CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY TRUST

Strategy 2026–2030



Charity Number 1118315

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Children's University is a national programme that inspires children and young people to enjoy fun, high-quality enrichment and activities. Learners earn credits / stamps for participating in clubs and experiences that build skills, confidence, and aspirations. Their personal development, progress and achievements are tracked over time and proudly celebrated through certificates and graduation ceremonies..

Over the past decade, the Children's University network has supported thousands of children to access meaningful learning opportunities outside the school day. Today, **around 92,000 children across 1,400 schools,** along with a growing number of home-educated learners, engage with the programme each year through the commitment of our members and partners.

Like many organisations across the education and community sectors, our membership has experienced change in recent years as partners navigate funding and staffing pressures. While our network has reduced in size, the continued reach and impact of the programme demonstrate the strength, resilience, and value of the Children's University model. Our experience, insight and evidence place us in a strong position to contribute to national conversations around enrichment, equity and children's wider development.

Looking ahead, this strategy sets out our ambition for 2026–2030: to strengthen and grow our membership network, enhance our digital platforms, expand our CU at home offer, engage more children in high-quality enrichment, and build the long-term resilience and sustainability of the trust and network for the future.

Children's University is a trusted voice in enrichment for children across the UK, reaching 150,000 children at our peak in 2024. Our goal is to become more widely recognised and known beyond our current network, so we can influence national conversations, **reach more children who need us,** and ensure enrichment is valued as a vital part of every child's learning journey.

A note from our CEO

"A world where every child has equal opportunity to build skills, confidence and aspirations to reach their full potential"



Sonjia Peers
CEO – Children's University Trust

The Current Landscape

Children's University operates within a rapidly evolving education and enrichment landscape. In recent years, schools, community organisations and delivery partners across the sector have faced increasing pressures on time, capacity and resources, creating challenges for the wider enrichment ecosystem. Despite this, the Children's University network has continued to demonstrate strong reach and impact, supporting children to access high-quality learning experiences that build confidence, skills and aspirations beyond the curriculum.



At the same time, there is growing national recognition of the importance of enrichment in supporting children's wellbeing, personal development and future opportunities. This creates significant opportunities for Children's University to strengthen its role as a trusted leader in the sector. Over the course of this strategy, and supported by secure investment, we will prioritise growing and strengthening our membership network and expanding our reach to more children, schools and communities. We will further develop the CU at Home offer to ensure it supports children and young people who are not in mainstream education settings, as well as those who face additional barriers to accessing enrichment opportunities.

Alongside this, we will continue to enhance our digital platforms in line with the development roadmap co-designed with members. These upgrades will help to strengthen accessibility, engagement and the overall user experience for children, families, schools and partners across the network.

As expectations around evidence and impact continue to grow, Children's University is well placed to build on its experience, insight and national network to demonstrate the value of enrichment and ensure more children can benefit from meaningful learning opportunities.



OUR MISSION

is to work through a national network to inspire, support and reward children's participation in high-quality enrichment, helping to ensure every child can access opportunities to develop the skills, confidence and self-belief to thrive.

Our Values

Collaborative

We achieve more together.
We work across our network of schools, universities, learning destinations, communities and partners to create meaningful opportunities for children. Through strong relationships and shared expertise, we build an ecosystem that expands access, strengthens impact and creates lasting change.

Inclusive

We create opportunities for every child to belong and thrive
We remove barriers and champion equitable access to high-quality enrichment, ensuring every child feels these experiences are for them. We value differences, respond to individual needs and create environments where all children can participate with confidence.

Inspiring

We open doors, broaden horizons and spark possibility.
We create enriching experiences that empower children to build confidence, develop skills and believe in their potential. By raising aspirations through meaningful opportunities, we help children discover new pathways for learning, growth and self-belief.

Impactful

We deliver trusted experiences that make a meaningful difference.
Guided by proven expertise, insight and evidence, we create high-quality enrichment that leads to lasting outcomes for children and communities. We hold ourselves to high standards, using our knowledge and credibility to lead with confidence and maximise positive impact.

Our five strategic pillars provide the foundations for the next chapter of Children's University. Together, they reflect our ambition to grow a strong and connected movement that gives more children the opportunity to discover new experiences, build skills and confidence, and see what might be possible for their future. They will guide how we work with our members, partners, and communities, how we innovate and extend our reach, and how we build a resilient organisation that can continue to make a lasting difference.



Growth through collaboration.

Building a thriving, connected national network that strengthens delivery, shares best practice, and expands high-quality enrichment opportunities for all children.

This pillar focuses on growing and sustaining a strong Children's University membership network that works together to deliver consistent, high-quality enrichment experiences. It recognises that CU's impact is greatest when members are supported, connected and empowered to collaborate, share learning and develop their provision. Growth will therefore be driven not only by increasing membership numbers, but by deepening engagement, improving retention and strengthening the quality and consistency of delivery across the network.

A key focus is positioning Children's University as a collaborative "movement for good", bringing together schools, universities, MATs, local authorities and charitable organisations, alongside their communities, around a shared commitment to improving access to opportunity and enriching experiences for every child. Through stronger regional connections, shared practice and targeted support, the network will become more cohesive, resilient and inclusive, enabling more children across a wider range of communities to benefit from high-quality experiences and measurable outcomes.

Digital Innovation.



Enhancing digital capability to improve access, engagement and insight across Children's University for children, families, schools and partners.

This pillar focuses on the continued transformation of Children's University's digital offer into a more accessible, engaging and insight-driven experience for all users. It will strengthen how children and families interact with enrichment opportunities through improved online platforms, while supporting schools and members with clearer tools to understand participation and impact.

A key focus is ensuring digital provision is inclusive and accessible for all learners, including home-educated children, disadvantaged groups and children with additional needs.

Through the introduction of more intuitive user journeys, child-friendly resources, and expanded accessibility features, CU will ensure its digital offer supports engagement at every level. Alongside this, greater use of interactive features such as progress tracking and gamification will help to motivate and sustain participation, while improved data and analytics will support members to better understand and evidence impact.

Reach and Impact.



Enhancing digital capability to improve access, engagement and insight across Children's University for children, families, schools and partners.

This pillar focuses on significantly increasing Children's University's reach while strengthening the quality, equity and impact of participation. It reflects an ambition to ensure more children, particularly those facing barriers to opportunity, including disadvantaged learners, children with additional needs, and learners at home can access meaningful enrichment experiences that build confidence, skills and self-belief.

Alongside growth in participation, this pillar places a strong emphasis on improving outcomes and demonstrating impact. Through enhanced data collection, evaluation tools such as CUO, annual impact reporting and learner feedback, Children's University will strengthen its understanding of how enrichment contributes to children's development over time. A key priority is the continued evolution of the CU at Home offer into a scalable, high-quality subscription service that extends access to enrichment beyond traditional school settings, while maintaining strong engagement and quality of experience.

National Voice and Influence.

Advocacy, Profile, and Influence

This pillar focuses on strengthening Children's University's profile, credibility and influence as a trusted voice in enrichment and education. We will use our evidence, research and insight to contribute to national conversations, shape policy and practice, and build strong relationships with policymakers, sector leaders and partners.

We will develop a more coordinated approach to communications and advocacy, ensuring our impact and the importance of enrichment are clearly understood by key audiences.

We will also empower our members and wider network to advocate for enrichment in their own communities, creating a stronger and more connected voice for equitable access to enriching experiences for every child.



Position CU as a recognised leader in enrichment, shaping policy, practice and public understanding at a national and local level.

A Resilient Future.

To secure long-term sustainability and resilience across the Trust, its members and the delivery model.





This pillar focuses on building a strong, sustainable future for Children's University by expanding reach and visibility and strengthening financial resilience, ensuring that both national infrastructure and local delivery can thrive. It places emphasis on longevity, consistency and smart growth, so that impact is not only achieved, but sustained.

A resilient Children's University will have a clear national presence and voice, aligned with education and government priorities, while supporting a connected network where expertise, opportunities and resources flow effectively across regions. It will balance national leadership with local strength, ensuring members are supported to grow sustainably without competing for the same opportunities.



Implementation & Resourcing

Children's University will deliver this strategy through a small, agile and collaborative national team, supported by specialist expertise where appropriate. Central to the success of the organisation is the strength of its membership network, with members playing a vital role in extending the reach, delivery and impact of Children's University across the country. Together, the Trust team and members form a connected national community, working collectively to support children and young people to access high-quality enrichment opportunities.

Over the course of this strategy, investment will be **focused on strengthening** the organisation's long-term capacity, including network growth and member support, digital development and programme enhancements.
Communications and storytelling will underpin all five strategic pillars, ensuring that the CU's impact, opportunities, evidence and achievements are communicated consistently.

Collaboration will remain central to delivery, with Children's University continuing to work alongside schools, universities, MATs, local authorities, charities, learning destinations, media partners and philanthropic supporters to maximise reach, sustainability and impact across the network.

Key priorities during 2026-2027 will include membership growth activity, followed by expansion of the network, development of the CU at Home offer and the introduction of new digital engagement features. The later years of the strategy will focus on increasing national visibility, **strengthening advocacy activity** and continuing to scale digital tools, partnerships and participation.



Working together with

Schools

Universities

MATs

Local Authorities

Charities

Learning Destinations

Community Patners

Corporate Supporters

…to maximise reach, sustainability and impact across the network.

Find out more about us **www.childrensuniversity.co.uk**

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