

Charityworks Strategy 2025 onwards

November 2025

Registered Charity number: 1136964
Registered company number: 07304744

Context

Charityworks published a strategy in 2024. At that time, we envisaged undertaking a review in 2026-27. The environment in which Charityworks operates has changed significantly since then leading the Board to develop this interim, short-term strategy to guide the charity through a particularly turbulent period for the not-for-profit sector.

The factors which have led to this include –

- Patchy recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Initially, there were strong signs of recovery for our Programmes, but the situation has since deteriorated which has raised concerns about sustainability
- Our delivery partner, Koreo, has experienced parallel challenges. This has led to a re-alignment of our working relationship
- Many charities are challenged by rising costs, alongside static or falling income streams
- There is already evidence of consolidation and contraction of the charity sector - that trend is likely to continue. This will lead to fewer opportunities for business development and therefore fewer leadership development placements being offered
- We sense that many young people look for careers with employers who have a social purpose – predominantly in the not-for-profit sector. However, the realities of life economically can direct those young people to better paid jobs outside the sector. The sector consequently loses out on that talent and commitment
- The rapid development of artificial intelligence is already impacting entry level professional jobs and bringing flux and uncertainty to the world of work
- There is a continuing debate about the value of holding of a degree. For young people, this relates to their earnings potential alongside accumulated debt from a student loan. Some larger employers prefer to “grow their own” on apprenticeship or other entry schemes with intake from A-level. While Charityworks has always offered programmes open to non-graduates, it has been viewed as a graduate training scheme by many for some time

Over the past two years Charityworks has weathered these impacts on our flagship **Learning Development programme** (LDP). The LDP aims to recruit, develop and retain in the sector the next generation of not-for-profit sector leaders. The challenging times for the sector demonstrate there is an even greater need for the LDP. Our **2027 Programme** is, as planned, coming to a conclusion. It has made good progress towards attracting people from working class backgrounds into professional, decision-making roles in the grant-giving sector. But there is much more to do working with that sector.

We know from feedback and the high quality of applicants that the LDP is valued and valuable. Charityworks is still seen as a quality brand and product. Despite the challenges outlined above, the charity has much it can build on. Over the 15 years we have

been in operation we have amassed over 1200 alumni on our programmes. We have begun work to establish how best we can support those people later in their not-for-profit sector careers and envisage that will be part of our future.

Operationally, we have –

- continued to work with Koreo. We have worked together to address the challenges and that will continue. One outcome has been to offer the LDP on an Open Programme model. This means applications can be made and taken forward at any time of year. Hitherto, there was a fixed, single deadline which model had become unwieldy. The new model is better suited to employers, applicants and Charityworks. It smooths the operational load throughout the year
- returned the LDP to more in-person delivery. This reflects hybrid working patterns post-pandemic and responds to demand from our trainees
- continued to work as a charity without our own staff. This has constrained what we are able to aspire to and deliver on.

Strategy review process

The imperative to review our strategy dictated a rapid internal process. We assessed the challenges for and the options open to the charity at a Board Day in July 2025. From a broad-thinking, divergent process we arrived at three strategic themes.

Three themes of strategic development

1. Commission ***independent research*** to explore the needs of the sector for future leaders; what are the current trends in the charity workforce so that we can better understand the potential market, what would attract and retain young people in the sector; what Charityworks might do differently with its current programmes or in addition to those programmes.

We see this as a fundamental re-look at the world of work in the not-for-profit sector. We are open to radical change or innovation. It would be complacent to assume that the offer we have now, while excellent and valued, will be fit for the future. We are wholly convinced at this time of challenge the sector more than ever needs to look to its future talent pipeline - its future leaders. We believe that Charityworks with its strong brand presence and long experience is ideally placed to be the partner of choice for sector employers.

2. ***New funding streams*** – to seek grant support for funding to sustain and grow our operations while this strategy is further developed. Such funding will support the resilience of the charity and support the development of new models of working or programmes for a sustainable future.

We are confident with the track record of the charity that we will be able to attract funding to support the next few years when the challenges we have outlined could become acute.

3. Explore **corporate support** for our programmes that might lead to **collaborations or partnerships**.

We are aware from initial research that there are a number of bodies who have an interest in our work. We will seek to develop partnerships with strategically- and values- aligned organisations that can help us maximise our impact. That impact is long-term in supporting future leaders - those who will shape and influence the sector of the future.

Implementing this Strategy

Initial work to develop these themes has begun. Board members have committed to undertake that work. We will assess the initial work and agree the detailed way forward in early 2026.

Underpinning this will be a continued and renewed focus on the LDP. Working with Koreo, we will look to strengthen the penetration of the programme into new sub-sectors or geographic regions. We know that the impact of the Programme benefits from higher placement numbers and it is our aim to attain and maintain increased placement numbers. Again, we will assess the specific ways in which the impact of the programme can be strengthened.

We are looking to introduce modest paid support for the charity. This will help ensure we can continue to attract committed, high quality trustees and transition the Board towards the more customary oversight and strategic focus. We have undertaken the annual appraisal of the skills and experience we need on the Board, the possibility of increasing the size of the Board and the arrangements to appoint a successor chair to serve from autumn 2026.

Reviewing this Strategy

We plan to review progress against this Strategy regularly. Initially, this will take the form of assessing the preliminary work in early 2026. That will lead to firm delivery plans over 2025-26. The intention is to agree a longer-term strategy which is evidence-led and builds on the work achieved through this interim strategy.

Background to Charityworks

Our objects

The Objects of the Charity are, for the public benefit, to advance education in such charitable ways as the Trustees think fit, in particular but not exclusively, the provision of training and development programmes for the benefit of the voluntary not for profit sector.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

An impactful not-for-profit sector that is connected, collaborative and capable, supported by excellent leadership and management, and that is representative of the society it serves.

Our Mission

To support our Vision, our Mission is to -

- attract, grow and retain future leaders and managers for the not-for-profit sector
- ensure that sector leadership is representative of a wide diversity of characteristics and backgrounds
- promote the value of recruiting, developing and retaining talented people
- support the development of cross-sector, supportive networks of current and future leaders

Our Values

In our work, we will prioritise and demonstrate these Values -

Inclusion

We will:

- actively welcome and respect diversity of experience and perspective
- encourage everyone to participate regardless of their background or role

Integrity

We will:

- be open and honest, demonstrating accountability in all our work
- use evidence-based and transparent decision making

Improvement

We will:

- create and take opportunities to advance and deliver on our Vision and Mission
- foster a climate of ambition and excellence drawing on expertise from across the sector
- strive to be a learning organisation, reflecting on both successes and failures
- actively welcome fresh ideas and approaches

Collaboration

We will:

- work collaboratively, both within our organisation and with our partners
- promote the value of collaboration within the sector, with employers and with participants in our programmes

Inspiration

We aim:

- to inspire the next generation of leaders by championing the role of the not-for-profit sector in improving society
- to be inspired by a range of viewpoints and stakeholders