

Railway Children staff member receives award for empowering young people and improving their wellbeing

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Railway Children's Dave Bentley, has been presented with the Young People's Champion Award at the Base51 Youth Services Award ceremony.

Base51, a leading young people's charity in the UK, annually presents its Youth Services Awards to recognise the achievements of charities, organisations and individuals that work to develop and improve youth services in the Nottinghamshire area.

Dave, Railway Children's Learning, Development and Participation Manager, who has been working in partnership with Base51 to improve young people's chances in life and ensure they have a voice, beat a tough line-up of nominees and says he was overwhelmed to receive the award. "I was truly shocked," he said. "The young people I've had the honour to work alongside have never failed to inspire me – so thank you to them."

During his time with Railway Children, Dave has established a thriving Youth Forum of engaged young

people who meet regularly to inform and direct Railway Children's work. Alongside this, he tirelessly delivers training to staff in and around stations and on trains as well as with British Transport Police, to help raise awareness of vulnerable young people and empower people to take action to help keep them safe.

Recently, Dave has also launched Railway Children's Mystery Shopper project – the first of its kind on the UK rail network – which takes young volunteers onto Britain's railways to ascertain how youth-friendly trains and stations are. Young people assess safety, safeguarding, support and accessibility before their findings, along with recommendations, are fed back to rail companies, helping improve provision and support for vulnerable young people.

However, Dave's most important achievements have been with the young people he has directly supported. "Youth participation allows me to have my say in how Railway Children works as a charity," said Corey, one of Railway Children's Youth Ambassadors. "I like knowing that people like Dave are trying to help young people in a way that's inspired by young people."

For more information about Railway Children, visit www.railwaychildren.org.uk.