



Trustee Pack

Welcome from Annabel Gittins

I'm delighted that you are interested in helping to grow and lead our charity. Our vision is libraries where children and young people feel understood, empowered and inspired.

In a world where children and young people need real-life connections and safe spaces, our mission is to harness valuable support and resources to enable libraries to amplify young voices; co-creating vibrant, relevant and inclusive services, spaces and programmes that empower and inspire.

Our values are:

- **Progressive**
- **Aspirational**
- **Kind**
- **Collaborative**
- **Inclusive**

The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians (ASCEL) has been a membership organisation for senior leaders in children's, public and schools library services for over 20 years, and in 2022 became a charity. We are supported by Arts Council England as an Investment Principles Support Organisation with a focus on children, young people, families and libraries.

The Board of Trustees is made up of members and independent trustees with the skills and experience to help our charity grow sustainably and achieve its strategic objectives.

As we are a young charity, we have been working together with the small staff team to establish strong governance to help us develop and grow. Becoming a trustee at this time will give you the opportunity to help shape the charity's culture and strategic direction. We need help to plan strategically and create a strong, diverse, financially sustainable and caring charity with a high national profile.

Our trustees must have a passion for expanding the life chances and opportunities of children, young people and families, for the future of libraries, and for equality, diversity and inclusion. We are looking for a range of skills and experience among our trustees.

Read on for information about the charity's core purposes and details about the key skills and attributes we are looking for in a trustee.

We actively encourage applications from people who do not have a professional background in libraries and from experts by experience. We want everyone who believes they can contribute to charity's Board of Trustees to feel welcome to apply and we particularly welcome applications from people aged under 35, Black, Asian and ethnic minority candidates and D/deaf and disabled people.

It is our responsibility to make the application process accessible, and to give you the information you need to decide whether you might be suitable. If you require the pack or any further information in a different format, or have any questions before you apply, please get in touch with annabel.gittins@ascel.org.uk

This is an exciting time for our charity and I look forward to hearing from applicants who share our passion for inspiring children and young people to achieve their full potential.



Annabel Gittins

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Introduction to ASCEL

We are working to create libraries of tomorrow with children and young people. We do this by delivering high quality programmes and initiatives that enable the voices of children and young people to be heard.

ASCEL is the national network of senior leaders in children's, public and schools library services. We provide training, peer support, best practice, resources and networking initiatives that enable our members to give children and young people a dynamic, inclusive and innovative library experience.

We have nine active regional networks and a school's library service network, 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, which ensures children and young people are:

- Inspired by welcoming, inclusive library spaces, with a range of books that mirror the diversity of our world and make reading irresistible.
- Enabled to engage with imaginative digital opportunities, building their skills, literacy, knowledge and creativity.
- Encouraged to take part in formal and informal learning opportunities.
- Engaged by a wide range of creative and cultural experiences.
- Actively involved in decisions about library service developments and are offered opportunities to volunteer.
- Supported through library services and activities to improve their health and wellbeing.

We invite you to watch a short video and **hear directly from young people** about what their library means to them.



Strategic priorities



Our strategic priorities and workstreams to 2026 are:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Our charity 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.

Our website will provide you with more information about our programmes including our Youth Engagement Network and Schools Library Service Research.

We have a new website being developed in tandem with our new brand launch in Autumn 2025.

www.ascel.org.uk

Benefits of being a trustee



- You will have the chance to make a real and positive difference to children, young people and families through your skills and experience.
- You will learn about library services for children and young people and get to visit them as a trustee to observe their activities and impact on the lives of the communities they serve.
- You will gain new skills and experience that could help you develop professionally and in your personal life.
- You will hone and develop your critical thinking and strategic skills.

Chair / Co-Chairs of the Board

We are looking for our next chair or co-chairs of the board to take the charity forward through the next three years. Our current chair will be standing down in December 2025.

We are keen to recruit to this role as either a chair or co-chairs and would like to hear from you if you have the leadership and trustee skills listed below or are interested in developing as a leader.

Appropriate training and shadowing of the current chair would be available prior to stepping into the role.

Trustee roles

As well as a chair/co-chairs, we are looking for a number of trustees to join our board. We are seeking a range of skills and experience, especially:

- **Finance:** strong finance skills and experience to be both a trustee and a member of the Finance Committee. This could be someone with a good understanding of finance from any sector, but understanding of charity finance, SORP submissions and/or experience of finance management in a charity or cultural organisation would be ideal.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** equality, diversity and inclusion is key to our strategic objectives. We are particularly interested in hearing from candidates with diverse lived experiences or who have a track record in community engagement and amplifying children and young people's voices. We are looking for trustees to be active members and/or chair the People and Culture Committee.
- **Research and evaluation:** ASCEL will be undertaking a number of major research projects over the next two to three years and we are looking for someone with a strong professional background in research and evaluation to help guide and advise on the development of these projects.
- **Communications skills:** we are looking for at least one trustee with knowledge and experience of strategic communication and charity brand development. Political influencing skills would also be desirable. You may have gained this experience working in a charity or corporate environment or through campaigning for change in your local community.
- **Small charity management:** ideally we would like to include someone on the board who has experience managing and/or leading a small or medium-sized charity (this could overlap with other skills).
- **Commercial development experience:** we are looking for a trustee with experience of developing commercial relationships, including contracts, growing and building ethical revenue and, if possible, membership expertise.
- **Strategic planning skills:** we are looking for trustees with any professional background who have experience of strategic planning and organisational development to help us grow strategically and sustainably.

Trustee responsibilities

Board members will be both directors of a company and trustees of a charity. They will therefore, have duties and responsibilities under company law and charity law.

As a trustee you will need to:

- Uphold and adhere to standards of charity governance as set out by the Charity Commission [Charity Governance Code](#).
- Ensure ASCEL complies with our articles of association and carries out our charitable objectives for the public benefit.
- Share responsibility for ensuring that the charity complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Contribute to the strategic direction of the charity.
- Monitor the performance of the Chief Executive and team against the organisation's strategic and operational plans.
- Contribute to the identification and monitoring of risk.
- Safeguard the good name and values of the charity.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the charity.
- Ensure the financial stability of the charity.
- Ensure equality and diversity is prioritised in all aspects of the organisation's business and operation.

Formal guidance on the responsibilities of trustees is issued by the Charity Commission:


[The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do](#)

Trustee behaviours

In addition to the legal responsibilities of a trustee, we expect all trustees to:

- Attend all four board meetings a year, with a minimum attendance of three. Also to be prepared to travel to 1 in person board strategy day.
- Read all board papers in advance and arrive at Board meetings prepared.
- Participate in meaningful discussions at Board (and committees) with your expertise, skills, knowledge and experience.
- Scrutinise Board papers and challenge the Board, Executive and Board's advisers constructively, ask questions, be inquisitive and welcome challenge back.
- Actively input into discussions, apply good judgement and contribute to the decision-making process.
- Be prepared to support the charity outside of Board meetings.
- Build constructive, positive relationships with other Trustees and staff with a willingness to listen and understand.
- Seek and increase knowledge, understanding and be willing to learn and improve.
- Have courage to make difficult decisions when required.
- Be an ambassador and an advocate at all levels for the future of children's and young people's library services and for the charity.
- Maximise your networks and identify opportunities that will benefit the charity and children's and young people's library services.

How to apply

 To apply to be a trustee, please send a CV and covering letter setting out how you feel you meet the person specification above to Tabitha Witherick at info@ascel.org.uk by midday 2nd June 2025.

- All applications will be assessed against the criteria in this brief by the Chair and a panel of Trustees.
- Shortlisted applicants will be asked to attend an interview online on Monday 30th June or Tuesday 1st July 2025. You will be asked to indicate your preferred date when contacted for interview.
- Please let us know if you have any access needs.
- If you have any questions, please email Annabel Gittins at annabel.gittins@ascel.org.uk.



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