

Supporting people with learning disabilities & autism



# Chair

## Appointment Brief

August 2025

# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair at Linkage Community Trust, a well-respected and much-loved charity, supporting people with learning disabilities and autism to live the lives they choose.

Linkage has grown and evolved over the years, responding to the needs of the people we support to a position today, where we provide high-quality education, care, employment support, community and day services that empower individuals to thrive across Greater Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and beyond.

Proud to be so valued by so many families: that unique blend of personal, respectful care and transformational learning that changes lives

Appointment to this role comes at a particularly exciting time for Linkage as preparations for our 50th anniversary in 2026 continue at pace and as we reach the mid-point of our current corporate strategy, which has been specifically designed to enable us to continue to thrive and grow, and better weather the challenging external environment within which we operate.

It also comes with a heavy heart, following the loss in December 2024 of our much-respected Chair, Mark Smith, who made a profound contribution and to whom we are deeply grateful for his leadership and commitment.

As we now move forward, we seek a new Chair who can honour that legacy and support us through our next phase of growth. Helping to set the strategic direction of the charity, ensure strong governance, and act as an ambassador for our work.

If you share our belief in the potential of every person we support, and you are ready to lead with purpose and care, we warmly encourage you to consider this role and learn more about Linkage.

**Keith Batty, Chair of the Nominations Committee**







## Linkage Community Trust

A compassionate, ambitious, and forward-looking organisation that puts people first. Our approach is rooted in lived experience, guided by the voices of those we support and the people around them. Through which we deliver multiple engagements across multiple communities.

Founded in 1976 as a specialist college for just four students. Today, we are a lifeline for people with learning disabilities and autism, providing an extraordinary breadth of activities and service provision. With our work spanning 24 residential homes, a leading FE college over 5 campuses, community support and day services, employability programmes, and three thriving social enterprises. We now have over 700 amazing staff and an income of circa £25m per annum.

In 2026 will be celebrating a significant milestone. 50 years of service dedicated to transforming the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism, and a Charity which has grown to become a locally and nationally recognised leading provider of high-quality services.

We remain committed to our model of providing person-centred support, with every pound we spend directed toward creating meaningful impact, whether that's through expanding day services, enhancing residential environments, developing new homes for people with learning disabilities and autistic people, or investing in our staff and volunteers.

This includes developments such as creating a sustainable future for our Weelsby Hall estate in Grimsby, which is being revitalised through a £5.6m project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund Enterprise Award, transforming a Grade II listed Victorian estate into a modern training hub, sensory centre, and residential care facility. A project which illustrates our commitment to delivering new services, jobs, and housing options.



# Nothing about you without you

## Corporate Strategy 2023–2028

Our current strategy sets out a clear and ambitious roadmap to strengthen and grow Linkage across four key strategic pillars:

- **Impact:** Enhancing the outcomes and quality of life for the people we support through person-centred practices, better data, inclusive co-design, and increased access to purposeful activities and employment.
- **Capacity:** Investing in a skilled, diverse, and engaged workforce; increasing volunteer and community engagement; and building internal systems to support sustainable, high-quality service delivery.
- **Sustainability:** Ensuring financial strength, digital innovation, environmentally responsible estate management, and long-term viability in a complex funding environment.
- **Growth:** Expanding our reach and service offer to meet rising demand, including services for young people, those with complex needs, and underserved rural communities.

A strategy underpinned by our values, Independence, Teamwork, Respect, and Honesty, and which commits us to an even more collaborative, “nothing about you without you” ethos in all areas of work.

## Financial Strength

For us, strong financial stewardship goes hand in hand with mission delivery, with Linkage remaining in a stable and resilient financial position, despite ongoing pressures, with demand growing, expectations rising, and where funding is often constrained.

Through prudent financial management and careful planning, Linkage continues to maintain its ability to invest in services, people, and infrastructure.







## Our Impact

Linkage makes a profound and wide-ranging impact on the lives of people with learning disabilities and autism, or both: empowering them to live with independence, dignity and purpose. Our person-centred services enable the people we support to build skills, confidence and meaningful lives on their own terms.

The ripple effect of this work extends far beyond the individuals we directly support. Families and carers gain vital reassurance and respite, knowing their loved ones are safe, supported and thriving. Communities benefit from greater inclusion, diversity and participation, as people with learning disabilities and autism become more visible, active and valued members of society.

We also help address significant societal challenges, from tackling social isolation and health inequalities to reducing long-term care dependency and creating inclusive employment opportunities. With our services and support, providing measurable outcomes in wellbeing, skills development and independence, contributing to reduced public sector costs and stronger, more resilient communities.

## Our Thanks

Everything we achieve is made possible by the extraordinary dedication and commitment of the people who power our mission.

Our incredible staff, whose professionalism, compassion and tireless efforts transform lives every day; our valued volunteers who give their time, energy and humanity so generously and whose contribution is vital to the richness of the Linkage community; and our funders, partners and supporters, whose trust and investment enable us to grow, innovate and sustain services that make a lasting difference.



## Our New Chair

One of those rare opportunities to lead with both heart and vision, at a time when strong, values-driven leadership has never been more needed.

As our new Chair, you will have the opportunity to work alongside a passionate and dedicated community of staff, trustees, partners, and most importantly, the people we support and their families.

Tasked with guiding a committed Board of Trustees, steering Linkage through the complexities of today's social care landscape, ensuring it remains firmly anchored to its mission. It's a leadership role that reaches far beyond the Boardroom. It requires strategic insight, moral clarity, and the ability to support and challenge our CEO as a critical friend, along with knowledge of the social care or specialist education landscape.

### Board Meetings

The Board holds seven meetings throughout the calendar year, with two focused on strategy, and half held in person and half held online.

### Time Commitment

The time commitment is approximately 3 days per month.

### Term

As Chair, you will be expected to serve at least one and potentially two further three-year terms, subject to review.

### Expenses

The role is not remunerated, but Board members are eligible to claim reasonable expenses for attending meetings and events on behalf of the charity.



# Role Profile

As our new Chair, you will be expected to apply your skills, expertise, knowledge, and networks to further the aims and ambitions of Linkage:

## Strategic Leadership

- Guide the Board to maintain a clear focus on long-term strategy and mission impact.
- Ensure the Board exercises proper oversight of financial viability, risk management, and resource stewardship.
- Act as guardian of the charity's values, ethos, and purpose.

## Board Leadership

- Lead the Board in exercising its collective legal responsibility for governance and strategic direction.
- Promote an effective, transparent, and accountable governance culture.
- Ensure the Board has the right skills, experience, and structure (including committees and working groups) to function effectively.
- Chair Board meetings effectively, enabling inclusive debate and timely decision-making.
- Lead annual individual Trustee appraisals and facilitate collective Board performance reviews to drive improvement
- Make decisions on behalf of the Board where delegated authority permits and ensure clear delegation to staff.

## Governance & Oversight

- Ensure the charity's governance structures support effective decision-making and the use of resources.
- Regularly review major risks and opportunities with the Board, and ensure appropriate mitigation or action.
- Ensure approval of annual budgets, capital expenditure, and the Treasury Strategy.
- Maintain oversight of safeguarding, compliance, and accountability frameworks.

## Supporting our Chief Executive (CEO)

- Build a strong, constructive working relationship with the CEO, providing challenge and support.
- Set clear annual objectives for the CEO, aligned to our strategic plan.
- Monitor performance through regular one-to-ones and conduct the CEO's annual appraisal.
- Provide feedback on the CEO's leadership of the executive team and identify training or development needs.
- Ensure clear boundaries and mutual understanding of the roles of Chair, Board, and CEO.
- Represent the charity jointly with the CEO at key internal and external events and engagements.

## External Representation & Advocacy

- Act as an ambassador for Linkage with regulators, commissioners, funders, and sector partners.
- Promote and protect the reputation of the organisation and its people.
- Engage with stakeholders professionally, in a way that reflects the charity's values and supports its goals.
- Attend internal events, supporting visibility of the Chair and Trustees, and engaging directly with learners, parents, staff, and partners.





# Person Specification

Our expectations are high. As our new Chair, you will need to bring the necessary experience, expertise, and energy to ensure we are able to achieve all that we hope to achieve.

## Experience

- Significant senior leadership experience within an organisation of comparable size and complexity.
- Successful track record of achievement throughout your career.
- Proven ability to manage and evaluate senior leaders, provide constructive feedback, and address underperformance and development needs.
- Board-level governance experience, ideally with chairing responsibilities, and knowledge of UK Corporate Governance and conduct standards.
- Clear understanding of trustees' legal duties and responsibilities, with the capacity to commit time, delegate effectively, and provide strategic leadership.
- Experience of leading change, including mergers, restructuring, or service innovation.

Experience or an understanding of national policy and the issues impacting the charity, including the Learning Disability, Education, and Care sectors, would also be desirable.

## Skills

- Strategic thinker with strong verbal, numerical, and critical reasoning skills.
- Skilled in analysing complex data, testing assumptions, assessing options, and conducting cost-benefit evaluations.
- Proven ability to challenge proposals, scrutinise investments, and support sound decision-making.
- Strong negotiator with a track record in strategy evaluation and delivery.

- Commercially astute, with solid financial and budget management experience.
- Creative and constructive thinker who values diverse views and fosters inclusive debate.
- Outstanding communicator, clear, persuasive, and influential at all levels.
- Effective board leader with the ability to unite Trustees, build consensus, and drive high performance.
- Confident ambassador, skilled in building relationships with funders and sponsors, and in maximising engagement and income generation.

## Attributes

- Personal gravitas, credibility, and impact to lead a significant local organisation operating in an increasingly important field.
- Strong and visible passion and commitment to the values and vision of Linkage and an empathy for the people, families and communities we support.
- Clear understanding of trustees' legal duties and responsibilities, with the capacity to commit time, delegate effectively, and provide strategic leadership.
- Demonstrates integrity, humility, honesty and a commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Relates easily to people from all backgrounds; open, collaborative, and skilled at drawing out diverse perspectives.
- Independent and confident in challenging constructively; seeks clear, evidence-based assurance from leadership.
- Reflective, resilient, and self-aware, with a commitment to personal development and growth.





## How to Apply

If you would welcome the opportunity to apply and become our next Chair, please forward:

- A CV or an extended biography outlining your executive and non-executive appointments, achievements, and academic and professional qualifications.
- A supporting statement (maximum 2 x A4 pages) demonstrating your motivation, skills, and experience relevant to the role, how you would hope to add value to both the organisation and the Board, and any other relevant information.

Your application should be sent to our advising consultant, Philip Nelson, via email to [philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com](mailto:philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com).

Please also let us know if you need any special provisions should you be called forward for an interview.

The appointment will be subject to the Charity Commission/HMRC's 'fit and proper person' test, receipt of satisfactory references and an enhanced DBS check.

### Timetable

Closing Date: Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> September

First Round Interviews: Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> September

Final Panel Assessment: Friday, 10<sup>th</sup> October

### Queries

For an informal and confidential discussion, to ask a question on any aspect of the appointment process, or for additional information, please get in touch with our advising consultant, Philip Nelson, on 020 3590 9978 or via email at [philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com](mailto:philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com).



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