



Trustee Recruitment Pack

October 2021

1. Introducing you to PET

“I spent the first 40 years of my life being told I can’t do anything and was stupid. That’s why receiving that letter from PET saying I’d been funded, it is difficult to express how amazing that was - that someone was believing in me.”
- ‘Jennie’, PET Counselling student

“My course is aiding my personal growth and has been such a help for my mental health during these difficult times. It has given me focus and purpose. Thank you.” - ‘James’, PET Maths A-level student

These reflections from just two of our thousands of learners say so much about Prisoners’ Education Trust (PET), both what we do and how we do it. Learners are at the heart of our strategy and all that we do, including how we work together as a Board. If this way of working appeals to you and if you think you can help us then you could be just who the Trustee Board is looking for and we would very much like to hear from you.

We are looking for candidates who can demonstrate that they will bring strategic vision, different perspectives, energy and fresh thinking to the Board. We are committed to increasing the diversity of our Board and would particularly welcome applications from candidates with lived experience of the criminal justice system. We have adapted and updated our appointment process to ensure that the process is fairer, more inclusive and minimises bias by adopting an anonymised hiring and shortlisting process. We are serious about our commitment to EDI and putting this into practice.

This is a pivotal time for PET. The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on PET and on the prison system as a whole, closing education departments and limiting our access to prison staff and current and potential learners. Nonetheless PET has continued to support people in prison to access distance learning throughout the pandemic, and we have also launched a new Advice Line, offering support and guidance to people in prison and their families. As we emerge from the worst of the pandemic, we are looking forward to the opportunities that will emerge to reconnect with prison staff, prison teachers and learners themselves.

We are also on the cusp of launching a new five-year organisational strategy, which will look to build on the progress that we have made in recent years and ensure that PET is fit for the future. It will see us reach out to new learners, broaden the advice and guidance that we offer, make greater use of digital technology in the provision of educational opportunities, and ensure that we use our voice and our expertise to influence and inform the future of prison education policy. All of this will be underpinned by our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to putting learners at the heart of all that we do, as well as to ensuring that PET is a well-run and efficient organisation. Good governance, and a Board of Trustees committed to the very highest standards, is central to this.

Under the leadership of our new Chief Executive, Jon Collins, our staff team is well placed to respond to current and future challenges, despite the ongoing uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Alongside this our committed and established Board is ready to ensure we don't lose sight of our ambition, vision and the importance of remaining prison-learner centred. Our Board is used to working to high standards of governance and in a spirit of shared collaboration. All of us recognise that the climate charities operate in has changed. The long unquestioned trust we held with the public has gone and the regulators have rightly responded. Boards are now expected to more actively question the environment they work within and we are doing just this.

I hope you agree that there couldn't be a more rewarding time for you to join the Trustee Board. You can find out more about the specific skills and backgrounds that we're looking for in this pack, and this includes from those with lived experience (in section 6 you can read more about Charity Commission guidance on applying for a waiver). There is also a link to our latest Annual Report.

If you care about prison education, if you want to help steer PET through the next phase of our development, and if you can offer us the dedication and commitment that we're looking for, then I hope you will consider applying to join us.

Through your commitment to addressing the issues facing prison learners you'll inspire PET to think differently. In return, this volunteer role offers an unrivalled opportunity for you to help us turn PET's bold ambitions into reality. I look forward to reading your application and thank you for your interest in our work.

With best wishes



Elisabeth Davies
Chair, PET Trustee Board

2. A view from a Trustee

I first came across PET while applying for a personal fitness trainer course in prison.

When it dawned on me that I could no longer pursue my original career, PET provided me with hope that there is a future and a pathway, and that there are both people and organisations out there that care.

When I left prison, I knew I wanted to play my part to give back and support those still in prison. I had ideas and passion to support learning, but I thought I wouldn't be 'good enough' as a young woman who had only just left prison. But when an opportunity came up to become a trustee it caught my eye and I applied not expecting to hear back. You could imagine my surprise when I was invited to an interview.

The PET trustees treated me with the utmost dignity, respect and genuinely valued my experiences not only of prison learning but also my professional skills and life experiences. My initial doubts were wrong. PET wanted people like me.

From the get-go, I received a full induction and opportunities to grow into the role. PET has always respected my time, provided support and opportunities to get more involved. I've never stopped learning in my role, whether that be from fellow trustees, staff or our alumni network.

Becoming a trustee has helped me develop my professional network in the criminal justice sector and increase understanding of what challenges are being faced by current prisoners trying to access education. For me, it's been both a humbling and rewarding experience and is a great way to positively impact the strategic direction of an organisation that, at its core, supports prison learners.

For anyone wondering whether becoming a PET trustee would be a right fit, I strongly encourage you to apply.

Mandy Mahil
PET Trustee

3. About Prisoners' Education Trust

3.1 Our history and impact

PET is a charity that works to help people achieve their potential through learning.

Our vision: prisoners' lives transformed through learning

Our mission: every prisoner a learner, every prison a place to learn

PET was established in 1989, the brainchild of the two founders, David Burton and Vernon Cocking. They had become disillusioned with the narrow range of classes on offer to prisoners, and wanted to provide more learning opportunities for the men they worked with. And so, PET was founded.

Initially working in just HMP Wandsworth, we now offer distance learning courses, advice and guidance to prisoners across England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. We help around 1,500 people each year to start courses, giving them the opportunity to learn new skills and gain recognised qualifications.

We know that what we do works. Ministry of Justice research shows that our provision reduces reoffending by 22% and increases the chance of someone finding work by 21%. Our learners have gone on to gain PhDs, start businesses and provide support for others in their communities. The chance to develop skills and knowledge can build self-esteem, improve mental health, and offer a source of hope - something too often lacking in our prisons.

3.2 Our values



We inspire

Through the courses we provide, the advice we give and the examples we share, we encourage our learners to reach their potential and achieve their goals.

We care

We care about the people we fund, prison staff and our team. We support people, enabling them to realise their learning ambitions and future goals.



We collaborate

We believe that by working together, we can achieve the changes we want to see. Our networks join-up prisons, universities, third sector organisations, and people with experience of prison.

We are tenacious

We strive to remove the obstacles in the way of prison learners, and work against the odds to give hope and opportunities.



We are expert

We have 30 years' worth of experience in delivering prison education. We share our expertise, while also learning from other experts - particularly those with lived experience.

We celebrate

We recognise the success of our learners, our partners and our team and shine a light on the, often unrecognised, people who help change others' lives.



We are inclusive

We value everyone's contributions and see diversity as a strength and asset. We work to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

3.3 Our strategy

PET is currently preparing to publish our new strategy for 2022-2026. Despite the current challenging context, this new strategy is an ambitious one - setting out a future for PET that builds on our strengths and continues to move the organisation forward.

Supporting people in prison to access distance learning courses remains at the heart of what we do and we will continue at all times to carry out this important work. But our new strategy will see us build on this, extending our reach and extending the support that we provide to learners - first to access the right courses for them and then to complete them and achieve qualifications that help them in the future. We will also make greater use of digital technology in the delivery of our services, while making use of PET's standing to influence the development of policy and practice.

This work will be underpinned by a commitment to involve people with lived experience of prison education in all that we do and to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our work. We will also continue to ensure that PET is a well-run, effective and financially sustainable organisation, built on firm foundations and fit for the future.

Due to be launched this month, this new strategy will guide PET's work for the next five years. We are confident that it will provide a robust framework to enable PET to continue to develop and grow.

Further information about PET and our work can be found at www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/what-we-do.

3.4 Our size and location

PET has offices in Cardiff and in London. We have 22 staff and an annual budget of around £1.9 million.

More information about our finances can be found in our [Annual Accounts](#).

3.5 Our governance

While our Articles give us some flexibility, PET aims to have a Board of around 12 Trustees. Amongst the Trustees there are three Officers - Chair, Deputy Chair and Treasurer.

Our Board meets six times a year, working to a clear agenda that has standard items including reviewing the financial management accounts, reviewing delivery against key targets and receiving a report from the Chief Executive. We also discuss our progress on equality, diversity and inclusion issues, along with service and fundraising updates and a report from the Alumni Advisory Group. Board meetings usually take place at PET's office in London, although they have been held remotely during the coronavirus pandemic and we are currently exploring the potential for future 'hybrid' meetings.

The Board has five formal sub committees:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - ensures PET explicitly and proactively delivers its commitment to EDI.
- Fundraising - provides oversight and scrutiny of PET's fundraising activity.
- Nominations - leads on recruiting new Trustees and led the recent recruitment of a new Chief Executive.
- Quality Assurance Panel - ensures that PET complies with our agreed processes in providing distance learning courses and that these processes are delivering the right outcomes in terms of PET's charitable objectives.
- Remuneration - leads on appraising the performance of the Chair and Trustee Board and in making recommendations on the pay review structure.

4. The Role of Trustee

4.1 Role summary

The Board of Trustees are individually and collectively responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of PET, our financial health and the probity of our activities. They are responsible for developing PET's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with our Articles of Association and taking full account of legal and regulatory guidelines. All Trustees are committed to working alongside service users, ensuring prison learners are at the heart of all that PET does.

4.2 Principal responsibilities:

Strategic leadership

- To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving firm 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 values and behaviours.

Governance

- To ensure PET's governance is of the highest possible standard and fully complies with its Articles of Association.
- To safeguard the good name and 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 the property of PET and to ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds.
- To ensure PET applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its 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.

4.3 Core competencies

We're looking for candidates who are able to 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 voluntary sector.
- A track record of and commitment to promoting equality, 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 support and maintain PET's reputation.
- The ability to act as a critical friend who empowers and constructively challenges the Chief Executive and the senior management team.

4.4 Additional competencies

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

- Current or recent operational experience of the prison system at a senior level.
- Knowledge and understanding of the prison and criminal justice system gained through lived, academic research or policy experience.
- The ability and willingness to be PET's next Treasurer from 2023; offering an understanding of charity finance and risk-management either gained through a suitable financial qualification or from direct experience working with or for a charity.
- Digital service delivery in a challenging context.

5. Time commitment

You will be joining the PET Board at a significant time, as we look to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and implement our new strategy. In order to contribute to our work, to forge relationships across the organisations and 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 at 4pm-6pm, six times a year with all the required preparation and reading.
- Attending one board awayday per year.
- Participating in one of the Trustee Board Committees, which meet four to six times per year.
- Additional contact, including over email and phone will be necessary both with fellow Trustees and the management and staff of PET.

For the 'Treasurer of the future' role, you will also be expected to spend some time being mentored and supported by our current Treasurer until you would formally start your role in April 2023.

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

6. 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. Through your commitment to addressing the issues facing prison learners you'll inspire PET to think differently about our future, what we do and how we do it.

We recognise and celebrate the unique perspectives that come from having diverse experiences - we see it as a strength. So, we are working hard to make equality, diversity and inclusivity part of who we are at PET and everything we do. 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 underrepresented groups and from applicants with lived experience of the criminal justice system.

We also run a Trustee Development Programme - this will be for up to two candidates with lived experience who we feel have shown real potential, albeit that they are not yet quite ready to be a Trustee. By being a member of the Programme, you will have the chance to attend and observe Board meetings and benefit from the support and skills of PET's Trustees.

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, depending on the circumstances, prove an issue for potential Trustees with lived experience of the prison system. In these circumstances, PET may be able to provide support for a suitable candidate in pursuing the waiver process.

To apply for this post, please submit an online application [here](#).

The application has two parts to it.

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

1. Please tell us about yourself and one thing that makes you want to be a Trustee of PET right now.
2. Referring to the skills and abilities we are looking for in section 4, please share the skills, experiences and perspectives you could contribute to the organisation as a Trustee. You may look at this list and doubt whether you have all of these competencies but please don't let this put you off.
3. In five years' time, what accomplishments would make you particularly proud to have been part of PET?

When answering these questions please do not feel you need to spend hours or write an essay - this is just to get a sense of you and what you would bring to the role. As an indication, your total response to these questions should be about two sides of a Word document.

Responses will be anonymised, then randomised, before being scored by the Trustee-led Nominations Committee.

Secondly, you will be asked to send your CV. This will be separated from your responses to the questions and only referred to at the shortlisting stage.

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

The closing date for applications is **12 noon on 29th October 2021**.

All applications will be reviewed by our Trustee-led Nominations Committee, and a panel will interview shortlisted candidates. They may be joined in this task by an independent Panel member from outside PET. Final interviews will be held **on Friday 12th November and/or Monday 15th November**. Interviews will be held remotely using Teams or Zoom for all candidates.

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

Successful candidates will be recommended to the PET Board for its meeting on Wednesday 24th November.

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.