Weston Charity Awards: Impact Evaluation

Full report

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Weston Charity

AWARDS

Independent evaluation for Pilotlight and Garfield Weston Foundation

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Foreword

There are dreamers and there are doers and in the charity sector, we need both.

This evaluation is a precious opportunity to see what a difference the right ingredients can make. After ten years of running the Weston Charity Awards, we can see how the programme of support that is on offer has so often had a transformative impact on the future trajectory of charities that take part, setting them up to help more people and to do more for the people they help.

Anyone who gives money to charity wants one thing, to give the charity more capacity to make a difference. But sometimes it is not money that makes the difference, but expertise. The Weston Charity Awards brings together the expertise of business and charity leaders, each learning from the other, each focused on how to help the charity to flourish.

In the field of capacity building, around the world, one form of impact is gold dust. This is where interventions have a lasting positive effect on the organisations that participate. This is the outstanding achievement of the Weston Charity Awards.

Over a ten year period, the evaluation looks at the experience of 145 charities – and moving on, we are now at 167. Almost all the charity leaders (96%) reporting back say that their charity is more operationally fit as a result of the support. Four out of five (83%) say that the improvements are still felt to this day.

Shortly after joining Pilotlight as the new Chair, I heard Emma Pears, Chief Executive of the children's charity SELFA (Skipton Extended Learning for All), speak about the impact on her charity. Emma reports that "in the seven years since we completed Pilotlight 360, we've kept moving forward - our income has increased threefold, we now have diverse and secure funding streams as well as clear financial planning. We are reaching more children and families than ever before."

It is no surprise that the evaluators conclude that "the Weston Charity Awards are a unique programme of transformative support for charities."

My warm thank you goes to those who took part in this evaluation, and to Inside Impact for their clear-eyed judgement and recommendations for the future of the programme. My thanks to the businesses and individuals we work with who are our Pilotlighters, skilled volunteers, in the programme.

Above all, I want to thank the Garfield Weston Foundation, its trustees and its team, for helping to make the Awards programme happen. At a time of need for charities, for the dreamers and for the doers, our partnership is gold dust.

Alison Forrestal
Chair, Pilotlight

Executive Summary

The Weston Charity Awards (WCA) are a unique programme of transformative support for charities. A partnership between Pilotlight and the Garfield Weston Foundation (GWF), the Awards have provided support to charities in targeted regions of the UK since its launch in 2014.

The WCA was established by Pilotlight and GWF to address a shared concern about the lack of support for charities outside London and the South of England. To tackle this, the WCA focused its support exclusively on charities in North England, the Midlands and Wales. Pilotlight and GWF aimed to level the playing field for charities in these regions by enhancing their fundraising capabilities and building their capacity to achieve even greater impact.

The programme is an unusual mix, combining an unrestricted grant, strategic mentorship from skilled volunteering professionals ('Pilotlighters') over a period of up to 12 months, and networking opportunities. Between 2014 and 2023, 145 charities have been Award winners and undertaken this support.

This impact evaluation examines the difference the programme has made to the charities involved and their leaders through four key evaluation questions.

Evaluation Question 1) What is the value of the WCA to its awardees as a uniquely combined programme?

Overall Value Delivered

The Awards have enhanced leadership capabilities, strengthened organisational resilience, and positively impacted the communities served by participating charities. The programme is unique in its combination of financial and non-financial support components and the fact it supports both personal leadership development alongside organisational development.

Charity leaders who participated are highly supportive of the value of the Awards. As a measure of their willingness to recommend it to others, they give an outstanding Net Promoter Score of 87 (the same level as for charities more widely who receive grants from GWF), suggesting they derive significant value from the programme as a whole. There were multiple instances of leaders actively promoting the Awards to their networks. The WCA is a vehicle for an enhanced reputation for both partners in the charity sector.

The responses of charity leaders in the evaluation surveys and interviews are generally overwhelmingly positive. One early Award winner said: "*I'm a huge fan of the programme. It's exactly what we needed and I think it helped us enormously to get to where we are now… Since I've been here turnover has trebled, staff team has doubled… we're on the up and up… and I think the programme had a huge part to play.*"

Value of Award Components

When the evaluation looked at individual components, rather than the WCA as a whole, each element is valued differently and contributes to different outcomes.

Award Component	Findings
Pilotlighter support	This is the most valuable aspect of the award, **valued by 99%** of charity leaders still in place. Pilotlighters are held in high esteem by many charity leaders keen to access commercial expertise. They provide validation for leaders, expertise, a neutral party to bridge CEOs and their Boards, and work effectively as 'critical friends' for those leaders with growth mindsets. Thirty-eight per cent are still in touch with at least one Pilotlighter to date, with some Pilotlighters becoming trustees and donors for the charities.
Unrestricted £6,500 grant	**Valued by 98%**, the grant is hugely appreciated given the difficulty in securing unrestricted funds. Some used it to enable their participation through travel costs or salary contribution; others used it to develop their charity such as acquiring a new CRM; others felt they could have participated without it, but the grant 'legitimised' them spending time and energy on the programme. It is also what attracts most people to the award initially, even if it transpires to be slightly less valuable than Pilotlighter support overall.
Launch event	**Valued by 72%**, the launch event helps set expectations, provide ideas on how the programme can be used, facilitates networking, and opens space to discuss 'fear factors'. As much as some leaders enjoyed the event, they felt they were being pitched something they had already bought into and were keen to commence work instead.
Celebratory event	**Valued by 89%**, this event brought a neat closure to the programme and many enjoyed their time at Fortnum & Mason in London. They enjoyed meeting the GWF family, felt valued by the partners, and appreciated time celebrating with Pilotlighters and their charity peers.
Peer-to-peer "Connect Sessions"	**Valued by 83%**, leaders found these sessions useful for making connections, hearing different approaches to challenges, and realising they are not alone. As much as the opportunities were valued, several leaders explained that networking opportunities are not unique to the WCA.
Raised profile from being an award winner	**Valued by 70%**, this was the area where expectation and reality differed the most, with more people finding it very attractive than very valuable. The WCA brand was repeatedly described as 'prestigious', recognised and respected in the charity sector, bringing credibility to organisations associated with it. Some had great success leveraging the profile including attracting additional funding and bringing media attention to their cause, whereas others were unable to make the most due to limited time or resource.

Evaluation Question 2) What is the comprehensive impact of the WCA?

Enduring Impact and Key Achievements

The WCA is achieving impressively positive outcomes for both charity leaders and their organisations, with most of the planned outcomes still being experienced today, even by the

2014 cohort, a decade later. This enduring impact is perhaps the most distinctive evidence of the value of the programme in unlocking lasting potential in the charities that benefit from the Awards. Since the impact of many funding programmes can diminish over time ('drop-off'), sustaining these long-term outcomes is widely regarded as a critical indicator of success for capacity building initiatives such as the Awards. For those that experienced these outcomes at *any* point during or after the WCA, the results are even higher, up to 98% for some.

Outcome for Charity Leaders	Experienced At Some Point	Continues To This Day
Better able to see things from a different perspective	96%	83%
Feeling like a more effective leader	92%	81%
Better able to critically analyse their own thoughts	94%	79%
Have improved self-confidence	92%	72%
Feeling better equipped for success	94%	68%
Feeling more resilient	90%	67%

Outcome for Charities	Experienced At Some Point	Continues To This Day
More operationally fit	96%	83%
Clearer on the organisation's purpose	91%	77%
Have more effective leadership (senior staff and Board)	98%	77%
Better able to deliver impact	91%	69%
Better able to identify external threats and opportunities	92%	69%
Better able to communicate impact	89%	64%
More financially fit	82%	57%

The only areas where outcomes were not sustained by the majority to this day were around feeling networked to other charities, and a raised profile from the award (though all were still experienced by the majority at some point).

When charity leaders were asked why they gave the programme the evaluation scores that they did, the most common reason was the positive impact it had on the charity:
- *"Was a fantastic positive experience and still having impact now"*
- *"It can make a huge difference to your charity"*
- *"Because of the significant positive impact."*

Managing Trade-offs and Unmet Need

Negative outcomes for charity leaders were limited and generally aligned with expected trade-offs, such as increased workload or more uncomfortable conversations. Most leaders saw these as necessary for meaningful results ("no pain, no gain"), though a couple of

isolated cases revealed misalignment or unmet needs. These instances highlight opportunities to clarify the programme's scope and better support unexpected changes. Overall, challenges were considered manageable and worthwhile, with no significant harm identified.

In rare instances when projects 'fail' there is still learning: for the charities, Pilotlighters or the partners. Short-term 'failures' such as trustees or CEOs leaving because of tensions in the process, can be long-term successes for organisations that then have more cohesive teams.

Evaluation Question 3) What specific changes can be linked to the WCA?

Organisational survival and growth: A notable number of charities attributed increases in income, reserves, staff, reach, impact, and quality of services at least in part to the WCA. For some, the programme was transformational, with one leader stating it made the difference between their charity's survival and closure.

Good management: Award winners are more likely than the whole charity sector to report that they have good management practices currently in place. Nearly half of the charities attributed the creation or improvement of key strategic documents to their participation in the WCA, including: a strategic plan, a business plan for the current year that contains measurable goals or objectives, an up-to-date statement of values, mission and values, and a theory of change.

Positive community impact: Many leaders credited the WCA with enabling their organisations to deliver more services, improve quality, and better meet community needs. These outcomes were achieved for most despite external challenges such as the pandemic and economic pressures, which, in some cases, limited potential impact.

Increased income: An analysis of 117 WCA charities using Charity Commission data from Find That Charity found that median income increased over time. Even after adjusting for inflation, income rose from the pre-award year to the award year and again in the post-award year. However, the analysis could not determine the extent to which increases were attributable to the WCA.

Despite this, several charity leaders shared in surveys and interviews that the WCA had helped increase income opportunities: *"Through the support and facilitation of the Pilotlighter, our income has increased year on year."* Pilotlight's own impact reporting on income levels after receiving Pilotlighter support echoes the findings of the Charity Commission financial analysis.

Whilst there are also examples of income stagnating or even falling in the Charity Commission data, charity leaders tended to attribute negative external factors as barriers to growth rather than any negative effects of the WCA.

Evaluation Question 4) Does the impact of the WCA align with the desired impact the partners aspired to create?

Values: The support provided through the Award is highly praised for reflecting the values of both partners. Charity leaders rated each value between 96% and 100% as 'fully met', showing a strong alignment. GWF's core principles of respect (100%), humility (96%), and trust (98%) are consistently upheld, while Pilotlight's focus on bringing people together

(96%), believing in potential (96%), and expecting the best (98%) is clearly reflected in the programme's approach. This demonstrates a shared ethos and a well-matched partnership in terms of how impact is delivered.

Partnership alignment in impact: Leaders from both GWF and Pilotlight agreed that the WCA appeared to meet their respective desired impact. Both had been able to expand their geographic reach beyond London and the Southeast, and both had seen evidence of charities becoming stronger and better equipped to make good quality grant applications through the WCA. GWF did however acknowledge that levels of applicants to their main grants from different geographic regions still fluctuate, leaving the question: **is there still more that can be done to level the geographic playing field for charities?**

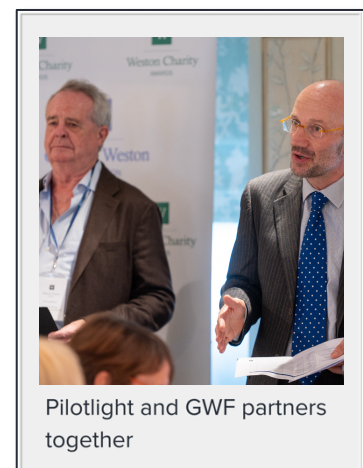## Sustained Impact and Engagement

The unique strength of the WCA is that it combines both organisational development with leadership development, often involving trustees, senior colleagues and other staff as appropriate through the programme. The evaluation was able to learn from charity leaders the impact on both them and their charities. However, the evaluation faced challenges not being able to reach WCA charity leaders who had left, and only reached a small number of organisations where someone could speak on behalf of the WCA charity leader that had left, potentially leaving some experiences unrepresented. This evaluation was not able to fully answer the question, **"What happens to the benefits when charity leaders leave?"**

The Future of the WCA and the Partnership

The partnership's long-standing nature and the commitment of the partners to their respective visions, missions and unique strengths, combined with the stability of three-year funding agreements have contributed to the success of the programme. Both partners require each other to make delivery of the programme possible. For Pilotlight, the 'critical mass' of the WCA is also what keeps their Pilotlight 360 programme feasible. Both partners see a continued need among charities for the work of the WCA.

Pilotlight and GWF partners together

Charity leaders highlighted two key areas for future support: the opportunity to reapply for or rerun the WCA after a few years, recognising its value at different stages of organisational growth, and increased access to unrestricted funding to address rising costs and sustain services. Suggestions also included developing an active alumni network to foster connections, longer-term support for leaders, and initiatives to help diversify income streams.

While there are a handful of similar programmes delivered to the charity sector, such as by the Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales, the WCA remains a unique package and achieves remarkable outcomes for most participants, even if the process itself can be challenging. **The Awards have the potential to be replicated by other organisations willing to make the investment and able to find appropriate partners to collaborate with.**

Recommendations for Future Development

1. **Expand evaluation reach**: Develop mechanisms to maintain contact with past leaders for follow-up impact data and improve representation in future evaluations.

2. **Enhance support to leverage profile**: Provide additional resources or training to help charities maximise the benefits of increased visibility.

3. **Sustain organisational benefits beyond leadership tenure**: Explore mechanisms to institutionalise learning and impact, ensuring continuity regardless of leadership changes.

4. **Strengthen alumni networks**: Establish formal alumni programmes to sustain relationships among participants and with Pilotlight and GWF.

5. **Adapt to external challenges**: Continue to ensure future iterations of the WCA are responsive to evolving external pressures, offering additional resources or flexibility to address these challenges.

Conclusion

The Weston Charity Awards exemplify strategic philanthropy, combining financial investment with skilled volunteering to create transformative change. Many programme outcomes are sustained for years beyond the programme's completion, demonstrating its long-term impact. A key factor in the programme's success lies in the strong partnership between Pilotlight and GWF, which integrates their complementary expertise, resources and values. This collaboration ensures a holistic and tailored approach, making the WCA uniquely effective in strengthening leadership and organisational resilience.

About the Weston Charity Awards

**Full details of the Weston Charity Awards can be found here:**
https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/weston-charity-awards

The Weston Charity Awards (WCA) were launched in 2014 as a partnership between Pilotlight, a UK charity that connects charities with business experts for skills-based volunteering, and the Garfield Weston Foundation (GWF), a family-founded grantmaker that donates around £100m annually to UK charities.

A decade ago, both organisations had a similar goal for enhancing the impact of charities and also faced a similar challenge related to geographic reach.

- Pilotlight were on a mission to support frontline charities become more effective, but found their work was dominated by supporting charities in London and the Southeast of England.
- GWF wanted to support charities to be more successful in their work, including developing strong applications for grant programmes, but needed to attract successful applicants from a broader range of regions across England and Wales.

Both organisations recognised the need to equalise access of opportunity to skilled strategic support and the funding opportunities it could unlock across the UK charity sector.

Pilotlight were already delivering their Pilotlight 360 programme in the South of England where volunteers from the private and public sector, *'Pilotlighters'*, worked as a group with a charity over 12 months providing skills-based volunteering to support on strategic challenges such as fundraising, governance, purpose, long-term viability, sustainability and leadership. Charity leaders and their Boards benefited from this tailored, expert guidance alongside skilled support from Pilotlight staff as project managers to help achieve the charities' unique strategic goals. The diagram below explains the stages and delivery of the programme over eight to 12 months.
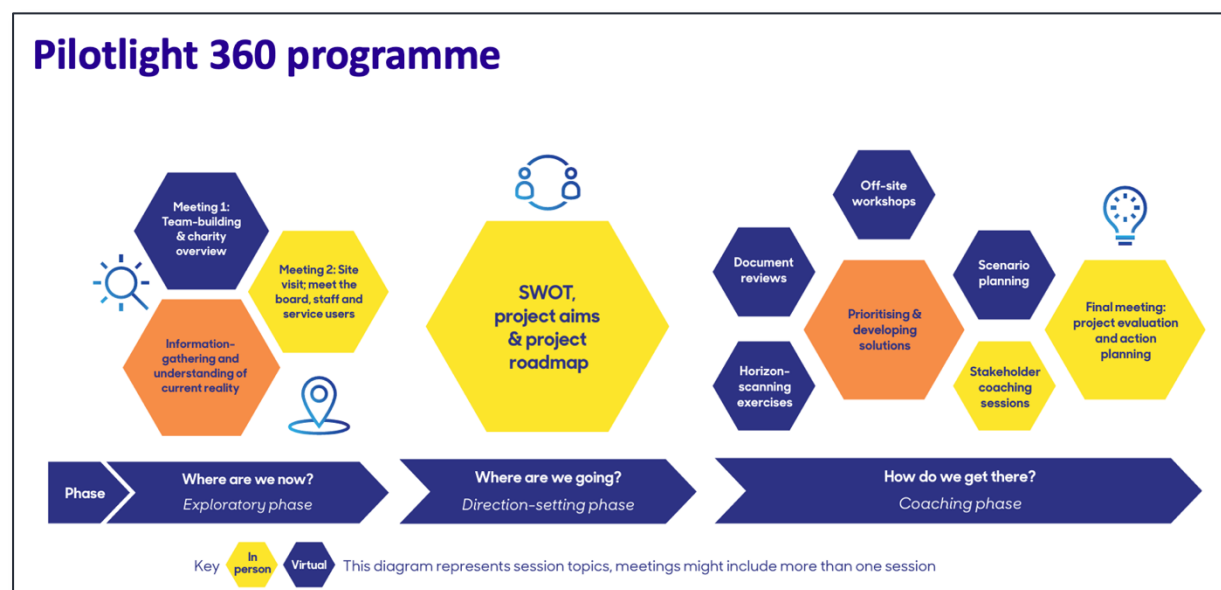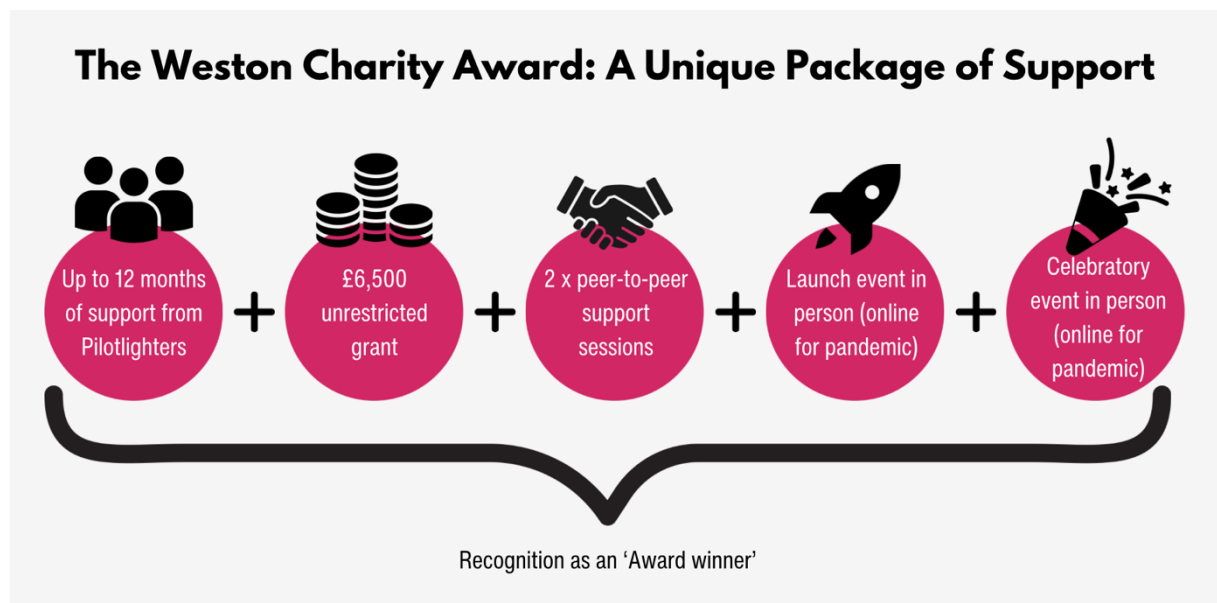
When Pilotlight and GWF partnered to create the Weston Charity Awards in 2014, the **Pilotlight 360 model was expanded and adapted to reach charities in Wales, North England and the Midlands working in the areas of Community, Welfare and Youth**. In addition to receiving pro bono support, participating charities were also awarded a grant of up to £6,500 to facilitate their involvement. Award winners also benefited from:
- a launch event at the start of the programme,
- a celebratory event at the end of the programme,
- peer-to-peer support sessions and opportunities to network with other UK charities known as 'Connect Sessions'.

2024 Celebratory Event at Fortnum & Mason, London

Furthermore, it was hoped that the prestige of this award would raise the profile of winners, increasing their visibility, and opening doors to further opportunities beyond Pilotlight and GWF.

It is believed that this package of support is unique to the charity sector, distinct from other programmes that offer just a skills-based volunteering aspect or only an award with the event element.

The Weston Charity Award: A Unique Package of Support

Up to 12 months of support from Pilotlighters **+** £6,500 unrestricted grant **+** 2 x peer-to-peer support sessions **+** Launch event in person (online for pandemic) **+** Celebratory event in person (online for pandemic)

Recognition as an 'Award winner'

From 2014 to 2023, 145 charities received this unique package of support. Assuming each charity received the £6,500 unrestricted grant, this equates to **almost £1million in funding over nine years**.

Pilotlight estimates the value of the Pilotlighter support package at £16,000 per charity. This reflects the contribution of up to four Pilotlighters volunteering over 8 to 12 months supported by a Pilotlight staff member. This puts the in-kind value of the support provided to these 145 charities at **around £2.3million over nine years**.

Even without factoring in the events and peer-to-peer support sessions, this represents a minimum of **£3.2m in value going into the charity sector in those nine years**.

Changes to the Award

Over the past decade, **the core offering of the Weston Charity Awards has remained largely unchanged**. In 2022, the Environment theme was added to the eligibility criteria. The programme's duration was reduced from 12 months to 10, and now 8 months, to better match charities' workload pressures. During the pandemic, sessions and events moved online and returned to in-person once lockdowns ended. The £6,500 core grant has remained unchanged, despite inflation.

Improvements over the years include better processes for identifying suitable applicants, the implementation of strategic development templates for project managers, and resources like videos, blogs, and case studies to help manage expectations.

The relationship between Pilotlight and GWF has evolved from a funder-partner model to a true partnership, combining financial and non-financial support. Partnership agreements are renewed every three years for stability.

As of this evaluation report, the Awards are currently in their eleventh year with recruitment open for the twelfth. No major changes are expected for the twelfth year, but **this evaluation is designed to inform any potential changes and improvements going forward**.

Evaluation Overview

1. Evaluators

At the end of 2023, Pilotlight commissioned an independent impact evaluation of the Weston Charity Awards, on behalf of GWF and Pilotlight, to be completed by March 2025. Pilotlight selected **Inside Impact** as the evaluator.

The evaluation was led by **Alexa Sage**, Director of Inside Impact, and supported by **Shehnaaz Latif**, Senior Associate at Inside Impact. Together they bring over 30 years of experience in impact and evaluation within the charity sector. **Neither had received support from Pilotlight's work previously nor worked at organisations that received a GWF grant, and so were well-placed to provide an independent and objective perspective.**

Left: Shehnaaz Latif
Right: Alexa Sage

2. Evaluation Aims

There are three main aims of this evaluation:

💡	**INSIGHT**	To look back at nearly 10 years of Weston Charity Awards to understand the long-term impact of receiving the award on charity leaders and their organisations.
👉	**DECISION-MAKING**	To use this information to help Pilotlight and GWF decide the most effective way to continue supporting the charity sector going forward.
🧠	**KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**	To share learnings with other funders, infrastructure bodies, and the sector to validate assumptions, avoid pitfalls, and encourage the replication of effective models for UK charities.

Pilotlight has consistently evaluated processes, outputs and outcomes over the years of the WCA, following up with charities six months after their award year ends to understand the sustained effects. The impact of all their skills-sharing programmes is detailed in their annual impact reports: https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/impact-data

This evaluation is the first time that:
- **The WCA has been independently evaluated since 2015**, distinct from Pilotlight 360 and other skills-sharing programmes run by Pilotlight, and distinct from other evaluations of grant-making by GWF.
- **The longer-term impact of the Awards has been evaluated**, with some charities being evaluated up to nearly ten years after receiving the award.

The evaluation focuses equally on understanding the impact on both the charity leaders who participated and the charities that received the award, even if their WCA leader is no longer in place.

3. Evaluation Questions

Inside Impact worked with Ed Mayo, Pilotlight's CEO, Mila Evanics, former Head of Charities and Impact, and Emily Snape, Operations and Impact Manager, to determine the questions the impact evaluation needed to address. These questions were then distilled into four key themes, questions upon which form the structure of the report.

1) What is the value of the WCA to its awardees as a uniquely combined programme? This includes the perceived attractiveness and the value of the individual programme elements and what effect combining these elements into one unique package of support has.

2) What is the comprehensive impact of the WCA? This includes any positive and negative outcomes (e.g. displacement) as well as planned and unplanned outcomes for charity leaders, the charities, and the communities those charities support. We also consider whether those changes are sustained over time, including any potential drop-off.

3) What specific changes can be linked to the WCA? This includes the trajectories charities have been on ('deadweight' or counterfactual), the influence of external factors, and the extent to which charity leaders attribute their successes or challenges to the programme (attribution).

4) Does the impact of the WCA align with the desired impact the partners aspired to create? This includes the perspective of Pilotlight and GWF on how the WCA contributes to their organisational aims and implications for partnership working.

Methodology

1. Timeline

The overall approach to this evaluation was agreed in January 2024 at an inception meeting between Pilotlight and Inside Impact. Data collection took place across February to November 2024 with the final analysis and write up in December 2024 to February 2025. During this time, Pilotlight continued to liaise with GWF providing updates and discussion on the evaluation.
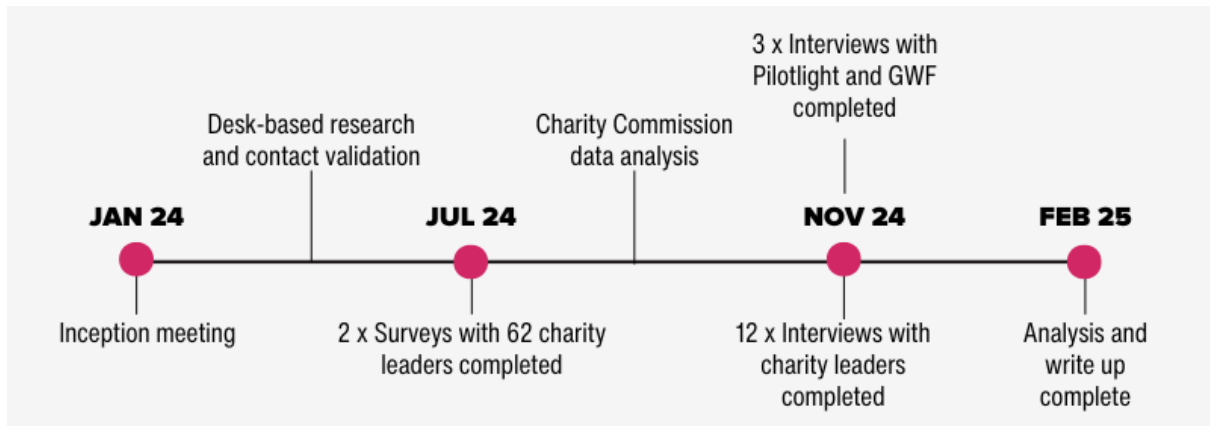
2. Data Sources

Inside Impact used a mixed methods approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data from primary and secondary sources.

There were seven sources of data used for this evaluation:

1. **Pilotlight's database** containing details of 151 awardees, from 2014 to 2023 including those who had withdrawn, deferred and concluded early.

2. **Survey 1, an online survey of 53 charity leaders who were still in place** at the organisation where they did the WCA (containing 27 closed and open-ended questions).

3. **Survey 2, an online survey of 9 charities where the leader who undertook the WCA had left** but where someone could still discuss its impact. The survey consisted of 24 closed and open-ended questions. Responses were elicited from those who were present during the WCA, namely the Chair of Board, Fundraising Manager, Contract Manager, Financial Controller, Head of People and Policy, and any leaders who joined after the WCA ended.

4. **Semi-structured interviews lasting around 45 minutes each with 12 charity leaders** who either undertook the award and were still in place, undertook the award and had since left, or worked at an organisation that had undertaken the award (see Appendix One for details).

5. **Semi-structured interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes with 3 former and current members of staff from Pilotlight and GWF** including Pilotlight's current CEO, Pilotlight's former Programme Manager and GWF's interim Director.

6. **Quantitative data that awardees provided to the Charity Commission of England and Wales**, covering income, expenditure, reserves and staffing. This data was obtained from "Find That Charity", a resource collated by David Kane of Kane Data Ltd since 2004. The PostgreSQL database was generously provided to Inside Impact for this evaluation.[1]

7. **Desk-based research of documentation previously produced or collated by Pilotlight** including case studies of award winners, impact reports, and an evaluation of the first two years of the WCA carried out by Cornish+Grey.

3. Incentives

Awardees were incentivised to take part in the evaluation. Every survey respondent received a PDF book on Impact and Evaluation (created by Inside Impact with a value of £24.99) upon completion and were given the opportunity to be entered into a prize draw for a hamper, awarded to one winner. Interviewees received no incentives.

4. Population

The evaluation focused on organisations that had completed their Awards to ensure they had fully realised the benefits and outcomes. Starting in January 2024, this included award winners from 2022 to 2023 but excluded the ongoing 2023 to 2024 cohort. **The population spanned nine cohorts from 2014 to 2023.**

Pilotlight provided Inside Impact with data they keep on all organisations that had successfully applied for an award, along with historical data on their leaders. This totalled 151 organisations.

Once we had applied the criteria that the winners must have had the opportunity to receive all the potential benefits from the programme which included those who 'completed' (i.e. utilised all available months of support) or 'concluded' the award (i.e. ended early after receiving all the support that was feasible), **this left 145 organisations**. A full list of the 145 organisations included in this evaluation can be found in Appendix Two.

Inside Impact carried out an analysis of the **Charity Commission data** on 144 out of 145 awardees (since one was not available) to understand their trajectories before and after their award year.

However, for the rest of our data collection, **our population was reduced to 140** since three charities had been dissolved, one had been made insolvent, and one charity had asked for no further contact. Therefore, 140 was the maximum we could have reached.

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[1] An approach was made to the Charity Commission of England and Wales by Inside Impact to access data prior to the last five years which is currently the only data available on their website to the public. They were very open to exploring potential access to more historic data, however timelines for the project made this more challenging. When Inside Impact approached David Kane of findthatcharity.uk where Pilotlight had previously manually accessed historical data on charities, he very kindly offered access to the source data for this evaluation which Inside Impact then analysed using SQL and Python. More about David's work and data available on UK charities can be found here: https://findthatcharity.uk/about
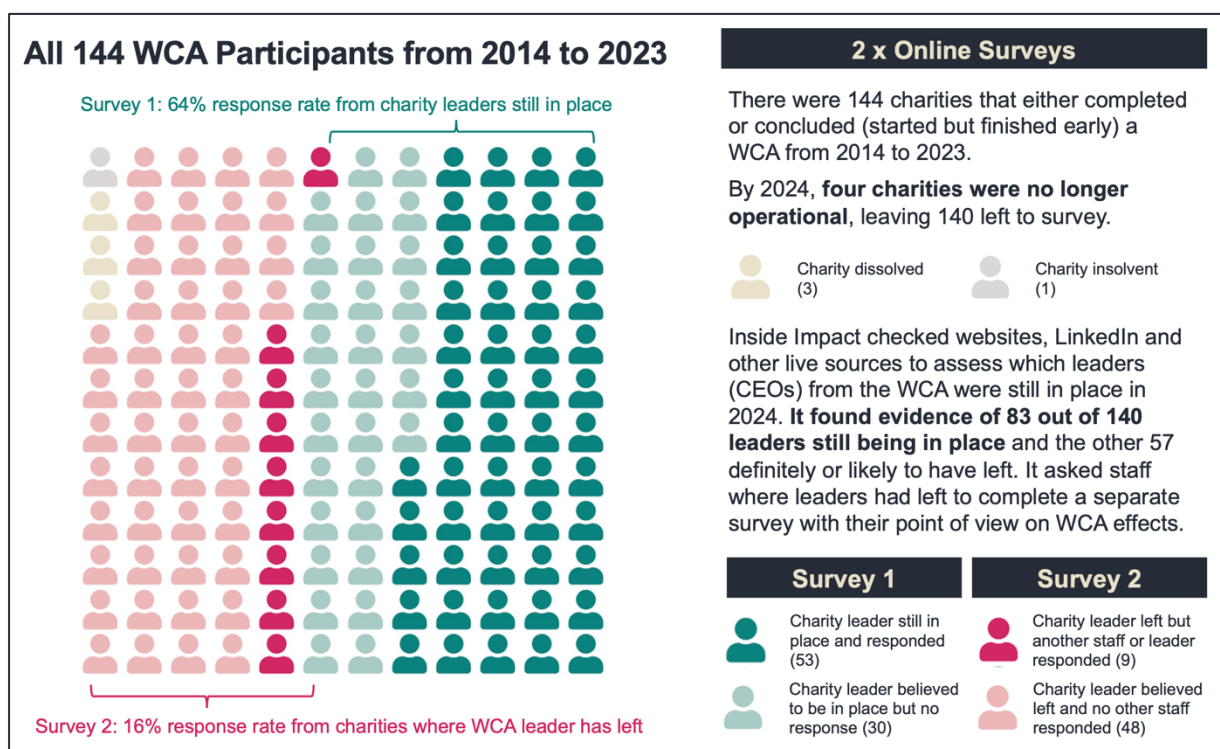
5. Samples and Sampling

We aimed to survey the entire population, so used a self-selecting sampling method by inviting all 140 organisations to respond to our surveys. However, we could not guarantee that the request reached the appropriate individual as we often had to use non-personal email addresses when WCA charity leaders had left.

In total 62 of the 140 WCA organisations responded to a survey totalling a response rate of 44%.

When broken down into the two distinct groups for each survey, the response rates were:
a) Charity leaders still in place at the organisation where they won the award: **64% (53 out of 83)**
b) Representatives responding on behalf of a charity leader who left: **16% (9 out of 57).**

For the interviewees, we agreed that 12 interviews would be sufficient to pick up key experiences and themes. We initially used a **stratified sampling** approach to achieve representation across all the cohort years. However, we struggled to get responses from all requests so switched to a **self-selecting sampling** method, reaching out to the entire population. While this approach allowed us to achieve representation from all but one cohort year, self-selection does introduce the potential for greater bias.

Limitations

1. Turnover in Charity Leadership

The biggest challenge was in **reaching charity leaders who had left the organisation where they received the award**. To remain compliant with data protection regulations, we took a cautious approach and did not attempt (e.g. through social media direct messages) to contact anyone who had left and would not have reasonably expected Pilotlight to make contact with them again[2]. The same was true of the leaders of the four organisations that were no longer operating. As a result, we accepted that this evaluation might not fully represent their experiences, and instead focused on maximising response and completion rates from those we could contact.

> When Pilotlight are recruiting WCA participants in future, could they offer charity leaders the option to join an opt-in professional network, such as a LinkedIn group or a dedicated mailing list, to facilitate future engagement? Any approach should include clear privacy assurances and an easy opt-out option to ensure compliance with data protection regulations.

2. Contact Validation

The second biggest challenge was **identifying the exact population for each survey**. By cross-referencing names with LinkedIn profiles and charity website staff pages, we estimated that 83 out of 140 leaders who undertook the Awards were still in place. We received 53 responses from this group, indicating a response rate of 64%. However, as public information may not have been up-to-date, we cannot be totally confident in the accuracy of this response rate.

For the remaining 57 organisations, the charity leaders had either moved to new roles or there was no evidence they were still in place. Since Pilotlight often only had personal (i.e. named) email address for these organisations, Inside Impact sourced generic email addresses from the Charity Commission. To make sure we had not incorrectly assumed someone had left when they had not, Pilotlight still contacted the personal email initially, but received 23 bounce-backs or automated replies confirming they had left.

For those picking up the evaluation request from the generic emails we contacted, we asked that a staff member only complete the survey if they had knowledge of the organisation having undertaken the WCA. We received 9 out of 57 responses, totalling a response rate of 16%.

The potential population size for the second survey is unclear, as it is unknown how many of the 57 organisations with departed leaders still had staff aware of the WCA. Some leaders may have been mistakenly believed to have moved and just chose not to respond.

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[2] Inside Impact made an approach to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for advice about contacting individuals who had moved on from their WCA charity. While some charity leaders have chosen to remain in touch with Pilotlight, the ICO advised that reaching out charity leaders through LinkedIn for example where they have kept no further contact with Pilotlight or any of its staff, would probably not reasonably expect to be contacted for the purposes of this evaluation based on the limited context Inside Impact had shared with the ICO.

3. Gaps in Charity Commission Data

The statistical analysis of data on charities submitted to the Charity Commission, provided by Find That Charity, was very limited for two main reasons.

Firstly, data on reserves, staff and volunteer numbers are often missing from returns from smaller charities. Data may be provided in some years and not others, **leaving many gaps**. The same is true for any breakdown in the types of income and expenditure. Even total income and expenditure data which all charities report, were sometimes unavailable for the years after the award as returns for the 2022 to 2023 cohort were not all due yet at the time of data collection.

Secondly, charities have different financial years, and start and finish the WCA in different months, so **comparisons of the relationship between variables such as income or staffing across financial years compared to award years, are never consistently like-for-like**.

4. Representation of Cohorts Across Time

While we were able to achieve representation from every cohort year among our survey respondents for WCA charity leaders still in place, and for all interviewees (bar the 2017 cohort), **the spread was skewed towards charities from more recent years responding**. Given turnover in leadership, this limitation was to be expected. Furthermore, one respondent incorrectly selected 2023 – 2024 as their award year, despite all participants being in the 2022 – 2023 cohort at the latest.
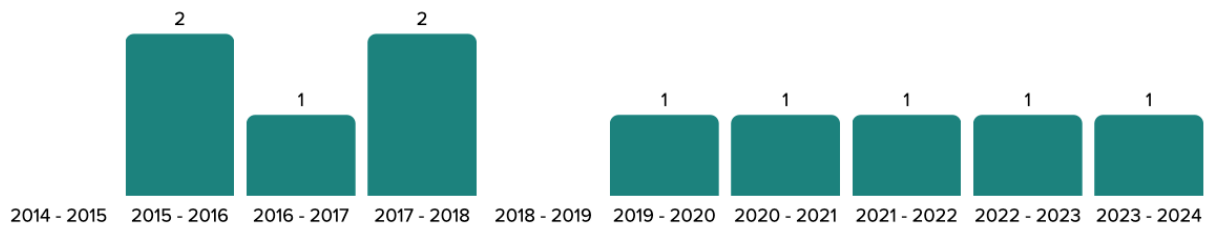
In which period did you receive the Weston Charity Award? (n=53)
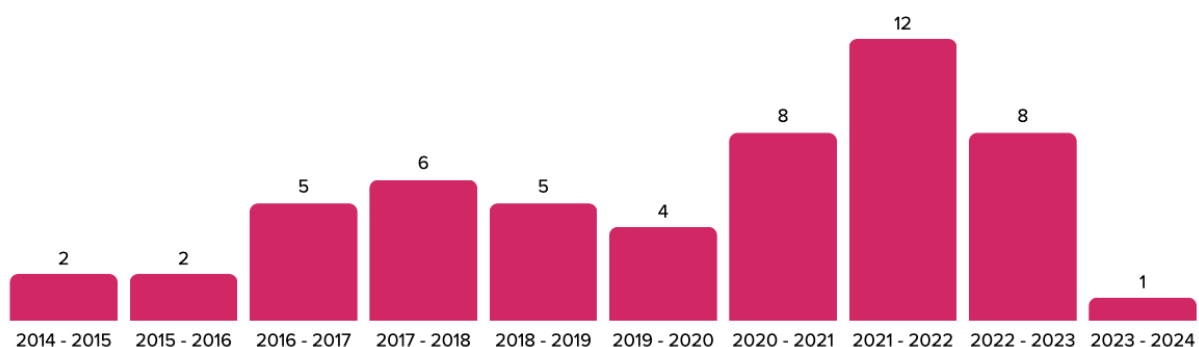
We also managed to achieve representation from across most years in the survey for organisations where the WCA charity leader had left. However this still only represented nine organisations out of an estimated potential 57, and another organisation mistakenly believed they were in the 2023 to 2024 cohort.

In which period did you receive the Weston Charity Award? (n=9)

2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019	2019 - 2020	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
	2	1	2		1	1	1	1	1

5. Power Dynamics

The final limitation, also highlighted in the 2015 WCA evaluation, is the **inherent power imbalance between funders and recipients**. Despite assurances of anonymity and no impact on relationships with Pilotlight or GWF, some respondents may have felt pressured to provide answers they think funders want to hear. While only one of 27 survey questions was mandatory, all respondents completed the survey, often with detailed open-text answers, reflecting significant effort and overwhelmingly positive feedback. **We hope this shows genuine engagement, but responses may still be influenced by a desire to please.** To address this, we encouraged honest reflections in interviews, focusing on areas where things did not go as planned. Still, this limitation cannot be entirely avoided.

Findings: Value of the WCA package

Evaluation Question 1) What is the value of the WCA to its awardees as a uniquely combined programme? This includes the perceived attractiveness and the value of the individual programme elements and what effect combining these elements into one unique package of support has.

1. Overall Value

Both surveys and interview responses have generally been overwhelmingly positive about the overall value of receiving a WCA.

> *I'm a huge fan of the programme. It's exactly what we needed and I think it helped us enormously to get to where we are now. We hadn't broken even since 2012. We've had four consecutive surpluses, now we're growing as an organisation. Since I've been here turnover has trebled, staff team has doubled… we're on the up and up… and I think the programme had a huge part to play. It came along at just the right time and enabled us as an organisation to jump onto something that would help us to develop and to get to where we needed to be.*

> *Turnaround achieved in no small part to the 12 months support package that we received. Organisation is now on an upward trajectory and looking forward, not back.*

> *We were nearly ready to close, and this was a lifeline for us.*

> *It was our saving grace.*

> *This is the very best pro bono support we have ever received by a very clear margin. The benefits were tangible. The access to people and networks provided ongoing and additional benefits.*

> *Things are infinitely better as a result of the support. We'd not be where we are today if we hadn't taken those first steps with Pilotlight.*

> *I felt that I had gained the skills I needed to take our organisation forward - we've tripled in size since our year with Pilotlight.*

> *It was undoubtedly the intervention that's had the biggest impact on our organisation in the whole time that we've existed.*
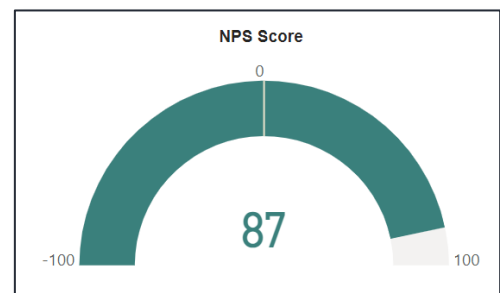
Net Promoter Score

Charity leaders who took part in the WCA were asked on a scale of 0 to 10 how likely they were to recommend applying to the WCA so that a Net Promoter Score (NPS) could be calculated for the award.

On a scale of 0 to 10, how likely are you to recommend applying to the Weston Charity Award to a colleague at a similar organisation to yours? (n=53)

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Count	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	6	41

These results revealed a **NPS of 87 for the WCA** which is a very high score even for the charity sector, which already tends to score higher than the public and private sector, suggesting a high level of value is gained from the Awards.[3] It also happens to be the **same score as the NPS for GWF's grant holders as per their 2023 report**. Even more remarkably, the split between **promoters** (those scoring 9 and 10), **passives** (those scoring 7 or 8) and **detractors** (those scoring 0 to 6) are also the same too.

NPS Score
0
87
-100   100

NPS Breakdown	GWF Unsuccessful Applicants	GWF Grant Holders	WCA Recipients
Overall NPS	**3.7**	**86.5**	**86.8**
Promoters	39%	89%	89%
Passives	26%	9%	9%
Detractors	35%	2%	2%

When asked why they gave the score they did, the most common reason was the positive impact it had on the charity (as opposed to just them as a leader), for example:

➢ *"Was a fantastic positive experience and still having impact now"*
➢ *"It can make a huge difference to your charity"*
➢ *"Because of the significant positive impact"*

A word cloud of people's reasoning shows words that were used more than once by different leaders.

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[3] For information about the Net Promoter Score and how it is calculated, click here to see DataKind UK's explanation.
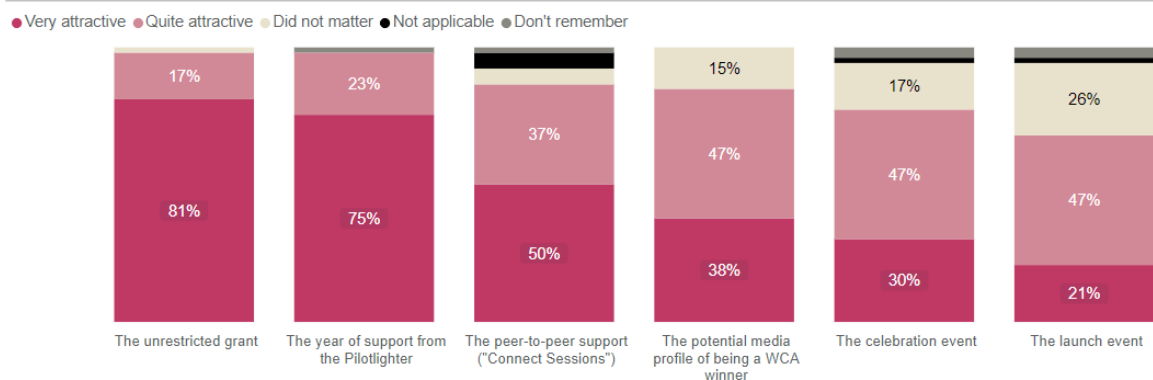
Standout descriptions include: '**positive**' (10 – experience, journey, learning, impact, push, process), '**great**' (7 – opportunity, process, experience, coordinator, recognition, balance), '**transformational/transformative**' (4), '**valuable/invaluable**' (4), '**fantastic**' (4), '**brilliant**' (3).

A key limitation of this NPS is that it is based on a minority of awardees, and may not represent the majority of experiences. Response bias is possible, as those with neutral or negative experiences may have been less likely to participate, particularly if they did not find the experience noteworthy or positive enough to warrant their time. This does not negate the **significant value many charity leaders associate with their experience**.
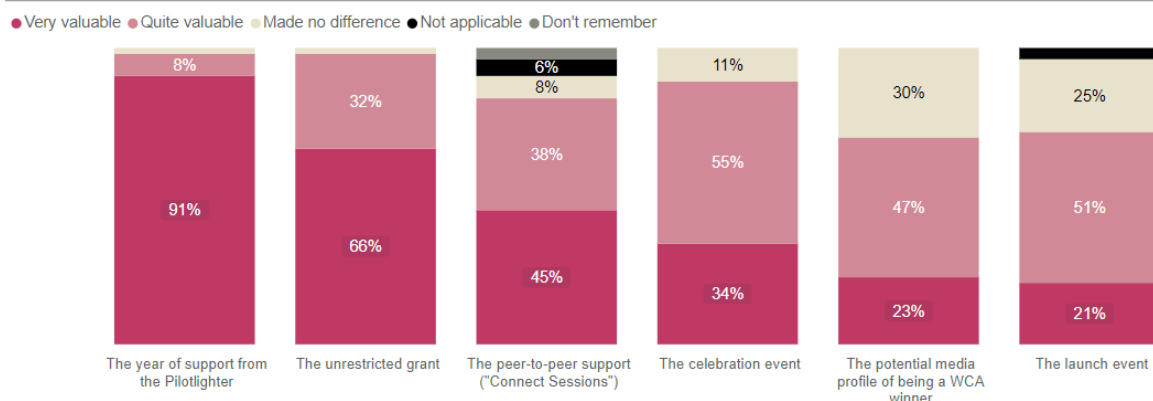
2. Attractiveness and Value of Award Components

Charity leaders who had taken part in the WCA were asked in Survey 1 about which components of the award they were attracted to, and which actually turned out to be the most valuable.

At the point when you applied to the WCA and before you actually received it, how attractive were the different aspects of the benefits package to you and your organisation? (n=53)

● Very attractive ● Quite attractive ● Did not matter ● Not applicable ● Don't remember

The unrestricted grant	The year of support from the Pilotlighter	The peer-to-peer support ("Connect Sessions")	The potential media profile of being a WCA winner	The celebration event	The launch event
17%	23%	37%	15%	17%	26%
81%	75%	50%	47%	47%	47%
			38%	30%	21%

Once you had received all the benefits in the package, how valuable did each of them actually turn out to be? (n=53)

● Very valuable ● Quite valuable ● Made no difference ● Not applicable ● Don't remember

The year of support from the Pilotlighter	The unrestricted grant	The peer-to-peer support ("Connect Sessions")	The celebration event	The potential media profile of being a WCA winner	The launch event
8%	32%	6% / 8% / 38%	11% / 55%	30%	25%
91%	66%	45%	34%	47%	51%
				23%	21%

The biggest gap between expectations and reality is that **the unrestricted grant was initially the most attractive element**, with 43 out of 53 leaders rating it as "very attractive," but in the end, **48 out of 53 found the Pilotlighter support to be the most valuable**.

The unrestricted grant, initially rated as "very attractive" by 43 out of 53 leaders, was ultimately considered "very valuable" by only 35, **proving slightly less valuable in practice** than it seemed at first.

Both before and after receiving the award, **the year of support from Pilotlighters and the unrestricted grant remain the two standout components for leaders**, perhaps unsurprisingly as they are also the two components representing the highest actual or in-kind monetary cost to provide.

Another notable difference between expectation and reality is the potential media profile that leaders thought the WCA would bring. This component was deemed more attractive than it turned out, with 45 leaders finding it "very" or "quite attractive" but only 37 finding it "very" or "quite valuable" in reality.

The celebration and launch events both appeared to slightly exceed expectations while the **"Connect Sessions" were slightly less valuable in reality.**

When asked for more details about what leaders found attractive and valuable in the survey, we identified what the key elements of each component were that mattered and other factors leaders were considering, based on the free-text responses.[4] We also asked the interviewees about the same six components, which we explore in the next sections.

3. Award Component – Pilotlighters

The 10 to 12 months of Pilotlighter support akin to Pilotlight 360, is the most valued component of the WCA, offering charity leaders transformative external perspectives, tailored strategic guidance, and safe spaces to reflect and grow.

> *Everything about the process was of huge value to our organisation and to me personally as the CEO. In particular the experience and knowledge of the Pilotlighters and how they helped me to question what is possible and how change may be of assistance to the charity. They took the time to understand our charity, our history and where we needed to get to. They were considerate at all times and focused on good outcomes for the charity.*

> *The professionals were very supportive. Their ideas and input were extensive. They had time for any issues. They built up my confidence in terms of dealing directly with the task at hand, decision making and time management.*

> *After the year of mentoring support with our Pilotlighters, the value of this aspect of the award was most evident. It was like having therapy for the organisation and me personally as a charity leader.*

> *I felt I had found new 'critical friends' to sound ideas off, discuss challenges and support to 'air' difficult conversations with trustees. The Pilotlighters acted as a safe, neutral facilitator. They brought expert knowledge and resources to support me in my role and ultimately the charity.*

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[4] Notably, of the 53 leaders still in place who responded to the survey, all 53 chose to provide more detail about what they found most attractive and 51 on what they found most valuable signifying a tremendous engagement with the survey.

> *The support of the Pilotlighters was the most valuable. They helped us to address a number of issues, some of which had not been obvious to us previously.*

Pilotlighters, who often come from professional business backgrounds, are **held in high-esteem by many of the charity leaders**, who referred to them as 'industry experts' and 'high-level consultants'. A lot of their value was tied to **an increase in the leader's confidence** by having their views and ideas 'validated' by these professionals. This supports Pilotlight's own theory of change which has "increased confidence for charity leaders" as a key outcome.

> *It gave me the confidence to go back to the Board and say 'We need to look at things a little bit differently.'*

> *Their thinking was not that any of us need development in our roles, it was more having that confidence to actually take those decisions, take some of those risks, balanced risks.*

> *Analysis from different sectoral people made me feel very confident in what we do and work on that.*

> *The positive feedback I received from the Pilotlighters about my leadership style and how positive they found my willingness to embrace change and didn't react negatively to their challenge made me more confident in my role and eroded some of the imposter syndrome I always feel I carry around with me.*

Many WCA charity leaders were in their leadership roles for the first time when they undertook the WCA, often at a time when they are in particular need of a confidence boost:

- *"When I participated in Pilotlight it was a tricky time for the organisation and as a new CEO, it was overwhelming at times. Pilotlight helped me navigate the trickier conversations with Board and strategic stakeholders that felt scary."*
- *"I had only been in the CEO role for 12 months, so this was a perfect experience to give me self-confidence to be the leader of the charity."*
- *"This was and still is my first CEO role. The Pilotlight process and Pilotlighters gave me confidence that I do know what I am talking about and that I am a good CEO."*

Some charity leaders, particularly those with prior leadership experience, were initially **sceptical of what Pilotlighters could offer**. Others were nervous about the process, especially about the **potential for a 'saviour complex'**. However, these concerns often eased over time, as one leader explained: *"I started to really enjoy the meetings… they endorsed all the things I wanted to change."*

Another leader reflected on the balanced approach of a Pilotlighter, combining **encouragement with accountability**: *"She was very supportive but at the same time, there was some tough love… she would say, 'I need to get this done and do this'."*

The **diversity of expertise** offered by Pilotlighters was also praised: *"Lots of different people with different backgrounds, which was really interesting with different views."*

In one extreme example, Pilotlighter support had a profound effect on a charity's governance: *"It was the first time the trustees had a little bit of pushback… the questions they were asking were really challenging. As a result, two of our trustees stepped down."* In most instances where leaders or trustees have left the organisation due to tensions revealed by the WCA process, those who remained have tended to view it as a positive outcome for the charity in the long-term, even if those who left may not share the same perspective.

In both surveys and interviews, leaders were keen to mention some 'outstanding' Pilotlighters by name. **Some described a 'jackpot-like' experience in their Pilotlighters**: *"One of the Pilotlighters remains a key supporter with our outdoor programme and in return we provide a partner-like volunteer programme. We have linked with over 500 volunteers during the past 5 years, developing an off-grid outdoor centre that now provides a national business for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Without [Pilotlighter] this simply would not have happened… I know this Pilotlighter is a special person and supports a number of organisations but for our charity he is an inspiration."*

Pilotlighters visiting a charity on site as part of support

In addition to instilling confidence in charity leaders, another key benefit frequently mentioned was the additional capacity for strategic work that the Pilotlighters enabled.

The benefits of the Pilotlighter support in terms of capacity can be seen in:
- The addition of **extra capacity** to support charities.
- The **high quality of that capacity**, provided by experienced professionals.
- The **duration of support**, which is sustained over 12 months.

While these benefits might also be achieved through internal capacity-building, such as hiring additional staff, **the external nature of the Pilotlighter support offers something uniquely valuable**. Specifically, external capacity:
- Provides a fresh perspective that **challenges conventional thinking**.
- **Creates a safe space** for leaders to share ideas and concerns openly.
- Serves as a neutral third party, helping to navigate staff and Board dynamics and **transcend internal politics**.

This external dimension appears to be a critical factor in the success and distinctiveness of the Pilotlighter support. This not only differentiates Pilotlighter support but also aligns closely with Pilotlight's theory of change for charity leaders, which emphasises "exposure to different perspectives" and "increased introspective practice" as outcomes leading to impact. A significant portion of respondents, unprompted, highlighted the value of receiving an alternative, challenging perspective, underscoring how the programme supports Pilotlight's intended impact:
- *"An experience that would challenge my thinking about my work"*
- *"The opportunity to have external scrutiny, support and challenge"*
- *"A very valuable alternative sounding board"*
- *"They helped me to question what is possible"*
- *"The challenge from the peers was very useful"*
- *"Critical friend challenges"*
- *"It allowed us to get an external and critical view… this was done in a friendly and supportive way which was very positive"*

> ➤ *"They helped us address a number of issues, some of which had not been obvious to us previously"*

There were a few limited examples where people had less positive experiences with the Pilotlighters. Sometimes this was **due to a Pilotlighter leaving during the process**, resulting in the leader feeling they missed out on the full benefit because they did not have the full number of Pilotlighters available to them. For others it was **frustrating that the Pilotlighters did not fully understand what the charity was about** or the unique challenges they faced as charities, rather than corporate entities, which Pilotlighters were predominantly from: *"I mean they came down and they really liked it… But I didn't really feel they got what we were about, basically."* While many leaders appreciated having volunteers with a commercial background, especially those explicitly wanting to adopt a more 'commercial' mindset, this same aspect was a negative for others.

A full breakdown of the elements related to Pilotlighters deemed attractive and valuable can be found in Appendix Three.

4. Award Component – Unrestricted Grant

For many charity leaders, the general appeal of unrestricted funding lay in its rarity and flexibility. Survey respondents explained:

> ➤ *"The unrestricted nature of the grant was very attractive, given challenges of securing funding in this area."*
> ➤ *"Unrestricted finance is always very welcome."*
> ➤ *"We were absolutely in need of unrestricted funding at the time, so were particularly attracted to that aspect."*
> ➤ *"To be honest, it was the money that first attracted us to the award."*

Several leaders highlighted how the grant specifically enabled participation in the programme by covering costs such as travel, staff time, or implementing actions arising from the work with Pilotlighters:

> ➤ *"The unrestricted grant helped with the time and travel needed to participate."*
> ➤ *"The funding was an added bonus and helped towards costs associated with taking part in the project."*

Others used the grant for costs not specifically related to WCA participation which included:

> ➤ Supporting hard-to-fund **overhead costs** and core operations
> ➤ **Investing in specific needs**, such as training for staff, upgrading technology, or refurbishing facilities (e.g. post-flood kitchen repairs)
> ➤ **Enabling long-term development**, such as clinical projects or CRM systems, which sometimes helped secure significant additional funding. One leader shared: *"The grant allowed us to expand the team, which helped us secure £270,000 from the National Lottery."*

Some leaders noted how the grant helped them **approach the programme with the right mindset**. One respondent shared that it eased feelings of guilt around stepping away from other work: *"It wasn't the amount of money but the 'mindset' it helped to create to justify the time away from other work."*

While most leaders said they could have participated without the grant, they acknowledged that the financial support made it significantly easier.

Even though the grant amount has remained the same since its inception in 2014, **no one cited it being insufficient to enable participation in the programme**, even up to 2023, during the cost-of-living crisis.

A few leaders expressed a desire for **slightly larger grants to support additional projects**, such as upgrading websites. One suggested creating specific funds that participants could apply to for particular needs: *"I think if you had pots of money that people could specifically apply to as part of how you develop things going forward, that would be helpful."*

The unrestricted grant provided critical flexibility and support, enabling charities to participate in the WCA and implement key developments. **While it was not essential for all, it helped cover practical costs, provided breathing space for leaders, and facilitated long-term growth.** For some organisations, the grant proved transformational, with one leader noting: *"It's an absolute lifeline… it gives you that breathing space to think: 'I've got it sorted.'"*

> Could the partners consider increasing financial support for organisations looking to explore new development opportunities that have come from working with Pilotlighters, to boost the programme's impact?

5. Award Component – Peer To Peer Support Sessions

In theory, awardees had access to two peer-to-peer support or "Connect Sessions" to connect with their charity peers in addition to the launch and celebratory event. However, not all awardees attended the sessions: *"I think there was one networking meeting and I couldn't go."*

Reasons for not attending included issues with time, geography and relevance. One interviewee said: *"I think some of it's down to geography because we're up in the Northwest so a lot of other charities closer to London... it's easier for them to make and keep connections."* So despite one of the award's main aims being to equalise the geographic playing field, **geography still appears to be a barrier for some, or at least a perceived barrier**. For others who did attend, some felt the opportunity to connect was available but they had not made the most of it.

When interviewees were asked for more detail about these sessions, the ones that attended cited benefits such as **making connections and maintaining them** for a couple of years, **realising they are not alone** in their challenges, being able to **hear how others approach different challenges**, and even one leader being touted as a potential trustee for another charity.

> " *It was quite good seeing what struggles other people have because you tend to think you're the only one… So it's quite an eye-opener and I tend to be a sponge and listen to what's going on...* "

Some felt that **networking opportunities offered by the WCA were not unique** and that they could have gained the same connections elsewhere or were already well-connected and networking regularly. Pilotlight's former Programme Manager offered an insightful perspective on whether the slightly lower perceived value of the networking, compared to the Pilotlighters and unrestricted grant, is an issue. He defined facilitating networking as: *"…the*

relationships being maintained and nurtured outside your circle of influence in order to open up potential future possibilities that you don't know what they'll be." This means that, *"If you don't know what the actual benefit is, those activities you'll drop first when you're under pressure. And charity leaders are always under pressure, so I'm not sure if it matters."*

It is worth further investigation at future Connect Sessions into what the true value of the sessions are and whether those who cannot attend feel as if they are missing out on opportunities. It will also be important to **probe the extent to which geography is a barrier to attending sessions for current awardees.** [5]

6. Award Component – Launch Event

Both survey respondents and interviewees mentioned the launch event as enjoyable and a **rare opportunity to connect with other award winners past and current**: *"The launch event was useful to hear from other people going through the process, or, who had already and the benefits they had achieved."* Some survey respondents shared that the launch and celebration events had been the only opportunity they had to connect with the other awardees, despite the Connect Sessions also being offered.

One interviewee cited the launch event as an opportunity to meet people with similar 'fear factors' which then acted as **a launchpad for discussing challenges in the peer meetings** that followed.

For some interviewees, the launch event, where they heard from past awardees, was interesting but felt more like **an effort to sell the award to people who had already bought into it**: *"The guy video-called in about his really positive experience about it. But I guess we were already signed up by that point... so we didn't really need convincing. So it absolutely wasn't a waste of time because we did have a nice day and it was nice to kind of network with some other people but it wasn't particularly useful in a real direct sense."*

This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee who also enjoyed the event but was keen to see results from the rest of the programme: *"…to be completely honest with you, we went. It was great. It was lovely. I myself was more focused on getting the work done rather than attending an event and shaking hands."* For those leaders, **the launch event might be summarised as a 'nice-to-have' rather than a 'must-have'**.

One interviewee, however, found **the launch event to be a negative experience, feeling overwhelmed***: "It was a lot to take in. There were a lot of people, a lot of organisations... it was all quite intense really. And I think I almost came away from that like a rabbit in the headlights going 'what is this all about?'... Maybe it was just me at that stage ... being in a room with so many new people."* While this is an important consideration for future attendees, it appears to be more of an exception among the otherwise positive experiences.

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[5] Forty-five per cent of survey respondents found the 'peer-to-peer support (Connect Sessions)' to be 'very valuable'. Only two survey respondents explicitly referred to the 'Connect Sessions' and both appear to have confused them with sessions involving Pilotlighters rather than other charities. As a result, the survey findings may be misleading, so all conclusions in this section are based on interviews leaving some limitations in our understanding.

A few interviewees mentioned that they would have liked more structure to the event to be able to speak with people. One person commented that the event wasn't 'hugely functional'.

> Could Pilotlight and GWF explore setting activities or tasks at the launch event which facilitate people making purposeful introductions, such as "Find someone in the room who…"?

For those who experienced the event online during lockdown, they still felt this was worthwhile but there was a sense that it would have been more valuable in-person. One survey respondent commented: *"Our launch event was on Zoom due to Covid, so was fine, but not as valuable as it would have been to meet face-to-face."*

One interviewee mentioned the specific value they felt was lost online: *"... we would probably have gone on to make some lasting partnerships. We didn't just because it was a kind of one-hit virtual room and so you didn't have that opportunity to spend any time with other organisations and their reps and getting to know them… no opportunity to go deeper."* This sentiment is echoed in other responses related to online sessions or meetings. However, this was completely outside the partners' control and all respondents recognised that. With lockdowns lifted, the event returned to being in-person.

7. Award Component – Celebratory Event

Interviewees really valued the celebratory event. This was most powerful for those who were able to come to the in-person event at Fortnum & Mason in London. **They felt really valued**. Some mentioned valuing the opportunity at this event to **meet the GWF family**: *"We got to meet the Weston family and thank them personally."*

> " *It gave a meaningful end to the process.* "

Five of the 53 charity leaders surveyed highlighted the celebratory event as particularly valuable, noting the opportunity **to celebrate with others who had also gone through the process**. One respondent shared, *"It was really nice to spend time with our Pilotlighters and other beneficiaries to celebrate what we had achieved."*

A couple of interviewees whose celebratory event had to be online were a little disappointed that the event was a bit 'low-key'. They did however acknowledge **they had not applied for the WCA 'for the cream teas'.** This was also the only negative comment associated with the event in both the interviews and the surveys.

Overall, the celebratory event provided a meaningful opportunity for leaders to reflect on their achievements and to feel recognised for their hard work.

8. Award Component – Profile of Winning an Award

Some charity leaders view the WCA as a strong brand, making association with it highly appealing. Building a strong award brand typically takes time, which highlights the value of having a well-established, long-standing award.

> *We knew the quality of support we would get and that it had national acclaim for its impact.*

> *The Weston Award is a recognised and prestigious award.*

> *The Weston Charity Award is a prestigious award to receive.*

> *I felt this was a prestigious award…*

While the profile of the WCA motivated some applicants, only one survey respondent cited it as the main reason for applying: *"I don't think the Pilotlight programme registered with me at the point of application. It was hard to gauge what that would involve so wasn't a key driver. The prestige and profile was the most attractive issue."* Everyone else mentioned another component of the award that they found attractive, in addition to the potential profile.

The comments also show that for some, the profile's value comes not only from external publicity and media exposure, but also from the **intrinsic reward of being recognised** for one's work:
- *"We were proud to be selected as a winner."*
- *"…the validation of our significant impact as a charity."*

Some were able to **gain publicity, attention or media exposure** from the award:
- *"The media profile was also really helpful."*
- *"We also had quite a bit of publicity from the award and the programme generally."*
- *"It helped promote our community centre to potential partners and funders."*

One charity highlighted how beneficial the video, commissioned by Pilotlight and GWF, which included their charity, had been for their profile. The video is still available on their YouTube channel, though this is not a standard part of the WCA programme.

For some, the media profile did not meet expectations. A few leaders felt they lacked the capacity to fully maximise the opportunity due to the absence of marketing or communications resources:
- *"We didn't make the most of it because we didn't have a marketing or comms role."*
- *"We missed a trick regarding promotion."*

We have already noted from the survey responses that the attractiveness of the potential profile was deemed less valuable than expected after the award. Pilotlight's website promotes *"the enhanced profile associated with receiving this award grant for excellence"* as part of what charities can access through the award. But there may be some misunderstanding in charity leader's expectations. Pilotlight's former Programme Manager clarified in his interview that *"Pilotlight does not have PR support for charities and couldn't offer it either."*

In a couple of instances interviewees mentioned the profile of **the award actually had a significantly negative impact on the charity or charity leaders**. In the first instance, a charity leader described already being in the midst of "a campaign running against me, a very political campaign". The increased profile meant more harassment being directed as part of this 'campaign': *"It was a bit of a dark time to be quite frank with you."* In the second instance, a charity was involved in a legal dispute over proposed redundancies, which was

made more challenging because of the award profile: *"…Staff thought they would get redundancy money out of us because they were seeing us as achieving all these different rewards so it backfired a little bit for us."* These cases were exceptions as for most, the profile was neutral to positive.

The WCA profile and recognition offer tangible benefits for many charities, enhancing their credibility, pride and public image. However, the slight gap between expectation and reality suggests a small need for additional support to help organisations fully capitalise on the opportunity.

> Is there potential for Pilotlight and GWF to explore how to better support charities with limited resources or capacity in leveraging their profile as award winners?

9. Association with Pilotlight and GWF

Linked to the profile of the award is the association with its funders: Pilotlight and GWF. Two leaders in the survey found the GWF association attractive, while another valued the opportunity to work with Pilotlight.
- ➤ *"Working with Pilotlight was something we were very keen to do and the prime reason for engaging with the Award"*
- ➤ *"It was the respect we have for the Garfield Weston team and organisation… they are a forward thinking and supportive organisation"*
- ➤ *"To be associated with Garfield Weston"*

The value of the opportunity to work with the partners was echoed by the interviews.

> " *GWF have been incredible, really incredible.* "

None of the survey respondents or interviewees noted any significant negative associations with the partners, even where they mentioned occasional frustrations, suggesting that the expectation of the association with both organisations is living up to the reality.

10. Pilotlight Project Managers

A key element of the WCA's success that risks being taken for granted the most is the **value provided by Pilotlight Project Managers** (also referred to as 'Project Coordinators' and 'Project Officers') - staff employed by Pilotlight to guide WCA winners and Pilotlighters through their strategic journeys. Both interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the impact of these staff, with several mentioning specific individuals by name. One interviewee claimed it as the highlight: *"I think for me the best part… my coordinator, [staff name]",* while two survey respondents called the same person "amazing".

Pilotlight's Delivery Team staff

A mutual appreciation was echoed by a Pilotlight staff member, who shared in their interview how much the role meant to them personally. **The dedication and passion of these staff members are integral to facilitating the programme's success.**

> *I love this programme. I get emotional about it.*
> ***Former Programme Manager at Pilotlight***

A list of other elements deemed attractive and valuable by charity leaders which could be useful to incorporate into future marketing for the WCA has been included in Appendix Four.

Findings: Impact

Evaluation Question 2) What is the comprehensive impact of the WCA? This includes any positive and negative outcomes (e.g. displacement) as well as planned and unplanned outcomes for charity leaders, the charities, and the communities those charities support. We also consider whether those changes are sustained over time, including any potential drop-off.

1. Positive Outcomes for Charity Leaders

The WCA does not have its own theory of change, but Pilotlight has a theory of change outlining how the whole organisation works to impact charity leaders. Pilotlight staff advised that they expected certain outcomes for charity leaders. To understand the longer-term impact, we asked charity leaders whether they experienced these outcomes and, if so, how long they persisted for.

Did you experience any of the following positive benefits on a personal level as a direct result of receiving the award? And if so, how long did the benefit last for? (n=53)

●It continues to this day ●For a little while after the Award year ended ●During the Award year but gone by the end ●Never experienced this benefit from the Award
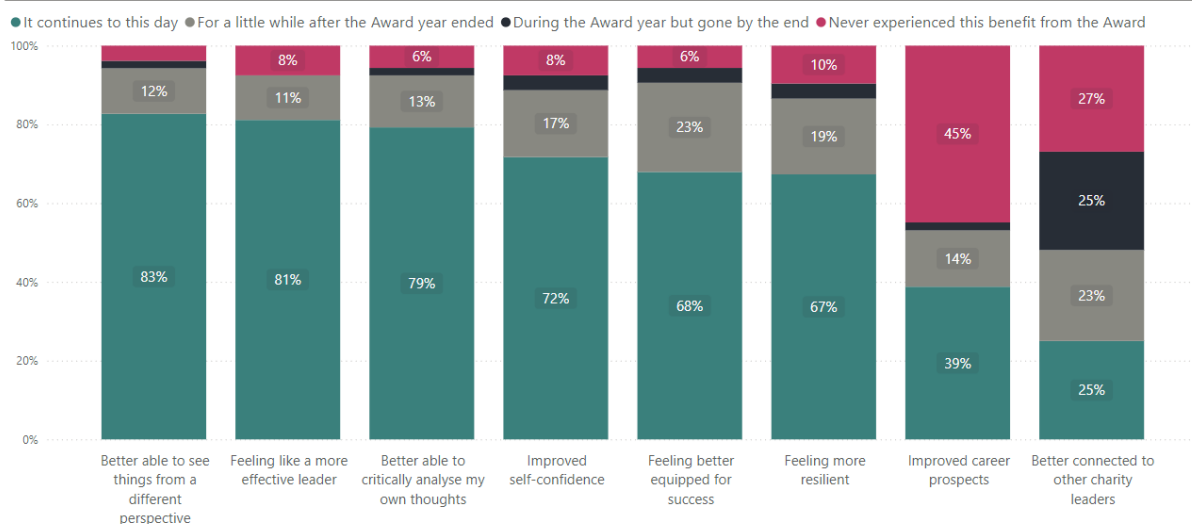
The outcomes of the WCA have been overwhelmingly positive, with a strong sense that **not only are the planned goals being achieved, but their impact endures over time**. For six of the eight outcomes, over two-thirds of leaders are still experiencing those benefits today – a testament to the programme's lasting value.

One of the standout successes is leaders' enhanced ability to see things from different perspectives. An impressive 51 out of 53 leaders reported achieving this outcome, and 43 still benefit from it today. Remarkably, even participants from the inaugural 2014 cohort noted that they continue to experience seven of the eight listed outcomes, a decade later. **This speaks volumes about the programme's ability to deliver on its promise of providing an external perspective, a feature that leaders consistently identified as a key attraction of the award.**

'Improved career prospects' was the least commonly experienced outcome. Of the 53 leaders, 22 did not experience this benefit. This could be because many respondents already held leadership positions within their organisations and may not have had prospects beyond their current roles.

The connections formed with other charity leaders were more short-lived, with only a quarter of respondents still experiencing this benefit today. However, the relationships maintained with Pilotlighters, Pilotlight, and GWF, demonstrate the award's ability to foster meaningful and enduring professional connections. Furthermore, 75% of leaders reported experiencing the benefit of being better connected to other charity leaders at some point, which remains an impressive result.

Overall, the WCA has delivered transformative and sustained desired outcomes for charity leaders still in place, aligning well with both the expectations and needs of charity leaders and those of Pilotlight.

We also wanted to understand whether there had been any unexpected positive personal outcomes. When asked "Please share any detail about positive personal experiences as a result of receiving the award" (n=41), responses revealed four main themes:
1. **Increased confidence and resilience in leadership**
2. **Stronger connections with peers and Boards**
3. **Enhanced leadership and strategic skills**
4. **Appreciation for the space to reflect and focus on strategic issues**

Many leaders noted significant personal growth, including eroded imposter syndrome, improved mental health management, and bolder communication. Additionally, some attributed career advancements to their participation, highlighting the programme's transformative effect on both their leadership and professional trajectories. A breakdown of the broader outcomes revealed through the survey responses for charity leaders is included in Appendix Five.

One of the WCA Charity Leaders

While the themes of confidence, skills, and connections align closely with the planned outcomes, **another key short-term outcome essential for enabling long-term impact could be incorporated into a theory of change: more 'space' for charity leaders**. This includes safe space, mental space, space as permission, and space in time.

We also looked for unplanned outcomes from the interviewees. They largely cited the same outcomes and themes revealed by the survey, including increased confidence in their leadership ability, better connections to their staff and trustees, and also the new outcome around gaining space. They did however reveal **a new unexpected outcome: ownership of leadership identity.** Some interviewees shared that, through this process, they began to see themselves as leaders more than before. While all were technically in leadership roles, some had not used the title of CEO or Director until the Pilotlighters invited them to do so.

It seems the WCA has delivered lasting impact driving profound personal growth for many leaders, including enhanced confidence, resilience, and a newfound ownership of leadership identity. By providing the space for reflection, safe exploration, and strategic development, **the WCA has proven to be transformative, equipping leaders to drive meaningful change within their organisations.**
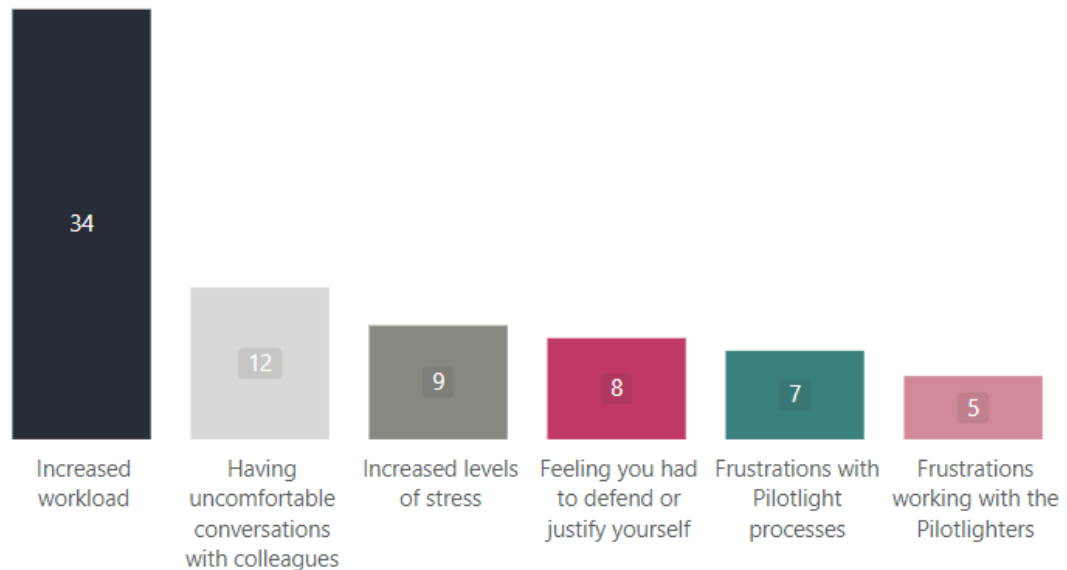
Could the partners create a theory of change for charity leaders to highlight the benefits of the WCA and entice more leaders to take this journey?

2. Negative Outcomes for Charity Leaders

Pilotlight and GWF acknowledged potential trade-offs or risk of 'displacement' in achieving positive outcomes and sought to mitigate negatives where possible. To understand this balance, we explored the extent of negative outcomes, unexpected challenges, and whether leaders felt the opportunity cost was worthwhile.

Thinking back to the time during the award and immediately after, did you have any of the following negative experiences on a personal level? Please tick any and all that apply. (n=53)

Increased workload	Having uncomfortable conversations with colleagues	Increased levels of stress	Feeling you had to defend or justify yourself	Frustrations with Pilotlight processes	Frustrations working with the Pilotlighters
34	12	9	8	7	5

From the first survey, 42 out of 53 respondents experienced at least one negative outcome, most likely to be an increased workload. **Negative experiences were limited**, with most respondents reporting only one or two negative outcomes, and very few experiencing three or more.

To understand if leaders had experienced any negative outcomes that had not been anticipated, we asked in the first survey: "Please share anything about negative personal experiences as a result of receiving the award?" (n=41). While they gave details around pressures to hit deadlines, or having to do uncomfortable but necessary things, **none gave examples that sat outside the expected trade-offs.**

The positive conclusion to draw from the survey respondents, was that while leaders did experience some negative personal outcomes, they overwhelmingly emphasised that **these challenges were expected and necessary to achieve meaningful results**. Thirteen respondents made statements that could be summarised as 'no pain, no gain'.

> *No doubt I had increased levels of stress and workload, but these were necessary evils. No pain, no gain!*

> *Some of the conversations with trustees and staff were difficult but necessary. Their ultimate effect has been positive.*

> *To say this was negative would be too strong—it's a reality that to get the most out of Pilotlight, you've got to put in the effort.*

Some of the interviews did however reveal some negative experiences where there was a misalignment with their needs or values, though these were generally isolated cases.

Case One

One charity leader described a particularly uncomfortable experience during a session where they were unexpectedly asked to pitch their charity to a group of business professionals. The leader felt the environment was unwelcoming and misaligned with their expectations: *"We had to do a pitch to business about our charity… that was really, really uncomfortable. I think the people we had to pitch for were a bit harsh to us. I've never been in an environment like that before or since. The pitch thing… is not the kind of thing we should have been doing. It wasn't really relevant to the work we do with businesses. That was the only part of the process that didn't sit well with me."*

It may be that there are some volunteers that do not embody the values of the programme 100%, although this is very hard for the partnership to control for, and still a rare example. The Pilotlighter induction process might incorporate this.

Case Two

Another charity leader recounted the shock of losing Pilotlighter support when they had to go on temporary leave for a few months. Although arrangements were made by the charity for someone else to step into the leader's role temporarily and other staff had been involved in the WCA journey from the start with good knowledge of the project, the Pilotlighter support was withdrawn (though the grant was still maintained).

This case underscores the need for **clarity around the extent to which the WCA is there to support the individual versus the whole organisation** and highlights an opportunity to **better accommodate unexpected changes in leadership during the programme**.

Overall, while negative personal outcomes do happen, they are largely seen as expected trade-offs by both the partners and the charity leaders themselves, and are widely accepted. There is no evidence of any significant harm to an individual resulting from the process.

3. Positive Outcomes for Charities

Pilotlight and GWF aimed to understand how the WCA benefits charities overall, assuming that gains for leaders would positively impact their organisations. Pilotlight ties its theory of change for charities to the CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) 'Creating Resilience' report[6], which identifies six interlocking pillars of charity resilience. We asked charity leaders in the survey whether their organisation experienced these benefits, breaking down some of the pillars into more detailed aspects, hence there are more than six aspects in the survey.
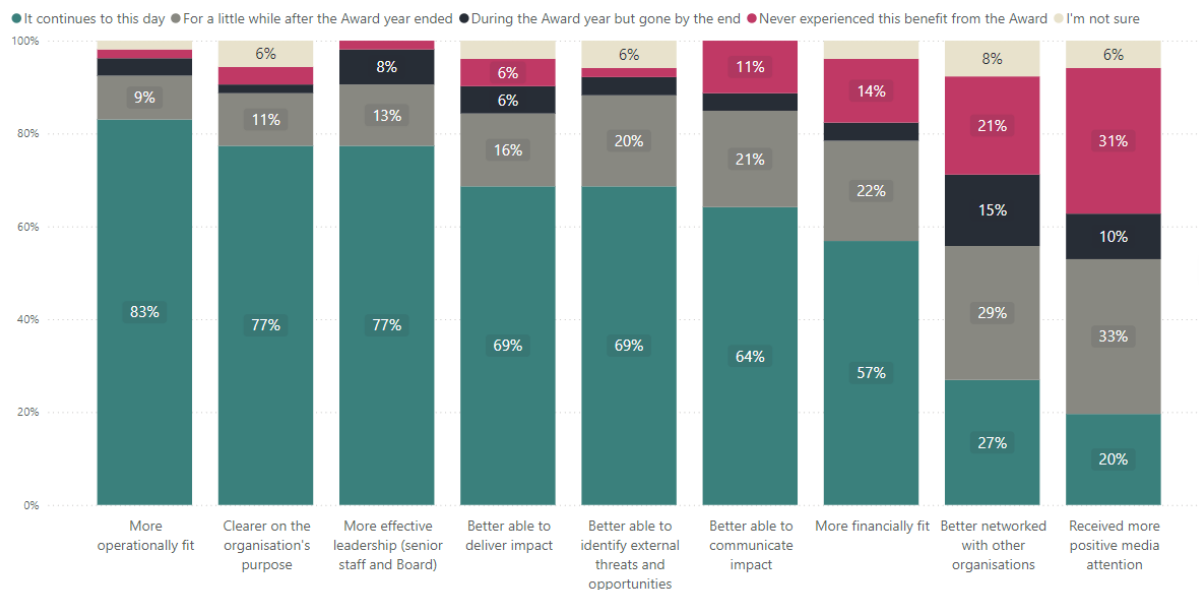
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[6] CAF's 'Creating Resilience' report can be accessed here: https://www.cafonline.org/services-for-charities/strategic-consultancy/caf-resilience-programme-report

CAF Pillar	Outcome to assess in the survey
Purpose	Clearer on the organisation's purpose
Financially and operationally fit	More financially fit
	More operationally fit
Impact	Better able to deliver impact
	Better able to communicate impact
	Received more positive media attention
Effective leadership	More effective leadership (senior staff and Board)
Well networked	Better networked with other organisations
Awareness	Better able to identify external threats and opportunities

Did your organisation experience any of the following positive benefits as a direct result of receiving the award? And if so, how long did the benefit last for? (n=53)

● It continues to this day ● For a little while after the Award year ended ● During the Award year but gone by the end ● Never experienced this benefit from the Award ● I'm not sure

As with the planned outcomes for charity leaders, **the desired outcomes for charities appear to also be overwhelmingly positive and long-lasting,** with the most enduring benefits being: "More operationally fit", "Clearer on the organisation's purpose", and "More effective leadership (Board and staff)".

The earliest cohorts are still experiencing outcomes today, just as many of the most recent cohorts are. Benefits do not appear to drop off after three or five years; instead they can endure for over a decade in organisations where the WCA leader remains in place.

"Received more positive media attention" is the least reported benefit, with only 20% experiencing lasting effects and 31% never experiencing this benefit at all. This is in line with the earlier evaluation findings where charity leaders felt that the potential raised profile was a more attractive element than it was valuable in reality. Nevertheless, 63% still achieved this positive outcome.

We also wanted to understand whether there had been any unexpected positive organisational outcomes, so we asked the charity leaders still in place, "Please share any detail about positive experiences that the organisation had as a result of receiving the award" (n=36). Key outcomes included **improved performance** through clearer decision-making, better management structures, and organisational growth; **stronger Boards** with enhanced skills, alignment, and ownership; and **greater financial security** with improved fundraising

strategies. Many charities also noted a **boost in their profile**, gaining confidence in publicising their work and receiving recognition from external stakeholders. **Strategic planning processes were significantly enhanced**, with new and clearer strategies developed. Other benefits included increased confidence in their organisation's value, better operational plans, and a renewed focus on quality over quantity. A full breakdown of outcomes from the responses concerning positive organisational outcomes is available in Appendix Six.

Where we begin to see a different story emerging, is in Survey 2 from staff who are now leading organisations where the WCA charity leader has since left. When asked for detail about positive experiences their organisation had as a result of receiving the award, **some shared that the desired positive organisational outcomes had not been achieved**, at least from their perspective (the original WCA charity leader might have answered differently): *"Nothing, other than contact with the Pilotlighters."*

> *The leader was a very complex person who used the programme to try and benefit their own agenda. It would be great to rerun the program now to really witness the benefits it could definitely bring.*

For others, when asked to identify which of the same planned positive organisational outcomes had been achieved, most were unable to conclude one way or another, instead choosing "I'm not sure" as their response.

It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the sustained impact on charities where the WCA leader has left, due to the very small sample size (n=9). These are also very subjective interpretations where one person is speaking for the organisation as a whole. What does seem clear though, is that there is a good chance that widescale outcomes can be achieved and sustained for a long time when the WCA leader stays within the organisation. **What happens to those benefits once they leave remains unclear.**

Sustaining Relationships

While it was clear that networking outcomes were being achieved at decent levels, they were not as high or sustained levels as other outcomes. However, our focus had been on relationships with charity peers, which is just one aspect of the award. We wanted to explore whether relationships with other stakeholders were formed through the process, and the extent to which they were sustained. To understand this, we asked charity leaders still in place about their relationships.

Are you still in touch with or working with any of the following? (n=53)

● Yes ● No ● Not sure ● Not applicable
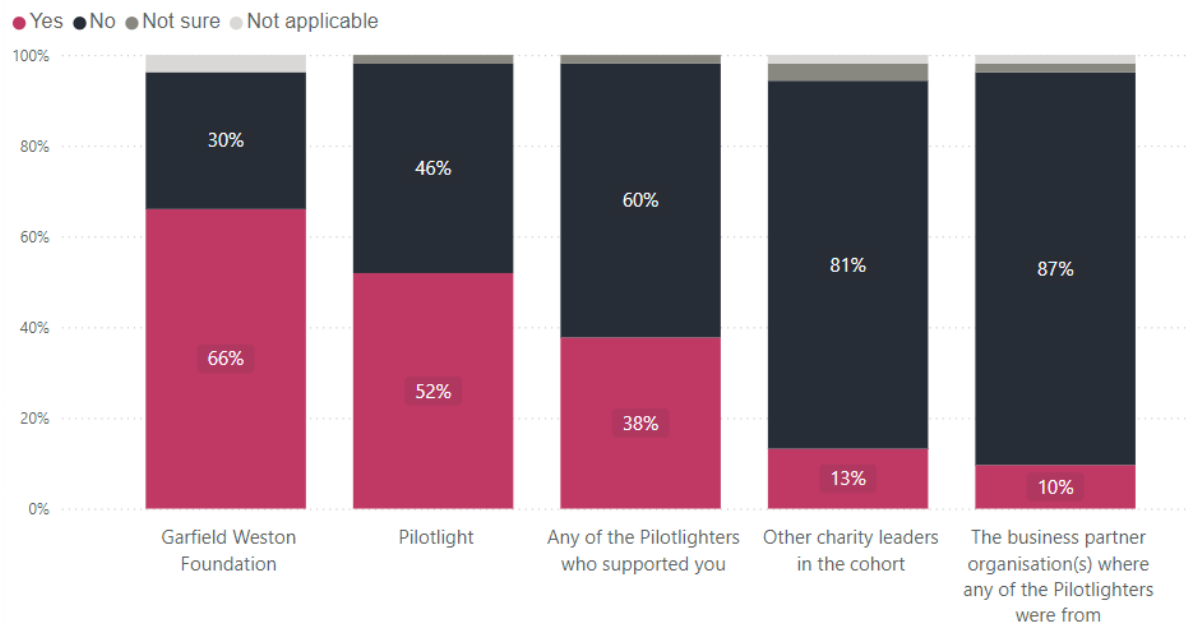
Two-thirds (35 out of 53) of charity leaders maintained a relationship with GWF, and over half (27 out of 53) remained in contact with Pilotlight. Notably, 38% (20 out of 53) stayed in touch with at least one Pilotlighter, with some Pilotlighters continuing to support charities as trustees, consultants, or donors. Fewer leaders kept connections with peers in their cohort (7 out of 53) or the business partner organisations involved (5 out of 53).

Many relationships continued to provide value, such as influencing long-term strategies or securing grants, while some leaders expressed interest in reconnecting. Although relationships sometimes ended due to workload or the pandemic, leaders attributed this to their own circumstances, not the Pilotlighters. Only 7 out of 53 charities reported no ongoing relationships with any parties connected to the award. For a breakdown of how different relationships were maintained and the value gained from them, see Appendix Seven. **These findings suggest potential value in establishing an alumni network to facilitate reconnections**.

> Is it feasible for the partners to develop an alumni network or facilitate a platform for all leaders to stay in touch on and build on relationships if they wish?

4. Negative Outcomes for Charities

To understand trade-offs or any 'displacement', we also surveyed charity leaders about negative outcomes for their organisations. Pilotlight staff had identified six potential risks associated with achieving positive outcomes, and leaders were asked if their organisation experienced any of these during or after the award.

Thinking back to the time during the award and immediately after, did you have any of the following negative experiences on a personal level? Please tick any and all that apply. (n=53)

8	4	3	3	3	2
A lack of resources stopping the organisation getting the most out of the Award	Reduced capacity to do other key charitable activities	A poorer relationship between staff and Board	Conflict amongst colleagues	Misperceptions about what additional funding or support the organisation could get from Pilotlight or the Garfield Weston Foundation	Feeling under pressure to find funding or resources to address risks or opportunities brought up by the Award
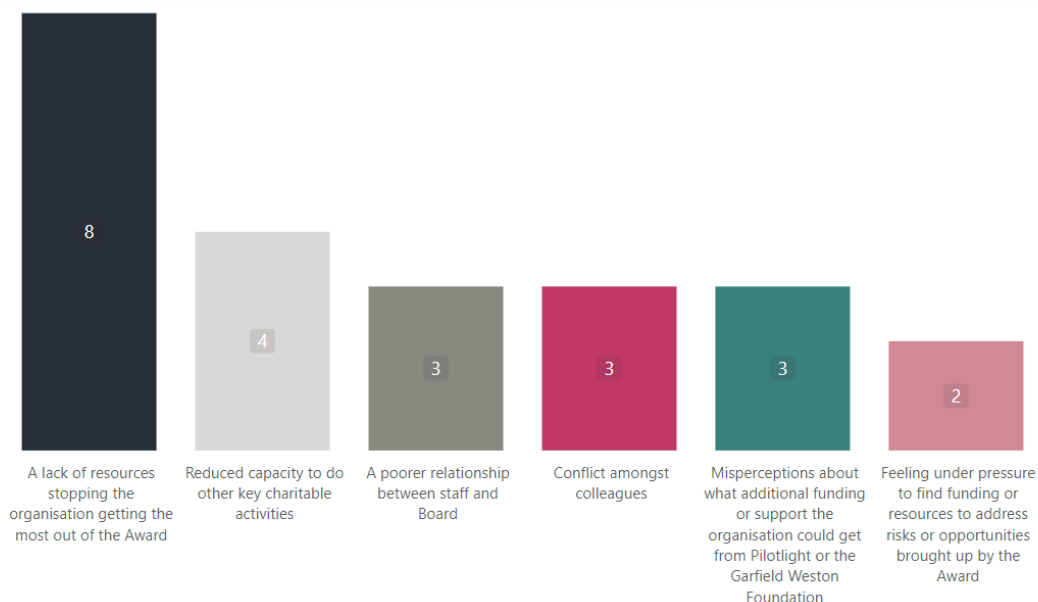
A total of 19 out of 53 organisations reported experiencing at least one negative outcome, meaning **the majority of participants did not experience *any* negative outcomes** that Pilotlight might have expected. Of those 19, 16 experienced only one negative outcome, suggesting that the negative effects Pilotlight expected were very limited in practice.

When we asked respondents "Please share anything about negative experiences that the organisation had as a result of receiving the award." (n=34), 14 described negative experiences. **Many of those were more like limitations to positive outcomes** – for example, not being able to implement all project recommendations due to capacity or lack of Board support – **rather than outright negative outcomes**. Truly negative outcomes were rare and included issues such as feeling demotivated after realising how much money was needed to achieve goals, or reduced capacity for other activities ('displacement'). **None of the reported consequences were unforeseen.** An additional 20 responses affirmed that there were no negative organisational outcomes, with one respondent noting: *"We didn't experience anything negative as we were all willing to learn."* These survey insights were echoed in the interviews.

Of course, this does not include the perspectives of CEOs or trustees who left during the process due to issues surfaced by the work. However, overall, it seems that **negative experiences were limited and were far outweighed by the overwhelmingly positive outcomes for the organisations as a whole.**

5. Impact on Those Supported by the Charities

While the WCA has achieved significant and sustained organisational and leadership outcomes, there is evidence that these benefits extend to the communities served by award-winning charities.

In the first survey, 21 out of 53 leaders reported that the WCA led to **direct positive changes for their beneficiaries**. The most commonly cited impact was the **availability of**

more support, mentioned by nine respondents, who credited the WCA with enabling service expansion:

➢ *"Pilotlight helped give us the confidence to significantly grow our service – although this remains a challenge to fund, it does mean we have been able to significantly grow both our reach and impact."*

➢ *"Our support in the community has increased and we are supporting more people now as a result of the award and this is because the support we received has enabled us to develop our structure, develop a strategy and an operational plan."*

➢ *"Better service provided, more support (as a result of growth)."*
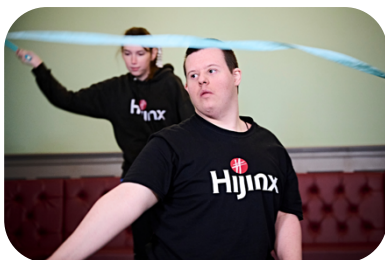
Other positive changes included **widened reach** (seven respondents), **increased impact** (seven respondents), and **improvements in service quality, targeting, and relationships with communities**: *"Our project was providing independent living… - it has happened and the impact on the people who have moved into the accommodation is hugely positive."*

Eighteen respondents noted **positive organisational changes that inevitably benefited their communities**. These included becoming more resilient, sustainable, and better equipped to attract funding or demonstrate impact.

A lot of these echo the responses to questions about outcomes achieved for the organisation. **The difference here is that charity leaders are going further and saying that in their opinion, these organisational outcomes are responsible for creating positive changes for the communities they serve.** We have taken the charity leaders at their word about impact on communities since we did not ask for their own impact data as part of this evaluation.

Nine respondents felt they could not say things had improved for their communities due to the WCA. Their reasons included:

➢ **It was too soon to say:** *"Realistically I think it's too soon to say because the impact takes time to manifest but were you to ask again in 5 years I'd be confident that we could point to improvements in learning and health for the communities we support."*

➢ **It simply just did not change things:** *"I don't think the award changed this for us or our communities."*

➢ **The impact of external factors outweighed any WCA benefits:** *"Far worse. The policy-crises (COVID pandemic, energy crisis, cost-of-living crisis) has had a profound effect on the communities we work with."*

➢ **Lack of funding created too great a barrier:** *"We are just struggling for further funding."*

Ultimately at least three of those four factors were outside of the control of the partnership. **External factors are limiting the potential of the WCA.**

It is important to note that those reporting worse outcomes for communities pointed to **recent national issues such as the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, which emerged after**

2020. The full impact of these challenges may not yet be fully understood, and it is crucial for **Pilotlight and GWF to continue focusing on what they can influence to ensure the WCA has a meaningful and positive effect, helping to counter these external pressures.**

While these external challenges remain, the positive outcomes reported by the majority of respondents highlight the significant potential impact the WCA is having on the communities they serve.

6. Accessibility

Two interviewees highlighted accessibility barriers, and although each mentioned only once, these issues are important to address to ensure the programme's benefits are fully accessible to all potential participants.

One interviewee had a negative experience during Covid when sessions went online and Pilotlighters were working through the strategy on spreadsheets, which proved **hard to access for someone who is dyslexic and neurodivergent**.

Another interviewee who is deaf and from a d/Deaf-led charity with d/Deaf colleagues, pointed out an assumed **lack of awareness around interacting with d/Deaf people on the part of non-deaf participants at networking events** such as the launch event.

> *I do mix, and I do talk to people, but quite often I have to go up to people to talk. And I think because we're deaf… people get a bit embarrassed, or they get a bit too worried about 'Oh, what, she can't hear me?', you know, and then 'How am I going to make myself understood?' So they tend to shy away from me… It's not just me, but my colleagues as well. We spend a lifetime having to initiate contact, having to go up to people, start talking to them, just to say hi. So I do feel that there are some assumptions being made, but what those assumptions are, I'm not 100% sure. But I do suspect it is to do with embarrassment and worry.*

Of course **it is possible that not all accessibility issues have come to light through this evaluation**. However, Pilotlight and GWF do work with individuals to discuss accessibility requirements and make efforts to accommodate them, ensuring that accessibility does not become a barrier. That said, it is worth noting that occasional challenges still exist. **Even if these issues are not directly within the control of Pilotlight and GWF, there may still be opportunities for them to influence or address them.**[7]

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[7] The Lloyds Bank Foundation which offers a similar 'grant plus skilled volunteering' scheme also offers £500 to go towards costs that enable accessibility. Find out more here: https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/funding/specialist-programme

> Is there more Pilotlight and GWF can do to ensure that participants from traditionally marginalised or under-served groups, are fully supported by fostering understanding and inclusivity among Pilotlighters and other award winners? Where does their responsibility start and end for other parties?

7. Future Support for Sustained Impact

We asked charity leaders in the first survey: "Is there anything you would like to share about what future support would be most helpful for your charity to scale its work?" (n=38).

The joint most commonly cited response (6 out of 38 respondents) was **the opportunity to apply for the WCA again or to rerun the process**. This was also mentioned by one of seven respondents in the second survey to the same question about future support.

> *I think that it might be useful to be involved in another Pilotlight process in 2 or 3 years' time – 4 to 5 years after the first experience – to refresh, challenge and advise again.*

> *Opportunity to reapply after X years*

> *Participation in another project would be helpful.*

> *Maybe the opportunity to reapply? I actually think that if I were to be given the opportunity to go through the experience again, I would be much more specific and it would have more measurable benefits, as I would know what to expect.*

> *I think we could go through the whole process eight years on and it would also have a great impact on the charity.*

> *We would love to be considered to rerun the programme (outside of COVID) with our new leadership team – I believe it could be extremely beneficial.*

> *I think we would be ready to do it again. So much has changed since we last did this…*

Several have mentioned the value of allowing time between repeating the award, suggesting that **waiting a few years may be more beneficial than doing it again immediately**. There is also the sense that repetition is helpful not just because circumstances change or benefits drop off, but also because the WCA supports organisations at various stages: *"I think wherever you are in your journey, the Pilotlight process can help take you to the next level"*.

This perspective aligns with insights shared by Pilotlight's CEO, who noted: *"The implication is that the WCA model could be extended, broadened, picked up with other funders in other ways but also shorter form programmes might also be a good fit for the current times."*

Another frequently mentioned area for future support, unsurprising to most funders, was **access to unrestricted funding**. Described as *"always helpful"*, respondents said it enables their organisations to address rising costs, launch new initiatives, fund core work rather than isolated projects, overcome growth barriers, and sustain existing services. As the interim Director of GWF aptly observed: *"Needs don't change, circumstances change."*

These two most common responses highlight two key themes that run through the other suggestions for future support.

Theme 1: An extension of the WCA	Theme 2: Income
• The opportunity to apply again or rerun the process • An active WCA network • Post-programme review sessions • Longer-term support for charity leaders • Encouraging Pilotlighters to sit on charity Boards • Keeping in touch with Pilotlight • Face-to-face support with Pilotlighters • An opportunity to update GWF on progress	• Access to unrestricted funding • Help gaining funding • Help creating a business arm • Help with corporate funding/non-grant fundraising • Charity trade advice • Continued GWF funding • Access to capital funding • Support to diversify income

Given that the outcome of being 'better networked or connected' was not achieved to the same extent as other outcomes, it is notable that three of the survey respondents wanted to see **an active WCA alumni**.

Interviewees also emphasised the value of an alumni network and **opportunities to stay connected with Pilotlight and the WCA**. Some appreciated being contacted for the evaluation, noting it was the first time since the award that anyone had reached out to them about the WCA.

For these interviewees, future support was less about what the partnership could offer them, and more about **what they were keen to contribute**. Suggestions included: sharing their stories at future events (including launch events for new winners) years later, writing blogs together and tagging each other on social media, providing impact data on their current progress, and showcasing post-WCA successes, such as receiving additional awards and benefits which they attribute to the WCA.

As for the future need of programmes like the WCA, both Pilotlight and GWF leaders agreed that **the need was not going away any time soon**.

> *There's absolutely still a need – I suspect there are lots of charities out there who could benefit… There's always a need to help charity leaders be the best they can be. These are amazingly talented people. Pilotlighters report how in awe they are of charity leaders.*
> **Interim Director of GWF**

> *There's an increasing demand for that core proposition around strategy, purpose, business case. The demand for that is growing significantly because it's a time of stretch and stress for charities.*
> *CEO of Pilotlight*

One survey respondent queried **whether 12 months of support is enough to make a meaningful impact**: *"We reached the point where we had a vision, mission, ambition and draft strategy but not the underlying financial model to demonstrate sustainability. We are now working on this with a consultant and are picking up where we left off."* However, recognising the workload pressures on participating charities, as seen in this evaluation and elsewhere, Pilotlight had already reduced the Pilotlighter support from 12 to 10 months and now to eight months for the current cohort. Other survey respondents wanted to see the award repeated at a later date rather than extended, aligning with Pilotlight's current approach.

In conclusion, there appear to be **clear opportunities for Pilotlight and GWF to enhance future support and therefore impact for WCA participants**. The existing infrastructure, such as the potential for an alumni network, provides a strong foundation for deeper engagement. While follow-up data is already collected six months after the programme ends, adding another follow-up point one to three years later could provide valuable insights. While the call for unrestricted funding is well-known, there is also potential to develop capability-building initiatives, particularly focused on diversifying income streams, from trading opportunities to corporate giving. These steps could further solidify the long-term impact of the WCA.

> Is it feasible for Pilotlight to factor in further contact and data collection with awardees beyond the current six-month post-award period so that additional follow-up happens every one to three years perhaps?

> If the partnership decides to invest more in the WCA, does it focus on sustaining and growing impact with existing WCA winners by repeating the programme years later or providing funding for development opportunities identified through the process for example, or does it focus on reaching new charities yet to receive any benefit: breadth or depth of impact?

Findings: Attribution

Evaluation Question 3) What specific changes can be linked to the WCA? This includes the trajectories charities have been on ('deadweight' or counterfactual), the influence of external factors, and the extent to which charity leaders attribute their successes or challenges to the programme (attribution).

1. Charity Trajectories

While we initially considered using statistical analysis to establish a counterfactual or 'deadweight' (understanding what would have happened anyway), to assess changes in income, size, and reach after the award, significant limitations made this approach impractical and unreliable.

One major issue is that data on the number of people reached is not provided to the Charity Commission in a standardised, quantitative manner. Another challenge stems from the incomplete data held by the Charity Commission, as provided by Find That Charity. Key variables such as reserves, staff, and volunteer numbers are often missing for smaller charities and reported sporadically. Even for required fields like total income and expenditure, data gaps remain – particularly for charities in the 2022 to 2023 cohort, as many returns were not yet due during the data collection period. Only 117 out of 145 charities had pre- and post-award year data available.

Additionally, inconsistencies in financial year reporting and the varying start and end dates of charities' participation in the programme created further complications. Comparing metrics like income or staffing across financial years relative to award years resulted in non-standardised datasets, further undermining the reliability of any analysis.

To gain a 'quick and dirty' understanding of possible trends across charities which we could then explore through our other data sources, we visualised key data points – income, expenditure, staff, volunteer and reserves data – against the award period (the shaded area in each chart). For simplicity, we assumed the same start and end dates for all charities, despite knowing that support begins and ends at different times for each charity.

1: Plotting Income, Expenditure and Reserves

In some cases such as Charity 1, we could see there appeared to be a step-change at the point of the award year. Income seemed particularly notable post-award changes (more so than staff or volunteering levels).
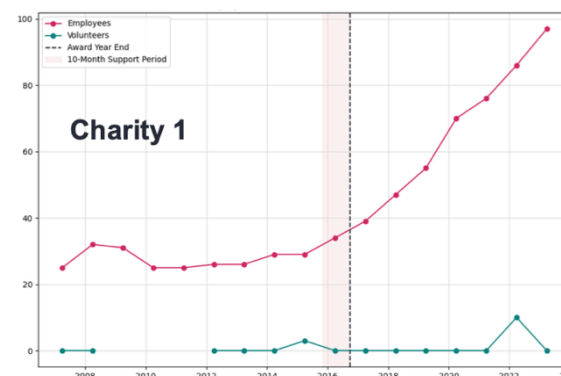
2: Plotting Employees and Volunteers

We next visualised each charity's income data against the award year with a 'line of best fit' for the income trajectory up to the award year (a simple linear regression).
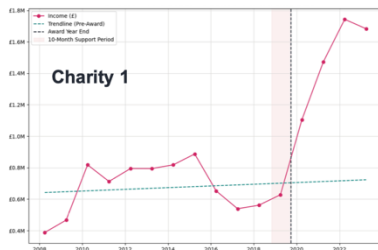
1: Income dramatically increases after award year
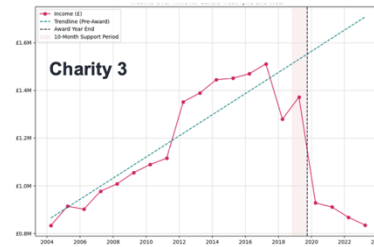
**2: Income dramatically decreases after award year**

2: Income continues on same trajectory after award year but changes dramatically much later

4: Income continues roughly on same trajectory indefinitely

However, we could find a story to fit most narratives among the 144 visualisations (data was not available for one), including those that appeared to see a significant downturn in income after the award year.

We also created boxplots of pre- mid- and post-award years, adjusting for inflation to examine any overall trends in income changes for WCA winners. Data was available for 117 charities.
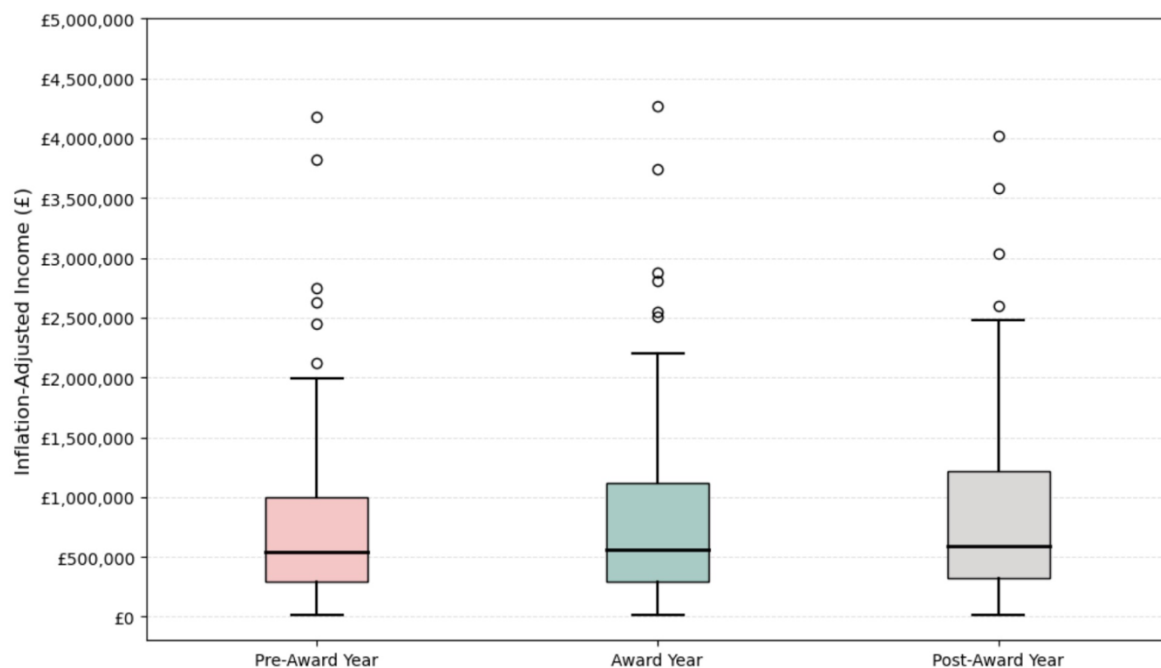
The chart indicates an increase in median income during and after the award year. However, this could have been even without the award, as charities typically continue to improve, learn and grow over time (even adjusting for inflation). It is important to note that the leaders of

these charities already possess unique qualities that set them apart, which is why they were selected as awardees in the first place, rather than other charities.

Beyond data limitations, external factors such as regional economic changes (including austerity measures, the effects of Covid, declines in local authority funding, inflationary pressures) significantly affect outcomes like income. These confounding factors make it challenging to isolate the impact of the WCA from broader trends, especially since charities took part in very different contexts across years.

Our final clue from the quantitative data comes from Pilotlight's own Skills Sharing Impact Report of Pilotlight 360 which in 2024 found that two years after completing Pilotlight 360, charities, on average, increase their reach (the number of beneficiaries) by 12% and their income by 44%.[8] While this suggests that the Pilotlight 360 programme may influence charities' trajectories, these findings are not specific to the WCA itself.

Given the limitations of the quantitative data, we turned to qualitative data, drawn from interviews, surveys, and case studies gathered by Pilotlight, to explore the changes experienced by charities and their leaders, focusing on how they attributed these changes to the WCA.

We were able to find **a significant number of examples where charity leaders had highlighted an increase in income, reach or impact which they partly attributed to the WCA**. Given how many factors influence changes in income, reach or impact, it would be improbable for change to be entirely down to the WCA. However, some leaders still said that change could not have happened without the WCA.

There were two notable case studies both published on Pilotlight's website where WCA awardees had experienced such increases and were able to quantify these in relation to their award year.

Case Study One: SELFA (2016 to 2017)

Published in 2023 in the words of SELFA
https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/case-studies/year-unforgettable-impact-selfa

In the seven years since we completed Pilotlight 360, we've kept moving forward - our **income has increased threefold**, we now have diverse and secure funding streams as well as clear financial planning. We are **reaching more children and families than ever before**, branching into new areas of work around children's mental health and addressing health inequalities. All of this at a time when charities have been under more pressure than ever before, both financially and in terms of demand for our services.

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[8] Access the Skills Sharing Impact Report 2024 by Pilotlight here:
https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/Pilotlight%20Impact%20Report%202024_0.pdf

I'm not sure if we'd be where we are now without the Garfield Weston Foundation and Pilotlight, the intensive support led to a step-change to SELFA and helped us 'future-proof' our organisation for the challenging times we've faced since.

I can honestly say that the year spent with Pilotlight was the most impactful time in my 20+ years career in the voluntary sector, we are still reaping the benefits of the opportunities that it brought many years later.

Case Study Two: Sport 4 Life (2016 to 2017)

Published in 2018 in the words of Sport 4 Life
https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/news/where-are-we-now-our-results-speak-for-themselves

Now, two years later, Sport 4 Life UK has grown and improved significantly, and the **Pilotlight 360 has played a crucial role in this.**

Financial growth
In 2016, when we started with Pilotlight, our turnover was £555,769. One year later, this had grown to £662,109 - an increase of 19%. Two years later, it has grown to £822,456 - an increase of 24% from the previous year, and 48% from the prior year.

Increase in impact
In 2016, we engaged with 721 young people: 226 gained an accredited qualification, 186 progressed from NEET (not in employment, education or training) to EET (re-engaged with employment, education or training), with 38 achieving a sustained job outcome. Two years later, our impact with young people has significantly grown. In 2018, we engaged with 1,532 young people: 306 gained an accredited qualification, 249 progressed from NEET to EET and 126 achieved a sustained job outcome.

Improvement in impact
Not only have our outcomes and impact increased, but the way we report on our impact has improved. All of our outcomes are fully evidenced now (including the more subjective 'life skills' outcomes, using the industry standard 'Outcome STAR' framework) to an auditable level (e.g. a payslip to evidence a job outcome). Our impact is also externally verified, by a University partner, to ensure its validity and reliability.

> Our work with Pilotlight through the Weston Charity Awards made a clear and tangible difference to our organisation. I would recommend it anyone who's looking to improve and grow their organisation.

Across the interviews and surveys, some leaders said they could not have made the changes that they did without the award, while others gave it significant credit for their growth:

- *"We were **nearly ready to close** and this was a lifeline for us."*
- *"It was undoubtedly the intervention that's had **the biggest impact** on our organisation in the whole time that we've existed."*
- *"I felt that I had gained the skills I needed to take our organisation forward - **we've tripled in size since our year with Pilotlight**."*
- *"Turnaround achieved in no small part to the 12 months support package that we received. **Organisation is now on an upward trajectory** and looking forward, not back."*
- *"**Things are infinitely better** as a result of the support, we'd not be where we are today if we hadn't taken those first steps with Pilotlight."*
- *"Through that support and facilitation of the Pilotlighter, our **income has increased year on year**."*
- *"[On the difference the award made] We used to get about three to 4000 people per year across our threshold, **and now it's increased up to 6000**, so it's been enormous."*

Other leaders who felt that while they might have been able to grow without the award's support, it still served as a valuable catalyst, accelerating change that may have otherwise taken much longer. The funding and focus provided by the WCA support played a key role in this.

There were also examples given of growth in income, staff and reach, though it was unclear to what extent this could be attributed to the WCA.

There are several indications that, for charities who are able to fully embrace the award, it has the potential to significantly alter their trajectory, and, indirectly, improve outcomes for the people they serve. In some cases, it has even helped charities avoid closure. The potential impact of the WCA on the charity sector should not be underestimated.

2. Infrastructure

The survey work revealed another area of impact that could be, to varying extents, attributed to the WCA. While not a specific goal of the programme, many charities were expected to develop or strengthen existing governing documents during their work with Pilotlighters, improving their overall infrastructure.

In 2023 YouGov Plc carried out a survey on behalf of the Law Family Commission on Civil Society published by Pro Bono Economics[9], involving 316 charities. This survey sets a benchmark for the key business documents that charities typically have in place. We decided

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[9] The Report by Pro Bono Economics used for benchmarking can be found here: https://www.probonoeconomics.com/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=b1d6a99e-c6b6-4623-9bc7-ea87b14c8e4b

to ask WCA awardees the same questions as those in the YouGov survey, using its results as a benchmark for comparison.

Number of charities with key strategic documents currently in place (n=53)

■ WCA charities responding to the survey ■ If PBE benchmark were applied

50	39	50	21
34	34	44	17
A current strategic plan covering more than one year that contains measurable goals/objectives	A business plan for the current year that contains measurable goals/objectives	An up-to-date statement of vision, mission and values	An up-to-date theory of change or logic model

Awardees are more likely than the sector average to have: a strategic plan (94%, compared to 65% for the charity sector); mission, vision and values (94%, compared to 83%); a theory of change (40%, compared to 33%); and a current business plan with measurable goals (74%, compared to 65%).

Most organisations have at least three of the four key documents in place. Where they are missing one, it is most likely to be a theory of change (or logic model) followed by a business plan for the current year with measurable goals or objectives. For detail on the combinations of documents that exist in WCA organisations see Appendix Eight.

We then asked respondents to tell us "If you have any of these [documents] in place, is any of it due (either in full or in part) to receiving the Weston Charity Award?" (n=50). Responses were then grouped into four categories (organisations referencing multiple documents sometimes fell into more than one attribution category):

ATTRIBUTION			NO ATTRIBUTION
Document(s) exists in full due to WCA	**Document(s) exists in part due to WCA**	**The existence of the document(s) is not attributable to the WCA but its clarity, effectiveness, quality or relevance is**	**No factor of the document's(s) existence is due to the WCA including its existence or quality**
Example: *"The strategic plan is entirely the result of the Pilotlight programme and is being seen through..."*	Example: *"We had the first two due to the WCA, and the other was developed and kept updated as a consequence."*	Example: *"We would have had these anyway… but I feel their quality is much higher as a result of the Pilotlight experience."*	Example: *"No."*
23	**17**	**11**	**2**

Nearly half attributed the existence of at least one key document entirely to the award, demonstrating a strong positive impact on organisational planning and document quality. This aligns with earlier feedback highlighting strategic thinking and planning as valuable aspects of the WCA.

The responses also reveal **gaps in charity infrastructure, such as the need for a theory of change, logic models, and live, measurable business plans**, suggesting areas for future support.

3. Influencing Factors External to the WCA

The UK has experienced significant challenges over the past decade, which shape the context for UK charities and likely limited the potential impact of the WCA.

From 2014 to 2023, the country saw five different prime ministers; austerity measures from 2010 to 2019; and then the end of 47 years of EU membership through Brexit. The COVID-19 pandemic killed over 220,000 people in the UK and almost seven million people globally up to May 2023[10]; while the government introduced a multi-billion pound furlough scheme. The 'cost-of-living crisis' led to sharp increases in food and energy prices, and interest rates surged from 0.1% in 2021 to 5.25% in 2023, causing mortgage rates to increase suddenly. Six local authorities declared bankruptcy by 2023, and 2022 saw the UK's hottest year on record.

For some charities, these challenges have generated potential opportunities by drawing attention to critical causes and securing additional support. Austerity and the 'cost-of-living crisis' have highlighted the increasing use of and growing reliance on food banks. The pandemic's lockdowns spotlighted a crisis in children's mental health. The increase in domestic violence during the pandemic has led to a heightened focus on violence against women and girls. The emergence of campaign groups such as Extinction Rebellion and Just Stop Oil, with their high-profile stunts, have raised awareness about climate change.

In addition to these external factors, organisations will also face internal challenges and opportunities. Staff and trustees may encounter personal challenges and opportunities such as becoming sick, becoming a parent or being promoted, which can impact their ability to contribute or shift their perspectives.

Charity leaders highlighted both positive and negative external factors that influenced their ability to maximise the benefits of the WCA.

Positive External Factors

Almost half of respondents in the first survey (19 out of 44) identified new or renewed funding as a significant boost during their award year. Grants from local authorities, large funders, and COVID-specific funding were common examples, with some leaders crediting the WCA for enhancing their ability to secure these opportunities:

> ⌖ *"…the assumption is that the benefits that we certainly felt at the time **acted as a springboard, catalyst and strong basis** to continue our progress and hopefully at a greater rate than would have happened without the award"*

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[10] Data provided by www.statista.com up to 02 May 2023 for the UK totalling 223,336 deaths.

> ➤ *"A large contract win… was **undertaken with greater confidence** the organisation was gaining via the support programme"*
> ➤ *"We had been lucky enough to have the support of the [external Foundation]… when we were a very small charity, so the Weston Award **came at the perfect time** when we were growing and needed to implement more strategy and structure".*

Other positive influences included forming new partnerships (four respondents), increased national interest in their cause (three respondents), and recognition through other awards or national press (four). However, eight leaders felt they were **already on a positive growth trajectory, independent of the WCA, though they acknowledged the programme's value**.

Negative External Factors

Despite the challenges facing the charity sector, one-third of respondents (13 out of 40) reported no negative external factors impacting their trajectory. Among those who did, the most common challenges mentioned were the pandemic (14 respondents) and the 'cost-of-living' crisis (6 respondents). The pandemic disrupted income streams, increased demand for services, and created logistical difficulties:
> ➤ *"The pandemic made everything harder!"*
> ➤ *"We entered COVID, which limited our ability to grow for years."*

The 'cost-of-living' crisis compounded issues with rising costs and reduced funding opportunities:
> ➤ *"Cost of living, especially energy costs, and lack of funding opportunities."*

Other negative factors included funding losses, local authority decisions, redundancies, and increased demand for services.

Balancing Challenges and Success

Despite these external pressures, most leaders reported achieving the expected outcomes from the WCA. In some cases, the award helped mitigate these challenges, as one respondent reflected on closing a social enterprise:
> ➤ *"With their support, we were able to do so in a positive way… and move forward with our new strategy feeling unique and relevant."*

Despite the backdrop of major events, no charity leader explicitly dismissed the award as inconsequential.

Interviewees highlighted the pandemic as the most influential factor on their participation (for those who undertook the award during lockdowns). Those that experienced online meetings and events found this to be a compromise and they would have preferred to have in-person meetings. The pandemic also had an effect on their work within the organisation and sometimes, their ability to participate in the programme.

The challenges cited, particularly the pandemic and 'cost-of-living' crisis, remain recent issues, underscoring **the importance of ongoing support to sustain the programme's impact amid evolving external pressures**.

Findings: Goals of the Partners

Evaluation Question 4) Does the impact of the WCA align with the desired impact the partners aspired to create? This includes the perspective of Pilotlight and GWF on how the WCA contributes to their organisational aims and implications for partnership working.

1. Values

Both partner organisations have their own unique values that they strive to uphold throughout their work. A key test of the partnership is whether the WCA can be delivered in a way that aligns with and respects the combined values of both organisations.

Pilotlight Values	GWF Values
https://www.pilotlight.org.uk/about	https://garfieldweston.org/about-us/our-philosophy
We bring people together.	**Respect**
We believe in potential.	**Humility**
We expect the best.	**Trust**

In Survey 1, charity leaders were asked to assess the extent to which they felt Pilotlight and GWF upheld their core values, including each other's values.

Values are important to both Pilotlight and the Garfield Weston Foundation. To what extent do you feel the following values were met throughout the award year from application to completion by those organising the award? (n=53)

The only instance where a value was 'not met' was from one respondent, who felt that the value of being 'good at bringing people together' had not been achieved, though all other values were either fully or partially met.

It appears **the WCA, in its current form, allows both organisations to support charities in a way that aligns with their respective values**. This does not suggest that other methods of support could not achieve this, but rather that the WCA has proven effective in doing so.

2. Strategic Relevance of the Partnership

Both Pilotlight and GWF's work focus on strengthening UK charities to increase their impact. Pilotlight achieves this through skills-based volunteering, linking 'business experts' with charities for capacity and expertise; while GWF predominantly uses grant-funding. Despite their different approaches, both organisations share the same goal which Inside Impact would summarise as the following basic theory of change.
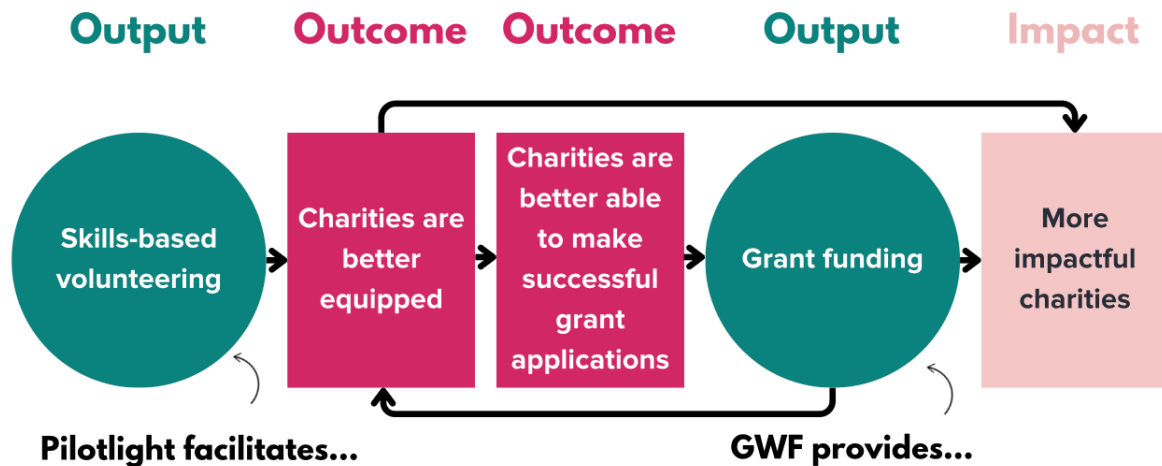
Over a decade later, the goals of the organisations remain aligned, with the unique delivery method of the WCA still highly relevant. Both organisations continue to focus on what they are each best placed to deliver – skills-based volunteering and grant funding – an approach that has not changed since the inception of the Awards.

Pilotlight's CEO explained the rationale for the partnership: *"The Awards were a brilliant way for Pilotlight to advance our own mission by doing it in partnership with someone with an interest in the goal we were trying to achieve. The collaboration with GWF gave the commitment and resource to be able to take that forward."*

The partnership offers a unique opportunity to GWF too, as their interim Director explained: *"We want to make a practical difference, and this is one way to do this that goes beyond the impact of our regular grant making."*

Pilotlight and GWF partners together

Continued commitment to their respective visions and missions is what appears to keep the programme working consistently well, and is likely why the programme remains largely unchanged too.

Both leaders of Pilotlight and GWF acknowledged in their interviews that any **partnership work has its challenges**, whether it is clarifying accountability for different tasks or balancing power dynamics. Both also agreed that since 2014, there had been **a maturing of the partnership** to something that resembles a 'true partnership', rather than just a 'funder

and delivery partner' relationship. Furthermore, both acknowledged that throughout the entirety of the WCA, **their partnership has been invaluable and critical to its existence**.

> *We wouldn't do this by ourselves and our way of grant-making is always that we look for experts in their own field… We wouldn't run the award without them.*
> *Interim Director of GWF*

> *We couldn't do it on our own. It's a genuine partnership.*
> *CEO of Pilotlight*

As we saw at the start, the strength of the WCA brand and the iterative improvements to the WCA process demonstrate that **the longevity of the WCA is key to enabling these 'maturations' over many years**.

The interview with Pilotlight's former Programme Manager highlighted **the benefit of the partnership, and the potential risk if it were to end, for Pilotlight's impact through its other work, specifically the Pilotlight 360 programme**: *"If the WCA weren't there, one of the core pillars of a functioning Pilotlight 360 programme would drop away. Because the WCA give access to charities outside of London. It enables a minimum critical mass to run the programme consistently. The success of the WCA and P360 are inherently linked."*

This long-standing partnership has made **the WCA an integral part of Pilotlight's ability to deliver national impact presenting both an opportunity and a risk**.

3. Grant Fundraising Capabilities

In her interview, the interim Director of GWF highlighted a self-perpetuating cycle: **charities that are well-equipped to make strong grant applications are more likely to succeed, which in turn enhances their resources and ability to secure even more funding. Conversely, charities lacking the capacity to create successful applications are excluded from this cycle, widening the gap between them**. This disparity becomes particularly problematic when it stems from unequal access to opportunities for improving infrastructure, often influenced by geographical location. Pilotlight acknowledged this same issue of inequity stemming from geography back in 2014 when they sought to expand their work beyond London and the Southeast, while GWF aimed to address the fact they received fewer applications from the Northeast of England.

> *It matters that charities have the opportunity to grow and improve their structure in order to be able to be successful in what they do, and therefore fundraise. This might generate more applications to us, but also to other funders.*
> *Interim Director of GWF*

This evaluation has provided evidence that several awardees go on to make successful applications to GWF, maintaining their relationships with the organisation. A fair number of them have increased their income in the years following the award, attributing this growth, in varying degrees, to the award itself. **It appears the award is on track to have the desired impact in this area on its awardees**.

Over a decade later, the programme continues to focus on reaching the same areas that have traditionally benefited less, aiming to keep the playing field level (Wales, the North of England and the Midlands). However, GWF acknowledges that, even today, **the levels of applicants from different geographic regions still fluctuate, despite receiving around 4,000 applications annually for all grant programmes, with WCA recipients representing only a "sliver"**. So the question remains:

> Even though the WCA is highly impactful for the charities and leaders involved, does its current scale meet the national-level impact desired by both partners in terms of the number of charities reached? And is there scope to widen the geographical eligibility to include charities working in areas of disadvantage in other regions of the UK?

4. Grant Fundraising Expectations

Survey and interview responses from charity leaders, along with an interview with GWF's interim Director reveal **a potential misalignment in expectations regarding what any improved grant-fundraising capability as a result of the award should enable**.

The interim Director of GWF explained that the WCA was designed to help charities make more successful grant applications, including to GWF, to address geographical funding inequities. The goal was also to **empower charities to be less reliant on GWF**. She did not anticipate that after receiving a WCA grant, organisations would immediately receive a larger grant from GWF. She emphasised that the WCA is neither a precursor nor a guarantee of getting follow-up funding. Even those who have completed a WCA have still been turned down where others have been successful on their own merit.

Some charity leaders shared the same understanding, believing that the WCA was intended to help them go beyond GWF funding:
- *"I felt this was a prestigious award that would support our funding bids to other funders and help the organisation in moving forward"*
- *"…funders would recognise the award and in turn realise that we are a professional organisation even though it was work at grass roots"*

However, a notable number of charity leaders believed that the WCA was a direct gate into GWF funding, and because they were successful in receiving a grant, erroneously attributed it to being an award-winner over any grant-fundraising capability they possessed:
- "The feedback you get from other charities is that it does give you a stepping stone because they're already aware of you. They've already invested in you as a charity… Now, I'll be honest about this. I think it helped us get the Garfield Weston grant as well, because we then applied again that year."
- "…And very importantly, when we completed it, we obviously applied to the Garfield Weston for funding…they have been unbelievable…"

Given that two-thirds of the charity leaders in the first survey said their organisation was either still in touch with or working with GWF, including at the very least 15 who received a GWF grant since, the scale of the potential misattribution about what the WCA enables is quite big.

Is GWF comfortable with the perceptions held by some WCA awardees (and potential future applicants) about what the WCA's impact on future GWF funding is? Is there a need for clarification in the marketing of the WCA to emphasise its role in building external fundraising capabilities?

5. When the Programme Does Not Work

Interviews with staff and desk research reveal a minority of cases where the WCA has not had the desired impact for its awardees. One strength of the programme is **the strong awareness of why programmes may not achieve the intended impact**. Over the years, changes have been made to maximise the impact of the Awards by ensuring those best suited to this type of support are selected.

> *Even when it didn't work, it always created some form of learning in one party or the other: Pilotlighters, charity leaders, or Pilotlight.*
> **Former Programme Manager at Pilotlight**

The three interviews with Pilotlight and GWF staff and leaders alongside the desk-review revealed some of those reasons including:

- **Underlying organisational issues**: the programme cannot fix deep-seated issues in a charity such as governance problems or poor management. These issues may only surface during the programme: *"Some problems are hidden well… this process shines a light on the elephant in the room."*
- **Governance conflicts**: tensions between Boards and CEOs can cause projects to "blow up". For example, forced discussions might result in significant changes like a CEO stepping down, which could be seen as short-term 'failure', but potentially lead to long-term success for the organisation.
- **Change at leadership level**: because the programme supports both individual professional development and organisational development, if a leader leaves or takes long-term leave, the programme may sometimes conclude early.
- **Mindset**: the purpose of the programme is to provide a challenging, alternative perspective. Those who have a set agenda they wish to pursue or do not wish to be challenged, could find the process with Pilotlighters to be a negative one.
- **Money as a double-edged sword**: those urgently needing core funding may see the WCA as an important opportunity to plug that gap with the £6.5k grant. However, the year-long commitment and support required can feel more like a 'necessary condition' to receiving the money, turning it into a burden rather than an opportunity.

Pilotlight's former Programme Manager emphasised the importance of **identifying inevitable failures as early as possible** in the process.

To address this, Pilotlight has made changes to its marketing and application processes to set clearer expectations, particularly regarding the level of commitment required beyond the grant to deter those only interested in grant-funding. These adjustments also aim to attract participants with a growth mindset who are more likely to engage fully with the programme.

Despite these efforts, some risks (e.g. underlying organisational issues, governance conflicts, changes at leadership level) remain an inevitable part of the process. **Even when projects are deemed to have "failed," they still provide valuable learning opportunities**

that can benefit both Pilotlight and the participating organisations in the long-term. **The majority of projects still have tremendously positive outcomes.**

6. Reputation

The WCA has proven remarkable in upholding the values of both partners and has an impressive NPS of 87. The programme's 'prestigious' brand has attracted applicants, who value the opportunity to work with Pilotlight and GWF. Some were even recommended the award by previous winners. All these factors suggest that **the WCA plays an important role in augmenting the reputation of both partners in the charity sector**.

Comments in the NPS reasoning responses show that many organisations, in the true sense of being 'promoters' (rating 9 or 10 out of 10), are actively spreading positive feedback about the partnership with their peers:

- *"I had recently spoken to another chief officer in the sector who recommended the Pilotlight 360 process as a hugely valuable experience"*
- *"I… have helped raise awareness of the Weston Charity Awards in Wales"*
- *"I have already recommended that others apply"*
- *"I have recommended it to others and will continue to do so"*
- *"I have promoted this to other organisations as a positive experience"*

One organisation has even gone beyond that and tried to encourage their local authority to develop the same model.

> *And I've even spoken to Wigan Council about them implementing their own sort of way of bringing businesses and the sector together in the borough to you know… whether they can do some of that. Because, yes, it's just invaluable.*

7. Implications for the Sector

One of the key questions for Pilotlight when developing the evaluation questions in January 2024 was whether the WCA is an effective support model for charities that should be replicated across the sector. As we saw from one charity leader, this question is already being answered in practice – they have actively encouraged their local authority to adopt the model. **This creates an exciting opportunity for this long-standing partnership to serve as a trailblazer for the rest of the sector**.

Participation in the WCA has undeniably made a significant, positive and lasting difference for many charity leaders and their organisations. While the award is not a perfect fit for everyone, **it can really be 'charity-changing'** for those leaders who remain with their organisation throughout the process, approach it with an open mind, embrace challenges, and can manage the inevitable additional workload.

Pilotlighters sharing learning at an Impact Day

The package of support offers a unique combination, not just of financial and non-financial support, but also personal professional development for leaders alongside organisational development.

All interviewees were asked about other awards or similar support they had received. One interviewee mentioned that since they had received an unrestricted grant from Comic Relief and got support from their Project Officer, they sought her help in reviewing their WCA application. This reflects the same spirit as Pilotlighters and the unrestricted grant enabling stronger funding applications. However, this outcome was not an intentional aim by Comic Relief.

The closest any interviewee came to describing something purposefully similar to the WCA, was the Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales 'Enhance' programme. This initiative combines an 'Invest' grant of £10k to £25k for two to six years, with non-financial support provided by volunteers from its funder, Lloyds Banking Group. Much like the WCA, this programme has been running for over a decade. Notably, two of the 12 interviewees had participated in this programme.[11] [12]

> Could Pilotlight and GWF explore opportunities to engage with organisations like Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales and Comic Relief, which may have similar models – either intentionally, or unintentionally due to their funder-plus approach? This collaboration could help identify whether the elements that make the WCA impactful could be replicated, scaled or used to inform the effectiveness of other programmes. Additionally, it could provide valuable insights from these organisations on how to further enhance the WCA.

> If Pilotlight and GWF end up successfully engaging with other leaders in the sector delivering similar support, could they co-create their theory of change pathways together so they can signpost charities to one another? Then the ecosystem of funders who provide 'more than money' becomes clear to charities?

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[11] A good summary of the Lloyds Bank Foundation's programme is available here: https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/services/benefits-and-grants/grants-for-communities/lloyds-bank-foundation-for-england-and-wales-(1)

[12] Information about outcomes from the Lloyds Bank Foundation programme is available here: https://www.lloydsbankfoundation.org.uk/media/vo3dd0kz/lbfew-skills-based-volunteering-a-win-win-win-full-report.pdf

Conclusion

The Weston Charity Awards have proven to be a highly impactful initiative, significantly enhancing the capacity and resilience of UK charities. Over the past decade, the partnership between Pilotlight and GWF has delivered a holistic package of support that combines financial assistance, strategic mentorship, and valuable networking opportunities. This evaluation, spanning nearly a decade of implementation, affirms the enduring value of the Awards and their ability to catalyse transformative changes for charity leaders, organisations, and the communities they serve.

Positive Impact on Charity Leaders

The WCA has profoundly shaped the leadership capabilities of its participants. The mentorship and coaching provided by Pilotlighters was particularly transformative, fostering enhanced strategic skills, confidence, and resilience. Many leaders noted a lasting shift in their leadership identity, with increased clarity and introspection. The Pilotlighter delivery method has been especially effective in creating "critical friends" who encourage reflection and challenge preconceived notions, leading to improved governance and decision-making.

Organisational Growth and Resilience

For participating charities, the benefits of the WCA extend beyond individual leadership. Organisations reported clearer strategic goals, strengthened governance, and improved financial health. The combination of unrestricted grants and professional guidance enabled charities to implement long-term development plans, enhance operational efficiency, and expand their reach and impact. The enduring effects of these outcomes, as observed even in early cohorts, highlight the programme's sustainability.

Broader Community Impact

The benefits of the WCA can cascade to the communities served by these charities. Many organisations credited the programme, at least in part, with enabling service expansion, improving quality, and better aligning their strategies with community needs. However, external challenges such as the pandemic and economic crises have, in some cases, impeded the full realisation of these benefits. This underscores the need for continued support to navigate an increasingly volatile external environment.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While overwhelmingly positive, the WCA experience is not without its challenges. A notable limitation of this evaluation lies in the difficulty of reaching all charity leaders who participated in the programme, particularly those who have since left their organisations. This limitation raises the possibility that some experiences, whether positive or negative, may not have been captured. While the evaluation provides a robust understanding of the WCA's impact, future evaluations should prioritise strategies to engage this group more effectively to ensure a fuller representation of outcomes.

Additionally, while the prestige of the WCA was a strong motivator for applicants, some charities struggled to fully capitalise on the increased profile associated with the award due

to limited capacity. Providing enhanced support in this area could significantly amplify the programme's impact. Lastly, the programme's reliance on specific individuals, such as the award leaders, highlights a potential challenge in sustaining benefits when leadership transitions occur.

Recommendations for Future Development

1. **Expand evaluation reach**: Develop mechanisms to maintain contact with past leaders for follow-up impact data and improve representation in future evaluations.

2. **Enhance support to leverage profile**: Provide additional resources or training to help charities maximise the benefits of increased visibility.

3. **Sustain organisational benefits beyond leadership tenure**: Explore mechanisms to institutionalise learning and impact, ensuring continuity regardless of leadership changes.

4. **Strengthen alumni networks**: Establish formal alumni programmes to sustain relationships among participants and with Pilotlight and GWF.

5. **Adapt to external challenges**: Continue to ensure future iterations of the WCA are responsive to evolving external pressures, offering additional resources or flexibility to address these challenges.

Final Reflection

The Weston Charity Awards exemplify strategic philanthropy, combining financial investment with skilled volunteering to create transformative change. Many programme outcomes are sustained for years beyond the programme's completion, demonstrating its long-term impact. A key factor in the programme's success lies in the strong partnership between Pilotlight and GWF, which integrates their complementary expertise, resources and values. This collaboration ensures a holistic and tailored approach, making the WCA uniquely effective in strengthening leadership and organisational resilience. While the model offers valuable lessons for the wider sector, its success is closely tied to the specific strengths of the partners involved. Replicating this approach elsewhere would require similarly aligned partnerships that can deliver both financial support and strategic guidance. By fostering such collaborations, the sector can amplify its collective impact, ensuring that charities across the UK continue to thrive and deliver meaningful change in their communities.

Acknowledgements

Appendices

Appendix One

The profile of all 12 interviewees who spoke for around 45 minutes each with Shehnaaz Latif at Inside Impact over Zoom.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Award Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Did Survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
WCA Leader	No, but was participating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Still at Charity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

	7	8	9	10	11	12
Award Year	2020-21	2020-21	2021-22	2021-22	2022-23	2022-23
Did Survey	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
WCA Leader	No, but was participating	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but concluded early
Still at Charity	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix Two

A list of all award winners for the period covered by the evaluation (2014 to 2023) who either completed an award or started an award but finished early. This list does not include those who were awarded a WCA but who withdrew from the programme before starting or who deferred their participation until after the period of analysis for evaluation.

Charity	Year	Location
Adoption Matters	2022-23	North West England
Cartwheel Arts	2022-23	North West England
Crossroads Derbyshire	2022-23	East Midlands
Cumbria Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service	2022-23	North West England
Deaf-initely Women	2022-23	East Midlands
Disability Stockport CIO	2022-23	North West England
First Stop Darlington	2022-23	North East England
Groundwork North Wales	2022-23	North Wales
IMO Charity	2022-23	North West England
Kids Kabin	2022-23	North East England
Linskill and North Tyneside Community Development Trust	2022-23	North East England
Muslim Women's Council	2022-23	Yorkshire & Humber
Nepacs	2022-23	North East England
Signpost Stockport for Carers	2022-23	North West England
Staying Put	2022-23	Yorkshire & Humber
The Boaz Trust	2022-23	North West England
Your Voice Counts	2022-23	North East England
All Arts & Media	2021-22	North West
Boys and Girls Clubs of Wales	2021-22	South Wales
Disability North	2021-22	North East
Dorothy Parkes Centre	2021-22	West Midlands
Friends of St Nicholas Fields	2021-22	Yorkshire & Humber
Hijinx Theatre	2021-22	South Wales
Legacy WM	2021-22	West Midlands
N-Vision, Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Society for the Blind	2021-22	North West
Neuro Therapy Centre	2021-22	North Wales
Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum	2021-22	East Midlands
One Roof Leicester	2021-22	East Midlands
Pentabus Theatre	2021-22	West Midlands
Salford Foundation	2021-22	North West
Sefton Women's and Children's Aid (SWACA)	2021-22	North West
Stockport Without Abuse	2021-22	North West
Stockport Women's Centre	2021-22	North West
The Children's Foundation	2021-22	North East

The Exodus Project	2021-22	Yorkshire & Humber
Young Asian Voices	2021-22	North East
Action for Elders	2020-21	South Wales
Carers Support South Lakes	2020-21	North West
Dangerpoint	2020-21	North Wales
Doncaster Community Arts	2020-21	Yorkshire & Humber
Eagle's Nest Project	2020-21	West Midlands
Grace House North East	2020-21	North East
Groundwork West Midlands	2020-21	West Midlands
Manchester Action on Street Health	2020-21	North West
Meadow Well Connected	2020-21	North East
Music Action International	2020-21	North West
Plant Dewi (St David's Diocesan Council for SR)	2020-21	South Wales
Positive Action in the Community	2020-21	North West
Ravenscliffe Community Association	2020-21	Yorkshire & Humber
Rochdale Connections Trust	2020-21	North West
Shropshire RCC (The Community Council Shropshire)	2020-21	West Midlands
The Brick (Queen's Hall Action on Poverty)	2020-21	North West
The Enthusiasm Trust	2020-21	East Midlands
Venus Charity	2020-21	North West
Worcester Community Trust	2020-21	West Midlands
Active Fusion	2019-20	Yorkshire & Humber
Burton Upon Trent & District YMCA	2019-20	East Midlands
Community Link Stafford & District	2019-20	West Midlands
Disability Direct	2019-20	East Midlands
Family Gateway	2019-20	North East
Greater Manchester Youth Network	2019-20	North West
Home-Start Horizons	2019-20	East Midlands
Moving on Durham	2019-20	North East
New Roots Housing Project	2019-20	East Midlands
NewLink Wales	2019-20	South Wales
Northmoor Community Association	2019-20	North West
Nottinghamshire Deaf Society	2019-20	East Midlands
Phoenix Domestic Abuse Services	2019-20	South Wales
Rubicon Dance	2019-20	South Wales
SafetyNet (UK)	2019-20	North West
St. Andrew's Community Network	2019-20	North West
The Manchester Men's Room	2019-20	North West
Trust House Lancashire	2019-20	North West
Wirral Mencap	2019-20	North West

YMCA Humber	2019-20	Yorkshire & Humber
Blackburn and Darwen District Without Abuse	2018-19	North West
Cardiff City FC Community Foundation	2018-19	Wales
Care Network, Blackburn with Darwen	2018-19	North West
Carers Trust Tyne and Wear	2018-19	North East
Cerebral Palsy Sport	2018-19	East Midlands
Dudley Advocacy	2018-19	West Midlands
Endeavour	2018-19	Yorkshire
GISDA	2018-19	Wales
Independent Advocacy North East	2018-19	North East
Leicester LGBT Centre	2018-19	East Midlands
Mencap Liverpool	2018-19	North West
Reach South Sheffield	2018-19	Yorkshire
Recovery Cymru	2018-19	Wales
SAYiT	2018-19	Yorkshire
SERVE	2018-19	East Midlands
Swansea Young Single and Homeless Project	2018-19	Wales
The Paul Sartori Foundation	2018-19	Wales
Vital	2018-19	Yorkshire
Worcestershire Association of Carers	2018-19	West Midlands
Wyre Forest Nightstop and Mediation Service	2018-19	West Midlands
Blackburn Youth Zone	2017-18	North West
Family Help Darlington	2017-18	North East
Focus Charity	2017-18	East Midlands
Home Start Trafford & Salford	2017-18	North West
Hull Children's University	2017-18	Yorkshire
Jericho Foundation	2017-18	West Midlands
Learning Partnerships	2017-18	West Midlands
Leeds Jewish Welfare Board	2017-18	Yorkshire
Mentor Link	2017-18	West Midlands
New Vic Theatre	2017-18	West Midlands
NIDAS	2017-18	East Midlands
Sporting Force	2017-18	North East
The Welcome Centre	2017-18	Yorkshire
Wirral Ark	2017-18	North West
YMCA North Tyneside	2017-18	North East
YSS	2017-18	West Midlands
Apex Trust	2016-17	North West
Disability Action Yorkshire	2016-17	Yorkshire
Falcon Support Services	2016-17	East Midlands
Hope Support Services	2016-17	West Midlands

Key Changes - Unlocking Women's Potential	2016-17	Yorkshire
LD: North East	2016-17	North East
Malvern Special Families	2016-17	West Midlands
Project 6	2016-17	Yorkshire
SAFE	2016-17	North West
SELFA	2016-17	Yorkshire
Sight Advice South Lakes	2016-17	North West
Sport 4 Life	2016-17	West Midlands
Staffordshire Women's Aid	2016-17	West Midlands
The Wellspring Stockport	2016-17	North West
WAITS	2016-17	West Midlands
Zest - Health for Life	2016-17	Yorkshire
42nd Street	2015-16	North West
A Way Out	2015-16	North East
Action Foundation	2015-16	North East
Cramlington Voluntary Youth Project	2015-16	North East
Gateway into the Community	2015-16	North East
Hospice at Home	2015-16	North West
Lancashire Women's Centres	2015-16	North West
Methodist Action North West	2015-16	North West
Ocean Youth Trust North	2015-16	North East
SASH	2015-16	Yorkshire
Stick N Step	2015-16	North West
The Clock	2015-16	Yorkshire
Bliss Mediation Services	2014-15	North East
Caring Hands Charity	2014-15	North East
Edward Lloyd Trust	2014-15	North East
Horden Youth and Community Centre	2014-15	North East
NE Youth	2014-15	North East
Sharp	2014-15	North East

Appendix Three

A count of the aspects of the Pilotlighter support deemed attractive and deemed valuable by charity leaders for the first survey.

Element of Support from Pilotlighters that seemed Attractive	Number of respondents who mention this (n=53)
Having an external perspective from a "peer" or "expert"	21
Help with strategic thinking or planning	9
Feeling supported in one's leadership	6
Having additional capacity (through additional people)	5
Getting protected time or accountability	4
Having one's thinking challenged	3
A desire to learn from others (not necessarily external)	2
Access to mentoring/advice/coaching	1
An expectation around the quality of support	1
Being able to move faster (due to external support)	1
Having a third party to resolve staff/Board tensions	1
Being able to develop a strategy to secure further funding	1

Element of Support from Pilotlighters that was Valuable	Number of respondents who mention this (n=51)
All the Pilotlighters as a whole	26
Gaining new thoughts and perspectives	13
Having support for a whole year	8
Support with strategic thinking or planning	7
Access to mentoring/advice/coaching	6
A specific Pilotlighter	4
Gaining a safe space (in the Pilotlighters to share)	4
Getting protected time or accountability	3
Having an alternative voice for the Board to hear	1
One to one guidance	1

Appendix Four

A count of other elements of the WCA deemed attractive or valuable by charity leaders for the first survey.

Element Deemed Attractive	Number of respondents who mention this (n=53)
Additional support during a time of crisis (at point of closure, during pandemic, generally difficult times)	4
Developing new skills as a leader	3
An opportunity to improve on weaknesses	2
Escaping the constraints of governance	2
Word-of-mouth recommendation	1
An opportunity for external evaluation	1
Seeing the impact on previous awardees	1
An external voice to advocate for change to trustees	1
Another funder had mentioned it	1
An opportunity to be with like-minded people	1

Element Deemed Valuable	Number of respondents who mention this (n=51)
Pilotlight project managers	3
An opportunity to pause and reflect	3
The Pilotlight coordinator	2
Taking the charity to the next level	2
Added gravitas with the Board	1
Having a clear focus	1
Collaborative working for smoother change	1
Being featured in the celebration video	1

Appendix Five

A summary of positive personal experiences felt by the charity leaders who took part in the WCA.

Theme	Category	Examples
Feelings	• More confident in leadership ability • Felt personally validated • More confident to plan and think strategically • Feel more resilient • Imposter syndrome has been eroded • Reduced self-doubt • Feeling the effects of 'therapy' • Being a leader felt 'less scary' • Felt easier to navigate difficult stakeholder conversations • Feeling better able to embrace big changes • Felt less alone	*"The positive feedback I received from the Pilotlighters about my leadership style and how positive they found my willingness to embrace change and didn't react negatively to their challenge made me more confident in my role and eroded some of the imposter syndrome I always feel I carry about with me"* *"This was the perfect experience for me, to give me the self-confidence to be the leader of the charity"*
Connecting	• Learned the value of asking for help • Learning from peers • Connecting with peers • Became more 'teachable' • Developed a better relationship with the Board	*"I feel I connect to other charity leaders more easily"* *"It taught me to… value asking for help from my team instead of feeling I had to carry it all"*
Skills	• Learned more about self/better able to self-reflect • Gained leadership skills • Better able to question things • New time management skills • Better able to recognise and manage stress and mental health • Better able to recognise the right people for the right support • Improved ability to think strategically • Bolder in communication	*"I felt that I had gained the skills I needed to take our organisation forward – we've tripled in size since our year with Pilotlight"* *"It helped me to build strategic skills and knowledge and apply that to my organisation"*
Space	• Gained a safe space to discuss concerns, frustrations and be candid • Gained more headspace • Gained space to focus on the strategic rather than the operational • More appreciative of the value of time with leadership to think laterally	*"I enjoyed coming down on the train – it gave me a couple of days of headspace, which was very beneficial for me and my charity"* *"A safe space to discuss to discuss issues and concerns re organisation turnaround"*
Career	• Career advancement	*"Two years after the conclusion of the Pilotlight process I was made up to Executive Manager status"*

Appendix Six

A summary of positive organisational experiences observed by the charity leaders who took part in the WCA.

Theme	Category	Examples
Performance	• Charity personnel being able to see things more clearly • Better management structure • Better able to hire the right people • Helped the organisation to move to a more opportune location • The Board saw an improvement in the charity leader's skills and ability • Improved organisational performance • Facilitated the growth of the organisation • Improvements to governance • A move to prioritising quality over quantity • More open to taking on risk • A growing network • Facilitated a 'turnaround' for the organisation (from negative to positive trajectory)	*"The award helped us identify and adopt some key operational improvements which made an impact to our performance and ultimately benefit our beneficiaries"* *"No doubt one of the reasons for the growth and development has been the award"* *"The Pilotlighters helped us to recognise the need to deliver quality and not quantity, and how to ensure we stayed on the path towards our vision, and the needs of our community"*
Board	• Better Board and staff alignment • Better able to support the Board • The Chair became more active • Trustees became more aware of challenges • The Board has grown • Trustees' skillsets have developed • The Board takes more ownership now • Gained a new Board member	*"Our leadership (Trustees) have increased in number and skills"* *"Better strategic planning processes and clearer alignment between Board and staff on this"* *"Awareness of trustees to some of our challenges"*
Finance	• More financially secure • Better financial thinking and planning • Better placed to gain GWF funding • Improved awareness of what funders look for in an organisation • Better fundraising skills • Clearer / new fundraising plan	*"The ability to monitor fundraising targets/needs"* *"The most tangible impact of the support we received was the creation of a strategic fundraising plan, which has been developed since, and still guides our fundraising activity"*
Profile	• Better articular of impact or Theory of Change • Increased profile of the organisation	*"It gave us a new identity… It was refreshing and gave us a status boost, to be able to say we were a Weston Award winner, it carries clout in the VCS world"*

	- Greater confidence to publicise the organisation's work - Increased publicity for the organisation - Organisation gained a new identity - Positive response from external parties who recognise the award - Good press releases	*"We received positive feedback from our local authority and funders when we applied for funding and mentioned we had the Weston award"* *"It raised our profile certainly"*
Strategy	- Better strategic planning processes - Positive effects on the approach to strategy and purpose - Clearer / new / better strategic plans	*"We concluded with the creation of a new three-year strategy with clear KPIs"* *"Clearer and more confident in developing and implementing strategy"*
Other	- More confident in the value of the work - Clearer operational plans - Better able to trust in organisational instinct - Development of a Sickness Absence Policy - Developed a business plan	*"We have learned to trust our instincts more"* *"The award gave us confidence about the value of the work we do, services we provide, and the overall benefit of the organisation, and its uniqueness"*

Appendix Seven

A summary of the method and value of relationships with different WCA stakeholders by charity leaders in the first survey.

Party	Nature of relationship	Count	Examples
Pilotlight	Continue to follow Pilotlight's thought leadership (social media, newsletters)	6	*"I continue to follow Pilotlight as a [sic] interesting and thought-provoking organisation"*
	Remained in touch with Pilotlight for a while or to this day (undefined)	6	*"…have also engaged with Pilotlight through various initiatives in our region"* *"Although we are still in touch with Pilotlight and the Foundation this is no longer on a personal connection, as individuals have moved on"*
	Charity leader became a Pilotlighter	2	*"I was a 'Pilotlighter' (charity rep) for a new project"*
	Charity leader is considering becoming a Pilotlighter	2	*"After the programme I was asked if I would consider being a business partner on the scheme, but have not been able to follow this up yet, due to work pressures"*
	Wrote a blog for Pilotlight	1	*"I wrote a blog for Pilotlight last year"*
	Remain in contact with the Pilotlight Coordinator	1	*"We have remained in contact with / have contact details for the Pilotlight Coordinator"*
The Pilotlighter(s)	Kept in touch with Pilotlighter for a while or until this day (undefined)	16	*"In touch periodically with Pilotlighters"* *"One of the Pilotlighters has remained in contact and continues to be a big supporter of the charity"*
	Pilotlighter(s) became a trustee(s)	5	*"One of our Pilotlighters has recently joined the organisation as a trustee on our board and already, the impact she is having is fantastic"*
	Connected on LinkedIn	3	*"I have put 'not sure' as we are connected on LinkedIn but nothing else really"*
	Commissioned a Pilotlighter(s) for additional work	2	*"We commissioned [Pilotlighter] for two rounds of coaching for myself as CEO, which had a number of benefits but specifically allowed me to adapt my approach in order to extend and embed the changes we began with Pilotlight through the award"*
	Pilotlighter making introductions	1	*"I am planning to meet with a charity linked with one of the Pilotlighters and share practice and methodologies"*

	Pilotlighter made a financial donation	1	*"…one made a very generous donation to us recently"*
	Pilotlighter considering becoming a Board member	1	*"We also have contact with one of the Pilotlighters who is interested in becoming a member of our Board"*
	Sharing successes	1	*"The six month review was useful to share the successes of the Trust after the Pilotlight project"*
	Joined one of the Pilotlighter's forums	1	*"One of the Pilotlighters invited me to join his network… I remained a member of [the network] for several years, which helped embed some of the learning from Pilotlight"*
Garfield Weston Foundation	Have since received a GWF grant	15	*"After our Pilotlight experience we applied for a grant from GWF which was successful. We applied again last year and was successful again"*
	Remain in touch with GWF (undefined)	4	*"Although we were not successful with GWF core funding this time, we had a helpful conversation with [GWF staff member]"*
	Currently applying for / are going to apply for funding with GWF	2	*"We're hoping to put a funding application into GWF very soon"*
	Presented to GWF Board	1	*"We spoke at the GWF Board meeting re issues facing the sector"*
Other Charities	Connecting to the same charities from the Awards at other events	3	*"I'm still connected with other charity leaders who are local to my area… and see them at events and for peer support"* *"Peer-to-peer support, connections at events"*
	Still in touch with charity leaders (unspecified)	1	*"I am still in touch with one of the charity leaders who was in our cohort"*
Business partner organisation	Invited to apply for a grant from the grant-giving arm of the business partner organisation	1	*"Invited to apply to the grant-giving arm of one of the businesses twice"*

Appendix Eight

A summary of the combinations of key documents that WCA charities currently have in place.

Survey 1 to WCA Charity Leaders: Which, if any, of the following does your organisation now have? Please select all that apply. (n=53)

A business plan for the current year that contains measurable goals or objectives	A current strategic plan covering more than one year that contains measurable goals or objectives	An up-to-date statement of its mission, vision, and values	An up-to-date theory of change or logic model that describes how you intend to achieve your organisation's desired outcomes	None of the above	Number of organisations with this combination of documents currently in place
✓	✓	✓			21
✓	✓	✓	✓		17
	✓	✓			6
	✓	✓	✓		4
		✓			2
✓	✓				1
	✓				1
				✓	1
39	50	50	21	1	53
74%	94%	94%	40%	2%	-

Survey 2 to staff at WCA charities where the WCA has left: Which, if any, of the following does your organisation now have? Please select all that apply. (n=8)

A business plan for the current year that contains measurable goals or objectives	A current strategic plan covering more than one year that contains measurable goals or objectives	An up-to-date statement of its mission, vision, and values	An up-to-date theory of change or logic model that describes how you intend to achieve your organisation's desired outcomes	None of the above	Number of organisations with this combination of documents currently in place
✓	✓	✓			3
✓	✓	✓	✓		3
	✓				1
		✓			1
6	7	7	3	0	8
75%	88%	88%	38%	-	-

On behalf of the
Weston Charity Award partners

Garfield Weston
FOUNDATION

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