UnLtd: Highlights from 2024/25

Breaking barriers so social entrepreneurs can change systems and lives.

The Big Picture

Social entrepreneurs are tackling urgent challenges like inequality — reshaping communities and driving lasting change. But too often, they face barriers to funding, networks, and support. That's where UnLtd comes in: levelling these obstacles with funding, investment, personalised support, and mentoring — always rooted in equity, and built to last.

2024/25 at a glance

242 new and additional Awards, providing **£2.39m** in financial support

70% of Awards to Black, Asian, minority ethnic and/or disabled social entrepreneurs

25% of Awards to social entrepreneurs from the 20% most deprived areas in the UK*

158 workshops, networking and learning events

252 meaningful connections to pro bono legal support, mentoring and peers

96% feel confident contributing to social change; **87%** feel able to grow and sustain their venture; **78%** increased total turnover

We expect Awards made in 2024/25 to benefit over 175,000 individuals

*IMD 2019.

The UnLtd Approach

Discover:
We go beyond outreach – we actively seek out under-served social entrepreneurs and communities, breaking down systemic barriers to ensure those furthest from opportunity are first in line for support.

Invest:
We provide unrestricted funding or investment according to each social entrepreneur's stage, ambition, and needs – because every journey evolves differently, and our support flexes to match.

Empower:
We deliver personalised support. Every Award winner gets a dedicated support manager, targeted workshops, vibrant peer networks, and access to expert mentors, including pro bono advice. It's not a one-size-fits-all; it's support designed around each social entrepreneur's journey to help them thrive and create lasting impact.

What guides us:

- **Lead with Equity:** We champion social entrepreneurs who face the toughest barriers, putting fairness at the heart of everything we do.

- **Future-Proof Growth:** We help social entrepreneurs build diverse, resilient organisations and business models so they thrive for the long term.

- **Power Through Impact:** We equip social entrepreneurs with insights, smart tools and expertise to accelerate and evidence their impact.

Equity in Action

In 2024/25 we made 242 new and additional Awards, totalling £2.39m in direct financial support.

Here Kritesh Bisht, founder of InStudents, talks about how our equitable approach has affected his experience as a social entrepreneur.

Click the image below to watch:



70%

of Awards went to Black, Asian, minority ethnic and/or disabled social entrepreneurs.

25%

of Awards went to social entrepreneurs from the 20% most deprived areas in the UK.

Personalised Help for Every Social Entrepreneur

What Award winners receive:

- A dedicated support manager
- A personalised programme of workshops and peer learning
- Expert mentoring and pro bono legal advice via partners

What we delivered in 2024/25:

- 158 workshops, networking and learning events
- 252 curated connections unlocking legal support, mentoring, and collaboration



> I can't stress enough how much I value being an Award winner. It's not just about the financial support—it's about the network, the knowledge, and the encouragement to take my business to the next stage.
>
> **Yuru Guo, Hey! Food Is Ready**



> The programme has taken the overwhelm out of being a new entrepreneur—practical, timely and confidence-building
>
> **Empress Gibbs, Skate Buddies CIC**

> The law firm helped me so much—I'm now able to ship to the EU again. Our products and website are fully compliant with new EU GPSR regulations. It's made a massive difference.
>
> **Jill Corbyn, Neurodiverse Connection CIC**



> This mentoring has been incredibly supportive and led to direct, significant changes in how we operate.
>
> **Kian Lawn, My Best Interest**

Our externally funded programmes enable us to provide expert support to ensure social entrepreneurs have a real impact on major challenges.

Movement for Change

A 3-year partnership with Sport England to increase access to physical activity and its associated benefits for the most marginalised communities in England. Click here to find out more.

Across the 3-years UnLtd has supported 76 social entrepreneurs.

Funding Futures Programme

A 2-year partnership with the Co-op Foundation and the Phoenix Group to harness the power of youth in tackling financial exclusion. Click here to find out more.

In 2024/25, we supported 9 social entrepreneurs under the age of 30 through this work.

Outcomes at year-end (for respondents of all awards including externally funded programmes):

96%

feel confident contributing to social change

87%

feel able to grow and sustain their business

78%

reported increased turnover

Building Ventures That Last

Case study: Upward Frog

Upward Frog, founded by Emma Gartside, breaks down financial barriers to yoga by delivering free and subsidised courses that prevent and manage long-term health conditions. Through support, the venture now has **multiple revenue streams**: a steady trading income from a subsidised membership model, growing corporate clients (including the NHS and the Mental Health Foundation), and a developing retail line.

> “We’ve grown a lot in the last 12 months, and I know that we have got so much more that we can do, I feel like we’ve only just started scratching the surface – so I’m really excited!”
>
> **Emma Gartside, Upward Frog**



Impact Where It Matters Most

Case study: Fitness Rush

Liam Rushmer, Fitness Rush founder and a Movement for Change Award winner, helps people from all backgrounds begin and benefit from physical activity.

> Fitness Rush is the best thing that's happened to me. I don't think I'd be sober, healthy or happy without it. It's given me purpose and a way to face my demons.
>
> **Catherine McFadzean, beneficiary of Fitness Rush CIC**

To find out more about Catherine's story and how Fitness Rush started, watch their story here: **Introducing Liam Rushmer, founder of Fitness Rush | UnLtd**



Better evidence, better story: our Impact Measurement Tool

We're committed to helping social entrepreneurs effectively present their work and highlight the impact they create.

In 2024/25 we developed, piloted and launched an **Impact Measurement Tool** suitable for our **Movement for Change** Award winners, allowing them to:

- Track beneficiary wellbeing over time
- Estimate social value to show need and effectiveness
- See trends in real time to improve services and bids

Case study - Transition to Excel

When Pauline Peters and Deane Williams launched Transition to Excel in 2023 — a social enterprise using sport and mentorship to help young people thrive — they faced a big challenge: proving impact with limited resources. Their turning point? Using our **Impact Measurement Tool**.

"It gave us the data we needed to secure funding," Pauline said. For Deane, it was a game-changer: **"Before, we were shooting in the dark."** The tool revealed their sessions weren't just about sport — they improved mental health and created safe spaces. That evidence unlocked funding, partnerships, and credibility.

It even shaped strategy: spotting gaps, they launched girls-only sessions, giving 20 young women a space to thrive. Today, data drives their growth and confidence: **"Now we know we're doing the right things—and growing in the right direction."**

Driving Change Through Investment — Growth Impact Fund (GIF)

The Growth Impact Fund (GIF) which we run with Big Issue Invest, tackles inequality by investing in diverse-led social enterprises and dismantling the systemic barriers many social entrepreneurs face. Through a Technical Assistance Fund, UnLtd provides pre- and post-investment support alongside capital.

To date, GIF has invested £3.2 million in 13 social impact ventures, which in total have reached 87,000 people facing systemic inequities in the UK.

50%
of those organisations are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic communities.

33%
of those organisations are led by those with a disability.

Founder focus: Patchwork Hub — Beth-Kume Holland

> The support was transformational. It isn't just financial...I feel like I've grown so much as a businessperson through the last year...The fund doesn't gatekeep what investors are looking for.



What's Next

In 2024/25, we began developing a new System Change Social Entrepreneur programme in partnership with the Henry Smith Foundation.

Launched in April 2025, the programme is supporting an inaugural cohort of 15 social entrepreneurs who bring both lived experience and a bold ambition to drive system change. We're excited to follow their journey and see the impact they create.

To find out more about Rory Doherty, one of the Award winners, click here.



None of this would be possible without the vision and determination of the social entrepreneurs we support, the communities they serve, and the partners who stand alongside us.

To our funders, mentors, sector allies, and supporters – thank you for helping us break down barriers and build a fairer, more inclusive future. Together, we're proving that collaboration creates change that lasts.