



Confederation  
of School Trusts

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# School Trusts as New Civic Structures

A Framework Document



# About CST - The voice of school trusts

CST is the national organisation and sector body for academy and multi-academy trusts - advocating for, connecting and supporting executive and governance leaders in School Trusts.

We are a charitable company, registered with the Charity Commission. Our charitable purpose, as set out in our Articles of Association, is "the advancement of education for public benefit".

We are governed by a Board of Trustees and are subject to the regulations of the Charity Commission and accountable to our members.

We are strictly apolitical. We work with the government of the day, political parties and politicians across the spectrum to advance education for public benefit.



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CST's mission is to build an excellent education system in England, with every school part of a strong and sustainable group in which every child is a powerful learner and adults learn and develop together as teachers and leaders.

Our vision is a system which holds trust on behalf of children.

## About Public First

Public First are public policy and research specialists. We believe public opinion determines corporate reputation and sets the parameters in which politicians approach policy.

Public First helps organisations understand and influence public opinion through research and targeted communications campaigns. And we help businesses craft policy ideas that governments can realistically apply to difficult issues.

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# Introduction

In February the UPP Foundation Civic University Commission launched its final report, [Truly Civic: Strengthening the connection between universities and their places](#).<sup>1</sup> The report sets out how universities have the capability, opportunity and responsibility to be civic partners and further support the places where they are based to solve some of their most pressing and major problems.

Lord Kerslake, Chair of the Civic University Commission said: *“The deep economic and social changes that are happening in Britain today have, alongside Brexit, made the civic role of universities even more vital to the places they are located in.”*

CST gave evidence at the commission. We believe school trusts are also well set up to play this role – particularly the

larger trusts who may be quite large employers in an area and will have the capability and capacity to act with other civic partners. But even smaller trusts can all play a role – as many already do - as good civic partners to their local authority to advance education as a public good in their community.

A group of CST member trusts and Public First - who were the secretariat to the Civic University Commission - have produced this guide to help school trusts think through how they might maximise and build on their civic impact.

If you want to read more about CST’s thinking about civic trusts and the systems of meaning in which school trusts are located, read our paper, [Systems of Meaning – three nested leadership narratives for school trusts](#).<sup>2</sup>

## Maximising civic impact

There are five principles which should be borne in mind for a school trust that is thinking about how it best delivers a civic role.

- **Firstly, civic work has the most impact when it is delivered in partnership with other civic actors** Local government, the NHS, housing bodies, cultural institutions, local businesses, and so on. There will be some areas where it makes sense for school trusts to take the lead, working with some or all these partners. And there will be some areas where school trusts work to support initiatives or programmes which are led by others in a local area.
- **Secondly, work should be designed around what the local community/ies where school trusts are based, actually want** Any programme of work should be preceded by a period of activity of consultation with the community – with a particular focus on those more disadvantaged and marginalised groups who may find it harder to articulate their priorities and needs.
- **Thirdly, work should be appropriate to the scale and the strengths of the trust and its partners**
- **Fourthly, civic work should be a conscious part of a school trust’s activity** Real impact comes when it is seen as a core part of the trust’s activity and strategy. This means that for civic work to be meaningful it should have an executive level sponsor as well as support from the trust’s board, and it should receive regular scrutiny from the trust to ensure it continues to be focussed and useful.
- **Fifthly, civic work should sit alongside the trust’s broader strategy** It need not be a huge amount of additional work, nor should it require significant additional financial resource from the trust. There should be no conflict between the trust’s broader charitable purposes to advance education, and the civic work it engages in with its local community/ies.

<sup>1</sup> UPP Foundation (2019) *Truly Civic: Strengthening the Connection between Universities and their Places*. The final report of the UPP foundation’s consideration of the civic role of universities.

<sup>2</sup> Cruddas, L. (2020) *Systems of Meaning – three nested leadership narratives for school trusts*. CST, Nottingham.

# A framework for civic trusts

Below we have set out a way to help trusts think through how they might focus their civic work.

We think there are at least three key audiences or relationships for this work, which should be considered when trusts are scoping their civic work:

1. **Parents, carers, the local community and other local schools**, both trust schools and maintained schools;
2. **Local governmental partners** - local authorities as well as larger areas of regional government where they exist such as mayors/combined city regions;
3. **Wider civic partners in an area**, like the health services, the police, other educational bodies (most likely

to be colleges, universities), other charities, local cultural institutions (museums, galleries, sports teams etc), and local businesses.

Below we set out a simple matrix to help trusts think through what activity in each of these areas may look like. A trust may choose to focus on all three of these areas, or two, or one. Trusts should also not feel constrained by the proposed groupings or examples – these are illustrative only.

In any case of activity, we think a trust's engagement as a civic actor might be *somewhat* dependent on scale, but not exclusively. In some of the examples below, scale is irrelevant – and small trusts may find that they can be part of a group executing civic activity on a large scale if circumstances lend themselves to it.

**Table one: a matrix for civic impact**

	<b>Parents, community and other schools/trusts</b>	<b>Local government</b>	<b>Wider civic partners</b>
<p><b>Smaller trusts</b> (typically five schools or fewer)</p>	<p>For example, offering some services in a school that may formerly have been offered by the local children’s centre, like a parent coffee morning</p>	<p>For example, developing a public compact with local government demonstrating how the trust or trusts in the locality will help to advance education as a public good including working with LA maintained schools.</p>	<p>For example, working with a local charity on a specific issue in a community and supporting volunteering by trust staff and students, or fundraising within the trust for the project</p>
<p><b>Medium-sized trusts</b> (typically 6 to 20 schools)</p>	<p>For example, publishing a ‘promise’ to parents, carers and the wider community like Eleven by Eleven – eleven experiences that your child will have by the time they turn eleven.</p>	<p>For example, public compact as above but operating city-wide/ across local authorities to help solve more widespread education problems in a bigger area</p>	<p>For example, working with other civic partners (NHS and local government) on the child and adolescent mental health pathway in a locality</p>
<p><b>Larger trusts</b> (typically more than 20 schools in the group and/ or working in multiple geographies)</p>	<p>For example, supporting schools in another area, for example establishing school-centred initial teacher training provision in an area that is struggling to recruit teachers.</p>	<p>For example, working with regional government on a wider strategy for school places, including expanding of provision, new schools, coordination of post 16 places, etc</p>	<p>For example, working with regional government/ housing authorities to consider affordable home for teachers</p>

These examples are purely illustrative. The idea is not to be prescriptive, but for each trust that signs up to commit to doing just one thing as a civic partner.

# Case Studies

CST is inviting member trusts to put forward case studies to support our framework document and bring it to life. The template below is a guide and should not restrict the writing of your case study if you want to use a different format. Please aim for between 800 and 1,000 words.

Contextual information about your trust
Why you believe creating wider social value and civic impact is important
Brief description of what you are doing
What impact you believe this will have
If relevant, key learning points for other school trusts

Please email your case study to [admin@cstuk.org.uk](mailto:admin@cstuk.org.uk)

We'll be starting a social media campaign with the hashtag **#CSTCivicTrusts** – please join in.