

Christmas 2025

Summer 2025

niscu

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Listen up

NEWSLETTER FOR THE

 Listening
SERVICE

*Thank you
for
listening*



VOLUNTEER

“... He made Himself nothing by taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”

(Philippians 2:7)

Welcome to our Christmas edition of ‘Listen Up!’, where we are going to focus on our marvellous listening volunteers. Our volunteers are so valuable. They are the backbone of what we do, as without them there would obviously be no Listening Service. The difference they make to the lives of the children they listen to is real; children flourish when they feel seen and heard and are shown that they matter.

This led me to contemplate the greatest voluntary act ever – Jesus voluntarily coming to earth

“... He made Himself nothing by taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:7)

He didn’t even ‘just’ become a human, he was born in cave, surrounded by animals, his first visitors were shepherds, the lowest of the low in occupations at that time, yet he was given the name “Immanuel, which means ‘God with us’.”

Just as without our volunteers there would be no Listening Service, so without Jesus there would be no Christmas and no salvation. This act of volunteering by Jesus can never be overstated or over-celebrated.

As Zechariah declared, *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come to His people and redeemed them.”*
(Luke 1:68)

Without actually saying a word about Jesus, our volunteers take this ‘redeeming love’ into school every time they go to listen.



**Thank God for
this work and
all our the
volunteers**

Round up

Term 1 - September to December 2025

Listening sessions since Sept 2025

Primary Sessions Secondary Sessions

639 278

917

Total Listening sessions...

...with

173

different pupils



New Schools: We started listening at schools in Lancaster and Maryport.



New volunteers listening in schools.



Volunteers ready to start listening.

New schools and volunteers since Sept 2025

Training sessions since Sept 2025

4

Day 1 training at The Lakes Christian Centre Windermere

Day 1 and 2 Training in Ingleton.

Day 2 Training in Lancaster

So, we have potentially the biggest increase in volunteers since the Listening Service restarted after Covid, in September 2021: listening to the most pupils in a single term - Praise God!

Increase since Sept 2025

Thoughts from new volunteers

We heard in 5 words how Rachel was feeling before she started listening in the last edition, so we thought we should ask for her 'After'...and here are her responses:

Joyful

to hear the exciting things they tell me about

Amazed

that they actually chat - even the most awkward, shy ones

Privileged

to be able to simply listen with no other agenda

Thankful

that I have the opportunity to give the children time to listen

Challenged

at times to simply listen and reflect, when it's tempting to give advice!



Feelings from our other new volunteers:

Before

uncertain
supported
willing
confident
committed
curious
nervous
enthusiastic
tentative

After

welcomed
valued
joyful
supported
involved
responsible
privileged
relaxed

Please pray for our new volunteers

Paul's comments

Paul has been listening in a school in West Cumbria for a couple of years...

Have you ever thought “What can I do to change the world?” or wondered “Why did God give me two ears and one mouth?” * If you have, then listen up! The NISCU 121 Listening service may be for you.

Increasingly research is supporting anecdotal evidence that children who feel overlooked and undervalued do

not develop into mature well-adjusted adults. We know it, even as adults, that our voice needs to be heard by others and that is what the 121 Listening Service does, it changes the world by listening to those who through no fault of their own are often overlooked and not given a chance to use their voice.

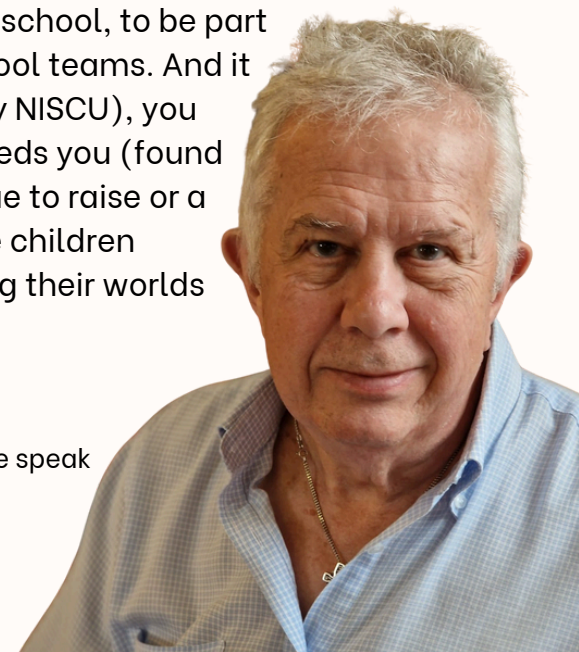
“What can I do to change the world?”

Now I must confess to an element of mis-selling by our CEO, Nick, as having completed the training, which is quite frankly excellent and worth doing just for your own mental health, I imagined spending time listening to angst ridden teenagers. Instead Suzanne and I spend a morning a week in a lovely Junior School listening to Year 4s and 5s talk about football, their pets, the last school trip, whatever is on their mind; anything they want to. For them it's not Listening but TTT, Time To Talk! And opportunity to share with an adult what is important in their lives; what is making them happy and what is making them sad. It's recognition and being given time to express how they feel, without judgement. It really is easy and yet so profound.

Early on a teacher admitted that she would “*love to have the time to listen to every child more*”, effectively to be interested in them as young people rather than one of a class of maybe twenty or more. Since then, we have seen shy children become more confident in expressing themselves, the over-anxious and nervous calm down and open up. We only see a few students a week but the staff clearly see a difference and value the service. It is joy to be truly welcomed into the school, to be part of that community and to support the hardworking school teams. And it is so easy – training takes a couple of days (provided by NISCU), you need a DBS (sponsored by NISCU) and a school that needs you (found by NISCU). You might never have a safeguarding issue to raise or a teenager burst into tears but in giving primary age children Time To Talk, I have learnt that we are changing their worlds for the better.

* It's because we should listen twice as much as we speak

**Please pray
for our
established
volunteers**



What our volunteers are saying

Why are you/what made you decide to become a listening volunteer?

Schools are such pressurised places for both staff and pupils and there isn't the capacity in the school day to meet all the needs that there are. Becoming a listener is a real honour and a way to not only serve your local school but to give a child that 1:1 attention and time that they deserve. We go in with Jesus in our hearts, which makes it life changing. (Laura S.)

As a church, we saw NISCU developing the initiative of listening in schools and we worked with them to set this up at our local school. It is a wonderful scheme to share God's love in a very simple way and ensures every child has the opportunity to be heard. (Steven)

I chose 1-2-1 Listening after many years of leading assemblies in primary schools. I was happy to realise the commitment worked well with my schedules and weekly prep is minimal. I started with 30 minutes a week! Now I hear 7 children across 3 schools. (Helen)

I wanted to be involved with ministry not church centred, one which would potentially encourage others. (Steve)

I have personal experience of speaking with a Listener so know how valuable it can be. I am passionate about supporting young people with their mental health and am aware of the scarcity of services available to them, being a listener is an easy and rewarding way to help fill this gap. (Emily)

I started listening simply so I had experience as the then Listening Service Manager but, once my 'experience period' was over, I kept going as a volunteer because I saw the impact it was having and there was no way I could just walk away. (Jane)

One of the reasons I became a Listener, is because I am naturally a listener rather than a talker, so suits my personality. I also recognise how infrequently people properly listen. They may hear, but don't actually listen. It makes a huge difference to me when I am listened to, and I enjoy offering that same opportunity to others. (Chris)

I decided to become a listening volunteer as I saw it as a God given opportunity to show a listening heart. (Janette)

I wanted to show God's love in schools by giving children time so that they can be heard. (Rebecca)

What our volunteers are saying

What's the best thing about being a volunteer?

Meeting so many different children and young people with their talents, abilities and struggles is a wonderful thing. Being able to give a child that undivided attention is fantastic and seeing the trust built up over time is lovely. Being able to take some of the load from teaching and pastoral staff is great too! (Laura S.)

Seeing the positive reactions from children when you come into the classroom, showing how eager they are to have a listening session. (Steven)

I love it! The children are always pleased to see you! And they always want to come again. Their stories can fill your day with joy or can pull on your heart. Either way to each child it's like Jesus sat down with them! (Helen)

The satisfaction of knowing you have helped/encouraged some of the children i have listened too. (Steve)

The privilege of having pupils open up about the things they are struggling with. Being able to witness and affirm the strength, resilience and maturity of some of the pupils who are managing very complex and painful family situations. (Emily)

Seeing the difference it makes in the lives of the young people - "I feel so much better now I've got that off my chest!" (Jane)

The best thing about being a volunteer is being welcomed into the school and class each week. The children greet us with pleasure and it's a joy to share their lives for a few minutes. Later, and in private, it is a privilege to lift them in prayer. (Chris)

The best thing about being a volunteer is 'being there', Jesus loves these children. (Janette)

It's really encouraging when volunteering in school leads to other opportunities to share our faith more directly e.g., inviting the school to our church to do a 'Walk through Easter'. (Rebecca)

I am able to develop real relationships with them and become one of the (few) adults in their lives who just spends time with them and only them for about 30 minutes a week. With the teenagers, this aspect of the work is especially useful. (Cathy)

What our volunteers are saying

Any downsides to being a NISCU Listener?

Not being able to solve all their problems!
(Laura S.)

It could be a lonely role and so it is good having a team alongside you to encourage you and pray together before and afterwards. (Steven)

Hours in the week - there just aren't enough of them to cover all the children and teens who would benefit. More trained, active volunteers could smash this! (Helen)

It can take time to build up trust with each new set of students I meet (Steve).

It can be frustrating to hear about very difficult and complicated situations and feel like 'there is nothing I can do to make it better'. At the same time I think this helps me remember to commit the pupils and their lives to God, knowing that what I can offer is so little but trusting that he will use it and will be at work in the wider picture of their lives. (Emily)

Knowing there are so many other pupils who need someone to listen to them, if only we had more volunteers. (Jane)

The downsides of being a NISCU volunteer is that I can't always hear or understand what a child says, but with a bit of repeating or explanation we get there in the end. (Chris)

Apologies I can't think of any downsides. (Janette)

We can often end up 'just' listening to children read their reading book, but the extra reading practise is a good thing, it's appreciated by the teachers and it's great to see improvements in reading over the year! (Rebecca)

The Listening Service continues to amaze me - I come home after every session with an incredible mixture of deep sadness and yet often also a kind of hope filled joy. And also both with a sense of huge inadequacy and yet deep fulfilment! (Cathy)

Upcoming events

Blue Monday – 19th January 2026 –

Rather than giving our Listening Schools treats at Christmas, as we are a mental health support service, we like to give something the week of Monday 19th January, which is known as ‘Blue Monday.’

It is said by a UK travel company to be the most depressing day of the year. If you (or your church) would like to contribute towards the cost of doing this, you can make a donation to the bank account using the following information:

Bank – CAF Bank Ltd

Account Name – NISCU, Account Number – 00019775, Sort Code – 40 52 40

Please reference the payment ‘LS Sch Treats.’ or you can send a cheque, payable to NISCU (not the Listening Service!) with “LS Sch Treats” written on the back. Thank you.



The Need



The need for the Listening Service is undisputed. One of our schools workers was talking to a former teaching colleague, who had heard of NISCU but wasn't aware of the listening service and she commented that schools will be “lining up for it.” The Wellbeing Lead in one of our secondary schools that belongs to a Trust, had a visit from the person who oversees Mental Health provision

throughout the Trust. She was asked, “*How do you handle such a large caseload?*” and when she explained about the Listening Service, the response was, “*That's gold! Whatever you have to do to keep that service, do it!*”

Have you been inspired to consider becoming a Listening volunteer – please, get in touch!

“How do you handle such a large caseload?”

“The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:35-38 ESV)

Training 2026



Listening-Training

Session 1: Listening Effectively



This session imparts the knowledge and skills to be an effective listener.

This course requires no previous experience, but can lead to an applied listening course for listening in schools.

Booking before the event is essential as there are only a limited number of spaces. Book by email to jane.callow@niscu.org.uk.

Where: Nentsberry Cottage, Nentsbury, Alston, CA9 3LH. (what3words - user.musically.appealed)

When: Saturday 24th January 2026

Timing: Registration and refreshments from 09:30am Course from 09:45am - 3:00pm

Cost: £10 per person

Bring a Packed Lunch!!



COME AND BE EQUIPPED TO LISTEN FOR LIFE



Contact: jane.callow@niscu.org.uk
for further information



Listening People
From AtaLoss.org

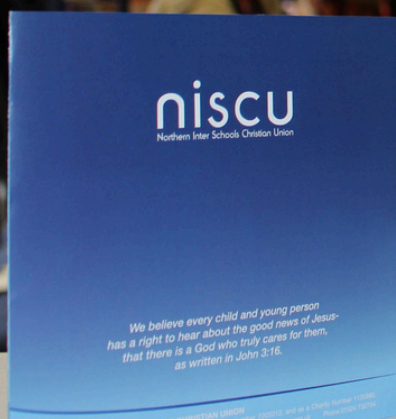


You can get involved by:

Get involved

The 1-2-1 Listening Needs You!

1. Becoming a prayer partner and praying for the on-going roll out of the Listening Service (sign up for our newsletter and prayer requests by emailing jane.callow@niscu.org.uk with 'sign me up' as the subject to the email).
2. Get trained as an 'effective listener' and volunteer as a listener to meet the need in a school near you.
3. Promote the 1-2-1 Listening Service in your church and get people to sign up to receive future newsletters about the listening needs across our NISCU areas.
4. By giving financially to the work, either online via the website (Please designate any donations 'Listening Service') or by cheque (payable to NISCU) posted to Jane Callow, 1-2-1 Listening Service, NISCU, 57, Lancaster Road, Carnforth LA5 9LE.



Thank you from all the listening team

For more information or to join in any of the above, please contact me, either by email to jane.callow@niscu.org.uk or give me a call or a text on 07718768548.