

2025

UK Fellowship Impact Report



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About UK Acumen Academy

UK Acumen Academy accompanies extraordinary social entrepreneurs and leaders in the United Kingdom, strengthening the transformative leadership practices, skills and community needed to scale their impact.

Since 2020, through our **Fellows Programme**, we have provided catalytic support to 84 Founders, CEOs, and senior leaders, whose organisations and innovations have positively impacted over 3 million lives across the United Kingdom.

Each year, we select a diverse cohort from across issues, geographies, and backgrounds who demonstrate the character, capacity, and commitment to create lasting change with people, places, and communities.

Acumen Fellows

Acumen Fellows are building solutions that reimagine the future of education, employment, healthcare, welfare, and community; celebrating potential, fostering choice, and cultivating dignity for those trapped by systems of poverty.



Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang
Founder, Lighthouse Pedagogy Trust

Using new approaches and training to improve the lives of young people in the care system.



Michaela Collins
CEO, PEEK - Possibilities for Each and Every Kid

Improving life chances for young people and families across Glasgow through play, creativity and community support.



Graham Whitham
Founder, Resolve Poverty

Bringing together policymakers and practitioners to explore local and regional action on poverty.

Over a 9-month programme, through a series of in-person residencies, online workshops, and group practice, participants develop the tools to turbocharge their leadership, deepen their organisation's impact, and address systemic problems of poverty.

Upon completion, Fellows join the **Foundry**: Acumen's global community of over 2,000 social innovators, gaining lifelong access to resources, support, and opportunities that build resilience and amplify collective impact.

Alongside this, we **partner** with foundations, corporations, and institutions to design and deliver tailored programmes that build trust across diverse audiences, deepen community, and develop transformative leadership.

Why focus on leadership?

Across the United Kingdom, persistent poverty, widening inequality, and rising pressure on public services mean many communities face daily barriers to education, healthcare, and employment. Without urgent change, too many people risk being undervalued and left behind, and we will continue to fall short of our collective potential as a society.

At the same time, we see extraordinary social entrepreneurs and leaders across the UK creating innovative, community-rooted solutions to break down barriers and expand opportunity. Yet their determination alone is not enough to address our challenges. Lasting change depends on equipping these leaders with robust and sustained support.

Enabling underserved leaders to access support:

People are the foundation for any effective, impactful and resilient organisation. However, social organisations suffer from chronic underinvestment in their most valuable assets — their people.

UK Acumen Academy invests in the ongoing learning and development of leaders solving problems of poverty.

Developing new models of leadership:

The challenges we face are deep-rooted, interconnected, and complex. They require more than quick fixes or a single approach — it demands leadership that thinks systemically and mobilises collective action.

UK Acumen Academy develops transformative leadership that engages diverse communities to overcome entrenched issues.

Building with community: Breaking down barriers and driving meaningful change is a long, difficult, and often isolating journey.

UK Acumen Academy cultivates a community of leaders who accompany one another throughout the lifelong journey of change, driving connection, collaboration and collective impact.

In summary, solving our most entrenched social issues will require a deep investment in leadership; one grounded in the moral imperative to reimagine the goals, structures, and rules of existing systems. Fortunately, we see this leadership emerging everywhere.



Measuring our impact

At its core, the Fellowship builds the capacity to address long-standing problems of poverty. Success is Fellows developing the competencies, character, and community to stretch to new levels, build moral imagination, listen deeply, reckon with their sense of identity and open up to understanding the layered

inconsistencies and differing perspectives of others. Success is building role models, mental models, and business models that challenge the status quo and tackle entrenched problems of poverty. Success is a society in which everyone has the opportunity to live a life of dignity.

Goals

Fellows Selection

Diversity of reach

Identify builders from across sector, place, and background who share determination and vision.

17

Fellows from all walks of life selected for the 2025 Cohort

Fellows Programme & Foundry

Depth of leadership

Create a learning environment to develop and apply leadership tools that address problems of poverty.

100%

deepened their leadership capacity to create change

Depth of community

Connect Fellows with a community that accompanies over a lifetime.

100%

built a trusted community to support their work

Impact

Fellows & Foundry

Amplifying leadership

So that together, we can reimagine existing systems and role model a new definition of success.

3,700

people recieved Fellowship content from UK Foundry

Scaling Impact

To build solutions that solve problems of poverty and create a world based on dignity.

3m

lives positively impacted by UK Foundry

“

This is some of the hardest work that I think I have ever had to do for myself — it gave me a bit of introspection I hadn't gone to previously and allowed me to navigate new channels of storytelling I hadn't plumbed before.

This has helped me to level up the how and why behind the way in which I tell the story of the charity.

”



Genna Millar
Executive Director
Dundee Bairns

Meet the 2025 UK cohort



Charlie Chan
Director of Communities
United Communities
 Enabling schools to be catalysts of community



Fred Kastner
Co-Founder & Director of Social Innovation
TERN
 Supporting refugee entrepreneurs to create thriving enterprises



Genna Millar
Executive Director
Dundee Bairns
 Providing essential support for children in need



Hannah Oyewole
Founder & CEO
Young Ladies Club
 Removing socio-economic barriers so young women can thrive



Jordan Ignatius
Managing Director
Reaching Higher
 Enabling young people to be leaders of their own lives



Joseph Howes
CEO
Buttle
 Supporting children and families in crisis



Kusai Rahal
Co-Director
4Front Project
 Reimagining peace and justice for communities



Oyin Adebayo
Founder & CEO
Niyo Group
 Empowering Black women economically through tech



Pranav Chopra
Founder & CEO
NEMI Teas
 Driving social change through business



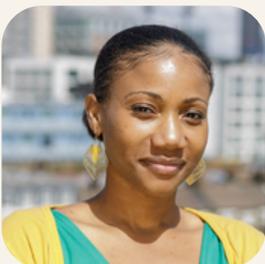
Remi Ray
Founder & Director
The Diverse Creative
 Championing equity in entrepreneurship



Richard Kennedy
Co-Founder & Director
Cornerstone Place
 Delivering net zero housing for those in need



Rosie Ginday MBE
Founder & CEO
Miss Macaroon
 Creating pathways to employment for underserved young people



Rowena Estwick
Co-CEO
Ten Years Time
 Reimagining philanthropy through racial justice



Ruth Boyle
Policy & Campaigns Advisor
The Poverty Alliance
 Ending the injustice of poverty in Scotland



Sajid Mohammed
Co-Founder & Director
Himmah
 Tackling issues of injustice on Nottingham's doorsteps



Sarah Germain
CEO
FareShare Cymru
 Tackling food waste and insecurity across Wales



Sebastian Rocca
Founder & CEO
Micro Rainbow
 Creating a safety net for LGBTIQ people fleeing persecution

1 Diversity of reach

Identify leaders from across sector, place, and background who share determination and vision.

Diversity of 2025 Fellowship applicants

53%

Women

53%

Black, Asian and minority ethnic

63%

with lived experience

21%

with a disability

10% North of England

2% Northern Ireland

4% Wales



8% Scotland

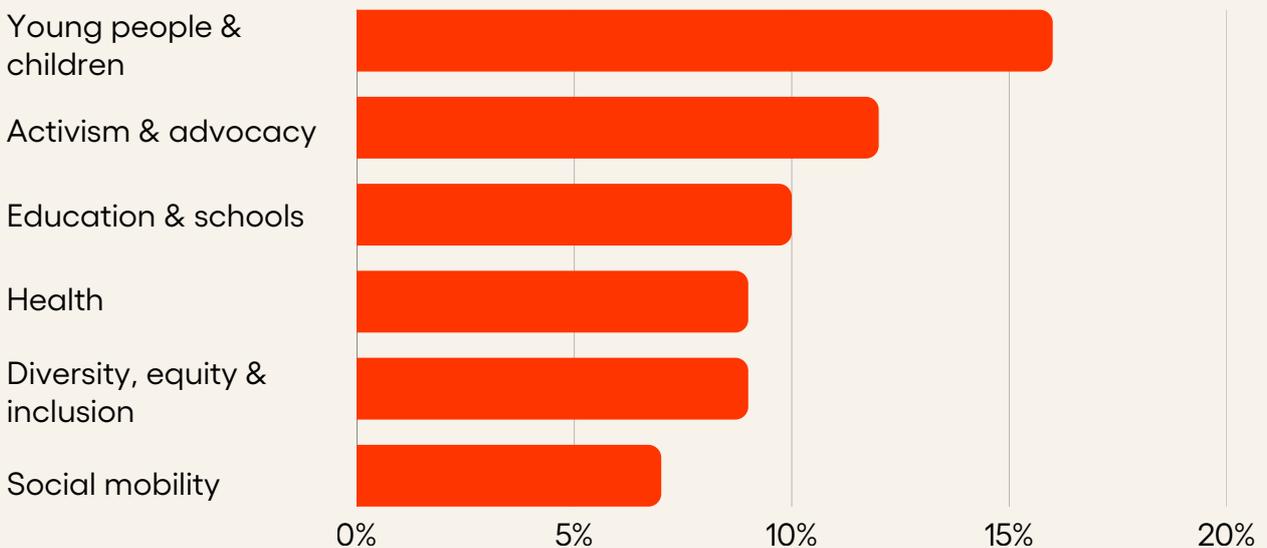
14% Midlands

52% Greater London

10% South of England

Focus areas of 2025 Fellowship applicants

% of applicants focused on issue areas:



2 Depth of leadership

Create a learning environment that enables Fellows to develop and apply leadership tools that address long-standing problems of poverty.

Strengthening leadership capacity

100% of Fellows state that their **leadership has strengthened**

“I have renewed confidence in my leadership style, enabling me to approach challenges more thoughtfully and maximise opportunities for growth. I now have practical tools that actively support my leadership.”

Ruth Boyle

Policy & Campaigns Advisor
The Poverty Alliance

Increasing organisational effectiveness

94% of Fellows state that their **ability to achieve organisational goals has improved**

“This has been a hinge moment for me and Cornerstone Place. It pushed me to think bigger and hold a wider set of perspectives — beyond individual projects to the housing system as a whole, and my influence within it. I learned to work with existing systems by aligning values and capital so assets remain in the hands of impact-makers.”

Richard Kennedy

Co-Founder, Cornerstone Place

Deepening social impact

88% of Fellows state that their **capacity to create social impact has already deepened**

“The programme has enabled me to present the work that Young Ladies Club delivers to high level government officials within the Ministry of Housing. I have been invited to sit on boards within the criminal justice system to advocate change for black and ethnic minoritised women that suffer from domestic abuse.”

Hannah Oyewole

Director, Young Ladies Club

Strengthening leadership capacity

94%

of Fellows state the programme has significantly increased their ability to have **courageous conversations** that bridge across lines of difference such as politics, class, and race.

88%

of Fellows state the programme has significantly increased their ability to engage with **power dynamics** and inequalities in service of their work.

75%

of Fellows achieved a new **'win' or 'breakthrough'** during the programme.

“The Fellowship really helped me grow as a leader not just in how I run Niyo, but in how I think, decide, and show up for my team and community. It has strengthened my ability to hold complexity and make hard decisions with both empathy and courage. I now lead with greater adaptability — not just to build a successful organisation, but to develop people who believe they can change systems too.”

Oyin Adebayo
CEO, Niyo Group

“The Fellowship has given me confidence in my own experience, ability, insight and leadership”

Charlie Chan
Director of Communities
United Communities



Increasing organisational effectiveness

88% of Fellows state the programme has significantly increased their ability to **solve recurring problems** in their work.

88% of Fellows state the programme has significantly increased their ability to **design effective solutions that grow the impact** of their organisation/initiative(s).

69% of Fellows **grew existing initiatives** to expand impact or financial sustainability, **63%** **secured funding** from new sources, and **56%** increased the **size of their team** during the programme.

“The programme has equipped me with the tools, frameworks and confidence to push my organisation beyond long-standing barriers and implement the changes needed. It allowed me to see the challenges differently, giving me the courage to explore new approaches and take decisive action. Plus meeting people from walks of life and backgrounds that I haven't previously has been so impactful.”

Sarah Germain
CEO of FareShare Cymru



“The direction our strategy has taken was directly influenced by my experience on the programme”

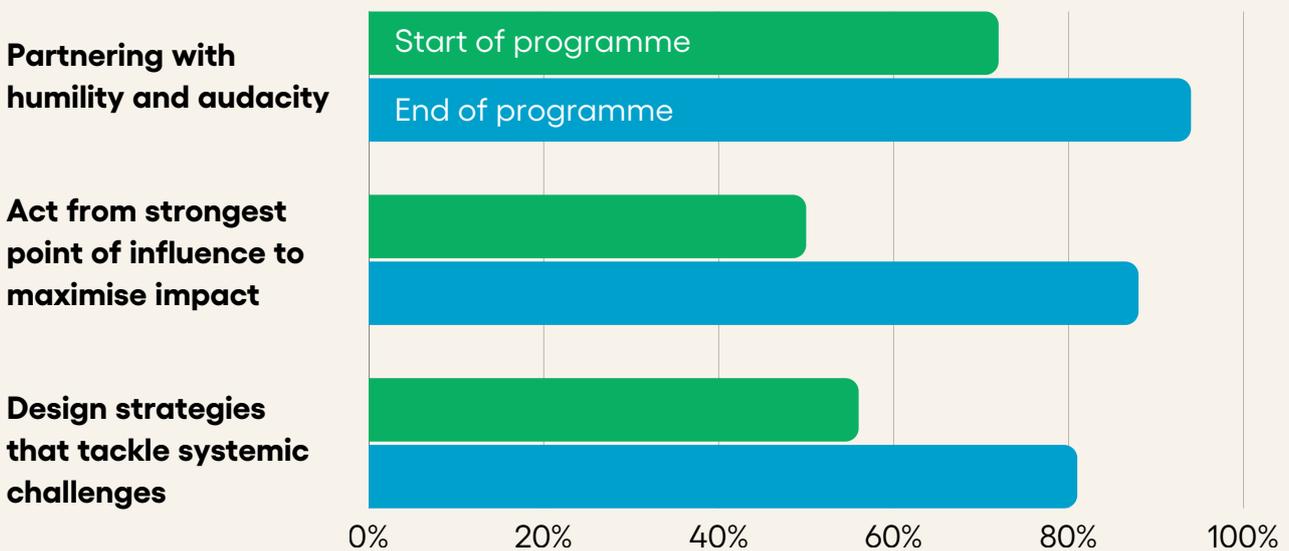
Joseph Howes
CEO
Buttle

Deepening social impact

88% of Fellows state the programme has significantly increased their understanding of how their work fits within a larger interdependent system - and **where their work is best positioned to have influence.**

50% of Fellows **reached more customers or beneficiaries** during the programme.

% of Fellows who reported they are highly competent in this area:



What the Fellows say: “Creating space for others to step in and lead”



“I’ve learned that the real work of leadership is adaptive work: holding complexity, resisting the urge to provide quick fixes, and instead creating the conditions for people to grow, take responsibility, and change together.

This shift has transformed how I navigate staff culture challenges, board dynamics, and the wider systemic frustrations of youth work policy. Instead of trying to carry everything, I’m creating space for others to step in, grow, and lead, even when that means sitting with discomfort or ambiguity.”

Jordan Ignatius
Managing Director of Reaching Higher

3 Depth of community

Connect Fellows with a community that accompanies them over a lifetime - enabling them to deepen & sustain their impact.

100% of Fellows strongly agree that the programme has provided them with a **trusted community** where they are able to give and receive support.

80% of Fellows strongly agree that the programme has given them **access to relationships** that open up new opportunities for their work.

Increasing social capital

On average, over the programme, each Fellow has:

Shared or received **knowledge and expertise** with each other

10x

Shared or received **funding and talent opportunities**

5x

Provided or received support during **personal challenges**

7x

Partnered or collaborated with other Fellows

3x

What the Fellows say: “Finding a community that deepens my learning”



“The Fellowship experience allowed me to see myself as a power source that must recharge. It provided the space—and the people—for me to do that.

For my organisation, Ten Years Time, the Fellowship enhanced my leadership, which I was able to share and build in my colleagues also. Most importantly, Acumen helped me find a community - a group of like-minded leaders who validate my learning, challenge my thinking, and walk beside me in tackling the knotty and urgent issues of today.”

Rowena Estwick

Co-CEO of Ten Years Time

“

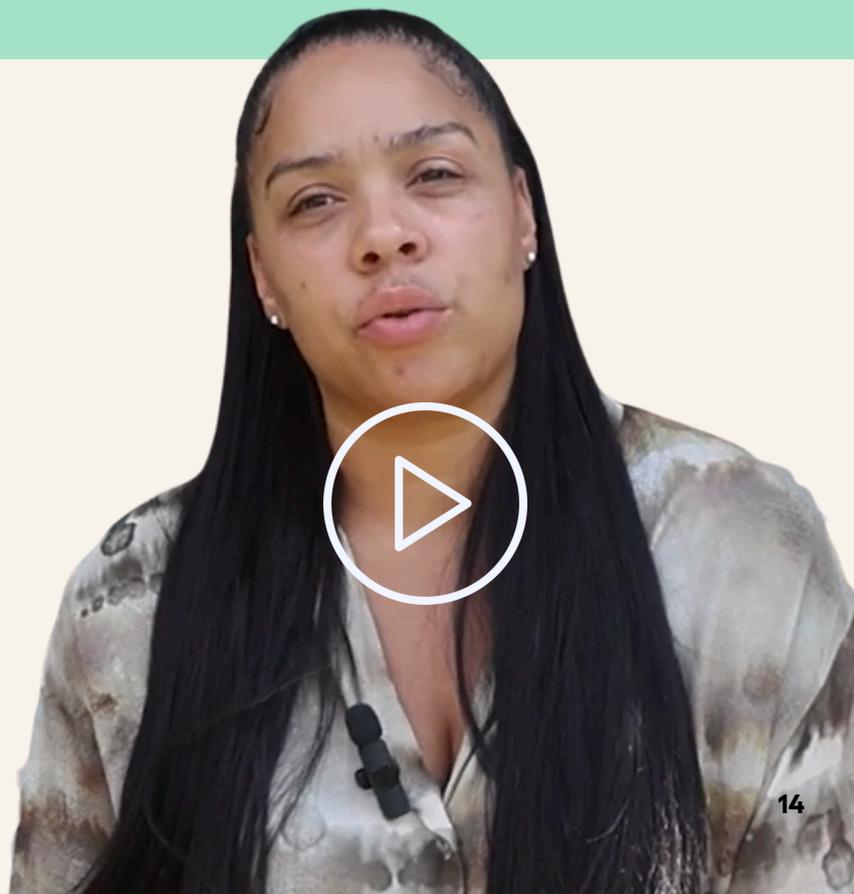
This has been one of the best learning experiences I've ever had. As someone who sometimes struggles to articulate themselves in writing, being able to contribute with my voice made a huge difference.

The in-person connection has been the most powerful part for me. It allowed us to truly see and feel the voices behind the organisations and beyond titles and roles.

”

Remi Ray

Founder and Director
The Diverse Creative





The UK Foundry in 2025

The UK Foundry is a diverse community of 84 Fellows working to build a United Kingdom grounded in dignity. This year, we refreshed our UK Foundry strategy and invested in partnerships shaped by Fellows' needs, focused on the following pillars:

I. Lifelong community & collaboration

A trusted, diverse community that offers mutual support and collaboration across a Fellow's leadership journey.

II. Access to skills & resources

Learning, tools, and support that strengthen Fellows' capacity to lead, grow organisations, and navigate complex systems.

III. Access to capital & opportunities

Connections to catalytic funders, partners, and platforms that unlock growth and resilience.

IV. Elevated visibility & influence

Initiatives that amplify Fellows' leadership, enabling their ideas and models to shape public narratives, policies, and systems.

Partners include:



85%

of the UK Foundry engaged with **at least one Foundry opportunity** in 2025, and **54%** engaged in **three or more**.

66%

of the UK Foundry have **reciprocated their Fellowship experience** by contributing to nominations, selection, or the delivery of our programmes.



I. Lifelong community & collaboration

13 community events held in 2025, including our Foundry Gathering

55 Fellows engaged in community initiatives

II. Access to skills & resources

5 core initiatives delivered, including strategic support from Bain & Co.

28 Fellows connected to skills-based support

III. Access to capital & opportunities

30 tailored Fellows connections with potential funders or partners

£750k unlocked for Fellows

IV. Elevated visibility & influence

41 opportunities created to raise Fellows' visibility in 2025

27 Fellows showcased across Acumen platforms



Yasmin Khan was selected to join the 2020-21 UK Fellowship as the CEO of Staying Put - transforming the lives of women, men and children who are survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Since starting the Fellowship:

- Increased revenue from £2m to £3.8m
- Grown from a team of 40 to 75
- Scaled from impacting 10,000 lives to over 18,000
- Launched a Housing Association subsidiary

“Being part of both the Acumen community and the Foundry has been transformational—for me and for our organisation—this year. The combined support, insight, and encouragement, alongside opportunities such as securing Postcode Innovate Trust social investment, launching Solace Housing Association, joining the Reimagining Leadership event, and taking part in the Foundry Forums, has strengthened our mission and expanded what we believed was possible. These communities create rare spaces for collaboration, support, and challenge, and they have had a profound impact on my leadership and on our growth.”

4 Amplifying leadership

Fellows are the “critical yeast” in a growing movement that reimagines existing systems and role-models a new definition of success—one grounded in dignity and human flourishing.

Embedding moral leadership

+3,700

people outside the Foundry have **received the Fellowship tools** from UK Fellows

50%

of Fellows are **providing mentorship** to future leaders in their community

40%

of Fellows are **training their organisation** or community in Fellowship content

Partnering for systemic change

87%

of Fellows are **partnering** with corporations or public institutions

66%

of Fellows are actively working to **influence public policy**

50%

are encouraging **open-sourcing or replication** of their initiatives



Marcellus Baz was selected to join the 2020-21 UK Fellowship as the Founder of Switch Up — building pathways for young people to break the cycle of reoffending and thrive.

Since starting the Fellowship:

- Increased revenue from £450k to £975k
- Grown from a team of 9 to 18FTE
- Scaled from impacting 600 young people to 1,300
- Launched Uniting Nottz cross-sector partnership

“Being an Acumen Fellow has been a transformative experience that has reshaped the way I lead. It continues to deepen my commitment to moral leadership and values-driven decisions. The Fellowship has helped me move from leading in isolation to building authentic, long-term partnerships — locally and nationally — grounded in trust and purpose.”

5 Scaling impact

Fellows are at the heart of building organisations that are scaling solutions to problems of poverty and creating a United Kingdom based on dignity.

Our Fellows community has impacted

3m

lives in the United Kingdom

155k Youth educated

146k Individuals trained

42k Patients served

11k Jobs created

7k Partnerships built



Michelle Hill was selected to join the 2023-24 UK Fellowship as the CEO of TLC: Talk, Listen, Change — supporting individuals and families to rebuild safety, voice, and choice.

Since joining the Foundry:

- Secured £260k in Postcode Innovation Trust social investment, accelerating the growth of a profit-with-purpose subsidiary.
- Received pro bono support from Bain & Company, helping navigate a significant organisational challenge at a critical moment.
- Co-hosted cohort meetups and contributed to shared learning through Acumen's Founders Hub
- Trained as a facilitator and led global and UK Fellowship sessions, deepening her learning and connecting with a global community of leaders.

“Being part of the Acumen Foundry has been profoundly supportive—not just in practical terms, but in the sense of belonging to a values-led community that genuinely wants one another to succeed. The relational generosity, challenge, and encouragement I’ve experienced have been as impactful as the technical support, creating space to think more boldly, lead with confidence, and give back to others along the way.”

Evaluation approach

How we measured our impact

Quantitative data were collected through evaluation surveys administered during the Fellows Programme and at the point of entry into the Foundry. Qualitative data were gathered through one-to-one conversations with Fellows and session feedback surveys. The Fellowship data includes 16 of the 17 Fellows who completed the 2025 programme.

As part of our impact evaluation efforts, we aggregate this data to better understand the broader effects of the Fellowship and the contributions of our Fellows worldwide. This data is not used at the individual level and is not intended for direct comparison across Fellows.

We recognise that measuring the impact of leadership development and complex social change is inherently challenging. We also acknowledge that “bigger” is not always better. An over-reliance on what is most easily measurable risks reinforcing systems that fail to capture the values, relationships, and long-term change we seek to advance

Continuous learning

Each year brings new challenges and opportunities, and we are deeply grateful to work alongside our UK cohorts, faculty, and Acumen’s global team as learning partners. While the Fellows Programme has been refined over 13 years of data and feedback across eight global regions, each cohort continues to offer unique and powerful insights. In 2022–23, we introduced a range of changes to the UK programme, and we are deeply encouraged by the continued progress, learning, and impact it has generated. We look forward to continuing to adapt to create the best possible Fellowship.

Past UK impact reports





UK partners

Thank you to our partners and supporters for believing in this team and making our work possible. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and trust.

As we look ahead, we do so with gratitude and optimism—committed to learning, rising to challenges, and building a future where everyone can lead a life of dignity.



And individual supporters

UK Acumen Academy is a registered charity (1185457), and an affiliate partner of Acumen Academy. For any questions or requests, please contact uk@acumenacademy.org.