



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Community Plan

2020–25





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Foreword

The University of Edinburgh has always been closely intertwined with the City of Edinburgh and its local communities. Founded by Edinburgh's Town Council in 1583, we are the oldest university in the English-speaking world to be established on a civic foundation and, as such, place a special importance on how we engage with our city, our region and its various communities.

In the early 20th Century, this relationship was exemplified by the University Settlement movement, which sought to alleviate poverty across the city and empower communities. Fast forward 80 years, and the University is now a key partner in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, where we are putting our excellence in research and education at the service of communities, government and industry, to realise the benefits of data driven innovation and promote inclusive economic growth.

In 2016, the University of Edinburgh became the first university in Scotland to have a formal community engagement strategy. Our new University strategy (Strategy 2030) reinforces the significance of our relationship with our communities even more, by placing social and civic responsibility at the forefront of our ambitions. This new strategy commits us to deliver positive change locally and regionally, as well as globally, and that has been the ambition behind this new Community Plan.

In the spirit of co-creation, we have tried to develop the actions in this Plan in consultation with a wide range of

communities external to the University, as well as with our own staff and student partners. We are conscious, however, that the University has not always got its relationship with communities right in the past and so we have approached our task in the spirit of humility and realism, and have welcomed and acted on the feedback we have received.

At the time of writing, we are living through extraordinary times. The Covid-19 pandemic has cruelly highlighted the fragility of our social, political, cultural and economic institutions. Indeed, the differential impact of the virus on our communities reflects and reinforces a global social order riven with inequalities. Likewise, the Black Lives Matter movement has exemplified how important it is for us to really listen to, and act on, the concerns of our BAME communities.

I believe that higher education, in general, and the University of Edinburgh, specifically, has a critical role to play in supporting the city and region's post Covid-19 recovery and regeneration in positive, measurable and sustainable ways. We can also help communities interrogate the history of slavery and colonialism and the ongoing impact it has in today's world.

The commitments outlined in this Community Plan will, therefore, find their first test in how we contribute to these very current challenges but, in the longer term, we hope it will help to embed our desire to partner with all local communities to help deliver positive change, and show our willingness to be a good and welcoming neighbour to those around us. In implementing our Plan the safety and well-being of the community, our students and staff are of the highest priority. We are mindful of the need to adapt in times of social distancing and lockdown. In implementing our commitments we will always follow public health guidance.

We want to be a university of, with, and for Edinburgh and the wider region and I look forward to working with you to help us achieve a better future for all of our communities.

Professor Lesley McAra
Assistant Principal, Community Relations



The story so far

We have made great progress in the few years since our initial Community Engagement Strategy was approved in 2016, but we know we need to go further and redouble our efforts to ensure the University is integrated into the city and its communities. Highlights since 2016 include the following:



Edinburgh was one of the first universities to sign up to the Scottish Government's **Social Impact Pledge**.



In 2019–20, the **Centre for Open Learning's Short Courses and Languages for All programmes attracted 8,000 registrations**, from learners aged between 18 and 92.



Community sports groups, governing bodies and members of our local communities have access to our sports and exercise facilities. **Fifty per cent of bookings at Peffermill are from the community.**



Staff and students piloted the remote teaching of basic digital skills to adults with disabilities and minority ethnic women in partnership with the charities LEAD Scotland and Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre.



St Cecilia's Hall hosted 62 concerts and events ranging from community groups to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. In 2019, **over 42,000 visitors enjoyed exhibitions and events at University of Edinburgh museums** such as the Talbot Rice Gallery and St Cecilia's Hall.



Our Digital Ambassadors programme has helped over 130 people through **300 one-to-one digital befriending meetings**, eight courses and at least 100 University student and staff volunteers.



We have increased our engagement with community councils, development trusts and neighbourhood groups. In 2019 alone, the University was represented at over **50 meetings with community groups.**



Support to local homelessness services, including the donation of PPE for frontline workers and delivering food, toiletries and clothing to people living in temporary hotel accommodation during the lockdown.



Since 2017, we have given out over **£300,000 to 79 local organisations** through our Community Grants scheme.



Over **1,400 people** receive our monthly Edinburgh Local e-newsletter and over **3,000 people** follow us on social media.



In response to the pandemic, an estimated **500kg of clothing was donated by staff to local charities in need.**



An additional **£25,000 of rapid-response grant funding provided to local community organisations** involved with the Covid-19 emergency response.

Delivering positive change with communities

In order to deliver positive change, we know we need to develop a ‘whole institution’ approach to working with our local communities.

This means that we will draw on our research, education, staff and students, to co-create opportunities and projects which have measurable and sustainable impacts.

We want to embed community engagement into our learning and teaching, develop a culture of working together with communities in shaping our research, and provide opportunities to recognise, reward and celebrate community contributions.

In order to achieve these aims, we will:

Support social impact

1. Sustain and grow activities related to our social impact pledges including:
 - Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping;
 - Promoting digital inclusion;
 - Supporting vulnerable groups and areas of multiple deprivation.

2. Develop training and support for student social enterprises, and invest up to £8 million by 2023 in social investments that help tackle social and environmental challenges, as part of our Social Enterprise and Social Investment Strategy.
3. Grow our Community Grants scheme and develop links with a more diverse group of organisations.
4. Conduct an Equality Impact Assessment of our Community Grants scheme and act on its findings.
5. Create more opportunities to bring our community grantees together to share their experiences.
6. Work with local partners, IntoUniversity and the University of Glasgow to establish a new learning centre in Craigmillar in 2021. The centre will respond to educational disadvantage and poverty, and will foster aspiration and improve access to higher education and training.
7. Work with local communities to find new ways in which local residents can take part in community planning.



CASE STUDY

Centre for Regenerative Medicine and Craigmillar community

Dr Cathy Southworth, Community Science Engagement Manager at Edinburgh BioQuarter has worked with the Craigmillar community since 2016. The partnership project has included work with Castlevue, Niddrie Mill, Prestonfield and St Francis' Primary Schools and Castlebrae Community High School, all close to the Centre for Regenerative Medicine at the Edinburgh BioQuarter. Partnership activities have included a community science festival, a holiday science club, continuing professional development for teachers and free boxes of STEM activities for families during lockdown. The work that Dr Southworth has done with Castlevue Primary School won the Rolls Royce Science Prize in 2019.

Share knowledge and experience

8. Actively look for ways in which we can place more of our resources (buildings, equipment, vehicles) at the service of local communities and groups, whilst still using them to deliver on their core purpose.
9. Encourage staff to take part in the University's new 'Day to Make a Difference' scheme (staff can take one day of paid leave each year to volunteer on a community project of their choice), and highlight ways members of the local community can take part in University activities.
10. Continue to support the Edinburgh University Students' Association in their work running the Student Volunteering Service and recognise students for their voluntary efforts, including through the Edinburgh Award.
11. Work more closely with our alumni in Edinburgh and the wider region as a source of expertise, volunteers and a vital link to our local communities.
12. In partnership with local communities, create a programme of exhibitions linked to University collections.
13. Facilitate knowledge exchange between the University and local communities, including community groups.
14. Provide learning opportunities for local communities through the Centre for Open Learning, Short Courses and Open Lectures, making sure that voices of the local communities are taken into account in the development of the Centre's new Outreach Plan.
15. Support and scale-up opportunities for all students to undertake community engagement projects as part of their degree programmes.
16. Support community groups to develop stronger links with the University, and celebrate and showcase the work of staff, students and community partners.
17. Build a network of Scottish universities, and seek best practice examples from our international networks, in order to share and improve our own work with local communities.

CASE STUDY

The Students as Change Agents project

The Students as Change Agents project brings together students, staff, and external partners to tackle real-life challenges and generate fresh thinking. It involves students from multiple disciplines who want to make a social impact during their time at University. The culmination of the programme in June 2020 saw 150 students taking part from across the world, working together with partner organisations to address challenges like youth homelessness in Scotland and exploring what an environmentally sustainable future might look like for Edinburgh in the revival of its tourism industry and festivals post-Covid-19.



Since 2017, our **Community Grants** scheme has supported great projects across Edinburgh and the wider region, some of which are shown here.



We have already distributed over £300,000 through this scheme. We commit to providing **£250,000** more over the next five years.



A good and welcoming neighbour

The University has a major presence across the city and region, with more than 550 buildings, 40,000 students, 12,000 staff and many alumni living locally.

We recognise that our presence brings responsibilities, and that community partnership and goodwill is fundamental to our legitimacy as an institution. In order to be a good and welcoming neighbour, we will continue to build and maintain strong relations with our community partners. We will do this by making sure the University is embedded in our local communities. We will listen to feedback and suggestions from the community, and will act upon these where we can.

In order to achieve these aims, we will:

Build close connections

18. Sign up to the city's 2050 Edinburgh City Vision which is underpinned by the following principles: Fair; Pioneering; Welcoming and Thriving.
19. Maintain our membership of the Edinburgh Partnership Board, and relevant Locality Community Planning Partnerships, so we can contribute positively to the future of the city.
20. Continue to regularly engage with elected representatives, community councils and neighbourhood groups as part of our 'business as usual', in order to build and maintain long-lasting relationships.

21. Continue to participate in, and support, local events in the communities in which we are based, from Doors Open Days to community-led events.
22. Alongside other community partners, we will take part in a review of our city's and University's historical links to slavery and colonialism and take measures to address these.
23. Continue to build on our role as a University of Sanctuary when working with members of the local community who have had to flee conflict and persecution in their countries of origin.

Provide services to our communities

24. Expand our sports and exercise services and facilities offer to community sports groups, governing bodies and members of our local communities.
25. Better promote our University museums and collections to the local community and make performance space available for local charities at St Cecilia's Hall.
26. Provide frameworks to support apprenticeships and career mentoring opportunities as part of the University's Youth Employment Strategy.
27. Continue to support and grow student social enterprise in partnership with the Students' Association, Edinburgh Innovations and local networks.



CASE STUDY

Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI)

EFI is a major strategic initiative of the University. It is being developed in recognition that almost all of the biggest challenges facing society are complex and multi-layered, and that insight and innovation can come from bringing together expertise from across different disciplines.

The Institute is working with local communities, governments and industry to create a portfolio of research, education and wider engagement which is data-rich and aims to have demonstrable ethical, social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts.

Once open, the Institute will offer a warm welcome into the newly redeveloped former Royal Infirmary building on Lauriston Place – fulfilling the Latin pledge above the main entrance: *'patet omnibus'*, open to all.

Open up our estate

When possible, following any easing of restrictions related to Covid-19:

28. Designate a physical front door on each of our campuses all year round, so that members of our community know how to reach us in person.
29. Trial opening up some of our buildings to allow community bookings on a cost-free basis.
30. Aim to operate on a 'no surprises' basis with community partners on developments of our estate which could impact local communities, and be as open and transparent as possible about our future plans.
31. Create positive community benefit through our procurement processes.
32. Work with community partners to protect our shared cultural heritage and enhance access to green spaces.



CASE STUDY

Museums Dementia Socials

Museums Dementia Socials is a partnership that offers people affected by dementia a regular, informal Friday morning guided visit of a museum, gallery or zoo. St Cecilia's Hall, the University's Concert Room and Music Museum, hosts once a month and the programme includes a cup of tea and cake, a discussion around some of the rare instruments on display, and a short concert.



CASE STUDY

Slurp

Slurp is a student-run social enterprise aiming to support individuals affected by homelessness in Edinburgh. Slurp runs bi-weekly cooking sessions at Streetwork's Holyrood hub where they make up to 50 hot meals alongside Streetwork's service users. Slurp also aims to build a forum for educating the student community on the causes of homelessness and misconceptions surrounding it. They create campaigns, organise events and try to develop innovative ways to convey messages to the student population and wider community in Edinburgh. All the work they do is funded by selling cooking vouchers and sustainably-sourced shopper bags.



CASE STUDY

University of Sanctuary

In July 2020, the University of Edinburgh became the first institution in the UK to renew its status as a University of Sanctuary, reaffirming a commitment to creating a culture of inclusivity and awareness for those seeking sanctuary on campus, and within the city. We will continue to enhance our leading role in the Universities of Sanctuary stream at a national and local level, working with other Universities of Sanctuary and City of Sanctuary colleagues in Edinburgh, to achieve collective aims. This work will include using research to shape national policy, improving access to information and support for sanctuary scholars, and building up Refugee Week activities.

Delivering on what we promise

The University is committed to carrying out the actions of this plan between 2020 and 2025 and, as a University plan, it will require the whole institution to live up to these commitments.

We will be open and transparent with our local communities about who is responsible for delivering aspects of this Plan, how we are measuring and evaluating ourselves, and how members of the community can contact us if any issues arise.

In order to achieve our aims, we will:

Be accountable to our communities

- Highlight our Community Plan and its activities to residents of Edinburgh and the wider region using our dedicated community-focused communications channels.
- Reform our Community Board to increase representation from colleagues across the whole institution, as well as community partners.
- Publish information and contact details of the members of the Community Board and Community Team who are responsible for the implementation of this Plan.
- Undertake a social impact survey to measure our impact and make sure we are meeting our social and civic responsibilities.
- Publish an annual report detailing the progress made against the commitments in this plan, and a final report after five years.



Further information

www.ed.ac.uk/local/our-community-plan

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It can also be made available in alternative formats on request.

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