Thrive Together

Event Charity Pack

This document provides session notes from the first Thrive Together event, and next steps for the programme.

November 2026

The Childhood Trust
Alleviating the impact of child poverty

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What is Thrive Together?

Thrive Together is The Childhood Trust's new capacity building programme, working to alleviate the impact of poverty on London's children by building the resilience of the charities supporting them.

Through this programme we'll deliver a blend of online and in-person workshops, a digital Hub with a resource library and a charity directory, and opportunities to connect and learn with peers.

The programme is designed for all charities working to alleviate the impact of poverty on London's children and young people (aged 0-18), and is aimed specifically at small grassroots charities. Some elements are open to all charities, whether or not they receive funding from The Childhood Trust.

What we mean by:

Capacity building – any form of non-financial support a charity can access (eg training, free access to paid platforms, mentoring)

Small grassroots – community-led local organisations with an annual income up to £500,000, or over £500,000 but with minimal paid staff and a strong reliance on volunteers.

About The Childhood Trust
The Childhood Trust is London's child poverty charity, dedicated to children and young people living in poverty in the UK's capital. We highlight the voices and experiences of children living in poverty and engage them to shape our strategy. Through our grant-making and volunteer community outreach programme, we support the health, wellbeing and safety of children. Our vision is that every child is prepared for life, no matter their background.

Rethinking Impact session

This session started with presentations from **ThinkForward** and the **Co-op Foundation**.

It was then followed by table discussion around three themes: *Hearing what really matters*, *Less burden, better insight*, and *Fair and equitable.*

Below is a compilation of notes from across tables.

What we heard

- There's not enough focus on **young people's voice**
- It's important to involve young people in programmes, but it's often **difficult to get good engagement numbers** on traditional methods (eg survey)
- Charities need to be mindful not to put the **burden of finding information** on the service-users
- It's **difficult to isolate the impact of a grant** on a specific group of beneficiaries (this issue is very common in the case of restricted grants)
- Current impact reporting tools don't capture the **leveraged effect of a grant** (ie a grant can help a charity secure further funding and support more people, often in a non-linear way)
- Charities don't work in a vacuum, and with multiple interventions tackling the same problem at the same time, it's hard to **estimate your own impact accurately without overclaiming**
- Every funder requests different data, so it's **difficult for charities to standardise** their approach to impact measurement
- There's still a **power imbalance between funders and charities**, so charities don't always feel like they can push back

What you suggested

- Involve a **consistent group young** people from the start and along the way, collecting perspectives at every stage rather than one-off
- Consider **paying for young people's expertise** (eg day rate, vouchers)
- **Share insights** from how you're engaging young people on the Hub
- Create a group of **ambassadors** to support decision-making
- Find **creative ways to collect and report data** (eg voice notes, phone calls, multimedia options)
- If you have **multiple funders**, ask the one you're closest to whether they can coordinate with the others on a shared set of reporting requirements
- Use **case-studies** whenever possible to mix quantitative and qualitative data
- Funders should only ask charities to **collect information that is also useful to the charities** themselves
- Whenever possible and ethical, use **AI to collate information** you already have
- Reporting should be **proportional** to the grant received
- Find a **data collection system** that works for your charity (eg Excel, CRM)
- Whenever possible, get **regular data and insights reports**, instead of generating them when reporting is due

Annexes
ThinkForward slides
Co-op Foundation slides

AI in the fundraising era

This session was one of three **breakouts** ran in the afternoon.

It was led by Ryan Bromley, and included the participation of **Bloomsbury Football Foundation** and **The Leathersellers Foundation**.

Below is a compilation of notes from the session.

Standing out in applications

- Read the application criteria and **don't apply AI to everything just because you can** – instead, check if it's relevant to your organisation
- **Human voice stands out**, especially when you're explaining your mission and what your charity delivers

What has AI got wrong and where is the "human" important?

- **Financial figures** – make sure you can always defend a figure or stat in case a funder asks. AI can do the complicated calculations but you need to understand how you (and it) got there
- **Have a clear mission statement** – genuine care and connection is obvious for funders, so don't delegate everything to AI
- **AI can support with relationships** but can't replace humans

Free vs paid versions

- **Paid versions** create a private, closed environment for your data and allow you to ask unlimited prompts. You can also upload your brand, strategy, and reporting
- **Free versions** are slightly more limitative and the data isn't private, so be mindful of what you input

Placing brand and voice into AI

- **Voice notes** can be a good way to train AI (eg sit with your impact team member and record the meeting, then upload it into AI)

Bloomsbury Football Foundation's use of AI

Applications: created an "Anthony [Fundraising Director] prompt" to review applications internally as Anthony would, creating a Word document of his regular feedback prompts. This frees up resources within team

Admin and memory: ensure all systems are joined up (eg Office365, Teams) so that information is easily findable

Prospecting: create a Word document of prompts before meeting with key people (eg what boards do they sit on, to learn about their networks, ask for specific introductions)

The Leathersellers Foundation perspective on AI

Happy for applicants to use AI so long as they are accurate and answer the questions, as AI doesn't always answer clearly. For example, they had around 20 applications where it was unclear what the charities do and what services they deliver

Annexes
Thinking and working well with AI
AI in Fundraising workshop presentation
AI in Fundraising principle cards
Bid Writer brief worksheets
Using AI well - risks and ethics

Engaging corporate support

This session was one of three **breakouts** ran in the afternoon.

The panel discussion was chaired by Olivia Galvin-Hughes (Head of Corporate Partnerships, The Childhood Trust).

With participation from **Christina Whitham** (UK Community Impact Manager, Freshfields LLP), **Jessie Bradley** (Corporate Partnerships & Individual Giving Manager, Power2), and **Robert Powell** (Culture & Engagement Director – Europe, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP).

Below is a summary of some of the key insights and practical takeaways discussed during the session.

Relationships matter more than cold outreach

One of the strongest themes throughout the session was the importance of relationships.

While cold approaches can sometimes be successful, the most effective partnerships are often built through:

- Existing supporters
- Trustees and Board members
- Employee champions
- Volunteers
- Professional networks and introductions

Before approaching a company, consider whether there are any existing connections that could help open the door.

Research is essential

Speakers repeatedly highlighted that corporate partners can usually tell when a charity has not done its homework.

Before making an approach:

- Understand the company's priorities and values
- Review existing charity partnerships
- Check recent company news and developments
- Consider how your work aligns with their business objectives

A tailored approach is far more effective than a generic one.

Focus on mutual value

Successful partnerships are not simply about asking for support. The best partnerships create value for both organisations.

Corporates may be looking for:

- Employee engagement opportunities
- Skills development
- Volunteering opportunities
- Community impact
- Wellbeing initiatives
- ESG and CSR outcomes

Thinking about how your charity can help meet these objectives can strengthen your proposition.

Start small and build overtime

Not every partnership needs to begin with a major commitment.

Many successful relationships start through:

- Workplace fundraising
- Volunteering opportunities
- Matched giving campaigns
- Charity talks and events
- Employee engagement activities

Small opportunities can often develop into long-term partnerships.

Internal champions are key

Many successful partnerships begin because someone within an organisation cares about the cause and advocates for it internally.

Identifying and building relationships with these champions can make a significant difference when navigating internal approval processes.

Use stories alongside statistics

Data demonstrates impact, but stories help people connect emotionally with a cause.

The most effective communications often combine:

- Clear statistics and outcomes
- Real-life examples
- Individual stories and case studies
- Tangible examples of impact

Be clear and specific in your ask

Simple, specific requests are often more effective than broad partnership proposals.

Consider:

- What exactly are you asking for?
- What impact will the support have?
- How will the company and its employees benefit?

Clear asks make it easier for organisations to understand how they can help.

Think beyond financial donations

Corporate support can take many forms, including:

- Employee fundraising
- Volunteering
- Pro bono support
- Skills-based volunteering
- In-kind donations
- Event support
- Matched funding

Exploring a range of opportunities can often lead to stronger and more sustainable partnerships.

Big Give and matched funding opportunities work well

The discussion highlighted the value of matched funding campaigns, particularly through initiatives such as Big Give.

These opportunities:

- Increase donor confidence
- Create urgency
- Help maximise donations
- Provide a strong message for both companies and individual donors

Be prepared to say no

Not every opportunity will be the right fit.

Being selective helps ensure that partnerships are aligned with your charity's mission, values and capacity, while also creating the best experience for supporters and beneficiaries.

Key takeaways

The overriding message from the workshop was that successful corporate partnerships are built on **genuine relationships, strong research, clear communication and shared value.** Organisations are increasingly looking for meaningful ways to engage their employees and support their communities, creating significant opportunities for charities that can demonstrate both impact and relevance.

Next steps

Thank you to everyone who joined us and contributed to the sessions throughout the day!

We'll now bring together your feedback from the Thrive Together event, alongside what some funded charities have shared with us via email, survey or call. These insights will inform the design of our capacity building offer and help us decide which elements to pilot first.

We'll also continue mapping the existing capacity building offer in the sector, so that we, as funders, don't duplicate efforts.

If you'd like to **join the Thrive Together advisory group** and help shape our capacity building offer, please get in touch and we'll send more information.

New digital Hub: Available now!

One of the key elements of the Thrive Together programme – our new digital Hub – is now yours to use!

Whether or not you receive funding from The Childhood Trust, you can create an account and explore for **free**.

You'll find:

- a **directory of charities** working across London to alleviate child poverty
- a **library of resources** where you can share and access materials
- **groups** where you can connect with colleagues on specific issues
- other **members** who have signed up and that you can contact directly
- and more!

Join here



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