



The US Charitable Trust

Impact Report 2018-2020

UK Registered Charity Number 1147089

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Introduction

Background Story

The US Charitable Trust is a registered charity which began in 2012. We are based in Harlesden, London and work with 220 'at-risk' 11-18 year olds a year. The US Charitable Trust exists to mobilise disadvantaged young people through the development of transferable life skills and cultural and social capital; equipping them with the confidence and freedom to fulfil their dreams and secure a bright and meaningful future. We do this through after-school and holiday programmes designed to enhance the participants lives while at school and prepare them for life after; whether that is into University, training, apprenticeships or employment.

The majority of young people we work with are deemed 'at-risk' of poor outcomes in such areas as school performance, health, crime & mental health (NSPCC Young Child Risk information). Brent is in the 10% most deprived areas of the UK (Government Indices of deprivation), where child poverty, poor educational outcomes & youth crime is interlinked.

Message from the founder

Serena Balfour



Serena Balfour

US began 2012 as a project to give young people in the community something to interest them after school and before their parents got home from work. Now it has developed to fulfil their needs and wishes for higher education and skills to achieve the careers they want. All the programmes and experiences, trips and conferences are driven by what they see as a need for them to achieve their goals. Recently, after US's summer project offered them a photography 'experience' a group of them realised this was a job/career, which was of great interest to them. They wish to study. US was asked by them to deliver a course, which they could use as UCAS credits to go on to University. It will pilot in December and be up and running in January.

Bridging the gap between private educational experiences and state schools, adding to life experiences and emotional intelligence is the main purpose of the charity. More and more building relationships with businesses and career providers are the main essence of the charity. Acting as the gateway to these jobs by preparing the students building self confidence and strong mental health as well as life skills and initiative to give them the best chance of success.

The year of COVID was especially challenging for everyone world wide but some suffered more than others. Our young people were less likely to have fully functioning WIFI and sufficient tablets or laptops to cope with online school work. More worrying were in some cases their living conditions and their food insecurities. US was extremely lucky to secure funding for two programmes over the summer and half term. US was able to reach a core group of young people who co-ordinated with other young people to help US develop the programme that helped them cope with mental health and catching up with their learning skills.

For mental health we designed programmes for them to express their emotions and feelings. by sharing and discussing these and putting them in to a drama piece. To exercises their muscles, we were able to offer dance coaching, football, basketball and boxing. Each of these had an end of programme piece. To exercise their brains, we had learning from a different perspective. How Maths, Science, English and History are in every day life and why they are important for pleasure and careers. Women's history of equal pay and voting rights, Math in art from Michelangelo to Picasso, writing poetry to describe their lock down experiences and how pandemics have change social history through the ages. Then just good fun and inspirational speakers. Laughter is the best medicine.

Young people have so much creativity and it is so crucial to find the way to allow them to express themselves and give them the confidence to reach their full potential.

Highlights 2020

2020 was an incredibly challenging year for everyone, but particularly so for young people. Our participants were already deemed 'at-risk' and economically disadvantaged. Research has shown lockdown affected poorer sections of society disproportionately in terms of physical and mental health, domestic abuse and access to resources. Brent was the worst effected borough in London, with 36 people dying in our immediate ward.

US was lucky to maintain communication with a percentage of our students during lock down and able to learn from them. It is vital we make sure that they know where to reach out to help and feel supported.

With this in mind, the US charitable trust kept a positive mind-set and did our best in supporting our young people in providing activities throughout 2020. The 2020 summer programme included a variation of activities which aimed to promote wellbeing and to develop transferable skills. Alongside our other programmes, we hope this encourages a positive attitude and skill-set ready for employment when they leave school.

The students have enjoyed all the activities we ran in 2020, including the half term and summer programmes. We also ran Debate and Public Speaking, Conferences, Dinners and Award Ceremonies, Set Design and Sports fixtures.



We became a referral agency for Children in Need and their Emergency Essentials program to give immediate help to families in destitution during this crisis.

Began to develop new programmes to address Youth Unemployment in the coming years.



Lockdown Response 2020

During the 2020 Covid-19 crisis and subsequent lockdown, we kept busy. We worked with local schools, and Young Brent Foundation to help the community response kitchen with the delivery of 500+ hot meals a day to residents in Harlesden living in extreme poverty.

- In addition we ran a 4 week summer programme for 25 local young people to help them recover from lockdown and prepare for return to school This was funded by the National Lottery and the John Lyons Charity.
- Worked closely (online) with our Student Advisory Committee to see what students needed and what they feel they will need in the future.
- Looked into new partner working and new ways of supporting our student's wellbeing & mental health. Planned ahead for after the crisis - what will our students need to get back to normal, heal and move on.

At the start and the end of the summer programme 2020 the students filled in a questionnaire (Kiddo-KINDL) designed to measure wellbeing:

95%

Felt proud of themselves in the last week.

100%

Enjoyed doing things together with their friends

75%

Reported having fun and laughing a lot often/all the time

80%

Reported feeling strong and full of energy often/all the time

In 2019, thirty 11-18 year olds took part in Debate and public speaking. The students filled in a questionnaire designed to show the impact of wellbeing and transferable skills.



Improve time management and be more organised – 80%



Feel more confident speaking in a public setting – 100%



Develop better knowledge of current affairs and world issues – 100%



Feel like I belong to a community – 80%



Increase my own sense of wellbeing and happiness – 90%

In 2019, 80 students took part in Urban Survival. The students filled in a questionnaire designed to impact of skills development

100%

Learnt new technical skills

82%

Developed stronger networking skills with professional people

80%

Better understand what career options are available to them

90%

Feel well prepared for their next stage of education or training

100%

Set more ambitious goals for their future

Summer Programme 2020

Over four weeks in the summer of 2020, the US Charitable Trust ran a summer programme for 25 'at-risk' young people aged between 12-18 years old. The aim was to provide activities to help recover from the trauma of Covid-19 and lockdown, improve mental health, catch-up from lost school and missing their friends, learn new skills and to HAVE FUN! The young people enjoyed Drama, Dance, Set Design, Gardening and looking after a veg garden and animals. They had catch-up sessions in History, Science, Maths and English and a series of inspirational speakers. The programme culminated in a performance and Prize Giving involving friends and family. Covid-19 safety measures worked well and the programme exceeded our expectations. We'd like to thank all our funders, particularly John Lyons Charity and National Lottery Fund, the staff and all the amazing students.



"Dance, drama and set design was my favourite part, because I never did set design before. I really enjoyed dance because that is one of my hobbies"





GUEST SPEAKER JAMES AIDOO GIVING A TALK OUTSIDE

"All the staff were really welcoming and helping, all the programmes set up for us were interesting. I had really fun in learning Maths and Science and also our little debate competition"
Student

"The guest speakers: they were very inspirational and gave me advice about the future"
Student

"My favourite part of the US summer programme is that they let everyone have fun in their own ways, there's never a restriction from what you want"

Drama, taught by Endy Mackay

- Activities: Ensemble drama games and exercises that challenge inhibitions, promote 'play' and stimulate creativity. Students will learn to work (play) together, finding their voice within the group. They will develop and hone drama and performance skills through the devising process—moving from idea to performance. They will become a company of performers.

- Skills learnt: Collaboration and teamwork, sharing ideas within a group, listening to others, body language and awareness of self, creative thinking, problem solving, vocal clarity and projection, confidence and courage. Presentation skills, improvisation, physical theatre techniques, choral work, acting techniques and group story telling. Commitment and trust.



'Performance can have a lasting effect on both audience and performers. The students will be able to see the result of their creativity, bravery, vulnerability, thoughts and ideas. They will understand deeply that if you apply yourself to something then amazing things are possible.'

Case Study

When one particular student first entered the drama studio on the first day, she was very quiet and very submissive. She was good at listening to others and taking on their ideas, but she lacked the confidence to voice her own thoughts. During an exercise on the first day, where we all had to ask each other a question in a set time limit, she commented that she thought it so unusual that I responded that the country I would like to visit most would be Ethiopia. At the end of the exercise where we fed back any interesting discoveries, she said that she always thought people would only ever want to go to 'European countries' and 'not somewhere in Africa or Asia.' This provoked her to talk about the country that she is from and how beautiful it is. Throughout the next session I could see her confidence increase further and she began offering her voice to creative tasks. She seemed to naturally flow from being a listener and facilitator of other's ideas, to an idea generator. In one particular session I asked her to play a particular part in a scene, which would require her to speak alone to the audience and the other actors. She would need to remember her 'cue' and her improvised line. She did this effectively but by the last session she had expanded her part, improvising with flair and spontaneity. I saw her grow in confidence as she recognised herself as a vital part of a group. Over the weeks this shy, quiet student seemed to become happier as she found the courage to share her thoughts and ideas with others. She began to 'play' again and laughed more. She was a joy to teach/direct.

Women in History: 'Striking Women—striking out', taught by Jade O'Connell



The aim is to gain deeper understanding and knowledge of the history of women in the UK, both historically and in the local area (Brent) as well as focusing on BAME women and migrant women workers. For students to express their views on ideas around women's work, female changing stereotypes throughout history and gender identity linking to their culture and society today.

'My favourite comment that kept popping up by students was 'why don't we learn history like this in school?', that is it-why not? Those comments were exactly why these sessions were important to students learning and opening their minds to both historical and current situations in the world'.

Outcomes (long-term)

- To gain knowledge on feminism and women's liberation groups
- To push their knowledge of the interlinking social categories such as race, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, religion, and nationality
- To become aware of systems of power, privilege, and oppression and how they shape our experiences as individuals and members of communities. To question their own and others actions and thoughts on women and minority women
- To be empowered to stand up and make a difference for rights of others and other groups
- For the young women, to feel supported and empowered to be who they want and know they can achieve anything they want to be. Also, to be comfortable in breaking down barriers and stereotypes they may face within their culture and own lives

Additional programmes

Podcasting

To develop English language skills, while also developing creative business skills such as podcasting, blogging & vlogging. Improved confidence & communication skills, development of digital skills, research & how to convey your message online.

Set Design:

Connecting English literature, Performing Arts, Music, Art, D&T & Business, this course offers the students group collaboration, how interrelationships work in a formal environment as well as industry-specific work including set and costume design making, marketing, finance and technical support.

Media

With presenting, production and music as the backdrop, the students will learn: to build confidence, self-discipline, learn how to communicate with others, to work with others, problem solving, flexibility, thinking under pressure and encourage creativity.

During the summer fresh Healthy halal meals were prepared locally everyday



October Half Term 2020

US engaged with 24 students over half term for four days of activities and fun. The main aim was to de stress and blow away anxiety that the continued lock down and worry of COVID is having on young people. All activities were organised to fit within the strict safety regulations of Medium risk COVID.

US engaged Alumni to coach our young cohorts in basketball, football and boxing. Other Alumni came to coach in debating and discussions. Professional dancers, tie dyers, graffiti artists and photographers gave instruction in their mediums as well.





“I was happy with the end result of the class. At times it was tricky to get some students engaged but overall, every student participated in an activity. Next time, I would have had created some differentiated activities, so they could choose, this would hopefully improve their engagement. Having mixed aged groups benefitted the class as the older students inspired and encouraged the younger students”. Teacher

The activities organised for October half term 2020 were based on developing young people skills, such as:

- Teamwork
- Creativity
- Developing confidence
- Problem solving
- Teamwork
- Creative thinking

We arranged dance routines where the young people created their own dances to develop transferable skills, such as confidence and creativity. They also took part in cooking and pumpkin carving.

Student A throughout the class showed progress in their confidence as they began the class not wanting to join in and by the end was leading their group when creating their individual dance routines. Performing was a worry for them but they took a step out of their comfort zone and performed their dance.

Student B began learning the hip hop routine with enthusiasm and added their own flair to it. During their own individual dances, they showed great creativity by creating a routine that expressed themselves. Along with other members in the students group they worked well together by encouraging and supporting one another's ideas.



A Way With Nature (AWWN)

Students learnt how to safely cook on a campfire and this helped them to bond. Participants engaged with farm animals and worked together to clean pigpens and stables. There was kite building and flying which they thoroughly enjoyed with a picturesque Oxfordshire backdrop. Through the programme, they went on an orienteering course and learnt how to navigate. On a summers evening they had an outdoor cinema screening and stayed away from video games!

2019 programme highlight

Jack Petchey Awards

The Jack Petchey awards is an added incentive that has had a great impact for the winners and has benefited other students as they get to decide how to spend the cash prize for all students.



Student voice:

'I joined the programme to get a chance to speak.'
'It was an amazing experience and a good chance to develop new skills''



Building the bridge between private and State schools Case Study

The Churchill public speaking debate at Blenheim Palace is one of the staples in the US calendar. Through the competition students learnt a multitude of skills from researching, presentation, team work, writing and learning to formulate arguments.

This year looked at what students were passionate about and how they could relate it to Churchill. The US Trust team took eight KS3 (Y7-9) students and decided to focus on Identity and Diversity. The emphasis of their argument looked at the Cultural Capital they're exposed to and how positive it is on them and their community.

"Presented with boundless confidence, clarity, and energy. They believed in what they were saying and that passion and vigour filled the room".

Radley vs Newman: A debate on Commonality

The US Trust team took 6th form students to debate and visit students from Radley College. The evening started off with a lecture relating to the oppressive regime in North Korea. US students researched North Korea and looked at the complex social, economic and political landscape of the country. This was very rewarding for our students as we feel it's important for them to understand what's going on outside of their community. We feel by expanding their knowledge of what's going on around the world helps them to form their individual opinions and allows them to converse with people on a range of subjects.

Churchill Debate at Blenheim Palace



Looking forward to 2021

It has been a productive and positive journey with our young people so far. With our student alumni, we have created a family, who respect and trust **US**.

The students have enjoyed all the programmes with **US** so far, with great feedback given by teachers and students.

As mentioned from our COO, we have exciting programmes in 2021. Such as Phoenix project, Zenobia scholars, Company partnerships, and expanding on our school network.

Please visit our [website](#) and follow **US** on [Instagram](#) or [Facebook](#) to get up to date free programme opportunities throughout the year.



Message from our COO

“We have made great progress from 2018-2020! It is important to reflect on what we have achieved together and feel proud of our young people.

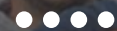
With new hardships in 2021 and onwards, we must direct our focus upon helping our young people by enhancing their transferable skills in helping them into employment. It is vital we give everyone an equal chance in a future they deserve.

If you have ever had the pleasure in meeting our founder and chair-Serena Balfour, it is easy to understand how the charity is known for being one big loving family. With such a heart warming and loving core. This core will help **US** strive in the future as the team shares the same passion in not just providing resources for our young people but also making sure they are supported from school and onwards.

We believe the voice of our young people and alumni are vital for the future. By listening and delivering the support to our young people, we aim to inspire them to shape the future the way they want it to be. We have some incredible and exciting new programmes focused on skills development and mental health coming up in 2021!”



Thank you from



The **US** Charitable Trust



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