Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

UKFin+

ANNUAL REPORT

UKFIN+

2026

www.ukfin.network

UKFIN+ Annual Report

WELCOME TO OUR ANNUAL REPORT 2026





Executive Summary

2026 marks the fourth full year of the UKFin+ Network, funded as a 5-year EPSRC/UKRI project. Our network continues to grow as a national platform that connects academia, industry, regulators, and charities to tackle wicked problems in financial services.

UKFin+ is now entering its final year of funding and the focus will move from funding projects to maximising the impact of the network and its funded projects.

This Year We:

- Funded 14 new projects, totalling 35 across the length of the project.
- Hosted a sandpit in collaboration witn incuto
- Supported follow-on impact from research with 3 completed projects progressing to Impact funding
- Launched the UKFinnovator series of hackathon for hundreds of students
- Strengthened sustainable finance collaboration through a major event delivered with BISCA and IDAI
- Completed the RegTech Resilience and Compliance spotlight
- Expanded UKFin+'s national presence, representing the network at 23 events
- Launched the Research Mapping Tool

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Spotlights & Events

Connecting academic researchers and stakeholders

Where have we been?

Over the past 4 years, we have hosted events across the UK as well as online. Locations are chosen to be as accessible as possible for as many people as possible whilst also keeping project costs reasonable. We have visited every country in the UK, our Research Showcase this year will take place in Edinburgh.



Events delivered Oct 2025 - Sept 2026

Annual Research Showcase
Cardiff 24th November 2025

Funding/ Impact Events

Workshop: RegTech Resilience and Compliance
Online 14th October 2025

Impact Webinar
Online 19th February 2026

UKFin+ Sandpit
Birmingham 13th July 2026

Sustainable Finance Forum
Birmingham 14th September 2026

UKFinnovators

UKFinnovator Birmingham
31st January - 1st February 2026

UKFinnovator London
13th - 14th June 2026

Events Delivered

Online Workshop: RegTech, Resilience and Compliance
14th October 2025 (39 attendees, which included 13 academics)

This Workshop brought together academics, regulators, and industry professionals to explore how financial regulation and technological innovation can evolve together. Key challenges include balancing consumer protection, market stability, and competition with the rapid growth of new financial technologies as well as ongoing changes in regulatory frameworks and legislation. Insights from the earlier roundtable discussions in the RegTech, Resilience and Compliance Spotlight helped shape the design of the workshop, with the breakout room questions drawn from those conversations to ensure continuity and depth of exploration.

Sarah Sinclair (Co-Labs Global) and Professor John Vines (University of Edinburgh) designed and organised the workshop, which combined expert presentations with interactive breakout sessions. Panellists Dr Devraj Basu, Scott Moncur, Annabel Gillard, Jane Jee, and Annabel Nelson shared their insights into three key use cases: AI Governance, Sustainability, and Economic Crime.

The workshop aimed to identify potential research directions and collaborative pathways that could help bridge these gaps and shape the next phase of UKFin+ research activity.

The conversations revealed a shared recognition that addressing the challenges of AI Governance, Sustainability, and Economic Crime requires both technological innovation and systemic change. The diversity of perspectives from regulators, academics, technologists, and practitioners helped uncover cross-cutting issues such as:

- The need for secure and interoperable data-sharing frameworks to support financial crime prevention while maintaining privacy and proportionality.
- The importance of proportional regulation to ensure smaller institutions, including credit unions and fintechs, can thrive in the industry as well as adopt RegTech solutions.
- The opportunity to embed sustainability-by-design principles into technology and regulation, ensuring that environmental and ethical considerations underpin innovation.
- The growing urgency to define AI Governance frameworks that balance transparency, fairness, and efficiency, while supporting responsible innovation.
- A collective call for collaboration across academia, regulators, and industry to develop shared standards and learning platforms that strengthen trust and resilience.

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Events Delivered

Annual Research Showcase
Cardiff 24th Nov 2025 (72 attendees, which included 51 academics)

This showcase is always one of our favourite moments of the year. It's where we pause to reflect on what our funded projects have achieved so far, where new connections form over coffee (with Welsh cakes) and posters, and where the possibilities for the coming year start to take shape. This year's event was bigger than ever, filled with rich discussions, forward-thinking research, and a renewed sense of shared purpose.







We opened with a welcome from Dr Jonathan Thompson (Cardiff University) and then a presentation from our Project Lead, Professor Aad van Moorsel, who shared the UKFin+ Network's achievements and our vision for the year ahead. The keynote was delivered by Clement Stross, Principal Data Scientist at Admiral Group, who gave a brilliant talk titled "Ethical Data Science Takes Hard Work." Our funded project presentations were a real highlight of the day, showcasing just how wide-ranging and impactful the UKFin+ research portfolio has become. We heard from teams working on AI and regulation, inclusion and accessibility, consumer protection, ESG, digital innovation and risk. Together, these presentations showed the strength and diversity of the UKFin+ network as well as how academic research can drive more trustworthy, inclusive and forward-looking financial services. We ended the day with an energetic and thought-provoking workshop led by our director John Vines and Lorita Cornish, exploring one of the most persistent "wicked problems" facing our sector: How do we build better, deeper, more sustainable collaboration between academia and industry?

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Events Delivered

Annual Research Showcase
Live Illustrations by Jenny Leonard





From Community Feedback to Action

At the UKFin+ Annual Showcase workshop, Designing the Future of Collaboration, participants highlighted several practical ways UKFin+ could strengthen collaboration across the financial innovation ecosystem. These suggestions aim to make collaboration easier by improving access to academic expertise, creating structured spaces to explore industry challenges, and supporting the next generation of financial innovation talent.

Over the past year, UKFin+ has taken a series of practical steps in response to this feedback. While not every structural barrier to collaboration sits within the direct influence of UKFin+, the network has focused on the areas where it can add value: increasing visibility of opportunities, connecting companies with academics, supporting researcher readiness and widening participation through student and early-career talent pathways.

Helping companies connect with academic expertise

One of the messages from the workshop was that companies need easier ways to access academic knowledge and find the right expertise for their challenges. In response, UKFin+ expanded the visibility of collaboration opportunities through konfer, a national platform designed to connect businesses with universities.

This provided an additional route for companies outside the existing UKFin+ network to bring forward research questions and explore potential academic support. Through this channel, UKFin+ received company enquiries and was able to signpost them to relevant academic expertise.

Alongside this, UKFin+ has developed an interactive FinTech research mapping tool, which provides a visual overview of FinTech-related research centres across the UK and maps where UKFin+ funded projects have been supported. This will help companies, academics and wider stakeholders better understand the UK research landscape, identify relevant centres of expertise, and see how UKFin+ funding has supported activity across different regions and challenge areas.

UKFin+ has also continued to attend and engage with sector events throughout the year. These activities have helped the team better understand the challenges companies are facing, where innovation is developing, and which technology and policy trends are shaping financial services. Following key events, UKFin+ shared summaries and insights with the network, helping academics identify emerging research areas and understand where their expertise could contribute to live industry priorities.

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From Community Feedback to Action

Creating structured spaces

Participants also would like to see more opportunities to meet around more focused topics, rather than relying on informal networking alone. UKFin+ has responded by continuing to design activities that bring different parts of the ecosystem together around specific challenge areas.

The Sustainable Finance event is one example of this approach. It brings together academic expertise, industry priorities and policy-facing questions to explore how finance, technology and collaboration can help address some of the most pressing sustainability challenges facing organisations and society. Rather than treating sustainable finance as a single-discipline issue, the event creates a forum for cross-sector discussion around complex challenges where collaboration is essential.





Supporting researchers to understand industry needs

Collaboration can be slowed down by differences in language, expectations and ways of working between academia and industry. A key response has been our team's successful application to deliver the Developing Business-Aware Academics (DBAA) programme. This initiative will support doctoral and early-career researchers to build commercial awareness and develop the confidence and skills needed to engage more effectively with industry and policy organisations.

The programme will help participants communicate their research more clearly to non-academic audiences and understand how external organisations identify problems and priorities. It will also introduce practical considerations such as intellectual property in networking conversations, formalising relationships with non-academic organisations, and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

This directly responds to the feedback by addressing one of the underlying barriers to collaboration: helping researchers become more confident, commercially aware and better equipped to work with external partners.

From Community Feedback to Action

Widening participation and supporting talent pathways

Participants also encouraged UKFin+ to become more outward-facing and to support talent pathways across the financial innovation ecosystem. The UKFinnovator series has been one of the clearest responses to this.

Through UKFinnovator events, companies are invited to put forward real financial services challenges for students to solve. This widens the UKFin+ network by bringing students into the collaboration ecosystem and recognising them as an important part of academic innovation.

UKFinnovator creates value for several groups. Companies gain access to fresh thinking and emerging talent. Students gain practical experience of working on industry problems. Academics can contribute as mentors, advisors and connectors, creating further opportunities for engagement between universities and industry.





A practical response to the community's priorities

Together, these activities show how UKFin+ has responded to the community's feedback in practical and achievable ways. The network has not attempted to claim ownership of every barrier identified in the workshop, particularly those linked to institutional processes outside its direct control. Instead, UKFin+ has focused on the areas where it can make a meaningful difference by creating clearer routes into academic expertise, supporting researchers to become more business-aware, widening participation through student innovation activity, and sharing insights across the ecosystem.

These actions mark an important step in UKFin+'s evolution from a funding-focused network towards a more active connector, convener and enabler of collaboration across financial services innovation.

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Events Delivered

UKFinnovator - January (Birmingham) - 136 students
June (London) - 77 students

What is a UKFinnovator?

UKFinnovator is a dynamic, two-day innovation competition designed to connect talented university students with real-world challenges from industry. Hosted by the UKFin+ Network, UKFinnovator brings together students, researchers, startups, and established businesses to co-create solutions that drive innovation in FinTech and related digital sectors.



Why did we create UKFinnovator?

UKFinnovator is part of the wider UKFin+ initiative to be a driver in collaboration between academia and industry to strengthen the UK's position as a global leader in FinTech innovation.

Our mission is to:

- Support students and researchers to commercialise ideas
- Connect universities with private sector innovators
- Build inclusive FinTech ecosystems across the UK
- Accelerate regional innovation and create tangible economic impact

Through UKFinnovator, we're building a pipeline where ideas become ventures, and students become founders, shaping the future of UK FinTech.

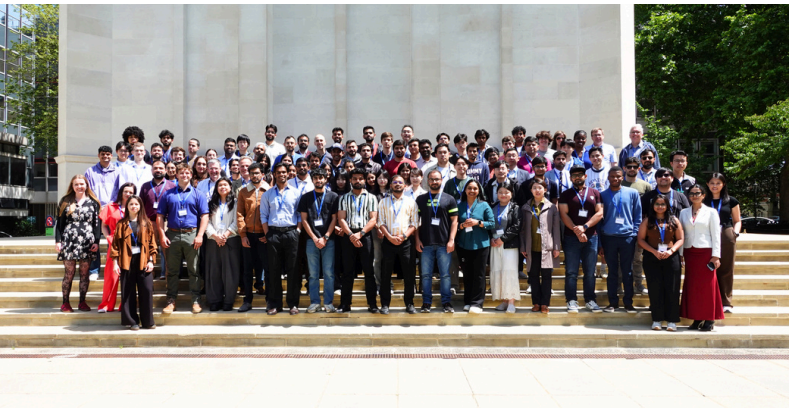
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Events Delivered

UKFinnovator - is it a success?

We have hosted two UKFinnovators so far, one at the University of Birmingham and the other at Imperial College London. The uptake from students has been incredible, with double the number of students applying than we have space for. Students applied from 20 different universities to the Imperial UKFinnovator, demonstrating the growing national interest in UKFinnovator and its unique approach to connecting higher education with industry.







What's next for UKFinnovator?

We have evolved from a model where the project funded the UKFinnovator to one where companies actively approach the project to host UKFinnovators events. This allows us to continue delivering all the benefits of a strong talent pipeline to students without carrying the financial responsibility of running the event.

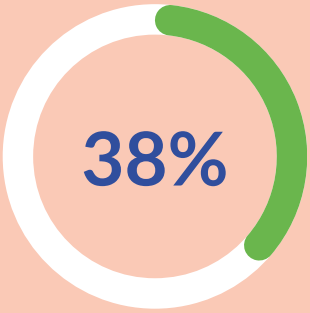
By having companies fund the event, they gain direct access to a highly engaged pool of talented students, benefit from our proven delivery model, and leverage our expertise in identifying and recruiting the very best candidates. This creates a mutually beneficial partnership that supports student development while helping employers connect with future talent.

Events Delivered

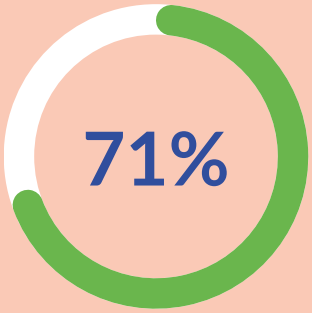
Impact Webinar (16 attendees, 13 academics)
19th February 2026

With the final funding deadline approaching and having received no Impact funding applications, the team decided to hold a webinar to share more information about the funding stream in hopes of increasing applications. This was designed to help support applications by giving inspiration for what Impact funding could be used for, as well as having the opportunity to ask questions.

Following the webinar, we received seven applications and funded three. This was a positive result for the project, especially as all three funded projects are based of research we had funded previously.



went on to apply for funding



of the Impact funding application had attended the webinar



of the funded impact projects had attended the webinar

Impact Webinar Statistics

- Of the 16 people who attended the webinar, 6 of them went on to be part of a team that applied for funding (either as an academic, industry partner or PhD student)
- We received 7 applications for Impact funding, of those 5 had at least one representative at the webinar
- 100% of the 3 funded Impact projects had at least one representative at the impact webinar

Events Delivered

Sandpit (25 attendees, 21 academics)
13th July 2026 Birmingham

Over the course of the UKFin+ programme, we have funded more than 30 research projects addressing complex challenges across financial services. As we approached the allocation of our remaining research funding, we wanted to give greater attention to the theme of inclusive finance and ensure that the final projects supported work with a clear potential to benefit people and communities. This naturally led us to the credit union and community finance ecosystem.

Rather than issuing a traditional open funding call and asking researchers to develop projects independently, UKFin+ decided to use a sandpit model. This enabled academics from different disciplines and universities to hear directly from an industry partner, explore the challenges together and build teams around the most promising ideas.

The Sandpit was held at the University of Birmingham in collaboration with incuto. incuto is a cloud-based technology platform that helps credit unions and community finance providers modernise their lending, payments and member services. The company works closely with organisations that aim to support people who may not be well served by mainstream financial institutions.

The event brought together 19 academics from 16 universities across the UK. Participants represented a wide range of disciplines, including computer science, mathematics, behavioural science, economics, business, design, law and policy.

Our remaining research funding was set aside to support two collaborative projects emerging from the sandpit. The event was not simply a discussion or networking exercise, it created a direct route from ideas to funded research and practical delivery and we look forward to sharing the results.



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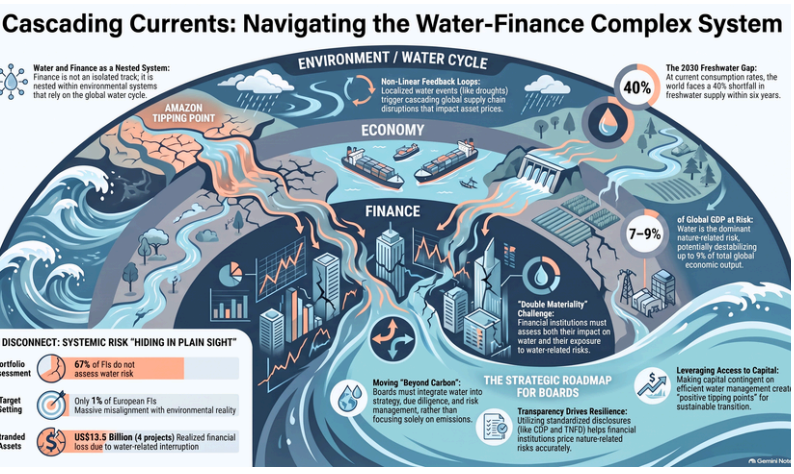
Events Delivered

Sustainable Finance Forum (62 attendees, including 33 academics) Birmingham 14th September 2026

The Sustainable Finance Forum, developed collaboratively by UKFin+, the Birmingham Institute for Sustainability and Climate Action (BISCA) and the Institute for Data and AI (IDAI), was designed to bring those perspectives together and ask a practical question: How can finance, technology, research and collaboration support better sustainability decisions when the challenges cross sectors, disciplines and organisational boundaries?

The event began with introductions to BISCA, IDAI and UKFin+ and an overview of how to work with the university. Prof Karen Elliot set the scene for the day, delivering a short presentation on complex systems in water, finance and sustainability. This was followed by the keynote speech from Annabel Nelson, who discussed three misconceptions in sustainable finance: the importance of labels and reporting, the availability of the correct data for decision-making, and challenging narrow approaches to sustainability.

Rather than using traditional conference panels, participants moved into facilitated discussions around four themes: Is AI Too Thirsty?, Resilience and Regulating Cloud Providers, Priorities, Strategy and Incentives, Data, Tech and AI for Sustainability Solutions. Although the four workshops started from very different questions, they repeatedly came back to the same challenge: sustainability decisions are rarely contained within one organisation, discipline or system. Finance, technology, infrastructure, regulation, natural resources and communities are interconnected, yet decisions are often still made separately. The value of the Forum was in bringing those perspectives together and testing what changes when people begin to look at the same problem from different angles. The Forum generated not only conclusions, but questions that could form the basis of future research, industry collaboration, demonstrators, student projects, policy work, hackathons and future funding partnerships.





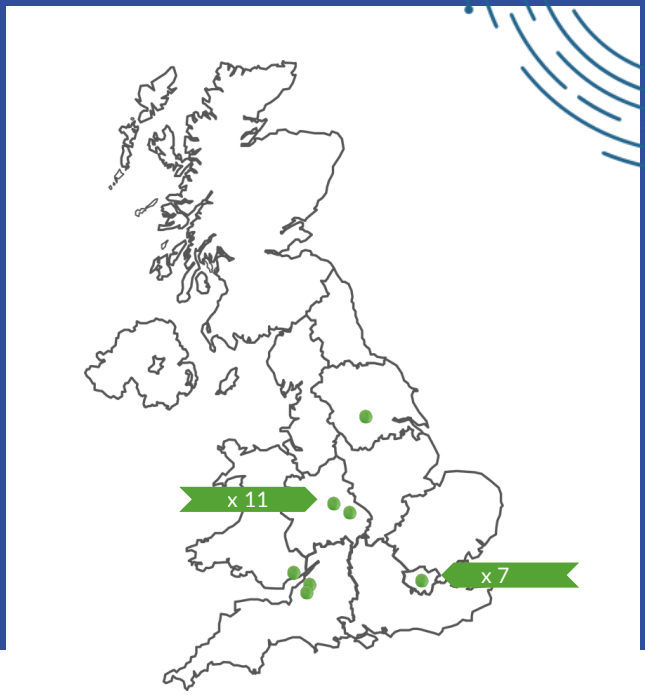
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Event Attendance

Reflections from a Year of Sector Engagement - Lorita Cornish (UKFin+ Impact and Engagement Manager)

Where has Lorita been?

Over the past year, Lorita has been present at a wide range of events across the financial services, technology, regulation and research landscape. These events offered sector overviews and valuable views of the issues industry, regulators and communities are actively trying to solve. Taken together, they show a sector moving quickly, but also one facing increasingly complex questions around trust, resilience, inclusion, regulation and responsible innovation.



One thing became obvious this year: some “emerging technologies” have already emerged. Agentic payments, digital identity and tokenisation are not waiting until everyone has finished their governance framework. They are already being tested and used across financial services. The question is whether organisations have the skills, structures and confidence to manage them properly, rather than constantly trying to catch up once the risks are already in the room.



Discussions around AI always led to the same conclusion: having a “human in the loop” is not enough if that person does not have the expertise, authority or confidence to challenge the system. In regulated financial services, responsible innovation needs more than reassurance. It needs expert oversight, clear accountability and governance that keeps moving as quickly as the technology does.

Event Attendance

Reflections from a Year of Sector Engagement

Trust emerged as another defining theme in any discussion, but especially around digital identity and open data. Customers need to understand how their data is used. Firms need confidence that new systems are safe, explainable and proportionate. Regulators need evidence that innovation does not weaken consumer protection or market integrity. This creates a significant opportunity for independent academic research to support the design, testing and evaluation of trustworthy financial systems.

The events also showed that financial crime and risk are becoming more complex, adaptive and human-centred. Sessions on chargebacks, digital identity, sanctions evasion and financial sextortion demonstrated that many risks now sit at the intersection of technology, behaviour, regulation and social vulnerability. These are problems that cannot be solved through technical controls alone. They require multidisciplinary insight, combining data science, criminology, behavioural research, law, economics, ethics and financial modelling.





Inclusion appeared in two connected but distinct ways across the year. The EPSRC EDI Hub Annual Conference focused on inclusion within the research system itself, addressing issues of who gets access, who is supported, whose expertise is recognised, and how inclusive practice has to be embedded rather than treated as an optional extra. UKFin+ Network's funded portfolio shows the other side of the same challenge: how research can help create more inclusive financial services. Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing is the most represented cluster across our funded projects, reflecting a clear need for research that addresses who is underserved by financial products, where exclusion happens, and how better design, data and policy can improve outcomes. Taken together, these reflections point to a wider lesson and demonstrate how inclusive innovation depends both on who is included in shaping research and who benefits from the systems that research helps to build.

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Event Attendance

Reflections from a Year of Sector Engagement

The regional picture was equally important. Events in Bristol and Wales highlighted the strength of fintech ecosystems outside London and the importance of regional collaboration between startups, established firms, universities, regulators and public bodies. The UK's fintech future will not be built from one centre alone. Regional ecosystems bring different strengths, priorities and lived realities, and UKFin+ has an important role to play in connecting these capabilities nationally. Overall, the year's events painted a picture of a financial services sector at a turning point.

Innovation is accelerating, but so are the risks, expectations and responsibilities attached to it. The strongest opportunities for UKFin+ sit exactly in this space: convening conversations across sectors, translating industry challenges into research questions, supporting responsible experimentation, and helping build the evidence base needed for trustworthy, inclusive and resilient financial innovation.

These reflections reinforce the continued relevance of UKFin+'s mission. The network was established to connect academic research with real financial services challenges, and the past year has shown just how necessary that role remains. The sector does not lack ambition or technology, but what it needs is rigorous, independent, collaborative thinking to ensure innovation delivers genuine benefit for society.









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Research Agenda

Inspiring the Next Wave of Research

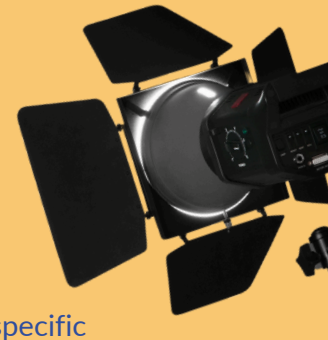
The research agenda is designed to tackle complex and long-term challenges in the UK financial services sector. The agenda highlights six key areas of real-life financial services challenges as well as the underpinning enablers for effective collaborations in these areas.



Real-life financial services challenges included

1. Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing
2. Coping with Game-Changing Technologies
3. Regulatory Compliance
4. Trusted & Effective Open Banking
5. Financial Resilience & Stability
6. Sustainable Finance

Spotlights



Connecting academic researchers and stakeholders

Following the publication of the Research Agenda, UKFin+ recognised that there are specific topics which we have a critical mass of academics and industry already engaged in tackling, but where some more work is needed to join experts up to develop collaborations. We ran a series of Spotlights, to put a metaphorical spotlight on topics in the run up to our bi-annual funding deadlines. Over the six months before a deadline, we hosted collaborative workshops, brokered collaborations, and supported grant applications to our schemes around the Spotlight topic.

Spotlights Delivered

- Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing (May–Nov 2024).
- Game-Changing Technologies (Dec 2024–May 2025).
- RegTech, Resilience & Compliance (May–Nov 2025).

Following the RegTech spotlight, we focused our efforts on receiving more Impact applications, holding a webinar to help inform applicants ahead of the final deadline. After this, we moved on from holding spotlights around our funding deadlines as we had previously, and instead focused on topics within the research area that we had not yet covered. In September 2026, we held our sustainable finance summit in collaboration with BISCA and IDAI. This event's purpose was similar to the spotlight in being an event designed to bring academics and industry together with the hopes of sparking ideas and forming relationships that would lead to future collaborations.

With one year left in the project, we will now be exploring ways to increase the impact of our project as a whole as well as the projects we have funded. We are looking at ways to expand the reach of the work into a public facing event, resource, podcast or book.

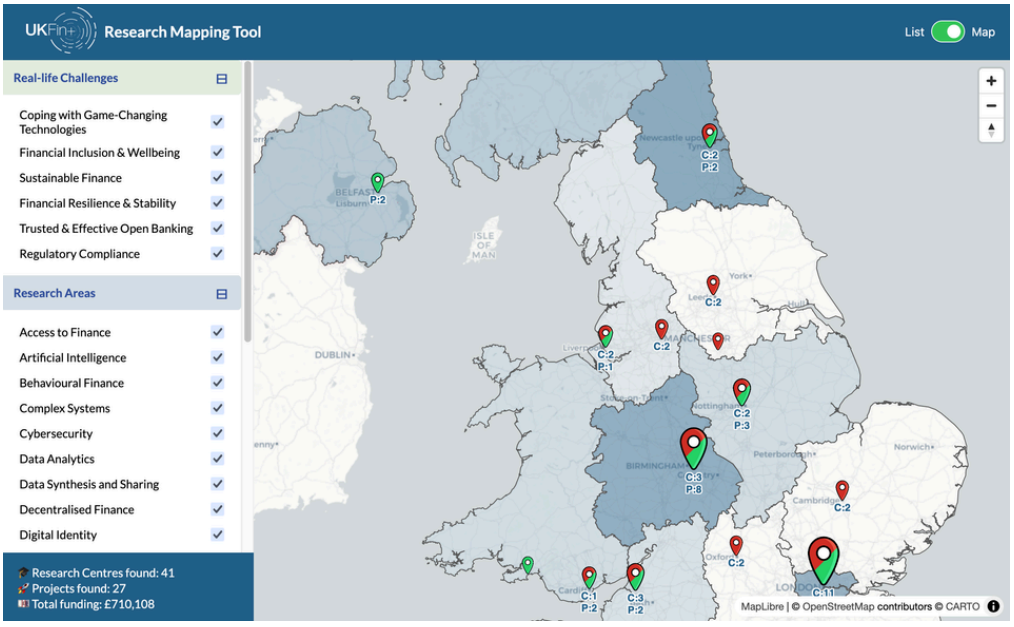
Mapping

Connecting academic researchers and stakeholders

The Research Mapping Tool provides an interactive overview of the UK FinTech research landscape. It brings together information on FinTech-related research centres across the UK and shows where UKFin+ funded projects are located.

The tool has been developed to make it easier to explore research expertise, identify potential collaborators and understand how different areas of FinTech research are distributed across the UK. There are filters to explore the map by challenge area or research area. You can select one or more filters to narrow the results and identify research centres or funded projects that align with your interests. You can then click on the map points or listed results to view more information about each research centre or funded project. The mapping tool is designed as a starting point for collaboration and we encourage users to contact us if they need further help.

View the tool on our website



Who is it for?

- companies looking for academic expertise;
- academics seeking collaborators across the UK;
- policymakers and regulators interested in research capability across financial services innovation;
- students and early-career researchers exploring the UK FinTech research landscape.

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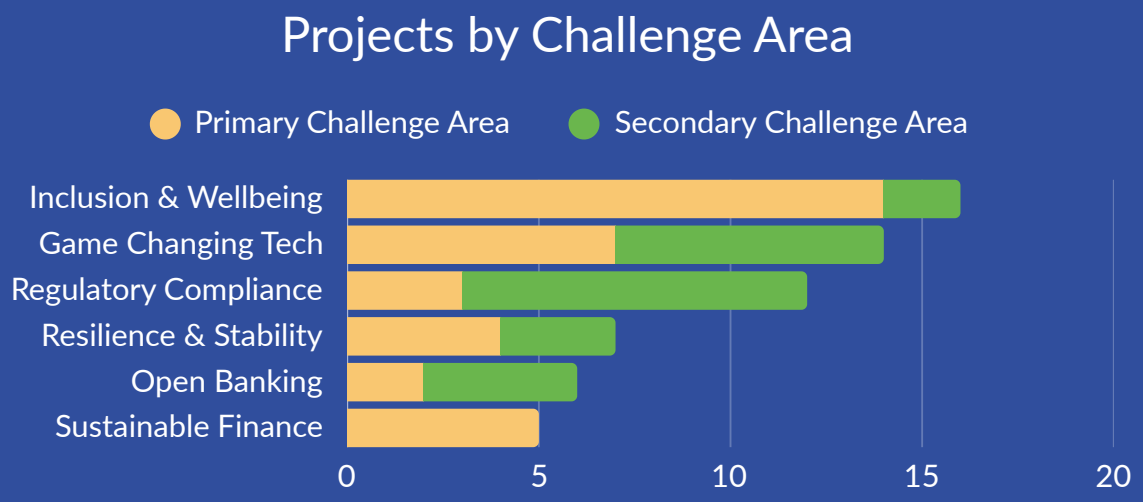
Funded Project Overviw

Key Achievements

- Funded 35 projects, with funding now distributed across the six challenge areas and a wide range of fintech, regulation, resilience, inclusion, open banking and sustainable finance topics.
- Completed 22 funded projects, creating a growing evidence base of research outputs, tools, frameworks, case studies and industry-facing insights.
- Supported follow-on impact from funded research, with three completed projects progressing into UKFin+ Impact funding to take promising findings, tools and partnerships closer to practical application.
- Launched the UKFin+ Research Mapping Tool, improving visibility of the UK fintech research landscape and helping industry, academics and policymakers identify relevant expertise and collaboration opportunities.

Projects by Challenge Area

UKFin+ has funded 35 projects across Agile, Pilot, Feasibility, Education and Impact streams across the six defined challenge areas. The chart below shows how all UKFin+ funded projects are distributed across the six challenge areas. It distinguishes between each project's primary cluster and its total representation, recognising that many projects sit across more than one theme.



Funded Projects

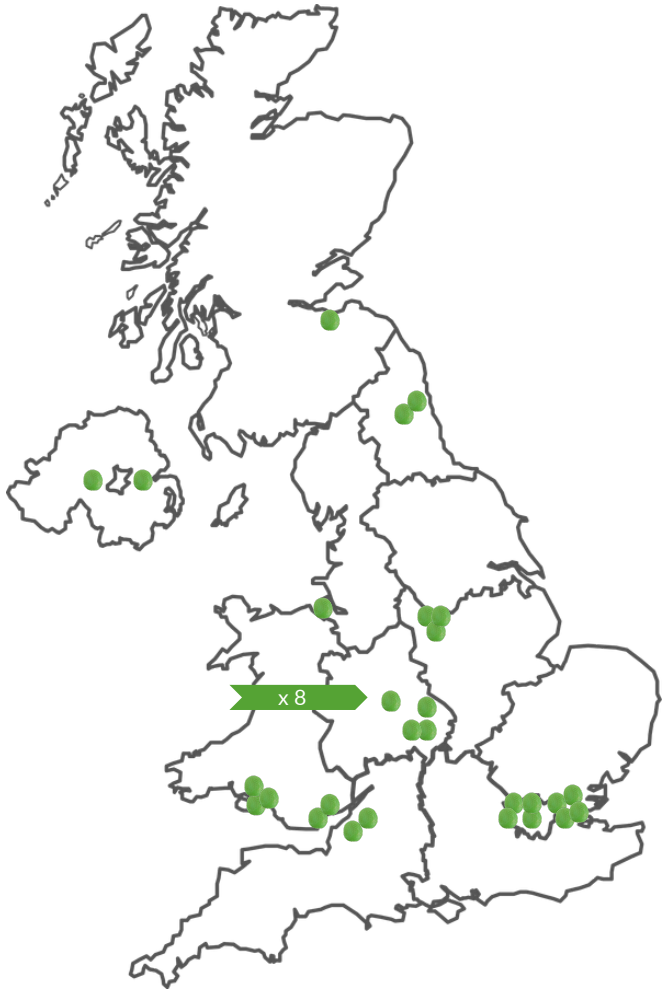
Key Achievements in 2025–26

We have funded diverse industry and academic collaborations through our funding calls, this has been enhanced by having spotlights on areas requiring focus as outlined in the research agenda. The spotlights allowed us to host targeted events to promote the funding and facilitate match-making. Since Lorita, our Impact and Engagement manager has started, we have been developing case studies based on the experiences of grantees to provide evidence for levers of change.

Location of funded projects

Ulster University, University of Birmingham x 4, Coventry University, Northumbria University, University of the West of England (UWE) x2, Birmingham City University x 2, Queen's University Belfast, Swansea University x3, University of Nottingham x 3, Cardiff University x 2, University of Edinburgh (UoE), Brunel University of London x2, King's College London, University of Warwick x2, University of East London x4, University of Liverpool, University College London, Newcastle University, Aston University x2.

We have funded projects across the UK and have a feasibility project in each country. These projects, selected for their alignment with UKFin+'s goal of tackling wicked problems in financial services and span a diverse range of themes.



Funded Projects

Newly Funded Projects

Over the past year, UKFin+ funded 14 new projects across all funding streams, and the network's portfolio has continued to evolve from early-stage exploration into practical application, education, impact and follow-on collaboration. The newly funded projects span universities across the UK, including the Midlands, the South, the North, and Wales, involving a wide range of industry partners.

The new awards reflect the breadth of UKFin+'s research agenda, while also showing where the sector's most pressing questions are emerging. Game-Changing Technologies emerged as the most dominant cross-cutting theme for the newly funded projects, appearing as either a primary or secondary cluster in more than half of the awards. However, financial inclusion remains the most dominant cluster across all funded projects. Projects on real-time LLM market analytics, predictive AI for risk intelligence, responsible AI education, blockchain talent development, cross-chain compliance and AI-driven sustainability labs all demonstrate how emerging and advanced technologies are becoming central to financial services research and education.

This does not mean the portfolio is narrowly technical. Instead, it reflects EPSRC remit to support technology-led research, while showing how those technologies can help address wider challenges around consumer protection, regulatory compliance, ESG reporting, financial resilience and trust.

Financial inclusion and wellbeing remain central to the new portfolio. Projects funded this year include research into young adults' engagement with credit card agreements, a FinTech Discovery Day for 16–18-year-olds, and the DEFEND Impact project, which will deploy contextualised digital banking security tools for older adults in Wales. These projects build on UKFin+'s strong track record of supporting work that addresses who is underserved by financial services and how better design, education and technology can improve outcomes.

The Education stream also plays an important role in the new awards. Projects such as Responsible Intelligence, the FinTech and Blockchain Talent Accelerator, AI-Driven Financial Resilience Labs, and FinTech Discovery Day demonstrate UKFin+'s commitment to developing the next generation of financial services talent. These projects translate research and industry insight into practical learning experiences, helping students understand emerging technologies, regulation, sustainability and real-world financial challenges.

Funded Projects

Newly Funded Projects

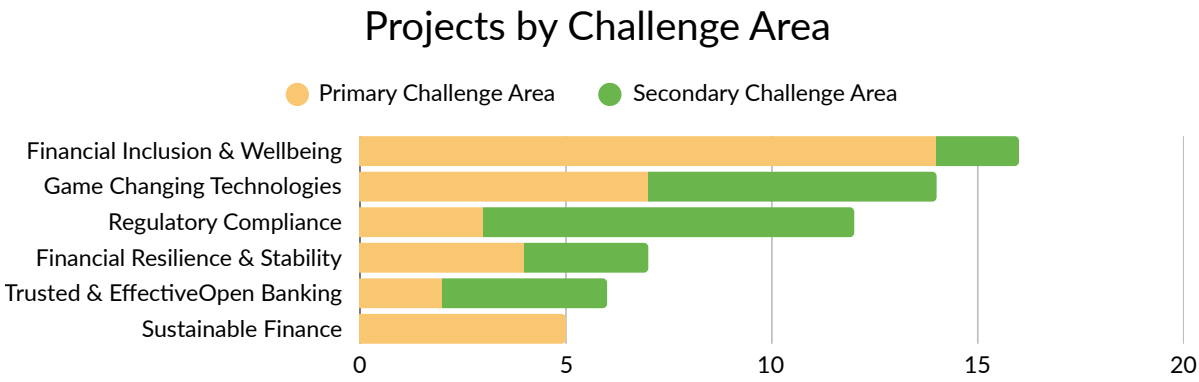
The Impact stream shows how earlier research can move closer to practical use. Greenwashing Analysis in Practice will trial an explainable ESG disclosure assessment tool, while DEFEND Impact will build on previous work with older adults and digital banking. Data-driven Materiality for Sustainability Reporting will support more effective sustainability reporting through collaboration with Maxwell Data Ltd.

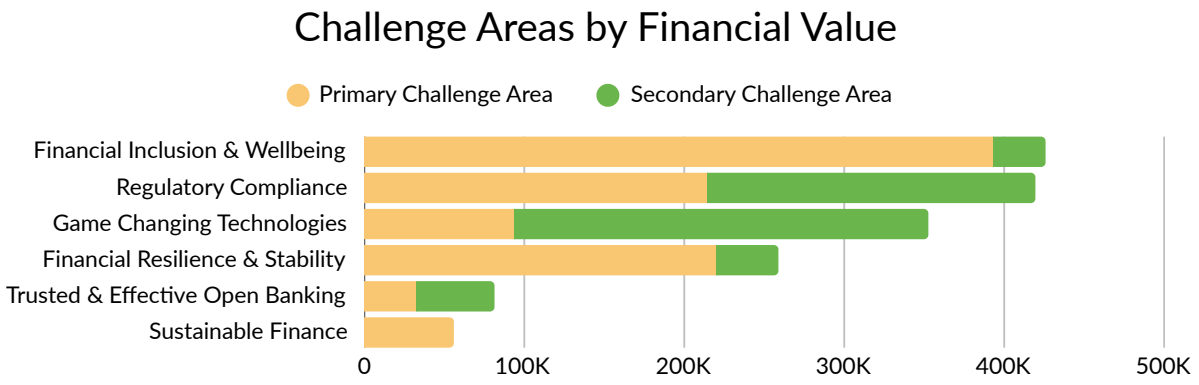
In addition to the projects listed above, we also supported two Sandpit projects as a final funding call, delivered in collaboration with incuto company. The Sandpit focused on inclusive community finance and credit unions, bringing together academics from across disciplines to respond to real-world challenges around fair lending, financial decision-making and financial resilience.

Taken together, the newly funded projects show a portfolio that is both broad and highly connected. They address the underlying questions of how financial services can innovate responsibly, protect consumers, build trust, and create more inclusive and resilient systems.

UKFin+ Annual Report

Funded Projects by Challenge Area





The graphs here show a comparrion of the number of projects by challenge area compared to the value of the projects in each challenge area. There are a large number of projects with a primary research area of game-changing technology or sustainable finance; however, this does not translate to the value of the funding. Instead, financial resilience and regulatory compliance take a larger share.

Impact of UKFin+ Funding

Practical Application of Funded Projects

A strong theme emerging from the UKFin+ portfolio is the way relatively focused funding can create momentum beyond the original project. Across several completed projects, UKFin+ support has helped to move from early-stage research into practical tools, follow-on funding, student engagement, sector-facing outputs and wider stakeholder conversations.

Three projects show this pathway particularly clearly. The News Sentiment Analysis for Sustainable Investing project developed and tested a prototype for identifying financially material ESG factors by linking open-source news sentiment to share price behaviour. The work produced company-level materiality rankings and demonstrated a transparent, data-driven approach to sustainable investing. It has since led to further engagement through UKFinnovator London, where the industry partner set a student challenge on turning complex ESG insights into clear recommendations, and to a successful Impact project focused on translating the methodology into market-ready prototypes.

A similar pathway can be seen in the DEFEND project, which explored how older adults experience digital banking and identified barriers around trust, privacy, usability and fraud concerns. Through co-design with older adults and partnership with Swansea Council, the original work challenged assumptions about digital exclusion and highlighted the need for banking tools designed around lived experience. This has now progressed into an Impact project developing contextualised digital banking security tools for older adults in Wales, including community-based support and practical resources.

In sustainable finance, the Greenwashing Analysis project developed a dashboard to assess ESG integrity by comparing corporate sustainability reporting with external news sentiment and market signals. Its follow-on Impact project is now trialling an explainable ESG disclosure assessment tool with CYKUBE in a real financial services workflow, moving the research closer to operational use. The Designing Out Economic Abuse in the UK Banking Industry project demonstrates a different but equally important form of impact. Working with victim-survivors, banking professionals and Surviving Economic Abuse, the project moved beyond reactive support and explored how banking products and services could be redesigned to prevent harm. Its outputs include a sector-facing call to action, follow-up discussions with banks and wider relevance for consumer protection, inclusive design and responsible digital banking.

Together, these examples show UKFin+ acting as more than a funder. The network is helping create pathways from research insight to practical application, connecting academics with industry and community partners, supporting follow-on activity, and generating evidence that can inform better financial services for consumers, firms and society.

Funded Project Partners

Project partners are in brackets next to thier project titles

Agile Projects

- An Agile Proposal for a Feasibility Study on a Gifted Account Information Service Provider (AISP) for Research Data **(Fintech NI, Fintech Wales, The Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology (CFIT) Smart Data Foundry)**
- Fintech entrepreneurship and innovation in online black markets **(Asset Reality Limited)**
- Enhancing Consumer Knowledge of Crypto Assets **(FinTech West)**
- Contemporary Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning Adoption by Fund Managers **(Cadro Technologies Limited)**
- FinTech for Dementia: Co-Designing Inclusive Future Financial Technologies for Older Adults living with Dementia and Caregivers **(Better Understanding of Dementia for Sandwell (BUDS))**
- Mitigating Stress and Confusion in Credit Contracts using Machine Learning and Simplification **(Amplified Global)**
- News sentiment analysis for sustainable investing **(Mettle Capital)**
- Investigating Multimodal Knowledge Graphs as Infrastructures for Digital Twins of Financial Operations Risks **(IRMAI LTD)**
- Including the financially excluded via credit unions **(Enterprise Credit Union)**
- Developing and Validating Personas for Understanding Young Adults' Engagement with Credit Card Agreements in the UK **(Amplified Global)**

Education & Engagement Projects

- Preparing Students for the Ethical and Effective Use of AI in Finance **(FinTech West)**
- FinTech & Blockchain Talent Accelerator – Blockchain applications solving wicked problems in Fintech **(SuperteamUK)**
- AI-Driven Financial Resilience Labs for ESG and Financial Services **(Cykube, FCA)**
- FinTech Discovery Day **(Crossing Point Investment Management Ltd.)**

Sandpit Projects

- Simulating the Path to Yes: Behavioural AI Agents for Fair Lending in Community Finance **(incuto)**
- Saving Over Time: Hierarchical AI Modelling of Longitudinal Multi-Frequency Banking Transaction Behaviour to Understand Savings Behaviour for Financial Resilience **(incuto)**

Funded Project Partners

Project partners are in brackets next to thier project titles

Pilot Projects

- UnFed: Selective Forgetting in Federated Financial Applications **(AdviceRobo)**
- The Impact of FinTech Apps on Consumer Wellbeing **(FinTech West)**
- Inclusive FinTech: Co-Creating Inclusive Future Financial Technologies with Disabled Communities **(Virgin Money)**
- DEFEND: Designing Age-Friendly Digital Banking Technologies **(Swansea Council)**
- Establishing a Cryptocurrency Volatility Indicator with Sentiment (CVIS) **(DeepSearch Labs)**
- Testing The Intelligibility Of Credit Information Through The Amplifi AI Tool **(Amplified Global)**
- Greenwashing Analysis: A Data Science Approach to Evaluating ESG Integrity **(CYKUBE LTD, Global Digital Finance)**
- RadarSeq Pilot: A Predictive AI For Risk Intelligence And Customer Excellence **(Kuflink Ltd, My Homecare)**
- TRACE – Transparency and Risk Assessment for Cross-Chain Compliance Evaluation **(UK Centre for Blockchain Technologies)**
- Guiding Real-Time LLM Market Analytics for the UK Financial Industry **(TT International)**

Impact Projects

- Data-driven Materiality for Sustainability Reporting **(Maxwell Data Ltd)**
- Greenwashing Analysis in Practice: Trialling an Explainable ESG Disclosure Assessment Tool with a Financial Services Partner **(CYKUBE)**
- DEFEND Impact: Deploying Contextualised Digital Banking Security Tools for Older Adults in Wales **(Swansea Council, Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA))**



Funded Project Partners

Project partners are in brackets next to the project titles

Feasibility Projects

- Designing out economic abuse in the UK banking industry **(Surviving Economic Abuse)**
- Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Enhance and Understand Regulatory Compliance in the Investment Management Industry **(Funds Axis Ltd)**
- A Targeted Support System to Bridge the Advice Gap **(Financial Administration Services Ltd)**
- SAiFE: A Sandbox for AI-powered trading in decentralised Financial markets **(Turing Intelligence Technology Limited (TuringTech AI))**
- Responsible Deployment of Frontier AI in Financial Services: Policy Pathways and Risk Frameworks **(FinTech West)**
- AI-driven Privacy Risk Assessment in Cyber Insurance **(Somerset Bridge Group Limited)**





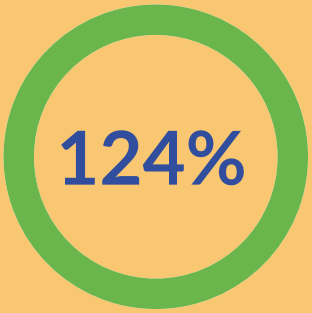




UKFin+ Annual Report

Funded Project Stats

Key Achievements in 2025–26



124 Applications received against a target of 100 over the project lifetime. All the deadlines have now passed.



We reallocated unspent funds to the sandpit to ensure we had the smallest underspend possible - currently £1283.43 or 0.1%

Stream	Deadline	Number received	Number funded
Agile	N/A	30	10
Pilot	Nov 2023	4	1
	Apr 2024	9	3
	Nov 2024	5	2
	Apr 2025	8	1
	Nov 2025	10	3
Feasibility	Nov 2023	6	0
	Apr 2024	6	2
	Nov 2024	5	1
	Apr 2025	11	2
	Nov 2025	8	1

UKFin+ Annual Report

Funded Project Stats

Key Achievements in 2025–26

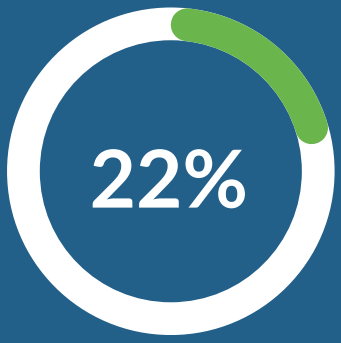
Stream	Deadline	Number received	Number funded
Impact	Apr 2026	7	3
Education	Nov 2023	1	0
	Apr 2024	2	0
	Nov 2024	2	0
	Apr 2025	1	0
	Nov 2025	2	2
	Apr 2026	3	2
Sandpit	Aug 2026	4	2

UKFin+ Annual Report

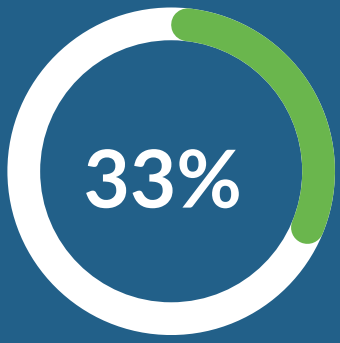
Funding Clinic Stats

Key Achievements in 2025–26

UKFin+ offered funding clinics for all potential applicants to our funding schemes. The clinics gave potential applicants the opportunity to seek clarification on eligibility, criteria and remit of our funding streams before submitting a funding application.



% Success rate accross all projects



% Success rate for those that attended a funding clinic

How effective were they?

89 funding clinics have taken place since the start of the project, and 16 since October 2025. We stopped offering funding clinics in February 2026 as our funding streams came to a close. In total, there have been 119 attendees (23 since October 2025).

Excluding sandpit applications researchers who attended a funding clinic achieved a success rate of 33% (20/61) compared with 22% (13/59) for those who did not attend. 22 out of the 35 funded projects had at least one team member attend a funding clinic.



UKFin+ Annual Report

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Importance to the network

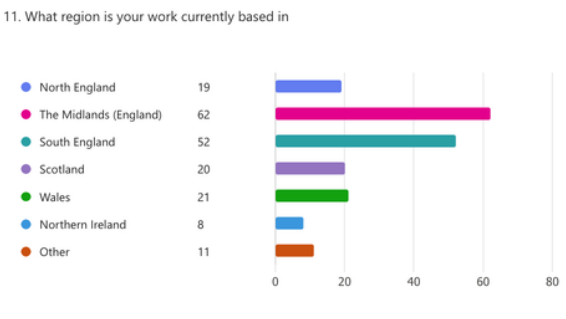
A commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is crucial to allow the UKFin NetworkPlus to achieve its aims. EDI has been positioned as one of the core principles of the Network, ensuring the inclusivity of different perspectives and lived experiences. For monitoring purposes, we ask those attending our events and applying for our funding to voluntarily provide us with data on their protected characteristics, geographic location of work and whether they are an academic researcher or working in industry.

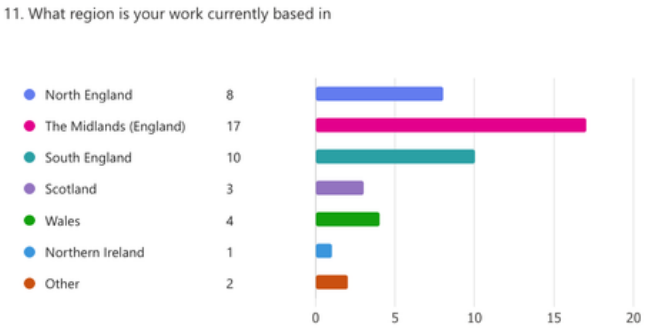
Event attendees

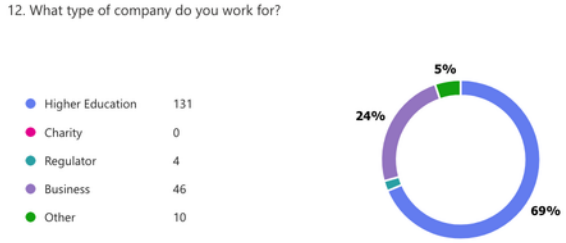
- Gender: 49% male, 47% female attendees.
- Age range: 6% 18 - 25, 42% 26–35, 31% 36 –45, 13% 46 - 55, 7% 56 - 65, 1% 65 - 76
- Ethnicity: 27% White (UK), 19% Asian British–Chinese, 18% White (Other), with wide diversity across other categories.

Funding Applicants

- Gender: 64% male, 33% female
- Age range: 22% 26–35, 33% 36 –45, 36% 46 - 55, 9% 56 - 65
- Ethnicity: 18% White (UK), 20% Asian British–Chinese, 13% White (Other), with wide diversity across other categories.







UKFin+ Annual Report

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKFinnovators

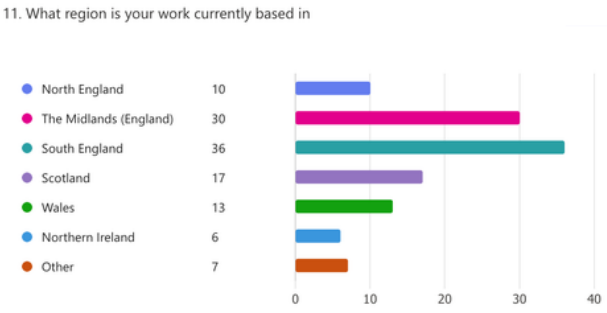
We monitor stats for the UKFinnovators separately from our other events, as they have a different audience. The age group is generally between 18 - 30, the subject areas are broadly a mix of business/ finance and computer science. The students come from universities across the country to attend these events and we plan to bring UKFinnovator to a wider range of cities. The results below are dependent on the students voluntarily filling in the form and not all do.

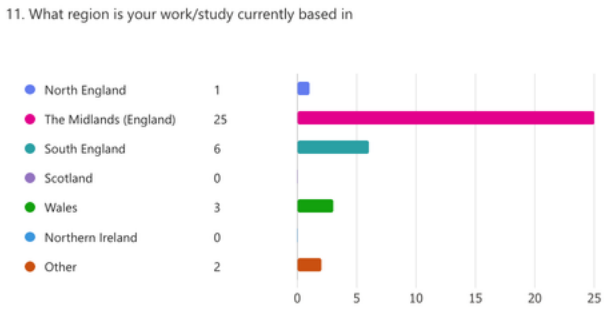
Event attendees - Birmingham

- Gender: 62% male, 37% female attendees.
- Age range: 76% 18 - 25, 16% 26–35, 5% 36 –45
- Ethnicity: 35% Asian/Asian British - Indian, 11% Black / Black British - African, 10% White British, 10% Asian/ Asian British Other, with wide diversity across other categories.

Event attendees - London

- Gender: 68% male, 30% female attendees.
- Age range: 57% 18 - 25, 41% 26–35, 3% 36 –45
- Ethnicity: 49% Asian/Asian British - Indian, 14% Asian/Asian British–Chinese, 11% Asian/ Asian British Other, with wide diversity across other categories.





KPIs

	Measure	Aim	Update September 2026
Connecting industry with academic researchers	Number of partners (industry, charity or other)	100 Network Partners	28 initial UKFin+ supporters, 32 project partners, 347 network members
	Partners in all Nations and Regions	Partners in each region	Completed
	Academic Network Members	1,000 academic	312 academics network members
	Number of co-creation events	Minimum 6 per year	7
	Co-hosted events with national FinTech clusters	At least one event per year with each cluster	0
	Number of academic participants at events	200 per year	143 (this does not include the 213 students that attended a UKFinnovator)
	Number of non-academic participants at events	200 per year	96
	Balance of academic vs nonacademic attendees at each event	Aim for 50:50	3:2
Co-ordinating through research agenda	Outputs from research projects	20 outputs over all projects	8

KPIs

Funding collaborative projects	Number of funding clinics	10 per funding round	16
	Education ECR participation	ECRs in 50% of projects	20/35 = 57%
	Number of applications	100 over project life time	124
	Matched contributions	At least 10 matched contributions over project lifetime	25
	Number of projects addressing local needs	20% of funded projects	5/35 = 14%
	Number of projects that address social inequalities	20% of funded projects	11/35 = 31%
Communicating outcomes	Social media engagement	1,000 LinkedIn followers. Engagement score: 5%	2,160+ (Sep 2026) Followers. Engagement score: 11.2%
	Policy commissions	5 policy commissions links	4
	Case studies	2 case studies, with one being developed with EPSRC for joint publicity.	16 have been written and added to the website

Some KPIs have been retired this year as they were either not possible to measure or not relevant to the project anymore.

- Research agenda downloads and citations - not measurable
- Uptake of UKFin services and infrastructure - no longer relevant
- Associate/Affiliate Network Members - retired, as we do not use this classification system

Looking Ahead – Plans for 2027

The final year of UKFin+

UKFin+ will be shifting the emphasis from funding research projects to articulating successful outcomes and further establishing the projects' impact. In addition, we will be identifying opportunities to extend the legacy and impact of UKFin+ beyond the lifetime of the project through collaboration with funders and key stakeholders.

Key Milestones

- Developing Business Aware Academics Programme: Having secured additional funding for this initiative, we will launch applications this Autumn. The programme will strengthen early career researchers' capability and confidence in engaging with industry partners.
- Further expanding and diversifying the talent pipeline through the UKFinnovator series, creating more opportunities for students to engage with the fintech ecosystem.
- Looking ahead to the successful completion of our final 12 projects, while continuing to see the outcomes of previous projects take root and deliver lasting impact across the financial services sector.
- Working with incuto via our sandpits successful projects to conduct impactful research into technologies that support community banks, enhance financial inclusion, and improve access to financial services.

UPCOMING EVENTS – AUTUMN/WINTER 2026

UKFin+ will be hosting/ co-hosting the following events this autumn:

- UWE UKFinnovator 2nd - 4th October 2026 (Bristol)
- Developing Business Aware Academics Workshop - 11th November 2026 (Birmingham)
- FIS UKFinnovator 25-26th November 2026 (London)
- Annual Showcase - 4th December 2026 (Edinburgh)

Appendix 1

All Events Lorita Attended Oct 2025 - Sept 2026

October	Fintech West Conference	Fintech West
October	Regional perspectives on local Net Zero through tech (techUK)	techUK
October	Opening Tech Social	Birmingham TechWeek
October	Fintech Fringe	Fintech Week London
October	Innovation Special - How to be the Next Big Thing	The 51% Club
October	Tech Week Dinner Awards	Birmingham TechWeek
November	FTT Fintech Festival 2025	Fintech Talents / VC Innovations
November	Wales Tech Week	Technology Connected
November	Future Finance Showcase Event	Future Finance
December	Glimpse of the Future Roundtable and Networking Event	Innovate UK, Business Connect
December	Fintech Connect & Tokenize Conference	Crowd Comms
February	Business & Research Partnerships for a Sustainable Future	UoB BERI event
February	FFECON26: FINTRAIL Conference	FINTRAIL
March	Sherlock Hackathon	Warwick Business School and Sherlock
March	EPSRC EDI Hub+ Annual Conference	EPSRC
March	FrontiertechX Conference	UoB and Fintech Society
April	Delivering Impact Through the UK Climate Change	BISCA
April	AI & Future Tech Forum: AI in Action	Tech WM
May	Banking Transformation Summit	MoneyNext
June	Stakeholder Management session for Business School Students	Birmingham Business School
June	Turn to Tech: The Digital Career Change Course Launch	Women in Tech
July	Unlock the Future of AI in Public Services	Microsoft
July	Grant Writing Workshop	UoB

Appendix 2

Funded Projects, their allocated cluster and value

Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing

Agile	Mitigating Stress and Confusion in Credit Contracts using Machine Learning and Simplification	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Regulatory Compliance	£10,000
Agile	Developing and Validating Personas for Understanding Young Adults' Engagement with Credit Card Agreements in the UK	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Regulatory Compliance	£9,967
Agile	FinTech for Dementia: Co-Designing Inclusive Future Financial Technologies for Older Adults living with Dementia and Caregivers	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£9,993
Agile	Including the financially excluded via credit unions	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£9,967
Education	FinTech Discovery Day	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Game Changing Technologies	£5,209
Feasability	Designing out economic abuse in the UK banking industry	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£99,860
Feasability	A Targeted Support System to Bridge the Advice Gap	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£99,997
Impact	DEFEND Impact: Deploying Contextualised Digital Banking Security Tools for Older Adults in Wales	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	£14,891
Pilot	Inclusive FinTech: Co-Creating Inclusive Future Financial Technologies with Disabled Communities	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£19,910
Pilot	DEFEND: Designing Age-Friendly Digital Banking Technologies	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	£16,019

Appendix 2

Funded Projects, their allocated cluster and value

Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing cont.

Pilot	Testing the Intelligibility of Credit Information through the Amplifi AI Tool	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	Regulatory Compliance	£17,796
Pilot	The Impact of FinTech Apps on Consumer Wellbeing	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£17,802
Sandpit	Simulating the Path to Yes: Behavioural AI Agents for Fair Lending in Community Finance	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£31,500
Sandpit	Saving Over Time: Hierarchical AI Modelling of Longitudinal Multi-Frequency Banking Transaction Behaviour to Understand Savings Behaviour for Financial Resilience	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing		£30,565

Financial Resilience & Stability

Agile	Enhancing Consumer Knowledge of Crypto Assets	Financial Resilience & Stability	Game Changing Technologies	£9,879
Agile	Fintech entrepreneurship and innovation in online black markets.	Financial Resilience & Stability		£10,000
Feasability	AI-driven Privacy Risk Assessment in Cyber Insurance	Financial Resilience & Stability	Regulatory Compliance	£100,000
Feasability	SAiFE: A Sandbox for AI-powered trading in decentralised Financial markEts	Financial Resilience & Stability	Game Changing Technologies	£99,994

Appendix 2

Funded Projects, their allocated cluster and value

Regulatory Compliance

Feasability	Responsible Deployment of Frontier AI in Financial Services: Policy Pathways and Risk Frameworks.	Regulatory Compliance	Game Changing Technologies	£97,666
Feasability	Leveraging Artificial Intelligence to Enhance and Understand Regulatory Compliance in the Investment Management Industry	Regulatory Compliance		£97,118
Pilot	TRACE – Transparency and Risk Assessment for Cross-Chain Compliance Evaluation	Regulatory Compliance	Game Changing Technologies	£19,937

Sustainable Finance

Agile	News sentiment analysis for sustainable investing	Sustainable Finance	Regulatory Compliance	£4,840
Education	AI-Driven Financial Resilience Labs for ESG and Financial Services	Sustainable Finance	Game Changing Technologies	£6,000
Impact	Greenwashing Analysis in Practice: Trialling an Explainable ESG Disclosure Assessment Tool with a Financial Services Partner	Sustainable Finance	Regulatory Compliance	£14,952
Impact	Data-driven Materiality for Sustainability Reporting	Sustainable Finance	Regulatory Compliance	£10,947
Pilot	Greenwashing Analysis: A Data Science Approach to Evaluating ESG Integrity	Sustainable Finance	Regulatory Compliance	£19,239

Appendix 2

Funded Projects, their allocated cluster and value

Trusted & Effective Open Banking

Agile	An Agile Proposal for a Feasibility Study on a Gifted Account Information Service Provider (AISP) for Research Data	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	£12,496
Pilot	UnFed: Selectie Forgetting in federated financal applications	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	Game Changing Technologies	£20,000

Game Changing Technologies

Agile	Investigating Multimodal Knowledge Graphs as Digital Twin Infrastructures of Financial Operations Risks	Game Changing Technologies	Financial Resilience & Stability	£9,999
Agile	Contemporary Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning Adoption by Fund Managers	Game Changing Technologies	Financial Resilience & Stability	£10,000
Education	Responsible Intelligence: Preparing Students for the Ethical and Effective Use of AI in Finance	Game Changing Technologies	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	£5,980
Education	FinTech & Blockchain Talent Accelerator - Blockchain applications solving wicked problems in Fintech	Game Changing Technologies	Trusted & Effective Open Banking	£12,000
Pilot	Establishing a Cryptocurrency Volatility Indicator with Sentiment (CVIS)	Game Changing Technologies	Financial Resilience & Stability	£18,993
Pilot	RadarSeq Pilot: A Predictive AI for Risk Intelligence and Customer Excellence	Game Changing Technologies	Financial Inclusion & Wellbeing	£19,894
pilot	Guiding Real-Time LLM Market Analytics for the UK Financial Industry	Game Changing Technologies	Regulatory Compliance	£17,050