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Royal London Short Duration Credit Fund

Quarterly Investment Report

30 September 2026

ROYAL LONDON
ASSET MANAGEMENT

Quarterly Report

The fund as at 30 September 2026

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Royal London Short Duration Credit Fund. The report has been produced by Royal London Asset Management. The report starts with a summary dashboard showing key information about the fund. A glossary is located at the end of the report covering the description of some of the more technical terms used within the report. All data is as at the report date unless otherwise stated.

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ROYAL LONDON
ASSET MANAGEMENT

The fund

Fund performance objective and benchmark

The Fund aims to provide a return greater than that of the ICE Bank of America Merrill Lynch 1-5 Year Sterling Non-Gilt Total Return Index over rolling 3-year periods, through a combination of capital growth and income, after the deduction of charges. The Index has been selected as a target benchmark because it is representative of the type of bonds in which the Fund invests, and it is therefore an appropriate measure for the Fund's performance. The performance comparator for the Fund is the IA Sterling Strategic Bond sector (the "IA Sector").

Fund value

	Total £m
30 September 2026	1,645.55

Fund analytics

	Fund	Benchmark
Fund launch date	7 November 2013	
Fund base currency	GBP	
Benchmark	ICE BofA 1–5 Year Sterling Non-Gilt Index (Total Return, GBP)	
Duration (years)	3.32	2.61
Redemption yield (%)	6.73	5.38
Number of holdings	387	586
Number of issuers	244	296

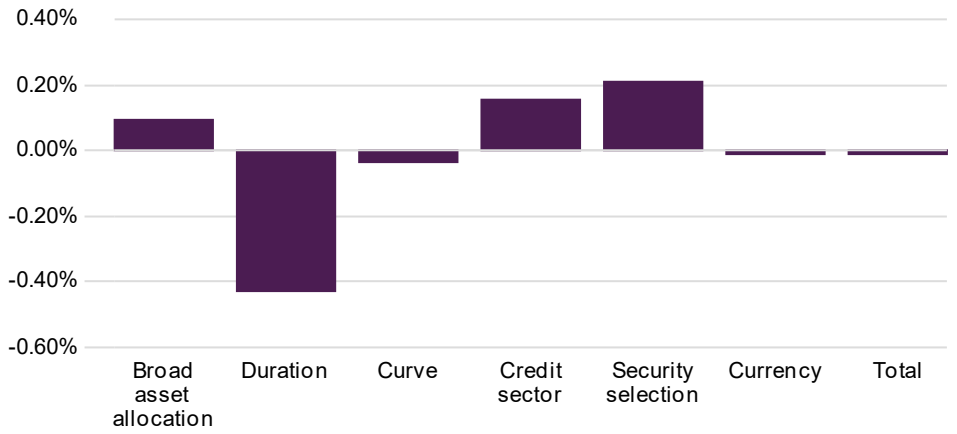
Performance and activity

Performance

	Fund (%)	Benchmark (%)	Relative (%)
Quarter	(0.40)	(0.44)	0.04
YTD	2.31	0.84	1.48
1 Year	4.49	2.53	1.96
3 Years (p.a.)	8.17	5.12	3.05
5 Years (p.a.)	4.13	1.90	2.23
10 Years (p.a.)	3.88	1.79	2.09
Since inception (p.a.)	3.90	2.12	1.79

Past performance is not a guarantee or reliable indicator of future returns. The impact of fees or other charges, including tax, where applicable, can be material on the performance of your investment. The impact of fees reduces your investment. Please refer to the Glossary for the basis of calculation and impact of fees. Performance and since inception date based on Z Inc GBP. Source: Royal London Asset Management; Gross performance; Since inception date of the share class is 8 November 2013.

Attribution over the quarter



Performance commentary

The third quarter saw negative returns from sterling credit investment grade markets (iBoxx). Against this, the fund performed in line with the index.

For sterling credit exposure, the third quarter was dominated by rising government bond yields, with this having a materially larger impact on corporate bonds than changing credit spreads. The carry on the asset class is attractive, and our strategy aim of providing an above-average yield supported performance.

With government bond yields rising, duration exposure had a negative impact. Our sterling credit strategies are generally long duration. This stance more reflects the value that we are able to find in longer-dated maturities – partly due to relatively strong performance in shorter maturities over the past few years, but also due to the sell-off in longer-dated yields over the same period – rather than a large-scale macro call.

Credit allocation was a small positive over the quarter. This was mainly due to our overweight exposure to the structured sector, which outperformed, supported by our longstanding underweight exposure to supranationals.

Stock selection also contributed positively, most notably within the structured sector. Intu Metrocentre was a standout performer over the quarter. The shopping centre is said to be close to finalising a deal exceeding £500m with preferred bidder Landsec, one of the largest commercial property development and investment companies in the UK, which would see proceeds returned to bondholders. Telereal and Canary Wharf also did well over the period.

In banks, we also saw positive performance driven predominantly by AT1 bonds from issuers such as Coventry Building Society and Nationwide.

Performance and activity

Top 10 holdings

	Weighting (%)
M and G PLC 5.625% VRN 20/10/2051	1.61
Electricite de France SA 7.375% VRN Perp	1.08
Lloyds Banking Group PLC 2.707% VRN 03/12/2035	0.96
Intu Metrocentre Finance 4.125% 16/01/2029	0.87
HSBC Holdings PLC 8.201% VRN 16/11/2034	0.85
South West Water Finance PLC 5.75% 11/12/2032	0.75
Dresdner Funding Trust 8.151% 30/06/2031	0.74
SW Finance I PLC 6.875% 07/08/2032	0.73
abrdn plc 5.25% VRN Perp	0.72
Telereal Securitisation PLC 5.634% 10/12/2031	0.70
Total	**9.01**

Fund activity

New primary market issuers were moderately active during July and August, and investment grade sterling issuance totalled £7.6bn over those summer months. However, September saw a surge in issuance spiking to £13.9bn for that month alone. This took the total sterling investment grade issuance for the third quarter to £21.5bn. Last year's volume of issuance during the same period stood at £12.8bn.

In the banks and financials sector, as well as adding new issues of senior bonds from favoured names such as UBS and HSBC we also added geographic diversification through a new senior euro-denominated bond from US investment bank Jeffries Group – this being the debut euro issue for the company and hence available at attractive levels. In the subordinated area, we added a Tier 2 bond issue from UK mortgage provider Paragon, a small but well capitalised UK specialist lending bank. We also added a new AT1 bond from Nationwide at a yield of around 8%.

Elsewhere in the financial sector, we added a tier 2 new issue from UK pension insurance specialist Rothesay Life, as well as a senior bond issue by US-owned asset manager Nuveen, offering a clear spread premium over US dollar equivalents.

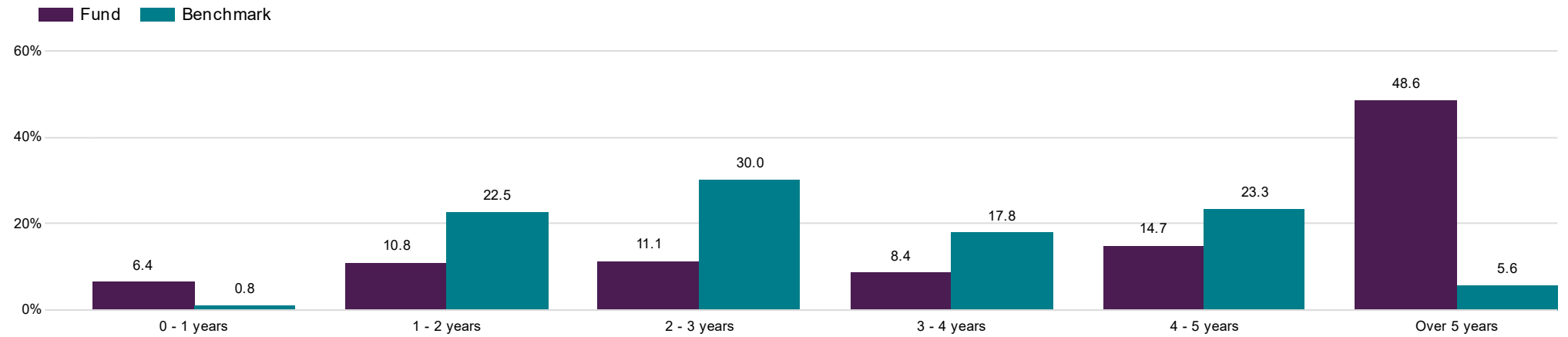
Structured bonds remain a key area for our portfolios and there were opportunities to add bonds with attractive risk / reward features in both primary and secondary markets over the month. We added a senior secured new issue from automobile recovery provider the AA, Sunshine Mortgage funding – a mortgage-backed security backed by equity release mortgage loans – and UK Logistics DAC – a commercial mortgage-backed securities (CMBS) transaction backed by diverse pool of UK logistics assets. We also added Exmoor funding – an RMBS backed by a portfolio of retirement and specialist mortgages. There were numerous opportunities to add to favoured bonds in the secondary market, including ICSL, backed by student loans, London property CMBS Canary Wharf and Tesco Property.

In technology, we bought Amazon, the global e-commerce platform, which came to market twice over the quarter, issuing in multiple currencies and maturities. We took a selective approach, adding the sterling 2032 bonds at attractive levels given the strength of the parent. There have been concerns around the sheer amount of hyperscaler issuance: they are now around 2% of the sterling index, and we are happy to have selected exposure to highly rated, robust companies.

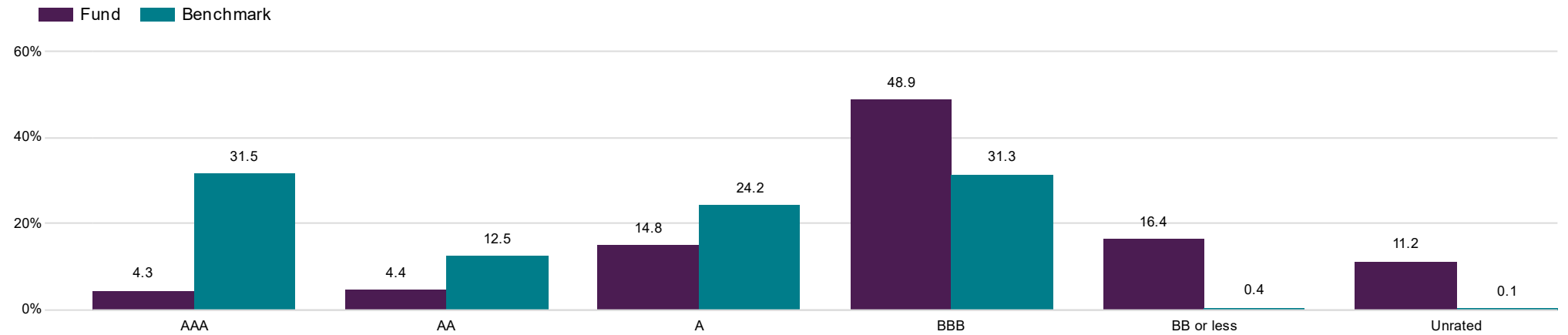
Further afield, we added a number of attractive euro-denominated hybrid deals, for instance new issues from Germany-headquartered life sciences company Bayer, multinational food distributor Sysco and in the secondary market Roquette Freres, Europe's leading starch producer, used across food, health and cosmetics products.

Fund breakdown

Maturity profile

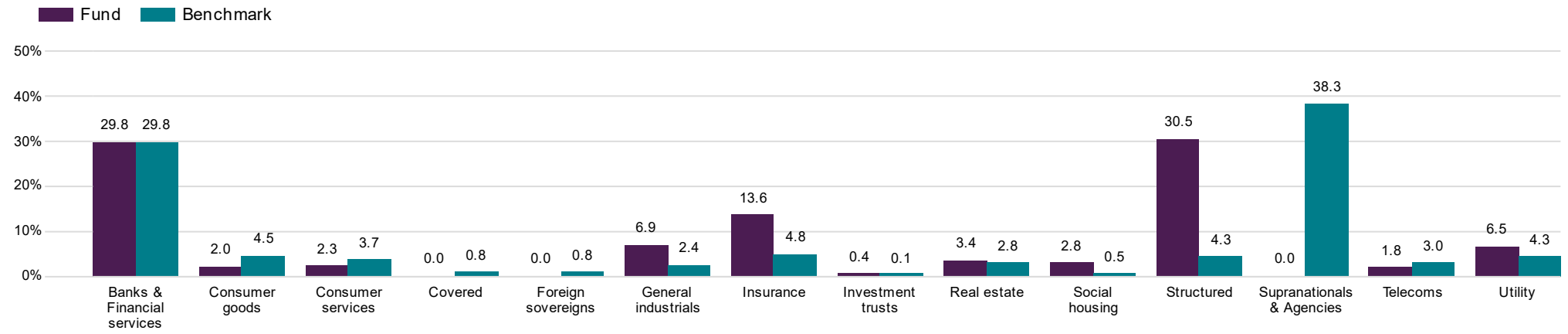


Credit ratings



Fund breakdown

Sector breakdown



Fund Engagement

Engagement definition

Engagement is active dialogue with investee companies (or other entities). There are two types: engagement for information, which is dialogue as part of investment research or ongoing monitoring, without specific objectives for change, and engagement for change, which is purposeful dialogue to influence positive change, with defined objectives and demonstrable outcomes.

Engagements

Engagement activity	Fund 3 months	Fund 12 months
Number of entities engaged	14	26
Number of engagements	20	64

This is an estimate. Some engagements at the issuer level may not have been attributed to the specific bond held in the fund, resulting in a lower number of engagement activities.

Total engagements by theme and topic

Climate	12
Climate - Transition Risk	12
Environment	1
Governance	6
Corporate Governance	4
Board	2
Social & Financial Inclusion	3
Just transition	2
Social & Financial inclusion	1
Technology, Innovation & Society	1
Technology & Society	1

The numbers of engagements and themes/topics discussed may differ where a single engagement covers multiple themes/topics.

Engagement focus

Firm-wide engagement activity is centred around six themes which we have identified in consultation with our clients. These are: climate change; nature and biodiversity; health; governance and corporate culture; social and financial inclusion; innovation, technology and society. Portfolio level engagements are not thematic and are focussed on issues specific to managing the portfolio and meeting the investment objective.

Engagement data represents all engagements undertaken at both firm and portfolio level across Royal London Asset Management, and may not be limited to those undertaken solely for the purpose of managing the fund.

Fund Engagement

Engagement outcomes

Barclays PLC - Climate - Transition Risk

Purpose:

We engaged Barclays PLC, a global banking and financial services company, as part of Royal London Asset Management's Net Zero Stewardship Programme to assess how the company's climate frameworks influence client engagement, financing decisions and real-world transition outcomes.

Outcome:

Barclays explained that its Client Transition Framework has expanded fivefold and now covers material clients across both its Investment Bank and UK Corporate Bank. Relationship managers own the assessments and use them in client discussions, portfolio reviews and Client Transition Review Forums, with financing limits or relationship constraints applied where appropriate. Barclays emphasised, however, that supporting clients through their real-world transition remains preferable to exiting relationships. We welcomed the framework's increased coverage and practical integration but encouraged the company to publish anonymised case studies demonstrating how assessments influence credit risk appetite, financing decisions and measurable client outcomes. On accountability following Barclays' departure from the Net Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA), the company stated that its climate commitments remain independently owned and supported by senior governance, including Board-level oversight. We identified greater transparency on policy advocacy and trade association alignment as an area requiring further development, and subsequently shared examples of good practice, including trade association reviews and guidance from InfluenceMap. We also requested further clarity on the link between Barclays' sector decarbonisation targets and the Client Transition Framework. Next steps include following up on small and medium-sized enterprise coverage and monitoring any additional disclosures the company provides.

Close Brothers Group PLC - Governance – Board

Purpose:

We engaged Close Brothers Group PLC, a merchant banking group, to address board composition concerns, specifically the approaching nine-year tenure of the company's Chairman and the implications for his independence.

Outcome:

We raised our concern that the Chairman was nearing the nine-year service threshold, at which point, under standard corporate governance guidelines, a director is no longer considered independent. Close Brothers acknowledged this as a serious matter and confirmed that a succession process was underway, though no specific details were available at that stage. Given the significant pressures the company was facing in relation to motor finance mis-selling issues, we recognised that a degree of flexibility in the timeline was appropriate. We indicated that, provided meaningful progress on succession was being made, we would not look to vote against the Chairman's re-election as an interim measure. Subsequently, the company announced that the Senior Independent Director would be appointed as Chair with effect from the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November 2026, with the Chair of the Remuneration Committee stepping into the Senior Independent Director role. We welcomed these concrete steps as a satisfactory resolution to our concerns. Our next step is to support the relevant appointments at the November 2026 Annual General Meeting.

Fund Engagement

Engagement outcomes

HSBC Holdings PLC - Climate - Transition Risk

Purpose:

We engaged HSBC Holdings PLC, a global banking and financial services company, as part of Royal London Asset Management's Net Zero Stewardship Programme to understand the rationale behind its revised climate targets, updated fossil-fuel policy, and approach to client transition assessments.

Outcome:

At a meeting in September 2026, HSBC reiterated its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 and presented the energy transition as a significant commercial opportunity, citing growing demand for renewable energy and improved energy security. The company explained that its revised target range reflects the widening gap between a 1.5 degrees Celsius pathway and the International Energy Agency's announced pledges scenario, while its seven sector-level targets continue to focus on the most emissions-intensive areas of its portfolio. HSBC described how financed emissions are governed through sector-level tolerances, monthly portfolio reviews and formal sustainability execution-risk processes embedded across the business. On fossil fuels, HSBC outlined a consolidated framework designed to improve clarity and consistency, under which prospective and existing clients are now treated alike, with due diligence, activity restrictions and enhanced assessments continuing to apply. Client transition assessments remain central to policy compliance, emissions modelling and credit analysis. We acknowledged the progress made but emphasised the importance of ensuring that target and policy changes remain grounded in climate science and aligned with the company's net-zero commitment. HSBC acknowledged our concerns as a serious matter and committed to continued dialogue as its strategy develops.

Tesco PLC - Labour & Human Rights

Purpose:

We engaged Tesco PLC, a major United Kingdom grocery retailer, to better understand the company's position on an ongoing equal pay claim, including how it assesses pay transparency, structural equity between store and distribution roles, and colleague engagement practices.

Outcome:

Tesco explained that distribution roles typically attract higher pay than store roles due to factors including location constraints, less pleasant working conditions, night shifts, and chilled or frozen environments, all of which require the company to compete harder to attract workers. The company acknowledged that estimating the financial impact of the equal pay litigation is difficult, stating that no provision has been made as its probability assessment is viewed as favourable. Tesco described its pay structure as transparent, with employees able to understand their position within pay bands and colleagues in equivalent roles paid consistently. On the gender dimension, the company framed progress partly around improving visibility of and access to distribution and senior roles, rather than filling quotas. Colleague sentiment is monitored through a \"great place to work\" survey, with Tesco moving towards a more continuous, rolling engagement model tied to employees' joining anniversaries. The company described its relationship with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers as strong and characterised the union as pragmatic within the retail grocery sector. We noted the seriousness of the issue and will continue to monitor developments as the employment tribunal progresses.

Market commentary

Market overview

Global economic activity remained resilient over the third quarter amid a more challenging backdrop of higher energy prices, rising government bond yields and renewed monetary policy tightening. Despite ongoing conflict in the Middle East and higher energy prices, business surveys and recent GDP figures look consistent with resilient global activity growth, with some indicators showing some improvement in Q3. US growth continued to be supported by robust household spending and a relatively firm labour market. The euro area also performed more strongly than expected, with second-quarter GDP recording its fastest quarterly expansion in four years, supported by consumption, exports and manufacturing activity.

Oil prices rose over the quarter, ending near $100 per barrel after starting at around $75 per barrel. Increasingly, however, attention shifted to refined products, where price pressures have been even more pronounced over the conflict. Towards the end of the quarter, news broke that US President Trump was contemplating a diesel export ban, adding to European energy price pressure. Given higher energy prices and with indications growing of a strong El Nino event and very dry and hot European summer, worries also grew around the outlook for food prices.

Against a backdrop of intensifying inflationary pressures, major central banks shifted more hawkish over the quarter. The European Central Bank hiked rates once again in September, while the US Federal Reserve also delivered its first rate hike since 2023, with the median FOMC participant indicating another hike later in the year in their forecasts. The Bank of England left rates unchanged in both July and September but expressed growing concern about elevated energy prices and signalled an openness to tighten policy later in the year if energy prices don't fall significantly.

Fixed income markets weakened over the period as persistent inflationary concerns and elevated energy prices prompted investors to reassess the path of monetary policy. Government bond yields rose sharply, particularly at shorter maturities, as markets priced a higher path for policy rates, while longer-dated bonds weakened on fiscal concerns and rising issuance. In the UK, the government's Debt Management Office sold £4.25 billion of July 2036 gilts at an average yield of 5.383% at the end of September, the highest 10-year borrowing cost since 1999. Demand for higher yields reflected ongoing inflation concerns and expectations of increased fiscal spending ahead of the forthcoming Autumn Budget. UK monetary policy expectations also shifted over the quarter and markets started pricing in a 25bps rate hike in November, with roughly four increases priced in by the middle of next year.

The sterling investment grade credit market (iBoxx non-gilt index) returned -1.74% over the period under review. Spreads ended the quarter at 0.80% (iBoxx), compared to 0.76% (iBoxx) at the end of June.

Outlook

Several trends have become obvious in 2026. Governments are investing more heavily in strategic priorities such as energy security, technology and defence in response to an increasingly fragmented geopolitical landscape fraught with tensions, particularly the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. At the same time, the development of artificial intelligence is driving a very capital-intensive investment cycle that's supporting higher levels of corporate borrowing and debt issuance – with the sheer scale of this supply adding to the upward pressure on government bonds as investors choose where to invest.

Absolute yield levels are therefore higher than seen for some time. With inflation and government spending expected to remain high in the near term, yields could rise further. However, we believe that on a medium-term view, yields are attractive at these levels.

For credit investors, this has meaningful implications. Higher starting yields in the credit markets improve the return potential of fixed income and reinforce its role within balanced portfolios, with investors being compensated for lending capital. This higher level of income also provides a buffer against further government bond market volatility.

We continue to expect swings in government bond interest rates to remain an important driver of returns, with markets continuing to reassess the balance between sticky inflation, slowing growth and the extent to which central banks can ease policy. For sterling credit portfolios, we believe that this outlook supports a measured bias towards longer-dated bonds where valuations and security selection justify it, rather than a significant use of risk budget.

We remain confident that active management can continue to add value in sterling credit. Ongoing credit market commoditisation, driven by price-insensitive buying from annuity providers, passive funds and maturity-focused investors, can create spread dispersion and attractive relative-value opportunities. Against this backdrop, detailed credit research remains critical. We continue to focus on diversification by sector and issuer, secured and collateralised debt, and attractive all-in yields. We believe that less commoditised areas of the market, including secured structures and overlooked issuers, can offer additional yield without a disproportionate increase in credit risk. As a result, credit market inefficiencies remain a valuable source of portfolio income and potential excess returns.

Further Information

Please click on the links below for further information:

Find out more

In an uncertain geopolitical and economic environment, we recognise the importance of keeping our clients updated on our current investment thinking.

Articles, videos, podcasts and webinars giving the latest views of our investment experts can be found in the Our Views section of www.rlam.com, including regular updates from our Fixed Income, Global Equity, Sustainable and Multi Asset teams.

Disclaimers

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The Fund is a sub-fund of Royal London Bond Funds II ICVC, an open-ended investment company with variable capital with segregated liability between sub-funds, incorporated in England and Wales under registered number IC001128.

The Authorised Corporate Director (ACD) is Royal London Unit Trust Managers Limited, authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, with firm reference number 144037.

For more information on the fund or the risks of investing, please refer to the Prospectus or Key Investor Information Document (KIID), available via the relevant Fund Information page on www.rlam.com.

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Risks and Warnings

Investment risk

The value of investments and any income from them may go down as well as up and is not guaranteed. Investors may not get back the amount invested.

Credit risk

Should the issuer of a fixed income security become unable to make income or capital payments, or their rating is downgraded, the value of that investment will fall. Fixed income securities that have a lower credit rating can pay a higher level of income and have an increased risk of default.

EPM techniques risk

The Fund may engage in EPM techniques including holdings of derivative instruments. Whilst intended to reduce risk, the use of these instruments may expose the Fund to increased price volatility.

Interest rate risk

Fixed interest securities are particularly affected by trends in interest rates and inflation. If interest rates go up, the value of capital may fall, and vice versa. Inflation will also decrease the real value of capital.

Liquidity risk

In difficult market conditions the value of certain fund investments may be difficult to value and harder to sell, or sell at a fair price, resulting in unpredictable falls in the value of your holding.

Counterparty risk

The insolvency of any institutions providing services such as safekeeping of assets or acting as counterparty to derivatives or other instruments, may expose the Fund to financial loss.

Charges from capital risk

Charges are taken from the capital of the Fund. Whilst this increases the yield, it also has the effect of reducing the potential for capital growth.

Performance to 30 September 2026

Cumulative (%)

	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years
Fund (gross)	(0.40)	2.49	4.49	26.60	22.46
Fund (net)	(0.48)	2.33	4.17	25.43	20.58

Annualised (%)

3 Years (p.a.)	5 Years (p.a.)
8.17	4.13
7.84	3.81

Year on year performance (%)

	30/09/2025 - 30/09/2026	30/09/2024 - 30/09/2025	30/09/2023 - 30/09/2024	30/09/2022 - 30/09/2023	30/09/2021 - 30/09/2022
Fund (gross)	4.49	8.37	11.79	8.05	(10.47)
Fund (net)	4.17	8.04	11.45	7.72	(10.75)

Past performance is not a guarantee or reliable indicator of future returns. The impact of fees or other charges, including tax, where applicable, can be material on the performance of your investment. The impact of fees reduces your investment.

Source: RLAM as at 30 September 2026. All figures are mid-price to mid-price for the Royal London Short Duration Credit Fund Z Inc GBP share class.

Glossary

Asset allocation

Breakdown of the assets by asset classes. Based on RLAM asset classification scheme.

Attribution

Attribution is shown for the most recent quarter. Attribution figures are based on close of business returns for both the fund and the index whereas performance figures are based on midday returns for the fund and close of business for the index. Therefore the performance will not include market moves between midday when the fund is priced, and close of business when the index is calculated. This may result in a different figure being shown for the quarterly performance vs attribution data.

Bonds

Securities that represent an obligation to repay a debt, with interest. Investment grade bonds are high quality bonds that are viewed as being highly likely to make all scheduled payments of interest and principal. Low quality bonds carry higher risk but also typically pay higher rates of interest. Corporate bonds are those issued by companies to raise finance.

Credit ratings

Credit ratings are based on RLAM composite ratings which uses a hierarchy of S&P, Moody's and then the Fitch rating.

Duration

Measure of sensitivity of a Fixed Income instrument to changes in interest rates, indicating the potential impact of interest rate fluctuations on the value of the investment.

Fund analytics

All figures exclude cash. Credit bonds include non-sterling bonds and CDs where held within the fund or benchmark.
This is applicable to the following sections: fund Asset Allocation, Duration, Yield curve, Sector breakdown, Financial holdings, Credit ratings.

Number of holdings

Total number of unique holdings of the Fund excluding cash, currency and derivatives.

Number of issuers

Number of unique issuers of all assets held by the Fund, excluding cash, currency and derivatives.

Performance

The Fund price is taken at mid-day using swing prices where applicable, while the index performance is priced at close of business. Significant intra-day market movements at the start or end of the day may therefore distort comparisons.

Pricing

The Fund's price may swing to bid or offer to protect existing investors from the costs associated with buying or selling the fund's underlying assets when other investors are entering or leaving the fund. Performance is based on this pricing.

Redemption yield

The weighted average rate of discount at which the future obligations of interest and capital payments of each of the fund's holdings equates to its current price, gross of relevant fund management costs and gross of tax.

Rolling 5-Year Period

A rolling 5-year period is any period of five years, no matter which day you start on.

Sector breakdown

Breakdown of the fixed income assets, excluding derivatives and cash by RLAM's internal industry sector classification scheme. Figures are subject to rounding.

Total return

A total return is a combination of capital growth and income. Capital growth is defined as the rise in an investment's value over time and income as the payment an investment generates, such as dividends or bond coupons.