



Welcome to Children's University Trust

Trustee Recruitment Pack 2026



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We are Children's University Trust

We are a small and agile organisation with a long history, a big reach and even bigger ambitions.

For more than twenty years, we have worked alongside a strong network of like-minded organisations to improve children's lives from an early age. Today, we collaborate with over 60 place-based delivery partners across the UK, reaching more than 110,000 children in over 1,400 schools each year.

Since April 2023, our reach has expanded even further. Through a new individual digital subscription model, Children's University is now accessible beyond our established partner network, available to all children and young people, wherever they live and regardless of how they are educated.

Within these pages, you will learn more about the opportunity to volunteer with Children's University as a Trustee. We sincerely hope you will consider applying and play a vital role in helping us achieve our vision, mission, and long-term outcomes for children.

Our Vision

A world where every child has equal opportunity to unlock their full potential through learning beyond the classroom.

Our Mission

- To inspire all children to love learning beyond the classroom
- To remove barriers to learning beyond the classroom making it accessible to all
- To engage children, their families and community in learning beyond the classroom, in and out of school, at home and online.

Our Outcomes for Children

We want every child to feel:

- That learning can be fun, aspirational, and lifelong
- They have enjoyed a range of new learning experiences and are motivated to keep learning in different ways
- They have grown in confidence and self-belief
- They have a broader range of essential skills in line with the Skills Builder Framework
- They are empowered to make positive choices about their future
- They can better cope with the challenges that life throws at them

Welcome from our Chair



I'm Vicky Charles, Chair of Children's University Trust since September 2024.

The last few years have been particularly challenging for the charity sector and for Children's University Trust, but with each challenge comes opportunity. We successfully managed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, developing a strong digital offer which now sits at the heart of all that we do. Now, as we navigate the current financial complexities and cost-of-living crisis, we are focussing on our purpose, ensuring that we continue to make a positive difference to the lives of those children and young people accessing our services.

I'm delighted that you have shown an interest in volunteering with our charity, and I wish you the best of luck with your application to join our dynamic, committed, and collaborative team.

The opportunity

Becoming a Trustee of Children's University Trust is hugely enjoyable and rewarding. It comes with the opportunity to help shape its direction, to impact the lives of thousands of children and young people across the UK, to meet and work with people outside your own professional sector, and for both personal and professional development. It can also offer a lot of challenge and fun.

Our Board of Trustees hold legal accountability for ensuring that Children's University Trust delivers its charitable purpose and aims, they are responsible for setting and overseeing the implementation of our strategy and for guiding the work of the charity in relation to areas such as finance, risk management, and organisational performance.

Our Trustees come from a wide variety of professional and personal backgrounds, and our charity benefits from our Trustees lived experience of their own education, learning, and enrichment, and we value all the varied contributions that Trustees bring. Children's

University Trust has accessibility and inclusivity at its heart, so as a Trustee, you will join a Board where different viewpoints are welcomed and respected.

We are working to fulfil our 3-year strategy and as a trustee you would have input to shape the future of the organisation.

Our strategic goals are:

By 2026, every child and young person in the UK will be able to benefit from Children's University

By 2026, every child and young person in the UK will be able to find and participate in a wide range of Children's University learning activities where they are

By 2026, the governments in England, Wales, and Scotland will be acting upon data and insights provided by Children's University

By 2026, Children's University will be receiving significant and sustained investment to develop learning beyond the classroom for all.

If this sounds like an organisation in which you would like to be involved, then read on and please do get in touch.

Vicky Charles

Chair

What our Trustees say

*“I was thrilled to join Children’s University Trust as a trustee. The opportunity to contribute to an organisation that ignites passion for learning in young minds is a privilege. Education is the foundation upon which we build our future, and being part of a team that encourages enriching experiences to children is incredibly rewarding. I strongly believe in the power of community and education to transform lives, and I am excited to bring my marketing expertise and enthusiasm to support Childrens University in expanding its reach and impact” - **Steph Webster***

*“As a Children’s University Trust Trustee, I feel incredibly proud and honoured, to be able to play a part in shaping strategies, which provide greater opportunities for children and young people and, I recognise the tangible impact Children’s University has, in helping children realise their potential” - **Tania Hardcastle***

*“Being a trustee for the Children’s University Trust is a deeply rewarding experience. I’m proud to support an organisation that empowers children and young people through learning and opportunity. Seeing the impact of our work especially how it inspires confidence and ambition in children from all backgrounds, reminds me why this matters so much” - **Owen Day***

*“I am so proud to be a trustee of Children’s University as I strongly believe that children and young people should have access to opportunities that develop a love of learning, leading them to thrive and fulfil their potential” - **Vicky Charles***

*“I’m delighted to be a Children’s University Trust trustee. I’ve always been a believer in equal access for all, and feel proud to be associated with an organisation that offers such a wide range of extra-curricular activities to children right across the UK, whilst inspiring them to achieve and explore new opportunities at every turn” - **Louise Richmond***

Read about our existing Trustees: <https://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/about-us/staff-and-trustees/>

Children's University Summary

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 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 more than 65 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. In April 2023, we launched an individual subscription model which means that Children's University is now also accessible to all children outside our current network of delivery partners and schools.

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 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.

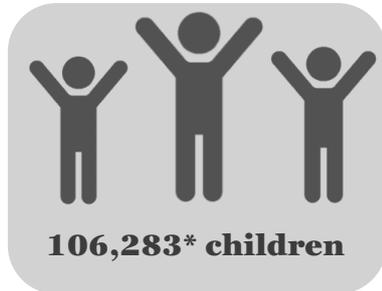
Research shows that young people's life chances in this country are still determined by the wealth of their parents and the social and cultural capital that this in turn brings. It also shows that children develop better life chances if they extend their learning outside the classroom.

Where we work

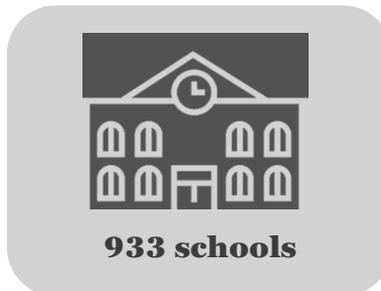
Children's University is open to all but retains a focus on targeting areas of disadvantage and with children facing the most barriers to learning beyond school. Across the country Children's University works particularly well when focused on areas of social disadvantage to achieve the greatest social 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 Priority Areas/ Education Investment Areas, historically disadvantaged regions, and children facing non-geographic disadvantage through strategic

partnerships with Local Authorities and Higher Education providers focused on greater inclusivity.

Numbers from Children's University Online



There were 106,283 children who recorded activity on CUO. **This is an increase of 48% from last year's report.**



There are almost 1000 schools registered on CUO.



There are 25,309 activities currently validated and available for children on CUO. **This is an increase of 30% from last year's report.**

How participants feel about Children's University

“

“Absolutely brilliant, great for activities to do in the holidays.”

“It's really good and motivating to do activities so I can keep adding the hours.”

“I love Children's University and doing all the challenges. The graduations make me feel very special too.”

“It's good to celebrate extra things we do.”

“Love the certificates, would like to visit universities or colleges.”

“It shows my mummy and daddy new activities we can do together.”

“Love that it encourages to find new things to do and sparks new interests.”

“I love Children's University as it gives me freedom to learn skills I love and also it encouraged me to learn and do educational fun learning out of school.”

“I like being able to chose extra clubs after school that I like to do.”

“I love it because it gives me opportunities to do things I wouldn't normally do and they are fun to do.”

”

Who we're looking for

We are looking for candidates who **fully support our charitable aims and objectives**, are passionate about our vision and mission, and care about:

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

As a Trustee of Children's University, you **will have a focus on creating opportunities for children and young people** and you **will act as an advocate for what we do**. 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. Therefore, we particularly welcome applications from a diverse range of people to reflect the diverse nature of our beneficiaries.

We're looking for candidates who **will support but also know how and when to challenge the Executive Team** and **will have the vision, enthusiasm, and strong communication skills to influence** Board decisions. All experience is valuable experience, so you **don't have to have been a charity Trustee previously or on a Board before** to apply.

The value of different experiences

Children's University Trust is committed to reflecting the communities we serve. We believe true diversity makes us a stronger organisation, which is why we're interested in who you are. Your lived experiences and your values are as important as your professional achievements. To reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion, we particularly welcome applications from people who:

- are aged -21-30
- identify as disabled or neurodivergent
- have a broad range of experiences of working life (you don't need a university degree to be a Trustee)
- are ethnically diverse
- are from a working-class background
- are LGBTQIA+

Strategic Expertise

We need Trustees with the right skills and experience to guide and challenge the strategic direction of every area of the organisation. Every year, we review our Trustee Skills Matrix and determine the areas of expertise we need to add to our Board. This year, we are particularly looking for candidates who can deepen our expertise and understanding in one or more of the following areas:

- **Finance and accountancy** expertise, ideally with an understanding of charity accountancy matters
- **Professional marketing** expertise, with experience of developing an effective marketing strategy and with industry knowledge
- **PR and communications** expertise, with experience in implementing strategic PR and communications plans to raise the profile of a brand and/or in broadening awareness of a brand's values and priorities and increasing its visibility across a wider audience.
- **HR professional** with expertise in people management to help guide our organisation's growth and governance.

What we'll ask of you

Joining the Board as a Trustee is a hybrid position of online and in-person daytime or evening meetings throughout the year (March, June, September, and December), including:

- One in person Board meeting of approximately 3 hours per meeting plus travel as meetings usually take place in London, Birmingham, or Manchester
- Three online Board meetings of approximately 2 hours per meeting (via Zoom or Teams)
- In person Annual Trustee Meeting and Strategy Planning Day
- Occasional extra meetings if necessary
- Membership of a sub-committee

Beyond these key meetings, Trustees also make other valuable contributions and occasionally represent Children's University Trust at events. New Trustees will also need to complete our Trustee induction programme, which will include a mixture of face-to-face and online sessions to suit your schedule. This usually includes time spent with the Chair, Treasurer, CEO and members of the Children's University network.

We ask all Trustees to commit to a three-year term in the role. In total, a Trustee can stand for three consecutive terms, each of three years, before retiring.

All our Trustee positions are voluntary and so unpaid. However, we realise that being a Trustee can incur financial expenses such as travel or the cost of covering care. Children's University Trust therefore reimburses its Trustees for reasonable expenses (according to the charity's expense policy), including all related travel and accommodation.

Responsibilities of Children's University Trustees

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. The most important traits for a Trustee of Children's University Trust are:

- to act in the best interests of the Trust's beneficiaries
- integrity to do the right thing, even when that requires you to make tough decisions
- impartiality: 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 Board has a duty to make sure those appointed are eligible to be Trustees. The Board will reserve the right to make checks on eligibility.

Please note: The Charities Act disqualifies people from being Trustees if they:

- **have unspent convictions for offences as set out in the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016**
- **are undischarged bankrupts**
- **have made an arrangement with creditors and have not been discharged (this will include an IVA)**
- **are subject to a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 or to an order made under section 429 (2) (b) of the Insolvency Act 1986**
- **have been removed from the Trusteeship of another charity by an order made by the Charity Commission of the High Court.**

Next steps: How to apply

Before applying you are invited to have an informal conversation about the role. To arrange a call, contact Sonjia Peers, CEO, sonjia.peers@childrensuniversity.co.uk

To apply, please send your CV with a statement of support (a maximum of two pages) to Sonjia at the same email 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 email addresses 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.

