



JOB PACK: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Role: Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Location: Greater London, with offices in Edinburgh & Cardiff

Salary: £85,000 – £90,000 per year + £5,000 PRP

Reports to: The Chair of the Board of Trustees

School Of Hard Knocks (SOHK) is one of the UK's leading education charities, working in 29 secondary schools across England, Scotland, and Wales. Using rugby as a key delivery tool, we support young people who are struggling to engage in early secondary education — often because of anxiety, low confidence, disrupted home lives, or behavioural challenges rooted in trauma. For many of the children we support, life has already brought more hardship than most adults experience in a lifetime. Our purpose is clear: to help young people facing complex challenges break the cycle and move towards a safer, stronger, more hopeful future.

The SOHK Schools Programme is a two-year intervention working with cohorts of around 20 pupils from Year 7 through to Year 9. Pupils are selected by the school and are typically among the hardest to reach young people. Each week, we deliver half a day of rugby training and classroom sessions built around our 3Cs framework, covering topics such as growth mindset, goal setting, and decision-making, alongside monthly one-to-one sessions with every pupil. The programme's impact is evaluated by SOHK staff, teachers, parents, and the pupils themselves.

Ninety percent of our participants report feeling more confident and more engaged with school after taking part, with long-term effects on attendance, attainment, and life outcomes. Find out more about our [Schools Programme](#).

Since 2023, SOHK has been proud to partner with Impetus, a charity that invests in and supports organisations helping young people from disadvantaged backgrounds succeed. This partnership combines investment with strategic and organisational development support, helping to strengthen our impact and set SOHK up for sustainable growth.

We are proud to be delivering long-term programmes that meaningfully reach hundreds of young people each year — but the societal need is vast. Our ambitious four-year strategic plan targets growth, aiming to bring our impactful programme to hundreds more young people each year.



THE ROLE

The CEO is the public face and leader of SOHK, responsible for the overall strategic direction, vision, and management of the charity - ensuring SOHK meets its mission and strategic objectives while maintaining strong relationships with Trustees, staff, supporters, and the wider SOHK community. We're looking for a mission-driven charity leader and effective fundraiser, capable of building a sustainable growth model.

Strategy and Direction

- Be the face and voice of the charity - its principal ambassador
- Lead the development and periodic review of SOHK's strategy with the Trustees and Senior Management Team
- Translate the 2026–30 strategy into organisational priorities, plans, and goals
- Ensure safeguarding, wellbeing, and the lived experience of young people remain central to every decision and growth plan

Programme Delivery, Quality and Impact

- Hold a high bar for programme quality and outcomes for young people
- Line-manage and support the Director of Programmes, working with delivery teams and partners to build a world-class, evidence-based intervention
- Ensure SOHK can evidence the impact of its programmes, with insights feeding back into constant improvement

Income Generation, Fundraising and External Relations

- Lead income generation across trusts and foundations, corporate partnerships, individual giving, and challenges and events
- Line-manage and support the Head of Fundraising in executing a comprehensive fundraising strategy
- Hold senior relationships with funders and partners, building SOHK's brand, reputation, and profile

Leading People, Culture and Operations

- Build and lead a high-performing Senior Management Team
- Foster a positive, inclusive, high-performing culture aligned with SOHK's values
- Line-manage and support the Director of Finance & Operations, ensuring operational excellence

Governance and the Board

- Act as the primary link between the organisation and the Trustees
- Attend all Trustee meetings (held quarterly) and provide timely, accurate reporting
- Ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, and Charity Commission requirements



ABOUT YOU

Essential

- Proven senior leadership experience in the charity, education, youth, or social impact sector - whether as CEO or as part of an executive team - including working directly with a Board of Trustees
- Demonstrated success in building or significantly growing an organisation, programme, or initiative
- A collaborative and values-led leadership style, with the ability to inspire trust, hold people to account, and build high-performing teams
- Strong track record of income generation, including securing significant funding from trusts, foundations, corporates, or major donors
- Experience of financial oversight, budgeting, and organisational planning at a senior level
- Strategic thinker, able to translate vision into clear plans and delivery
- Strong relationship-builder and communicator, confident with a wide range of stakeholders

Desirable

- Previous charity CEO experience - a bonus, but not essential; we know brilliant candidates come from a wide range of backgrounds
- Direct classroom, youth work, or education leadership experience
- Knowledge of the UK education system and youth policy landscape
- Experience of scaling a multi-site delivery organisation and working with local authorities

Personal Attributes

- Deep commitment to improving outcomes for young people, especially those facing disadvantage
- Resilient and persistent, able to work under pressure and navigate setbacks
- Collaborative, open, and reflective leader who seeks feedback and learns from it



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

- **Contract type:** Full-time, permanent
- **Location:** Greater London with offices in Edinburgh & Cardiff
- **Salary:** £85,000 – £90,000 per year + £5,000 PRP
- **Travel:** Regular UK travel, primarily to Edinburgh and Cardiff. Occasional evenings for stakeholder engagement and capital raising functions expected.
- **Reports to:** The Chair of the Board of Trustees
- **Direct Reports:** Director of Programmes, Director of Finance & Operations, Head of Fundraising
- **Meetings Schedule:** Quarterly Trustee Meetings (London, Evenings). Ad hoc Subcommittees e.g. finance, Fundraising.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please send your CV and a cover letter to jobs@schoolofhardknocks.org.uk. Your cover letter should set out your motivation for applying and how your experience relates to the person specification above.

The closing date for applications is Monday 5th October at 10pm.

A full Job Description is available on request, please contact Megan at megan@schoolofhardknocks.org.uk.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview in October 2026.

This role involves regular contact with young people and is subject to an enhanced DBS check and satisfactory references.

School Of Hard Knocks is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and we welcome applications from all backgrounds, particularly those underrepresented in the charity sector.