

Children's University Trust: Trustee Pack



Introduction

Children's University Trust is the charity at the heart of the Children's University network. Our vision is simple: a world where every child has equal opportunity to unlock their full potential through learning beyond the classroom.

We are a small and agile organisation with a big reach and even bigger ambitions, so we are looking for new Trustees to join our Board and play a part in guiding us towards achieving them. Our executive team do the day to day work while our Trustees help to shape our strategy and ensure we have the greatest impact as a charity. This pack has been put together to give applicants an overview of the charity and the network we exist to support. For starters, there's a few things you should know:

- **As a charity, our impact is huge and indirect.** We operate as a social franchise and work with over 60 delivery partners to reach more than 110,000 children in over 1,000 schools each year.
- **We're digital thinkers.** In 2019 we launched *Children's University Online (CUO)*, a bespoke digital platform that offers significant opportunity for us to use participation data to best support children, schools, partners and policy makers. While CUO is an ongoing development project, the platform already has over 34,000 users and digital is a key part of our strategy.
- **Evidencing impact is vital for us.** The reason why digital is so important to us is because of the picture that the data enables us to paint. Last year we launched [our first ever State of the Nation Report](#) – which combined external evidence on the importance of learning beyond the classroom, along with everything we know about the provision and participation in opportunities based on 22,000 users.
- **We are proactively and intentionally seeking out people with different perspectives and viewpoints.** Diversity and inclusion are important to us and not just as buzzwords; we support a wide breadth of children and communities and we need a Board that reflects this.

If this sounds like an organisation you want to be a part of, then read on and please do get in touch.

Very best wishes

Helen O'Donnell, CEO and Director of Partnerships

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Contents

About Children’s University	3
Children’s University in a nutshell	3
What we do	3
Why we’re needed	3
Where we work.....	3
Increasing accessibility – 2022 and beyond.....	4
In action – Children’s University on film.....	4
Our impact and evaluation.....	4
About this role.....	4
What we’re looking for in a Trustee	4
The key skills and attributes we’re looking for.....	5
Main responsibilities of Children’s University Trustees	6
Key priorities for new Trustees.....	6
Support for Trustees.....	6
Remuneration.....	6
How to Apply.....	6
A note on eligibility.....	7

About Children's University

Children's University in a nutshell

Children's University encourages, tracks, and celebrates learning that takes place beyond the classroom. While curriculum time remains the focus of the formal education system, we know that time spent wisely beyond the classroom holds unlimited potential for life-changing experiences, skills development, and social mobility. What the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent closure of schools has highlighted, is the very real need for organisations like ours that work to give structure and recognition to what children do beyond the classroom. We are needed now more than ever.

What we do

We run a long-established *Passport to Learning* programme that is proven to have a huge positive impact on children. We currently reach over 110,000 children each year through a consortium of close to 60 local delivery partners. These partners are typically universities, further education institutions and Local Authorities. All are not-for-profit and all are committed to equality of opportunity for the children in their area and encouraging limitless learning beyond the classroom. We also run a digital platform, *Children's University Online*, that works alongside our passport scheme offering children a safe and secure space to record their participation, while also providing schools, partners and policy makers with actionable data that helps inform and improve provision.

Why we're needed

With children only spending 9% of their waking life in a classroom by the time they turn 18, Children's University offers a framework for unlocking the potential held in the remaining 91%. It is a framework that complements and ties together existing extra-curricular initiatives, programmes and activities and enables educators to get a clear picture of availability of opportunity in their area as well as participation rates. An [Education Endowment Foundation evaluation](#) proved the impact that participation in Children's University has on closing the attainment gap between children on Free School Meals and their more advantaged peers. Right now, the rich-poor attainment gap in primary school is 9.3 months growing to more than 18 months at GCSE. Covid-19 has exacerbated that attainment gap like never before.

Research shows that young people's life chances in this country are still determined by the wealth of their parents and the social and cultural capital that this in turn brings. Research also shows that children develop better future life chances if they can extend their learning outside the classroom.

According to the [Sutton Trust's Life Lessons report](#), essential life skills such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication are associated with better academic outcomes and better prospects in the workplace. Extra-curricular activities contribute to the development of these skills but even pre Covid-19, almost [two in five young people \(37%\) didn't take part in any clubs or activities](#). A recent report from the Education Policy Institute (EPI) found that [disadvantaged pupils in England are 18.1 months of learning behind their peers by the time they finish their GCSEs](#) – the same gap as five years ago. We know that what we do can help close this gap.

Where we work

Children's University is open to all but retains a focus on working in areas of disadvantage and with children facing any barriers to learning beyond school. Across the country Children's University works particularly well when focused on areas of social disadvantage. We know that by targeting these areas, Children's University can achieve the greatest social impact on the children with greatest need. We specifically target areas that are ranked highly in the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and areas where there is a correlation between Free School Meals and poor access to Higher Education. We also target Opportunity Areas and children facing non-geographic disadvantage through strategic partnerships with Local Authorities and Higher Education providers focused on greater inclusivity.

Increasing accessibility – 2022 and beyond

While we are open to all, the reality is that we are not always accessible to all. Children can only sign up if their school is a member of their local Children's University. This means that children in only 5% of schools can take part in our programme. One of our current priorities is to open up Children's University Online to those children beyond the reach of our current partners using CUO and digital technology to do this. This is a project due to start in 2022 and will truly make us accessible to all, as well as generating a sustainable income for the organisation via subscription fees.

In action – Children's University on film

We have some brief videos that help us tell our story. Click these to links to view (clockwise from left): 1. [An animated introduction to Children's University in less than three minutes](#); 2. [TEDx Talk on lifelong learning by Children's University CEO, Helen O'Donnell](#); 3. [University of Wolverhampton Children's University – Bring it on!](#)



Our impact and evaluation

We know what we do works and has an incredible impact on the lives of children from more disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. [Follow this link for more on each of these reports and their key findings.](#)

- [State of the Nation 2021](#) – A Children's University-authored report taking data from CUO to illustrate all we know about learning beyond the classroom.
- [EEF - Children's University Evaluation](#) - *Children participating in Children's University made 2 months additional progress in maths and reading at KS2. For those on Free School Meals this was 3 months.*
- [University of Wolverhampton Evaluation](#) - *Participation in Children's University increased the level of awareness of university, and the perceived relevance of university to participants, as well as a broadening of aspirations, with a greater awareness of possible future options.*
- [Sheffield Children's University – How does it make a difference?](#) - *More pupils with Children's University awards achieved the expected standard in their SATs than non-Children's University pupils, exceeding both local and national averages.*

About this role

What we're looking for in a Trustee

We are looking for high-calibre candidates who have proven success in their own field of work and are passionate about:

- social mobility
- the power and potential of informal education and informal skills development
- raising young aspirations
- closing gaps in educational opportunity, attainment and outcome
- boosting the self-confidence, resilience, and cultural capital of children, regardless of their background.

We particularly welcome applications from a diverse range of people to reflect the diverse nature of our beneficiaries. The children we work with come from a broad range of backgrounds. To best support all the children we benefit, our Trustees need to come from a wide range of backgrounds themselves. We therefore welcome applications irrespective of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race or religion and belief. We will particularly welcome applications from BAME candidates and younger applicants to increase the diversity of the Board.

The key skills and attributes we're looking for

Right now, we are particularly looking for candidates who can deepen our expertise in these key skill areas:

- legal expertise
- data (management and insights)
- marketing and communications
- digital
- income generation
- corporate fundraising
- HR

Trustees of Children's University Trust are jointly responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, its financial health, its activities and developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing documents, legal and regulatory guidelines. All Trustees should be aware of, and understand, their individual and collective responsibilities, and should not be overly reliant on one or more of the other Trustees in any particular aspect of the governance of the charity. In essence, this means that we will expect you to take an active interest in the charity, ask lots of questions, and not be afraid, when appropriate, to challenge other members of the Board of Trustees, the CEO, or members of staff. The most important traits for a Trustee of Children's University Trust are:

- the desire and ability to act in the best interests of the Trust's beneficiaries;
- the integrity to do the right thing, even when that requires you to make tough decisions;
- impartiality: you can make decisions that are fair and consider both sides of an argument;
- empathy with our beneficiaries, so the decisions you make are based on delivering the best outcomes for children participating in Children's University;
- the ability to absorb, understand and contribute to presentations, papers and spreadsheets presented to the Board.

The list below provides an overview of the responsibilities you will be expected to take on in concert with the other Trustees of the Trust. Further information about the responsibilities of all charity Trustees can be found on the Charity Commission website. This list can look intimidating, but as a Trustee you will receive support and training to help you fulfil your duties and you will be part of a team. You don't need to have held a Trustee position in the past. We simply ask that you can make a commitment to the charity to fully understand every aspect of what we do, attend Trustee meetings, and use your skills to support the charity in other ways as the opportunity arises.

Main responsibilities of Children's University Trustees

- Operate in a manner consistent with Children's University Trust's overall purpose and vision and be an active ambassador for the organisation
- Actively contribute to the role of the Board in giving strategic direction to the Trust, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting KPIs and evaluating performance against agreed targets
- Ensure that the Trust pursues its objectives and has in place the policies, procedures and resources to fulfil its objectives
- Ensure that the Trust applies its resources effectively in pursuance of its objectives
- Ensure financial stability for the Trust including the approval of annual plans and budgets and liaison with auditors to ensure good financial management
- Safeguard the name, reputation and values of both the Trust and Children's University.

In addition to the above duties, each Trustee should use any specific knowledge or experience they have to help the Board reach sound decisions. This will involve scrutinising Board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues and providing advice and guidance requested by the Board on new initiatives and other issues.

Key priorities for new Trustees

As a new Trustee, you will be expected to invest time in learning about Children's University and its aims. New Trustees must be willing to:

- Be strong advocates of the work the Trust does and actively promote it across your networks
- Attend a minimum of four Trustee meetings each year, traditionally held alternately in central Manchester and central Birmingham but now online
- Commit to a three-year term in the role. In total, a trustee can stand for two consecutive terms, each of three years, before retiring.

Support for Trustees

Each Trustee can meet once a year with our Chair, Jackie Dunne, to talk about the past year, review how the Board and organisation have performed, and exchange feedback. Feedback on the performance of the Chair is also requested from each Trustee once a year.

Remuneration

All our Trustee positions are voluntary and so unpaid. However, the Trust will reimburse Trustees for reasonable expenses (according to the charity's expenses policy), including all related travel and accommodation.

How to Apply

Before applying you are invited to have an informal conversation about the role. To arrange a call contact Helen O'Donnell, CEO and Director of Partnerships.

helen.odonnell@childrensuniversity.co.uk

To apply, please send your CV with a statement of support to Helen at the same address. Your statement should include **why you would like to become one of our Trustees, what experience you have in one or more of the key skill areas we identify, and how you think you could help.**

Please also provide the names, positions, organisations and telephone contact numbers of two referees. References will only be taken once your express permission has been granted.

A note on eligibility

Please note that applicants must be able to show their eligibility to become a trustee as set out in The Charity Commission's [The Essential Trustee](#) guide.

Thank you for your interest.