



Recruitment Specification: Chief Executive Officer

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1. Introduction

Vision

Our vision is that the imagination and aspirations of all children and young people can soar through exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity, where their voices are heard, valued and reflected.

Mission

At ASCEL we inspire all children and young people to reach their full potential by championing excellence, diversity and equality in libraries.

About ASCEL

ASCEL is the national network of senior managers in Children's, Public and Schools Library Services. We were founded by library staff to provide the specialist skills, partnerships and programmes needed to deliver excellent services for children and young people in public and school library

services. We provide training, peer support, best practice and initiatives that develop and improve services. We have 166 individual members from 140 library services. We have 9 active regional committees which support place-based partnership working across the country.

We reach all 151 library services in England through the Children and Young People's Promise, a [Universal Library Offer](#). We also support those leading and delivering School Library Services. Our primary audience is staff and volunteers working with and delivering services for children and young people in libraries. All of our work is designed to ensure that all children and young people in England are able to experience exciting, vibrant and dynamic library services which promote inclusion and diversity.

We are a registered charity and were successful in gaining funding from Arts Council England to become an Investment Principles Support Organisation from 2023-2026. This means we have £200,000 per year core funding for this time to develop our support services for libraries and embed quality children's and young people's engagement across the library sector.

Our work as an Investment Principles Support Organisation commenced from March 2023 and our key projects are underway, including building a network of youth engagement groups across public and school library services. Our new CEO will need to build on and carry forward this work for 2024.

Co-creation with children and young people is central to our organisational development plan. We have always championed the needs and aspirations of CYP, but our new vision and mission place the voice of the child and young person at the heart of our organisation's aims and objectives.

Partnerships underpin our ability to create impact and change as a small organisation. We have formal partnership agreements with a wide range of organisations, including Libraries Connected, The Reading Agency, the National Literacy Trust, BookTrust, the LGA and the Autism charity Dimensions. We are also part of the CYP Mental Health Coalition.

Strategic outcomes for ASCEL

- 1. Children and young people feel that libraries are safe, welcoming places where their voices are heard and valued**, particularly the voices of those who do not currently use libraries, children and young people from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, who identify as LGBTQIA+ and neurodivergent, disabled and D/deaf children and young people.
- 2. The offer for Children and Young People is vibrant, dynamic and joined up** across public and school library services and through the Universal Library Offers and this in turn is integrated with other Arts Council England strategic investments in Children and Young people, especially Music Education Hubs and Local Cultural Education Partnerships
- 3. Staff and volunteers working with children and young people in libraries have access to talent development and career pathways** and the value of specialist skills in this area is recognised and rewarded by employers
- 4. The role of libraries in providing support and learning opportunities for children and young people is recognised and libraries are seen as first-call partners** for organisations delivering activities and interventions to support children and young people.
- 5. ASCEL is a diverse, inclusive and effective organisation** that supports libraries to provide an excellent offer for children and young people through direct engagement with their audiences, and open and collaborative working with partners and which provides staff and volunteers with access to high quality training, support and national partnerships

2. Role Specification

2.1 About the Role

Job title:	Chief Executive
Responsible to:	Trustee Board through the Chair
Responsible for:	The line management of a small core staff team
Salary package:	Up to £55,000 (dependent on experience)
Holiday entitlement:	25 days
Location:	To be confirmed
Application deadline:	20 th November 2023
Interview date:	8th December

2.2 Overview

We are looking for an ambitious, enthusiastic, and creative Chief Executive with strong empathy and listening skills who is passionate about our vision and mission. Our new Chief Executive will need to build on the work that we have started in 2023 and grow ASCEL so that it can deliver against its business plan and new role as an Investment Principles Support Organisation for the public library sector.

Working closely with the Board and the wider ASCEL members, the new Chief Executive will be responsible for carrying on the work of transitioning ASCEL into an established, credible, innovative and responsive organisation, which delivers significant impact and value for staff and volunteers working with children and young people in school and public libraries, and for the children and young people who use those services.

This role will also be responsible for leading the culture of listening to a diverse range of children and young people and centring their voices at the heart of our strategy, values and programmes of work.

Job Purpose

- To lead and develop the empathetic, listening and child-centred culture of ASCEL as it establishes itself as an Arts Council England Investment Principles Support Organisation;
- To work with the board to provide the strategic leadership and direction for ASCEL, developing and implementing the agreed vision, values, aims and goals, ensuring it delivers strong and demonstrable impact for children and young people and the staff and volunteers who work with them in libraries;
- To maintain existing close partnerships with other organisations to support ASCEL's long-term effectiveness and sustainability and develop new strategic partnerships;

- To ensure delivery of ASCEL's business plan, meeting key performance indicators agreed with Arts Council England and other stakeholders;
- To maintain and develop ASCEL's profile and reputation within the public library sector and beyond, sustaining the existing high levels of support for the organisation from its membership;
- To lead the diversification of income streams for the organisation, engaging with board members, funders and stakeholders to identify and bid for appropriate funding streams.

2.3 Skills and experience

Essential

- Experience of working with children, young people and volunteers
- Experience of creating a strong culture of listening and learning so that the organisation where they work is high-performing
- Demonstrable safe, ethical and inclusive practice (e.g. contributed to or developed policies, managed implementation, trained team, led on safeguarding etc.)
- Excellent listening skills with demonstrable ability to hear a diverse range of opinions and take them into account in developing work
- Experience and knowledge of charity governance, finance and reporting requirements
- Experience of public speaking, profile raising and influencing
- Experience of working with a range of people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Excellent communication and advocacy skills, particularly in amplifying under-heard voices on national platforms
- Experience of leading an organisation and/or managing a team to deliver impact for others
- Excellent understanding of the role of libraries within national and regional debates
- Experience of networking, building relationships and partnership working with a range of different stakeholders and political decision-makers
- Strong financial management skills
- Experience of identifying funding opportunities and successfully achieving new revenue
- Confident and skilled in using technology to work and connect with others

Desirable

- Experience of working with local government (officers and elected officials)
- Experience of leading and/or managing a small charity

Personal qualities

- An empathetic person who is able to understand a variety of viewpoints that are different to their own
- Passionate about the future of libraries and about centering the voices of children and young people in these settings
- Someone who trusts others and inspires trust
- Ambitious for ASCEL, the library sector and for children and young people
- Strategic thinker who can also absorb and analyse detailed information
- An entrepreneurial person with the ability to spot opportunities and develop them

- Someone who asks for feedback and is able to accept and act on it to improve their own performance

2.4 Responsibilities

The new Chief Executive will:

- Provide creative leadership and direction, reflecting ASCEL's values and a clear organisational vision;
- Support the monitoring and further development of our long term strategic plan to enable the organisation to achieve its vision;
- Work closely with the Chair/President and Board to sustain the engagement of the ASCEL membership in the delivery of the organisation's objectives;
- Continue the work ongoing to build an effective organisation with the voices of children and young people at its heart, which delivers for ASCEL members and for the children and young people they serve.
- Work closely with the Chair/President to represent the organisation in order to extend its influence and profile amongst opinion formers and relevant bodies;
- Position the charity strategically with government, partners and funders;
- Ensure sound governance, acting as the main interface between the Board and the executive team;
- Be accountable for the financial health of ASCEL, ensuring robust financial management, oversight, risk assessment and financial planning;
- Lead the staff team, supporting them to deliver the organisation's vision and business plan
- Undertake other duties as required by the Board and commensurate with this role within the organisation.

External responsibilities

- Take a strategic and leadership role in developing new contacts, networks, strategic partnerships and funding opportunities for ASCEL to develop existing and new business areas;
- Take high level responsibility for external communications and marketing and, where appropriate, engage with the media to ensure a high profile for the work of public and schools library services and ASCEL as an organisation;
- Maintain and develop close partnerships with counterpart organisations and members in the Home Nations to maximise the voice for public libraries across the UK;
- Keep abreast of local, national and international developments relating to children and young people, schools library services and public libraries as well as keeping up-to-date with developments in local authorities and relevant policy areas, including health and wellbeing, education and digital services;
- Stimulate and, where appropriate, drive new developments, cutting edge thinking and innovations across the sector which position ASCEL as a thought-leader in representing the voices of children and young people in the cultural sector;
- Work to influence public and schools library policy and advocacy with Government departments and other relevant bodies.

Internal responsibilities

- Oversee the creative development of projects and programmes ensuring a consultative and listening approach which centres the voices of children and young people;
- Oversee safeguarding and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policies, training and culture in the organisation;
- Drive and oversee fundraising efforts;
- Manage and support governance arrangements with the Board and sub-committees;
- Have overall accountability to partners, funders and other key stakeholders;
- Maintain a rigorous overview of the current financial position and the long term financial strategy, working with the Finance and Business function;
- Engage with the broader membership of ASCEL to ensure their continued ownership and support for the organisation, providing opportunities for school, education and public library staff at all levels to engage with, and contribute to, ASCEL's work;
- Establish strong and effective working relationships with other members of the staff team, with the Chair/President, the Board of trustees and ASCEL's Committee;
- Oversee delivery of ASCEL's annual seminar and programme of events, working closely with the Board and ASCEL's Committee to benefit from their skills and input;
- Develop policies which help the charity deliver its goals and ensure the well-being of the staff team, and the organisation's future health;
- Develop and oversee a risk log for the organisation, ensuring ASCEL develops a risk aware approach to developing the organisation.

3. How to apply

If you are interested in applying for this role you are welcome to book a conversation with our President and Chair of Trustees Annabel Gittins, to understand more about what it entails. Please email annabel.gittins@ascel.org.uk to book a time to speak with her if you wish to do so, however this is not mandatory.

In order to apply for this post, please send a CV along with a completed application form to Katie Pekacar at katie.pekacar@independentmind.co.uk by 20th November 2023. The timeline for applications and interviews is as follows:

Date	Activity
20th November	Deadline for applications
28th November	Applicants invited for interview
8 th December	Interviews take place in the Midlands

Appointment will be made subject to a satisfactory enhanced DBS check or evidence of a current enhanced DBS certificate and references