

National Opportunity Summit

Building a country that works for all children and young people

Date: 8th September 2025

Venue: Cloth Hall Court, Quebec St, Leeds, LS1 2HA

SPEAKERS



Dr Charmele Ayadurai

Charmele is Assistant Professor of Finance at Durham University. She is also Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lead, and Institutional Champion for Child of the North. Her research involves trauma, increase screen use and student concentration during Covid-19 and overall student learning and wellbeing.



Sophie Balmer

Sophie is an experienced youth campaigner with lived experience of the realities of being from a low-income family and the barriers that this creates in and beyond education. She is a student of Social Policy, Sociology and Crime at the University of York, and has campaigned avidly around effects of poverty on education and young people's futures.



Professor Caroline Bond

Caroline is placement and selection director for the Doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology, initial training programme for educational psychologists at the University of Manchester. Her main areas of research include developmental differences, school attendance, inclusion and professional practice.

Dr Eleanor Bryant

Eleanor is Psychology Research Lead at the University of Bradford, with a primary research focus on mental health in children and young people. She is a member of the Wolfson Centre for Applied Health Research and the Centre for Applied Educational Research (CAER).



Anne-Marie Canning MBE

Anne-Marie is CEO of the Brilliant Club, having developed the charity's strategy, scaled existing programmes and led the establishment of new areas of work. She is widely acknowledged as a powerful voice in social mobility and education and has advised institutions, ministers and policy makers. She was awarded an MBE for services to higher education in 2018.



Michelle Carrington

Michelle is Director of Nursing for Health and Care Integration (and Deputy Executive Nurse) at Humber & North Yorkshire ICB. She has played a large part in the development establishing the ICB vision to radically improve the health and well-being of children and the underpinning wider system Children's Plan.



Dr Jo Casebourne

Jo is the Chief Executive of Foundations. Jo has spent 25 years leading research on how government and public services can best support children and families. Previously she was chief executive of the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) and has worked at the Institute for Government, Nesta and the Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion.



Dr Sarah Cattán

Sarah leads Nesta's work on the 'A fairer start' mission, whose goal is that every child has the same chance of developing to their full potential in the early years from 2030. She is an economist with over a decade of experience conducting policy-relevant research on early childhood development and policy.



Professor Andrew Daly-Smith

Andy is a Professor of Physical Activity and Child Health at the University of Bradford (UK). Within Bradford, he co-leads the Centre for Applied Education Research and research on the JUMP project; Andy's research focuses on the implementation and effectiveness of whole-school approaches to physical activity- specifically Creating Active Schools.



Professor Peter Day

Peter is a Professor of Children's Oral Health and Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry at the University of Leeds and Bradford Community Dental Service. His clinical time is spent providing dental care for children with a wide range of complex dental, medical, physical, social, or learning needs.



Pepe Di'lasio

Pepe is General Secretary of the ASCL. Most recently, he was Headteacher at Wales High School, an 11-19 high school in Rotherham. He has worked as Assistant Director of Education for Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, and as Executive Headteacher of two high schools.

Professor Matthew Grenby

Matthew is the strategic lead for the N8 on 'Child of the North'. He is Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at Newcastle University, and a professor in the School of English specialising in children's literature and culture.



Professor Sarah Howard

Sarah is a Professor of Digital Education at the University of Leeds. Her research addresses the adoption and integration of new and emerging technologies, innovation and change in schools and higher education. Specifically, my work explores how new technologies can be made meaningful in teaching and learning.



Councillor Jon Hubbard

Jon is a passionate advocate for children and young people with over 15 years of experience in local government and the voluntary sector. As Lead Member for Children's Services on Wiltshire Council he brings strategic leadership to both local and national work in children's policy, safeguarding, education, and youth services.



Professor Neil Humphrey

Neil is Professor of Psychology of Education at the University of Manchester and Head of the Manchester Institute for Education, where he previously was Research Director for Education. His main areas of research interests are social and emotional learning, mental health, and special educational needs.



Professor Charlie Jeffery

Charlie became Vice-Chancellor and President at the University of York in September 2019. He previously was Senior Vice-Principal at the University of Edinburgh. He was a Member of Council of the Economic and Social Research Council from 2006-12 and Chair of the Political Studies Association of the UK from 2009-12.



Maryam Kapree

Maryam has just graduated from the University of Leeds and is an alumna of Dixons Trinity Academy in Bradford. She has worked at Dixons Trinity Academy as a tutor since she was sixteen and is now a Teacher of English. Maryam is passionate about supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and ensuring equal opportunities are available for all.



Dr Camilla Kingdon

Camilla is a consultant neonatologist at the Evelina London Children's Hospital in London. Until March 2024 she was President of the RCPCH. Camilla is Chair of the NHS England Children and Young People's Gender Service National Provider Network. She is a Non-Executive Director on the board at Great Ormond Street Hospital, and is also Chair of the UK Healthy Air Coalition.



Dr Christine Lenehan OBE

Christine is Strategic Advisor on SEND to support government reforms. She began her career as a social worker, and joined the Council for Disabled Children in 2000. Christine was awarded an OBE in 2009, became an Honorary Fellow of the RCPCH in 2013, and received a Damehood in 2016 for her work with disabled children.



Kathryn Loftus

Kathryn is Director of Bradford Birth to 19, a training, research and development centre which works to improve outcomes and increase social mobility for children. Kathryn has worked to support vulnerable young people through a variety of roles across the education sector, before moving into Local Authority management roles.



Baroness Anne Longfield CBE

Anne is a passionate champion for children and has been at the forefront of the national debate and policy agenda to boost the life chances of children, particularly the most vulnerable. In 2024, Anne founded the Centre for Young Lives. From 2015 to 2021, Anne was Children's Commissioner for England.



Julie Longworth

Julie is Director of Children's Services for Leeds City Council. She has spent 41 years working with children and families in the public, private not for profit and voluntary sector. Previously she has been Head of Service for Children's Social Work, Head of Service for Early Help, and Chief Officer for Children's Social Work.

Professor Zoe Marshman

Zoe works as a professor of dental public health at the University of Sheffield and as an honorary consultant in dental public health. Her main interest is child-centred dental research to improve the oral health and treatment experiences of children and their families. She is an National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) senior investigator.



Professor Mark Mon-Williams

Mark holds a Chair in Cognitive Psychology at the University of Leeds and is Professor of Psychology at the Bradford Institute of Health Research. He leads the Born in Bradford Centre of Applied Education Research – a multidisciplinary Centre based at the Bradford Royal Infirmary.

Professor Faisal Mushtaq

Faisal is the Director for the Centre for Immersive Technologies at the University of Leeds and a Full Professor in Cognitive Science at the School of Psychology. His research sits at the interface between psychology, engineering and computer science and takes a multi-modal approach to understanding the relationship between action and cognition.



Professor Uta Papen

Uta is a Professor of Literacy Studies engaged in interdisciplinary research located between social anthropology, education and applied linguistics. She has expertise in literacy in education. She co-leads the Morecambe Bay Curriculum Storytelling and Writing Pilot Project.



Professor Kate Pickett OBE

Kate is [Professor of Epidemiology](#), Director of the [Cost of Living Research Group](#), Associate Director of the [Leverhulme Centre for Anthropocene Biodiversity](#) and leads the [Public Health & Society research group](#). Kate is an academic co-director of [Health Equity North](#). She was awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List, 2023. Kate is a lead researcher with the [Born in Bradford](#) research programme.



Charlotte Ramsden

Charlotte is currently the CEX of Bradford Children and Families Trust. She was previously Strategic Director for People at Salford City Council, responsible for Children's and Adult Services and Public Health, and Director of Children's Services before that. She is a Past President of the Association of Directors of Children's Services and was awarded an OBE for services to Children's Services in Greater Manchester.



Rachel Sylvester

Rachel is an award-winning journalist on The Times and chair of The Times Health, Education and Crime and Justice Commissions. She joined The Times as a political columnist and interviewer in 2008 and before that she was a political correspondent on The Daily Telegraph and political editor of The Independent on Sunday.



Professor David Taylor-Robinson

David is the W.H. Duncan Professor of Health Inequalities and Professor of Public Health and Policy at the University of Liverpool. David is an academic director for Health Equity North and led the Child of the North report, focussed on post-COVID levelling up for child health and wellbeing.



Professor Liz Todd OBE

Liz is Professor of Educational Inclusion at Newcastle University, and she was awarded the OBE in the 2025 New Years Honours. Liz was elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Science in 2020. She has a background in education and her university research has a strong social justice agenda.



Professor Steve Turner

Steve is President of the RCPCH, and a consultant paediatrician in Aberdeen, working as a general and respiratory paediatrician. His research interests include early origins of disease and monitoring asthma. Steve has been an advocate for children and young people in many roles over the last twenty years.



Jonny Uttley

Jonny is the CEO of The Education Alliance Multi-Academy Trust. As a National Leader of Education, he has worked with schools in many different contexts and is committed to a school improvement approach that puts real ethical leadership at the heart of our system, so schools create cultures in which staff genuinely thrive.



Dr Ruth Wadman

Ruth is an Associate Professor in Children and Young People's Mental Health at the University of Bradford. She is an experienced researcher in children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Ruth is also a Chartered Psychologist and Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society.



Professor Shearer West CBE

Shearer is Vice-Chancellor and President of the University of Leeds. An expert in Art History, Professor West has held influential leadership roles in universities and higher education. She obtained her BA degree in Art History and English at the College of William and Mary in Virginia in the United States of America, and her PhD in Art History at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She was awarded a CBE in the 2021 Queen's New Year's Honours List for services to higher education.



Stian Westlake

Stian is Executive Chair of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Previously, he served as Chief Executive of the Royal Statistical Society, Executive Director of Policy and Research at Nesta, and adviser to three UK science ministers and as a management consultant with McKinsey & Company.



Professor John Wright

John is a doctor and epidemiologist. He established and leads the Bradford Institute for Health Research and Wolfson Centre for Applied Health Research. He is Director of the NIHR Yorkshire and Humber Applied Research Collaboration and Visiting Professor in Clinical Epidemiology at the Universities of York, Bristol, Leeds and Bradford.