



Application pack

Chair of Trustees

Bring your senior-level expertise to a committed and forward-thinking Board.

Unlock has achieved a great deal for the people we support, thanks to the talents and dedication of our staff, volunteers, and trustees. By listening to and working alongside people who face difficulties because of their criminal records, we have built a strong track record of identifying problems, developing solutions, and turning those solutions into real change. We also influence national policy and drive systemic reform.

We are now seeking a new Chair of Trustees to join our engaged and committed board.

Trustees play a crucial part in shaping Unlock's leadership, strategic direction, and governance. As Chair, you will work in partnership with the Chief Executive to provide clear and inclusive leadership, ensuring that the board operates effectively and that the organisation remains focused on its charitable purpose. You will help the board set strategy, scrutinise performance, uphold good governance, and support the CEO and senior team to deliver Unlock's mission.

About you

We would love to hear from you if you can bring the following attitudes and skills:

- Experience as a trustee and of working with or managing senior leaders.
- A willingness to offer advice to staff when needed, and to get involved practically where appropriate.
- A strong commitment to Unlock's vision, values, and mission.
- Experience in the charity sector is helpful but not essential. If you have the right leadership qualities and a passion for our work, we will provide support to help you step confidently into the role. So if you're new to the voluntary sector, please don't let that discourage you from applying.
- We are committed to increasing diversity across Unlock, including within our board. We particularly welcome applications from people who have themselves faced and overcome the disadvantages associated with a criminal record.
- If you're energised by the prospect of helping to lead a small criminal justice charity with an impressive national impact, we would be delighted to hear from you.

About the role

The Chair provides inclusive and strategic leadership to Unlock, working in close partnership with the Chief Executive to ensure effective governance, sound oversight, and a strong commitment to the charity's mission of supporting people with criminal records to move on positively with their lives. The Chair ensures that the board operates effectively, upholds Unlock's values, and maintains a focus on delivering public benefit in line with statutory, regulatory, and organisational requirements.

In addition to the general responsibilities of a trustee, duties of the Chair include:

Leadership

- Providing leadership to the organisation and the board by ensuring that everyone remains focused on the delivery of the organisation's charitable purposes in order to provide greater public benefit.
- Leading the board, ensuring its effectiveness and monitoring trustee performance, taking into account issues raised by trustees, staff, funders and the Charity Commission.
- Ensuring that the board focuses on its key tasks and provides leadership and support to the CEO.

Upholding values

- Upholding the values of the charity by example and ensuring that the organisation promotes equality and diversity for all its stakeholders.
- Upholding the highest standards of personal integrity and probity, upholding the values of the charity and to ensure that the organisation promotes equality and diversity for all its stakeholders.
- Championing lived-experience leadership within the organisation's governance, ensuring that diverse perspectives shape strategy and decision-making.
- Acting as a visible ambassador for Unlock's mission and values, promoting understanding of the challenges faced by people with criminal records and advocating for systemic fairness and inclusion.
- Remaining well briefed on key issues affecting the charity and its beneficiaries.

Effective governance

- Giving direction to board policymaking.
- Creating a board environment with strong working relationships and where challenge and scrutiny are welcomed.
- Chairing and facilitating effective board meetings, promoting effective decision making and constructive debate, ensuring that the business is covered efficiently and effectively in those meetings, and encouraging all trustees to contribute their skills, experience and opinions in order to ensure adequate scrutiny.
- Encouraging directors to be involved in the board's work where relevant.
- Holding the CEO to account for the effective management and delivery of the organisation's strategic aims and objectives.
- Bringing objectivity to decision-making and checking that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.
- Instigating and facilitating discussions on the strategic development of the charity.

- Maintaining the trustees' commitment to board diversity, renewal and succession planning, in line with the charity's governing document and/or current good practice.
- Undergoing an individual and board performance appraisal and attending any additional training highlighted as a result of the evaluation process; undertaking evaluations of the performance of trustees.

Supporting the CEO

Supporting the CEO including line management and performance appraisal.

With the CEO

- Planning the annual cycle of board meetings and other general meetings where required
- Setting agendas for board and other general meetings.
- Developing the board of trustees including induction, training, appraisal and succession planning.
- Addressing any conflict within the board and within the organisation, and, if appropriate, liaising with the CEO to achieve this.

Powers/Authority

Acting between full meetings of the board in authorising action to be taken as follows –

- Acting as bank signatory for transactions that do not require Board approval.
- Ensuring that the board fulfils its responsibilities for risk management, safeguarding, and compliance with legal and regulatory obligations.
- If required, receiving serious incident reports from the CEO and deciding with the CEO whether to inform the Board immediately or at the next Board meeting.
- If required, receiving reports on safeguarding events from the Safeguarding Trustee and/or the CEO and decide with those persons whether to inform the Board immediately or at the next Board meeting.

Where required, and could be delegated to other trustees:

- Representing the charity at functions, meetings, and in the wider media, in line with the charity's agreed media strategy.
- Sitting on appointment and disciplinary panels.
- Building and maintaining close relations between the charity's various constituencies.

Commitment

4 days per year for board meetings

12 days per year (approx.) for planning and inter-meeting decisions

Flexibility to respond to requirements for support and leadership as they arise

Legal responsibilities

Read more about the role and legal responsibilities by clicking this link:

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Publications/cc3.aspx>

Expenses

Permitted expenses incurred will be reimbursed in line with Unlock's expenses policy

Chair's appraisal

- The Vice Chair and one other Trustee (chosen by the Trustees and whose selection shall not involve the Chair) will carry out an annual appraisal of the Chair (the appraisers).
- The appraisers must ask for feedback from all Trustees and the CEO ahead of that appraisal (although, obviously, no one is obliged to provide a response).

Note: This description is not binding, and amendments can be made to the role of the Chair to support Unlock's future development.

Person specification

The following experience and qualities would aid applicants in the role of Chair but it is not expected that candidates will meet all qualities and have experience in all areas to apply:

- Previous trustee experience
- Experience of - or an understanding of - small organisations
- Experience of a role within the Criminal Justice sector or a role within adjacent sectors
- Experience of managing senior people
- Experience of chairing meetings or a commitment to chairing well and hearing everyone
- Knowledge or experience of charity governance
- Access to wider networks
- A collaborative approach with others and able to encourage resilience in others
- Able to influence and bring people with you
- Empathy and the ability to listen
- Able to exercise good judgment
- Able to lead through and resolve conflict, finding consensus or agreement
- Able to show innovative and forward-facing thinking to help move Unlock forward in the changing Criminal Justice and funding landscapes
- Understanding and accepting the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
- High level of literacy and numeracy, including the ability to understand charity financial records with the support of a treasurer
- Willing to be available to staff for advice on an ad hoc basis, with "hands on" involvement where necessary.
- Commitment to the vision, values and mission of Unlock

How to apply

- Please review:
 - <https://unlock.org.uk/topic/employment-business-and-volunteering/>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/automatic-disqualification-rules-for-charity-trustees-and-charity-senior-positions>
- Download and complete the [application form](#).
- Email your completed form to admin@unlock.org.uk using the subject line: Chair application.
- Closing date: Sunday 4 January 2026
- If you would like to discuss the role, contact current Chair Faye Goldman for an informal chat: faye.goldman@unlock.org.uk

Thank you