



# Chair of Trustee Recruitment Pack

November 2024

Lead the board of Communities  
Empowerment Network (CEN) to ensure  
every child has the right to education.



Dear applicant,

Many thanks for your interest in becoming the Chair of Trustees for Communities Empowerment Network (CEN), the charity that fights on behalf of any child excluded or at risk of exclusion from their education. For 25 years, we have supported, advised, represented and reintegrated pupils excluded from school back into mainstream education and supported parents to play an empowered role for the successful education and progress of their children.

With record numbers of children suspended and excluded from school (the numbers have doubled in recent years) our work is needed now more than ever. There are so many reasons that young people reach the point of exclusion - from disruptive behaviour caused by unsettling or even dangerous home lives to disengagement due to family members ill-health or bereavement, to undiagnosed mental health or special educational needs - most of which are out of a child's control. Yet we know that permanent exclusion can be life-altering for young people, with many further losing direction, being at risk of criminal exploitation or being left out of the labour market.

Despite the great need for our work, recent years have been difficult for CEN; we have struggled to secure sustainable income leading to us collaborating with a lean staff and volunteer team, and changes in our Board have led to further disruptions. Yet our determination to help young people stay in mainstream education and to reach their potential, has never wavered.

This is a pivotal turning-point in our charity's history. We are working to strengthen our governance structure by recruiting a new, knowledgeable Chair and Trustees to guide our charity to a stronger future and are exploring new ways to source sustainable income that will help to grow our team, and our impact.

The experience and engagement of our Board is key to our success. So is having a strong, ambition and strategic leader who can guide our Trustees and CEO to deliver even greater impact for our beneficiaries. We are looking for someone who shares our passion for improving the life chances of young people and who can dedicate time to helping us develop an upward trajectory for the charity. We are particularly seeking a Chair from the Education, Legal or Human Rights background, who understands the challenges children can face in the current schooling system, or who is willing to learn quickly. We particularly encourage those who may have experienced their own struggles or discrimination in their education to apply.

If you are interested, please send a CV and covering letter as soon as possible (or by Monday 25th November at 9.00am at the latest), telling us why you're applying and how you meet what we're looking for, to [emily.legg@cenlive.org](mailto:emily.legg@cenlive.org). We will be reviewing applications on a rolling basis.

Thank you very much for your interest in this key leadership role at CEN.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'E Legg'.

**Emily Legg**  
Trustee

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jenn Lewis'.

**Jenn Lewis**  
CEO



## Introduction

### Summary of CEN's objects.

The Objects of CEN are to *'advance the educational environment in England and Wales for the benefit of the public and to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity within our education system for students who may suffer discrimination for whatever reason but including under the Equalities Act 2010, by providing information, advice, support, representation, advocacy and training for such students and their families experiencing mistreatment and disadvantage in education, including in respect of, but not limited to school admissions, special education needs and school exclusions'*.

The Trustee position within CEN is to oversee the successful delivery of CEN's objects including but not limited to improving and driving forward strategies to improve the outcomes for vulnerable groups with whom CEN engages.

### Chair of Trustee requirements

Due to recent changes and upcoming planned retirements from the Board, we are seeking new, ambitious and knowledgeable Chair of Trustees to lead and govern our charity. Together with the CEO and other Trustees, you will have the opportunity to shape the future of our charity and to help us deliver our mission of helping children excluded, or at risk of exclusion, stay in mainstream education and reach their potential.

This is a pivotal and exciting time to join CEN as we seek to build back our charity following a number of years of limited fundraising success. This year in particular, we have seen an extremely competitive fundraising environment meaning we have begun to look for alternative sources of income including crowdfunding and reaching out to our networking for corporate and individual supporters.

We actively seek to bring diversity of perspectives and experience onto our Board, and welcome applications from younger people, those with disabilities, those from racially marginalised backgrounds and LGBTQ+ communities.

If you are interested in applying, please send a CV and covering letter by 9.00am on Monday 25th November, or as soon as possible, telling us why you're applying and how you meet what we're looking for, to [emily.legg@cenlive.org](mailto:emily.legg@cenlive.org).

There will be a two stage interview process:

- Informal interview with one member of our board to understand your skills-set in more detail and opportunity for candidates to learn more about the charity (online).
- Formal interview with two member of our Board and Chief Executive (online) and key members of our advocacy or charity network.



## What we do

CEN is an educational support charity focused on preventing school exclusions and reintegrating excluded pupils into mainstream education. We work to uphold minoritised children's rights to mainstream education through:

1. **Early Intervention** to prevent school exclusion and to upskill and empower parents, in partnership with Action for Race Equality (ARE)
2. **Training volunteer Education Advocates (EAs)** to provide free Advocacy Representation in panel or appeal meetings
3. **Advocacy Representation** for disadvantaged pupils facing exclusion from school.
4. **Research** to use collected data to evidence the impact of exclusion on disadvantaged children and to influence for systemic change, in partnership with the Runnymede Trust.

School exclusions are a major problem within our education system, leading to long-term social impact. There are glaring disparities in exclusion rates for children - especially boys. Children with Black and mixed White and Black Caribbean heritage, and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D) are two to five times more likely to be excluded compared to the school population as a whole. These minoritised children are one focus of our work.

### Why we are needed.

Previous governments have given schools increasing powers to exclude students, and removed the mechanisms, such as Independent Appeals Panels (IAPs), through which parents could challenge schools' illegal or unreasonable exclusion practices. Independent Review Panels (IRPs), which replaced IAPs, have no authority to require a school to reinstate an excluded student, even when the school's exclusion of that student is found to be unlawful.

Part of a child's educational entitlement is guidance and support in embracing their personal responsibility to act in a manner that helps to make the school a place where all can feel valued and can learn and teach in safety and comfort. It is the responsibility of mainstream schools to deliver that entitlement.

Instead, the school system is structured such that errant young people are sent to Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and similar forms of 'alternative provision,' where according to a growing body of research, the barriers to their learning and self-development are typically compounded. Despite the rapid expansion of 'alternative provision' over the last decade, and the government's own data on the growing number of students with special educational needs and disabilities being excluded from school, the Department for Education (DfE) is unable to present any evidence that exclusion acts as a deterrent.

The 2019 All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime reported that "Evidence to the group clearly suggested that when a young person was excluded from school, they were usually very vulnerable. For a number of young people this includes a risk they could become involved in violent crime. Too many children are being socially excluded and marked as failures, with tragic consequences. All too often the moment of school exclusion is the tipping point that leads to young people picking up knives. It's



increasingly clear children outside of mainstream schools are at serious risk of grooming and exploitation by criminal gangs.”

### **Strategic priorities**

Our focus is to create a stable environment for CEN to be able to grow and deliver more impact for children and families we support. To do this, there are a number of priorities for our Board of Trustees in the coming months and years:

- 1. Stabilise and grow our income.** We will seek alternative income streams to grow our unrestricted income and build back our reserves. We are starting this immediately with a Crowdfunding campaign and seeking support from partners, companies and individuals. Should we secure enough funding, we will recruit a full-time Fundraiser.
- 2. Recruit a new Chair and Vice-Chair.** We are actively recruiting a new Chair of the Board and Vice-Chair who are experts in the educational or legal field who can lead the charity to develop a new organisational strategy that drives our impact for our beneficiaries.
- 3. Expand the expertise on our Board of Trustees.** Our current Board members have Fundraising, Financial and Educational expertise. We would like to expand this to include HR, Communication and Legal knowledge. Due to upcoming and planned Board retirements we will also be seeking Fundraising and Financial experts to join the Board in coming months and years.
- 4. Strengthening the Senior Executive Team.** We will seek to grow the leadership of our organisation to lead the staff team to deliver a new organisational strategy.

We are seeking a dedicated individual, with expertise, leadership skills and sound judgement, to lead our Board to help make this possible. You will guide, advise and govern over the charity so we can support more children and their families.

### **CEN's Values:**

- **Equality and Justice:** Every child deserves fair educational opportunities, regardless of their circumstances.
- **Empowerment:** We equip parents and guardians with knowledge and confidence to advocate effectively for their children.
- **Proactive Support:** Through our advocates and PEP initiative, we prevent exclusions before they happen and create positive, lasting outcomes.
- **Community Impact:** We build strong partnerships within diverse communities to provide comprehensive support networks.
- **Resilience:** We foster confidence and self-worth in young people and families, helping them overcome challenges and build stronger futures.



## Chair of Trustees Job Description

### Time commitment:

Currently, and until CEN's financial situation is more stable, the Trustees are required to prepare for and attend monthly Board meetings. Once we feel confident in the charity's future stability, this will change to at least 6 meetings per year. These will mostly be online, but you may be required to meet in person on rare occasions in central London. There will also be opportunities to get involved in trustee sub-committees, attend events and support the charity on the basis of the individual trustee's expertise. We are looking for someone who is willing to commit to at least three years as a Trustee. Trustees will serve for a maximum of six years.

### Remuneration:

The role of trustee is not paid, although travel and subsistence to attend board meetings will be covered within reason.

### Role description:

As our new Chair, you will have proven leadership experience, strategic vision, strong communication and interpersonal skills, and a passion for our mission and value. You will bring charity governance experience and strong commercial acumen and will lead and develop our Board, bringing energy, enthusiasm and proactive commitment to the role. Our new Chair will be excited about strategic development, board dynamics, building a relationship with our Chief Executive, Jenn Lewis, and supporting children at risk of being excluded, and their families.

The Chair will lead the Trustees, who have independent control over, and legal responsibility for how CEN is governed. The Trustees play a very important role in making sure that the charity is run effectively, that it is helping the people it is supposed to in the best way possible, and that it is using its funds wisely and appropriately. The day-to-day running of the organisation is delegated to the Chief Executive who together with the Board, develops strategic objectives and budget, for the approval of the Board. Our new Chair will line-manage the CEO and keep a keen eye on the running of the charity. You, and all Trustees will function as ambassadors for the charity, helping to raise awareness and, where possible, funds. Chairmanships can be rewarding for many reasons – from knowing that you are making a difference to the charity's cause, to new experiences and relationships. The most effective trustee boards are ones which benefit from having trustees with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and skills.

### Statutory duties:

The statutory duties of a Trustee are:

- To ensure that the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these.
- To contribute actively to the Board in giving clear strategic direction.
- To appoint the Chief Executive and monitor their performance.
- To ensure CEN complies with its governing document - sometimes known as a constitution or articles of association - charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- To ensure CEN pursues its objectives as stated in its governing document.



- To ensure the charity spends its money only on things that will help it to achieve its objectives.
- To evaluate organisational performance against agreed targets.
- To safeguard the good name and values of the organisation.
- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation.
- To ensure that the charity is financially stable.
- To protect and manage the assets of the organisation and to ensure the proper investment of the charity's funds.
- To ensure that the charity's governance is of the highest possible standard.

#### **Other Duties:**

- The Chair and each Trustee should also use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board reach good decisions.
- Setting the agenda for Board meetings with the CEO and Chairing the meetings, reading and scrutinising Board papers in advance.
- Supporting or mentoring staff in particular the Chief Executive; Providing advice and guidance on new initiatives or workstreams.

#### **Chair person specification:**

- Excellent leadership skills with past experience in senior leadership roles
- Willingness and ability to devote the necessary time and effort to meet the duties and responsibilities of the post.
- Strategic vision.
- Good understanding of Charity governance with previous experience as a Trustee.
- Good, independent judgement.
- Ability to think creatively.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Strong team player, who respects and values the views of others and is able to speak their mind with tact and diplomacy.
- Commitment to social justice and the rights of children and young people.
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
- Experience of Education, Law, Human Rights, Human Resources, Fundraising or Communications is desirable.

*CEN is an equal opportunities organisation and encourages applications from underrepresented groups. We do not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, place of origin, class, citizenship, system of belief, gender, sexual orientation, language, marital status, family status, physical and/or mental disability. All employees will be chosen on merit.*