



## Trustee

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# RECRUITMENT PACK

Help us support families to get the right education for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

## A letter from our Chair



Many thanks for your expression of interest in the role of Trustee for Independent Provider of Special Educational Advice (IPSEA). Founded in 1983, we are a leading charity in the field of SEND law in England; providing free and independent legal advice and support to families of children and young people with SEND, and empowering them to challenge unlawful decision making. Our vision for all children with SEND is that they can fulfil their potential.

Over 1.7 million children and young people in England have special educational needs. Of those, over 638,000 have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. However, many families struggle to secure the provision their children are legally entitled to, necessitating them to take their cases to the Tribunal, where over 95% of cases are found in favour of families.

Nationally we are about to enter a time of change as the Government takes a White Paper through Parliament which could lead to updated SEND legislation and guidance. This could change how SEND services are delivered for children and young people and their families. We have an important part to play in highlighting the rights of children with special educational needs and disabilities during this time, and we will also need to respond to any changes through adapting our training and advice services as appropriate. Our core business though will continue to be helping children, young people and their families and carers to access the appropriate education, training, and support to which they are entitled under the law.

Our services are delivered through our team of highly trained staff and volunteers who are passionate about our vision. Through our charitable mission we:

- Provide free and independent legal advice and support to families of children and young people with SEND;
- Offer online legal guides, resources and template letters;
- Run a telephone helpline service for families;
- Provide specialist support to families navigating an appeal to the SEND Tribunal;
- Deliver training on the SEND legal framework; and
- Influence policy at both a local and national level.

It is a hugely exciting time to consider joining IPSEA as we work to launch our new strategy taking us to 2030. We see a future where we can grow to help even more families. Whilst we are not a large organisation we have big ambitions, are well respected in the SEND sector for our expertise and are strong and resilient as an organisation. Our new strategy will continue to support our aims to ensure high-quality services that are responsive to the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families.

We are now seeking new Trustees to join our strong collegiate Board. The Trustees play an important role in supporting and strengthening our organisation and in maintaining our strong financial resilience. Please visit our website for more information about our work, our staff and volunteers, and the Board of Trustees. I hope that you will consider applying for a Trustee role, you would be joining us at an exciting time, as we continue the charity's hugely important work.

Yours faithfully

**Dr Carol Long**  
Chair, IPSEA

# NEW TRUSTEES

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Our Trustees help shape IPSEA's strategic priorities at a time of unprecedented growth and when the external landscape poses some significant challenges for our beneficiaries.

We are looking to broaden and diversify our Board, filling skills gaps and bringing new perspectives and ideas to IPSEA's work. IPSEA's Board and senior leadership team welcome challenge and recognise the value that diversity of thought brings to an organisation.

As a trustee, you will gain experience of values-based collegiate decision-making and the opportunity to develop your knowledge in a range of areas, including charity governance, strategic planning, impact measurement and finance. It is not necessary to have previous Board or Committee experience as training will be provided. The role would therefore suit individuals taking their first steps to develop wider Board level and governance experience, as well as experienced trustees.

We are looking for people who have a strong empathy with our mission and we would particularly like to hear from candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds, marginalised groups and disabled people, as well as those with lived experience of the SEND system, either as a child or as a parent/carer. We are also interested in hearing from people with expertise and skills in one or more of the following areas:

- IT / Digital transformation / cyber security
- Governance
- Marketing and social media
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

Your expertise could be key to helping us continue our transformative impact, including making the SEND system work for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and their families.

We look forward to receiving your application.



# ABOUT IPSEA

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## OUR VISION, MISSION, VALUES AND STRATEGIC GOALS

### Our vision

Every child and young person with special educational needs and disabilities has the right education and support to thrive and achieve their potential.

### Our mission

We use the law to help children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities get the education and support they are legally entitled to.

### Our values

#### **Focused**

We are always focused on the child or young person in all that we do.

#### **Inclusive**

We welcome, respect, support and value our staff, our volunteers, our beneficiaries, and the communities accessing our services.

#### **Adaptive**

We actively listen and collaborate with openness and empathy and embrace continuous learning to create a positive culture.

#### **Compassionate**

We care about people; we appreciate other people's perspectives, and we are open to all. We understand our beneficiaries have different needs.

#### **Accountable**

We hold ourselves and others accountable for meeting our objectives and living our values.

#### **Proactive**

We anticipate challenges, seize opportunities and take initiatives that will drive meaningful change.

### Our impact

- Children and young people with SEND receive the education and support to which they are legally entitled, to thrive and reach their potential.

- Local authorities, education settings and health bodies work together to make sure that children and young people receive the special educational provision and wider support they need and to which they are entitled.
- All aspects of the SEND legal framework are applied in full and function correctly to support children and young people with SEND, and existing legal rights are protected.
- Children and young people with SEND who have additional vulnerabilities from under-served communities receive the special educational provision to which they are entitled by law, eradicating inequalities they experience.

## Our strategic goals: Empower, Educate, Influence, Innovate

This is a period of significant change for families, especially with the recent launch of the Government's [White Paper](#) and SEN reform [consultation](#). In response, we developed our strategy to support families through this change, with a clear focus on defending their legal rights to SEN Support and EHCPs as those protections come under increasing pressure.

### Our strategic goals in 2026-29

1. Empower all families of children and young people with SEND through expert legal information, advice, casework support and training.
2. Strengthen and enhance IPSEA's position as the leading charitable authority in SEND law.
3. Drive positive change within the SEND system to ensure the existing SEND legal framework is applied, protected and enforced through policy work and campaigning.
4. Train a broad range of professionals and practitioners to acquire the legal knowledge and skills to support all children and young people with SEND, with a particular focus on under-served communities.
5. Innovate and enhance IPSEA's operations, ensuring our services are family-centric and make best use of digital innovation and technologies.
6. Strengthen our organisational foundations and infrastructure to support capacity and growth ensuring sustainability and a positive focus on an inclusive culture and well-being.

## WHAT WE DO

Children and young people with SEND are legally entitled to educational support that meets their individual needs, but they frequently fail to receive what the law says they should. Through our advice services, policy work and training, IPSEA is determined to change this.

Since IPSEA was formed in 1983, we have helped to improve educational support for thousands of children and young people with all kinds of SEND.

The impact of this can be life changing.

If the needs of children and young people with SEND are properly understood as a result of a thorough assessment, if the necessary provision is put in place to support them, and if that support

is delivered in a suitable school, college or other setting, they are significantly less likely to experience multiple fixed term and/or permanent exclusions, end up out of education for long periods, experience mental health problems, end up “NEET” (not in Education, Employment or Training) or enter the criminal justice system.

## Advice services

Supporting families to ensure that local authorities meet their legal obligations is the prime focus of IPSEA’s work. We deliver our services across England, providing free one-off telephone advice and ongoing casework support to parents, carers and young people.

We run two helplines which operate on a call-back basis and a call-in helpline service. Our Advice Line provides one-off next step advice on any educational issue that relates to a child or young person’s SEND, including exclusion from school, home to school transport, disability discrimination and the process for obtaining additional support for a child or young person.

On our Tribunal Helpline we give next step advice on appeals and disability discrimination claims to the SEND Tribunal. The Tribunal’s role is to resolve disputes between parents/young people and local authorities where they are unable to agree on the support that a child or young person with SEND requires.

Our call-in service is designed for people to access on the spot advice if they haven’t been able to book an appointment on our Advice Line or Tribunal Helpline.

Through our Tribunal Support Service we provide families with in-depth casework support. This includes assistance with drafting appeal grounds, compiling evidence, assisting with the case management process, negotiating with local authority representatives, helping with paperwork and providing representation at the hearing. We prioritise cases that are complex or where the parent’s ability to advocate is limited – e.g. those who have literacy difficulties, for whom English is a second language, who have significant caring responsibilities or are themselves disabled.

Our advice services are enhanced by our easy to navigate website which is constantly reviewed and updated to ensure it reflects current law and policy and includes a series of template letters for parents and carers to use in securing the education their child is legally entitled to.

## Policy work

In addition to the support we provide to families, we use the evidence gathered from our helplines and casework to influence SEND policy and practice, and to achieve systemic change at a local and national level. We are regarded as thought leaders in the field, and we have been instrumental in shaping SEND law and policy over the past four decades through strategic litigation, influencing government and collaborating with other organisations in the SEND sector.

## Training

As well as training and supervising our volunteers, IPSEA's legal team devises and delivers a range of SEND law training to parents/carers, SENCOs, local authorities and other professionals working within the SEND system. Over the past year, we have trained over 1,400 parents and carers, ensuring they understand their children's legal rights and entitlements and that they feel empowered to enforce them.

## FUTURE AMBITIONS

We are currently developing our 2026-2029 strategy, which will focus on the growth and innovation required to meet the rising need for our services and ensure that IPSEA is ready to respond to any changes in SEND legislation.

The SEND system is at a crisis point and ultimately leads to many tens of thousands of children and young people with SEND not receiving a suitable education. Politicians from all parties agree that the SEND system needs to change in some way, and new legislation may be proposed. Through our policy work, we will influence and challenge policies to ensure the existing legal rights and entitlements of children and young people with SEND are protected, promoted and upheld.

At present, IPSEA is only able to assist one in five families who need our support. We must invest in expanding our advice and information services to ensure that more families are empowered. IPSEA is focused on supporting those most in need, including families who may not traditionally access our services and children who face the most barriers to getting the right education.

Over the next few years, IPSEA will focus on maintaining and growing our services, investing in digital solutions, building on our policy work, and strengthening our team and financial sustainability. Ultimately, this will ensure that more children and young people with SEND receive an education that meets their needs.



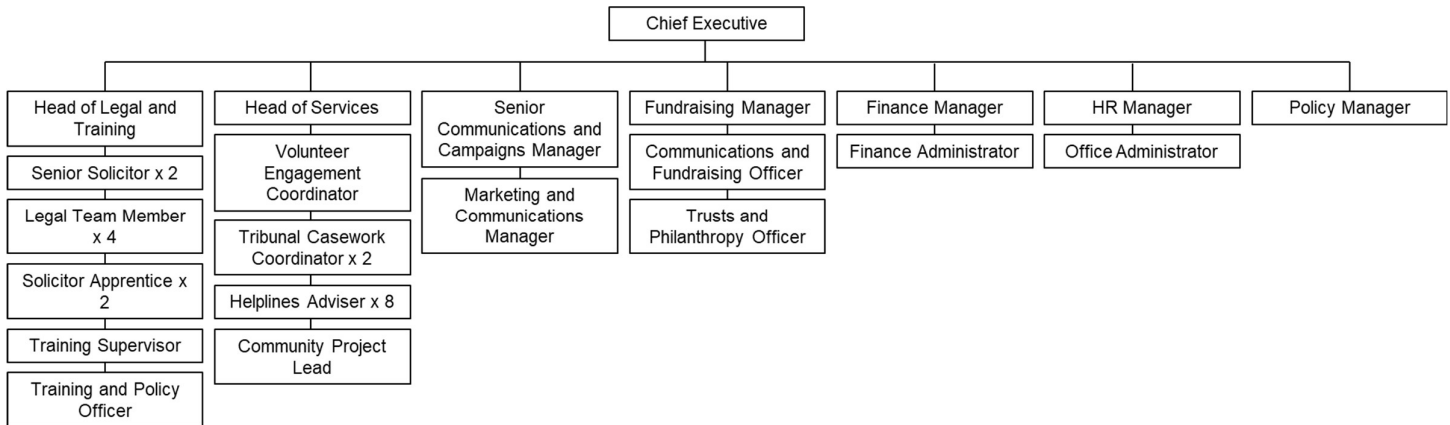
**“The County Council were unhelpful through the latter stages of the process, but Sarah’s [IPSEA volunteer] voice had a weight at this time that mine simply no longer had. She was able to get responses from the local authority when I continued to be ignored. She was able to lend much-needed authority to our responses, and again for that, I am also very grateful.”**

~ Parent helped through our Tribunal Support Service

# ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

We are a small charity with a turnover of circa £1,250,000, but we punch above our weight and hold a prominent position in the SEND sector. We have 32 members of staff and around 80 volunteers. A significant proportion of our staff and volunteers have lived experience of parenting a child with SEND and the challenges associated with navigating the system in order to secure appropriate provision and support.

You can see our organisational structure below:



# ABOUT THE ROLE

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## ROLE DESCRIPTION

- Remuneration:** The role of trustee is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although reasonable expenses are reimbursed in accordance with IPSEA's trustee expenses policy
- Location:** Board meetings are held in person (in central London or at IPSEA's office in Takeley, Essex) with the option to join some meetings virtually
- Time commitment:** Six board meetings per year, held on weekdays, plus at least one strategic planning/training day and other occasional IPSEA events (at evenings or weekends) if possible
- Reporting to:** Chair of Trustees

## Main duties and responsibilities

Being a trustee involves ensuring that IPSEA fulfils its objective to help children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), their families and carers get the appropriate education, training and support to which they are entitled under the law, and ensuring that IPSEA delivers on its vision, mission and values.

The Board of Trustees are jointly and severally responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, its financial health, the probity of its activities and developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines.

The statutory responsibilities and duties of a trustee are to:

- Ensure compliance with IPSEA's governing document, companies and charity law, and any other relevant legislation
- Ensure IPSEA pursues its objectives as defined in its governing document
- Act in IPSEA's best interests and in line with our trustee conflict of interest policy
- Ensure IPSEA is accountable and complies with its statutory accounting and reporting requirements
- Manage IPSEA's resources responsibly
- Act with reasonable care and skill

## SPECIFIC DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES

- To actively contribute to the Board of Trustees' role in determining IPSEA's strategic direction, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and monitoring and evaluating performance against agreed plans, targets and key performance indicators

- To ensure that IPSEA seeks the views of its beneficiaries and stakeholders when setting the organisation's strategic direction and policy
- To safeguard IPSEA's good name and values
- To act as an ambassador for IPSEA and to represent the organisation at events and meetings as appropriate
- To be aware of current issues relating to SEND policy
- To appoint the Chief Executive and monitor their performance
- To maintain and review a central risk register to ensure that key risks to IPSEA are identified and effectively managed, and that professional advice is sought and considered where appropriate
- To participate in trustee training as appropriate
- To prepare for and attend Board Meetings regularly, read papers in advance of meetings and contribute to discussion and collective decision making
- To attend subcommittee meetings as appropriate
- To keep informed about the activities of the organisation and wider issues which affect its work
- To use any personal knowledge, skills and experience to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions and further the objects of the charity. This will involve scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, and providing advice and guidance requested by the Board on new initiatives, or other issues relevant to the area of the organisation's work in which the trustee has special expertise
- To attend IPSEA events, including volunteer training, IPSEA-led conferences and trustee and staff away days
- To participate in other tasks as arise from time to time, such as interviewing new staff and helping with fundraising

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

### Experience

- Experience of working effectively with others towards a common goal
- A track record of sound judgement and effective decision making
- A commitment to promoting equality and diversity

### Knowledge, skills and understanding

- A commitment to the organisation and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship (training will be provided)
- Good, independent judgement and strategic vision
- Ability to act with impartiality and fairness
- Willingness to challenge and question others' views and ideas constructively
- An ability to work enthusiastically and effectively as a member of a team
- An ability to respect confidences
- An understanding of the respective roles of the Chair, Trustees and Chief Executive
- Willingness to be available to staff for advice and enquiries on an ad hoc basis
- Working knowledge of SharePoint and Microsoft Office

## NEXT STEPS

If you wish to apply for the role, please visit: <https://hr.breathehr.com/v/trustee-46082> where an application form is available to download. After completing the form, submit your application by clicking the 'apply' button at the bottom of the page. You will be asked for some personal details before being able to upload your form. Should you have any issues uploading the form and your CV please email a copy to [hr@ipsea.org.uk](mailto:hr@ipsea.org.uk).

The closing date for applications is **5pm on 29 May 2026**. The current Board of Trustees will review all applications and those whose skills and experience seem to be a good fit with IPSEA will be invited to an interview with a subcommittee of the Board. Interviews are expected to take place in person in London, during the week beginning **29 June 2026**.



[www.ipsea.org.uk](http://www.ipsea.org.uk)

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