

‘We must not remand children to custodial settings.’

Dame Rachel de Souza, Children’s Commissioner and Longford Lecturer



**The Longford Trust
Annual Report 2025**

The
Longford
Trust

Education is the only key many prisoners get: I am living proof

For nine months after being arrested and held on remand in prison, *writes our scholar Robert*, I would be knocking on the education manager's door, eager to start a course, only to be told nothing could happen until I was sentenced. So, on the day the judge handed down my sentence, my new life finally began. My mind wasn't only on how my wife and family would take the news, but also on sending the application for an Access Module with the Open University.

Five years later, I am writing this from the common room of my local university. Starting university on day release from an Open prison, as I am, is a messy and uncertain experience. I was determined to complete my criminology degree, which I started in prison, by studying crime on the other side of the prison's walls. But nothing about the transition was smooth: convincing staff; sorting paperwork. It took a lot just to keep moving forward.



Stepping onto campus, leaving behind years of locked doors and jangling keys, I entered a reception hall buzzing with activity. It was a far cry from the receptions of old, where a grey tracksuit and a cold jacket potato awaited. Entering the lecture hall for the first time, I was noticeably older than most other students and I felt out of place.

As I settled into a routine, though, the freedom of university became both liberating and overwhelming. Criminology felt personal, and in many ways ironic. My sincerity in essays and seminars led me to confront not just the system but also my own choices. Lectures on drug trafficking, organised crime and the justice system brought back daunting experiences from my past.

After the first few weeks, the initial loneliness began to fade. I was talking to more people and grew more confident about speaking up in seminars. Eventually, I shared my circumstances with fellow students and lecturers, admitting I was still a serving prisoner. The moment I did, a weight lifted. I could finally exist as a student by day and a prisoner by night. I was welcomed by the community.

As time went by, my peers began asking questions, and lecturers turned to me, wanting insider perspectives. At the end of one seminar about organised crime, a lecturer asked if what we had discussed was accurate. At first, I thought it was about my well-being, but later I realised they saw value in my insight. The exchanges became meaningful. We discussed high-profile news cases, daily prison life. Only today was I asked if we still have 'lights out' – thanks to watching too many episodes of *Porridge*. For them, sitting next to someone with lived experience was a rare opportunity for further understanding.

The education manager at my prison who supported me going to campus was outstanding. Having walked a similar path as a mature student, they understood how crucial this journey was for both of us. Being allowed to collect my laptop and my phone, along with being able to drive myself there, gave me a sense of independence.

The prison service needs to build stronger ties with local universities, offering prisoners a lifeline out of the revolving door of repeat offending. The process is slow, flawed, and full of setbacks, but education is the key, the only key many prisoners ever get to use. It is when rehabilitation becomes more than just a buzzword, more than a politician's slogan, and finally gives people a chance to get a worthwhile job.

We publish blogs by our past and present students regularly on our website. To receive alerts when a new one goes up, why not follow us on social media.

A conversation more urgent than ever

At the Longford Trust, we often speak of 'turning sentences into degrees'. It is a simple phrase but behind it lies something profound: the belief that education, trust and human connection can unlock potential, restore dignity and create lasting change. This year, that belief has once again been borne out through the achievements of our scholars. Their stories remind us that the journey from custody to campus to workplace is rarely straightforward, but with the right support, it is possible - and transformative.

A particularly powerful example of this has been the success of *Punch*, the award-winning play based on the memoir of a Longford Scholar. Its critical acclaim and growing audiences have brought one individual's story to a much wider public, challenging perceptions and demonstrating the power of restorative justice and the creative potential that can emerge when talent is given the opportunity to flourish. It stands as a compelling illustration of what the Trust seeks to achieve - not only educational success, but the confidence and platform to reshape the narrative about people with convictions.

Our scholarships remain at the heart of what we do. Alongside them, the Longford Lecture and Prize create space for national conversation on justice, fairness and reform. And in 2025, these conversations felt more urgent than ever. Questions of opportunity, inclusion and the treatment of some of the most marginalised in our society have rightly been brought to the fore. The Trust remains committed not only to supporting individuals, but also to amplifying their voices and advocating for change.

None of this work would be possible without the generosity and dedication of our supporters, mentors, volunteers and partners. Their belief in people and the need for second chances continues to sustain and grow our impact. As we look ahead, we do so with confidence and humility.



Tom Pakenham
Chair
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Three takeaways from twenty years

Our scholarship programme notched up its 20th anniversary in 2025, which inevitably prompted recollections of the small-scale, tentative start it made – just two awards in its first year. We referred to it as a 'pilot' in case it didn't take off. What struck me most, though, was the contrast with where we are at now: more than 300 potential scholars contacting us about an award a year, sent our way via a vast range of signposts from our own inserts in *Inside Time*, the national newspaper for prisoners, through to recommendations from probation officers or other charities, and hearing about us from our past scholars who are now thriving in their various careers.

What hasn't wavered is our firm belief that education changes lives and offers second chances. And two decades on, that belief is now borne out by the 'outcome' data shared inside this report on the 600 or so scholars we have worked with so far. It gives us a very clear focus in our work, and prevents mission creep, though we try hard each year to find ways in which we can make more effective the support we give our scholars, hand-in-hand with increasing their numbers.

Such an approach requires three things: the first, and most essential, is the generosity, steadfastness and enthusiasm of our supporters. Simply put, we couldn't do anything without you. The second is a dedicated team. That is as true whether it be our trustees (now including four former scholars), our volunteer mentors who give so willingly of their time and wisdom, or the tireless office team. Any credit belongs in equal measure to each and every one.

And the third thing? It is our scholarship award-holders. Every year without fail from 2005, their commitment to their studies and their resilience and determination in the face of the obstacles put in their path at every stage has been and remains remarkable and inspiring. It is what makes the Longford Trust what it has grown into, and will continue to be.



Peter Stanford
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Easy to see, difficult to change

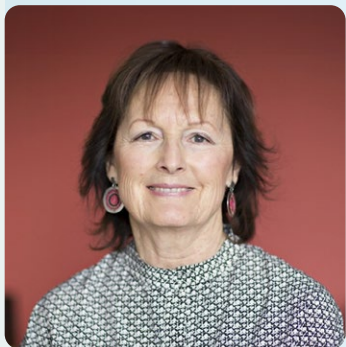
It would be good to report of 2025 that the days when a prisoner 'looked/With such a wistful eye/Upon that little tent of blue/Which prisoners call the sky...' had long passed. That the mantra of rehabilitation, active in my father, Frank Longford's lifetime, had resulted in engaged prisoners, locked away from the world, certainly, but able to use education and useful jobs to escape their cells and prepare for a better future. Unfortunately, Oscar Wilde's description written in 1898, even if the blue sky is exchanged for a television, is still too often true.

Overcrowding means double cells, leading to frustrations and greater violence. James Timpson, named Prisons' Minister in July 2024, commented to me wryly that when he ran his family business, he watched the sales figures. Now he watches the prison population figures. The reasons are easy to see: longer sentences; court delays; high recidivism, accentuated by under-staffing both in the prisons and the probation service. Easy to see, difficult to change.

Money could be the answer. Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood promised in 2025 to deliver 14,000 more prison places costing around £10 billion. In September 2025, David Lammy took over and wanted to cut back on jury trials to reduce the backlog of 80,000 in court cases. There are, then, people at the top trying their best to unravel an almost impossible situation.

And there is a happier story of all the trusts and charities pouring their energies and funds into dealing with individuals, recognising their very different problems, talents and ambitions.

At the Penned Up Festival at HMP Erlestoke in June I heard ex-prisoner, now lauded actor, Michael Balogun, tell a somewhat surprised audience: 'In prison you've got time to think. Time to plan. Time to prepare'. To reach that positive state of mind, you need help and tools. The Longford Trust and other charities provide just that.



Rachel Billington OBE
Trustee

Our 2025 impact at a glance

630

scholarship awards made since 2005

80%+

of our award-holders each year go on to graduate with a degree

3-4%

of our award-holders end up back in prison

100%

of our current volunteer, trained mentors said they would recommend being a Longford Trust mentor to others

In an independent, anonymised survey of our current scholars:

89%

said the Trust had increased their emotional well-being

86%

said it had given them vital practical assistance

83%

credited their mentor with helping them succeed at university

90%+

felt being supported by the Trust had changed their lives for the better



‘I believe we are letting children down’

Our 2025 Longford Lecture was delivered on November 11 by Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England. The Assembly Hall of Church House, Westminster was full to its 650-seat capacity to hear her speak, with an additional 450 joining via a livestream, and the event broadcast on National Prison Radio and by the in-cell education TV channel WayOutTV into every prison cell in England and Wales. It was sponsored by AtkinsRéalis and barristers' chambers 23ES.

23es

AtkinsRéalis



On stage at the 2025 Lecture: poet and scholar WS Pendray read the 'Pinter Poem'; scholar Andrew Morris reflected on what his mentor had meant to him; and Lady Unchained brought the house down to conclude the evening.

In it, she reflected on why children and youngsters end up in the criminal justice system. *'This is the story of a boy,' she said, 'who I met last year in a cell. A boy who, a few weeks earlier, had been out with a mate on his bike on a summer's day. He told me, "we could hear shouting so we went around the corner and I thought, hey, what's happening here?... There was just loads of little kids and grown men egging the kids on to chuck stuff at the police."*

This boy, with many others, was one of those involved in the riots in 2024. He presents us as a society with a question, a challenge, a choice. Do we say – this boy scared people, he hurt people; he is guilty - he must be punished? Or do we say – this child scared people, he hurt people; he is guilty – how have we failed him? How do we engage him, so he doesn't do it again? Break the cycle before it beds in.

And what did happen? He was sentenced to custody, his education interrupted, his dreams of a career as an electrician and a future irreparably damaged. We simply saw his guilt and didn't allow for the fact that he is a child. I believe we are letting children down. By failing to provide moral leadership and show them what it means to be a child today. We have left a vacuum in the services that children need, in the moral and social fabric of our country; and nature abhors a vacuum. We have left it to children to fill it for themselves.'

Watch Dame Rachel's lecture in full on our website – or register to get advance notice of our 2026 Lecture.

Our 2025 Prize Winners

Since 2002, our annual **Longford Prize** – worth £5,000 - has celebrated courage, persistence, originality and humanity in individuals and organisations working for prison reform. The judges chose as 2025 winners **Liberty Choir**. In their citation the judges wrote: *'Music makes a difference in lives and never more so than in prison, where Liberty Choir transforms lives. Built on volunteers who go into prisons to sing alongside prisoners, it has grown steadily since 2014, bringing to more and more prisons joy, much-needed and sustaining hope, peace and evidence that there is still a world out there open and willing to forgive. Its full-circle approach sees its volunteers supporting choir members when they are released, making it an exemplar at a time when such links are too few and far between.'* It was collected on stage by founders Ginny Dougary (pictured) and MJ Paranzino as the audience watched a short film on the choir in action, made by director and former Longford Scholar, Brian Edmond, set to the tune of 'My Way'. Watch it here. (longfordtrust.org/the-longford-prize)



Our **Kevin Pakenham Prize** has been awarded since 2021 in memory of our founding chairman. It recognises the public figure or organisation that has used their platform to make an outstanding contribution to public understanding of what goes on in prisons. It is sponsored by the Blavatnik Family Foundation. Our 2025 prize went to **The Archers** – the world's longest-running radio soap – for a storyline that saw core character George Grundy imprisoned and revealed what incarceration means for his family, his community, his victims and George himself. The prize was presented on stage by Kevin's wife, the ITN newscaster Ronke Phillips, to editor Jeremy Howe, storyliner Dave Payne, and actor Angus Scobie who plays George.

BLAVATNIK
FAMILY FOUNDATION

The 2025 Pinter Poem

Our annual lecture ends each year with The Pinter Poem. Awarded to the best poem over the year by a serving prisoner that has appeared in *Inside Time*, The Pinter Poem was established by Antonia Fraser, Frank Longford's daughter, in memory of her husband, the Nobel Laureate Harold Pinter. 'Give Em 5' by Les Walker from HMP Gartree was read by poet, actor, rapper and former Longford Scholar, WS Pendray.

Do you ever judge a book by its cover?
Do you ever look at a man and judge him a mug?
Or looked at another and thought him a thug?
And get someone else and think him a lug?
A conclusion formed before he opens his mouth.
So, you close your mind because of what you see.
You're deaf before he makes a sound.
The guy you see could be a decent Gadge.
When his words come out a total ledge.
Funny, insightful, inspiring, delightful
But what you see you formed a conclusion
A conclusion based on your bias illusion.
Or is it our own twisted mind's delusion?
Is this why we pay so much heed to what we see?
He's a scruff, a snob, he's thin, he's fat.
Look at the state of him he must be a tw't
Could it be human nature to say what we see?
And what we see is how it must be.
Or is that an excuse so people can be prats.
Forming a conclusion because someone's wearing tat.
Or because he's thin or because he's fat
We need to take 5 and stop being so old hat.
And listen to the person under the tat.
Even if he is thin, fat, scruffy or what.
Without forming a conclusion, you may have a good chat.
And even if you don't and the man is a tw't
Then at least you gave him 5 and you can't be fairer than that.

Watch Will reading this as part of the recording of the 2025 Lecture on our website



Transforming self and society

The scholarship programme is the cornerstone of the Trust's mission to empower individuals through education. 2025 saw record numbers of scholarships awarded, with 42 scholarships granted. Of these, nine were awarded to women and 33 to men. In total, 35 scholars embarked on studies for undergraduate degrees or associate programmes, while seven pursued Masters degrees.

Among the new scholars were two Patrick Pakenham Awards (studying law) and two Nat Billington Awards (for computer science). The average age was 28, with more than £150,000 pledged in total, if all recipients complete their degrees.

Over 2025, our scholars demonstrated exceptional achievements despite ongoing societal, economic, and personal challenges. A total of 20 scholars successfully graduated, an important milestone reflecting both their determination and the steadfast support of our office team, volunteer mentors, and external partners. Impressively, 10 of these graduates achieved a 2:1 or first class degree.

Many graduates transitioned into meaningful employment, with several securing highly competitive graduate traineeships. These included roles such as a technician at a national water company, a consultant at a fintech start-up, and a Graduate Structural Engineer at a major construction firm. Others entered careers in the film industry, the fitness sector, and a housing association, while one graduate successfully launched a pet food business.

One of our most inspiring stories in 2025 was that of current scholar John. Just one year since release, he has built a strong and supportive network enabling him to found a Community Interest Company dedicated to empowering underprivileged children through sport. His journey is a powerful example of resilience and what can be achieved when opportunity is matched with drive.



Clare Lewis
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One bad day in housekeeping...

A year into my sentence, *writes our scholar Sania*, I moved onto the Open unit and worked in housekeeping for about six months. It was honest work but it was also the kind of job that gives you a lot of time to think. I was tired, physically, mentally, emotionally. I remember thinking, 'I can't do this forever. I need something to change'. Around that time, another woman on the unit said something, when we were talking casually, that I will never forget. 'You have so much potential. You shouldn't waste it. Have you ever thought about doing your Masters?'

The truth was, I hadn't. Not seriously. I had an undergraduate degree already and had worked as a manager at Amazon before my sentence. Yet her words stuck with me. They settled somewhere deep, right where hope had been sitting quietly waiting for a moment like this. One bad day in housekeeping pushed me to act on that thought. I told myself, 'if I want change, I have to start it'. So, I decided to go to a university open day. I didn't expect much. I definitely didn't expect to be accepted on the spot. But that's exactly what happened.

I applied for a Masters in business computing and was offered a place immediately. Suddenly, I had something that belonged to my future rather than my past. I started the course in September 2024 and finished in September 2025, just as my sentence came to an end. I graduated with a distinction. Even now, those words feel surreal.

When I first entered prison, I felt everything had been taken from me: my job; my freedom; my confidence; and, honestly, my sense of who I was. The Masters changed that. I came out as a graduate with a distinction. I came out with confidence and purpose. I came out feeling ready to face the world again.

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Willing to step into the unknown

It's been another great year, with more people coming forward to become mentors than ever before, which is always encouraging. But what always strikes me isn't just the numbers—it's who they are. People come to us from all walks of life, bringing different experiences and skills, and willing to give up their time to volunteer. There's no such thing as a typical Longford mentor, and that's exactly what gives the programme its strength.

The word 'mentor' itself comes from the character in Homer's *Odyssey*, who was trusted to guide and look after another. From the beginning, the idea for us has been rooted in guidance, trust and support over time, and that is exactly what our mentors do.

What sits behind that is a real willingness to step into the unknown. Mentors could be paired with a scholar in prison, someone in the community, or someone transitioning between the two. Each situation brings its own challenges.

What stays with me is the resilience, passion and commitment in meeting those challenges time and time again, and in celebrating the wins along the way. Things don't always go to plan, and circumstances can change quickly. But they adapt. They keep showing up. They meet people where they are, and that takes patience, flexibility and real commitment.

We've tried to build more of a sense of community around our mentors. Simple things have made a difference—our WhatsApp group, hosting a pre-lecture event, creating a space for mentors to connect and support each other.

They do all this voluntarily, often going the extra mile and offering steady, unflinching support. It's a real joy for me to be part of their journey and to see their impact up close. We are lucky to have them.



Veena Josh
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This is where the mentor comes in

When I was first told about my mentee Rahim, a Masters student studying Aeronautical Engineering, I felt a jolt of imposter syndrome. 'I don't know anything about aeronautical engineering. I'm not sure I'll be any good at this after all!' I had met Longford Scholars before (my firm, AtkinsRéalis, works in partnership with the Longford Trust on its employability programme), and been impressed, but still I was flooded with doubts.

Luckily, Veena, the trust's mentoring manager, knows this landscape inside out, has heard hundreds of mentor stories, and understands that the road is not always straightforward or obvious. She convinced me to give it a try.

Rahim is curious, technical, creative, practical, eager and utterly dedicated to his studies. It felt like the most natural thing in the world to be his personal cheerleader. I hadn't realised quite how much Rahim needed one of those. We chat on Teams every couple of weeks. I hear what he's learning and what he's up to. Outside of our calls, I've invited Rahim to an Insight Day I hosted at AtkinsRéalis – a chance to spend a day in the office learning about different careers and live projects, asking questions and networking.

We did a special session on resilience: how to reframe our most difficult life experiences as times of significant personal growth, which can even bring us unexpected skills and advantages at work. On his feedback form, Rahim wrote: 'I have more confidence/belief in myself. I am as good and deserving as everyone I look up to. I belong here.'

Though I can't begin to imagine the impact a prison sentence has on self-confidence, I am starting to understand the resulting lost potential, missed opportunities, dimmed inner-light, and lives not fully lived. This is where the mentor comes in.



Esther Waldren
Longford Trust mentor

Starting a degree in prison

2025 marked 12 years of the Frank Awards, created to address a clear gap in provision: serving prisoners wishing to get going on a distance-learning degree with the Open University are not able to access Student Loans until within six years of their earliest release date. The Frank Awards are designed to widen eligibility and access as well as, where possible, offer recipients face-to-face mentoring in prison.

Over the past 12 months, we made 19 new Frank Awards, bringing the total number since the programme began to 172. Of these, 103 have completed the funded module, with 82% passing and an impressive 15% achieving distinctions. Encouragingly, more than half have gone on to further study, either continuing with the Open University or progressing to campus-based degrees. 10 recipients have gone on to receive one of our Longford Scholarships.

The success of the Frank Awards is only possible through the generous support of the Linbury Trust. We are also grateful to work on them in close partnership with the Prisoners' Education Trust and the Open University's Students in Secure Environments (SiSE) team.

While applications were slightly lower this year, most likely reflecting ongoing challenges within the prison system where education departments are facing up to 40% cuts, our Development Manager, Veena Josh, alongside our Ambassadors and Scholars, continues to visit prisons to encourage and inspire potential applicants to take the first step towards higher education.

One message this year perfectly captures the impact of the Awards. *'It is with extreme joy and gusto that I bring you the news of my last result. I scored 91%. Once again can you pass on the news to everyone at The Longford Trust with my continued gratitude for their support.'*



Sara Boxer
Office Manager
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A graduation with a difference

Most long-stay prisons are situated in the middle of nowhere, to the despair (and cost) of families who spend hours on trains and buses and taxis to visit their loved ones, *writes our director Peter Stanford, of a day out of the office*. I was reminded of that reality one spring morning heading out by rail to rural Suffolk to HMP Warren Hill, but any effort required was repaid in spades when I finally got there. The brilliant education team in this category C training prison – Karen, Jennie and Catherine – had organised a graduation ceremony for two of the young men the Longford Trust has supported there through our Frank Awards, to get their Open University degrees.

It was all very simple and dressed down compared to those big, packed, over-emotional events in historic halls on the campuses of our great universities. Here in a recreation room in prison tears were carefully dammed, but unmistakably present. Why? Because both men, when asked to say a few words, conveyed viscerally how much it meant to them. And also because everyone there – whether it was the Pro-Chancellor of the Open University, splendid in his academic gown, or the deputy governor of the prison, or the head of the Independent Monitoring Board, or the one relative of the two graduates who was attending – knew what an achievement this ceremony was marking.

Getting a degree when behind bars is tough. They should get extra letters after their name to reflect that. There are obstacles at every turn. Yet, as the two men received their certificates, the clapping and the cheers and the foot-stamping were as loud as in any football stadium. And everyone was joining in, prisoner and prison guard, insider and outsider, teacher and jailer, united by a shared human instinct to celebrate the very best in each other.



A fair chance to succeed

After joining as Employability Manager at the end of 2024, this year has been one of growth, both for the programme and for me. I have become more confident and efficient in my role, developing a deeper understanding of what meaningful employability support looks like for our scholars.

At the heart of my work is building genuine, trusted relationships. Many of our scholars face complex barriers when moving towards employment, and having consistent, tailored support makes a significant difference. I have felt encouraged to bring my full self into the role, with the autonomy to shape and expand our offer in ways that are both responsive and impactful. It has been particularly important to feel that my insight and lived experience are not only valued, but actively welcomed in shaping our direction.

A key focus has been increasing access to internships, ensuring scholars can gain meaningful, career-relevant experience. In 2025, some of our scholars worked as interns with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner on policy proposals; others with an educational television service broadcasting into prison cells; still more spending time in the offices of several third sector partner organisations; and two fine-tuning their creative and literary talents thanks to bursary places at a prestigious writers' retreat.

We have also made strong progress in developing opportunities within the financial sector, working closely with the Worshipful Company of International Bankers to explore internship pathways. Our partnership with the international construction and engineering company AtkinsRéalis has also continued to develop, with scholars attending insight days at their offices round the country and benefiting from targeted workshops designed to support them through recruitment processes, including aptitude testing. These opportunities are critical in levelling the playing field and giving scholars a fair chance to succeed.



DREAMCHASING
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Roxanne Foster
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Me? Working with the police? Never...



Working with the police had never been something I imagined myself doing, *writes our scholar Alicia*, particularly given my past experiences and the reality of having a criminal record. So, starting a month-long, paid placement with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, organised through the Longford Trust's employability project, felt daunting.

I was working on a project to make the rooms in police stations where witnesses and victims are interviewed more "trauma-informed". The focus was on creating safer, more supportive spaces where victims of serious crimes would feel at ease and willing to discuss often distressing and overwhelming matters with police officers. The support I received from my new colleagues was invaluable - constant encouragement and guidance as I navigated both professional and personal challenges along the way.

There was having to arrange meetings where I was discussing issues involved in my research with outside foundations and experts. The oral presentation exams I had done as part of my law degree at university gave me some confidence in such situations, but this was definitely outside my comfort zone. Perhaps my proudest moment, though, came when I presented my research findings to the senior leadership, including the Chief Executive and Simon Foster, the Crime Commissioner. Having my work genuinely valued gave me a lot of confidence. The placement completely shifted my perspective. It helped me rebuild trust, both in myself and in the systems around me.

The whole experience has had other tangible impacts since. Shortly after completing my time with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, I secured three job interviews, with my placement playing a key role in strengthening my CV. This is what is possible when trust and opportunity are extended. It showed me that meaningful relationships between the police and people with lived experience of the criminal justice system *can* be restored, that reform, trust and opportunity *can* genuinely coexist.

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The Patrick Pakenham Awards

Set up in 2007 to support our scholars studying Law, in memory of Frank Longford's barrister son, the Patrick Pakenham Awards enjoyed a busy year, with two of our graduates going forward to take the legal profession qualification course that enables them to work as solicitors. One of them, Chris Walters, (*pictured*) has also joined the trustee board of Human Rights Consortium Scotland and sits on one of the committees of the Law Society of Scotland. We have three more Law undergraduates nearing the end of their degree, with one in discussions with the Solicitors' Regulation Authority about progressing to the professional qualification course.



The Nat Billington Awards

Prison regulations ban any engagement with the digital world when serving a sentence, meaning that on release one of the many challenges is getting back up to speed with the technology that now dominates every aspect of daily life, personal management and the workplace. Our Nat Billington Scholarships, established in 2015 in memory of Frank Longford's grandson, a successful tech entrepreneur who died that year, aim to offer support in that transition and backing for those who then go on to university to do tech-focussed degrees.



Dolly Costopoulos (1947-2022)

In 2006, when we started our Patrick Pakenham Awards (in memory of Frank Longford's barrister son) for young released and soon-to-be-released prisoners who wanted to read Law at university, *writes Peter Stanford, our director*, Dolly Costopoulos was among the first to step forward to fund the programme. An old friend of both Paddy (as he was known) and his partner, Dominique de Borchgrave, Dolly continued that support every year until her death in 2022, always attending our annual lecture and talking to some of the recipients of these Law awards. Occasionally she would share the story of her own thwarted ambitions as a young woman in Greece, blocked by her family from becoming a lawyer.

Clever, cultured, spirited, a successful photographer and with an equally sharp eye for injustice in society, Dolly lived in London for much of her adult life. Her death in 2022 came suddenly. In her will, she left the Longford Trust a substantial legacy to ensure that both our Patrick Pakenham Awards would continue on a firm footing, as well as our broader scholarship scheme within which they sit.

In recognition of her own particular enthusiasms, we are planning an addition to our already growing employability programme which seeks to ensure that some of our Patrick Pakenham law graduates, if they want to and have met various tests set by the Solicitors Regulation Authority, can go forward like all others on their courses and make a career in the legal profession. That means getting a training contract with a law firm, where at present in a highly competitive market a criminal record is too often a reason to reject their application.

Final details are yet to be agreed but we hope, in 2026 in Dolly's name and as she wanted, to be supporting young would-be lawyers on our scholarship programme to achieve their ambition to be solicitors. May she rest in peace.

On the road, it's about persistence

In 2025 I spent a lot of time on the road, often with one of our Longford Ambassadors, visiting prisons to raise awareness of the Trust and what we offer. We visited 21 prisons over the 12 months, covering Category C, Category D/ Open, and both men's and women's prisons.

What has struck me most is not just the scale of the prison estate, but how differently education is experienced within each place. In some prisons, there is a real passion, energy and commitment around learning. In others, the impact of staffing pressures and wider cutbacks to the budget (up to 40% in some prisons, with all staff members put on part-time) is clear. Education teams are overstretched, resources are limited, and as a result, prisoners who want to engage with learning don't always get the support they need.

This has had a direct impact on the Trust's work. It is often harder to identify and reach the individuals who would benefit most from a Longford Scholarship. Gaining access to prisons can still be a slow and sometimes difficult process, and even when we are inside, the systems that might once have helped connect us to potential applicants are not always in place.

Despite this, the importance of showing up in person has only become more apparent. Wherever we are able to speak directly to potential scholars in prison, the response is immediate. Having a Longford Scholar in the room, someone who has sat where they are sitting now and gone on to study, remains the most powerful way to cut through doubt and scepticism. It makes the opportunity feel real and attainable.

Alongside these visits, we've continued to build relationships across the criminal justice sector. For me, this year has reinforced that raising awareness is not just about visibility — it's about persistence.



Veena Josh
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develop@longfordtrust.org

You make our successes possible

As I enter my third year as Fundraising Manager, I've been reflecting on the past 12 months. It has been a year of deepening relationships with a wide range of supporters. Whether it is London's livery companies, our corporate donors, or our individual givers, I am incredibly grateful for their commitment. We only succeed because of this support. It allowed us to welcome a record 42 new scholars this past summer.

The 2025 Longford Lecture was a major highlight, where Dame Rachel de Souza gave an inspiring talk. We used card, cash, and QR codes to make donating as easy as possible on the night, but I was especially moved by those who reached out afterward. Several generous people offered to support us even further, as mentors or long-term donors.

The brilliant video featuring our Ambassadors is wonderful to watch and has been really useful in my work. It was filmed and edited by one of our 2025 film graduates, Brian, and it has been a helpful tool for showing donors the power of our work. I am grateful to our ambassadors for using their voice and experiences to help continue the Trust's life-changing programme of support.



This year has been about strengthening our donor base, building closer bonds between coworkers, and making the work of the Trust even more effective. Thank you to the donors, my colleagues, and the scholars who work so hard to make this positive change a reality.

Chris Walters
Fundraising and Operations Manager
fundraising@longfordtrust.org

If you wish, after reading this report, to make a further or a first donation to the Longford Trust, here's how you can do it.

By bank transfer: CAF Bank, sort code 40 52 40, account number 00019561, account name Frank Longford Charitable Trust.

By cheque: made out to Frank Longford Charitable Trust and sent to PO Box 72887, London N2 2FG.

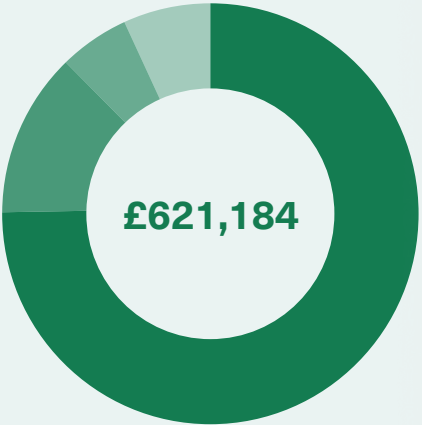
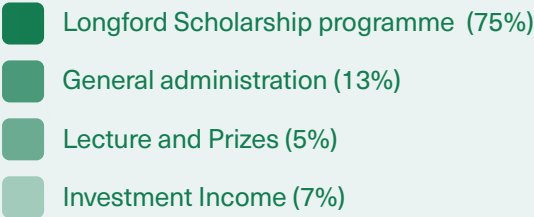
Via JustGiving: by scanning the QR code.



Income

Donations to Restricted Funds	2025	2024
Scholarship programme	£ 465,833	£ 548,338
Lecture and Prizes	£ 33,055	£ 36,745
Subtotal	£ 498,888	£ 562,248
Donations to Unrestricted Funds		
General admin	£ 80,333	£ 103,316
Investment income	£ 41,963	£ 7,884
Subtotal	£ 122,296	£ 111,200
Total	£621,184	£696,283

2025



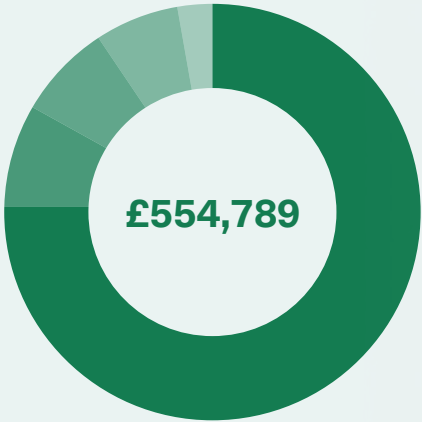
We are grateful to the following for their support in 2025: 8C Capital; 23ES; Charles Alexander; The Ambrose & Ann Applebe Trust; The John Armitage Charitable Trust; Atkins Realis; Ariane Banks; The BEC Trust; The Blavatnik Family Foundation; Thomas Brown; Buchanan & Rob Collin; Susan and Paul Butler; Clive and Rosalind Boxer; The Cairns Charitable Trust; The Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust; Lord Charles Cecil; Elisabeth Chapman; Dr Les Clark; Stephanie Clarke; RJ Clark; Morag Cleland; JS Corcoran; The Cowley Charitable Trust; George Cruddas; The Cumber Family Charitable Trust; Jill Dale; Jane Dominey and Jim Warwick; Dreamchasing – the Dennis Family Foundation; The February Foundation; Alex Fletcher; Emily Fletcher; Marine Franklin; The Revd Alan Gadd; The Robert Gavron Charitable Trust; Beth and Tom Gilbey; Rachel and Sebastian Grigg; The Grocers’ Charity; Ben Gummer; The Bryan Guinness Charitable Trust; The Hargrave Foundation; The Hawthorne Charitable Trust; Hugh Herzig; Kate Hill; Peter Holt; Sir Harold Hood’s Charitable Trust; Bruce Hunter; Jeremy Kember; JJ Killen; The KW Charitable Trust; Luke Leighfield; The Karen and Lawrence Lever Charitable Trust; The Linbury Trust; Phyllida Lloyd; The Lund Trust – a charitable fund of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing; The Martin Charitable Trust; Charlotte Mitchell; Carolyn Norris; The Ofenheim Charitable Trust; The Henry Oldfield Charitable Trust; Beth O’Leary Charitable Trust; Sandy O’Leary; Ben Pakenham; Guy Pakenham; Sir Michael Pakenham; Ronke Phillips Pakenham; Patrick Racklow; The Rank Foundation; The Rivers Foundation; Winston Roddick; The Rothschild Foundation; Sally Sampson; John Samuels KC; Terry Schwennes and Ann Britton; ShareGift; The Sheriff’s and Recorders’ Fund; Niharie Sri; Peter Stanbrook; MJ Stanford; Jonathan Sterling; The Stone Family Foundation; Valentine Thomas; The TS Eliot Foundation; Dame Marina Warner; The Wilmington Charitable Trust; The De Winton Charitable Trust; The Wolton Charitable Trust; Lloyd Zuckerberg and Charlotte Triefus; and many more who gave on the basis of anonymity.

Expenditure

	2025	2024
Scholarship programme	£ 419,025	£ 447,989
Longford Lecture and Prizes	£ 36,235	£ 46,967
Fundraising costs	£ 43,477	£ 43,221
Office and Governance costs	£ 40,647	£ 22,791
Employment cost*	£ 14,132	
Legal and Insurance	£ 1,273	£ 1,280
Total	£ 554,789	£ 585,084

*The trust began paying its staff on PAYE in 2025

2025



Current assets at the end of year	2025
Investments	£185,748
Current assets at the end of year	£792,768
Creditors: due in one year	(£147,975)
Creditors: due in more than one year	(£51,023)
Total net assets	£779,518

Oxford helped me find my place again

I was reasonably academic during my A-levels, *writes our scholar Haider*, so I was aware of Oxford and Cambridge and the status they carry. But before I really had the chance to explore that properly, my life went off track and I ended up in prison. At that point, I felt like I'd completely derailed what I thought my future was going to be.

When I came out in my late 20s, I believed that period of my life was going to define everything that came after it. I was certain people wouldn't look past it. So, I made a decision. If I was going to change how people saw me, I needed to do something that carried real weight in a positive direction. That's what led me, in my late 20s, to apply to Oxford to study maths and philosophy.



I chose Harris Manchester College because it is for mature students, so I thought they'd be more open to people who hadn't followed a conventional path, including someone like me, and they were great - open, understanding, and genuinely supportive. The issue came when my application was pooled to another college because the maths side of the degree would need to be taken elsewhere. Because of my record that college refused me a place and caused the whole thing to fall through.

By that point I'd already been awarded a Longford Scholarship and I was set on Oxford, so with their help I reapplied, this time to Mansfield College, and after a bit of back-and-forth, I was offered a place. Once I was there, most tutors and students, whether they knew about my background or not, were welcoming and treated me normally. Of course, there were a few exceptions, but nothing I wasn't prepared for.

At the start, especially in the first term, there was a lot of curiosity. People had looked me up, so I ended up having a lot of conversations about my past. It wasn't always comfortable, but it settled down pretty quickly. Oxford has a way of making sure everyone's attention ends up where it should be, on the work.

I probably would have enjoyed other universities too, but the reason I stuck with Oxford is simple. It carries weight. Fairly or not, people make assumptions when they see it on your CV. In my case, it helped shift how people saw me. It opened doors and gave me opportunities I might not have had otherwise.

Ten years on, I run my own fitness business across two sites in London, with a third on the way. Looking back, the process of getting into Oxford probably taught me more than the degree itself in some ways, especially how to deal with setbacks and rejection. It also showed me that I could rebuild and find my place again. I even met my wife there.

If I was speaking to someone with a similar background thinking about university, I'd say this: there are lots of good options out there, and Oxford isn't the only path. But if you're considering it, don't assume it's closed to you because of your past. It's not easy. Getting in takes hard work, persistence, and sacrifice. Once you're there, it's demanding and will challenge you. But the path does exist, and for those who choose to take it, it can be a rewarding one.

We publish blogs by our past and present students regularly on our website. To receive alerts when a new one goes up, why not follow us on social media.

‘After I received my dissertation grades, I felt compelled to write something. What a journey this has been so far. Thank you so much for your support. You are all amazing.’

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‘Thank you for all the help to get me to complete something I’d never thought I would ever be able to do’