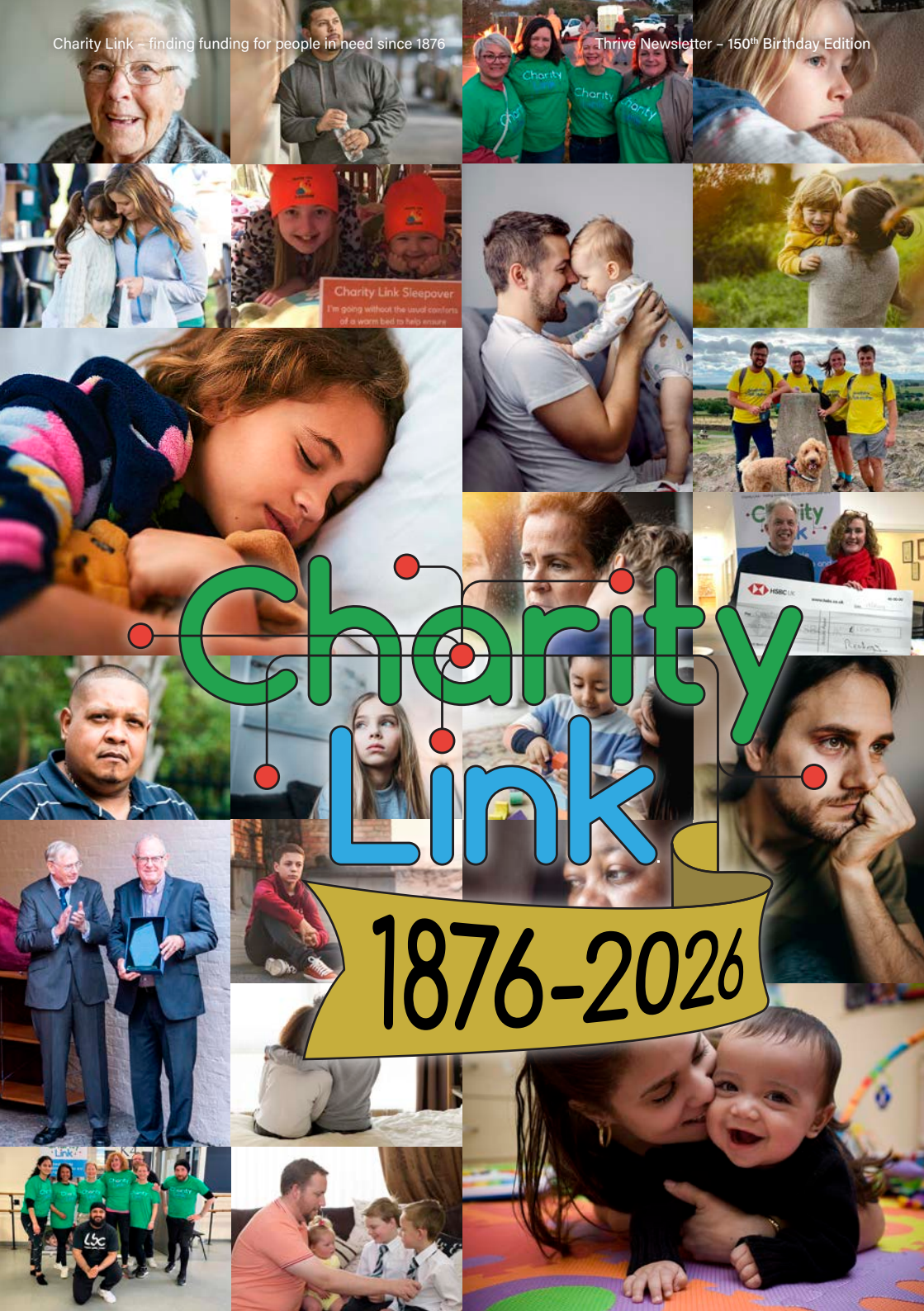

Charity Link

1876-2026

As Patron of Charity Link, I am delighted to celebrate this remarkable milestone: 150 years of transforming lives across Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire. This anniversary is a testament to the charity's commitment to its mission and to the incredible generosity and enthusiasm of its supporters.

Over the years, I have seen the difference your support makes. Walking alongside many of you at previous Leicestershire 3 Peaks Challenges has been a privilege. These challenges have demonstrated the incredible dedication and determination you have to support Charity Link. I have also had the honour of meeting some of you by presenting your awards. These moments reflect the spirit of community that has sustained Charity Link for a century and a half.

I was also proud that the Vice Lord-Lieutenant represented me during the Royal Visit in September 2024, when His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester visited Charity Link. This was a wonderful recognition of the charity's vital work and its impact across the region.

While we celebrate this achievement, the need for Charity Link's services remains as vital as ever. I encourage everyone to continue their support during this special birthday year and beyond, so together we can help even more people in hardship.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the Birthday Ball in June and at the 2026 Leicestershire 3 Peaks Challenge. Congratulations to Charity Link on this incredible milestone – here's to a future of making a difference!

Michael Kapur **OBE CStJ**
Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire

A special milestone

Welcome to our special 150th birthday issue of Thrive!

I have been with this amazing charity for 18 years (not quite the full 150!). Even during that relatively short time in our history, so much has been overcome and achieved and, most importantly, so many lives have been changed for the better. I can only imagine what those who founded the charity would think. No doubt they would be shocked by the continued need for our service, but I hope they would be rightly proud.

It is my great honour to be leading Charity Link in this new chapter of its history. There are many challenges ahead, first and foremost, securing the funds needed in the current economic climate. But we look ahead with as much passion and determination as ever. We'll continue to modernise and innovate, but will always stay true to our core mission of improving the lives of people in financial hardship and crisis.

We are so grateful to everyone who has been part of our journey so far, and hope that together, we will achieve so much more in the future.

Sue McEniff | Chief Executive Officer

Charity Link launched during the Second Industrial Revolution, amid development of electricity, the internal combustion engine, and the telephone. We mark our 150th anniversary in the Fourth. AI is changing how the world operates - so Charity Link is again changing too.

We've always adapted to meet evolving need. Currently, that necessitates moving deeper into digital and automation; utilising tools which enable our skilled officers to focus on the human delivery in which we excel. It also means developing our social entrepreneurialism, addressing need where public services can no longer afford to.

Our Board continues to refresh itself too. Five new trustees have joined over 12 months after a hugely successful recruitment campaign. Each brings distinct skills and experience that position us to succeed in our 150th year and beyond. But we also thank volunteers who are departing and have done so much - often over decades of selfless service. The commitment of the Charity Link family is testament to our continuing relevance and impact through times of change.

George Oliver | Chair

Birthday Ball

Help us mark our 150th birthday in style! Join us on 5th June at Devonshire Place, Leicester, for Charity Link's first ever ball! Enjoy a three-course meal (with a Leicestershire theme!) and a fun-packed night.

Tickets are now on sale, and we are also looking for sponsors for the night.

Parkrun 150 Challenge!

Help keep us running! The aim: join the Charity Link team to help smash our target of completing 150+ parkruns during 2026 – with a target of raising £15,000 to help us continue our vital work.

Whether you complete 1 or 15 or 50, be part of the Parkrun 150 Challenge!

Down to business!

There are lots of ways for the corporate community to be part of our special year.

Raise £150 (or £1,500!), choose us as your charity of the year, encourage the team to take part in our events, or organise your own activities.

Get in touch to discuss how we can work together to change lives in need.

Go4it Challenges

Four challenges (each running over three months) to make a difference.

Take part in one or all four. January – Give up a little to give a lot, April – Go without a bed to give a bed, July – Get active to make an impact, October – 150 challenge.

Contact us for support materials.

YOUR SUPPORT IS AS VITAL AS EVER

Tina's story

Tina has recently become widowed and is now a single mother to four children. This has been a time of significant distress for Tina, as she tries to manage her grief whilst caring for her children alone.

But life had already presented Tina and her family with huge challenges. Tina had been diagnosed with terminal cancer, and her illness has left her struggling with her mobility, which adds to the difficulty of daily life. Tina is extremely worried for the future of her children and how she can provide for them now on a low income.

Tina's Universal Credit and Child Benefits only cover the costs of very basic daily living expenses, and when the family's cooker broke, Tina had no way of affording a replacement. The family also didn't own a microwave. This has meant that the family has been going without hot meals – so important over winter and also vital in helping Tina maintain her strength and face her health and emotional challenges.

Tina was referred to us by her Social Worker, knowing what a difference a cooker and microwave would make to the family's quality of life.

We were delighted to have been able to untap the funds needed to provide these two items for the family, helping to improve their wellbeing and ease some pressure as they continue to support each other during this very distressing period in their life.

A family history dedicated to Charity Link

Caroline Wessel (née Gee) (b.1942) is a historian, published author and qualified musician; she has also been a trustee of Charity Link for 28 years. But it is not only Caroline who has been a dedicated champion of Charity Link - her Gee family has long-standing links with the charity going back four generations.

"I became a Trustee as, when my father, Harry Gee, retired as President of what was then Leicester Charity Organisation Society in 1997, he asked if I would like to become a trustee in his place to continue our family's involvement. But this wasn't my first connection with Charity Link, as I had volunteered for a short time when I was nineteen years old."

Caroline, who is also Chairman of Trustees of Leicestershire & Rutland County Nursing Association (LRCNA), which gives substantial financial support to Charity Link and Charity Link clients, gets great satisfaction out of her involvement:

"I really enjoy knowing that we are helping so many people suffering severe hardship. As Chairman of LRCNA, I read around 300 Charity Link anonymised client stories a year, so I have a vivid picture of what it is like for them and the difference Charity Link makes. In addition, the Charity Link Board of Trustees has always been a group of lovely, friendly people, but astute and dedicated too. I still get so much out of being involved. Charity Link is so special and very few charities, local or national, started up as long ago as 150 years. I'd love my family's connection with Charity Link to continue long into the future, as that would be the fifth generation of Gees dedicated to the charity. I am hoping my granddaughter or cousin (the great-granddaughter of Percy Gee), may become involved. Watch this space!"

Want to read more?

Read more about the interesting backgrounds and substantial links to Leicester of H.Simpson Gee, Percy Gee and Harry Gee on our website or contact us for a copy.

Here you can also find Caroline's '125 years' booklet, written to mark that special birthday (with an update on the past 25 years), and Caroline's new 'Leicester in 1876' booklet, written to mark our 150th birthday.

DO YOU HAVE A CONNECTION TO CHARITY LINK (LEICESTER CHARITY LINK, LEICESTER CHARITY ORGANISATION SOCIETY)?

If so, we'd love to hear from you: hello@charity-link.org

CAROLINE'S FAMILY ASSOCIATION WITH CHARITY LINK

Caroline's great-grandfather, H. Simpson Gee (1842-1924)
As the wealthiest man in late nineteenth-century Leicester, in 1910, he paid to install the then Leicester Charity Organisation Society in a much-improved office.

Percy Gee (1874-1962), H. Simpson Gee's son
Percy was Finance Secretary of Charity Link for over forty years, between 1904 and 1961.

Harry Gee (1907-2001) Caroline's father and Percy's nephew
Along with H.Simpson Gee, and Percy Gee, Harry was a Trustee, Subscriber and considerable benefactor of Charity Link, with many other family members also financially supporting the charity for many years.

We would like to thank Caroline - and the family members who went before her - for their dedication and vital contribution to Charity Link's work and impact.

Birthday messages

To help us mark our special birthday, we are collating birthday messages, and we'd love to receive yours!

Messages will be shared with the team, used across our platforms and displayed at our events to highlight the community's support of our work.

Please do send us your message to: hello@charity-link.org

"Happy 150th birthday to Charity Link. What an amazingly effective charity that genuinely changes lives and transforms opportunities for those less fortunate. Leicester is proud to have you in our community! Congratulations to everyone involved!"

Rosemary Conley CBE DL

"Your team have changed so many lives of our community, by having access to new household items which they would never be able to afford or borrow the money to get the items. You are all a fantastic team and let's hope you have many more years!!

Denise Morley – St Ann's Advice Centre

We've been changing lives in need for 150 years

We desperately need your support NOW to continue our vital work.

DONATE TODAY

www.charity-link.org/donate-today

thank you

Leicester Charity Organisation Society is a registered charity no. 1078271 and a company limited by guarantee no. 03761954.

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