

YMCA DOWNSLINK GROUP

Chair of the Board

Recruitment pack



September 2025

YMCA

Here for young people
Here for communities
Here for you

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Welcome

We are pleased that you are interested in the opportunity to join us as Chair of our Board of Trustees. This pack has been designed to give you an insight into who we are, what we do, and the impact we make. We hope it will support your decision to join an organisation deeply committed to achieving the very best outcomes for the children and young people we serve.

We are the largest charity in Sussex and Surrey working to prevent youth homelessness and support children and young people's emotional and mental health. We support children and young people with multiple and complex needs up to the age of 25. We offer support in three service areas:

- Housing provision and sustaining accommodation
- Specialist information, advice and support
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health

We know there is more to do to achieve our mission for children and young people, and this year we are developing our new Strategy 2026–2031. As Chair, you will join us at a key time and play a vital role in guiding the Board to deliver our aims. You will be supported by our Executive Team, with our refreshed values at the heart of our work and children and young people at the forefront of everything we do.

We are proud to be a member of the federation of YMCA England and Wales. We contribute to their vision and purpose: an inclusive Christian movement transforming communities so that all young people can belong, contribute and thrive.



We welcome people of all faiths, and those of none, both among the children and young people we support and our staff. However, the Chair of our Board must share Christian values. You may be actively involved in a church or practise your faith privately, but your values should be grounded in the Christian faith. This is a genuine occupational requirement under UK equalities legislation.

We support children and young people who are LGBTQ+, Black and racially minoritised, neurodiverse, care experienced, survivors of exploitation, young carers, young parents, and young refugees or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. Our Chair should demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusivity and lead fellow trustees in embedding this across the organisation.

We are passionate about promoting equality, valuing diversity, and working inclusively. We recognise the continuing challenge to maintain diversity at the Board in terms of gender, age, religion, race, and ethnicity. Our goal is for the Board to become ever more representative of the communities we serve.

As Chair of the Impact and Services Committee, I am delighted to lead the interview panel and to welcome you to this recruitment process. I hope you find the information in this document helpful and inspiring. We are looking for a new Chair who will share our vision and play a vital role in ensuring children and young people have a fair chance to be who they want to be.

Very warm wishes,

Simone Button,
Chair of the Impact and Services Committee



About us

YMCA DownsLink Group

We are the largest charity in Sussex and Surrey working to prevent youth homelessness and support children and young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health.

With a turnover of approximately £16 million, 56% of our income is from rent and service charges, with the remaining 44% largely from commissioned contracts with some fundraising and other income streams.

We do this by providing a safe home, increasing life skills and self-confidence, and improving emotional wellbeing and mental health. Each year, we support thousands of children and young people up to the age of 25 across Sussex and Surrey.



Our mission:
To help children and young people have a fair chance to be who they want to be.

Our values:
**We do what’s right,
We work with heart,
We build real connection.**

We offer a mixture of self-contained and shared accommodation, and a support pathway from high support services to independent accommodation. Our supported housing units, include 24 hour staffed services, projects which have daytime support staff, transitional housing schemes with visiting support, and move-on accommodation for more permanent, independent living.

We reach young people and their families through our key services, including a wide range of therapeutic services - both directly to clients in the community as well as in schools and digitally; support and advice; family mediation; and specialist services, such as our service for children and young people who have been sexually exploited.

Key Documents and additional information

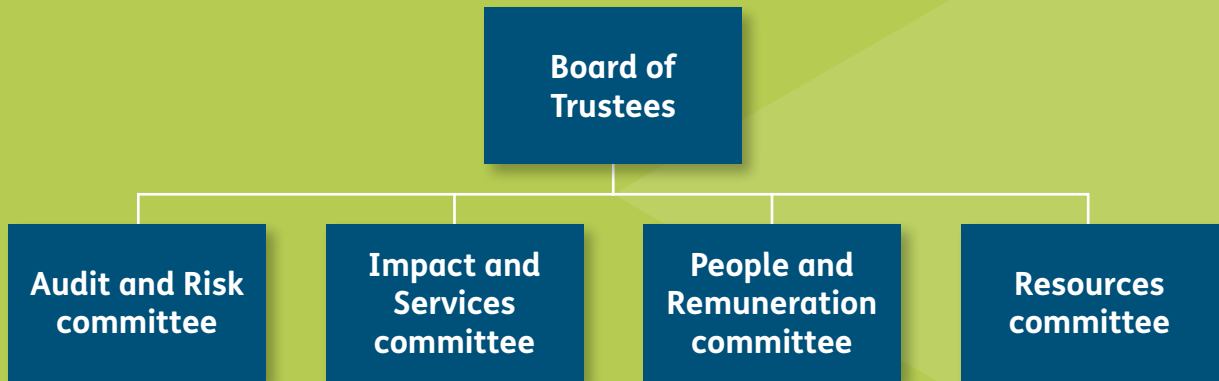
- ▶ Our 2023-2026 Strategy can be viewed [here](#)
- ▶ To see our latest Trustees’ Annual Report & Accounts 2024/2025, [click here](#)
- ▶ To see our latest Impact Report [click here](#)
- ▶ Introducing:
 - ▶ [Our Board members](#)
 - ▶ [Our Independent Committee members](#)
 - ▶ [Our Executive Team](#)

Our governance

Our Board of Trustees, currently 10 members, is a professional, enthusiastic, and effective governing body committed to the highest standards of corporate governance. This year, we commissioned Good Governance Improvement to carry out a comprehensive external review, which recognised that our Board is operating effectively, particularly in terms of governance processes.

Trustees, all of whom are non-executive and unremunerated except for the reimbursement of essential expenses, bring a broad range of relevant experience and skills to Board discussions.

There are four committees of the Board and Trustees sit on one or more committees.



All meet four times a year, usually remotely:

- ▶ Audit and Risk, which reviews and monitors the risk management, assurance and internal control frameworks, ensures effective internal and external audit processes are in place as well as full compliance with contractual, regulatory and legal requirements.
- ▶ Impact and Services, which monitors the ongoing quality of our services ensuring the development of a Psychologically Informed Environment and the management of safeguarding risks as well as oversight of organisational impact.
- ▶ People and Remuneration, which reviews the organisation’s People Strategy, workforce planning and remuneration package of the CEO and Executive Team as well as determining the arrangements for the appraisal of all staff.
- ▶ Resources, which reviews the organisation’s annual budgets, Asset Management and ICT strategies as well as stress-testing the organisation’s Business Plan and ensuring that new business opportunities are reviewed prior to making recommendations to the Board.

There is a clear distinction between the oversight role of the Board and the responsibility of senior management for the day-to-day running of the organisation.



Role profile

The Chair plays a pivotal role in guiding the Board and supporting the CEO, ensuring that governance is strong and aligned with the organisation’s values, strategic goals and founding Christian principles. As a leader, the Chair shapes the culture, champions inclusivity and drives the strategic direction of the organisation. This is a unique opportunity to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and young people through a dynamic and highly respected organisation.

Role:	Chair of the Board of Trustees (Board Director)
Responsible to:	The Board of Trustees – The Chair is accountable to the Board of Trustees and acts on its behalf to ensure that the best interests of the charity and its stakeholders are served within relevant regulatory frameworks and standards of probity in the areas of delegated responsibility

Specific duties:

- ▶ To respect and promote the founding Christian principles in line with our charity’s objects.
- ▶ To be responsible for the effective and efficient conduct at Board meetings, ensuring that resolutions are properly put, and necessary decisions made.
- ▶ To ensure Board meetings take place at appropriate intervals and locations and that start and finish times are agreed with other members.
- ▶ To chair the annual general meeting and any other special meetings that may be called from time to time.
- ▶ To ensure that all Board members can play a full part in meetings, that their contributions are timely and relevant, and that the appropriate standards of conduct and behaviour are maintained in accordance with the code of conduct approved by the Board. Regular conversations should take place with all Board members between meetings.
- ▶ To agree annually with committee chairs their specific responsibilities for the year and meet regularly with them between meetings to consider current issues.
- ▶ To deal with paperwork associated with the function of chairing Board meetings including organising with the CEO, an agenda and preparing a chair’s section of the annual report.
- ▶ To take decisions between meetings as delegated by the Board, in line with agreed policy and established practice, and in consultation with the CEO and other senior officers as appropriate.
- ▶ To ensure that any decisions taken between meetings are reported to and ratified at the next Board meeting.
- ▶ To be primarily responsible for the performance management of the CEO with the assistance of the committee chairs and in consultation with other Board members.
- ▶ To establish a constructive working relationship with and provide support for the CEO and ensure that the Board acts in partnership with the Executive Team. Regular meetings between the chair and the CEO should take place, involving other trustees and the Executive Team as appropriate.
- ▶ To ensure that the Board delegates such authority to its committee, the chair and the CEO and others to enable the business of the organisation to be carried on effectively between meetings of the Board and also ensuring that the Board monitors the use of these delegated powers.
- ▶ To maintain a watching brief on Board membership and ensure that the relevant skills and experience are in place to enable the Board to fulfil its functions, through succession planning, recruitment and induction of new members.
- ▶ To lead on the appraisal process to ensure proper and appropriate arrangements for the overall Board appraisal and that of individual Board members, including the chair and committee chairs and to consider Board training needs.
- ▶ To sign documents requiring the Board or chair’s authorisation.
- ▶ To attend other functions and meetings on our behalf and to undertake public duties in an ambassadorial role as required.
- ▶ To have a general understanding of and keep abreast of legislative changes and developments in the housing or support sectors which may affect us.
- ▶ To ensure that the Board receives professional advice when it is needed, either from its executive staff or external sources.



Person specification:

- ▶ To have an active Christian faith and a passion for our vision, mission and values.
- ▶ To be committed to inclusivity and respectful of other faiths and cultures, leading fellow trustees in this area.
- ▶ To have experience of leadership in a charity, housing association or similar highly regulated environment.
- ▶ To be progressive and strategic with sound judgement that promotes independent thinking and stimulates discussion and decision-making.
- ▶ To possess the ability to communicate with people at all levels, understanding the difference from the governance role when speaking with staff and the children and young people in our services.
- ▶ To have an awareness of the role and the pressures on the CEO and Executive Team, being available for advice and guidance as necessary.
- ▶ To be a strong communicator who is transparent and open and brings the right amount of constructive challenge.
- ▶ To be an analytical thinker who is able to consider proposals and consequences.
- ▶ To have a desire to develop and lead a high performing Board.
- ▶ To hold a sound knowledge of good governance and an understanding of the role of the Company Secretary.
- ▶ To have sufficient time to undertake the role.
- ▶ To have previous chair experience is desirable, as are candidates with links to the local area.



Time commitment:

- ▶ The role is unpaid although reasonable expenses are reimbursed.
- ▶ The initial term for the position is three years.
- ▶ The Board rhythm is typically:
 - ▶ Approximately four three-hour Board meetings mid-to-late afternoon over the course of the year.
 - ▶ Two full day 'away-days'.
 - ▶ Travel time for meetings as Board meetings and Board Away Days are in person at various locations across Sussex.
 - ▶ Time spent to read papers and prepare for the meetings.
- ▶ The four sub-committees meet virtually between three and four times a year for two hours. There is an expectation that our new Chair will attend these meetings during induction, after which a mutually agreeable pattern will be agreed.
- ▶ Annual appraisal of each of the nine trustees.



How to apply

When submitting your application it should consist of:

- ▶ Your CV containing details of your current or most recent role, a summary of previous roles and your achievements, skills and experience.
- ▶ Your letter of application outlining your motivation for applying for this role, why us and how what you bring aligns to the role specification.
- ▶ Details of your availability to attend the 'in-person' interviews in Hove as outlined below along with any accessibility needs.

Please send your completed application to our company secretary sian.stokes@ymcadlg.org no later than midday on Monday 3 November, this being the deadline for receipt of applications.

If you have any questions in relation to this role or if you would like to have an informal discussion about any aspect of the role, please contact our Company Secretary, Sian Stokes by telephone - 07890 431854 or by email sian.stokes@ymcadlg.org

Key dates

Closing date: midday on Monday 3 November

Informal virtual meeting with the current Chair of the Board: Thursday 13 November

An opportunity to hear firsthand the role of the Chair and to ask any questions.

Shortlisting: candidates will be shortlisted and invited to interview, candidates will hear back no later than Friday 21 November.

Formal interviews: Thursday 4 December

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a formal interview, a youth voice panel and an informal meeting with the CEO, Emily Brock. All will take place on the same day in person at our central office in Hove. The formal interview will be conducted by:

- ▶ Simone Button, Chair of the Impact and Services Committee
- ▶ Nick Mourant, Chair of the Resources Committee
- ▶ Andrew Newell, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee
- ▶ Caroline Stearman, Chair of the People and Remuneration Committee

If you are offered the role, we will apply for an Enhanced DBS Disclosure, as is our practice for all Trustees on the Board.

Keep in touch



YMCA DOWNSLINK GROUP

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Hove
BN3 2BE

Registered company:	03853734
Registered charity:	1079570
Registered social housing provider:	4644
Registered BACP accreditation:	00102752
Registered Ofsted:	Brighton & Hove 2767751 East Sussex 2766597 West Sussex and Surrey 2766609