

Generator Impact Report 2025/26





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About Us

The Generator is the University of Greenwich's enterprise centre, helping students and graduates develop entrepreneurial skills, launch ventures and grow existing businesses. Since 2011, we have supported the creation of more than 1,000 businesses through programmes such as the Enterprise Challenge, #GreHacks, #GreStartUp, our summer accelerator, and practical in-class activities.

This year nearly 1400 students and graduates signed up to our extra-curricular events and competitions. We supported 500 students via in-curricular activity, delivered four major hackathons in partnership with employers (#GreHacks), and awarded £30,000 in seed funding. Students worked alongside peers and partners from universities across London, including King's College London, Kingston, Westminster and Goldsmiths.

7,005

hours students spent
learning about
enterprise



Foreword

Rachel Brown, Head of Enterprise and Innovation



This report brings to life the difference our support is making to students and local entrepreneurs, who in turn are creating businesses with a positive impact on our communities.

Nearly 1,400 students signed up to our extra-curricular activities this year, while more than 500 benefited from our in-class support. We also awarded £30,000 in seed funding to 10 enterprises, including staff ventures for the first time, as part of our ambition to create an enterprise ecosystem that supports - and is supported by - the whole institution.

A highlight of the year has been seeing businesses we have supported gain real traction. Enterprise Challenge winners Daniel Mbajiaku and Thankgod Izime have already processed more than \$200,000 through UltraPay since launching its beta version, while last year's winner, Alie Sesay, has expanded Elixir Punch into retailers across South London and secured further investment.

We are equally proud to support ventures driven by purpose as well as profit. This year, we were shortlisted for the Small Business Charter Award for Outstanding Support for Student Entrepreneurship and the University's Green Initiative Award. Among the founders featured in this report are Petra Pálkováčsová, whose independent publishing house Femme Social Press has sold more than 1,700 books, and Alix Corley, whose Player1 Mindcare is developing assistive technology for people with physical limitations.

We have also strengthened our links with external partners. Crystal Palace Football Club hosted the winning Pledgeball hackathon team at Selhurst Park, while Alcatel Submarine Networks invited students to present their ideas directly to senior leaders following their #GreHacks experience.

Looking ahead, we are excited by the opportunities the merger with the University of Kent may create for new collaborations, partnerships and enterprise activity across a wider geographical region.

Our Impact

Behind every number is a student developing an idea, building new skills, making connections or taking the next step towards starting and growing a business.

Our impact extends beyond individual programmes. By combining practical support, mentoring, funding and opportunities to work with employers and external partners, we help students put their learning into practice and develop the confidence to create their own opportunities.

The figures opposite offer a snapshot of the reach of that work in academic year 2025/26.



77 students attended
2+ events

£30k
seed funding
distributed

28 students attended
3+ events

500+
students
engaged through
in-curricular
activities

98 1-2-1 appointments

113 students
received
mentoring

600+
mentoring
hours received
by students

1,381
student
engaged with us

55 students
incorporated
businesses



The Enterprise Challenge

We partnered once again with FPT University Vietnam for this year's Enterprise Challenge, flying their winning student to the UK to pitch in the live finals. The competition received 194 applications, including 19 from Vietnam, and featured a strong mix of commercial, social and freelance ventures. We were also delighted to welcome Marnie Swindells, winner of BBC's The Apprentice, as chair of the judging panel.

This year also saw the introduction of a new Freelancer of the Year Award, recognising students building sustainable freelance careers alongside those developing scalable businesses. David Moluba received the £1,000 prize, while more than 30 students took part in the GRE Freelancers Half-Day Programme, developing their ideas, confidence and practical business skills.

Across the competition, students presented ventures tackling real-world challenges, from fintech and assistive technology to AI-powered wearables and engineering solutions. Training and mentoring helped participants strengthen their value propositions, financial plans and routes to market ahead of the pitch stages.

The Grand Final celebrated the ambition of Greenwich's entrepreneurial community, with UltraPay, founded by Daniel Mbajiaku and Thankgod Izime, named the overall winner.

194

Applications

Mentoring

This year we replaced traditional 1-1 mentoring in the Enterprise Challenge with a structured group mentoring system to create a better experience for both students and mentors. The new approach enables students to meet a variety of different industry experts depending on their needs, to share their learning with peers, and ensures that the time volunteered by mentors is used as effectively as possible.

Students benefited from a total of 600+ mentoring hours from the new system, and mentor feedback recorded a 100% satisfaction rate. The results suggest that clearer preparation, targeted matching and shared learning have made the programme more valuable and easier to manage.



30

Mentoring group sessions
(avg 5 per class)

150+

Mentoring hours for
Enterprise Challenge
alone

*"I love this method of mentoring;
everyone feels more prepared and the
students get to learn from each other."*

(Julie Sané-Pezet - Business Mentor)



Case Study: Bilal Hayat

Bilal Hayat is an MSc Computer Science student and founder of Extranet, a social app designed to help neurodivergent people and introverts to build meaningful connections. The idea grew from Bilal's own experience as an autistic person who often struggled to find friendships and communities where he felt understood. Rather than relying on generic introductions, Extranet connects people through communication styles, interests and hobbies.

Bilal first developed the idea through GreStartUp before entering the Enterprise Challenge to test whether it could become a viable business. The programme helped him to validate the concept, meet like-minded entrepreneurs and to build confidence in pitching and speaking about his business.

At the live finals, Bilal won the £500 Best Pitch Award as voted by the audience. He has since invested the funding into tools supporting the app's development, customer engagement and marketing, and has built an early MVP. Conversations with neurodivergent users have already shown that the concept resonates, with participants telling him that Extranet makes their experiences and challenges feel seen.

The experience also helped Bilal recognise his passion for entrepreneurship alongside his technical skills. His ambition is to develop Extranet into a global platform that tackles loneliness and helps people, particularly those who are neurodivergent, to form lasting friendships.



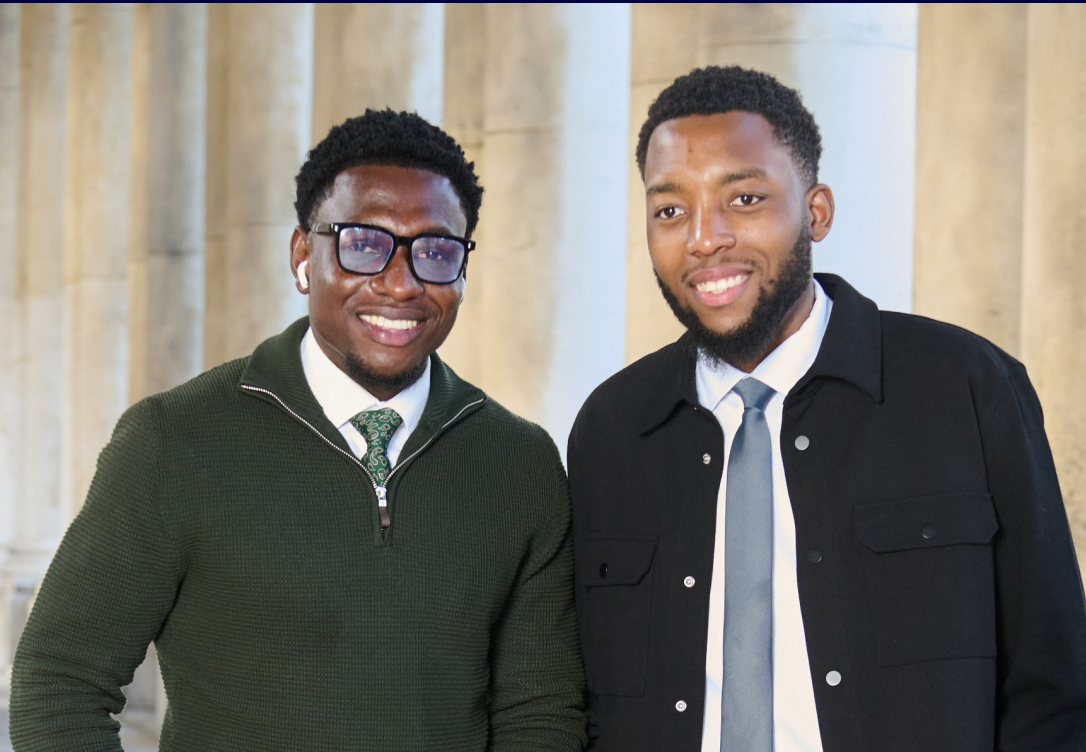
"If you're thinking of entering the Enterprise Challenge, go for it. Even if you don't create a substantial business, you'll meet like-minded people and gain a better understanding of your potential outside of academia."

Bilal Hayat

Case Study: Thankgod & Daniel

“The Generator helped me structure what I was already building. The mentorship pushed me to think more clearly about our business model, and the pitch support helped me communicate UltraPay in a way that made sense to investors.”

Thankgod Izime



UltraPay was founded by Thankgod Izime, an MSc International Business graduate, and Daniel Mbajaku to make digital wealth easier to use in everyday life. The platform enables users to hold crypto, stablecoins, fiat currency and stocks, then spend from those assets through a single Visa card compatible with Apple Pay and Google Pay.

The idea grew from the founders' frustration at seeing people build significant digital wealth but struggle to use it for ordinary purchases. UltraPay is designed particularly for diaspora communities, crypto holders, investors and digital nomads who may be underserved by traditional financial services.

The team developed UltraPay with support from the Generator, taking part in enterprise mentoring and pitch competitions before winning the 2026 Enterprise Challenge. Mentors helped the founders sharpen their value proposition, strengthen their go-to-market strategy and financial projections, and communicate the business more clearly to investors.

UltraPay also secured £5,000 in Santander funding through the Generator. The funding supported its card infrastructure partnership with Rain, helping the team bring the product to market. Since launching its private beta, UltraPay has issued cards to around 30 users, with almost 2,000 people joining its waitlist. Those early users processed more than \$200,000 through the platform in just 30 days.

Thankgod said the experience strengthened his skills in investor communication, financial compliance and making decisions quickly while completing his MSc.

Case Study: Alie Sesay

Alie Sesay is the founder of Elixir Punch, a South London soft-drinks brand creating bold fruit punches inspired by multicultural London. What began as a homemade recipe sold locally has developed into a professionally manufactured product stocked by independent convenience stores, wholesalers and more than 100 retail accounts.

Alie engaged with the Generator throughout his studies, taking part in the Enterprise Challenge and winning the 2025 University of Greenwich Entrepreneur of the Year Award. The £5,000 prize was reinvested into manufacturing, stock, packaging and marketing, helping Elixir move from small-scale production towards larger commercial runs.

18 months on from winning the competition, Alie has secured further private investment, developed wholesale partnerships and completed his first 20,000-bottle production run in January 2026. The stock sold through within a few months, leading to a second 20,000-bottle run. Having previously supplied around 30 independent stores, the business now works with more than 100 retail accounts.

The growth of Elixir Punch has also given Alie the confidence to leave his job and focus on the company full-time, with the ambition of building a nationally recognised drinks brand. Alongside growing the business, he has developed skills in sales, negotiation, leadership, marketing, financial management and working with retailers, manufacturers and investors.



“The support gave me the confidence to believe that Elixir could become much bigger than the business I originally started.”

Alie Sesay

Case Study: Tegan Bernard

“Even if you don’t leave with money, you leave with experience – and as a business owner, that is the most important thing.”

Tegan Bernard



Tegan Bernard is studying a BA in Business, Entrepreneurship and Innovation and is the founder of Pop Tales, an alcoholic bubble tea brand combining familiar cocktails with the flavours and experience of bubble tea. The idea grew from Tegan’s experience as a student and former bartender. As a non-drinker at the time, she often found that mocktails felt like an afterthought, inspiring her to create a more inclusive experience with alcoholic and non-alcoholic options that look and feel equally special.

Pop Tales was already trading when Tegan entered the Enterprise Challenge, but the competition gave her the opportunity to test the concept beyond her existing customer base. Pitching to judges and audiences helped validate the idea and gave her greater confidence to step forward as the face of the brand.

Tegan went on to win the £2,000 Commercial Category Award. She has reinvested the funding into stock, branding and marketing as she develops the business and explores a future ready-to-drink format for shops and supermarkets.

Group mentoring also helped Tegan transform her pitch, identifying which information mattered most and how to communicate the brand more clearly. For someone who had previously described herself as a “phantom business owner”, the experience helped her become more visible and confident as an entrepreneur.

Case Study: Alix Corley

Alix Corley, a BSc Computer Science Cyber Security graduate, founded Player 1 Mindcare to develop assistive technology for people who cannot use conventional controllers. The idea is deeply personal: after spending seven years as a full-time carer for his mother, who had Huntington's Disease, Alix saw how losing physical movement could also remove access to television, radio, games and other everyday forms of independence.

Inspired by technologies developed for people such as Stephen Hawking, Alix began exploring a hands-free multimedia system using eye-tracking and EEG technology. He entered the Enterprise Challenge's Social Impact category, where repeated pitching, feedback and contact with other student entrepreneurs helped him clarify the vision and build confidence in the venture.

After winning the Social Category of the Enterprise Challenge, Alix invested the £2,000 prize fund in research and development, purchasing a mini PC, eye-tracking camera, EEG headset and Bluetooth equipment for early pilot testing. He also covered essential business costs and joined a local accelerator.

Since then, Player 1 Mindcare has expanded to a four-person founding team. Alix has applied to Santander X, Barclays' Digital Demo Directory and Scottish EDGE, and has pitched for £2.5 million of investment to Vortex Capital. Preparing for investment has pushed him to strengthen his understanding of MVP development, validation, target markets and business strategy.



"Winning gave me a massive confidence boost that this is a cause worth chasing."

Alix Corley

Case Study: Keira Naidoo

Keira Naidoo developed PacerX while completing the final year of her BSc (Hons) Computer Science (Artificial Intelligence). A competitive distance runner herself, Keira experienced first-hand how difficult it can be to maintain a precise training pace when running alone. PacerX is her solution: an adaptive robotic pacing companion designed to act as a physical training partner, helping runners complete sessions more accurately and independently.

Keira entered PacerX into the 2026 Enterprise Challenge, where regular one-to-one sessions with Enterprise Adviser Junior Ogunyemi helped her to refine the idea and consider it from a user and business perspective, rather than purely as a technical project. The process helped her separate PacerX's ambitious long-term vision from the core features needed for an effective first prototype.

After pitching in the live finals, Keira won the £3,000 Engineers in Business Award. She is reinvesting the funding into hardware, electronics, manufacturing and testing as she works towards producing the first small batch of PacerX units for real-world trials with runners and running clubs.

Development has continued since the competition, with Keira building the app-controlled pacing system, sensor and safety functions, while planning future features including adaptive pacing, performance analysis and computer vision.

The experience has strengthened her skills in engineering, presenting technical ideas, commercial thinking and managing the scope of an ambitious project.

"The Enterprise Challenge showed me that I didn't need to wait until I had graduated or become an experienced engineer before beginning to build something meaningful."

Keira Naidoo



#GreHacks

Over the past year, #GreHacks continued to bring students, academics and external partners together to tackle live industry challenges through collaborative problem-solving. Across four major hackathons, more than 120 University of Greenwich students took part alongside participants from King's College London, Kingston University and the University of Westminster.

Working in multidisciplinary teams, students responded to briefs developed with partners including Pledgeball, Syntech Biofuel, Alcatel Submarine Networks, Palace for Life Foundation and the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Challenges explored sustainability, inclusive workplaces, community engagement and social care, while the programme also expanded to Medway with the first Green Den hackathon.

Each event combined a live brief with expert mentoring and practical workshops in problem-solving, teamwork, communication and pitching, giving students the chance to apply their academic knowledge in a professional setting.

Several collaborations also created opportunities beyond the hackathons. Three winning teams from the Alcatel Submarine Networks event were invited to present their proposals directly to senior leaders, while the winning Pledgeball team visited Crystal Palace FC's Selhurst Park and connected with the Palace for Life Foundation. One participant also secured an internship following their #GreHacks experience.

The programme continues to demonstrate the value of giving students authentic challenges, while strengthening connections between the University, employers and the wider community.

100%

Reported
a positive
experience

100%

Made new
connections



Syntech Biofuel

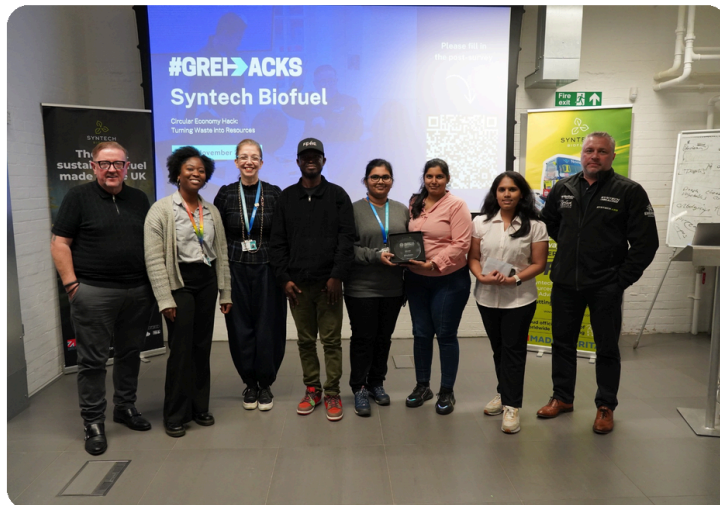
(2 day hackathon November 2025)

Syntech Biofuel is a renewable fuel manufacturer focused on circular economy solutions. Students were challenged to develop scalable ideas for turning waste streams into valuable resources and encouraging more sustainable behaviours across universities, businesses and communities.

"The creativity, teamwork, and drive to create meaningful, real-world sustainability solutions were really exciting. From tackling food waste and plastics to innovative ideas around used cooking oil, algae, and tap-water contaminants, every team demonstrated commercial awareness, ingenuity, and commitment to positive change."

This was our second hackathon collaboration in a year with the University of Greenwich and once again, we were blown away by the students' hard work, professionalism, creativity, and enthusiasm for sustainability. Their ideas give us real confidence in the next generation of innovators driving the circular economy forward."

(Mike O'loné - Syntech Biofuel)



RO's Kitchen

(Mini hackathon March 2026)

RO's is an award-winning food and sauce brand inspired by bold, authentic West African flavours. Students were challenged to assess the brand's competitive position and develop a creative social media strategy to support its growth in the UK.

"Thank you again for having me engage with your students during the hackathon last Monday. It was a great experience observing their interaction with the challenge and watching their pitches."

It was great having one of the hackathon students intern with RO's Kitchen for six weeks - her tenacity and resourcefulness were exactly what was needed."

(Roseanne Cole - RO'S Kitchen)



Alcatel

(2 day hackathon May 2026)

Alcatel Submarine Networks is a global leader in undersea cable networks. Students tackled three live challenges: creating more inclusive onboarding and neurodiversity support, developing FOD safety training, and improving marine maintenance reporting.

"The quality of the students' presentations and the solutions they developed was really impressive. They brought well thought-through ideas that could genuinely be used at Alcatel, while challenging us to think differently about technology, inclusion and the future workplace. The hackathon also gives students invaluable experience of teamwork, communication and presenting real solutions to professionals, helping prepare them for what businesses are actually looking for."

(Claire Chapman - Alcatel Submarine Networks)



Venture Crawl

Venture Crawl brought together 36 University of Greenwich students and five students from Goldsmiths for a full-day exploration of London's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The group visited Apple, IKEA and the Bank of England, hearing directly from industry professionals about innovation, leadership, careers and the role of entrepreneurial thinking within large organisations.

The day concluded at King's College London, where students joined participants from universities across the capital to celebrate enterprise and build new connections. A highlight was seeing the University of Greenwich's 2025 Enterprise Challenge winner represent the University as our pitch champion, presenting their venture alongside student entrepreneurs from other institutions.

By expanding beyond start-ups to include global organisations, this year's programme demonstrated that entrepreneurial skills are valuable in businesses of every size. It also gave students the opportunity to grow their networks, encounter different working environments and consider a wider range of career and venture pathways.



Generator Bursary

This year, the Generator received £15,000 from Santander to award as three bursaries of £5,000 each to businesses founded by University of Greenwich students and staff. To be successful, businesses needed to demonstrate commercial traction, clear growth potential and a credible plan for using the investment.

Following a competitive application and interview process, the bursaries were awarded to Laura Gama, founder of Psychology Behind It, an online psychology community supporting people to better understand their minds and develop practical wellbeing skills; Christy Llewellyn, founder of LOSTE, a reusable false-nail brand offering a gel-like finish without damaging natural nails; and Petra Pálkovácssová, founder of Femme Social Press, a women-led independent publishing house championing underrepresented and boundary-crossing work.

Petra's journey demonstrates the value of sustained engagement with the Generator. After first taking part in a #GreHack with independent publisher Cassava Republic Press in 2020, she went on to launch her own publishing company in 2024, progressing to the finals of the Enterprise Challenge with the business in 2025. She received her first Santander bursary in the same year, before being awarded a larger bursary of £5,000 as a staff member in 2026 to scale the company further, in recognition of the traction they'd already gained.

This includes publishing 8 new books since launching the business, receiving expert mentoring by the Society of Young Publishers, collaborating with PLP Labs on their publication Symbiocene Architecture, which included a foreword by Merlin Sheldrake, selling in excess of 1,700 books, gaining over 262,000 views on social media, securing a place at Queer Bath festival, and with the help of the £5,000 bursary, securing BookSource as a national distributor of their books going forward.



Petra Pálkovácssová, founder of Femme Social Press

Venture Voices

This year we launched Venture Voices, a six-week speaker series created to give students honest, practical insight into the realities of building a business. Eight external speakers explored themes including entrepreneurship, branding, sales, finance, team development and resilience, combining practical advice with personal stories from their own journeys.

The series concluded with a special session featuring BBC's The Apprentice winner Marnie Swindells, whose experience of launching and growing a business reinforced the importance of perseverance, confidence and learning from setbacks.

The programme engaged 87 students from 32 courses. 26 attended more than one session, while nine completed the full series. Venture Voices also generated 15 referrals into other Generator programmes, showing that the series encouraged students to deepen their engagement with enterprise support.

Feedback highlighted the value of hearing directly from experienced founders. Eshara Fernando described the programme as “one of the most inspiring learning experiences during my university journey”, while Faria Tabassum reflected on the importance of building a strong reputation and being intentional about who you work with and how you show up.

87

participants

8

external
speakers



Growth Conference

The Greenwich Growth Conference brought together more than 70 local businesses for a day of insight, connection and collaboration with the University. Attendees explored the support available through Greenwich's enterprise and innovation ecosystem while sharing experiences and building new relationships.

The event was headlined by Andrew Xenii, founder of Nobody's Child and Fabacus, who reflected on the journey from local start-up to global business and shared practical lessons on innovation, growth and maintaining a clear vision.

The conference concluded with Tamsin Bradberry's overview of the international recruitment landscape, offering businesses practical guidance on attracting and retaining global talent. The event strengthened links between the University and the local business community, giving attendees new knowledge, useful contacts and fresh perspectives to support future growth.



Social Impact

We continue to see year-on-year growth in the number of students who want to create positive social change through the businesses they launch. This year, more than 50 students and graduates submitted social enterprise ideas to the Enterprise Challenge, addressing issues including community wellbeing, the environment and health.

In May, more than 40 students from Greenwich and Goldsmiths took part in Hack for Good, developing ideas around unemployment, mental health and green initiatives.

Social impact was also embedded across #GreHacks. Students worked with Syntech Biofuel on circular economy solutions, developed ideas for neurodiversity-friendly workplaces with Alcatel, and explored community-led social care with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. A Pledgeball challenge also asked students to help football clubs reduce waste from football kits.

Enterprise Challenge Social Category winner Alix Corley has grown Player1 Mindcare into a four-person founding team developing hands-free computing technology for people with disabilities.

Finalist Bilal Hayat is developing Extranet to tackle loneliness among neurodivergent people and introverts. Early conversations with 10–15 neurodivergent people found that the concept made participants feel their experiences were recognised.

Some of our commercial ventures are also creating positive impacts on communities. UltraPay aims to make finance more inclusive and borderless, attracting almost 2,000 people to its waitlist, while Pop Tales offers alcoholic, non-alcoholic and halal options to create a more inclusive social experience.

The Generator Advisory Board

Our advisory board is comprised of entrepreneurs, innovators and business leaders who with their varied expertise and industry knowledge help us to continuously develop our programmes. The board meets twice a year to discuss our strategy and to make sure we are maximising our impact on the local business community. This year we named a new chair and accepted two new members to the board with experience in finance, marketing and social enterprise.



Ella Weinberg
Advisory Board
Chair
Entrepreneur



Christofi Christou
Economic
Inclusion
- Peabody



Joey Spenser-Campbell
Wealth Manager
- Santander UK



Artjom Jekimtsev
Founder
- Drove



Roneish Myers
Founder
- MoneyHeave



Hannah Spence
Founder
- Clockflower
- Prep4Prospects



Yoma Kukor
Co-founder
- Vendoir



Emma Lawton
Co-founder
- More Human

Contact Us



Rachel Brown
Head of
Enterprise &
Innovation



Lynette Lisk
Programmes
Manager



Junior Ogunyemi
Enterprise
Advisor



Lea Henry
Enterprise &
Events Advisor



Alex Wilding
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