



Big Leaf Foundation

Helping displaced young people belong and grow

join our board of trustees

We're seeking new trustees to join our board. This is an exciting opportunity to help lead Big Leaf Foundation in the next phase of its development and to use your skills and experience to make a lasting difference to the lives of displaced young people in Surrey.

The most effective Boards are ones that benefit from individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets and we are particularly keen to hear from people with lived experience of forced displacement and/or direct experience in one or more of the areas listed below.

While trustees might have distinct areas of responsibility, all trustees are responsible for ensuring the charity fulfils its charitable purposes, and for helping to take strategic and financial decisions.

We are seeking individuals with:

- commitment to our vision, mission and values;
- excellent teamwork and leadership skills and effective decision-making;
- willingness to commit time and effort to the role;
- good, independent judgement, strategic vision and ability to communicate ideas;
- history of impartiality, fairness and commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

We particularly need individuals with skills and experience in one or more of the following areas:

- charity governance;
- risk management;
- data security and IT;
- diversity and inclusion;
- evaluation and reporting.

Please read on to find about more. If you would like an informal chat with our current Chair of Trustees about the role, please email chair@bigleaffoundation.org.uk

We are also seeking a treasurer to take over from our current treasurer within the next 6-8 months and a full role profile can be viewed at www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk/vacancies

about us

Our vision is of a community where displaced young people are valued, supported and given the opportunity to create better outcomes for themselves.

Big Leaf Foundation is an award-winning charity working with displaced young people aged 15-25 across Surrey.

Our aim is to provide a nurturing programme of activities, projects and events that focus on combating social isolation and improving wellbeing for the young people we support.

We want to engage the young people we work with to be excited about the opportunities available to them, and to value their unique talents and abilities so that they can rediscover their potential and move forward with renewed optimism.

We want to support and empower these young people to know they are more than the status they have been given, and help them find their place within the local community.

Our projects range from sports and creative arts projects to full-day English language schools, specialised casework support and residential workshops, alongside leadership programmes, summer schools and progression opportunities. All of our projects are built with the focus of helping young people feel more empowered within their own lives, their local communities and within Big Leaf itself.

“

It makes me feel like a family and not like I am alone. Like I have someone beside me that can help and support me.” Y

The young people we support have all been forced to leave their homes – many fled conflict and religious or political persecution, some were trafficked, some were kidnapped from their families and forced to train as child soldiers, and others were promised the dream of a better life and smuggled to the UK at huge cost to their families.

In 2023 we supported 285 young people from 23 different countries. The majority of young people we support arrive as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and 63% of our beneficiaries are 15-18 years-old.

Separated children arrive alone, often in shock and without language or cultural understanding. They have to navigate their new lives, and the long and complex asylum system, without the support of family or friends. Even for those who come with family or through resettlement schemes, the experience can be overwhelming, confusing and incredibly difficult.

But despite trauma, anxiety and an asylum system that seems focused on destroying their rights, these young people are resilient, strong and determined. They are full of hope and optimism and given the proper support, they can thrive in the UK and in their new communities.

“

Big Leaf provides invaluable opportunities for young people seeking asylum... to connect with others, try new activities, find a passion and develop their English and social skills... The staff are polite, passionate and put the young people at the heart of all they do.”

Emma, keyworker

our approach

We're a growing team of passionate individuals, determined to support and empower displaced young people to know they are more than their status, and help them find their place within their local community.

Our team includes refugee care and migration studies experts, experienced youth workers, volunteers with lived experience of forced displacement and finance, project management, fundraising and communications specialists. The team has combined experience of more than 20 years working with displaced young people.

our values

trust & transparency

Nothing is more important to us than trust, because so many of our young people have experienced a world in which they can trust no one. It's essential that we build trusted relationships with our young people, and that they have confidence that we will always act in their best interests. We do this through maintaining high standards of openness, honesty & transparency.

equality

We want everyone to feel welcome at our projects. We approach everything we do with empathy and compassion. We strive to create a sense of community to which we all belong, on equal footing and to create a safe, secure and non-judgemental space for young people to engage and build new friendships, explore new activities, and uncover their talents and passions.

growth

Everything we do is focused on promoting the personal growth of our young people – growth that allows them to know they are more than the status they have been given and that each one of them is unique and valued. Growth is also at the heart of our approach to governance. We prioritise team learning, work to embody best practice and aim to make each project better than the last.

working in partnership

Partnerships are integral to our work. To achieve our vision of a community where displaced young people are valued and supported we need to build strong connections within the community. We do this through working in close partnership with local organisations, agencies and businesses.

Over the last five years Big Leaf has built has a network of more than 35 community and multi-agency partners. These partnerships bring valuable skills and experience to our work, and are essential to building connection, trust and understanding within the community.

youth leadership

We recognise that young people with direct experience of forced displacement are best placed to create projects and campaigns that meet their needs and the needs of their peers. Our young leaders programme supports young people to build skills and confidence, helping them feel more empowered within themselves, their local community and to lead within Big Leaf itself.

our projects

Now in our sixth year, we've learnt so much from the young people we support about the challenges they face. Our projects are designed to address these challenges and are built around four key strands: safety, health and wellbeing, connecting communities and growing knowledge.

“

Big Leaf gave me the confidence and knowledge.
I have made such good friends, like family.
Big Leaf supported me and most importantly
gave me the courage to enter the world.” M



“

The only family we have is Big Leaf... you've taught us and you are keeping us going and keeping us safe.” Merhawi



Big Leaf Foundation



about the role

The trustees are jointly 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.

All trustees should also be aware of, and understand, their individual and collective responsibilities, and should not be overly reliant on one or more individual trustees in any particular aspect of the governance of the charity.

Remuneration | voluntary (+ expenses)

Location | Surrey with key project hubs in Redhill and Guildford

Hours | flexible but estimated at 2-4 hours per week; to include trustee meetings and attendance at min. 2 projects per year and a strategy planning day

Commitment | 2 years with option to renew for a further two terms

meetings

The trustee board meets approximately eight times per year with meetings lasting up to three hours. Most meetings are online but we aim to meet in person at least once per year. We also ask that trustees attend a minimum of two Big Leaf projects per year as we strongly believe this contributes to a better understanding of our organisation, how we work and the young people we support.

sub-committees

We are in the process of establishing new working groups to oversee/deliver specific areas of work including: Diversity and Inclusion; Partnerships and Patrons; Risk Management and Evaluation and Reporting. These will sit alongside our existing Safeguarding and Fundraising sub-committees. Each committee is expected to meet once every 1-2 months and report back to the trustee board at bi-monthly meetings. No individual trustee will be expected to join more than one working group.

safeguarding

Safeguarding is embedded in Big Leaf and all trustees, staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training through our safeguarding partner, SafeCIC, as part of their induction and every two years thereafter. We have a range of policies in place to support good practice, including safeguarding, health and safety, lone working and codes of conduct for trustees, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries. Big Leaf also has a Safeguarding sub-committee that meets once a fortnight to discuss safeguarding and update policies and processes as needed. Successful applicants will be required to undertake a criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

duties of a trustee

The statutory duties of a trustee are to:

- Ensure the organisation complies with its governing document.
- Ensure that the organisation pursues its objectives as defined in its governing document.
- Ensure the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives – the charity must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objectives, no matter how 'charitable' and 'worthwhile' those activities are.
- Contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the good name and values of the organisation.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation.
- Ensure the financial stability of the organisation.
- Protect and manage the property of the organisation and to ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds.
- If the organisation employs staff, to appoint the Chief Executive Officer and monitor his or her performance.

In addition, with other trustees to hold the charity "in trust" for current and future beneficiaries by:

- Ensuring that the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these.
- Being responsible for the performance of the charity and for its "corporate" behaviour; ensuring that the charity complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Acting as guardians of the charity's assets, both tangible and intangible, taking all due care over their security, deployment and proper application.
- Ensuring that the charity's governance is of the highest possible standard.

Trustees should make full use of any specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the board make good decisions and all trustees must adhere to our Trustee Code of Conduct.

how to apply

Please send your CV and a covering letter explaining your reasons for wanting to be a trustee at Big Leaf to contact@bigleaffoundation.org.uk. You are welcome to submit a video as an alternative to the covering letter if preferred.

We are aiming to conduct interviews in the autumn with a view to new trustees starting late 2024/early 2025.