



**BIG  
CHANGE.**

**TOGETHER  
WE SPARK  
LASTING  
CHANGE**

**BIG CHANGE STRATEGY TO 2030** ✨

# REIMAGINING HOW WE SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE

**Big Change's ambitions for young people and for systems change are unashamedly hopeful.** We believe a new way is possible: a future where every young person can thrive, backed by people and ideas that unlock their purpose, agency, relationships, and opportunities to grow.

**Young people are growing up in a world characterised by uncertainty and rapid change.**

They face uncertain career paths, economic conditions that make milestones harder to reach, and a pace of change that can feel overwhelming rather than exciting. But the systems meant to support them - education, mental health, youth services, and care - were built for a different era. Disconnected and under strain, they're no longer meeting the needs, hopes, or realities of young people today. As a result, many young people feel unprepared for the future and let down by institutions designed to help them thrive.

**We believe this demands more than reform, it calls for a fundamental reimagining of how we support young people.**

This is why we back leaders who are closest to the issues and brave enough to challenge the status quo. We fund, mentor, and learn alongside those working across boundaries to create deep, lasting change, so that every young person can thrive in a world that's changing fast. Together, we're building a future that puts young people at the centre. Our role is to support, connect, and act as a catalyst for the leaders doing the work. **Together we spark lasting change.**



# WE NEED **5** SYSTEM SHIFTS TO ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE **THRIVE:**

## FROM

### 01. SURVIVING

Young people coping with a one size fits all system designed around narrow success measures.

### 02. TREATING SYMPTOMS

Short term, reactive fixes that address surface level symptoms.

### 03. TOP DOWN CHANGE

Policies and change is driven from the top down by leaders without the input or experience of those affected.

### 04. COMPETITION

Current systems encourage competition by pitting people and initiatives against each other.

### 05. OUTDATED THINKING

Funding and resources are locked into systems that reinforce injustice, inequality, and stagnation.

## TO

### 01. THRIVING

Young people are flourishing within systems that take a more holistic approach to supporting them.

### 02. LASTING CHANGE

Deep and long term approaches that address root causes of systemic problems.

### 03. CO-CREATED CHANGE

Sharing power and resources across generations so that people and communities co-create the solutions they want and need, grounded in lived experience.

### 04. COLLABORATION

Creating the conditions for people and organisations to learn and act together for greater impact.

### 05. EMERGENT THINKING

Invest in innovation, equity and backing approaches that challenge the status quo, and centre justice and fairness.

# VISION

Society working together so that all young people are set up to thrive in life.

# MISSION

We find, back, and connect leaders who are reshaping systems with and for young people.

# WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY:

## SOCIETY WORKING TOGETHER

We mean everyone, from families and schools, to businesses, governments, and communities, recognising their shared responsibility for young people's futures. It's about breaking down the barriers between different sectors and generations, so that young people, and the people who support them aren't left to navigate challenges alone. When adults and young people share power and collaborate together, they create the conditions where more young people can flourish.

## ALL YOUNG PEOPLE

We mean every young person, regardless of their background or circumstances. When young people struggle, it's not because there's something wrong with them - it's because the systems around them aren't working. We believe in shifting these systems to be inclusive and equitable, designed from the ground up to work for everyone.

## SET UP TO THRIVE

We believe that young people thrive when they have a sense of purpose, knowing what matters to them and why. They have agency when they are surrounded by meaningful, trusting relationships, and when they have ongoing opportunities to learn and grow.



# TOGETHER WE SPARK LASTING CHANGE

Over the past decade, we've learnt so much from the brilliant leaders we support, and we've seen what's possible when people choose hope, work together, and reimagine what young people need. Today, that sense of purpose feels more urgent and more inspiring than ever.

With our community of funders, donors, and big changemakers, we are on a mission to ensure young people can thrive in life.



# THREE AREAS WE CAN MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE:

## EXPANDING WHO LEADS

We'll focus on finding leaders closest to the problems, those with bold ideas for systems change. We'll work hard to reach people who might not typically have access to funding, visibility, or networks. We are committed to sharing power and bringing leaders together from across the generations.

## STRENGTHENING HOW WE WORK TOGETHER

We'll build an ecosystem of support that helps leaders and their ideas create lasting change. We'll create spaces where leaders can rest, connect, and grow, finding joy and learning together, and becoming stronger through collaboration. By building trust and sharing insight, we'll help our community both sustain one another and act together as a powerful force for change

## CHAMPIONING LASTING CHANGE

We'll harness the collective insight and experience of leaders at the forefront of change to champion shifts in the conditions that enable lasting transformation. From how funding flows, how we measure success, how we support leaders, to the mindset shifts that open up the doors to change, we'll bridge perspectives, generations and sectors, because big challenges can't be solved alone.



# 1.OBJECTIVE

## WE WILL FIND AND BACK LEADERS WHO ARE ON A MISSION TO SET YOUNG PEOPLE UP TO THRIVE

We will find and fund a community of 100 intergenerational leaders with bold ideas, deep insight into the challenges they're tackling, and a commitment to connecting systems and communities to create lasting change for young people.

We will work with leaders, young and old, with lived or direct experience and the drive to rethink and reshape the systems that affect young lives. We support these ideas at the earliest stages, when support is hardest to find, selecting those with the greatest potential to realise our shared hopes for change.



### We will build:

- An understanding of the areas where young people face the greatest challenges, and where opportunities for meaningful change are strongest.
- New ways to identify and support leaders who are closest to the issues and best placed to lead solutions.



### With a focus on:

- Leaders with lived or learned experience of the challenges they're addressing.
- Funding and support co-designed with those most affected.
- Active partnerships that increase the collective impact of our community.



### We will track and measure:

- The ideas we receive when we open new calls for applications for funding and support.
- The progress of ideas towards system-level change and the impact they have on young people.
- The impact of leaders and ideas on systems, including follow-on support and influence.



### Resulting in:

A diverse, intergenerational community of Big Changemakers who are actively demonstrating that a new way is possible by creating lasting change with and for young people.

# 2.OBJECTIVE

## WE WILL BUILD NETWORKS OF SUPPORT WITH AND FOR OUR COMMUNITY OF LEADERS TO DRIVE CHANGE TOGETHER

**We will nurture a powerful community of leaders by building trust, sharing insights, learning, and acting together. We will ensure our community of leaders come from different sectors, generations, and backgrounds, and are united by a shared vision and values.**

**As they learn from one another, share challenges, and collaborate, they will grow in strength, resilience, and reach. Together, they will become a powerful force for change.**



### **We will build:**

A community of values-aligned leaders that share, learn, and act together to drive long-term impact, alongside an ecosystem of partners supporting them.



### **With a focus on:**

- Creating support that unlocks and sustains the impact of leaders and their innovative ideas.
- Fostering a culture of shared learning, collaboration, and collective action.



### **We will track:**

- The length, breadth, and depth of partnerships.
- Engagement levels and feedback from the community.
- Quality of engagement within the community.
- Financial sustainability of Big Change in line with our impact goals.



### **Resulting in:**

A Big Change community where leaders feel supported, connected, and empowered to work with courage and resilience.

# 3.OBJECTIVE

## WE WILL CHAMPION DEEP-ROOTED SYSTEMS CHANGE

**We don't just back change, we help change the conditions that make it possible.**

**We will amplify the leadership, practices, and relationships that make change stick, and bring the lived experience of leaders together to shift the systems that too often hold change back.**

**We will champion how lasting change really happens: through people, relationships, shared power, and learning over time. By amplifying the practice and leadership of those at the forefront of change, we will help influence wider norms about what change looks like.**

**At the same time, we will surface the collective insight and experience of these leaders to shape the systems around them: from how funding flows, to how success is measured, how leaders are supported, and how decisions are made. This is how we make systems move away from hindering change to enabling it.**



### We will build:

- Collective insight and learning by convening leaders to share experience, evidence, and practice.
- Clear narratives, frameworks, and stories that show how change happens and why it matters.
- Partnerships across philanthropy, government, business, and beyond to amplify influence and unlock follow-on support.



### With a focus on:

- Ensuring research and insight amplify the voices and experiences of those closest to the challenges.
- Championing trust-based, equitable, and intergenerational approaches to change.
- Bridging perspectives, sectors, and systems so learning travels further.



### We will track:

- The influence of our collective insight on funding, policy, and practice.
- Engagement with shared narratives about lasting change for young people.
- Intergenerational collaboration, equity, trust-based practice, and learning.



### Resulting in:

- Powerful insights that shift narratives, policies, and practice.
- More funding and support that enables long-term change for young people.
- Systems that better reflect how change actually happens, and who makes it happen.



### And stay true to our commitments:

- Intergenerational collaboration.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Trust-based practices.
- Learning and growth.

# OUR MODEL OF THRIVING

WE WANT SYSTEMS TO SHIFT (1-4) - SO THAT YOUNG PEOPLE CAN THRIVE (5-8).

## PURPOSE

**1** BROADEN OUTCOMES  
A world that nurtures an ambitious set of goals for young people, rethinking the way society understands success by valuing the whole child.

**5** SENSE OF PURPOSE  
Young people stay curious and take opportunities to live meaningfully and with purpose.

**4** PRIORITISE LEARNING  
A world that prioritises learning, adapting and growing to support ongoing change.

## GROWTH

## AGENCY

SHARE POWER **2**  
A world that works across generations with young people and communities to create change together.

AGENCY AND POWER **6**  
Young people believe in themselves and their ability to influence their lives and the world around them.

MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS **7**  
Young people enjoy access to deep networks of support with strong and trusting relationships.

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS **3**  
A world that fosters trust and relationships between people, organisations and breaks down barriers.

## RELATIONSHIPS

YOUNG PEOPLE  
ARE SET UP TO  
THRIVE IN LIFE.

## BUILDING ON OVER 12 YEARS OF BIG CHANGE:

# WE FIND AND BACK LEADERS

**We believe in the power of people to create lasting change.** For over a decade, we've worked with an intergenerational community of leaders and partners who are sparking bold, systemic change for young people.

A core part of our work has been finding and backing exceptional leaders who turn lived experience into powerful ideas. Their achievements have taught us what effective early-stage support requires, and why it matters.

**Our early backing has helped ideas grow into national movements:**

- **In 2013**, we supported a pilot with Frontline; it is now England's largest social work charity, training 2,400 social workers who have reached 150,000 families.
- **In 2014**, we backed Voice 21's Oracy project in one school; it now works with 200,000 students across 850 schools, and in 2025 oracy skills became part of the national curriculum.
- **In 2017**, we funded 50 Things To Do Before You're Five, and they are now reaching one in eight children under five nationwide.

**We have backed over 66 projects. This support has contributed to improving the lives of over 8 million young people. And the £5 million we provided in early funding has unlocked more than £60 million in follow-on investment. This unlocked an incredible £12 for every £1 we invest.**

There is no single solution to the challenges young people face. Real change comes from backing multiple approaches, valuing the things people experience in their communities, and constantly learning as we grow. We continued to evolve our model, launching the Big Education Challenge in 2022, and the Spark Awards in 2025, to ensure we back the leaders closest to the problem who have the ambition to shift systems.

## INSIGHTS



### EARLY-STAGE FUNDING FOR NEW IDEAS

Bold, insight-led ideas often struggle to find support at the earliest stages, which is why we focus our efforts on filling that gap and inspiring others to do the same



### BACK PEOPLE, NOT JUST PROJECTS

To shift systems, we need to build trust, share power, and commit to investing in people, their learning, growth, and resilience..



### LEADERS NEED A DIFFERENT KIND OF SUPPORT

Leaders of all ages need long-term, human support through funding, community connection, and capacity-building.

**BUILDING ON OVER 12 YEARS OF BIG CHANGE:****WE LISTEN, LEARN,  
AND ACT TOGETHER**

- Alongside backing leaders in the UK, we have spent the past decade listening, learning and acting together with global partners, researchers and communities. By convening diverse voices and working across generations, we have become a catalyst for change, helping shape the ideas, insights and relationships needed to shift the system.
- Through long-term collaborations with organisations such as Teach For All, the OECD, HundrED, Brookings, Restless Development, YouthxYouth, and more, we've deepened our understanding of how meaningful change happens. In 2023 we co-led an intergenerational programme with Salzburg Global Seminar and developed a Guide to more Inclusive and Intergenerational Convening which was launched alongside the UN General Assembly.
- In the New Education Story, over 30 global leaders explored what it takes to transform systems by shifting purpose, power and practice, and sharing leadership across generations. The insights highlighted that systems change must be done with, not to, young people, and that progress accelerates when adults and young people lead side by side.
- The Big Education Conversation, a campaign to get people across the world talking about the change we need to see in education systems, galvanised conversations across 35 countries. We provided the tools and confidence to encourage communities to come together to reimagine the future of education and learning, sharing best practice from different countries.

- Insight gathered from our global convening underpins the pillars of our new strategy: supporting visionary leaders, connecting people to drive collective action, and championing change. It reinforces that systems change is always a shared endeavour, and is possible when people act together.

**INSIGHTS****WE NEED A NEW KIND OF LEADERSHIP**

We back purpose driven leaders who lead with courage, generosity, and humility, and who are close to the issues they're trying to change.

**THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION**

The challenges facing young people are complex and interconnected. Lasting change comes from the collective action of people, perspectives, and approaches from across systems.

**CHANGE WITH, NOT TO, YOUNG PEOPLE**

For change to be meaningful and lasting, power and agency need to be shared across generations and communities. And change needs to happen with, not to young people.

# BUILDING ON OVER 12 YEARS OF BIG CHANGE



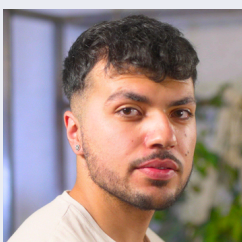
It's exciting to see an organisation genuinely working hard to support changemakers and using such a brave model. This kind of funding creates the conditions for the radical shifts that we so badly need to start taking place.



**Eliza-Reid Perks**  
Education Activist



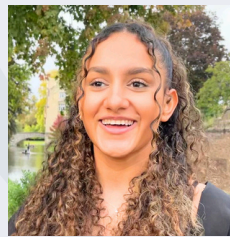
I grew up in a world where drug dealers were the only successful entrepreneurs I knew, so, I started a social enterprise, teaching skills to young people involved or at risk and empowering them to become successful business owners and leaders as an alternative to crime.



**Farhad Gohar**  
Founder of Big Change-funded programme, Potential



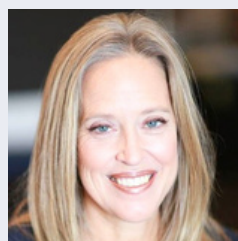
Shared power multiplies strength. By distributing authority and responsibility for transforming education among individuals and groups, you unlock a collective force that far surpasses the sum of its parts.



**Aliyah Irabor-York**  
Founder, Pupil Power, former Big Change Associate



Creating space for debates and discussions is a crucial part of fostering system change. Big Change's investment in people and relationship building, and in enabling everyone to be at their best, has put them on a trajectory to contribute more than they might have ever envisioned.



**Wendy Kopp**  
CEO, Teach For All

# OUR PATHWAY TO CHANGE



## Building on our experience we have chosen to:

- **Work with leaders** who are insight-led and focused on deep-rooted, lasting system change.
- **Create spaces** where everyone working with and for us feels respected, included, and truly valued.
- **Focus on building trust**, care, and invest in relationships, recognising they are the fuel of lasting change.
- **Work in partnership**, always asking who else should be here and how can we Collaborate rather than compete.

# IMPACT DRIVES OUR WORK



**Big Change has been a powerful partner in my work. They didn't arrive with a fixed agenda or a prescriptive model. Instead, they asked the most important question: "What do you need to make this possible, and how can we help remove the barriers?"**

They didn't just fund a project, they validated a vision. They helped me see Emoco not just as a temporary programme that gets one run-of-the-mill and then dissipates into nothing, but as a potential social enterprise: something that could scale, deepen, and become part of reimagining education and belonging in Blackpool - and beyond!

They asked, "What do you believe in?" That kind of trust changed everything for me. With their support, I was able to grow Emoco beyond one school. Their belief in the work gave me the space to innovate, to listen deeply, and to build the foundations for real, systemic change. But what stands out even more is the community Big Change creates. I often call it my Big Change family, and I don't use that word lightly. I'm quite introverted, often reclusive. But this community truly feels like a warm collective. It gives you a sense of belonging.

Big Change backs the messy, beautiful, people-powered parts of transformation, the kind that starts with relationships, not just metrics. Big Change focuses on those projects that go upstream and tackle the problem at the source, not sticking-plaster solutions.



**Andrew Speight**  
Founder of Emoco

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Emoco, a project supporting schools to improve wellbeing has reached more than 4,000 pupils, directly improving opportunities and mental health. They have also helped secure £2.3 million for place-based partnerships in their area.

# IMPACT DRIVES OUR WORK



At Lighthouse we believe that every child in care deserves the same opportunities as everyone else. Young people need a place to call home, they need great people around them and they need great opportunities in life. Big Change backed us to create this when we were at a very early stage and that was an incredible thing to have.



**Emmanuel Akpang-Inwang**  
Founder of The Lighthouse  
Pedagogy Trust

## GROWTH

Lighthouse have collaborated with 18 local authorities as well as over 30 other organisations, working to improve the lives of children in care across the UK.

## YOUTH VOICE

We supported #BeeWell, a youth-centred programme who are amplifying the voices of more than 130,000 young people, in order to improve their wellbeing.

## WORKING TOGETHER

Our community brought their insight and evidence to share contributions to the curriculum and assessment review. This joined up approach made it simple for their networks to participate confidently, and champion change together.

# IMPACT DRIVES OUR WORK



We can only change the outcomes when we change the rules of the system. I've created The New School, because I believe we can do things differently. I think that education can be inclusive of all young people.



**Lucy Stephens**  
Founder, The New School



Big Change inspires me because it dares to believe in the extraordinary power of people to drive transformation.



**Maryam Chowdhury**  
Founder and Director,  
Beyond the Bias, Big  
Change Trustee

## WELLBEING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Through The Firefly Project, 350 professionals have been trained to support 10,000 young people dealing with grief in over a 1,000 schools.

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

We backed Rekindle, who are reviving a love of learning in young people. We invested in them early and they are working across the country, mentoring under-served young people.

# IMPACT DRIVES OUR WORK



Big Change invests in people who want to see a real change, not just a minor improvement. They are open about being on a learning journey and bringing everyone along on it.



**Ed Fido**  
Founder, London  
Interdisciplinary School



Huge kudos and thanks to Big Change, your foresight and bravery in backing oracy was the spark that enabled Voice 21 to ignite. The APPG report you funded called for exactly the framework the Government has now introduced and your sustained support and championing of oracy helped make the small steps forward that has resulted in big change.



**Beccy Earnshaw**  
Charity Leader

## TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

At the London Interdisciplinary School, our early-stage funding helped create a new kind of education, one that tackles real-world problems across disciplines. It is now named one of the UK's 100 most innovative startups.

The Difference, an organisation improving outcomes for the most vulnerable children by raising the status and expertise of those who educate them, has improved chances for over 200,000 students by training leaders to improve whole school inclusion.

# THE BIG CHANGE WAY

**Our values guide and inform the way we work with each other, with our partners and with our community.**

They are inspired by, and embedded in our ways of working, and our commitment to being intergenerational, equitable and inclusive in everything we do.

We won't allow external pressures to bend or influence our values.

## UNDAUNTED

To create impact, we need to be brave, take risks, remain hopeful, and never give up. We enjoy hearing opposing points of view, and we encourage diverse perspectives to deliver our best work. We are privileged to work with and for young people, and we listen to everyone who works with and for us.

## HUMAN-CENTRED

We learn when we make mistakes, and we encourage everyone to be proud of who they are and where they come from. We believe everyone works with good intentions, and we listen to foster understanding and collaboration. We do our best to ensure everyone we work with has a sense of belonging and can contribute.

## CONNECTED

We invest in relationships and networks to bring people and ideas together from different walks of life to build a community focussed on impact. We commit to having difficult conversations, and embracing messiness. And we consistently ask ourselves - who isn't here? Whose perspective are we missing?

## INSIGHT-LED

We seek to understand through asking questions, digging deeper and listening with curiosity and humility to the needs and perspectives of our community and all those we work with. We are happy to get things wrong in order to learn how to get things right.

## CATALYTIC

By connecting people we build momentum for the change we want to see in the world. We inspire and enable those around us to take action individually and collectively. We hold ourselves accountable for connecting with others and facilitating spaces that foster collaboration.

# INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

**At Big Change, we believe that lasting change happens with young people, not to them.** Intergenerational collaboration is central to how we find, back, and connect leaders who are reimagining the systems that shape young people's lives.

We know that people of different generations bring different kinds of wisdom, energy, and experience. When young people and adults lead together, they generate ideas, relationships, and change that are more relevant, creative, and sustainable.

**That's why we are committed to sharing power, creating equitable spaces for participation, and valuing every generation's contribution.**

- We work to ensure that young people have meaningful influence in shaping decisions and driving change. We are learning to build the conditions for collaboration, time, trust, flexibility, and care, that allow diverse generations to learn and lead together.
- Our goal is not only to model intergenerational collaboration within Big Change but to help our wider community of leaders do the same.
- Together, we can show that shared leadership across generations is not only possible but essential to creating systems that truly enable all young people to thrive.

# EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

**Equity, diversity, and inclusion are not add-ons to our mission; they are at its core.** They shape how we work, whom we fund, the kind of change we seek to catalyse, and the just systems we seek to create.

We recognise that many communities, and the organisations working alongside them, continue to face systemic barriers to resources, opportunities, and participation.

**We are committed to listening, learning, and collaborating to create fairer, more inclusive, and more accessible systems of support, within Big Change and across the funding ecosystem.**

- We are learning to identify and address bias in our internal policies, practices, and decision-making, ensuring that no one is excluded or disadvantaged based on race, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, or any other aspect of identity.
- We are committed to becoming an anti-oppressive and anti-racist organisation, building equity into everything we do.
- We approach this work with humility and accountability. We invite challenge, embrace feedback, and commit to transparent reflection and progress.
- We ensure that those historically under served are supported to thrive and lead change in their communities.

# THANK YOU

To everyone who has been part of our work and stood with us: funders, partners, youth consultants, friends, and fellow changemakers, thank you.

**Your belief in the potential of young people, your commitment to doing things differently, and your trust in us and our community make our work possible.**

This strategy is a plan and a call for change. We're calling for more collaboration, more shared leadership across generations, and for deep, long-term commitment to systems that truly work for all young people.

**Whether you're new to Big Change, or you have been part of our story for years - join us as we back those who are reimagining the future, for and with young people.**



**WE ARE**  
**UNASHAMEDLY**  
**HOPEFUL**

**BIG**  
**CHANGE.**