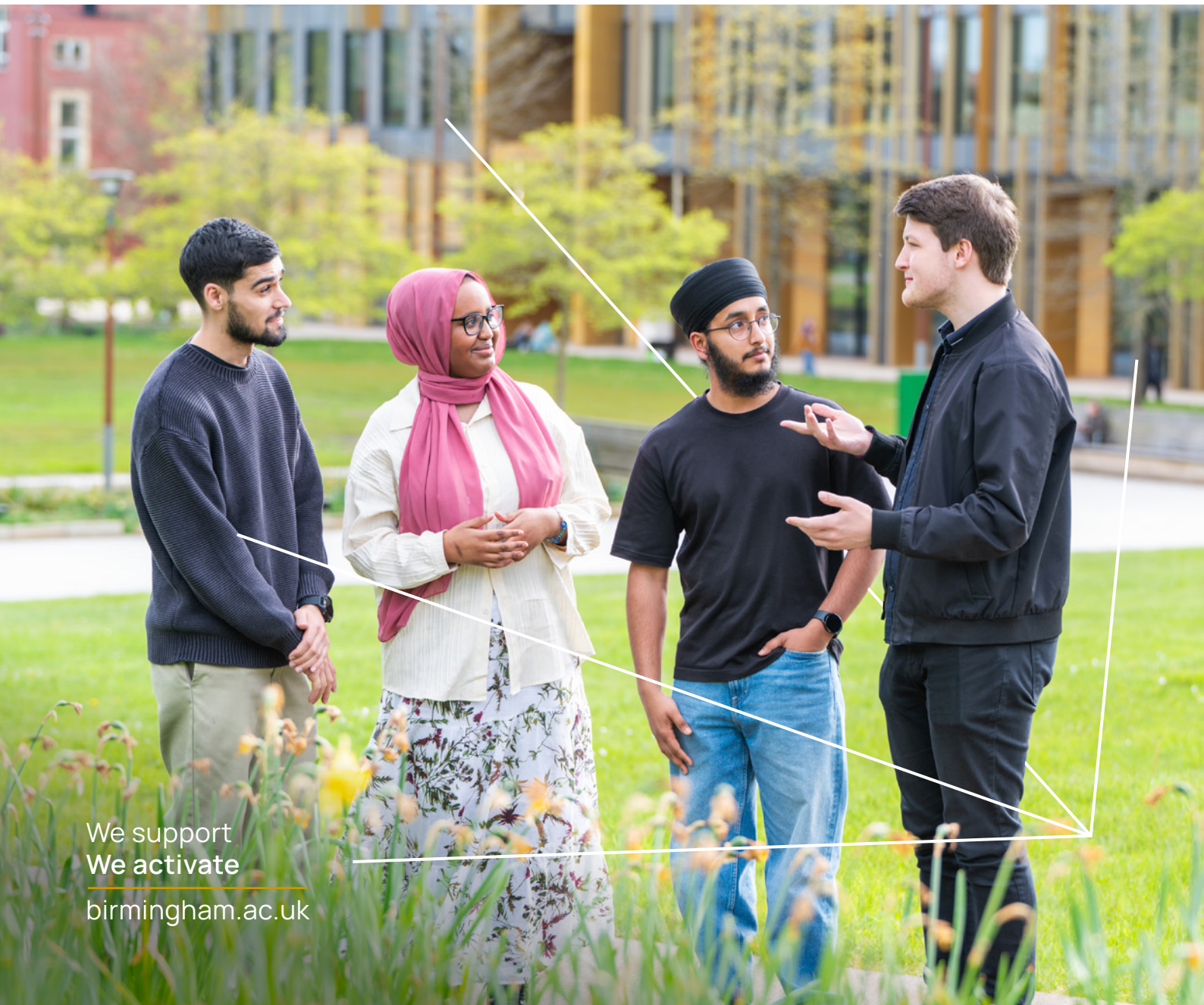




UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham In Action

Impact report 2023/24



We support
We activate
birmingham.ac.uk

Foreword from Professor Adam Tickell, Vice-Chancellor and Principal

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this executive summary for the report on the Birmingham In Action campaign. As Vice-Chancellor of the University of Birmingham, I am privileged to witness the remarkable impact of the collective efforts of our friends and advocates who foster positive change through gifts of time and money.

Our University is built on a foundation of excellence, innovation and a commitment to making a meaningful difference in the world. The Birmingham In Action campaign reflects our dedication to turning knowledge into action and this report serves as a testament to the transformative power of our supporters in advancing our vision of becoming a global top 50 university.

Philanthropy is crucial in improving our ability to drive positive change. The generous financial support from our donors continues to enable us to provide scholarships to talented students, often from underserved communities, and invest in cutting-edge research to address the pressing challenges we face. Together we share a belief in the ability of education and research to shape a better future.

Gifts of time reflect the commitment to engage with our students and community by our alumni and supporters. Through the dedication of our volunteers, we extend the reach of our mission beyond the confines of our campus, creating lasting connections with the wider community through support such as mentoring and sector insight. The diverse skills, perspectives and experiences of our volunteers enrich the learning environment and help us to be a more inclusive and socially responsible institution.

This report puts the beneficiaries of your support front and centre. From groundbreaking research to life-changing student experiences, each success story reinforces the impact of our collaborative efforts in realising the vision for the University of Birmingham. I hope you enjoy reading them.

We have achieved so much together, but our work is not done. We intend to continue to drive innovation, to encourage inclusivity and to position the students and researchers at our University as a global force for change. I extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to the campaign so far. Your dedication fuels our ambition and together we are shaping a future where the talented minds at Birmingham continue to lead with impact.



Professor Adam Tickell
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Celebrating your impact

Since its public launch in October 2019, the Birmingham In Action campaign has been a transformative force, uniting the University and stimulating positive change through generous gifts of time and money.

This campaign has become a cornerstone of the University's commitment to excellence, touching the lives of our students, our researchers and the broader community.

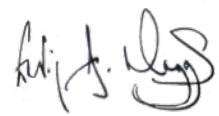
Birmingham In Action brings together many of the University's charitable projects, to tackle five key challenges that face our generation and the next.

- **Bright Minds:** making sure no talented student is held back by their circumstances.
- **Global Health:** helping to improve prevention, earlier diagnosis and better treatments.
- **Our Environment:** taking action to help to protect our planet.
- **Fulfilling Lives:** tackling inequalities across society and creating a fairer world.
- **Driving Innovation:** supporting the talented minds that power world-changing inventions.

We are so grateful to the thousands of alumni, friends, students and staff across the University who are supporting the campaign. Generous donors and volunteers like you are playing a crucial role in shaping so many success stories. Your commitment to the University's mission has not only transformed individual lives but has also contributed to broader societal advancement.

We can't stop here.

Our ambition is to raise over £600 million of charitable funding and 1.25 million volunteer hours by the close of the campaign. You can help us to achieve that. I hope you enjoy reading the array of stories featured in this report, from helping students succeed to cutting-edge research and community engagement.



Gavin Maggs
Director of Development and Alumni Relations



Over **£422 million** charitable funds raised during the campaign to date.



Over **one million hours** of volunteering time committed to date.



More than **60 PhD students** have been funded during the campaign to date.

Supporting students, improving access to education

Thanks to our community of supporters, more students have what they need to succeed and the opportunity to reach their full potential. In a recent survey, nearly **85%** of Pathways to Birmingham (P2B) scholarship recipients said that the recent cost-of-living increases have negatively impacted them.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and with the cost-of-living crisis creating even more significant challenges, you are helping to ease the pressure for bright students, regardless of their background.

Creating paths to University for bright minds

Alumni and friends support a wide variety of scholarships, from sports and music to those which help students with caring responsibilities at home. P2B is the University's flagship initiative which supports students from under-represented backgrounds in applying to the University of Birmingham. The University supports eligible students through the Chamberlain Award, offering £2,000 per year of study, but access and support programmes, such as P2B, build on this and help ensure everyone has the chance to learn.

As well as removing financial barriers, the scheme provides a range of support, including residential summer schools for A level students, mentoring and subject-specific workshops, that helps prepare students for life after university. In 2023, **over 550** students began at the University via P2B – a figure that has doubled in ten years and, of that total, **over 180** students began with a P2B scholarship. Yet, thanks to our supporters, we are now better placed to meet this increase in demand for scholarships, which help level the playing field for talented students.

Thank you to everyone who picked up the phone to our student callers and supported our telephone campaign, ensuring young people can fulfil their potential.

This year's campaign has seen **344** of you donate over **£245,000** over **five years**. This is enough to fund **163 P2B scholarships** for one year!

£245,000



Alumni and friends support around **20 different types** of scholarships.



Over 1,000 students at the University are currently receiving a P2B scholarship.



Goldman Sachs: working together to level the playing field

Our collaboration with Goldman Sachs has extended and enriched the support we offer to under-represented students, allowing us to take great strides towards our shared ambition of levelling the playing field and sparking economic growth for people and communities.



Goldman Sachs has generously donated £150,000 to support the Goldman Sachs Scholars programme, all of whom have entered the University through the P2B programme.

The Scholars gain insight into industry and receive a breadth of personal and professional support. Goldman Sachs also benefits from the programme with a pipeline of young and diverse talent to support the growth of its new office and engineering division in Birmingham. Scholars are paired with a Goldman Sachs mentor to engage in a series of conversations focussed on their career development.



The financial assistance I received was crucial in enabling me to build my work experience in the museum sector, which is voluntary and unpaid, and progress my career after university. I also had a mentor from the arts sector through the scheme who was so helpful in giving me an insight into how to gain experience in the arts and supported me when applying for placements.

One thing that genuinely helped me in making connections in the field following graduation was networking on site trips and through P2B sessions online. It enabled me to communicate professionally and to feel comfortable and confident in work settings.

Liz Pardoe
(BA History, 2023), former P2B scholar, MA Art History and Curating student and Curatorial Assistant



I owe a lot to the University of Birmingham. It brought me to this great city, my home for many years, and launched me on a fulfilling career in national and international law firms.

The first in my family to attend university, I was only able to do so through a full grant from my local authority. These days, financial backing is harder to find. That is why I support the University and its Pathways to Birmingham programme.

Adrian Bland
(LLB, 1977), donor to Pathways to Birmingham



I have had such a great time on this mentoring programme. Sophie has been one of the best mentors. She has provided me with invaluable support and has played a massive role in getting me this far in my journey so far. I was able to implement some tips from my mentor when successfully reapplying for a placement on a scheme I had previously failed to get onto.

Samirah
Final year student, Goldman Sachs Mentee

I find it very fulfilling to be able to pass on my experiences and learnings to aspiring lawyers and I hope that I can help them in their careers. I know from personal experience that it can be very hard to get into a career in law if you don't have any existing connections, and it's important to me that more diverse candidates can enter the profession and be successful.

Sophie
Goldman Sachs Mentor

We are proud of our partnership which has enabled us to sponsor and mentor 50 students through their studies at University of Birmingham. Additionally, we hosted several activities to promote social mobility – something we are very committed to. Our dedication is evident through initiatives like the Student Possibilities Programme, aimed at upskilling students and expanding their professional networks for greater outcomes. We firmly believe that talent knows no boundaries, but opportunities often do. We are focussed on attracting, recruiting and advancing the brightest minds, irrespective of their background.

Janine Glasenberg
EMEA Head of Recruiting, Goldman Sachs

Saving lives, changing futures

The prevalence of diseases and other causes of poor health vary greatly across the world, as does access to basic healthcare and treatments.

Birmingham is where big healthcare breakthroughs are made. You are supporting talented researchers to make cutting-edge discoveries in diseases from cancer to infections from surgery, and making sure more people around the world have access to good healthcare.

When the next healthcare emergency hits, we want to be ready, whether that is another pandemic, a mental health crisis or the day when our antibiotics no longer work.

Helping diagnose cancers earlier and creating more effective personalised treatments

Cancer is a global health challenge, with an estimated 18.1 million new cases worldwide diagnosed in 2020. This number is projected to reach a staggering **28 million** by 2040. Understanding the fundamental biology of cancer development is critical for prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, researchers at Birmingham are making significant strides in this area. Our Cancer Research UK Clinical Trials Unit is a hub for pioneering cancer research and we're translating research into real progress for patients through quicker diagnoses and more effective treatments. One such area focusses on harnessing the immune system's power against blood cancers.

Boosting cancer immunotherapy treatments

Exciting progress has been made by our researchers into new ways to boost the effectiveness of CAR-T immunotherapies, an approach where a patient's immune cells are engineered to recognise and attack cancer cells. Whilst these therapies have led to treatment breakthroughs in some settings, we urgently need to find out why many types of cancer are resistant or stubborn to CAR-T therapies. Our research group, led by Dr Carmela De Santo, is driving forward cutting-edge research on new ways to boost how immune cells can kill tumours that are unresponsive to these therapies. This work could help inform the development of new and more effective treatments for a range of cancers, including aggressive cancers that affect children such as neuroblastoma.

Robert and Sarah Martin's generous support for cancer research at the University since 2017 has helped increase the scale, scope and impact of the De Santo lab's important work. Their dedication to funding the next generation of bright minds in cancer research has helped the group to launch a new clinical trial for child and adult patients, among other successes.



Like many others, we have seen the effects of cancer first-hand. We have been able to support two PhD students and a post-doctoral scientist and have enjoyed being able to visit and meet the team working on the development of new treatment possibilities. It's so rewarding to hear the work that the team is doing is already making a difference, and we are proud to have been able to help in this way.

Robert (MEng Integrated Manufacturing Systems, 1994) **and Sarah Martin**



Pictured left to right: PhD Scholar Nicola McJannett with alumnus Robert Martin and Sarah Martin

Accelerating breakthroughs in brain tumour research

Generous donations have significantly advanced brain tumour research at the University of Birmingham. This funding has enabled high-risk foundational studies critical for understanding brain tumour biology, leading to successful applications for extensive funding. Additionally, the support has nurtured early career researchers, ensuring a future generation of experts in this field, notably Himani Rana, whose PhD in brain tumour metabolism was supported by alumnus, Robert Spier. She has now completed her studies and is continuing her work as a post-doctoral researcher.

Contributions like these are paving the way for breakthroughs in brain tumour treatment, with recent years showing promising results. Birmingham's cancer research thrives on donor support. The impact of these donations extends beyond individual achievements, inspiring new scientists and encouraging significant strides in the fight against brain tumours. Continued generosity is vital for improving patient outcomes and survival rates.



I am truly grateful for Robert's kind donation. This means just as much to my parents and loved ones as it does to me, and I will now be spending the next few years working towards publishing a paper based on the data we have collected throughout my PhD.

Dr Himani Rana

(PhD Metabolism and Systems Research, 2023),
Postdoctoral Researcher



Dr Himani Rana's PhD was supported by philanthropy

Thank you to everyone who supported our appeal to support cancer research. A total of **£149,465** was raised which will go towards supporting talented researchers in making new discoveries to advance cancer treatment.

£149,465



Identifying and treating new diseases faster

Antibiotic resistance is a health crisis, potentially transforming minor infections into deadly threats. In 2019, it was associated with nearly five million deaths. By 2050, it could be **ten million** per year – potentially making it the number one cause of death in the world. The University of Birmingham is developing rapid disease identification methods to target treatments and reduce unnecessary antibiotic use.

Additionally, we're investigating the power of gut bacteria, aiming to harness their protective potential against diseases and even conditions like cancer and dementia. Our research seeks to unlock the body's natural defences, safeguarding our health in the face of antibiotic resistance.

Making sure everyone has access to safe childbirth

Every day around **800 women and 12,000 newborns** die globally because of pregnancy and childbirth related complications. Every year, countless mothers face preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth. The University of Birmingham jointly leads Europe's largest miscarriage research centre – the Tommy's National Centre for Miscarriage Research – and we also have the honour of holding the designation for the WHO Collaborating Centre for Global Women's Health.

The groundbreaking E-MOTIVE trial, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and led by Professor Arri Coomarasamy, has reduced severe postpartum haemorrhage by 60%, improving health outcomes for mothers worldwide.

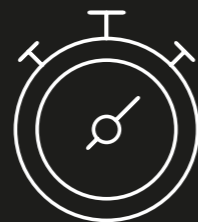
The World Health Organization (WHO) is now revising its recommendations. The research team estimate that once it is scaled up, E-MOTIVE could save a life every 24 minutes.



Our new approach to treating postpartum haemorrhage could radically improve women's chances of surviving childbirth globally.

Professor Arri Coomarasamy

Professor of Gynaecology and Reproductive Medicine, (MChB Medicine, 1995; MD Obstetrics and Gynaecology, 2004)



E-MOTIVE could save a life every **24 minutes**.

E-MOTIVE in action in Tanzania



The talented minds driving innovation

Society and technology exist in a dynamic relationship: societal needs drive innovation and new technologies reshape the world we live in.

At the University of Birmingham, we harness these advancements to address global issues, from fighting diseases to revolutionising air travel with clean hydrogen fuel. Your support enables us to nurture the next generation of innovators through programmes like EPS Futures, climate-focused internships and Start-Up Scholarships, while also driving vital, ground-breaking research.

Making business ideas a reality

One in ten students express a strong desire to launch their own business or pursue self-employment.

Launched in 2021, the UoB Elevate programme empowers aspiring entrepreneurs through mentorship, workshops and networking opportunities. The initiative also provides a dedicated collaborative workspace, fostering knowledge sharing and bridging the gap between academia and the wider world.

Businesses in the programme continue to grow and thrive, collectively securing over **£2 million** in private investment to date.

Dr Nigel Evans and his wife Chris are leading supporters of the Start-Up Scholarships programme, where a number of UoB Elevate businesses receive further financial support. In addition to gifting funds to support Start-Up Scholarships, Nigel volunteers his time and lends expertise from his own journey as an entrepreneur and business leader to help student and recent graduate start-ups accelerate their ideas and ambitions.



My wife Chris and I have been involved with supporting students at Birmingham for over a decade, namely supporting scholarships that help students from backgrounds under-represented in education to have fair access to an excellent university education. We see our support for the Start-Up Scholarships programme as an extension of this; it is about ensuring that young people have every opportunity to get the best out of life. The Elevate founders I have met are incredibly impressive and I get so much out of spending time with them – they are developing fantastic opportunities both for themselves and for the economy and growth of the West Midlands region.

Dr Nigel Evans

(MSc Physics and Technology of Nuclear Reactors, 1975; PhD Experimental Neutron Physics, 1978), leading supporter of the Start-Up Scholarships programme



Nigel Evans (fourth from left) with UoB Elevate entrepreneurs

Sharing time makes a huge difference to students

The University of Birmingham thrives on a vibrant ecosystem of volunteers. From recent graduates to established professionals, local residents to international friends, every individual has something valuable to contribute.

Their commitment, whether it's just an hour a month or a single day, creates a lasting positive impact, shaping the lives of students and positively impacting our local communities.

Motivating, inspiring and empowering students

The University of Birmingham is deeply committed to mentoring as a key component of success and a thriving community, empowering students personally and professionally. Guidance and support from mentors boost confidence, enhance decision-making and clarify career paths, leading to smoother workforce transitions. The overwhelming satisfaction among participants highlights the transformative power of mentoring.



I was paired up with a wonderful mentor who worked in BAE Systems and knew the ins and outs of the aerospace industry. We met once every month and discussed various topics such as the sector, LinkedIn, my CV and a lot more. We had our meetings remotely, which was great as they were flexible and it was easy to connect with my mentor who lived in a different part of the UK. She shared her lived experience and gave me valuable insight, helping me to understand the industry better. Her feedback was so beneficial that I got a job with the advice she gave me.

Lamyea Ahmed

(MSc Aerospace Engineering, 2024), former P2B scholar



I know from experience how valuable the support of mentors can be, and being asked to be a mentor to University of Birmingham students felt like a great opportunity to give back. Being around their energy, enthusiasm and can-do attitude, sharing my experience and networks and providing a confidential space where they can discuss their highs and lows has been a joy.

Sally-Anne Hunter

(LLB Law, 1986), Director of Lifetime Consultancy

Lunch with a Leader

University of Birmingham students are driven to expand their horizons beyond the lecture theatre. Recognising the value of expertise and experience from successful alumni, we launched the Lunch with a Leader initiative. This programme connects students with influential University of Birmingham graduates in senior roles. Through intimate lunch settings, students gain invaluable insights and connections from leaders across diverse sectors – opportunities which may otherwise be inaccessible to them.

One Lunch with a Leader session was hosted by Jagvinder Singh Kang, Partner, International & UK Head of IT Law at Mills & Reeve. Ten students from a variety of subjects had lunch with Jagvinder and asked him questions ranging from how to adopt and develop a growth mindset and learn continuously, to how to differentiate themselves, find mentors throughout their career and pick a job that they love.



This insightful session has sparked my interest in cyber law. I found that this opportunity to talk to someone who has studied at the University of Birmingham, was once in the same position as myself, and has now gone on to have such a successful career in law, inspiring and motivational.

Monica Puri

First year student studying Law with French Law



Over **one million volunteer hours** have supported students and research projects since the start of the campaign.



Over **12,600 alumni and friends** have volunteered in that time.

Helping the next generation

We are always so grateful to those who decide to leave a gift in their will to the University of Birmingham and make donations in memory of those no longer with us.

Gifts in wills fund crucial research and support students at every stage in their education. Through innovative research and by providing life-changing opportunities for young people, these gifts are making amazing things happen.

One such gift is that left by alumnus Sir Gabriel Horn (MBChB Medicine, 1955; PhD, 1965; Honorary Degree, 1999) and his wife Prill Horn. They set up the Gabriel Horn Bursary which supports fifth year medical students. The bursary is a lifeline for many during the cost-of-living crisis, helping to cover the increased costs of energy, fuel and food during their final year studies and work placements.

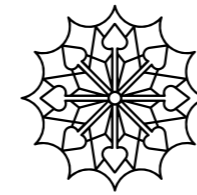
Sir Gabriel made significant contributions to neuroscience, particularly in learning and memory. Rising from a working-class background in Birmingham, he pursued medicine at the University of Birmingham, later becoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Cambridge. Knighted in 2002, he was a Fellow of the Royal Society and received its Gold Medal in 2001.

His children say that he often talked to them about the gratitude he felt for the education he received at Birmingham, an education that was instrumental in launching him on the path to his distinguished career.

In the first year alone, this gift has helped nearly 100 medical students. They not only benefit financially, but graduate knowing that they have benefitted from the generosity of a world-renowned scientist and a proud alumnus. With this support, they are given the best opportunity to follow in the footsteps of Sir Gabriel and become the next generation of doctors and researchers.



Sir Gabriel and Prill Horn



Rowbotham Fellowship

All legacy pledgers are invited to join the Rowbotham Fellowship. Members of the Fellowship are invited back to campus for an exclusive event each year to hear more about the impact of gifts in wills at Birmingham.

If you have chosen to leave a gift in your will to the University, we'd love to hear from you. Telling us about your gift also helps us ensure your wishes are met later on.

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will, visit birmingham.ac.uk/legacies or email legacies@contacts.bham.ac.uk



I do very much hope that others are inspired to consider leaving gifts to the University – it's so important to support students, particularly at this time of hardship for many.

Melissa Horn

Sir Gabriel's daughter



There are currently **457** Rowbotham members.



Since 2019, the University has received **over £5 million** through gifts in wills.



Addressing inequalities in society, globally

The University of Birmingham is having a transformational impact on global challenges, including giving vital research traction to make a real-world impact on the refugee crisis and giving hope to those who wish to pursue higher education. Our generous community of donors is helping us strive to make changes for a fairer world.

A University of Sanctuary

Birmingham is a University of Sanctuary – a national network of university staff, partners, alumni and students working to make higher education institutions places of safety, solidarity and empowerment for people seeking sanctuary.

As part of our response to the global refugee crisis, the University is offering five Sanctuary Scholarships per year for students from anywhere in the world living in the UK. They have been established to help those who have sought refuge in the UK but cannot access student loans or other sources of statutory funding available in the UK, due to their residency status.

To date, we have welcomed ten Sanctuary Scholars, plus three Article 26 Scholars (the forerunner to Sanctuary Scholarships) from nine countries. Five new Scholars are due to join us in September 2024. These scholars are given certainty and confidence during challenging times.



As I read the email confirming I had received the scholarship, an overwhelming wave of relief washed over me. In my eyes, I had secured my dream. I can't count how many times I've said to friends, 'if it weren't for the scholarship, I would have given up a long time ago.'

Many of us refugees experience a whirlwind of emotions long after we leave war zones for places of safety. Life can be unpredictable and some might even call it unfair. So, it's only natural that some of us lose faith and brace ourselves for the worst.

Thank you to the donors who funded this scholarship for believing in me for four years when, frankly, I struggled to believe in myself. They provided that extra push that propelled me this far, preventing my past from dictating my future. I hope to someday be able to pay this kindness forward, just as they have.

Karim Bakkar

(MEng Nuclear Engineering, 2023), Article 26 Scholarship recipient



The Sanctuary Scholarships change lives and are a cornerstone of the University's sanctuary activities, helping us to provide a welcoming environment for students who have sought refuge in the UK. They create opportunities for future leaders to study at Birmingham and help us to deliver on our commitment to be a truly inclusive university, to the benefit of our entire community.

Working with our Sanctuary Scholars has been a privilege and they have made a significant contribution to university life. I am incredibly proud of the fact that Birmingham has achieved University of Sanctuary status and of the collaborative efforts that have gone into building a community in which displaced students thrive.

Dr Emily Rozier

Co-chair of the University of Birmingham Sanctuary Group (BA English and Philosophy, 2007; MPhil Medieval Studies, 2008; PhD English Literature, 2016; MBA, 2023)



Investing in social science research in a troubled world

The University's SEREDA project, led by Professor Jenny Phillimore, is shedding light on the challenges displaced people face when seeking refuge, including when they are trapped inside asylum systems or tied to abusive partners via spouse visas. SEREDA focusses especially on forced migrants' experiences of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) from pre-displacement to refuge, including along their journeys to imagined safety. Forced migration has more than doubled in the past decade and SGBV is one of the risks people encounter, with up to **70%** of women victimised, and under-reporting being the norm.

The research is helping inform policy at a national and international level. A generous gift from alumnus Tony Langham and Clare Parsons helped propel the project forward – coming in at a really important time for the research when core funding was coming to an end.

- The research and associated recommendations put SGBV against forced migrants back on the table at the highest levels in Geneva.
- Major non-governmental organisations (NGO) working in the refugee and domestic violence sectors are now working with SEREDA, developing priorities for all the major party manifestos.
- SEREDA helped to shape the Victims Bill in parliament, helping ensure safe reporting and accessible services for all victims.
- The SEREDA project was extended to Wales and Scotland, giving the project traction to go further.
- The evidence contributed to a toolkit for agencies working with Ukrainians.
- SEREDA is undertaking a new study looking at the experiences of LGBTQIA+ forced migrant survivors.

Philanthropic support gave this vital research traction to make a real-world impact – the largest piece of academic research of its kind.

Tony and Clare's support also initially funded Sandra Pertek's position for one year, helping to launch and accelerate her career. She has recently been awarded a Future Leaders Fellowship from UKRI to support and develop her groundbreaking research into making aid work for displaced women.



The gift from Tony and Clare supported my role as SEREDA Policy and Impact Fellow. While in this role, I was able to develop relationships with major humanitarian agencies and government institutions, which helped disseminate SEREDA findings and crucially, to mobilise action to strengthen protection for forced migrants. My research focusses on the impact of religion and faith on refugees' experiences and I have spoken at major global forums on the need to consider the role of religion in protection and support interventions.

This position enabled me to take the first steps to becoming a policy-oriented researcher, publish findings from my PhD thesis and develop tools for humanitarian aid workers. It also gave me the opportunity to apply for an ESRC Postdoctoral Fellowship and an ESRC IAA project on the Ukrainian displacement emergency, both of which were successful. I am now a Teaching Fellow at the University of Birmingham's School of Government, but I continue to work with the SEREDA team. Tony and Clare's gift was instrumental to my academic early career trajectory.

Dr Sandra Pertek

Future Leadership Fellow, Department of Political Science and International Studies



Clare and I are passionate about social causes and we are huge advocates of Professor Jenny Phillimore's research into the challenges faced by refugees fleeing conflict and trapped in the asylum system. The global migration crisis is affecting millions worldwide, and we are firm believers in the importance that social science research has in helping to change policy and improve lives, particularly in such turbulent times across the globe. In this field, the University of Birmingham has made a positive difference.

Tony Langham

(BA Medieval and Modern History, 1982), Co-founder and Executive Chair, Lansons



Taking action for our trees and air

In less than two centuries, human beings have created an industrial footprint big enough to throw the life-giving systems of the planet decidedly out of balance. Since 1970, CO₂ emissions have increased by about **90%**.

Global warming is accelerating at an alarming rate. If we don't act now, we risk catastrophic outcomes, including rising sea levels, increased frequency and intensity of severe weather events, shortages of food and water and the mass displacement of people.

Great strides are being made towards a sustainable future, including major contributions through research at the University of Birmingham, supported by donors of time and money. However, given the extent of damage already done, the livelihoods of billions of people still hang in the balance.

Clean air to live, grow and thrive

Air pollution is one of the greatest threats to public health, killing more than seven million people a year and causing huge problems for the global economy. Air quality and climate change are strongly interlinked. Improving air quality also reduces greenhouse gases, thereby slowing climate change and improving human health.

The McCall MacBain Clean Air Master's Fellowship programme, led by Professor Francis Pope, is for both UK and Eastern European students and is instrumental in creating the next generation of clean air leaders in some of the most air polluted areas in the world. The Fellowship programme, funded by the Canadian-based McCall MacBain Foundation with an initial pledge of over £240,000 and co-delivered alongside the Clean Air Fund, provides the Fellows with a comprehensive understanding of air pollution and the required leadership skills to lead the clean air movement.

For the first year in 2022/23, we recruited three excellent Fellows: Lejla Ademi, Catrin Rathbone and Owain Rose. The McCall MacBain Foundation has recently extended the programme for an additional year into 2024/25.



The project for my Master's dissertation has been a highlight because I enjoyed planning and carrying out my own monitoring project. A key achievement was seeing my first academic paper published in Environmental Chemistry. I also secured an internship with the Environment Agency. This has definitely been helped by the skillset and knowledge gained from the Master's and it's great to be working in an air quality capacity already. I've built up lots of knowledge and am ready to play a part in making change in the sector.

Catrin Rathbone

(MSc Air Pollution Management and Control, 2023), former Clean Air Fellow

What I love about this project is its long-term approach – investing in the next generation of professionals who will be tackling air pollution in a range of countries for years to come. But it's not just that. This grant has brought to light a group of really impressive, committed and passionate individuals who clearly love the course they're doing and are committed to working in the sector – and that is a joy to behold.

Imogen Martineau

Head of UK Portfolio, Clean Air Fund

BIFoR: the lab in the trees

The University of Birmingham is leading global research to address the realities of climate change. The Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFoR) was formed in 2014 thanks to a £15 million donation from the JABBS Foundation.

This project provides evidence and scientific expertise to governments and institutions on a wide range of topics ranging from future global carbon budgets to threats to tree health and biodiversity.

BIFoR's Free Air Carbon Dioxide Enrichment (FACE) project is the world's largest climate change experiment, which aims to investigate the full spectrum of responses of a woodland under elevated CO₂. This includes measuring tree growth, the rate of photosynthesis, disease incidence and food web changes.

This year, we discovered that soil communities are speeding up nitrogen cycling, which could help maintain the faster tree growth we've seen with higher CO₂ levels.

Through projects like FACE and with the support of philanthropy, we can provide vital insights into how forests work to preserve themselves and protect us from the uncertain impacts of climate change. Continued support will enable us to transition to the next phase of this remarkable experiment and to build a powerful legacy that will inform research for decades to come.

Our students volunteer too!

BIFoR offers students and supporters the opportunity to volunteer. The team have seen first-hand the value this brings to developing both research interests and career prospects.

Most opportunities involve helping in the laboratory or with field work sample collection and measurements, and there are a growing number of volunteers supporting education and outreach activities. In 2022/23, BIFoR logged over **1,000 volunteering hours**.



I had a great time with the BIFoR team and have learned many skills. It was so much fun and the people were so friendly!

Anantharam Venkatachalam

Environmental Health Master's student



Students volunteering at BIFoR

BIFoR in a box – bringing forestry research to the classroom

Dr Samantha Dobbie, Learning and Engagement Lead at BIFoR, whose role is funded by alumni John and Lorna Powell, brings this ground-breaking research to the classroom through BIFoR in a Box. This kit, which allows secondary school pupils to join a growing community of citizen scientists measuring tree growth, has been taken up by 120 schools across the UK.

Their new project, BIFoR Branching Out, was one of the successful applicants for funding from the Alumni Impact Fund this year, receiving £2,460. The project had already received £2,460 from the Education Enhancement Fund and so this match-funding will effectively double the overall impact of their current work.



BIFoR Branching Out workshop attendees, including researchers, professional services staff and undergraduates



Funding from the Alumni Impact Fund has enabled us to host BIFoR Branching Out workshops for students and staff at the University to develop the awareness, knowledge and skills required to help us bring this project to a growing community of citizen scientists, measuring tree growth and carbon capture across the UK and beyond!

Dr Samantha Dobbie

BIFoR Learning and Engagement Lead, (MRes Conservation and Utilisation of Plant Genetic Resources, 2011; PGDipEd Secondary Education Science: Biology, 2017)



A researcher working from the flux tower at BIFoR FACE

Beyond Birmingham

The University of Birmingham is proud to have a vibrant community of international alumni and philanthropy continues to be vital to the success of our research, students and community abroad.

Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Foundation unites alumni generosity with critical issues facing Hong Kong. The Foundation builds on our close ties to the region and fosters knowledge exchange between Birmingham and Hong Kong, and addresses challenges like pollution-linked cancers, sustainable food transport and microplastic-pollutant research. From awards such as the Geoffrey Ma Scholarships to youth sports participation projects, its lasting impact paves the way for a healthier, more sustainable future for Hong Kong and beyond.

The Birmingham Scholar programme helps over **3,600** high-achieving Birmingham students from under-represented backgrounds reach their full potential.

Last year, with thanks to the Foundation, the programme expanded to include an immersive trip to Hong Kong for over 30 students. The trip provided students with global perspectives, valuable alumni insights and a taste of Hong Kong's vibrant life, helping them develop intercultural skills and career confidence.

The trip was so successful that it was repeated this summer, supporting our students to become global citizens and have learning experiences that extend far beyond the classroom.



Canada

The University of Birmingham maintains a robust alumni network of approximately **3,000** members in Canada, a number continually growing due to our active student exchange programme. Since 2018, the generous support of Canadian alumni donors has enabled 18 exceptional students to benefit from the Canada Outstanding Achievement Scholarship.



I am currently a Paralegal for the Attorney General of British Columbia. Due to financial constraints, I would not have been able to study at the University of Birmingham without the scholarship. Alumni donations have had a tremendous impact on my life and those I have interacted with. Because of this contribution, I was able to fulfil my dream of going to law school.

Alyssa Samuel
(LLB Law, 2020)

Dubai

Dedicated alumni and friends volunteer their time to support a variety of life-changing projects at our beautiful Dubai campus. From career guidance for students to hosting alumni events, our volunteers make important things happen. They equip graduates with the skills and connections to thrive in their careers, fulfilling their potential and giving back to the world.

Our successful Lunch with a Leader programme expanded to Dubai in February 2024, connecting nine students with Fazeela Gopalani, who was named on the Forbes Middle-East '100 Most Powerful Businesswomen 2024' list. Students praised the experience, with one commenting:

'I left the event not only inspired by Fazeela's accomplishments and vision for the accounting profession but also with a renewed sense of purpose in my own career journey'.



It was an honour to speak during the graduation ceremony in Dubai. The lifelong relationship that you can have with your University is a treasure. The University alumni community gave me so much and I hope to give much back through volunteering for Birmingham.

Annalisa Cleland-Awity

(BA History, 2013), social enterprise co-founder and educator





My late husband and I were Birmingham graduates in the 1950s, both from working class families and the first to go to university. Our parents couldn't afford to send us, so we were lucky enough to be awarded scholarships which covered our fees and living costs. These days such generous grants aren't available, so we have tried to 'pay back' by helping students who are in similar situations.

Eira Leach

(BSocSc Social Studies, 1957), donor to the student support fund

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