



PETER
SOWERBY
FOUNDATION

Funding
Healthcare,
Innovation &
Creativity

Grant Impact Evaluation 2013-23



A Decade of Transformational Impact

The Peter Sowerby Foundation (the Foundation or PSF) was established in 2011 to direct the personal wealth of Dr Peter Sowerby to organisations that meet the philanthropic objectives established by Peter and his wife, Ann.

As a former GP in a rural community in North Yorkshire, Peter's passions were his patients, the community and access to high-quality primary healthcare.



These priorities are all reflected in the Foundation's grants in the areas of Healthcare Innovation, Education, Community and Environment.

Dr Sowerby created the groundbreaking software behind EMIS – now the largest supplier of clinical software to GPs in the UK, and the Foundation similarly looks for projects that are innovative, use technology effectively and are often those that don't meet the criteria for mainstream funders.

To date, the Peter Sowerby Foundation has awarded over £18 million to charities, community groups and healthcare providers.



10th Anniversary

Following 10 years of grant making, the Foundation commissioned The Researchery to carry out an evaluation to show:

Which grants have been most successful and why

The impact of the grants on the organisations, beneficiaries they support, sector and society

The Foundation's longer term impact across a variety of sectors

2013-2023 In Numbers



**£18.7 million
grants given**



**160 organisations
supported**



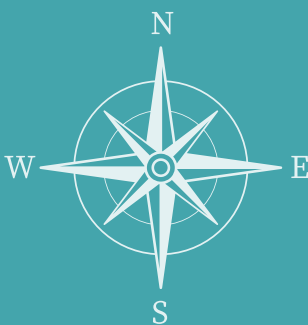
**£8.5 million Good
Causes grants**



**£1.7 million Covid
Increasing Access
Fund**



**£8.3 million
Breakthrough in
Healthcare**



**16% of grants given in
Yorkshire and the Humber**



**41% of grants given
outside of London**

Since its inception in 2013, the Foundation has provided funding across a range of health-focused initiatives, with a strategic emphasis on medical innovation, access to care and systems-level impact.



This evaluation of PSF funding - including quantitative and qualitative grants data analysis, thematic deep dives, interviews and case studies - suggests a funder that has supported innovative and transformative progress in health and care.

It also recognises the vital role of education, arts and the environment in underpinning underserved communities across the country, particularly in rural North Yorkshire.



Grant Making Overview

The Peter Sowerby Foundation's grant-making strategy is designed to support impactful initiatives across various sectors, primarily divided into two core categories, with additional targeted funds for specific needs and partnerships.



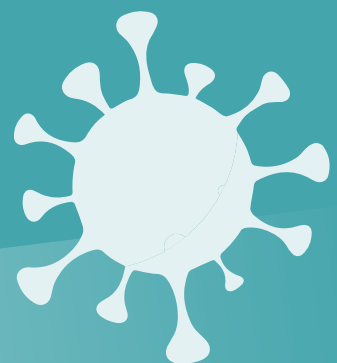
The Peter Sowerby Foundation grant making strategy divides grants into two main categories: Breakthrough in Healthcare and Good Causes.

Defined as "innovation and transformation in health and social care" that must maximise impact on patient care and engagement, including: Primary care and out of hospital provision; End of life care, Terminal illness and hospices; Patient-professional trust and interaction.



Good Causes grants are given in areas: Community; Environment & Conservation; Education; Seed Funding and Other (all small grants and natural disasters, and health projects aligned with Breakthrough grants).

During the Covid Pandemic an exceptional fund called the "Increasing Access Fund" was created to help when beneficiaries struggled to access charity services due to Covid-19 restrictions.



Grants Over the Last 10 Years (2013-2023)

Over 210 grants to 160 organisations, totalling £18.7 million, were analysed and categorised into type, using the Peter Sowerby Foundation grant strategy.

£8.3m (44%) went to 'Breakthrough in Healthcare'

£8.5m (46%) went to 'Good Causes' (including core funding and partnership funding)

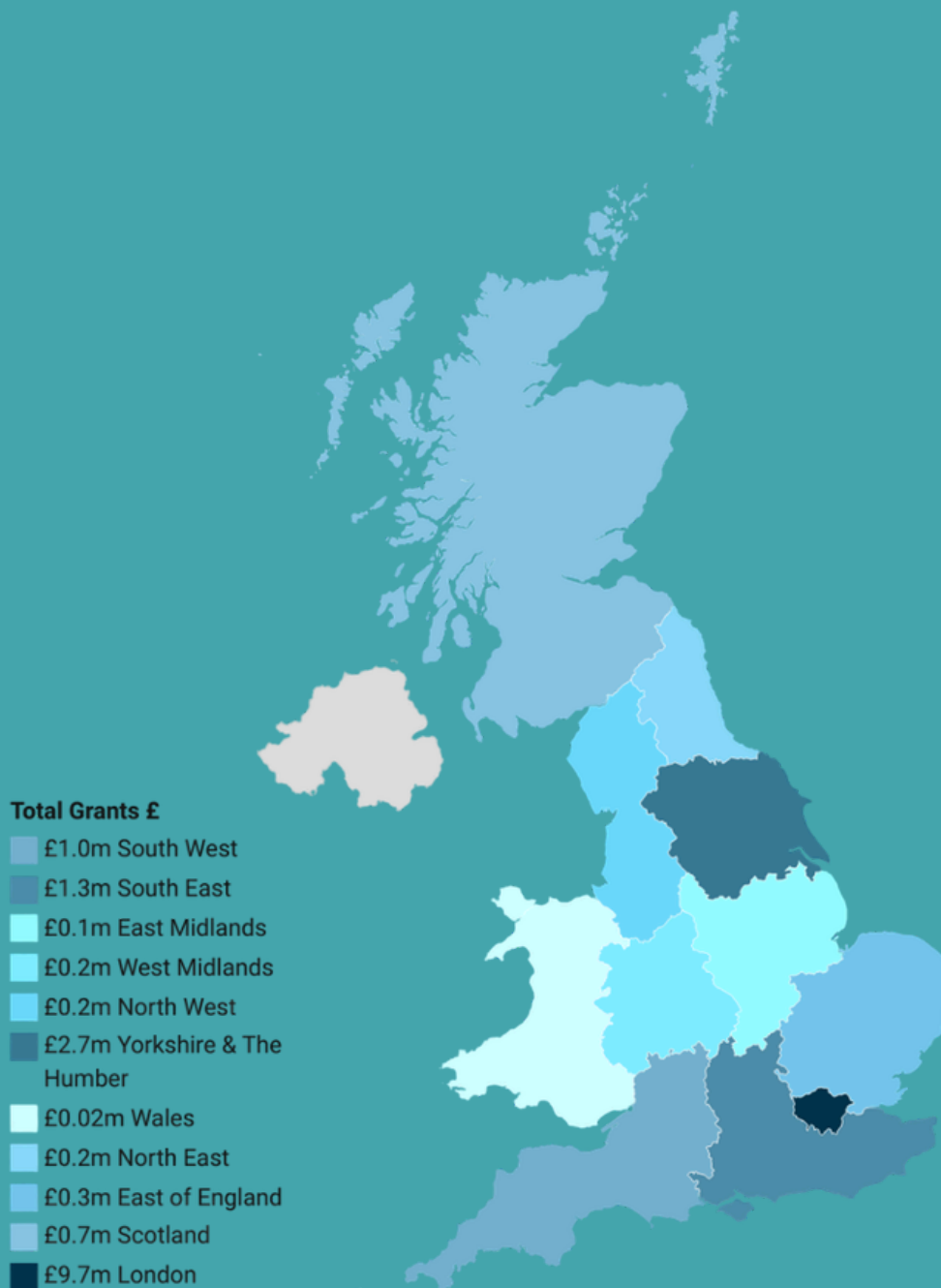
£1.7m (9%) went to the Covid pandemic response: 'Increasing Access'

Grant Making

Grant Category	Count of Organisations	Total Grants £	Total N grants	Median Grants Total per organisation
BREAKTHROUGH HEALTHCARE	17	£8,307,755.00	29	£294,833
GOOD CAUSES	81	£8,536,559.21	117	£25,000
COVID - INCREASING ACCESS FUND	61	£1,723,765.00	65	£23,413
Grand Total	160	£18,718,079.21	212	£25,000

Region	Total Grants £m
London	£9.7
Yorkshire and The Humber	£2.7
South East	£1.3
South West	£1.0
Scotland	£0.7
East of England	£0.3
North East	£0.2
North West	£0.2
West Midlands	£0.2
East Midlands	£0.1
Wales	£0.02
Grand Total	£16.3

Distribution of Grants



Grant Making: Key Outcomes

1: Catalytic Support for Medical Innovation

PSF has backed high-risk, high-reward projects, especially through Breakthrough Health Grants, which have enabled early-stage innovation, new care models and digital tools, leading to:

- Enhanced patient access and care adoption
- Improved health outcomes
- System efficiency gains with NHS adoption

“Our breakthrough grants provided the crucial early-stage funding that allowed us to transform innovative digital tools into life-saving solutions for patients.”

2: Support for Underserved Groups and Conditions

PSF funding plugs gaps left by more mainstream funders, helping fund important projects affecting underserved communities neglected by other funders, including:

- Neurodiversity
- Rare or complex conditions
- Communication disorders and trauma
- Artistic solutions to mental health and wellbeing issues
- Educational access and equity
- Rural community needs

“Thanks to PSF's understanding of neglected areas, we were able to bring vital support to neurodiverse communities, filling a gap no one else would touch.”

3: Transformational and Long-Lasting Impact

Grantees consistently demonstrated clear outputs and outcomes, including widespread evidence of:

- Innovation (outside of medicine and healthcare)
- Community building, empowerment and engagement
- Improved access, e.g. to services
- Capacity building
- New models of service delivery, especially digital

PSF's strategic approach has enabled grantees to secure additional funding, influence wider practice and policy, evolve their projects into self-sustaining models, ultimately achieving transformational outcomes that prevent preventable suffering and bring lasting change.

“The focus on tangible outcomes meant our project didn't just make an impact for a year; it created a lasting, systemic shift in how support is delivered.”

4: Contribution to Policy, Practice and Systems-Change

Across healthcare, science, education, environmental policy, and the arts, PSF-funded projects have impacted sector policy and practice by shaping national frameworks, informing clinical trials and diagnostic models, and influencing professional training and practice.

“PSF-funded research directly informed new national guidelines, fundamentally reshaping policy and practice in public health.”

5: Risk-tolerance, Flexibility, Trust and Commitment to Sharing Learning

PSF's proportionate, risk-tolerant, flexible and trusting approach to the funding relationship has allowed grantees the freedom to pivot, innovate, and adapt change where necessary to achieve the best results.

The Foundation's commitment to sharing learning (e.g. through funding evaluations, encouraging open-source tools, learning dissemination and sector partnerships) has strengthened sector-wide knowledge, including knowledge infrastructure and replicability.

“The endowed Sowerby Chair has fundamentally transformed our academic landscape by embedding rigorous philosophy and ethics teaching into the medical curriculum.”

6: Collaborative Partnerships and Co-Design

Many grantees forged strong partnerships which helped them expand reach and share expertise, increasing their credibility, sustainability and impact.

“It brought together Natural England, local NGOs, and international organisations ... spanning from the ground up to international learnings.”



What Has the Foundation Achieved and What Have We Learned?

Over the last decade the Foundation has acted as a catalytic funder. The evidence from the evaluation shows that PSF funding has:

Enabled Innovation

- Backed high-risk ideas that other funders would not support
- Led to new healthcare models, digital tools and research breakthroughs

Improved Lives and Access to Services

- Thousands of people reached through mental health, community and health programmes
- Digital innovations enabling access for underserved groups

Influenced Policy and Systems

- Projects informing NHS practice, national policy and professional training
- Research influencing major conditions strategies and clinical pathways

Strengthened Organisations

- Funding has helped charities scale services, attract further funding and build capacity

Key Learnings

The most impactful projects consistently shared several characteristics:

- Integration with existing systems (e.g. NHS pathways)
- Strong partnerships and collaboration
- Use of evidence and data to drive improvement
- Focus on underserved populations and unmet need

These factors significantly increase the likelihood that projects will scale, sustain and influence wider policy and practice.



Case Study: Philosophy & Medicine Chair at King's College London

Launched in 2013 with a landmark endowment from the Peter Sowerby Foundation, the Philosophy & Medicine initiative at King's College London bridges two traditionally distinct disciplines to foster deeper ethical reflection and critical thinking amongst medical students and professionals. Over 10 years, the programme has embedded critical philosophical inquiry into the heart of medical education and has positioned King's as a global leader in the burgeoning field of Philosophy of Medicine.



**£1.43 million over
10 years (2013-2023)**

Grant Support

Purpose: To endow the Peter Sowerby Chair in Philosophy and Medicine, establish a research programme, deliver teaching across undergraduate and postgraduate levels, and host national and international events.

Legacy and Impact

- Raised national and international profile for philosophy in medical education
- Created a model for integrating philosophical reflection in clinical training and public health policy
- Contributed to debates on pandemic response, mental health, disability, maternity care and research ethics

Transforming Medical Education

Kings is currently the only UK University, and possibly the only one in the world, where philosophy is taught by professional philosophers within a medical school to undergraduate and postgraduate medical students, with CPD offerings for doctors and medical professionals.

Driving Research Excellence

Kings has published extensively in philosophy of medicine, epistemology, and applied ethics; hosted international colloquia and workshops; and played a founding role in the UK Reproducibility Network.



Global Thought Leadership & Public Engagement

The annual Peter Sowerby Lecture and workshops tackle real-world medical challenges such as addiction, COVID-19, death and dying, mental health, and policy evaluation; while Kings also published publicly accessible video explainers on epidemiology, herd immunity, and evidence evaluation, particularly during the pandemic; the Sowerby Chair is now seen as a prestigious academic post, attracting international attention.



Case Study: Peter Sowerby Foundation Fund for North East Yorkshire

The Peter Sowerby Foundation Fund for NE Yorkshire, administered by Two Ridings Community Foundation, supports the health, resilience and connectedness of rural communities. The fund tackles rural isolation, poor transport and infrastructure, maintains and regenerates community assets and services to build social capital, invests in the sustainability of small organisations and supports local people's mental health, connection and wellbeing.



**£150,000 per year,
for three years**

Grant Support

Supporting grassroots rural organisations in North East Yorkshire, through grants of between £2,000 and £10,000 for local community base organisations.

Legacy and Impact

A model for decentralised, place-based philanthropy. The fund's success has validated a flexible, community-led grant making model that demonstrates how delegated philanthropy can channel funding into trusted local networks, with minimal bureaucracy.

Supporting Local People Most in Need

Grants prioritised communities with little or no other funding access, with priority beneficiaries including Isolated older people, Children and Families in poverty, Neurodivergent young people, Survivors of domestic abuse, Individuals facing mental health crises and/or bereavement, Disabled and chronically ill residents.

Revitalising Rural Community Infrastructure

Funding has helped keep village halls open, improve accessibility, modernise and reduce carbon use, making them safer, greener and more inclusive.

Improving Mental Health & Connection

Grants supported choirs, befriending schemes, community kitchens, peer-led groups and creative therapies, reducing loneliness, improving emotional wellbeing and building new friendships.

Strengthening Local Infrastructure & Resilience

Grants supported first staff hires, new CRM systems, fundraising strategy development, and website and digital upgrades.



Two Ridings
Community Foundation

Kids Inspire: Talk Together Programme

Kids Inspire's Talk Together programme provided trauma-informed, creative and therapeutic support to children and young people (CYP) aged 0–25 yrs in Essex, Southend, and Thurrock. Services were tailored and holistic, combining arts-based, psychotherapeutic, and trauma resolution approaches to address emotional, behavioural and mental health needs.



£24,362, May 2022 -
April 2023

Key Achievements

94% of children showed improvement in at least one key area; 98% of parents reported positive outcomes; delivered trauma-informed training to over 1,000 professionals.

Legacy

Kids Inspire continues to adapt to post-COVID complexity and has piloted geographic expansion into Suffolk, with plans to expand to other areas based on data-driven need by 2025.



Gardening for Health: Thrive

Thrive, the UK's leading horticultural therapy charity, harnessed over 40 years' expertise in therapeutic gardening to create an innovative, digital-first Gardening for Health Information Service. Thrive transformed its in-person expertise into a freely available, personalised digital resource, helping individuals with long-term conditions, disabilities and mental health challenges, manage their wellbeing through gardening.



£109,997 Covid grants
**(Increasing Access Fund:
Digital Breakthrough)**

Key Achievements

187,000 users accessed the service in 2023, surpassing the target by 24%; Nine out of ten users with disabilities reported that the service removed barriers to gardening.

Legacy

Thrive has started a journey towards integration into social prescribing pathways and aims to expand its reach to over 300,000 users annually.

Alzheimer's Society: Dementia Transformation Fund

This landmark programme was designed to address an urgent, long-standing issue: the lack of meaningful, coordinated post-diagnostic support for people with dementia and their carers. With primary care identified as the most logical coordination point, the project created and tested the PriDem model – a GP-integrated, multidisciplinary system of support for post-diagnostic dementia sufferers.



**£1.85 million awarded
over four years
(2019–2024)**

Key Achievements

Developed a Nationally Recognised, Scalable, Post-Diagnostic Standard (PriDem);
Over 13 peer-reviewed publications; cited in Parliament, NHS England, and local authority commissioning guidance, including feeding into the UK Government's Major Conditions Strategy.

Legacy

PriDem now seen as a national template for embedding dementia support in ICSs with strategic ambition for PriDem to become the nationally commissioned standard for post-diagnostic dementia support.



Conclusions and Looking Forward

Over the last decade, the Foundation has established itself as a strategic, impactful and flexible funder, particularly in the health and care space, as well as in strengthening communities.

Its portfolio showcases significant outcomes, long-term impact, a commitment to learning, and a rare willingness to fund bold ideas where others fail to fund, leading to sector-shifting interventions that influence national policy and public health systems.



The evaluation suggests PSF should:

- Continue funding bold, innovative ideas where others won't
- Support underserved conditions and communities
- Maintain flexible and trust-based funding relationships
- Strengthen follow-on funding to scale successful pilot partnerships with other funders
- Remain transparent and share learnings across the sector

PSF is not simply funding activity - it is enabling innovation that changes systems, services and lives.



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