magpie DANCE

EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Candidate Pack 2026

Welcome from our Co-CEOs

Magpie Dance is truly a wonderful charity to be involved in; based in Bromley we have huge ambitions and deliver a rich and varied programme of work to suit all ages and abilities.

As Co-CEO's we are proud to lead a professional company of inspiring and talented dancers, supportive families and a team of dedicated facilitators, musicians, volunteers, board of trustees and a small, but highly productive office team.

Together we all work to ensure our mission and aims are fulfilled; from delivering our weekly sessions and outreach work, working towards an annual show with a new artistic theme each year, to over-seeing important grants and finances. Everyone has a vital role to play in making Magpie Dance such a success it is and to achieve the best possible outcomes for our wonderful dancers.

Our charity is made up of the people who attend (dancers attend and stay with Magpie for decades), work and support it, and none of this would be possible without them.

Having just celebrated our 40th Anniversary (in 2025), this is an exciting time for a new Chair to come on board and help scope the next 40 years of Magpie Dance with us.

Alison Ferrao and Laura Graham, Magpie Dance Co-CEO's

"Magpie Dance is such an important part of my daughter's life. It has given her purpose, friendships, responsibility and a huge opportunity to express herself in dance. Our family can't imagine life without the Magpie family."
Magpie Dance parent

Message from Outgoing Co-Chairs

It's been an honour to co-chair Magpie's board of trustees over the last couple of years. We are proud to have guided Magpie Dance through a challenging but exciting time.

Highlights of our tenure include maintaining and building upon our status as one of Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations, developing and rolling out a new marketing strategy with our intern kindly funded by the Jack Petchey Foundation, and supporting key fundraising efforts during our 40th year celebrations.

Holding the position of co-chairs has been highly rewarding and we're fortunate enough to see and hear first-hand how our work impacts the dancers and their families.

As we head through 2026 and beyond, we're looking for someone with a fresh perspective, and dedicated passion and commitment to lead Magpie's board of trustees as we shape what's to come for the next 40 years.

Upon joining Magpie Dance you are welcomed into the most kind and caring family - one which lasts long after people finish their tenure on the board! With a diverse and dynamic board of trustees, dedicated and passionate office and facilitator team led by our co-CEOs, and the outstanding dancers, Magpie Dance is a magnificent charity to be a part of.

Chris Wicks and Jade Bassett – Outgoing Co-Chairs

Magpie Dance
A Brief Overview

Magpie Dance is the UK's leading dance charity for people with learning disabilities. We have been delivering regular classes, training, workshops, and public performances for people with learning disabilities in Bromley and the South East for 40 years. Our mission is to enable people with learning disabilities to reach their full personal, social, and artistic potential through dance.

"Magpie Dance has been supporting my son for 16 years, playing a huge part in developing his confidence, creativity and dance skills, and providing opportunities for him to help others as well as to make friends. I truly believe that Magpie Dance has made the biggest impact in his life to [help him] become the confident young man he is."
Parent

We offer lifelong provision, with a core programme of 17 weekly classes for dancers aged 3 upwards. Alongside our weekly programme, we deliver a range of workshops, trips, and projects to broaden participants' experiences, including with specialist partners such as the Royal Opera House and the Horniman Museum. Participants stage regular performances and national tours, many in high-profile venues such as Sadler's Wells and the Southbank Centre. Across all classes, workshops, and events, we benefit 1,200 participants every year.

Our participants are at the heart of everything that we do and involved in every aspect of our activity. Dancers are empowered to generate ideas, create their own work, and make key creative decisions on how work is shared. They are given leading responsibilities in classes and sessions, and our learning-disabled Ambassadors deliver paid teaching and training, supporting skills and career progression for those otherwise marginalised in the dance sector.

"I always like it when we make work. Magpie staff let me be who I am. With other companies, I don't get to do that."
Participant

Our evaluations show the measurable impact of our work. Through dance, our participants gain increased confidence and independence, improved mental and physical health, increased leadership and choreographic skills, and exposure to different methods of learning, including the use of technology.

We also deliver professional training for education, dance, health, and business clients nationally, and we work in partnership with the NHS to provide in-patient work for clients with a range of complex learning disabilities.

To gain a real insight into our work, please watch this video:
Magpie Dance Overview | Magpie Dance

Magpie Dance
Where We Are Now

In 2017, the charity restructured the Senior Leadership Team with the appointments of Alison Ferrao as Artistic Director/Co-CEO and Laura Graham as Executive Director/Co-CEO. They are supported by a small core staff team and a wider pool of dance facilitators and musicians.

This new structure has allowed us to raise our artistic ambition through a thematic artistic plan that aims to enrich our participants' experience and increase audience reach:

- WWI: **Hidden Impact (2018/19)** explored the contribution made to the war by people with learning disabilities and included a touring and online exhibition, and performances of 15 works co-created with our dancers reaching 2,500 live and 7,000 online audiences. We also harnessed the power of technology, including AR and VR, to explore the theme from different perspectives, making a challenging subject more tangible to both dancers and audiences.
- Technology: **eMotion (2019-21)** explored how technologies such as AR, VR, and robotics can help realise the creative potential of people with learning disabilities and support additional access needs. This work led to two innovative online performances reaching over 500 audiences to experience films created by participants.
- Global Moves and Grooves **(2021/22)** celebrated international dance, bringing onboard artists of diverse heritage and giving our dancers the opportunity to engage meaningfully with different cultures and experiences they otherwise wouldn't be able to access.
- Our Land is in your hands **(2023/24)** looked at issues of climate change through the lens of the four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Magpie Dancers explored different aspects of climate change, from blue carbon to air pollution to saving the bees.
- Our People….Histories and Heroes **(2024/25)** celebrated the stories and heritage of neurodiverse and learning disabled people from Bromley and South London. The theme coincided with Magpie Dance's 40th and Mencap's 80th Anniversaries (both in 2025).
- Our Future **(2025/26)** uses technology to explore new ways of creating and sharing dance, increasing our reach and ensuring that people with learning disabilities will have a voice in an ever-changing world.

Responding to the Pandemic

During the pandemic, we adapted quickly and ambitiously to meet the needs of our community. We created a series of twice-daily free online dance classes and daily film. The classes were a huge success, reaching 1,200 unique participants and totaling 8,100 views. We also introduced live Zoom classes and skills sessions for participants and their families. Over the course of the pandemic, we delivered 175 accessible tutorials, 3 holiday schools, and 500+ Zoom sessions, skills workshops, and screenings. This transformed the way we operate. Learning from this experience and embracing digital, Magpie Dance is currently experiencing an energetic period of growth.

Magpie Dance

Funding

For over 40 years, Magpie Dance has operated and evolved without core funding from local or central government. Our primary source of funding has been through grants from Lottery funders, trusts, and foundations, including the National Lottery Community Fund and Arts Council England. As fundraising becomes more competitive, our income has fallen over the last few years to £417k in 2025/26, from £531K in 2023/24. In 2024/25, grant funding represented 86% of income.

Magpie Dance's current ambition is to diversify its income, looking at a broad range of funding streams from traditional sources as well as further developing more recent sources, such as our Friends' scheme, individual giving, and innovative partnerships. We are redoubling our efforts to grow our fundraising by investing in our profile-building and marketing activity, with a new website, increased social media activity, and a focus on growing our reputation within the sector and beyond. We have been granted Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisation status for the years 2023-2026 with a one year extension to 2027.

To view our weekly sessions (for a summary of our work) please visit our website: Classes | Magpie Dance

To virtually meet and find out more about our Magpie Dance team please visit our website:

Staff Profiles | Magpie Dance

Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

A world where a learning disability is no barrier to personal and artistic success in dance.

Our Mission

To enable people with learning disabilities to reach their full personal, social and artistic potential through dance.

Our Values

People, Access, Challenge, Excellence – PACE:

PEOPLE – Our people come first.
We work together. We listen, share and encourage ideas, support and respect individuals. We focus on ability, not disability.

ACCESS – Our priority is accessibility and increased participation.
We strive to ensure safe, physical access to activities and venues. Our commitment is to increase participation of people with learning disabilities within the cultural sector.

CHALLENGE – We challenge perceptions.
We change perceptions of what people with learning disabilities can achieve. We challenge participants to fulfil their potential and we challenge those they interact with to believe in their ability.

EXCELLENCE – We strive for excellence.
We create high quality artistic experiences and professional practice.

Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion

We welcome applications from anyone regardless of their age, experience, disability, ethnicity, heritage, sexuality, gender and socio-economic background. Magpie Dance is deeply committed to inclusive working practices, so during the application process we commit to making our recruitment process as inclusive and accessible as possible, including making reasonable adjustments where necessary, i.e format of materials, flexibility on location and timing of interviews, covering travel costs where it may inhibit attendance etc.
If there is anything else you are concerned about or think we could provide, please let us know.

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Our Board

Magpie Dance is a registered charity (no. 1062185) and company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (no. 3292609). It is governed by a non-executive Board of Directors, who are also Trustees of the charity.

The Board has overall control of the organisation and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that Magpie Dance acts in line with its charitable purposes and complies with its governing document and all relevant legislation and regulations, including charity law and company law. It also sets and monitors the overall organisational vision, strategy, and budget. Day-to-day running of the organisation is delegated the Senior Leadership Team, which is made up of the Artistic Director and Executive Director as Co-CEOs.

The Board has a number of Committees and Task & Finish groups that focus in detail on particular issues. Committees and Task & Finish groups are created and dissolved as necessary in line with organisational needs.

Current Committees:

- Finance
- Marketing, communications, and fundraising
- Skills Audit and Recruitment of new Trustees

Current Task & Finish groups:

- Office space
- Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation oversight

Short biogs of current Trustees are available on the Magpie Dance website:
Board Members | Magpie Dance

Overview of the Chair Role

Magpie Dance is recruiting a Chair or Co-Chairs to join the Board in Spring 2026, where they will contribute to overall strategy and support Magpie Dance's CEO team.

The appointed Chair will also champion Magpie Dance as an active ambassador, helping us build connections and raise our profile across the charity and arts sector networks.

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The role of the Chair:
Strategic Leadership

- Provide leadership to the charity and its Board, ensuring that the charity delivers its public benefit role;
- Ensure that Trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of the charity;
- Ensure that the Board operates within its charitable objectives, and provides a clear strategic direction for the charity;
- Ensure that the Board is able to regularly review major risks and associated opportunities, and satisfy itself that systems are in place to take advantage of opportunities, and manage and mitigate the risks;
- Ensure that the Board fulfils its duties to ensure sound financial health of the charity, with systems in place to ensure financial accountability.

Governance

- Ensuring that the governance arrangements are working in the most effective way for the charity;
- Developing the knowledge and capability of the Board;
- Encouraging positive change where appropriate and addressing and resolving any conflicts within the Board;
- Appraising the performance of the Trustees and the Board on an annual basis;
- Ensuring that the Board of Trustees is regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and experience needed to govern and lead the charity effectively, and which also reflects the wider population;
- Working within any agreed policies adopted by the charity.

External Relations

- Acting as an ambassador for the cause and the charity;
- Maintaining close relationships with key stakeholders;
- Acting as a spokesperson for the organisation when appropriate;
- Representing the charity at external functions, meetings and events.

Efficiency and effectiveness

- Chairing meetings of the Board of Trustees effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision making process;
- Ensuring that Trustees are fully engaged and that decisions are taken in the best, long-term interests of the charity and that the board takes collective ownership;
- Fostering and ensuring that constructive relationships exist with and between the Trustees;
- Work closely with the Co-CEO's to give direction to board policy-making and ensuring that meetings are relevant and well planned;
- Monitoring the implementation of decisions taken at meetings.

Relationship with the management team

- Establishing and building strong, effective and constructive working relationships with the Co-CEO's and holding them to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives;
- Supporting the Co-CEO's, whilst respecting the boundaries which exist between the Board and the team;
- Ensuring regular contact with the Co-CEO's and developing an open and supportive relationship so that concerns, worries and challenges can be effectively aired;
- Liaising with the Co-CEO's to maintain an overview of the charity's affairs;
- Conducting annual appraisals and remuneration review in consultation with other Trustees;
- Ensuring that the Co-CEO's have the opportunity for professional development and have appropriate external professional support.

Time commitment

The Chair role is likely to involve a time commitment that can come in peaks and trough depending on the time or year. Busier months could be up to 5-8 days per month - this will include participating in Board and committee meetings, preparing (such as reading papers, compiling board agendas), discussions with the Co-CEO's, and other ad-hoc activities such as attending events or interviewing.

Person Specification

Personal Qualities

- Demonstrate a strong and visible passion and commitment to the charity, its strategic objectives and cause;
- Exhibit strong inter-personal and relationship building abilities;
- Ability to foster and promote a collaborative team environment;
- Ability to commit time to conduct the role well, including travel and attending events out of office hours.
- Commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Experience

- Experience of operating at a senior strategic leadership level;
- Successful track record of achievement through their career;
- Experience of charity governance and working with or as part of a Board of Trustees;
- Experience of external representation, delivering presentations and managing stakeholders;
- Significant experience of chairing meetings and events.

Knowledge and skills

- Strong leadership skills, ability to motivate staff and volunteers and bring people together;
- Financial literacy and a broad understanding of charity finance challenges;
- Good understanding of charity governance, understanding the legal duties, responsibilities, and liabilities of Trustees
- Consultative yet decisive approach to decision making, utilising the skills and knowledge of the existing board members, Artistic and Executive Directors and staff teams.

Representation of our community is central to our way of working, including at the Board level. This means that we particularly welcome applications from candidates who:

- Have lived experience of disability, neurodiversity, or sensory impairment
- Live, work, or study in Bromley, or have some other connection to the local area
- Identify as being from the global majority (this includes people of Black African, Black African Caribbean, South Asian, East Asian, South East Asian, Middle Eastern, Arab, Latinx, Jewish, Romany, Irish Traveller, or mixed/multiple heritage)
- Identify as male or gender non-binary, as they are currently underrepresented on the Board

Commitment and Support

Trustees are appointed for an initial term of three years and are eligible for re-appointment to an additional term of three years by mutual consent. This is an unpaid, voluntary role.

Trustees are expected to attend five Board meetings per year, which last around 2 hours and take place in the evenings. Meetings typically alternate locations between Bromley and central London. Trustees are also expected to attend an annual Board Away Day. Meeting dates and locations are set at the start of each year, taking into account the availabilities and preferences of all Trustees.

Trustees may additionally choose to nominate themselves for one of the Board's Committees or Task & Finish groups. Each Committee or T&F group agrees its own meeting schedule and activities, and the time commitment varies according to need. Committee and T&F group work is typically conducted online via emails or videoconferencing.

Trustees are also encouraged to attend Magpie Dance classes, performances, and events throughout the year.

All new Trustees will receive a full induction and be assigned a current Trustee as a 'buddy'.

Magpie Dance is committed to working flexibly to meet the needs of a diverse Board, and we are open to discussing any support that a candidate may require to fully contribute and undertake their duties as a Trustee, such as access requirements, digital/technical support, training, and reasonable expenses such as travel or childcare.

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How to Apply

For an informal discussion about the trustee role, please contact our current Co-Chairs, Chris Wicks and Jade Bassett, at chair@magpiedance.org.uk and jadelbassett@gmail.com.

To apply, please submit your CV and a brief supporting statement (up to two pages) or video/audio recording (up to three minutes) that speaks to your interest in Magpie Dance and what you will bring to the chair role. If you wish to apply via video/audio recording, please provide a link to download the recording from a file-hosting service such as Dropbox or WeTransfer.

Applications should be sent to Laura Graham, Magpie Dance's Executive Director at lauragraham@magpiedance.org.uk

Please also complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form.
Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form

If you have any access requirements as part of the application process or wish to submit your application in another format, please contact us at info@magpiedance.org.uk

The deadline for applications is 17:00 on **Monday 23rd March 2026.**

The Process

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a first stage interview (likely to be week commencing 6th or 13th April 2026), with a panel of current Trustees. The second stage will be an informal meeting with the Senior Leadership Team and our participants.

Candidates will then be invited to observe the Board meeting (6.30-8.30pm) and invited to observe a Magpie Dance session.

After this, if both parties agree and following receipt of two satisfactory references, the candidate will be appointed to the board.

Thank you for your interest – we look forward to receiving your application.

www.magpiedance.org.uk

Chair of the

Board of Trustees