



The Sutton Trust

Trustee Recruitment Pack



Welcome from the Chair

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee of the Sutton Trust.

The Sutton Trust is at a pivotal moment in its development. For nearly three decades, we have been the UK's leading voice on social mobility, working tirelessly to break the link between socio-economic background and life chances. Today, that mission is as urgent as it has ever been. Despite pockets of progress, social mobility in the UK remains low by international standards, with deep inequalities in education, access to professions, and regional opportunity continuing to limit life chances and economic potential.

As Chair, I am proud of the Trust's reputation as an independent, evidence-led 'do-tank'. We are unique in our ability to combine agenda-setting research with high-impact programmes that support thousands of talented, non-privileged young people each year.

Our research is widely respected across government, Parliament, and the education and employment sectors, while our programmes support young people to navigate key transitions into higher education, apprenticeships, and competitive careers. Crucially, we do not see research and delivery as separate endeavours: our policy positions are grounded in lived experience, data, and long-term evaluation, and our programmes are continually shaped by what the evidence tells us works.

The role of the Trustee Board is central to our success. We provide strategic oversight, constructive challenge, and stewardship of the Trust's mission, ensuring that we remain ambitious, rigorous, and financially resilient. For a Trustee with policy expertise, this is a rare opportunity to shape an organisation that operates at the intersection of research, practice, and national policy influence.

We are seeking a Trustee who shares our commitment to fairness, evidence, and long-term change. We value diversity of thought and experience, and we are keen to hear from those who can help us navigate an evolving political landscape and leverage our research to challenge systemic barriers, ensuring our voice remains the most influential in the national drive to transform social mobility.

I hope this pack gives you a clear sense of the Trust's work and ambition and inspires you to join us. If you are motivated by the chance to use your expertise to shape the future of social mobility in the UK, I very much encourage you to consider applying.

Ian Walsh

Chair of Trustees, The Sutton Trust

'Before attending this programme I was unsure of applying to university, but after attending, gaining experience, and learning about new opportunities I am excited to start a future towards the career I dream of doing.'

Zoya, St Andrews, 2022

About Us

The Sutton Trust is the UK's leading social mobility charity. We believe every young person should have a fair chance in life, regardless of their family's income, the school they go to or where they grow up. But today in Britain, the opportunity to succeed is heavily shaped by socio-economic background. Our mission is to change this. Our programmes empower young people to access life-changing opportunities, and our research influences national change to deliver a fairer future.

Each year, together with our university and employer partners, we support over 14,000 young people to reach their potential through our university, apprenticeship and career access programmes. And our support doesn't stop there. We engage our thriving alumni community to help them to succeed in their professions and to act as advocates for social mobility.

Our rigorous and extensive research shines a light on barriers to opportunity from the early years to the workplace, and we strive to influence national policy change with evidence-based solutions to tackle educational and workplace inequality. Since 1997 we have published over 300 evidence-rich reports, many of which have gone on to influence national policy. Using insights from our programmes and research, we also test and scale new ideas in education and employment practice.

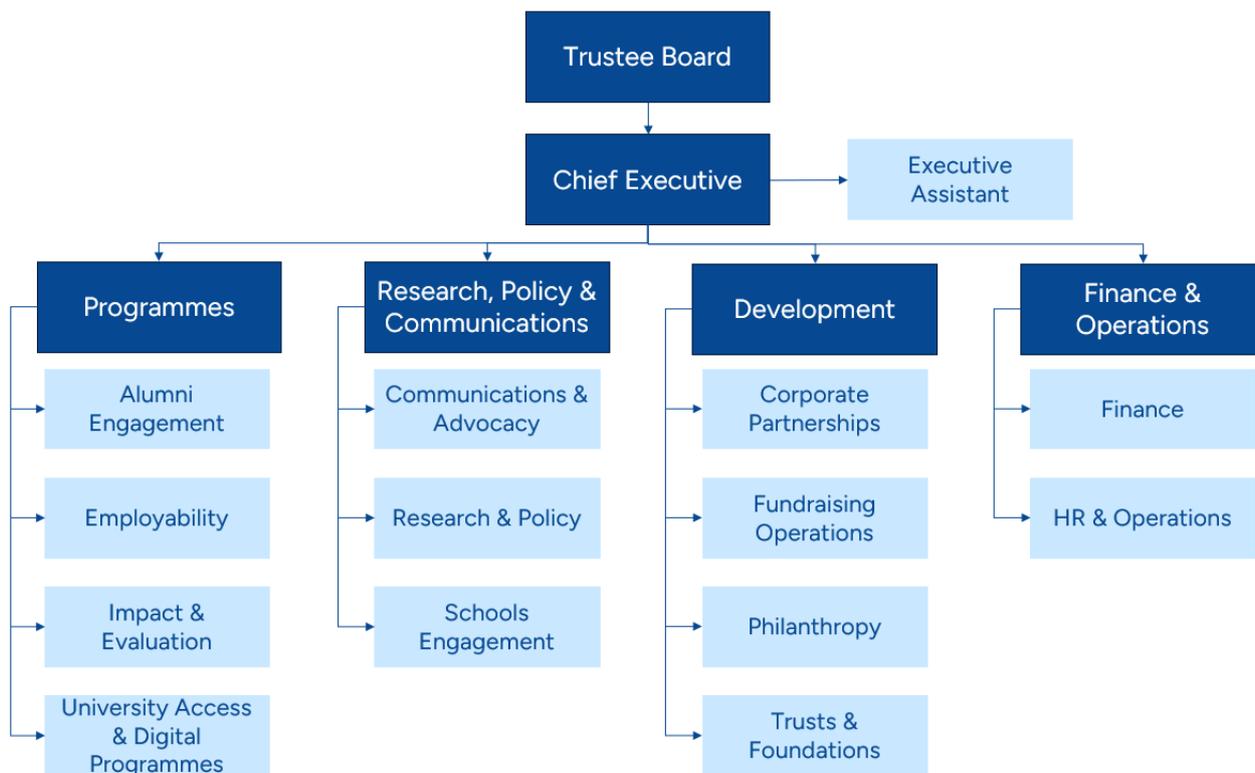
As an independent charity, our work is entirely reliant on the generous support of our community of donors. The need to support our work to tackle the UK's low social mobility has never been greater.



Who We Are

Under the governance of our Trustees, our CEO leads an expert executive team and a collaborative staff team.

Organisation



In addition, the Trust’s work is supported by a number of important stakeholder groups and networks:

Board (Strategic Advisory and Development Board)

The Board is made up of senior figures from a range of backgrounds who provide strategic advice and financial support to the Trust.

Education Advisory Group

The Education Advisory Group is made up of leading figures from across the education and employment sectors who advise on our policy positions and research.

Alumni Leadership Board

The Alumni Leadership Board is made up of alums who work closely with the Trust, to develop ways to support the alumni body after students complete their programme.

For more information about each of these groups, please visit [our website](#).

Our Strategy & Impact

The Trust has five focus areas: Early Years, Schools, Apprenticeships, Higher Education and Access to the Workplace.

The Trust has a unique 'do tank' model of research and policy activity allied with practical, on-the-ground programmes. The Trust's programmes focus on academically able, disadvantaged students. We have built considerable expertise in this area over the last 25 years and concentrate our support on young people from secondary school age onwards – up to and including those starting their careers – and at key transition points, particularly from school into university and from university into careers.

The Trust's research and policy work is deliberately wider, recognising that there are a range of access issues at play from early years, through school and college and into university, apprenticeships and employment. The intention is, though, that a substantial proportion of our research and policy work directly informs our programme work, and vice-versa.

In the first half of 2025, the Trust refreshed its 2030 strategy for the period from 2025-2030. We aim to deliver material improvements in UK social mobility through our three strategy pillars:

- **Transforming lives with our Programmes** – by growing the number of young people supported to approx. 20,000 annually: particularly through expanding our online offering on Sutton Trust Online and growing our Pathways and Apprenticeship programmes in existing and 1-2 additional sectors while maintaining our activities across UK Summer Schools and the US Programme.
- **Changing the System for all** – by increasing pressure for change with high profile research, communications and advocacy, driving at least four significant policy changes as per our manifesto priorities (published in 2024) as well as through focussed practice change in schools, universities and employers.
- **Building the alumni movement** – by empowering our alumni as change makers, volunteers and advocates as well as improving our support to succeed at university and with expanded employment access.

Our success will be enabled by refreshed brand messaging with strengthened youth voice and a clear social mobility narrative, a well supported high-performing team empowered by process and technology, selected partnerships increasing leverage in advocacy and delivery as well as innovation across all strands of our work. We recognise that in order to deliver our strategy we need to substantially and sustainably grow our fundraising income in a challenging external environment. As we move through the strategy period, we regularly review our performance against our strategy principles ensuring we balance ambition with sustainability to maximise impact. We remain guided throughout by our vision of breaking the link between socio-economic background and opportunity, so all young people have a fair chance in life.

Programmes Impact

Through our innovative suite of evidence-led programmes, each year we support thousands of talented students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to make informed choices about their future, maximise their talents, and realise their aspirations.

The students we support have often grown up in areas with high rates of poverty and economic deprivation – in 2024/25 65% of students on our guided programmes were eligible for free school meals. They attended state-funded schools and more than 75% are the first in their family to attend university. In 2024/25 we received more than seven applications for each place on our programmes, demonstrating the critical need for our support to help young people to unlock their talents.

We know from our expert programme evaluations and longitudinal data analysis that:

90%

of our students apply to university for study immediately after their A-Levels (or equivalent), with more than 75% of the total cohort going on to study that year.

80%

of our students apply to high-tariff universities, with our students twice as likely to go on to study at a high-tariff university compared to peers with similar grades and backgrounds.

80%

of students who took part in our UK Summer Schools and graduated from university in 2020 are in high skill level occupations, compared to 70% of all 2020 graduates in employment.

System Change

Our agenda-setting research identifies the root causes of low social mobility and promotes effective solutions for policymakers, business leaders, and wider society. Over our history we have worked with every government and across all political parties, as well as with leading employers to support them to understand their role in improving social mobility. We also work in partnership with leading organisations, including as a founding member of the Social Mobility Alliance, to promote actions to increase social mobility.

Our practical policy recommendations are recognised across all political parties, and recommendations recently adopted by the UK Government include the rollout of 1,000 new Family Hubs (*July 2025*), increasing the Early Years Pupil Premium (*Dec 2024*), expanding Free School Meal eligibility (*June 2025*), a consultation on banning unpaid internships (*July 2025*), the reintroduction of maintenance grants (*Oct 2025*), and ongoing engagement with the ten-year Health Plan for England (*July 2025*) which includes an explicit commitment to work with us to expand access to the medical profession.

About Being a Trustee

Time Commitment

Board Meetings occur four times per year in September, December, March and June, and generally take place in the late afternoon, usually from 4pm – 6pm. Most meetings are hybrid meetings, with normally one dedicated in person meeting per year. All Trustees are invited to attend these meetings at the Trust's offices in Millbank Tower, London, however online attendance can be supported as needed.

Many Trustees are also involved in additional activities relating to their area of expertise or specific Trustee role, such as safeguarding or finance, the time commitment for which may vary. Further engagement with our work, such as visiting programme activities, interacting with current or potential donors, and attending staff away days is highly encouraged, but not required.

Terms

Trustees are appointed for a term of four years and may serve a maximum of eight years (two terms). Upon receiving an offer of appointment, all Trustees must sign an eligibility declaration and our Trustee Code of Conduct as well as verify their identity with Companies House.

Trustee roles are voluntary, however reasonable expenses may be covered where appropriate, for example, travel to a programme visit.



Role Description – Lead Trustee for Policy

Last Updated: January 2026

Duties and Responsibilities of a Trustee

Policy Responsibilities

- Providing oversight for the charity's research and advocacy, ensuring the Trust's work is mission-aligned, evidence-based, and intellectually rigorous
- Supporting the Board in discharging their collective duties around planning, risk and compliance, particularly in areas such as horizon scanning for upcoming legislative changes, political shifts and shifts in social trends affecting the Trust as well as specific regulations around political neutrality
- Leveraging their professional networks and expertise, enhancing the charity's credibility and influence, ensuring our research translates into meaningful systemic change

General Responsibilities

- Inputting into and agreeing the Trust's vision, mission and values and providing advice on the Trust's wider purpose, goals and activities
- Inputting into and agreeing the Trust's aims and long-term strategy in furtherance of its charitable purpose
- Ensuring key risks are identified, monitored and controlled effectively as well as keeping abreast of changes in the Trust's operating environment
- Monitoring the Trust's performance against its strategic aims, operational plans and budgets
- Safeguarding and promoting the Trust's reputation, and acting in the best interest of the Trust at all times
- Ensuring the financial stability and sustainability of the Trust
- Ensuring the effective and efficient administration of the organisation, including having appropriate policies and procedures in place
- Ensuring proper arrangements are in place for the appointment, supervision, support, appraisal and remuneration of the CEO and they are held to account
- Contributing to regular reviews of the Trust's own governance
- Ensuring the Trust complies with its governing documents, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations

In addition to the above statutory duties, each Trustee should use their specific skills, knowledge and experience to contribute to the Board's decision-making, and dedicate sufficient time to carry out their responsibilities effectively. This may involve sitting on Board Committees, scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, or other issues in which the Trustee has special expertise.

Trustees aim to support a specific member of the SLT based on their skills and experience or may participate in appropriate subgroups, e.g., Alumni Leadership Board, Education Advisory Group, (Development) Board meetings, etc.

Person Specification

Mission and Values

- Sympathetic to the aims of the Trust and its mission to address educational disadvantage
- High level of personal and professional ethics, integrity, and accountability
- Willingness to safeguard and promote the Trust's reputation within the wider sector

Strategy and Interpersonal Skills

- Ability to think strategically in order to provide appropriate oversight and scrutiny for the Trust's overall activity and direction
- Ability to confidently and fairly make evidence-based decisions and constructively challenge the decisions of others if required
- Ability to collaborate and work as part of a team to provide advice, make decisions, and/or solve problems
- A commitment to personal development and a willingness to participate in regular reviews of the Board's own performance and governance

Governance, Risk and Finance

- Understanding of the legal duties of a Trustee (or willingness to learn), including compliance with Charity Commission and Companies House regulations and commitment to the roles and responsibilities of a Trustee
- Awareness of (or willingness to learn about) financial health indicators and organisational risk management

Specialist Expertise and Experience

- A background in public affairs, civil service, think tanks, education sector organisations or senior policy or research roles in (education) charities
- Strong understanding of how UK government (at local, regional or national level) and/ or the UK education sector works
- Strong influencing and communications skills with the ability to lead discussions, provide expert advice, and influence stakeholders in a professional manner
- Good understanding of how to translate policy jargon into clear, strategic advice for the wider Trustee Board

If you are applying as a first-time Trustee, you can find out more about becoming a charity Trustee using the resources below:

- UK Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/become-charity-trustee>
- Reach Volunteering: <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/become-trustee>

How to Apply

To apply, please submit your application via [this link](#) on our website.

Please note that your application should be submitted in one go – you can view the questions by clicking on the link if you would like to prepare in advance.

We're not asking for a cover letter and instead would like you to answer a few application questions about your interest in becoming a Sutton Trust Trustee and what you would bring to our board. This is to help you understand exactly what we are looking for so that you can focus your responses.

You will also be asked to complete an optional equality monitoring form so that we can understand where our applications are coming from and make efforts to ensure we can be representative in our governance. This information is not made available to interview panellists.

We aim to respond to all candidates by 10th April with the outcome of your application. Please note that we are generally unable to give feedback on unsuccessful applications, however we will always offer feedback if you are invited to interview.

Application deadline:

**30th March
10am**

First-round interviews will take place on **Wednesday 15th and Thursday 16th April** with our Chief Executive, Director of Research & Policy and a current Trustee. Second-round interviews will take place **w/c 27th April or w/c 4th May** with our Chair of Trustees, and two further Trustees.

All interviews will take place in person at our London offices by default, however we can accommodate online attendance if this is needed to support your participation. We will share either the specific interview questions or the question themes with you in advance of interview so that you know what to prepare for and can reflect on your best examples beforehand.



Safeguarding statement

The Sutton Trust believes that a child, young person or vulnerable adult should never experience abuse of any kind. We all have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. Therefore all posts undergo a safer recruitment process, including but not limited to, disclosure of criminal records where necessary and eligibility to work in the UK. We have procedures in place to promote safeguarding and a safe culture at the Trust.

Contextual recruitment

The Trust is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and that all applicants receive equal consideration. We strongly encourage individuals from all backgrounds, including those underrepresented at present at the Trust, to apply for this role. As such we particularly welcome applications from people with disabilities, Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ and from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. We are committed to being an inclusive and welcoming team and know that greater diversity will lead to even greater results for the young people we support.

We are committed to providing reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates throughout our recruitment process and during their time with us.

We also operate contextual recruitment at the Sutton Trust. Our application process gives you the option to include information about your background, such as whether you were eligible for free school meals, whether your parents went to university, or whether you attended a state school. For more examples and information on contextual recruitment, please see our [website](#).

If you have any questions before applying, or if you would like to enquire about accessibility needs, you can email us at jobs@suttontrust.com.



The Sutton Trust
jobs@suttontrust.com

W: www.suttontrust.com

Twitter: [@SuttonTrust](https://twitter.com/SuttonTrust)

LinkedIn: [sutton-trust](https://www.linkedin.com/company/sutton-trust)

Charity registration No. 1146244

**Registered Office: The Sutton Trust, Millbank Tower,
21–24 Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP**

The Sutton Trust is a limited company, registered in
England and Wales with company number 07951541