

Corporate partnerships insight

**Darnell Consulting's
Market Research Findings**

March-April 2026

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Corporate partnerships insight

Evidence-based findings on charity partnerships

Insights drawn from over 100 hours of research

Reviewing 100 companies with active partnerships, using our data on selection criteria, and speaking with decision makers

Examples to inspire you from other charities

Full set of links to sources and further reading at the end of this slide deck

UK corporate partnerships headlines

- £1.85bn donations from FTSE 100 listed companies in 2024 (2023: £1.82bn)
- £2.2bn donations from companies with a turnover > £250k (2023: £2.26bn)
- FTSE 100 cash giving declined – cash was 56% of total giving in 2024 (2023: 63%)
- A big positive: 30% of businesses cite an *intention to increase* donations
- Performative purpose is dead; the future of purpose-led business belongs to companies that can *demonstrate genuine commitment* without preaching

“it is cash giving, particularly when unrestricted, that allows charities to run”

CAF Corporate Giving Report

Causes most favoured by companies currently

- ✓ **Children and young people** — particularly around education and opportunity but also focusing on wellbeing and safeguarding
- ✓ **Health** — including medical research and those charities providing patient care, information and support
- ✓ **Social welfare** — particularly charities that support the elderly, disabled people, and efforts to alleviate poverty
- ✓ **Mental health** — emphasis on tackling mental health challenges for all segments of society, but particularly young people

Environmental causes still feature heavily; in terms of issues **employability skills / social mobility** appear to be moving up the corporate agenda

As with last year, increasing focus on **UK-based charities** over international causes. This reflects a broad national trend in public giving.



1. Causes must connect; brand is less important

- Businesses want to know the problem you tackle, what you do about it and why it is important
- What does the work look like? “*Supporting people with x*” doesn’t cut it – keep it simple
- Brand doesn’t matter. Local impact and underfunded causes (“*the underdog effect*”) is gaining traction – firms want to be authentic
- How will the work connect with our stakeholders? note – most want *vision* not minutiae; many are happy to give unrestricted funding



What should you do?



Think about how your cause connects with people; think about totality (i.e. impact on friends and family)

Map proximity to their locations and play up localness; if you are underfunded, say so

Make sure you describe what your work looks like at key touchpoints

Inspiration – CNWL Health Charity “About Us” Page



PUTTING PEOPLE'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

With your support, we can ensure every patient and every staff member in our community has the support, care and treatment they need to live well.

Donate to support life-changing care

How we make a difference

ENHANCING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

We fund meaningful extras like gyms, relaxation rooms and gardens that offer patients positive outlets and calming spaces to support their recovery.

See what we fund

SUPPORTING THE WELLBEING OF STAFF

We support our incredible NHS workforce by funding restful break areas and wellbeing initiatives helping them recharge, and continue their vital work.

Support our staff

INVESTING IN INNOVATION AND COMMUNITIES

We invest in new ideas and community-led projects that promote healthier, more fulfilled lives.

Explore community projects

2. Charities must paint a picture about impact

- Business want a sense of impact – for both strategic partnerships and workplace fundraising
- Data is obviously key – this *tells* companies about impact; BUT stories are vital – this *shows* companies
- Most companies are happy to see data on outputs with case studies portraying outcomes
- Companies want to see this at first touchpoints – your website; any initial backgrounder / credentials document; in a proposal



“We want a clear sense of before and after”

Senior decision-maker, Law Firm

Outcomes can be hard to frame, so think about:

- **Improved:** independence, confidence, resilience, employability, self-esteem, physical activity, financial literacy, skills, ability to make decisions, inclusion
- **Reduced:** isolation, loneliness, exclusion, financial vulnerability, inactivity, screen time, social media use, stress, barriers to participation, reliance on others
- **Stories** with an obvious before and after. A simple example:

“I had no confidence and thought I lacked social skills but since participating in the programme, I’ve made new friends and have now joined my local cricket club”



What should you do?

Ensure your proposition:



Uses output data – number of people helped, hours of participation / care etc.



States outcomes and illustrates these via powerful before and after stories. Stories are **critical**



Uses pictures and film as well as narrative – talk to individual giving teams and comms for content



Inspiration – United by 22; Chance To Shine

United by 22 Impact Event



WHAT WE DO

WE ARE A UK CHARITY THAT WORKS IN STATE SCHOOLS TO DELIVER BEST-IN-CLASS PROGRAMMES TO UNDER-SERVED YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 5 TO 24.

We want them to learn a lot, have a sense of belonging through their wider wellbeing and life, and reach their potential.

OUR OUTCOMES

- PHYSICAL WELLBEING
- SOCIAL WELLBEING
- MENTAL WELLBEING
- PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

IT IS OUR MISSION TO GIVE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY, LEARN AND DEVELOP THROUGH CRICKET

ARTHUR'S STORY

Arthur's Story
Chance to Shine

Watch on Youtube

A photograph of three young boys in green t-shirts with 'KP' on them, playing cricket. One boy is in the foreground holding a blue cricket bat, another is in the background with his arm raised, and a third is to the right. A red YouTube play button icon is overlaid on the image.



3. Firms seek ways to drive meaningful connection for staff

- Most major firms now insist on a minimum three days in the office*
- A key challenge remains: how to build relationships and collaboration between staff
- Decision-makers consistently say that ‘forced fun’ is roundly disliked
- Key question: how can a charity help to create a sense of shared purpose amongst staff?

* Sources: CIPD, Virgin Media O2 Business Movers Index 2025



“A charity that can help us bring people together with a sense of shared purpose will get attention”

Senior decision-maker, insurance firm



- Charities can deliver this if they position the offer in the right way
- Events and workplace fundraising create camaraderie, togetherness and opportunities to build relationships
- Sports and social events remain popular

What should you do?



Use team activities that you already have – sports challenges, quizzes, social events

This is about the basics of good fundraising – involve community and events colleagues for more ideas

Conversations with companies should be about creating a series of activities not a one off

NB: Activities must be focused on raising money



Inspiration

North West law firm Woodcock, Howarth & Nuttall Solicitors (WHN) as raised more than £3,000 for Bury Hospice through its annual charity quiz night.

at the Stables Country Club in Bury, the event brought together WHN partners, clients and staff, with 16 tackling seven rounds of challenging questions across a range of topics. It was hosted by quizmaster, WHN Tara Beaumont, who is based at the firm's Bury office.

quiz, which WHN has been organising since 2016, has raised funds for a range of Bury-based charities in recent years including The Met and Bury Society for Blind and Partially Sighted People.

Acrisure's football tournament raises incredible £127,000

28 MAY 2025



4. Compelling content is (still) crucial

- Companies want charity partners that can provide engaging content across all formats
- Decision-makers see great charity-generated content in the public domain, and they want this mobilised in their partnerships
- Without good content you are really going to struggle to engage potential corporate partners
- Firms want content that works easily on their socials and internal comms platforms

Storytelling for Marketing



What should you do?



Build content library – get comms team on board – use this slide as a rationale to secure their support

Engage colleagues in Events and Individual Giving and re-use their content if available material is thin

When targeting corporates show them that you've got brilliant content and stories across all formats that can be utilised to support partnerships

Inspiration



We have a wide range of people who use our services and everybody has a different story to tell. Below, hear what some of our guests have to say about their own journey, and how The Pink Place has helped.

PAPYRUS
Help me ▾
I want to help ▾



SUPPORTER STORIES

**Public success, private grief:
Peter Cowley**

11/05/2026



SUPPORTER STORIES

**"It's a permanent solution
temporary problem and all
problems can be solved"**

24/04/2026

Alex had all the tools to help others through crisis. But nobody was looking after him. Read his story of survival and hope.



Jan
April 2024
24/04/2026
Darcy was vibrant, colorful, and shares her story so no other same loss.



5. Maximising monetary support

- COTY / workplace fundraising is all about monetary support, but people think you can't compete if you're not a big brand. **This is a myth.**
- We have full details on over 80 COTY partnerships; mostly professional services; value circa £100k; most are not partnering with big brand charities
- These partnerships have proven and well-planned fundraising calendars and raise reliable sums
- They come up annually (bi-annually if two years) and have structured application processes
- 90% of these filter nominations / expression of interest and invite a small shortlist (e.g. 6) to apply

“It is cash giving, particularly when unrestricted, that allows charities to run”
CAF Report



What should you do?



Don't rule out COTY / workplace fundraising; use your proposition to assess fit and target accordingly



Build a pipeline that fits your targeting. The services sector has some great COTYs - services businesses tend to consider *beyond the big brands*



Mobilise your base for nominations – social media, stewardship comms for events & community / IG

Inspiration



DementiaUK
Helping families face dementia



Change your story



Final considerations

- It is a tough market. Use this session to support **realistic target setting** but don't be disheartened - there are still opportunities if you have the right approach
- Check that your corporate proposition clearly articulates: ***the problem(s)*** you tackle; how your ***cause connects with people***; what the work ***looks like***; a sense of ***impact***
- Charities have a unique offer when it comes to creating a sense of camaraderie, meaning and collaboration for a company's staff – how are you going to sell this?
- If you need help convincing comms / digital teams to optimise your touchpoints (web pages, materials) then email us and we can help you build the rationale
- COTY / workplace giving is a reliable source of monetary support: COTY = CASH. Check you haven't ruled this out and consider the right targets

Sources and further reading

- CIOF [free resources](#) on how to win corporate partnerships
- Darnell Consulting [COTY and Partnerships database](#)
- Darnell Consulting Market Research: An analysis of corporate partnerships based on a sample of 100 active companies and 10 depth interviews, March-April 2026
- CAF report: [Corporate Giving Report 2025](#)
- The [Role of Purpose in Advertising](#)
- [Purpose isn't dead but the era of easy wins certainly is](#)
- [2026 study](#) into low effectiveness of social purpose marketing
- For impact and strategic partnering see the [B4SI Framework](#)

Corporate partnerships insight



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darnell consulting

OUR TEAM

OUR SERVICES

TESTIMONIALS

