



**HENRY SMITH
FOUNDATION**

Elevate your impact

Our strategy 2025 – 2030

3	About us
4	Our strategy at a glance
5	Our strategy 2025 to 2030
6	Our mission
7	Funding priorities
8	Getting started
10	Building independence
13	Safer futures
16	Opportunity Fund
17	How we work with you
18	Living our values
19	Key facts

At the Henry Smith Foundation, we back bold organisations and their leaders dedicated to making social change across the UK.

We invest in their work, strengthen their voice and help their impact grow. They're building brighter futures for people and pushing for fairer systems. In 2024, we awarded £61.9 million, supporting over 970 organisations and reaching more than 410,000 people across the UK.

For nearly 400 years we've been backing work to tackle poverty and create a more just society. And now, in the face of rising inequality, economic pressure and broken systems, we're going further.



Our strategy at a glance

Our funding priorities

The right support. At the right time. Can change everything. Our funding focuses on organisations helping people through three of life’s toughest transitions:

- **Getting started** – Supporting families to give their young children a strong start
- **Building independence** – Helping young people move into adulthood with confidence, skills and hope
- **Safer futures** – Supporting people to rebuild their lives after abuse, displacement or prison

Going further together

We’re not just giving grants. We’re building long-term partnerships with the people driving change through:

- Flexible funding that adapts to what partners need
- Simple processes that save time and remove barriers
- Decisions shaped by people who know the issues first-hand
- Support that strengthens organisations, not just their work
- Sharing our learning to help others and influence lasting change

Because when support is flexible, organisations can adapt, respond and lead. They grow stronger, and their impact goes further.

Our values

These values guide everything we do. They shape how we work, who we partner with and what we stand for.

- Catalysts for change**
We use our resources to create lasting impact and drive positive change.
- Relationship-centred**
We put relationships first. We listen with compassion, act with inclusion and learn from different perspectives.
- Forward-thinking**
We look ahead. We look outward, stay open to ideas and act on insight.
- Always learning**
We reflect, challenge ourselves, share what we find and keep improving.

That’s not all...

This strategy sets out the main focus of our work and funding. But it’s not everything we do. We also run a number of long-standing programmes, including Kindred, Holiday Grants and support for Anglican clergy. You can find more about these on our website.

Our strategy 2025 to 2030



The Henry Smith Foundation supports people and organisations working for a more just society.

Our role is to elevate the impact of those delivering change on the ground by backing bold ideas, strengthening organisations and standing beside the people driving lasting change.

Our funding supports work that tackles social and economic exclusion, offers support when life is at its hardest and strengthens communities. Because when people get the right support, change lasts.

This strategy sets out how we'll go further. We're sharpening our focus and concentrating our support around three of life's toughest transitions – moments when the right help can prevent harm and open up opportunity. We're also broadening our role, offering more than funding to help organisations grow and lead lasting change in their communities.

We've refined our name – now simply the Henry Smith Foundation – to better reflect who we are and what we do.

Over the next five years, we'll focus our resources where they can go furthest. We'll prioritise some of life's key turning points. The moments where the right support can prevent harm, unlock potential and change lives.

Elevate your impact

Our resources empower people who are economically or socially excluded and support those in adversity to thrive. We don't deliver frontline services. We fund, partner with and stand beside those who do.

We focus on life's toughest transitions, where the right support can prevent harm, unlock potential and lead to lasting change.

What follows is our strategy and how we'll focus our funding in the years ahead.

Our mission

Funding priorities

We'll support work in three core areas:

1

Getting started

Supporting organisations working with families to give young children a strong start in life.

2

Building independence

Backing efforts that help young people move into adulthood with confidence, support and the skills they need to thrive.

3

Safer futures

Funding organisations that support people to rebuild their lives after experiences like abuse, displacement or prison.

What's driving this focus

Funding with real impact

This strategy is about supporting people through life's toughest transitions. By building deeper partnerships, and offering more flexible, long-term support, we aim to help organisations thrive and deliver lasting impact for individuals, families and communities most in need.

These transitions change lives

They can influence whether someone feels safe, connected and able to move forward, or faces greater risk and fewer choices. They're moments of vulnerability, but also of real possibility where public systems often fail, especially for people already pushed to the margins.

System change

We'll invest in work that challenges and improves the systems that shape people's lives. This includes using insight from lived experience, supporting collaboration and influencing policy.

This focus comes from listening

We've consulted widely with organisations we fund. Their insight has helped us identify where our funding can have the greatest impact, not just for individuals but for families, communities and systems.

More flexible funding

We'll offer longer-term, core funding wherever possible. We'll focus on honest relationships, shared responsibility and clear expectations.

Deeper partnerships

We'll work alongside the organisations we fund to support their goals and help them grow stronger.

More than funding

We're developing a wider offer to help organisations be the best they can be. This will include peer learning and organisational support. We're also developing a network to connect organisations working together on big social challenges.

Diversity, equity and inclusion guide how we fund and how we behave as an organisation

We recognise that not everyone starts from the same place. That's why we're working to remove barriers in our processes, make our funding more accessible and shape our support around the realities our partners face.

We'll ensure people with direct experience of the issues we fund are involved in shaping our decisions. Their insight helps us stay relevant and focused on what matters most.

We'll also keep listening and learning, so that our approach continues to reflect the diversity of the people and communities our funding aims to support.

Learning and sharing

We don't just want to fund well. We want to help strengthen the wider sector. That means sharing what we learn, being transparent about how we work and creating space for civil society leaders to connect and reflect.

We'll use our convening power to bring people together. We'll back collaboration and peer support. And we'll invest in insight that informs policy and improves practice.

Backing new ideas

We're launching a new Opportunity Fund to support bold thinking before it's been proven.

Big change often starts small. The Opportunity Fund backs early ideas, bold ideas and the people behind them. We'll invest in leadership, inclusion and the tools that help the whole sector grow, adapt and stay strong. Our support for leadership and management development is just the start.



Getting started

Backing organisations that stand with families in the first years of life.

The early years matter. They shape a child’s future health, education and wellbeing. And they lay the foundations for opportunity later in life.

But not all children get the same start. Too many grow up in families held back by poverty, insecure housing, poor access to services and high levels of stress. The effects show early. By the time children start school, the gap in development between those growing up in more disadvantaged circumstances and their peers is already wide. That gap can be hard to close.

Research shows that 90% of brain development happens by the age of five. A child’s progress by the age of 22 months is a strong predictor of their educational outcomes at 26. That’s why our Getting started priority focuses on intervening early. We fund organisations that support families during pregnancy and the first five years of a child’s life. This includes helping parents feel confident and connected, and making sure children get the best possible start.

We also back work that addresses the root causes of inequality. This includes tackling the structural barriers that keep families locked in poverty. By investing in the early years, we are supporting organisations to create lasting change. This gives children the best chance to thrive and helps build a fairer society from the start.

Our vision for change

- Families feel confident, supported and connected. They have what they need at home and in their community to help their children grow and flourish
- Children are healthy, curious and confident. They are ready to learn, play and build strong relationships
- Families can access high-quality early years support that reflects their needs and strengths
- Policies and practices put families first. They remove barriers so that every child has the chance to thrive, no matter their background or postcode

SHAZIA'S STORY

I arrived in the UK from Pakistan with my husband, Tahir, in August 2014. At first everything was new and frightening. I had no money, no papers and no home. And I did not speak English.

When my daughter was born, I struggled with anxiety and depression. I just couldn't cope. I kept reliving the trauma of our journey. I would wake in the night screaming, thinking that someone was trying to kill me. I spent some time in a mental health hospital. These were very dark days for me.

But then, the GP recommended me to Home Start Glasgow South. A kind lady began visiting me. She spoke to me, comforted me and told me, "Tomorrow will be better." Slowly, I began to believe her.

She encouraged me to join the Warm Start group for parents and children. It changed everything. I met other mothers, talked about my struggles and felt less alone.

At first we struggled to find a safe place to stay. We were sent to temporary accommodation – one had very bad mould and a leaking roof. Natalie from Home Start Glasgow South did so much for us. She helped with our successful claim for asylum. She also fought for us to move into our permanent home. I love living here – I feel at peace at last. Our children are happy and doing well in school.

Now I am studying English at college and making new friends. I feel like myself again.

I used to teach Urdu in Pakistan and, one day, I hope to teach again. I want to work, help others and my community.

Thanks to Home Start Glasgow South, I am happy. I am learning. I am moving forward.



“Thanks to Home Start Glasgow South, I am happy. I am learning. I am moving forward.”

Shazir was supported by the team from Home Start Glasgow South



Building independence

Backing organisations that support young people into adulthood.

Growing up is messy. Adulthood doesn't start on your 18th birthday. It builds, slowly and not always steadily.

Between the ages of 14 and 25, young people are developing their identities, building relationships, making big decisions and forming the skills and confidence that will shape the rest of their lives.

This can be a time of huge opportunity. But it is also a time when support often falls away. Many young people face the future without the help they need. Services often drop off at 18, as life gets harder. At the very moment young people need steady ground, it gives way beneath them.

For young people in difficult circumstances, this challenge is even sharper. Too many lack the support, relationships or safe spaces they need – especially those leaving care, excluded from school, living with a learning disability or navigating life as an LGBTQ+ young person.

The COVID-19 pandemic, cost-of-living crisis and rising mental health needs have made the situation worse. But the underlying issues are not new. They're structural and they're fixable.

That's why our Building independence priority supports organisations working with young people aged 14 to 25. We fund work that helps young people to raise aspirations, build confidence and feel equipped for the next stage of life. We also support work that joins up fragmented services and pushes for policies that reflect the real experiences of young people.

Through our partners, we want to help young people not just get by but move forward with purpose. And we want to help create the conditions where young people shape the communities and systems around them too.

Our vision for change

- Young people feel hopeful, confident and ambitious about the future
- They have the skills, support and confidence to reach their potential
- The services around them work together and fit around their needs
- They are backed by adults who listen, care and understand what they're going through
- Their voices are heard and reflected in policies and decisions that affect their lives

AALIYAH'S STORY

I didn’t have much of a school life because I was bullied badly. I was caught up in the Manchester Arena attack and, after that, my anxiety spiralled. I stopped going to school and stopped seeing people. Then COVID hit, which made everything much worse.

Everything changed when I reconnected with Football Unites, Racism Divides (FURD). I'd first been there when I was younger and Lisa, the support worker, reached out when she heard I was struggling. She encouraged me back to the music sessions and it was like I could breathe again – laughing, singing songs and just having fun. I felt safe and welcomed.

Lisa supported me through everything. She helped me believe that I could go to university and encouraged me to apply for an access course. Now I’m at Sheffield Hallam university and I’m starting a journalism and media degree course.

I am so excited because it fits perfectly with my new love: ice hockey. I started going to games and it was Lisa who encouraged me to take photos and talk to everyone there. I noticed there weren’t many women – or people of colour – in the ice hockey world. That made me want to be part of the change. I want young girls to see someone like me and think, “If she can do it, I can too.”

I have weekly counselling sessions here. It’s the first time I’ve felt truly heard and supported. I’ve learned to set boundaries, respect myself and become more confident.

FURD has completely changed my life. It’s helped me come out of my shell and see a future I didn’t think was possible. Now, I want to use everything I’ve learned to help others feel the same.

Aaliyah participated in the Football Unites, Racism Divides programme



“FURD has completely changed my life. It’s helped me come out of my shell and see a future I didn’t think was possible.”

ELIPH’S STORY

Growing up, I had a lot of challenges. I was diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome at 12, and later found out I had autism and a learning disability. It’s been a big journey, discovering who I am.

I didn’t have friends because I missed so much school. I tried college, but didn’t get the support I needed. After that, I applied for loads of jobs and volunteering – but no one wanted me. It was really depressing.

Things started to change when I got a supported internship at the charity Amaze. That’s how I found Speak Out. I joined its self-advocacy group for young people, the Power Group, and met people like me – but who were working and living independently. It was the first time I realised I could move out of my family home too.

Speak Out helped me find the right support and eventually I moved into my own flat. I have a carer but it’s my space, my home. I can do my artwork all night if I want to. That freedom has changed my life.

I’m also part of Speak Out’s self-advocacy steering group. I help train doctors about autism and learning disabilities and speak out about health inequalities.

Now I’m working one day a week at Speak Out, supporting the transitions advocacy project. We work with colleges and run groups and events to help young people think about independence, understand their options and see what support is out there.

My confidence has grown hugely. I’ve made friends and set up an LGBTQ+ group, and am working towards an exhibition of my artwork. I’m thinking about the future now – maybe art therapy. Life feels full of possibilities.

Speak Out helped me realise I have a voice. We all have a place in the world, and our voices need to be heard. Now I want to help others find theirs too.



Eliph was supported by Brighton and Hove Speak Out

“Speak Out helped me realise I have a voice.”



Safer futures

Backing organisations that help people rebuild their lives after abuse, displacement or prison.

We fund work that supports people as they rebuild their lives following some of the most challenging experiences imaginable.

This includes people leaving prison, people overcoming domestic abuse and those seeking refuge and safety.

We also support work that challenges and improves the systems surrounding them. These systems often fail to provide safety, stability or dignity, leaving people to navigate complex transitions alone.

Our Safer futures priority focuses on three key areas:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Leaving prison |
| 2 | Refugees and people seeking asylum |
| 3 | Domestic abuse |

1. Leaving prison

The UK has one of the highest imprisonment rates in Western Europe. Reoffending is common, with many people trapped in a destructive cycle of crime. Some 38% of people and 58% of women are reconvicted within a year of release. Most have experienced significant trauma. Many leave prison with no safe housing, no income and no clear pathway forward.

Too often, support disappears at the point of release. This failure has a knock-on effect on communities and families, especially children. It hits hardest for communities already over-represented in the justice system.

We fund organisations that support people during and after prison. This includes housing, mental health care, family support and mentoring. We have a particular focus on young people leaving youth custody.

We also support efforts to improve how the justice system works, especially when those efforts are shaped by lived experience.

Our vision for change

→ People are prepared for release and supported into the community

→ Support is trauma-informed, focused on people’s strengths and needs

→ Fewer people return to prison

→ Policies are shaped by lived experience and designed to reduce harm

2. Refugees and people seeking asylum

Refugees and people seeking asylum face enormous barriers as they try to build a safe and settled life.

Even after gaining refugee status, many have only days to find housing, income and support. Without it, they often face homelessness, exploitation and exclusion.

We fund organisations that help people on their journey from arrival to independence. This includes safe housing, legal advice, language support, education and routes into work. We also back work that aims to improve the systems surrounding immigration and resettlement.

Our vision for change

→ Refugees and people seeking asylum have access to the tools and opportunities they need to thrive

→ People are safe from harm, poverty and exploitation

→ Policies and systems reflect real experiences and support people to move forward

3. Domestic abuse

Over two million people each year experience domestic abuse. It has huge personal and social consequences. It’s a leading cause of homelessness for women and has devastating effects on mental health, safety, children and financial security.

Yet support for people who are experiencing or recovering from abuse is often patchy and under-resourced, especially for people in marginalised or minoritised communities. Many don’t feel safe reporting abuse and services often aren’t equipped to respond.

We back organisations offering support, to help people break free from abuse and rebuild their lives. That includes emotional and practical help, safe accommodation and long-term recovery. We also support work that improves services and ensures survivors’ voices shape how support is designed and delivered.

Our vision for change

→ People live free from abuse and fear

→ Victims and survivors can rebuild their lives and recover from trauma

→ Support is accessible, compassionate and designed around people’s needs

→ Services and systems are shaped by the experiences of survivors



JAVEL'S STORY

Growing up, I didn’t have the best relationship with my parents. Then, when I was 12, I found out that my dad wasn’t my biological father. That moment shattered everything. I lost my sense of family and turned to friends for belonging – but it also led me down a difficult path.

At secondary school, I had a reputation for being the kid who fought a lot, and got into trouble. I had a hero complex, always trying to protect others, even if it meant getting hurt myself. I ended up getting kicked out of school.

By 16, I'd been stabbed – pierced lung, liver, almost my heart. I was in hospital for six weeks. Soon after that I went to prison.

Prison gave me space from my past. I got involved in mental health work, spoke in Parliament and even won an award from the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

After leaving prison, I was homeless and got pulled back into the same circles. I had a lot of trauma from being stabbed and was stuck in survival mode.

My turning point came during my third sentence when I joined Spark Inside’s coaching programme. It was life-changing. The group sessions created a space for deep, judgement-free conversation – and the ‘positive gossiping’ exercise moved many of us to tears.

After release, Spark Inside continued to support me. My coach helped me to understand myself better and figure out my direction. She’s been a huge anchor.

Since then, I’ve launched my own consultancy, built multiple businesses, managed artists and started a podcast.

Spark Inside helped me to understand who I really am, to find the power within to be my authentic self. Right now I’m aligned with my purpose and walking with that every single day. I've never been as happy with my life – or with who I am. It’s amazing.



Javel participated in Spark Inside’s Hero’s Journey programme

“Spark Inside helped me to understand who I really am, to find the power within to be my authentic self.”



Opportunity Fund

Backing bold ideas and building a stronger sector.

Our strategy is focused, but it's not rigid. The Opportunity Fund gives us the flexibility to support work that sits outside our core priorities but has real potential to make change happen.

We're using this fund to back bold thinking early. That includes new ideas, pilot projects and untested approaches. We'll also support promising work that's ready to grow or respond to urgent needs.

We're comfortable taking risks. Some of the best ideas start small, and need backing before they're proven.

Through this fund we will:

- Support innovation through early-stage work and pilots, including projects that sit outside our main priority areas
- Strengthen leadership and skills across the sector by investing in tools, training, networks and collaboration
- Support inclusion by backing leaders from under-represented communities and helping organisations diversify how they are led

This fund is also part of how we'll support the long-term strength of the voluntary and community sector. It gives us space to respond quickly, test new approaches and back the people shaping the future of social change.

We fund organisations committed to creating social change. We know that how we work matters as much as what we fund. We don't just invest in your work. We learn from it, grow with it and adapt because of it.

How we work with you.

Our commitments to the organisations we fund:

1. Flexible funding

We fund running costs as well as project work. Wherever we can, we prioritise unrestricted, longer-term support. Flexible funding means you can focus on what matters most. We're ready to adapt, so our support fits the way you work.

2. Clear, focused programmes

We run grant programmes with clear aims and criteria. Our aim is to help you quickly see whether a fund is right for your work. When we say no, we'll explain why. Some of our programmes also support early-stage ideas and work that's ready to grow.

3. Putting people first

Our funding supports organisations that work with, not just for, the people they serve. We value data and evidence as well as direct experience. The best services are shaped by the people who use them.

4. Support beyond funding

We want to help you grow, not just deliver. That's why we're developing a wider offer that includes capacity building, peer learning and shared resources. We'll work with you to strengthen your organisation and elevate your impact.

5. Partnership and collaboration

We know we can't make change happen alone. Our grant holders are our partners. We also work with other funders and local and national leaders. And we invest in strong community networks because the people closest to the challenge often hold the answers.

6. Diversity, equity and inclusion

Diversity, equity and inclusion are part of everything we do. We're building a culture where everyone feels seen, heard and valued, whatever your background or life experience. We aim to support work that tackles inequality and improves outcomes for communities that have been excluded or overlooked.

7. Simple, accessible processes

We work to keep our application processes clear, proportionate and as quick as possible. We're removing barriers where we can and making space for the voices that matter most. People who've faced the issues we fund help shape our decisions. Their insight keeps us focused on what matters most.

8. Strong relationships

We build relationships based on trust, openness and curiosity. We take time to understand your work, listen to your challenges and support your goals. We want to be a partner who helps you grow.

9. A long-term view

As an independent foundation, we can take the long view. We focus on lasting impact. Change that improves lives, strengthens communities and shifts systems. While our strategy guides us, we'll be flexible and adapt to emerging priorities.

10. Sharing what we learn

We're always learning. We listen to our partners, test what works, and reflect on what doesn't. Then, we share what we find with the sector, decision makers, and each other. We also bring people together – funders, organisations, community leaders and policymakers – so we can learn together and push for better systems.

Our values guide everything we do, from how we act as a team to how we show up as a funder and partner.

Living our values through how we fund.

Values only matter if they show up in how we fund, decide and treat people. Ours do.

- 1

Catalysts for change

We use our resources to create lasting impact and drive positive change.
- 2

Relationship-centred

We listen to different voices and learn from them. We do this with compassion, curiosity and care. Good relationships are at the heart of how we work.
- 3

Forward-thinking

We stay open, ask questions and look ahead. We're always searching for better ways to support people and strengthen what works.
- 4

Always learning

We reflect on what we do, listen to feedback and stay open to challenge. We hold ourselves to account and share what we learn, so we can keep getting better.

We are one of the UK's largest independent funders. We aim to get funding to where it has most impact, right across the UK.

Key facts.

£61.9M

In 2024 we distributed £61.9 million in grants

970

We supported more than 970 organisations

410,000

Our funding supported more than 410,000 people across the UK

This strategy sets out our main funding priorities but it's not everything we do. We run long-standing programmes, originating from Henry Smith's Will: the Kindred, providing support for descendants of Henry Smith's sister who have a financial need, and the Christian Projects, which supports Anglican clergy. Holiday Grants fund fun trips for children experiencing inequity or who live with disabilities.

You can find more about these programmes on our website.

www.henrysmith.foundation

With thanks to:
Shazir, Tahir, Aaliyah, Eliph, Javel, Jason and all the staff and volunteers at Home Start Glasgow South, Brighton and Hove Speak Out, Spark Inside and Football Unites, Racism Divides.

Design by OPX.Studio
Photography by Sam Bush

HENRY SMITH FOUNDATION

Henry Smith Foundation
Caledonia House, 3rd Floor
223 Pentonville Road
London, N1 9NG

T: 020 7264 4970
www.henrysmith.foundation

Registered Charity No 230102