



Children's University Trust Annual Review 2015

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*ur vision* - Is to inspire all young people, but particularly those who need it most, to discover innovative and creative learning OUTSIDE THE NORMAL SCHOOL DAY, which boosts their **self confidence** and **love** of **learning**.

*ur mission* - We are a critically acclaimed international charity which encourages children 5-14 to try new experiences, develop new interests and acquire new skills - boosting their self- confidence and using their *Passport to Learning* to work towards Children's University awards.

- **Our aims for children** We will signpost children and young people to quality assured learning opportunities designed to:
  - Raise aspiration, self-esteem and confidence
  - Encourage curiosity and a love of learning
  - Enhance motivation and build resilience
  - Improve life experiences

## ur principles ensure that CU

- Is open to all, but particularly to those who need it most
- Maintains participation as voluntary for all young people
- Actively seeks strategic and learning partnerships to extend the range of learning experiences.

#### Chairman's Welcome



Sandy Bradbrook

Chairman

Welcome to the Children's University Annual report for the 12 months to June 2015.

We have reached an important sevenyear milestone on our Children's University journey, which provides a good opportunity to reflect on just how far we have come.

However much we might increase in terms of numbers, we will ensure that we never compromise on the basic concept – to recognise and celebrate learning that happens beyond the formal curriculum - and the fundamental principles that the learning should be voluntary, owned by the child, fun and interactive.

Established in 2007, we work with children to ignite their passion for learning, to raise their aspirations, to build their self-confidence, breaking the cycle of low expectations which prevents many children from experiencing success. We work with a wide range of organisations at local, regional and national level: one of our strengths is that CU

centres reflect their local context and can maximise the benefits from existing partnership arrangements, as well as act as a catalyst for new and exciting collaborations.

I am especially encouraged by the increase in the number of universities and colleges that are taking the lead in establishing CU centres. The CU ethos clearly aligns with their strategic commitment to community engagement and widening access, targeting resources in the most disadvantaged communities and engaging with young people from an early age. Additional benefits accrue from the opportunities for academic staff and students to develop and deliver innovative and exciting Learning Activities facilitated by

positive role models. We do not claim that every child should or could go on to university, but children can only aspire to what they know exists. We want every young person - whatever their background - to expect more for their future, be aware of the array of options available to them and have the confidence to pursue them.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the central team I would like to express thanks and appreciation to all of you who have supported us over the years and accompanied us on our learning journey so far. The concept of CU is not difficult to grasp - we have been described by the Sunday Times as the 'University of Fun' - but it takes commitment, energy and resource to turn the rhetoric into reality. Through our collective efforts we will continue to provide those life-enhancing, at times life-changing, opportunities and experiences to children who will benefit most.

## How does the Children's University work?



Each participating child receives a Passport to Learning (just like a normal passport) where they record participation in activities at quality assured Learning Destinations, with a stamp or sticker alongside their learning hours. Learning Destinations cover a huge range of activities artistic, sporting, business and

enterprise, community activities, after school clubs, museums

and many more. There is a national Quality Assurance framework which ensures that learning offered anywhere across the CU network is of the same high standard, irrespective of location or subject area.





### How does the Children's University celebrate achievement?



A central part of the CU experience is the invitation to a Graduation and Celebration event, normally held in partnership with local FE and HE institutions. Seeing their children graduate in a cap and gown is often the moment when families begin to feel that there are more opportunities out there for their children than they might have thought. Children receive a certificate for the number of hours of learning in their passport. We celebrate achievement from the first 30 hours, right the way to 1,000 hours.

Currently around 80% of our passport holders are in primary schools. As they are reaching year 6 we are finding increased demand from them to be able to continue using their Learning Passports. More and more secondary schools are realising that the *Passport to Learning* can be a powerful vehicle to support the transition between primary and secondary school, particularly as part of summer school activities and that all important start in year 7.



#### Passport to Volunteering



As they reach 14-15, passport holders naturally begin to pursue a whole range of different activities and interests, and for those who want to maintain their participation in CU, we offer a *Passport to Volunteering*, which encourages them to use their skills in support of younger CU learners and in the service of others. The *Passport to Volunteering* is also recognised by the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

#### How is the CU structured?

The CU Trust operates through a voluntary network of local CU Centres across the British Isles, and now has centres in Singapore, Malaysia and South Australia. By the end of March 2015 there were around 100 local centres in the UK, with plans to extend our international reach to China, Sri Lanka and Tasmania.



One of the unique selling points of the CU is that it operates through a range of existing local structures and partnerships. The membership model is designed to keep overheads low and adapt to local circumstances, thus ensuring that we can meet the needs of pupils living in Sunderland as effectively as those in South Australia. CU Trust is responsible for overall strategic direction and management, providing ongoing support to local partners as well as developing new national learning partnerships. Local Partners are not-for-profit organisations and are selected based on their successful track record of working with children, and mutually shared aims. Our partners range across: HE/FE Widening participation teams; schools' collaboratives and trusts; academy chains; Community Interest Companies; education/business charities, with some remaining Local Authority School Improvement services.

Between 10 and 15 new local centres are added each year.

#### How do we know we make a difference?

Childhood experiences, or a lack of them, heavily shape future life chances and choices. At national level we have two independent evaluations carried out through the University of Cambridge which demonstrate that participation in CU activity has a positive impact on attendance and achievement at school and, as importantly, on the skills and attitudes which so many employers want to see more of in young people – resilience, adaptability, collaboration, self confidence and self belief.

We also encourage local centres to carry out their own studies and more detail on all of the above can be found at www.childrensuniversity.co.uk.

## **Taking Stock**

From our respective day jobs as Head of CU Learning Development and Support and CEO of CU Scotland, it is an exciting and rewarding opportunity to take on joint interim leadership of such a diverse and vibrant organisation as Children's University; one that puts the child at the centre of learning facilitated by individuals, educational establishments and organisations across all sectors from Aberdeen to Adelaide.

Thanks to funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation we have been able to expand our network of local CU centres, which are currently being established at the rate of one a month. CU Scotland now has four centres, has celebrated 2 graduations and, thanks to full adoption of the *E-Passport* system, can boast a total of 13,000 hours of learning recorded by CU members north of the border.

Our facts and figures reflect that we now have:

- Over 90 local CU centres
- Over 1,000 participating schools
- Over 100,000 Passport holders
- 5,800 public *Learning*Destinations
- 10,000 restricted *Learning*Destinations

We are particularly pleased that, despite all the movement and change within the MOD, Service Children's Education is still able to support CU in six areas across the world. This summer there will be graduations as far afield as the Falkland Islands, across Germany and in Naples and Cyprus. The *Passport to Learning* can provide both reassurance and motivation for children and families as they settle into new postings.



Our international colleagues are also going from strength to strength. In 2013 the University of Adelaide became the sole license holder and lead organisation for the introduction of Children's University Australia (CUA) with the intention of expanding across Australia and New Zealand. Between 2013 and 2014 CUA has grown from 1 pilot school to over 30 schools, with 2,000 Passport holders. CUA is set to expand to Tasmania this year and with other Australian Universities keen to join, the prospects of CU down under have never looked brighter.

Children's University is licensed to operate in Malaysia and held its inaugural graduation in Kuala Lumpar in November 2014. The pilot

programme, which is approved by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, saw 200 children from primary schools graduate in CU caps and gowns, with a special focus on Leadership and Communication skills.

We are proud to welcome the newest members of the CU family - CU China. Following some existing class to class activity, CU China is set to launch in summer 2015 at 2 schools in Ningbo, who will be linking with schools in Coventry and Lincolnshire. We look forward to celebrating their first graduation at the beginning of 2016.

## The Way Ahead

We are conscious that we need to match expansion with support from the centre providing networking opportunities to promote the sharing of new ideas and good practice.

Since the launch of the national Facebook and Twitter presence in 2014 our profile has been building amongst parents and learning providers and local CUs are leading the way in setting up their own pages. We are also helping local centres to generate income through our new range of merchandise.

And growth is not just about numbers; we must ensure that resources are targeted at those that need it most. Our university partners share that common agenda to raise aspirations and achievement of learners from the most disadvantaged communities and we are delighted that this synergy is recognised by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

One of our flagship programmes for 2014-16 is the Youth Social Action Project in the North West and Middlesbrough, supported by the Cabinet Office and the Education Endowment Fund. Through this project we are using Children's University to introduce over 60 schools and over 1,500 children to a range of activities which are not only fun but help them to develop the skills and confidence to use their learning to benefit their communities.

Summer 2015 sees the launch of our new-look website and brand new *Learning Destination* and *E-Passport* app, making it far easier for our CU members to identify and record their *Learning Activities*. We will also be reviewing the validation process and the way we build local capacity through training validators. We are exploring new ways to reach out to specific cohorts or individual children who are currently unable to access our programmes.

As always we rely heavily on the input and guidance provided by all our members. On behalf of the central team we would like to express enormous thanks and gratitude for the support and encouragement you have given us over the past year and look forward to building on that collective enthusiasm to take our organisation from strength to strength over the coming year.





Lynne Upton and Mary De la Peña, Interim CEOs

#### **Meet our Passport Holders and their families**



Bradley competed in a Karate competition two months after joining a class through CU. (Norfolk)

"I'm so proud he didn't give up and really proud of all those that went out of their way to encourage him."

"The Children's University passport scheme has encouraged Tyler to have the confidence to join an after school club, plus look for others like the Lego Club at Morecambe library. Tyler had been starting school later in the mornings dues to anxiety but the morning of receiving his CU prize he went to school early and stood in front of Y7 with a new found confidence, which he hadn't shown for quite a while."

(Parent, Sefton)

"It's really important to me and it helps me in my learning. At the last award ceremony I got a bronze award and that made me feel proud." (Oliver, 10 Sheffield)





"Going to University made me and my parents really proud. Like seeing me in a cap and gown. My Mum said she never thought she would see inside a university. It just makes me feel proud." (Central CU Trust)

"If we were not members of CU and had not seen the list of Learning Destinations, my daughter would never have tried the Children's University of Manchester on line activities, the BBC Tour and Karate skills to name a few of the sorts of extra curricular knowledge she has acquired. In short, CU definitely holds a big role in widening the horizons of the architects of our future."

(Parent, Norfolk)

"I was surprised how many things you can do and interesting places you can visit on your doorstep.
There's still a lot I'd like to explore and I'm getting my friends involved too."

(Hope, Queen Margaret CU Edinburgh)



"Children's University gives you the opportunity to learn new things and is a great way to get awarded for learning new things outside class time. You might surprise yourself by what you end up enjoying."

(Cameron, Queen Margaret

**CU Edinburgh)** 

#### **Meet our Volunteers and Ambassadors**

As they reach the age of 14, we know that many of our passport holders continue to pursue a passion they have discovered through CU, and we are proud to have played a part in that. But involvement with CU need not stop at 14, and for some young people, that's exactly where it starts!

We have a growing number of volunteers who want to use their skills to 'give something back'. Young people who participate in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme can use CU volunteering to qualify for their award.

**Laura** is the first Children's University volunteer in Birmingham from the Central CU Trust. She has completed her first spell of volunteering by

"Laura as become such a valued member of our team and the children think a great deal of her."

(Colmore Infant and Junior School)

helping out at not 1 but 3 after school clubs at her former primary school. Through taking part in CU activities herself, Laura has developed the confidence to help others.





**Matthew** was one of the first volunteers for Croydon CU pilot Volunteering Programme, and although he had not been involved with CU before, he found that working on primary school projects helped him to confront some of his own problems with confidence and motivation. He discovered that he had the experience and attitude to be an excellent role model, and his school helped him to build on this to become a mentor.

Matthew is now in his second year of university, and as part of his Business Planning module on his sports degree, he has been helped to set up his own mentoring service, 'Push Through Sport'.

Matthew being interviewed about what inspired him to set up 'Push Through Sport' by CU Ambassadors attending the CU Newspaper workshop during the three week CU Summer Camp 2014 .

#### Meet our Volunteers and Ambassadors

Volunteering can also help spread the word about CU in the wider community.

Hamish is a pupil at Clacton Costal Academy who acts as an Ambassador for the CU, attending events at FE/HE exhibitions, and who is also honing his business skills by running the CU merchandise stalls as well.



"Hamish is my right hand man. He has helped to set up HE/FE exhibitions, manning our merchandise stalls. He is a brilliant example of volunteering in action." (Clacton Coastal Academy)

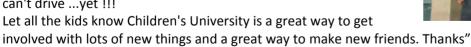
Adam Allam's passport is full, and he is spreading the word in his home town of Doncaster.

"Please let the other kids in Doncaster know there is so much you can learn even when you're not in a classroom, and if you don't try something new how do you know if you'll like it or if you're good at it? I think it's important to have a go at everything if you have a chance to and it's also a great way to see what you might fancy doing when you eventually leave school. More choices if you know what I mean. When I had my interview with you I said I wanted to be a footballer, but I never got chance to say, and maybe a pilot and an explorer.

It's also fair to say mum and dad help me get to all these things as I can't drive ...yet !!!

Adam Allam, Doncaster

Let all the kids know Children's University is a great way to get



Schools are also telling us about the success of their Parent and Grand Parent CU Ambassadors—adding weight to our belief that anyone from 14-114 can volunteer for us.

## Why Get Involved: The school perspective

Schools are choosing Children's University as a way to build a curriculum "from the inside out" and to open children's

eyes to the power and magic of learning, often in places and ways they might least expect. There are a number of ways Children's University can support school improvement:

- As a means of shaping national initiatives into local priorities eg. celebrating achievement through activities provided as part of the Sports Premium
- As part of a transition programme, enabling activities to continue across holiday programmes between Year 6 and 7
- As a different context for offering activities to develop pupils' personal and learning skills
- As a vehicle which is open to all, but can be targeted at those who need it most.
   CU is an effective and justifiable use of the Pupil Premium

"Children's University is the spark that awakens our children to the possibility of achieving great things" (Richard Machin, Primary headteacher, Coventry)



benefit the community. "We are thrilled that 3 of our students have shown such kindness and social awareness and that they are now being recognised for their efforts. Our school has truly embraced the ethos of the Children's University and we couldn't be prouder of our students."

Malin Bridge Primary School in Sheffield started CU two years ago "If your children are coming to school every day and they're happy, they're joining clubs, they're socialising, they tend to achieve more. It's starting to get out into the community – we put Children's University into the fortnightly bulletin and people have been to the awards ceremonies, so it's slowly building." (Steve, Learning mentor)

#### **Links with OFSTED**

School leaders are challenged to provide a curriculum which "prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in modern Britain" (OFSTED School Inspection Handbook 2015) yet so much of this learning takes place beyond the normal school day.

The benefits of CU extend far beyond traditional accountability frameworks, but schools tell us that they choose CU as part of a whole school approach to developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, as well as improving attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning.



"Attendance has gone up over the last twelve months term on term, without doubt I would credit some of that to Children's University and the activities we put on."

(Kay Roe, Learning mentor,

Malin Bridge Primary School Sheffield)



- Harpfield Primary Ofsted 2015
  Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key priority for the school and is excellent. Many pupils earn recognition on the role of honour for the Children's University.
- The attendance at the after-school clubs, which are held for an hour every day, is high. Pupils enjoy craft gardening clubs and enjoy gaining credits for the Children's University.

## Why Get Involved: The FE/HE perspective

The UK continues to face huge challenges in making sure that children's family circumstances or lack of resources don't prevent them from aspiring to be the best they can be. Increasing numbers of Further and Higher Education institutions are choosing the Children's University as a key part of their Widening participation programmes.

The Head of the Office for Fair Access, Professor Les Ebdon, has cited Children's University at Nottingham Trent University as an example of good practice, "I'm very pleased to see the work that Nottingham Trent University is doing to improve access. In particular, its outreach programmes clearly show that the university understands the importance of reaching out to children from primary age onwards, and developing long term, sustained interaction with schools."

Children's University is a vehicle for harnessing the potential of the whole community to support young people's learning. Zoe Hancock, Principal of Oaklands FE College, Herts explains, "We became part of Children's University because we knew it would offer significant benefits to children, parents and the community as a whole. For local attractions and clubs the scheme has translated into repeat business and increased footfall for participating *Learning Destinations*.



wakefield College
Ofsted Report 2015
Partnership working is outstanding.
The college has led the way in
setting up a Children's University
which successfully provides, in
which successfully provides, in
organisations, a rich set of learning
organisations, a rich set of learning
experiences across the community.
experiences across the community
to raise aspirations in the
to raise aspirations in the
community and to increase
participation in learning."

Wakefield College also sees Children's University as a powerful example of its partnership working – and OFSTED agree!

# What does it take to become a Children's University *Learning Destination*?

Learning Destinations are places and organisations that children can "travel" to with their Passport to Learning. They provide exciting, creative activities and experiences quality assured through the CU's own quality assurance framework "Planning for Learning." Children gain a stamp in their Passport to Learning for the hours of learning they complete.

*Learning Destinations* directly linked to school clubs are called Restricted *Learning Destinations* and this is where many children begin their learning journey.

Children can also use their *Passport to Learning* across a huge range of Public *Learning Destination* partners and providers – from the biggest names to the smallest local attractions. We want to encourage Passport holders and their families to get out and try activities in new and perhaps unexpected places. Closer to home, children can gain time in their Learning Passport by attending locally validated youth groups or uniformed organisations, or at participating libraries and museums. Music, sport, outdoor adventure,

science and technology – we have something for everyone.

Every single *Learning Destination*, large or small, local or multi-national, makes a contribution to our vision, and we would like to recognise publically that vital role they play in a child's learning journey.

#### What about the cost?

We ask all our local CUs to ensure they have a balance between free learning opportunities, and those with a cost. As we grow, some of our partners are considering offering reduced rates to Passport holders.

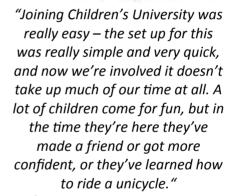
Becoming a *Learning Destination* is a great way to promote an activity or

venue to new visitors, and offers an additional incentive to those who already attend. Public *Learning Destinations* feature on our interactive

search facility on our website, as well as through our social media channels and our soon to be released App!

THE READING

We are also working with a number of partners to give Passport holders access to an exciting range of home or locally based challenges, downloadable from our own or Partner websites. These change throughout the year and are a great way to add time to the passport.



(Lauren Cowdery Education manager, Greentop Circus)

## A word from some of our most recent Learning Partners



"We are delighted that we have become a Children's University Learning Destination to promote learning outside of school hours through attendance at our Pet

Pals workshops. Together, we want to capture children's enthusiasm and encourage them to pursue their passions supported by our expert knowledge and range of resources."

(Niki Frazer, Learning & Development Manager)

"Like the Children's University. **English Heritage Education puts** exciting high quality learning experiences at the core of all its activity. While our learning offer focuses around teachers and schools, working with the Children's University allows us to help further that learning outside of the normal school day and give 7 – 14 year olds the opportunity to experience and learn with their





families. Our prehistoric sites, castles, abbeys and country houses can all be used to bring history alive, spark a lifetime interest in the environment and teach just about everything. Working in partnership with the Children's University allows us to help families and little learners create unique and memorable learning experiences." (Verity Hope, Education Marketing Manager West)

# halfords

"Our partnership with Children's University provides a great opportunity for more children to learn basic bike maintenance skills so they can get out and about on their bikes. The passport stamps really help children to chart their progress and we've had excellent feedback from many of the children and parents who have attended so far."

(Emma Thomas, Head of PR)



## **Forestry Commission**

"We are delighted to be involved in the Children's University scheme. Our forest discovery activity has been completed by more than 75 children, at forests across England, and we are looking forward to having more activities validated during 2015."

(Rachel Giles **National Learning Officer)** 

### **Our partner funders**

Children's University is very fortunate to enjoy the support of several exceptionally generous companies and grant-making trusts, all of whom share our commitment to raising young people's aspirations, helping them to discover unknown talents and interests and, ultimately, improving their life chances.

Investment is vital and by no means limited to hard cash: services, venues, products and staff time, skills and expertise all play an equally critical role. Please find below a snapshot of some of our key supporters:

MacFarlanes LLP generously agreed to undertake CU Trust's legal requirements on a pro-bono basis. In particular, staff focussed on creating a social franchise infrastructure which allowed Children's University to realise its international growth ambitions. As a result, children across the globe are now able to benefit from the programme and operations have recently launched in Malaysia, Singapore and Australia with further not-for-profit ventures set to start in Sri Lanka and China later this year.







The Education Endowment Foundation/Cabinet Office have invested £550k over 2.5 years to pilot the Children's University model as a vehicle to promote increased engagement in social action amongst primary-aged children. The pilot is currently underway in over 60 schools across Lancashire/Middlesbrough with Durham University evaluating the impact on all pupils involved. Assuming the pilot proves to be as successful as initial indicators suggest, the intention is to extend to the wider CU network longer term.

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation very generously awarded a grant of £100k over 3 years, on a reducing basis, so we could appoint a Head of Local Support and Development, Debbie Bird: her role is to spearhead the continued growth of the local CU network in England. In less than two years the number of centres of has grown 20% and, as a direct result, 10,500 more children are now benefiting from CU services nationally. This appointment has also played a critical role in supporting the long-term sustainability of the organisation and its membership bodies.



#### Our partner funders cont'd

**F2UNI** and the Fidelity Foundation have jointly funded the development of the 'Learning Destination and E-Passport' App which will be officially launched in summer 2015. The App will make it far easier for parents, carers and children alike to pinpoint the exact whereabouts of individual 'Learning Destinations'. Once activities have been completed, credits can then be uploaded onto a child's E-Passport via the App.





the collective voice of graduate recruiters

Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) generously allocated the Children's University premium exhibition space, free of charge, at their 2015 annual conference. The event was attended by universities, further education colleges and FTSE100 companies and provided a great platform to raise awareness amongst key stakeholders; not to mention forge relations with potential programme partners.

**Birmingham Solicitors Group (BSG)** Many local CUs are also fortunate to be supported by foundations, companies, individuals and/or public agencies. One supporter, in particular, we are keen to recognise is the Birmingham Solicitors Group (BSG).





Birmingham CU was

selected as the Group's 'Charity of the Year' and its members have worked tirelessly over the course of the last 12 months to organise a series of imaginative events to raise money for the charity. Not only have members generated much needed income, they have also greatly raised the profile of the programme across the city and increased uptake amongst schools and pupils accordingly. In recognition of BSG's unstinting support, Birmingham CU has created the 'BSG Outstanding Achievement Award' as a permanent legacy; the latter will be launched at the forthcoming 2015 graduation and awarded on an annual basis thereafter.

#### Meet some of our Chancellors



























We encourage all local CUs to designate a local Chancellor. Alongside the children they can be the most powerful role models and advocates of what we do.

- Michael Morpurgo
   Children's author
   CU Trust (UK) National Chancellor
- 2. Louis de Bernières Author Norfolk CU
- 3. Annie Maw
  Retired High Sheriff of Somerset
  Somerset CU
- 4. Shobna Gulati
  Actor of Coronation Street fame
  Oldham CU
- Professor lain Stewart Scientist and broadcaster Devon CU

- 6. **Dr Jeremy Paul**Wildlife artist
  Isle of Man CU
- 7. Gervase Phinn Author Doncaster CU
- 8. Nick Gillingham Olympic medallist Walsall CU
- 9. Warwick Davies Actor of 'Harry Potter' fame Peterborough CU
- His Excellency Kevin Scarce Governor of South Australia CU Australia

A special welcome to our newest Chancellors:

11. Ade Adepitan

TV presenter and wheelchair basketball player
Newham CU

12. James Milner

Premier League and International Footballer Leeds CU

**13. Martina Cole** Author Bromley CU

•• It's like a club for developing your talent that other children also belong to and that is fun. As I inhabit the worlds of the grown-ups and of the children I can speak up for what the Children's University tries to achieve.

Michael Morpurgo, CU Trust National Chancellor





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