



## Chair Candidate Brief

*Embrace. Empower. Educate.*

Role:	Chair of the Board of Trustees
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This job description is in Arial size 12 font. Should you require this description to be sent in a larger size or read out to you, please contact 0800 801 0400 or email [recruit@mermaidsuk.org](mailto:recruit@mermaidsuk.org)

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## A little bit about us...

'We use 'trans' as an umbrella term for people that are binary trans, non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender or of other non-cisgender genders, including those of non-Western origin.'

## The Charity

Mermaids has been supporting trans children, young people, and their families since 1995. Mermaids has evolved into one of the UK's leading LGBTQ+ charities, empowering thousands of people with its secure online communities, local community groups, helpline services, web resources, events, training, policy and stakeholder engagement and residential weekends.

We also seek to educate and inform wider society on gender identity by helping professionals accommodate and reassure gender diverse young people. Over the years, we've seen many changes in the language and understanding surrounding gender issues, but one thing remains the same: trans children deserve the freedom and confidence to explore their gender identity wherever their journey takes them, free from fear, isolation and discrimination.

## What You Can Expect

In supporting our mission to create lasting, positive change for trans people, now and for generations to come, you will receive our full support to thrive in your role. This includes comprehensive training, opportunities for professional development, a contributory pension, generous holiday entitlement, access to external supervision, and a range of additional benefits.

## Message from the CEO

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of the Board of Trustees with Mermaids. This is a truly exciting time to join the charity; there's no other organisation like Mermaids. Whatever you do here you will be supporting our work to achieve our mission and make positive change for transgender, non-binary, gender diverse children and young people for generations to come. Given the challenges facing young transgender people on numerous fronts, it is more important than ever for the charity to step up.



If you want to be involved in one of the most significant civil rights movements of our time, then this is where you need to be. This role will focus on further strengthening governance, restoring confidence among stakeholders, support organisational sustainability, and ensure the charity remains firmly focused on the needs and wellbeing of trans, non-binary and gender-diverse young people.

We are entering an exciting period of strategy development, where our support for trans kids and their families is more important than ever. This is a fantastic opportunity for the incoming Chair to work with other trustees, staff, volunteers and stakeholders to build strong foundations for our future success.

I joined the organisation as Chief Executive Officer in November 2025, bringing with me a long-standing commitment to youth advocacy and inclusive leadership. Supporting trans, non-binary and gender-diverse young people is central to my work. Throughout my career, I have championed policies that promote safety, dignity and equal access to opportunities, and I continue to listen closely to the communities we serve to ensure their experiences guide our direction. I am dedicated to fostering a culture of respect, belonging, and meaningful change for all young people.

If you have the passion and drive to help us achieve our vision, we look forward to hearing from you and, hopefully, joining us soon.

Yours,  
Jo Hardy (CEO)

## Message from the Chair

For over three decades, Mermaids has provided support, advocacy and safe spaces for trans, non-binary and gender diverse children, young people and their families. The next Chair will inherit a committed Board, a passionate staff team, and an organisation that continues to provide essential support to thousands of young people and families. They will also inherit a responsibility to lead with integrity, thoughtfulness and resilience in a complex and highly visible environment.



We are seeking someone who understands that effective governance is not simply about compliance, but about stewardship: creating the conditions in which an organisation can deliver impact, remain accountable, and stay true to its purpose even during difficult periods.

The role requires calm leadership, sound judgement, emotional intelligence and the ability to navigate complexity with confidence and empathy. It also requires someone who can foster constructive relationships, internally and externally, while keeping the needs of beneficiaries at the centre of decision-making.

Serving as Chair of Mermaids over the last 3 years has been both demanding and deeply meaningful. Having the opportunity to help shape the future of an organisation that matters enormously to many young people and families across the UK has been a privilege and I am thrilled to welcome a new Chair to lead the charity at this pivotal stage in the organisation's development.

Best wishes,  
Kathryn Downs  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

# Role Profile

## Chair of the Board of Trustees

The young people, children and families that we support are at the heart of everything we do at Mermaids.

Mermaids operates in a highly visible and often contested social and political environment. The organisation is emerging from a period of significant scrutiny and governance reform and is focused on rebuilding trust, strengthening organisational resilience, and delivering meaningful impact for beneficiaries.

This is a pivotal leadership role for an experienced, values-driven Chair who can provide strategic direction and oversight, strong governance leadership, and visible ambassadorial support to the organisation.

We are particularly interested in candidates who can demonstrate a combination of the following:

- Board chair or trustee experience.
- Charity governance experience

Mermaids is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from those with lived experiences (directly or indirectly) and/or close ties to the LGBTQ+ community. We actively support and encourage people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to join us and shape what we do. We are particularly keen to receive applications from BPOC (black and people of colour) and/or disabled and trans candidates.

### Key Priorities

#### **Governance and Organisational Strengthening**

- Continue to strengthen governance, oversight and accountability.
- Supporting board development and trustee effectiveness.

### **Organisational Sustainability**

- Supporting a healthy organisational culture.
- Supporting long-term financial sustainability and fundraising confidence.
- Strengthening stakeholder engagement across supporters, funders and partners.

### **Leadership/Strategic Leadership**

- Helping to develop, define and communicate new and updated strategic priorities
- Supporting improved decision-making accountability.
- Supporting internal and external engagement in a complex environment.
- Providing effective oversight and support to the CEO, including supporting their ongoing development and performance.

### **Safeguarding and Risk Management**

- Maintaining a strong safeguarding culture.
- Ensuring robust risk management and compliance practices.
- Supporting the charity in balancing mission delivery with operational resilience.

# Person Specification

## Chair of the Board of Trustees

We are particularly interested in candidates who can demonstrate a combination of the following:

- Experience chairing boards, committees or senior governance structures.
- Strong understand of charity governance and trustee responsibilities.
- Ability to lead through organisational complexity and change.
- Experience of contributing to strategy development
- Strong understanding of safeguarding and risk.
- Financial and organisational oversight capability.
- Experience in regulated or publicly scrutinised environments.
- Commitment to inclusion and social justice.
- Experience engaging with diverse stakeholder groups.
- Experience supporting executive leadership teams with both challenge and encouragement.
- Sound judgement and the ability to make balanced, evidence-based decisions.

## Key terms

**Salary:** The role of Chair of the Board of Trustees is voluntary (unpaid), but reasonable expenses – such as travel will be paid.

**Commitment:** We meet quarterly, generally on weekday evenings. Meetings are usually held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

In addition, the Chair of the Board of Trustees will be required to allocate time for:

- Committee engagement and stakeholder meetings as required. This will involve oversight and input into board sub-committees (currently Finance, Audit and Risk, and People and Culture) as well as main board.
- Regular meetings with the CEO.
- External engagement responsibilities.
- Additional time during periods of strategic importance or organisational change.

**Term:** The Chair of the Board of Trustees will serve an initial three-year term and will be eligible for re-appointment for an additional term of three years.

# The selection process

## How to apply

If you would like to be considered as the Chair of the Board of Trustees, please send:

- A comprehensive, up-to-date CV.
- A supporting statement explaining how you believe your skills and experience match the priority skills and experience that we are looking for, as outlined in the personal specification
- Details of any business or other interests which might give rise to conflict of interest, and how you could address this should your application be successful

to [recruit@mermaidsuk.org.uk](mailto:recruit@mermaidsuk.org.uk) with Chair of the Board of Trustees in the subject title.

Please include hyperlinks in the letter to relevant material and add all social media accounts to the body of the email.

## Safeguarding

Mermaids is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and this is a responsibility that is shared by all members of staff and volunteers across the Charity. The successful candidate will be subject to reference requests, safer recruitment checks and will be required to pass a Basic or an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (criminal records) check.

## Data Collection and Protection

We treat personal data collected during the recruitment process in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

## Equity, Diversity and Inclusion monitoring form

We want a team at Mermaids which is representative of society, and we want everyone to feel encouraged that our work speaks to their background and experience.

We won't deliver our mission (to relieve the mental and emotional stress of all trans\* YP) if everyone shares homogenous experiences and backgrounds. To help us review if

we are reaching out in the way that helps us achieve this, we would be grateful if you would complete this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring [form](#).