

**CHAIR OF TRUSTEES
RECRUITMENT PACK
2024**



**WE
ARE
FAMILY**

ADOPTION SUPPORT COMMUNITY



WELCOME LETTER FROM THE CURRENT CHAIR

Thanks for your interest in the joining the Board of We Are Family.

Since the organisation's founding in 2013 it has gone from strength to strength – growing to over 1,500 members, primarily across London and the South East, with a total reach is excess of 3800 people. We are expanding and have big ambitions for the future. We Are Family provides a range of opportunities for adopters and prospective adopters to connect, share experiences and provide support as well as webinars, podcasts and a wealth of useful resources to support members throughout their adoption journey.

We Are Family is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) governed by a board of Trustees. Everything we do is driven by our values of community, inclusivity, independence, reliability and safety.

In November 2025, I will come to the end of my 6 year term as a trustee of We Are Family. It has been a pleasure and privilege to serve as a trustee and to act as Chair for nearly five years.

We are inviting expressions of interest to join the board as our new Chair of Trustees. This pack tells you more about us, the opportunity and commitment and how to apply.

We look forward to hearing from you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Hoult-Allen'.

Mark Hoult-Allen

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST



WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

OUR VISION AND MISSION

Vision statement

We want to see a world in which adoptive parents and prospective adopters feel connected, benefit from peer support and are part of a community which enables them to thrive.

Mission statement

We Are Family works to ensure that adoptive parents and prospective adopters are part of a community, offering each other support from a place of lived experience through the highs and lows of parenting.

Our aim is to promote the health and wellbeing of prospective adopters and adoptive parents throughout the UK. We seek to connect people at the same stage in their adoptive journey, so they can build strong relationships and networks of peers, as well as creating opportunities to hear the experiences of others at different stages.

Equality & Diversity

At We Are Family we embrace diversity and feel passionate that our trustee board should be truly representative of the people it serves. We're therefore encouraging applicants from all backgrounds and (especially those) from Black, Asian and global majority groups.



WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

WHO WE ARE

We Are Family is a peer support community by adopters, for adopters. We're there for families throughout their adoption journey.

Originally founded in 2013 by adopters who experienced first-hand the lack of post-adoption support available for their families and wanted to provide locally-based peer-to-peer support for adoptive parents. From one group in Hackney & Islington, the organisation grew to seven over two years.

Online and in person, our parents' groups, events, resources, podcasts and talks offer mutual support, information and inspiration to adopters and those considering adoption.

We Are Family's small part-time staff team (Director, Head of Operations, Development & Partnerships Manager, Community Development & Engagement Manager, Programme & Content Manager) are supported by a number of volunteers and by the trustees.

The charity is funded through grants from Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) and Voluntary Adoption Agencies (VAAs), trusts and foundations and a small (but growing) individual giving stream.

THE ADOPTION JOURNEY

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

Adoptive Families
Prospective Adopters
Regional & Voluntary Adoption Agencies
Funders and Supporters
Policymakers
Wider Society

Adoptees have almost invariably suffered early trauma

The journey to adoption has many ups and downs

START
Placement is the beginning of the story, not the end.

THE PROBLEMS WE NEED TO SOLVE:

PROBLEM
On the adoption journey, there is a lack of targeted and tailored peer support

PROBLEM
On the adoption journey, there is a lack of freely accessible information to help parents better support their children/families and advocate for them

PROBLEM
On the adoption journey, there is difficulty in accessing structured support and making adopter voices heard

VALUES
Keeping us on track
RELIABILITY

THE CHANGE WE NEED TO CREATE:

CHANGE
We need to create
Improved well-being of parents, and by extension, their families

VALUES
Keeping us on track
COMMUNITY

CHANGE
Improved understanding of how to respond to the challenges the face

CHANGE
Access to the right services at the right time

WE ARE FAMILY

ADOPTION SUPPORT COMMUNITY

VALUES
Keeping us on track
SAFETY

HOW WE CREATE THE CHANGE:

HOW
We are making the change
AMPLIFYING VOICES
We use the voice of our We Are Family community to amplify calls for improved support for adoptive parents and families

VALUES
Keeping us on track
INDEPENDENCE

HOW
We are making the change
CONNECTION & RELATIONSHIP
Adoptive Parent and Prospective Adopter support. Peer support groups, family meet ups, social events, cultural connections... for all stages of the journey.

They say it takes a village to raise a child. WAF is building those villages.

MISSION
Our mission is to ensure that adoptive parents and prospective adopters are part of a community, offering each other support, from a place of lived experience, through the highs and lows of parenting.

GOAL
Our vision is to see a world in which adoptive parents and prospective adopters feel connected, benefit from peer support, and are part of a community which enables them to thrive.

VALUES
Keeping us on track
INCLUSIVITY



WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

OUR SUPPORT

We Are Family membership is FREE. We offer:

CONNECTION & RELATIONSHIP

Online and in-person groups including:

- Parent Support Groups
- Playgroups and Family Meet-ups
- Parent Socials
- Single Adopters Support Group
- Prospective Adopters Support Group
- Thematic Groups such as 'Teens and Tweens'

INFORMATION & INSPIRATION

- WAF Talks webinars - inviting leading experts to share their knowledge, available live and on-demand.
- Member-led blog, and our podcast series 'Adoption Shared'
- Access to our digital Member Hub featuring regular news, updates, recommendations and opportunities.

AMPLIFYING VOICES

Amplifying adopter voices to improve support for adoptive parents and families.

I was lucky that I found We Are Family early into our placement, my husband and I were struggling a great deal with the challenges with no family or support close by and being part of We Are Family changed that. I don't believe that we would have the relationship with our children that we have now if it were not for the help, support and understanding that other WAF members gave to me.



THE ADOPTION LANDSCAPE

Adoption provides a new, permanent family to a child or group of siblings who cannot be raised within their birth family. Adoptive parents take on a lifelong commitment, with the same rights and responsibilities as a biological parent.

Whilst adoption has been around for centuries, the process and legal system surrounding adoptive families has evolved significantly. The profile of an adoptive family is also quite different - today, the majority of adopted children will have suffered abuse or neglect in their birth families¹ and most spent time in foster care. This means that adoptive parents are often caring for children who have experienced early trauma, with increased risk of social, emotional and mental health difficulties². To compound these challenges, post-adoption services are not always accessible, and the level of support is usually lower than what was available when the child was in foster care³.

A two-year evaluation of the Adoption Support Fund (ASF) by King et al. (2019) showed that whilst it contributes to positive outcomes, more must be done to sustainably support adoptive families into the longer term⁴. In addition to the services that we offer adoptive parents, We Are Family aims to promote the importance of access to consistent, reliable and sustainable support for adoptive families in order to improve adopter health and wellbeing.

¹<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/d1162385-ef28-47d1-8bdd-99a27d0a2714>

²Gore Langton, E. (2017). Adopted and permanently placed children in education: From rainbows to reality. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 33(1), 16-30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02667363.2016.1217401>

³Palacios, J., Rolock, N., Selwyn, J., & Barbosa-Ducharne, M. (2019). Adoption Breakdown: Concept, Research, and Implications. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 29(2), 130-142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731518783852>

⁴King, S., Gieve, M., Iacopini, G., Hahne, A. S., & Stradling, H.. (2019). Are the early benefits of the Adoption Support Fund (therapeutic support for adoptive families) sustainable? *Journal of Public Mental Health*, 18(1), 66-72. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-08-2018-0056>

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
TRUSTEE

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

OUR IMPACT

- Over 1,500 members across the UK and beyond - REACH in excess of 3800
- 1,250+ resources and webinars in the Member Hub. 89% have watched a WAF TALK, citing highlights as the information / support provided (82%) and it feeling like parent self care.
- Over 1,500+ lifetime peer support hours
- 82% of members agree or strongly agree that since joining WAF, they have opportunities to engage with a variety of experience on adoption.
- 57% have attended PEER SUPPORT GROUPS, citing highlights as the ability to share openly about challenges (73%) and the opportunity to meet / connect with other adopters (71%).



**Approximate number based on available data.*

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

KEY PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

We Are Family are recognised by our partners for the significant positive impact that we have on adoptive families' lives. Many adoption support groups are local authority run and as such are not able to offer the independent, safe-space approach and flexibility of service provision based on member feedback that We Are Family is able to offer. We Are Family provides additionality to existing statutory support services. Some of our current funders, including Trusts & Foundations, are shown here:



As an adopter-led organisation, We Are Family is uniquely able to support fantastic adopter peer support networks in a way which is most helpful for parents and responsive to their needs. Through We Are Family, our adoptive parents are connected to social networks of other adoptive parents from the earliest stages of adoption, providing parents with a place to seek advice, normalise parenting challenges, and reduce the potential for isolation.

Adopt London, Partner





WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

We Are Family became a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) in 2015 and, as such, is governed by the charitable objects set out in its Constitution. The trustees of the charity have legal, financial and fiduciary duties under charity legislation.

The Board of Trustees fulfils the important roles of scrutiny and governance. This includes responsibility to:

- Ensure that the organisation works to its Vision and Mission
- Maintain a policy of inclusiveness and diversity
- Ensure responsible financial control which is prudent and sustainable
- Support the striving for excellence and high quality in all which We Are Family is involved

The Board of Trustees draws on its members' extensive knowledge, skills and experience to provide strategic and occasionally operational guidance for the charity and to advocate for it within appropriate contexts.

The Board of Trustees currently operates a Finance, Fundraising and Resources Committee made up of Trustees and members of staff whose skills and specialisms fall into this area.

Further short-term 'task and finish' or 'working groups' are established by the board in order to address specific issues or new business. Current working groups include the Education Working Group.



CURRENT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board consists of up to 16 trustees including the Chair and Deputy Chair.

Current trustees include:

- Mark Hoult-Allen (Chair)
- Liz Davenport (Deputy Chair)
- Pauline Gillbanks (Treasurer)
- Amy Burns-Thompson
- Andrew Taylor-Dawson
- Anita Giveas
- Anna Willow
- Claire Walsh
- Diane McGrath
- Esi Cathline
- Mike Clarke
- Sophie Miller

The Company Secretary role is currently vacant.

Biographies of the current trustees can be found at

<https://wearefamilyadoption.org.uk/about/our-board/>

Any appointment to the Board is as a trustee of the Charitable Incorporated Organisation and the Board's role and responsibilities are governed by charity law in England and Wales.

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST



WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

THIS OPPORTUNITY

We are looking to appoint a new Chair of Trustees. The successful candidate will gain experience of We Are Family for 6-9 months as Vice Chair of Trustees working alongside the current Chair and Deputy Chair of Trustees, prior to becoming Chair by November 2025.

We are looking for an individual with a strong understanding of the challenges facing adoptive parents and who shares our commitment to supporting adopters and prospective adopters throughout their adoption journey.

Ideal candidates will have strong governance knowledge, the capacity to think strategically, work collaboratively and lead the Trustees in making significant contributions to our future. Applicants will have been Chair or Deputy Chair of a Board of Trustees previously.

Commitment

- Chair 4 Board meetings per year
- Attend 4 Sub-Committee meetings per year
- Help plan and chair 2 Board away days per year (on a Saturday)
- Fortnightly check-ins with the Director
- Join the staff team meeting once per month
- Induction meetings with new Trustees

Board and committee meetings are held in the evening via Zoom and dates of meetings are distributed a year in advance. The away days are held in person in central London.

Associated Trustee expenses such as travel and childcare will be covered by We Are Family.

We value a diverse team and welcome applications from all sectors of the community, including those with lived experience of adoption, and those without.



THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Purpose

To advise, govern, oversee policy and direction and assist with the leadership and general promotion of We Are Family to support the organisations Vision, Mission, Values and needs.

Length of term

The term of office for each of the office holders shall be two years unless agreed otherwise on appointment. Office holders are eligible for re-election, within their overall period of appointment as a trustee.

Skills and knowledge

All applicants should be able to demonstrate the following:

- Strong understanding of the challenges faced by adoptive parents;
- Extensive governance knowledge;
- Skills or experience in strategic planning, setting targets and monitoring and evaluating performance;
- Good organisational and communication (written and oral) skills;
- Proven track record in senior governance roles;
- Previous Chair or Deputy Chair of a Board of Trustees Experience.

We welcome applications from all ages and backgrounds.

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Principal Responsibilities and Accountabilities

- Ensure the Board of Trustees fulfils its responsibilities for the good governance of We Are Family.
- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees, ensuring that the business of meetings is dealt with; and decisions are clearly taken, recorded and their implementation monitored.
- Develop appropriate and relevant agendas for meetings of the Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Director, Deputy Chair of Trustees and Company Secretary.
- Ensure that the Board of Trustees regularly reviews and monitors the implementation of the charity's overall strategy and operational plans.
- Lead the Board in identifying the skills and experiences needed; recruiting new Trustees to fill gaps identified; and reviewing the selection and performance criteria for Trustees.
- Welcome and induct new Trustees into the organisation.
- In consultation with relevant stakeholders, carry out succession planning for key roles, including Chair, Deputy Chair, Committee Chairs and Trustees.
- Lead a regular process of reviewing the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees, and the structure and role of the Board.
- Act as a lead spokesperson and ambassador for the charity.
- Provide line management for the Director, including fortnightly one to one meetings and formal staff appraisal.
- In consultation with other Trustees as appropriate, take responsibility for urgent decisions between meetings of the Board of Trustees in line with any schedule of delegations.
- Attend meetings of the Board's committees.
- Approving payments in line with the Schedule of Delegations.

WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST



WELCOME

OUR VISION,
MISSION & VALUES

WHO WE ARE

OUR SUPPORT

THE ADOPTION
LANDSCAPE

OUR IMPACT

KEY PARTNERS &
FUNDERS

THE BOARD

THIS OPPORTUNITY

THE ROLE OF A
CHAIR

EXPRESS AN
INTEREST

EXPRESS AN INTEREST

If you would like an informal conversation about this opportunity with either Mark Houlton-Allen, Chair of Trustees or Liz Davenport, Deputy Chair, please contact us via applications@wearefamilyadoption.org.uk.

If you are interested to apply for the role, please send:

- An up-to-date copy of your CV (or equivalent written information)

And either:

- A short email introducing yourself and your interest in the role
- A short film introducing yourself and your interest in the role (no more than two minutes)

If we are able to move forward with your expression of interest, we will be in touch to organise an interview held via Zoom.

We look forward to hearing from you!