



Tall Roots

The Brilliant Club

Chief Executive Officer

Recruitment Pack

December 2025



Registered Limited Company: 07986971

Registered Charity: 1147771 (England and Wales), SC048774 (Scotland)

Registered Office: Fivefields, 8-10 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W 0DH

Chair's Letter



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of CEO at The Brilliant Club. As one of the earliest pioneers in the social mobility space, The Brilliant Club has built a strong reputation, credibility and influence across the education system. The charity has proven its ability to drive lasting, system-level change for young people country-wide. As CEO, you will have a unique opportunity to build on this platform, shaping the charity's future direction and delivering significant impact at a national scale.

Almost a quarter of children in the UK are currently eligible for Free School Meals, the most used indicator of disadvantage. At the same time, students eligible for Free School Meals are becoming less likely to progress to competitive universities, with better off students now approximately three times more likely to progress to a competitive university. This is the widest the gap has been since 2019/20 (EPI 2025).

In 2020, the Education Policy Institute estimated that at its current rate, the attainment gap between advantaged and less advantaged students will never close. Our work to ensure young people have a fair chance in education feels urgent and necessary.

The charity is now coming to the end of its five-year strategy, Join the Club, and is approaching 15 years of existence. During this time, The Brilliant Club has worked with 150,000 young people in all nations of the UK, supporting them to access and thrive at competitive universities. In the last five years, our work has expanded to include parents and carers, and I am delighted that 1,000 parents have engaged with our Parent Power chapters.

We are seeking a bold, insightful, and committed leader to guide us into our next strategic period as we look to significantly expand our reach and impact. The ideal candidate will bring fresh vision and constructive challenge, with an enterprising mindset and ability to identify new funding and partnership opportunities. You will have exceptional ambassadorial and stakeholder engagement skills, underpinned by strong charity governance and management experience. You will also bring an authentic, empathetic and decisive leadership style that inspires others to unite behind a shared vision and purpose.

Above all, we are looking for someone who shares our commitment to creating a society in which every child has a fair chance to unlock their brilliance, regardless of background. While an understanding of education policy and the social mobility landscape would be valuable, we warmly welcome leaders who bring transferable skills, energy and drive from across the wider sector.

If you think that you have the skills and expertise to work alongside an experienced Executive Leadership Team and Board of Trustees, building on the charity's reputation and commitment to evaluation, I look forward to receiving your application.

The charity's future is bright, and we are all excited about making this crucial appointment.

Yours,

Dr Josephine Valentine OBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees at The Brilliant Club





What we do

In the UK today, where you are born and your family income are still the strongest predictors of the career you will have, how much you will earn and your future health and happiness. Attending a leading university is the most effective way of opening up opportunity, but it is a route too often out of reach. This is fundamentally unfair to young people and detrimental to society as a whole.

We are creating a society where every child has a fair chance to unlock their brilliance, regardless of where or how they grow up, and where positions of influence are open to everyone, not just the most advantaged.

Our Mission

We mobilise the PhD community to support students who are less advantaged to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there.

Founded in 2011, The Brilliant Club has now worked with 150,000 young people across the UK.

Students from the least advantaged backgrounds have a **2 in 100** chance of going to the most competitive universities, compared with **28 in 100** for the most advantaged ([UCAS Multiple Equality Measure](#)).

This disadvantage doesn't disappear when they enter university. Disadvantaged students are 20% more likely to miss out on a 1st or 2:1 grade at university. This affects an individual beyond their time at university and impacts society as a whole.

Through our programmes, we are working to combat this inequality.

Programmes

Our programmes support social mobility through a range of approaches:

Through [The Scholars Programme](#), 15,000 students each year develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to access university

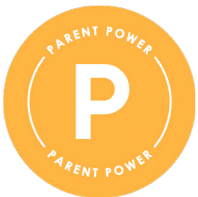
Our pioneering approaches to [university transition and student success](#) ensure that less advantaged students are supported to achieve a strong degree

[Parent Power](#) empowers parents and carers to become champions for higher education in their communities and address any barriers their children face



[The Scholars Programme](#) inspires a love of learning and raises attainment in students aged 8-18, provides practical experience of higher education and helps develop the skills needed to thrive in academia and careers.

PhD tutors deliver courses of university-style learning to small groups of students and the programme culminates in a graduation event at a competitive university.



[Parent Power](#) creates parent/carers communities across the UK. Parents are empowered to ensure their children have a fair chance at education and their future careers by:

Developing community organising and leadership skills.

Gaining advice and guidance on accessing higher education.



[Join the Dots](#) supports students from Year 12 and 13 through to their first year at university. At school, students take part in a series of webinars, called UniPrep, which help build confidence and understanding of university.

On A Level results day, students that will be attending one of the programme's partner universities are matched with a PhD Coach from their university. Each PhD Coach supports up to eight students to develop key university study strategies, academic self-efficacy and sense of belonging at university.



Alongside our core programmes, we collaborate with institutions and organisations to deliver additional [access projects](#) to support their priorities.

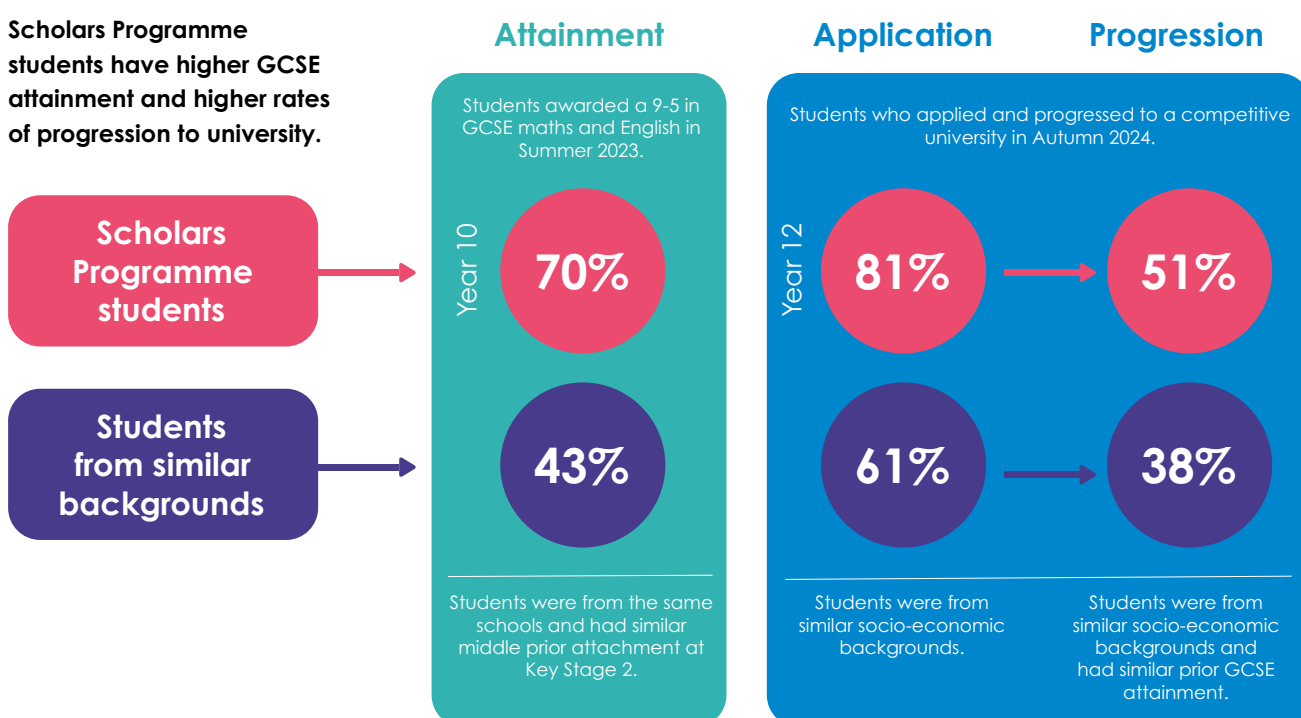
Each project is specific to the needs of the partner and builds on our experience of working with the PhD community to develop key academic skills and self-efficacy to support students accessing and succeeding at university.

Our Impact

The Brilliant Club is coming to the end of its third five-year strategy, Join the Club (2021-2026). Despite challenging economic conditions for the education sector, we have made significant progress towards our ambitious targets for growing our student reach and establishing new areas of work in parental engagement and student success.

Recent evaluation of The Scholars Programme has shown that our Year 10 scholars achieved a strong pass at GCSE maths and English at a **63% higher rate** than comparable students within their schools. Our Year 12 scholars progressed to a leading university at a **34% higher rate** than students from similar backgrounds. Economic analysis found that a **£300 investment per student could unlock £160,000 in lifetime earnings**, demonstrating the long-term value of access to competitive university.

Scholars Programme students have higher GCSE attainment and higher rates of progression to university.

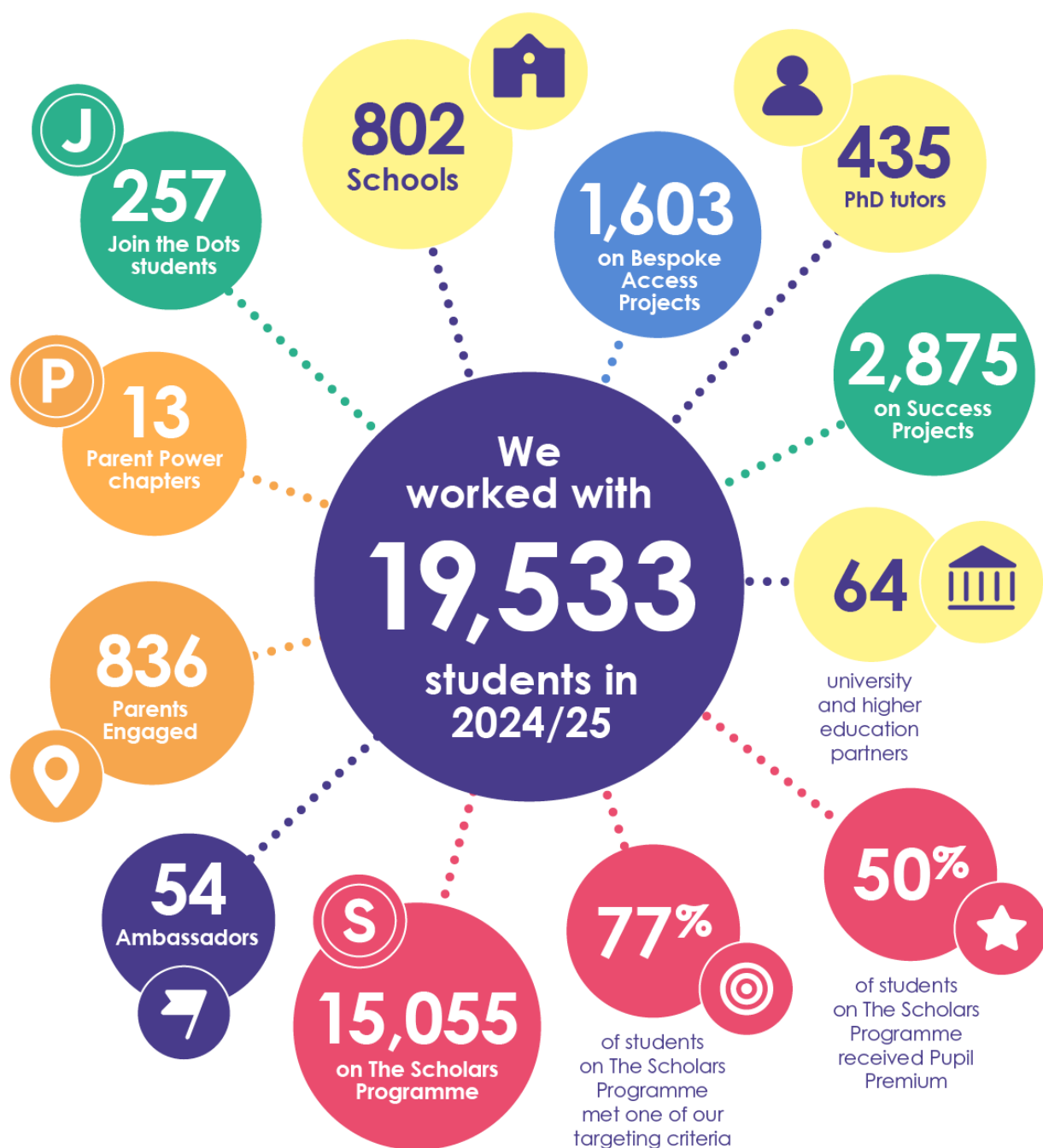


We are delighted that our student success programme, Join the Dots, shows strong results in key areas of undergraduate student development, including a statistically significant improvement in metacognitive and cognitive strategies, sense of belonging and academic self-efficacy.

Across our 15 Parent Power chapters, **97% of parents/carers** say they are able to talk to people in their community about higher education. In Bradford, parents have initiated 'The Learning Legends Club', a community-led tuition group, securing **£9,000** from the National Lottery Community Fund for enrichment activities and learning resources.

From our experience of programme delivery and evaluation we have built **Brilliant Consulting**, supporting other organisations that want to ensure better outcomes for future generations. Specifically, specialising in fairer education and university access and success outcomes.

Our Impact: 2024/25



Our Foundations

The Brilliant Club is in a position of stability, clarity and purpose as it approaches the end of its most recent strategy period. In 2024/25, the charity reported total income of £5.6m and held general reserves equivalent to three to four months of core costs, which aligns with our reserves policy. We also designated additional funds to support delivery of our current strategic objectives, and, looking ahead, we are committed to returning to a breakeven budget as those designated investments come to an end.

Our income is drawn from a deliberately diverse mix of traded activity, including long standing partnerships with schools, universities and sector bodies, which provides a strong and predictable foundation. Alongside this, our fundraising ambitions remain high. We are targeting over £1.5m per year across the next three years, building on trusted relationships with major funders, trusts and foundations, as

well as individual supporters. Strengthening these philanthropic streams will be an important focus for the incoming CEO, not only to sustain core delivery but also to unlock future innovation.

Operationally, the organisation continues to invest in the systems and practices that give staff and partners confidence. We hold ISO 27001 accreditation and Cyber Essentials Certification, reflecting our commitment to robust data security and good governance.

Finally, and central to how we work, The Brilliant Club is committed to being an excellent employer. We want colleagues to feel supported, stretched and able to bring their best. We are building a genuinely inclusive workplace where people from all backgrounds can thrive, contribute and lead. This culture underpins everything else and remains a priority as we look to the next chapter.





What's next?

This is an exciting and important time for The Brilliant Club. We are in the process of developing our next three-year strategy, and we expect our new CEO to review and input into this ahead of launching in Summer 2026.

Together with the charity's Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and the Board of Trustees, the new CEO will play a critical role in delivering this strategy, which will focus on expanding our work in the areas of the UK that will benefit from it most.

Three key pillars will underpin the new strategy: our work with schools, parents and the broader education sector:

- Young people will get prepared for university by working with a PhD researcher to explore cutting edge research, build key skills and boost attainment
- Parents will become partners in their child's education and leaders of educational change in their communities
- Using our 15 years of experience and commitment to the evaluation of our programmes, we will put the voices of young people and their communities at the heart of the conversation across the sector

Chief Executive Officer

Salary: £101,514 - £114,854 (plus £2,000 London weighting for those living in London and within the M25).

Contract Type: Full time, Permanent

Location: London (we have offices based in London and Leeds. We expect the successful candidate would need attend regular events in London, which could include evening events. We expect the role may be in London around once a week)

About the role

The Chief Executive will provide strategic and inspirational leadership to The Brilliant Club, guiding the organisation through the next phase of its strategy and ensuring that it continues to deliver meaningful impact for the students, parents, researchers and partners we serve. They will bring in new forms of philanthropic and place-focused partnerships to support the charity to reach areas that are currently underserved.

They will work closely with the Board of Trustees, the Executive Leadership Team and colleagues across the charity to set direction, make sound decisions and foster a culture that is values-led, inclusive and ambitious.

The role spans both strategic and operational leadership.

The Chief Executive will:

Partnerships and profile

- Develop philanthropic culture at the charity, by working closely with the fundraising team, Board of Trustees and senior leadership team to bring funders and their needs closer to the organisation.
- Work with Directors leading on business development to open networks and create opportunities to connect with universities, school leaders, funders, other charities and organisations in the sector.
- Build and sustain strong relationships with key external stakeholders, including government, funders, universities and schools.
- Lead the charity's external voice, representing The Brilliant Club with authenticity and authority, and identifying opportunities for influence, innovation and partnership.
- Represent the charity in policy discussions and through coalitions with others in the sector to deliver the charity's policy priorities.
- Lead the charity's approach to building strategic place-focused partnerships and work closely with other organisations and communities to shape this.

Culture and Organisational Stewardship

- Model the charity's values, fostering a culture of collaboration, inclusion and continuous learning.
- Champion equity, diversity and belonging, both internally and in the way the charity works with its external partners.
- Support and empower the Executive Leadership Team, ensuring clarity of accountability and a collective approach to leadership.
- Lead and inspire a high performing culture across the charity, encouraging ambition, ownership and a shared commitment to delivering excellent outcomes for the young people and partners we serve.
- Ultimate decision making and escalated management of programmatic delivery across the Brilliant Club.

Programmes and Impact

- Provide strategic oversight of The Brilliant Club's programmes, ensuring they are high quality, evidence-informed and achieve measurable impact.
- Shape how The Brilliant Club can use its evaluation expertise to support others in the sector through consultancy.
- Develop and sustain strategic partnerships, particularly those with a place-based focus, working with schools, universities and sector bodies to strengthen delivery and extend the charity's impact where it is needed most.
- Ultimate decision making and escalated management of programmatic delivery across The Brilliant Club.

Strategic Leadership and Governance

- Lead the delivery of the organisation's new multi-year strategy, ensuring it builds on the charity's strengths and responds to the changing education landscape.
- Work in partnership with the Chair and Trustees to maintain effective governance, ensuring the Board is well informed and able to discharge its responsibilities.

Operational and Financial Oversight

- Ensure robust planning, delivery and reporting processes are in place, with clear measures of success.
- Oversee the charity's financial management and operational systems, working with the Chief Operating Officer and the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee to ensure efficiency and good governance.
- Lead organisational change where necessary, ensuring that structure, capability and culture enable the charity to achieve its mission.

About you

Knowledge and Experience

Essential

- A highly experienced strategic leader with direct knowledge of overseeing complex budgets, managing organisational risk and ensuring long-term sustainability within a charitable organisation, gained as a CEO or Executive Director within a senior leadership team.
- A proven track record of building and sustaining high-value external relationships, including cultivating strategic partnerships with senior stakeholders such as funders, MPs, civil servants and policymakers.
- Strong understanding of fundraising and income generation, with the ability to diversify and grow revenue streams through partnerships, philanthropy and/or commercial opportunities.
- Demonstrable experience of developing and delivering impactful programmes, ensuring quality, relevance and measurable outcomes, with familiarity in impact measurement, quality assurance and continuous improvement.
- Substantial experience of working effectively with a Board of Trustees, providing clear strategic leadership and fostering strong governance partnerships.

Desirable

- Knowledge of the education and/or social mobility policy environment.

Skills, Abilities and Behaviours

- A clear understanding of how structural and societal barriers affect young people and their communities, alongside a genuine commitment to challenging and changing those systems.
- A deep commitment to the mission, values and charitable purpose of The Brilliant Club, with a demonstrable passion for advancing its impact.
- Strong and credible ambassadorial and spokesperson skills, with media experience an advantage.
- A values-led leadership approach, with experience of maintaining financial health while partnering effectively to innovate, adapt and deliver ambitious cross-organisational goals.
- Experience of leading an organisation or major function through significant strategic change, particularly within a challenging or uncertain external landscape.
- Strong people leadership skills, including experience of leading, developing and empowering senior teams, nurturing talent and supporting autonomous leadership.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to inspire confidence, build trust and unite others around a shared vision.
- Clarity of vision and strong self-awareness, able to articulate motivation for the role, personal leadership strengths and a commitment to ongoing development.
- A sound understanding of legislative and policy requirements, including information governance and information security responsibilities.

Working at The Brilliant Club

We know that the only way to deliver lasting impact for others is to look after our own people. We may be a small charity, but we take pride in offering a benefits package that rivals much larger organisations.

Everyone starts with 36 days of annual leave (rising each year to 41). This includes bank holidays, enabling colleagues to choose which days matter most to them. Everyone benefits from a winter closure, enhanced family leave and a sabbatical policy that gives time and space to recharge or explore something new.

We invest in wellbeing through employer-funded Bupa health cash plans, an Employee Assistance Programme, and enhanced sick pay that offers security when life gets difficult. Hybrid working is part of how we operate, with teams typically spending one day a week together in London or Leeds and the rest wherever they work best.

We know the value of balance and flexibility at senior levels too. Our CEO, like all colleagues, can work flexibly around our core hours of 10am to 3pm, and can apply to work abroad for up to three weeks each year. We also have monthly early finishes, because sometimes the smallest gestures make the biggest difference.

We offer a 6% employer pension contribution, a staff hardship fund for moments of unexpected strain, season ticket and railcard support, and access to discounts through Tickets for Good and Discounts for Teachers.

We believe that development is not an optional extra, it is part of what keeps our work ambitious and alive. Every colleague has dedicated professional development days, access to apply for training as well as access to learning loans for more ambitious opportunities.

We are proud to be Working Families 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working', Disability Confident, and We Show the Salary accredited. These reflect our belief that fairness, inclusion and flexibility are the conditions for excellence.

At The Brilliant Club, we work hard, we care deeply, and we make time for life outside work too. That is how we stay brilliant.

If you would like the full detail of our staff benefits, including leave, wellbeing support, family-friendly policies and flexible working arrangements, you can find them [here](#).

Our Values

The Brilliant Club has three core values that underpin how we work. We look for people who share these values:

- We get to a solution
- We seek and act on the best data available
- We understand that little things go a long way

Diversity at The Brilliant Club

We mobilise the PhD community to support students who are less advantaged to access the most competitive universities and succeed when they get there. We think it is important that our charity reflects the lived experience of the communities we work with, and we want to be an organisation where employees from any background can thrive. We particularly welcome applications from disabled, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Non-binary (LGBTQ+) candidates, and candidates from low-income families.

Safeguarding

The Brilliant Club is committed to proactively safeguarding children, beneficiaries and staff and to taking reasonable steps to protect all those who come into contact with the charity from harm. The safety and welfare of everyone affected by the charity's activities, especially children, is a key governance priority.

As part of our recruitment and selection process and commitment to safeguarding, we will undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check of all individuals in this role. Any offer of employment will be subject to a satisfactory disclosure report.



"As the first in my family to go to university and having worked as a teacher in a state school, I applied to join The Brilliant Club with a real passion for the charity's mission. I am grateful every day that I work at a charity that is supportive of both professional development and flexible working, as well as being full of kind and passionate colleagues."

Leanne, Chief Operating Officer



"I am the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Engagement Lead at The Brilliant Club. My role is to help make the charity an inclusive working environment for all of our colleagues. I work with our amazing Staff Networks and colleagues in HR to ensure everyone at the charity has a sense of belonging."

Emily - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Staff Engagement Lead

How to Apply

Tall Roots is acting as an employment agency partner to The Brilliant Club. Applications should be made online at <https://www.tallroots.co.uk/tbc-ceo> and include:

- a CV
- covering letter (no more than two pages), explaining your motivation for applying for the role and how you meet the person specification.

The closing date for applications is **Friday 23rd January 2026**.

Preliminary interviews with Tall Roots will be held virtually during **w/c 2nd February 2026**.

Final in-person panel interviews with The Brilliant Club are planned for **Wednesday 18th February 2026**.

If you have any questions relating to the role or the process, or would like any adjustments made to accommodate your needs, please contact Mark Crowley at Tall Roots by email at mark.crowley@tallroots.co.uk.



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**Join
the
Club**



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