

Impact Report 2025



Tackling youth inequality by fuelling
courageous leadership

Welcome



We are delighted to share the latest report, which we produce every three years. Impact reports are a valuable indication of a charity's effectiveness, ensuring that they remain true to their purpose, and am sure I can express on behalf of all the Trustees, that the following pages make us extremely proud of the work that we do, confirming that our support really matters.

We operate at such an important stage of a social venture, right at the very beginning and what we call 'the first mile', especially so because there aren't many other funders able to take the same risks without proof of concept. We receive hundreds of applications each year and our voluntary board of Trustees undertake independent and unbiased review of these, selecting only a few to become Shackleton Leaders – 73 to date.

We cannot do this alone, and are extremely grateful to The Oak Foundation, The Bernard Sunley Foundation, The Headley Trust and Saints & Sinners, as well as some private donors, for their incredible financial support over the years.



We find it increasingly challenging to maintain this fundraising momentum and appreciate any introductions, awareness and donations ([here](#)) that can help us back the next generation of Shackleton Leaders.

The challenges facing disadvantaged young people in the UK are growing more urgent. Inequality is deepening, support systems are under strain, and opportunities for those with the least are harder to come by.

We need to support more Leaders, often the people who have lived these realities, with their bold and effective solutions. For the next 5 years we want to:

- Support 4-6 new Shackleton Leaders each year
- Reach a target of £1m raised in catalytic funding by 2030
- Build a network of 90+ social leaders by 2030

This report should provide the evidence you need, but don't hesitate to contact me at info@shackletonfoundation.org if there is anything you require or are interested in. Together we can deliver bold impact with precision, care and courage.

Onwards,

Charlotte Hatfield, Chair of Trustees

About Us



"I have felt held and valued as a Shackleton Leader, the funding has been very important but even more so is being a part of a community of others on similar journeys. I will always be grateful for the support that has been given and hope this can be returned one day by myself to others in the network."

John Harrison, Solidarity Farm



The problem

Across the UK, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds face entrenched barriers to opportunity. Cycles of poverty, underfunded education, youth offending, unemployment and poor mental health persist—fuelled by systems that are often impersonal, outdated, or broken. Yet within these communities, powerful, practical ideas for change already exist—often carried by individuals with lived experience who are ready to lead. But these aspiring social entrepreneurs face a critical obstacle: the **first mile**.

The early stage of launching a social venture is the hardest—critically underfunded, often unsupported, and isolating. Funders often shy away from unproven leaders or untested models, leaving transformative ideas stranded before they can make a difference. Without someone willing to take a chance on them, their potential to drive lasting change is lost. As a result, too many young people lack opportunities and remain held back by persistent challenges.

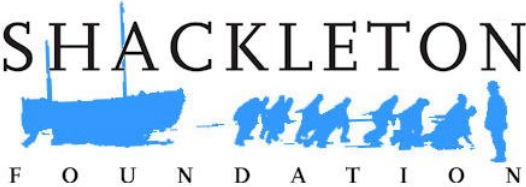
Our solution

We are a small grant-making foundation centred on disadvantaged youth, that invests in individuals with the vision and lived experience to lead bold social change, particularly in the most vulnerable early stages of launching a venture. Inspired by Sir Ernest Shackleton in honour of his spirit of leadership, we exist to back individuals who carry that same courage into solving today's most urgent social challenges.

Our focus is the first mile—the moment when potential hangs in the balance, and belief makes all the difference. We back people, not just projects. We believe that by supporting social entrepreneurs who are closest to the challenges, we can drive the most authentic and effective solutions to youth inequality.

We provide up to £15,000 in seed funding, alongside guidance, expert access, and a supportive peer community. We call our grantees "Shackleton Leaders"—a nod to the spirit of Sir Ernest Shackleton, whose **leadership**, **endurance**, and **courage** guide our values.

Our Theory of Change



The Shackleton Foundation believes that excellent leadership has the potential to transform lives.

But many social entrepreneurs struggle to turn their concept into reality as securing funding without a proven track record is extremely challenging.

Our Activities

We raise funds
from trusts,
individuals and
companies

**We invest catalytic
seed capital** in social
entrepreneurs
(Leaders) who
embody the
leadership spirit of
Sir Ernest Shackleton

**We provide Leaders
with support**
(mentoring,
expertise,
introductions)

**We build an alumni
network of Leaders,**
to enable peer-to-
peer learning,
connections and
workshops from
experts

**We develop informal
partnerships** with
organisations to help
source Leaders and
enable follow-on
funding
opportunities

Our Outcomes

Social entrepreneurs
have **access to**
capital to launch and
grow successful
enterprises

Innovative solutions
to social problems
are developed and
scaled

Social entrepreneurs
have the **confidence**
**to kick-start a
project**

Organisations are
**more effective and
sustainable**

More funders are
aware of the **value**
**of early-stage risk
capital**

The Shackleton Foundation's vision is to create a society in which young people can thrive and flourish without social injustice or discrimination

Our Impact – highlights



73 Leaders funded to date
£10,000 average award

We have awarded
£596,337 in grants
£110,000 in loans

75% of Leaders met or
exceeded their milestones
(of those funded since 2015)

43% of Leaders have lived
experience of the issue they
are tackling

84% of Leaders still operating
(of those funded since 2015)

Over 7x increase in turnover
seen by our average Leader,
three years after our award
(of those funded since 2015)

71% of Leaders are female
(compared with 59% of UK social
enterprises and 18% of small businesses)*

Each Leader has helped, on
average, around 1,600 children
and young people in the three
years after our award
(of those funded since 2015)

17% of Leaders are from ethnic
minority backgrounds
(compared with 13% of UK social
enterprises and 6% of small businesses)*

* State of Social Enterprise Survey 2023

Our Support

Alongside our seed funding, we provide support for our Leaders with many practical aspects of starting a social venture, in their first mile and throughout their journey.

These include:

- Mentoring by existing Leaders
- Quarterly advice surgeries – to facilitate peer-to-peer learning within the Leader community
- Annual Leader's Forum – bringing in expert speakers and providing networking opportunities
- Awareness building of their ventures
- Introductions to potential follow-on funders

All our support aims to help Leaders grow their projects from a mere idea to reach significant numbers of children and young people, often across the UK.



"The quarterly meetings have meant that I felt that I have support when I need it, the chance to feel part of a community of leaders and the opportunity to feel inspired by the achievements of those who have gone before me."

**Lindsey Crosbie,
The Tinnis Trust**

"The Shackleton foundation put Safempowerment on the map and I will forever be grateful. This money allowed us to expand earlier than we had originally planned. The application process was easy and I have been incredibly impressed with the follow up support – no other grant offers this service!!"

Sharon Ellis-Gillard, Safempowerment

Our Support cont.



Sarah Waite - Get Further

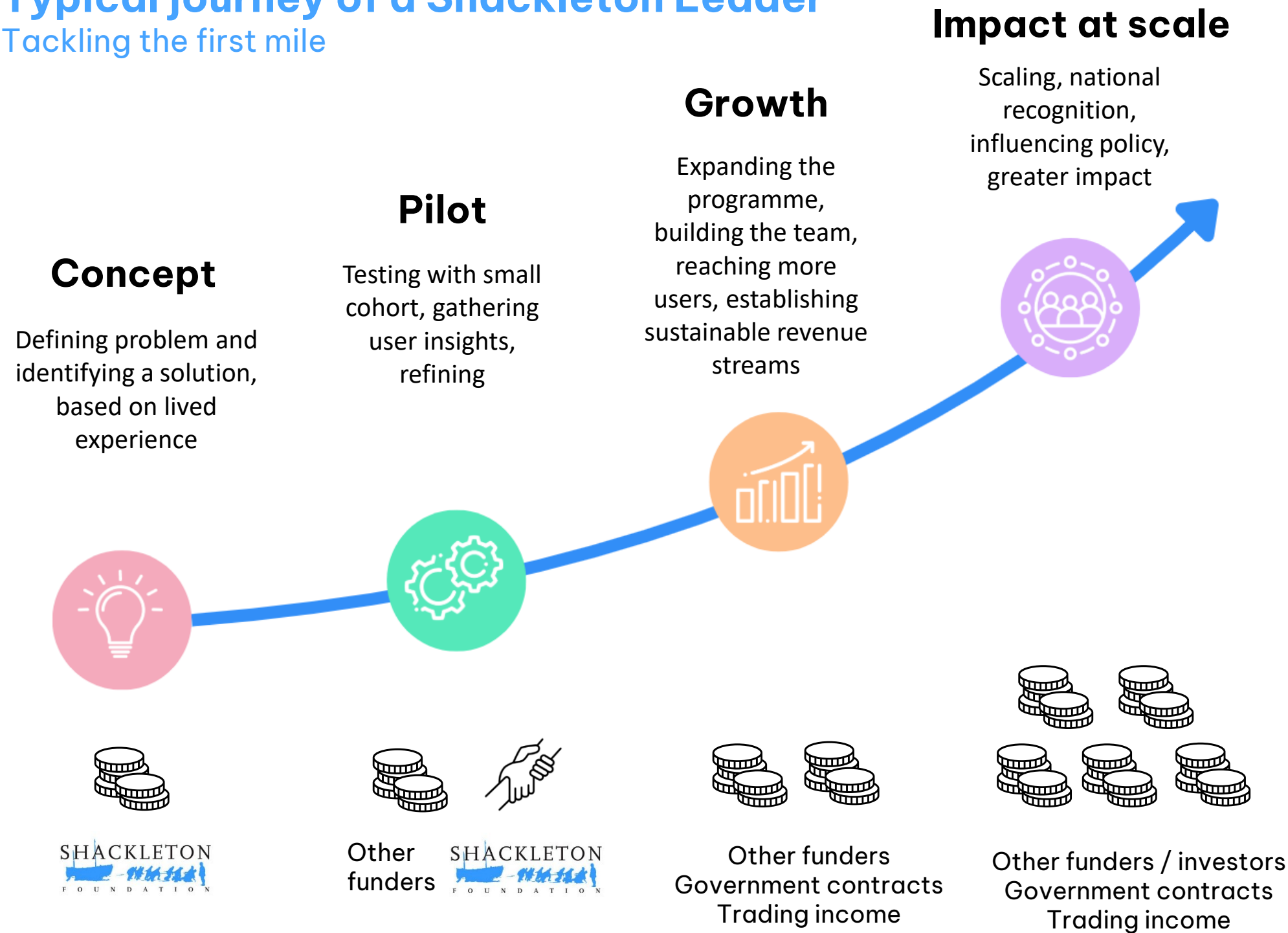
When Sarah approached us in 2018, she was trialling a small project with 10-20 disadvantaged young people who needed to retake maths GCSE to unlock further work or study opportunities.

Sarah was the only employee at the time, but our funding and support enabled her to complete the maths pilot, launch an English pilot, recruit top graduate tutors and take on more employees.

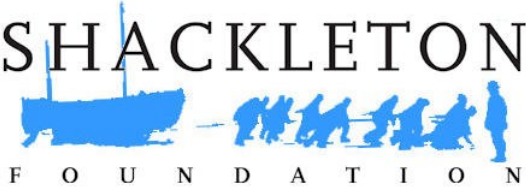
Get Further has since worked with nearly 5,000 students across the UK, with their students achieving pass rates 70% higher than the national average in Maths, and 77% higher in English. It is now an award—winning charity with an income of almost £2.5m, influencing national policy for post-16 education.

Typical journey of a Shackleton Leader

Tackling the first mile



Our Support cont.



“Your support has been completely transformational in helping me achieve what I want to with Rise. It has helped grow our presence in London and Bristol and to better tell our story and bring in more support.”

**Thomas Hague,
RISE Community Jiu Jitsu**

“It is a rigorous but responsive process that forced me to think about all the details of the project without requesting an unrealistic level of detail given I was just starting out.

I remain very grateful for the help! Shackleton was the first organisation to support Why Care and has helped with all our subsequent work”

Niketa Sanderson Gillard, Why Care



“Without the Shackleton funding, we would not be in a position to grow, expand our offer and incorporate life-changing communication with the space station as a result”

Ella Bains, Eric Knows



“Thank you so much for believing in our work, and for taking a leap of faith on a second application, something that we recognise as rare! The Shackleton team have been flexible, accommodating and supportive throughout.”

Laura Harte, Oxfordshire Discovery College

“I’d like to express my deep gratitude to the Shackleton Foundation for putting your trust in me as a Shackleton Leader right at the beginning of my journey with Luna.”

**Anna Wardley,
Luna Foundation**

Leaders Funded 2022-2025

**Laura Harte**

Oxfordshire Discovery
College

Innovative mental health
programmes based on lived
experience

Ella Bains

Eric Knows

STEM sessions for
autistic/neurodivergent
children to improve learning
and social engagement

Sharon Ellis-Gillard

Safempowerment

Workshops for boys and girls
around mental health,
respect, influence and
staying safe

Lindsey Crosbie

The Tinnis Trust

Training and provision of
equine therapy retreats for
care-experienced young
people and trauma survivors

Dan Dodge

Sports 4 Change

Sports programmes for
young people to develop
skills, gain qualifications and
find employment
opportunities

**Niketa Sanderson-
Gillard**

Why Care

Transforming foster care
system through innovative
recruitment, training and
support

Sarah Gaunt

Unstoppable Girls

Empowering girls with ADHD
to navigate the world and
thrive

John Harrison

Solidarity Farm

Provides a unique learning
environment for children and
young people on an organic
farm

Jerome Sewell

Prodigal Monster

Using the arts to raise
awareness of positive mental
health while upskilling
underrepresented groups.

Thomas Hague

RISE Community Jiu-Jitsu

The UK's first social
enterprise to support young
people's physical and mental
health through affordable
Jiu-Jitsu

Ella Williams

Our Goal

Sports mentoring programme
to boost mental and physical
health – targeting inactive
teenage girls living in areas of
multiple deprivation

Sarah Sudea

Finding the Flex

Aiming to widen access to
flexischooling for UK school
children.

Robert Dickinson

ParkBox

Toy and book libraries in
public parks for 2-16 year
olds, supported by forest
school style classes

Cynthia Lai

Ella Support Loop

Improving outcomes for young
people with SEND by
empowering the adults around
them through AI guidance

Leader Spotlight

John Harrison – Solidarity Farm

John is the founder of [Solidarity Farm](#), an organisation working with vulnerable children and young people, using farming practices and the natural environment to create a psychologically safe learning environment where relationships of trust are built, and individual transformation can take place.

Our grant enabled John to become established and to develop further offers to support young people at risk of exclusion from education, while also providing a community of inspiring leaders that can support and provide challenge as Solidarity Farm grows a space in the local education and social enterprise ecosystem.

At the end of his first year, Solidarity Farm doubled its original FTEs and volunteers, and experienced greater demand for the 1:1 support than anticipated, with referrals from the local authority.

700 young people have benefitted from visiting the farm, either for holiday activities, school organised educational farm visits or 1:1 dedicated support.



“## always increases in confidence after attending Solidarity Farm and it’s great for their social skills. Being outdoors and enjoying nature, learning new skills and having new opportunities have a positive impact on health and well-being”

Parent of attendee

Ella Williams – Our Goal

Ella Williams is the founder of [Our Goal CIC](#), a not-for-profit organisation which exists to empower every girl to be active and to reach her full potential. Currently, 43% of girls in England drop out of sport in their teenage years. Ella set up Our Goal to change that and tackle the barriers facing teenage girls making it difficult for them to be active.

Our grant helped Our Goal to pilot a mentoring and physical activity programme targeting inactive girls aged 11-16 living in areas of multiple deprivation, and has been developed with teenage girls, designed to boost their confidence and self-esteem.

In its first year Our Goal trained 3 young people to deliver the programme in schools, increasing to 6 this year and have now worked with over 200 women and girls across Greater Manchester. From the Pilot, 93% of girls were more physically active by the end of the programme, and 74% said the sessions help them feel better about themselves.

The pilot has enabled them to partner with a second university so they can double the number of girls they reach.



“The sessions have allowed me to be more confident and more engaged whilst doing PE. They have also helped me enjoy other lessons more”
Year 9 student

“The sessions help with my mental health”
Lilly, Year 7

Leader Spotlight

Niketa Gillard-Sanderson – Why Care

Niketa is the founder of a social enterprise focused on increasing the number of stable, loving fostering homes available for vulnerable children. Currently there are not enough carers, in the right places, with the right skills for the children who need them. [Why Care](#) helps find, assess and support more foster carers from diverse backgrounds.

Our grant helped Niketa design an innovative new approach to how potential foster carers are assessed and will bring those who have experience of being in foster care or of being a foster carer into the design and delivery of that assessment.

An experienced social work manager involved in the process stated that assessments of foster carers typically rely on a very narrow interview style approach with a single social worker. By creating a more dynamic assessment that tests potential foster carers under different circumstances we have been able to gain greater insight about their potential strengths as well as highlighting development needs or concerns.



"It feels great that I am able to be involved in something so important that could literally make or break a child's life."

Young person in care

Sharon Ellis-Gillard – Safempowerment

Sharon is the Director and Founder of [Safempowerment](#). She worked in the police for over 20 years. On retiring Sharon worked in a women's refuge qualifying as a family intervention practitioner, where she felt that if the women had received input on healthy relationships earlier in life, would they be in the refuge now? This led her to starting Safempowerment.

They started talking about healthy relationships, but it quickly became aware that more was needed to expand their input. Sexual harassment, child exploitation including county lines and mental health are in the forefront of the media and a real problem in our society.

Reaching over 2,500 young people in their first year, Safempowerment runs workshops for up to 30 students at a time covering subjects such as respect and influence, mental health, self-harm, keeping safe and how to make girls feel safer on the streets.

This expanded further to them working 1:1, with 6-week courses for 54 children highlighted by schools to be at heightened risk of exploitation.



"You gave my daughter a voice and the courage she needed. I can honestly say our lives would be completely different if we didn't have Sharon's support and advice. Anyone who needs help with their children's anxiety and abusive relationships DO NOT HESITATE reach out to Safe Empowerment you will not feel alone anymore."

Parent of participant

Impact of some of our Leaders over the years

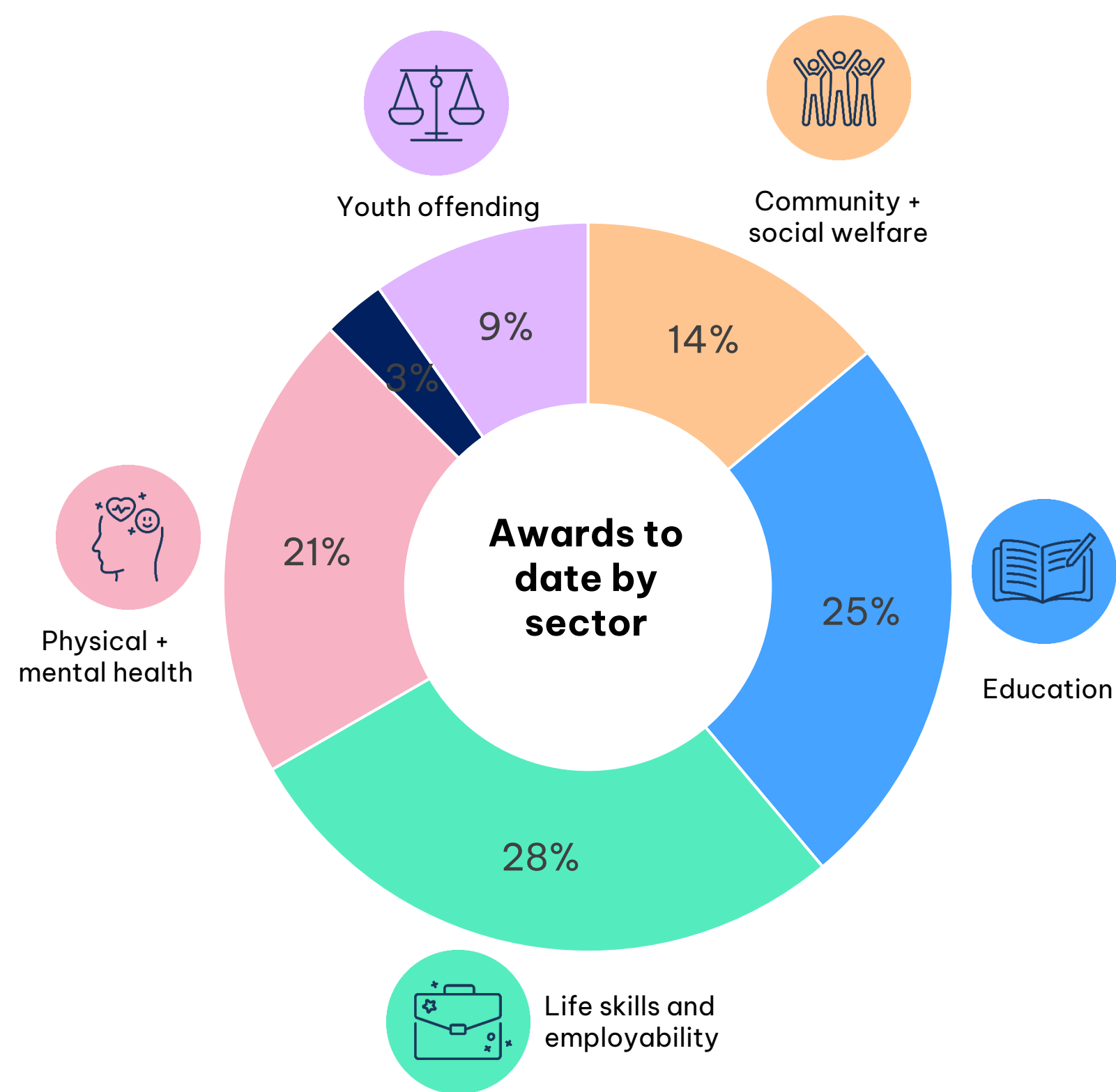


Our funding and support helps get the projects off the ground, but many of our Leaders have gone on to drive profound changes in the lives of children and young people. Some examples include:

Christy Acton - Standing Tall supports homeless people into stable jobs and safe homes. 80% of participants exit street homelessness permanently, the average social value generated per person is £57,000, and the model earned the “One to Watch” accolade from Social Enterprise UK. We first supported Standing Tall in 2022 in its first year, and after three years, it had grown its income by 4x, expanded to 8 cities, and now helps around 100 people move off the streets each year.

Evie Keough - Boromi provides freely accessible play libraries for families to nurture early childhood development. In its first three years, Boromi reached almost 7,000 children, and now operates across the UK. Evaluation findings saw significant improvements in children’s communication skills and social/emotional development. Parents also reported increased confidence, knowledge and ideas on initiating play with their child.

Stephanie Wheen - Gympanzees creates fully inclusive and accessible play facilities for disabled children and young people. Since our award in 2018, Gympanzees has welcomed over 28,000 children, young people, and family members to its pop-up centres, with 98% of visitors reporting a positive experience and significant improvements in physical and mental health.

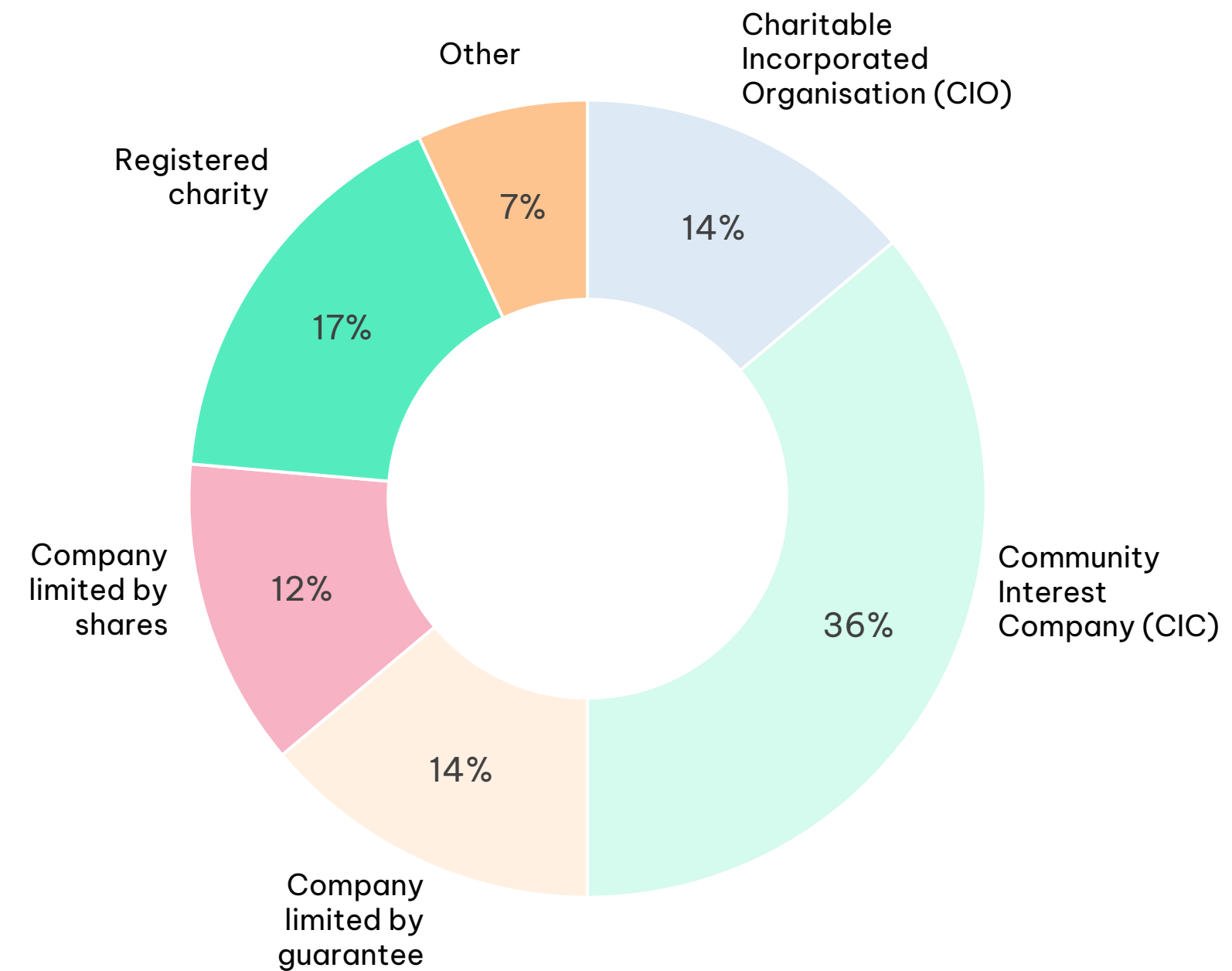


About our Leaders

Where our Leaders operate



Legal Status of our Leaders



Our Learnings



We are very proud of what our Leaders have achieved in making society a better place for children and young people—and we hope we have played some part in their growth and impact. And despite improvements we’ve made to our model over the past three years, there are always things we could do better.

Areas we particularly want to focus on include:

- **Improving accessibility to our awards.** We would like to widen the geographic reach of our Leaders – still predominantly concentrated in the South of England, and we would like to improve on the ethnic diversity of our Leaders. To this end, we are ensuring that we are known among wider networks and funding databases, and we are constantly evolving our assessment process for fairness principles.
- **Refining our Leaders support programme based on feedback.** We implemented a more substantial support programme for our Leaders in 2023, including Leaders mentoring each other and quarterly online drop-in sessions. We are still gathering feedback from our Leaders on these, and other aspects, of our support, and will keep refining accordingly.
- **Enabling more follow-on funding.** We are exceptionally proud of the longevity of our Leaders’ projects. The average age of UK Community Interest Companies (CICs) is 3.4 years, and yet 92% of our Leaders have survived more than 5 years. Key to sustainability is clearly funding, and we want to develop more and stronger partnerships with potential follow-on funders to help our Leaders secure their futures.
- **Attracting new funders.** Despite being a grant-maker, we also need to constantly raise new funds to survive. We have been reliant to date on trusts and foundations, and a number of generous individuals known to the foundation. But we are looking to increase our visibility among a wider group of funders, particularly those who recognize the power of (and challenges of) courageous leadership and entrepreneurship.