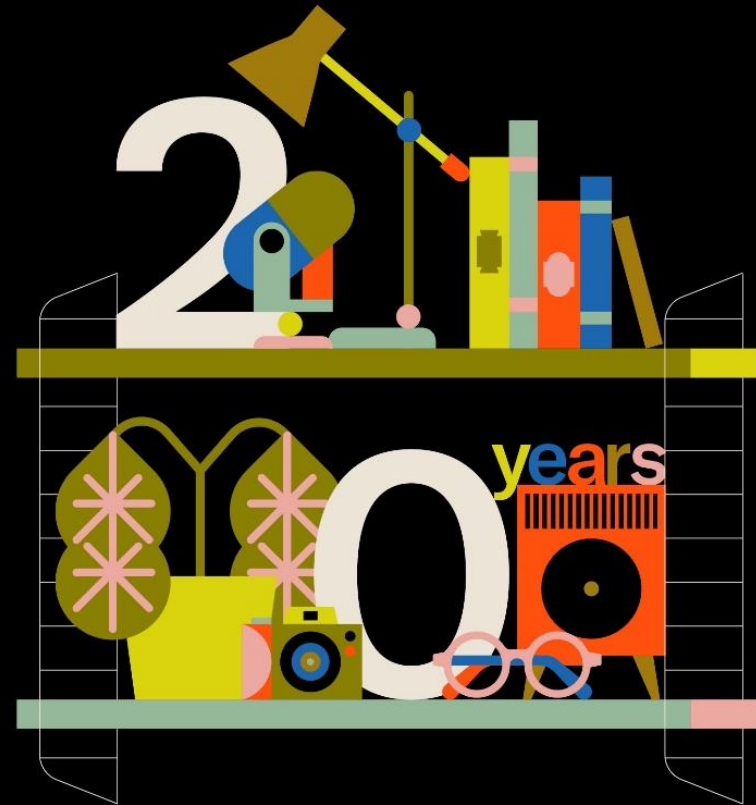




Trustee Recruitment Pack 2026





“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.



“MLF has pulled out all the stops again with an incredible line-up of top literary talent and the chance for festival-goers to hear from some of the most talented and creative writers and thinkers currently around. We couldn't be more excited about the depth and range of the programme on offer which reflects our status as a UNESCO City of Literature and we can't wait to welcome writers and readers to Manchester this autumn.” – Councillor Garry Bridges, Deputy Leader Manchester City Council

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**.

One of the most compelling young voices in contemporary fiction, **Rebecca F. Kuang** discussing her dark fantasy novel *Katabasis*.

Zadie Smith discussing the wide-ranging themes explored in her new collection of essays *Dead and Alive*.

Booker Prize-winning author **Kiran Desai** discussing her critically acclaimed new novel *The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny*.

Jung Chang discussing the long-awaited sequel to her internationally bestselling memoir *Wild Swans*.



“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

Led By Donkeys activists Ben Stewart and Oliver Knowles inspiring audiences with insights into their impactful political protest.

Sarah Hall and **Daisy Johnson** came together to discuss writing about place, landscape and the body with podcaster **Naomi Frisby**.

Robert Macfarlane discussed the importance of rivers, nature and environmental action with poet and climber **Helen Mort**.

George Monbiot debated climate politics, soil erosion and the future of food and farming with **Jeanette Winterson**.

Angela Davis and **Jackie Kay** took part in an empowering Digital conversation about feminism, activism, the Black Lives Matter movement and their hopes for the future.

Fantasy authors **Samantha Shannon** and **Saara El-Arifi** gave insights into their craft, characters and creating new feminist worlds with host **Eliza Chan**.

Max Porter launched his new novel *Shy* with dramatised monologues and an intense live electronic score.



“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 Greater Manchester. Targeted at children eligible for free school meals, the creative sessions develop reading, writing and film production skills.

Media Cubs – each year MLF teams up with Media Cubs to provide media training opportunities for primary school aged children and an opportunity for them to report live from one of the Festival’s Family events. In 2025 they produced a video report from the Manchester Literature Family Birthday Bash at Central Library.



“Two decades on, Manchester Literature Festival remains a creative force for good and a perennial source of inspiration within the cultural life of the city. The Centre for New Writing at The University of Manchester is proud to act as the Higher Education Partner of the Festival, and MLF 2025 promises an array of literary luminaries and cultural icons, with some compelling commissions and unmissable events. Here’s to the next twenty years!”

— Kaye Mitchell, Director of the Centre for New Writing at The University of Manchester

Key Facts

Manchester Literature Festival (MLF) recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. The Festival 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 and Manchester City Council, 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)

Angie Lee (Digital Engagement Coordinator)

Liz Coupe (Volunteer Coordinator & Events Manager)

Our Trustees

Current Festival trustees are: **Chris Jeffries** (Treasurer), **Anne-Marie Nugnes**, **Gwen Oakden** (Chair), **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

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

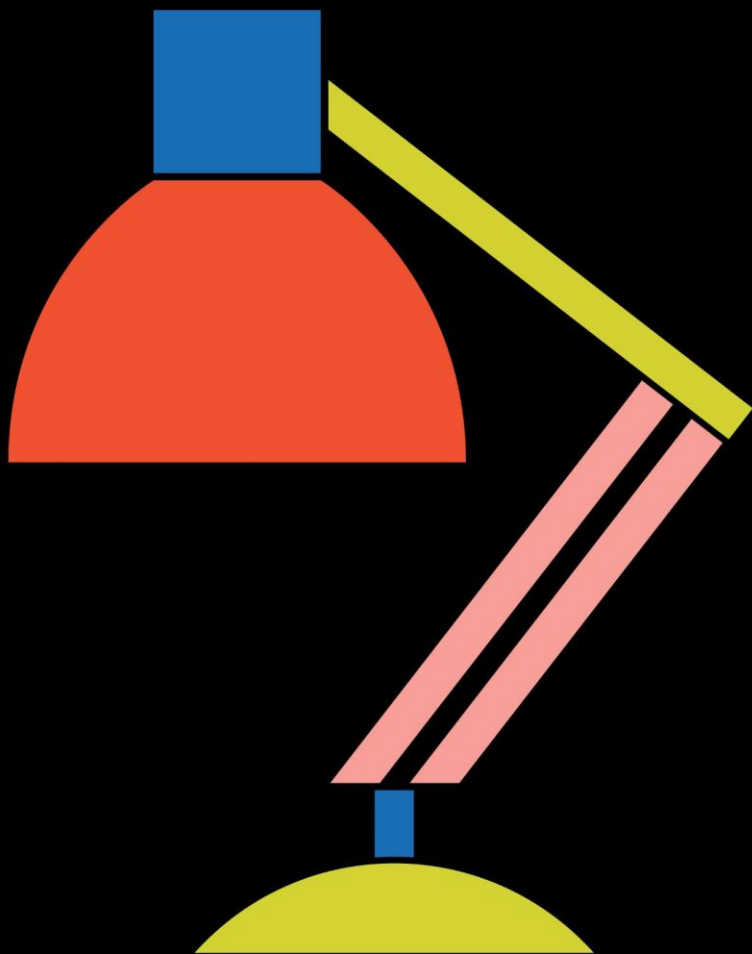
Candidates must be at least 16 years of age and be legally eligible to become a Board Member/Chair or Trustee of a charity. You must not:

- 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 Trustee, 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?
- What do you feel you'll bring to the Board in terms of skills, experience, perspectives, knowledge or other?
- Do you have any previous governance or trustee experience? (This isn't essential as any necessary training and/or mentoring will be provided for successful candidates.)

Please email your application to: Cathy Bolton at director@manchesterliteraturefestival.co.uk by **5pm on Sunday 1 March 2026.**

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 MLF Chair, **Gwen Oakden** at Gwen.Oakden@thelowry.com