

Trustee Recruitment Pack

June 2026



We are seeking up to four new Trustees to join our Board

We are looking for up to four people who align with our mission, vision, and values and are passionate about education and social mobility.

Together, we want to continue transforming educational outcomes for young people with experience of children's social care or estrangement and work towards a future where care-experienced young people are supported to achieve their full educational potential.

The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) is a registered charity. We are governed by a Board of Trustees. Our Trustees ensure we are delivering our mission, using our resources correctly and sustainably, and that we are meeting our legal and regulatory responsibilities.

We want our Board to reflect the richness of our society. We warmly welcome applications from people with a care background or with recent lived experience of being an estranged student.

You don't need experience of being a Trustee, we will provide you with an induction, a buddy and all the support you need to feel confident in the role.

We are especially interested in hearing from:

- People with experience in philanthropy and fundraising
- People with experience of in children's social care decision making
- People with experience of political influencing
- People with recent experience of care and post-16 education

Being a Trustee is a voluntary unpaid role. We cover the cost of NNECL related travel and reasonable expenses.



The role of a Trustee ...



Undertaking the role of a Trustee at NNECL carries important legal duties and strategic responsibilities. Trustees are collectively responsible for ensuring NNECL delivers its mission: to create educational environments where people with care experience thrive. NNECL exists to transform the progression of young people with care backgrounds into and through further and higher education, including higher apprenticeships, so they can reach their full potential.

NNECL is unashamedly ambitious for all children in care and care leavers, we want a future where we have cut off at source the poor practices leaving people with social care backgrounds without the opportunities needed to enjoy the security of a career which sustains them for life. To achieve the systemic change needed to transform our young people's education outcomes, across the post-16 education sector, we advocate for:

- Making the NNECL Quality Mark, mandatory for HE and FE institutions across England
- Making committing to the Care Leavers Covenant mandatory for all sixth forms, FE and HE providers
- Revising the LA minimum offer to align with evidenced good outcomes
- Extending the local offer to age 30, recognising care leavers post-16 education challenges.



... The role of a Trustee



Double award winning student Megan with Wendy (also a NNECL trustee) and Safeenah, University of Sunderland

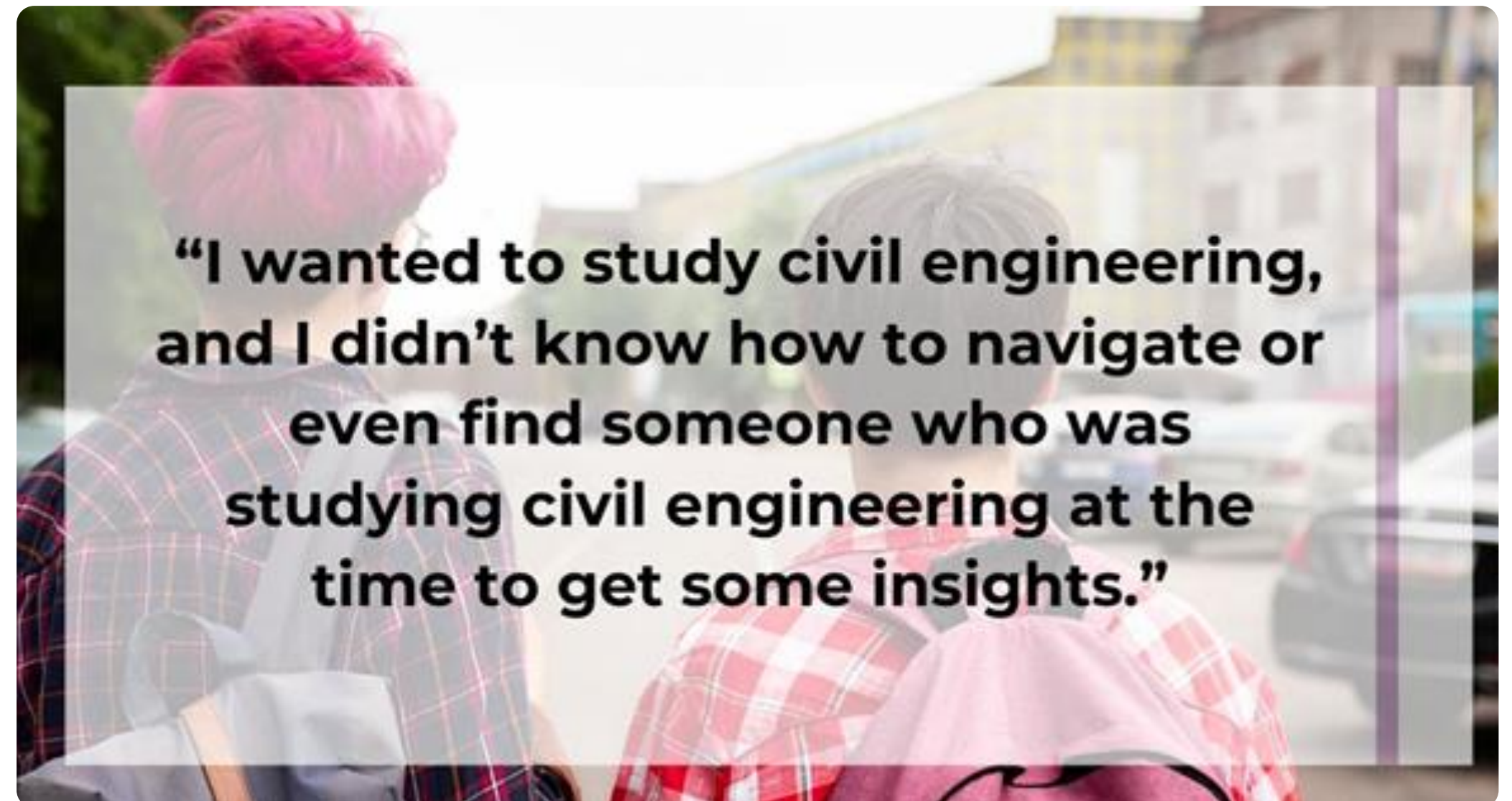
Trustees are expected to attend Board meetings (four per year, a mix of in person and online), participate in relevant events and focused groups (e.g. safeguarding, fundraising, strategy refresh), and act as Ambassadors for NNECL championing our work, our impact and our values within their networks.

NNECL's work helps dismantle those barriers - not through short-term fixes, but by reshaping statutory systems and holding central and local government to account. We believe our young people must receive the support to which they are legally entitled so they can access post-16 education, remain engaged, achieve their full educational potential, and move confidently into adulthood.

What problem are we solving?

Across the UK, care leavers are identified as a priority group for targeted outreach and support within universities and colleges to drive up educational attainment and to reduce the incidence of homelessness, poor mental health and under employment. Just 15% of care leavers enter higher education by the age of 19, compared to 48% of the general population. The reasons for this are complex and multi-layered.

- The impact of early childhood trauma
- The stark difference in attainment between children in care and their peers
- Disrupted education, sometimes involving several placements and school moves
- Low expectations from key influencers in a young person's network; social workers, teachers, foster carers, sports coaches, youth workers and staff in leaving care teams





About NNECL ...

NNECL is an award winning not for profit organisation working across the UK, supporting, connecting, and empowering a community of practitioners with whom we share our overarching ambition, for more vulnerable young people from care backgrounds or who are estranged, to consider, access and flourish through apprenticeships, further and higher education into fulfilling careers, which will sustain them for life. By improving national co-ordination, collaboration and through our Quality Mark, NNECL aim to reduce the differences in educational support our young people typically experience.

Our **vision** is for learners with care experience across our four nations to be empowered and supported to achieve their full educational potential.

Our **mission** is to create educational environments where care-experienced and estranged learners thrive.

About NNECL



NNECL members Ruth (L) (University of Huddersfield and Shauna (R) (University of Kent)

Established in 2018, NNECL is the only charity solely dedicated to transforming care leavers educational attainment. We are a membership body with over 100 organisations in active membership, including universities and colleges, foster agencies, local authority leaving care teams, virtual schools and charities.

Through our membership and strategic partnerships, we are proud to reach a community of more than 800 professionals who participate in our events and benefit from our regular policy and practice updates so they can best support the 5000+ care-experienced and estranged learners attending their institutions.

We independently generate our income through membership, training and consultancy, Quality Mark assessment fees, donations, and grants. We do not hold property or endowment funds and receive no core funding from central government.

Our impact

We are incredibly proud of our Quality Mark, endorsed by the Department for Education and described by the sector as “gold standard.” To achieve it universities and colleges must evidence the holistic and practical support they provide to care-experienced and estranged learners and the impact and outcomes of their actions, including: a designated contact, financial bursaries, well-being and pastoral care, help with accommodation, work placements, careers guidance, progression rates and attainment. All Quality Mark submissions are peer reviewed by a panel of widening participation experts to ensure consistency. In November 2025 we announced University of Cambridge as our 50th Quality Mark holder.



Queens University Belfast receiving their Quality Mark accreditation



A few of our members



Our team



L – R Denise, Shaunna and Sian

We employ three people full-time in our core team - our Executive Director, our Programme Manager and a Programme Support Officer. Close-knit and collaborative, we bring together our professional skills, our lived experienced of care, and our dedication to support the people who guide our learners every day and help make a real difference in their educational journeys.

We have a team of freelance Quality Mark Assessors. With backgrounds spanning a wide range of roles supporting young people's educational journeys. Our Assessors bring valuable knowledge and practical understanding to each Quality Mark submission.

Our National Strategy Group (NSG) is the central forum for communication across our eight Regional Groups. The NSG membership is made up of Regional Group representatives and national organisations committed to the progression and support of care-experienced young people through apprenticeships, further and higher education.

Our Trustees

We have seven Trustees, who meet a minimum of four times per year. Our Board is responsible for ensuring NNECL's resources and activities are focused on addressing our charitable purpose. Its membership reflects the need to operate effectively at an organisational leadership level. We also have independent advice from our accountants. Our Board of Trustees are duty-bound to ensure NNECL complies with all legal and statutory requirements.



Arron Pile, Co-Chair of NNECL

Arron is Student Inclusion & Diversity Manager at the University of Salford. He has been involved in supporting care experienced young people (as well as estranged students, carers, sanctuary seekers and under eighteen students, trans and non-binary students), into and through higher education at the University of Salford for the last fifteen years. Arron has been involved in NNECL since its inception. He has close relationships with Greater Manchester local authorities and provides foster care training and specialist training for people working around care experienced young people.



Jon Wakeford, Co-Chair of NNECL

Jon was appointed Co-Chair of NNECL in 2023. He has more than 25 years' experience in the higher education sector and has held Board positions in several large-listed property and infrastructure businesses, including most recently leading strategy and communications at the University Partnerships Programme, the UK's leading provider of campus accommodation and infrastructure, where he originated the Company's approach to partnerships and played a key role in the establishment of the Group's bond programme and the acquisition by its current shareholders.



Emma Watson is NNECL's Treasurer as well as a Trustee. She is a Chartered Financial Planner and has held numerous senior roles in Finance including heading up a large Financial Planning team for a UK bank.



Mike Hill has over 35 years experience of working in the Adult, Further and Higher Education sector. His areas of interest include widening access, student retention and success, student engagement and institutional research.



Dr Neil Harrison is Associate Professor in Education and Social Justice in the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter. Neil was the author of NNECL's 'Moving on Up' report the first examination of care leavers pathways into and through higher education.

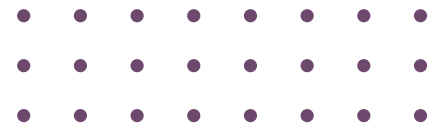


Nicola Turner is a Adviser Engagement Partner at UCAS, where she works to support the supporters of under-represented students, including care-experienced and estranged students. She has worked in widening access and participation since joining UCAS in 2016.



Alan Benvie was until recently Vice Principal - Student Experience & Inclusion at Oldham College. He led the college's successful submission of the Quality Mark. He has over 30 years of successfully leading change programmes in post-16 education and training.





Trustee recruitment

Interested in finding out more?

For an informal and confidential discussion regarding the roles please contact info@nnecl.org and we will organise a conversation with either one of our Co-Chairs or our Executive Director.

Keen to apply?

You can tell us about you, your experience, and how this would be of value to NNECL, and its future, in one of the following ways.

- A letter (no more than five pages long) or
- A video or audio message (no more than five minutes long)
- And a CV

Please send this information to info@nnecl.org by 5:00pm on Friday 17 July 2026. Please include the names of two referees you would be happy for us to contact.

Next steps

We will be in touch by the end of the day on 24 July 2026 to let you know if we would like to take your application to the next stage.

If your skills and experience are what we are looking for we will invite you to a conversation with one of the Co-Chairs and our Executive Director in the week of xxx. We anticipate conversations lasting around 45 minutes.

Trustee recruitment

Appointments will be made subject to following, which is inline with our recruitment policy

For an informal and confidential discussion regarding the role please

- Satisfactory references
- A Right to Work check
- An employment history check (via CV)
- A declaration of any interest you hold
- A basic DBS check

Thank you so much, we look forward to hearing from you.

Our charity number is 1180793. You can learn more about us via our website NNECL.ORG and by reading our annual report and accounts which are published on the Charities Commission website.

