



Foundation

KPMG Foundation

**Change for  
children:  
25 years of  
partnership**



# Welcome



**Bina Mehta**



**Judith McNeill**

The KPMG Foundation was set up at the turn of the millennium, by Sir Mike Rake, Senior Partner of KPMG UK, with a bold vision to help bring about positive change in the lives of young people in the UK's most disadvantaged communities. The issues that this charity, the KPMG Foundation, was trying to tackle were as complex and deep rooted then as they are now.

To mark our 25th anniversary, this report highlights some of the work we've supported since 2000. Telling the story of the KPMG Foundation over this quarter century has been both a joy and a challenge. A joy, in bringing together incredible stories about such compelling work, with and for babies, children and families. And a challenge, in deciding what to leave untold.

We have reached out across nations and regions for stories that demonstrate the focus, commitment and reach of our charity partners, not just in their communities but also in influencing policy and practice at regional or national levels.

Positive change is only possible when passionate people work hard together, to understand the context, to build and use evidence, and to adapt to new circumstances.

A huge thank you to all the past and present Trustees and CEOs, for building a legacy that we are proud to be entrusted with.

Throughout the last 25 years we have been supported by KPMG UK Partners, some of whom have served as Trustees or Advocates. We hope that everyone feels proud of our contribution in helping make children's lives safe, healthy, happy, learning and engaged. And also, inspired to do more into the next generation.

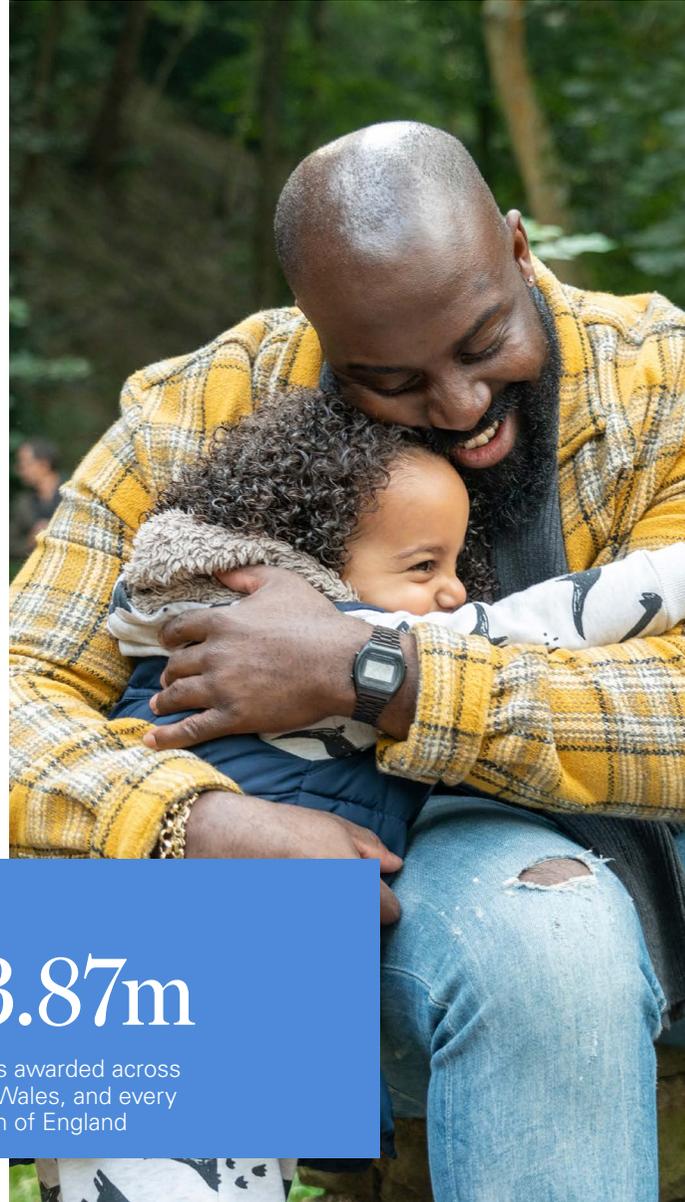
**Bina Mehta**, Chair, and **Judith McNeill**, CEO, KPMG Foundation

## About us

Every child deserves the best start in life. They need people who love them and can help them build the confidence, skills and resilience that will be essential as they get older.

The KPMG Foundation invests in partner organisations who are passionate about tackling the toughest challenges. We support initiatives that work with children and families during the early years, in school and through adolescence, in birth families or in the care 'system'. They all improve children's lives, so they are safe, healthy, happy, engaged and learning.

The KPMG Foundation is an independent charity supported by KPMG in the UK.



Since 2000...

145

grants  
awarded

130

organisations  
supported

£23.87m

total grants awarded across  
Scotland, Wales, and every  
region of England

## Our approach to grant making

We seek out people, charities and social enterprises with ambition and drive. The organisations we work with all have strong leadership, sound business planning, and a commitment to building evidence and sharing learning. We want to improve systems and bring about the changes in children's lives that really matter.

**We support organisations at different stages in different ways:**



We help **catalyse** initiatives through START UP grants, to help test new ideas for creating change.



We **amplify** evidence and learning through STEP UP grants.



We **connect** ideas and people, through collaboration and convening in STEP TOGETHER grants.



We also support **action-focused research**, where we can see real possibilities of putting the findings into practice.

## *The Foundation and the Firm*



KPMG is a global organisation of independent firms providing audit, tax and advisory services in over 40 countries.

The KPMG UK partnership supports the Foundation financially, through donated services, and by sharing business skills and experience. Some Partners become KPMG Foundation Advocates, who are paired with a charity in an informal mentoring relationship, with reciprocal learning about each other's sectors.

### Working together

Throughout this report, you can read about projects and programmes where KPMG and the Foundation share interests, and the business has been instrumental in advancing work with a social purpose for children and young people. For example, the Skills Builder Partnership (page 13) received seed funding from the Foundation – and is now also one of KPMG's key **social mobility partners**. You'll find more examples on pages 11, 16, 20 and 33.

“

**It was really energising. A two-way process. I was getting at least as much out of it as, I hope, they were.”**

**Stephen Dooley, KPMG Partner and Foundation Advocate**

“

**There was clearly a lot of respect for what we did and the complexity of what we do.”**

**Cathy Ashley, Chief Executive, Family Rights Group**



# Our Theory for Impact



## Issue

**Children growing up in families or communities in poverty**, living with neglect, mental ill health, substance use or domestic violence, will start school behind their peers, and **face persistent challenges** throughout their lives.

This carries an enormous financial and social cost, to families, communities and society.

**Change is possible**, with ambition, persistence, practice-based evidence and earlier interventions.

## Inputs

### ADDED VALUE

of the Foundation, including experience, expertise and networks



### GRANTS

Start Up, Step Up, Step Together and Actionable Research

### ADDED VALUE

of KPMG

## Approach



### CATALYSE

Test innovative ideas to transfer, sustain or scale



### AMPLIFY

Generate and share practice-based evidence to influence policy



### CONNECT

Build capacity and strong relationships, networks and collaborations

## Interim outcomes



**Charity Partners** (and those they work with) **are more effective, resilient and sustainable**

## Systems change



Children, young people and their families are supported in ways that are **more joined up, take the long view, and are better informed by evidence, earlier interventions and lived experience**

## Impact



[www.commonoutcomes.org.uk](http://www.commonoutcomes.org.uk)

We have used the term 'children' here. But we support work with babies, children and young people.

**We are supported by the KPMG UK Partnership**, across England, Scotland and Wales **and governed by the Foundation Board of experienced Trustees**

## How others see us

### Transparency, Accountability and Diversity

The Foundation Practice Rating system\* offers grant makers an independent assessment of three key practice areas – Transparency, Accountability and Diversity – and rates them A to D.

In 2024, we were rated:



Transparency



Accountability



Diversity



Overall rating

\*The Foundation Practice Rating was set up by 10 leading UK foundations to improve Transparency, Accountability and Diversity across the UK grant making sector.



**This has been the best experience I've had in over a decade talking with a Foundation. A real sense of shared understanding and commitment to outcomes"**

**Charity partner**

What our charity partners said\*

87%

said they had a 'strong relationship' with us

7%

said they had a 'good relationship' with us

6%

said they did not have much contact with us

\*from our 2023  
Grantee Perception Review



## About the stories in this report

We've chosen a selection of grants that reflect the commitment we share with our charity partners to making sure children and young people are:



### SAFE

– and feel personally secure



### HEALTHY

– that their physical wellbeing is the best it can be



### HAPPY

– socially, emotionally and personally



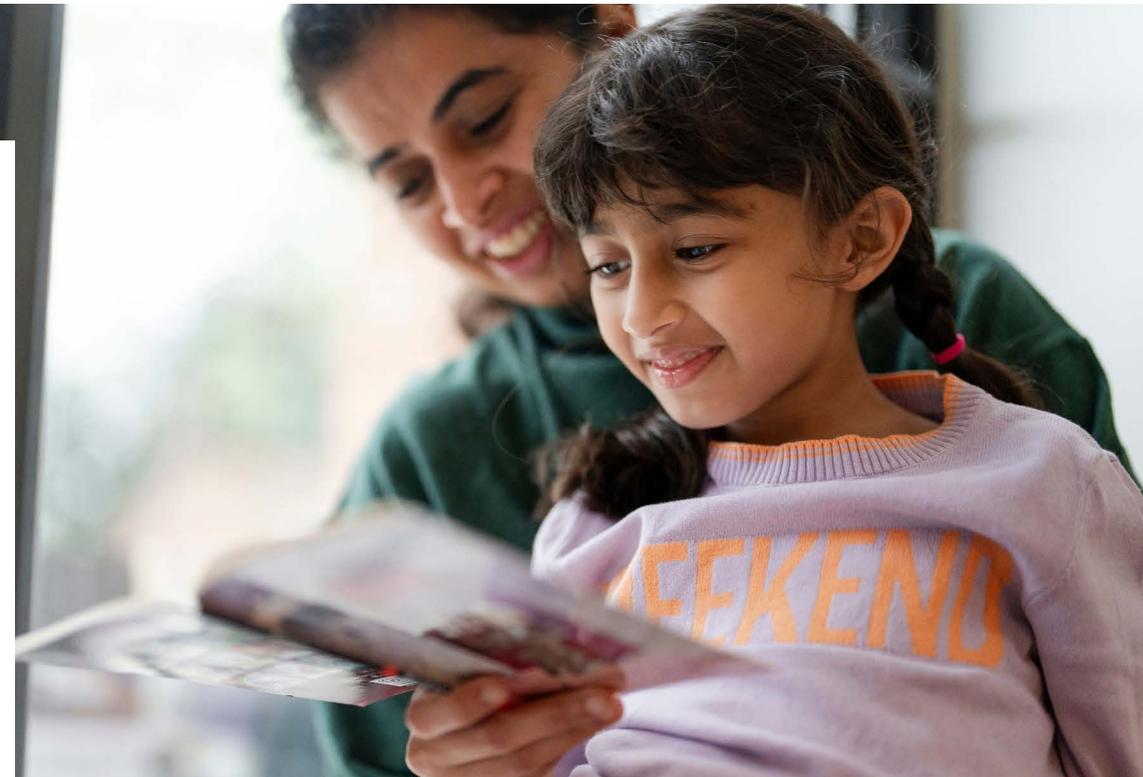
### LEARNING

– that they have opportunities to develop knowledge and skills



### ENGAGED

– and feel part of a community



### Case Studies: Creating change for children

The case studies on pages 13, 21, 27 and 33 describe some of our relationships in more detail, often over many years. They highlight aspects of Our Theory for Impact. They also demonstrate that while financial support from our grants is vital, so too are other 'inputs' such as our knowledge, networks and brand.

We want our charity partners to be more effective, resilient and sustainable – an 'interim outcome'. And we want to influence systems change for children, young people and their families, so they are supported in ways that are more joined up, take the long view, and are better informed by evidence, earlier interventions and lived experience. These steps are a means to an end, so that children are ultimately safe, healthy, happy, learning and engaged.

We're proud of what we've achieved together. And we hope you can see our aspirations and our purpose coming to life through this snapshot of the last 25 years.

# 2000-2004: Getting started

We sought out our first innovative and ambitious partner organisations – each one sharing our unwavering commitment to improving the lives of children and young people. We focused on those who were homeless, seeking sanctuary and had experience of the care system.



## The policy landscape

### • Sure Start

A 1999 UK Government initiative to combat child poverty and reduce inequalities – including children’s centres, support for parents, child health and early learning services. It was called Flying Start in Wales and Best Start in Scotland.



### • Every Child Matters ENGLAND

This policy set out five outcomes: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic wellbeing. It was a major turning point in children and young people’s services.

### • The Children Act ENGLAND

Improving the previous 1989 Children’s Act, this legislation focused on child protection, welfare and integrating services.



## Our partners for change



• Inspired by the KPMG Values Charter in 1999, the **KPMG Foundation** was officially launched, with the founding Chair Mike Rake, and Trustees human rights advocate Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, and KPMG Partner Michael Fowle.

• **The KPMG Millennium Appeal** raised £1.5m, including £224,000 for **Place2Be** to expand their services – vital emotional support to school children in Nottingham, the North East, and Kent.

• Our first year grants totalled £121,000, to young people’s organisations including: **Local Solutions** tackling barriers to learning, such as dyslexia, in Liverpool and North Wales; **Depaul** for young offenders to find homes in Birmingham and London; and the **Refugee Council** to help develop a national education strategy for teenage refugees.



• Taking social mobility literally, we supported the **Fitz Driving School** in West Yorkshire with a small grant of £31,575 over six years. Run by community police officers, it helped young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their life skills and employability.



• The Prince’s Trust (now **The King’s Trust**) developed a **‘Leaving Care in Wales’** scheme, providing one-to-one mentoring towards independent living for over 40 young people. Our grant was £67,000 over three years.



• Our first collaboration with **Buttle UK** addressed the unique challenges faced by care experienced young people to get into university and succeed in higher education. **By Degrees: Going to University from Care** was a five-year action research study and the learning was shared with schools, universities and local authorities. You’ll see examples of our ongoing partnership with Buttle UK on pages 11 and 23.



# 2005-2009: Essential skills, bold ambitions

By 2005, we'd been gifted £10m by KPMG. We were ready to think bigger and plan longer term. Collaboration was key as we broadened our focus to improve literacy and numeracy for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, particularly through earlier intervention.



## The policy landscape



### • Getting It Right For Every Child

#### SCOTLAND

A commitment from the Scottish Government to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time – so that every child and young person can reach their full potential.

## 2005

### Our partners for change

- We made our first major investment into literacy – almost £1.2m for **Every Child a Reader**. A collaboration with the Department for Education, this initiative aimed to reduce the number of children starting secondary school without basic reading and writing skills – an estimated 35,000 a year. Children needing the most support were given specialist one-to-one ‘reading recovery’ teaching for up to 20 weeks.

**A study by Pro Bono Economics estimated that every £1 spent on ‘reading recovery’ would create a societal benefit three to four times this value, between £3.30 and £4.30.**

Initially a three-year pilot project, the Government committed to funding the national roll-out of Every Child a Reader. See **The impact of ‘reading recovery’ ten years after intervention** on page 20.

Learning

- The **National Literacy Trust’s Reading for Life** programme helped parents understand the significance of reading and literacy skills, in communities where poverty was on the increase and literacy levels were low.

Engaged

Learning



The National Literacy Trust has become a national authority on literacy and remained a key charity partner of KPMG. Together, they host initiatives with children, teachers, parents and employers, including the **Vision for Literacy Business Pledge** – a framework to help close the literacy gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers.

## 2006

- Building on their 2004 research to understand the barriers care experienced young people face going into higher education, our long-term partner **Buttle UK** created the **Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education**.

To achieve the mark, education providers had to demonstrate they’d committed extra support so that care experienced young people knew how to apply to university and about bursaries and scholarships available.

- By 2015, **112 universities and 84 colleges** achieved the **Quality Mark for Care Leavers in Higher Education**.

Engaged

Learning

**“KPMG’s leadership was underlined by Sir Mike Rake creating the KPMG Foundation. My privilege was to work with brilliant Trustees, advisers, and Director Jo Clunie, supporting young people in care to go to university; helping schools work with refugees; and investing with others to support children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds to read and count. All of these show purpose, with partners, driving change.”**

Neil Sherlock CBE, Former Vice-Chair, KPMG Foundation

## The policy landscape

- **The Children's Plan**

UK

The goal of this 10-year government plan was to make the UK the best place for children to grow up. It focused on health, wellbeing and educational achievement.

- **The Children and Young Persons Act**

ENGLAND & WALES

This act was part of a broader effort to reform the care system and ensure that services were better tailored to meet the needs of children in vulnerable circumstances.



2007

2008

2009

## Our partners for change

- We formed **Every Child a Chance Trust**, a £10m literacy and numeracy collaboration, funded by **KPMG**, other businesses and charitable trusts, with government matched funding. The aim was to unlock the educational potential of children from disadvantaged backgrounds by developing evidence-based early intervention programmes – see Every Child a Reader (page 11) and Every Child Counts.

Learning

Learning

- Building on the success of Every Child a Reader, we launched **Every Child Counts**, targeting children in Year 2, to help close the numeracy gap between children with the greatest need for support and their peers. (See page 15 for results.)

- **The Long Term Costs of Numeracy Difficulties** report highlighted the higher risk of being excluded from school or being drawn into criminal activity, if children leave school with poor number skills. Providing effective numeracy interventions at age seven was estimated to produce an annual national saving of £1.6bn. Following this research **KPMG** placed a great focus on numeracy – including helping create and supporting National Numeracy Day (see page 20).

Learning



Learning

Safe

- The **Refugee Council** published their much needed research report **Beyond the School Gates**, exploring the experiences of young refugees and asylum seekers in secondary school. The report identified bullying and racism as common problems. Recommendations included stronger links between schools, families and local refugee groups, and specialist mentoring and befriending services. Supporting this research was part of our ongoing work to help traumatised children and teenagers achieve their potential.



## Case study 1

# Building skills for success

The Skills Builder Partnership is tackling an important barrier to employability and social mobility.

We have worked with them over ten years to strengthen and share their concept, and ultimately, go global.

Their ground-breaking programme helps young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop vital employability skills, equipping them for work, for careers, and for life. The Skills Builder Partnership works with employers, educators and impact organisations, and uses a shared model to build eight essential skills:



“The partnership with the KPMG Foundation and KPMG has been transformational for us. As we look forward, the changing policy environment provides scope that building essential skills can become mainstream in a good education for all.”

Tom Ravenscroft, Founder and CEO

### Our contribution and the difference it helped to make

- **START UP to STEP UP:** We've supported Skills Builder since 2015, when they were a small organisation in London and Birmingham called Enabling Enterprise. They focused on training teachers and providing resources to build essential skills. Our grant of £170,000 from 2015-17 helped develop their work in Manchester and the North West.
- A second grant of £158,000 was used to create the **Skills Builder Universal Framework** - a shared model for widespread use. In 2020, KPMG started using the Skills Builder approach across their education and schools work, and social mobility activities nationally, and recently internationally.
- The Universal Framework is included in UK Government guidance on careers education, and be adopted by nearly 1000 partners in education, employers and impact organisations
- We made our final grant to Skills Builder in 2025 as part of 25@25 to review and relaunch the Universal Framework 2.0. (See page 32)
- **More than 1.8 million** learners develop essential skills through approved Skills Builder Partnership programmes by end of 2024.
- Learners on their Accelerator programmes made **3.3 times the rate of progress in essential skills** compared with peers who didn't take part.

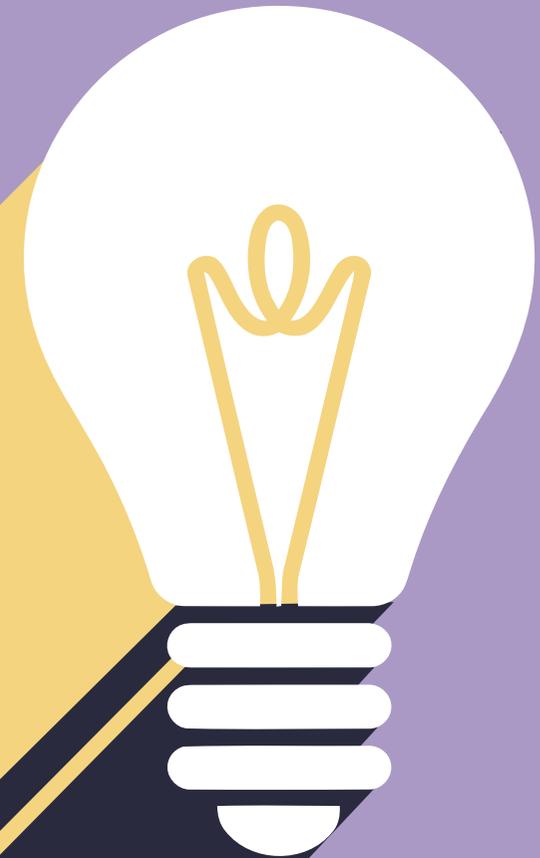


# 2010-2014: Turning knowledge into action

We celebrated our first decade in 2010, and in 2013 set out a new five-year plan.

We focused on putting into practice some of the things highlighted through our research into improving literacy and numeracy.

We were also developing more strategic partnerships in Scotland and Wales.



## The policy landscape

### • The Child Poverty Act

UK

This legislation set legally binding targets to reduce child poverty in the UK, with the aim of eradicating it by 2020.



### • Getting it Right for Every Child

SCOTLAND

The Scottish Government updated its guidance to integrate the Getting it Right for Every Child approach into a unified system for planning and delivering children's services.

2010

## Our partners for change

- We funded a **University of Strathclyde action research project** to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of attachment, relationships and emotional wellbeing. This knowledge helped improve practice in early childhood development, by implementing Government policy.

- **The Jeely Piece\* Club** Nursery in Glasgow's south side was chosen as an exemplar partner for how attachment theory can be used. It remains one of the most successful community organisations in Scotland, recognised for its development of a range of innovative and quality services for children and families.

Learning

Happy



\*For the unfamiliar, a 'jeely piece' is a slice of bread and jam.

2011

- Through a grant to the **Helena Kennedy Foundation**, we provided financial, practical and personal support to three groups of young people to go to University – 15 seeking sanctuary in the UK, 15 who had grown up in the care system, and 15 with additional learning needs. These 45 young people would not otherwise have had the opportunity to significantly change their life course.

Learning

Engaged

- Putting the learning from **Every Child a Reader** and **Every Child Counts** into practice, we supported **School Home Support** practitioners to involve parents and carers more closely in their children's education. Working with primary schools in Hackney they ran 'Unlocking Potential' workshops, training and home visits. Children who took part exceeded national and borough averages in numeracy, literacy and attitudes to learning. Attendance and behaviour significantly improved, too.

Learning

2012

- By 2012, **Every Child Counts** had supported **47,000** children to improve their maths. An independent evaluation by the University of Oxford found that young people on the programme achieved an average gain of 15.7 months in 'number age' (a measure of their mathematical ability in relation to their actual age) after one term of support.

Learning



## The policy landscape



### • The Children and Families Act

ENGLAND  
A wide ranging Act to reduce inequalities for children, every local authority in England was required to appoint a 'virtual school head', responsible for improving educational outcomes for care experienced children.

### • The National Child Poverty Strategy for England

The Government set out its approach to tackling child poverty, increasing household income, improving life chances, and reducing social inequalities.



2013

2014

## Our partners for change

• **Street Football in a Safe Place** became a life-changing focal point in one of the most deprived areas of Scotland, helping over 300 children every week. Run by **Spartans Community Football Academy** and funded by our £60,000 grant over three years, the project reduced crime, increased volunteering and strengthened community cohesion.



• **Siblings Together** reconnects siblings in care, adoption or kinship care who've been separated. We supported the charity with an £80,000 grant over four years. Although small, Siblings Together continues to build family bonds and create positive memories, through fun activities, as a strong foundation for the future. An **evaluation** by the University of Oxford Rees Centre found significant benefits for most children, including improved self confidence and stronger sense of identity.



“

The new pitch has coincided with a 27% fall in vandalism and a 33% drop in reckless conduct so far this year in the Forth Ward. Fire raising in the Ward has also plummeted by 40%.”

Lothian & Borders Police



“

I was completely unaware how often siblings are split up in the care system. Spending a week at summer camp really demonstrated how important it is to maintain these relationships... as sometimes your siblings are the only ones who understand you and your feelings. They all loved just having time to be together and have fun.”

Gemma, KPMG volunteer

# 2015-2019: Supporting the adults who care

Against a backdrop of Brexit and cuts to public services, we continued to support organisations tackling some of society's biggest challenges, including rising levels of childhood poverty and the growing incidence of child sexual exploitation. We also started to focus on supporting the adults who care for children, including teachers, social workers and foster carers.

## The policy landscape

### • Working Together to Safeguard Children

#### ENGLAND

The Government issued statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help protect and promote children's welfare in health, education, housing and in charities.



## 2015

### Our partners for change

- We helped make careers and employability education more equitable with a grant to **Teach First**.

The **Careers Education in the Classroom** pilot helped to challenge and break down limiting stereotypes, particularly among girls, by broadening children's knowledge of a wide range of career choices.

- Teach First worked with over 3,000 newly qualified teachers during the year one pilot; and with more experienced teachers.
- 73% of middle and senior school leaders on the Employability Leadership Programme rated the modules 'very good'. These leaders took their learning back to school, to support children and other teachers.

Learning

Engaged

- We made our biggest ever single grant of £1.5m to **Barnardo's** for their **ReachOut** project to support and protect young people at risk of sexual exploitation in Rotherham. Working alongside police, health and social services, ReachOut used a three-stranded approach: outreach work to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation and support children and young people in their communities; healthy relationship education in schools; one-to-one support for children and young people identified as at risk of exploitation. Every secondary school in Rotherham was involved.

- ReachOut successfully raised awareness with over 10,000 people in the community, promoted healthy relationships education in schools to over 2,000 children, and supported 300 children at direct risk of exploitation.

Healthy

Safe



“

The most useful thing has been what I've learnt about online grooming, knowing the signs and knowing that anyone can try and groom you. When I look back six months ago, I feel like I was a different person. If someone I didn't know had messaged me back then I'd have messaged them back. Now I block them straightaway... I've learnt loads of self-respect since working with ReachOut.”

Young person in Rotherham

## The policy landscape



### Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act WALES

Reflecting the changes brought about by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, this legislation developed a coherent and consistent Welsh approach, putting people at the centre of their care and support, including in fostering and adoption.

### Children and Social Work Act UK

To improve support and safeguarding for looked-after children and care leavers, and introduce new regulations for social workers.

### Children's Social Care Review

SCOTLAND

This review heard from over 5,500 care experienced infants, children, young people, adults, services staff and volunteers. Their vision of what needed to change in the care system, was set out in **The Promise**. A parallel but shorter review in England was launched in 2021 and published in 2022.



## 2016

### Our partners for change

- We made a major investment to introduce 'social pedagogy' into foster care, using education methods to address social issues, focusing on equality and respect, relationships, dialogue and team work.

The connections between the 'head, heart and hands' are at the centre of 'social pedagogy'. It's also the name given to the collaboration between **The Fostering Network**, funders, trainers and leading educationalists.

The final evaluation of **Head Heart Hands**, published in 2016, showed it had increased foster carers' knowledge of good practice and confidence, particularly in dealing with difficult situations and conflict with the children they were caring for.

Over 40% of foster carers also said their relationships with social workers had improved after taking part.

## 2017

- We also supported the start up of a new **Social Pedagogy Professional Association**. Social pedagogy is now widely applied, including in children's residential social care (for example by Juno, see page 26) and in virtual schools. Thousands of practitioners have been trained.



## The policy landscape



### Children's Rights in Wales

The Welsh Government set out how it promotes children's rights and applies the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in policy development.

## 2018

### Our partners for change

- Sparked by the wider interest and success of **Every Child Counts** some years earlier, in 2015, KPMG put numeracy and celebrating numbers at the heart of its corporate responsibility and social impact strategy.

The first **National Numeracy Day** took place in 2018, run by the charity **National Numeracy**, with KPMG as a founding supporter. It raises awareness of the importance of numeracy in everyday life and inspires people to improve their numeracy skills and confidence.

- Over 2 million actions to improve numeracy skills have taken place since the campaign began, boosting confidence and ability in everyday maths.

Learning



Learning



## 2019

- We supported children's charity **Frontline** to build a sustainable coaching model for newly qualified children and family social workers. Our grant helped Frontline deliver the coaching cost-effectively for greater long term sustainability. This is another example of our commitment to supporting the adults who work with children in the most vulnerable circumstances.
- In the first year, 94% of newly qualified social workers who took part in coaching reported an increase in their resilience, and 84% in their professional authority.

Safe

Happy

## Case study 2

# Building long-term relationships

Our decade long partnership with Family Rights Group has helped strengthen the organisation, ensuring they can focus on helping children and young people build the long term relationships that will be vital in later life.

Their Lifelong Links programme connects care experienced children and young people with relatives and other supportive adults willing and able to make a lasting commitment to them. These relationships improve their happiness, health, education and offer a chance to be part of a loving support network that they can rely on in future.

### Our contribution and the difference it helped to make

Our support helped test an idea, establish it, and learn from it.

- **START UP:** We supported the development of Lifelong Links practice, with a grant of £189,250 in 2015. Confident about the potential for success, over £1m of Department for Education Innovation funding was awarded, to trial the programme in 12 areas across England.
- **STEP UP:** In 2017, they adapted and developed a programme in Scotland, which we supported with a three year grant of £300,000.
- In 2021, our 'transition' grant helped create stability and opportunities to leverage other financial support, as the national Lifelong Links evaluation evidence was emerging.
- They are now **adapting** Lifelong Links for young care leavers, with a new grant of £225,000 over three years. A final evaluation is due in 2027.



- **Over 4,000 children have re-established family connections through Lifelong Links** and will benefit from extending and strengthening their networks, as they move from childhood to adolescence to adulthood.
- Family Rights Group has built a strong reputation, recognised as experts in their field, influencing the sector and actively collaborating with families, policymakers and practitioners for change.



**I was 17. I was on my fifth placement in care. I didn't know my identity. It was such a confusing time for me. When I was introduced to Lifelong Links... and found out that so many people cared about me, all of the confusion, all of the anger went out of the window. I've finally found myself and I know who Salma is. I think that every child in care should have Lifelong Links without a doubt."**

Salma, Lifelong Links participant

# 2020-2024: Focused and flexible support

With a refreshed strategy, we focused our work on the early years, and children who are care experienced or on the 'edge of care'. Like everyone, we had to flex our plans and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and the urgent need to protect children and families in the most vulnerable circumstances.



## The policy landscape

### Childhood in the Time of Covid

UK

A report from the Children's Commissioner for England. This report examined the impact of the crisis on children, with proposals and a roadmap for recovery.



### Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on children, young people and families

SCOTLAND

The Scottish Government made recommendations for a targeted response, highlighting those living in poverty, young people from black and minority ethnic communities, and families impacted by disability.



### The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days

ENGLAND

A policy paper with six action areas designed to make things easier for busy parents and carers. These included the **Family Hubs** and **Start for Life** programme, launched in 2023, to improve health and education outcomes for babies, children and families.

2020

## Our partners for change

- The impact of the pandemic on children's wellbeing and education needed a radical and rapid response. So we made bold decisions to spend more and fast, with trusted charity partners. Together, we focused on reaching children in some of the most fragile families, where learning and wellbeing would be most affected by the lockdowns. Grants totalling £900,000 were allocated to:
  - National Tutoring Programme:** (see right)
  - Anna Freud:** A pilot early years digital therapy service for families
  - Buttle UK:** Direct practical support to families in vulnerable circumstances with very young children; and to young people lacking any family emotional or financial support
  - Family Action:** Listening Works support line and befriending service for care experienced young people
  - Just for Kids Law:** Casework and practical support to young people struggling with complex issues during lockdown; and working to improve legislation affecting children in the Coronavirus Act of 2000
  - School Home Support:** Helping families manage the challenges of lockdown, school closures, new digital learning and food poverty.

- We were an early investor in the **National Tutoring Programme (NTP)**, led by the **Education Endowment Foundation**. The NTP provided tutors and mentors to school children, aiming to close the growing learning gap between children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Our support helped catalyse activity and attract a government grant of £350m. By summer 2021, NTP had reached over 250,000 children, prioritising those most likely to have fallen furthest behind.

Learning



2021

- We responded to Ofsted's 2021 review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges with a grant to the specialist charity **Lucy Faithfull Foundation**. They ran a three-year action research project to develop effective leadership responses to harmful sexual behaviour, working with leaders across 30 diverse schools in the West Midlands. The aim was to make schools safer places for children and young people. Their interim report in 2024, **Everyone's Safer**, detailed strong evidence underlining the need to: support teachers and school leaders in their safeguarding role; give young people 'tools not rules' about respect and consent; and make sure parents are part of the conversation so they can share consistent messaging.

Safe

Healthy

## The policy landscape

- **Post-pandemic policies**

UK

Emerging from the pandemic, the UK made significant strides towards improving legislation and policies affecting the most vulnerable children and young people. Strategies and services were focused on mental health, autism awareness and improved planning, placements and case reviews for children in the care system



## 2021

## Our partners for change

- We helped the **Reach Foundation** develop an ambitious model of support for children and families in Feltham, one of London's most overlooked areas, with a grant of £300,000. Their support will give thousands of children greater opportunities and life chances, from the early years, right through to leaving school, into college, university or employment. And parents benefit too, with the chance to meet others and become more connected with school and their child's education.



**“The support from the KPMG Foundation was transformative for our work. It came early in the development of our ‘Cradle to Career’ model and brought the core funding that allowed us to pilot and refine some of our early activity... and we now have more than 40 clusters of schools around the country, serving thousands of pupils, who we are supporting to develop their own place-based model. Your funding was catalytic and has set us up to develop a national brand and expertise.”**

**Ed Vainker, Managing Director, Reach Foundation**

- With a grant of £335,000 over four years, we became a key funder of **Seen Heard Believed**, the Middlesbrough-based charity providing trauma-informed early interventions to families with some of the greatest challenges.

**“It was so good to get help and not feel judged. I felt like everyone genuinely cared. We are in such a positive place as a family now.”**

**A family member supported by Seen Heard Believed**

Healthy

Engaged



## The policy landscape

### The Levelling Up White Paper

UK

Included measures to address regional inequalities, improve educational outcomes, and support children and families in disadvantaged communities.



### The Independent Review of Children's Social Care

ENGLAND

Following The Promise in Scotland, an independent review was launched in England into the needs, experiences and outcomes of the children supported by social care. The Government responded in September 2023 with Children's Social Care: 'Stable Homes: Built on Love', which outlined six pillars of reform or 'ambitions'. These include: a decisive multi-agency child protection system; putting love, relationships and a stable home at the heart of being a child in care; and a system that continuously learns and improves, and makes better use of evidence and data.

## 2022

## Our partners for change

- **Sister System** works alongside care experienced girls and young women to ensure they have the same opportunities as everyone else – at home, school, work and within communities. We supported them with a core grant of £150,000 over three years. As well as doubling their team and aiming to double the number of girls supported, they launched a Youth Advisory Board and provided 705 mentoring sessions to over 100 girls.
  - 91% of girls reported improved mental wellbeing sense of belonging, pride, and self esteem.
  - 80% of girls had increased awareness of and an ability to stay safe.

Safe

Happy



Our core funding has helped **Wild**, a young parents' charity in Cornwall, to develop their approach and support to young people and their babies in a variety of ways. These include: increasing breastfeeding; reducing smoking; helping young parents learn more about their babies physical, social and emotional development; and building a new Wild Garden for growing, play, and peace and quiet.

The charity also leads a national alliance of over 60 young parents' organisations to influence policy and practice, making things better for young parent families across the UK.

Healthy

Happy

“Sister system's approach to mentoring is person centred. Ensuring she knows she is the expert, and her voice will be heard, is what empowers her towards building trust and a safe space.”

Mentor Lead, Sister System

## The policy landscape

### Basic Income for Care Leavers in Wales Pilot

#### WALES

A Welsh Government pilot to support care leavers in Wales in their transition to independence. Those taking part received a monthly payment of £1,280 after tax. Interim findings look positive, and the final evaluation will be published in 2027.



2022

2023

2024

## Our partners for change

- **Juno** has ambitious plans to transform residential children's care, creating homes where young people can feel safe, loved and supported in every aspect of their lives. They work in Liverpool City Region where too many young people experience poor quality care or are moved away from their families, friends and schools. We've been supporting Juno since their first home was still a building site in late 2021. In spring 2025, they opened their third home on the Wirral and a fourth is in development.

Learning

Safe

Happy

- We funded research by the **Education Policy Institute** into how food poverty is affecting under-fives – an area that's been significantly under-researched. One of their key recommendations was that tackling food poverty in the early years should be a priority of the Government's Child Poverty Taskforce, which is due to publish its strategy in summer 2025.

Healthy

“At a time when there is an urgent need for more high-quality, local care options for children, Juno is leading the way and putting the needs of young people first... It is community-based, which means that more children can be kept closer to their local communities in safe, nurturing environments.”

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region



## Case study 3

# Building strong foundations for babies, toddlers and under fives

In 2021, we made our first major grant to an early years initiative, supporting children to build strong foundations for life: Thrive at Five.

They work with communities where families face the most challenges, focusing on early communication and language development, parent-infant relationships, parental wellbeing, home learning environments and early education. By being there for parents, Thrive at Five helps children get the best start in life.

### Our contribution and the difference it helped to make

- **START UP:** We were one of Thrive at Five's early investors soon after they became a charity in 2021, with core funding of £450,000 over three years. We supported them to pilot their approach and **STEP UP** quickly. They worked closely with local authorities and the voluntary sector in each of their 'pathfinder' areas to **STEP TOGETHER**, where they test, learn and create a shared approach to best practice.
- Thrive at Five have grown from a startup charity with three staff to a thriving organisation with a team of 30, in just a few years. They're on a journey to establish a nationally replicable, adaptable model that can benefit children in every community, sustainably and for the long term.
- By 2026, they will have developed four pathfinder programmes, in Stoke-on-Trent, Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough, and Scotland.
- They are using their expertise to influence national policy, including how their approach can help deliver significant benefits and '**Break Down Barriers to Opportunity**' in early childhood.



### The impact of Thrive at Five

# 92%

of parents felt confident about their child starting school after support from Thrive at Five  
*(from 2023 parent survey)*

# 5x

more parent-baby and parent-toddler support groups in Thrive at Five areas of Stoke-on-Trent



It's amazing that you can come [to Thrive at Five] and not have to worry about finances, or if there's going to be somebody there to talk to. Because there's a bit of everything for everybody."

Parent at Thrive at Five

# 2025 and beyond

Despite some remarkable advances in society over the last quarter century, life for too many families in the UK is a daily struggle.

In this most recent phase, we have placed more emphasis on even earlier interventions with babies, young children, their parents and communities.



## The policy landscape



### ● Child Poverty Strategy

UK

Over 4 million children are growing up in a low-income family. The **Child poverty taskforce** will publish a cross-government strategy by summer 2025. It aims to reduce and alleviate poverty, tackle root causes, and improve lives and life chances.

## 2025 and beyond

### Our partners for change: Mothers and babies

- We're supporting **Birth Companions** to develop a national care pathway for women in contact with children's social care. The aim is to create better social and emotional outcomes for mothers and babies, and fairer and more effective systems and services. The pathway is due to be published by early 2027.

Healthy

- The **Institute of Health Visiting** is using our grant to develop a Fellowship Leadership programme. This will support health visitors to use their expert experience to influence policy and practice. Health visitors effectively act as an 'early warning system' when parents with newborns need more targeted support. So this investment could help prevent crises and lead to significant savings for children's services, in the longer term.

Healthy

- **Happy Baby Community** works with mothers and babies from some of the most disadvantaged communities – including those seeking asylum having been trafficked into the UK, and living in temporary, cramped hostel and hotel accommodation.

We're supporting the charity's work including to train 25 women with lived experience to be peer mentors to other mothers.

Happy

- 'The Village' is **The Why Not Trust's digital community** for new parents and parents-to-be with experience of care in Scotland. Our grant will help them develop reliable and supportive relationships; access parenting advice and knowledge; and awareness of entitlements and help with applications.

Engaged



“

**I am a young mum, 20 years old, and I have a daughter, two months old. When she grows up and when she goes to school I would like to start a job. I would like to be a teacher. ... This group helps me make plans for our future.”**

**Member of the Happy Baby Community**

## The policy landscape

### ● Technology, AI, and social media

With many benefits for society, in education and employment, the growing concern for children, over the unregulated or unscrupulous applications of technologies and media, will inevitably see new policies and regulation during 2025-30.



## 2025 and beyond

### Our partners for change: The early years

- With the ultimate aim of reducing inequalities and increasing life chances, **50 Things to do** offers playful experiences that help young children have the best start in life. The charity is working across Bradford and West Yorkshire to improve relationships between parents and professionals and ensure more children benefit from activities that will nurture their social, emotional and physical development before they are five.

Happy

What do AI-powered toys mean for young children, especially those growing up in disadvantaged circumstances?

**The Childhood Trust** is working with the University of Cambridge to address this important question. We're supporting their groundbreaking study, which will recognise the possibilities for AI toys in education, socialising and play, but consider whether they could also deepen existing inequalities or pose new risks to children's development.

Learning

- Together with international experts, the charity **Think Equal** has designed an evidence based social and emotional learning programme for three to six year olds. Our funding supports their core UK work, and will help sustainability and strengthen monitoring and evaluation.
  - The Think Equal programme has been implemented in 1,428 early years settings and reached almost 42,000 children across Greater Manchester in 2023-2024.
  - In Think Equal's end of year teacher surveys:
    - 82% observed stronger peer relationships and conflict resolution
    - 78% reported children's improved social skills

Learning

Happy



“Your funding has allowed us to develop our practice to evidence our impact. It has also been positive in attracting further funding; people respond positively when we mention that we are funded by the KPMG Foundation.”

Christian Bunting, CEO, Bradford Birth to 19 and 50 Things to do

## The policy landscape



### • The Welsh Basic Income Evaluation

The final **evaluation** of the Welsh Government's basic income pilot for care leavers will be published in 2027. It will report on the impact of the basic income on young people, including health, wellbeing and community connections, as well as the costs and benefits of the scheme.

## 2025 and beyond

### Our partners for change: At home, at school, in communities

- **Now Foster** wants more people to experience the joy of fostering. They're developing groundbreaking approaches that disrupt traditional models and modernise services in the foster care sector. Just a few years ago, the organisation was starting out with a pilot project in two local authorities. This year, they're launching eight new local authority partnerships, with more planned for later in 2025.

Happy

- In 2024, Education charity **The Difference** published a report analysing the growing issues of school absence and exclusion. They followed up in 2025 with a detailed report, **Who is losing learning?** offering a set of solutions. We're supporting the charity to use their evidence to build good practice, influence policy and secure the resources where they're needed most towards more effective inclusion.

Learning

- **Project Change** is a charity 'built by care experienced people, for care experienced people' in Scotland. They're building relationships across Scotland, with local authorities and public sector organisations, such as Social Work Scotland and the Care Inspectorate, to ensure that lived experience informs and influences improvements in care. Our grant will support their strategy to make the charity more financially sustainable, by training staff and supporting the leadership team.

Engaged

- **Safe Families** working with almost 40 local authorities to provide a more holistic solution, through churches and faith organisations, to prevent children entering the care system, through family support and then, if they do, ensuring there are enough safe and nurturing homes through fostering, adoption, and supported lodgings.

Safe

Happy



# 25@25 in '25

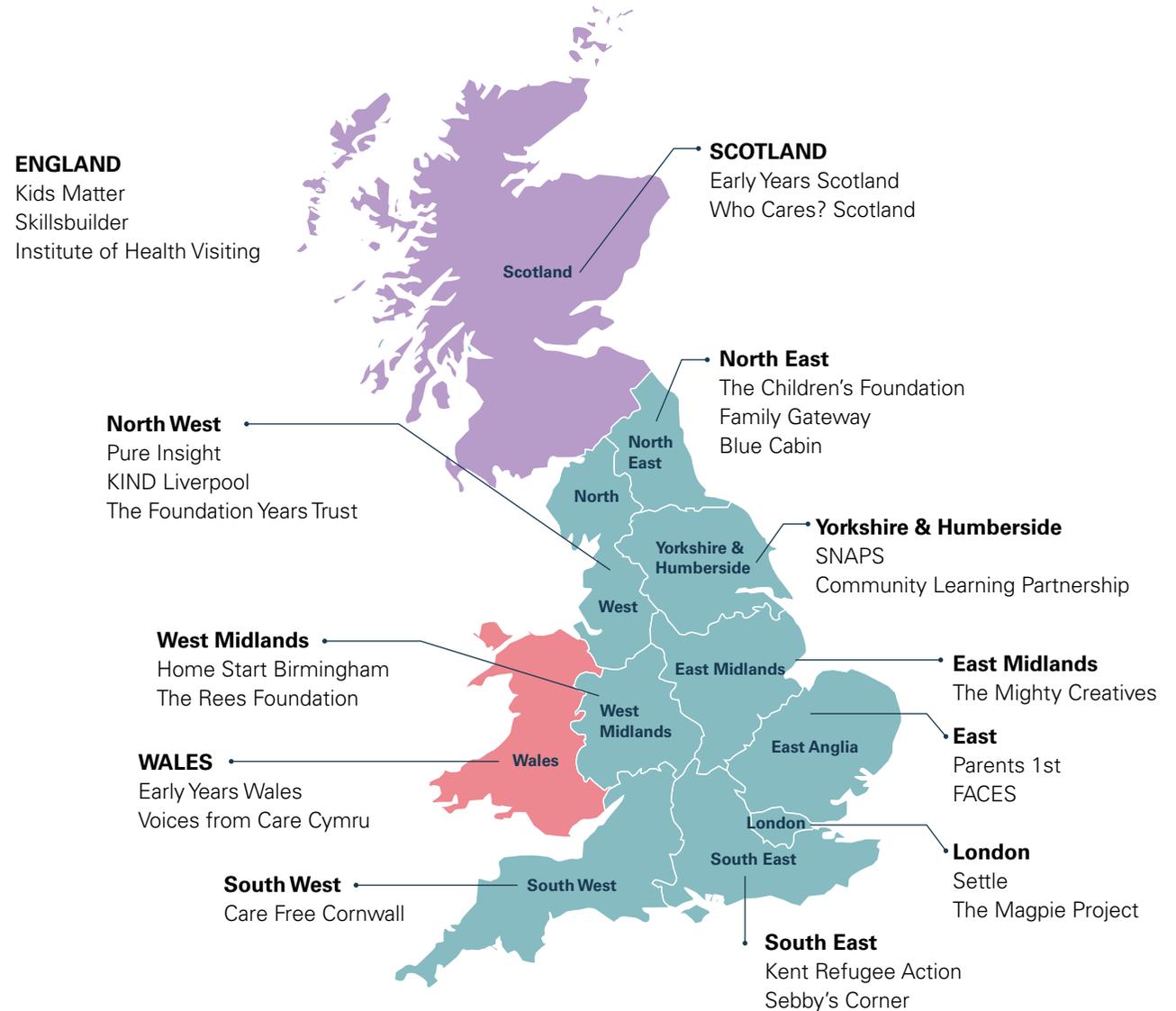
## Strengthen and sustain

To mark our 25th anniversary, we launched 25@25: to back bold, brilliant work with babies and under-fives, care-experienced children and young people, and families facing disadvantage.

We awarded 25 unrestricted grants of £25,000 to help build stronger, more resilient organisations. There was no formal application process. Instead, we proactively sought standout organisations, especially smaller charities where a modest grant could unlock potential or accelerate plans.

Scaling one-to-one support for families in crisis; investing in long-term fundraising; deepening creative work with young people at risk; supporting and training volunteers; covering essential core costs; and unlocking insights from data to improve delivery.

As we write this report, £625,000 is already fuelling change in community centres, in families, in playgroups and in nurseries, across Scotland, Wales and every region of England.



## Case study 4

# Building evidence through high-quality research

How we help build and share learning to influence policy and improve practice.

As part of our commitment to improving outcomes for care experienced children, we focus on the adults involved in their lives. Between 2018 and 2025, we funded four initiatives that consider the vital role that foster carers, kinship carers and school leaders play in a child's life.

1. The **Reflective Fostering Programme** developed by specialists at mental health and wellbeing charity **Anna Freud**, helps carers look after themselves and build strong, supportive relationships with the children they care for. We supported the START UP pilot programme in Kent in 2018 and the STEP UP national roll out, since then. The evaluation of the trial is due for publication in mid 2025 with very promising results so far.
2. Right now, more mainstream foster carers are leaving their roles than joining. At the same time, the number of children in care is increasing. To help address this gap, we funded research by **The Fostering Network** into **recruiting and retaining foster carers**. Based on the findings, the Fostering Network has recently developed a range of resources to help fostering services. This includes a toolkit with evidence-based insights into attracting **a more diverse and stable foster care workforce** across the UK, highlighting what works to ensure quality care for children. Local authorities are using the evidence and resources to help them recruit, support and retain foster carers.

Engaged

Happy

Safe

Happy

**KPMG became a Fostering Friendly Employer in 2023. Members of the scheme support and recognise the roles of their employees who foster, through more flexible working practices and policies.**



“

The KPMG Foundation has been first in line to back so many brilliant organisations in its 25-year history. It is unusual to find a foundation so effective at focusing on the disadvantage faced by care experienced people, yet it has led the way in this work. Many brilliant initiatives would have been delayed, diminished or cancelled altogether were it not for the foundation. Thank you.”

Josh MacAlister, Chair of the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care published in 2022 (currently MP for Whitehaven and Workington)



3. **Kinship carers** are friends or family who step up, often at a point of crisis, to raise a child when their parents aren’t able to. They often go unnoticed and need more support. Around one in five children in kinship care in England are being raised by people from minority ethnic communities, but relatively little is understood about their experiences. We’ve supported the charity **Kinship** to find out what would be the most helpful. Their research, ***Raised by Relatives: the experiences of Black and Asian kinship carers***, makes recommendations for reducing stress and improving the wellbeing of carers and children, such as:

- Making more support available, especially financial and housing assistance
- Making sure kinship carers receive clearer information, resources, and can take breaks
- Tackling systemic racism within kinship care services, ensuring fair treatment and listening to the concerns of Black and Asian carers.

4. Why do children in care get markedly different educational outcomes depending on which local authority has responsibility for them? We funded research to address this question. Published in 2023 by the **University of Exeter** and the **National Association of Virtual School Heads (NAVSH)**, the research explored the issue through the lens of the ‘virtual school’ – the team in each local authority responsible for learning, progress and attainment. The ***Improving the effectiveness of virtual schools*** report came up with 10 principles that can be implemented by the Department for Education, Ofsted, Children’s Services and local government. The work was well received and widely shared within the Virtual School Heads community, and is now being developed in Scotland, with our grant to CELCIS at the University of Strathclyde in 2025.

Learning

Healthy

Safe

Happy

# Looking ahead

It was probably hard to imagine in 2000 how the futuristic would become so everyday. The technology, AI and media landscape is changing fast with many benefits in education, employment and society.

However, we will need to be wary of developments with negative impacts on children, even on the very youngest developing minds. These impacts are likely to be felt in those areas where statutory funding is under most pressure, undermining critical support services in the most vulnerable communities, and where our focus should remain.

## We will:

- 1 Build on evidence and be prepared to innovate, flex, adapt and take some risks
- 2 Remember that good ideas need even better implementation. Because strategy is not enough
- 3 Continue to invest in leadership teams. Effective leaders gather other great people around them
- 4 Always make time to develop strong relationships. It's people that make things happen



“

**If you want to go fast, go alone;  
if you want to go far, go together”**

(proverb – origin unknown)



## Thanks to everyone who has shaped the KPMG Foundation over its 25 years:

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We are always interested to hear your feedback, so please get in touch with any comments (compliments or complaints): [kpmgfoundation@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:kpmgfoundation@kpmg.co.uk)

Designed by CREATE (KPMG) | CRT160500A | May 2025

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and a Company limited by guarantee, no. 13083579  
Registered office: 15 Canada Square, London E14 5GL