

# GWR proud of its four-year contribution to £3.5m Action for Children charity partnership

April 4, 2022



Great Western Railway and its parent company FirstGroup, bring a four-year charity partnership with Action for Children to a close this week after providing more than £3.5 million of support since its launch in April 2018.

The partnership, initially set up for three years, was extended by a fourth year in 2021 and is coming to an end this March. Throughout the partnership, GWR and FirstGroup, have provided support to Action for Children through employee and customer fundraising, corporate donations and gift-in-kind advertising space, as well as volunteering and pro bono support.

A highlight of this fundraising was in June 2019 when GWR ran the HST Farewell Rail Tour, raising £30,000 for the charity. The tour, featuring the last High Speed Train, called The Flying Banana, attracted hundreds of rail enthusiasts to catch a glimpse of it making its final journey across 900 miles of the GWR network.

Community Manager for GWR, Emma Morris, said: "To be able to contribute towards this incredible sum of money, knowing the difference it will make to so many young people, is a huge moment of pride for all of us at GWR".

The organisations' support has focused on the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people, including over 1,000 training opportunities for Action for Children mental health staff on the frontline of the Great Western Network.

Thanks to this training, Action for Children employees have been able to deliver initiatives such as The Blues programme, an evidence-based group intervention for 13-19-year-olds with early indicators of low mood and anxious thoughts.

GWR and FirstGroup's funding also supported the training of staff to deliver the Bouncing Back programme, a one-day training course that started in response to the pandemic. Aimed at 8-19 year olds, the scheme looks to equip young people with practical tools, an understanding of good mental health resilience, and the knowledge of when and where to seek additional support.

One of the children who took part in the Bouncing Back training, said: "The Action for Children Bouncing Back training will really help me cope with stressful situations. I've learnt that wellbeing is a way of being a better you and that if you fall over you get back up again. My confidence has had a real boost."

The fundraising support has further led to more than 2,000 activities being provided through Action for Children's Enrichment Fund, giving children, who might otherwise miss out, access to enriching activities and experiences that improve mental health and wellbeing.

Since 2018, Action for Children has been the main beneficiary of FirstGroup's charity activities across its First Bus and First Rail businesses, which includes GWR. In 2020, the partnership won the Business Charity Award for best charity partnership in the transport and automotive category. With this Group-level partnership coming to an end this March, FirstGroup is now taking the opportunity to review its charity partnership approach and explore new ways to complement, support and enhance community investment programmes across its divisions.

FirstGroup Executive Chairman, David Martin, said: "It has been a privilege to be able to support Action for Children in their mission to protect and support children and young people, and to see the lasting legacy that our partnership will leave. Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our colleagues and customers, who really got behind the partnership, we have been able to fund impactful initiatives, supporting the mental health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people across the country, as well as providing vital training to frontline staff."

Action for Children CEO, Melanie Armstrong, said: "Thanks to FirstGroup's partnership and a shared vision to support vulnerable children and young people across the UK on their journey to better mental health, Action for Children has been able to deliver essential life-changing services during a time when they are most needed. Despite all the challenges of coronavirus, the fundraising efforts have been truly impressive. As the partnership comes to an end, we would like to say how grateful we are for the passion and ongoing commitment to Action for Children shown by everyone across FirstGroup, which has enabled us to reach an incredible milestone of £3.5m."

*Photo credit: Great Western Railway*