



Impact Report 2024 / 2025

Introduction

As Chair of the Oswin Project trustees, I am delighted to be able to present our most recent Impact Report. As a charity we pride ourselves on our rigorous measuring of outcomes rather than outputs, in other words we measure what difference our work has made, both for the Oswinners we work with and how these outcomes are helping to break the cycle of reoffending, therefore impacting society positively. Everyone involved in the project, staff, Oswinners, volunteers and trustees are included in this work, measuring and refining our approach, and I wish to thank them all.

Pam Walker MBE
Chair of the Oswin Project



2024 / 2025 in Brief

6

Enterprises
operated
by The Oswin
Project

4.9*

Tripadvisor and Google
Reviews Score for Cafe
16 Newcastle
Cathedral

2

New Enterprises
opened

412

Prisoners and prison
leavers supported
between May 2024 -
December 2025

<4%

Reoffending rate
among Oswinners

30%

Regional reoffending
rate

15,320

Hours of Employment
for Oswinners

5,320

Hours of
Volunteering

£52,000

Amount we save the
taxpayer for each
person who does
not reoffend

2024 / 2025 in Brief

26

Qualifications gained
by serving prisoners
in HMP
Northumberland

50

Training
Courses we
provided

70%

Of our staff have
Criminal
Records

29,100

Cups of Coffee
served

120kg

Fresh produce grown
by prisoners

24,000

Pies made in
our Bakery

301

Plants cultivated
and sold

Timeline of the Charity

2010

Our Founder, Fiona Sample, visited HMP Northumberland and saw the issues facing prison leavers. She felt there was a need for a 'bridge of opportunity' and began to gather like minded people around her to bring the project to reality.

2014

The Charity was formally registered and supporting those with criminal records into employment.

2017

R- affordables , An affordable housing initiative, in partnership with the architect Rodderick James.

2021

Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral opened.

2022

Changing Perceptions Art Show. The Oswin Project's art exhibition showcased diverse artworks created by prisoners and prison leavers.

2023

Growing Out farm shop opened at HMP Northumberland selling the produce grown and furniture crafted in the prison's Market Garden and Workshops.

2025

Baking out, is our new bakery due to open in a disused kitchen in HMP Northumberland.

2013

Pilot Project – In June 2013, four Oswinners renovated a flat and shops in Pegswood.

2016

Garden & Maintenance Team was created in June 2016, the Oswin Project redecorated Netherwitton Village Hall.

2020

Café 16 in HMP Northumberland opened in March 2020. It was hailed as a groundbreaking initiative in the rehabilitation of prisoners.

2021

The Oswin Project and New Futures Network launched 'Farming Out' at HMP North Sea Camp and HMP Kirkham.

2022

The Oswin Project's Changing perception conference held in Newcastle brought together key figures to discuss the rehabilitation of prisoners.

2024

Changing the Cycle bike shop opened, providing work and training opportunities for prison leavers . The Oswin Project Bike Shop refurbishes and sells pre-owned bicycles, providing valuable skills and training to prison leavers.



“Being employed by the Oswin Project has given me the opportunity to provide financial support for my children which is a massive bonus for me”

An Oswinner

Changing Perceptions

UCL Centre for Education & Justice

The Oswin Project co-organised "Building Hope: The future of education in the criminal justice system" at UCL's Institute of Education in September 2024, bringing together over 100 delegates. Our CEO Fiona Sample was on the panel that answered questions about working in the system and our hopes and fears for the future of the criminal justice system.

University Partnerships

The Oswin Project hosts psychology students from Northumbria and Newcastle Universities for placements where they see how employment and mentoring create real change. We also supported researchers from Nottingham Trent, Durham and Bath Universities, ensuring our practical insights inform academic research.

Volunteering

The Oswin Project provided 5,320 volunteer hours in 2024/25, offering vital stepping stones between training and employment for people leaving prison. Our mixed team of volunteers, including those with criminal records work together in our enterprises.



**“Well that’s the first letter
of disclosure done...Every
time I have to do this, it
feels like I’m just offering
to walk the plank myself”**

An Oswinner



Case Study – Café 16 HMP Northumberland

“Working at Cafe 16 in HMP Northumberland gave me structure and a normality of life, it felt like I was not in prison and an escape from everyday prison wing politics.

While I worked in the Cafe I learned valuable skills that I did not expect to use again but it prepared me for a job that I could walk straight into. Working at the café gave me access to people on the outside who I knew could help me on release, without the help of the Oswin Project I would have felt more anxious about leaving prison.

From leaving prison on one Thursday and a meeting at the Cafe 16 in Newcastle Cathedral, I had an interview with Greene King that the Oswin Project pushed for me on release. The interview was on the Saturday; it was great and I got a job offer a couple of days later. I am loving my new job, and I have also started an apprenticeship with Greene King.”



Café 16 in HMP Northumberland



36+

People mentored, supported and trained over the last year

14,600

Estimated annual bread loaves produced

8,500

Individual cakes baked annually across various specialties

500

Pies produced per week

Café 16 in HMP Northumberland is a café-bakery which employs serving prisoners. 15-20 Oswinner each year receive training in commercial baking and food safety. It supplies the baked goods for Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral and the farm

shop along with a growing list of local businesses. Most Oswinners find jobs in hospitality after release due to their catering experience and qualifications.

Case Study – Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral



Pat joined Café 16 in the Cathedral and found that 'having a routine, a reason to get up in the morning, is hard to put into words; the difference it has made'. Initially, Pat had to work hard on time management and personal organisation. With support from a volunteer, he was able to navigate the complications of bank accounts and living in a rental property. With the regular work in Café 16 in the Cathedral, Pat's confidence continued to grow.

Pat has used his experience to advocate for prison leavers. He shares frank accounts of prison and addiction to "make an impact," arguing that "there is a fine line between punishment and neglect" and that prisons should "see people as individuals and offer rehabilitation accordingly." Pat continues working hard to change not only his own life but to create positive change for others.

Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral

Café 16 in Newcastle Cathedral is our flagship hospitality venue, serving thousands of visitors annually while reducing the gap between prison training and community employment. The café provides a bridge of opportunity for people who have completed training at HMP

Northumberland and for serving prisoners who are released on temporary licence. Customer feedback shows outstanding performance and strong support for our work. The café is a valued community space where people enjoy quality food and service while being part of positive change.

16

People with criminal records employed in 24/25

6,200

Hours of paid employment

230,400

Items sold across all menu categories

500kg

Coffee beans used

91.3%

Of customers rated service quality as "Excellent"

36

Short-term work placements and volunteering opportunities provided



“The Oswin Project has been a massive help getting over these hurdles and they have supported me into employment. Chris has been a massive support and has helped me with opening a bank account”

An Oswinner



Case Study – Inside & Out



Nick arrived at the Oswin Project feeling "nervous about the world and ashamed of my past. I was unable to see how to progress to integrate back into society." After starting as a volunteer at Café 16 in the Cathedral, he wrote to the Mentor Manager saying "I really felt I was making a contribution to something again."

With growing confidence, Nick joined the Inside and Out team. Here he had to develop his 'physical fitness and stamina (that I never had before)'. He recalls how the physical work helped with 'anxiety and my confidence in what I am doing and what I can achieve'.

He's now an integral team member and mentor to others, having "lost the 'it is beyond my capabilities' attitude" and learned that "setbacks are temporary and just part of the journey."

Nick values being part of a team and having people ready to listen: "Sometimes that's all that's needed. But, when that's not enough, advice about how to proceed has been invaluable."

Inside & Out

Inside & Out provides year-round paid employment and training for people leaving prison, led by people with lived experience who understand reintegration challenges. The team works for landowners and estate management companies across Northumberland and northern County Durham, including specialist conservation work on listed buildings. Projects have included heritage work on Grade I buildings, rebuilding ha-ha walls and applying lime-mortar finishes to exacting standards. That landowners give such sensitive work to former prisoners demonstrates the quality and trust earned.

People who trained at HMP Northumberland can progress to Inside & Out, receiving ongoing support with work skills and rebuilding their lives. This model is proving highly effective at reducing reoffending.

6

Men employed
in the team
in 24/25

12

Men
volunteered

430

Volunteered
hours

**5,200
hours**

Paid
employment

2

Team members
moved into full-time
permanent external
roles

100%

Leadership positions
filled by people with
personal understanding
of the
challenges



Case Study – Farm Shop



David joined Café 16 in HMPN and immediately threw himself into the kitchen bustle. With catering experience from the forces, he thrived on the challenge of large breakfast orders and ensuring efficiency throughout the week. David enjoyed the 'pleasant atmosphere' and working as part of a team again.

His steady, reliable presence in Café 16 was recognised throughout the prison, enabling him to overcome his biggest hurdle and have his risk level reduced. David could now apply for ROTL (day release), which he quickly achieved, becoming a key member of the Farm Shop team.

He quickly impressed the volunteers with his cheery presence and brilliant floor washing and they missed him when he started the daily commute to Café 16 in the Cathedral.

David sees the Oswin Project's support as key to his progress, finding 'the one-to-one support most valuable.' His goal: "on leaving prison I would like to carry on working for Oswin".

Farm Shop

Our Farm Shop is open four days a week, in a courtyard next to the visitor's car park at HMP Northumberland selling fresh produce from the prison gardens, baked goods from Cafe 16 in HMP Northumberland, and furniture made in the prison workshop. It connects the training prisoners receive to real market sales while serving the local community. The shop provides volunteering and employment opportunities for Oshwinners and any unsold produce goes to Amble Food Bank each week.

1296

Customer visits throughout the year

120 Kg

Fresh produce grown by prison residents and distributed

305

Plants cultivated and sold

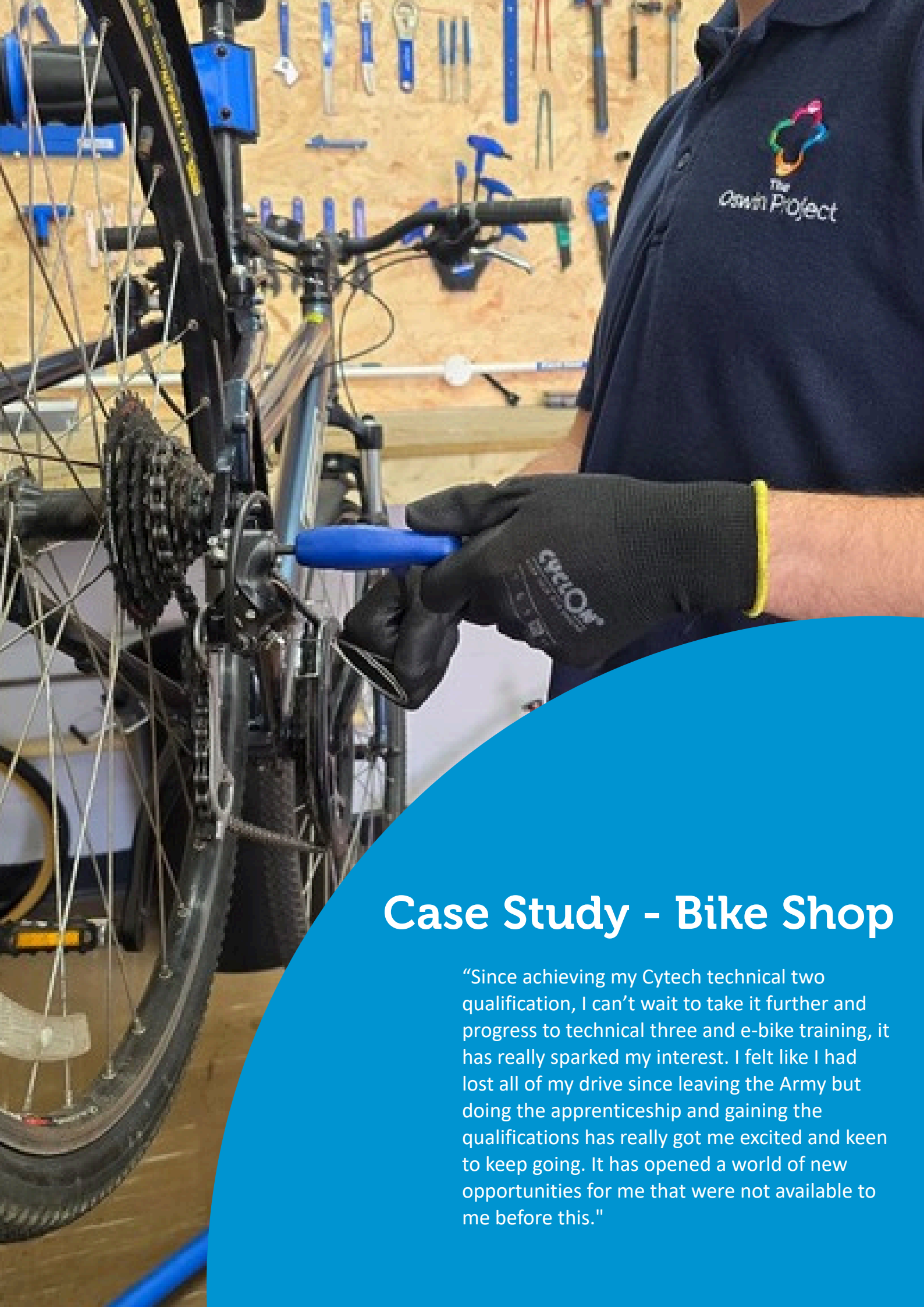
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Full-time Oshwinner employed at the shop

22

Volunteers





Case Study - Bike Shop

"Since achieving my Cytech technical two qualification, I can't wait to take it further and progress to technical three and e-bike training, it has really sparked my interest. I felt like I had lost all of my drive since leaving the Army but doing the apprenticeship and gaining the qualifications has really got me excited and keen to keep going. It has opened a world of new opportunities for me that were not available to me before this."

Bike Shop

Changing the Cycle employs an apprentice alongside several individuals with lived experience of the justice system, all working towards industry-recognised Cytech bike maintenance qualifications. The shop offers full bike servicing to the local community, giving the team hands-on experience in repair, customer service, and workplace skills that build confidence and employability.

As part of our partnership with Recirculate, we also refurbish donated bikes, restoring them to a roadworthy condition. Our aim is to make cycling accessible and affordable for people across the North East and transform lives.

30

Level 1 bicycle services completed

40

Bicycles restored, refurbished and sold

8

Qualifications achieved by staff and volunteers

5

Volunteers





Case Study Market Gardens

In prison, Will worked in the glass house, developing an interest in propagating plants and experimenting with seeds. He quizzed the mentors, who were doing horticulture qualifications to discover more.

This "oasis of calm" helped steady his racing mind as he planned for release. The Oswin Project acted as a 'bridge' for him on release. Meeting people who knew and understood his journey brought relief: "Thanks for your time today (and the scones!) and cheers for being a sounding board - I really appreciate it."

Will searched for employment, working hard on preparing for disclosure despite the anxiety: "Every time I have to do this it feels like I'm just offering to walk the plank myself." After "days of anxiety, stress and tears," he secured a job. Will has stayed in touch, talking through challenges and sharing successes. The skills he learnt in the Market Garden, he now uses every day.

Market Gardens

38

Oswinners engaged in growing produce and plants

3

Prisoners supported to start RHS Level 2 Horticulture courses

40

items of garden and indoor furniture produced for public sale

4

Prisoners working in the equipped woodwork workshop

Working with Sodexo at HMP Northumberland's Market Gardens, we engage with 20 Oswinners in growing produce and plants that supply our Farm Shop and other enterprises. This hands-on training teaches valuable horticultural skills, with 4 prisoners now studying for Level 2 Horticulture qualifications.

We have also set up a woodwork workshop where up to 4 prisoners make garden and indoor furniture sold to the public. Together, the horticultural and woodwork training give people strong foundations for jobs in landscaping, agriculture, and skilled trades after release.

Case Study

Direct Mentoring

The Oswin Project helped me by putting my name forward for the next demolition course and giving me the confidence to go for it and encouraging me along the way. There was a final exam, and it was quite nerve racking, but I gained top marks in the group! I am now in paid employment and fully kitted out for work, it makes me feel part of the team and it is a pleasure going to work. I have just received my first pay cheque.

I couldn't have done it without the support of the Oswin Project , from the initial first meeting right up to now they have been there. I am so grateful to Chris for contacting me and checking on me, talking to me and encouraging me all the way. I am determined to do the best job I can.

'Onwards and upwards doing great. Working the same hours each week and earning good money. Settling into a routine'





Direct Mentoring

Our mentoring program provides one-to-one support with CVs, job searching through our employer network, training, and advice on disclosing criminal records. We partner with other organisations for housing and mental health support when needed. With an average mentoring period of 18 months, we provide the consistent, long-term support essential for successful reintegration.

412

Individuals directly supported by our team since May 2023

18

months

Average length of support provided

66

People supported into employment or training

55

People helped with writing disclosure statements

65%

Of participants securing employment within 6 months of completion

We would like to thank our partners and funders who support our work

Partners

Northumberland CVA
SSAFA
Handcrafted
Ingeus
The Recruitment Junction
Connected Voice
High Sheriff of Northumberland
North East Probation
Newcastle Cathedral
Sodexo
Junction 42
Northumbria County Council
NEPACS
Keir
Optimum Skills
Newcastle College
Tyne Group
Connected Voice

Funders

Swire Charitable Trust
Scottish Power Foundation
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales
Garfield Weston Foundation
Bromley Trust
Northumberland Estates
Pease Charitable Trust
Centre for Social Justice
Fyrish Foundation
The Rank Foundation
Sir James Knott Trust
Community Foundation for Tyne & Wear and Northumberland
Horseman Trust
Barbour Foundation
Platton Family Trust
O'Flaherty Foundation
Tudor Trust
Weavers Company Benevolent Fund
Hadrian Trust
Shears Foundation
Kelly Family Charity
Forrester Family Charity
Mercer's Company
Charles Hayward Foundation
Reece Foundation
Finnis Scott Foundation
Joicey Trust
R W Mann Trust
St Hilda's Trust
Steve and Christine Convey Fund





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