



TRUSTEE



RECRUITMENT PACK

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

Thank you for your interest in becoming a trustee of IPSEA

We are the leading provider of free and independent legal information, advice and casework support to families of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Becoming a trustee is an exciting opportunity to help shape IPSEA's strategic priorities at a time of unprecedented growth and when the external landscape poses some significant challenges for our beneficiaries. With two of our current trustees reaching their maximum term of appointment in Autumn 2024, 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 (but this would be desirable and for the avoidance of doubt this experience does not need to be in relation to a Charity role). 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. We are looking for applicants who can demonstrate an interest in the law relating to SEND, and an in-depth understanding of IPSEA's work and ambitions. We welcome applications from individuals with diverse identities, including people with disabilities and those from other under-represented communities, particularly 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 (although this is desirable and not essential):

- Advice services/helplines management
- Volunteer management
- Audit
- Digital & Cyber Security
- Charity law & regulation
- Data protection
- PR and Media Relations
- Human Resources Management

If you wish to apply, please review the following document and [complete an application form](#).

The closing date for applications is **9am on Friday 2 August 2024**. 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 during the week beginning 12 August 2024.

If you would like an informal chat about the role before applying, I would be delighted to speak with you. Please email uriah.smith@ipsea.org.uk to arrange a call.

I look forward to receiving your application.

Yours faithfully

Uriah Smith

Chair of the Board of Trustees

ABOUT IPSEA

OUR IMPACT

As the leading provider of free and independent legal information, advice and casework support, IPSEA works to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the educational support they are entitled to by law. 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.

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.

We are a small charity with a turnover of close to £1,000,000, but we punch above our weight and hold a prominent position in the SEND sector. We have 26 members of staff working across six teams (Development and Communications, Policy, Legal, Finance, Fundraising, Advice Services). Our advice services, which assist around 4,000 families per year, are delivered by a network of volunteers, trained and supervised by IPSEA’s legal team. 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.

Advice and casework support

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.

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.

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 (Las) where they are unable to agree on the support that a child or young person with SEND requires.

Through our Tribunal Support Service (TSS) we provide in-depth casework support to parents, carers and young people appealing to the SEND Tribunal, including assistance with drafting appeal grounds, compiling evidence, assisting with the case management process, negotiating with LA representatives, helping with paperwork and providing representation at the hearing.

Our 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 to which their child is legally entitled.

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

Following a change in the charity's leadership, we are in the process of reviewing and finessing our strategy and we have ambitious plans for the future. The next few years will pose significant challenges for children and young people with SEND. The Government published its SEND Improvement Plan in March 2023, which set out a range of planned changes to the SEND system to be "tested" over a two year period. This testing period will therefore come to an end during the early tenure of the political party elected to govern in July's general election. Whichever political party is in government, and whatever the outcome of the SEND Improvement Plan testing, we must be appropriately positioned to make sure that children and young people with SEND don't get forgotten as education policies are developed, and that their legal rights and entitlements are protected, promoted and upheld. As a recent example of our external communications, a recent online BBC News article highlighted the pressures the SEND system currently experiences and IPSEA's central role both in calling challenges out and advising on obligations and needs in these conditions.

We are also determined to ensure that we can better meet the increasing demand for our advice services, and that we are delivering support in a way that meets people's individual needs. We want to make greater use of technology, and reach more of the families and young people who don't traditionally reach out to us, but who may need us the most, including those in the care system, in penal detention and with an unsettled immigration status.



"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

TRUSTEE 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:	Typically a minimum of six board meetings per year, held on weekdays, plus at least one strategic planning/training day, occasional working group meetings 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 (see appendix 1).

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 contribute actively to the Board of Trustees 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 considers 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 keep abreast of current issues relating to SEND policy
- To take part in the appointment of the Chief Executive and monitor their performance as appropriate
- To contribute to the maintenance and management of 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 IPSEA's work
- To use any relevant 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 areas in which the trustee has special expertise
- To attend IPSEA events, including volunteer training, IPSEA-led conferences and trustee and staff away days where possible
- To participate in other tasks as arise from time to time as appropriate, such as interviewing new staff and helping with fundraising.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Experience

- Experience of working effectively with others towards a common goal
- Experience of strategy development, articulation and accomplishment
- A track record of promoting diversity, equity and inclusion
- Demonstrable experience of building and sustaining relationships with key stakeholders and colleagues to achieve organisational objectives
- Proven track record of effective decision making

Knowledge, skills and understanding

- A commitment to the charity and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort to the performance of trustee obligations
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship (training will be provided)
- An ability to exercise good judgment, impartiality and fairness
- The willingness and ability to challenge and question others' views and ideas constructively
- An ability to work enthusiastically and effectively as a member of a team as well as independently where required
- An ability to respect confidences
- An understanding of the respective roles of the Chair, Trustees and Chief Executive
- A willingness to be available to staff for advice and enquiries on an ad hoc basis, within an appropriate structure



IPSEA
Independent Provider of Special
Education Advice

www.ipsea.org.uk

Registered charity number 327691

Limited company 2198066