Recruitment Pack

Partnership Development Lead



Challenge Partners

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About Challenge Partners

Challenge Partners is a national partnership of schools and trusts who believe the best way to reduce educational inequality and enhance the life chances of children is through collaboration, challenge and leadership development. We work together to ensure every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

Our national partnership currently reaches more than 420,000 pupils in over 440 schools and 90 trusts across the country. All fervently believe that working together is the best way to reduce educational inequality and increase the life chances of all children.

School leadership plays a significant role in pupil outcomes, and our practitioner-led programmes and networks offer unique continuing professional development (CPD) for leaders at all levels - from classroom teachers to CEOs.

And our approach works; pupils in our schools consistently achieve more and progress faster than national averages, despite serving a higher proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Inspection and peer review outcomes demonstrate how long-term participation in Challenge Partners leads to sustained improvements over time.

By rapidly sharing innovative practices across the country, we ensure that the most effective support reaches the children who need it most.

You can read our 5-year strategy here and our latest impact report here.

Working at Challenge Partners

At Challenge Partners, we invest in our people to ensure they feel valued, supported and inspired to make a real impact on the life chances of children.

Our culture is built on our six core values: excellence, collaboration, innovation, equity, challenge and courageous leadership. We are committed to cultivating a workplace that promotes professional development, where everyone has the opportunity to take on new challenges and contribute to reducing educational inequality through meaningful work.

As a small but effective team with big ambitions, we offer the chance to work across the organisation and collaborate with senior leaders and practitioners - creating an environment where ideas are shared and progress is driven collectively.

Listening to and learning from our staff is important to us and we are passionate about championing diversity, equity and inclusion to create a positive workplace where every individual feels a true sense of belonging and is encouraged to bring their authentic selves to work.

Staff Benefits

Work-life balance

- Blended working with two in-office days (Tuesday to Thursday) during term time as per our current Ways of Working policy
- Flexibility to work from home during school holidays
- Extended leave policy (for travel, study, personal development etc.) after 3 years of service

Annual leave

- 33 days of annual leave (inclusive of bank holidays)
- 3 bonus days of annual leave over the Christmas period, as determined by Challenge Partners

Employer pension contributions

- We match up to 5% of your own contributions

Health and wellbeing support

- Confidential 24/7 helpline through our Employee Assistance Programme
- SimplyHealth cash plan (GP, dental, optical, physiotherapy and more)

Training and development

- Access to training programmes, coaching and mentoring
- Opportunities to work closely with senior leaders and practitioners in a small and collaborative team

Family-friendly policies

- Enhanced maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave pay (conditions apply)
- Compassionate and dependants' leave

Connection and celebration

- A 1-year anniversary gift voucher to celebrate employee contributions
- Half-termly Whole Team Meetings to deepen connections and celebrate achievements across the organisation

"I have worked at Challenge Partners for over five years, in three different roles. It is a wonderful place to work that offers the perfect balance of support and challenge. I am frequently pushed beyond my comfort zone to take on new areas of development, which has helped me to further my career."

Georgina, Partnership Experience Manager (joined 2019)

Partnership Development Lead

Salary: £32,005 - £34,515 per annum (Specific salary is dependent on experience - Please note that this may change as we are currently reviewing our salaries based on cost of living increase)

Contract: Fixed-term for 12 months in the first instance (with the possibility of a contract extension subject to funding and business need)

Start Date: As soon as possible (specific date to be agreed with consideration for your notice period)

Location: This is a blended-working role with two days per week at our office in Finsbury Park (Tuesday-Thursday) during term time and the flexibility to work from home during school holidays. Occasional travel to schools and events will be required.

Working Pattern: 37.5 hours per week. Our core hours are 09:30 - 16:00 from Monday to Friday.

Job Purpose

Established in 2011, Challenge Partners is a well-respected nationwide network of practitioners who engage in impactful collaboration and mutual accountability to ensure every school community can benefit from the combined wisdom of the education system.

Schools and trusts within Challenge Partners subscribe to an annual partnership, partaking in school and trust improvement programmes, engaging in collaborative networks at local, regional and national level, and becoming a member of a national partnership of education practitioners from Cornwall to County Durham.

The Partnership Development Lead will play a key role in driving growth and development within our partnership, devising and executing high impact sales and marketing plans aimed at schools and trusts new to the idea of Challenge Partners, and those considering rejoining it, that will result in accelerated growth of the partnership.

Key Responsibilities

Reporting to the Partnership Development Manager, the Partnership Development Lead will have the following key areas of responsibility and will be expected to undertake other responsibilities commensurate with the role:

Partnership Development and Reach

- Collaborate closely with the Partnership Development Manager to devise and implement sales plans that align with our growth strategy and the wider educational landscape
- Identify and pursue campaigns in high-growth opportunity areas, using data driven research and insights into Challenge Partners' existing relationships
- Build a pipeline of interested school and trust prospects through targeted activity to generate sales meetings for yourself and/or senior members of staff
- Contribute to the planning and delivery of strategies that enable current partners to effectively represent and endorse Challenge Partners
- Partner with the Marketing Team to ensure consistency of messaging across all channels and resources in line with Reach
- Empower colleagues across the team to confidently articulate Challenge Partners' value, and champion opportunities for wider staff to get involved in Reach activity

Stakeholder Management and Ownership

- Develop and maintain expert knowledge of Challenge Partners' networks and programmes, as well as their benefits and impact, to accurately and persuasively communicate value to prospective stakeholders
- Build and manage a portfolio of school and trust prospects, nurturing relationships and delivering high quality, consultative sales conversations, in-person and virtually
- Identify and engage stakeholders from organisations, local authorities and other relevant bodies to form partnerships and unlock ways to engage with schools and trusts

Data Management and Systems

- Become an expert in Challenge Partners' Salesforce CRM to track lead schools and trusts, leveraging data to drive sales and process automation

- Present regular reports on KPIs through data management and reporting, relating to the sales pipeline, conversions, and potential leads and opportunities
- Actively contribute to the development of our Salesforce CRM, ensuring systems support high standards of sales data tracking and management

Event Planning and Support

- Lead the planning and marketing of a series of introductory webinars for interested schools and trusts to hear an overview of the partnership from senior colleagues and partner speakers
- Scope and lead on supporting hub events and partner events where prospective schools and trusts can be invited to engage
- Coordinate prospective partner attendance at wider central team events, ensuring that they have excellent experiences of Challenge Partners on the day, while supporting events more generally

Matrix Management

At Challenge Partners, we work in a matrix structure which means that individuals collaborate across different work streams and are, at times, task managed by colleagues who are not their direct line manager. Therefore the Partnership Development Lead will:

- Provide consistent and high quality task management to all Partnership Coordinators supporting activities related to Reach, and cultivate strong relationships with all hub owners
- Provide consistent and high quality task management to all colleagues involved in school and trust Reach. This includes upwards management of Managers and the Leadership Team
- Support the provision of training and ongoing support to Partnership Coordinators in Reach and the articulation of Challenge Partners' value

Person Specification

Specific skills and attitudes we are looking for in an applicant are as follows:

- As one of our Leads, you will be a role model for our values at all times and a cultural leader within the team and whole organisation
- Proven track record of strong project management, ideally in sales pipelines and partnerships from prospect to close

- Experience in stakeholder management, with a clear approach to identifying and uncovering needs to influence decision makers and articulately communicating value
- Ability to prioritise effectively to meet competing demands and work under pressure, through excellent organisation and time management
- Outstanding attention to detail, and pride in your work
- Strong sense of proactivity, ensuring any issues are recognised and dealt with before they escalate
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, with the ability to deal with people diplomatically and appropriately, building rapport with those at varying levels of seniority
- Positivity, optimism and agility - we are a small organisation and all staff are expected to contribute across the organisation (and sometimes beyond their specific job role) to ensure our success and sustainability
- High information technology literacy - confidence and competence in using Google Suite, Microsoft programmes and Salesforce (or a similar CRM system) would be an advantage
- Proactive in seeking and applying feedback to continuously improve performance
- A genuine passion for the education sector, and a desire to make a difference
- The ability and willingness to travel across the country

How to apply

Please click here to submit your application on Hireful by **10am** on **30th October 2026**. You will be asked to upload your CV and answer four competency and scenario-based application questions.

First-round interviews for successful applicants will take place **virtually** in the **week commencing 26th October.** Specific details will be confirmed near time.

Second-round interviews for successful candidates will take place **in-person on 4th November 2026**, at the Challenge Partners office (Oxford House, 49 Oxford Road, London, N4 3EY). Specific details will be confirmed near time.

Please note that Challenge Partners is not currently able to offer visa sponsorship. We welcome applications from candidates who already have the right to work in the UK .

Our values

At Challenge Partners, how we go about our work is as important as the work we do. This is underpinned by our six values:

Value	What it means for the central team
Excellence	We work hard and with urgency, striving for excellence in all that we do. We put the needs of our schools first.
Equity	We treat each other/everyone fairly, with care and respect. We value, encourage, and celebrate diversity in all its forms. We are one team.
Courageous leadership	Everyone is a leader, encouraged and empowered to take ownership and responsibility for their contribution to our mission.
Challenge	We expect the best of each other and support and challenge each other as critical friends.
Collaboration	We work purposefully together and in partnership with our schools to achieve more together than we could alone.
Innovation	We use and generate research and innovation intelligently to continually improve the work we do.

A note on AI

At Challenge Partners, we are committed to a fair and inclusive recruitment process. We don't use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to assess or shortlist applications - applications are reviewed by members of the team and we use blind shortlisting to mitigate potential bias and ensure all candidates are considered on merit.

We understand that AI tools can be helpful for tasks such as proofreading or structuring your responses. Whilst you might choose to use AI to refine your response, we ask that you complete the application questions drawing on your personal experiences and own insights. This helps us to get an authentic sense of your skills, motivations, and fit for the role.

Please note that applications which appear to rely heavily on AI-generated responses, and do not reflect your own experience or voice, may be discounted.

Authenticity matters to us - we want to hear your voice in your application.

DEI

Challenge Partners is committed to further enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion within our team and we welcome applications from all suitably qualified persons regardless of their race, gender, sex, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or age.

Safeguarding

Challenge Partners is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, beneficiaries and staff. We expect all employees, consultants and volunteers to share this commitment. All offers of employment or contracts with us are subject to a satisfactory DBS check and references.

"Balancing parenthood and work presents its challenges, but Challenge Partners' supportive environment made the transition after my maternity leave smoother than I expected. I've grown through two roles here, each stretching me and providing valuable training and development opportunities."

Rebecca, National Networks Lead (joined 2019)