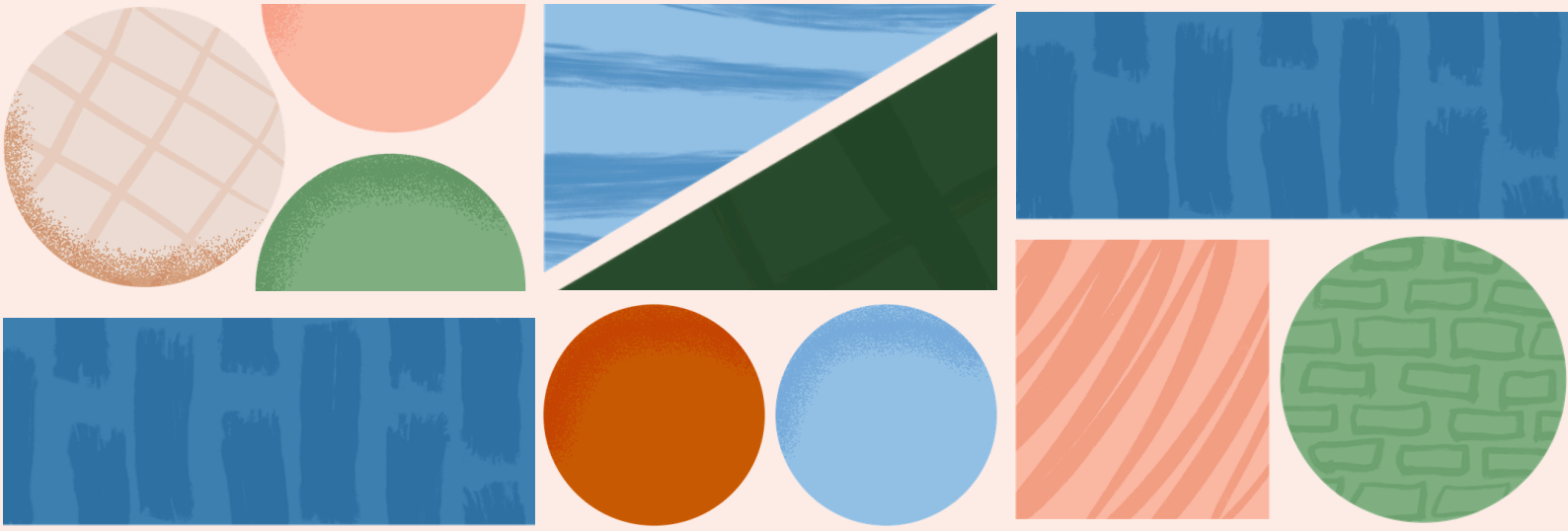
place matters

Trustees' Annual Report

Summary Report

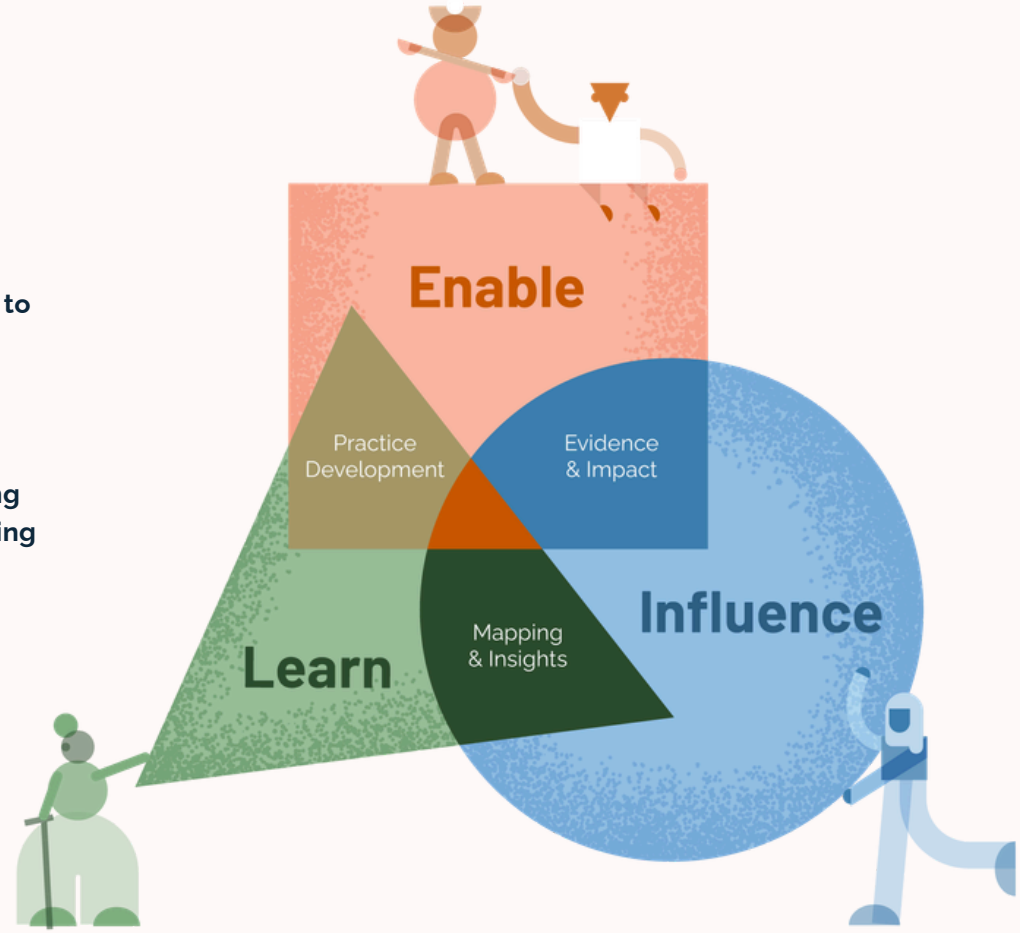
For the period ending 31 December 2025



Registered Charity Number 1210905

Our Mission

Place Matters' mission is to enable community-led, place-based change to thrive by strengthening communities, amplifying good practice, influencing funding, policy, and turning learning into action.



Our approach to achieving impact

Place Matters delivers public benefit through three interconnected approaches - Learn, Enable, and Influence - each of which is designed to create lasting, systemic change rather than short-term relief.

Learn
within and between places

We create and disseminate place-based practice and knowledge to build real understanding of what might transform the lives of people facing different challenges in different places. We make data, research, evidence and resources (e.g. frameworks and tools) for place-based working from both the UK and globally, widely accessible to communities and organisations,

Enable
within and between places

We work with communities and organisations to build the capacity, confidence, connections and leadership capabilities to make the changes that improve people's lives. This includes advising, convening and facilitating communities of practice around addressing disadvantage and inequality in areas of shared endeavour, enabling diverse people to come together to collaborate within a place, and connecting communities and organisations between places to share learning and inspiration to build a wider movement for change.

Influence
beyond places

We amplify the voices and practices of communities to achieve systems change. We convene organisations with statutory responsibilities, policymakers, funders, and other actors beyond places to create better and more equitable funding and policy conditions to address the disadvantages and inequalities that affect people in different places.

Taking our Learning Forward to 2026 and Beyond

A Message from our Chair & CEO

We have learned a great deal through our learning and practice development work and support for individual communities. We have seen big gaps in local social infrastructure for change, particularly in the 'backbone' role that convenes cross-sector partnerships, coordinates a shared strategy, and manages the learning and evidence behind it.

We have learned that the practice of place-based change remains inconsistently understood and that it needs to have more coherence with shared narratives and frameworks, have a better approach to data and evidence, and learning and good practice needs to be much more accessible to practitioners, funders and policy makers.

Our experience has reinforced what we already knew: that systemic challenges can't be solved at place level alone. They require action across the whole system, including regional and national levels, and a field-building approach bridges that gap, connecting community-centred work with the wider ecosystem needed to drive systemic change.

We are now conceiving of the period since we became a registered charity in November 2024 as the emergence of new place-based policy architecture, rather than a collection of unrelated initiatives: English Devolution, Integrated Settlements, Local Growth Plans, Pride in Place, Best Start Family Hubs, Neighbourhood Health, Local Outcomes Framework, Place-Based Budgets. National and regional philanthropic funders are increasing their own commitment to place-based funding. This all adds up to a positive policy environment for locally led, cross-sector, preventative and outcomes-focused approaches to complex problems, and is a genuine opportunity for communities to tackle challenges that have locked in disadvantage for decades.

Based on our learning and the conducive policy and funding environment, we are defining a set of strategic priorities for Place Matters that responds to the needs of the moment over the next two years or so by:

1. **Strengthening social infrastructure for change at local level**
2. **Developing the practice of place-based change nationally**
3. **Investing in a field-building approach for specific areas of impact**

Delivering all of this means growing Place Matters' own capacity without losing the agility that has been core to how we work. We will be looking to add skills in managing coalitions and partnerships, in sense-making and thought leadership, and in capacity-building itself, largely through our network of associates and partners rather than by growing headcount for its own sake.

We will also scale up our learning hub, learning resources and events, so that people and organisations at different stages of the journey along place-based working can find what they need to move forward, connect with fellow travellers and achieve the change that is long overdue.



Emily Sun, CEO



Amanda Jordan OBE, Chair of Trustees

What We did in 2025

Across government, philanthropy and the voluntary sector, a shared conviction is taking hold that tackling deep-rooted social inequity requires more than well-intentioned programmes delivered at communities, and requires working with them, at place level, over time, in a spirit of genuine partnership.



Nowhere was that energy more visible than at our Collaborative Action Summit on Child Poverty in June 2025, which brought together 135 leaders from across the UK, Canada and Australia. Several attendees told us it was the most productive day of collaboration on child poverty they had experienced, and it has since created connections between organisations that would not otherwise have worked together.







We amplified community voices

As part of our mission is to tackle the root causes of social inequity, we believe that how knowledge is constructed and acted upon needs to be addressed. **Data Democracy** is about empowering communities to access, interpret and analyse data that is relevant to the change they want to see. It is about validating the wealth of community knowledge and making it visible to "the system". With a grant from Joseph Rowntree Foundation, we piloted data democracy with Just Knowledge, Roots and Rigour, North London Partnership Consortium and residents of Northumberland Park (one of the most deprived wards in the country) in the London Borough of Haringey.



With residents, we co-authored reports and blogs which highlighted the impact of spatial inequality and how Northumberland Park has gone backwards on nearly every measure since the redevelopment of the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in 2019. It concluded with several resident-led provocations for change, including a shift from child-focused to family-focused interventions and the establishment of a Northumberland Park Endowment Fund.

We supported evidence building for place-based change

System leaders, commissioners and funders need confidence in place-based approaches before they will back them. We convened a Stewardship Group to consider how to build that trust and, with additional funding from Impact on Urban Health, it commissioned Stories of Change (working with Ratio) to produce the Place and Evidence report. Published in November 2025, it argues that to evidence place-based change we must first be clear about what it is and sets out the first structured taxonomy of five categories of place-based change. It was launched at our annual place-based funder convening, followed by a webinar, and several funders have already used it to shape their own place-based funding strategies.

We supported learning, connection and practice development

Learning

We have been involved in learning partnerships and research with place-based initiatives all focused on addressing systemic inequalities. These partnerships have been critical in developing our tools, frameworks and learning methods.

Right to Succeed is a charity that provides backbone support and is currently serving 10 communities in the bottom 5% of indices of multiple deprivation, working to improve outcomes for over 50,000 children and young people. Our learning partnership has primarily focused on Cradle to Career in Liverpool City Region which is a sector-defining programme that shows the power of cross-sector collaboration and regional leadership to tackle systemic problems in doubly disadvantaged communities. We have walked alongside the teams to build a culture and practice of reflection and learning that has been critical to the work.

In 2016 Esmée Fairbairn Foundation set out to test large-scale, place-led funding to inform their funding strategy that is now Creative, Confident Communities (CCC) with three 'place pilots' in Barking and Dagenham, Plymouth and Sandwell. We spoke to 49 people including funders, public sector officers, staff from the pilot projects, local partners, organisations the projects were supporting and residents, to provide learning for Esmée on the value and impact of the projects and how their role as a funder was experienced. The external version of the report was published in Autumn 2025.



We started a learning partnership with The Clothworkers Foundation to provide capacity building support to five of the organisations they fund to address various aspects of economic inequity such as affordable housing, community asset ownership, financial education, and employment pathways. The work is being carried out over three years and Place Matters role is to enable learning for Clothworkers and the broader funding sector on how to effectively and sustainably support economic equity at various levels: individual, community and systems.

Connection and practice development

We continued to facilitate the two communities of practice we started in 2024. Both connect people, create space for peer learning and use that learning to influence funders and policymakers.

UK Community Foundations Partnering for Neighbourhood Health brings together 16 of the UK's 47 community foundations seeking to tackle health inequalities through partnership with health systems. Over three years the 14 that submitted data distributed nearly £50m to health-related projects, 46% of it their own money. We supported them to produce the Preventative Power report, an evidence-based case to the NHS for community-based preventative investment.

Place-based approaches to early childhood connects eight collaborations in England and one in Northern Ireland, responding to the lack of any organised way to share learning between pioneering initiatives. Members co-designed objectives to increase each initiative's impact through shared learning, to articulate the practice so it can be scaled across disadvantaged communities, and to open conversations with funders, commissioners and policymakers about shifting early childhood outcomes at place level.

We helped communities to understand, design and implement place-based change strategies in Rhyl, the Isle of Wight, Clifton (East Midlands), Northern Ireland and several combined authorities. We were invited in by a mix of community groups, local government and funders, a sign of how widely the approach is now being sought.



We influenced policy and funding

National policy

Our early childhood community of practice contributed directly to the Department for Education's Place-based Collective Impact Match Fund. At the Department's request we produced case studies for its guidance, covering place-based working, the role of backbone organisations and how Family Hubs can work more effectively with communities. These are now in the hands of every local authority in England.

Funder collaboration

Since 2023 we have worked with 17 major UK place-based funders on how funders can have greater impact. We had planned a second iteration of our interactive map of place-based initiatives, but feedback on how the first version was being used led us to change course. Instead, funders joined people with lived experience, community organisations and governments at the Summit and at a Place and Evidence workshop.



We extended our reach and scale

Our **learning community** grew:

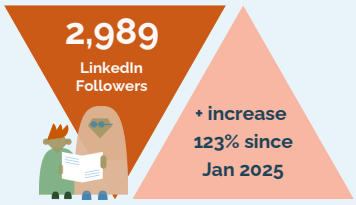
514 engagements in 2024

1,221 engagements in 2025

Website users rose from 2,920 in 2023 to 9,700 in 2025, and we added several new resources.



LinkedIn followers more than doubled to 2,989 (+123%), reaching 45,270 members with 82,620 impressions.

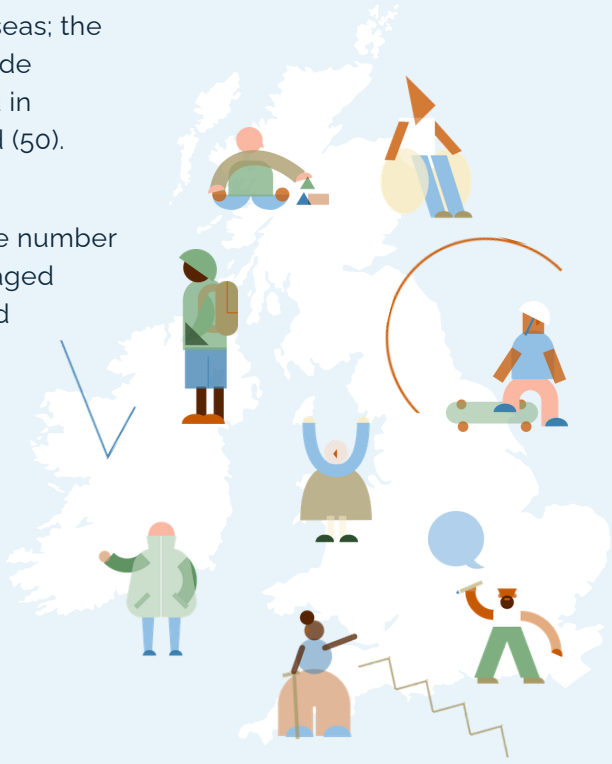




We hosted four free **webinars** attracted 896 sign-ups: Measuring with Value; Healing Trauma in Vulnerable Places; Understanding Poverty in Place: Where Data Meets Community; and Place and Evidence. Where we captured location, participants came from every UK region and overseas; the largest groups held UK-wide remits (238) or were based in London (108) and Scotland (50).

Geography: we trebled the number of places we actively engaged with, through grant-funded and commissioned work across England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Dublin.

Partnerships: we significantly increased the number of organisations we work with, including thinking and collaboration partners in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, research and backbone partners, more than 25 funders, and UK, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Ireland governments and combined authorities. New partnerships in government and research are particularly important to our systems-change ambitions.



We built our organisation

Place Matters was incubated within Right to Succeed CIO from 2021 and became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation on 12 November 2024. During 2025 we built the infrastructure a new charity needs.

Systems: we embedded a suite of new policies, strengthened our finance capability, upgraded our website and made progress on impact metrics.

Board: four trustees joined during 2025, bringing new expertise and diversity of lived experience, appointed after interview against the skills the charity needs. A Finance and Risk Committee oversees financial performance, reserves, cash flow and the risk register, reporting regularly to the full Board.

Team: we deliberately remain small, aiming to grow a movement rather than an organisation. By the end of 2025 we had five people, including a newly recruited Learning and Practice Associate Director and Senior Administrator. We recognise we will need more capacity to meet our ambitions.

Financial Summary

These are our first accounts, covering 12 November 2024 to 31 December 2025, which reflects more than one financial year.

Place Matters was incubated by Right to Succeed CIO from 2021 until 11 November 2024 when it became a registered charity in its own right. The total income shown for the period is £734,712 which includes a transfer of £228,363 from Right to Succeed, representing the balance held in Right to Succeed accounts since they started incubating Place Matters.

Grants came from funders including The National Lottery Community Fund, Impact on Urban Health, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Point North Community Foundation (for Community Foundations UK). Fee income came from partners including The Clothworkers' Foundation, BBC Children in Need, the Northern Ireland Civil Service, the Department for Education/Collective Futures and Youth Futures Foundation.

Income	**£**
Grants	384,500
Fees from charitable activities	120,850
Donation	1,000
Transfer of funds from Right to Succeed CIO on incorporation	228,362
	734,712
Expenditure	
Charitable activities (incl. staff, programme delivery, Annual Conference, governance)	363,358
Overheads and administration	104,002
	467,360
Surplus for the period	**267,352**
of which restricted funds	115,723
of which unrestricted reserves	151,629

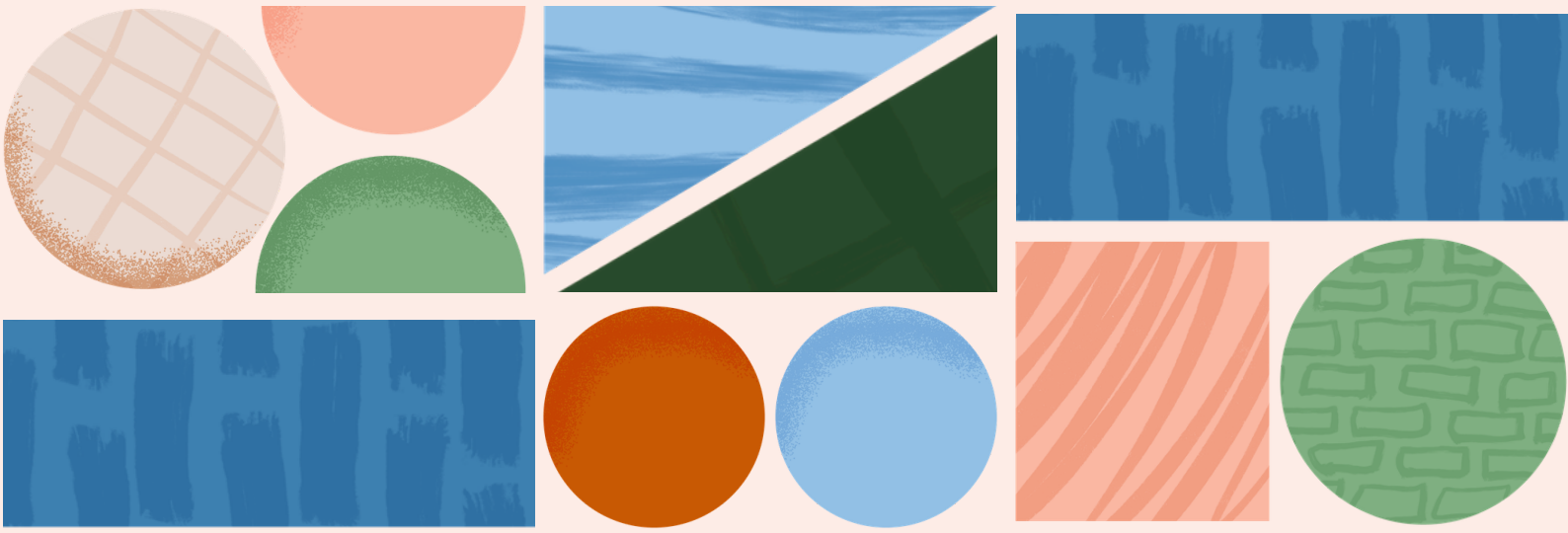
Place Matters full Trustees Annual Report & Accounts for the period ending 31 December 2025 is available on the Charity Commission Website.

Thank you

We thank our partners and the many practitioners and community members who have trusted us with their time, knowledge and experience.

Special thanks to Right to Succeed for incubating us for 3 years and to organisations that have provided grant funding, donations and sponsorship that has supported our infrastructure and ability to scale up our work.

Just some of the organisations that have supported us on our journey up to December 2025:



The 2025 Annual Reports and Accounts was prepared by
Place Matters
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