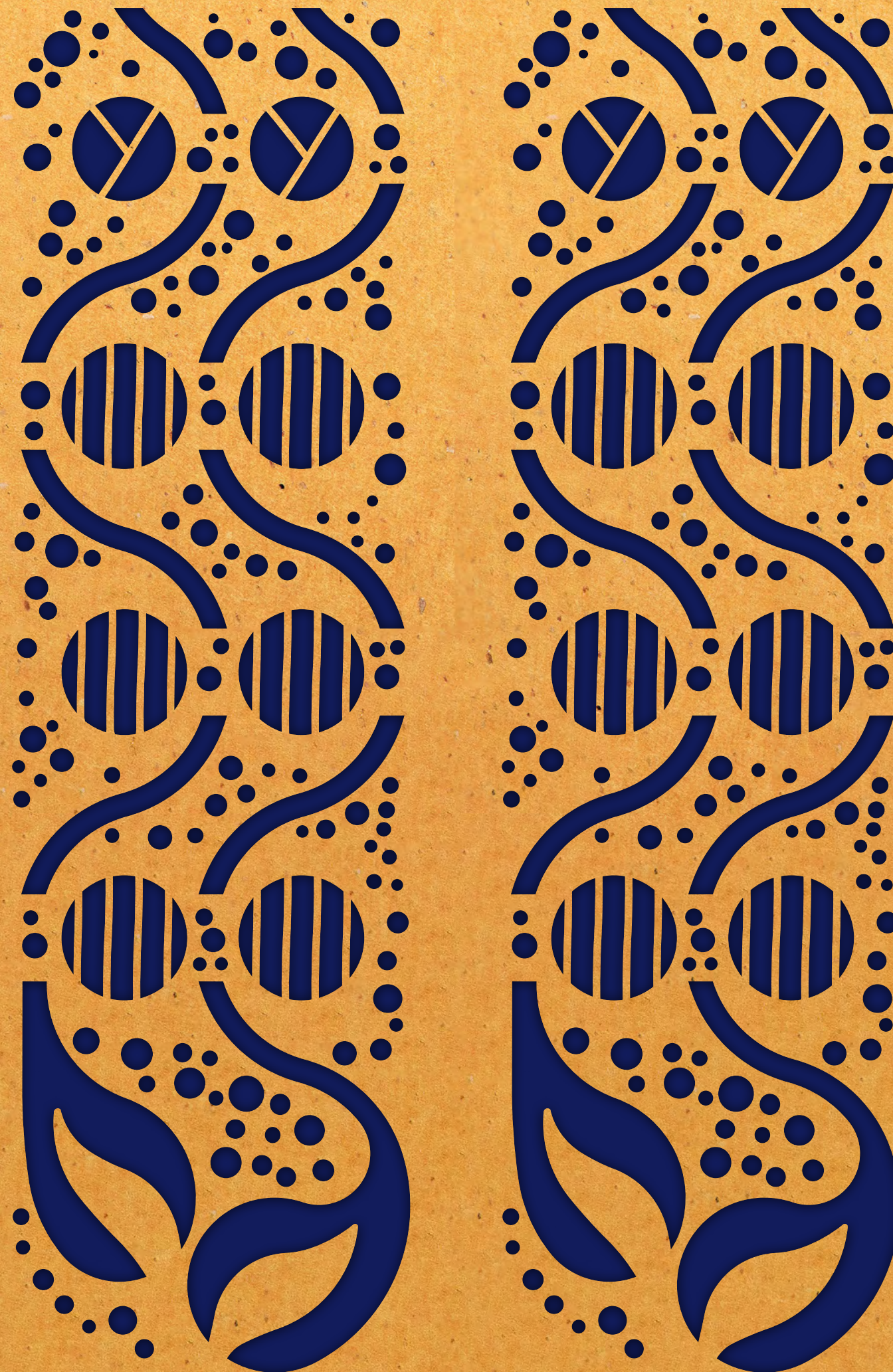


2025-26
**ANNUAL
REVIEW**



Contents

We are a thriving livery company
focused on being a philanthropic
force for good.

Introduction

Master's Introduction	03
At a Glance	05
Our Impact	07
Clerk's Statement	09
Ten-Year Strategy	11

Philanthropy

Overview	13
Giving Over Eight Years	15
Philanthropy Framework	16
Our Approach	17
Our Philanthropy 2025–2026	19
Young People & Education	21
Older People & Housing	31
Church & Communities	41
Heritage & Arts	51
Charities	55

Membership

Overview	57
A Shared Culture of Giving and Support	59
Members' Philanthropy	63
Charter 600	71
Heritage	73

Stewardship

Overview	77
Covent Garden	79
The City	83
Environmental Action Plan	85

First Mercers' Company seal

CARE

Bill Palmer volunteering

Guinness Open Gate Brewery

Master's Introduction

I am honoured to have served as Master of the Mercers' Company over the past year, a period marked by some significant milestones and meaningful philanthropic work.



Alice Hohler

– Master –
2025–2026

One of the year's defining moments was welcoming Guinness to its new home in London, within our Covent Garden estate. I was delighted to attend the opening alongside His Majesty The King, celebrating the arrival of a globally recognised brand and significant investment in London that brings innovation, creativity and more than 250 new jobs to the West End.

For nearly 500 years, the Mercers' Company has stewarded the Covent Garden estate and it felt particularly fitting to see a new chapter in the site's brewing history begin in Old Brewer's Yard, where beer was first brewed in 1722. The opening demonstrated how thoughtful investment can honour the heritage of a place while helping it evolve for future generations.

The themes of heritage and stewardship run throughout this year's Annual Review and are reflected in its front cover. Featuring the distinctive gates at Old Brewer's Yard, the artwork celebrates both the rich history and continued evolution of the estate, with a design that traces the brewing process from barley and oak barrels to the effervescence of the finished product.

Seeing the Company's philanthropy in action has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my year.



If stewardship and heritage provide the foundation, philanthropy is the expression of our purpose. This year, we awarded £16.1 million to organisations whose work supports people facing disadvantage across London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England. Alongside this, we have continued to shape the Company's future philanthropic direction through the development of the 2028–2035 Philanthropy Framework, ensuring that we remain focused on where need is greatest. I am particularly encouraged by our recent place-based initiatives, which includes funding for communities in Grimsby, Gainsborough and the North East of England, where collaboration and long-term commitment are creating lasting and meaningful change.

Seeing the Company's philanthropy in action has been one of the most rewarding aspects of my year. Visits to our Associated Schools & Colleges and Almshouses provide a tangible reminder of the difference they make to the people and communities they serve. A particular highlight was visiting St Paul's Girls' School to see the Rosalind Franklin Wing. Having been involved as a governor during the project's development, it was immensely rewarding to see pupils making full use of the new spaces, from design and engineering projects to creative and collaborative learning. Equally enjoyable was spending time with the wonderful residents at Lady Mico's, Trinity Hospital Greenwich and Whittington College, where a strong sense of community and friendship remain at the heart of daily life.

Heritage has been a defining theme throughout my year as Master. In May, I joined members at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, to take part in the recreation of the sealing of a 1516 Indenture between the Master of St Catharine's Hall and the Master of the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon (the monastery which once stood on the site of Mercers' Hall). Bringing this remarkable piece of Mercers' history to life offered a vivid reminder of the enduring relationships and traditions that continue to shape the Company today.

The event also highlighted the outstanding work of our Heritage team in preserving, researching and sharing our collections, ensuring that our history remains relevant and accessible to future generations.

I was also honoured to attend the installation of Dame Sarah Mullally as the Archbishop of Canterbury, who has become the first woman to hold this historic office. It was a memorable occasion that demonstrated how institutions with deep historical roots continue to evolve and adapt while remaining grounded in their traditions.



One of the great pleasures of this year has been spending time with fellow members and experiencing the friendship that sits at the heart of our Company. I particularly enjoyed bringing together women members through informal networking lunches, to share our experiences of the Company in a relaxed setting. Walking has also featured prominently throughout the year, including my second Whittington Walk raising funds for No Going Back. Whether supporting charitable causes or simply enjoying conversation, walking offers an opportunity to slow down, reflect and appreciate what we share as well as enjoying the world around us.

I am enormously grateful to our members and executive team for their continued support, generosity and commitment. It has been a privilege to serve as Master and to witness first-hand the many ways in which the Mercers' Company continues to make a positive difference. I do hope you enjoy learning more about what the Company does as you read this Annual Review.

Alice Hohler – Master

At a glance

Creating Positive Change

We are a dynamic, thriving livery company that has worked for the good of others for over 700 years, creating lasting, positive change for people and communities.

Philanthropy is at the heart of everything we do. It inspires members to give their time and expertise, informs the stewardship of our investments and property portfolio and guides the partnerships we build to support organisations tackling society's most pressing challenges.

Our role

As trustee of several charities, we play a central role in delivering their charitable objectives.

Our approach is guided by our Philanthropy Framework, which brings together our funding priorities, partnerships, insights and learning to support long-term impact.

Through our work, we aim to:



Improve people's lives



Strengthen organisations



Contribute to societal change

Our Impact

£94m

distributed since 2018

£16.1m

distributed over 2025–2026



All People All Places

Our funding programmes

Our giving is delivered through four main programmes to relieve disadvantage across London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England.



Young People & Education

Supporting children and young people to have a good start in life, strong mental health and opportunities beyond secondary school.



Older People & Housing

Addressing loneliness and poverty faced by older people and provide high quality accommodation to over 200 residents in six almshouses.



Church & Communities

Building stronger communities in areas of deprivation, supporting refugees and the homeless and deliver better outcomes for families and carers facing poverty or other challenges.



Heritage & Arts

Supporting people at the start of their careers and enabling access for disadvantaged groups.

How we deliver this

Philanthropy

Our Philanthropy Framework shapes how we work, building strong relationships, supporting learning and using a range of tools to deliver lasting impact.

Find out more about our Philanthropy on page 13

Membership

Each year, members contribute significant time and expertise to support the Company and the charities of which we are trustee.

We also support members and the executive team in their own philanthropic endeavours through our Members' Philanthropy programme.

Find out more about our Membership on page 57

Stewardship

We manage, develop and maintain the commercial property, financial investments and charities entrusted to the Company. Income generated through these assets support our philanthropic work.

Find out more about our Stewardship on page 77

Heritage

Our Heritage team stewards the Company's collections, deepening understanding of our history that informs our work today.

Read more about our Heritage and Archive on page 73

Governance, compliance and sustainability

Our governance, regulatory compliance and approach to sustainability support effective decision-making and the delivery of long-term philanthropic impact.



Thomas Telford School

Our Associations

We maintain our centuries-old links with our Associated Schools & Colleges, the Armed Forces, our Church Livings, the City of London Corporation and other livery companies.

Clerk's Statement

One might assume that from year to year the dial doesn't turn much in a 700 year old organisation. However another year passes within the Mercers' Company and this is most definitely not the case.



Rob Abernethy
– Clerk –

The opening of Guinness Open Gate Brewery at Old Brewer's Yard was one of the highlights of an active year. Delivered in partnership with Diageo, the investment brought another globally recognised brand to Covent Garden and reinforced its position as a world-class visitor destination in the heart of London's West End.

For the Mercers' Company, the opening is the culmination of two decades of placemaking, transforming our Covent Garden estate into a vibrant urban space that brings people together through a carefully curated mix of retail, culture and experience; demonstrating the value of strategic long-term investment.

The success in Covent Garden, together with full occupancy across the City estate centred around Frederick's Place, also reflects the strong position of our portfolio and leaves the Company well positioned for future growth.

Much of our focus this year has therefore been on ensuring we build on that position. Under the auspices of our ten-year strategy, we have continued to progress our thinking across our asset allocation, increasing balance sheet resilience and strengthening the Company's foundations. This strategy is explored in more detail on page 11.

At the heart of these ambitions is our commitment to philanthropy. During the year we awarded £16.1 million to relieve disadvantage in London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England. As ever, our focus is not the scale of our giving but on the difference it makes.



His Majesty The King at the Guinness Open Gate Brewery

The giving committees have continued to consider how best to direct our philanthropy, with an emphasis on addressing need and supporting effective long-term change. This work will continue in the autumn through a dedicated philanthropy strategy day, that will consider future priorities and opportunities to make an even greater difference.

We also continue to invest in our membership. Alongside opportunities for members to engage more directly with the organisations and communities we support, a range of training initiatives to strengthen the Company's governance framework and enhance members' knowledge and skills will be launched later in the year.

At the heart of these ambitions is our commitment to philanthropy. During the year we awarded £16.1 million to relieve disadvantage in London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England.

The Mercers' Company is very proud of being the only City Livery Company to have a Chapel in its Hall, a legacy of the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon which once stood on its site.

We are immensely grateful to Bishop Michael Colclough, who stepped down in December after 15 years of dedicated service as Chaplain to the Mercers' Company. During that time, he provided guidance, support and friendship to members and staff through both joyful and challenging times. We are equally pleased to welcome his successor the Revd Hugh Shilson-Thomas, former Chaplain of Selwyn College, Cambridge. In his first six months with the Company, he has already become a valued member of our community.

Ultimately, the work of the Company would not be possible without the commitment of our members and the executive team. We are powered by the partnership between them and I would like to extend my sincere thanks for their continued energy, commitment and service to the Company and its philanthropic purpose.

Rob Abernethy – Clerk

Ten-year Strategy

Our overarching and perpetual ambition is to remain a dynamic City of London Livery Company harnessing the energy and commitment of our member community to deliver social good, increase philanthropic impact and secure our long-term future.



Philanthropy

Our aim is to create positive change.

As sole trustee of several charities, we work together through our Philanthropy Framework to support people facing disadvantage across London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England.



Hackney Showroom

Our work is delivered through four main funding programmes:



Young People & Education



Older People & Housing



Church & Communities



Heritage & Arts



At this point in the delivery of our Philanthropy Framework, we continue to see the value of long-term partnerships, trusted relationships and shared learning. By listening and working alongside those closest to the communities we support, and our dedicated learning partners, we are shaping our philanthropy to respond effectively: meeting the challenges faced by our grantees and the individuals they serve, providing evidence for meaningful change and a strong foundation for organisational growth.

Serena Hedley-Dent,
Deputy Clerk,
The Mercers' Company

Giving Over Eight Years

(1 April 2018 – 31 March 2026)

£94m*

total awarded

*£1.7M awarded to other charitable organisations outside of main giving programmes

£79m 1,339

awarded across four main funding programmes

grants

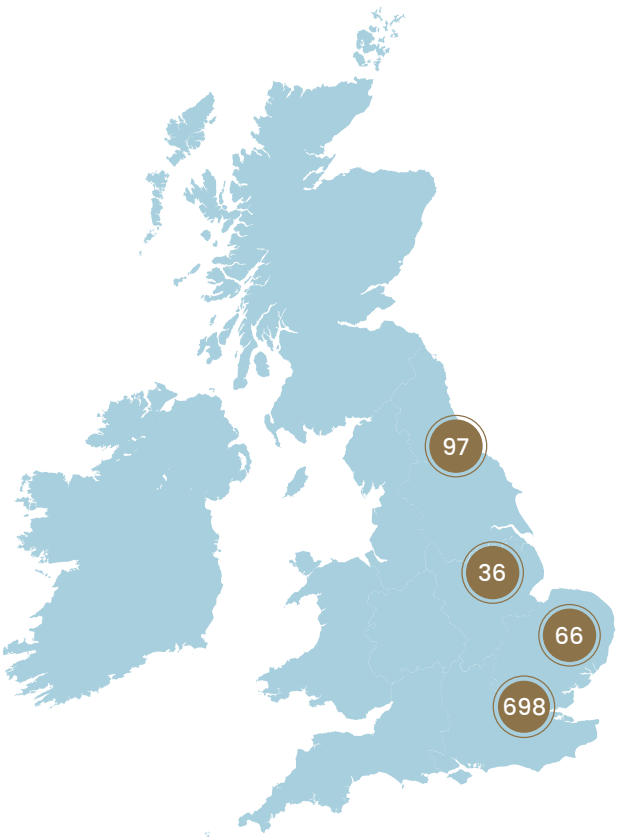
586

organisations

£13.3m*

direct company giving (including Gresham College and Members' Philanthropy)

*Company year end 31 December



Distribution of grants

Across people-focused funding programmes (balance of grants made to Associated Schools & Colleges (ASCs) and organisations headquartered in England).

We believe in open data and transparency. We publish information on our grants, to provide details of who we fund, how much we funded and what the funding was for.

We have published all grants made across our four main funding programmes since our Philanthropy Framework was established in 2018 on 360 Giving.

Scan the QR code to view the data.



Philanthropy Framework (2018-2028)

Phase 1 2018-2023
Phase 2 2023-2028

Our Philanthropy Framework continues to guide our work and shape our approach to tackling disadvantage. We have developed consistent impact indicators to help us understand the difference our funding makes, with a focus on improving people's lives, strengthening organisations and contributing to societal change.

As part of this work, we are shaping the 2028-2035 Philanthropy Framework. This will build on our current work, continuing to focus on tackling disadvantage, maximising the impact of our funding, strengthening our use of data and insight and working in partnership with other organisations across the sector.

Throughout the year, our philanthropy committees have continued to reflect carefully on priorities, coming together to consider how best we can address need and deliver meaningful impact through our programmes.

Vision & purpose

We believe that opportunity and aspiration should be nurtured for all, so that a fulfilling life should be open and achievable for all

To empower people and help reach their potential by:

- Inspiring a love of learning
- Strengthening self-belief and wellbeing
- Creating opportunities to live a balanced, rewarding and varied life

Driven & supported by

Mercers' Philanthropy
Charities (of which we are trustee) and the Mercers' Company

Our guiding principles

- Support people facing disadvantage
- Fund based on impact
- Sustainable philanthropic results
- Build on strengths
- Stringent asset management and capital allocation

Relational approach

Build value added relationships with our grantees

Areas of focus

London, Norfolk, Lincolnshire and the North East of England

Funding Programmes



Young People & Education



Older People & Housing



Church & Communities



Heritage & Arts



Members' Philanthropy

Insights and learning

Insights and learning

Measurement by outputs and indicating outcomes



Improve People's Lives



Strengthen Organisations



Contribute to social change

Our Approach

Our approach to philanthropy brings together funding, relationships, learning and collaboration to support long-term impact.

We build strong, trust-based partnerships with organisations, working as equals and valuing their expertise.

We also work with learning partners across our funding programmes and facilitate collaborative insights amongst our grantees. This helps organisations reflect on their findings and adapt their delivery, while increasing our understanding of the sector and shaping future funding.

By working in partnership, we extend our reach and aim to achieve more than we could alone. We take a flexible approach to funding and combine it with capacity building, training, networking opportunities and tailored support to help organisations build resilience and deliver lasting change.



We appreciate how Mercers' clearly sees this as a partnership and is so invested in our success, whether via providing us with learning partners and funder plus offers or coming to see our work in action as part of the application process and truly learning about what we do.

Noa Girls,
YP&E Transitions grantee



For us, philanthropy is about far more than just funding. Building relationships is central to our approach. We work alongside grantees in much the same way they support the people they serve – through engagement, listening to understand where they are at and how we can best support.

Matthew Roche,
Head Grants Programme Manager,
The Mercers' Company



Learning Event Darlington

Relationships

We build open, trust-based relationships with organisations, working as equals and valuing their expertise. Through regular contact and support, we strengthen partnerships, working together to address need.

Insight & learning

We work with learning partners and facilitate shared insights amongst grantees, helping organisations reflect on their findings and adapt their delivery, while shaping our future funding priorities.



Supporting organisations

We help grantees build resilience through capacity building, training, networking opportunities and tailored support, working with partners including Media Trust and Cranfield Trust.

Open, transparent and responsible

We take a flexible approach to funding, informed by data, feedback and sector commitments, ensuring our work is responsive and effective.

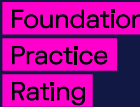


Open and Trusting Grantmaking
Committed to IVAR's Open and Trusting Grantmaking principles

Scan the QR code to read our 8 commitments to open and trusting grantmaking.



Living Wage
Living Wage Employer and Funder



Foundation Practice Rating
The Mercers' Charitable Foundation: B rating maintained in 2026 for diversity, accountability and transparency



Diversity, equity and inclusion
Using the DEI Data Standard to understand who we reach and inform decisions

Our Philanthropy

2025-2026

Funding environment, what we are seeing and learning

Understanding the changing needs of the people and communities we seek to support is central to our philanthropy. Through programme evaluation, feedback from grantees and ongoing engagement with learning partners, we continue to build a clearer picture of the challenges facing charities, how organisations are responding and the factors that strengthen resilience and effectiveness. The insights below reflect some of the common themes emerging across our funding programmes.

Rising need, resilient organisations

We continue to see organisations delivering meaningful, people-centred work in an increasingly constrained and unstable environment, with rising costs and growing competition for limited resources. Need is rising and becoming more complex, as organisations respond to interconnected challenges including poverty, poor mental health, housing insecurity and barriers to education and employment.

Charities are also increasingly acting as frontline support where statutory systems are stretched, while also navigating staffing pressures and financial instability themselves.

Despite these pressures, organisations continue to demonstrate strong resilience, drawing on trusted relationships, lived experience and adaptable delivery models to support their communities.

A consistent learning is the importance of flexible, multi-year and unrestricted funding, enabling organisations to adapt in real time, maintain stability and respond to emerging needs.

Overall, this reflects what we continue to see and hear from grantees: the importance of trust based, long-term support that enables organisations not only to deliver impact today, but to adapt, sustain and strengthen their work in exceptionally challenging times.

Scan the QR code to read the Mercers' Philanthropy - Insights & Learnings.



Listening to grantees and applicants

We commissioned **nfpResearch** to deliver our first grantee and applicant perception survey, published in September 2025. The findings reflect the responsive funding approach that we are proud of, grounded in long-term relationships and mutual trust and respect.

Grantees rated us highly against IVAR's Open and Trusting Grantmaking principles, particularly for asking relevant questions, communicating clearly and not wasting applicants' time. Our approachability, staff support, accessible processes and commitment to equity and inclusion were also recognised as strengths.

The survey also highlighted opportunities to improve our practice, including providing clearer feedback for unsuccessful applicants and greater transparency around funding opportunities and timelines. These insights continue to inform how we strengthen our funding approach and prepare for the next phase of our Philanthropy Framework in 2028.

Scan the QR code to read the full Grantee and Applicant Perception Survey.



We are in the best place we've ever been in... Mercers' was the first multi-year grant that we received, which has helped our ability to sustain ourselves and think long-term.

Hackney Showrooms, OP&H grantee

Our grant manager has been consistently supportive and responsive. Mercers' funding is also a powerful endorsement and as such, helps attract other funding.

Luminary Bakery, C&C grantee



Giving

From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, through our Philanthropy Framework, we have awarded **144** grants to **125** organisations totalling **£10.5 million** with an additional **£4.8 million** awarded through Direct Company Giving.

£16.1m*

total awarded

*£750K awarded to other charitable organisations outside of main giving programmes

£10.5m 144

awarded across four main funding programmes grants

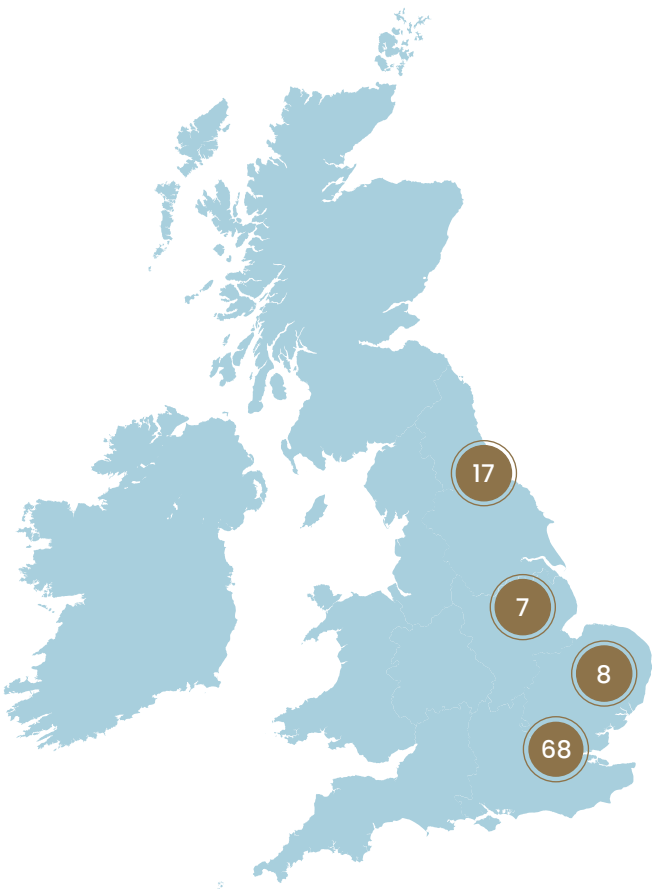
125

organisations

£4.8m

direct company giving (including Gresham College and Members' Philanthropy)

Company year end 31 December



Scan the QR code to read 2025-2026 Grants (above £10,000) across our main funding programmes.



Young People & Education

We aim to help young people have a good start in life, strong mental health and opportunities beyond secondary school.

Our priority is to support children and young people experiencing disadvantage, helping them develop the skills, confidence and resilience they need to thrive in education and beyond.

We do this through:

- Funding and support for not-for-profit organisations in Greater London delivering programmes focused on **Early Years, Literacy & Oracy, Transitions from Secondary Education and Mental Health & Wellbeing**.
- Working closely with our **16 Associated Schools & Colleges (ASCs)** on whole-school, preventative approaches to supporting pupils' mental health and wellbeing, **school leadership** initiatives, and grants for projects that align with our Young People & Education priorities.

Where we fund

Greater London*

*and 16 ASCs across England



Scan the QR code to watch Read for Good's 'Magic of Stories' a funder plus campaign film.



2025-2026

£2.6m

awarded

30 25

grants organisations supported

During 2025-2026, we awarded £2.57 million supporting 25 organisations working with children and young people. This included £1.3 million awarded to seven grantees forming the second cohort of our Mental Health & Wellbeing special initiative, supporting young people from marginalised communities across London. A further £944,000 supported our Associated Schools & Colleges, £261,000 funded learning partner activity and £50,000 was awarded for School Leadership initiatives. Almost 40% of funding was awarded to organisations with an annual turnover below £1 million, helping ensure support reaches smaller organisations with expertise and strong connections to the communities they serve.

Post year end, £1.5 million was awarded to six organisations forming the second cohort of our Transitions from Secondary Education special initiative. With the award of grants to the second Transitions cohort, all four special initiatives are now funded through to 2028-2029.



Through our funding, we aim to:



Improve People's Lives



Strengthen Organisations



Contribute to Societal Change

How we support organisations

Our Young People & Education programme combines multi-year funding with a cohort approach, supported by learning partners who facilitate collaboration, reflection and the sharing of effective practice.

By learning alongside one another, organisations are able to better test and refine approaches used in practice, build evidence of what works and contribute to a growing understanding of how best to support children and young people. This is a distinct feature of our Young People & Education Programme, which is positively received by the organisations we fund.

Alongside funding, we also offer capacity-building support through **Cranfield Trust** and **Media Trust**, helping strengthen organisational resilience, leadership, communications and long-term sustainability.

An example of capacity building in practice, this year, nine organisations worked with Media Trust to create short films showcasing their work and impact, helping them reach new audiences and tell their stories more effectively.

Scan the QR code to watch the nine grantees funder plus films.



What we are learning

Across the programme, grantees continue to report that young people's needs are complex, with mental health, poverty, family circumstances, school engagement and barriers to opportunity often overlapping.

Grantees also consistently highlight the value of long-term, flexible funding. It enables organisations to respond to individual needs, pilot new approaches, strengthen their practice and build evidence of what works.

Insights from our learning partners highlight the importance of earlier, sustained support that helps children and young people build confidence, communication skills, resilience and aspirations for the future.

Early Years: Learning reports from both phases of the special initiative reinforce the value of parental engagement, strong relationships between practitioners, parents and carers and accessible training for practitioners. Effective support from organisations can strengthen children's confidence and home learning environments, while helping organisations respond to practical, social and emotional barriers to engagement.



Across our funding strands, we are seeing the importance of earlier and sustained support, trusted relationships and opportunities for children and young people to build confidence and communication skills. While the challenges young people face are increasingly complex, the learning from our grantees continues to reinforce the value of long-term, flexible support that enables organisations to adapt, strengthen their practice and respond to individual needs.

Charlotte Nugent,
Lead Grants Programme Manager,
The Mercers' Company

Learning Partners

Early Years: SQW

Literacy & Oracy: The Open University

Transitions from Secondary Education:
Causeway Education & Rocket Science

Mental Health & Wellbeing:
St Mary's University and Maudsley Learning

Literacy & Oracy: Organisations are developing a broader understanding of how reading, writing and developing oracy support confidence, agency and self-expression. The Open University has encouraged organisations through cohort learning days to reflect on their own practice, strengthen evaluation approaches and better understand how young people develop as readers, writers and communicators. Read more about our Literacy & Oracy cohort learning approach on page 25.

Transitions: The recent report from Causeway Education highlights the importance of trusted adults, earlier preparation and closer collaboration between schools, employers and youth organisations. Young people benefit when support is sustained over time and connected to meaningful pathways beyond secondary education.

In its **End of Phase 1 report 2019-2026**, Causeway Education also makes wider recommendations for policy and practice including stronger cross-sector networks, longer-term flexible funding, earlier transition support, trusted adult relationships and greater employer engagement.

Mental Health & Wellbeing: Funded organisations continue to demonstrate the importance of long-term, relational approaches that build trust over time, access to evidence-informed groups and one to one interventions as well as approaches that can embed wellbeing into everyday practice for beneficiaries.

Associated Schools & Colleges: Insights from initiatives such as the School Leaders Conference reinforce the value of whole-school approaches to wellbeing and strong leadership in creating positive environments where young people can thrive. Read more about the work we do with our ASCs on page 29.

Scan the QR code to explore full findings from our recent reports from Early Years and Transitions Learning Partners.



The Open University
Literacy & Oracy Learning Partner



Developing Identity, Agency and Connection

During the National Year of Reading, Professor Teresa Cremin CBE from The Open University reflects on our Literacy & Oracy Special Initiative.



Professor Teresa Cremin CBE

Professor of Education and Co-Director of the Literacy and Social Justice Centre, The Open University

Building on the OU's Reading and Writing for Pleasure Framework, published in 2023, Phase 2 (2024–2028) brings together 13 organisations working with children and young people across London. Through a cohort approach supported by The Open University, organisations come together for learning days, critical friend conversations and shared reflection as they continue to develop their own approaches to reading, writing and talk.

Phase 2 organisations: **CARAS (Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers), Company Three Theatre, First Story, Theatre Peckham, UK Reads, West Ham United Foundation, Write Back, Action for Refugees in Lewisham, Create Arts, Intergenerational Music Making, Ministry of Stories, Read for Good** and **The Reading Agency**.

What has stayed with you most from this year of the programme?

The way organisations have begun to take ownership of the cohort. It is no longer simply a space facilitated by The Open University. Increasingly, grantees are sharing practical strategies, learning from one another and building relationships that continue beyond the programme itself. We now regularly hear about organisations exchanging ideas, sharing resources and visiting each other's work.

There is also a greater sense of playfulness and participation. At one session, everyone ended up singing and writing together. That matters. Learning is an act of playful engagement. It is human-centred. The adults who support young people benefit from those experiences too.

What are grantees beginning to learn about their own practice?

One of the most powerful things happening is that organisations are becoming more conscious of what they already do well. As a critical friend, part of our role is to hold up a mirror. Many work in relational and inclusive ways, creating safe spaces where young people feel listened to and valued. Organisations are beginning to recognise that what often feels intuitive is actually highly skilled, helping them articulate their approach more clearly and communicate its value to schools, funders and the wider sector.

What has Phase 2 of the initiative added to the original focus on reading and writing for pleasure?

Phase 2 is highlighting the role of talk. Oracy is sometimes understood quite narrowly, as speaking clearly or performing in front of others. What we are seeing is much richer than that.

Talk is not just a tool in a box. It is a way of thinking, connecting and expressing identity. It helps young people explore who they are, share their experiences and develop a sense of themselves as readers and writers.

Increasingly, organisations are recognising that talk is not just something that supports literacy. It helps young people develop voice, agency and a stronger sense of self. They are not having literacy "done to them"; they are becoming authors, readers, speakers and creators in their own right.

Talk is not just a tool in a box. It is a way of thinking, connecting and expressing identity.

How are organisations learning to evidence this work?

Many organisations want to understand and evidence their impact more deeply, but these changes are not always easy to measure. How do you capture confidence, voice or a growing sense of identity?

We are helping organisations use observation, reflection and creative evaluation approaches to document young people's journeys as readers, writers and communicators. It is not about turning charity practitioners into researchers but helping them better understand and strengthen their own practice.



What difference does the Mercers' approach make?

The length of the funding is hugely important. Multi-year funding gives organisations permission to try things, take risks, adapt and learn. That is rare, particularly for smaller charities.

Just as importantly, the cohort model creates space for reflection, shared learning and relationships that continue beyond the programme itself.

What is the next challenge?

One of the biggest questions for the future is how we bridge what happens in charity settings and what happens in schools. A young person may develop confidence, agency and a new sense of themselves as a reader or writer through a charity programme, but that progress is not always recognised when they return to the classroom.

The next step is helping organisations share what they know about young people with schools, so the confidence, identity and sense of possibility developed through these programmes can continue to flourish.

With special thanks to The Open University:

Professor Teresa Cremin CBE
Professor of Education and Co-Director of the Centre for Literacy and Social Justice and;

Dr Helen Hendry, Senior Lecturer in Education;
Dr Lucy Rodriguez Leon, Senior Lecturer in Early Years and **Rowena Seabrook**, Facilitator

Mental Health & Wellbeing



Mental health at the heart of youth work

The Change Foundation's Mind Coach programme is helping young people access mental health support in communities where traditional services can be difficult to reach. Through group-based therapeutic support, participants develop emotional awareness, resilience and positive coping strategies, while exploring themes including trust, self-respect, relationships and wellbeing.

The funding is also strengthening the organisation. Staff have been trained in trauma-informed practice, safeguarding processes have been enhanced and an independent evaluation is building a long-term evidence base. Learning from Mind Coach has shaped The Next 5, The Change Foundation's new strategy, embedding mental wellbeing at the heart of its future work.

Three new trainee therapists have also been recruited to help build future therapeutic support capacity.



The Change Foundation



£97,000 grant
(2025-2027)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation
via the Propel Expand grant



Improve
People's Lives



Strengthen
Organisations

The Change Foundation formed part of our MHWB grants via propel. Other organisations from Cohort 1 included:

Go Forward Youth, Spectra CIC, African Community School (ACS), Newham All Star Sports Academy (NASSA), South London Counselling and Support Services (SLCSS), Body & Soul

Transitions from Secondary Education



Opening doors to future careers

Construction Youth Trust's Pathways to Professional Careers programme helps young people explore opportunities in the construction and built environment sector. Working predominantly with schools serving disadvantaged communities, the programme combines coaching, skills development, employer insight days and work experience to broaden horizons and support informed career choices. In 2024, 92% of participants reported improved knowledge of career pathways available to them, while more than 90 industry experiences were delivered with over 30 employer partners.

Construction Youth Trust is part of Phase 2, Cohort 1 of our Transitions from Education special initiative. Other organisations from the cohort include:

Inspire, Making the Leap and **Noa Girls**



Young people shared that more should be done to dispel misconceptions about apprenticeships so that parents can support their career progression in a more informed manner.



£345,390 grant
(2025-2028)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation



Improve
People's Lives



Contribute to
Societal Change



Construction Youth Trust

Early Years



Supporting early learning through reading and play

Coram Family and Childcare, working in partnership with Coram Beanstalk, delivers the Books Together programme helping parents build confidence in sharing books and stories with their children. Delivered originally across two London boroughs, the programme now covers seven and engages families who face barriers to accessing information and support, including those with English as an additional language. In year 3, 26 courses were delivered, with 99% of parents rating sessions as good or very good. Library use also increased, with the proportion of parents visiting three or more times a month rising from 31% to 51%.

Co-production is central to the programme, with parent volunteers helping shape and deliver sessions. Their lived experience has strengthened engagement, informed delivery and helped Coram continue to adapt and improve its approach.



It's the modelling, it's the teacher, the facilitator. Just seeing how she did it gave you that idea of how to do it as well. Excellent.

Parent participant



£220,772 grant
(2023-2027)
The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington



Improve
People's Lives



Strengthen
Organisations

Coram Family and Childcare is part of Phase 2, Cohort 1 of our Early Years special initiative. Other organisations from the cohort include:

Campaign for Learning, Early Education, Fatherhood Institute, National Day Nurseries Association and **Youth Sport Trust**



Coram Family and Childcare

Associated Schools & Colleges

Our 16 Associated Schools & Colleges (ASCs) educate approximately 18,000 pupils across England. We support collaborative learning across the network, leadership development for Heads, Senior Leaders and Governors, governance through the appointment and nomination of Governors and grant funding for initiatives aligned with our Young People & Education funding priorities.

Through forums, conferences and working groups, schools and colleges come together to share expertise, explore common challenges and learn from one another.

Learning and collaboration across the ASC network

In February 2026, the ASC Leaders' Conference, hosted by Sandwell Academy, brought together around 35 Heads and senior leaders from across the network. The programme included a keynote address from Richard McCann, an internationally recognised speaker on resilience, who shared his personal story and reflected on the profound impact adults can have on young lives. Workshops explored school culture, leadership, vulnerability and the challenges facing boys and young men today, while leaders shared experiences and practical approaches from their own schools.

From barriers to opportunities

In his reflections on the conference, James Saunders explores the realities of school leadership today, the challenges of building and sustaining positive school cultures and why creating space for leaders to learn from one another has never been more important.

Scan the QR code to read James Saunders' reflections on school leadership today.



School culture is not something that can ever be 'finished'; it is shaped daily through relationships, decisions and the courage to keep focusing on what really matters.

James Saunders,
Head of Sandwell Academy

ASC network highlights

Year 12 Conference: Held at the University of Reading, the Conference theme was Navigating the AI Age and gave students from across the ASCs the opportunity to consider how further study can prepare you for an AI world and how AI impacts on particular areas such as sociology, linguistics and criminal justice. It provided an opportunity to explore university life and connect with peers from other schools.

St Paul's School: Start It, St Paul's sustainable entrepreneurship programme, was recognised as Best for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in The Week Independent Schools Guide.

Preparing for life beyond performance

The Royal Ballet School's Career Development Programme helps students prepare for life during and beyond a professional dance career. Delivered in partnership with Dancers' Career Development, the programme combines workshops, one-to-one coaching and alumni engagement to help students explore future opportunities with confidence.

Over the past year, 92 students took part in career development workshops, while 30 students progressed into careers within and beyond the dance sector. Through its 100 Stories alumni campaign, students hear directly from former pupils whose careers have taken them into leadership, education, business and the arts.



The Royal Ballet School

The most valuable thing for me is the opportunity to reflect on the good within me and truly recognise my qualities. It helps me see my strengths and understand who I want to become.

Royal Ballet School student

£80,000 grant
(2024-2027)
St Paul's Schools Foundation

Older People & Housing

Older people deserve the right support and opportunities to lead a healthy and connected life.

We fund organisations supporting older people who are at greater risk of loneliness and poverty.

Our funding prioritises disadvantaged neighbourhoods and minoritised communities, including informal carers and people living with long-term conditions.

Alongside our grant-making, we provide training and capacity-building support to help organisations strengthen their services and increase their impact.



Where we fund

Norfolk

Greater London



2025-2026

£3.2m
awarded

30 grants 30 organisations supported

During 2025-2026, we awarded £3.2 million through 30 grants supporting organisations primarily across London and Norfolk. The largest share of funding, £1.93 million, supported organisations tackling both loneliness and poverty amongst older people, reflecting the close links between social isolation, financial hardship and wider wellbeing. A further £911,000 was awarded to initiatives focused primarily on reducing loneliness and strengthening social connections, while £211,000 supported projects solely addressing poverty and its impact. £124,000 was distributed in grants to support almshouse operations.

The Older People & Housing and Church & Communities programmes have identified a need for community cohesion in the North East and have both awarded grants of £150,000 to Point North to establish the Belong North East Fund, which will include a specific focus on older people. See page 48 for more detail.

Nearly half of funding was awarded to organisations with an annual turnover below £1 million, helping ensure support reaches smaller organisations rooted in the communities they serve.

We continue to prioritise support for older people living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, people from Black and minoritised communities, LGBTQ+ communities, carers and those living with health conditions. Alongside grant funding, we support organisations through long-term, flexible funding and capacity-building opportunities with Cranfield Trust, helping them strengthen services and respond to changing needs.

Through our funding, we aim to:



Improve People's Lives



Strengthen Organisations



Contribute to Societal Change

The chance to meet others is invaluable, it gives me a ready-made social life and I'm learning new hobbies. Just a couple of hours away mixing with others really is a lifeline.

Participant,
Carers Trust Hillingdon and Ealing



Understanding ageing

Our ongoing learning, informed by our independent evaluation, engagement with grantees and reflections from the programme team, highlights the increasingly interconnected challenges facing many older people. Loneliness is often experienced alongside poverty, poor health, caring responsibilities, bereavement and housing difficulties, reinforcing the importance of holistic and person-centred support.

Community-based activities, befriending services and peer support continue to play a vital role, particularly for older people who are less mobile. By creating opportunities for friendship, and participation, they help older people feel connected and engaged as part of a community.

We are also seeing the importance of recognising older people as active contributors rather than passive recipients of support. Sharing skills and supporting others can strengthen confidence, agency and connection. Increasingly, organisations are involving older people in designing and improving the services they use, helping ensure support remains relevant and effective.

A further insight is the importance of recognising hidden need. Organisations working in local communities are often best placed to understand the experiences of older people in their area, including issues such as fuel poverty, transport barriers, poor housing or social isolation.

Our learning also highlights the wider value of community-based support in later life. By helping older people remain connected and independent, organisations are not only improving individual wellbeing but also demonstrating the importance of preventative support within communities.



As we continue to support organisations delivering vital services for older people, we are hearing consistent reflections on a changing funding landscape, increasing complexity in people's lives and a widening gap between need and available resources. While there are no simple answers, these insights help shape how we think about our role as a funder.

Eva Pryce,
Grants Programme Manager,
The Mercers' Company



Scan the QR code to read our OP&H's Year 2 evaluation.

Evaluation partners
Kerry Swain, Sarah Frost, Kathryn Crowther and Sue Cook.



Scan the QR code to read Eva Pryce's reflections on funding older people's services and the challenges facing the sector.



Supporting people ageing with HIV

Positive East's Older People's Programme provides holistic support for people ageing with HIV across East London. The programme reduces loneliness, isolation and poverty by providing opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences, free from stigma. Through monthly lunches, social outings, wellbeing advice, befriending and accredited support with benefits and housing, participants build confidence, community and a stronger sense of belonging.

Funding has provided stability for the organisation, helping it retain staff and respond to growing demand. Described by participants as a "second home" and an "HIV family", the programme offers both practical support and lasting social connections.

I feel safe... I'm not worried I'll say something wrong because we are all the same.

Participant





£61,818 grant
(2024-2027)
The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington



Improve People's Lives



Contribute to Societal Change

Reducing isolation for older men

MensCraft's Positive Elders Group supports older men in Norfolk who are experiencing social isolation, poor mental health and major life changes such as bereavement, retirement and declining health. Through walking groups, craft, music sessions, volunteering opportunities and peer support, the programme helps men build new routines, develop friendships and regain confidence.

I'd be dead if it wasn't for this place. Yeah, it saved my life.

Participant



I think it's being witnessed, I think it's being heard. I think it's listening. I think it's the power of positive expectation - peer-to-peer.

Project Lead



£94,163 grant
(2024-2027)
The Earl of Northampton's Charity



Improve People's Lives



Contribute to Societal Change

Helping people living with dementia thrive

Sydenham Garden's Sow and Grow project offers a warm, welcoming space for people in the early stages of dementia to build confidence, connection and wellbeing.

Through weekly gardening, cooking, art, music and cognitive stimulation, participants are supported to stay active, socially connected and engaged in meaningful activity.

Funding has helped establish and strengthen the project, while helping Sydenham Garden approach other funders. Alongside improving participants' quality of life, the programme provides valuable reassurance and respite for carers and families.



£120,000 grant
(2024-2027)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation



Improve People's Lives



Strengthen Organisations



It's a non-judgmental, welcoming, gentle but active environment... where people flower and flourish. They feel safe...and can open up and be themselves... they all describe it as such a rare thing to find.

Volunteer



Almshouses & Housing

Our four almshouses and two sheltered housing schemes in London and Norfolk are at the heart of our commitment to older people.

More than 200 residents live in safe, affordable homes designed to support independent living. For many, what matters most is the sense of community, friendship and belonging that grows around them.

We're here and we're staying

Childhood friends Pearl and Maureen have spent more than 80 years looking out for one another. Having remained close throughout their lives, they now both call Lady Mico's home, where friendship, independence and community continue to shape daily life.

Pearl and Maurine first met when they were five years old, growing up in neighbouring streets close to the river Thames in East London. Much of their childhood was spent outdoors, in a community where children played together from morning until night and everyone knew one another's families.

"We were always together," Pearl remembers.

The East End they describe has long since changed, but their friendship endured.



Pearl and Maureen

Today, Lady Mico's, where they now live, sits at the heart of the community they have called home for most of their lives.

The childhood friends remained close as they married, raised families and built lives of their own.

Years later, after her marriage ended, Pearl found herself without a settled home, dividing her time between family in the UK and Australia. It was her friends who stepped in.

"They phoned me and said, 'We've found you a flat,'" Pearl recalls. While visiting family in Australia, friends had viewed an apartment on her behalf at Lady Mico's and encouraged her to take it. "And then I moved in here," she says with a smile.

Who would have thought we'd all be in our 80s, living next door to one another and still be friends?

Maureen already knew Lady Mico's well. Over the years, she had attended parties and social events there with Pearl and other friends and had seen first-hand the sense of community it offered. When the opportunity later arose for her to move in too, the decision was an easy one.

Today, the two lifelong friends are neighbours once more within a close-knit community of 18 women at Lady Mico's.

Sitting together, they laugh easily, sharing memories and finishing one another's sentences with the familiarity that comes from a lifetime of friendship.

"We laugh too much to ever fall out," says Maurine.

What stands out most when they talk about life at Lady Mico's is the balance between independence and companionship.



School days - Pearl and Maureen

No one needs to ever be lonely.



Pearl, Maureen and friends

"Your own front door is the best thing ever," says Pearl.

Coffee mornings, shared activities and informal gatherings bring neighbours together, while residents look out for one another and share news, friendship and support. Scheme Manager Laura helps nurture the sense of community that both women say makes Lady Mico's special.

"Safe. It's very safe," Maureen says simply.

Looking out from her balcony, she reflects on her surroundings.

"I come out sometimes and think I'm in Spain somewhere," she says with a smile. Searching for the right description, she settles on a single word. "It's an oasis."

Being able to remain close to family has also been important. Maureen's children and grandchildren live nearby, while Pearl's son visits regularly and her daughter travels from Australia when she can.

"No one needs to ever be lonely," says Pearl.

Looking back, Pearl and Maureen reflect on their friendship and the many memories they have shared throughout their lives.

"Who would have thought we'd all be in our 80s, living next door to one another and still be friends?" Pearl says.

"We're lucky," says Maureen. "We're very lucky people."

Pearl nods and chuckles. "We're here and we're staying."

More than a place to live

Our almshouses and sheltered housing schemes are more than places to live. Residents enjoy the independence of their own homes while remaining part of supportive communities.

Scheme Managers organise a wide range of activities across our housing schemes, helping residents connect with one another and enjoy shared experiences. Throughout the year, activities included art classes, games evenings, sewing groups, outings, celebrations, guest speakers and fundraising events.

I feel part of a community.

Wouldn't get these opportunities in most housing schemes.

I feel safe and secure and can enjoy life worry free.



Trinity Hospital, Greenwich

Residents making a difference

Fundraising and volunteering remain an important part of life across our housing communities. At Mercers' House, residents raised £1,000 through two coffee mornings for Noah's Ark Children's Hospice, supporting the charity's work with babies, children and young people with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions. Residents later welcomed the hospice's Head of Philanthropy, Rebekah Severn, to learn more about the impact of their contribution and the families it will help support.



Mercers' House residents

Celebrating community

Residents across our almshouse communities were pleased to welcome the Master during the Christmas season. Members of the Older People & Housing Committee also visited Trinity Hospital Shotesham during the summer, sharing a fish and chip lunch with residents before visiting projects funded by our Older People & Housing programme. These visits help strengthen connections between residents, members and staff while providing valuable opportunities to hear first-hand about life across our housing communities.

Award-winning gardens

Residents at Lady Mico's received awards from London in Bloom and Tower Hamlets in Bloom for their gardening achievements, reflecting the pride they take in maintaining their shared outdoor spaces.



Maintaining high standards

Providing high-quality housing means continually investing in our homes, services and people. During the year, we retained our BSI accreditation following audits at Mercers' House and Lady Mico's, while also successfully achieving the first year of a new three-year Independent Living Standards accreditation programme with EROSH. We continue to play an active role in shaping good practice across the sector, chairing regional networks for both EROSH and the Almshouse Association, while investing in ongoing training and professional development for our housing team.



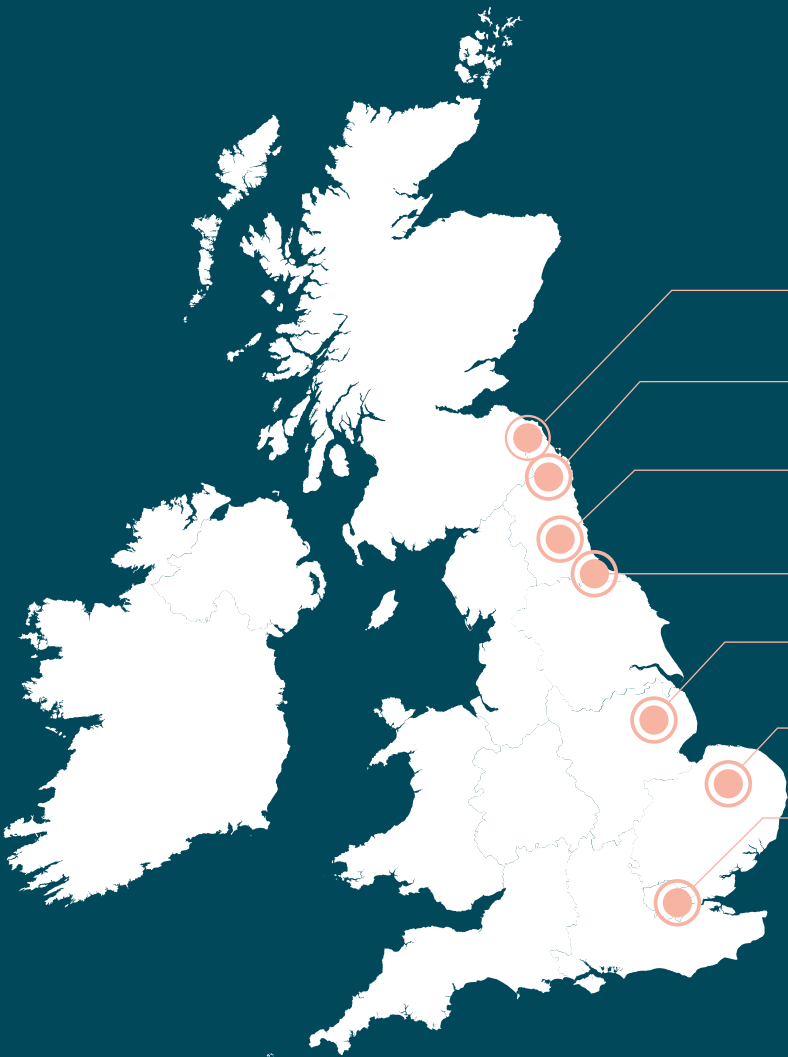
Church & Communities

Supporting churches and other faith and community-based organisations that strengthen communities and improve outcomes for people and families in areas of deprivation and from marginalised groups.

Our priorities are:

Stronger communities

Better outcomes for families and unpaid carers



Where we fund

Northumbria

Tyne and Wear

County Durham

Tees Valley

Lincolnshire

Norfolk

Greater London



2025-2026

£4.2m
awarded

77 grants
63 organisations supported

Through our funding, we aim to:



Improve
People's Lives



Strengthen
Organisations



Contributing to
Societal Change

Our focus continues to be ensuring our funding reaches communities facing the greatest disadvantage across our priority areas. During 2025-2026, £4.2 million was awarded through 77 grants to 63 organisations. The largest share of funding, £2.1 million was directed to disadvantaged communities, alongside £872,000 supporting families facing poverty, £447,000 for carers, £391,000 for refugee-focused work and £205,000 for homelessness initiatives. More than half (58%) of funding awarded went to organisations with an annual turnover of less than £1 million, helping ensure support reaches smaller, locally embedded organisations.

This year, we also expanded our place-based funding, investing in community-led initiatives in Lincolnshire and the North East of England. These investments support local people and organisations to identify priorities, strengthen partnerships and shape solutions that reflect the needs of their communities.

Alongside grant funding, we continue to strengthen the organisations we support through our funder-plus offer, including capacity-building through Cranfield Trust, wellbeing grants for staff and volunteers and learning opportunities for grantees. During the period, 39 organisations received wellbeing grants totalling £170,000, recognising the growing pressures facing the voluntary sector and the importance of supporting those delivering frontline services.

The wellbeing funding has strengthened our team's resilience, confidence and motivation at a time of growing demand, helping us continue delivering effective frontline support.

Wheely Tots - Moselle Community Project



Wheely Tots - Moselle Community Project

We have expanded our staff and volunteer base, improved our monitoring and evaluation processes, and deepened partnerships with local agencies.

Peace of Mind



Luminary Bakery

Mercers' demonstrated genuine interest in the impact of the work and a clear understanding of the importance of community-led, preventative support. We have felt trusted as delivery partners, with flexibility that allows us to respond to emerging needs.

Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre

Evaluation and reflections

Our ongoing learning, informed by our independent evaluation and engagement with grantees, highlights the approaches that are proving most effective. We are seeing the importance of services shaped and led by local people. While organisations from outside a community can play an important catalytic role, lasting change is most effective when local communities are involved in identifying priorities and shaping solutions, building on trusted relationships and local knowledge.

In work with refugees, approaches informed by lived experience are proving increasingly important in building trust, overcoming barriers to engagement and responding to a challenging environment. Homelessness organisations continue to demonstrate the value of balancing immediate support with longer-term approaches that help prevent future homelessness. They are also highlighting the importance of tailored provision, particularly for women.

We are also seeing the benefits of whole-family approaches, which help uncover underlying trauma that may otherwise remain hidden. Short respite breaks and volunteer-led support continue to demonstrate their value in improving wellbeing for carers.

Our independent evaluation also underlines the factors that help organisations remain resilient: strong leadership, a clear sense of mission, effective use of assets, prioritising staff wellbeing, strategic approaches to funding and access to flexible multi-year grants. These insights continue to inform our funding and support for the sector.

Scan the QR code to read our C&C's Year 2 evaluation.

Evaluation partners
Kerry Swain, Sarah Frost, Kathryn Crowther and Sue Cook.



Recognising the Expertise of Carers

In 2023, a £103,200 grant over three years was awarded to **Cripplegate Foundation**, which works to address inequality in Islington through its place-based giving programme, **Islington Giving**. The funding supported the creation of two carers panels, bringing together people with caring responsibilities to help shape funding decisions. The panels directly supported 11 organisations working with carers across the borough.

For Sarah, who joined the first carers panel as a participant and is now part of the Islington Giving team, the opportunity proved transformative. Her story highlights the power of recognising carers not only as recipients of support, but as experts whose lived experience can help shape better decisions, stronger communities and more effective funding.



Sarah Page

Carers Panel and Make It Happen fund support

Anne Shewring

Programme Director

Cripplegate Foundation & Islington Giving

For those less familiar, can you tell us about Cripplegate Foundation and Islington Giving, and the need you are seeing across the borough?

Anne: Cripplegate Foundation works to tackle poverty and inequality across Islington. Through Islington Giving, we bring together funders, businesses and residents to support community-led solutions.

Islington is a borough of contrasts, with significant wealth alongside real disadvantage. Many people continue to feel the impact of rising costs, reduced public services and growing isolation. As a place-based funder, our role is to listen to communities and respond to the issues that matter most to them.

What prompted the creation of the carers panel?

Anne: The Mercers' Company approached us because they recognised that unpaid carers were a group whose experiences and needs were not always receiving the attention they deserved. We already had experience running resident-led (participatory) grant-making panels with young people, families and older people, so together we saw an opportunity to apply that approach to carers and learn from a group we hadn't previously worked with in this way.



What have you learned about engaging carers in decision-making?

Sarah: As a carer, you can feel very isolated. You're often focused on the person you care for and not necessarily on yourself.

Being part of the panel gave me a chance to step outside that bubble. We met carers from different backgrounds and experiences and it opened my eyes to the many different forms caring can take. It was rewarding, but also therapeutic in a way, because for a few hours, the focus wasn't on my own caring responsibilities.

Anne: Flexibility was essential. Caring responsibilities can change at very short notice, so we adapted the programme around people's lives. If you want people to participate meaningfully, participation has to work for them.



Where have you seen the most meaningful impact?

Anne: The panel brought knowledge and insight that simply can't be gained from a funding application alone. It helped ensure funding reflected carers' real experiences and priorities.

The panels so far have supported 11 organisations, including groups such as Mother to Mother and ADHD Islington. In the first year alone, funded projects enabled 222 carers to give and receive peer support, 104 carers accessed learning opportunities, 67 received therapy and 45 took part in day trips and activities that reduced isolation and improved wellbeing.

Sarah: Some of the applications were incredibly moving. You could see exactly how the funding would reach carers and create opportunities they otherwise wouldn't have. It felt meaningful because it was about recognising that carers matter too.

Sarah, what has this journey meant to you personally?

Sarah: It has been life changing.

When I joined the panel, I wasn't sure what to expect, but it was welcoming, supportive and enjoyable. Afterwards, I became involved in Islington Giving's alumni programme and eventually applied for a role supporting the Make It Happen fund.

Before, my world felt quite small. This experience gave me confidence, purpose and a new sense of possibility. It showed me that the skills and knowledge developed through caring have real value.

Anne: That's what this work is really about. When people are dealing with something difficult on their own, it can sometimes feel as though their experience has value only within their own circumstances. These panels recognise that lived experience is expertise. By trusting carers to help make decisions, we not only direct funding more effectively, we help people who are often unseen feel heard, valued and able to shape change for others.

Place-based Funding: Community-led Solutions

During the year, we expanded our place-based funding through two investments, supporting communities to identify priorities, strengthen local partnerships and shape responses to the issues that matter most to them.

Lincolnshire: supporting community-led development

East Marsh, Grimsby

Building on seven years of collaboration between The Mercers' Company, **Key Fund** and local partners, this new £100,000 investment supports the next stage of community-led development in East Marsh.

The funding comes at an important time for Grimsby, where regeneration is underway and local organisations are creating new opportunities for residents to shape investment decisions. Key Fund will deliver two linked funding programmes to support community-led proposals and help organisations develop projects that respond to local priorities. Around 30 community organisations are expected to benefit.



East Marsh



We are increasingly seeing that lasting change happens when local people help shape the decisions that affect their communities. Listening to lived experience, building trusted relationships and supporting collaborative action are helping us learn how funding can have the greatest impact.

Ann Wynne,
Head Grants Programme Manager,
The Mercers' Company

South West Gainsborough

Funding has been awarded to **Together CIO**, a partnership of local organisations working to improve life in the South West ward of Gainsborough.

Together CIO has emerged as a central coordinating body for community-led change, supporting community engagement, improvements to local green spaces, partnership working and opportunities for residents to shape local priorities.

The funding will provide core support to help Together CIO build sustainable income and strengthen its role as a long-term community anchor. A further wellbeing grant will also support staff wellbeing and resilience.



Together CIO

One of our key values is collaboration: a genuine willingness to work together for the good of the neighbourhood. We believe this partnership will help deliver practical, lasting change for the South West ward of Gainsborough, ensuring support reaches the people and neighbourhoods who need it most.

Barry Rooks,
Leader and CEO,
Together CIO



£205,000 grant
(2026–2029)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation

£100,000 to Key Fund
£100,000 to Together CIO
£5,000 for staff and wellbeing



Belong North East Fund

Belong North East Fund

Delivered in partnership with **Point North Community Foundation** and **Community Foundation North East**, the new Belong North East Fund supports existing and new projects that tackle disadvantage and build a sense of belonging for people who feel isolated across the North East of England.

Grants will support grassroots organisations working across County Durham, Tees Valley, Tyne & Wear and Northumberland, helping bring people together, strengthen community connections and create opportunities for young and older people to become more involved in their communities. This grant is supported by both the Church & Communities and Older People & Housing programmes.

Growing pressures from poverty, poor health and isolation mean too many people are still struggling alone. Through the Fund, our aim is to strengthen local support and help ensure assistance reaches those who need it most.

Michelle Cooper,
CEO,
Point North



£300,000 grant
(2026–2027)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation

Giving unpaid carers the support they need

Caring Together's Giving Carers a Break, Norfolk project provides trained volunteer befrienders to give unpaid carers regular short breaks from their caring responsibilities. Through flexible, personalised support, volunteers offer companionship, practical help and time for carers to rest, see friends, or focus on their own health and wellbeing. The project helps reduce isolation, stress and exhaustion for carers who may not qualify for formal care but still need support.

Funding has helped the service grow across Norfolk, recruiting 16 volunteers and delivering more than 500 hours of befriending support. Feedback shows carers feel less alone, more supported and better able to continue in their roles.



Feeling less alone and knowing where to access the right help for my situation has made a huge difference to me.

Carer



£83,030 grant
(2023-2025)

£100,870 grant
(2025-2027)

Earl of Northampton's Charity



Improve People's Lives



Strengthen Organisations

Providing housing and support in times of crisis

CARE (Christian Action & Resource Enterprise) supports people facing homelessness and hardship in North East Lincolnshire through housing advice, one-to-one support and a flexible drop-in service. Working with people whose needs are often complex, the charity helps individuals secure safe accommodation and rebuild their lives with dignity.

Funding has supported the day-to-day running of the service at a time of rising demand linked to the cost-of-living crisis and local service closures. In January 2026, CARE opened a new hub, providing a welcoming space for people experiencing homelessness and hardship. Over the past two years, CARE has significantly increased the number of people housed, while continuing to offer trusted, non-judgemental support to those with nowhere else to turn.



It's made a huge difference in my life. It's given me a sense of community and belonging.

CARE participant



£96,500 grant
(2023-2026)

Mercers' Charitable Foundation



Strengthen Organisations



Contribute to Societal Change

Church Livings

We share patronage of eight benefices of the Church of England.

Grants and support continue to be provided to the Company's church patronages, parish church, St Paul's Cathedral and three associated churches.

Clergy Day at Mercers' Hall

Celebrated the work of the clergy associated with the Company by providing space away from their busy day to day roles. The Clergy Day in June 2025 involved a service, a fascinating lecture from Dr Sr Gemma Simmonds CJ of the Margaret Beaufort Institute, Cambridge, and a visit to Guildhall.

It was a great experience for us to be with you all, get to know the company a bit more, as well as the other members.

Fr Yuce Kabakci



Valued support

The Clergy we work with consistently tell us the thing they value most is the moral support they receive. At a time when many are facing growing demands on their time and resources, having a trusted network around them can make a significant difference.

I want to thank The Mercers' Company for funding my place at the recent Future Leaders course on the Windsor Leadership Programme. The course content was excellent, long intense days but left feeling liberated, affirmed and excited about my role, my leadership capabilities and the future.

Reverend Jess Bellshaw,
South Lawres & Barlings



Heritage & Arts

We appreciate the richness that heritage and the arts bring to our lives. What we have inherited from the past and what we create in the present can help us to understand who we are and where we have come from, and to build a sense of belonging, ownership and opportunity.

Our Heritage & Arts programme is a research-based, invitation-only initiative, through which the philanthropy team identifies organisations and invites them to put forward proposals for funding.

Our funding priorities are:

Early Careers
Supporting people at the start of a career in heritage and arts.

Access & Outreach
Enriching lives through access to heritage and arts.



Peon Boyle – Mercers' Arts Award recipient

The Mercers' Arts Awards

A career in the arts can be difficult to establish, particularly for those from underrepresented or socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Mercers' Arts Awards support talented graduates as they take the first steps in their professional careers.

The Awards are delivered in partnership with **West Dean, University of the Arts London** and **Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance**. The institutions receive funding for the Mercers Arts Awards for four years and make the individuals awards each year.

Emily MacMillan – preserving the past for future generations

Emily MacMillan, a graduate of West Dean's MA Conservation Studies programme, specialises in the conservation of books and library materials. Since graduating, Emily has secured a permanent role as a Book Conservator at the British Library, where she helps preserve and make nationally significant collections accessible.

The Award has supported her professional development through specialist training, conservation tools and opportunities to deepen her expertise. Emily is now building a career dedicated to safeguarding cultural heritage for future generations.



Emily Macmillan

Bincy Senthil Kumar – textiles, wellbeing and community

Bincy Senthil Kumar, a graduate of the MA Textile Design programme at the University of the Arts London, explores the intersection of textiles and wellbeing through her creative practice. A recipient of the Mercers' Arts Award, Bincy is using the funding to develop community-based projects and pursue artist residencies as she establishes her career.

The Mercers' Arts Award has supported me in pursuing my career goals in London. This support has been instrumental in providing the tools and resources I need.

Bincy Senthil Kumar



Bincy Senthil Kumar

Restoring heritage, creating opportunities

The **Heritage of London Trust** is restoring historic sites across London while helping young people connect with their local heritage and explore careers in the sector. During the first six months of the year, nine heritage sites were restored, alongside site visits, conservator masterclasses and traditional craft workshops involving more than 1,300 young people.

Through its Proud Places programme, 360 young people from Islington took part in the restoration of the Whittington Stone, helping conserve a much-loved local landmark connected to former Mercer philanthropist Richard Whittington and the enduring legend of his cat. Young people gained hands-on experience of traditional stonemasonry. Before taking part, 88% of participating young people did not know what a stonemason was. The project helped to build skills, confidence and pride in local heritage, while opening pathways into heritage careers.



£20,000 grant
(2025-2026)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation

 Improve
People's Lives



The Heritage of London Trust

Sankofa community carnival

The **Barbican Centre's** Sankofa Community Carnival brings local communities together through workshops in costume design, music and dance. Participants work alongside artists to develop performances for two carnival processions as part of the Barbican's wider Project a Black Planet: A Season programme.

Funding is helping increase access to the arts while creating opportunities to develop new skills and celebrate shared cultural heritage.



£20,000 grant
(2025-2026)
Mercers' Charitable Foundation

 Improve
People's Lives



The Barbican Centre's Sankofa Community Carnival

Charities

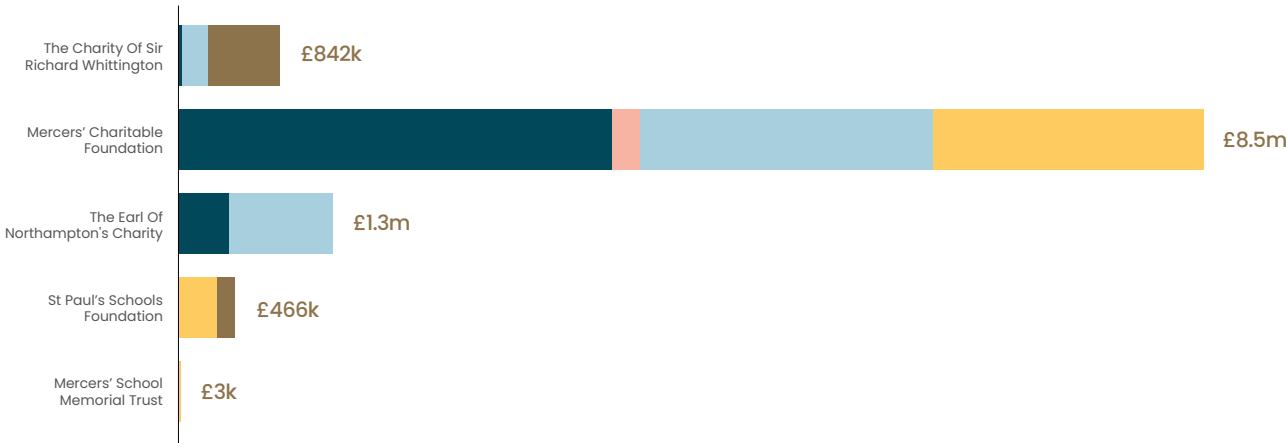
Over the centuries, we have been entrusted with significant gifts and bequests for charitable purposes from members and other benefactors.

We are the corporate trustee of six registered charities and sole member of Mercers’ Company Housing Association. Five of these charities support our collaborative Philanthropy Framework funding the Young People & Education, Older People & Housing, Church & Communities and Heritage & Arts programmes.

- Young People & Education
- Older People & Housing
- Church & Communities
- Heritage & Arts
- Other

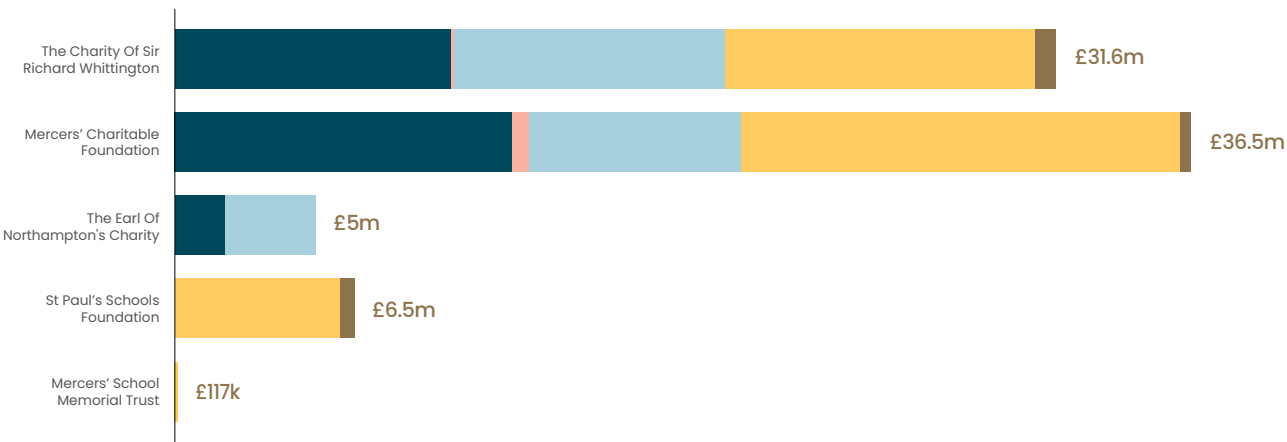
2025–2026 charity support

From 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 the charities awarded **£11.1million**



8 year charity support

From 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2026 the charities awarded **£79.8million**



Mercers’ Charitable Foundation

Established 1983,
The Mercers’ Company
is the Trustee.

Founded for general charitable purposes, the Foundation's primary source of income is donations from the Mercers' Company. The charity makes grants to a wide range of organisations through the Philanthropy Framework.

Provides: funding for the Church & Communities, Older People & Housing, Young People & Education and Heritage & Arts funding programmes.



The Charity of Sir Richard Whittington

Established 1424,
The Mercers’ Company
is the Trustee.

Richard Whittington, four-time Lord Mayor of London and three-time Master of the Mercers’ Company, bequeathed his estate to charity. The Mercers’ Company was entrusted with the care of the charity in 1424.

Provides: almshouses and funding for the Church & Communities, Older People & Housing and Young People & Education programmes.



The Earl of Northampton’s Charity

Established 1614,
The Mercers’ Company
is the Trustee.

Founded by Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton (1540–1614)

Provides: almshouses and sheltered accommodation for the elderly and funding for the Church & Communities and Older People & Housing programmes.



St Paul’s Schools Foundation

Established 1509,
The Mercers’ Company
is the Trustee.

The charitable objective of the Foundation is ‘to promote in Greater London the education of boys and girls and, in particular, to assist in the conduct and maintenance of schools in or near Greater London.’

Provides: support to St Paul's Girls' Schools, funding for London based Associated Schools and funding for the promotion of education through the Young People & Education Programme.



Mercers’ School Memorial Trust (The Merrett Bequest)

Established 1984,
The Mercers’ Company
is the Trustee.

The Trust was set up as a memorial to the Mercers’ School which closed in 1958 and although it has wide charitable purposes, it focuses on the advancement of education.

Provides: annual funding for the Mercers’ School Memorial Professor of Business at Gresham College and funding for school prizes at the Associated Schools & Colleges.

Membership

Philanthropy and service remain at the heart of what it means to be a Mercer.



In memoriam

2025-2026

- Mr Basil Heys
- Sir John Christopher Calthorpe Blofeld DL
- Mr John Parker
- Mr Robert Salusbury Brewis

Every year our members invest thousands of voluntary hours to support the Company and the charities of which we are trustee.

Their commitment, expertise and service make our philanthropic work possible.

112

Mercers serving on the Company's committees

40

Mercers serving as Governors and Trustees of Associated Schools and bodies*

*An additional 28 non-Mercers are appointed by the Company as Governors and Trustees across the 16 Associated Schools & Colleges



Our philanthropic work is driven by our members. Their commitment, expertise and generosity underpin everything we achieve. By contributing their time, skills and perspectives, they enable us to support those who need it most. In return, we invest in their development through training and ongoing support, ensuring they feel confident and equipped to maximise our collective impact.

Anna Robinson,
Member Development,
The Mercers' Company



A Shared Culture of Giving and Support

What philanthropy means to our members

Two of our members share their personal perspectives on philanthropy, highlighting what they gain and the positive impact that can be created in communities through voluntary service.



Bill Palmer
Member since 1978

A developmental movement therapist, Bill specialised for over 30 years working with infants with cerebral palsy and now teaches postgraduate courses for physical therapists. He served as trustee of Open Story Tellers for over six years.

My involvement in charitable causes has been shaped by a belief that small acts of kindness can make a difference, particularly when they help people to build confidence and feel more connected to those around them.

While responding to immediate need is essential, personally I am drawn to organisations that focus on longer-term support, helping people to build confidence, relationships and a stronger sense of agency. It is this approach that, over time, I believe, can have a lasting impact on individuals and the communities around them.

This is what led me to support organisations such as **Open Story Tellers** and **Good Heart CIC** in Frome. Both focus on creating spaces where people are encouraged to take part, given the tools to support their interests and be recognised for what they bring to society.

Through Open Story Tellers, a charity which supports people with learning difficulties, I have seen how this approach can open up new possibilities. Remarkable examples of this, include a gentleman who had previously never spoken, who then attended the weekly Get Connected groups, is now creating films and contributing to a project helping people with dementia to remember their lives. Another participant developed his skill as a cartoonist with the support of Open Story Tellers and now contributes illustrations to local publications instilling humour into copy. There are many other such examples which demonstrates the importance of creating spaces that encourage developing agency.

Good Heart CIC is a community group which focuses on reducing loneliness and isolation for those most in need. What has stayed with me and why I support, is its approach to developing personal kindness in practice. People experience support that is offered freely and without expectation and in many cases that kindness is passed on, not in monetary terms but through small acts of support for others in similar situations.



My involvement in charitable causes has been shaped by a belief that small acts of kindness can make a difference...



What stands out is the way these spaces allow people to feel welcomed and, in time, to play a part in supporting others as well.

This is achieved by initiatives such as its pay-it-forwards Café where someone can sponsor a meal for another person and its annual Kindness Festival which celebrates the way which people can act with kindness in everyday life, across schools, families and communities. What stands out is the way these spaces allow people to feel welcomed and, in time, to play a part in supporting others as well.

I am hugely appreciative of the support from the Company's Members' Philanthropy programme in awarding grants and matched funding to both these organisations in Frome, supporting their ongoing presence within the local community with measurable impact.



Claire Jennings
Member since 2015

Claire Jennings has worked within the charity sector for over 10 years, primarily with organisations supporting young people in areas of disadvantage. She also volunteers as a counsellor in Edinburgh.

I believe passionately that providing opportunity can change someone's life for the better, particularly when it reaches those most in need. Through my experience in the charity sector and my own volunteering, I have seen how financial and personal circumstances can limit what people are able to take part in. This has motivated me to support organisations that help level the playing field, offering activities, life chances and services that can have a positive and lasting impact.

I have been fortunate to be able to support a number of organisations in my spare time that reflect this, including **Project Trust**, **Aban Outdoor** and **PF Counselling** in Edinburgh.



My connection to Project Trust goes back a number of years, first as a volunteer and later working alongside the organisation as Head of Volunteering and School Engagement. Project Trust supports young people to spend time overseas, often in unfamiliar environments, teaching in schools and immersing themselves in a different culture. It can be a significant step, but one that can shape confidence and perspective in lasting ways.

Being able to contribute in this way helps ensure that opportunities like these are available to a broader group of people.

I believe passionately that providing opportunity can change someone's life for the better,

Aban Outdoor offers something different but equally valuable closer to home, working with young people in the Scottish Highlands to develop skills and confidence through outdoor experiences and activities. Through Members' Philanthropy, I was able to support its Outdoor Youth Work Community Outreach project, helping to extend its reach to young people who may not otherwise have access to these experiences. Being able to contribute in this way helps ensure that opportunities like these are available to a broader group of people.

Through this work, I have seen first-hand the positive impact that a series of counselling sessions can have for a beneficiary, providing space for people to reflect, feel heard and begin to work through difficult experiences.

More recently, my role as a volunteer counsellor with PF Counselling in Edinburgh has provided another perspective. The organisation offers weekly counselling to adults across the city, helping to ensure people can access consistent and affordable support. Through this work, I have seen first-hand the positive impact that a series of counselling sessions can have for a beneficiary, providing space for people to reflect, feel heard and begin to work through difficult experiences.

Supporting these organisations through Members' Philanthropy has allowed me to play a small part in helping make these experiences more accessible. Having worked within the charity sector, I am also aware of how important this kind of funding can be in enabling organisations to continue their work.

What has stayed with me most is seeing how individuals respond to these opportunities. Whether it is someone stepping outside their comfort zone, developing new skills or beginning to see things differently, these changes may feel small at first, but they can have a lasting impact on people's lives.



Members' Philanthropy

Our Members' Philanthropy programme aims to build a culture of giving, advocating and supporting members and employees in their own philanthropic endeavours.

Funding helps a wide range of charities, particularly smaller, grassroots organisations in the UK and overseas where a comparatively small grant can make a big difference with a focus on improving people's lives.

Members and employees can apply for matched funding from the Mercers' Company for their volunteered time, fundraising efforts and personal donations, as well as apply for grants for an unlimited number of charitable organisations.



How our funding programme works

Members and employees can apply for the following in support of one or more charitable organisations:



Up to
£2.5K
matched funds from fundraising



Up to
£3K
matched funds for personal donations



Up to
£2.5K
matched funds for regular volunteering



Up to
£10K
per grant to organisations nominated by Members and employees



2025 overview

Members' Philanthropy continues to play an important role, supporting members and employees to contribute to causes they care about through giving, volunteering and fundraising.

In 2025, the programme grew to over £500,000, more than doubling its funding since it launched in 2019. Set against a backdrop of declining personal donations in the UK, it continues to provide flexible support for smaller charities, enabling them to respond to significant need, sustain critical services and, in some cases, prevent closure.

From 1 January to 31 December 2025, we are pleased to have awarded:

£512,036

total of matched funding and grants

229

donations and grants

183

organisations supported

99

members and staff engaged



Smartphone Free Childhood



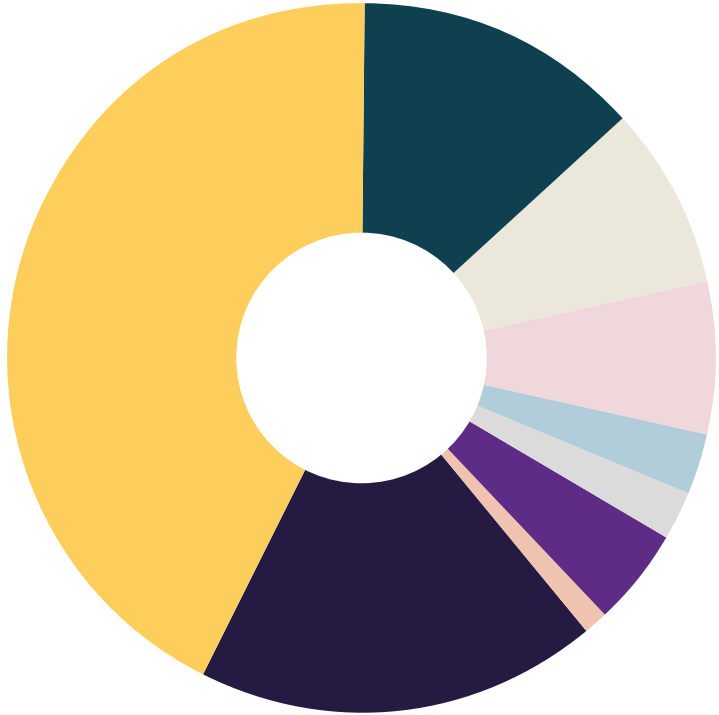
During my time as Chair, Members' Philanthropy has refined its focus on improving the lives of disadvantaged people by supporting smaller organisations, where grants of £5,000-£10,000 can make a real difference. The programme has also helped strengthen engagement across the Company, with more members and employees sponsoring applications and volunteering their time than ever before.

Hearing directly from sponsors has given us much clearer insight into what these grants achieve. Time and again, we have seen that, without this funding, important work would have been reduced, delayed or not happened at all.

Johnny Robertson,
Chair of Members' Philanthropy
The Mercers' Company

Donations and grants awarded

Young People	£220,000
Communities	£67,000
Medical & Disability	£42,000
Families	£36,000
Older People	£15,000
Heritage & Arts	£11,000
Relief & Emergency	£23,000
Homelessness	£5,000
Other	£93,000



Funding charities in the UK and overseas

London	£117,000
South-east	£57,000
South-west	£53,000
Scotland	£46,000
East of England	£26,000
Wales and West Midlands	£2,000
North-east and Yorkshire	£6,000
UK wide	£94,000
Overseas	£111,000



Of the 99 people that volunteered, donated or nominated an organisation for a grant – 14 were members of Court, 37 were Liverymen, 25 were Freemen, 4 formed group fundraising and 19 were employees.

Matched Funding



Fundraising & Donations



The Grassmarket Community Project

Grassmarket Community Project

Susie Stevenson (member) donated to an award-winning community project in Edinburgh – **The Grassmarket Community Project** supporting vulnerable adults through reconnection, experience and social enterprise.

Walking for Blood Cancer UK

Roddy Graham (member) walked 300 km over a 26-day period as part of Amwins Global Risk 40,000km walk to raise funds for the Matthew Wilson Multiple Myeloma Fund at **Blood Cancer UK**. The charity is dedicated to beating blood cancer by funding research, supporting those affected and campaigning for change.

Save the Children

Chris Watkins (Estate and Grounds Manager at Whittington College) has had a beard for over 14 years. He was willing to shave it all off to raise money for **Save the Children**, which works in the UK and around the world to make sure children stay safe, healthy and keep learning so they can reach their full potential.

£105,000

donations from members and employees and matched funding awarded by the Company to 146 organisations

£26,000

fundraising by members and employees and matched funding awarded by the Company to 20 organisations.



Rory's Well

Rory's Well

Set up by parents of a boy who died aged 18, **Rory's Well** works to provide fresh water, through a mix of hand-pumped and solar wells, to people in Barri Chiefdom, a remote part of Sierra Leone. **Lucy Floyer-Acland (member)** donated and sponsored a grant application which helped fund a new vehicle to transport people, tool and supplies in an area of the country where there is no public transport or road infrastructure.



Volunteering



Meads Community Centre

Meads Community Centre

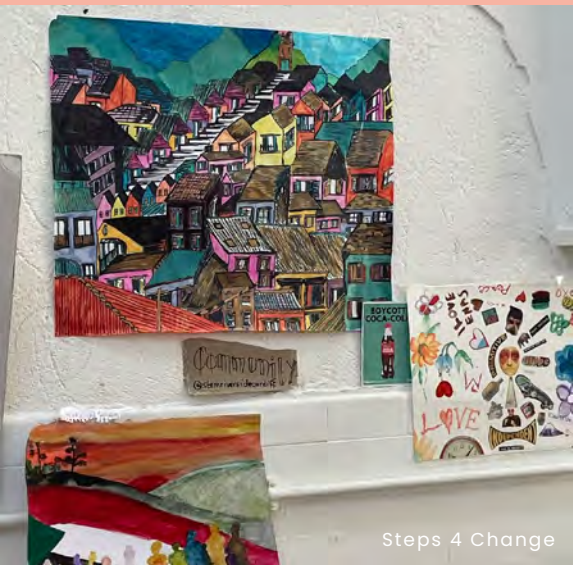
Annalisa Bicknell (member) volunteers and donated to the **Meads (Eastbourne) Community Centre**, a charity set up to save the village hall, when it was being sold, for the local community. Annalisa was Honorary Treasurer for the charity and together with the trustees managed to raise the funds to lease and renovate the Hall.

Friends of the Homeless

Nancy Tribe (member) volunteers at **Friends of the Homeless in Fareham and Gosport**. She helps to prepare food parcels, restocks the shelves and creates a warm and welcoming environment for people referred to it. Over the past 12 months the foodbanks have provided food parcels to last seven days to over 7,000 people facing difficult circumstances.

£27,000

awarded to 13 organisations matching time volunteered by Members and employees



Steps 4 Change

Steps 4 Change

Abigail Hall (Data Impact Analyst) volunteered with **Steps 4 Change**, a Cardiff-based non-profit, as a tutor on its girls in STEM project, supporting primary school-aged child with their maths and literacy development.

Smartphone Free Childhood

Felicity Winkles (Communications) volunteers for **Smartphone Free Childhood** aiming to give children back what truly matters: time to play, space to grow, freedom to be. Felicity works with schools, parents, health professionals and communities to empower families to make informed choices on delayed smartphone and social media access.



Grants

£354,000

total of grants awarded

50

organisations received grants

Sebby's Corner

Sebby's Corner serves families in crisis across London, many of whom are experiencing homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, seeking asylum or living in poverty. The grant helped provide essential resources such as nappies, formula, baby equipment, clothing, school uniforms and birthday gifts for families in need.



Grant awarded

£5,000 2025

Sponsor - Emily Brewis (member)

Touch India Trust

Touch India Trust is a Delhi-based charity supporting children from some of the city's poorest communities through education, nutrition and healthcare. Its flagship programme, Shiksha Rath (meaning Chariot of Education), provides after-school classes alongside daily meals and access to basic health support.

Georgie Ruoss has sponsored two grants to Shiksha Rath (2021 and 2025), with the most recent supporting the programme's core delivery. During a visit to India, she spent time with the project, taking part in activities and seeing its work first-hand.



Grant awarded

£10,000 2025

Sponsor - Georgie Ruoss (member)

Arts Education Exchange

A creative community in Thanet, East Kent, the Arts Education Exchange provides long-term, person-centred support for disadvantaged young people through art and advocacy into education, training and employment. The grant supported the ongoing running of its services within the community.

Grant awarded

£7,000 2025

Sponsor - Simon Bryant (member)

183

organisations were supported in 2025 through Members' Philanthropy

We are grateful to our members, employees and residents for the many ways they contribute, through their support of the Company and the time they give volunteering and fundraising within their communities, reflecting our shared purpose of creating positive change.



Grants

- Big Leaf Foundation
- Learning with Parents
- Key4Life CIO
- Mummy's Star
- Sebby's Corner
- WizeUp Financial Education
- Children of Rwanda
- Black Mothers Matter CIC
- Free to Be Kids
- West Youth Zone



Match-Fund Fundraising

- Alzheimer's Society
- Cure Parkinson's
- Hearing Dogs for Deaf People
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- Noah's Ark Children's Hospice
- Palestine Children's Relief Fund
- Save the Children Fund
- Snow-Camp
- SSAFA - Forces Help
- Young Lives Vs Cancer

Organisations recently supported through Members' Philanthropy include:



Volunteer Time

- All Saints Church East Stratton
- Arts Society Horsley
- Cheltenham and Gloucester Unitarians
- Friends of the Homeless in Fareham & Gosport
- Hedger's Almshouses
- Meads (Eastbourne) Community Centre
- Smartphone Free Childhood Charitable Fund
- Steps 4 Change
- Sydenham Garden
- UTC Portsmouth



Match-Fund Donations

- Action for Children
- Alzheimer's Research UK
- Amref Health Africa
- Blue Marine Foundation
- Care4Calais
- Crisis UK
- Freedom from Torture
- Magic Breakfast
- Medical Aid for Palestinians
- Greater Change Foundation

Charter 600 Charity

Supporting causes chosen
by our members

Charter 600 reflects our members’ shared commitment to giving back. By coming together through participation and donations, the members’ charity provides grants to grassroots organisations, where funding can make a significant difference.

Charter 600 Awards

Supporting rehabilitation

In September 2025 we chose the 2025 Charter 600 Awards, focused on supporting outstanding charities working with Offenders and Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders. The sector plays a vital role in helping individuals within the criminal justice system, delivering essential advocacy, rehabilitation and “through the gate” resettlement support.

The following two charities, selected by members, were awarded **£30,000** each:



LandWorks

LandWorks

A Devon-based, award-winning resettlement charity providing a supported route back into employment and the community for people leaving prison or at risk of going to prison.

The Charter 600 Award has enabled us to continue our life-changing work, providing intensive placements and ongoing support for people involved in the criminal justice system, helping them to find a new and better path and, in turn, making our communities safer.

Steve Bradford,
LandWorks

Scan the QR code
to read more about
LandWorks.



Working Chance

The UK’s only employment charity for women with convictions, offering employment coaching, confidence building, and skills development to help women find sustainable work and turn their lives around.



Thanks to the support of The Mercers' Company, since October 2025 we have supported 245 women with convictions to develop their employability, including 85 women to access education and training opportunities.

Natasha Finlayson,
Chief Executive,
Working Chance

A huge thank you to all our members who took part in the 2025 Awards, supporting grassroots organisations making a real difference.

Team fundraising

Blenheim Triathlon

On 6 June 2026, Members and executive took part in the Blenheim Palace Triathlon raising over £2,000 for Charter 600.



2026 Awards launched

We are pleased to announce that the 2026 Charter 600 Awards are underway. This year’s theme is Hospice and Palliative Care, where two grants of £30,000 will be awarded.

This theme received strong support in last year’s member vote and recognises the vital role these organisations play in providing compassionate care for people living with life-limiting conditions, alongside support for their families and loved ones.

Following strong member engagement in the nomination process, shortlisted charities have been invited to submit an application, with member selection taking place in September ahead of General Court.



Heritage

Our Heritage team stewards the Company's collections, deepening understanding of our history while supporting scholarly research and encouraging engagement.

Acquisitions

During 2025–2026, we acquired the following significant items for our archive collection.

Braun and Hogenberg map of London

The 1574 second edition Braun and Hogenberg map of London (Londinum Feracissimi Angliae Regni Metropolis) is among the earliest surviving full city plans of Elizabethan London, published in the landmark Civitates Orbis Terrarum.

For the Mercers' Company, it is particularly significant in depicting our first Hall and the newly established Royal Exchange, completed in 1566. With detailed features such as the Royal Barge on the Thames, St Paul's Cathedral's former spire, the map offers valuable insight into the Company's and London's history.



Braun and Hogenberg map of London



Zoomed view showing location of Mercers' Hall



Through careful curation and preservation, we ensure that records and objects remain accessible and meaningful for present and future generations.

Charlotte Ferra,
Supervising Archivist
The Mercers' Company

Baptist Hicks, 1st Viscount Campden

A portrait of Baptist Hicks, 1st Viscount Campden, has been added to our permanent collection as a gift from The Middlesex Guildhall Collection Trust. A Mercer and twice Master (1603 and 1610), Hicks was a prominent court supplier to Elizabeth I and James I, later serving as an MP and created Viscount Campden in 1628.

His legacy includes founding an almshouse and supporting the development of Chipping Campden, alongside benefactions to the Mercers' Company, including support for scholarships from St Paul's School to Trinity College, Cambridge. It was also through his friendship with the Earl of Northampton that Trinity Hospital, Greenwich, was entrusted to the Company. The painting is on display in the first-floor corridor of Mercers' Hall.



Portrait of Baptist Hicks



Bust of George II

Conservation

Bust of George II

The bust of George II, collected by the late Mr Bernard Watney (Master, 1988) and generously gifted by his widow, Mavis Watney, has completed its conservation treatment. One of only 21 known examples, with others held by the British Museum and the V&A, it is an important addition to the Company's collection.

Treatment addressed a historic repair that compromised the structural integrity, with the bust carefully dismantled, cleaned and stabilised using conservation-grade materials and the surface restored to replicate the tone and the gloss of the original porcelain.

Following this a bespoke socle (base) was created, replicating other known examples. The bust and its new socle returned to us in late May and is now on display at Mercers' Hall.

Access, learning and engagement

Historic ceremony at St Catharine's College

In May, members travelled to Cambridge to take part in a ceremony at St Catharine's College, recreating the sealing of a 1516 indenture between the Master of St Catharine's Hall and the Master of St Thomas of Acon. Using facsimile seal matrices, the re-enactment brought the historic agreement that established a fellowship at the College and an annual sermon at the Hospital of St Thomas of Acon, which originally stood on the site of Mercers' Hall, to life and offered a vivid insight into how these formal relationships were originally recorded.

The visit highlighted our collaboration with Corpus Christi College and Aberystwyth University on their research into seals, reflecting a shared commitment to research, preservation and public engagement with historical materials.



The Master sealing at St Catharine's College

Highly commended – supporting early careers

We were awarded Highly Commended at the **Westminster Adult Education Service Apprenticeship Employer of the Year** Awards, recognising our support for apprentices across the Library, Information and Archive Services and Archivist and Records Manager programmes. Through visits, placements and hands-on experience, we continue to support skills development and widening access to careers in the cultural and heritage sectors.

The Mercers' Company have been a fantastic supporter of the apprenticeship programme, sharing their professional expertise and knowledge.

Apprenticeship Manager,
Westminster Adult Education Service



Award winner Charlotte Ferra

New heritage displays

We continue to introduce new ways for members to engage with our archive and historic collections, from expert talks to closer access to selected items.

During the year, we launched a new bi-annual heritage display in the Education Suite, with the first display highlighting the diversity of items received into our collections over the previous year. The next display will be in August, focusing on the Royal Exchange. Members and their guests are welcome to visit the Education Suite at their convenience, with no booking required.



Education Suite

Stewardship

We manage, develop and maintain a strong investment property portfolio, spanning over five acres in Covent Garden and two acres in the City of London, with a mix of retail, restaurant, office and residential uses.

Our property portfolio generates the majority of our income, which is reinvested to enable our philanthropic work.

An important milestone this year was the opening of the Guinness Open Gate Brewery in Covent Garden. Delivered in partnership with Diageo, this investment reflects our role as a proactive owner and active asset manager, further strengthening the Yards as a world-class visitor destination and positioning it for future rental growth.

Alongside this, we achieved full occupancy at Frederick's Place, reflecting the successful regeneration of our City estate in recent years.



The Yards - Long Acre



The Guinness Open Gate Brewery



Through active asset management, we continue to strengthen the performance of our portfolio and position it for sustained income growth. Importantly, this income directly supports our philanthropic work, enabling us to fund charitable organisations that relieve disadvantage, improve people's lives and create positive change.

Richard Angliss,
Property Director,
The Mercers' Company

Covent Garden

The Yards

A vibrant destination in the heart of Covent Garden

The Yards is a leading visitor destination comprising St Martin's Courtyard, Mercer Walk, Neal Street, Long Acre and Old Brewers Yard. It offers a curated mix of shopping, dining and lifestyle experiences across interconnected streets and squares, complemented by regular events that draw visitors, businesses and communities together.



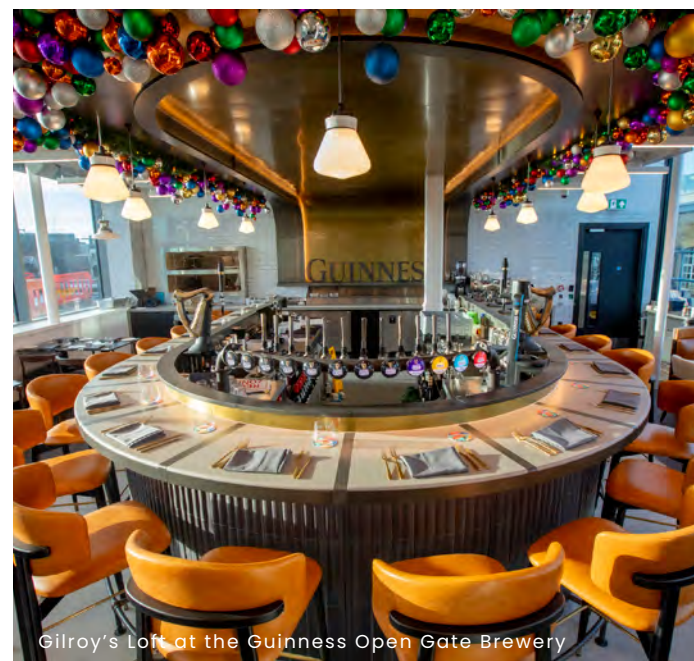
The Guinness Open Gate Brewery

Bringing brewing back

The opening of the **Guinness Open Gate Brewery** London at Old Brewers Yard marks a significant moment for London's West End and the continued evolution of our Covent Garden estate.

Delivered in partnership with Diageo, the 54,000 sq. ft attraction offers a new way to experience the magic of Guinness – combining brewing, gastronomy, retail and community in a single destination. At its heart is a world-class micro-brewery producing limited-edition brews, alongside two restaurants and a courtyard dining experience from Calum Franklin.

Old Brewers Yard provides a fitting location for Guinness' new home in London. Beer was first brewed on the site in 1722 and three centuries later, the opening brings brewing back to the Yards where a new chapter in this industry's story begins.



Gilroy's Loft at the Guinness Open Gate Brewery

His Majesty The King attended the opening of the brewery, alongside our Master, tasting a selection of craft beers before pouring a 'perfect pint' and meeting graduates of Diageo's award-winning Learning for Life programme, which has helped more than 8,000 adults across the UK start careers.

The opening reflects the culmination of more than 20 years of proactive asset management by the Mercers' Company, focused on long-term stewardship, placemaking and social value. Around half a million visitors are expected each year, with the brewery creating more than 250 new jobs and further strengthen Covent Garden and The Yards' position as a global visitor destination.



Scan the QR code to watch a video about the Guinness Open Gate Brewery.



On behalf of the Mercers' Company, I'm delighted to welcome Guinness to our Covent Garden estate and its new home in London. The opening marks a major milestone for London's West End, bringing innovation, creativity and importantly over 250 new jobs to the area.

Alice Hohler,
Master,
The Mercers' Company



Scan the QR code to read the Masters' full toast, given at the opening of Guinness Open Gate Brewery London, December 2025.



His Majesty The King at the Guinness Open Gate Brewery

The Yards

New arrivals

We continue to secure key lettings to market-leading brands which develop our tenant mix and build a vibrant neighbourhood for shoppers, office workers, residents, UK and international visitors.

During 2025-2026 we were delighted to welcome the following brands to The Yards.



Aqua Restaurant Group has brought its contemporary Cantonese restaurant venture to London following its success in Hong Kong. Located at 136 Long Acre at the bustling edge of where Covent Garden meets Chinatown, the restaurant offers elevated dim sum prepared by chefs in view, while the bar pours cocktails over real tea leaves.



Dim Sum Library

OFFICE

Office, a leading high-street fashion footwear retailer in the UK, has opened a new London store at 121-123 Long Acre, on the corner of Mercer Street, in Covent Garden.



Office



UGG, the global lifestyle brand renowned for its premium sheepskin footwear and relaxed Californian aesthetic, is set to open its new UK flagship store later in 2026 on Long Acre. The store will showcase the full breadth of the brand's footwear, apparel and accessories collections, creating a distinctive retail experience that brings the UGG brand to life for customers.



UGG

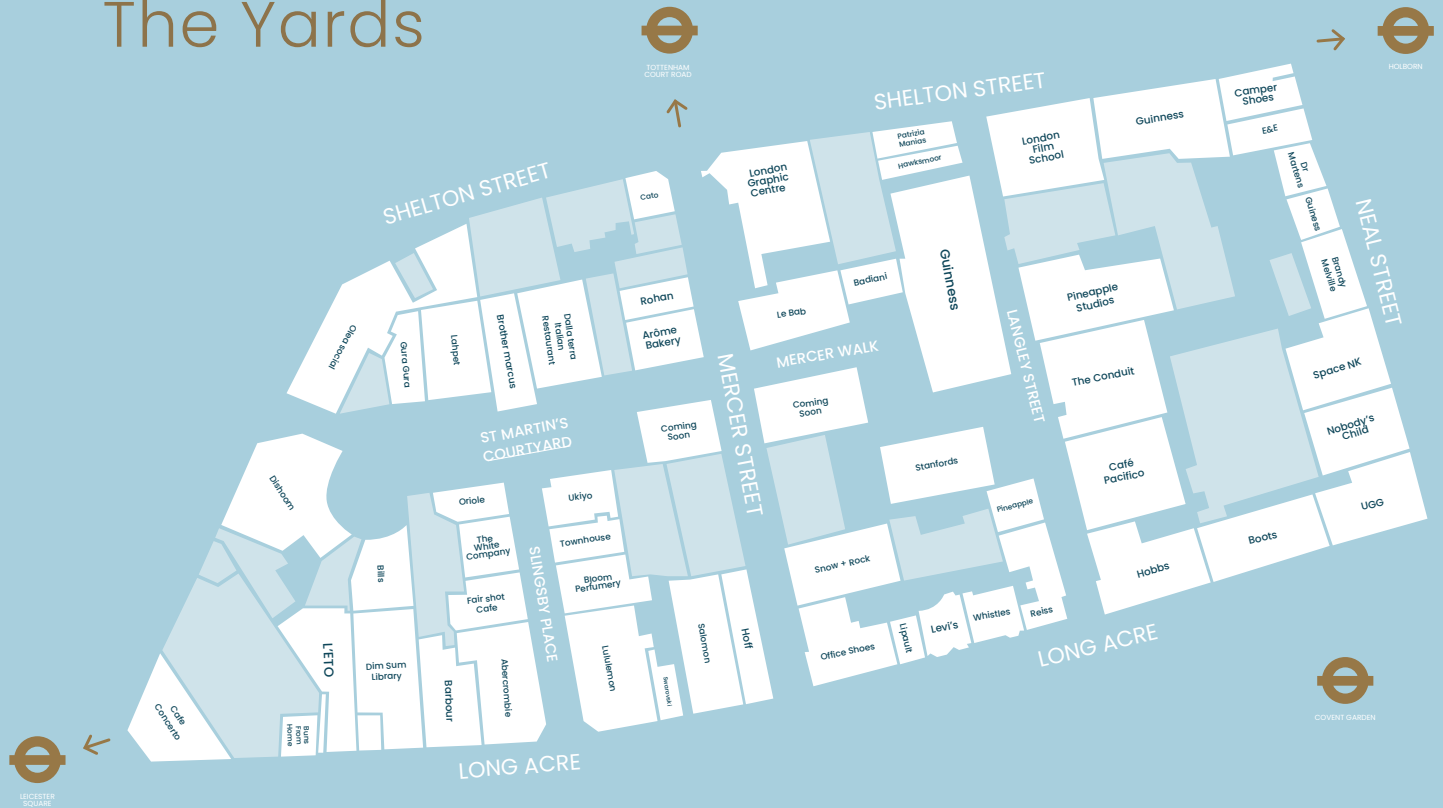
HOFF

Spanish sneaker brand Hoff opened its second and largest London location at 124 Long Acre, Covent Garden in the spring of 2026. The offer builds on its Regent Street presence and marks the brand's first major international retail debut since launching its 'home concept' venue in Madrid in October 2025.



Hoff

The Yards



The City

Heritage meets
modern business

Our core City estate is located on the northern side of Cheapside between Ironmonger Lane and Old Jewry.

During the past year we achieved full office occupancy at the heart of this area, Frederick's Place, reflecting the successful regeneration of our City portfolio in recent years.

During 2025-2026 we welcomed the following retail, dining and businesses to our City estate.



Wild Izakaya

WILD IZAKAYA

Wild Izakaya, a new Japanese restaurant bringing Tokyo energy and glamour to the City, opened on Old Jewry in April 2026. The restaurant has been well received, with Financial Times food critic Jay Rayner praising its "serious sushi" and describing the overall experience as "damn good".



Wild Izakaya



Moss

MOSS

Menswear retailer Moss has recently doubled the size of its presence with a newly created flagship City store on Cheapside.

Life Cycle

INVESTMENT PARTNERS

The beautifully refurbished period office at 4 Frederick's Place has been let to Life Cycle Investment Partners, a boutique investment management business.



Scan the QR code to watch video on the refurbishment of 4 Frederick's Place.



4 Frederick's Place

Environmental Action Plan

We launched our Environmental Action Plan in June 2024, outlining our commitment to a 43% reduction in CO2e emissions across our property portfolio and operational footprint by 2030.



Reduction in absolute energy consumption through operational efficiencies – concentrating initially on Scope 1 & 2 targets



Electrification of the property portfolio



BREEAM building standards Excellent or Outstanding



Biodiversity, conversation and integrated approaches to land-use planning.

We continue to manage the estate in accordance with our Environmental Action Plan focusing on operational efficiency, improved data and performance analysis, working collaboratively with our occupiers through “green lease” provisions and ensuring that the portfolio is positioned to be fully compliant with future best practice and legislative requirements.

Recent development projects have incorporated significant environmental performance improvements, such as that at the 5,000 sq. ft 7/13 Mercer Street refurbishment, where a BREEAM Excellent accreditation and EPC A rating were achieved.

Energy efficiency remains at the heart of improvements to our operational property at Mercers’ Hall and the Almshouses. At the Hall and Whittington College, hot water systems have been converted from gas to electric, reducing reliance on carbon-emitting fossil fuels. We continue to maintain our green spaces, looking to increase bio-diversity, where possible and prioritise the procurement of energy-efficient equipment.

The Company is a member of the Livery Climate Action Group and Pollinating London Together which brings together Livery Companies and other organisations to help tackle the challenges of climate change and environmental loss.



Scan the QR code to view our Environmental Action Plan.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our members, executive team, grantees and strategic partners who work tirelessly in the pursuit of creating positive change so that everyone has the chance to lead a fulfilling life.

Editorial and copywriting – Felicity Winkles
Design – K4 Creative

