

Sheila Coates Foundation receives £25m endowment from philanthropist Ben Delo to expand and enhance support for autistic young people

19 February 2026, London: Sheila Coates Foundation (SCF) has received a significant endowment from the British entrepreneur and philanthropist Ben Delo to fund its work in perpetuity and enable it to expand and enhance its support for autistic young people in England.

Established by Delo in 2020 to advance the education and mental health of autistic children and young people, SCF has supported over 600 schools and colleges, providing over 25,000 young people with opportunities to excel, achieve, flourish, and succeed. Through an agile grant-giving approach, SCF funds initiatives which help autistic young people to thrive in mainstream secondary school or college.

Since its inception, SCF has funded schools and colleges to provide a wide range of targeted support for autistic young people. Projects have spanned sensory spaces and gardens, specialist interventions, staff training, additional staffing capacity, and creative and therapeutic activities. These initiatives have transformed learning environments, strengthened wellbeing, fostered connection and belonging, and significantly improved engagement and confidence both in and beyond the classroom.

The endowment from Ben Delo will strengthen SCF's strategic grant-making capacity over the long-term. It will allow SCF to expand its support for autistic students in mainstream secondary schools and colleges with the ultimate aim of improving students' experiences and outcomes across the education system. This sits alongside SCF's collaboration with the [University of Birmingham's Autism Centre for Education and Research \(ACER\)](#), which is deepening understanding of project impact and facilitating the sharing of experiences and best practice among educators and settings.

Ben Delo commented: 'I have long believed that diversity in the way that people think – and how they interpret and share their perspectives – needs to be seen as an asset to be nurtured, not a disability to be managed. I was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism, aged 11, and the support I received from Sheila Coates was genuinely transformative to my education and future outlook. This Foundation, established in her memory, has had an incredible impact since its inception and I am looking forward to watching it grow from strength to strength in the coming years.'

Stephen McShane, CEO of Sheila Coates Foundation, commented: 'We are honoured to have received this endowment from Ben Delo. It secures our future and will enable us to continue transforming the educational experiences and lives of autistic students across the country. We are continually inspired by the teachers and schools we work with, and by the forward-thinking approaches we support to improve students' experiences in mainstream education. We look forward to expanding our work with this generous support. Thanks to this endowment we can create lasting change for autistic young people now, and into the future.'

<https://www.sheilacoates.foundation/>

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