



Rosa's Rise Fund

Impact Report

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Foreword by Lisa Raftery, Rosa Trustee and Chair of the Rosa Rise Grants Panel

Organisations led by and for racially minoritised women are lifelines for individuals in communities across the UK. As well as providing sisterhood and culturally appropriate specialist support to individual women and girls, these organisations are essential in addressing systemic racial inequalities.

By campaigning and advocating on intersecting issues of racism, sexism and poverty, as well as discrimination relating to disability, sexuality, and immigration status, Black and minoritised women's and girls' organisations are driving real and lasting change across the UK.

Despite delivering undeniable impact, Black and minoritised-led women's and girls' organisations remain chronically underfunded. The funding model to sustain them is failing, leaving many organisations operating on the brink of survival. This is not just an economic issue—it is a reflection of the systemic discrimination that continues to devalue the work of women's and girls' organisations, particularly those led by Black and racially minoritised women.

It is unacceptable that organisations operate on so little when the work is so instrumental in securing lasting, systemic change.



The Rise Fund was launched shortly after the Covid pandemic, and the situation has worsened since then. The racist and Islamophobic riots in the summer of 2024 left many Black and minoritised-led women's and girls' organisations fearing for their staff's safety, while simultaneously increasing their support to the women they work with. Meanwhile, the post-Covid funding surge has receded, leaving organisations operating on significantly decreased incomes. While more funding initiatives for Black and minoritised-led organisations have been launched recently, women's and girls' organisations are rarely prioritised for grants. These challenges come at a time of increased misogyny and racism, making the operating environment much harder.

Black and minoritised-led women's and girls' organisations have a powerful and rich history of empowering and transforming individuals and communities. Systemic shifts are possible when women's and girls' organisations work collectively; it is within these organisations that future leaders of the feminist and anti-racist movements grow.

These organisations need to be trusted, invested in and celebrated.

This is why in May 2025 Rosa launched the second round of Rise, providing flexible funding to Black and minoritised-led women's and girls' organisations. Through this fund, we will continue to champion and invest in these organisations, because we know their survival is essential to creating a society in which women and girls are safe, healthy and equal.

Thank you to all the funders, advisory group members, grants panellists and women's and girls' organisations that have made Rise possible.



Executive Summary

The Rise Fund represented a bold and transformative investment in organisations led by and for Black and minoritised women and girls across the UK.

Responding to challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic and persistent racial inequality, the fund took a calculated risk: that with generous and targeted support, small grassroots organisations could evolve into robust, sustainable institutions capable of creating lasting change in their communities.

The results validate this trust-based approach to funding:

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

£1,387,546

total awarded through organisational development grants and core cost support

35

organisations supported across the UK

12,451

women and girls supported

£1-£2.07

For every £1 invested in organisational development, grantees raised £2.07 in additional funding

These figures tell only part of the story. The Rise Fund demonstrates that grassroots organisations create profound societal change through two powerful pathways: direct service delivery that transforms individual lives and communities, and growing strategic influence that reshapes systems and policies. Through the fund, organisations provided culturally-appropriate crisis support and safe spaces to over 12,451 women and girls. This created immediate impact, while building deep understanding of community needs to inform better service design across the sector. Their growing influence in decision-making spaces, combined with enhanced collaboration across the sector, shows how grassroots expertise translates into lasting systemic change. This can be seen both in improvements to the operation of mainstream services, and in ensuring that marginalised voices inform policy decisions.

The real impact lies in the transformation of small, community-based initiatives into sustainable organisations. Through a combination of organisational development funding and responsive core cost support, the Rise Fund has proven that investing in small, by-and-for organisations not only works - it also catalyses extraordinary change at both local and systemic levels.



Background:

Covid-19, Increased Costs and Racial Inequality

The Rise Fund emerged at a critical moment when multiple crises converged to create unprecedented challenges for Black and minoritised women's and girls' organisations. Beyond the immediate health impacts of COVID-19, the communities served faced disproportionate economic hardship.^{1,2}

The pandemic exposed and exacerbated long-standing systemic inequalities. Organisations led by Black and minoritised women remain chronically underfunded, despite their essential role in supporting vulnerable communities and driving social change. The funding disparity is twofold for these organisations: they face specific barriers to accessing funding, while also being affected by the broader underfunding of small women's and girls' organisations.

This underfunding limits their ability to grow, adapt, and meet the increasing needs of their communities. The murder of George Floyd in 2020 sparked global recognition of racial inequality, leading to a brief surge in funding for Black and minoritised-led organisations. However this support quickly dwindled, leaving many organisations in a worse position than before.

The Rise Fund was created to address this gap and provide sustained, flexible support to these vital women-led community organisations.

¹ House of Commons Library, (2024). Rising cost of living in the UK. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9428/>

² Tims, S and Caddick, D, (2022). Losing the Inflation Race. Available at: <https://neweconomics.org/2022/05/losing-the-inflation-race>

The Rise Fund: Trusting and Responsive

The Rise Fund pioneered a distinctive approach to supporting grassroots organisations by providing two-year grants of up to £40,000 specifically for organisational development to organisations led 'by and for' Black and minoritised women and girls.

The fund prioritised established organisations with annual incomes under £100,000, recognising their potential for growth and impact with targeted support.

What set the Rise Fund apart was not just its focus on organisational development, but its approach to grant-making:

TRUST-BASED FUNDING

- Organisations were trusted to identify and articulate their own needs
- The application process itself helped organisations understand and express their development requirements
- Flexible funding allowed organisations to adapt to changing circumstances

RESPONSIVE GRANT-MAKING

When the cost-of-living crisis intensified pressures on grantees, Rosa demonstrated the power of responsive grant-making by providing an additional core cost uplift of approximately 50% of the original grant amount. This combination of organisational development funding alongside flexible core cost support, proved crucial in enabling organisations to both strengthen their infrastructure, and maintain essential services during challenging times.

50%

approximate core cost uplift of the original grant amount

“The core costs has provided us with the much-needed breathing space to plan and strategise for the future.”

Young Ladies Club



Key Achievements and Outcomes

The Rise Fund's impact demonstrates how targeted investment in organisational development, combined with flexible core funding, can transform grassroots organisations into sustainable institutions.

STRONGER FOUNDATIONS

The numbers tell a compelling story of transformation:

97%

of grantees reported developing clearer organisational strategies

89%

reported more effective governance

97%

developed more effective leadership

80%

implemented more effective systems and processes

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The fund enabled organisations to invest in their most valuable asset - their people. This included:

- Professional training and development programmes
- Improved strategic planning capabilities
- Space for leaders to think strategically about their organisation's future

This investment in leadership development ripples out through organisations and communities.

“Our CEO has now been enrolled in the first ever Women of Colour Leadership Programme in Manchester.”

Angels of Hope for Women

OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

The fund enabled organisations to build robust foundations for growth through the:

- Implementation of new IT systems and databases
- Development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks
- Enhanced financial management systems
- Creation of essential policies and procedures

“The grant allowed us to invest in our infrastructure and leadership. This investment will impact all our delivery and services.”

Goldstar Creative Marketing

STRATEGIC PLANNING

With the breathing space provided by the fund, organisations could move from reactive service delivery to proactive planning, in the form of:

- Creation of long-term strategic plans
- Development of sustainable funding strategies
- Improved governance structures
- Enhancing stakeholder engagement

“Without a doubt, the upskills and the peace of mind of being supported allowed us to thrive and lay out on the table clear visions to be implemented.”

Step Up 2 Fitness

BUILDING STRONGER NETWORKS

While focusing primarily on internal development, many organisations strengthened their connections through:

- Increased engagement with local authorities and healthcare providers
- Enhanced collaboration with community partners
- Having a stronger voice in policy discussions

57%

reported stronger alliances with other women's and girls organisations



Case study:

Angels of Hope for Women

Angels of Hope for Women is a charity that empowers women in and around Manchester to become independent and self-reliant through a combination of volunteering opportunities, support groups, facilitated workshops and courses.

The Rise Fund enabled Angels of Hope for Women to evolve from a small volunteer-led initiative supporting Manchester's Central African community, into a structured charity with four employed staff and 17 volunteers. Through strengthening their organisational infrastructure, they significantly expanded their culturally-specific support, ultimately reaching 460 women and girls.

KEY IMPACTS

- Created first full-time administrative role, freeing up the CEO role to focus on strategic work
- Developed a comprehensive strategy and theory of change
- Secured £290,000 in National Lottery funding
- Expanded from three to 21 team members (four staff, 17 volunteers)
- Provided crucial cost-of-living support to community members
- Enhanced one-to-one support and empowerment programmes
- Maintained vital culturally-specific services for Central African women

£290,000

secured in National Lottery funding



Case study: Angels of Hope for Women

Founder and Chief Executive Officer Leah Chikamba, spoke to us about the impact of the Rise Fund and the vital importance of culture-specific support.

HOW AND WHY DID YOU ESTABLISH ANGELS OF HOPE FOR WOMEN?

“When I was growing up, my mum used to help a lot of people in the community. When she died unexpectedly, the rest of the women in the community rallied around us as her children. They provided - whether that was food or financially - removing a huge burden until we were able to stand on our own. That really stayed with me. So when I moved to the UK from Zambia, I had lived that way, I started working out how I could help other people. Arriving in Manchester and becoming part of the Zambian community, I knew that these were people I could help because I knew their struggles. I'd get paid and buy some packs of sugar, handing them out. Soon I joined up with friends, and we became a small voluntary organisation. People would donate items, and we would hand them out. I realised that we needed to grow to help more people, and so we registered as a charity in 2014. We are very proud to have had our tenth anniversary this year.”

“There used to be three of us, and now we have four employed staff members and 17 volunteers.”

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE ORGANISATION?

“Our mission is empowerment for women and girls - we work in and around Manchester. We want to see every woman empowered to the level that they are able to use their skills. That's why we include education in our offering. We want every woman to be able to stand on their own. People think to be empowered you must become a CEO. It doesn't have to be that. We look at the individual and where they are and support them in steps from there.”

“We are committed to being a service that works with women, rather than simply delivering services to them.”



Case study: Angels of Hope for Women

WHY IS THIS WORK IMPORTANT IN MANCHESTER?

“There is a large community of women in Manchester who come from Central Africa, Zambia, Malawi, some from South Africa and Zimbabwe. While there are other women’s organisations, the people there may be Ghanaian or Nigerian. What we have found is that women want to seek help from someone in their own tradition and culture.”

“People often say the reason they wanted to come to us specifically, is because we have been through the same kinds of things. We have the same culture and understanding, so they feel free to speak to us about their issues.”

“They don’t want to go and speak to someone who doesn’t understand them. We may all be African, and we may all be women, but there are differences. The culture is different, our understanding of things may be different.

Before we started, we knew that a lot of women suffered because they felt they had nowhere to go, despite there being women’s organisations locally. That’s why we are so powerful and impactful. We have shared lived experience. Our service users often become part of the organisation, whether that’s volunteering or elsewhere. Not only do they know what the women we support are going through, but service users can see that with the right opportunities, someone just like them has achieved something. Here in Manchester, these women really do need us.”

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SERVICES AND SUPPORT YOU OFFER?

“Women and girls most often come to us as they want an opportunity to do something for themselves. Most of them have been told what to do their whole lives, whether that’s by their husband, father or family. They are told, ‘This is what you need to be.’ It impacts mental health, and that can be hard to talk about due to stigma. They often feel that as Black women they should be strong. The women want to be empowered to do their own thing and support their children, especially their girls, so they don’t end up in the same situation.

When people first come to us, they have an outreach worker who will support them one-on-one. We offer weekly exercise sessions, coffee mornings, volunteering opportunities and monthly empowerment sessions. We have strength-based conversations, and they say what they feel they can do. We support them one-on-one for four to six weeks intensely, until they feel strong enough to come along without the push.”



Case study: Angels of Hope for Women

HOW DID THE RISE FUND SUPPORT THE WORK OF ANGELS OF HOPE FOR WOMEN?

“This funding allowed us to help around 460 women and girls. When we got the Rise funding, it was just me, my Chair of Trustees and volunteers. That meant I was doing most of the day-to-day running of the organisation.

With the funding, we recruited an administrator and brought on some additional volunteers. With someone supporting the business day-to-day, I was also able to work with a consultant to see where we wanted to be in five years. It was so powerful. We developed a strategy and a theory of change. When we applied for National Lottery funding of £290,000 for three years, I think that's what sold us. We were successful because we knew where we wanted to go.

So the Rise Fund gave me time, which helped us to grow. Now we've been able to recruit three more members of staff, and the admin role is full-time.

The capacity the funding has given me to develop not only myself but the organisation as well - that's where the impact has been. As a result of that, we've grown and are now able to meet the needs of so many, which we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise.”

“When we received the cost-of-living uplift, most of our women were really struggling. Even women who had previously supported our work were now coming to us asking for support. The cost-of-living uplift allowed us to provide food, electricity and gas to service users who really needed it. It was invaluable and helped a lot of people.”

460

approximate number of women and girls
helped by Angels of Hope for Women's grant

From Grassroots to Growth - A Journey of Transformation

The most compelling narrative to emerge from the Rise Fund is the journey from grassroots organisations to sustainable institutions. This transformation demonstrates how appropriate support can help small organisations achieve their full potential.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The fund's impact on financial sustainability demonstrates the power of initial investment:

- For every £1 invested through the organisational development grant, organisations raised an additional £2.07
- Multiple organisations grew from under £50,000 annual income to over £100,000
- Organisations developed more diverse funding streams
- Many grantees reported being better able to secure larger, longer-term grants

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The fund enabled organisations to discover and articulate their needs:

- 97% developed clearer organisational strategies
- Many created their first formal business plans
- Leadership gained space to think strategically
- Organisations moved from reactive to proactive approaches

97%

developed clearer organisational strategies

“Funding helped to identify the organisation’s weakness, strengths and opportunities, as such we have now developed our five-year business plan.”

African Women’s Care



From surviving to thriving:

The impact of infrastructure investment on Utulivu

Reading-based grantee Utulivu's journey exemplifies how organisational development funding transforms service delivery:

“We knew there were things we needed to do for our organisation but we couldn't invest in Utulivu, as we were investing in the women we support. We were too busy providing practical support to stop and think about the bigger picture.”

Sometimes, small investments yield extraordinary returns. For Utulivu, a £200 investment in Zoom created a ripple effect across their network:

“It was incredible how much difference it made! There are other smaller women's groups doing similar work to us and Zoom meant we could bring everyone together - this created a ripple effect and amplified all of our work.”

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Investment in people proved transformative:

- Leaders accessed specialised training programmes
- Staff received professional development opportunities
- Volunteers gained formal qualifications
- An enhanced capacity for service delivery and management was created
- Knowledge sharing happened across networks

“Thanks to the Rise Fund, the whole team of trustees and volunteers have gone on courses that have enabled them to run better services, add to their personal career portfolios, and feel more valued by the organisation.”

Step up 2 Fitness

Case study: Inspiring Women's Network

Inspiring Women Network (IWN) is a women-led organisation that cultivates enriching and meaningful connections amongst Black, Asian and minoritised women in Cornwall.

The organisation provides opportunities for social connection, personal and professional development through providing therapy and a schedule of activities, workshops and cultural events.

“Receiving funding from Rosa has significantly boosted our confidence as an organisation. It affirmed our mission and impact, enhancing how we present ourselves to other funders.”

PRIOR TO RISE FUNDING, THE ORGANISATION OPERATED ON APPROXIMATELY £20,000 ANNUAL INCOME. THROUGH THE FUND'S SUPPORT, THEY:

- Developed their first comprehensive business plan
- Strengthened their governance
- Secured additional grants from multiple sources
- Grew to over £100,000 income
- Were recently awarded £300,000 in National Lottery funding

£300,000

recently awarded in National Lottery funding

Case study: Inspiring Women's Network

IWN Founder Nourallah Chakroun shared how Rise funding allowed IWN to strategize to meet unprecedented demand.

HOW WAS INSPIRING WOMEN NETWORK ESTABLISHED?

“I founded Inspiring Women Network back in 2012. It emerged from a different project I was working on that specifically supported Muslim and South Asian women living in Cornwall. That project grew and we got interest from women outside that group who wanted to be part of the project. I decided to establish IWN and open it up to all women, but still focus on and prioritise Black, Asian and minoritised women.”

WHO DOES IWN SUPPORT?

“Women who are from Black, Asian and minoritised backgrounds can access our services; for example mentoring, coaching or therapy, for free. We cover the costs of the organisation, but everyone else is asked for a contribution as there are lots of other services available to them in Cornwall. We feel like it's a prerogative we have to say our services mainly exist for this Black, Asian and minoritised community, but if you want to access them, we'd love to have you, but we expect a contribution. The contribution is very minimal; we have a sliding scale and if people genuinely can't afford to contribute they can get in touch, but we want to ensure our communities have priority in accessing free services.”



Case study: Inspiring Women's Network

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR IWA IN CORNWALL?

“Isolation is endemic to Cornwall; it's such a large area and so spread out that places can be remote. Transport can be difficult so our women often find themselves isolated and lonely. We wanted to address the social aspect, providing spaces for people to come together, to connect, meet new people and learn new skills.

There is also a real issue in Cornwall around cultural isolation. There is racism, discrimination and few opportunities to connect with others from minoritised groups. When I first moved to Cornwall, it was 2% minority ethnic. So that's 98% white. Now, 10 years later, it's just under 4%.

So for our Black, Asian, and minoritised women, we provide spaces for them to celebrate their culture, be confident in who they are, and talk about their experiences with other women of colour. It's about providing solidarity and understanding.”

“Our intention is to connect, inspire and empower. Our main goal is to connect women, and then everything hopefully flows from there.”



Case study: Inspiring Women's Network

HOW DID THE RISE FUND SUPPORT YOUR WORK?

“At the point we were awarded the grant in 2021, IWN was growing very quickly. From 2018 to 2020, just before Covid, our membership was increasing. Then Covid hit, and everyone was alone and scared. The need became even greater, and that almost doubled the demand for the services we were providing. We needed to keep increasing our delivery to meet demand, but as we were volunteer-based and it was primarily down to me to deliver the work, find volunteers, and do the accounts and social media. We had reached a ceiling on what we could achieve with the resources and capacity we had.

So in 2021 we applied for Lottery funding. That took a lot of time, so we applied for the Rise Fund for a project coordinator who could take on a lot of other elements so that I could focus on the Lottery application and our strategic development policies.”

“We have just been awarded the National Lottery Community Fund for the next three years, and we are about to hire six members of staff. That is huge, and that funding was secured because I was able to take a step back thanks to the Rise Fund.”

“Especially as a women-led organisation, we are so used to doing it all that it can be hard to see the bigger picture.

I also think that the Lottery funders were impressed by our successful application to Rosa. It was seen as validation that we were trusted and could manage a bigger grant. I believe it helped, not just in allowing me to step back and focus on funding, but to have Rosa's name down on our funding bid.”

Case study: Inspiring Women's Network

HOW DID THE COST-OF-LIVING UPLIFT SUPPORT IWN?

Things cost more. All our outgoings seemed to increase - the premises we hire went up by 50%, the fees for our facilitators increased, everything seemed to double. So we used the grant to balance things so that we didn't feel financially overwhelmed as we hadn't factored in the huge increase in costs.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE ORGANISATION GOING IN THE FUTURE?

Our goal for the next three years is to try to become as sustainable as possible. Funding, especially for women's organisations, is very, very limited. We have always been so careful with our resources, but we need to be even smarter about how we use money.

There is nothing else in Cornwall for women of ethnic minorities. In big cities there are so many resources available, but not here.

We want to prepare for the next three years in a way that ensures that when we get to the end of it, whether we get funding or not, we can carry on delivering.

This means we will be focusing on increasing our own income generation through our paid-for programmes. This will allow us to continue serving Black, Asian and minoritised women in Cornwall.



Recognition and Trust: From the Margins to the Mainstream

The Rise Fund significantly enhanced grantees' visibility and credibility, creating a virtuous cycle of recognition and support.

The fund enabled organisations to build their profile and influence. Utulivu's journey from a grassroots organisation to a sector leader demonstrates this transformation. Through investment in their website and infrastructure, they became more visible to both service users and funders:

"Our new site meant we were more visible and because of this we were noticed by other funders."

They now share their expertise at sector conferences and support other women's organisations, creating a multiplier effect across the sector.

DATA ANALYSIS:

Analysis of monitoring data showed that many organisations reported increased trust, confidence and recognition in their work, this included:

- Regular invitations to policy discussions and planning meetings
- Increased media coverage, including national broadcast coverage
- Multiple community awards and public accolades
- Stronger relationships with statutory services

"We have been expanding our project since we received this funding and clear evidence of our effective leadership is winning BBC Humberside Make a Difference Award for the best community centre in Humber and Lincolnshire. Similarly, Channel 4 News chose us to make a report on the cost of living and its effect on women."

Hull Sisters

The Hawa Trust demonstrates how enhanced credibility leads to expanded impact:

“We have been contacted for inclusion in making political statements... the council regularly now invites us to planning meetings; the Homerton NHS hospital regularly invites us to counsel pregnant FGM and domestic violence victims during pre and post-natal observations.”



A Lifeline in Uncertain Times: The Power of Responsive Grant-making

The Rise Fund's approach demonstrated how combining organisational development support with flexible core funding creates resilient organisations capable of weathering multiple crises while continuing to grow and develop.

THE IMPACT OF COMBINED SUPPORT

The dual approach of organisational development funding alongside responsive core cost support proved particularly powerful:

- Organisations could strengthen infrastructure while maintaining services
- The core cost uplift provided stability during economic uncertainty
- Rosa's flexible approach to funding allowed adaptation to emerging needs
- Organisations could focus on long-term development while meeting immediate community needs

“The core costs fund helped our organisation to provide a support helpline, advice, advocacy, opportunities, and practical help to make sure BME women and girls with lived experience of being hit hardest by the rising cost of living got the practical help they needed.”

Sandwell African Women's Association

Case study:

Bloss.m

Bloss.m is a not for profit established to provide women and girls with the skills, knowledge and network to reach their full potential, no matter their background.

The Rise Fund proved transformational for blossom at a critical moment when the organisation was at risk of closure due to Covid-19. Through the funding, they evolved from a volunteer-led initiative into a structured organisation with professional staff, reaching 162 Black girls across five London schools with their innovative leadership programme.

KEY IMPACTS:

- Hired their first full-time project manager
- Developed professional branding and a social media strategy
- Created a theory of change and strategic development plan
- Built solid foundations for national expansion



Expanded from a pilot to reaching 162 girls across five London schools



Case study: Bloss.m

Here, **bloss.m's founder Lola Olaore** and **project manager Naomi Grant** discuss the ways in which the Rise Fund help the organisation establish solid foundations after an uncertain pandemic.

CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE SERVICES BLOSS.M OFFERS?

Naomi: "We have two flagship programmes. One is BInspired, a mentorship programme where we empower women through critical junctures of their lives and connect them with mentors in the workplace. The other element is blossom scholars, where we support African-Caribbean girls by going into schools on a weekly basis to teach them about leadership and problem-solving."

Lola: "I founded blossom back in 2018. We started with the BInspired mentor programme and have successfully matched just over 350 women, aged 16 to 27, to accomplished female mentors. When we asked the participants of BInspired for feedback, one of the things that came up repeatedly was that they wished they'd had this when they were younger. So they began looking at organisations for young women like Brownies and Girl Guides, but it wasn't diverse and didn't appear representative of how the UK looked at the time. I realised we needed something specifically for Black girls. There is a lack of opportunities for Black girls, especially if they come from a low income, disadvantaged background. They are experiencing adultification, sexualisation, a lack of role models and a lack of opportunity. That is why we decided to launch a leadership programme that supports girls for five years. So we launched blossom scholars, a specialised leadership programme delivered in schools and designed exclusively for Black girls in the UK."

"We use an immersive curriculum that aims to empower the girls with a focus on leadership, technology, youth social action, experiential leadership and mental wellbeing. We go in at year 8 and follow the girls through to year 11."

350+

women, aged 16 to 27, successfully matched to accomplished female mentors



Case study: Bloss.m

“We start by helping them tackle stereotypes about themselves, their community, and the world, moving from a fixed to a growth mindset. We engage with the community and the corporate sector to invite aspirational leaders to talk to the girls. We also deliver a summer programme where the girls go on trips to broaden their experiences and exposure. When you can see it, you can believe it.

The schools we are working with are in disadvantaged areas. With 60-70% of these girls coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, our mission is to empower them to overcome systematic inequalities and achieve their full potential. This is where I feel the Rise Fund has really helped us over the last couple of years.”

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR TEAM?

Lola: “The reason why blossom.m is so important to me is that I grew up in Greenwich and there were two options for me; to go on a negative path or fix-up and go on the path that truly transformed my life. I went to one of the schools where we deliver the blossom.m scholars programme. I was fortunate to attend at a time when funding was available for youth clubs and things like dance classes. I’m a little Black girl from southeast London, now a successful woman working in the corporate world. All our directors run blossom.m around full time jobs as we are so passionate about providing better solutions for these girls. We want the girls to see positive representation. Our six blossom.m scholars facilitators are all from African and Caribbean backgrounds.”

“We think it’s important that when they go into schools, these are people who have grown up in the community where they are delivering the sessions. These ladies have all grown up in the area, and several of us have attended the schools where they are delivering the training.”



Case study: Bloss.m

WHAT DID THE RISE FUND SUPPORT YOU WITH?

Lola: “During Covid, we had to pause the BInspired programme, and, without the Rise Fund at that point in time, I was thinking about closing blossom.m down. Clients, especially corporate clients, were pausing their funding. The basic things that we wouldn't normally worry about, we were worried about. I wasn't sure if we could continue.

With the Rise Fund and other funding, we were able to hire project manager Adeline Choo, our first full-time employee. She now manages the blossom.m scholars programme, works on curriculum development and liaising with the schools to really understanding what the girls' needs are. We also took on some additional freelancers, one of whom came in and helped us map out where we were going. She focused on strategy and business development, and we now have a theory of change.

Year one, we used some of the funding to hire an agency to develop a brand that speaks to young women. Then we were able to promote our BInspired mentoring programme and establish a social media strategy.

The fund helped us employ people and contract out to build a solid foundation.”

WHAT DO YOU ENVISAGE FOR THE FUTURE OF BLOSS.M?

Lola: “We started blossom.m scholars with a small pilot, and now we're 162 girls in. We currently deliver to five schools across Greater London. The next cities we are looking to are Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds. I see blossom.m scholars becoming a flagship programme in the UK, similar to Brownies and Girl Guides. We want a national programme focusing on the critical needs of Black girls in the UK. We want to increase social mobility in the UK and provide exposure for young Black women who often don't get the exposure that their white or Asian counterparts do due to their upbringing.”

“We are trying to change the narrative. Your postcode doesn't matter; what school you went to doesn't matter; you matter as an individual.”



CRISIS RESPONSE WITHOUT COMPROMISING DEVELOPMENT

Rosa's flexible approach enabled organisations to:

- Meet the rising costs of rent and utilities reported
- Address immediate community needs
- Retain experienced staff despite economic pressures
- Maintain the momentum of organisational development
- Adapt services while building for the future

“The core cost uplift grant kept our door open, as we also introduced the food bank project. Many Black African women have nowhere else they feel able to turn to for advice and support; being socially isolated; facing mental health issues and trauma; and often having no access to money.”

African Women's Care

THE POWER OF TRUST-BASED FUNDING

The fund's approach validated that:

- Small organisations know what they need, but often lack the space to articulate it
- Flexible funding enables innovation and responsive service delivery
- Trust in leadership decisions yields powerful results
- Small grants can have phenomenal impact when awarded flexibly



Cultural Competence and Specialist Support - The Power of 'By-and-For'

The Rise Fund powerfully demonstrates why investing in by-and-for organisations is crucial for creating lasting social change.

These organisations don't just deliver services - they understand the complex intersections of culture, identity, and experience that shape their communities' needs. When given appropriate support to build their capacity, they can provide uniquely effective and culturally competent services.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN ACTION

By-and-for organisations bring distinctive strengths to their work:

- Deep community understanding
- Staff share lived experience with service users
- Services delivered in community languages
- Intimate understanding of cultural nuances and traditions
- Built-in cultural sensitivity and appropriateness

“The women and girls that come to us don't have to explain their backgrounds. We understand them.”

Roj Women's Association, which offers counselling in Turkish, Kurdish, and English



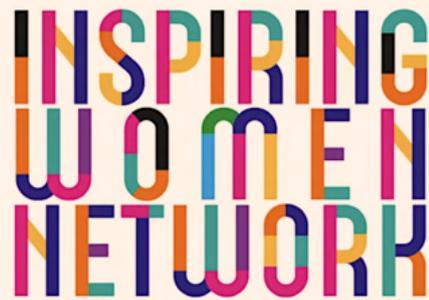
BREAKING GEOGRAPHIC BARRIERS

The Rise Fund's support of by-and-for organisations across diverse geographical areas reveals their crucial role in creating inclusive communities everywhere.

- Organisations serve as cultural bridges in areas with low racial diversity
- Grantees have developed community spaces where none existed before
- Isolated community members are connected
- Networks of cultural support are created

Inspiring Women Network's work in Cornwall demonstrates this impact.

In a region where the minority ethnic population is just 4%, they provide essential spaces for cultural connection and understanding, growing from a £20,000 annual income to over £100,000 through the fund's support.



EXPANDING ACCESS

By-and-for led organisations consistently reported breaking new ground:

- Developing culturally appropriate outreach strategies
- Creating accessible service points
- Building partnerships with mainstream providers
- Advocating for culturally competent service provision



The Rise Fund demonstrated the unique value and impact of organisations led by and for their communities. Their deep understanding of community needs, combined with enhanced organisational capacity, creates particularly effective support.



Case study:

Roj Women's Association

The Rise Fund enabled Roj Women's Association to transform from a local North London service into a pan-London organisation supporting Kurdish, Turkish and Cypriot-Turkish, migrant and refugee women and girls.

Through vital infrastructure development and staff support, the organisation has built sustainable foundations for growth, whilst maintaining their crucial culturally-specific services.

KEY IMPACTS:

Expanded from North London to become a pan-London service

- Developed comprehensive policies and a five-year business plan
- Retained key staff through secure funding
- Established clinical supervision and support structures for the team

Established in 2004 by a group of Kurdish women from Turkey, Roj Women's Association is a non-profit grassroots organisation run by and for women.

It is dedicated to supporting and empowering Kurdish, Turkish, Cypriot Turkish, migrant and refugee women and girls across London. Roj Women's Association offers English language classes, domestic violence services, employment opportunities, native-language counselling, community exercise classes and training opportunities.

Case study: Roj Women's Association

Here, project manager Fatos Usta discusses the ways in which the Rise fund helped the organisation grow to cover the whole of London and support their staff.

WHY ARE THE SERVICES YOU OFFER SO CRUCIAL TO THE COMMUNITY?

"I believe specialist services, especially those relating to language and culture, are vital.

The women and girls that come to us don't have to explain their backgrounds. We understand them. [Staff here at Roj Women's Association] all come from the same background as the group we are working with. We know the dynamics. As a migrant woman myself, I have experienced similar things to many of the service users.

It is also important that we allow service users to speak their own languages. All of us [who work for the organisation] are at least bilingual, while our counsellor provides support in Turkish, Kurdish and English. We have seen a huge demand for her services and that is only increasing."

WHAT ISSUES WERE YOU FACING BEFORE RECEIVING THE RISE FUND?

"Before applying for the fund, another project manager and I had identified that something needed to change. There were gaps in our services, and our organisation needed greater structure. Roles weren't clearly defined, and we realised we could not continue doing this work without support. I started at Roj Women's Association as a support worker. Having been a frontline worker, I knew that there wasn't the support in place for our frontline staff.

Several of our funding applications to other funds had not been approved with feedback that they appreciated our work was necessary, but preferred to support larger organisations. While that makes sense to me, our work is highly vital for the group we are working with. Funding opportunities are really limited, and so much is short-term. That's why the Rise Fund was so important."

Case study: Roj Women's Association

WHAT WAS THE RISE FUNDING USED FOR?

“The fund has had a holistic impact. Where you support one area of the organisation, it impacts other areas.

Our capacity has hugely increased [since receiving the Rise funding]. We were formerly just covering north London, but we are now a pan-London service. We have increased capacity to meet rising demand.

We also worked with a business development consultant who supported us in putting in place a five-year business plan and new policies around safeguarding, data protection, financial control, whistleblowing, adult and child safeguarding, professional boundaries and health and safety. In terms of structural changes and business development, we are now in a much better position than we were prior to receiving the funding. We know where we are going.

The fund also covered my fellow project manager's position for two years. This was crucial. Without it, she wouldn't have been able to stay with the organisation. I would have been left to oversee all the projects, act as team leader, and be the fundraising officer, all of which would have been impossible for one person.

[The fund] has also had a big impact for her. She is in a secure position and has been able to do her work without worrying about losing her job. This has allowed her to really become part of the local community groups, reach out more, and speak about our services.

Thanks to the fund, we have had the chance to work together to make vital changes, grow and improve. The cost-of-living uplift continues to pay her salary.”

“Our whole team feel more supported. It was not like that before. I have been in their position and know that we had limited opportunity and capacity to help and support each other. But we now have a clear structure and clinical supervision in place.”

“The Clinical Supervisor works with staff members in one-to-one and group settings. We are also continuing to work with a business development consultant who supports our team. [Our organisation] is completely different than it was two years ago, thanks to the Rise Fund.”



Case study: Roj Women's Association

ARE THERE EMERGING TRENDS IN THE DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE WOMEN AND GIRLS YOU SUPPORT?

"Housing is a crisis. While it is probably an issue across the UK, in London the only word we use is crisis. [Some service users who have experienced domestic violence] are struggling without the right accommodation, and for that reason alone they are going back to perpetrators. For refugees, asylum seekers and women who are not settled in the UK, they are often exempt from the support system. They cannot apply for housing, they cannot claim benefits, and they cannot stay in refuges, so this continues the abuse and violence in their lives."

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FUTURE FOR ROJ WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION? GIRLS YOU SUPPORT?

"We are planning to put into action the points of our five-year plan and deliver a monitoring system. We are also aiming to further improve the structure of our services and develop a larger domestic violence service. We need to focus on outreach and have an outreach plan in place. These are my dreams."



Sector Challenges:

Meeting Growing Need in Uncertain Times

The Rise Fund's success highlights the potential of by-and-for organisations, but also reveals significant challenges facing the sector.

Understanding these challenges is crucial for funders and policymakers seeking to support sustainable community infrastructure.

GROWING DEMAND, LIMITED CAPACITY

Grantees reported experiencing unprecedented demand for their services, highlighting the:

- Increasing complexity of cases, particularly around mental health support
- Rising needs due to cost-of-living crisis
- Growing requirements for culturally-specific support
- Heightened demand from women with no recourse to public funds

“The key challenge for us is the growing higher level of need required by the young women accessing our services. The expertise in dealing with suicide ideation, self-harm and eating disorders has been limited,”

Ashdon Jazz Academy

“We are seeing an increasing number and complexity of cases; partly due to the restrictive asylum and immigration policy and partly as our capacity and reputation grows.”

Baobab Women's Project CIC

FUNDING SUSTAINABILITY

Grantees were unanimous that the grant funding landscape presents particular challenges for small, by-and-for organisations, including:

- Difficulty securing long-term core funding
- Challenge around being “too big for small grants, too small for big grants”
- Rising operational costs outpacing available funding
- An urgent need for sustained investment in staff and infrastructure

“Core funding is always a challenge, especially when you have already received it from funders. The continuation of that can be daunting, especially when you have a small team that relies on the key people involved.”

GirlDreamer LTD

EXTERNAL PRESSURES

Many grantees reported facing increasing external pressures. These include:

- Rising hostility towards migrant and minority ethnic communities
- Increased anti-semitism affecting service delivery
- Complex immigration policies creating additional barriers
- Cost-of-living crisis affecting both service users and organisations

“Our voices need to be around the decision-making tables so we are not further marginalised by policies made by those who do not have the understanding we have.”

Women of Worth

“We support women and girls from the Charedi community who have specific needs that will support their employment journey. Unfortunately the current climate together with escalating anti-semitism, has affected our young girls and women’s access to external training and support. Consequently Goldstar is being inundated with requests for training, mentoring support.”

Goldstar Creative Marketing

THE CASE FOR SUSTAINED INVESTMENT

These challenges highlight the need for:

- Longer-term, flexible funding commitments (minimum two years)
- Investment in core costs and infrastructure
- Recognition of the unique value of by-and-for organisations
- Support for organisational development alongside service delivery
- Greater inclusion in policy and strategy development

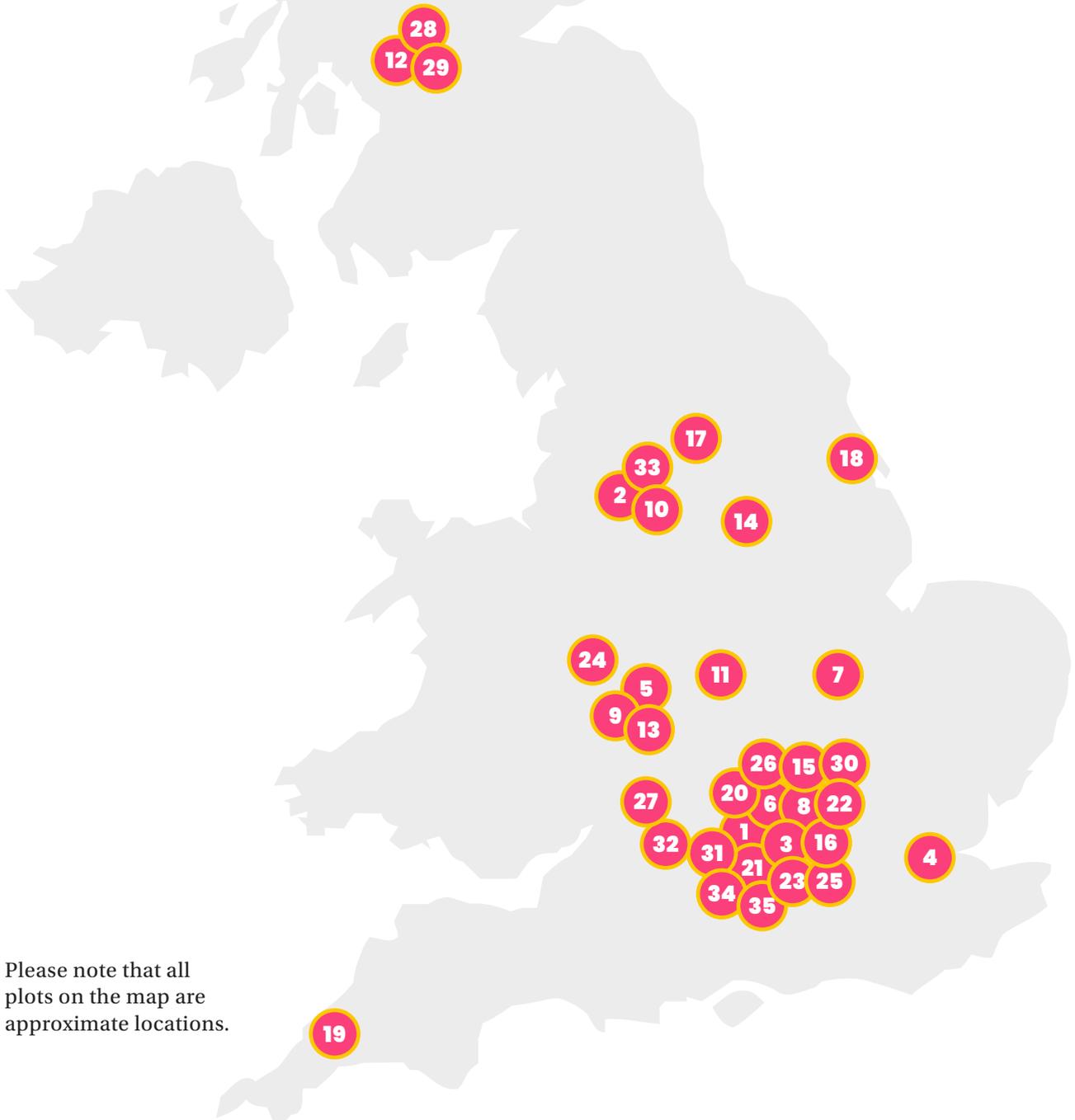
“Providing funding that is secure over two to three years would be what we would request... we would be delighted that they [funders] make some additional commitment in funding available so that we can thrive.”

Sandwell African Women Association

These challenges underscore the importance of the Rise Fund's approach to flexible, trust-based funding that supports both organisational development and responsive service delivery.

They also highlight the need for sustained investment in the by-and-for sector.

Map of grantees



Please note that all plots on the map are approximate locations.

Organisation Name	Location	Grant	Cost of living uplift	Total Grant
1. African Women's Care	London	£34,154	£15,750	£49,904
2. Angels of Hope for Women	Manchester	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
3. Ashdon Jazz Academy	London	£25,400	£11,700	£37,100
4. Asian Single Parents Network CIC	Gillingham	£15,000	£6,900	£21,900
5. Baobab Women's Project CIC	Birmingham	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
6. Came Women and Girls	London	£30,000	£13,800	£43,800
7. Chinese Women in Peterborough	Peterborough	£30,000	£13,800	£43,800
8. Deaf Ethnic Women Association	London	£33,918	£15,650	£49,568
9. Diyya Project	Stourbridge	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
10. Dynamic Support GM	Manchester	£26,000	£12,000	£38,000
11. ForwardCulture CIC	Leicester	£26,390	£12,150	£38,540
12. Gilded Lily Inspiring Enterprise CIC	Glasgow	£39,426	£18,150	£57,576
13. GIRLDREAMER LTD	Birmingham	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
14. Globalmama Enterprises	Sheffield	£12,050	£5,550	£17,600
15. Goldstar Creative Marketing	London	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
16. Highlights	London	£5,000	£2,350	£7,350
17. Hop On (Yorkshire) Ltd	Bradford	£20,000	£9,200	£29,200
18. Hull Sisters	Hull	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
19. Inspiring Women Network CIC	Truro	£38,800	£6,350	£45,150
20. Lighthouse	London	£28,000	£12,900	£40,900
21. Ocean Women's Association	London	£9,635	£4,450	£14,085
22. Peninim	London	£25,520	£11,750	£37,270
23. Roj Women's Association	London	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
24. Sandwell African Women Assoc.	Sandwell	£35,500	£16,350	£51,850
25. Southwark Every Woman's Centre	London	£14,666	£6,800	21,466
26. Step Up 2 Fitness	London	£20,000	£9,200	£29,200
27. Syrian Sisters	Oxford	£8,000	£3,757	£11,757
28. The Feel Good Women's Group	Glasgow	£19,310	£8,900	£28,210
29. The Glendale Women's Café	Glasgow	£18,795	£8,650	£27,445
30. The Hawa Trust	London	£19,590	£9,050	£28,640
31. thinkHER ambition / blossom Limited	London	£32,900	£15,150	£48,050
32. Utulivu Women's Group	Reading	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
33. Women of Worth	Bury	£13,000	£6,000	£19,000
34. Young Ladies Club	London	£40,000	£18,400	£58,400
35. Young Steps Ltd	London	£33,935	£15,650	£49,585

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