autistic girls network

Join our board

Trustee recruitment pack: Treasurer and five trustees

The national charity for autistic girls and women and campaigning for earlier recognition and support.

Autumn 2026

Registered charity: England and Wales 1196655, Scotland SC054837

A welcome from our Founder

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Autistic Girls Network started because families kept hearing that their daughters were fine at school, right up until they weren't. Girls who had masked for years were collapsing into Barriers to Attendance, situational mutism and self-harm, and the adults around them were reaching for reward charts.

Today we are the UK's only national, neurodivergent-led charity for the girls and gender-diverse young people the education system has failed. Our online community of 37,000 people is often the first place a family hears someone say "we get it". Our face-to-face groups give young people somewhere they belong. And since September 2025, The Haven, our specialist online school, has been showing what happens when a young person who hasn't left her bedroom in months is met with safety instead of pressure. She starts talking, and then she starts learning again.

We are growing quickly and our board needs to grow with us. We are looking for a new Treasurer and up to five more trustees who will bring expertise we need and hold us to account, while sharing our refusal to treat any child as a problem to be fixed.

Like everything we do, our board is shaped by lived experience. If you are autistic, ADHD or otherwise neurodivergent, or you have parented a young person through all of this, that experience matters to us alongside the expertise each role needs. Every role asks for specific skills and board experience, so please read the essential criteria carefully before you apply.

Have a read, and if you would like to talk it through before you apply, get in touch. I would love to hear from you.

Cathy Wassell
Founder and CEO, Autistic Girls Network

Who we are

Autistic Girls Network is a registered charity in England and Wales (1196655) and Scotland (SC054837). We support neurodivergent girls, women, non-binary people and their families to build a positive neurodivergent identity and to fight for better lives.

What we do

Family community	A moderated online support community of 37,000 people, and free monthly workshops for parents and carers.
Face-to-face groups	Around 20 local groups for neurodivergent young people across the UK, with new groups opening in Scotland. Demand is far higher than the groups we can currently fund.
Mentoring	One-to-one mentoring for young people, free when we have funding and otherwise paid privately or commissioned by local authorities.
Training	Neuro-affirming training for schools, health and social care services, parent carer forums and employers.
The Haven	Our specialist, non-profit online school for young people who have been unable to attend school, sometimes for years. Learners can start with Back to Balance, a 12-week gentle reintroduction to learning, and move into part-time or full-time study through to GCSEs. Most of our educators are neurodivergent themselves, and mentoring is part of every timetable.

Places at The Haven are paid privately by families, commissioned by schools as Alternative Provision, or funded by local authorities through a young person's EHCP. We are working towards Ofsted accreditation as an online education provider.

Why we are recruiting now

The next few years will decide whether Autistic Girls Network becomes the national provider that families and commissioners can rely on for the long term. The Haven is growing and preparing for inspection, and our groups need to reach many more areas. We are also building income that does not depend on any single grant.

We have a committed board with real strength in governance and safeguarding, and in education. What we need now is more depth: a Treasurer, specialist legal and technology expertise, and trustees who can open doors to funding that we cannot open ourselves.

Being a trustee

Trustees are legally responsible for Autistic Girls Network. Together, the board makes sure we stay true to our charitable purpose, stay within the law and use our money wisely. The board sets direction and holds the CEO to account. It does not run the charity day to day.

As a trustee, you will help to:

- Agree our strategy and keep us focused on the young people and families we exist for
- Make sure we are financially sound, with good controls and a sensible reserves policy
- Make sure we meet our safeguarding responsibilities to every young person in our care
- Support and hold to account the CEO and The Haven's leadership
- Manage risk and make sure we comply with charity law in England, Wales and Scotland
- Act as an ambassador for Autistic Girls Network

Time commitment

Board meetings	Six a year, roughly every two months, held online. Each meeting lasts around 90 minutes.
Preparation	Reading papers and policies for approval before each meeting.
Committees and lead roles	Most trustees also join a committee, such as the Haven Education Committee, or lead on an area that matches their expertise.
Term	3 years, renewable in line with our constitution.
Pay and expenses	Trustees are unpaid volunteers. We pay agreed incurred expenses, though they are rarely needed.

The roles

We are recruiting for six roles. Each has a full profile in this pack. You are welcome to apply for more than one.

Treasurer	Leads the board's oversight of our money, so growth never outruns our finances.
Legal trustee	Brings legal judgement to our contracts, our people and our structure.
Income and philanthropy trustee	Opens doors to philanthropists, foundations and companies who want to back this work.
Digital and technology trustee	Oversees the technology an online school depends on, and the data we hold about children.
Education and curriculum trustee	Strengthens the board's oversight of teaching and learning at The Haven.
Business, impact and profile trustee	Helps us grow earned income and prove our impact beyond our own community.

What every trustee must have

- Board experience: you have served on a board or governing body, for example as a charity trustee, school governor, non-executive director or member of a committee with real decision-making responsibility
- Shares our values: neuro-affirming, identity-first, and firmly on the side of families
- Can read papers carefully, ask good questions and disagree in a non-challenging manner
- Will respect confidentiality and act in the charity's interests, not their own
- Is comfortable working online

ROLE PROFILE

Treasurer

> You will lead the board's oversight of Autistic Girls Network's finances, so families and funders can trust how we use every pound, and so the board can make confident decisions as we grow.
>
> The Treasurer will be independent of our staff team and their families.

The context

We run on two calendars. Autistic Girls Network's financial year runs from January to December, while The Haven works to the academic year, and local authority and school payments arrive on their own timetables. We hold a reserves policy that the board reviews, and we are considering the right long-term structure for The Haven. You will work closely with our CEO, our finance administrator and our external accountant.

What you'll do

- Review the monthly management accounts with the CEO and bookkeeper, and lead the board's discussion of them
- Oversee the annual budget and cash flow forecast across both calendars
- Keep the reserves policy under review and make sure we stick to it
- Create the year-end accounts and our financial controls, with help from our bookkeeper, working with our independent examiner or auditor
- Advise the board on VAT, trading income and any future structure for The Haven
- Explain the numbers plainly, so every trustee can take part in financial decisions

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- A professional accountancy qualification, or senior experience in financial management
- Confidence reading and challenging budgets, cash flow forecasts and management accounts
- The ability to explain finance clearly to people who are not finance specialists

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Knowledge of charity accounting (the Charities SORP) or experience as a charity treasurer

- Experience of school or education finance, public sector contracts or trading subsidiaries
- Understanding of VAT on education and training income
- Business development expertise, as we are fast-growing and developing

ROLE PROFILE

Legal trustee

> You will bring legal judgement to the board, so we can grow with confidence and protect the young people and families who rely on us.

The context

We hold contracts and framework agreements with local authorities and schools, we employ staff and engage freelance educators and trainers, and we are registered with both the Charity Commission and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. We are also considering the right long-term legal structure for The Haven. In addition, we are receiving international enquiries about The Haven and our school training and we may need to investigate the legal requirements of international trading.

What you'll do

- Help the board spot legal risk early, and know when we need formal advice
- Review the governance of our contracts and framework agreements
- Oversee our employment practice and policies for staff and freelancers
- Keep our constitution and governance in step with our growth, in England, Wales and Scotland
- Advise on the legal side of any change to The Haven's structure

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- Legal training and experience (for example as a solicitor, barrister or in-house counsel) in at least one of: charity law, company and commercial law, employment law or education law
- The judgement to separate what the board must decide from what needs paid advice

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Knowledge of SEND and education law, including EHCPs and tribunals
- Experience of data protection, or of Scots law

ROLE PROFILE

Income and philanthropy trustee

> You will help us build income from people and organisations who want to back this work, so that our groups and mentoring are not left waiting on the next grant decision.

The context

We are growing our major giving, our trust and foundation income and our corporate partnerships. Our CEO and Fundraising Lead lead the work day to day. What they need from the board is strategic advice and connections.

What you'll do

- Advise on our fundraising strategy and help the board hold it to account
- Make introductions to philanthropists, family offices, foundations and companies
- Join Cathy at key donor and partner conversations where that helps
- Act as an ambassador for Autistic Girls Network in your own networks

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- A strong network among people or organisations who give, invest or sponsor at a significant level
- Comfort with making introductions and talking about money

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Senior experience in fundraising, philanthropy advice, private banking, wealth management or corporate partnerships
- Experience of a major giving campaign

ROLE PROFILE

Digital and technology trustee

> The Haven is a school that lives online, and we hold sensitive information about children, young people and families. You will make sure the board understands and governs the technology all of that depends on.

The context

Our learners, families and staff rely on a set of platforms for lessons, timetables, records and communication. New tools, including AI, raise questions about safeguarding and data that the board needs to answer well.

What you'll do

- Advise the board on digital strategy and on the platforms we choose
- Oversee cyber security and resilience, and how we would respond to an incident
- Help the board govern data protection and the use of AI tools safely
- Support the team when we buy, build or change systems

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- Senior experience in technology, IT, cyber security, data or digital product leadership
- The ability to explain technical risk in plain English

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Experience of education technology or online learning
- Knowledge of online safety and safeguarding in digital settings

ROLE PROFILE

Education and curriculum trustee

> You will strengthen the board's oversight of teaching and learning at The Haven, so every learner gets an education worth coming back for.

The context

The Haven teaches learners from age 11 through to GCSEs, many of whom have been out of school for months or years. We are working towards Ofsted accreditation as an online education provider. The Haven has its own Education Committee, whose members serve as Haven Governors.

What you'll do

- Support and challenge the Haven leadership team on curriculum, teaching quality and progress
- Help the board stay ready for inspection and meet the standards that apply to us
- Join, and in time possibly chair, the Haven Education Committee
- Bring an education professional's view to board decisions about The Haven

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- Senior experience in teaching or school leadership, ideally at Key Stages 3 and 4
- Understanding of how schools are inspected and held to account

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Experience in SEND, Alternative Provision or independent schools
- Experience of online education, exam access arrangements or school governance

ROLE PROFILE

Business, impact and profile trustee

> You will help us grow earned income and show our impact clearly, so we reach the people who don't yet know we exist.

The context

A growing share of our income is earned through training, Haven places and commissioned services. Commissioners and funders want clear evidence of what changes for young people, and we are well known in our community but much less so beyond it.

What you'll do

- Advise on business development, pricing and new earned income
- Help us measure and present our impact against our Theory of Change
- Advise on raising our profile with the media, policymakers and new audiences

What you'll bring

Essential: you must meet all of these to apply

- Board experience, as set out in what every trustee must have
- Senior experience in at least one of: business development or social enterprise, research and evaluation, or media, PR and communications

Desirable: helpful, but not required

- Experience of selling to local authorities, schools or the NHS
- Experience of public policy or government relations

Who we want to hear from

We want our board to reflect the young people and families we work with. Whatever your background, if you meet the essential criteria for one of these roles, we want to hear from you. We would particularly welcome applications from:

- Autistic, ADHD and otherwise neurodivergent people
- Parents and carers of neurodivergent young people
- People living or working in Scotland
- People from communities that are under-represented on charity boards

> To apply, you must meet every essential criterion for your chosen role, including board experience. Desirable criteria are a bonus. Please show how you meet each essential criterion in your cover letter.

Eligibility

You must be 18 or over and not disqualified from acting as a charity trustee under the law in England and Wales or Scotland.

Because we work with children and young people, appointments depend on an enhanced DBS check, or a PVG check in Scotland, and satisfactory references.

You will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest.

Induction and support

Every new trustee has an induction with Cathy and the Chair, the key governance documents explained rather than just sent, and trustee training. You will also have the chance to see our work for yourself.

How to apply

Send us your CV and a cover letter of no more than two pages. Tell us which role you are applying for and why you want to join us. Then show us, with examples, how you meet each essential criterion for that role and the board experience we ask of every trustee.

If writing isn't the best way for you to show us who you are, you can send a video or voice note of up to five minutes instead of the cover letter.

> Email: cathy@autisticgirlsnetwork.org
>
> Closing date: 31 December 2026
>
> Please put the role title in the subject line.

What happens next

1. Informal conversation	Optional, before you apply. Talk to Cathy Wassell, our Founder and CEO, or Vicki May, our Chair.
2. Apply	Send your application by 31 December 2026.
3. Shortlisting	A panel of trustees reads every application against the essential criteria. We can only shortlist applications that show how each one is met.
4. Interview	An online conversation with a small panel during December at a mutually convenient time. We send the questions in advance.
5. Checks	References, DBS or PVG check (including ID check), eligibility declaration and conflicts of interest.
6. Welcome	Formal appointment by the board, followed by an induction.

Adjustments

Tell us what would help you at any stage. That might be questions in advance, answering in writing, keeping your camera off, extra time, or the chance to speak to the same person throughout. Asking will never count against you.

Your information

We use the information you send only to run this recruitment process, and we keep it securely. Applications from people who are not appointed are deleted after the process ends.

You can read more about our impact and accounts in 2025 here: https://autisticgirlsnetwork.org/impact-reports/

Thank you for considering joining us.