

Finsbury Institute
Impact Report: Year One
2025-2026



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Executive Summary



The Finsbury Institute was established to strengthen connections between academia, policy, business and civic society, creating new opportunities for collaboration and enhancing the real-world impact of City St George's research and expertise. During its first year under its inaugural Director, Professor Diana Beech (pictured left), the Finsbury Institute has focused on building the foundations for long-term success: developing researcher capability, raising institutional visibility, creating new external partnerships and establishing dynamic platforms for dialogue between researchers, policymakers and practitioners.

Despite being in its formative year, the Finsbury Institute has already delivered a range of tangible outcomes, including researcher training and support, external engagement opportunities, successful partnership development, public events and the launch of a suite of new communications channels. This Impact Report details the activities through to the end of June 2026 which have positioned the Finsbury Institute as a growing convening force within the City of London and beyond.

Our Impact in Year One

The Finsbury Institute has a broad remit, serving students, researchers and external cross-sector communities equally around City-relevant issues. This means the Institute is developing activities that are important to each of these key stakeholder groups, while also creating opportunities for them to interact and learn from one another to promote both interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral working. At its core, the Finsbury Institute seeks to act as a bridge between academia, policy, industry and civic society, helping to ensure that knowledge, skills and expertise flow in both directions.

As a result, during its foundation year, the Finsbury Institute has prioritised the following six areas:

1. Supporting Students and Employability
2. Supporting Researcher Development
3. Building Knowledge Exchange Platforms
4. Strengthening Public and Policy Engagement
5. Building External Networks and Partnerships
6. Supporting Practitioners and Professional Development

This Impact Report sets out in more detail how the Finsbury Institute has built firm foundations in each of these areas.

1. Supporting Students and Employability



A key objective of the Finsbury Institute is to help prepare students in the School of Policy and Global Affairs (SPGA) for successful careers by exposing them to the realities of policy, public affairs, business and professional practice, and providing them with relevant work experience.

During its first year under its inaugural Director, the Finsbury Institute has contributed to student development through several targeted activities designed to build awareness of policy careers and strengthen students' practical understanding of policy and public affairs roles. Activities include:

- The Finsbury Institute was fortunate to host one SPGA student for a three-week **Micro-Placement** during summer 2025 to help shape its future development. Through an online survey, the student gathered views on SPGA students' aspirations and expectations for the Institute, producing a report that has informed future priorities and established a baseline against which progress can be measured in the years ahead.
- The Finsbury Institute contributed to the **SPGA Careers Panel** through participation by its Director, providing students with real-life insights into careers in policy and public affairs within government, think tanks, charity and related advocacy sectors. Also featuring City St George's alumni, the session helped demystify policy careers to current students and highlighted the diverse opportunities available to those interested in influencing public policy.

- The Finsbury Institute engaged with the **Festival of the Professions**, offering students direct access to advice and mentoring on careers in policy and public affairs at its Saddlers' Hall event in February 2026. The Director spoke to around a dozen students on a one-to-one basis to share insights from her career as a public policy practitioner. These conversations enabled students to gain a better understanding of the skills, experiences and networks that can support entry into policy roles. Some of these students have also followed up with the Director since the event.
- The Finsbury Institute supported the **CityMUN (Model United Nations) programme**, with the Director opening the event in November 2025 and sourcing the keynote speaker, **Dr Naimat Zafary**, then an Afghan Chevening scholar at the University of Sussex (pictured right), who spoke about the importance of international development and human rights policy. (The Finsbury Institute also [published his speech](#) as part of its #FinsburyExchanges series in July 2026). Support for CityMUN served both to inspire students into policy careers and support them with key employability skills in negotiation, diplomacy, communication, public speaking and critical thinking – all essential for policy careers.



Looking ahead, this commitment to enhancing the employability of SPGA students will be further strengthened through the development of the Finsbury Institute's proposed **City Immersion Scheme**, which aims to connect students directly with employers, industry leaders and professional networks across the City of London in Year Two in conjunction with the University's Careers Team. Together, these initiatives reflect the Finsbury Institute's ambition to support students not only as learners, but as future professionals, policymakers and civic leaders capable of making meaningful contributions to the City of London's professional communities and beyond.

2. Supporting Researcher Development



A core objective of the Finsbury Institute is to equip researchers – at all levels and in all disciplines – at City St George's with the skills, confidence and networks needed to engage effectively with policymakers and practitioners. During its first year under its inaugural Director, the Finsbury Institute has concentrated on the following areas:

Policy Engagement Training

During the past year, the Finsbury Institute has delivered **seven specialist policy engagement training sessions** for researchers, reaching colleagues – from PhD candidates through to Professors. These sessions have reached **over 50 individual researchers** from across the University and include:

"Today's training session was extremely varied, creative, engaging and educational in terms of the diverse methods of policy communication and engagement that are possible. Such training empowers me to do more to share and influence society about my research and its usefulness. Thanks Prof Beech for organising it!"
(Prof Atul Shah, Bayes Business School)

"I enjoyed the training session. I thought it was pitched at just the right level, and Mark (the trainer) was the perfect mix of relatable, credible and knowledgeable. Thanks for putting it on, and looking forward to attending more when I can!"

(Dr Andrew Payne, SPGA)

- **Three group policy engagement training sessions**, in November 2025 and June 2026, led by former Labour MP Huw Edwards (pictured above).

- **Four group policy engagement training sessions** – each on a different aspect of the policy engagement process, from understanding parliament and government through to communication skills – delivered by former parliamentary researcher and practicing academic Dr Mark Bennister between March and June 2026.

- **Two one-to-one policy engagement support sessions** with Huw Edwards in June 2026, providing tailored advice to individual academics on getting their current research into parliament.

Following the first training session, the Director distributed feedback forms to participants to gauge how well the training matched expectations and to solicit ideas and requests for future training provision. These included a plea for 1-2-1 support sessions and dedicated training on communicating research to policymakers – both of which were offered by the Finsbury Institute in the second half of the year, demonstrating a culture of listening to researchers and acting on the feedback received.

"The training session was excellent. Huw (the trainer) gave us clear and precise explanations of government and policymaking processes that we could target with our research. I'd appreciate further engagement with him. Bring him back!"

(Dr Julian Hargreaves, SPGA)

'I ran a great series of policy engagement workshops at City St George's with various groups of keen and engaged researchers. We all had fun with our mock select committee session too.'

(Dr Mark Bennister)

While participation was initially concentrated among a relatively small number of SPGA researchers, collaboration with the University's Researcher Development Office part-way through the year enabled wider institutional engagement. The result was increased attendance and a more interesting dynamic in the sessions, helping to promote interdisciplinary conversations. The Director intends to build on this whole-university approach for future training sessions.

Overall, this strand of work is helping to build institutional capacity for policy engagement at a time when demonstrating societal impact is becoming increasingly important across the university research sector as it prepares for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. The trainers' feedback on working with City St George's researchers should also give us confidence that we are building strong foundations for success in this area – not least through our researchers' demonstrable willingness to learn and engage.

"Being asked to contribute to policy engagement training sessions for the Finsbury Institute has been a stimulating and enjoyable experience. We can do so much to help the University's researchers understand how to promote their work to parliaments and policymakers and it's so rewarding to see a researcher's work cited in a select committee report and in parliamentary questions or debates. Our sessions can be tailored for cross disciplinary groups or specific institutes, or for PhD researchers and early career researchers. It's also possible to offer one-to-one coaching for individual researchers whose work is ripe for policy engagement.' (Huw Edwards MBE)

Bespoke Researcher Support

The Finsbury Institute's Director has also supported researchers from across the University on an individual basis when requested. Examples include:

- Participating in mock UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship interviews and providing advice and guidance to the candidate;
- Providing guidance and templates to researchers submitting written evidence to parliament;
- Providing advice and guidance to researchers presenting oral evidence to parliament;
- Communicating opportunities to researchers to engage with the UK parliament and government via e-mail and supporting several researchers with their applications; and
- Providing letters of policy engagement support to researchers for funding applications.

Learnings from the first year suggest that the Finsbury Institute needs to develop its own resources in this area, with a view to joining up with the central Communications Team and the Learning Futures Lab. This will be an objective for Year Two.

Creating Opportunities for External Engagement

"It is a genuine pleasure to support the Finsbury Institute's work in forging new partnerships across The City. Helping connect our fantastic researchers at City St George's with opportunities to inform strategic thinking has demonstrated the value of academic expertise in addressing real-world challenges, and I look forward to seeing these collaborations grow through the Finsbury Institute in the years ahead."
(Caroline Sipos, Business Engagement & Knowledge Exchange Manager)

The Finsbury Institute has begun to establish unique routes to input academic insights into external stakeholder discussions and events within our 'civic patch' of the City of London. This year's outcomes include:

- Securing a **consultancy project with a high-level external partner** for two Economics researchers (including financial overheads for the Finsbury Institute). The project looked at the relationship between policing, crime and economic performance in the Square Mile (see quote below).
- Securing **speaking opportunities for researchers at two external partner events** (one with a legal practice in Canary Wharf and the other with the City of London Corporation). Feedback from the researchers involved has been positive and it is hoped other academics will take up future opportunities sourced through the Finsbury Institute. The external partners involved have also expressed satisfaction in being able to come to the Finsbury Institute to help source appropriate speakers for their events.

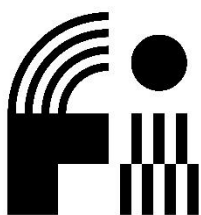
These projects, while small in scale, have helped to expand the visibility of City St George's expertise among high-level external audiences in our vicinity and have allowed our researchers to expand their practitioner and policymaker networks.

"It was a privilege to be invited by the Finsbury Institute to contribute to a project for City partners and to play a key role in shaping conversations about the City of London. Together, we contributed to an evidence-based assessment of the economic implications of the proposed restructuring of the City of London Police, focusing on the relationship between policing, crime and economic performance in the Square Mile. The opportunity to contribute rigorous economic evidence to such an important policy debate enabled us to apply our expertise in economic analysis to a real-world policy challenge, and it was particularly rewarding to see policymakers engage with the findings and consider their implications for future decision-making." (Dr Filippo Boeri & Dr Giulia Faggio, SPGA)

3. Building Knowledge Exchange Platforms

A major focus of the Finsbury Institute this year has been creating sustainable platforms through which researchers, policymakers and practitioners can connect, converse and collaborate. These platforms also help to build brand awareness of the Finsbury Institute among external audiences. They include:

Trademarking



The Finsbury Institute's (i) name, (ii) full name logo and (iii) 'fi' logo (pictured left) are now all **registered on the Trademarks Registry of the UKIPO**, with an effective date of 14 November 2025. The three registrations will remain in force until **14th November 2035**. This means the Finsbury Institute's name and logos can now be used across the range of goods and services for which they are registered with confidence.

Launch of the Finsbury Institute Webpage

The Finsbury Institute launched an updated [webpage](#) on the University website in May 2026. The webpage provides:

- A public-facing identity and web presence for the Finsbury Institute;
- News of Finsbury Institute activities and information for external stakeholders about opportunities for collaboration (including a mailing list to build a contact base);
- A central repository of opportunities and resources for researchers; and
- A platform that will continue to evolve in response to researcher and stakeholder needs and interests.

The website can also be easily shared via a QR code and has the short-form format: www.citystgeorges.ac.uk/finsbury-institute.

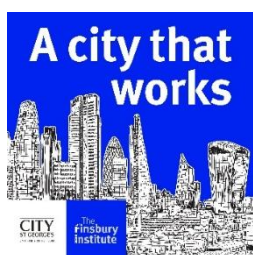
Establishing a Social Media Presence

The Finsbury Institute has also established a dedicated [LinkedIn presence](#) to enable it to connect to business and practitioner communities more easily and promote activities and events in a more dynamic way. This includes regular **#FinsburyFridays** posts to celebrate the Finsbury Institute's civic operating context and the launch of a new thought-leadership blog series, called **#FinsburyExchanges**, to encourage good-natured conversation about key City issues between practitioners, professionals, policymakers and researchers.

Finsbury Exchanges

This blog series, launched in June 2026, has begun to position the Finsbury Institute as a hub for evidence-informed discussion on issues affecting the City. Three articles were published in the summer to kickstart the programme. (The first was contributed by a City professional looking at **London's financial markets**, the second was authored by City St George's Deputy President Professor Elisabeth Hill on the importance of **AI and digital transformation** and the third was from Dr Naimat Zafary following his **CityMUN keynote**). While engagement with the blogs and subsequent cross-sector discussion has been limited to date, it is hoped activity will strengthen as the Finsbury Institute grows its audience base in the months ahead.

Launching a New Podcast



The Finsbury Institute launched its flagship podcast, ***A City That Works***, in June 2026. Produced with the expert support of production company *Research Podcasts*, the series provides a platform for conversations on policy, business and civic issues affecting the City of London and beyond. The production schedule to date includes three episodes recorded and released before July 2026. These comprise:

- Episode 1 on *A Global City* featuring President of City St George's **Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein** in conversation with former Lord Mayor of the City of London **Professor Michael Mainelli**;
- Episode 2 on *A Financial City* featuring **Professor Keith Pilbeam** in conversation with **Kirsty Rutter** from Lloyds Banking Group; and
- Episode 3 on *A Cyber City* featuring **Dr Elinor Carmi** in conversation with **Adham Harker**, Senior Associate at City law firm Brett Wilson.

A further four episodes have been commissioned for recording and release in Autumn 2026 on the themes of *A Devolved City*, *A Safer City*, *A Fairer City* and *A Retail City*.

This podcast series, available in video format on the Finsbury Institute's new [YouTube channel](#) and in audio on all major podcast platforms, provides a modern and accessible mechanism for knowledge exchange and public engagement. It also extends the Finsbury Institute's reach to new audiences, which will be invaluable when hosting in-person events in the years ahead. Uptake of Episode 1 has been strong, with video clip views performing well, and the Director aims to secure external funding to produce further series in the future.

"The Finsbury Institute has been invaluable in helping to bring serious academic insights into conversations that matter to the City. As an Alderman, it has been refreshing to know I can turn to the Finsbury Institute to identify the most relevant researchers to strengthen the quality of debate around the table and ensure our conversations are informed by evidence and long-term perspective. That ability to curate the right expertise for the right moment is a real asset to the City of London landscape." (Alderman Gregory Jones KC)

4. Strengthening Public and Policy Engagement

The Finsbury Institute has played a significant role in supporting University events that bring academic expertise into conversation with public policy and societal challenges. While it remains premature for the Finsbury Institute to host its own events so early in its development given the need to secure a reliable external audience base – to ensure differentiation from ‘traditional’ academic panels and conferences, and provide value for money – the Finsbury Institute has undertaken the following activities:

Supporting Internal Events

The Finsbury Institute generously supported **three pre-arranged internal events** with clear policy relevance or historical significance to the SPGA. Its involvement in these activities ensured fair and balanced policy debate around pressing societal and political issues. Events include:



- The inaugural **Rita Hinden Memorial Lecture**, in partnership with **Dr Lise Butler (Dept of International Politics)** and the journal *Renewal: A Journal of Social Democracy*, given by **Dr Annelise Dodds MP** (pictured left) on the topic of ‘how to tackle the challenges of Big Tech, democratic disillusionment and online disinformation’ on 30 September 2025. [News article here](#).

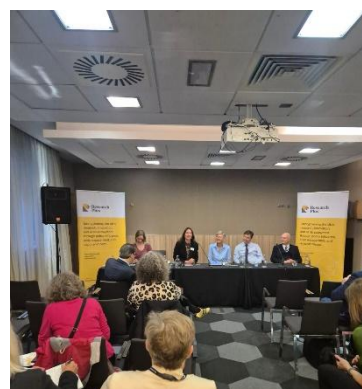
- A policy-focused panel discussion on **Barriers to research on sex and gender: Lessons from the Sullivan Review**, in partnership with **Professor Ian Pace (Dept of Sociology & Criminology)**, featuring City St George’s President Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein and external policy Chair Nick Hillman OBE, Director of the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), on 12 February 2026. The event secured coverage in [The Telegraph](#) and the [Times Higher Education](#).
- The **2026 Rosemary Hollis Memorial Lecture** – ‘A cuckoo in the nest? Why cities matter in state conflicts’ – in partnership with **Dr Sara Silvestri (Dept of International Politics)**, given by Professor Wendy Pullan on 24 February 2026. [News article here](#).

In addition, the Finsbury Institute offered support to the following initiatives:

- The *Closing the gap for asylum seekers in north London* workshop, organised by **Dr Hallam Tuck (Dept of Sociology & Criminology)** in collaboration with Citizens UK, which took place on 25 March 2026. The Finsbury Institute was instrumental in securing coverage for the workshop in the *London Daily*.
- The **Centre for Online Safety, Safeguarding, Privacy and Identity (COSPI)**’s workshop on UK Digital ID. The Finsbury Institute promoted the resulting policy briefing via a [LinkedIn post](#).
- The **European Social Survey (ESS)**’s *Make It Digital* report on attitudes to AI. The Finsbury Institute highlighted an interesting finding from the report via a [LinkedIn post](#). The Director also has plans to write a feature on this in the near future.

Learnings from these outputs suggest that the Finsbury Institute now needs to develop its own policy briefing series – **Finsbury Factsheets** – which will be an ambition for Year Two working in conjunction with the University’s research centres and individual researchers.

Finally, the Finsbury Institute played a key role in launching the new sector-wide mission group, *ResearchPlus*, in September 2025 with the Director chairing a **fringe event at the Labour Party Conference** featuring the Vice-Chancellors of Brunel, Sussex and Ulster universities alongside Lauren Sullivan MP (pictured right). This event helped to pitch the Finsbury Institute as the ‘go to’ externally facing policy institute among this new collaborative of universities – a role which it hopes to continue as the *ResearchPlus* collective gathers momentum under its new Director, Johnny Rich (commencing August 2026).



Convening an inaugural School Symposium

The Finsbury Institute co-hosted the inaugural **SPGA Digital Education and Innovation Symposium** on 8 June 2026 in collaboration with **Dr Xiaogang Che (Dept of Economics)** and **SPGA Executive Dean Professor Charles Lees** (pictured below). The Finsbury Institute contributed to the event by:



- Securing external policy speakers from HEPI and Jisc, alongside the ESS;
- Publicising the event on LinkedIn leading to prominent external attendees from City of London businesses (including the co-founder of Epiphany Productions and Director of Sector Engagement at UPP), the sector body AdvanceHE, and the CEO of Edtech company Skilled Education.
- Chairing a leadership panel featuring senior university leaders, including colleagues from the LSE, King’s College London, De Montfort University and City St George’s.
- Arranging for the closing remarks to be given by Deputy President of City St George’s Professor Elisabeth Hill. These were also turned into a [Finsbury Exchanges blog](#) in late June 2026 to give longevity to the event’s content.

This event demonstrated the Finsbury Institute’s ability to position both the SPGA and the wider University as a convener at the intersection of higher education policy, innovation and professional practice, and the Director looks forward to continued engagement in this area. A news item on the Symposium is [available here](#).

Raising the Institute’s External Profile

Alongside building the Finsbury Institute’s programmes and partnerships, the Director has played an important ambassadorial role, using her established profile in higher education policy and public affairs to raise the visibility of both the Finsbury Institute and City St George’s among national and international audiences.

Throughout the year, the Director has contributed to high-profile policy discussions on the future of higher education, skills and public policy, ensuring that the Finsbury Institute is recognised as an active participant in key debates shaping the sector. This has included providing expert commentary, chairing and speaking at events, as well as engaging directly with policymakers, business leaders and professional networks. The Director had a total of **48 external speaking engagements** in the period from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2026. These can be broken down into:

- 18 private roundtable policy discussions;
- 10 keynote presentations;
- 14 panel appearances and 3 charring roles; and
- 3 external podcast appearances.

While some of these events are related to the Director's own research interests in higher education and research policy, many have been chosen to meet the following strategic business objectives:



- **Exposure to City of London networks:** demonstrated through speaking on a panel alongside Lady Hale of Richmond DBE at the invitation of the **Worshipful Company of Educators** (pictured left) and attending its annual Franklin Lecture; attending the annual Tacitus Lecture of the **Worshipful Company of World Traders**; attending a dinner of the **Worshipful Company of Cordwainers**; and becoming a liveryman at the **Worshipful Company of Founders**.

- **Exposure to corporate audiences and potential partners:** demonstrated through delivering the opening keynote address at the **Association of University Legal Practitioners (AULP)** annual conference, at the University of St Andrews, in June 2026 where the Director addressed an audience of leading City law firms and legal professionals hoping to generate interest in the Finsbury Institute among a core City market; and also hosting a 'lunch and learn' session at City-based company, **UPP** (pictured right).



- **Exposure to international audiences:** demonstrated by the Director's participation as a speaker at the **India Global Forum** in the heart of the City of London in June 2026 discussing the impacts of AI in global education (pictured left). This provided the opportunity, not only to highlight the work of SPGA's Digital Champions and wider digital transformation efforts at City St George's but also introduce the Finsbury Institute to policymakers and professionals from other global cities.

- **Exposure to national policy debates:** demonstrated by appearing on a panel alongside Professor Sir John Curtice and *Telegraph* journalist Annabel Denham (pictured left) in June 2026 to examine public perceptions of higher education as part of the launch of the **British Social Attitudes** to higher education survey. The event provided an opportunity to bring the Finsbury Institute front and centre of a high-profile national conversation about universities' role in society, value and future direction.



The Director has also made **122 unique media comments** in the period from 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2026 which highlight her Finsbury Institute affiliation. These include her monthly *Beech-side Views* column in *The PIE* news outlet and several blogs for HEPI, *Research Professional News* and the *Times Higher Education*. She also published two major co-authored policy reports in May 2025 and March 2026 through the think tank HEPI.

Collectively, these activities have contributed to enhancing the visibility, credibility and reach of the Finsbury Institute, helping to establish it as a recognised voice within higher education policy, civic engagement and the wider City ecosystem. It has hopefully also created a culture of leading by example, inspiring other researchers within the SPGA and City St George's to embark on similar engagement activities with their own research.

5. Building External Networks and Partnerships

Building relationships across the City of London ecosystem has been a key priority throughout the Finsbury Institute's first year to ensure it becomes embedded in the fabric of the City. Activities include:

Engagement with Businesses and Other Civic Organisations

Following the launch of its website, podcast series and social media presence, the Finsbury Institute has ended the year by writing to more than **200 City-based businesses and organisations** to:

- Introduce the Institute;
- Raise awareness of partnership opportunities; and
- Generate interest in future events and collaborative activities.



The Director is now following up on a one-to-one basis with those organisations which have expressed an interest in learning more about the Institute's activities and services.

The Director has also developed a promotional leaflet (pictured left) for distribution at events and other external engagements. This outreach has hopefully laid the groundwork for deeper engagement for City St George's researchers across business, professional services, civic organisations and local stakeholders in the years ahead.

"The Finsbury Institute recently provided an opportunity for me to speak at a high-level policy discussion hosted by a leading City business. For junior colleagues, discussions like these open doors to new networks and collaborations, and for those of us further along in our careers, they help to reconnect our research with real-world needs and reinforce our professional integrity. (Prof Raj Rajarajan, School of Science and Technology)

"I'm grateful to the Finsbury Institute for the opportunity to contribute to a City of London event. It generated rich and constructive discussions with councillors, practitioners and civic leaders, created valuable connections that will directly inform our ongoing research, and opened promising possibilities for future collaboration. I'd be pleased to support similar initiatives in future (Dr Christian Reynolds, Centre for Food Policy)

6. Supporting Practitioners and Professional Development

A distinctive feature of the Finsbury Institute is its commitment to serving not only the University's students and researchers, but also the practitioners, professionals and organisations that drive economic, civic and public life across the City of London and beyond. Some key initiatives include:

Practitioner in Residence Scheme

The Finsbury Institute has successfully **relaunched the SPGA Practitioner in Residence (PiR) Scheme** in conjunction with **Dr Georgios Giannakopoulos, SPGA Associate Dean for Employability, Engagement and Enterprise**, to strengthen opportunities for external experts to contribute directly to teaching, research and student enrichment activities. The new scheme will offer PiRs the opportunity to be part of the SPGA research community for a period of 3 to 6 months, and [a call for expressions of interest](#) has been launched for the summer. The Director has also created new guidance for 'host' researchers in the SPGA based on conversations with past PiRs to ensure that future candidates receive a rewarding experience with us. It is hoped that the scheme will play an important role in strengthening links between academic expertise and professional practice and also provide students and researchers in the SPGA with access to practitioner perspectives to enhance their own research and relevance.

Learning and Development

During the past year, the Finsbury Institute began developing its profile as a trusted source of expertise and insight for external stakeholders. Activities include:

- Direct engagement with businesses and professional audiences, sourcing briefings and commentary where requested. After the Director delivered a successful lunchtime briefing on the state of the UK higher education sector to City-based business UPP, she hopes to make more connections between policymakers, practitioners and relevant researchers as the Finsbury Institute's network grows. Conversations are already underway with other organisations to expand this work in Year Two.

- Working closely with colleagues across the University to develop a programme of professional learning opportunities tailored to the needs of City practitioners and employers. In partnership with the **School of Professional & Lifelong Learning** and the **SPGA Senior Leadership Team**, the Finsbury Institute has begun shaping proposals for a portfolio of City-relevant short courses and executive education offerings that draw on the University's academic strengths and the expertise of leading practitioners. The first of these courses is currently going through the internal approvals process with a view to launching it in Year Two.

These activities contribute to the Finsbury Institute's wider ambition to act as a bridge between the University and the professional communities it serves, helping external partners better understand emerging policy challenges while creating opportunities for deeper collaboration with academic experts. By engaging directly with practitioners and contributing to the design of professional learning opportunities, the Finsbury Institute is also building new routes through which knowledge can be shared, skills can be developed and relationships can be strengthened across the wider City ecosystem. These foundations will support the Finsbury Institute's future growth as a centre for executive education, professional development and practitioner engagement.

Impact matrix

As a newly established Institute, much of Year One has focused on building the infrastructure, partnerships and platforms needed to create lasting impact. Alongside this foundational work, the Finsbury Institute has delivered a substantial programme of activity that has strengthened institutional visibility, expanded external networks and created new opportunities for knowledge exchange. The headline metrics below provide an overview of progress during the Finsbury Institute's inaugural year:

Metric	Result
Individual researchers supported	50+
Training sessions delivered	7
External speaking opportunities facilitated for researchers	2
Income-generating consultancy projects secured	1
External partners engaged	200+
Podcast episodes produced	3
Internal events supported	4
Media mentions for Finsbury Institute	122

Year One: Lessons Learned

This first year has inevitably been a period of experimentation, relationship-building and learning to navigate internal and external landscapes. Alongside delivering a substantial programme of activity, several important lessons have emerged which will help to shape the Finsbury Institute's development in the years ahead:

- 1. Building demand takes time:** One of the clearest lessons from the Finsbury Institute's first year is that meaningful engagement cannot be assumed simply because opportunities are made available. Whether working with researchers, students or external stakeholders, sustained participation depends upon trust, visibility and demonstrated value. While some activities attracted strong interest from the outset, others required ongoing promotion and relationship-building before gaining momentum. This reinforces the importance of the Director investing time in communications, audience development and personal engagement.
- 2. Cross-university collaboration strengthens impact:** The Finsbury Institute's work has been most successful where it has brought together expertise from across different Schools, Departments and Professional Services teams. Collaboration with colleagues in Researcher Development, Communications, Knowledge Exchange, Learning and Development, Employability and Professional Education has enabled activities to reach wider audiences and deliver greater value than could have been achieved through a more narrowly focused approach. The Finsbury Institute will therefore continue to position itself as a catalyst for collaboration from its position in the SPGA, rather than operating in isolation, operating on an 'SPGA+' basis.
- 3. External audiences value access to academic expertise:** Engagements with policymakers, businesses, civic organisations and professional bodies have demonstrated a strong appetite for independent academic insight on issues affecting the City of London and wider society. In many cases, external partners are less interested in traditional academic outputs than in practical, accessible and timely contributions that can inform decision-making. This has reinforced the importance of developing communications platforms, policy briefings, podcasts and other forms of knowledge exchange that translate research into usable, bitesize insights.
- 4. Strong foundations must precede sustainable impact:** The first year has focused heavily on creating the infrastructure necessary for long-term success, including establishing the Finsbury Institute's brand, securing trademark protection, launching digital platforms, building networks and developing new programmes of activity. While some tangible outcomes have already emerged, the wider impact of these investments is likely to become more visible over time as relationships deepen, partnerships mature and opportunities for researchers and students continue to grow.

Taken together, these lessons provide confidence that the Finsbury Institute is moving in the right direction. They also provide a clear roadmap for Year Two, with future efforts focused on deepening engagement, expanding opportunities and translating the foundations established during the Institute's first year into lasting institutional and societal impact.

Looking Ahead: Aims and Aspirations for Year Two

Thanks to the wealth of activities developed in Year One, the Finsbury Institute is entering its second year of operations in 2026-27 with strong foundations, momentum and a growing pipeline of activity. Some aims and aspirations for Year Two include:

Professional Education

- Potential launch of the first Finsbury Institute short course in Global Commercial Awareness, to be delivered by former Lord Mayor Professor Michael Mainelli, subject to internal approval.

Research and Insight Generation

- Development of 'Finsbury Factsheets' to be hosted on the Institute's website and social media profiles. These will be short 2-4-page policy notes of relevance to the City and written by University researchers, similar to POST notes but with a distinctly 'City feel'.

Convening and Thought Leadership

- Development of the academic programme for the London Economic Forum, scheduled for October 2026, including the publication of academic think pieces in the run up to the event.
- The realisation of collaborations on thought-leadership with external partners, with discussions with three external organisations already underway.

Stakeholder Engagement

- Delivery of the first Finsbury Institute Reception to gather external partners and introduce ways to engage with us.
- Completion of the podcast, *A City That Works*, releasing the final four episodes in autumn 2026, and securing funding for series two, ideally from an external partner.

City Pulse Surveys and Academic Commentary

- Developing *City Pulse Surveys* from the Finsbury Institute's online mailing list (once a good number of City-based policy professionals is reached) to capture timely insights on emerging economic, technological and societal issues affecting the City of London. Findings would be accompanied by expert academic commentary from the SPGA and wider University to feed unique City perspectives to the press.

Research Impact and REF Readiness

- Collaboration with the University's central Researcher Development Team to establish a programme of policy engagement training aligned to REF 2029 objectives.

Peer-to-Peer Policy Engagement Resources

- Creation of peer-to-peer videos, offering practical advice and guidance from the SPGA's academics on their experiences of engaging with policymakers, media and the public. These videos would help other researchers who have perhaps not engaged as widely and provide a lasting repository of expertise accessible to students and researchers across the sector.

Practical Tools and Templates

- Development of Finsbury Institute-branded resources for researchers based on observations on what is needed by the Director as well as researcher requests, e.g.

advice on how to run and chair policy panels (which *are different* from traditional academic formats) or templates for parliamentary submissions.

Student and Employer Engagement

- Development of a City Immersion Scheme, providing SPGA students with direct exposure to key sectors and industries across the City. This includes submitting a prospective bid for funding through the Destination City initiative to support with the visits and an accompanying mentoring programme.

Strategic Partnerships

- Development of the next Lord Mayor's Fellowship project following strategic conversations with the incoming Lord Mayor of the City of London Timothy Hailes and the Mansion House team.

Civic and community mapping

- Applying for an SPGA Industry Project to secure a student team to map civic organisations operating across the local area and identify existing partnerships and opportunities, as well as develop recommendations for a Finsbury Institute civic engagement strategy. This would facilitate the roll-out of community-facing activities such as free digital literacy provision and place-based engagement programmes.

Conclusion

In its first year under its new Director, the Finsbury Institute has established itself as an emerging hub for policy engagement, knowledge exchange and civic connection with a growing national profile. Through researcher development, strategic partnerships, public events and new communications platforms, the Finsbury Institute has begun to create an independent space for dialogue between academia, policy and practice

While much of the year's activity has focused on creating the infrastructure, networks and visibility necessary for long-term success, the Finsbury Institute has already delivered measurable outcomes for researchers, students and external stakeholders. With a strong programme of activity now in development, the foundations laid during Year One position the Finsbury Institute well to expand its influence and impact significantly during its second year.



(Photo of Finsbury Institute Director chairing the Leadership Panel at the SPGA Digital Education & Innovation Symposium 2026)