



APPLICANT INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL TRUSTEES 2024



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Trustee at TACT.

TACT is the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity, with over 500 foster carers currently providing loving homes for over 600 children and young people across England, Scotland and Wales. We have annual income of £25million and 200 staff.

Since we were founded in 1993, we have strived to offer excellent care for all our children entrusted to us and to instil positive change in the wider care system. We have also sought to innovate so we can improve the experiences of children and young people in the care system to transform outcomes for the better.

TACT has continued to undertake a wide range of innovative work across the UK. We have recently added an education service to improve educational outcomes for our children and this is proving to be both a much-needed resource and a great success. We have also launched TACT Connect, initially with support from the Rank Foundation and now with a significant four-year Lottery grant. TACT Connect recognises that parenting never stops and we aim to stay in touch with all of the children we have cared for so that we can celebrate their successes and offer support when required. TACT Connect is a wholly unique service in the sector. We aim

to remain at the leading edge of improving the UK care system.

Underpinning all of this vital work are our excellent staff and, of course, our amazing and inspirational foster carers. They are caring for children and young people who are vulnerable, but also full of hopes, dreams, potential and joy. Good foster families provide safe and stable homes and help children fulfil their potential and enable them to lead happy and successful lives.

With the recruitment for our new Chair well underway, we are looking to appoint up to four additional Trustees to join our Board, bringing a range of diverse skills and personal lived experiences and providing critical challenge and oversight to our work. While we are open to a range of professional backgrounds, we are keen to appoint Trustees with knowledge of children's health (including mental health and wellbeing), Finance and IT to our Board. We are also interested in candidates with a background in HR.

It may be that you are an experienced Trustee who is looking to be part of an organisation going through an exciting period of change, or an individual who is passionate about our work and looking for your first Trustee role. We are keen that our Board is representative of the diversity of people that we support. We are particularly interested in hearing from care experienced adults.

We are all excited about the opportunity this appointment presents to lead our charity into the next phase of its journey, with our foster carers and children at the heart. We hope that you want to be part of it.



OUR VALUES



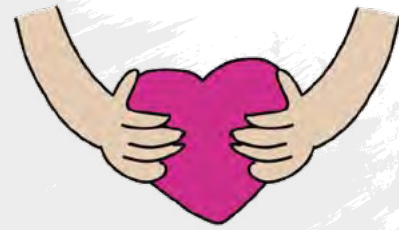
CHILD & PEOPLE CENTRED

We will ensure our decision making is in the best interests of children who are in our care and care experienced people we remain connected to. We will look after our carers' and colleagues' wellbeing and development to ensure they are able to provide the best possible care to our children, young people, and adults.



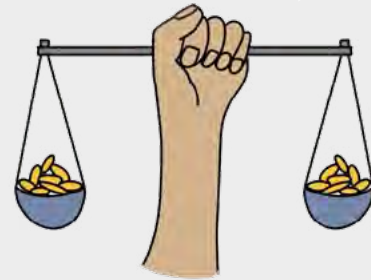
CONNECTED & INCLUSIVE

We will do this by providing a safe and trusting environment, where people can connect and support one another by building meaningful long-term relationships that can flourish. We will work to include the views, feelings, and thoughts of all those that work with us, particularly those who may be marginalised.



CARING & COMPASSIONATE

We will provide the best care for our children, young people, care experienced adults, foster carers and staff. We will show compassion and empathy in our approach and our behaviours.



CHARITABLE & FAIR

We will reinvest our funds into support and services that directly and positively impact the outcomes for children and young people to achieve better lives. We will be an organisation that is fair, courageous and transparent to all.

KEY STRATEGIC AIMS

- 1 Great Outcomes:** Deliver the best possible outcomes for our children.
- 2 Outstanding People:** Supporting our staff and foster carers to deliver the best possible childhoods.
- 3 Innovate:** A culture of developing and delivering successful services.
- 4 Be The Best:** Be the first choice foster care agency.
- 5 Speak Up:** Advocate for our children, young people and care experienced adults, and encourage them to speak up for themselves.
- 6 A Community for Life:** We will be there for our care experienced people lifelong.
- 7 Generate a Surplus:** Have a strong and sustainable financial position, so that we can invest in our children and care experienced adults.

ABOUT US

TACT (The Adolescent and Children's Trust) is the UK's largest dedicated fostering charity. Established for 30 years, we currently have over 500 foster carers providing loving homes for over 600 children and young people.

As a charity everything we do is for the benefit of children in care and on the fringes of care. We are beyond profit, which means that all surplus income is invested back into our services to ensure our carers and the children in our care receive the best possible support. We also regularly campaign on behalf of vulnerable children, seeking to influence public policy and argue for positive changes.

Over the next five years we are embarking on a journey to becoming a more trauma-informed organisation. By following a set of trauma-informed principles, we will ensure that individuals feel supported, motivated and engaged, enabling them to provide high levels of care and support to our foster families directly or indirectly through their role.

We will put trauma-informed principles at the heart of everything that we do, to create a strong organisational culture that:

- Realises the widespread impact of trauma, stress and adversity, and understands potential paths for healing and recovery.
- Recognises the signs and symptoms of trauma in children, carers, staff and all others involved in the system.
- Responds by fully and meaningfully integrating, embedding and infusing knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, language, culture, practices and settings.
- Resists traumatisation through our practices, interventions, policies, language procedures and culture.

OUR FOSTERING SERVICES

Our core work involves providing high quality and well supported foster families for children and young people in the care of local authorities. We passionately believe that all children deserve to live in loving, safe and stable homes. Our team of highly experienced and dedicated staff provide support to foster carers and children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Working in partnership with local authorities across England, Wales and Scotland, we are dedicated to providing creative, effective and outcome-focused services.

As a charity working in a competitive marketplace within the fostering arena, we are in a unique position as our surplus income and fundraising provides additional training, services, support and activities that benefit

our children and foster carers. As an example of this, we have employed extra support staff, such as a play therapist, to support our fostering teams. We provide regular opportunities for children and foster carers to meet and share experiences, through activity weekends and carers' support groups.

We are proud of our achievements to date and are committed to continually growing and improving as an organisation and to working tirelessly to help our children and young people to achieve their dreams and aspirations.



OUR EDUCATION SERVICE

In 2019 TACT launched a new Education Service that is accessible to our staff and foster carers, for the benefit of the young people in our care. Educational attainment for children in care is significantly lower than their non-looked after peers. Our Education Service aims to close this gap and ensure that the children in our care receive the best possible education.

TACT's Head of Education works with Virtual School Heads, as well as Supervising Social Workers, Local Authority Social Workers and schools, advocating solely for the child's interests and ensuring that the most appropriate resolution is found to the issue in question.



Issues that the Education Service work on include:

- Ensuring that every young person receives their educational entitlement
- Gaining school places for any child out of education
- Averting permanent exclusion
- Reducing the number of fixed term exclusions
- Monitoring Personal Education Plans, attainment and progress
- Supporting applications for special schools/EHC plans
- Gaining additional support for educational, social and emotional needs
- Liaising with the Heads of the Virtual Schools
- Promoting education in all its forms and offering on-going career's advice

OUR HEALTH SERVICE

Along with young people's educational needs, health can sometimes take a back seat when children come into care – particularly if they have suffered some form of neglect. They may be behind on their dental check-ups, or they may even have a serious undiagnosed condition.

Along with any physical health needs, young people's mental health will have inevitably suffered as a result of coming into care. Abuse and neglect can lead to feelings of abandonment and disconnection from their birth family.

TACT's Health Service was set up to be an advisory resource for social workers, children's support workers, foster carers and external agencies. Overseen by TACT's Head of Health Service, some of the support elements provided are:

- A level of clinical oversight for the child, taking into account historical, current and potential health issues.
- Health-related objectives that can be incorporated into a child's care plan.
- Therapeutic strategies to support with emotional and mental health issues.
- Participation in multi-agency review meetings for the child.

Providing consistent health advice and support to all professionals involved with a child will help ensure that young people's physical and mental health is prioritised.



POLICY & CAMPAIGNING

As well as being a service provider, TACT campaigns on behalf of children in care across the UK.

We work with others in the sector and use our experience and expertise on fostering and adoption services to argue for policy change that will benefit young people, carers and adoptive families. We have good relations with politicians and senior civil servants and we write parliamentary briefings and departmental consultation responses on a range of issues impacting on the care system.

Recent policy and campaigning work includes:

- In 2022 we were closely involved in the consultation process for the English Care Review and many of the recommendations on fostering reflected the suggestions we made alongside our partners in the **Fairer Fostering Partnership**. We are now working closely with the DfE and others to make the necessary changes to practice and regulation.
- **We are seeking to strengthen delegated authority** for foster carers so that decisions are made with children in the homes they live in.
- We also pushed hard for a national government backed recruitment campaign for foster carers, and this has been agreed, though underfunded.
- We continue to advocate that **the care experienced community are central to the design, planning and enactment of any changes that are made.**
- In Scotland TACT is an active member of Stand Up for Siblings, a collaboration between organisations within Scotland that recognise the importance of protecting the rights and needs of siblings in care. **TACT is committed to keeping siblings together, when possible and appropriate**, and works tirelessly to ensure that they can do so.
- The Fairer Fostering Partnership, which is chaired by TACT CEO Andy Elvin, sent an open letter to the Secretary of State for Education in 2022 calling for higher fees and allowances for foster carers to help them through the cost-of-living crisis. While TACT was pressing the government to provide more financial support to carers, **we increased our own fees to help our foster carers through the crisis.**
- In Wales we are an integral part of the Welsh Plan for Government, working closely with our charitable partners to ensure that **we feed into the Government's Consultation to end profit-making in children's social care**. This consultation is part of the Welsh wider objective to redesign how they look after children and young people, and TACT has worked to ensure that the voices of our carers, children and care experienced people in Wales are listened to during the process.

TACT CONNECT

TACT Connect is an innovative program that provides our care experienced adults with access to a supportive community plus grants, practical support, information and guidance. We aim to be there to celebrate success as well as lend a helping hand when required.

At TACT we recognise that leaving care is a challenging time for young people, especially as many will not have the help of a supportive family network. As a young person in care they are surrounded by professionals dedicated to their welfare, TACT Connect aims to ensure that care experienced people will continue to be supported throughout their life by those who have had experiences similar to their own, as well as TACT.

TACT Connect has built an impressive network of care leavers that support and celebrate one another, while keeping in touch with TACT. The program offers young people the chance to meet other care experienced people, learn and access new skills and get support in reaching their aspirations. By becoming a member, care leavers receive newsletters packed full of helpful advice and shared experiences, plus invites to events, and the opportunity to be involved in shaping the scheme.



THE ROLE OF A TRUSTEE IN TACT

STRATEGY

The board of trustees has the collective responsibility of planning for the future and developing the strategic direction of the organisation across the span of its responsibilities. Trustees need to be properly informed about the issues and confident to challenge the executive management team as plans are developed. Sometimes there can be a narrow dividing line between strategy and operational management and trustees need to be careful not to be drawn across this boundary. To do so risks them becoming distracted by the operational detail and thereby unable to maintain the distance and objectivity needed for their role in scrutinising performance. Strategic planning will be guided by the targets, objectives and delivery dates in the TACT strategy document.

SCRUTINY OF PERFORMANCE

Trustees will be encouraged by the Chair to question and probe the executive management team on its performance. To do this effectively they will need to have proper information, presented in an understandable format and be given enough time to digest it. In taking this role, the trustees are not acting as an external policing agency. Rather they should be constructive and guiding so that their scrutiny leads to better outcomes and improved strategies. This level of constructive debate requires trust between executives and trustees and a clear understanding and acceptance of each other's roles. 'Whole board' training can be helpful in developing this level of understanding.

RISK

Trustees have a responsibility to ensure the solvency of the charity. Trustees also need to be assured that the systems of internal control, including the "fostering" regulatory framework and financial management, are properly established and that appropriate systems of risk management are in place. Trustees will need to determine the level and detail of reports they need to maintain confidence that the systems that are established provide a sufficient level of control over the organisation. It is also a key responsibility for trustees to be aware of their obligations around staff and foster carer/child safety and the duty of the board regarding adverse incidents and occurrences.

The Trustees, and in particular business and sub committee members, will be able to review and endorse the risk management framework signed by the Chief Executive. The board needs to ensure it is complying with the published guidelines (by the Charity Commission) associated with governance, financial and risk management.

PEOPLE

The Trustees should be a source of support for the Chair. This does not mean uncritical support but constructive acknowledgement of the Chair's Board leadership role and authority.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Trustees can ensure that the interests of “children in care”, foster carers and the community in which they live remain at the heart of the board’s discussions. Notwithstanding this responsibility, on occasion boards will need to take a wider view in making difficult judgements between local interests and the wider population. Trustees have a particular responsibility for encouraging engagement with foster carers, staff and local communities. Trustees can ensure that the organisation consults staff about significant changes to services, listens to children and foster carers’ views and keeps the public informed about performance.

Drawing from their own experience with local networks, trustees also have an important part to play in ensuring that the board and the organisation builds networks with other organisations both within and outside of the charitable and social care sector, to assist and inform of their services.

Fostering Network and Coram BAAF events will be a particularly useful route for the exchange of information between the board, the public and foster carers.

OTHER DUTIES OF THE TRUSTEES

Trustees will be called upon to fulfil roles on the relevant sub committees and/or TACT’s Health & Safety committee, and other such “ad-hoc” committees, where more detailed scrutiny takes place.

Trustees may be called upon to undertake other duties, such as disciplinary and grievance panels, where they are perceived to be independent of the executive management team and therefore to bring more objectivity. Trustees will be expected to sit on one of the trustee’s sub committees which focuses on business and HR, fundraising and policy and our fostering services.

BOUNDARIES OF THE TRUSTEE ROLE

To add most value, the trustees’ duties should not extend into operational matters. For example they should not take total responsibility for communication with staff; they should not substitute for weaknesses in the executive management team; and they should not need to spend time in policy committees or shadowing executive directors simply to ‘find out what’s going on’. However, as part of the trustee induction it is important that trustees understand they are appointed with a mandate to assist the board in governance, rather than to act in the representative capacity that would be more appropriate for someone who is in senior management.

By focusing on strategy, scrutiny of performance and the outcomes associated with social care regulation, performance of children in our care, risk and financial management and the governance of the organisation will be far more secure and enriched. None of the above is intended to prevent TACT from using the special expertise of trustees or capitalising on their local networks and knowledge where this is clearly appropriate. It is also recognised that, as part of the trustee induction training and their ongoing familiarisation with the staff and business of the organisation, it is essential that the trustees should have contact with the operational activities of the organisation. Again, this is a matter of defining appropriate boundaries which recognise responsibilities and the paramount duty of governance. Within the trustees remit there is ample scope for the trustees to enjoy a term of office that is rich in personal fulfilment as well as making a focused contribution to TACT.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Time Commitment

Trustees serving on TACT's board, which is properly focused on its governance responsibilities and which is properly supported by papers and information from the executive management team, should be able to fulfil the role in eight days per year. Clearly some individuals will be able to give more time to the organisation where this is helpful.

There are 4 full Board meetings per annum and a Trustee away day. Two meetings are virtual and two are face to face, usually in London and the Trustee away day is also usually in London.

Trustees are also occasionally invited to attend staff, carer, and children's events across the UK (these are mainly in the summer months and approaching Christmas).

Remuneration

This is an unremunerated role, although all reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

TACT is fully committed to providing a harmonious working environment in which employees are able to maximise their full potential and contribute to business success, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnic origin, race, disability, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or marital status.

TACT is committed to identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices, procedures and attitudes throughout the organisation. TACT believes that all employees are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect while at work and to treat others with dignity and respect also when representing the business in any capacity outside of the usual working environment.

TACT expects employees to support this commitment and to assist in all possible ways. Our Equal Opportunities policy aims to prevent discrimination, provide guidance to resolve any problem should it occur and prevent recurrence.

PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

TACT endeavours to ensure that no employee or job applicant is subject to unlawful discrimination, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, race (including colour, nationality, caste and ethnic origin), disability, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or maternity, part-time status, age, religion or belief, political belief or affiliation or trade union membership. This commitment applies to all the aspects of employment outlined below:

- Recruitment and selection, including advertisements, job descriptions, interview and selection procedures.
- Training for all staff involved in the recruitment of staff.
- Training for all staff to ensure employees are aware of the policy and practice.
- All training in which staff participate will actively take account of equal opportunities issues and address any discriminatory remarks of behaviour.
- Promotion and career development opportunities.
- Terms and conditions of employment, and access to employment-related benefits and facilities.
- Grievance handling and the application of disciplinary procedures.
- Selection for redundancy.

DISABILITY POLICY

Recruitment is carried out on the sole basis of the applicant's abilities and suitability for the job. A disability will not in itself justify the non-recruitment of an applicant. Reasonable adjustments to the application procedures will be made as required to ensure that applicants are not disadvantaged because of disability.

No applicant will be considered unsuitable for appointment or less suitable than another applicant unless full consideration has been given as to whether a reasonable adjustment can be made to overcome any effect of their disability upon suitability for the post.

When a disabled employee commences employment we will, in consultation with that employee, ensure that such reasonable adjustments are made as required to enable them to work safely and effectively and to secure equal access to the benefits of employment.

DIVERSITY POLICY

TACT actively encourages diversity to maximise achievement, creativity and good practice and bring benefit to individuals and communities. TACT encourages all people it works with and for to contribute to an environment in which people feel comfortable expressing how they feel and what they need, knowing they will be treated with respect and that their contribution will be valued.

The way we work, train and learn within TACT reflects both the mission and objectives of TACT and the spirit and intentions of legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality and diversity.

TACT makes reasonable adjustments to working practices, equipment and premises and offers, where appropriate, additional support to trustees and employees to ensure they are able to take a full and active part in TACT's work. TACT also recognises that its ability to meet these diverse needs is enhanced by having a diverse workforce which generally reflects local populations in the area that it services and which has the skill, knowledge and understanding to achieve the service objectives. It commits itself to valuing diversity in its workforce and to developing and training employees to improve their ability to meet TACT's goals within an overall framework of equality.

TACT IS COMMITTED TO BE AN ORGANISATION THAT:

- Has a workforce generally reflecting the population it serves.
- Accepts that all have a right to their distinctive and diverse identities.
- Understands how valuing diversity can improve our ability to deliver better services to children and young people and so reduce disadvantages.
- Actively consults with staff, foster carers, young people and other stakeholders to ensure that the services, which are provided, are responsive and reflect the diversity of need.
- Provides a supportive, conducive environment where all employees have the opportunity to reach their full potential.
- Allows employees to challenge behaviour that de-values diversity and equality in a safe and constructive manner.

TACT believes that employees have an important part to play in making this happen and it requires every employee to recognise and discharge their own responsibility. It undertakes to listen to its foster carers, young people and customers and to involve them in the development of services, which recognise and value their diversity.

TACT uses its best endeavours to deliver services in a manner that genuinely recognises the role and benefits of an inclusive society that brings opportunities and access, not barriers, to individuals.

EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees have the right to work in an environment which is free from any form of harassment. All employees have a responsibility to help ensure a working environment in which the dignity of employees is respected; employees must ensure their behaviour to colleagues, clients or and customers does not cause offence and could not in any way be considered to be harassment or victimisation.

THE REAL LIVING WAGE

The Charity Governance Code states, as one of many principles of good governance, that charities should recognise their broader responsibilities to communities and wider society. This is at the heart of what we do at TACT and is evidenced by our commitment to tackling disadvantage and improving life chances for our families, children and more and that is why TACT is proud to be a registered Living Wage Employer and is committed to pay more than the national minimum wage for all casually engaged workers.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS, MILESTONES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Last year we celebrated TACT's 30th anniversary and in those 30 years, TACT has grown into the UK's largest fostering charity. Over the last three decades, our dedicated foster carers have cared for and created better lives for well over 6000 children and young people.

TACT Connect, our innovative service for care-experienced people, has made fantastic progress since it began in 2018 and now has an impressive community of care leavers who support and celebrate one another while keeping in touch with TACT. We also achieved our largest-ever charitable grant by winning a four-year grant from the Big Lottery to support TACT Connect and the Lottery is keen to extend this funding. TACT is clear that we need to be a parent for life and Connect is the way we aim to meet this duty of care.

Our well-being offer, which was started ahead of the pandemic, has paid rich dividends in recent years. Our HR team has undertaken excellent work and the various events on topics such as menopause, financial health, breath-ways, bereavement & managing anxiety have been very well utilised. This has had a positive impact on sickness & wellbeing. We are now rolling this support out to all foster carers.

Alongside this, we have promoted six existing staff members into management positions (including five women & three BAME staff). We are looking at further improving how we develop staff and succession plans.

The excellence of our education service meant that we regularly have stretches of the year where none of our children are without education provision due to exclusion or admission issues. This is very rare in this sector. Teams now fully utilise the education service we are seeing the benefits of this in improved educational outcomes.

We have recently completed a management restructure and now have a dedicated marketing and communications team to support all of our work and an innovation office that provide project and

program support to our entire charity and ensures that our support plans can be enacted effectively and successfully. Both of these will help us better meet the needs of our children.

We retain our clear focus on improving outcomes for children, supporting our foster carers, investing in our people, and continuing to be an innovator in the sector. We also advocate for change, have been active in policy development in England, Scotland, and Wales, and amplify the voices of our children, care-experienced adults, and foster carers to local and central government.

FINANCIAL POSITION

The austerity policies, in place since 2010, have meant that there have been significant cuts to local authority funding. This, of course, has had an impact on TACT. The pandemic was an additional challenge.

Despite this, we are in good financial health and our underlying metrics remain sound. We have addressed weaknesses in our business model and have seen this reflected in better financial performance. As a charity, we seek to balance financial prudence with a commitment to invest as much as possible in better lives for our children and families. We made a significant surplus in recent years, and we have invested the overwhelming majority of this directly into support for our children, foster families, care-experienced adults and staff whilst ensuring we have prudent reserve levels in place.

We seek to delegate decision-making on spending to as close to the child as possible and this allows our staff to be more responsive to the needs of our foster families.

*A copy of our most recent financial results is available to [download here](#).



OUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Underpinning all of our plans is an unwavering commitment to provide better lives for all of the children, young people, care experienced adults and foster families we serve.

The need to improve carer recruitment and retention will be central to our plans and we will continue to explore innovative ways to address this issue.

We are launching a new employment service which will see TACT partner with employers to create work experience, work shadowing, paid internships, apprenticeships, and employment for our young people and care-experienced adults. We already have a group of employers keen to work with us on this and we will be piloting our approach with them. We see this as a natural extension of our offer as we will be acting as any good parent would in leveraging our connections to create opportunities for our young people as they seek to enter the workplace. The service will remain available to our Connect community throughout their working lives.

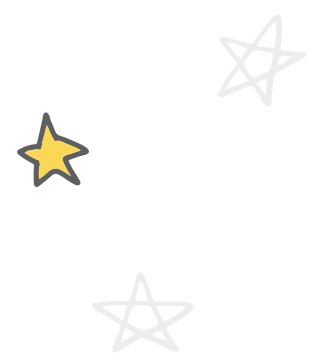
We are continuing to develop our Health Service which focuses on health outcomes for our children and young people, with a particular focus on emotional and mental health support.

We are also looking to further develop our specialist fostering services through growing our Child & Parent fostering service, our Residential step-forward offer, our Children with Disabilities service, and our innovative Parallel Parenting service, which sees foster carers act as parenting coaches to birth parents and extended family members so that children can remain in, or return to, their birth or extended family.

We are continuing on our Trauma Informed journey and will be working with Dr. Karen Triesman and others to embed Trauma Informed principles throughout all of our practice and in our organisational approach.

We will work closely with our local authority partners and with governments in England, Scotland, and Wales to promote fostering and seek central government leadership in promoting foster carer recruitment. We will also continue to argue for the removal of profit from children's social care and to address issues such as delegated authority and the allegations process which cause frustrations for foster families and impact negatively on carer retention.

TACT is looking confidently to the future, and we are in a good position to continue to invest in and improve our services for our children, young people, care experienced community and foster carers.





HOW TO APPLY

Tall Roots is acting as an employment agency partner to TACT. Applications should be made online at

tallroots.co.uk/tact-trustees and include:

- a CV
- covering letter (no more than two pages), explaining your motivation for applying for the role and what you would want to bring to the Board of TACT as a Trustee.

The closing date for applications is **Friday 22nd March 2024**. Candidates will be informed of the outcome of their application by Friday 29th March 2024.

Preliminary interviews with Tall Roots will be held virtually during w/c 1st April 2024.

Informal stakeholder sessions (remote) and final panel interviews (in-person) with TACT will be held during w/c 22nd April 2023.

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.



Registered Charity Numbers: England and Wales 1018963 | SC 039052

