

ELEVATE

TAKE YOUR FUNDRAISING
TO THE NEXT LEVEL

11.03.2026

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS, LONDON

- 🚀 The big picture: leadership & strategy
- 🚀 Cutting edge campaigns & comms
- 🚀 Disruption & innovation
- 🚀 Tech trailblazers

Presented by

Fundraising
magazine

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Stephen Cotterill
Editor,
Fundraising Magazine

ELEVATE

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We are delighted to invite you to ELEVATE, a forward-thinking conference designed to help charities meet today's challenges with fresh ideas, bold strategies, and powerful innovation.



Jenni O'Donovan
Events director,
Civil Society Media

This year's programme reflects the biggest challenges and the most exciting opportunities facing fundraising teams right now. Our sector is under immense pressure: funding uncertainty, declining income, political and economic instability, and rising demand for services. At the same time, fundraisers must stay ahead of fast-moving technology, shifting donor expectations, and the urgent need to diversify income as traditional funding sources fall away.

The 2026 programme dives into the emerging areas shaping the future of fundraising – including content creation, practical applications of artificial intelligence, and the rapidly expanding potential of legacy giving – all underpinned by a focus on long-term sustainability and income resilience.

You'll hear from inspiring speakers, learn from standout campaigns, and gain practical, actionable insights to strengthen your organisation's future.



Rob Preston
News editor,
Civil Society Media

Join us for what promises to be an inspiring, energising day – designed to help you rise, adapt, and thrive.

ELEVATE 2026 is a Net-Zero Event

As event organisers, we at Civil Society Media are on our own journey to a sustainable future. We have calculated the carbon footprint of this event and implemented several measures to reduce it, including:

-  **Offering a fully vegetarian menu throughout the day.**
-  **Selecting a venue which is the first and only royal college to achieve The Carbon Trust Standard, the world's leading independent certification of an organisation's achievements in reducing environmental impact.**
-  **Going paperless—our event app will provide the programme, presentations, and delegate list, replacing traditional printed materials.**
-  **Using fully recyclable badges—please hand in your badge and lanyard at the end of the day so they can be recycled and reused.**

We are continually working to monitor and reduce our environmental impact. We have offset the remaining emissions of this event by investing in a carbon offset scheme. We have partnered with an ICROA-accredited organisation, ensuring that only certified carbon offsets from internationally recognised registries are used to meet the highest standards of environmental integrity. Civil Society Media has chosen to support the Mataven Jungle Indigenous Guardianship Project which protects biodiversity and preserves cultural heritage in Columbia.

What do past attendees say?

"Fantastically organised, with a wonderful array of speakers who were honest and generous in sharing their journeys with the audience." – **Amy Dickin**, US War Dogs Association

"It's easy to get a bit entrenched in your ideas about 'what works' in fundraising, but this event was really inspiring and challenged me to think more expansively." – **Anonymous**

"Really informative set of sessions which give thought to how our own charity can move even further forward." – **Nigel Naylor-Smith**, Scannappeal

"This was a great event to share ideas and learn about the latest technology in fundraising. The exhibitors I spoke to were relevant to my organisation's needs, friendly and approachable." – **Anonymous**

Programme

08:45 Registration and networking

09:20 Chair's welcome – **Matthew Nolan**, chief executive, Civil Society Media

09:30 **Opening panel: Fundraising in a polarised age – lessons from the frontline**

In an era of heightened political polarisation and amplified public voices, fundraising campaigns are navigating increasingly complex terrain. This panel explores what happens when charitable campaigns become caught in the crosscurrents of culture wars. Drawing on real examples of organisations that have faced backlash, our speakers will unpack what went right, what went wrong, and how fundraisers can communicate boldly and authentically without losing trust or support.

Mel Oley, director of fundraising and communications, Freedom from Torture, **Andy Taylor-Whyte**, interim executive director of brand, marketing and fundraising, Crisis and **Eleshea Williams**, social media officer, Amnesty International

Chaired by **Dhivya O'Connor**

10:10 Transit time

Stream A – The big picture: leadership & strategy

Chair: **Dhivya O'Connor**, experienced charity chief executive, creator & host of The Charity CEO Podcast

Stream B – Cutting edge campaigns & comms

Chair: **Léa Legraien**, senior reporter, Charity Finance

Stream C – Disruption & innovation

Chair: **Rob Preston**, news editor, Civil Society Media

Stream D – Tech trailblazers

Chair: **Ian Allsop**, contributing editor, Charity Finance

10:20

1A. Stewarding your top 1% – transforming donors into lifelong partners

Many charities overlook the significance of their top 1% of donors – individuals whose cumulative giving and long-standing ties to the cause often exceed the engagement of trustees. This session explores how to identify, understand, and meaningfully steward these 'friends' of the organisation through a focused, relationship-led approach. With high-net-worth individuals on the rise, we'll examine how charities can reassess donor potential, refresh engagement opportunities, and embed personalised stewardship into organisational culture to unlock transformational support.

John Green, chairman, Catholics in Fundraising

1B. Rebranding without regret – lessons from Keech Hospice

Rebranding is more than a new logo; it's about shifting perceptions, building trust, and giving people reasons to believe in your mission. With limited resources and big ambitions, Keech Hospice faced this challenge head-on. In this session, they share what it took to deliver an authentic, future-focused brand refresh: the tough calls, creative wins, and moments that tested the team's resolve. Expect practical insights, candid reflections, and ideas to take back to your own organization.

Melissa Higgins, Head of Marketing and Communications, Keech Hospice

1C. Creator fundraising 101: myths, risks and rewards of streaming and content creator fundraising

Hear directly from charities that have taken the leap into live streaming and creator-led fundraising. This panel discussion will break down myths about "gaming for good" by sharing the reality a diverse group of causes have faced as they explore the world of online community fundraising. From prospecting and due diligence, ongoing supporter care and managing risks, hear the wins and lessons learned along the way as well as a glimpse of what might be next for this exciting frontier of fundraising.

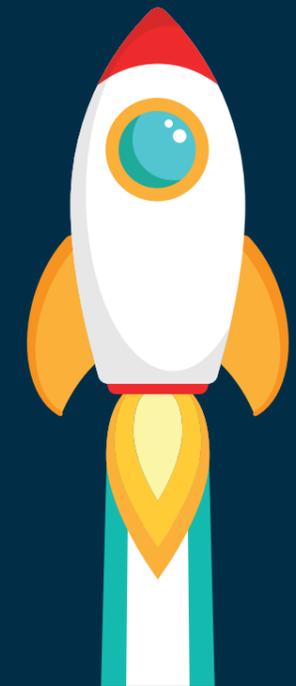
Panel – Ben Austwick, gaming partnerships manager, Great Ormond Street, **Tom Downie**, director of strategic philanthropy, Tiltify, **Rachel Henderson**, digital fundraising manager, CoppaFeel! and **Thomas Martin**, events fundraising manager – gaming & streaming, Samaritans

1D. The resilient not-for-profit: turning challenges into impact

Not-for-profits face rapid change, from economic uncertainty to digital disruption and shifting donor expectations. This session with Blackbaud shows how forward-thinking organisations turn these challenges into opportunities: embracing uncertainty to spark creativity and collaboration, building trust through transparency and ethical practices, leveraging digital tools and AI to enhance fundraising, and transforming data into actionable insights that drive meaningful, lasting impact.

Maxine Smitiuch, account executive and **Rebecca Williams**, enterprise account director, Blackbaud Europe

11:00 Morning coffee and networking



11:30

2A. Your lasting good deed – building a sustainable legacy strategy inside and out

This session explores how legacy giving became a core part of the Salvation Army’s fundraising strategy. The bold Your Lasting Good Deed campaign revitalised legacy giving, sparked a sector-wide conversation and increased prospects. It will look at how internal buy-in was achieved and how the organisation is now turning momentum into lasting impact – engaging next-generation donors, embedding legacy awareness, and using data and cross-team collaboration to strengthen the long-term fundraising journey.

Polly Hughes, director of fundraising, The Salvation Army

2B. Hearts, minds, and motives; what really drives donors to act?

This session examines how donors make decisions, drawing on behavioural psychology and emerging research into emotion, identity and trust. It explores the limits of shock and fear based appeals, and contrasts them with evidence on positive framing, meaning and human centred narratives. The focus is not persuasion at any cost, but understanding how messages shape empathy, confidence and long term commitment. Attendees will gain practical insight into designing communications that respect donor psychology while supporting sustainable giving.

Dean Steele, private adviser & doctoral researcher, Organisational Succession Institute

2C. AI with heart – how personalisation transformed Ramadan giving

In a season saturated with appeals, Muslim Charity Helping The Needy set out to do something radically different. Partnering with Giving Analytics, the charity delivered thousands of personalised emails – each reflecting an individual donor’s unique journey and impact. The result: a 300%+ increase in donations, record engagement, and overwhelmingly positive supporter feedback. This session will explore how cutting-edge technology, guided by empathy and ethical data use, can deepen donor relationships and set new benchmarks for digital fundraising.

Maroof Pirzada, UK director, Muslim Charity Helping the Needy and **Mohammed Khalil**, founder, Giving Analytics

2D. True end-to-end financial visibility – from income to reconciliation

While much attention is rightly placed on maximising income, real financial outcomes can sometimes be lost. Microsoft now offers a fully integrated platform that delivers clear financial insight and proven results across campaigns, events and initiatives. mhance will demonstrate how fundraising campaigns can be managed and reported through Microsoft Business Central, ensuring every pound is used effectively, compliance is simple, and data-driven decisions are just a click away.

Johannes Strack, business development manager, mhance and **Sam Taylor**, business central pre sales consultant, mhance

12:10 Transit time

12:20

3A. Table for one – thriving as the solo fundraiser

Being the only fundraiser in your organisation can feel both empowering and isolating. You wear every hat – strategist, storyteller, event planner, data wrangler – often all before lunch. This session will discuss practical ways to collaborate effectively with non-fundraising colleagues, build internal champions, and keep fundraising on everyone’s agenda. Whether you’re a team of one by design or circumstance, we hope you’ll leave with ideas, tools, and renewed confidence to keep making impact without burning out.

Felicity Lambert, head of fundraising, Action on Postpartum Psychosis (APP)

3B. Where legacy meets brand – creating campaigns that endure

Explore the story behind Oxfam GB’s first major legacy campaign and its groundbreaking TV ad. This session unpacks how the team navigated sensitive messaging while aligning with Oxfam’s wider decolonisation efforts. Discover how authenticity became the foundation of this legacy ask, positioning it as a bold, lasting act of justice and solidarity. Learn how the campaign’s insights have not only driven strong results but also shaped Oxfam GB’s wider brand strategy. This is a must-attend for anyone looking to create legacy campaigns that inspire and resonate.

Sinem Bilen-Onabanjo, head of legacy engagement, Oxfam

3C. From friction to flow – rewiring comms and fundraising at Prostate Cancer UK

For fundraisers, communications can be a powerful ally or a major bottleneck. Prostate Cancer UK has been on a journey to transform how its communications and fundraising teams work together, shifting from competing priorities to a shared sense of purpose. This session explores the organisational design behind that change – addressing cultural and structural barriers, redefining roles and processes, and putting collaboration first. The lessons learned show how organisations can break down silos, align strategy and planning, and unite around a clear vision for delivering value and funding their mission.

Sadie Crabtree, head of integrated marketing & media, Prostate Cancer UK

3D. The death of the Christmas appeal – why always-on beats seasonal campaigning every time

Every year, charities repeat the same expensive mistake: they switch into ‘Christmas appeal mode’, pause their best-performing digital campaigns, and throw untested festive creative into the most competitive (and expensive) ad season of the year. The result? High CPAs, low returns, confused algorithms. This session shows why the Christmas appeal mindset – borrowed from direct mail – is actively undermining digital fundraising performance. And more importantly, what to do instead.

Deniz Hassan, digital, data and technology director, Astarita Aldrich & Ward (AAW)

13:00 Lunch

14:00

A decade on: trends, trust and what comes next – insights from the Regulator

Gain insight into the key fundraising themes shaping the sector as the Fundraising Regulator approaches its 10th anniversary. This session will explore emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges for charities, with reflections on how the Code of Fundraising Practice underpins trustworthy and supporter-focused fundraising.

Gerald Oppenheim, chief executive, the Fundraising Regulator

14:25 Transit time

14:30

4A. Brilliant brands, fragile systems – leadership lessons for sustainable organisations

Bloody Good Period closed its doors in 2025, despite a celebrated brand and strong public engagement. Drawing on lived experience from within the organisation alongside broader sector insight, Jo Atkins-Potts explores what this moment reveals about the deeper patterns shaping sustainability in charities – from integrity gaps and inequitable governance to leadership accountability and fundraising pressures. Participants will gain candid, systemic insights into sustainability, culture, and the practical shifts that leaders and fundraisers can make to strengthen their organisations against similar risks.

Jo Atkins-Potts, consultant, writer and formerly head of communications & campaigns, Bloody Good Period

4B. Rethinking corporate partnerships at Ambitious about Autism

Ambitious about Autism is moving beyond traditional Charity of the Year models to develop deeper, more strategic partnerships that create genuine mutual benefit. We’ll share how brands such as Vanish, Schuh and Zurich are partnering with us in ways that reflect their distinct goals and audiences, while gaining vital insight into neurodiversity in the workplace. Join us to discover how we tailor our partnerships for maximum impact, drive shared value, and create environments where autistic people can thrive. Attendees will take away practical lessons for tailoring propositions and building partnerships that deliver lasting impact for both sides.

Abbie Murphy, head of corporate partnerships, Ambitious about Autism

4C. When funders walk away – lessons from Full Fact’s funding pivot

After losing major support from Big Tech, Full Fact has had to rethink its funding strategy fast. As they diversify income streams and reframe their message for new supporters, they also face the ethical tension between speaking out and staying silent. This session examines what happens when advocacy collides with funding realities, and how organisations can diversify income while staying mission-driven in an era of political polarisation and corporate caution.

Chloe Allen, senior grants lead, Full Fact

4D. Tap into giving: how NFC is transforming charity fundraising

As cashless payments become the norm, charities need smarter ways to collect donations. This session will explore how NFC tag technology replaces costly card terminals with flexible, low-cost contactless donation points. Learn how charities and local councils can boost income, capture Gift Aid instantly, and simplify donation management – and how organisations including the NHS, Age UK, the Salvation Army, Mountain Rescue and many others are making it easier than ever for supporters to give with a simple tap.

James Mullin, charity consultant, BMC Azurri

15:10 Afternoon coffee and networking

15:35 **5A. Mentoring matters – building community in fundraising careers**

Fundraising is a relationship-driven profession, and building a supportive community is key to personal and professional growth. This practical, exploratory session dives into why mentoring might work for you, what mentoring actually is (and isn't), and how it can strengthen your confidence, resilience and leadership. Through real-life examples from both mentor and mentee perspectives, we'll look at the kinds of challenges mentoring can help navigate and the impact it can have on your career.

Simay Sali Sevik, Development Manager, University of Westminster and **Laura Swan**, director, Elischer Foundation

5B. Saving the Vagina Museum – crowdfunding against the clock

When faced with imminent closure, the Vagina Museum launched an emergency crowdfunding campaign – and raised over £68,500 in just a month. This session explores how the museum captured public attention, mobilised supporters, and overcame financial pressures despite limited resources. We'll dive into the strategies, messaging, and creative approaches that made the campaign a success, and extract practical lessons for charities looking to engage communities, build momentum quickly, and fundraise effectively on a shoestring budget.

Zoe Williams, director, Vagina Museum

5C. Fundraising against the odds – disruption in a cost-of-living crisis

As traditional fundraising faces new pressures, some platforms are breaking the mould and thriving despite economic challenges. Drawing on some examples of alternative fundraising methods, the discussion will unpack how collaboration, digital innovation and values-led giving are helping charities cut through, inspire generosity and build more sustainable income. Join us to unpack what is driving their success and what charities can learn to engage supporters in fresh, effective, and recurring ways.

Panellists – **Nick Cook**, head of UK public affairs, People's Postcode Lottery, **Trina Little**, co-founder and chief executive, A Noble Gift and **Sahil Shah**, key partnerships manager, The Big Give

5D. Reach vs responsibility: rethinking social media strategy for fundraising

Nearly a year on from Mind's decision to leave X, and amid growing concerns about platform governance and AI moderation, this session explores the importance of a values-led approach to social media. Focusing on organic social, it highlights the importance of understanding your audience and creating content that truly connects, building lasting relationships and enhancing your brand. Fundraisers will gain practical insights on balancing reach with responsibility, crafting resonant content, and navigating a fast-changing social media landscape – proving impact doesn't have to come at the cost of values.

George Hodgson, senior social media officer and **Samantha Hopps**, digital content manager, Mind

16:15 Transit time

16:25 **Closing keynote: Stories that move people – communicating for impact in a noisy world**

Emma shares how being diagnosed with Parkinson's at 29 pushed her to communicate with radical honesty – from daily vlogs to publishing her book – and how authentic storytelling became the engine behind award-winning fundraising campaigns. She explores what truly resonates with audiences, how vulnerability builds trust, and how to cut through the noise and communicate with clarity, courage, and purpose. She highlights what she learned from turning her own lived experience into a platform that inspires action, raises awareness, and unlocks funding.

Emma Lawton, creator, entrepreneur and campaigner

16:55 Chair's closing remarks – **Jenni O'Donovan**, events director, Civil Society Media

17:00 Networking reception

Registration

PRICES

	Super early-bird (before 19 December)	Early-bird (before 6 February)	Final release tickets (after 6 February)
Charity delegate	£150	£199	£249
Charity team ticket (up to four places) Limited quantity available	£450	£599	£649
Fundraising subscriber rate (applies to direct subscriptions through Civil Society Media only)	£99	£164	£224

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