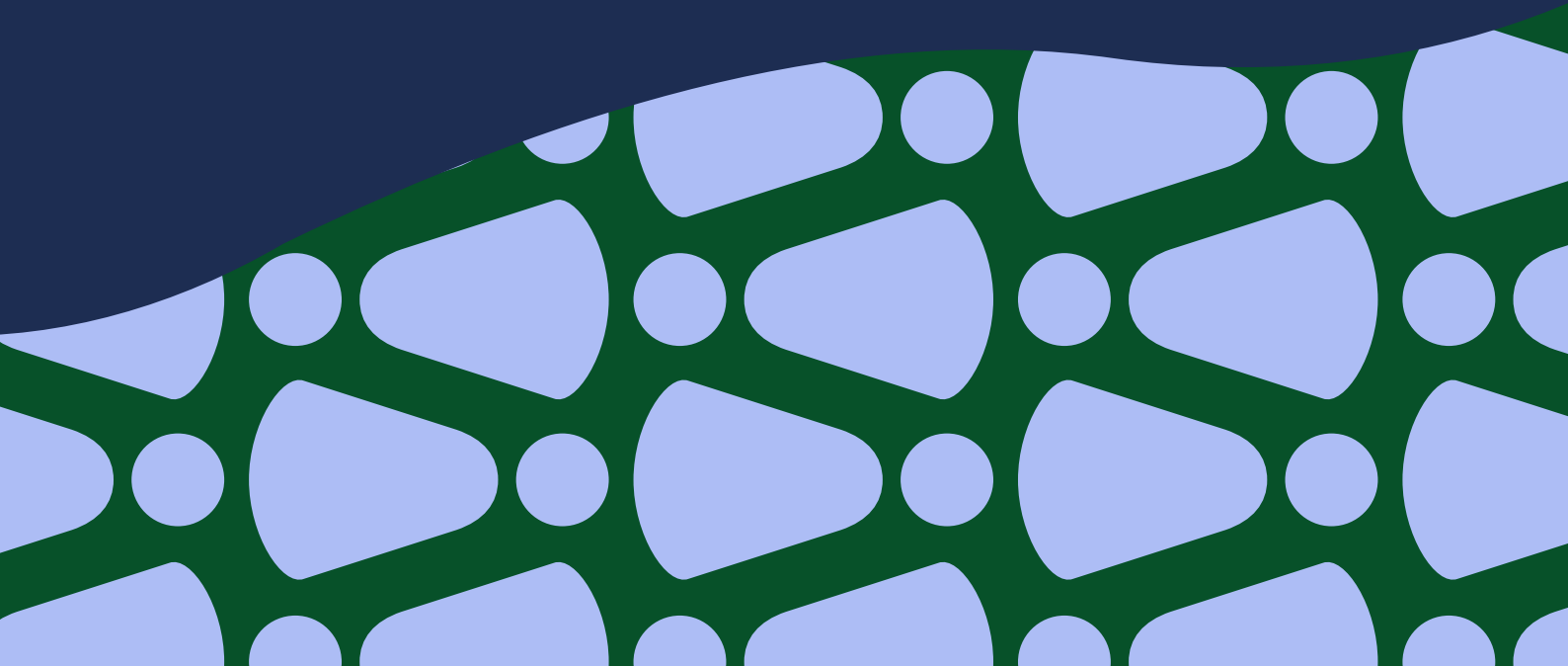


**National  
Literacy  
Trust**

Change your story

# **National Literacy Trust and Experian**

**Impact report 2021-2024**



# Introduction



For children and young people to thrive in the modern world, functional literacy skills and financial capability are increasingly vital. Yet, many young people today simply don't have the literacy skills to be confident in managing their finances.

Last year, a third (35%) of 16-year-olds failed to get good grades in English and maths GCSEs, rising to more than half (57%) of those from disadvantaged communities<sup>1</sup>. What's more, three-quarters (77%) of this age group say they are worried about money or personal finances<sup>2</sup>.

Our research shows that young people who have good reading skills are four times more likely to have good financial skills than their peers who have poor reading skills<sup>3</sup>. However, large gaps exist in young people's literacy and financial capability, with those from disadvantaged communities disproportionately affected.

Over the last three years, we have worked with Experian to equip more young people with the words, knowledge and skills to make informed decisions about their money through our Words that Count programme and digital campaign.

The programme directly empowered close to 1,000 UK young people to feel more confident and informed about making their own financial decisions. While our influencer-led digital campaign reached more than 16 million young people and parents with informative videos that demystified key financial terms and topics and aimed to build financial resilience.

Experian's invaluable and longstanding support also extends to many other areas of our work.

The co-creation of a literacy vulnerability score in 2017, and updated in 2022, has enabled us to continually target our work in the communities where it is needed most. As a result, we are currently working in 20 local areas where low literacy and poverty are seriously impacting people's lives. In the last few years alone, it has contributed to our engagement with Salford City Council, our proposals for work in Liverpool and has supported the development of a new literacy strategy in Swindon. The dataset is unique and adds to our charity's credibility with external organisations.

In addition, Experian's Colin Grieves (MD, Marketing Services, UK&I) has served as a member of our Business Council since it was founded in 2021, joining a group of senior business leaders to help shape the long-term strategic direction of our work to address literacy inequity in the UK.

We are immensely proud of everything we have achieved together and look forward to continuing our important work, increasing our reach and impact and helping more people change their life stories.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Douglas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jonathan Douglas CBE  
Chief Executive,  
National Literacy Trust

1 Department for Education (2024) Key stage 4 performance 2022/23  
2 The London Foundation for Banking & Finance (2024) Young Persons' Money Index 2023/24  
3 National Literacy Trust (2019) Reading and financial capability

# Introduction



At Experian, our mission is to create better financial outcomes for people across the UK. The intricate relationship between literacy and confidence is a challenge we are deeply committed to addressing.

Our collaboration with the National Literacy Trust through its Business Council has illuminated the significant role both businesses and communities must play in tackling literacy head-on to drive lasting change.

Over the past three years, our strategic partnership with the National Literacy Trust has transcended traditional volunteering. By leveraging our people, resources and technology, we have dismantled barriers to literacy and propelled the charity's mission forward.

We are particularly proud of the Words that Count programme. What began as a digital campaign has blossomed into a nationally delivered initiative with a grassroots essence. This programme, now embedded in community and sports settings, reaches young people in environments where they feel most at ease, delivered by trusted leaders in a relatable manner.

From its pilot phase to its current national scope, Words that Count has significantly enhanced financial literacy and confidence among young people.

A cornerstone of our partnership has been our expertise in data analysis. Our ongoing work with the National Literacy Trust on the Vulnerability Mapping tool exemplifies this. This tool empowers the National Literacy Trust to gain deep insights into community literacy challenges, enabling the strategic deployment of programmes tailored to the unique needs of each community.

We are inspired by our achievements thus far and, as a responsible business, we remain committed to innovative thinking to create enduring impacts in our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Grieves'.

Colin Grieves  
Managing Director,  
Experian Marketing Services

# Words that Count

Words that Count is a free financial literacy programme for young people, run by the National Literacy Trust and created in partnership with Experian and Foundation 92, the community foundation affiliated to Salford FC. It includes a programme of direct delivery in communities as well as a digital campaign.

## Overall reach and impact for 2021-2024

**986**

young people directly supported by the programme

**16 million**

young people and parents reached through digital campaign

**9 in 10**

young people have an increased understanding of how to manage their money

**Twice**

as many young people feel confident managing their money

# Words that Count: The programme

The words we use, the words we read, the words we hear – they all count and can affect our wellbeing, build our confidence and help us make informed decisions. The more we understand, the more empowered we become.

Launched in 2021, Words that Count empowers young people to feel more confident and informed about making their own financial decisions through six in-person workshops. Sessions cover topics including money management, understanding credit cards and methods of bill payment.

The programme initially supported 200 local 16 to 24-year-olds in Salford in 2022/23 and grew to support a further 786 young people aged 15 to 19 in 2023/24 across Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham.

While initially supporting young people aged 16 to 24, we have since adjusted the programme to work with 15 to 19-year-olds to enable us to focus on an audience who are getting ready to leave education, or go onto further education, but who might not have the financial literacy skills they need and deserve in order to thrive.

To maximise engagement from young people, our programme is delivered by community role models trained by the National Literacy Trust and employed by football foundations and community sports organisations.

Starting with Foundation 92 in 2021, this model has expanded to include 15 sports organisations, ranging from Notts County FC to the Solihull Moors Foundation in Birmingham.

“

It is instrumental for young people to understand how to manage their money. The Words that Count model provides activities and examples to help prepare them for everyday life and managing their money. This is something a lot of people do not have access to or understand.

*Delivery partner*

”

“

I really enjoyed the sessions and learned a lot about how to manage money.

*Participant*

”

# Programme aims

By the end of the programme, young people are able to:

- demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of money management, including debt management
- demonstrate a good understanding of budgeting
- demonstrate an ability to forecast
- understand the importance of good financial behaviours

“

I found the sessions to be incredibly valuable. The workshops were well-structured and covered essential topics like budgeting, saving, and financial planning in a way that was easy to understand. The practical tips and hands-on activities helped me grasp the concepts better and apply them to my own situation. Overall, the sessions gave me more confidence in managing my finances and provided useful skills that I'll carry forward.

*Participant*

”

“

It has been a great programme with a real impact on the service users we work with, really changing people's outlooks on life.

*Delivery partner*

”

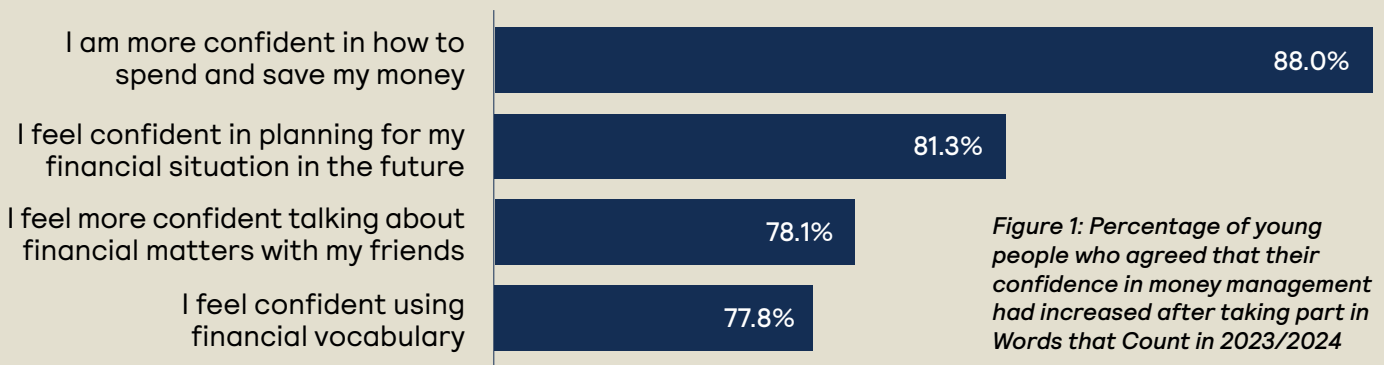


# Evaluation

Insight from the in-person sessions was collected from young people and facilitators after they'd taken part. The feedback was very positive, indicating that young people found the activities valuable for learning about finance and many had not been taught about the topics before in this way.

Highlights from two years of delivery show that after taking part in Words that Count:

- 9 in 10 (90.0%) young people had an increased understanding of how to manage their money.
- More than 4 in 5 had an improved understanding of financial concepts, such as debt and credit (86.5%).
- Twice as many young people felt confident managing their money, increasing from 48.8% to 96.0%.
- In 2023/2024 we explored young people's confidence in more detail and saw that more than 3 in 4 young people felt more confident in all areas of money management, including saving, planning, talking about financial matters and using financial vocabulary.
- All but two facilitators (n= 29) felt the training provided improved their understanding of the importance of financial literacy and helped them to understand their role in delivering the project.
- 4 in 5 facilitators (80.0%) felt more confident to support young people's financial literacy.



## After taking part in the Words that Count programme:

**9 in 10**  
young people  
had an increased  
understanding of  
how to manage  
their money

**Twice**  
as many young  
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confident managing  
their money (from  
48.8% to 96%)

**4 in 5**  
facilitators felt  
more confident  
supporting  
young people's  
financial literacy

# Case study: Declan's story

Declan, aged 15, attends a Salford-based alternative provision setting and took part in the Words that Count programme as part of a small group.

Declan usually struggles with his engagement levels, particularly when working in groups. After a few weeks of delivery, Declan found a connection to the programme and stated "I would like to be an entrepreneur when I leave school. I want to work for myself so that I have control over what I am doing."

As the weeks progressed, Declan began to recognise he wasn't confident with his

reading and understanding of some of the words within the booklets but really enjoyed when the sessions could be made practical.

Declan said, "I really understand how I can look after my money. Some of the words are a bit complicated for me, but I find it easier to understand when we have done the activities."

When we asked him about his confidence and understanding after taking part in the programme, he said, "I thought I knew stuff before, but I really didn't. I know loads more now and it's going to help when I want to set up my DJ-ing."





# Words that Count: The digital campaign

Our Words that Count digital campaign empowers audiences to make good financial decisions and build financial resilience by unpicking some key financial terms and topics through engaging video content across a range of social media and digital channels.

Over the past three years, following a pilot in Manchester in 2021, we've partnered with #FinTok content creators who are knowledgeable on saving, borrowing, spending and generally being money-savvy.

We've worked with them to produce a range of impactful, timely and topical articles, videos, quizzes and challenges. Our original content has covered everything from deciphering your pay slip to Lingo Bingo and understanding your credit score.

Amplified across multiple digital channels, the campaign has had an incredible reach. Over 16 million 15 to 24-year-olds and their parents have seen and engaged with our content which in turn will undoubtedly have supported them on their financial literacy journey.



## Digital channels

- National Literacy Trust website
- TikTok
- Snapchat
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Instagram
- X (formerly Twitter)

## Digital campaign reach from 2021-2024

**16.2m**  
reach

**6.3m**  
video  
views

**287k**  
website  
article  
views

# What's next for Words that Count?

By 2029, we aim to be delivering Words that Count directly to 10,000 vulnerable young people, supporting them to have the financial futures that they deserve, while also engaging and influencing hundreds of thousands of young people via our digital campaigns.

The growth of Words that Count will make a major contribution to the National Literacy Trust's organisational strategy, directly supporting one of three main changes (or 'breakthroughs') the charity believes will have the biggest impact on creating a more equal society driven by literacy. This breakthrough, 'Literacy to learn', aims to ensure every young person leaves school with the literacy skills they need to fulfil their potential.

Partnerships are critical to the way the National Literacy Trust makes change happen and our work with Experian directly contributes to the success of our wider strategy.

By enabling young people to have a better understanding of their finances, and to feel more confident and informed about making their own financial decisions, we are improving their chances of better financial health now and in the future. This can open the door to life-changing opportunities – from having a home or building a business to paying for education or healthcare.

Local settings, such as community sports clubs, sit at the heart of the communities they serve and help us to reach young people who wouldn't otherwise interact with literacy programmes but who might benefit from them the most.

This makes Words that Count a unique and invaluable programme and, with Experian's support, we can be bold and ambitious in our plans to maximise our impact, to achieve our strategic goals and make a real difference to young people across the UK.



# Our strategic partnership

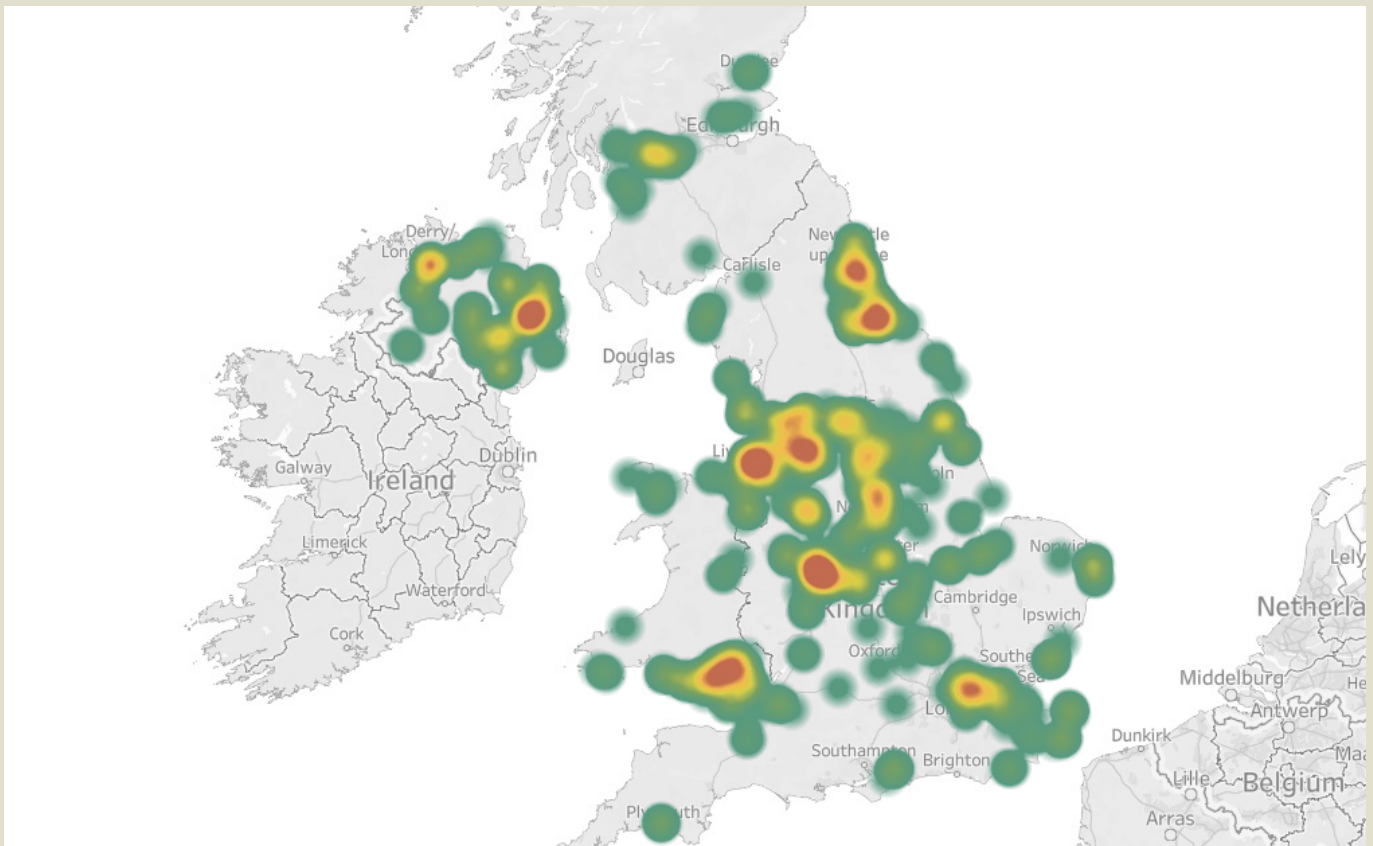
The National Literacy Trust and Experian have a longstanding relationship. In 2017, Experian worked with the National Literacy Trust to co-develop a literacy vulnerability score to help target the charity's work where it can make the biggest difference.

The score was built by combining Experian's extensive data expertise with the National Literacy Trust's deep understanding of the socioeconomic factors most closely associated with low literacy, such as education, income and unemployment.

It not only shows the extent to which literacy challenges are embedded in the social fabric of the country, but also pinpoints the literacy needs of every parliamentary constituency in England, right down to electoral ward level. In 2022, Experian updated the data.

**£43.7k**

**The value of pro bono support from Experian since 2022**



## Supporting communities

The literacy vulnerability score has informed the National Literacy Trust's place-based model of working. By combining the score with other key data sets, we can target our work where it is needed most. To date, we work in 20 local areas throughout the UK where low literacy and poverty are having the biggest impact on people's lives.

The literacy vulnerability score continues to provide value to the National Literacy Trust, both as a tool for our own prioritisation of resources within priority areas and to secure new funded work. The dataset is unique and adds to our charity's credibility with external organisations.

In the last few years, it has contributed to our engagement with Salford City Council (now with a six-figure investment in literacy work over the next three years), our proposals for work in Liverpool and has supported the development of a new literacy strategy in Swindon.

Arts Council England, through its funding of our Connecting Stories project, also recognises the value of data-led planning and delivery and the role the tool has played in shaping our work.

The addition of UK-wide data has also supported our growing work in both Scotland and Wales.

**81%**

**of constituencies in England have at least one ward with significant literacy issues**

The tool enables us to respond to regular enquiries from library authorities and other parts of local authorities interested in data pertaining to their area, to include in strategic planning – which in turn is fed into reports and recommendations to local decision makers.



**Working with Experian has given us a unique and powerful new tool to support our ongoing work to tackle low literacy. The literacy score lays bare the national spread of the challenge but also enables us to focus our work more effectively in the communities where the need is greatest and so support the literacy of more children, young people and families than ever.**

*Jason Vit, Head of Local Areas, National Literacy Trust*



## Political engagement

The National Literacy Trust uses insights from the literacy vulnerability score and analysis of the local factors behind it to provide tailored briefings to MPs to help them better understand and respond to the specific literacy challenges in their constituencies.

Furthermore, in 2023, Experian, the National Literacy Trust and National Numeracy held a joint event at the Labour party conference to discuss with key MPs and policymakers how an incoming Labour government could harness the power of data to provide better public services, improve literacy rates and boost social mobility.

# Thank you

We would like to take this opportunity to express our immense gratitude for Experian's ongoing commitment and support to help us tackle literacy inequity for children, young people and adults in the UK.

We believe educating, enabling and empowering young people in our communities is the best way to ensure they develop the literacy skills needed to thrive in the modern world and write their own life stories.

To support this ambition, we look forward to working with Experian to grow our Words that Count programme and receiving a renewed data set for our literacy vulnerability score as we continuously look at where in the UK our support is needed most.

We will also continue our work with Experian in the thought leadership space to help shape our thinking on key campaign activity.

We will use the unique insights Experian's expertise provides to support our work with local communities, businesses, third sector partners and local and national government.

**Together, we will help more people change their life stories.**

