



STANDOUT

BIG GIVE CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE 2025

AWARDS APPLICATION

**Christmas
Challenge**

BigGive

StandOut



STANDOUT

StandOut is an award-winning charity – working in HMPs Wandsworth, Pentonville, and Wormwood Scrubs – that empowers people to make positive change, realise their potential, and rebuild their lives after prison. Our unique programme begins in prison with coaching and practical support and continues after release, for as long as someone needs us.

On our intensive course in prison, people can discover who they are and what they want to achieve. It's here that they develop a relationship with StandOut that forms the foundations of our work with them after prison.

Each journey is individual, and leaving prison isn't easy. It's why StandOut provides one-to-one coaching and support that bridges the transition between prison and the community.

We are determined that more people leaving prison are empowered to make positive change that has an impact on them, their families, and society.

OUR PROGRAMME

The StandOut programme has three phases:

The StandOut course

Support begins in prison with an intensive 12-day course to prepare people for life outside. Group work is combined with in-depth one-to-one sessions so coaches can get to know each person's needs and hopes for the future. The interactive and engaging course includes modules which support participants to:

- develop positive mindsets and new ways of thinking; build confidence, motivation and self-worth.
- strengthen essential skills in communication and teamwork.
- engage with employers who have a positive attitude towards people leaving prison.
- understand how to navigate practical elements after release, such as working with probation and writing disclosure statements.
- work with volunteers to develop CVs and interview skills.

Preparation for release

Following the course, coaches continue working with participants to ensure they have the basics in place for release: ID, a bank account, access to accommodation and health services. This is combined with ongoing coaching, group sessions exploring themes identified through discussions with participants, and encouragement to engage with other forms of purposeful activity at the prison.

Post-release support and coaching

The hard work really starts when people leave prison. Our community support looks different for everyone. It combines practical support and individualised coaching, including help in securing stable housing and benefits applications, addressing issues with family or difficulties with mental health and connecting participants with employers open to hiring those with criminal convictions. For those who are particularly anxious about the day of release and don't have someone to meet them, we are pleased to be able to provide gate meets, to offer immediate support. Ongoing support after release enables people to develop the stability that is essential if they are to thrive and move forward into employment or education.

Experts Beyond Bars

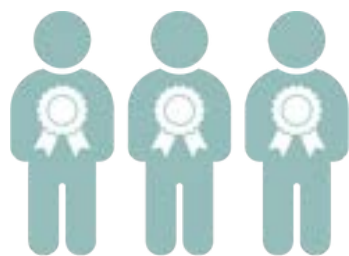
We're committed to ensuring that everything we do is grounded in the experiences of people leaving prison. One of the ways we do this is through our Experts Beyond Bars (EBB) group. EBB is formed of StandOut participants who meet monthly to discuss topical social justice issues, contribute to policy debate, and play a key role in shaping the strategy and direction of StandOut's work, ensuring that it remains rooted in the realities of life after prison.

OUR 2025 CAMPAIGN CONCEPT

Rebuilding a life after prison isn't easy, and the steps a person takes upon release to create stability in their life are often hard-won and fragile. It requires a huge amount of courage – and resilience – to leave the criminal justice system behind, and we wanted our 2025 campaign to highlight that.

We wanted to show our supporters – and the wider public – that the people we work with have persevered on extraordinary journeys, with StandOut walking alongside them. For us, this campaign served a dual purpose – to raise funds to support our work, and to shift perceptions of people leaving prison.

We are also a values-led organisation, and this was an opportunity to showcase our newest value, Courageous.



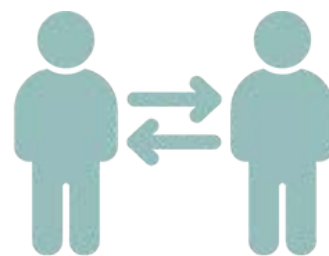
Champions

We are people first



Connected

We are stronger together



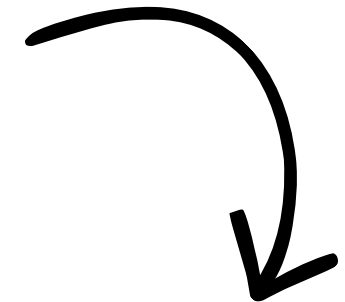
Committed

We are in it for the long haul



First Class

We aim for excellence



Courageous

We embrace challenge

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As well as being values-led, we decided from the outset that the campaign, and its planning process, should:

- 1 Centre, and be led by, the voices of those with lived experience of prison.
- 2 Embrace ethical storytelling.
- 3 Create buy-in among the whole staff team.
- 4 Be produced in-house, without a budget.



Centring the voices of those with lived experience of prison

We're committed to grounding everything we do in the experiences of people leaving prison. That means centring their voices and looking to StandOut participants to tell those stories.

How did we do it?

For the 2024 Big Give Christmas Challenge, we spoke with a participant in the community about the sense of connectedness he had experienced throughout his time with StandOut. We also clipped existing recordings on the same theme, combining them with images and subtitles to create a cost-effective video.

In 2025, we wanted to open up the opportunity to our participants in prison too. This would mean that supporters could hear from those with current, as well as past, experience of prison and gain a better understanding of the courage it takes to prepare to step through the prison gates, and into the community.

To achieve this, we proposed that the Fundraising Officer and Communications and Policy Manager would work with StandOut coaches at each of our partner prisons – HMPs Wandsworth, Pentonville, and Wormwood Scrubs, to host a series of workshops on the theme of courageousness. And then, StandOut coaches in the community would host a meeting on the same theme with Experts Beyond Bars (EBB) – our advisory group of participants who have been through our programme and are now thriving in the community.

We decided that written and verbal (to be recorded in note form) reflections would be gathered together, and we would draw out the 'gold' to create our Big Give campaign. As we wanted to be led by the reflections of participants, we didn't go in with a vision for what the campaign would look like (i.e., whether we'd have a video, if we did what that would look like). We set out with a theme (courage and resilience) and a method (the workshops), but we then wanted to let discussions unfold naturally, shaping the campaign around what emerged and resonated most with participants.



Embracing ethical storytelling

We wanted to centre the voices of those with lived experience of prison, but it was important that we did this in a way that balanced impact with dignity. We did this through implementing ethical storytelling principles. Ethical storytelling is defined by [CharityComms](#) as: “Shining a spotlight on the people and communities we serve, while being mindful, respectful, and genuine in how we portray their stories. It helps infuse our narratives with empathy, authenticity, and a commitment to giving a voice to those who often go unheard or are marginalised.”

How did we do it?

It was important to us that the workshops were first and foremost development opportunities for participants, and the creation of fundraising materials was secondary. For that reason, we developed the sessions collaboratively with the prison coaching teams, as they were best placed to understand what each cohort might find valuable.

We also wanted to ensure that we gathered informed consent from each workshop participant, and that everyone involved understood the purpose of the campaign, the workshops, and how their contributions in the latter would be used in the former.

We produced a one-page briefing for coaches to refer to when recruiting for workshop participants out on the prison landings. This had responses to questions such as: ‘What’s the workshop about?’, ‘How is this different to a normal StandOut workshop?’, ‘Why do you want my help?’, ‘What are you going to do with the things I share in this session?’, ‘What’s in it for me?’, and ‘What if I don’t want to take part?’

When the time came for the sessions themselves, we began by summarising the contents of the briefing and requested that everyone who wished to participate complete a consent form.



Creating buy-in among the whole staff team

In previous years, the Big Give Christmas Challenge primarily involved the fundraising and communications teams. This year, we recognised that the campaign reflects the work of the whole organisation, and so it was important that we involved as many people as possible in the planning process and created buy-in for the challenge week.

How did we do it?

The Fundraising Officer and Communications and Policy Manager came up with the concept, which they then took to the coaching teams at each prison, giving them the freedom to develop the workshop as they saw fit. We followed an iterative process with each team, collectively ensuring that the topics discussed would be both valuable to participants and appropriate to discuss with the potential of their reflections being shared more widely. The coaches then recruited participants and hosted each workshop.

Through this approach, coaches gained a better understanding of these kinds of fundraising campaigns - the thinking behind them and the operational considerations involved. At the same time, the fundraising and communications team learned much more about how workshops are structured and how each prison's context differs. This proved to be a highly valuable exchange of knowledge and, as a result, increased coaches' interest in this year's campaign and its success.

On top of this, we developed a Big Give resource pack – with email and social media templates – for staff and trustees, to enable them to quickly and easily amplify the campaign among their networks. We also hosted a first-look screening of our video in the weeks prior to its launch and held a session at our whole team meeting on what the Big Give is and why it's important to the organisation – particularly important for newer members of the team.

Altogether, this created a bit of a buzz in the office during the week of the campaign and resulted in considerably more posting on social media by the team than in previous years.



Producing the campaign in-house, without a budget

Without a budget, we needed to develop any campaign materials (which included the resulting video) in-house.

How did we do it?

We kept the concept simple and used Canva – which is free for non-profits. It's very intuitive and easy to use – essential if you're a small charity like ours and you don't have someone on the team who is a video editor! Given these restrictions, we made sure to plan ahead and give ourselves plenty of time to get to grips with the software, and test things out.

On top of this, we asked different members of the team to record different parts of the voiceover – which also helped staff team buy-in!



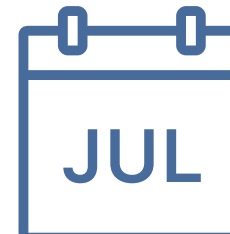
PROJECT PLANNING



Created a pitch document for our campaign concept, along with a timeline, both of which were then signed off by senior leadership.



Scheduled and developed prison workshops.



Hosted prison workshops.



Reviewed materials collected in prison workshops, and developed a pitch document for our campaign video.



Hosted community workshop, further developed campaign video pitch document, and received sign-off.
Started to create the video.



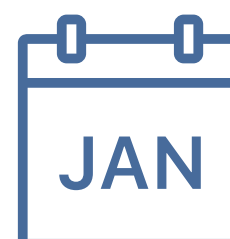
Continued to create the video.



Created accompanying socials, newsletters, and other materials.



Big Give Christmas Challenge 2025!



Reflected on the Big Give Christmas Challenge 2025.

PROJECT PLANNING, CONTINUED

August was an especially important month for the campaign. Once we had completed the three workshops in prison, it was time to gather the materials we had collected (written notes, drawings, and letters), read and analyse them, and come up with our campaign. With our community workshop the following month, we could use this as an opportunity to supplement the material we had already gathered.

Each session had been different, which enabled us to collect a range of reflections, but they all had one activity in common – an exercise in which participants wrote a letter to an imagined person leaving prison, encouraging them to draw on their courage and resilience for the journey ahead.

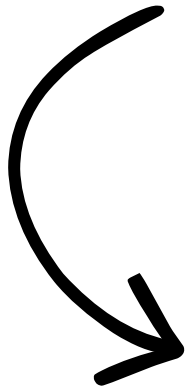
We sat down and sifted through the materials gathered, highlighting what we considered to be the ‘gold’ (the particularly impactful reflections on courage and resilience) in the conversations we had noted down and the letters that had been penned. It became clear quite early on that the letters contained the most ‘gold’ and, by using them in the campaign, we’d be creating an opportunity for StandOut participants to speak directly to supporters, and potentially others in the same situation too.

Once we’d gathered the ‘gold’ it was time to think about the format of the campaign. As mentioned, we hadn’t been sure whether we’d create a video, as they can be expensive to make externally and time-consuming to make internally. But we wanted StandOut supporters, and the wider public, to ‘hear’ from StandOut participants themselves. So, in a world where video is king and free/low-cost video creation software abounds, we decided to go for it.

THE VIDEO

Our video features simple graphics, professional photography from our archives, and a voiceover performed by various members of the staff team. It starts with a man in prison writing a letter to someone on the outside explaining that, while he's looking forward to no longer being in prison, he's apprehensive about what awaits him. He then proceeds to list all the different things that are worrying him, and they flash across the screen.

During the workshops, participants reflected on their concerns about release and, as they listed worry after worry, it became clear how stressful leaving prison can be, and how overwhelming it can feel. We wanted people watching the video to understand that – to witness some of that stress and overwhelm. To do this, we gathered together all of the things that were on participants' minds, and – through this flashing of words across the screen – attempted to create the sense of unrelenting worry for our writer.



In replying to this letter, please write on the envelope:

Number A0123BC Name J. Williams
Wing C-Wing

I'm getting out of prison in a month and I'm feeling a bit anxious.

Don't get me wrong, I'll be glad to leave prison behind, but it's not going to be easy.

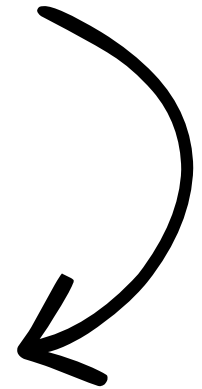
*My mind keeps circling back to everything I'll have to face, like **dealing with tough conversations**.*



Watch the video

We then explain that leaving prison isn't easy and rebuilding a life in the community takes a huge amount of courage and resilience. We introduce that StandOut participants have written letters to remind each other to draw on the courage and resilience they have within them, as they make that transition from prison to the community.

Following this, a series of postcards flit across the screen, each with an image of our work on the front and an excerpt from a letter on the back.



The video ends with a short explanation of how StandOut supports people in their prison to community transition, and a call to action to donate to our Big Give Christmas Challenge.

COMMS STRATEGY

Energising the team!

At our team meeting on 27 November, we give a fun presentation on why next week is important, and how everyone can play a part.

★ **One week to go!** On 25 November, we then share our video with our supporters via Mailchimp, LinkedIn and Bluesky.

★ At these points we shared with our staff team and Trustees, a 'pack' of resources - including newsletter copy, sample social media posts, and graphics - to encourage the whole organisation to support the campaign, quickly and easily!

Video premiere for the team!

At our weekly team check-in on 7 November, we give everyone a first glimpse of our campaign video.

November

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

A sneak peek!

On 21 November, we share our video with selected supporters and key donors.

24 hours into Big Give week! We keep up the buzz we've created on socials, by posting on LinkedIn and Bluesky.

December

★ Launch day! On 2 December, we launch our campaign! We update our website and email signatures, send out a supporter newsletter via Mailchimp, and share posts via LinkedIn and Bluesky.

24 hours to go!

On 1 December, we continue to build a buzz around our campaign on LinkedIn and Bluesky - reminding our supporters that the Big Give Challenge Week drew nearer!

24 hours left of the campaign! Mailchimp, LinkedIn and Bluesky.

Thank you! And total, to everyone who donated to the Big Give - via Mailchimp.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Celebration! We celebrate meeting our total, and thank our supporters, via LinkedIn and Bluesky.

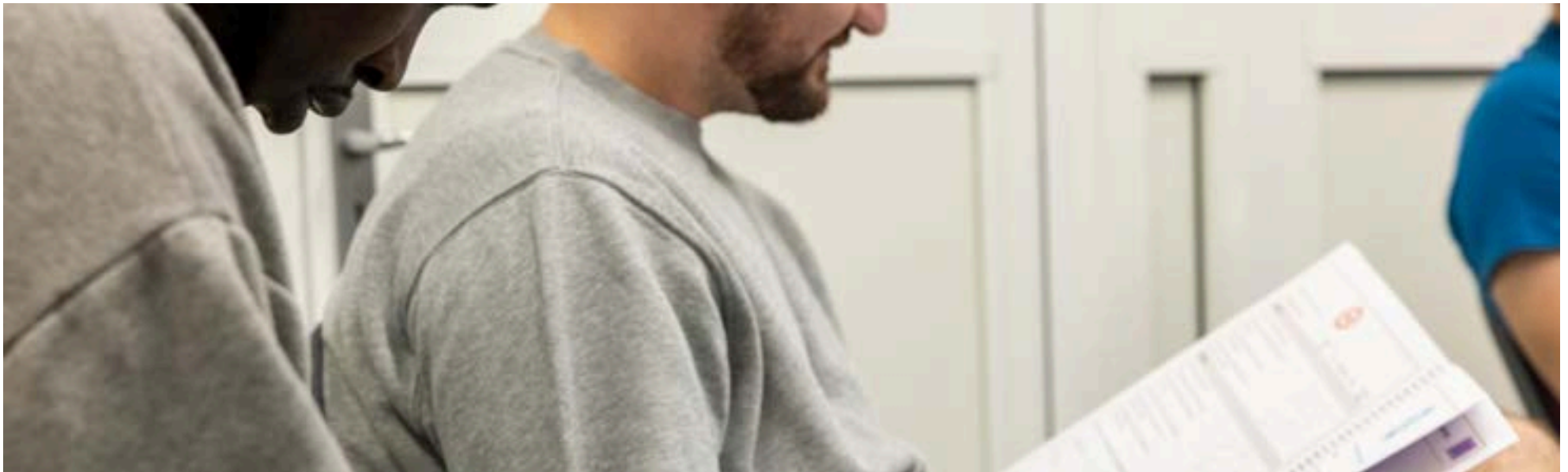
We publish our regular supporter newsletter, with a link to donate via the website, for those who missed the campaign.

SOCIALS AND MAILINGS

The video was the centrepiece of our campaign, with everything else hanging off it.

Socials: We created a series of socials posts for LinkedIn and Bluesky; some general, introducing the video and the campaign, others more specific. For each of the more specific posts, we drew out an anxiety from the initial letter writer in the video, explained why someone leaving prison might be worried about this, and detailed how StandOut supports people through it. To accompany each post, we clipped a relevant section of the video.

Mailings: For our mailings, we kept things simple; taking the opportunity to describe the problem (leaving prison isn't easy), the solution (empowering people through coaching and practical support, at StandOut), and the call to action (donate to our Big Give Christmas Challenge). Each email was accompanied by an image of one of the postcards.






Sample LinkedIn post

Sample Bluesky post



Sample supporter email (top)



Christmas Challenge
BigGive
StandOut
2 - 9 December
One donation, twice the impact.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge is live!

Dear Friend

From now until 9 December at 12:00 pm, donations to StandOut via the Big Give Christmas Challenge will be **DOUBLED**.

Double your donation, double your impact.

With your help, we can support more people to build lasting positive change after prison. Our target is to raise £40,000 over the next week, which will be doubled by our generous match funders.

To leave the criminal justice system behind and truly begin to thrive requires a huge amount of courage and resilience. This is why supporting people to recognise and build on these strengths is fundamental to our programme.

Support someone leaving prison to make lasting change.

Know someone who would be interested in making a donation, or finding out more? [Share this email](#) with friends, family, colleagues, and connections.

On behalf of everyone at StandOut, and the men we work with - thank you.

The StandOut Team

POSTCARD

WHEN THE TIME COMES FOR YOU TO BE RELEASED, I WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE YOU WITH A SAYING THAT I HEARD: 'COURAGE WAS NOT BUILT IN A DAY' SO TAKE EACH DAY AS IT COMES AND ALWAYS CONTINUE YOUR CONTINUAL PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

ONLY YOU KNOW WHAT YOU WANT, WANT YOU'RE CAPABLE OF AND WHAT YOU NEED TO GET THERE.

YOUR LIVED EXPERIENCE IN THE CONFINES OF HMP DOES NOT DEFINE WHO YOU ARE BUT INSTEAD SHOULD SERVE AS A CONDUIT TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RESOLVE.

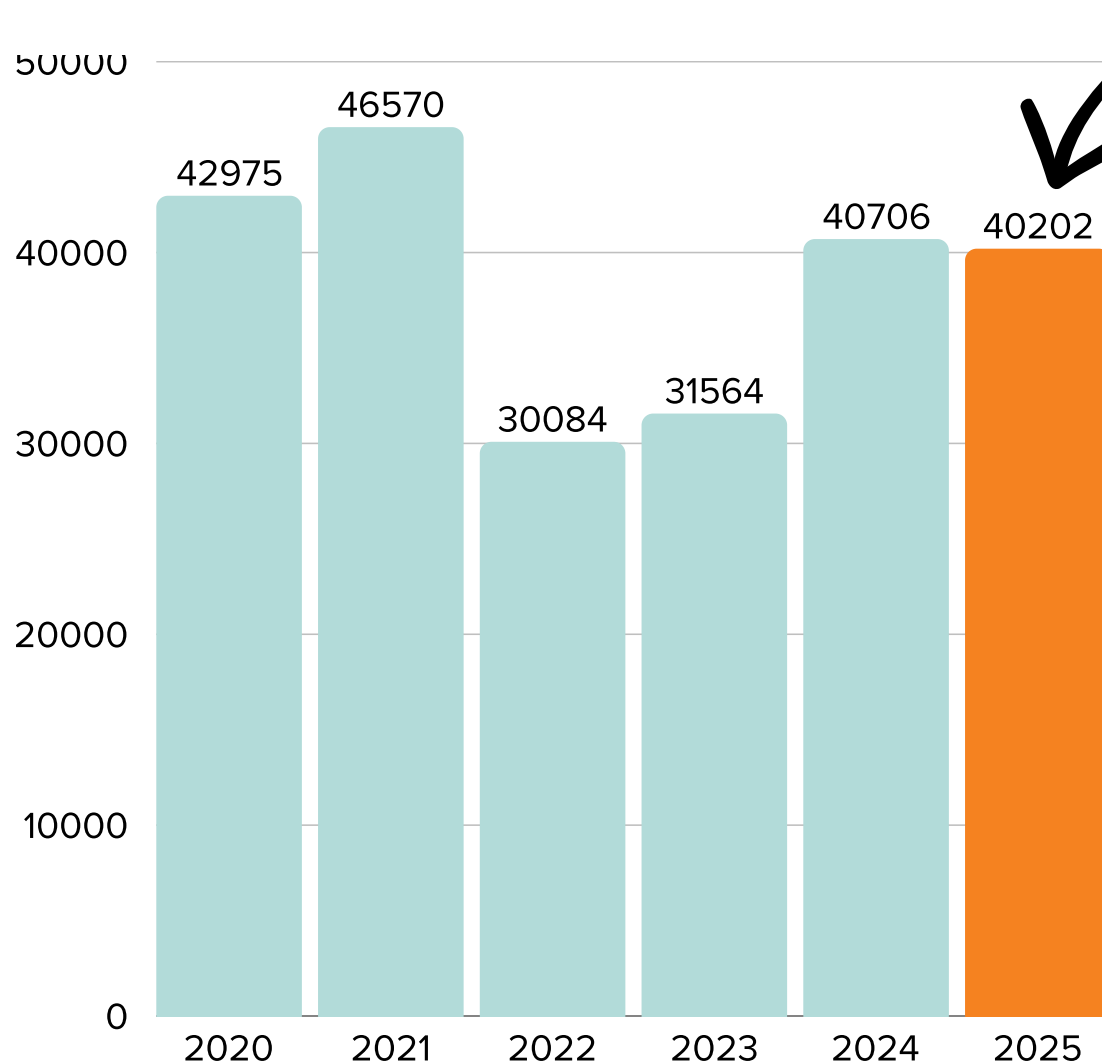
SOMEONE LEAVING PRISON,
WHEREVER YOU ARE,
HAVE COURAGE

StandOut

StandOut

Sample supporter email (bottom)

RESULTS



We've taken part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge annually, since 2020. Each year, we have beaten our target - and this year was no exception!

This year, we raised £40,202 in donations - rising to £88,431 with match funds and Gift Aid. That's almost 10% of our annual income.

We received an incredible 116 donations. The average donation was £346.57, and the most commonly made donation was between £11 and £50.

LESSONS LEARNED AND TOP TIPS

Being participant-led is worth it but takes time (so start early!)

Centring the voices of those you work with is, of course, the right thing to do. However, it takes time to get it right – including consent processes, ensuring you balance impact with dignity, and being responsive and adaptable to people's reflections. Next time, we want to engage participants even earlier, before we land on a concept.

Create staff 'buy-in'

Involving frontline staff from the outset really improves organisational 'buy-in' and gets everyone in the team excited about the campaign!

You can do a lot with no budget and a little time

You don't need a budget to produce a video in-house, but you do need time and a certain amount of skill. There's great free and low-cost software out there, which is easy to use. Take advantage of platforms like Canva, which is free for charities.

Keep videos short, or clip them

Ideally, keep videos short. Or, failing that, create standalone clips out of them. Our attention spans are short – the recommended length for a video on social media depends on the platform, but generally shorter is better, with the upper limit being around 60-seconds. Our video was too long – something that came about because we were being led by the material. There are pros and cons to this.

Create once, publish everywhere!

That key communications principle. We collected a huge amount of material through the workshops and only managed to use a small amount of it during the Big Give Christmas Challenge. Our next step is to sift through it all and figure out what else we can use, and how! One idea is to include the letters to people leaving prison in our 'release packs' for those being released from prison.



THANK YOU

First and foremost, we'd like to thank the StandOut participants who trusted us with their stories and contributed to this campaign. We are so privileged to get to work with you.

We'd also like, of course, to thank our pledgers, Champion, and donors for your support – we hope you will continue to get involved in other ways.

Finally, a big thank you to our wonderful staff team and Trustees - all of whom were involved in the campaign in some shape or form.