



**Blaggrave**

# Leading with hope

A vision for a hopeful future: grounded  
in community, led by young people.

# Leading with Hope

*In community, in perpetuity.*

**Building on our work empowering and championing young people facing (or at risk of facing) deep-rooted inequalities over the last twelve years, we are co-creating a bold new vision with young people (aged 16–30) to focus on deeply investing in youth-centred change in Portsmouth, London, and Birmingham.**

**We are starting by investing in buildings and community spaces in these areas for young changemakers: places to gather, lead, learn and build lasting support around them and their wider communities.**

**We are committed to working with young people facing (or at risk of facing) deep-rooted inequalities and their wider communities in these places over the next decade, with the intention of creating lasting change. We want the buildings and spaces we support to become financially resilient, locally accountable and rooted in community stewardship, so that they continue to empower young people and their communities long into the future – and well beyond Blagrave’s own lifetime.**

*As our financial assets reduce, the assets held in community ownership increase, supporting lasting change for future generations of young people.*

## Introduction

At a time when inequality deepens, polarisation hardens, and opportunity shrinks, the Blagrave Trust chooses hope. We begin with a fundamental truth: young people and their wider communities are already transforming their places and society for the better. What holds them back is not vision or courage, but unequal access to resources – money, time, capacity, and space – and the burden of entrenched social and economic barriers.

Over the last twelve years, Blagrave’s focus has been to bring lasting change to the lives of young people aged 16 to 30, to invest in young people as powerful forces for change, and to act upon their right to be heard in pursuit of a fair and just society.

After the end of our 2022–2026 strategy, we reflected deeply on the key learnings of that strategy, and how our mission – and our charitable purposes – can be most effectively advanced.

Following this process, and looking ahead, over the next ten years we intend to deploy the substantial majority of Blagrave’s charitable assets in furtherance of its charitable purposes, with a core focus on providing deeper, trust-based support to young people and their wider communities in Birmingham, London and Portsmouth (as detailed further in the next section below).

In reaching this decision, we have considered in detail the scale and urgency of the challenges young people are facing, Blagrave’s available resources, its history and learning as a funder and partner, and the potential long-term impact of investing deeply in a smaller number of places. Having done so, our trustees have concluded that our charitable assets are much more likely to achieve greater public benefit if they are intentionally deployed over the next decade to build lasting community infrastructure, youth leadership, local capacity and locally accountable assets, rather than preserved indefinitely in our endowment.

The purpose of this new strategy is, therefore, to convert financial assets held by the foundation into enduring charitable benefit: places, relationships, leadership, governance structures, skills, networks and community assets that can continue to support young people beyond the life of Blagrave itself. As our financial assets reduce, the assets held in community ownership increases, supporting lasting change for future generations of young people.

**Vision – A future where our charitable resources are boldly and equitably used to support young people and their wider communities, strengthen community-stewarded assets and infrastructure, and champion and create lasting benefit for present and future generations.**

**Mission – To invest in communities with young changemakers at their heart, strengthening community leadership and infrastructure to drive long-lasting change.**

We are using everything we have – grants, endowments, buildings, people, networks, influence – in service of this vision. Our charitable funds and assets will

be invested to support and empower young people and their wider communities through funding community assets: buildings that serve as vital infrastructure for young people and their wider communities. We, the Trust's board and staff, are centring empowerment to support young people and their wider communities to shape decisions and grow their stewardship of community assets. This is what it means to lead with hope.

We envisage that this will be our last strategy as a charitable funder. As the strategy develops, our trustees will reflect carefully on whether Blaggrave has a useful continuing role to play beyond the next ten years – for example through capacity-building, learning, convening, or wider ecosystem support. No final decision has been made at this stage; we instead want to be led by the priorities and needs of young people and their communities in the three focus areas. Any future decision about Blaggrave's role, charity status or legal form will be made thoughtfully, transparently, taking advice where needed, and after taking into account all relevant factors.

## **Why this approach and why now?**

Young people face challenges that feel unprecedented in scale and intensity: deepening inequality, housing insecurity, eroding trust in institutions, and a growing mental health crisis. Cuts to youth services have left many communities without the physical spaces that allow young people to meet, organise, and lead.

COVID-19 compounded these pressures. In some communities, violence and insecurity further restrict young people's ability to thrive. Incremental, short-term responses are not enough. These conditions demand bold, long-term approaches that place young people and their communities at the heart of decision-making about resources, investment and relationships.

Blaggrave has supported important work nationally, but we have learned that spreading our resources thinly limits long-term impact. We have, therefore, made a strategic decision to focus deeply in three places – Portsmouth, London, and Birmingham – where we will commit to long-term, place-based investment through funding and wider support.

We chose these places because they combine large populations of young people facing deep-rooted inequalities, existing strong community leadership structures, and the relationships needed for long-term, accountable investment. This depth allows trust to grow, accountability to be real, and decision-making authority to be meaningfully shifted over time.

We also know something else: creating sustainable pipelines for young changemakers and building strong, youth-centred change ecosystems requires more than funding. It needs physical spaces – a dedicated hub, and places where young people can come together, organise, and lead. Community-stewarded spaces like this are increasingly rare, yet they are vital for building movements and lasting change.

The spaces we invest in will be stewarded and governed in close collaboration with young people and their communities, using democratic and participatory governance structures that centre young people, embed community ownership, and share decision-making. This approach will ensure these spaces serve young people, young changemakers and their wider community for generations to come, in community in perpetuity. They are not just venues, but long-term bases for building leadership and community empowerment, designed to support young changemakers now and to remain resources for future generations. We are committed to supporting the development of these models, including building strong pathways for young people to access the training, support and resources needed to steward these assets with their wider community.

Blaggrave's role is to help create the conditions for these spaces to last. Our investment will complement, not compete with, initiatives such as Youth Hubs, offering greater flexibility, strong local accountability, and a commitment that goes beyond short funding cycles or political priorities.

By investing in community assets, embedding youth governance, and supporting collaboration across generations, we aim to create the foundations for change that can endure. This approach is ambitious – and we believe it is necessary, and full of possibility.



# Theory of Change



At a time when inequality deepens, polarisation hardens, and opportunity shrinks, the Blagrave Trust chooses hope. We begin with a fundamental truth: young people are already transforming their communities and society for the better. What holds them back is not vision or courage, but resources—money, time, capacity, space—and the weight of unjust systems.

**Our theory of change sets out the work we want to do to break down those barriers, and move towards a world where young people have the opportunities, resources and networks they need to change the world for the better.**



**Birmingham**

**In our three places**



**London**

**Portsmouth**

## What we'll do

Fund and stand alongside young changemakers

Invest in the local youth sector, to further support youth-led change

Build or renovate physical spaces that will be used by young people and their communities

## So that

Young changemakers have the agency, resources, networks and spaces they need to sustain meaningful, lasting change

Local youth organisations are inspiring and supporting young people to act

Communities are supported to own and steward assets that provide lasting, sustainable benefit

## And eventually

**Lasting change:**  
Empowerment and lasting benefit for future generations

**Strong foundations:**  
Strong local ecosystems allow young people to gain the foundations they need

**Long-term security:**  
Young people and their communities can imagine boldly, build solutions creatively, and turn local challenges into long-lasting opportunities



## **Our Strategy**

### **(Investing in) Places and community spaces as a base for young changemakers**

These will be physical spaces – buildings, but also shared infrastructure for connection, organising, and care. They will serve as hubs for youth-led change and for the organisations and networks that support young people locally.

From the outset, these spaces are designed to become financially sustainable, environmentally responsible, and community-stewarded over time. Their purpose is not only to host activity, but to become catalysts for lasting local benefit – places where youth leadership grows, communities connect, and shared opportunity and learning are strengthened over time.

The approach Blagrove takes and the role it plays will be context-specific and co-created with young people and community partners. This means the timeframe and nature of Blagrove's investment and engagement will be different in each location. The approach in all locations will be underpinned by a commitment to youth leadership, democratic and participatory governance, and long-term community ownership.

Blagrove is ready and willing to grapple with the complexity and messiness that will be part of this co-creation process – the real work of trust, shared decisions, and lasting stewardship.

### **(Investing in) Youth-led change**

Young people remain at the heart of our work – not as recipients or beneficiaries, but as leaders, visionaries, and architects of change. Young people lead change; Blagrove supports the conditions around them.

Blagrove's experience has shown what's possible: when young people have access to resources and support, they lead initiatives that challenge and change local and national systems and structures.

Young people will be central to governance and vision-setting in each place. This includes shaping priorities, participating in decision-making, and defining what success looks like on their own terms. Rooting this leadership deeply in place

builds collective, intergenerational empowerment and responsibility, and strengthens the local ecosystems that sustain change.

## (Investing in) Community wealth-building and community empowerment

We are inspired by ‘community wealth-building’ approaches and practical ways of ensuring that assets, skills, employment, and investment create lasting benefit in the places they are intended to serve. Through our investment, we want to support community spaces and infrastructure that are locally accountable, financially resilient and capable of creating lasting benefit for young people and their wider communities. Where we can, we also want to support local employment, procurement, and ownership in ways that are fair, proportionate and consistent with our charitable purposes.

This is new territory for Blaggrave, and we'll learn alongside our partners in communities and our advisors on our legal responsibilities. Our intention is that our investment creates the conditions for lasting local benefit and community infrastructure: spaces that endure, leadership that grows, and benefits that remain rooted in the communities we serve.

**Community wealth building** is a place-based approach to economic development that focuses on keeping wealth within communities and using it to deliver shared, long-term benefit. It is about creating a resilient and inclusive economy for the benefit of the local area, and emphasises democratic ownership, the development of shared community assets such as buildings and spaces, and inclusive participation, ensuring that economic value is held and reinvested locally rather than extracted.

## (Investing in) Learning and Influencing

We will facilitate learning across and between our three areas, sharing openly and transparently so that it can inform other place-based or youth-led change initiatives. We'll use our experience to encourage more investment in these communities and other place-based, community infrastructure and community-led development approaches.

As we apply our resources in closer partnership with communities, we will share what we learn to help foster positive changes within the funding, practice and policy environments that affect young people and the organisations that support them. We'll ensure that communities and young people are at the forefront of those conversations, not as case studies but as experts and leaders.

## Our Approach

The approach to implementing this strategy will be co-created in the places where we work, with our community partners and young changemakers.

Within this, Blaggrave – trustees and staff – will be guided by the following principles:

**Valuing relationships:** We will build relationships – connecting with people, organisations, and communities. We will listen deeply and remain conscious of how we use our resources and influence.

**Humility and Transparency:** We are leading with hope and humility. We will get some things wrong – despite good intentions and careful planning. We're committed to learning, acknowledging mistakes when they occur, and addressing them. We will share our learning openly and maintain clear processes for how decisions are made.

**Centring empowerment:** We are committed to youth-led change, intergenerational collaboration, and community empowerment and infrastructure-building. We will support structures that allow community assets to be locally accountable, well-stewarded and sustained for the long-term benefit of young people and their communities.

**Anti-racism and inclusion:** Actively challenging racism and all forms of discrimination, bias, or barriers that unfairly exclude people—including ableism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and more. This means not just avoiding exclusion, but proactively working to foster a more fair and equal society for everyone.

**Taking account of future generations:** Making decisions that consider long-term outcomes for future generations and the planet. This includes climate action, sustainable investment, and intergenerational fairness. The decisions we make today echo into tomorrow.

We also commit to ensuring that all areas of our work, from our investments to our internal systems and practices, work in harmony with our strategy. We see significant emerging possibilities across how we operate and recognise that achieving this requires intentional internal work. We will continue to evolve how we work, so that our structures, culture and decisions are fully aligned with our aims and maximise our positive impact.

## Our Role

We are, and will be:

**A Funder:** Providing both financial and non-financial capital to support community infrastructure, young changemakers, and charitable organisations working with young people. This includes grant funding alongside our expertise in grant making, our networks, our convening capacity, and our organisational learning – everything we know and everyone we know, in service of this work.

**An Amplifier:** Using our voice, social capital, influence, and platform to shift narratives and policy. Making space for voices that need to be heard.

**A Partner:** Committing to being in a deep relationship with young people and their wider communities, working alongside existing community infrastructure and organisations rather than creating parallel or competing structures. True partnership means walking alongside, not leading from the front.

**A Convener:** Bringing together different groups from the three areas and across the country – young people, communities, funders, policy makers. Creating space for connection, learning and collaborative leadership.

## Our Timeline

We will begin exploring opportunities for partnerships and potential buildings in each area in 2026. Each place will develop its own timeline, governance structures, and transition plans – co-created with young people and their wider communities. Different contexts will move at different speeds.

This is not an ending but a beginning – the moment when community stewardship truly takes root.

Blaggrave's grant-making approach will transition to align with the new strategy over the next few years, starting with the closure of two programmes: the Young

People in Policy Fund and the Regional Programme. We will work directly with partners holding existing grants to support them through this transition, providing resources, clear communication about timelines, and support for organisations to adapt or find alternative funding sources. We honour what has been built and commit to supporting what comes next. For more detail on our grant-making, read our grants strategy.