



David Cunningham – Biography

David is the Chief Executive of Kids Operating Room, a global health charity focused entirely on the provision of safe surgery for children in low-resource settings.

Working across 40 countries, the charity has created annual capacity for almost 200,000 children to access the surgical care they urgently need. Focused on a non-mission model of care, Kids Operating Room strengthens the local health system by installing surgical equipment, training local people, and deploying their award-winning solar surgery system to ensure the best quality of care is given.

David has led the charity since it formed at the start of 2018, having previously been the CEO of Scottish children's healthcare charity, The ARCHIE Foundation, which supports children's health services across the North of Scotland and Islands. A role that he held for almost a decade, building the charity to be an integral part of the health services for children from across many remote and rural communities.

A graduate of the University of Dundee, where he studied psychology and specialised in early years development, David went on to serve as student President and President of a national student body. In 2024 he was the joint winner of the University's 'Transforming Lives Globally' award. Further study has included successful completion of the Reimagining Global Health course at Harvard.

During the pandemic, David was appointed by the Chief Medical Officer of Scotland to lead a government review of how medical equipment is donated to low-income countries, resulting in enhanced guidance for the National Health Service, charities and other organisations planning to donate medical equipment.

David is a Board member of the Fundraising Regulator, the body responsible for setting the rules for, and overseeing, all charity fundraising in the UK. He is also a member of the regulator's Standards Committee. He previously sat on the Standards Committee of the Institute of Fundraising and was appointed to chair a UK-wide review of charity fundraising in 2015 following a national scandal about poor practice in the sector.

Other active positions include sitting on the Board of the Foreign Policy Centre, a UK think tank advising government; being a board member of Kids Operating Room USA; being a director of Global Hospital, a company specialising in healthcare infrastructure development in low-resource settings; and being a visiting lecturer at the University of Oxford where he teaches on the Global Surgery course.

David has published several articles on global health and global surgery in high-impact journals, including a Lancet report on the development of the world's first operating room for children's surgery in a refugee setting.

A strong advocate for collaborations to maximise impact for people denied access to healthcare, David is involved in bring NASA's space shuttle technology to hospitals in East Africa, providing solar systems to partner hospitals in Ukraine, and working with the UN and WHO to develop surgical services in Gaza.

David is married to Claudia, who is Head of Dentistry at the University of Central Lancashire, and they have two children, Orla and Lucas.