

Role Profile

Role title:	Head of Basic Needs and Partnerships
Salary:	£36,301 - £40,560
Full/Part Time:	Full-Time
Contract term:	Permanent
Accountable to:	Associate Director of Student Engagement
Accountable for:	Basic Needs Project Coordinator, Senior Financial Wellbeing Coordinator
Hours:	Standard hours are 35 hrs per week – these hours can be worked flexibly we are happy to discuss alternative working patterns
Location:	Usually located at the Essentials Building, at times at the Students' Union building and there is an option for some home working where duties do not need to be delivered on site (80-100% on site working)
Eligibility:	Open to applicants with relevant skills and experience who are eligible to work in the UK
Benefits:	We offer a great range of benefits. You can see them here .

Our Organisation

We are Manchester Students' Union, the biggest SU in the country, supporting over 48,000 students throughout their time at university. We help to make student life the best it can be by supporting students to campaign for change, creating opportunities to meet new people, providing employment opportunities, providing advice and support and being a safe place on campus.

We are a values-centred organisation that employs around 100 permanent, full-time members of staff. We recruit a wide range of roles throughout the year within all our departments from our Commercial team operating Manchester Academy Venues, 13 Media, Bar 532 & Kitchen and Corridor Coffee to our Student Activities, Student Engagement, Marketing and Communications, Finance, HR and Facilities teams. Our team of around 400 part-time, studying staff are instrumental in providing support to all departments as well as leading major projects like Student Angels. When you join UMSU, you'll be immersed in an environment that empowers staff to make great things happen and we're always on the lookout for innovative, passionate, and proactive people to join us.

Our staff team is led by our senior leadership team who are instrumental in driving our strategy at UMSU. It's made up of our CEO, COO, 3 Directors and 5 Associate Directors. We are governed by our trustees and Exec Officers, you can find out more about that [here](#). All our permanent, full-time roles are graded (Grade A-E) which means that there is a clear path to your development and progression whilst at UMSU.

Our Organisational Values

Our values are really important to us and shape the work that we do every day. As part of our recruitment process, we want you to demonstrate how your experiences, behaviours and skills align with our values.

Our values are

- We put students at the heart of what we do
- We provide a 'great experience' service
- We believe in improvement and progression
- We are a community
- We are open and transparent
- We are inclusive

You can find more detailed explanations of our values on [our website](#).

Role Overview

The UK's cost-of-living crisis has intensified financial pressure on students, affecting their wellbeing and academic performance. Many students struggle to afford essential items, which can negatively impact their mental health. A third of students (32%) report feeling not in control of their finances and struggling to afford essential costs. While 73% of students can afford accommodation and 88% can cover food expenses, 27% and 12% respectively cannot. Source: [Student Priority Report 2024-25](#)

We recognise that a student's ability to meet their basic needs has a profound impact on all aspects of their life - including their physical and emotional health, academic success, personal and professional development, and the quality of their overall university experience. As the cost of living rises and students face rapidly changing circumstances, we aim to provide a reliable and supportive place for students to turn to for guidance and resources. Our mission is to help students build the strong foundations that enable them to thrive during their time at university and beyond.

The Head of Basic Needs and Partnerships will lead the strategic development and delivery of our [basic needs provision](#), which opened in November 2025, ensuring students can access vital support including food, essential items, financial wellbeing support, and life-skills programmes. The postholder will provide leadership and oversight of the basic needs team, managing the Basic Needs Project Coordinator, who oversees the day-to-day operations of Essentials and frontline service delivery, and the Senior Financial Wellbeing Coordinator, who leads our financial wellbeing provision and associated programmes.

The role will oversee the continued growth of the service from a direct provision model into a sustainable, community-powered basic needs hub. This includes building strong partnerships with external organisations and donors, expanding financial wellbeing provision, developing volunteering programmes, and growing preventative support such as cooking classes, life-skills workshops, budgeting education, and repair cafés.

The postholder will ensure the service is accessible, impactful, and financially sustainable, while maintaining a strong focus on student wellbeing, dignity, and independence. A key responsibility will be developing innovative approaches to improving students' financial literacy and resilience, and demonstrating the impact of this work.

This role will suit someone who thrives on building relationships, thinking creatively, and turning ideas into practical solutions that make a real difference to students' lives. Much of the role involves working collaboratively with colleagues, partners, and donors to develop innovative approaches that strengthen the sustainability and reach of the service; while also supporting the team delivering the service day to day to ensure they have the structure, resources, and leadership needed to succeed. Essentials currently operates at full capacity, with around 400 student visits to the Pantry each week, making strong organisation, strategic thinking, and supportive leadership essential. No two days in the role will be the same, and the postholder will need to be comfortable working across a wide range of areas - from strategic planning and partnership development to operational problem-solving, marketing and engagement, financial planning, and analysing service data to understand demand and improve delivery. The role plays a key part in connecting these areas to ensure the service runs effectively while continuing to evolve in creative and impactful ways.

We are committed to building a diverse and inclusive team and warmly welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. We recognise that talent and potential come from many different pathways, and we encourage applications from candidates who may not meet every listed requirement but believe they can bring valuable skills, insight, and passion to the role. If you are excited about the opportunity to support students and develop impactful services that improve student life, we would love to hear from you.

Key Result Areas

Responsible for	Contributor to
Leading the development and strategic management of Essentials, ensuring services address the diverse basic needs of the student population. This includes developing and delivering a long-term strategic plan aligned with University and Students' Union priorities, with a focus on student wellbeing, financial resilience, and access to essential support such as food, hygiene items, and clothing.	Supporting Students' Union impact reporting and insight work by gathering and analysing service data, identifying trends in student hardship and financial need, and contributing evidence to inform organisational priorities, funding applications, and strategic decision-making. This includes collaborating with relevant teams to strengthen understanding of student financial pressures and barriers to participation.
Managing the day-to-day operation of the Essentials service, including oversight of budgets, staffing, stock management, and resource allocation. The role will implement policies and operational frameworks that support service growth, sustainability, and effective frontline delivery, while overseeing the recruitment, development, and management of staff and volunteers to ensure high-quality service provision.	Being part of the Safeguarding team at the Union as a Deputy DSL, supporting safeguarding processes and working with other DSLs on cases where appropriate. This includes contributing to safeguarding training and ensuring that appropriate procedures are followed to protect student welfare.
Leading the development and expansion of financial wellbeing provision, including programmes that improve students' financial literacy, confidence, and ability to manage living costs. This includes helping the team develop innovative and engaging initiatives such as financial education programmes, and life-skills activities, while	Contributing to organisational financial planning and budget management, ensuring that resources are effectively allocated to areas where they will have the greatest impact. This includes monitoring spending against budgets, supporting the development of sustainable funding models, and ensuring that external funding and donations are utilised effectively.

ensuring the impact of these interventions is measured and demonstrated.	
Developing clear student pathways and referral systems to ensure students accessing Essentials are supported effectively and connected with the most appropriate services across the Students' Union, University, and external partners. This includes strengthening the student journey from crisis support to longer-term financial resilience through preventative education, guidance, and access to wider support networks.	Supporting the development of inclusive, student-centred services by contributing insight from Essentials service delivery and student engagement. This includes ensuring that feedback from service users informs continuous improvement and that programmes and initiatives remain responsive to the evolving needs of students experiencing financial hardship.
Building and maintaining productive partnerships with key stakeholders, including University teams, community organisations, businesses, charities, and donors, to strengthen service delivery and improve sustainability. This includes developing opportunities to secure donations, funding, and collaborative initiatives that increase the reach and value of Essentials.	

This is not an exhaustive list of responsibilities and you may be asked to carry out other duties appropriate to the role.

Organisational Stewardship & Leadership Responsibilities

- You'll guide the work of the team, participating in the development of annual operating plans to support the achievement of strategic aims, holding teams accountable for delivery against these plans
- You'll contribute to the development and delivery of risk mitigating strategies as they relate to departments area of work
- You'll ensure all team are assisting in key students' union events throughout the year such as Welcome week and elections and proactively identify opportunities to support the officers in delivering their plans
- You'll lead teams acting as an exemplar of the Union behaviours ensuring all staff are given appropriate support in line with the Union management framework and teams are consistently held accountable for delivering against expected performance standards (both role performance and behaviours)
- You'll be accountable for the financial performance of area of responsibility taking prompt action where financial targets are at risk. Contribute to the forecasting & budgeting exercises in line with the organisational framework
- You'll own the policy as it relates to departmental activity, have good working knowledge of the Union policy and procedure framework as it relates to the team's function and ensure that all teams activities are conducted in line with this framework
- You'll proactively contribute to maintaining the communal spaces and ensuring whole team share responsibility for managing team stores and keeping areas clean and tidy

Person Specification

Criteria	Assessed at:
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	Application Form	Interview	Interview Task	All
Education				
<i>We accept candidates from any educational background.</i>				
Skills				
<i>Demonstrated ability to work collaboratively and proactively across different teams, ensuring alignment with organisational goals</i>			✓	
<i>Strong communication skills, with the ability to convey complex information to a wide range of audiences</i>				✓
<i>Embedding data driven user feedback and insight into delivery plans</i>	✓			
<i>Ability to develop and maintain productive relationships with both internal and external stakeholders</i>				✓
Experience/Knowledge				
<i>Experience supporting strategy development and implementation</i>		✓		
<i>Experience conducting and analysing both internal and external research</i>	✓			
<i>Experience managing a budget or commissioning funding for desired outputs</i>				✓
<i>Experience of embedding equity and diversity in daily work activity</i>				✓
<i>Strong knowledge of issues affecting university students, including academic, social, and financial challenges</i>				✓
<i>Experience of safeguarding policies and procedures.</i>	✓			
Personal Attributes				

<i>A self-motivated and adaptable individual, with a commitment to ongoing professional development</i>	✓			
<i>Strong organisational skills, with the ability to manage multiple priorities and work to deadlines</i>				✓
Values & Behaviours				
<i>Align with the SU's values and behaviours both personally and professionally</i>				✓
<i>Insight driven – always looking for ways to collect data from a range of sources to measure the impact of your work on the student community or to inform your work</i>	✓			
<i>Collaborative – great at working collaboratively with team members, seeks ways to ensure all voices are heard, works with colleagues to problem solve</i>		✓		
<i>Active Bystander – continually seeks to dismantle barriers, ensures all working practises are accessible, seeks to ensure all voices are heard and factored in when making decisions</i>				✓

Working Arrangements

The Basic Needs team is based in the Essentials building Thorncliffe House, 320-322 Oxford Road, M13 9NG, which is a 5-minute walk from the Students' Union building, where you may also be based occasionally for office work or meetings.

- Flexibility/Remote Working

This role is fully on-site due to the nature of the work. There may be occasions where flexibility is needed to support evening or weekend events. TOIL will be provided.

- Hours/ Patterns of Work

Core hours are 10-4pm Monday to Friday, but flexible working is supported where possible.

Our Recruitment Process

The way that we recruit is designed to be fair, transparent, and inclusive as well as being an enjoyable experience for everyone involved. You should expect to receive great communication and a warm, welcoming experience.

Every member of staff is recruited exactly the same way, by submitting an application form and attending an interview. We use a recruitment platform called StaffSavvy where you'll submit your application and book interviews, if successful.

Our process allows you to show us your authentic self, gives you a platform to display your skills and knowledge in relaxed and welcoming setting. We'll never put you under any necessary pressure on you, ask you trick questions or interrogate you in an interview and we'll support you all the way through our process.

Top Tip: our roles can be quite competitive, so we recommend applying as soon as possible as we often close applications early!

If you'd like further information or support regarding our recruitment process, we recommend that you read our full recruitment guide for applicants [here](#).