

NCO Board Recruitment Pack

Chair & Trustees



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1. About National Children's Orchestras

Purpose

Our purpose is to champion the life-changing power of music.

Mission

Together, we are using the power of music to create a supportive community that enriches lives.

We empower children to uncover the joy of orchestral music, unleash their creativity, realise their ambitions and embrace a future filled with endless possibilities. The confidence, resilience and teamwork learned through music become skills for life, wherever each young musician's journey takes them.

National Children's Orchestras was founded in 1978 by Vivienne Price MBE who recognised a lack of provision for younger aged musicians to engage with orchestral music. NCO set out to provide opportunities for children aged 8-14 to discover the joy of orchestral playing at the highest level, during a period of their lives when many give up their music as they transition to secondary school. Fast forward 48 years, there are approximately 24,000 NCO alumni, many of whom are professional musicians and music teachers across the globe.

Today, nearly 2000 children aged 8-14 connect with NCO each year. They take part through:

- Auditioned orchestral weeks and weekends
- Non-auditioned workshops
- Activities with schools and hubs
- Free tickets to concerts

The next few years will be defined by a significant expansion of free, non-auditioned activities and initiatives, increasing NCO's reach and impact by enabling thousands more children to play together, to be creative and to embrace the possibilities that music can offer them.



Our values influence everything we do and how we do it.

We believe no *dream* is too big.

When we're free to dream, explore, create and play, the world opens up. In music and in life, dream big – you never know what incredible things you'll discover along the way.

Dare to Dream



**We believe orchestral music shapes
*skills and hearts.***

Orchestral music is a wondrous world that nurtures empathy, resilience, and the courage to face whatever life throws our way. It builds strength of spirit, deepening connections to ourselves and the world around us.

Strength of spirit



**We believe everyone has their own
*brilliance.***

Everyone has a unique potential waiting to shine. In a supportive, inclusive environment, we can discover our own brilliance, find our voice, and grow with confidence and creativity.

Every Voice Matters



**We believe in the *power of
community.***

Our power lies in our unity; we grow together, support each other, and become something greater as one.

The Power of Us



Play together. Be unstoppable.

2. Who we are looking for

NCO Chair of Trustees

Following six transformative years as NCO Chair, Louise Mitchell CBE will retire from the NCO Board in May 2026. We are looking for an exceptional individual with a **passion for music education, significant leadership and governance experience** as well as the **relevant knowledge, understanding and networks** to build on Louise's impactful legacy. The new Chair will take a prominent role in supporting the financial sustainability and strategic growth of our national charity over the next 3-6 years.

"Being Chair and Trustee at NCO is a really joyful way of helping the next generation of musicians. Your skills and experience will help to enhance the impact of this inspiring charity. I've very much enjoyed helping to guide the dedicated staff team and our diverse team of volunteer trustees."

Louise Mitchell CBE

NCO Board Trustees

We are also seeking to appoint c.2 knowledgeable, dynamic, and dedicated individuals to serve as Trustees on our Board. We are particularly interested in candidates with experience in one or both of the following areas: **Finance & Risk Management, Fundraising**. We are just as interested in candidates without any prior governance experience, as in candidates who have served as a charity trustee before. We are open to those who work either inside or outside the arts sector.

For either role, we would particularly welcome applications from individuals based in Bristol/South west.



General attributes

In addition to the specific knowledge and experience outlined above, we want individuals who can support the mission of NCO by demonstrating:

- A passion for the transformative power of orchestral music making for young people
- An overarching commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and making what we do equitable and fair
- Support for our vision, values and strategic aims in relation to opportunity and diversity, learning and creativity, social impact and audience development.
- Commitment for securing the future of NCO as an organisation at the forefront of the music sector
- The ability to represent the organisation externally
- An ability to think creatively and innovatively
- Willingness to engage in fundraising activities in partnership with the development team
- Good judgement with strong leadership and interpersonal skills
- An ability to challenge and constructively contribute to strategic discussions in ways which ensure robust debate at Board level
- Appreciation of the non-executive nature of the role but with a readiness to support and mentor the senior executive team as appropriate
- All NCO Trustees must hold a current DBS certificate (NCO can arrange this for new trustees).

3. Role of an NCO Trustee

The day-to-day and operational management of the NCO is delegated to the Chief Executive. NCO's Board works closely with the senior management team to ensure the charity continues to achieve its ambitions and deliver public benefit.


Under the leadership of the Chair, the Board is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of NCO. Trustees are expected to engage with and support all aspects of the charity, helping to foster stakeholder relationships, representing the organisation regionally and nationally, and ensuring compliance including safeguarding. It is ultimately the Board's responsibility to ensure that the NCO remains focussed on its core mission.

Principal Responsibilities of an NCO Trustee

- To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in overseeing strategic direction to the organisation and agreeing overall policy in line with the values and objectives of the charity. Evaluating performance against agreed targets with the Chief Executive.
- To ensure that NCO complies with its Articles of Association, charity law and the requirements of the Charity Commission; conducting the charity's affairs in accordance with the principles set out in the Charity Governance Code.
- To ensure NCO's safeguarding policy is fully complied with and enacted.
- To promote the organisation's brand, profile and values.
- Appointing the Chief Executive, and monitoring the effective and efficient administration of NCO, ensuring the needs of beneficiaries are being met.
- To support the financial sustainability of NCO.
- To act with integrity and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets.
- To protect and manage the property of the organisation and to ensure the proper investment of NCO's funds.
- To take care and consideration in their work as Board members, using their personal skills, experience and best equitable practice as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run, efficient and compliant.

4. Role of NCO Chair

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, NCO's new Chair will:

- Provide overall leadership and direction to the Board of Trustees.
 - Ensure the charity's mission, vision, and values are upheld.
 - Work closely with the Chief Executive to support the development and implementation of long-term strategy.
 - Support fundraising and development initiatives
 - Ensure accountability and performance monitoring.
 - Chair board meetings and ensure effective decision-making.
 - Ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
 - Oversee risk management and safeguarding policies.
 - Act as a public ambassador for NCO at events and in the media.
 - Build relationships with stakeholders, funders, and partners.
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5. Board Structure

The current Board of NCO comprises 14 non-executive Trustees (also called 'Directors') who are chosen for their expertise, skills and experience. As we embrace the innovation and change seen in recent years and our status as a National Youth Music Organisation with regular funding from Arts Council England, we are looking to balance our existing skills and experience predominantly in arts/music and music education with those specifically listed above.

Board members are appointed for an initial term of 3 years and are unremunerated. We will cover all travel expenses and ensure people are able to travel safely to attend meetings and undergo Board business and we will meet all access requirements for meetings face to face and online.

The Board usually meets four times a year, including one away day strategy session. Responsibility for finances are delegated to the Finance Committee which also meets four times a year. Meetings take place either online or in person (in London or Bristol). In addition to formal meetings, Trustees are expected to attend events and engage in ambassadorial and fundraising-related activities around the UK, potentially requiring some travel. The overall time commitment for these roles is likely to be in the region of 7-10 days each year.

We are committed to ensuring that all new Trustees, no matter what background or level of experience, are fully inducted into the Board and supported in their governance role. NCO provides a digital induction pack for new Trustees as well as pairing you with an existing Trustee to support your introduction to the organisation. New Trustees will have the opportunity for individual meetings with the Chair and Chief Executive, as well as an invitation to visit the office and meet the wider team.

We are also committed to ensuring that the Board as a collective can undertake relevant training and attend industry networking events and conferences.

6. Safeguarding

NCO is committed to safeguarding and protecting the children in our programme. We ensure that our organisation has a range of policies and procedures in place so that we can do everything possible to safeguard our members. Applicants should possess relevant enhanced DBS documentation or be willing to undergo a new check with NCO.

[You can read NCO's Safeguarding Policy on our website.](#)

7. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

NCO works year-round with children and young people from across the UK, inspiring creativity and musicianship irrespective of race, gender, disability, belief, sexual orientation, or a low socio-economic background. We want our Board to reflect that diversity. We understand that for our organisation to fully reach our potential, we require a group of Trustees who bring a diversity of life experiences and lived experiences, cultural and social knowledge and expertise.

We are particularly keen to hear from candidates from backgrounds and experiences currently under-represented on our Board (representative of the Global majority, younger people under the age of 30, D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent, and anyone from low socio-economic backgrounds). We recognise that it is every single Trustee's responsibility to represent the full diversity of our organisation.

You can read [NCO's Equality Statement on our website](#).

[Please fill in this anonymous equal opportunities form before completing your application.](#)

8. How to Apply

[All applications must be submitted using this application form.](#)

You can find the application questions listed below to allow you to prepare them in advance, but you do need to complete the form to apply for the role. You can use one form to apply to be a Trustee, Chair or both. You will also need to supply the names and contact details for two references.

- 1. In place of a cover letter, please use this space to tell us a bit more about why you would like to be a Trustee/Chair at NCO and what attracts you to the role (500 words max.)*
- 2. Please refer to the Trustee Recruitment Pack and tell us how your skills and experience would contribute towards the general role of Trustee at NCO (if applying for Chair, please also address those of the role). (500 words max.)*
- 3. Please refer to the Trustee Recruitment Pack and provide evidence of how your skills and experience would contribute towards any specific area of expertise and/or lived experiences we are looking for. (500 words max.)*
- 4. Please use this space to succinctly list your work experience and education history in chronological order.*
- 5. Please detail your relevant qualifications and any other training you have undertaken.*
- 6. If you have any gaps in your work experience or education and would like to let us know, you can tell us about them here or at interview. (optional)*

If you would like to talk to us about this role before you apply, please email Beth Mackenzie (Head of Business Administration) b.mackenzie@nco.org.uk and we will arrange a call.

Deadline: Monday 24th November at 9am

First Round Interviews w.c. Monday 1st December, online

Second Round Interviews (if needed) w.c. Monday 8th December