

field School



Trustees

Introduction

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming a trustee of Autism Unlimited.

This is a really positive and pivotal time for Autism Unlimited. It's an exciting time to join our Board as we enter an ambitious period of strategic growth and expansion. Not only have we survived the challenges of Covid but our fantastic team have helped us to thrive and look to the future with great optimism.

We are one of the largest regional charities in the UK, supporting people living with autism and their families and educating children and young people. In the past three years we have expanded our services and reach, and we know that we have the capacity to double our impact over the next strategic period.

This ambition and sense of purpose is what drives us all and we have exciting plans ahead to change the world for autistic people. With a capital programme in the pipeline, and having recently rebranded, we are poised to extend our service provision across education, support, supporting people into employment and creating more awareness. We are planning a new research programme so that we can evidence our approaches and successes and learn more about what works and doesn't work to empower the autistic community.

Our Board is central to our success, and we are lucky to have a supportive and challenging board who work closely with us to deliver our strategic aims. We are charged with developing our board further now, with an eye to future capabilities and succession. We would love to bring additional skills and experiences on to the Board to increase our leadership potential. In the long run, we want our board to reflect our charity with diversity and lived experience and we are particularly keen to meet people living with autism who might be interested in taking a role. We are also keen to find people who have senior leadership experience in social care or in education.

You do not need to have been a trustee before, all we ask is that you are able to use your professional insight, your strategic ability and your absolute determination to improve the lives of children and adults living with autism.

If this excites you, please do apply via our partners at Starfish Search on www.starfishsearch.com. We'd love to hear from you.

Best wishes,

Siún Cranny, Chief Executive and Malcolm Farrell, Chair of Trustees



Autism Unlimited exists to support and empower those living with autism. Autism affects around 700,000 people in the UK and if you include their families, autism is a part of the daily lives of 2.8 million people. We recognise the challenges for children, adults and their families and will work with them as partners to find solutions and create opportunities through tailored learning and support. Our help is varied and far-reaching and our services are available to anyone who needs it – people with autism and associated difficulties, families and professionals and the environment we create is fun, friendly and joyful – we see the possibilities and opportunities and not the barriers and boundaries.

We are a progressive organisation with an ambitious vision; from a charity founded by parents of autistic children, who held our very first school in their garden shed, to now 50 years later delivering a range of services to adults, providing advice and information, bringing groups together to share experiences and support each other, providing assessments and diagnoses in the face of long delays and high fees, educating children from as young as 3 to 19 years in our Early Years provision, School and Sixth form, taking aspirations further by opening a new provision for 19 to 25 years when young adults can train and plan for careers and independent lives.

As a team of 500 employees, Trustees and Volunteers, we stand side by side with autistic individuals, to search for innovative ways to enhance the lives of those who we support, working in an agile way to constantly develop our services, and to explore ways to involve the wider community, such as employers and local authorities. We provide learning, life advice and practical skills that are as individual as an individual! We don't believe in boxing people in which is often the experience of our autistic community. From bespoke education for children, to independent living skills for adults, our aim is that everyone who comes to us for support finds a route to their aspirations and to a rich and fulfilled life.

Vision, Mission and Values

We are reimagining our vision, and mission to fit in the world as it is today, with all of its new challenges and to address the environment in which we find ourselves post Covid and Brexit. The sector has many challenges but, we are confident we have the right people and the right approaches to achieve our goals. As we evolve as an organisation, we will work side by side with people living with autism to raise awareness and promote understanding and in the process help autistic individuals achieve their full potential in a more inclusive world. We encourage and promote our talented people and they will always be at the forefront of our fabulous charity and the work we do.



Portfield School

Portfield School is a thriving non-maintained school for 90 pupils across two sites, one in Parley, near Bournemouth and the other, Sixth Form, presently in Christchurch will now be moving to a fabulous new site to accommodate more young people. We aim for this new site to be the funkiest sixth form on the south coast if not the UK! We want our young people graduating from our main school to have the best education, at a Sixth Form that everyone wants to go to – our young people deserve the best!

Residential Care

We operate seven residential homes for adults across the region for small group living in the community. Each of our bespoke properties provides a home from home and employs specially trained teams to provide a safe, supportive and positive environment, ensuring that personal interests, hobbies and needs are considered and met.

Community Support

We provide supported living services to people of all ages in their own homes and in the community. These services are across the counties of Dorset, and parts of Somerset and Hampshire. Our commitment is to provide every single person we support with the framework to identify the opportunities that are available to them, make considered choices about what they want to achieve and work in partnership to successfully achieve those aims. The Community Support Service has offices in Christchurch and Dorchester.

"Community Connect"

Our Community Connect team provide signposting, and information on autism and associated conditions. They can help with education options, support in school, college or university, support for families, counselling and training for professionals.

Futures Unlimited

Special Further Education for 19 to 25 years.

Our new provision for young adults launches on 8th November 2021. This exciting development is an innovative approach to truly surround each individual learner with the programme of their choice to enable them to meet their career and independence goals.

Assessment and diagnoses

Thanks to a generous legacy, we have developed and will open a new assessment and diagnostic service in December 2021. A nationwide shortage of assessment services has damaging effects on children and adults and their families whilst waiting long periods, often years, for assessments. Our services will provide timely assessments, with some support as a result, to enable people to negotiate the challenges of life with a new diagnosis. A diagnosis is often felt to be a solution, whereas what we have found is that the journey only begins with a diagnosis, and support and guidance is often needed to plan next life stages. It is our plan that once operational, a bursary scheme from reinvestment of any surpluses from paid assessments, will be available to assist those who might be unable to fund private fees.

Corporate Training and Awareness

It is crucial for us to engage with employers and to support them so that more autistic people can be successfully employed. Our corporate training programme provides all stages from introduction and awareness to in-depth training in recruitment, successful on-boarding, performance management and team support to ensure that organisation get the best from their autistic employees and vice versa! We guide employers on reasonable adjustments, illustrate the benefits of appointing an autistic employee and cover the relevant legislation in place. Training is also provided to ensure that businesses can provide informed customer service and ensure equal experiences to the autistic community.

Our Board

Autism Unlimited is governed by our Board of Trustees. Their primary purpose is to promote Autism Unlimited, uphold our vision, protect our assets and funds, and ensure that we comply with legislation and regulation.

Our Board comprises 10 to 12 trustees. We are working to strengthen our numbers and expertise as our services grow. We are keen to welcome trustees to our Board who have expertise in business particularly at a strategic level, in fundraising, senior operational experience in social care or clinical settings, or a leading role in the education sector. As our philosophy is one which combines psychotherapeutic approaches underpinned by an understanding and sensitivity to behaviour as a communication process, then those with interest and knowledge of approaches such as these and with experience of their application would be most welcome and encouraged.

Principally, as we look to the future, we envisage succession as our Board evolves with new members who have standing in their sector, whose vision might be to lead a charity such as ours in the future, whilst making aspirations a reality for our autistic community. Lived experience is, of course, hugely valuable to us and it is our vision that our Board will, in time, be far more representative of the autistic community.

You can read about our Trustee team here: [Trustees | Autism Unlimited](#)



Role Description

Our Trustees represent diverse backgrounds and are chosen for the skills and expertise they can bring to Autism Unlimited's delivery of support and services. Many who join us already have an understanding of the issues that affect people with autism.

Trustees are responsible for:

- Overseeing and contributing to the setting and shaping of Autism Unlimited's strategic direction, financial management and governance.
- Ensuring that Autism Unlimited is well governed, that effective governance structures are in place and are regularly reviewed and followed.
- Ensuring that Autism Unlimited works within its charitable objectives and is compliant with charity and company law within the jurisdictions within which it is registered and operates.
- Ensuring financial sustainability and robust financial management of Autism Unlimited.
- Championing our work by supporting our activities, fostering networks within wider communities and promoting what we do.
- Engaging in our work, acting as ambassadors for Autism Unlimited and broadening our reach and impact and from time to time offering additional resource as and when available.
- Supporting, questioning and holding to account the Executive.
- Sitting on one of two committees – Either practice and standards, or our school governing body.
- Furthering the charitable objectives of the organisation.



Person Specification

It is essential that in your written application you give evidence of examples of proven experience in each of the selection criteria in the person specification listed below. These responses will be developed and discussed with those candidates invited for interview.

A background in one or more of the following is essential for these appointments:

- Care – professionally qualified within social care, ideally in adult social care and preferably with experience in delivering learning disability services.
- Experience of a leading role within education.
- Portfolio expertise.
- Service design and delivery experience.
- Sales or business development expertise.

We are receptive to suitable candidates who have additional expertise, that may further enhance the subject matter areas of expertise we currently have as a Board.

Experience, knowledge and skills:

- Strategic leadership experience gained in a professional context.
- The ability to work supportively with other Trustees, advisers and executive colleagues to high ethical and professional standards and in line with their legal responsibilities.
- A proven strategic thinker with experience of operating at a senior management level and/or experience of leading or contributing to business and cultural change.
- A skilled communicator who is experienced in persuading, influencing, and advising.
- A commitment to transformational change, learning, improvement and performance.
- Aspirational and ambitious with a commitment to the aims and strategic objectives of Autism Unlimited and the ambitions of our growth strategy.
- A proven track record of translating strategy into plans that can work on the ground.
- You will demonstrate sound and independent judgment and your style will be consultative, collegiate and supportive.
- A personal commitment to improving the lives of all those living with autism and their families and with personal values be aligned with Autism Unlimited.



Terms of Appointment & How to Apply

These are unremunerated roles although reasonable expenses incurred through performance of duties will be reimbursed.

- Each term of appointment is three years and trustees may be appointed up to a maximum of nine years in total.
- Meetings are currently held virtually although we will be resuming face to face meetings in the New Year.

We hope you are motivated to express an interest in this role. If you have questions about the appointment process, please email joelle.prins@starfishsearch.com

To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/autism-unlimited-trustees/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We would also be grateful if you would also complete the Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

Closing date	17th December 2021
Preliminary interviews with Starfish	w/c 10th January 2022
Formal interviews with Autism Unlimited	w/c 24th or 31st January 2022

