

How Russell Group universities engage with their local communities

1. Summary

Community connections are right at the heart of every Russell Group university. Our universities make a real difference by engaging with business, schools, NHS trusts, charities and community organisations. They understand that developing close ties with their neighbours living and working in the area mutually benefits both the university and community alike.

- They contribute to the cultural, artistic, sporting and educational life of their home communities by opening their facilities, museums and galleries to their local communities, and providing opportunities to engage local people in learning and research.
- Students are encouraged to engage with their local communities by undertaking volunteering and opportunities to work with local people are embedded into curricula to help students develop new skills and enhance their experience at university.
- Work with schools and colleges supports raising attainment and aspirations. Our members ensure young people with the potential and determination to succeed at a leading university can do so, whatever their background.

Active engagement with the public, community groups, schools and colleges, and local businesses is critical for Russell Group universities to help drive local and regional growth and inclusion. It helps them to produce excellent research, facilitate social mobility, promote cohesion and strengthen the social fabric of communities, which underpins the future prosperity of the UK.

In short, Russell Group universities have an international reach and world-class reputation, but they are grounded locally, where community matters.

2. Engaging the public with research and learning

Throughout the year, our universities run and participate in a diverse range of events and activities. This includes science, history, literature, sporting and music festivals aimed at engaging local people in the transformative power of education and ideas.

Russell Group universities stimulate awareness and discussion through access to their museums, galleries and free public lectures. **Almost 1.5 million people attended free public lectures at our universities last year and more than 5.5 million people attend exhibitions at museums and galleries located within our universities every year.**

Many of our universities also have well-established lifelong learning centres offering hundreds of different courses to local residents both on and off campus.

The York Festival of Ideas launched by the University of York in 2011 is now the largest free festival in the UK with a wide range of talks, exhibitions, plays, concerts, tours and workshops attracting over 32,000 people in 2017.

The University of Liverpool runs a Continuing Education programme providing hundreds of short courses, lectures and events for the Merseyside community and beyond.

Our members also collaborate with their local communities on important research projects. Such partnerships underpin Russell Group universities' reputation for research excellence and help them address global health, economic and environmental challenges that affect all our lives.

Queen Mary University of London has teamed up with King's College London and the University of Cambridge to conduct one of the world's largest community-based genetics studies analysing the health of 100,000 local Pakistani and Bangladeshi people to identify better treatments to cure or prevent serious diseases.

The dental school at Cardiff University has been leading the Welsh Government-funded 'Designed to Smile' programme aimed at national oral health improvement. In collaboration with the Community Dental Service, it now reaches 59% of pre-school to Year 2 children in Wales.

3. Student engagement in local communities

Our universities support their students to undertake volunteering opportunities and make a valuable contribution through working with charities, community groups and not-for-profit organisations. It is estimated that Russell Group university students undertake **almost 1 million hours of volunteering in their local area every year** and each of our universities works with an **average of 200 local and national charities**.

Our universities' community engagement activities also support students to engage with local people as part of their studies, helping them to develop new skills and enhancing their student experience.

At the University of Durham students give more than 14,000 hours of community support annually. Durham Student Community Action runs around 50 projects open to all students including a residential camp and day trips for young people identified as being at risk.

The London School of Economics (LSE) Volunteer Centre helps thousands of students each year donate tens of thousands of hours to good causes locally, including refugee networks, peer support, and career coaching for young people.

The University of Edinburgh runs a free student-led law clinic providing legal advice and supporting the local community as well as enhancing the learning experience of law students.

4. Working with local schools and colleges

Russell Group universities have a strong track record in supporting schools to help raise standards, attainment and aspirations. They make a **positive impact through work with around 8,000 schools and with hundreds of thousands of young people across the country each year**. Some of our universities have set up, or are sponsoring, local schools, whilst others are providing broader support for school leadership and governance, and teacher and curriculum development.

The University of Birmingham School opened in September 2015 and draws in pupils from all backgrounds across the city and beyond. It is the first secondary University Training School and works with the University of Birmingham's School of Education, using its research to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers. This creates a strong learning environment for pupils across the region.

The University of Manchester has a School Governor Initiative that allows staff and alumni to make a difference to the leadership across hundreds of local state schools; 514 staff and alumni give over 6,000 days of support to schools each year, impacting on over 230,000 learners.

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