



DANIEL
SPARGO
-MABBS
foundation

The drug education charity



Head of Education Candidate Information Pack

Sept 2026



Eastside People

Supporting young people to make safer choices about drugs.



"Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation exists to make sure no harm happens to another young person through drugs or alcohol, and that all other young people get to go home safely."

Welcome from our CEO

Thank you for your interest in becoming the new Head of Education at the DSM Foundation.

We are a small but mighty charity, with a big heart and vision to make sure all young people have the drug education they need to make safer choices about drugs. This role lies right at the heart of our core purpose.

There has never been a more important time for young people to be armed with the knowledge and skills good drug education can give them. Exposure and access to drugs has never been greater thanks to social media and online connectivity, while mainstream media normalises drug use, and many young people face uncertainties, instabilities and anxieties both close to home and globally.

The DSM Foundation is widely considered the UK's leading drug education charity, with a strong reputation for excellence. We provide sector leadership through our role heading up the national Drug Education Forum, and contribute to understanding of evidence-based practice through Middlesex University's ongoing evaluation of our drug education programme with government NIHR funding. My role on the government's Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs provides a privileged position in the frontline of policy and practice.

Our Head of Education plays a critical role, providing strategic leadership for all aspects of our education provision, ensuring our programmes, curriculum, training and delivery remain evidence based, high quality and aligned with best practice in prevention and drug education. Working closely with the CEO, Deputy CEO and senior leadership team, our new Head of Education will ensure our offer continues to be sector leading, impactful and responsive to emerging trends.

These are exciting times for the DSM Foundation, as we grow our team and embrace opportunities to expand our reach, increase our depth, and develop new provision, to meet our vision of keeping all young people safe from the harm drugs can cause.

Thank you again for your interest in this exciting and important role.

Fiona Spargo-Mabbs

CEO

About us

Who we are

The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation is a drug education charity founded in 2014 by Dan's parents Fiona and Tim in response to his death from an unintentional overdose of ecstasy when he was sixteen.

What we do

Our core values are compassion, connection and quality: everything we do is driven by **compassion**, caring deeply about keeping young people from harm; it works through **connection** – with young people, the important adults in their lives, schools, partners, stakeholders; and it is of the highest **quality**, ensuring all our provision, and our working practices, are as effective as they can be, to enable every young person we reach to get the best possible chance to stay safe.

We work with young people, parents and carers, teachers, educators and a wide range of professionals working with young people, providing evidence-based, evaluated drug education to schools, colleges and community organisations across the UK.

Our core, universal, multi-component programme is flexible, responsive and trauma-informed, and continually updated to ensure it is current, accurate and relevant. It consists of six basic elements, all of which can take many various forms. Three of these our drug education team delivers – workshops for students, parents and carers, and training for professionals; two consist of resources we provide for schools and colleges to use – lesson plans and resources for teachers to deliver drug education, and a Youth Ambassador programme; and finally the touring Theatre in Education productions of the play the charity commissioned playwright Mark Wheeler to write to tell Dan's story, 'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die'. The play is also available as filmed versions with accompanying teaching resources.



Our objectives

- to provide evidence-based and innovative educational resources and programmes, and support and advisory services about substance use, in order to promote healthy, informed choices for young people.
- to work directly with young people, schools, families, professionals and the community in increasing awareness about substance use and its risks.
- to empower young people with the knowledge, life skills and confidence they need to choose lives free of drug-related harm.
- to support initiatives to educate young people about the risks of substance use through partnerships with them, schools, families, professionals, charities, universities and other agencies.

Our impact

Over the years the charity has grown from its first two pilot schools in summer 2015 to now almost one thousand settings across all four UK nations. Although we work primarily with education settings, we also work with other organisations, such as providing training for Street and School Pastors and Young Minds, and our Safer Choices programme is available as a skills option on the Duke of Edinburgh website. We've recently launched a workplace programme, providing drug education workshops to early careers, and to working parents and carers, including a play package and keynote speaking options. We have a wide range of digital resources available through our website, and two books for parents and carers of adolescents by CEO and Founder Fiona Spargo-Mabbs have been published in recent years.

Nationally, the DSM Foundation launched and leads the [Drug Education Forum](#), a national community of practice for drug education professionals, which aims to strengthen and support the sector, uphold evidence-based standards and advocate for good drug education for all young people. We have been working with Middlesex University since 2023 on [a national evaluation of our drug education programme](#), with government funding provided through the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR) which aims to identify programmes that are effective in reducing the demand for illicit drugs, and which are scalable and sustainable nationally. [Papers have begun to be published](#) based on outcomes from Phase 2 of this research, and Phase 3 will continue until 2027. Fiona was appointed to

the government's [Advisory Council for the Misuse of Drugs](#) in 2025, contributing to advice to government on policy and practice in relation to drugs. Her passionate commitment to do all she can to prevent what happened to her son happening to anyone else drives everything she does, recognised with the award of an OBE for services to young people in the 2023 New Year Honours.



Context of the role

“Growing Well”

Following a leadership and collaboration programme, the strategic priorities for the next phase of the DSM Foundation have been defined as “Growing Well”: increasing the Foundation’s reach and impact in a way that is planned, sustainable and true to its mission and values.

The Foundation has grown significantly since it was established and a key priority is to move from reactive growth to more intentional development, creating the leadership capacity, workforce planning and organisational structure needed to reach more young people, families and professionals.

Alongside this, the Foundation is reshaping its senior team so that education, operations and engagement responsibilities are clearer and better supported, and introducing the role of Deputy CEO. This will reduce reliance on Fiona as founder and Chief Executive (freeing her up for more external, strategic and influencing work), strengthen accountability, and create a more resilient platform for future growth.

Financial position and funding landscape

The Foundation has always been financially stable throughout its history and this remains the case. We reported income of £476,787 and expenditure of £403,465 for the year ending 31 August 2025. The latest return is due in January 2027; the data has been collected and indicates we are in a similar, stable position to 2025.

Funding for the work of the DSM Foundation comes from various sources – contributions from schools for drug education or the play, grants and trust funds, corporate donations, individual donors, fundraising and challenge events, local authority and public sector funding and commissioning.

The Foundation’s funding model is linked closely to its delivery and growth ambitions. Demand has grown largely through reputation and need, rather than through significant marketing, and capacity has been the main constraint on further growth. The next phase therefore includes a stronger focus on sustainable income development, including corporate partnerships, as well as creating more commercial income streams from existing work.

The team

As outlined above (under “Growing Well”), the senior leadership team is being strengthened as part of the Foundation’s next stage of growth, and the wider staff team reorganised to create clear alignment of roles and responsibilities under the leadership of education, communications and operations. This structure is intended to reduce reliance on the founder/CEO, clarify accountability, and create the leadership capacity needed to support planned, sustainable growth.



What success looks like

Success in this role will mean protecting the high standards that make the DSM Foundation trusted by schools, families, professionals and partners, while helping the organisation grow in a planned and sustainable way.

In the first six months, one clear priority will be to launch and embed the Workplace Programme, following a successful pilot in summer 2026. As outlined above, this brings DSMF's drug education into workplace settings for early-career employees and working parents and carers. Much of the groundwork is already in place, including testimony from the pilot, resources, delivery model and public webpage. Working closely with our Corporate and Community Fundraiser, the new Head of Education will help turn this into active delivery, building confidence in the offer, supporting colleagues to promote it, and establishing it as a credible way to reach young adults, parents and carers through workplace settings.

Longer term, the Head of Education will also play an important part in shaping what "Growing Well" means in practice. This will include contributing to decisions about how DSMF can expand its reach, whether through regional growth, deeper work with existing settings, partnership delivery, new models of provision, or other carefully chosen opportunities that increase impact without compromising quality.

One of the clearest ongoing priorities will be workforce planning for the drug educator team. Recruiting, training and supporting educators takes time, so the postholder will need to maintain a strong pipeline, plan ahead for future capacity, and ensure the frontline team remains able to meet demand while maintaining the quality on which DSMF's reputation depends.



Head of Education job description

Location	Purley, Croydon (hybrid). Regular travel to schools and agencies in Croydon/London and nationally.
Contract	Permanent. 0.8FTE (30 hours per week)
Salary	£43,368 FTE
Benefits Include:	Nest pension Five weeks' annual leave plus bank holidays Eligibility for a Blue Light Card (More details available on request)
Reports to	CEO / Deputy CEO
Direct reports	Bookings Coordinator, Play and Events Coordinator; Drug Education Coordinator (Scotland); contracted Drug Educators.

We invite anyone to apply

Evidence shows that long or overly detailed job and person specifications discourage strong candidates, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, from applying.

For this role, we have focused on the experience, values and judgement that matter most. We welcome applications from people who can lead high-quality, evidence-informed education work and contribute to the Foundation's next stage of growth, even if their experience has been gained through different routes.

If you are excited by the role but unsure whether you meet every point, we would strongly encourage you to consider applying.

Feel free to contact John Sanger on johns@eastsidepeople.org or 07522 163938 if you would like to talk things through ahead of making an application. We will make reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process so candidates can participate fully and fairly.

Overall purpose of role

This role provides strategic leadership for all aspects of DSMF's education work, ensuring the Foundation's programmes, curriculum, training and delivery remain evidence based, high quality and aligned with best practice in prevention and drug education. The postholder works closely with the CEO, Deputy CEO and senior leadership team to ensure DSMF's educational offer is sector leading, impactful and responsive to emerging trends.

Responsibilities

Education

- Lead curriculum development for DSMF's drug and alcohol education programmes, resources and Theatre in Education productions, ensuring content is current, relevant and evidence informed.
- Provide overall strategic responsibility for quality monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of programme content and delivery.
- Build and sustain strategic relationships with educational settings, customers, professionals and relevant organisations.
- Ensure high quality initial and ongoing training for drug education staff, enabling consistent, evidence based delivery.
- Maintain a strategic overview of the drug education and prevention sector, identifying emerging trends, research and policy developments to ensure DSMF's work remains aligned with best practice.
- Deliver talks, assemblies and workshops to young people, parents/carers, teachers and professionals as required.
- Identify new areas of educational work, projects and programmes in line with DSMF's strategic priorities.

Leadership & Management

- Lead, manage and develop staff within areas of responsibility, fostering a positive, inclusive and high-performing culture, including through periods of change.
- Work collaboratively with colleagues across the Senior Leadership Team to develop and implement strategies that support organisational priorities, including appropriate workforce planning and resource allocation.

- Provide safeguarding leadership as Designated Safeguarding Lead, alongside the Chair.
- Support organisational risk management in relation to educational delivery and programme quality.
- Work with SLT to support employee engagement and wellbeing

Who we're looking for

Knowledge, Experience and Skills

- Extensive experience of drug education in schools, colleges and community settings.
- Experience of evidence-based educational programmes, curricula or resources.
- Experience of quality assurance, evaluation and continuous improvement.
- Understanding of safeguarding in educational contexts.

Attributes

- Commitment to DSMF's vision and aims.
- Knowledge of evidence-based practice in prevention and harm reduction.
- Ability to build strong relationships and motivate others.

Appointment will be subject to satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and references.



Ready to apply?

[Eastside People](#) is supporting Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation in the recruitment of this role. Please [click here](#) to apply by submitting your CV and a cover letter **both in Word doc format**.

Please use the cover letter (max 2 pages) as an opportunity to add to the information you have shared in your CV and ensure that you cover the following:

- What interests you about the Head of Education role at Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation?
- What experience do you have of delivering evidence-based drug educational programmes?
- What do you think you would bring to the role that other applicants might not?

You are welcome to send your cover letter in writing, or as a video or audio clip, alongside your CV. Any video or audio submissions should be emailed to johns@eastsidepeople.org

If you would like a call to discuss the role in more detail, please email John Sanger to arrange a convenient time at johns@eastsidepeople.org. Having a call of this kind will not influence the success or otherwise of your application.

We want you to have every opportunity to demonstrate your skills, ability and potential. If you have a disability or require reasonable adjustments during the application or interview process, please contact us so we can support you appropriately.

The closing date for applications is Monday 28th September (9am). Eastside People will conduct a short skills-based assessment interview as part of your application. If you are shortlisted, there will be a two-stage interview process:

- 1st stage interviews with DSMF are scheduled for w/c 12th October.
- 2nd stage interviews are scheduled for w/c 19th October.

Finally

We recognise that AI can be a helpful tool, but please use it with care and ensure your application is accurate, personal, and genuinely reflects you. We do not use AI in our sifting or selection process - a human reviews every application!

If you know anyone else who might be interested, please do share this information pack with them.





Eastside People

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