Prisoners' Education Trust

Trustee Recruitment Pack

October 2026

Deadline for applications: 9 November 2026

1. Introducing Prisoners' Education Trust

Since 1989 PET has provided funding for more than 50,000 courses. 50,000 lives changed. 50,000 people given new hope. And society benefits too. Research by the Ministry of Justice shows accessing a PET course reduces the chances of reoffending by 20% and increases the likelihood of finding employment by over 20%.

Our work has never been more important. Prison education is under severe pressure. New contracts have led to cuts in education and reduced the curriculum available in many prisons. This is short sighted. Education isn't "purposeful activity" it's the cornerstone of rehabilitation. If people in prison can't access education that meets their needs and aspirations it will have a knock-on effect on reducing reoffending.

Many of those who find themselves in the criminal justice system were excluded from school or struggled to gain any academic qualifications. However, there is a clear link between education and rehabilitation which is why at PET we are committed to ensuring everyone in the prison system has access to education and why we fund courses in levels and subjects that are not available through prison education departments.

Gaining these qualifications gives people a purpose and self-respect and enables them to secure meaningful and rewarding employment to support themselves and their families.

In October we launched our new five-year strategy; it isn't radical, deliberately so. We're going to keep on doing what we know works. This doesn't mean our strategy lacks ambition. Going forward our work focuses on three pillars.

The first is to do what we do even better. High-quality distance learning courses and outstanding information, advice and guidance to those applying for funding to help them with their application. Since 2022 we have provided information, advice and guidance on 15,500 occasions, including taking almost 5,000 calls on our advice line.

Second, drive innovation in digital access to learning, enhancing what we offer learners, improving their learning experience. We know digital delivery is becoming the norm in many settings, however, in the prison estate access to computers and in-cell learning is slow and challenging. However, we have already pioneered effective digital learning, launching a website available to people in prison, developing free digital courses anyone can access and successfully piloting the delivery of funded courses digitally for the first time.

Third, to use our experience to influence prison education policy and practice.

We are looking to broaden the skills and experience of our Board and are particularly interested in hearing from people with recent lived experience of the criminal justice system or expertise in prison education, further or higher education policy or human resources.

In this document you can find out more about PET, our work and our current aims and objectives.

If you care about prison education and its power to change lives, I hope you will consider applying to join our Board.

With best wishes

Paul Kelly
Chair, Prisoners' Education Trust

2. A view from a Trustee

I first became involved with PET when I worked in the education department of a prison and got to experience first-hand their vital work and the impact on learners. After a change in career I still kept abreast of PET's work and I was delighted when I applied to become a trustee and was successful. Serving as a trustee provides me with the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of passionate individuals who believe in the transformative power of education.

As a trustee, you will help steer the strategic direction of the charity, providing the governance and financial probity required of a charity. There is a robust induction process to support new trustees to fully understand their role and the work of PET. In addition, PET has helpfully signposted me towards a number of flexible, external training courses specifically aimed at trustees, in topics such as charity governance, that have been beneficial in helping me undertake my duties.

I have a full-time job and I was initially worried about whether I could dedicate enough time to this role. However, I have found that the expectations are not onerous, can easily fit around my other commitments and are clearly communicated, which allows me to forward plan and manage my time. It helps that the charity has an excellent Chief Executive and Senior Management Team who support us in being able to undertake our role whilst maintaining a healthy balance with our day jobs and other personal commitments.

I would encourage anyone considering becoming a trustee with PET to take that step. You will work alongside a committed and passionate Board and a dedicated staff team who bring a range of skills and experiences to the table. As a trustee, you will gain valuable insights into the charity sector, enhance your leadership skills, and make a tangible impact on an important social issue.

If you're looking for an opportunity to make a difference, contribute your expertise, and be part of a forward-thinking and compassionate organisation, then becoming a trustee of PET is a fantastic and fulfilling opportunity.

Vicki Mulligan
PET Trustee

3. About Prisoners' Education Trust

At Prisoners' Education Trust (PET) we believe that everyone in prison, wherever they are and whatever their background, should have access to education.

We work with prisons in England and Wales, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man to offer distance learning courses and related advice and guidance to people in prison.

We offer 120 different courses including GCSEs and A-levels, Open University Access modules, and a wide range of professional courses. We help around 1,600 learners each year to study, giving them the skills and qualifications to build brighter futures.

We also use our policy and advocacy work to improve prison education and show prisons, policymakers, and the public the impact education can have - not just for people in prison, but also their families and wider society.

If you would like to find out more about PET, the following may be helpful:

- PET's vision, mission and values are on our website at prisonerseducation.org.uk/about-us/mission-vision-values
- PET's current strategy – which sets out our priorities for 2022–26 – is on our website at prisonerseducation.org.uk/about-us
- PET's annual report and accounts for 2025 are on our website at prisonerseducation.org.uk/about-us/annual-report-and-accounts

PET has just published our new strategy, which sets out our priorities for 2027–31. It is on our website at prisonerseducation.org.uk/2026/10/our-new-five-year-strategy-lives-transformed-by-learning-in-prison.

PET currently has 20 staff and is based in London.

4. About Prisoners' Education Trust's Board of Trustees

PET aims to have a Board of around 12 Trustees. We meet four times a year, with two meetings held in person in London and two online remotely, as well as holding an annual awayday.

The Board has five formal sub committees:

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – ensures PET explicitly and proactively delivers its commitment to EDI.
- Finance, Audit and Risk – scrutinises PET's finances and risk profile.
- Fundraising – provides oversight and scrutiny of PET's fundraising activity.
- Nominations – leads on recruiting new Trustees and the Chief Executive.
- Quality Assurance Panel - ensures that PET complies with our agreed processes in providing distance learning and that these processes are delivering the right outcomes.
- Remuneration – leads on making recommendations on pay and benefits.

5. The Trustee role at Prisoners' Education Trust

5.1 Role summary

The Board of Trustees are individually and collectively responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of PET.

They are responsible for developing PET's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with our Articles of Association (which is our governing document) and taking full account of legal and regulatory guidelines.

Trustees serve four-year terms and are limited to a maximum of two terms, other than in exceptional circumstances. Trustees are not paid, but expenses are reimbursed.

5.2 Principal responsibilities

Strategic leadership

- To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving strategic direction to PET, setting overall policy and defining goals.
- To set and agree targets and regularly monitor and evaluate performance against these.
- To demonstrate our organisational values and behaviours.

Governance

- To ensure PET's governance is of the highest possible standard and fully complies with our Articles of Association.
- To safeguard the good name and the values of PET by ensuring the organisation complies with charity law, company law and relevant guidance, and fulfils all legal and regulatory requirements.
- To work within any agreed policies adopted by PET.

Financial probity

- To ensure the financial stability of PET and ensure systems are in place to ensure financial accountability.
- To protect and manage PET's assets and to ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds.
- To ensure PET applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of our charitable objects.

External relationships

- To act as an ambassador for PET, including acting as a spokesperson when appropriate.
- To represent PET at meetings and events as required.

Extra duties

- To fulfil additional duties as agreed with the Board.

5.3 Core competencies

We are looking for candidates who can demonstrate the following core competencies.

Knowledge and experience

- Empathy with and commitment to PET's vision, mission and values.
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
- An understanding of the critical issues and challenges facing the charity sector.
- A track record of and commitment to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion.

Skills and abilities

- A collaborative listener with an ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
- Able to exercise independent judgement, a willingness to share opinions, and an ability to focus on arriving at a decision.
- Strong communication and relationship management skills.

Personal style and behaviour

- Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort.
- Conscientious and committed to acting appropriately and to supporting and maintaining PET's reputation.
- The ability to act as a critical friend who empowers and constructively challenges the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team.

5.4 Additional competencies

In addition, we are particularly interested in candidates who can demonstrate a further competency from the list below:

- Expertise in human resources, particularly in remuneration.
- Expertise in fundraising strategy.
- Expertise in equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Expertise in strategic risk management.
- Knowledge and understanding of government, further or higher education, and/or the prison system.

5.5 Lived experience of prison and prison education

PET is committed to ensuring that people with lived experience of prison and of prison education are represented on our Board of Trustees. We therefore particularly welcome applications from people with this lived experience.

6. Time commitment

You will be joining the PET Board at a significant time, as we begin the process of implementing our new organisational strategy. The most important thing that you can bring to being a Trustee is to fully engage with and contribute to our work.

In order to contribute to our work and to forge relationships with fellow Trustees and staff alike, we estimate you will need to be able to contribute 10-12 days a year. This will include:

- Attending Board meetings, which normally take place mid-week from 4pm-6pm, four times a year with all the required preparation and reading (the reading required varies by meeting but is normally around 40-60 pages).
- Attending one board awayday per year.
- Participating in one or more of the Board's committees, which each meet around four times per year.
- Contributing to other work as needed, collaborating with both fellow Trustees and the staff team.

Of the four Board meetings each year, two take place in person at PET's office in London. The other two Board meetings – and most committee meetings – are held online. The annual awayday, which normally takes place in October, is also held in person.

Where meetings take place in person your travel expenses will be reimbursed, and we are committed to making any reasonable adjustments that you need to enable you to carry out the role.

7. Application process

We are seeking applications from candidates who can demonstrate that they will bring strategic vision and energy, along with fresh thinking and new perspectives.

We recognise and celebrate the unique perspectives that come from having diverse experiences represented on the Board of Trustees. Because we are focusing on becoming an organisation that more closely reflects the society we live in and the population we serve, we especially welcome applications from groups that are underrepresented on our Board, which includes people from minority ethnic groups and younger people, and from applicants with lived experience of prison.

Some people are disqualified by law from acting as charity trustees, subject to waiver provisions. You can find out about automatic disqualification rules in Charity Commission guidance here, including information on applying for a waiver. Some of these disqualification rules relate to those with criminal convictions. PET is aware that this could prove an issue for potential Trustees with lived experience of the prison system. In these circumstances, PET will provide support for a suitable candidate in pursuing a waiver.

To apply for this post, please submit an online application here. This will take you to SurveyMonkey, where you will be able to submit your responses.

The application has two parts to it.

Application questions

Firstly, a set of questions to give us a sense of your interest and what you could bring to PET as a Trustee. The questions are:

1. Please tell us about yourself and what makes you want to be a Trustee of PET right now.
2. Section 5 sets out the competencies we are looking for. Referencing your own experiences, please share the skills, experiences and perspectives you could contribute to the organisation as a Trustee.
3. In five years' time, what accomplishments would make you proud to have been part of PET and why would they particularly matter to you?

We want to hear about you in your own voice in your answers, so please make sure they are grounded in your own experiences and perspectives rather than being generated by AI.

While there is no set length, as an indication your total response to these questions should normally be about two sides of a Word document.

You may look at the list in section 5 and doubt whether you have all these competencies. But if you think this is the right role for you, please don't let this put you off. Focus instead on what you would bring to the role.

Uploading your CV

Secondly, you will be asked to upload your CV. CVs should be no longer than two pages.

If you would prefer to submit your responses to these questions on a Word document rather than through the online form, please send them by email to PET's Chief Executive, Jon Collins, at jon@prisonerseducation.org.uk.

You will also be asked to provide contact details and diversity monitoring information. The latter is entirely voluntary.

Interviews

All applications will be anonymised before being scored by our Trustee-led Nominations Committee. A panel will interview shortlisted candidates. Interviews will be held online using MS Teams for all candidates.

We are committed to making any reasonable adjustments that you require to assist you in the application and interview process.

8. Timeline

The closing date for applications is **5pm** on **Monday 9th November 2026.**

Interviews will be held **on Wednesday 25th November or Thursday 26th November.** If you cannot make either of these dates, please let us know as soon as possible by emailing jon@prisonerseducation.org.uk.

We aim to make appointments in early December. For successful candidates, induction will take place in the first two months of 2027. Your first Board meeting will be in March 2027.

9. Further information

If you have any questions about the process, please contact PET's Chief Executive, Jon Collins, at jon@prisonerseducation.org.uk or on 07968 493 098.