

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES



SUPPORT EQUITY AND ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNITIES THAT WE SERVE



PROVIDE EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



TAKE ACTION ON SOCIAL MOBILITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING



ENABLE ACCESS TO FOOD

LEVY SHARE

£42M

since 2021, Co-op Levy Share has seen £42m in pledges and has funded over 3,800 apprentices from diverse backgrounds



38

Co-op Academies providing a Co-operative Education to over 20,000 students



400K+

400,000+ people have benefitted from community fridge and pantry networks supported by Co-op in 2025

SUPPORTING POSITIVE FUTURES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We know that co-operation is vital in tackling the key challenges in our members' communities. We partner with like-minded organisations who can help to deliver positive and lasting change on the big issues our members care about and create social value in their local communities.

In June 2025, we announced the extension of our partnership with the UK's largest children's charity, Barnardo's. We're now raising £7m to support positive futures for 1 million young people.



£6.5m

Since our partnership began, colleagues, members, suppliers and customers have raised £6.5m and supported over 750,000 young people.



551,479
PEOPLE BENEFITTING
IN 2025



**IMPACT:
IMPROVE**

Colleagues continued to hold fundraising activities such as walkathons, car washes, raffles, cold water swims and more. We also added a bit of magic to our fundraising when Barnardo's [partnered with film franchise, Wicked: For Good](#).

Our partnership is supporting young people online through advice and information on TikTok,

Instagram and YouTube. Content includes quick and easy meal ideas, how to look after your mental wellbeing and tips for pushing out of your comfort zone to take advantage of opportunities.

We're also delivering face-to-face support services in local communities, including:

- **Sal-food Together in Salford:** Weekly and holiday sessions with activities focused on cooking, wellbeing and life skills.
- **Sedgemoor for our Future in Sedgemoor:** Weekly 'social kitchen' where young people cook and eat together with sessions on skills and wellbeing.
- **Project Balance in Edinburgh:** Weekly sessions focused on topics such as life skills, wellbeing and food.

In July, we launched [Deeper Roots, Stronger Futures](#), a policy report highlighting the need to involve young people in local food partnerships. 96% of our members aged 16-25 said they want to see and be involved in more local food partnerships. The report offers actionable recommendations for Government, local authorities, businesses, charities and community groups to support their meaningful participation in food partnerships. Our previous policy report, Recipes for Success, contributed to the three-year extension of the Government's Holiday, Activities and Food programme.



CO-OP LEVY SHARE

Launched in 2021, Co-op Levy Share brings together our suppliers, partners and other employers to pool unspent levy funds and channel them into apprenticeships for underrepresented groups.

The service continues to provide vital funding to the communities and organisations that need it most. This year we have received £8.8m in pledges, which has supported 1,084 apprenticeships.

To date more than 3,800 apprenticeships have been supported with:

- 30% individuals of non-white British ethnicity.
- 67% female.
- 19% declaring a disability.



1,084
PEOPLE BENEFITTING
IN 2025

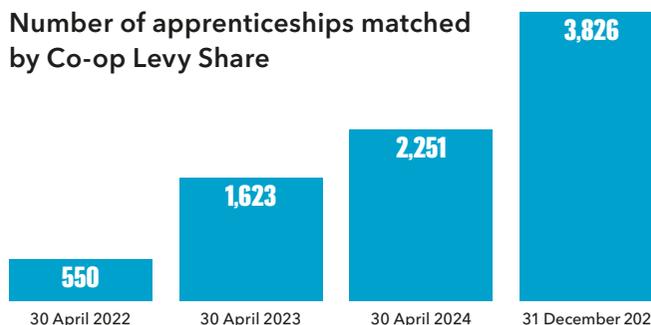


**IMPACT:
IMPROVE &
TRANSFORM**

In the last four years, the amount pledged has massively exceeded our initial target of £15 million over three years and over 3,000 apprenticeships have been matched with employers.



Over £42m
pledged in total since launching Levy Share in 2021¹.





65%
of apprenticeships provided through Co-op Levy Share² were located in communities scoring 5 or below in the Index of Multiple Deprivation

In 2025, Co-op Levy Share partnered with the City & Guilds Foundation to fund the first rail engineering apprenticeships at the Centre of Excellence skills hub in HMP Highpoint. This pioneering initiative addresses the UK's rail engineering skills shortage while helping to reduce reoffending rates. The initiative aims to reduce the UK's £21bn annual reoffending cost by offering industry-standard training and guaranteed employment upon release.

We also continued our partnership with The Royal Foundation to support apprenticeships in the early childhood sector.

You can read more on the impact Levy Share is making in our four-year impact report [here](#).



"My apprenticeship journey has been very fulfilling yet challenging, pushing me to work to the best of my ability. I have experienced a variety of opportunities to enhance my skills and knowledge in fabrication and welding preparing for my future" Zafeerah

¹ As of December 2025.
² Apprenticeships created up to 30 April 2025.

ROYAL FOUNDATION

We're proud to be a founding member of The Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood Business Taskforce.

The Taskforce was created to play an essential role in the Princess of Wales's work to inspire society-wide action to create a healthier, happier society for young children.

Over the past two years our Co-op has embraced the Taskforce's ambition to help build a more compassionate world in which children can grow, learn and live. We've supported our members, customers and colleagues by:

- **Co-op Suppliers stepping up:** After we hosted a roundtable, Kellogg's and Noble Foods began donating to our Co-op Academy breakfast clubs. Lego joined in too, gifting development kits to our primary academies and Midcounties nurseries.
- **Apprenticeships for the future:** Our Co-op pledged to raise £5m over five years through our Apprentice Levy Share scheme to fund early childhood apprenticeships. Just one year in, we've already raised £1.4m, supporting 133 apprenticeships.
- **Local Community Fund causes:** Through our Local Community Fund, we've supported 124 causes from baby banks to playgroups, taking our total investment through the Local Community Fund for the early years to £5.6m since 2016.
- **Business action hub:** Together with the Royal Foundation Centre for Early Childhood, we've built a hub to help businesses of all sizes take practical steps for children's futures.

Looking ahead to 2026, we'll celebrate the importance of pausing and connecting with young children. Together with over 8,000 of our members who have helped us shape the campaign, we'll share real stories and advice that inspire simple, playful everyday moments.



SOCIAL MOBILITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING

Social Mobility, Inclusion and Belonging have always been priorities for our member owners - areas where they expect us to campaign, advocate and drive change.

Our strategy focuses on building a more inclusive workplace, enhancing social value and ensuring The Co-op remains responsive to colleagues, member owners and their communities.

In 2025, we strengthened fair access to opportunities, deepened belonging across all identities and embedded behaviours that help every colleague feel safe, respected and able to thrive.

OUR TARGET:

- We will increase the proportion of ethnic minorities who are leaders to 10% by 2027 and 13% by 2030
- We will increase the proportion of women who are leaders to 45% by 2027 and 48% by 2030

OUR PROGRESS:

- 9% of our leaders are from an ethnic minority background
- 43% of our leaders identify as women

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING DIVERSE TALENT

To advance our commitment to increasing diversity in leadership, we delivered two more cohorts of our *Elevating Women in Leadership* programme - equipping women with the skills, behaviours and confidence to progress into senior roles. Targeted where representation declines, the programme blends world-class facilitation with leading gender diversity research.

We see similar challenges for ethnic minorities, so we piloted a dedicated programme focused on removing structural barriers to progression and creating fair access to leadership opportunities.

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION AND BELONGING

In 2025, we reaffirmed our commitment to trans colleagues and communities. Following our CEO's public statement, we made clear that dignity, safety and respect are non-negotiable for everyone we serve and employ. We created a colleague working group to ensure our approach reflects diverse needs and reviewed our estate to provide facilities that uphold dignity and respect for all.

We also rolled out our new Colleague Code, supported by updated learning resources and a Zero Tolerance standard. Leaders used these tools to drive conversations about behaviour, expectations and

accountability. Managers have given feedback that they feel more confident addressing non-inclusive behaviour, and colleagues say the Code makes expectations "clearer, simpler, and easier to act on."

The Co-op's first digital Inclusion Passport launched, making workplace adjustments simpler and more consistent. Colleagues with disabilities or other needs can record agreed adjustments in our online colleague system (MyHR), ensuring support follows them across roles. Shaped by colleague feedback, it reinforces our commitment to dignity, equity and belonging.

Our Inclusion Pioneers continued to play a critical role in 2025. Drawn from all areas, they acted as catalysts for change - spotting barriers, modelling inclusive behaviours and supporting teams to create safer, fairer, more welcoming workplaces.



PAY GAP REPORTING

In 2025, we published our first [Intersectional Pay Gap Report](#), reinforcing our commitment to transparency and equity. By examining how gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background intersect, we gained a clearer picture of colleague experience and progression. These insights are already driving targeted actions to close gaps, improve representation and ensure fair access to opportunity - marking a unique step forward in the retail sector.

In 2026, we'll stay focused on improving representation across all characteristics and ensuring our systems deliver equitable outcomes - from recruitment through to engagement and progression. We'll also focus on strengthening inclusive leadership, launching a Career Acceleration Programme for ethnic minority colleagues in Funeralcare, and continuing our *Elevating Women in Leadership* programme.



6th in the 'Diversity in Retail' Index

This year, we were proud to place 6th in the 'Diversity in Retail' Index, reflecting our progress in creating a workplace where difference is valued and inclusion is part of everyday practice.

CAMPAIGN: SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility is, at its heart, about giving every individual a fair chance.

For The Co-op, it's not just about a lucky few landing elite jobs in big cities - it's about enabling more people to thrive in the communities they call home and ensuring our workforce reflects the communities we serve. That's why, since our members voted for action in 2021, we've been campaigning to tackle the inequalities we see today.

Taking action on social mobility isn't just the *right* thing to do - it's the *smart* thing to do. It has the potential to deliver on both the Government's "Opportunity" and "Growth" missions. Our 2024 report with think tank Demos, *The Opportunity Effect*, found that improving social mobility could boost the UK economy by £19bn - proving it's not a burden, but a way to increase productivity.

In 2024, we became the first UK retailer to publish a standalone socio-economic pay gap report. In 2025, we went further with a single report covering gender, ethnicity, disability and socio-economic background - remaining the only major UK retailer to voluntarily publish pay gap data across all four areas.

We've worked hard to encourage colleagues to share their socio-economic background (SEB) data. Starting with a 48% share rate, we set a target of 80% by 2025. We hit that target a year early, and today 82% of colleagues have shared their SEB data.

In November 2025, we published a Social Mobility Employer Toolkit, offering practical guidance for employers to measure, understand and promote social mobility in their workforces. We also launched an Employability Toolkit to help people facing barriers to work - such as young people, returners, refugees and those with convictions - build job-ready skills and confidence.

In March 2025, we gave oral evidence to the Lords Social Mobility Committee, making the case for SEB to become the 10th protected characteristic and for Government to encourage employers to collect SEB

SMF

TOP 75 IN

THE SOCIAL MOBILITY

EMPLOYER

INDEX

2025

17th place

We ranked 17th in the 2025 Social Mobility Employer Index (2024: 34th)



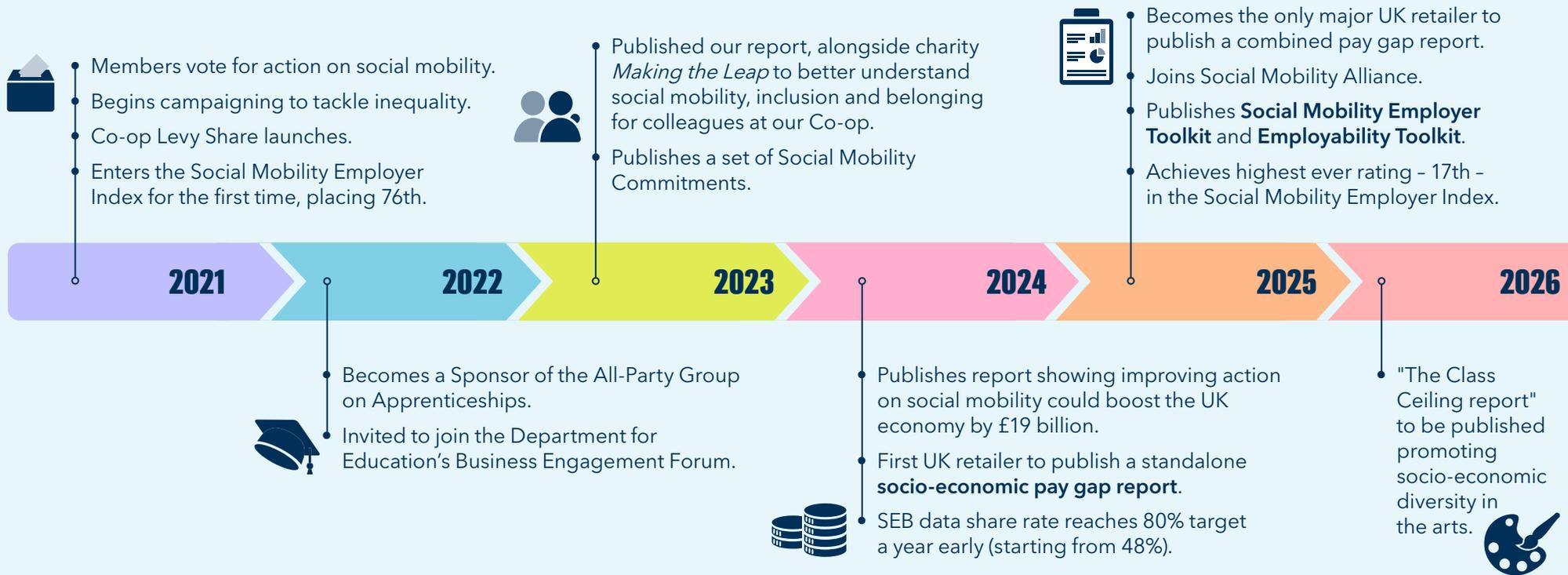
Take action on social mobility, inclusion and belonging

data and report SEB pay gaps. In June, we joined the Social Mobility Alliance - the only employer invited - to help co-ordinate lobbying efforts to promote social mobility. And in December, we appeared before the Women and Equalities Select Committee to give evidence alongside the Social Mobility Foundation. We also responded to the consultation on the Draft Equality (Ethnicity and Disability) Bill, advocating for SEB pay gap reporting to be introduced alongside proposed mandatory ethnicity and disability reporting.

We see apprenticeships as a vital way to promote social mobility. That's why we continue to push for reform of the Apprenticeship Levy, sponsor the All-Party Group on Apprenticeships and provide evidence to Parliamentary committees. During National Apprenticeship Week, we also called on the newly formed Skills England to collect SEB data on apprentices - ensuring these opportunities are truly open to everyone. You can read more on our Co-op Levy Share Service [here](#).

Looking ahead to 2026, we've co-sponsored research in partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to promote socio-economic diversity in the arts and creative sector. The *Class Ceiling* report will be published early next year. We've also commissioned new research, due in May 2026, exploring the link between social mobility and wellbeing to broaden the conversation beyond income and status.

SOCIAL MOBILITY CAMPAIGN: 2021-2026



CO-OP ACADEMIES

The [Co-op Academies Trust](#) is one of the largest multi-academy trusts serving the north of England, with 38 primary, secondary, special and post-16 academies. The Trust provides an education based on Co-operative Values and Principles as well as supporting careers education and encouraging social action for over 20,000 young people. By providing education and opportunities for the youngest in our society, our Academies aim to inspire a new generation of high-achieving, ambitious, skilled and confident co-operators, and are helping us deliver our social value priorities.

 **Over 20,000**
38 Academies providing an education based on Co-operative values and principles for over 20,000 students



Our Co-op provides £1m of funding annually, which is targeted at supporting pupil premium students, and to cover the cost of the Trust’s community team. We’ve strengthened our support for Co-op Academies by offering more enrichment activities and tackling barriers to social mobility, ensuring help reaches the students who need it most.

The Trust and its pupils get involved in social action projects throughout the year, including [The Big Lunch](#). Academies across the Trust hosted activities to bring people together, including events such as ‘Tea Time Pie and Mash’, garden parties and Father’s Day breakfasts.

We’re proud to support a broad careers offer for pupils across our Trust, from Reception all the way up to Year 13. Our Co-op Careers Programme continues to go from strength to strength, with the Primary World of Work Week now delivered in all our primary academies. We’re also delighted that the Trust has been selected to take part in a national pilot in partnership with the National Careers Company.


20,000
PEOPLE BENEFITTING IN 2025


IMPACT: IMPROVE



THE HACKING GAMES

As part of our long-term response to the spring cyber-attack, we launched a new partnership with *The Hacking Games* - a UK-based social impact business dedicated to preventing cybercrime by identifying and supporting young cyber talent before they are exploited.

The initiative goes beyond recovery; it's about prevention by connecting the cybersecurity industry with unconventional talent. With an estimated 30-40% of people in tech identifying as neurodivergent, the programme focuses on prevention through access to opportunity, resilience-building and guidance - especially for those most at risk of exploitation.

Our long-term partnership begins with an independent research study to inform prevention strategies and a pilot within the Co-op Academies Trust. Together, we aim to create a programme that delivers targeted training for students and parents, and opens pathways to ethical cyber careers.

"We know first-hand what it feels like to be targeted by cybercrime.

At Co-op, we can't just stand back and hope it doesn't happen again - to us or to others. Our members expect us to find a co-operative means of tackling the cause, not just the symptom. Our partnership with The Hacking Games lets us reach talented young people early, guide their skills toward protection rather than harm, and open real paths into ethical work. When we expand opportunity we reduce risk, while having a positive impact on society."

Shirine Khoury-Haq, Co-op CEO

Since launching the partnership, we've partnered with *The Guardian* to highlight the scale of youth cybercrime through a series of articles exploring how talented teenagers are being led astray - and the ethical alternatives available.

We also hosted our first Inspire Session at Co-op Academy Walkden, engaging 300 students (aged 14-15) with leading cybersecurity experts. The session introduced ethical hacking and showcased career opportunities for digital talent.



ENABLING ACCESS TO FOOD

In 2025, we continued to use surplus food and improve food redistribution. As cost of living pressures continue, our partnerships with Hubbub and Your Local Pantry promote sustainable and dignified approaches to reducing food insecurity.

Since 2021, we have helped to double the size of the Hubbub Community Fridge Network, which now has more than 815 locations that were visited over 1.5 million times in the last 12 months.

In 2025, we have funded 45 new community fridges across the UK (343 since the start of the partnership), allowing local residents to come together to learn new food cooking and growing skills, access affordable food and connect with their neighbours. We also distributed 300 investment fund grants. Since the start of our partnership, Your Local Pantry has opened 80 new pantries, growing their network to more than 120 pantries. There have been 314,000 visits over a 12-month period, where members of Your Local Pantry have saved £6.9m on their shopping bills.





409,930
PEOPLE BENEFITTING
IN 2025¹



**IMPACT:
IMPROVE**

¹ Cumulative beneficiaries of YLP and Hubbub community fridges.