

Mayflower



IMPACT REPORT

Grants, Awards and Subsidies 2025/2026

Introduction



At Mayflower we believe that everyone who connects with us should have an equal opportunity to enjoy inspiring experiences. We also recognise that many individuals and communities face significant barriers to accessing their first – or continued – engagement with culture.

Our ambitious programme of grants, awards and subsidies directly addresses this. For many years Mayflower has invested substantially in this programme and we have a strong reputation for the support we can offer, particularly through our long-running Higher Education Grants and more recently through our transport subsidy. In 2025/2026 Mayflower elevated the programme once more with a strategic increase of investment from £65,420 in 2024/2025 to £99,009 to widen participation through a range of targeted initiatives.

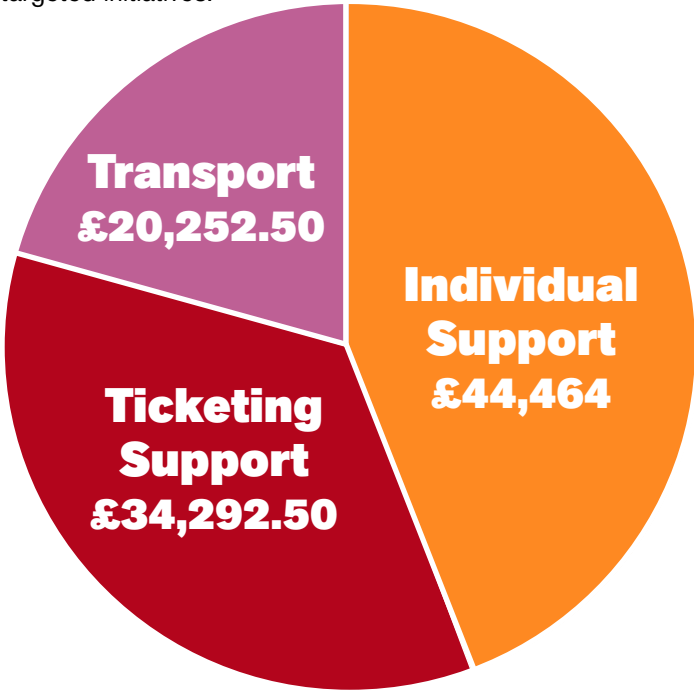
The aims of the Grants, Awards and Subsidies Programme are:

- Remove economic barriers to the arts
- Increase pathways into the industry
- Build meaningful connections with schools, underrepresented communities, and individuals
- Support the creative curriculum across education settings.

All these aims support Mayflower’s foundational ambition of offering *Inspiring Experiences* which *spark a love of theatre*. To achieve this, we are reliant on the continuation of a thriving ecology of theatregoers and theatre-makers – two key principles that underpin all our activity and will ensure our organisational longevity.

At Mayflower we assess our impact using an impact framework that spans the four focus areas of our business: Stages, Community, People and Venues. At the heart of Mayflower’s purpose is our creative work, and everything we do contributes to our overall Stages ambition of sustaining **a relevant, thriving cultural sector**. Achieving our Community ambition of developing **an inspired, valued and connected community** is central to this. These two focus areas are where the impact of grants, awards and subsidies is most clearly seen.

This report brings together the evidence of our programme’s impact in 2025/2026, sharing the stories of change behind the numbers and evaluating how effectively we have met our aims. It provides a picture of what the support has made possible this year and the potential for continued impact in the future.



Individual Support

Investments:

£21,275

in Higher Education Tuition Fee Grants and Awards across **6** young people

£7,000

in Higher Education Support Grants across **14** young people

£13,590

in subsidised fees and hot food provision for Summer and Christmas Youth Projects

50

performer places (20% of the casts) subsidised across our Summer and Youth Projects

5

Young Filmmaker places subsidised in our Summer Youth Project

67

people supported with a daily hot meal on our projects

Image: Owen Noon

At Mayflower we recognise how important it is, particularly in the current climate, to do what we can to remove barriers to individuals pursuing creative experiences.

Our **Higher Education Grants** have been designed to support individuals in the local community who want to progress a career within the arts.

Tuition Fee Grants

The Tuition Fee Grants for this year supported six individuals with their courses at ArtsEd, Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, Chichester University, Northern School of Acting and Guildford School of Acting.

These grants help to open the door to professional training. The impact of these grants will be seen in the future, and we will assess the outcomes through longitudinal studies. We remain connected with the recipients, and this is an important part of the value of the grant - they become our advocates, audiences, and future theatre-makers.

A further £2,600 was invested to support 37 individuals to experience other Mayflower youth activity across the year.

Evidence of long-term value has been demonstrated this year where we have welcomed two professional productions to Mayflower that featured the incredible talent of individuals previously supported by Mayflower's Higher Education Tuition Fee Grants.

Musician, George Shrapnell, was with us as part of the orchestra for the touring production of *Miss Saigon*, playing clarinet, flute, and saxophone. Since receiving the Tuition Fee Grant, George is forging a successful career as a musician in the industry. He articulates the significance of his ongoing feeling of connection to Mayflower:

“

I will always have a place here; it feels like coming home.

”



Petra Joan-Athene performed at Mayflower Studios in March 2026 with the Olivier award-winning play: *The Boy at the Back of the Class*. Petra received a Tuition Fee Grant in 2023 and credits Mayflower as a defining factor in her choice to rejoin the company of *The Boy at the Back of the Class* as a touring cast member:

“

Honestly, the thing that drew me to it this time was the fact that I was going back home to the Mayflower.

”



Many more of our recipients and wider alumni return to us while still in Education as speakers at our annual Federation of Drama Schools Insights Day. Here they can share their experiences with younger hopefuls and share the impact of their Grant or Award; in the words of one returning recipient, it can feel important *‘to come and give back.’*

These expressions of connection from students and industry professionals are significant, helping enhance Mayflower's reputation in the sector and actively demonstrating the value of our Grants and Awards in supporting careers in the industry and furthering our ecology of theatre-makers.

Higher Education Support Grants

Underpinning the Higher Education Tuition Fee Grants are Mayflower's **Higher Education Support Grants**. These are specifically designed to help people with ongoing costs of study, including books, equipment, short courses, audition fees, and associated travel costs. Recent research commissioned by Equity as part of the *Break Down Barriers* campaign found that financial considerations are a significant barrier to higher education in arts specialisms for many young people, with two thirds of working-class students prevented from applying to training institutions due to audition fees and hidden course costs. In offering support for these costs, we are acknowledging this - often overlooked - barrier and helping young people to navigate it.

In addition to supporting routes into education, our individual support also ensures that young people can spark a love of performance through access to our activities. We subsidise fees across the year on our regular youth activity.

Youth Projects

In our 2025/2026 youth projects, we invested £13,590 through subsidies and food provision to ensure that economic barriers were removed for individuals that might otherwise struggle to participate.

This support has significant impact on those who receive it. We know that performance experience is so crucial to young people for improving their wellbeing, developing creative skills, and growing their confidence amongst many other benefits. Our participants regularly share their reflections on these areas:

I realised I could do more than I thought, it was amazing.

I felt seen and heard and I had the best time.

Performing on the Mayflower stage was a dream.



We want as many young people as possible to experience these benefits and we strongly believe that it should not be someone's economic or social situation that prevents them from engaging with us.

We put this belief into action through targeted outreach work bolstered by our subsidies. It is a notion powerfully expressed by a cast member of *A Christmas Carol*, who received financial support to be part of the project:

Without it, being part of this production would have been very difficult. The fact that funding is available means money isn't the thing that stops someone from performing. It shouldn't define whether you're a good actor or not. Talent doesn't come with a price tag, and everyone deserves the opportunity to explore it.

Ticketing Support

Investments:

£3,356

Providing tickets for Youth Project cast members

£3,550

Providing tickets for **485** young people from our Community Youth Theatre Schools

£875

Providing tickets for **100** members of Mayflower's groups with ArtfulScribe and Blue Apple Theatre

£23,912

Providing ticket and tour subsidies for **16** community groups through our Community First Nights Scheme

£2,599

Providing ticket subsidies for **130** young people through our Dance Pass Scheme

One of Mayflower's foundational impacts is to spark a love of theatre and not only develop future theatre-makers but also theatregoers.

Ensuring people have access to visit the theatre and see a performance with us is crucial to achieve this. Our artistic programme is designed to offer something for everyone – it is vibrant, ambitious, and inclusive. It is also at the heart of everything we do at Mayflower, and all our participatory experiences are shaped by it in some way. We ensure we deepen that connection to the artistic vision by enabling every participant to benefit from subsidised tickets to a performance.

Community First Nights

More broadly, our Ticketing Support investment through our Community First Nights scheme allows us to create connections with communities that might experience barriers to engaging or participating in arts and cultural activities.

Community First Nights offers community groups subsidised tickets, talks and tours. We are actively removing barriers to the arts and building meaningful connections with communities and individuals. The impact of this is substantial – regular subsidies and continued engagement opportunities throughout the year for a mix of young people and adults have resulted in increased participation in the scheme with new members alongside returning individuals. This demonstrates how addressing financial and practical barriers can enable not only initial access to the arts but also continued engagement.

Many of our Community First Nights groups are facing multiple challenges in their everyday lives. Our artistic vision is to Entertain, Challenge and Amplify stories less told as well as offering an Escape from the everyday. The variety and depth of our presented work is curated to achieve this artistic vision. The difference that engaging with this work makes is summarised by a spokesperson for Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (a local refugee and asylum seekers support group):



It is hard to describe the positivity and joy we see when we bring our refugee friends to the theatre. We see a real difference in people when they can engage with activities which are a positive distraction for them during a frightening and challenging time in their lives but also allow them to learn about the UK.



Image: Owen Noon

For the young people who attend, the impact is also significant. A young carers group who have attended this year reflected that:



Going to theatre is often aligned with older people, people who are more affluent due to the cost of the tickets.

Offering these tickets to our care leavers has given them experiences that they would not have experienced. Giving them new experiences of the arts and theatre that as adults may support aspirations of a different pathway.



Southampton Social Services further support the idea that introducing young people to theatre now may well have future significance:



For the children we work with this is something they would not have been able to attend without the Mayflower support. Hopefully, they will attend the theatre as adults with their children.



Dance Pass

Young people have further been supported with Ticketing Support investment through the **Dance Pass**. This is the first year we have offered this scheme. Dance as an artform can offer a uniquely accessible point of engagement for some not currently connecting to the arts. This directly links to our organisational objective of being a leader for dance sector development and, in doing so, growing our current and future audiences for the dance programme.

Six local dance groups enjoyed subsidised tickets to see *English National Ballet's Sleeping Beauty* and – through our partnership with Dance Consortium - *MÁM* by *Teač Darhsa / Michael Keegan-Dolan*. Supported further with onstage tours and workshops, the experience was summed up as:



A surreal, once in lifetime experience.



Inspiring and eye opening to the ballet world.



Transport Support

Investments:

1

Mayflower-branded bus

£18,627

**Providing transport to our venues for
3,844 young people in education settings**

£1,625

**Providing transport to our venues for
121 community group members**

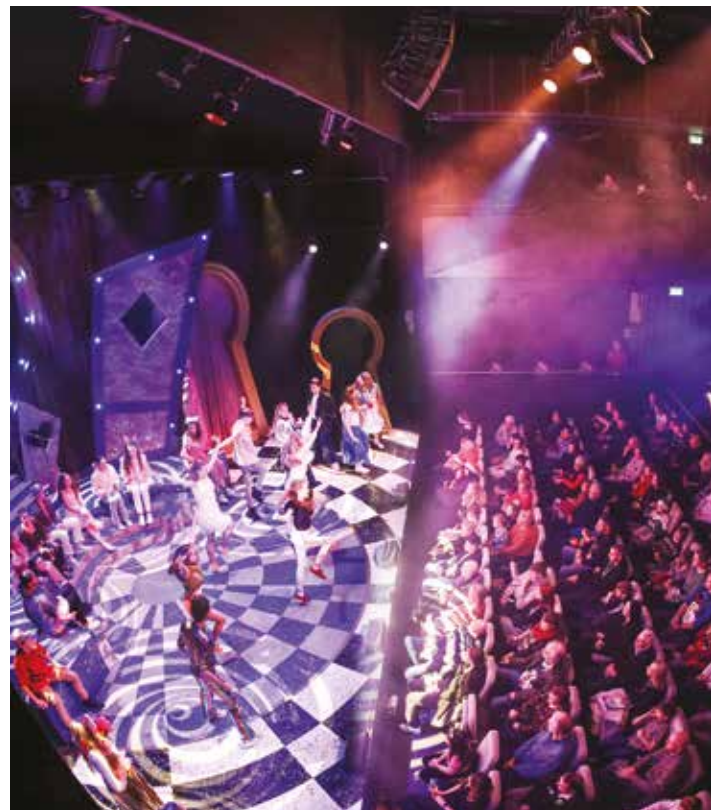
Subsidising tickets alone is not enough to encourage attendance; our pioneering Transport Subsidy and partnership with Xelabus aims to tackle both financial and practical barriers to schools and community groups engaging with theatre at our venues. The cost of transport is one of the biggest barriers for schools to bring children to our venues, with teachers often saying that without the transport subsidy they would not have been able to attend. One of our core aims is to support the creative curriculum in schools and ensuring education providers can access our venues is a critical part of this. Mayflower's investment in 2025 and 2026 has enabled 40 education providers across primary, secondary, and further education to travel to our venues free of charge this year. The impact of this is considerable. One teacher, when told the school can apply twice per year, was visibly emotional and said she will make it her mission to get her children here; 90% of her pupils have not attended the theatre previously.

It is unsurprising that we have seen a high number of first-time attendees through this scheme; of the schools who responded to our survey we know that 40% of the students attending had not previously visited the theatre. We have been told about the impact on some of these children, such as a shy young carer whose parents wrote to the school thanking them for the trip and sharing that they could see a big difference in their child's personality when they got home and were talking about the show. Such positive experiences of theatre do so much for potential future engagement and immediate wellbeing and happiness - the benefits are felt by the individual but also back in the classroom and at home. For some teachers it was a reminder of their pupils' true selves and potential – for a young boy who finds school challenging, his teacher commented:

His face during and after the performance is something I will never forget - it was pure joy.

Our Transport Subsidy extends beyond schools to our Community First Nights community groups. 121 community members – adults and young people – benefited from free transport using the Mayflower bus:

It gave the group a once in a childhood opportunity to go to the theatre.



Conclusion

Mayflower's 2025/2026 Grants, Awards and Subsidies programme has delivered significant and evidenced impact across individuals, education providers, and community groups. The investment has directly removed barriers to engagement, strengthened pathways into the creative sector, and deepened our connections with local communities. The outcomes demonstrated in this report show clear alignment with Mayflower's organisational ambitions and reinforce our pivotal role in the sector and community as we seek to sustain a thriving ecology of theatre-makers and theatregoers.

To embed this success into 2026/2027, Mayflower will sustain the investment of £100,000 and maintain all existing support. An additional £7,000 of external funding allows for further targeted ticketing support and increased individual support to include a specific artist development award.

Ongoing monitoring and long-term engagement with recipients will ensure our Grants, Awards and Subsidies programme stays relevant and impactful. We will continue to widen participation, nurture future talent, and strengthen our reputation as a leader in the sector.

Mayflower's commitment to this investment reflects our organisational vision of **inspiring experiences** for all which spark a love of theatre; fostering **an inspired, valued and connected community** and sustaining **a relevant thriving cultural sector**.



A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white lace gown and a tiara, stands in profile holding a lit candle. She is positioned in front of a dark brick wall with a large, multi-paned wooden door. Warm light from the candle and the door's opening illuminates the scene.

Mayflower

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