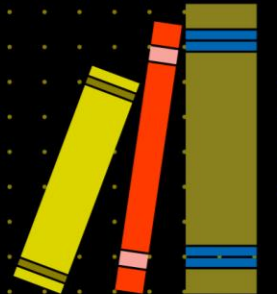
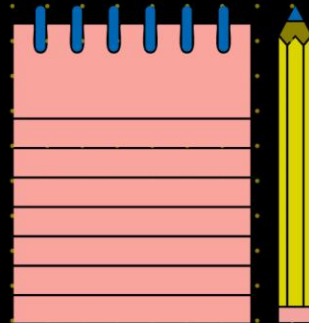
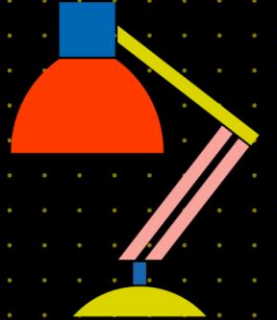
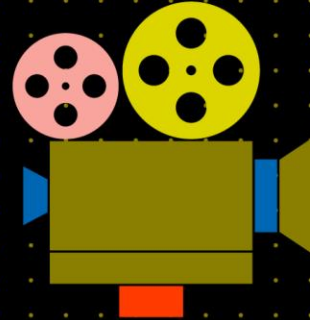




Manchester
Literature
Festival

Chair Recruitment Pack 2025





“Wonderfully diverse, inclusive festival with some beautiful venues. The festival has opened my eyes to a wide range of otherwise unknown (to me!) writers and artists, thank you for producing this great festival”

Our Mission

Manchester Literature Festival is a celebration of imagination, ideas, stories, and voices from around the world. It is part of Manchester’s rich cultural tapestry and is committed to bringing together the most exciting storytellers, poets, and thinkers for everyone to enjoy.



“I’m always after enriching experiences for children that I also enjoy as an adult. Being able to share it with my kids and participate as a family is what matters to me most.”

Our Vision

Our vision is for everyone to discover a love of literature in all its forms. To provide a welcoming and inclusive space where people can connect with each other; experience events that entertain, surprise and move them; and be inspired to become the writers, readers and activists of the future.



Programming Events

Through our annual 16-day Manchester Literature Festival in October and Spring programme of events, we showcase some of the most exciting and inspirational writers, thinkers and other cultural figures from around the world. Recent events have included:

Iconic Swedish singer-songwriter **Neneh Cherry** in conversation with Booker-prize winning novelist **Bernardine Evaristo**.

Rebecca F. Kuang discussing her multi-award-winning novel *Yellowface*, the craft of writing and the repercussions of empire.

Bestselling food writer **Meera Sodha** sharing recipes, family stories and the joy of food.

Turkish-British author **Elif Shafak** talking about her new novel *There Are Rivers in the Sky* and how fiction can build bridges in an age of division.

Bestselling author **Matt Haig** in conversation with broadcaster **Nihal Arthanayake** about his writing, neurodiversity and mental health.

Jackie Kay performing work from her new poetry collection *May Day* and discussing a life of protest with actor **Julie Hesmondhalgh**.

“I wanted my name associated with one of the world’s most exciting festivals. There are many things I love about Manchester Literature Festival. Primarily among them, the festival organisers don’t just look at who’s sold the most books, who’s the most established author, instead they ask themselves who is doing the most exciting work this year and those are the writers they invite.”— Kamila Shamsie, author and MLF patron



“The residency has enriched my writing and my practice. It has given me a deeper faith in poetry, it introduced me to people I will stay in touch with, and it has opened up new opportunities. And it has reminded me that I am made in Lancashire, and I love it.” – Clare Shaw

Commissioning Writers

Manchester Literature Festival provides new commissioning and writer in residence opportunities for both established and emerging writers. Some recent commission and writer in residence projects include:

Poet **Jason Allen-Paisant** created three new poems inspired by paintings and garments in Manchester Art Gallery’s collection and recent Dandy Style exhibition.

Hafsah Aneela Bashir, Andrew McMillan & Reshma Ruia created new poems inspired by their connections, memories and reflections of the Oxford Road corridor and films of their work were presented as part of the first Corridor of Light Festival. The project was shortlisted for a Manchester Culture Award.

Clare Shaw produced a series of poems responding to her interaction with the landscape and local people during her time as Carbon Landscape Poet in Residence across Lancashire Wildlife Trust sites.

You can read and watch many more MLF commissions on our **website**.



**“I live in a flat without a garden, the fact that the children couldn’t wait to go to the sessions shows how much they were enjoying them. I was shocked to see that they came home with books and actually sit and read them!” –
Joe (parent Sale West Story Explorers project)**

Inspiring activities for Children and Families

Through our year-round Creative Learning programme, we create opportunities for children, young people and their families to develop skills, confidence and social connections through creative activities. Current projects include:

Little Reads – fun, interactive workshops using drama, dance, songs and craft to bring stories to life. Targeted at pre-school children and their parents/carers, these monthly sessions are delivered across 11 Greater Manchester libraries.

Story Explorers takes place over the Easter and Summer holidays in various venues across Trafford and Rochdale. Targeted at children eligible for free school meals, the creative sessions develop reading, writing and film production skills.

Events for schools – we curate LIVE and DIGITAL events targeted at Greater Manchester schools to inspire pupils to develop creativity and confidence. In March 2025 we presented two Musical Storyland LIVE shows for at Z-arts featuring storyteller Jan Blake, djembe player Yahaël Onono and musicians from the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra.



“Every year the Manchester Literature Festival offers up a rich feast of readings, culture and conversation. In 2024, this feels especially vital: to provide a space for joy, beauty and connection, but also for urgent discussions about who we are or might be; the earth we inhabit; our fraught histories and possible futures – and even what we eat. This showcasing of contemporary creativity is at the heart of the Centre for New Writing’s mission, and we are delighted to be the Festival’s Higher Education Partner once again.” –
Kaye Mitchell, Director of the Centre for New Writing at The University of Manchester

Key Facts

Manchester Literature Festival (MLF) began trading in 2006 and was built on the legacy of its successful predecessor, Manchester Poetry Festival.

MLF is a Charity and a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The Festival holds National Portfolio Organisation status with Arts Council England and is also supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Culture Fund and Manchester City Council Cultural Partnership Fund, with The University of Manchester as its Higher Education Partner. Other funds and support are secured from a range of partner organisations, businesses and trusts and foundations.

For more background information about Manchester Literature Festival please visit our [website](#).

Our Team

Manchester Literature Festival employs the following permanent and freelance members of staff:

Sarah-Jane Roberts (Co-director, Artistic Programme and Production Lead)

Cathy Bolton (Co-director, Business Development Lead)

Miriam Wild (Children and Young People's Programme Manager)

Claire Saville (Marketing and Audience Development Manager)

Charlotte Platt (Festival Fundraiser)

Angie Lee (Digital Engagement Coordinator)

Liz Coupe (Volunteer Coordinator)

Mel McMinn (Festival Admin Assistant)

Our Trustees

Current Festival trustees are: **Karl Jackson**, **Chris Jeffries** (Treasurer), **Peter Mearns** (Chair), **Anne-Marie Nugnes**, **Gwen Oakden**, **Erinn Roocroft**, **Becca Parkinson**, **Jo Somerset**, **Bonnie Turnbull**, **Ben Ward** and **Andrew Westle**.

The Role and Responsibilities of Festival Trustees

Trustees are expected to:

- Provide leadership and strategic direction for Manchester Literature Festival
- Ensure that financial and other resources are well-managed and used effectively
- Act as responsible employers to the Festival staff and support their ongoing training and development needs
- Ensure that the Festival meets all its legal obligations and maintains appropriate policies and procedures
- Use their skills, knowledge, experience and contacts to help support the development of the organisation and raise the profile of the Festival's work
- Act as an ambassador and a 'public face' for the Festival, and advocate for its work
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to the arts, to equal opportunities and to championing the vision and ambition of MLF
- Commit appropriate time to the role, attending Board meetings, contributing to the work of the Board's sub-committees where appropriate, and representing MLF at events and meetings with key stakeholders
- Foster and promote a positive working environment
- Support the work of the organisation by attending MLF's events

The Role and Responsibilities of the Festival Chair

In addition to the roles and responsibilities of the Festival Trustees, the Chair will be required to:

- **Lead the Board of Trustees and Senior Team, holding them to account for the organisation's mission and vision**
- **Provide inclusive and collaborative leadership, ensuring that the Board functions as a unit, and work closely with the MLF Team to achieve agreed business and artistic objectives**
- **Ensure Trustees fulfil their duties and are responsible for the effective governance and sound financial health of the organisation, with systems in place to ensure accountability**
- **Ensure that the Board regularly reviews risks and opportunities, satisfying itself that systems are in place to manage and mitigate risks, and take advantage of opportunities**
- **Have strong networking skills, developing and encouraging partnership working while advocating MLF to funding bodies, local authorities, philanthropists and the business sector**
- **Support the MLF Team via meetings, regular contact, support and advice**

The Chair will need to have experience of, or be skilled in the following areas:

- Strategic leadership – ideally in the arts, culture or charity sectors
- Managing people, communications and understanding human dynamics
- Emotional intelligence – ability to provide pastoral support to senior staff
- Governance – ideally in the arts, culture or charity sectors
- Chairing meetings, facilitating discussion and decision-making
- Managing financial resources
- External relations and advocacy
- Maintaining relationships with funders, partners and stakeholders
- Influencing and networking
- Business, philanthropy and fundraising

The above list is indicative only and not exhaustive. The Chair will be expected to perform duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role.

We are currently rebuilding our board of trustees to be more reflective of the communities we serve and welcome applications from anyone with a passion for literature/the arts and a belief in the transformative power of stories.

Further Information

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held every two months, typically starting at 5.30pm in central Manchester. We expect Trustees to be fully prepared for meetings which will entail reading written reports in advance.

Expenses

Trustees are volunteers and are not financially remunerated, though reasonable expenses to enable attendance at meetings may be claimed back from MLF. These include travel, accommodation, postage, phone calls, childcare or care of other dependents while attending meetings.

Length of Service

Trustees will serve a three-year term to be eligible for re-appointment for one additional term.

Eligibility

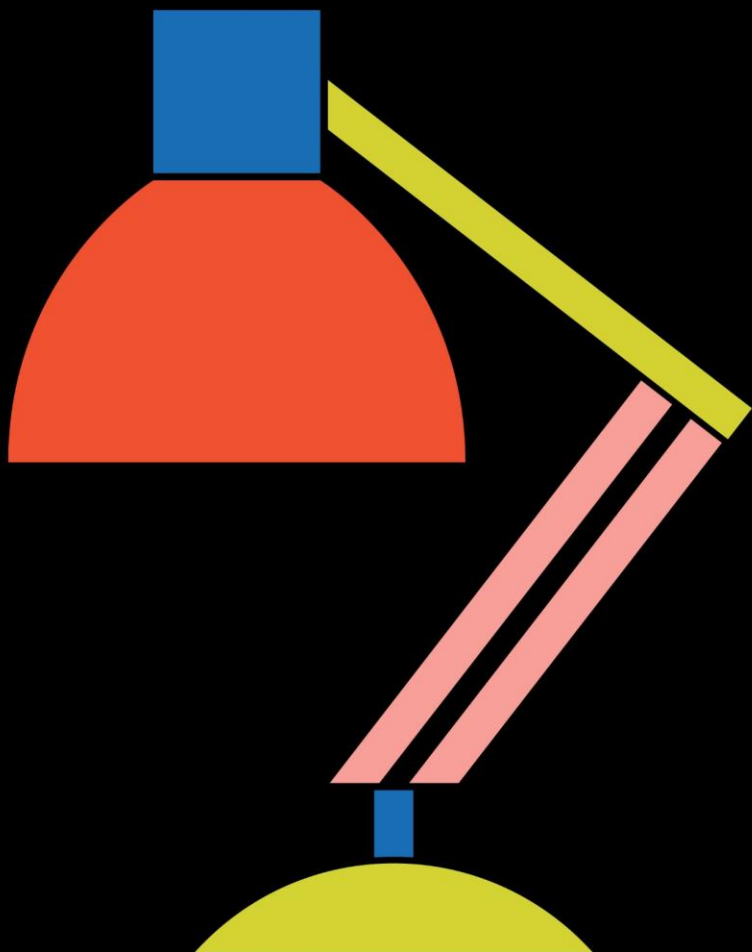
Candidates must be at least 16 years of age and be legally eligible to become a Board Member/Chair or Trustee of a charity. You must not:

- Have an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty or deception (such as fraud)
- Be declared bankrupt or be subject to bankruptcy restrictions
- Have an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA) with a creditor
- Been removed or disqualified as a company director or charity trustee because of wrongdoing
- Be disqualified or barred from acting as a trustee under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Please see further information here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved#before-you-start---make-sure-you-are-eligible>

Applicants may be required to undergo a DBS check.



How to Apply

To apply for the role of Chair, please send a covering letter or video message along with a CV and a Completed Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form addressing the following questions:

- Why do you feel motivated to support Manchester Literature Festival?
- Why do you feel well-placed to lead the organisation?
- What do you feel you'll bring to the Board in terms of skills, experience, perspectives, knowledge or other?
- What is your previous experience of Governance and/or executive leadership?

Please email your application to: Cathy Bolton at director@manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk by **5pm on Wednesday 1 October 2025**

Once applications have been assessed, we will invite shortlisted candidates to an interview and arrange an informal opportunity for them to meet other Board Members and core staff.

If you have any queries or would like an informal chat prior to submitting an application, please email Festival Co-director **Cathy Bolton** or our outgoing Chair, **Peter Mearns** at peter.mearns@live.co.uk