This allowed members to apply for funding to launch a new idea, expand an existing project or develop a community initiative. The themes, as chosen by members, were the environment, improving our area and health and wellbeing.**

Panels of youth forum members came together to decide which applications received the funding. 16 applications were successful and received over £7,500 for their youth led projects.

**“First Aid is a great skill, they’ve only asked for £150, if we double it, they can offer the course to more young people”** Airplay Benson forum member, aged 13

Funded projects included First Aid courses, family days, wellbeing areas, community events, cookery clubs and gardening activities. At Brize Norton they ran the Feel Good Factor where families came together to take part in Indian head massage, stress ball making and Zumba. At Odiham young people used special projects funding to create a sensory area at their club complete with bean bags, fairy lights and quiet zone.

**150** members were involved in the application process with the projects  
**benefitting over 700** members across Airplay.

**“[The Sensory Area] is perfect right now because my dad is away and I feel sad so just want some time alone”**

Airplay Odiham member, age 9

Odiham sensory area



Henlow's Dining In night



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▶ The 2023 Airplay Special Projects launches again in April.
- ▶ Members have chosen themes of personal safety, mental health and the environment for 2023.

# SPOTLIGHT ON AIRPLAY RESIDENTIAL

The Airplay Residential took place in August 2022 at Kingswood Activity Centre. Young people aged 11 and over from as far north as Lossiemouth, east to Marham, south to St Mawgan and west to Valley joined up for 3 days of adventurous outdoor activities. 16 Airplay projects were represented.

Joined by Airplay staff the young people got involved in activities including archery, zip lining, climbing and bushcraft.

**“The beds are comfy, and I like who I am in room with. It’s a great place to socialise, I want to come again for longer”**

Airplay Leeming member, age 12



For some members this was their first time away overnight without their parents. For others it was an opportunity to make new friends or re connect with friends they had moved away from.

Before and after the experience, members self-assessed how they felt as part of the group using One YMCA’s Authentic Human Connect Star. The results showed that young people felt they had grown in all areas including a **44%** increase in feeling able to take on responsibilities and a **37%** increase in skill development.

**“Meeting new people has been the best thing about the last few days. I was nervous. I didn’t think I would fit in. Within a couple of hours, I realised I was the same as everyone else.”**

Airplay Cosford member, aged 14

**“I learnt how to make a tepee, it was cool.”**

Airplay Boulmer member, age 11



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▶ The 2023 Airplay residential sees an increase from 100 to 200 places for RAF children and young people aged 8 and above.
- ▶ The youth forum groups have designed the 2023 residential based on feedback from 2022.

# SPOTLIGHT ON AIRPLAY CONNECT

2022 saw Airplay move online through the development of its own exclusive website [airplayconnect.org](https://airplayconnect.org). Airplay Connect is a member only website where parents and young people can login securely to find out what is happening across the project, sign up to activities, get support and access a range of digital content and virtual sessions.

This platform expanded Airplay's reach beyond the 24 RAF Stations, providing opportunities to engage for young people from across the diaspora or those who moved to bases that do not have an Airplay project.

Airplay Connect also joined up the projects by bringing together members with a shared passion like the Airplay Gamer group, or through providing safe spaces online for members to explore particular themes like the LGBTQ+ group.



[airplayconnect.org](https://airplayconnect.org)



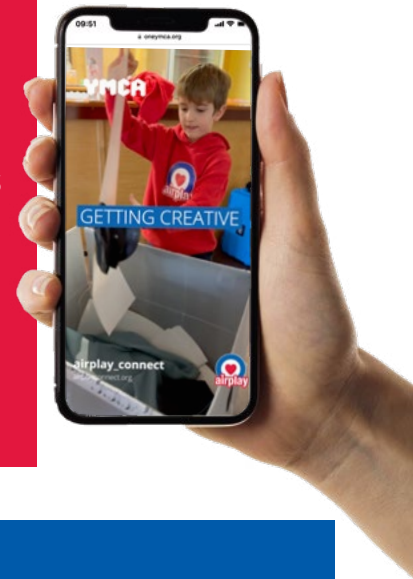
It's a fantastic opportunity to reach out to those young people who are not on RAF bases. We should regard it as an evolution of the Airplay project reaching people in different ways providing a service no matter where you are in the country, where you are in the world."

Paul Hughesdon, Director Grants, Services and Programmes, RAF Benevolent Fund



AIRPLAY CONNECT  
is live!

22 live sessions were delivered since the launch in October and 12 video activities made by members and staff were posted. Alongside this the RAF Benevolent Fund kitted out each club with a next generation gaming console and installed Wi-Fi, where needed, to create further opportunities for members to connect in the future.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▶ Delivering the first Airplay e-gaming tournament through the FAirplay World Cup.
- ▶ 2023 will see a programme of over 150 virtual activities delivered.

# SPOTLIGHT ON ANNUAL YOUTH FORUM



Forum members at the London Eye

The Annual Youth Forum saw young people from 5 Airplay projects head to London. For 3 days they worked together to budget, shop and cook for themselves, participate in workshops and see the sights.

Members reviewed feedback from across the project and looked at future aspirations for Airplay. They visited RAF Benevolent Fund HQ where they presented their findings to a panel including the RAF Benevolent Fund's Director Grants, Services and Programmes, One YMCA's Chief Executive Officer, and the RAF Chief Community Development Officer.

**It's been really special to get to meet the incredible young people and find out how we can make their Airplay experience better and have them involved in the decision making around their youth clubs."**

Caroline Fielding, Wellbeing Manager, RAF Benevolent Fund

The Forum members remained connected through virtual sessions and developing initiatives like the Greens Gardening Project and the Airplay Monthly Challenge.

**It means that I can have an opportunity to share what I think, I can make sure that everyone else's ideas can get heard as well."**

Airplay Henlow youth forum member, aged 15



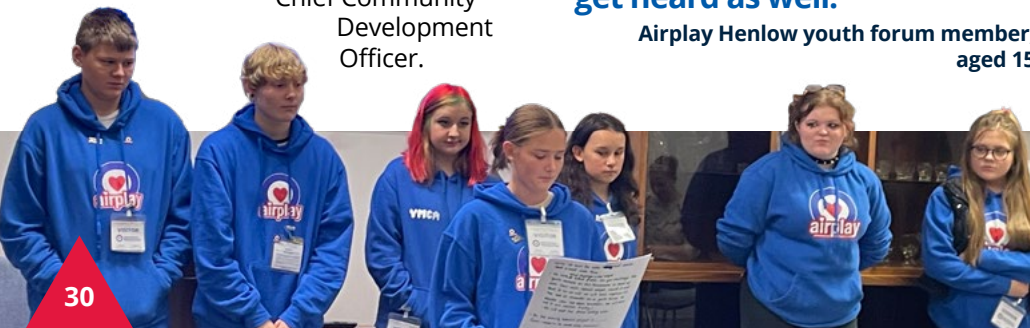
**I wanted to be a part of the forum to contribute ideas to how it [Airplay] can be improved and listen to other ideas that we can then do ourselves"**

Airplay Honington youth forum member, aged 14



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- ▶ The Youth Forum will be designing a youth recognition award.
- ▶ They will be meeting online to prepare for the 2023 Youth Forum event.





# SPOTLIGHT ON YOUNG LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Airplay members developed their skills through becoming youth volunteers or young leaders at their projects. These members supported the staff teams with planning and delivering sessions as well as running tuck shops, peer mentoring and representing Airplay in their community.

**“ I’ve improved my public speaking, my social skills and been able to open up about things when needed. Airplay has made a massive difference to me. I’ve been given countless opportunities, met new people, and made great friendships. I feel happier and much more confident. ”**

Airplay Wittering Young Leader,  
aged 15



Through volunteering and young leadership members learnt about leadership and decision making. They proved to be a vital cog in fostering an inclusive and welcoming Airplay community.

**41%** of sessions in 2022 had an Airplay Youth Volunteer in attendance.

**“ Airplay has helped me to feel more confident in my day-to-day life. I always feel as if my voice is heard and that I am supported by my peers and youth workers. I love coming to Airplay and feeling accepted by the friends I have made. ”**

Airplay Boscombe Down  
Youth Volunteer, aged 16,  
MOD Boscombe Down



**WHAT'S NEXT?**

- ▶ Developing a new Airplay Young Leader and Youth Volunteer course.
- ▶ Celebrating and recognising volunteers and young leaders through a youth recognition event.

# THANK YOU...

- ▶ **to the RAF Benevolent Fund** whom without their ongoing commitment to the RAF Family the Airplay project would not exist.
- ▶ **to National Lottery Young Start, Wimbledon Foundation and Armed Forces Community Covenant Fund** who contribute to the RAF Benevolent Fund directly for the Airplay programme.
- ▶ **to the 11 YMCAs** whose staff and volunteers work tirelessly to deliver the projects day in day out across the UK.
- ▶ **to the RAF RAF Community Development and Support Teams** whose dedication and support enable Airplay to operate successfully at each base.
- ▶ **to the hundreds of parents and carers** who get involved, provide feedback, and support their children to access Airplay.
- ▶ **to the thousands of children and young people** who make Airplay such a wonderful place to be.

## SUPPORTED BY



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Find out more  
[airplayconnect.org](http://airplayconnect.org)

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## Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund

There are many ways the RAF Benevolent Fund can support you and your family. From financial support to our young person counselling service, we are here. Please contact us today if you know someone who is in need of support or to request help for yourself.

[welfare Navigators@rafbf.org.uk](mailto:welfare Navigators@rafbf.org.uk)  
0300 102 1919  
[rafbf.org](http://rafbf.org)

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Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund

YMCA

ROYAL  
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SUPPORT

The Fund's flagship programme supporting young people in the RAF Community