

15 years of Student Hubs



A retrospective

OUR VISION

A society in which **every student** participates in **social and environmental challenges** during their education, supporting them to become **active citizens for life**

OUR MISSION

to **mainstream student social action** within higher education

Over the past 15 years Student Hubs have worked with over **20,000** students across **10 Hubs**. A further **100,000** students have attended our events, training and conferences.

Our programmes have been delivered in partnership with more than **1,200** community organisations, reaching at least **16,000** community members.

This retrospective shares our story, and impact, from the last 15 years as we get ready to launch our reviewed model of delivery.

82%

of students agreed participating in the activity enhanced their wellbeing

since 2018

91%

of students agreed participating in the activity enhanced their university experience

since 2015

89%

of students agreed their experience improved their confidence in approaching challenges

since 2015

From beginnings in Oxford

In **2007** our journey begins in Oxford. Our four student founders set up Oxford Hub to provide a space for collaboration, conversation and social action.

88%

of students agreed their experience improved their ability to work with others to make change

since 2015

94%

of students agreed the activity introduced them to people they otherwise wouldn't have met

since 2015

86%

of students agreed they are more likely to tackle further social challenges as a result of their engagement with Student Hubs

since 2018

From **2008** the network began to grow, establishing Hubs across the country. Including Bristol, Cambridge, Southampton, Oxford Brookes, Warwick, Imperial and SOAS.



SOAS Hub, 2016



Imperial Hub, 2013



Warwick Hub, 2013

Until **2012** our focus was connecting students: signposting them to external opportunities, networking with likeminded peers and conferences to raise awareness. Over the years our conferences have focused on sustainability, social enterprise, international development and the UK's nonprofit sector.

In the 2011-12 academic year students across the Student Hubs network supported the delivery of **13** conferences reaching **840** students. One of these was the Social Enterprise Conference at Bristol Hub, aiming to demystify social enterprise among students.

“The Bristol Social Enterprise Conference focused on how students can make the transition from social consciousness into finding entrepreneurial solutions to social problems. The event brought together students with budding social entrepreneurs to discuss and debate issues and opportunities; debate explored the role of social enterprise in higher education, new inventions tackling climate change and new systems of money such as the Bristol Pound.

- Jonathan Levin, Conference Organiser

To developing our programmes

In **2012** we launched Schools Plus, our first structured volunteering programme tackling educational inequality. To date our Hubs have supported over **2800** student tutors to work with more than **250** partner schools, building academic confidence for around **7500** young people.

Our internal social action programmes developed even further in **2013** which saw the launch of our second structured volunteering programme, LinkAges, which reduces isolation through building intergenerational friendships. Over the last 10 years LinkAges has been a part of **6** of our Hubs, building connections between **470** students and more than **1000** community members.



Bristol Hub, 2019

71%

of students taking part in LinkAges agreed they have noticed a reduction in loneliness in the older people they met

since 2019

91%

of students taking part in LinkAges agreed that they are learning about the challenges facing the community members they met

since 2017

2013 also saw Student Hubs partner on broadening the reach of Student Volunteering Week, an annual celebration of all things student social action. With Barclay's support we coordinated national activity, supporting institutions to run one-off volunteering opportunities and raise awareness of the impact of student volunteering - for both students and communities. One-off opportunities have become an important part of our offer as they are often a vital first step for those new to social action, and those who face barriers to getting involved with longer term projects.



In February 2013 Student Volunteering Week saw **8000** students participating in events at over **70** institutions. For our Oxford and Brookes Hubs this included a Good Deed Day during which **120** students performed good deeds including litter picking, providing food for homeless people and sorting donations at local charity shops.

“Student Volunteering Week has provided me with a great opportunity to communicate the value of volunteering to my peers, both for the impact it has on the local community, and the skills it has helped me to develop.

- Student participant, 2013

In **2014** we piloted skilled placement opportunities, offering a different way for students to engage with social action as consultants for non profit organisations on the Social Innovation Programme. The Social Innovation Programme focuses matches teams of four students up with local charities to work on a challenge brief. The students attend eight weeks of training whilst working on their project, culminating in a showcase to share and celebrate their work.



Kingston Hub, 2019



of students on skilled placements agreed they developed professional skills from the activity

since 2018

The Social Innovation Programme has supported over **1700** students to work on challenge briefs for more than **350** community organisations, adding capacity, new perspectives and energy to their work.



I chose the programme for two main reasons. On the one hand it seemed a fantastic way to develop a range of skills, from report writing to working as a team; on the other hand I wanted to give something back to a city which I have loved being a student in. I must say that it is one of the best things that I've been involved with at Cambridge.

- Laurie Woolridge, Cambridge Hub 2016



In 2014 Imperial Hub Schools Plus tutors supported weekly sessions at Azza Supplementary School in North West London. The school shared that the sessions were important for pupils to meet other children like them and experience small group tutoring which ultimately supported them to learn self-learn.

Student tutor, Sadaf, shared

“I have really enjoyed spending time with these kids, they are an awesome group and it has been nice to see our relationship strengthen with time. It's also been an experience to discover a new culture... The whole experience has been monumental in my application for a PGCE this year.

Her pupil shared

“It's fun, I like the interaction and socialising. [My tutor is] really nice, and she helps.

To refining our approach

In **2014** we launched Hubs in partnership with Kingston University and the University of Winchester - reaching our first student bodies outside of Russell Group institutions. We recognised that in order to truly achieve our mission of mainstreaming, we needed to be working with more institutions in more ways.

85%

of students agreed participating improved their ability to adapt and overcome challenges

since 2020

87%

of students agreed the Hub offered them access to opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have had

since 2015

87%

of students agreed they have gained an increased understanding of social issues

since 2018

As our work developed, in **2015** we refined our double benefit approach through our Theory of Change. We believe that when students are supported to **learn** about social issues, **connect** with one another and **do** something to tackle issues communities benefit from student social action, students develop skills and insights into social issues and students leave university and become active citizens for life.



Student Hubs' Theory of Change



Southampton Hub, 2022

“All universities are seeking to enhance their employability of their students... and I think having experiences like what the Hub offers, making you think out of the box, out of the narrow channel of your own subject, really enhances all of those outcomes in a very powerful way and that's got to be good for the individuals and for the university itself... [Student Hubs] bring the structures, the context, the creativity, the mentoring, all those sort of things, in a way which is much more powerful perhaps than universities on their own.

- Joy Carter, Vice Chancellor at the University of Winchester, 2021



To continuing to develop



“I met some lovely people and it also got me more interested in projects that address social issues as well... It pushed me outside of my comfort zone and because of that I did something kind of different from my usual style and I really enjoyed it... For me, I'm a mature student... but I've never had a career involving the arts. So, this is a whole new skill set... It was great for community engagement, and also a little, instead of a stepping stone, a little trampoline bounce into the art world.

- Lauree, Kingston Hub 2023

Lauree is a mature student studying BA Photography at Kingston University who worked on a brief for Creative Youth.

In the following years we continued to develop our in house structured volunteering and skilled placement programmes. From sustainability initiatives like **Climate Action Bristol** and **Engage for Change** training student consultants to be future (and current) change makers to youth focused activities such as **Branch Up** - which provides free Saturday activity days for 7-11 year olds and their student mentors.



Southampton Hub, 2018



Bristol Hub, 2022



Cambridge Hub, 2020



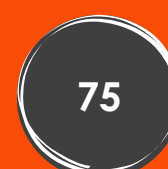
Winchester Hub, 2020

In **2018** we piloted Community Engaged Learning at Kingston Hub, bringing social action into the curriculum. This programme enabled us to further our mainstreaming mission by removing the barriers students face to engaging with extracurricular activities. To deliver Community Engaged Learning we work alongside academics, local community partners and students to deliver meaningful projects in which students skill up in consultancy, and can apply their academic learnings.

Between 2018 and 2023 Community Engaged Learning worked with:



student
participants



community
partners



Kingston Hub, 2023

And becoming who we are today

In **2019** we said farewell to our friends at Oxford Hub, with their focus turning towards the city as a whole whilst we remained focused specifically on student social action as an independent charity.



Brookes Hub, 2012



Oxford Hub, 2016



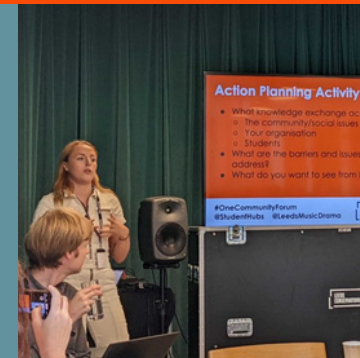
Oxford Hub, 2017

“I've learned how to prioritise myself in Oxford's non-stop working culture. I've definitely developed skills in communications, leadership and organising events. I think I've become more organised during my years volunteering. I started as an activities coordinator, and now I'm the coordinator, so I've learned to juggle many different things at once, and that's been a useful skill- keeping up with emails especially. Taking charge is now second nature for me, a prospect that used to make me nervous, but now I feel totally comfortable getting up in front of a group of people.

- Oxford Hub Branch Up Coordinator, 2017

In **2023** we launched our 2023 and beyond approach. Recentreing our mission of mainstreaming student social action by simplifying the ways institutions can work with us. We want to reach even more students, at even more universities.

In 2022 and 2023 we worked with **Leeds Conservatoire** on two Projects supporting them to develop knowledge exchange. This included a One Community Forum, bringing together students, staff from the University and community members to discuss what meaningful artistic citizenship could look like.



“Music was a large focus at the One Community Forum, with all of the attendees agreeing that it was a powerful force in providing hope, unity and comfort in the community and for those who are struggling. There was also a need to break down stereotypes and assumptions of art as inaccessible, and conversation about what would be needed from Leeds Conservatoire to do this community engagement effectively... After going through our notes from the One Community Forum we found three key findings which included accessibility for community organisations and their clients; other barriers to engagement; and social issues present in the community impacting both community members and students.

- Iona Gillies, Student Hubs staff member, 2022

Thank you to our network of staff, students and partners without whom the last 15 years would not have been possible. If you'd like to learn more about our work and how we can collaborate on student social action **reach out to Partnerships and Development Director, Fiona, at fiona.walsh@studenthubs.org.**