Ripples







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Introduction

Welcome

For this edition, we invited Rank Memorial Award recipients from across the last 15 years to tell us where their journeys led and how these experiences have shaped their work.



Caroline Broadhurst
CEO, The Rank Foundation

What can a journey set in motion?

The Rank Memorial Award was established in 2010 to commemorate our former Chairman, Fred Packard.

The aim of the Memorial Award is to give Network members the opportunity to go on a learning journey, meet people who are tackling similar issues and bring what they learn back to their communities – and into the Network.

For this edition of Rank Ripples, we invited Award recipients from across the last 15 years to tell us what those journeys led them to and the longer term impact.

> **The Memorial Award gives recipients the chance to see shared challenges through someone else's eyes and then bring what they discover back to the Network.**

The starting points of their journeys are similar – a desire to learn – but the route each recipient takes is varied.

Neil Young travelled to Canada to learn about youth radio and came home with an idea that helped grow a community food project in Glasgow. Years later, Melanie Hall visited one of the same organisations, The Stop in Toronto, and brought fresh thinking back to Glasgow. Their stories show how learning gathers momentum as people make it their own.

Elsewhere, Joe Russo reflects on what he learnt about responding to violence with love and care in Los Angeles. Laura Charlton considered what it takes to support families beyond an immediate crisis. Emma Pears, Lily Fairbairn and Viccie Hamlet each returned from their trip with insights about belonging, community power and wellbeing.

In our sector, we often say that no one person or organisation can tackle social challenges alone. What strikes me is that the Memorial Award gives recipients the chance to see shared challenges through someone else's eyes and then bring what they discover back to the Network so we can find better ways forward together.

We would usually announce Memorial Award recipients at our annual conference in the Autumn. As the next conference takes place in February 2027, I'm delighted to share the details in this edition of Rank Ripples. Visit page 30 to see who will be embarking on learning journeys this year.

This magazine gives us a chance to hear from people whose journeys have already shaped their work. It's a wonderful reminder of the shared learning that's available in our thriving Network.

Feature

Expect the unexpected



Neil Young's 2015 Memorial Award took him to Toronto to learn about youth radio, but an unexpected visit to a community food project set a new direction for his work in Glasgow.

Neil Young
CEO, St. Paul's Youth Forum

In youthwork we always have a plan A, B, C, D and so on. Young people turn up with a completely different agenda to what has been planned, due to circumstances outside of their control, family emergencies, issues at school etc, and we need to adapt quickly - often putting aside well thought out plans to create something different.

Likewise, my experience with the Rank Memorial Award had so many different aspects that were not expected, creating a long-lasting impact that is far beyond the predictions.

It was a hot morning when I arrived in London for my pitch. I was looking to expand my knowledge of youth radio, with our youth station, Bolt FM, about to celebrate its 15th birthday by visiting the world's most popular youth radio station in Toronto, Canada. I had been told not to use PowerPoint, but to be more creative. I brought with me a mobile broadcast unit consisting of a laptop, a mixing desk, mics and cables.

I proceeded to give my presentation, and the judges seemed interested. But sadly, on the way home, I got the call... I was not the winner of the award.

Then! Plot twist, the judges were so impressed that they wanted to give me the award too, so I could take the trip to Canada!

I arrived in Toronto in a blizzard. It was April, -8 degrees C and the airport was closed after our flight arrived. I managed to get to my accommodation, eager to get over any jet lag and begin learning. Staff at the radio station had been told of my arrival. Neil Young was coming to the station for a week! When I arrived, I have never seen so many disappointed faces, until I discovered that they were expecting an older rock star, rather than a youth worker.

> "My experience with the Rank Memorial Award had so many different aspects that were not expected, creating a long-lasting impact that is far beyond the predictions."

Through my time at the station, I discovered about their expansion into TV, making short news programmes and drawing people together from all over the city. I learned how their finances worked and the Canadian model of people being able to reduce their income tax bills by giving to charity. I learned how to bring diverse communities together, give marginalised people a platform and about how First Nation People were at the heart of tackling poverty and injustice.

Thirdly, The Stop provides incredibly high-quality food suitable for all its members. There were tortillas for the Mexican woman I served, no pasta but extra rice for the couple from Japan, and cookie mixes for the family having a party. »



One evening, I met with a family friend for dinner who had been at a bridge competition the night before, raising funds for a food organisation called The Stop. I had vaguely heard of The Stop through a visit they had made to Glasgow around tackling the growing problem of food insecurity and the arrival of food banks. A meeting was arranged to visit this fantastic project in Toronto and I learned from the founders about their growing project, where people helped grow food in community, learned how to cook good food and share food round a table together. This unexpected meeting shaped a whole new direction for my work.

I left Toronto a few weeks after arriving, in balmy summer weather of 25 degrees. The warmth of old and new Canadians, happy to share knowledge, skills and concepts left me with a great deal to reflect on.

The impact of the Memorial Award

Over ten years on, the ripples of that visit can be seen around our community. Youthworkers are continuing to deliver radio and podcast programmes in the area, however the visit to The Stop inspired a new area of work for us. We began with a small orchard and polytunnel for growing with a few people gathering and sharing food, but it has now grown into hundreds of people enjoying food round a table every week, an urban farm with commercial polytunnels in the middle of a Glasgow Council Estate (barely touched by vandalism due to the ownership felt by the community), and a Pantry supporting people in a dignified way. The Scottish Government even created and launched a fund from our project as an example of good practice.

We can attribute almost five million pounds of investment into our community to the seed funding of a few thousand pounds. A real unexpected outcome where the ripples of the pebble in the pond have gone far, creating positive big waves in our community.

spyf.org.uk



Blackhill Community Farm, St. Paul's Youth Forum.

Feature

Mindfulness in practice

From a Buddhist monastery in Nepal to a busy New York coffee shop, Viccie Hamlet's Memorial Award journey transformed her understanding of mindfulness and inspired new ways to support wellbeing among young people, colleagues and communities.

Viccie Hamlet
Senior Training & Development Coordinator, Brook Young People



I first came across mindfulness at a seminar which suggested that stress didn't have to be the price we paid for being successful in our careers while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. As someone who was progressing within my career, and feeling that stress, I was intrigued. Through the seminar I learnt techniques which, with practice, helped me feel less overwhelmed, calmer, more present and better able to juggle the multiple roles I held.

"I believed mindfulness could provide young people with practical techniques to stay grounded, understand themselves, manage difficult emotions and make more considered choices. "

I just wished I had known about this sooner! It would have been so beneficial during school and university, which made me think about the young people I worked with and the pressures they faced. Young people are navigating many of the same issues that existed when I was growing up, but they are now doing so in an increasingly fast-paced and digitally connected world where there is often no opportunity to switch off.

I believed mindfulness could provide young people with practical techniques to stay grounded, understand themselves, manage difficult emotions and make more considered choices.

The Memorial Award enabled me to travel internationally and learn about mindfulness from people with different experiences and perspectives. My first destination was Nepal.

I travelled to Kathmandu and took part in a Mindfulness in Daily Living course in a Buddhist monastery alongside forty other participants. For ten days, I immersed myself in a completely different way of living.



A portion of every day was spent in silence, as were the final two days. Before I arrived, this was something I was really nervous about but, in reality, it became one of my favourite parts of the day.

Without distractions, I had space to mentally digest everything I was learning and, importantly, practise it. Over those ten days, I learnt more about myself and others than I can remember learning during any other period of my life.

The next part of my research took me to the United States. I'll be honest and admit that after the wealth of knowledge I gained in Nepal, I was sceptical that there was much left to learn that wasn't repeating or even diluting what I already knew. I couldn't have been more wrong!

During my time in New York and Los Angeles, I met eight mindfulness practitioners, each with very different perspectives and approaches. Until then, most of my knowledge had come from the Buddhist perspective, I was now introduced to secular, scientific, philosophical, educational, and humanitarian approaches.

One of my most memorable experiences was practising mindful breathing in a busy New York coffee shop. Surrounded by the noise and movement of the city, there was complete calm. It was a reminder that mindfulness doesn't need a perfect environment. It can happen anywhere.

»

I also visited schools where mindfulness and yoga were embedded into the curriculum. A powerful part was hearing directly from the children. One girl told me how she used deep breathing and positive self-talk when she felt stressed and another explained how mindfulness had helped her manage her anger and avoid getting into fights.

Another important lesson came from observing a 20-minute mindfulness session delivered to 13-year-old boys. The practitioner described herself as a "seed planter," which really challenged my thinking around outcomes and reminded me that even a short intervention can have an impact.

I also met someone who had established mindfulness sessions for teachers. The idea was to better support young people by creating calmer teachers and classroom environments. This really resonated with me.

The impact of my Memorial Award

Following my experiences, I integrated mindfulness practices into the staff team I managed and introduced practical mindfulness techniques into the programmes we delivered to young people. Staff reported feeling calmer, less stressed, and better able to manage the pressures of their roles. We also saw positive changes in our education sessions, with young people engaging more readily with the activities and staff reporting improved outcomes.

In addition, I began working with a mental health charity in Liverpool that was set up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The charity works with GPs through social prescribing, and I delivered weekly mindfulness sessions online.

I am now a qualified coach and use mindfulness techniques within my coaching practice. For me, mindfulness and coaching work great together. Mindfulness creates space to notice what is happening — our thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and assumptions — while coaching helps create and take next steps.

Within my organisation, I am a Wellbeing Champion and regularly deliver mindfulness sessions for colleagues across the country. Themes include confidence, self-esteem, self-care, stress and more.

One of the most important things I have learnt is that mindfulness doesn't need to look the same for everyone and it is adaptable to the individual, the environment, and what people need at that time. This enables me to spread the benefits of mindfulness far and wide.

brook.org.uk



Feature

Meeting gang violence

with love

After visiting Glasgow's Violence Reduction Unit and Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, Joe Russo discovered a different way to tackle gang violence: through connection, compassion and love.

Joe Russo
Managing Director, Project-Connect



In 1992 I started a youth club. It was set up to help provide a place of safety and create connections for young people and children, and for communities to feel a sense of family, a sense of belonging and what it's like to be loved.

That youth club evolved, grew and developed and it became a charity that worked across multiple areas, including Manchester, Nottingham and Derby. It began to grow beyond being a youth club. We developed mentoring programmes, and we began to work with gangs.

Some of the gang members were young people in their early 20s, who'd come along to my youth club as 11-year-olds. So, I had a great interest and understanding of why and how people are drawn into those lifestyles. But more than that, I wanted to be able to try and create alternative opportunities and possibilities for those young people who were turning to gangs.

When I came across the Rank Memorial Award in 2020, I decided I would apply for it to visit two projects: The Violence Reduction Unit and Homeboy Industries, which is the world's largest gang rehabilitation re-entry programme.

The Violence Reduction Unit in Glasgow was absolutely fantastic. I met some amazing young people and found out the context of the Unit, which has been subsequently copied across the UK. Most importantly, the thing that I learned was that violence is a symptom, it is not a cause. Their approach was to tackle violence as an illness, treating the violent behaviour like an infection by looking at where it spreads, who is most at risk, and what triggers it.

While there, I discovered that they were heavily influenced by Homeboy Industries, a Los Angeles-based non-profit. It was set up in the 1980s by an amazing human called Father Greg Boyle, who had spent lots of his time burying people who'd been involved in gangs. When he realised that standard job placement couldn't keep up with the number of individuals looking to escape gang life, he began launching dedicated social enterprises, the most famous of which is Homeboy Bakeries.

"Violence is a symptom. It is not a cause."

I spent approximately a month in Los Angeles, and it was one of the most amazing times of my life. There are so many lessons, so many powerful encounters that I had but the biggest lesson I came away with was that the most powerful thing we can do when tackling issues around violence and deprivation, is for people to connect with who they really are: a human being, special, seen and loved.



I have so many different stories from Homeboys, so many different encounters. I remember spending time with Miguel, who was the first person to show me around. He took me under his wing and I learned that from a very early age, he'd been surrounded by violence. He'd spent 20 years in prison, of which about half had been in solitary confinement. He was a wonderful human being. He had such a gentle, beautiful soul that really touched the people who came into contact with him. My two big takeaways from Homeboys - and from Miguel - were that, firstly, we are all inherently »

good and secondly, that we're all connected.

The impact of the Memorial Award

I maintain regular contact with the teams, both in Glasgow and Los Angeles. A lot of their work has influenced the work that I do now. I'm privileged to travel and work up and down the country with police forces, charities, local authorities, and I always bring to the table those lessons from Homeboys.

More recently, I've teamed up with two amazing UK charities, Shift and Oasis, for a conference in London and Manchester. We're calling it the Restoration Revolution, and over four days we'll bring together voices from across the justice system to talk about the growing recognition that we cannot harm to heal. Father Greg Boyle and Homeboys will be there too.

> "My trip transformed not just how I viewed the world, but how I viewed myself."

On a personal note, my trip transformed not just how I viewed the world, but how I viewed myself. Having run a charity for almost three decades, the truth is it is incredibly difficult and challenging; sometimes I became part of the system. My trip got me to reflect on my identity and my values. And that's something I've been working through ever since.

That is the legacy of my Memorial Award.

project-connect.uk



Feature

Increasing

social and economic mobility in the UK

Beyond emergency assistance lies the opportunity to create lasting change. Through the Memorial Award, Laura Charlton explored how relationships, skills, confidence and personalised support can help people build a brighter future.

Laura Charlton
Regional Charity Manager, Cash for Kids



My role as Regional Charity Manager at Cash for Kids in the Northwest has given me first-hand insight into the realities faced by children and families living in poverty. I have supported thousands of families experiencing financial hardship and crisis, at times when they had nowhere else to turn.

In 2023, the Rank Memorial Award provided me with an invaluable opportunity to travel to the USA and explore different approaches to improving social and economic mobility. I wanted to understand how organisations were supporting people, what approaches were having a meaningful impact, and, importantly, what learning could be applied within the UK.

My first visit was to Project STRIVE, an anti-poverty programme supporting children and young people through education, aspiration, positive behaviour and access to an evening meal.

What struck me most was the organisation's holistic approach. Academic achievement was not considered in isolation; STRIVE recognised the importance of relationships, behaviour, nutrition, confidence and providing young people with a safe and supportive environment.



Their philosophy of "a healthy behaviour, a willing attitude then academics" places responsibility and personal development at the heart of learning. I was particularly interested in their use of "STRIVE dollars", which reward positive behaviour and allow children to save towards items they need. Many chose things such as school bags rather than toys, demonstrating how simple incentives can introduce children to financial responsibility while reinforcing positive choices.

STRIVE also supports parents through adult education, counselling, mental health provision and advice - creating a more joined-up approach where support for children is strengthened by supporting the wider family.

I also visited the Jewish Family Service and Resource Centre, where I saw another strong example of support centred around dignity and self-determination. Its food pantry provides families with access to food, including fresh produce donated by local farmers.

The food provision was part of a wider model. Alongside immediate assistance, individuals could access mentoring, life-skills support, employment advice and other services designed to help them move towards greater independence.

I worked alongside an employee who was a former service user. He was able to offer people empathy, understanding and a space to talk.

When I visited Project Hope, they reinforced the importance of personalised support, rather than simply helping people find any available job. The organisation considers their circumstances, strengths, interests and long-term ambitions.

I met a young mother who wanted to build a career while balancing her caring responsibilities. She was interested in working with children and, with personalised support from Project Hope, planned a pathway involving training and voluntary experience, helping her develop the confidence and skills required for sustainable employment that worked for her and her family.

This reinforced for me that there is no universal route out of poverty. Meaningful employment support needs to recognise the individual rather than focusing solely on the immediate outcome of getting someone into work.

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My final visit to Stanford University provided an opportunity to consider these practical experiences through an academic lens. Speaking with academics researching poverty and inequality challenged me to think beyond individual programmes and consider the systems and circumstances that influence social mobility.

"Data and research can identify patterns and inequalities, but lived experience provides the context needed to understand why those inequalities exist."

We discussed the importance of understanding poverty through the experiences of the people directly affected by it. Data and research can identify patterns and inequalities, but lived experience provides the context needed to understand why those inequalities exist and what effective support might look like.

"The Rank Memorial Award reinforced my belief that improving social and economic mobility requires us to see the whole person, not simply the immediate barrier they are experiencing."

The conversations at Stanford further reinforced the limitations of one-size-fits-all solutions. Social mobility is influenced by education, family circumstances, employment, access to services, financial security and opportunity. Effective interventions therefore need to recognise the complexity of people's lives and connect different forms of support.

The impact of my Memorial Award

Across all my visits, the strongest common theme was that emergency assistance alone cannot create sustainable change. People also need relationships, skills, confidence and opportunities.

I returned to the UK determined to apply this learning within my role at Cash for Kids. With my team, we have expanded opportunities for volunteering beyond our main campaigns, delivered sessions to community groups to explain our work, and provided guidance about routes into the charity sector. We have also developed a more joined-up approach with other services, helping vulnerable individuals access organisations that can support their wider personal development.

We have also introduced an annual Community Challenge which is delivered nationallly, providing financial support to those who need it most.

The Rank Memorial Award reinforced my belief that improving social and economic mobility requires us to see the whole person, not simply the immediate barrier they are experiencing and to create pathways that enable people to build a future beyond their current circumstances.

cashforkids.org.uk



Feature

Food for change

Inspired by the same community food project that sparked a new direction for Neil Young's work, Melanie Hall visited The Stop in Toronto and returned to Glasgow with fresh ideas that have transformed her community pantry, strengthened volunteer involvement and brought food to the heart of community life.

Melanie Hall
Deputy CEO, St. Paul's Youth Forum



The Stop existed in my mind long before I reached the building in Toronto.

My manager Neil told me about it in 2016, shortly after I started at St. Paul's Youth Forum (SPYF). "This is what we're aspiring to here - using food as a tool to bring people together and change lives." Neil lent me Nick Saul and Andrea Curtis' book about The Stop which I read in a weekend and returned to work on Monday fizzing with possibility.

In 2024 I received the Memorial Award to research holistic responses to food insecurity, and in the summer of 2025, I travelled to Canada and the USA, visiting 12 projects in Toronto, Detroit, Seattle and San Francisco over six weeks.

In this article I will focus on The Stop, a community food centre in Toronto which works with over 28,000 people a year. I spent a week there, talking with staff, interviewing project coordinators, and volunteering with their foodbank, drop-in meals and community gardens.

I want to highlight three things I learnt from The Stop:

1. A clear vision matters
2. The importance of supporting staff and volunteers
3. Culturally appropriate high-quality food needs to be at the heart of a food security project.

Firstly, getting to see an inspiration for our own project really emphasised to me the power of having a collective goal: transmitted to me verbally, through a book, and then through multiple staff at The Stop.

> **"Everyone at every level can be a leader in how they contribute to the organisation's mission and feel ownership over their contributions."**

Everyone there was clear about why they were doing what they were doing, and how it fed into the greater whole. Volunteers spoke of a thorough induction process on the entirety of The Stop's offerings. A coherent vision allowed leadership to be dispersed: everyone at every level can be a leader in how they contribute to the organisation's mission and feel ownership over their contributions.

Secondly, the staff, volunteers and participants I chatted with all spoke highly of the support they received from The Stop. It made me question if we could do more at SPYF.



There was clear acknowledgement that for The Stop to achieve its aims, everyone involved had to feel cared for and that volunteers are key to the impact of The Stop. Helena, their senior volunteer coordinator, told me that in 2025 they were on course to have 180 active volunteers committing around 22,300 volunteer hours.

For those in paid positions at all levels, 'people-care' was key to ensuring the organisation's ability to sustain its impact. Volunteers are treated well: recognised for their hard work, reimbursed for travel costs, and for each shift they receive a stamp equivalent to CA$2.50. After four shifts the completed card can be used at The Stop's Farmers Market, or alternatively it can be donated to The Stop's perinatal support programme. »

Thirdly, The Stop provides incredibly high-quality food suitable for all its members.

Having access to nutritious wholesome food gave members a sense of dignity by empowering them to properly nourish themselves and their families. This was only possible because The Stop was incredibly well-resourced, and dedicated substantial staff time to fundraising.

The impact of my Memorial Award

Since returning from my Memorial Award trip I have been inspired with so many ideas for change and have had the privilege of turning some of them into tangible benefits for our community here in Glasgow.

Our community pantry has become a calm space of support for all. We've improved our queuing system, reduced waiting times and now source a much wider range of food options, which cater to all our community members.

The pantry is now predominantly run by our brilliant volunteers. It is their project, for their community, and they make the decisions about what will work best. They receive vouchers after each shift which they can redeem in our community centre cafe to recognise their time and dedication.

We have updated our website to make it easier for people to support us financially and personally thank everyone who donates. This has seen our direct donations increase by more than 500%.

We are due to review SPYF's vision, mission and aims in 2027 and refining these to make them as easily communicable as possible will be crucial.



I will forever be grateful to The Rank Foundation for this opportunity to learn from world-leading community food projects. I know it will catalyse positive change in the north east of Glasgow for many years to come. ●

spyf.org.uk

"I will forever be grateful to The Rank Foundation for this opportunity to learn from world-leading community food projects. "

Feature

What would you do

if you weren't afraid to fail?

Inspired by a speech at a Rank Foundation conference, Emma Pears embarked on a month-long journey across Canada and New York to explore belonging, inclusive leadership and the power of community.

Emma Pears
CEO, SELFA Children's Charity



A few years ago, I was at a crossroads.

Personally, my children were growing up and becoming more independent. Professionally, I had spent 18 years building SELFA Children's Charity from literally nothing into an organisation supporting several hundreds of children and young people each year.

I had developed an incredible team and was immensely proud of what we had built. But I also had a niggling feeling that there was more I wanted to explore.

Then, at The Rank Foundation Conference in 2023, I heard Liz Weaver from Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement speak about leadership and community change in Canada. She had helped create a movement that encouraged communities to believe they could tackle something as big as poverty.

Her message was all about possibility and thinking bigger than the limits we put on ourselves. Something clicked.

Liz made me think: if I stopped limiting myself by worrying about failing, what would I really want to do?

That's when I thought about applying to the Memorial Award and going to visit some of the people and places Liz talked about at the Conference.

The Memorial Award gave me permission to dream. It gave me the opportunity to push myself completely outside my comfort zone and, perhaps most importantly, to ask for help.

So, in the summer of 2025, I spent a month travelling solo across Canada and New York, meeting changemakers, community leaders and organisations exploring leadership, belonging and the power of communities, and people said yes!

They invited me into their homes, their workplaces, their communities and their conversations. They introduced me to other people. They shared their stories, challenges and ideas. From Vancouver to Saskatoon, Montréal, Ottawa and New York, I was welcomed by people I had never met before.



"The Memorial Award gave me permission to dream."

I started the journey with a simple piece of cloth: my Banner of Belonging.

Before I left, I asked my family to add their thoughts about what it feels like to truly belong. Their answers ranged from "not being judged" to "having in-jokes only we understand". I carried the banner with me and invited people I met along the way to add their own voices.

That simple idea became a thread running through my entire journey.

In Vancouver, I met people creating connection between neighbours and learned about the importance of community weavers: those trusted local people who notice who is missing, make introductions and bring others together. They are often informal and under-recognised, yet they are essential to the fabric of thriving communities.

In Saskatoon, I spent time with young women who had arrived in Canada from Afghanistan and other parts of the world. They spoke about rebuilding a sense of home, maintaining their cultural identity and finding the confidence to become leaders themselves. Their courage, resilience and willingness to share their stories will stay with me.

In Montréal, I explored how public spaces, art and play can create unexpected moments of connection. I met leaders asking difficult questions about how we measure belonging and whether data can ever fully capture what it means to feel seen, heard and valued.

And in the Ottawa Valley, I found something that felt incredibly familiar. In a rural community where distance, transport and isolation can make connection difficult, I saw the power of relationships and accessible, hands-on leadership. It reminded me of home and of the importance of understanding the place in the work we do at SELFA.

The best leaders I met were not standing at the front telling everyone what to do. They were making introductions, creating opportunities, listening deeply and creating the conditions for other people to lead.

"Inclusive leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about creating space for others to bring theirs."

That confirmed something I have increasingly come to believe throughout my own leadership journey: inclusive leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about creating space for others to bring theirs.

The impact of my Memorial Award

I have always found asking for help difficult. Yet this trip simply would not have happened without it. From people helping me make introductions to opening doors, offering a spare room, sharing a meal or simply taking time out of their busy lives for a conversation, I learned that asking for help is not a weakness. It creates opportunities for connection and allows other people to share their gifts too.





The Rank Memorial Award gave me much more than a month of incredible travel.

It gave me time and space to think. It reignited my curiosity. It introduced me to new ideas and friendships. It challenged some of my assumptions and strengthened others. Most importantly, it reminded me that the answers to some of our biggest challenges may already exist within our communities if we are prepared to listen differently.

My journey took me thousands of miles from home, but it brought me back to something very simple. Belonging is not a luxury. It is the foundation for resilience, leadership and hope. And it is built in small moments: through relationships, trust, shared stories and the feeling that someone notices when you are missing.

The Memorial Award has been a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, but its impact will continue long after the journey itself.

And I still have one question for myself, and perhaps for you too: What would you do if you couldn't fail? Maybe the first step is simply daring to ask. ●

selfa.org.uk

"My journey took me thousands of miles from home, but it brought me back to something very simple. Belonging is not a luxury. It is the foundation for resilience, leadership and hope."



Feature

The power of community

What began as an exploration of food insecurity took Lily Fairbairn from rural Nepal to Vatican City to uncover powerful lessons in trust, community leadership and creating lasting change from the ground up.

Lily Fairbairn
Digital Policy and Project Officer,
Greater Manchester Combined Authority



When I applied for the Memorial Award, I had food insecurity and how local leaders can tackle deep rooted issues in their communities at the front of my mind. Throughout 2025, I found myself sitting in community meetings in rural Nepal, learning how to cook high nutrition meals with women's groups, interviewing climate activists on the edge of the Himalayas, visiting organisations at local, national and international level, and standing in soup kitchens in Vatican City.

None of those experiences appeared on my original proposal.

How could they? When I first received the Award, I knew I wanted to explore how leaders tackle food insecurity at both a global and local level. Food insecurity affects millions of people across the world, including many communities in the UK. I wanted to understand what leadership means in this space, what works, why it works, and how we might apply those lessons closer to home.

Food was the community builder and became the backdrop to every connection I made.

The organisations and individuals who inspired me were the people finding ways to build confidence, trust and agency within their communities.

In Nepal, I spent time with community groups that have been working alongside rural villages for decades. Rather than delivering solutions to communities, they focused on creating the conditions for communities to solve problems themselves. Over and over again, I heard stories of people who had been excluded from decision-making opportunities find confidence, organise collectively and create change within their own neighbourhoods. I was sat cross legged on tarpaulin in rural Nepali villages listening to people's stories, »



seeing first-hand what investment really means when it doesn't always come with finance.

I met women's groups that had reinvested collective savings into education, community facilities and local enterprises. I learnt about seed banks established to strengthen food resilience. I saw how communities with extremely limited resources had built systems of support that stretched across generations.

The whole process has changed how I approach my own work, how in policymaking we can use participatory methods to build services around community's needs. The most effective of the organisations I worked with didn't see their communities as beneficiaries but invested time and education and confidence so they could see themselves as leaders, and drivers of their own change.

Working in policy and public services, we often talk about engagement, consultation and participation. Yet during my travels I found myself reflecting on how easy it can be to design services around communities rather than with them.

Some of the strongest examples I saw started with a very simple principle: people are experts in their own lives.

"Some of the strongest examples I saw started with a very simple principle: people are experts in their own lives."

I also found myself reflecting on the challenges many organisations face internationally. Conversations with charities and NGOs highlighted how difficult it has become to sustain community work when funding models are increasingly uncertain. Yet despite these challenges, the most successful initiatives continued to focus on long-term relationship building rather than short-term interventions.

And trust came up in almost every conversation I had. Every local institution, organisation, and community group showed me that putting yourself forward will create meaningful change. Without trust, interventions wouldn't succeed.

One approach from Nepal has stayed with me deeply and can be relevant to many issues. It was affectionately called the 'Momo Model', inspired by Nepal's famous dumplings. Simply put, sustainable, long-term change happens when grassroots energy and institutional support work together. The perfect momo has the right balance of heat and steam, the lid ensuring the dumpling is at the perfect temperature. Too much emphasis on systems, and you lose connection with people. Too much emphasis on grassroots energy without wider support, and good ideas struggle to scale. It's all about balance.



The impact of my Memorial Award

It is a lesson that feels increasingly relevant to the work I do in Greater Manchester. Whether we are discussing digital inclusion, public service reform, or community participation, lasting change depends on balancing top-down ambition with bottom-up ownership.

The Rank Memorial Award gave me an opportunity to travel, but more importantly it gave me an opportunity to listen. »

Over the course of the Memorial Award I met activists, community organisers, volunteers, policymakers and local residents. Their circumstances were often very different, but their values and challenges can be seen across the UK. They cared about dignity, belonging, opportunity and creating a better future for the people around them.

What began as a project exploring food insecurity became a deeper lesson about community power, participation and trust. It challenged assumptions, strengthened my belief in community-led change and reminded me that some of the most important voices are often the least heard.

For that, and for every conversation that shaped the journey, I will always be grateful to the Rank Foundation.

"What began as a project exploring food insecurity became a deeper lesson about community power, participation and trust."







News

Fellowship News



John Hind, Director of Education and Leadership, The Rank Foundation

An update on the development and activities of the Rank Fellowship.

Journeys and development are central to the Foundation's work in the School Leadership Award and Fellowship. One of the many privileges of my role is to witness the development of those young people who join us as 16-year-olds into the mature and socially aware adults who make up the Rank Fellowship.

The journey of Martyn Snow (Class of 1984), from a nervous new Sixth Form student entering Newcastle's Royal Grammar School for the first time to the Bishopric of Leicester and a seat in the House of Lords, provides a perfect example of how our award can be fundamental in enabling its holders to blossom as adults.

Learning through Leadership: 'Leadership in Uncertain Times'

In his May 'Learning through Leadership' presentation focusing on Leadership in Uncertain Times, Bishop Martyn explained how receipt of the award, with its recognition of his 'leadership potential' served to encourage him to think about his own journey.

Central to that has been a belief in the power of relationships whether that be in the House of Lords or in the 'grill a bishop' sessions he organises in pubs around his diocese. His encouragement to 'do politics' in the sense of building a common life with people you didn't choose, you might not like and with whom you might not agree set out a challenge. »



Leadership, Bishop Martyn argued, is about championing these values in the public square through a willingness to stick your head above the parapet, to know that you'll get criticised, to know that you won't get everything right and to know that you don't have the answers. He recognised the challenge implicit in this guidance and strongly commended the need to take time to replenish one's reserves of strength to face this.

Ultimately, he argued, our future in uncertain time depends on the strength of our relationships. Quoting the German Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's categorisation of relationships as either I-It or I-Thou, he encouraged us to eschew the former - in which other people are reduced to categories or functions or stereotypes which make them manageable, predictable, or dismissible – and rather work to the latter where we treat the other as a person, not just there for our own use, demanding that we listen to them and that we treat them as a full human being - something, Bishop Martin felt of particular significance in our digital age.

In his focus on the power of human interaction he not only gave great advice for all our future journeys, he also encapsulated everything that Rank's model of relational philanthropy entails. »



Welcome to the Fellowship 2026

Other Fellows have longer journeys to travel. Our youngest Fellows (the graduating class of 2024) joined us for the Welcome to the Fellowship event in August but had the benefit of sage advice from four members of the class of 2023 who generously gave of their time to share their experiences of the first year of university life. Interestingly, they formed part of the first cohort to benefit from the maintenance grant which is now offered as part of the leadership award programme.

Feedback from the peer group has been universally positive both in terms of the financial impact and also our wider leadership programme:

- "The grant has really allowed me to be able to focus on my studies and I was really happy with how I was able to do in my exams and I don't think I would have done anywhere near as well without it."
- "Without the Rank Foundation Grant I would have struggled to pay rent and to live comfortably. This meant I could really focus on my studies and things that were more important to me instead of needing to worry about money. For this I am extremely grateful." »
- "The grant has been a massive help during university. I have been able to fully dive into uni life without the additional stress of an even larger financial burden."
- "Outside of the grant as well, the leadership sessions have really helped me to begin university with a different mindset, and really apply the advice given both in daily life and in my role as Welfare Officer. I am really grateful for all the support I have received."



At least one person present benefitted from the Fellowship's visit to the Supreme Court.

Generously hosted by Natasha Bennett (Class of 1985) the visit allowed us not only to see the court's impressive buildings but also – more tellingly for those Fellows about to start a legal journey – to speak with two judicial assistants about their experiences of working in the courts.

Leadership Event 2026

Finally, the journey for our award holders is, as ever, full of promise.

Our September Leadership Event at the University of Chester saw the classes of 2025 and 2026 combine to create short videos with excellent guidance and support from our colleagues at CTVC. Tasked in an excellent first presentation by Jordan Ignatius to focus on issues of concern to them, the resulting well-produced videos provided a snapshot of what matters to young people of their age – fake news; the dangers of social media; the impact of consumerist society on suffering in the developing world; domestic violence and gender pay and promotion disparities.

On Friday night a presentation from the team at Project Trust encouraged our award holders to step out of their comfort zones – a perfect message for the journeys ahead! ●





News

Memorial Award Winners 2026





It is with great pleasure that we announce the winners of the Rank Memorial Award 2026.

This year, the Memorial Award focuses on learning from inspiring leadership from across the globe with a particular emphasis on **organisational resilience**.

As usual, applicants were invited to learn from outstanding examples of leadership that address a social issue or opportunity, and to consider how those insights could be applied within their own communities.

The award is highly competitive, and we are delighted to announce that following careful consideration, the selection committee awarded two grants of £5,000 each to Alisha Dixon and Angeletia Padmore.

Alisha Dixon

Deputy Chief Officer, Search Newcastle



Alisha plans to travel to Norway for two weeks to explore how the country creates age-friendly cities and communities. She hopes to visit the Centre for an Age-friendly Norway in Ålesund, alongside inner-city and rural communities, to learn how Norway supports people to age well, maintain social connections and live independently.

With Newcastle having held age-friendly city status since 2014, Alisha wants to understand how strong leadership, resilience and innovation can turn this ambition into meaningful change. She hopes to bring these insights back to Search Newcastle and share them with wider networks, helping to inspire progress towards more inclusive communities where people of all ages can thrive.

searchnewcastle.org.uk

"Totally stunned and elated to be given this unique and wonderful opportunity. I know it will change my life!"

Angeletia Padmore

Founder, Cooked and Delivered



Angeletia plans to travel to Denmark for over a week to learn from organisations that are successfully using food and community spaces to strengthen social connections, improve wellbeing and build community resilience.

These include Madhuset (The Danish Food Culture House), Settlementet Vesterbro and Roskilde Festival Group, as well as community food projects, social enterprises and community hubs in Copenhagen and the surrounding areas.

Food has always been a connector in Angeletia's life. As the founder of Cooked and Delivered, a community initiative that uses food to strengthen local connections, she hopes to learn from some of the world's best examples of community leadership and bring those lessons back to Lincolnshire to benefit local communities for years to come.

"The award is an honour and an opportunity to explore how leaders and resilient communities can be developed around a shared table where food becomes more than a meal."

Ripples

Rank Foundation

The Rank Foundation works in communities across the UK to encourage leaders, develop entrepreneurial mindsets and form strong Networks that improve life.

Founded in 1953 by the flour miller and film maker Arthur Rank, the Foundation is built on his Christian faith, enterprising spirit and commitment to community. During his lifetime, Arthur spotted opportunities to innovate, growing a multi-million pound empire. He remained committed to helping and encouraging others, describing young people as 'the seed corn of the future and the leaders of tomorrow'.

Today, the Rank Foundation continues to support the leaders of tomorrow and encourage enterprise for social good. Our grant programmes focus on:

- Leadership – nurturing purposeful, confident and inspiring leaders who drive positive change.
- Enterprise – developing resilient, impactful organisations that contribute positively to the people and places they serve.
- Community – building on and investing in a community's strengths.
- Faith – engaging in respectful conversations about faith in all its forms.

At the heart of the Foundation, is our supportive Network of over 1,500 leaders working in communities across the UK. Together, they learn, share and connect to tackle society's challenges. We build deep and lasting relationships of support with our Network, going beyond traditional funding to philanthropy based on mutual respect, trust and empathy.

Our thriving Network leads positive change to improve life in the communities they cherish.

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