

Learn  
**Sheffield**



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# Directors' Strategic Report **2022/23**

ANNUAL REPORT TO MEMBERS  
LEARN SHEFFIELD AGM

THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2024



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**Sheffield**

This **Annual Report to Members** is the eighth such report produced by Learn Sheffield, coming at the end of the eighth year since incorporation on the 14th August 2015. 2022/23 was the final year of our third commission from Sheffield City Council (SCC) in relation to school improvement and the fifth year of our school subscription model.

This report provides an overview of performance in the 2022/23 reporting period in relation to Board effectiveness, key developments, School Improvement Commission outcomes and financial outcomes. It has been prepared by the Chair of the Board, Antony Hughes, and the Chief Executive, Stephen Betts. It should be read in conjunction with the financial statement and other papers for the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 8 February 2024. Further information about Learn Sheffield can be found at [www.learnsheffield.co.uk](http://www.learnsheffield.co.uk).

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



*This is my third opportunity as Chair to report on the progress of Learn Sheffield in this, our eighth Annual Report to Shareholders, and I am delighted to be able to reflect on such a strong year for the organisation and for Sheffield's school system.*

Our view as a Board is that 2022/23 saw Learn Sheffield build on the strong platform we described last year to successfully navigate a very challenging financial position whilst retaining a focus on supporting our members. It also demonstrated that we are sustainable as a values-led Schools Company.

Our financial position has continued to improve, as you will see in our financial reports. Learn Sheffield had its strongest year to date in 2022/23, with an in-year surplus of £118,036. This came about due to strong financial management and the development of new income streams, which will be crucial in 2023/24 as Sheffield City Council's commission reduces significantly again. This has enabled the level of reserve to increase, working towards our target reserve position and making Learn Sheffield more resilient.

The continuing high level of subscription reflects the close and unique working relationship between Learn Sheffield and our member schools, academies and colleges. The commitment of our members continues to underpin Learn Sheffield and enable the organisation to bring a wide range of opportunities and projects to the city that have benefitted Sheffield's children and young people. I would highlight the SAFE programme as a particularly good example of that.

The further improvement in Sheffield's Ofsted position (proportion of settings judged good or outstanding) in 2022/23 means that the city is above national for the second time and at the highest level that it has ever been. The Board shares the focus of the executive team on understanding the apparent contrast between setting outcomes and pupil outcomes, which remain stubbornly below national. It is clear that raising attainment remains a city wide priority and focus for our collaboration.

In my last message, I reflected on the relationship with Sheffield City Council. I am pleased to report that this relationship has improved since the last AGM and returned to being both collaborative and purposeful. We believe that a shared strategic approach is essential to providing the best conditions for Sheffield's educational settings to have the maximum impact on children and young people's life chances.

I would like to conclude, as previously, by thanking Stephen, Sam and all of the team for their hard work in 2022/23. The Board recognises that it has taken dedication and innovation to navigate the significant challenges that we have faced as an organisation. This would not have been possible without both courageous, positive leadership and a fantastic and talented team. I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Board for their contribution to Learn Sheffield's continued progress in the last year and for continuing to bring commitment and high expectations.

Thanks to all our members for your continued support. Learn Sheffield remains By Sheffield. For Sheffield. In Collaboration.

**ANTONY HUGHES** CHAIR – LEARN SHEFFIELD BOARD

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Hughes', written over a light grey background.

# OVERVIEW FROM THE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



*2022/23 has seen Learn Sheffield navigate the challenges that we outlined in the last Annual Report and reset our relationship with Sheffield City Council, whilst continuing to support Sheffield settings to achieve their strongest ever Ofsted outcomes.*

The twelve-month period covered by this report included the fifth year of our school subscription offer and the final year of our third School Improvement Commission from Sheffield City Council. At the time of last year's report, our relationship with SCC had deteriorated and it was expected that the School Improvement Commission would cease in August 2023. The relationship has reset and is once again productive, something which is illustrated by the continuation of a smaller SCC commission into the current school year.

I would like to thank the amazing Learn Sheffield team for the expertise and commitment that they continue to bring to everything that we do. The quality of education in Sheffield, measured through Ofsted judgments, is the strongest that it has ever been and the proportion of good and outstanding settings is above national for only the second time. This success belongs to our education community and Learn Sheffield is proud to have played a part in this.

Increasingly, Learn Sheffield's contribution to the city goes beyond school improvement. The graphic on page 13 of this report demonstrates the impact of Learn Sheffield as a vehicle for the city, including the projects outlined on page 14. The improvement in our financial position and the very significant reduction in the proportion of our income which comes from SCC are testament to the hard work and dedication of the entire Learn Sheffield team.

In recent months, we have, as a team, been considering our purpose, vision and values as an organisation. We have shared a new draft version (on page 15) and look forward to receiving feedback from our members. I have been struck throughout this work by the extent to which our team has enabled Learn Sheffield to consistently punch above our weight and continually improve. The organisation which enters 2023/24 is the product of steady but significant year-on-year progress.

We have also, as you will be aware, been completing a wide-ranging evaluation of Learn Sheffield's impact since its incorporation in 2015. An outline of this project and its role in defining the future shape of Learn Sheffield can be found at the end of this report. This will, no doubt, be the key focus of our annual report for 2023/24 and, in the meantime, we will develop our plans with the input of our members. Learn Sheffield is your company, and we are extremely grateful for your continued support and contribution to determining its future.

STEPHEN BETTS *CHIEF EXECUTIVE*

# BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

Board membership has continued to be stable during the 2022/23 school year. The changes between the last AGM and this one are below:

- Chris Holder was confirmed as one of the primary sector nominated directors at the 2023 AGM for a further three years.
- Laura Gillespie was confirmed as the special sector nominated director at the 2023 AGM for a three-year term.
- Bev Matthews' term as a secondary sector nominated director ends in February 2024. We hope to confirm this secondary sector nominated role at the meeting.

SCC are in the process of finalising the two SCC nominations for the Board. It is expected that these will be able to be discussed at the AGM, having been finalised at the Board meeting which precedes it.

Learn Sheffield has continued to carry two vacancies for co-opted directors since the last AGM but is in the process of making an appointment. This is expected to be reported on at the AGM in February 2024.

Attendance at the Board and committee meetings continued to be strong. Overall attendance was 92% in 2022/23 (in line with the 94% figure from 2021/22). Board attendance, including apologies, was 100% during 2022/23.

The attendance, effectiveness and contribution at meetings of the directors are kept under review by the Chair. Directors agree that the Board is effective in fulfilling its strategic duties and the reports and presentations provided by the executive continue to be of good quality, enabling the Board to carry out its functions efficiently.

The format of the Learn Sheffield Board and committee meetings in 2022/23 have continued to take place online and Sir David Carter continues to act as Strategic Advisor to the Board, as he has since September 2020.

More information about the Learn Sheffield Board can be found below and online at [www.learnsheffield.co.uk/About-Us/The-Board](http://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/About-Us/The-Board) and profiles of the 2022/23 Board follow. Board profiles are also now found on the Learn Sheffield website. The company public records are available at [Companies House](#).

# THE BOARD



## Stephen Betts

*Chief Executive*

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Stephen was appointed as the Interim Chief Executive of Learn Sheffield in late summer 2015, having previously chaired the working group that determined the approach that Sheffield would take to school improvement. Following a competitive recruitment process, he was appointed to the substantive Chief Executive role in May 2016. Before becoming involved with Learn Sheffield, Stephen was the Headteacher of Malin Bridge Primary School and had worked for 17 years in the primary sector. His previous schools were Ecclesfield Primary and Nook Lane Junior School.

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## Laura Gillespie

*Special School sector nominated*

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Laura was appointed as the Special School Director on the Board of Learn Sheffield in February 2023. She is currently the Chair of Governors at Bents Green Special School. Laura is a previous Special School representative on Sheffield Schools Forum and is also currently the Chair of Sheffield Parent Carer Forum, where she has a focus on inclusion and preparing children and young people for adulthood. She was a physiotherapist prior to having children, specialising in neurology.

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## Christopher Holder

*Primary School sector nominated*

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Chris has almost thirty years teaching experience working in multicultural inner city schools in both London and Sheffield. He has been the Headteacher of Lowfield Primary School since 2012 and is one of the two Primary School Directors on the Board of Learn Sheffield, which he joined in December 2016. Chris has been a National Leader of Education and has been deployed as both an Executive Headteacher and an Associate Headteacher. He represents his locality partnership on the Primary Partnership Group.

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## Antony Hughes

*Chair of the Board – Co-opted Director*

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Antony was appointed as one of the co-opted non-executive Directors on the Board in February 2017. He became the Chair of the Board in September 2021. He is currently the Chief Executive of The Harmony Trust, which is a multi-academy trust containing schools in Oldham and Derby. Antony was previously Commissioner for Children's Services and Director of the Inclusion and Learning Service at Sheffield City Council, in which roles he worked closely with Learn Sheffield. Antony worked for the Department for Education before coming to Sheffield.

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## Angela Lant

*Co-opted Director*

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Angela became a co-opted Director in September 2021. She had previously been one of the two Primary School Directors on the Board of Learn Sheffield. Angela worked in Primary education for more than thirty years, in a variety of contexts, and led schools for more than twenty years. In her last role Angela was part of the Executive Team at Tapton School Academy Trust and, in her role as Director of Primaries, led a team of five Sheffield primary schools. Angela also represented her locality partnership on the Primary Improvement Board and supported a wide range of local education initiatives.

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## Bev Matthews

*Secondary School sector nominated*

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Bev is currently Chief Executive Officer of the Minerva Learning Trust in Sheffield. It is a local academy trust comprising four secondary schools, one primary school and a FE college. She is one of the two Secondary School Directors on the Board of Learn Sheffield, which she joined in March 2020. Bev has over 18 years of experience in the education sector, including FE and secondary settings and LA roles. She returned to school leadership in Sheffield following a period of Headship in West Yorkshire.

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## Nicola Shipman

*Primary School sector nominated*

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Nicola has over 30 years of teaching and leadership experience and is the Chief Executive Officer of Steel City Schools Partnership. It is a primary academy trust in Sheffield, providing education to over 3,500 pupils and employment to over 550 staff in the area across ten schools. Nicola is a National Leader of Education and a Lead Ofsted Inspector. Nicola has led a number of schools as Executive Headteacher and has wide experience of successful system leadership.

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## Paul Simpson

*Further Education sector nominated*

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Paul is the Executive Director of People at The Sheffield College. He has more than 20 years' human resources experience in the public and private sector, the majority being in the further education sector. Paul was born in Rotherham and is a graduate of Sheffield Hallam University. Making a difference to Sheffield City Region is important to Paul and a key reason for his support for Learn Sheffield.

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## Mike Westerdale

*Secondary School sector nominated*

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Mike is Chief Executive Officer of Brigantia Learning Trust in northeast Sheffield. It is a 2-19 local multi academy trust currently made up of 5 academies, an infant academy, a junior academy, a 2-16 all through academy, a secondary academy and a 16-19 academy. He is one of the two Secondary School Directors on the Board of Learn Sheffield, which he joined in February 2019. Mike has been a secondary school leader since September 2000 and became Principal of Parkwood E-Act Academy in 2010. Subsequently he has worked in a national role for a large multi academy trust and has worked in Liverpool, London, Manchester, and the West Midlands focussing on 2-19 education.

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# FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Learn Sheffield re-appointed Hart Shaw as company auditors for the financial year 2022/23 and they will present the full set of audited accounts at the Annual General Meeting.

A presentation at the AGM will identify the key elements of financial performance from Learn Sheffield's eighth year of operation. The 2022/23 year has been instrumental in building financial resilience in preparation for a more financially challenging year in 2023/24, when Commission support from SCC is further reduced.

The company has continued to build on its financial stability with an in-year trading surplus of £118,036, adding to the positive trading reserve position. The trading reserve now stands at £199,032, which represents two months of operating costs, however, this still falls short of the reserves target set. Learn Sheffield has been successful in broadening its activity and revenue base during the year, by working in

partnership with the DfE and the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) on programmes focused on violence reduction. We will continue to build on our diversity of revenue in the forthcoming year.

The trading position excludes adjustments to the Pension Fund and we have also seen further positive adjustments to this reserve balance. This account now stands in a balanced position following a positive in-year movement of £57,000.

Therefore, the total reserves following the 2022/23 financial year is a surplus position of £199,032. This is the strongest balance sheet position seen by the company since the start of trading in September 2015 and provides an excellent platform to build on over the coming years. Hart Shaw have issued a completely clean audit report and continue to have confidence in the financial management of the company, moving forward as a going concern.



# SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PERFORMANCE

Learn Sheffield is undertaking an evaluation of its performance and impact across the eight years since it was incorporated (see more information on page 16). This work includes the development of a performance analysis document, which will be an appendix to the evaluation. This document will be shared in advance of the AGM and provides a more in-depth analysis for members.

The Sheffield Performance Analysis 2023 document will include:

- Ofsted inspection judgments, benchmarking and trends
- Pupil characteristics and SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Attainment and progress

## School Outcomes

Sheffield's Ofsted position has continued to improve and Sheffield finished the 2022/23 school year above national (% of all schools good or better) for the second time. Sheffield is now 0.9% points above national and also remains above both core cities and statistical neighbours.

At the end of last year, 89.8% of Sheffield settings were judged to be good or outstanding and this is the highest ever figure for this outcome. This significant improvement (more than a 10% point improvement relative to national) has largely been driven by the primary sector, 94% of which are now good or better. Sheffield primary schools ended 2022/23 3.8% points above national and 2.1% points above core cities.

<b>% of ALL schools good or outstanding</b>				
<b>Area</b>	<b>30/09/20</b>	<b>30/09/21</b>	<b>30/09/22</b>	<b>30/09/23</b>
Core cities	84.6	84.8	87.2	89.0
National	86.3	86.5	88.1	88.9
Sheffield	85.7	85.7	88.6	89.8
Stat. neighbours	82.3	82.7	84.9	86.0

## Pupil Outcomes

Whilst Ofsted outcomes for all Sheffield settings are above national for the second time, pupil outcomes at each key stage remain below national. This apparent contrast, especially in the primary phase, has been a key focus in our analysis as the national data has been published in stages across the autumn term.

The Sheffield Performance analysis 2023 document explores this data in detail. Once all national data is available and the document has been finalised, we will use this in the AGM itself to look at the analysis.

# SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN 2022/23

The developments identified below summarise some of the key work that has been undertaken by Learn Sheffield in its eighth year of operation. It is intended to provide a context to support shareholders in evaluating the performance of the organisation.

This includes the development of an evaluation of Learn Sheffield, which is expected to be published around the same time as the AGM in February 2024. Whilst the evaluation and supporting documents will not be AGM papers, they will accompany this Directors Report and inform the future planning of Learn Sheffield.

## Subscription Model

2022/23 was the fifth year of the Learn Sheffield subscription model. As previously, this subscription offer was developed in the spring of 2022 and offered to settings in May. The offer continued to accommodate the SCC Commission so that maintained schools receive a discount (equivalent to the purchase of the core element of the offer) funded by the Commission, although settings were aware that this would be the final time that this would be the case.

The proportion of subscribing schools in 2022/23 was the highest level that we have seen, with 91.2% of Sheffield settings choosing to subscribe including more than 90% of each sector.

As we move into 2023/24 the proportion of subscribing settings has fallen back slightly to 87.5%. This is in line with previous years and means that the proportion of settings who subscribe has ranged from 87.4-91.2% across the six years that the subscription has been in place.

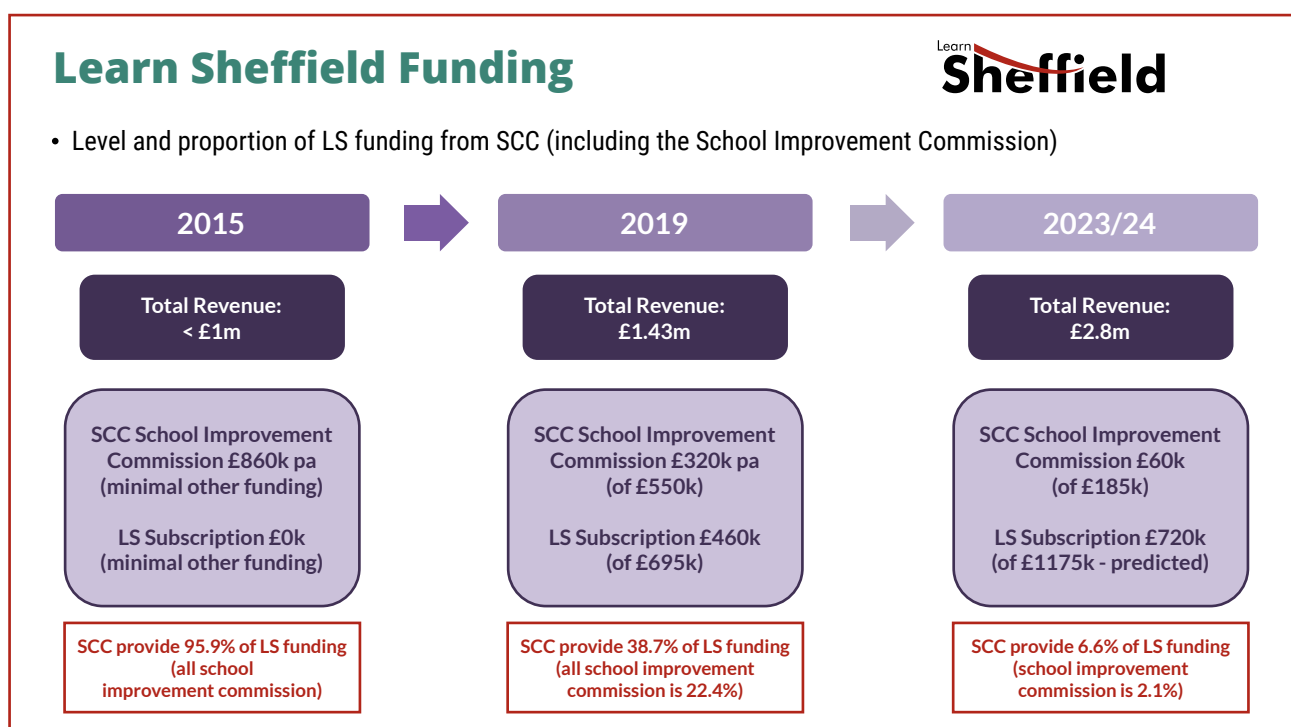
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Primary (inc. nursery)	88.3%	87.6%	87.9%	90.5%	89.1%
Secondary (inc. FE)	83.9%	81.8%	88.3%	90.6%	75.8%
Special	100%	100%	83.3%	100%	100%
<b>OVERALL</b>	<b>88.3%</b>	<b>87.4%</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>91.2%</b>	<b>87.5%</b>

# School Improvement Commission

Learn Sheffield continued to deliver the School Improvement Commission from SCC in 2022/23, which was the second of a modified two-year commission as described in the last annual report. The 2021/22 Directors Report was also accompanied by a Position Statement, which included more information about this delivery and analysis of the implications of Learn Sheffield ceasing to carry out this activity completely, which was expected at the time.

It was later decided that Learn Sheffield would continue to be commissioned to carry out four specific activities (SATs and phonics monitoring, statutory primary moderation, support for maintained school headteacher recruitment & speaking to inspectors at the Ofsted inspections of maintained schools) from September 2023. This two-year commission is now under way.

This slide, which was used in a presentation to the SCC Education, Children and Families Committee, contains the SCC school improvement and other revenue as a proportion of the total Learn Sheffield revenue in 2015, 2019 and 2023.



This shows that funding from SCC (including the School Improvement Commission as part of that) has decreased as a proportion of Learn Sheffield revenue from 95.9% in 2015 to 6.6% in the 2023/24 budget.

This clearly shows the changes in the financial relationship but also demonstrates the impact of Learn Sheffield as a vehicle for the city. Our not-for-profit company will spend circa £2.8m on education activity in the city this year. Only half of that will come from Sheffield settings (who contribute almost 42%) and SCC (who contribute 6.6%) combined.

The reset in the relationship between SCC and Learn Sheffield is very welcome. It is also important in ensuring that the civic education collaboration exists to make the most of the opportunities that the Learn Sheffield vehicle provides.

## Key Projects

Learn Sheffield is currently engaged in a wide range of projects, including several commissioned projects and two national pilots. The examples of this work below are designed to exemplify some of the activity that was taking place in 2022/23.

### Developing Healthy Attitudes

This project is commissioned by the South Yorkshire Violence Reduction Unit. It supports schools across South Yorkshire to develop:

- student voice
- RSHE
- personal development

### Eat Smart Sheffield

This programme is funded by Public Health and delivered in partnership with Food for Life. It seeks to give children, their families and the wider community the confidence, skills and knowledge they need to cook, grow and enjoy good quality, affordable food.

### SAFE Taskforce

This government-funded pilot aims to reduce the risk of a young person being involved with serious violence. Sheffield is one of ten SAFE Taskforce areas and Learn Sheffield is the lead partner locally. More than 500 secondary pupils will receive mentorship support in each of the project's three years.

### Educating for the Future

Learn Sheffield is taking part in the Educating for the Future: Developing New Locality Models for English Schools pilot. In 2022/23 this project has focussed on the development of school report cards, which are now being tested with parents and carers. The pilot is sponsored by AEC and BELMAS and will be completed in 2024.

# Purpose, Vision & Values

Learn Sheffield has been reviewing its mission statement, which had been in place since the autumn of 2015. This work began internally in 2022/23 and has then been completed in the autumn of 2023. The new statement, below, outlines the purpose, vision and values of our organisation. It is being shared in this annual report publicly for the first time and will be discussed at the AGM in February 2024.

## **Our purpose is: to enhance the life chances of children and young people in Sheffield.**

Our education partnership works with and through our member settings to achieve this by: *providing high quality school improvement support for Sheffield settings, leading collaboration within and beyond our education sector and being the 'glue' in the education system of our city.*

We are driven by our values. Learn Sheffield will always:

**Move forward with rigour,  
curiosity and optimism.**

**Demonstrate integrity,  
humility and compassion.**

**Promote equity, social  
justice and belonging.**

We will achieve this vision by:

- Providing “done with and not done to” bespoke support from expert external eyes to enable school and system leaders to enhance the quality of education they provide.
- Developing and delivering successful programmes and projects which support education professionals and improve the life chances of children and young people alongside their families and communities.
- Working effectively with partners through sector-led collaboration and strong, trusting relationships to make Sheffield the best place in the country to learn and teach.
- Being an inclusive employer, which recruits exceptional people, develops and supports them and enables their work to impact on our team, our partners and our priorities.
- Being a socially responsible organisation, which consistently delivers beyond its size and contributes to the improvement of our city.
- Continually improving through an ambitious, motivated and reflective culture.

# Learn Sheffield Evaluation and Future Planning

Learn Sheffield is undertaking an evaluation of our work since incorporation in 2015. This impact review is involving our team, Board, members and stakeholders. At the time of writing this annual report, we still plan to complete the evaluation so that it can be published ahead of our AGM in February 2024.

We are working with a number of external colleagues to ensure that this work provides objective and informative learning for our city, our organisation and for place-based education partnerships across the country.

The expected content for the final report will include:

- An introduction and methodology
- An outline of the work that Learn Sheffield does
- An evaluation of the impact Learn Sheffield has had
- The learning for the city, the organisation and place-based partnerships
- Initial thinking on the future shape of Learn Sheffield

The report will include an executive summary and reflections from Christine Gilbert (who led the peer review of Learn Sheffield in 2018). It will also be accompanied by a number of supporting documents, including:

- An analysis of Sheffield performance
- Insight reports on attendance and SEND
- Questionnaire feedback
- A background history to Learn Sheffield 2015-2023

Once the report is published, following the AGM, we will offer a series of workshops to discuss the findings. These sessions will enable us to explore and test our understanding of what we have learned and how Learn Sheffield will continue to develop in the future.





Learn

**Sheffield**

**By Sheffield.  
For Sheffield.  
In Collaboration.**





Please contact us to find out more. We look forward to hearing from you.

**By Phone:** 0114 250 7417

**By Email:** [enquiries@learnsheffield.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@learnsheffield.co.uk)

**In Person:** Learn Sheffield,  
Suite 6, Albion House,  
Savile Street,  
Sheffield, S4 7UD

**Follow us:** [X @learnsheffield](https://www.x.com/learnsheffield)

**[WWW.LEARN SHEFFIELD.CO.UK](http://WWW.LEARN SHEFFIELD.CO.UK)**

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