



Application pack
Head of Operations, Governance & Programme
Support

Thank you for your interest in our Head of Operations, Governance and Programmes Support.

This is an exciting opportunity for an exceptional individual with proven experience to join our small and successful national charity as our Head of Operations, Governance and Programmes Support.

Unlock has achieved a great deal for the people we support and that is testament to the talents of our dedicated team of staff and volunteers. Through listening and engaging with people who face difficulties because of their convictions we have an impressive track record of identifying issues, finding solutions and putting them into practice. We also influence policy and create systemic change.

Whilst we are a small charity we punch above our weight; we're resourceful, impactful and work efficiently with like-minded organisations so that, together, we can achieve our aims. We are widely recognised as the go-to organisation in this arena.

We're looking for an organised, motivated individual with operations and governance experience who will be responsible for the smooth running of the organisational systems, governance frameworks, people practices and programme support functions that underpins Unlock's work,

If you are motivated to help people move on positively with their lives and create a fairer and more inclusive society, this is the place for you.

We look forward to meeting you.

Best of luck with your application and kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paula', on a light grey grid background.

Paula Harriott

Chief Executive Officer

About Unlock

Our mission

Our mission is to advocate for people with criminal records to be able to move on positively in their lives. We:

- Support people with criminal records to navigate their way through challenging times
- Research and raise awareness of the systemic issues that people are facing
- Campaign for changes to legislation, policies and practices of government, employers and others.

Our vision

A fair and inclusive society where people with convictions can move on positively in their lives.

Unlock is an independent award-winning national advocacy charity that provides a voice and support for people who are facing stigma and obstacles because of their criminal record, often long after they have served their sentence.

We exist for two simple reasons.

Firstly, we help people to move on positively with their lives by empowering them with information, advice and support to overcome the stigma of their previous convictions.

To do this we provide information, advice and support, through our website, online tools and confidential peer-led helpline. We help advisors who work with and support people with criminal records by providing criminal record disclosure training. And we support employers and universities in treating people fairly.

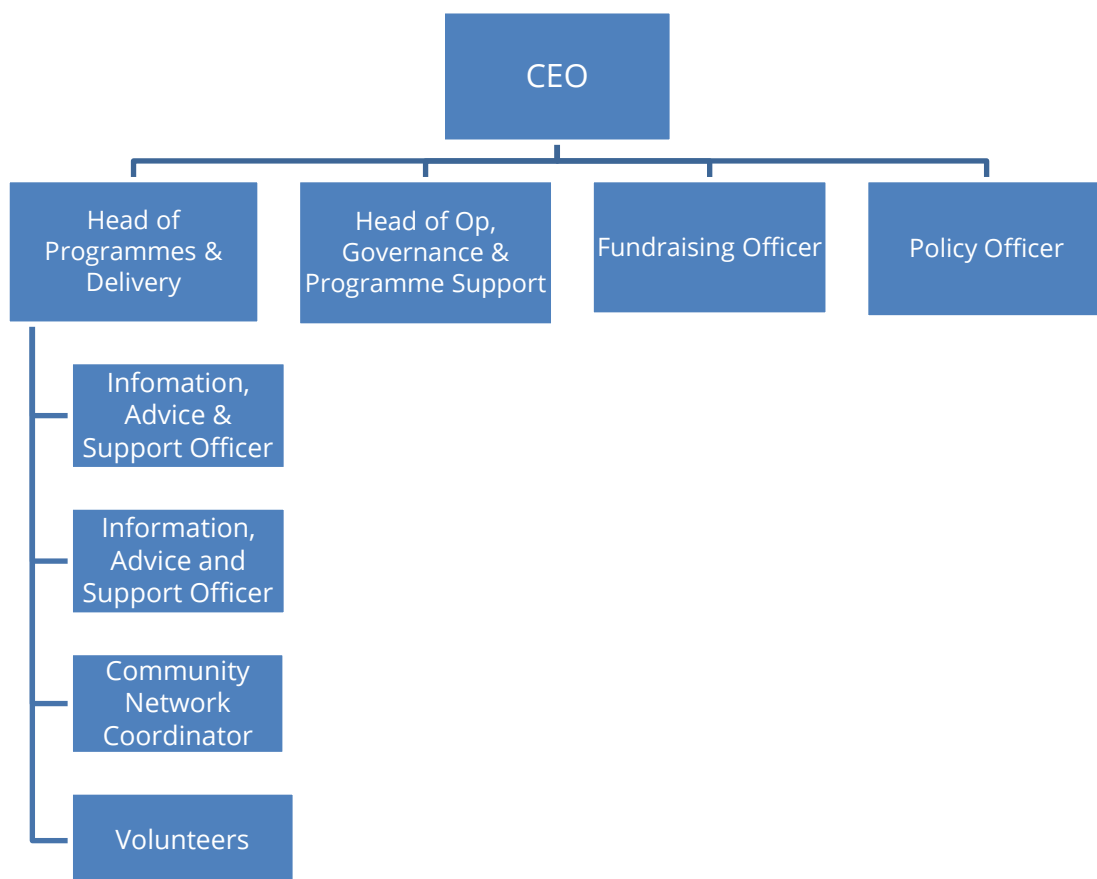
Secondly, we seek to promote a fairer and more inclusive society by challenging discriminatory practices and promoting socially just alternatives.

To do this we advocate for change, working at policy level to address systemic and structural issues. We listen to and consult with people, undertake research and produce evidence-based reports to inform policy makers and the public. We challenge bad practice, influence attitudes and speak truth to power. We co-founded and support the Ban the Box campaign and we are pushing for #FairChecks, a fresh start for the criminal records system.

We welcome applications from people from all backgrounds. Applications from candidates who are from racially minoritised communities, have a disability or who are from a less privileged background are particularly encouraged. We welcome applicants with a criminal record although it's not a requirement for the role. Having a criminal record is not a bar or a requirement for this role.

Unlock is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion. We continue to develop our policies, processes and culture and ensuring our services are accessible by those who most need them, as we know there is always room to improve. We are committed to doing this work in an open and transparent way, and with the involvement of the whole organisation as well as external stakeholders and people we support.

The Unlock team



Benefits of joining Unlock

Holidays	You'll receive 25 days of annual leave, plus bank holidays. In addition, we have a three-day Christmas closure between Christmas Day and New Year's.
Pension	You'll automatically be enrolled in our pension scheme. We'll contribute 6% of your salary provided you make a minimum contribution of 2%.
Employee assistance	You'll have access to confidential, independent advice 24/7. This includes online resources and a dedicated helpline staffed by qualified counsellors and advisors ready to support you with legal, financial, health and family-related concerns whenever you need it.
Death in Service	Our life assurance scheme is designed to give you and your loved ones peace of mind. If the worst happens, your nominated beneficiaries will receive a payment equivalent to twice your annual salary.
Flu jab	We will pay for your annual flu jab.
Eye care	We cover the cost of a standard annual eye test. If you require glasses or contact lenses specifically for work, we'll contribute £50 towards the cost.
Reward Gateway	A discount platform giving you access to offers on popular brands.

The role

Job title:	Head of Operations, Governance and Programme Support
Responsible to:	CEO
Salary:	£35,000 - £38,000 per annum
Contract:	Permanent, full-time
Holidays:	28 days paid holiday during each holiday year. This is inclusive of 3 days closure between Christmas and New Year. In addition, you are entitled to take the usual Public Holidays in England.
Working hours:	37.5 hours per week
Probation period:	6 months
Location:	Remote, with occasional travel to Maidstone and other locations.

Please note this role isn't suitable for job-share.

Role purpose

The Head of Operations, Governance and Programme Support is a senior leadership role responsible for the smooth running, operational integrity and organisational infrastructure of Unlock. The postholder will ensure Unlock's systems, people practices, governance processes and programme support functions operate effectively, ethically and in alignment with the organisation's values. Working closely with the CEO, Senior Leadership Team and Board of Trustees this role enables Unlock to deliver its mission with consistency, care and impact, embedding lived-experience-led and people-centered ways of working across the organisation. The role provides strategic leadership on operations, HR, governance, systems and programme support, and oversees day-to-day organizational functioning as well as offering support to the finance team.

Key responsibilities

Organisational Operations and Systems

- Lead and continuously improve Unlock's operational systems and processes to ensure efficiency, compliance and values-alignment.
- Oversee organisational systems including Microsoft 365, HR platforms, CRM Beacon and data governance processes.
- Manage contracts and relationships with professional and service providers (e.g. HR, IT) ensuring quality and value for money.
- Ensure operational policies and procedures are clear, up to date and embedded in practice (HR, safeguarding, health and safety, IT, data protection).
- Lead organisational process improvement and operational problem-solving.

Governance, Risk and Compliance

- Lead and strengthen Unlock's governance frameworks in partnership with the CEO and Board of Trustees.
- Maintain organisational risk registers, business assurance processes and disaster recovery planning.
- Act as organisational lead for data protection and GDPR compliance.
- Ensure compliance with Charity Commission, Companies House, HMRC and other relevant regulatory requirements (excluding financial reporting duties).
- Coordinate Board administration, ensuring high-quality papers, agendas and follow-up actions.

HR, People and Organisational Culture

- Lead HR operations including recruitment, onboarding, performance management, learning and development, wellbeing and organisational policies.
- Support the CEO on complex people matters such as organisational change, grievance, disciplinary and wellbeing issues.
- Champion Unlock's anti-discriminatory, and lived-experience-led organisational culture.
- Ensure people practices are legally compliant, compassionate and values-driven.

Programme, Training, Events and Organisational Support

- Hold overall accountability for the administrative, coordination and support functions that enable Unlock's programmes, training, events and involvement activity to operate smoothly and to a high standard.
- Ensure high-quality organisational administration, including diary coordination, meeting organisation, record-keeping, document management and internal communications.
- Oversee coordination of training sessions, programme activity, project meetings and events, ensuring logistics, communications and participant experience are consistently strong.
- Ensure systems are in place to track attendance, engagement and follow-up activity across programmes, training and events.
- Oversee preparation of reports, presentations, briefings and internal updates that support delivery, governance and organisational learning.
- Ensure effective coordination of our flagship lived experience leadership programme, involvement activity and patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE), including session organisation and post-session follow-ups.
- Work collaboratively with programme leads to ensure operational readiness, smooth delivery and continuous improvement across all activity.

Support the Finance Team

- Ensure the finance team have access to relevant information as required.

Strategic Leadership and Contribution

- Act as a key member of the Senior Leadership Team, contributing to organisational strategy, planning and development.
- Support the CEO on operational and organisational matters across the charity. Embed a culture of accountability, transparency, care and continuous improvement.
- Attend and support Board meetings as required.

Person specification

Essential criteria, knowledge and/or experience

- Senior leadership experience in finance, operations, governance and organisational management.
- Experience managing organisational systems, policies and professional service providers.
- Board and governance support experience.
- Experience working in charities, social justice or public benefit organisations.

Skills and abilities

- Strong organisational and strategic planning skills.
- Excellent communication skills, with the ability to work across teams and with trustees.
- Ability to manage complexity in a small organisation.
- Strong people-centered and values-led leadership style.
- Confident user of digital systems and organisational tools.

Knowledge

- Charity governance and regulatory compliance.
- HR practice and employment law.
- GDPR and data protection.
- Programme and organisational management.
- Understanding of inequality, criminal justice and social justice contexts (or commitment to learning).

Personal attributes

- Commitment to Unlock's values and lived-experience leadership.
- High ethical standards and integrity.
- Resilient, adaptable and solution-focused.
- Strong commitment to equality, inclusion and trauma-informed practice.

How to apply

Application deadline

Friday 8 May 2026

All applications will be acknowledged by email. Whether or not you're shortlisted for interview you'll hear back from us by 15 May.

Meeting our Insight panel

Tuesday 19 May 2026

The selection process will include an online meeting with members of our Insight Panel. The panel will be keen to explore how you would collaborate with them to ensure their perspectives are meaningfully heard, valued and embedded in shaping the services we provide to people with a criminal record.

Interviews

Thursday 21 May 2026

Interviews will take place online. We'll share the interview questions with you beforehand.

To apply for this role:

- Send your completed application form by email to admin@unlock.org.uk with the subject line 'Head of Operations, Governance and Programmes Support'.
- To help us meet our aims and commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion please complete our monitoring form [here](#). Any information you share is completely anonymous and will not form any part of the selection process.

Our shortlisting process

We shortlist candidates by matching details on your application against the person specification for the role.

The application form includes three role specific questions. We're looking for clear evidence of your experience, skills and knowledge and the approach you'd take to key parts of the role.

To help us recruit fairly we are using anonymous recruitment techniques. This means we will remove your name, gender and other identifying information when sifting and shortlisting candidates. As we work in a small specialist sector, it is possible that members of the selection panel may have had prior professional contact with applicants. Any such connections are declared and managed appropriately to ensure a fair and transparent process.

Our aim is to find out more about you, your skills, abilities and experiences. We know sometimes that means people need adjustments to fairly take part in applying for jobs. If you, at any point in the recruitment process, need adjustments to be made because of a disability, please let us know.

We actively encourage applications from people with criminal records

Our approach to criminal records for this role:

- We are a Ban the Box employer and won't ask you to disclose a criminal record on the application form.
- If you'd like to reference your lived experience of the criminal justice system as part of your application, this will only be considered for if/how it contributes to your suitability for the role. Your application will be anonymised before being assessed, including any potentially identifying criminal record details that you include such as the offence type or prison.
- If you would like to talk to someone in confidence about your criminal record before submitting your application, please email debbie.sadler@unlock.org.uk.

If you're successful at interview

If successful at interview, you'll receive a conditional offer and be invited to a separate, confidential disclosure discussion with our CEO and Head of Delivery and Programmes.

You'll be asked to tell us if you are currently subject to any supervision or conditions that may be relevant to the job. For example, if you are subject to restrictions that relate to digital access, such as use of social media, access to confidential databases, or requirements to provide access to your devices to supervising staff, or restrictions to where you can travel or the people you can meet we may need to discuss these further with you.

Thank you

If you have any questions, please contact Debbie Sadler on 07748 593 182 or email admin@unlock.org.uk.