

# Building Tomorrow's Skills in Today's Charities

A Roundtable Insight Report



January 2026

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## Foreword

Charities hold our communities together. Every day they respond to complexity, crisis and change with creativity, compassion and commitment. That makes the central question in this report especially important: how do we equip people in our sector with the skills they need to shape tomorrow, not just survive today?

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When I first brought a handful of charities together the idea was simple: we're stronger when we learn together. That small group has grown into the Charity Learning Consortium, a thriving network where members from over 400 charities freely share experience, challenges and solutions. Our events, conversations and collaboration are where the real magic happens; peers learning from peers, openly and honestly.

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This Roundtable Insight Report is a product of that generosity. The learning and development practitioners who contributed bring a unique charitable lens to the future skills debate, grounded in values, proximity to communities, and a deep understanding of inequality, inclusion and hope.

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They remind us that while technology, AI and data are transforming work, our sector's impact will always depend on vital human skills such as resilience, empathy, courage, collaboration and values-led leadership.

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For charities, learning and development are not a "nice to have", they sit at the heart of our effectiveness and Employee Value Proposition.

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We offer meaningful work, visible impact and genuine opportunities for growth, and people development is what turns those promises into reality. By investing in skills, we enable people to do their best work for the communities they serve, while building careers that feel purposeful, supported and future-ready.

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I am hugely grateful to everyone who took part, and to Andy Lancaster for distilling their thinking. I hope this report sparks fresh conversations and bolder action across our sector, and that other sectors, in turn, draw on these important insights as they consider how they develop their own people's skills for the future of work.

### **Martin Baker**

*CEO and Founder, The Charity Learning Consortium*



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## Executive Summary

This report draws on insights from 102 learning and development practitioners working in UK charities to answer a key question: how can charities build tomorrow's skills in their people today? Informed by skills priorities in the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Future of Jobs Report 2025 <sup>[1]</sup>, it argues that charities must develop key human, values-led and digital capabilities to remain effective and attractive as employers.

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Through two roundtables held in Edinburgh and London, and a survey, participants prioritised and ranked seven future-critical skills for charities:

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- Resilience, flexibility and agility top the list of critical capabilities underpinning adaptive change and wellbeing. Without these, other skills are unlikely to thrive.

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- Sharing equal second place priority are leadership and social influence and technological literacy. Leadership and management is key for a positive culture and high performance, with inconsistent approaches seen as a key risk. At the same time, digital competence is generally lagging.

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- The use of AI and big data is also a rising priority. AI is already reshaping work, but literacy, ethics and confidence are challenging. Participants call for a move from ad-hoc experimentation to a clear values-aligned strategy for using AI.

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- The next three skills priorities; talent management, curiosity and lifelong learning and creative thinking, focus on ensuring organisations are future-fit. With constrained pay and flat structures, charities need creative career paths, coaching and mentoring, and cultures that expect and empower curiosity, experimentation and reflection.

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Beyond the WEF list, respondents highlight the additional skills priorities of coaching, critical thinking, change leadership, advocacy, reflective practice and communication.

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The report also frames effective ways in which skills are built. Rather than relying on formal courses, practitioners suggest creative, often lower-cost approaches including:

- Peer learning and shared expertise; e.g. learning communities and skills swaps.
- Learning through experience; e.g. projects, secondments and volunteering.
- Coaching, mentoring and reflection embedded in daily work.
- Personalised self-directed learning pathways supported by AI assistants.
- Microlearning development opportunities in the flow of work.

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**These insights lead to five key calls to action:**

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- Put resilience, flexibility and agility at the core of strategy and culture.
- Close the digital and AI divide as an inclusion issue, not just for efficiency.
- Rethink talent and learning moving to creative skills-based pathways.
- Ensure stakeholders see skills investment as mission-critical, not an overhead.
- Collaborate across the sector; no organisation can solve this alone!

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## Introduction and Context

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The Future of Jobs Report 2025 <sup>[1]</sup> signals a major shift in the global labour market. The World Economic Forum (WEF) projects that technological acceleration, the green transition, demographic change and economic turbulence will create 170 million new jobs this decade, while 92 million will disappear. The result is a net increase of 78 million roles, equal to 14% of today's employment base.

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Drawing on insights from more than 1,000 large employers across 22 industries and 14 million workers, the report maps where work is heading, identifies the fastest growing roles and outlines the skills people need to stay employable and be effective.

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The findings matter for every sector, including charities navigating rising demand, tight resources and rapid digitalisation. They point to a labour market where value depends on both technology fluency and human capability.

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A key finding was the set of ten fastest-growing skills predicted to be essential by 2030, illustrated in the World Economic Forum infographic in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: The Top 10 fastest growing skills by 2030

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## Methodology

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To examine the implications of this report on future skills development within the charitable third sector, the Charity Learning Consortium (CLC) undertook a focused qualitative inquiry.

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Two roundtable events were held in September 2025 (Edinburgh) and November 2025 (London) to explore the theme “Building Tomorrow’s Skills in Today’s Charities.”

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A total of 102 participants took part, drawn from CLC’s membership and representing diverse charitable areas, organisational sizes, and operational models.

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Although not statistically representative of the entire sector, this purposive sampling approach enabled the inclusion of information-rich insights from learning and development practitioners with direct experience of emerging skills needs and challenges.

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Each roundtable session lasted 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured format grounded in three core questions:

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- Which two skills from the Future of Jobs Report 2025 “Top 10 fastest growing skills by 2030” list feel most urgent for your organisation right now, and what makes them so critical in your context?
- Which important skills might be missing from the “Top 10 fastest growing skills by 2030” list, given the charity sector’s unique values, missions and cultures?
- What creative approaches could help future skills flourish in your organisational context?

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To strengthen the validity of the findings, participants were also invited to complete an online survey addressing the same core questions. Together, these data sources enabled a more robust understanding of sector-wide patterns and priorities.

The findings are presented under the following sections:

**Part 1:** What Are the Seven Top Future Skills for Charities?

**Part 2:** What Additional Skills Do Charities Prioritise?

**Part 3:** How Can Charities Creatively Develop Skills?

**Part 4:** Conclusions and Calls To Action

Report Author

**Andy Lancaster**

*Chief Learning Officer and Consultant,  
Reimagine People Development*



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## Part 1: What Are the Seven Top Future Skills for Charities?

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This section sets out the top seven skills that the CLC learning practitioners see as most critical for the future. Based on the World Economic Forum's "Top 10 fastest growing skills by 2030" list, participants prioritised the capabilities that matter most in their context. The results highlight a blend of human and technical strengths with the importance and relevance of each skill summarised with practical tactics for L&D teams.

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### 1. Resilience, Flexibility and Agility

One third of respondents identified resilience, flexibility and agility as the top priority area for third sector organisations. This is by far the primary development need reported.

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The feedback is clear: in an environment of constant change and increasing pressure to meet operational and stakeholder demands, resilience is no longer just an individual trait. It has become a vital organisational capability.

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Respondents powerfully described the turbulent context in the third sector: "Massive change is happening right now," "The goalposts are constantly changing," and "We face underfunding... job insecurity... and the increased pressures of work."

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A clear distinction emerged between the need for individual and organisational resilience: one respondent noted "Work has an emotional toll," but there is "... also the need for organisational resilience in the changing climate."

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Flexibility is framed as the ability to respond to the real environment, adapting to what is possible rather than what is ideal: "Our services are changing constantly... more resilience is required." Flexibility emphasises the importance of creating good solutions rather than striving for perfection.

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Agility is seen as the crucial ability to pivot creatively without panic. As one respondent noted, "We need to always be asking could we do this another way?" Traditional operating methods may no longer serve organisations well, especially with rapidly advancing technologies.



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Together, resilience, flexibility, and agility form the foundation for both learning and development practice but also organisational success in the face of change.

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Resilience underpins wellbeing in fast-changing circumstances. Flexibility drives responsiveness. And agility supports innovative service delivery in challenging funding environments.

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These three capabilities ultimately determine whether an organisation thrives or falters and must be a top priority on the L&D team's agenda and advocacy. One respondent captured the gravity of the situation: "They must be the foundations, without which none of the other skills are supported."

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The overwhelming feedback also makes it clear: flexibility and agility, alongside resilience, are equally indispensable skills for third-sector L&D professionals.

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### **Resilience, Flexibility and Agility: 5 Skill Development Tactics**

- Position resilience, flexibility and agility as organisational safeguards: Show how they link to key KPIs, reduce risk, protect service continuity and strengthen teams.
- Anchor the case in data and real consequences: Connect gaps in these capabilities to turnover, burnout, stalled change and missed funding opportunities.
- Encourage and support leaders to develop these behaviours: Role modelling sets the tone, so provide practical and accessible resources for busy managers.
- Co-create a shared skills model: Define what resilience, flexibility and agility look like in context and identify how progress and impact can be tracked.
- Embed these capabilities into the workflow: Use reflective practice for individual and team activities to build these skills through regular habit, not one-off courses.

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## 2. Leadership and Social Influence

Sharing second position on priority areas for development was leadership skills and influence which showed up as both a risk and opportunity.

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Respondents named some uncomfortable truths: “Management styles vary hugely... often in a negative way.” Another named a deeper issue; “Boss culture”, a signal of power, control and status overshadowing trust and collaboration.

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These comments aren’t throwaway remarks. They point to a capability gap that touches performance, culture and trust. And it’s a gap charities can’t afford to ignore.

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Today leadership is less about hierarchy and more about influence, integrity and the ability to shape environments where people can thrive. It’s social as much as structural. It’s about compassion, courage and accountability in action.

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One respondent captured it perfectly: “Kind leadership is modelling best practice, having those difficult conversations and creating teams where all belong.” That’s not soft; it’s skilled.

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As pressures in the charitable sector intensify and are the backdrop to daily work, the need becomes sharper. As one participant put it: “Organisations are undergoing a huge transformation... we need leaders capable of getting us there.”

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Change exposes capability gaps quickly.

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Another insight struck at a root issue: “Leadership is different from the role people were promoted from. It is a distinct skill set.” This sits at the heart of developing leadership and social influence skills. Technical excellence doesn’t automatically translate into leadership effectiveness. Charities must build that bridge intentionally for those promoted.

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And because charities operate within a wider ecosystem, leadership influence must stretch beyond the organisation. One respondent put it plainly: “We need thought leaders that can shape policy.” Network influence and public voice are part of the charitable leadership role.

In short, leadership development in charities isn’t a nice-to-have. It shapes culture, performance and impact inside the organisation and far beyond it.

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## Leadership and Social Influence: 5 Skill Development Tactics

- Build transition support for those promoted: Provide upskilling options for those emerging into roles with leadership such as accessible resources, peer circles and mentoring.
- Develop social influence as a core skill: Develop storytelling and strategic communication skills and use simulations to strengthen the ability to influence teams and networks.
- Grow relational leadership behaviours: Use feedback, coaching and case studies, to develop compassion, courage, accountability and trust.
- Equip leaders for change: Support reflection on transformation through learning sprints and feedback loops to develop leadership and adaptability in uncertainty.
- Reward influence, not authority: Recognise inclusive leadership, embed influence and integrity into expectations, and use 360 degree insights to challenge power-heavy habits.

## 2. Technological Literacy

Sharing equal second in the priority for skills development was the capability to use technology.

For many there is a widening and worrying gap: “People are behind on this.” “We have very low technological literacy... and it’s hard to keep up.” “There are big gaps across the organisation.” The message is consistent and uncomfortable; digital capability is lagging, and there is a significant impact.

Digital competence is no longer optional. People can’t learn effectively, collaborate across teams, or support service users confidently. Nor can they take advantage of emerging AI tools that have the potential to radically improve practice and productivity.

Several respondents linked this directly to inclusion and equity. One commented on generational gaps with “... some older employees not feeling confident.” Confidence gaps quickly become participation gaps, and participation gaps become performance gaps.

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Frontline roles often feel this most sharply. As one respondent observed, “We assume they can access or use technology... all our learning is online.” Such assumptions are costly. When staff struggle to navigate platforms, systems or digital learning environments, support becomes inconsistent and service quality uneven. This makes frontline digital capability a strategic priority, not just a training issue.

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Technological literacy also matters for the people charities serve. As another respondent put it, “An ordinary life now includes involvement in the digital world.” Many clients can only engage fully with services, opportunities and social connections when they have the digital skills to participate. Staff who lack digital competence struggle to support that opportunity.

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All of this sits against the backdrop of an accelerating shift toward AI-enabled work. One participant warned, “Get the basics right now to prepare for AI which is developing at pace.” Without foundational digital skills, AI readiness is impossible, and the sector risks falling permanently behind.

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This is about the future of work. And respondents understand what is at stake: “We are simply leaving people behind if this isn’t supported.”

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### **Technological Literacy: 5 Skill Development Tactics**

- Start with confidence, not complexity: Create safe spaces to encourage curiosity and small steps in digital capability. Confidence unlocks participation, and participation drives performance.
- Build digital basics into workflows: Embed small digital tasks into daily work. Micro-practice and nudges accelerate capability more effectively than standalone training.
- Design digital solutions for frontline realities, not assumptions: Test solutions in operational environments before rollout. Provide mobile-friendly access and simple guides.
- Close inclusion gaps with targeted support: Use diagnostics to spot workforce capability gaps. Then offer tailored support through buddies, drop-ins or peer mentoring.
- Prepare people now for an AI-enabled future: AI readiness depends on digital foundations. Prioritise the use of core tools so staff can then engage effectively with emerging AI.

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## 4. AI and Big Data

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A close fourth on priority skills was the use of AI and data, where the responses carry a mix of urgency and realism. AI isn't on the horizon. It's already here, shaping decisions, speeding tasks and shifting expectations faster than most organisations can absorb.

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People recognise this. One respondent put it simply: "We can't avoid it, so we need to be equipped to use it well."

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There's excitement and anxiety. Several respondents noted ethical risks such as: "Avoid GDPR violations... keeping the human in the AI." Others see the opportunity for efficiency: "With limited funding... we need to find ways of working that are more efficient because we can't just recruit more people."

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But the deepest concern is understanding. As one respondent noted: "... there's such a gap in literacy about AI." Without understanding, AI becomes guesswork at scale. Without strategy, it becomes fragmented and risky.

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Respondents know what's at stake: relevance, service quality, trust and decisions that stand up to scrutiny. They also see AI's creative potential. One captured the necessary shift: "Build AI agents, use tools thoughtfully... think creatively around data and solutions."

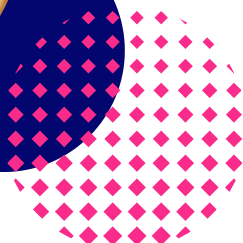
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The message is clear. AI and Big Data are the new organisational literacy; an essential skill. And if charities don't invest in strategy, skills, and safe use, they could fall behind while others move ahead.

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## AI and Big Data: 5 Skill Development Tactics

- Build essential AI literacy for all: Make it easy for staff to learn the basics of AI, how to use it in context, safely and ethically so they can build confident, informed practice.
- Develop ethical and safe-use confidence: Use real work situations to instruct people about GDPR, bias, and making ethical decisions to improve human-centred AI practice.
- Strengthen data fluency across teams: Provide staff with the tools and targeted support they need to understand data and use it to make better decisions.
- Enable hands-on experimentation: Let people try things out. Create safe "sandboxes" and use real problems to let staff practice with AI tools to boost their creative confidence.
- Build strategic capability, not just skills: Help staff understand how AI affects strategy so they can choose the right tools, make better decisions, and have better governance.



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## 5. Talent Management

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Across the sector, organisations are under increasing pressure to attract, develop and retain talent. The headline challenge is stark: “We’re losing talent in a difficult sector and it’s hard to recruit and retain.” Therefore, skills in talent development are seen as an essential priority.

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Turnover is being driven by limited progression routes, constrained pay and steadily rising delivery demands. One respondent captured the issue succinctly: “It’s about keeping employees motivated, with job satisfaction, and lowering turnover.”

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As in many sectors, traditional career ladders are no longer adequate. Employees expect development, mobility and meaningful stretch even when organisational structures are flat. As one respondent put it, “Career development is no longer about vertical progression.” Talent pathways must evolve to support “... a more flexible, skills-based, tailored culture” and more systemic, creative thinking about “... how skills are used across the organisation to develop talent.”

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But the barriers aren’t only structural; they are cultural. One contributor acknowledged the deeper challenge: “There’s a lack of desire to shape the environment around individuals who could make a big difference.”

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Smaller organisations, as many charities are, feel these pressures most acutely. “There is not a lot of career progression... we need other types of opportunities to attract and retain talent.” That calls for a broader view of career development beyond promotion, with exposure to projects, cross-functional work, secondments, partnership assignments, shadowing, and short-term innovation roles that build capability, engagement and confidence.

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There is also a longer-term relational dynamic. In some cases, staff may need to leave to gain vital experience elsewhere, to return later in a promoted role. This makes a positive, thriving culture essential for maintaining ongoing connections with high-performing people: “When we don’t have space for them to progress... they may be willing to come back at a higher level.” This is strategic talent thinking: people may leave, but maintaining the relationship increases the likelihood they will return stronger.

Ultimately, talent management isn’t an HR process. It is the organisational discipline of creating conditions where people choose to stay, choose to grow and choose to contribute. It is how the charitable sector protects its future capability, and the evidence suggests there is significant room for more creative, systemic approaches, supported by planned upskilling.

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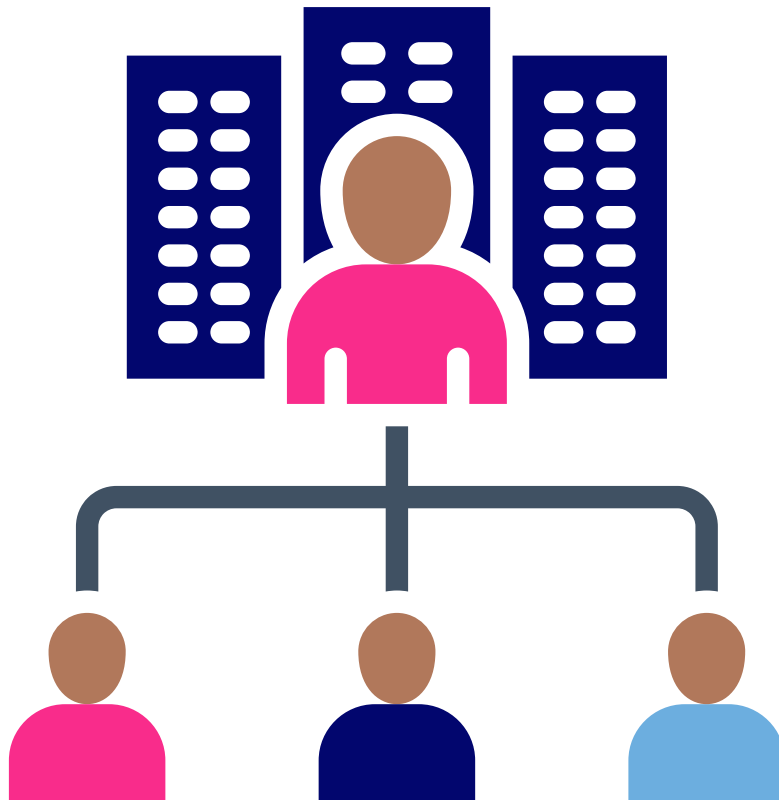
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## Talent Management: 5 Skill Development Tactics

- Build flexible, skills-based learning pathways: Create progression without promotions, through modular learning and role-agnostic skills development routes.
- Formalise cross-functional development: Provide access to short-term projects, secondments, shadowing and an internal “opportunities marketplace.”
- Strengthen the coaching culture: Equip managers with practical coaching tools and feedback skills. Consider cross-departmental mentoring.
- Develop an alumni and returner strategy: Maintain relationships with leavers to build a long-term pipeline of experienced talent.
- Implement talent intelligence: Use skills audits and AI tracking of critical capability to target development opportunities and allocate people to project opportunities.



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## 6. Curiosity and Lifelong Learning

Sixth in the priority skills development list was fostering curiosity and lifelong learning.

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Curiosity is recognised as a catalytic force. One respondent summed it up: “Curiosity drives so many other skills.”

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Respondents see curiosity as the mindset that fuels innovation and growth. It transforms perspectives, sustains motivation and encourages reflection. And crucially it keeps organisations from becoming trapped in a “head down” operational mode: “It’s easy to get focussed on delivery and forget to see what other organisations are doing.”

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Curiosity is what enables people to move toward the unfamiliar rather than retreat from it; emerging from established routines to innovative delivery models. It underpins AI readiness, digital confidence, leadership, creativity and collaboration. In rapidly changing environments, it is an essential mindset that helps people evolve as things around them shift.

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A commitment to on-going professional and personal development is seen as essential for future performance. “Our staff NEED to be lifelong learners... they need to keep up with industry to be relevant to the next generation.”

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Yet respondents also recognise a cultural barrier: engagement in learning and development is inconsistent; “... encouraging take-up is patchy.” Whilst learning can be offered, not all choose to engage.

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So, it’s vital that development opportunities fit in with busy work schedules. When learning is relevant to work, presented in easy-to-understand, accessible formats, built into daily workflows, supported and emphasised by managers, and connected to career advancement, it becomes more engaging.

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And, the concept of lifelong learning raises opportunities for supporting personal development beyond the current role, which is a vital part of a strong Employee Value Proposition.

In a fast-changing world, curiosity is the root of a healthy system for charities, and lifelong learning is what makes them perform and grow.

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## Curiosity and Lifelong Learning: 5 Skill Development Tactics

- Make learning part of everyday work: Encourage short learning moments that fit into busy schedules and encourage managers to create space for staff to develop.
- Model curiosity and psychological safety in action: Invite staff to share what they're learning and create a culture where it is safe to ask questions and for help.
- Connect learning to real work: Link development opportunities to current projects. Explore future role and career skills needs and offer meaningful stretch opportunities.
- Create collaborative learning spaces: Use learning circles, communities, knowledge swaps and "working out loud" principles to share insights and build collective curiosity.
- Support future-focused learning: Enable development opportunities beyond current roles to enhance the Employee Value Proposition, for example shadowing others.



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## 7. Creative Thinking

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The final position in the top 7 skills development priorities for charities was creative thinking. For charities, creativity is about resilience, imagination and adaptability rolled into one.

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Respondents see it as the ability to open possibilities despite constraints. “Not seeing one answer but multiple... is vital for everything at work.” One said it plainly, we must: “... ensure creative thinking isn’t lost.”

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Creativity is the antidote to stagnation. And it’s not just about ideation, it’s about courage. “Some teams are better than others at innovating and being brave to try new things.” Often creative thinking and behaviours need to be replicated across functions, multiplying pockets of great practice.

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Creativity also connects performance and growth. In a resource-stretched sector, creativity becomes a strategic necessity. “We need to think creatively to drive revenue... and energise areas that are underperforming.”

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And crucially, this is inextricably linked to developing digital skills and harnessing technology. Respondents noted: “With AI and data at our fingertips... we need a new creative approach.”

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Creative thinking skills development is how charities move from surviving to thriving. From being static to adaptive. Even when schedules are busy and times are tough, teams need to experiment, explore and evolve.

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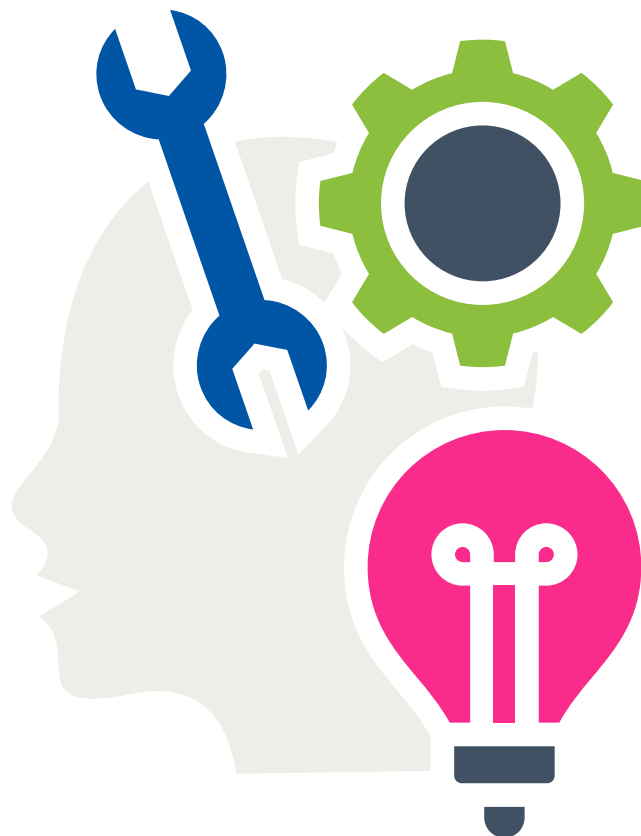
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## Creative Thinking: 5 Skill Development Tactics

- Run small, low-risk experiments: Encourage teams to try out new ideas in pilots and learn from what works without having to wait for full-scale approval.
- Create cross-team problem-solving sessions: Set up times for staff from different teams to get together and create ideas they may not have thought of on their own.
- Use digital tools to spark ideas: If one team succeeds in something new that works, let everyone know about it and help them adapt it to their own work scenario.
- Showcase and replicate good practice: Highlight examples of creative approaches from one part of the organisation and help other teams adapt and adopt them.
- Build time for curiosity and reflection: Encourage teams to pause and reflect to ask themselves, "What else could we try?"



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## Part 2: What Additional Skills Do Charities Prioritise?

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Beyond the World Economic Forum's "Top 10 fastest growing skills by 2030" list, participants were invited to identify additional priority skills shaped by the charity sector's unique values, missions and cultures.

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The top ranked skills are listed below, which offer valuable guidance for charities as they refine their future skills strategy and priorities.

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The top additional listed skills for development:

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- Coaching and mentoring.
- Critical thinking and analysis.
- Change leadership and management.
- Advocacy and campaigning.
- Reflective practice.
- Communication skills.

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## Part 3: How Can Charities Creatively Develop Skills?

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Traditionally, skills development has focused on formal solutions such as courses, programmes or workshops. But with a move to provide learning closer to work and in moments of need, there is a widespread shift in design and delivery methods.

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The evidence from the charity-based L&D practitioners highlights that powerful and often more cost-effective creative opportunities for skills development exist through the following five approaches:

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- Peer learning and shared expertise.
- Learning through work experience.
- Coaching, mentoring, and reflection.
- Personalised and flexible self-directed pathways.
- Microlearning.

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### Peer Learning and Shared Expertise

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Peer and shared learning emerged as the most cited approach to creative skills development, and it shows up in many forms. Action learning sets, communities of practice, and cross-team groups help people tackle skills needs together.

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Alongside this, skills swaps, intergenerational sharing, and small knowledge circles spread expertise within the organisation.

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Staff forums, safe-space sessions, world cafés, and internal guest speakers were also highlighted as ways to turn everyday insight into shared capability and open the conversation wider.

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Finally, champions and mentors play a crucial role in leading skills practice areas and fostering energy in the learning ecosystem.

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## Learning Through Work Experience

Many note that in their context, skills development is targeted through real work opportunities, not formal programmes.

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For example, staff can gain skills through secondments, job rotations and short gig assignments. By shadowing colleagues, staff can see skills in action, and working together helps employees learn faster than with structured training.

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Being involved in cross-disciplinary projects also provides a natural place to try out new skills and gain new ideas.

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To strengthen resilience, organisations also use stress-test scenarios, case studies, and simulations so teams can rehearse challenges before they arise.

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And finally, volunteering is widely encouraged as a way to connect people to real-world contexts and develop skills that transfer back into the workplace.

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## Coaching, Mentoring, and Reflection

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Respondents noted that coaching, mentoring, and reflective practice gain real power when they're woven into the everyday rhythm of work. Not only through planned activity, but often through serendipitous human moments.

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Skills develop through simple coaching-in-the-moment sessions where staff can surface real questions and uncover fresh insights. Supervision in activities create the space to experiment, take risks, make mistakes, and fail fast but learn quick.

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A combination of mentoring and reverse mentoring enable different perspectives to support practice development. That blend of curiosity, honesty, and shared growth is a powerful environment for skills enhancement.

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Reflective practice gives staff the chance to stop and think about what they could have done differently or how they could do things better in the future.

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What respondents importantly note is that changes often happen at ground level, when people see their learning in context, progress they can be proud of, and determine what new skills or proficiency levels they need to work on.

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## Personalised and Flexible Self-Directed Pathways

Greater opportunities for tailored learning experiences is beginning to transition from a visionary goal to a reality. Respondents noted that staff are now able to define what skills they want to develop and then to target options for their own development.

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Employees don't have to wait for someone to tell them what to learn, skill dashboards and frameworks help employees to define what areas they want to grow in.

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Options for personalised learning include bite-size on-demand digital resources, curated and learner-created content that carries powerful contextual value, and case studies or personal narratives to link skills to organisational mission and values.

4

Skills sprints are being used to target an organisational wide shared skills focus. And the emergence of AI assistants add further innovative support, helping people learn in the flow of real work.

5

Personalised, self-directed learning is not a “nice to have” but is a key learning strategy to support staff to invest in their skills growth, and future careers.

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## Microlearning

Respondents were clear that overloaded teams and staff often learn best when they have short, sharp development opportunities.

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Microlearning enables employees to develop skills amidst busy work schedules.

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Instances reported include weekly target resources, “power hours” for focussed learning, skills sprints, pop-up learning moments in team meetings, and even simple quizzes and feedback sessions to consolidate skills.

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Skills development was also helped by weekly or monthly protected learning slots which were encouraged and protected by managers. And microcredentials were noted as motivational for some to affirm skills progress.

The message from respondents was clear; small touchpoints often build capability more effectively than rare longer interventions ever could.

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## Part 4: Conclusions and Calls To Action

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Drawing on the insights from the roundtables and survey, a clear set of priorities emerge for charities that want to build tomorrow's skills today. The themes below summarise key things that charitable organisations can do to support future focused skills.

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### Put Resilience and Values-Led Leadership at the Core

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- Charities are operating in constant change and pressure, so treat resilience, flexibility and agility as core organisational capabilities and build them into strategy, governance and L&D support.

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- Staff look to leaders to navigate uncertainty, so define the behaviours of kind, inclusive, values-led leadership and support managers to model them consistently.

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- Learning from experience is the fuel for resilience and leadership, so create regular spaces for reflection, feedback and debriefing at individual, team and organisational levels.

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### Close the Digital and AI Divide as a Matter of Inclusion

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- Digital basics now underpin learning, collaboration and service delivery, so run a simple digital skills audit and target support where capability is weakest, especially for frontline and less-confident staff.

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- Staff digital exclusion quickly becomes charitable beneficiary exclusion, so design tools and learning for real-world use, mobile-friendly, simple and accessible, and test them with the people who use them most.
- AI is already reshaping work, so build a phased AI and data literacy plan for all staff, starting with safe, ethical use and progressing to confident, practical application.

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## Rethink Talent, Learning and Human Skills

- Traditional career ladders cannot meet expectations in flat, resource-stretched structures, so offer skills-based pathways through projects, secondments and cross-team work, supported by coaching and mentoring.
- Curiosity, empathy, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and reflective practice are distinctive strengths of the sector, so name them explicitly as priority skills and invest in supervision, mentoring and values-led development.
- Learning is most powerful when it is close to work, so design a mixed ecosystem of microlearning, peer spaces and self-directed pathways, underpinned by simple skills data to focus effort where it matters most.

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## Network as a Sector to Build Future Skills

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- The biggest skills challenges, from digital gaps to leadership and wellbeing, are systemic, so participate actively in cross-charity networks to share resources, tools and lessons learned.
- Every organisation reinventing the wheel wastes scarce capacity, so collaborate on shared frameworks and solutions for high-cost areas such as digital basics, AI ethics and leadership for change.
- Funders, boards and policymakers often view skills development as a cost overhead rather than impact, so develop a clear, evidence-based narrative that links investment in future skills to sustainable outcomes for communities.

So, as you consider the vital development of future skills in your context, this Roundtable Insight Report offers more than ideas. It's designed to spark movement, practical shifts and innovative experiments.

It's time for bold actions that build individual skills and capability, strengthen teams, shape the organisation, and most importantly create better outcomes for the people and communities that we serve.

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## References

[1] World Economic Forum (2025) The Future of Jobs Report 2025, World Economic Forum. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/digest/>

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## Organisations Involved in the Roundtable and Report

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Out of the 102 participating organisations, the following gave permission for their names to be included in the roundtable and the report.

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Abri Group

Access to Industry

Barnardo's

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Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland

Bridges Outcomes Partnerships

Chailey Heritage Foundation

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Change Grow Live

Christian Aid

CSJ

DePaul UK

6

Early Years Alliance

Edinburgh College

Girlguiding

7

GoodWork

Jubilee Church

KeyRing

Kingdom Housing

8

LDN LONDON

LiveWest Homes

Llamau

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London Diocesan Fund

Lord's Taverners

MSF

Museums Galleries Scotland

Mytime Active

North East Scotland College

Open Doors International

Orders of St. John Care Trust

Plan International UK

Plantlife

Prostate Cancer UK

PSS

RAF Benevolent Fund

Right There

Royal Hospital Chelsea

RSPCA

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Shelter

SIAA

Single Homeless Project

Speech and Language UK

St John Ambulance Cymru

St Margaret's Hospice

St Peter's Hospice

Thames Valley Air Ambulance

The Action Group

The Children's Society

The Scout Association

Victim Support

Whizz Kidz

YMCA London City and North

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The  
Charity Learning  
Consortium