

Creating lasting change for women and girls



Foreword



Olivia Gillan
Chair, Rosa

It's a huge privilege to step into the role of Chair at such a pivotal point in Rosa's journey and I'm thrilled to be sharing our new strategy with you.

We're building on the impressive achievements of Rosa's 17-year history. In that time, we have established ourselves as the only UK-wide funder and sector builder dedicated to organisations led by and for women and girls. Working with more than 100 funders and philanthropists, we have invested over £11.5 million into the sector, supporting almost 500 organisations and reaching over 400,000 women and girls. It's a record we are deeply proud of and a legacy that powers us forward.

We can't afford to stand still. We live in an unsteady and uncertain world, where progress towards safe, healthy, and equal lives for women and girls can't be taken for granted - and hard-won rights are once again being questioned. Right now, the UK women and girls sector needs Rosa's support more than ever before.

Our Strategy is bold, rooted in collaboration and designed to meet the evolving needs of our sector. It's the result of months of thoughtful reflection, engagement and dialogue - with our funders, partners, and the amazing organisations that make up the women and girls sector. It reflects our goal to build a sector that is better funded, more resilient and more sustainable to continue transforming the lives of women and girls throughout the UK and change our society for the better.

Achieving this ambitious plan won't be easy. We know we'll need to stay focused while listening to the different voices within our sector, remaining agile and responsive in a rapidly changing world. And critically, we also know that we can't do this alone.

Rosa's strength has always come from the incredible community around us - charities, funders and partners - and we hope that we can continue to count on your support to make our shared goals a reality. In return, we commit to keeping you informed on our progress - sharing our challenges and learnings as openly as we share our successes.

Together, we can create lasting change for the women and girls sector.

We look forward to embarking on this exciting journey with you.



*"Our strategy is bold, **rooted in collaboration** and designed to meet the evolving needs of the sector."*

About Rosa



Rosa remains the first and only UK-wide funder with a mission to invest in women-led organisations that champion and support women and girls.

We do this because women's and girls' organisations are crucial in driving and delivering positive change for individuals, communities and in wider society.

To develop our new strategy, we undertook our biggest stakeholder consultation yet. We spoke to women's and girls' organisations across the UK and to a wide range of our stakeholders, so we could gain a deep understanding of their challenges today and their priorities for the future. We also asked what Rosa is doing well, what needs improvement and what our stakeholders would like to see from us in this new strategy.

This process has confirmed the critical need for the work we do – strengthening and championing the women and girls sector to ensure its long-term sustainability.



Our new strategy sets out how we plan to do this, creating lasting change for women and girls.

Vision

A society in which women and girls are safe, healthy and equal.

Mission

Rosa contributes to empowering women and girls by drawing in and distributing funding and resources to the women and girls sector, by strengthening organisations and by using our voice to achieve change.

Purpose

Rosa's purpose is to build and sustain a buoyant, properly funded, effectively led, well-networked women and girls sector because this is critical to creating significant, effective and positive change in women's and girls' lives. This purpose recognises that strong organisations led by women for women and girls have been critical for driving and sustaining all aspects of positive change in women's and girls' lives over centuries.

Values

We are...

- **Bold:** We seize new opportunities, and we are not afraid to take risks in pursuit of our mission and vision.
- **Agile:** We are a responsive funder, adapting quickly to the changing needs of the women and girls sector and of wider society.
- **Collaborative:** We collaborate and partner to reach a common goal.
- **Inclusive:** We value the diversity of the UK women and girls sector and seek to represent and include the whole sector with fairness and equity in all our work.
- **Transparent:** We strive to improve, to be open and accountable.

The context for Rosa's new strategy

We know that this is an extremely challenging time for women's and girls' organisations. Our strategy will create the conditions for the sector to be strong and sustainable.

Women and girls disproportionately endure the worst of economic policies and societal conditions like austerity, welfare cuts and rising prices. They continue to face persistent misogyny and sexism, with many also experiencing racism, poverty and male violence. It increasingly feels that women's and girls' hard-won rights are under threat.

Against this backdrop, the UK needs a thriving and resilient women and girls sector, made up of organisations led by women driving positive change for women and girls as well as wider society.

However, currently the sector remains seriously underfunded, creating an unacceptable risk to its survival. [Our research](#) shows that just 1.8% of all charitable grants in the UK are awarded to women's and girls' organisations. When it is awarded, funding tends to be short-term and provided in response to immediate events. This threatens organisations' capacity to drive long-term change and dismantle the systems which cause harm to women and girls.

In this climate, women-led frontline service organisations face rising demand from women and girls with complex needs at the sharp end of intersecting inequalities and discrimination. At the same time, those organisations focused on influencing policy must increasingly broaden their efforts to address potentially harmful legislative changes. Low pay, long hours, and staff burnout only add to the strain.

Just 1.8% of all charitable grants in the UK are awarded to women's and girls' organisations.



[Our research](#) shows that 90% of organisations have experienced increase in demand for services; while at the same time, 64% have experienced either no change or a deterioration in finances. Individually, women's and girls' organisations do everything from providing services to women and girls, to securing, protecting and advancing women's and girls' rights. As a sector, they contribute to changing the systems which cause harm to women and girls by shifting attitudes, culture, law and practice for everyone's benefit.

So Rosa's strategy comes at a critical moment for the women and girls sector.

We are proud of our record of investing in and championing the women and girls sector across the UK; of partnering with institutional and major donors to create grants programmes that address the evolving needs of women's and girls' organisations; of influencing donors to invest in the sector directly; and of producing research which raises awareness and shifts understanding of the incredible work undertaken by the sector and the challenges it faces in doing that work.

Since 2008 we have invested over £11.5m into women's and girls' organisations, which has impacted over 400,000 women and girls.

Over the next three years we will build on this track record, living our values through all our work and continuing to champion and invest in women-led women's and girls' organisations.

We will do this because we know that when women and girls are empowered to live safe, healthy, and equal lives, all of society benefits. A buoyant and resilient sector is essential to making this a reality. We are uniquely placed to champion and fund the sector, inspiring donors and partners to join us.

Our strategy is the start of our next three years: we are galvanised and ready to play our part in creating lasting change and a women and girls sector that thrives.

Our Strategic Objectives 2025 – 2028



What we will do

1. We will fund for a thriving sector



We will use our grant making expertise to fund women's and girls' organisations so they can flourish and thrive, meeting the needs of individuals, influencing progress in women's and girls' rights and creating the conditions for a gender equal society.

2. We will build for a resilient sector



We will conduct and share research to improve understanding of the sector's challenges and impact. We will strengthen the sector's capacity through training and networking opportunities. Our goal is to contribute to sustaining a women's and girls' sector that is resilient, well-resourced, and collaborative.

3. We will inspire investment for a sustainable sector



We cannot do it alone. We will use our unique position as a UK-wide funder of the women and girls sector to engage and inspire other funders and philanthropists to invest more. By expanding funding, we can secure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Strategic Objective 1: Fund for a thriving sector



The Challenge

The women and girls sector is underfunded: just 1.8%¹ of all charitable grants in the UK are awarded to women's and girls' organisations.

Funding is often short-term, provided in response to immediate events. This threatens women's and girls' organisations' capacity to drive long-term change and dismantle harmful systems.

What We Will Do

Continue to fund the broad range of organisations that make up the women and girls sector. We will prioritise those with greatest need, including smaller grassroots organisations in areas of deprivation and those led by and for Black and racially minoritised women and girls.

Deliver grants programmes that address the evolving needs of women and girls. We will continue to run grants programmes which align with our values and are shaped by active and ongoing engagement with women's and girls' organisations. We will keep listening too, gathering evidence and quickly responding to emerging challenges and priorities.

Centre the voice of the women and girls sector in all our grant making. Our programmes will be shaped by the expertise of the sector. We will continue to resource women's and girls' organisations to deliver essential campaigning, advocacy and

¹ Mapping the UK Women and Girls Sector and its Funding: Where Does the Money Go?, Centre for Economic and Social Research and Rosa, April 2023.

influencing work, amplifying and raising their voices to bring lasting change.

Build new partnerships to catalyse investment and grow the support for the women and girls sector. This will be an opportunity to share learning and will mean more grant makers can contribute to the vital work that the sector does for women and girls.

Increase our focus on improving the lives of girls, recognising that girls' organisations are a distinct part of the sector with unique funding needs. We will highlight their impact on individual girls' lives and their essential contribution to advancing the rights of every girl.

Specific Projects Will Include:

- Undertaking strategic consultation with the sector, listening to its needs, and delivering grant programmes which are responsive to evolving opportunities and challenges.
- Collaborating with partner funders and philanthropists to develop grant-making programmes that are impactful, sustainable, and responsive.
- Building focused support for the sector, for example girls' organisations, both through targeted grant-making and by fostering meaningful partnerships to help amplify its vital work.

The Difference We Will Make

- Women and girls will have **better access to specialist services** provided by women's and girls' organisations.
- Women's and girls' **voices will be better amplified;** their **rights improved and protected.**
- Grassroots and community-based women's and girls' organisations will be **better resourced**

Girls' organisations are a distinct part of the sector with unique funding needs,

Strategic Objective 2: Build for a resilient sector



The Challenge

Women's and girls' organisations often struggle to build capacity, skills, resources or confidence to sustain and grow their work effectively. This is a particular issue for smaller and grassroots organisations.

Organisations face challenges finding opportunities to connect, collaborate, and share knowledge, leading to missed opportunities for collective action.

What We Will Do

Strengthen women's and girls' organisations through high-quality sector-specific training. We will build skills and confidence across the sector through our impactful capacity-building training. This will be flexible to meet the unique needs of the organisations we support and based on our learning and feedback from the sector.

Build a thriving network of women's and girls' organisations through peer support and collaboration. We will enable connections between sector organisations across the UK, linking them with each other and with those who influence change. Connecting together will reduce isolation, share learning, foster innovation, enable collective action and build solidarity in challenging times.

Produce evidence, data and research that acts as a catalyst for the sustainability and growth of the women and girls sector. We will challenge assumptions through evidence, demonstrating the value of the women and girls sector for individual women and girls, and the positive impact it has on wider society.

We will enable connections between sector organisations across the UK.

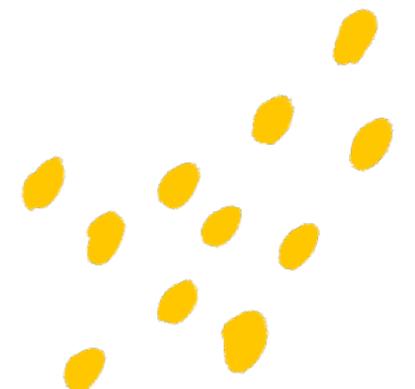


Specific Projects Include:

- Producing a regular survey of women's and girls' organisations, to track trends over time and increase understanding of the sector and its impact.
- Delivering an annual conference to highlight the incredible work of the women and girls sector, discuss emerging trends and provide valuable opportunities for organisations to connect, learn, and grow together.
- Scoping new areas for research, including in partnership with others, to ensure the evidence we produce is relevant and that its impact is amplified.
- Creating a programme of opportunities for women's and girls' organisations to come together, network and connect.
- Increasing our training offer to a wider pool of women's and girls' organisations.

The Difference We Will Make

- Women-led organisations will have **more effective leadership**, be **more sustainable, better connected** and will **feel part of a stronger movement**.
- Women's and girls' organisations will **enhance their fundraising, advocacy and influencing** work through our research and evidence.
- Other funders will have **solid evidence** on which to build their own women and girls focused funding streams.



Strategic Objective 3: Inspire investment for a sustainable sector



The Challenge

There is a chronic lack of funding prioritised for women's and girls' organisations by UK funders: only 1.8% of charitable grants are awarded to women's and girls' organisations and currently fewer than 2% of UK funders cite women and/or girls as among their main funding criteria².

Government and public sector funding is complex to access and **fails to prioritise the work delivered by specialist women-led women's and girls' organisations.**

What We Will Do

Produce evidence and research to support funders and philanthropists to increase investment in the sector. We know that for the women's and girls' sector to thrive, it needs much more investment. Over the next three years, we will work closely with strategic funders to help them see the incredible potential of this sector, encouraging them to increase their support and improve sustainable funding for women's and girls' organisations across the UK.

Encourage statutory funders to prioritise funding for women's and girls' organisations. We believe that the process for awarding statutory funding needs to be adapted, so that funding for women's and girls' organisations is not only

² 40 out of 2,000 organisations listed in the 2023/24 *Directory of Grant Making Trusts*, (Directory of Social Change).

protected but also reflects the immense value of their expertise. Over the next three years, we will identify experts and partners with whom we can work to make this change.

Build sustainable income streams that allow Rosa to continue to operate as a grantmaker, capacity builder and influencer. We must raise every penny we spend on our work, so we will work to expand our network of donors and harness the power of a dynamic funding community that can help create lasting change.

*We must **raise every penny** we spend on our work.*

Projects Will Include:

- Establishing a programme of unique engagement opportunities with Rosa and the women and girls sector, including The Thrive Network, a new giving community.
- Producing communications that highlights the urgent need for greater investment in the women and girls sector to provide donors with the evidence they need to make informed, impactful giving decisions.
- Providing strategic partnership opportunities for Trusts and Foundations, individual donors, businesses, collectives and social justice movements.
- Exploring new investment models to help improve Rosa's long-term sustainability, including the potential for establishing an endowment fund.
- Developing Rosa's legacy fundraising approach.

The Difference We Will Make

- Funders and power holders will **better understand the value and impact** of women's and girls' organisations on women's and girls' lives.
- More funders and philanthropists will **prioritise funding** for the vital work of the women and girls sector.



Ready for the challenge

We need a solid foundation to deliver our strategy, so over the next three years we will invest in our team, organisational culture, and processes.

To meet the challenge, we will:

- Reaffirm our unwavering commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion to drive the decisions we make and improve the way we work.
- Continue to foster an inclusive culture underpinned by our values.
- Further strengthen our highly professional, committed and experienced team through ongoing investment in training and development of staff and trustees.
- Embed our approach to organisational finance, data and risk, ensuring we remain a resilient and efficient organisation able to withstand future unpredictability.
- Invest in our capacity, including fundraising and evidence, research and evaluation.

Measuring Progress

Our strategic objectives give us a strong framework for prioritising and improving our work.

For each objective, we will track our progress against our goals as well as the impact of our work using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Our findings will enable us to adapt and improve our work and will also allow us to celebrate our successes.

*For each objective, we will **track our progress** against our goals.*

We will use our annual report to highlight our progress against our objectives and share our achievements to date.

A thriving, resilient, sustainable women and girls sector is vital for all of society.

Our strategy directly addresses the challenges and lays out the part we will play in creating lasting change for the sector.

We hope you'll join us.



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