

Access Dorset



Removing Barriers to Inclusion



Vice Chair and Trustees Candidate Pack

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Welcome

Firstly, thank you for taking an interest in the opportunity to join the Board of Trustees of Access Dorset.

As CEO of our small charity, I would like to introduce our work and invite you to consider joining us in a role where you can make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged people.

We are a community-based organisation working alongside disabled people, neurodiverse people, older people, and carers to promote independence, confidence, and connection. We are guided by the social model of disability, removing barriers and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive.

The Bridge is a special place in Bournemouth where people tell us they feel safe, included and more confident. From here, we provide a welcoming and supportive space where disadvantaged adults can meet, connect and take part in inclusive activities, including cooking, gardening, DIY, art, crafts, music and performing arts, helping to build confidence, community participation, and independent living skills.

Our beneficiaries, aged from 18–80, often experience complex and overlapping needs presenting significant barriers to inclusion and independence. 60% of the vulnerable people we support have learning disabilities, 47% are neurodiverse, 34% have physical disabilities including a number of wheelchair users, 32% have long-term health conditions, 25% have mental health conditions, and 15% have speech or communication impairments including a number of individuals who are non-verbal.

We think of everyone as members of our community, whether they are people accessing our services, volunteers, staff or Trustees, and our motto is “We’re all of equal worth.”

As a Trustee of Access Dorset, you are automatically also a member of our community. You will play a key role in ensuring strong governance and sound financial management, helping to secure the charity’s long-term sustainability and continued ability to support the communities we serve. We hope you will also draw on your lived experience to help shape the development and delivery of services for disabled people, neurodiverse people, older people, and carers.

Access Dorset has faced a challenging period over the past 18 months. We have worked hard to remain sustainable while continuing to deliver vital support to those who need us. I have always believed that brighter times were ahead, and I am now beginning to see the first signs of a more positive future.

We are fortunate to be supported by a number of valued funders, including Lloyds Bank Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Dorset Community Foundation and Talbot Village Trust. However, we recognise that in the current charity environment, remaining small is not necessarily sustainable, and we must continue to evolve to secure our future. We are therefore seeking to build partnerships within and beyond our immediate community, creating opportunities to collaborate, attract new funding and develop our services in response to the changing needs of those we support.

I hope you will join us on this journey and become part of our friendly, supportive team, working alongside me and others who are passionate about what we do. We genuinely value the unique perspective, experience, and contribution that each person brings, and believe we are stronger when we work together. As a Trustees you will play a vital part in guiding our charity's future, supporting our values, and ensuring we remain strong, safe, and effective.

If this sounds like something you might enjoy being part of, I would love to hear from you. Please feel very welcome to get in touch for an informal chat, ask any questions or simply find out a little more about the role and our charity.

Warm regards,



Jayne McCann
Chief Executive



About Us

Access Dorset is a community-rooted, user-led charity based in Bournemouth, working to improve the lives of disabled people, older people, neurodivergent people and carers by promoting inclusion, wellbeing and independence. We support over 100 people each week through a programme of social, recreational and life-skills activities, alongside information, advice and support designed to strengthen connections, reduce isolation and build confidence and resilience.

We think of everyone as members of our community, whether they are people accessing our services, volunteers, staff or Trustees, and our motto is “We’re all of equal worth”. We are proud to be a representative organisation, with 50% of our Board of Trustees, 75% of our staff and 75% of our volunteers coming from the communities we serve.

Our team of five part-time staff, twenty regular volunteers and currently four Trustees work together to deliver our activities and services and support our mission.

Our activities are designed to combat loneliness and social isolation, create opportunities for peer support and improve mental and physical wellbeing. We offer a diverse range of structured activities, from cooking and gardening to the performing arts, giving members opportunities to explore new interests, develop practical life skills and build confidence in a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment.



We are based at The Bridge at Chaseside in Littledown, a fully accessible, ground-floor Centre for Independence in Bournemouth. From here, we run our programme of activities alongside a community café, and welcome people to visit Monday to Thursday each week. We are also keen to collaborate with other organisations to develop services that respond to the needs of our community.

This is an important time for Access Dorset as we continue to develop our services and strengthen our organisation. As a community-rooted and user-led charity, we are committed to ensuring that the voices, experiences and perspectives of our members continue to shape what we do. We are looking for Trustees who share our values and can contribute their skills, experience and perspective as we build on our strong community foundations and continue to develop Access Dorset for the future.

Our Impact

- Over 75% of our members report improved wellbeing
- Over 85% of our members gain improved confidence
- Over 90% of our members report reduced isolation

Governance And The Board

Access Dorset's Board currently comprises four Trustees, who bring a range of lived and professional experience, including neurodivergence, experience of mental health conditions and perspectives from different generations. The Board is now beginning to find its collective identity and voice and is looking to build on this foundation as the organisation moves into its next phase.

Community involvement is embedded in the way Access Dorset is governed. A monthly Community Forum (held from 11am every second Wednesday of the month) gives members an opportunity to share ideas, celebrate achievements and influence the development of services. Three members of our community are our nominated 'Community Forum Representatives' who run the monthly Community Forum and attend the first half of every Board meeting to report back from the Forum. This ensures members' views are brought directly into Board discussions. Elections for new Community Representatives are expected in January, providing an opportunity for people who use Access Dorset to become more involved in the organisation and potentially progress into wider governance roles in the future.

As part of the Board's development, we are looking to recruit a Vice Chair and two additional Trustees. We are keen to strengthen the Board with people who can bring additional skills, experience and perspectives while sharing our commitment to inclusion, wellbeing and independence. This is an opportunity to join a genuinely community-rooted organisation where Trustees are not removed from the work of the charity, but are closely connected to its members, activities and wider community.

Role Description - Vice Chair

About the Role

Access Dorset is looking to appoint a Vice Chair to work alongside and support the Chair, the Board and the wider Access Dorset team as the organisation continues to develop.

This is an important role at a time when the Board is rebuilding following a period of significant change and is beginning to establish its collective identity and voice. The Vice Chair will help the Chair to ensure that the Board works effectively, provides appropriate oversight and maintains a clear focus on the organisation's purpose, strategy and future sustainability.

The Vice Chair will deputise for the Chair when required and provide supportive leadership to the Board, helping to create an environment in which Trustees can contribute fully and constructively. They will also work closely with the Chair and the wider team to ensure that Board decisions are followed through and that there is effective communication between Trustees, staff, volunteers and the Access Dorset community.

This is an opportunity for someone with leadership potential who is keen to develop their governance experience and play a significant role in shaping the future of a genuinely community-rooted organisation.



Key Responsibilities

Working alongside the Chair, the Vice Chair will:

- Support the Chair in ensuring the Board operates effectively and fulfils its responsibilities for the governance and strategic direction of Access Dorset.
- Deputise for the Chair when required, including chairing Board meetings in their absence.
- Help ensure that Board discussions remain focused, constructive and aligned with Access Dorset's purpose, values and strategic priorities.
- Support the Chair in ensuring that decisions made by the Board are followed through and that agreed actions are monitored.
- Work with the Chair to encourage active participation from all Trustees and help foster a positive, inclusive and collaborative Board culture.
- Support the Board to maintain an appropriate balance of skills, experience and perspectives as it develops, including contributing to future Trustee recruitment.
- Help strengthen communication and relationships between the Board, staff, volunteers, Community Forum Representatives and the wider Access Dorset community.
- Work with the Chair and other Trustees to consider the organisation's strategic direction, sustainability, risks and opportunities.
- Provide constructive challenge and support to the Chair, fellow Trustees and the wider organisation where appropriate.
- Take an active role in Board development and, over time, develop the leadership capabilities required to take on greater responsibility within the organisation.



In addition to the above, the Vice Chair will automatically be a Trustee and have the responsibilities and qualities of all Trustees.



Person Specification

We are looking for someone who can bring strategic thinking, good judgement and leadership potential to the Access Dorset Board. Previous experience as a Trustee or Chair is **not essential**; we are open to someone with transferable leadership or professional experience who is keen to develop their governance and leadership skills.

Ideally, you will bring:

- **Strategic thinking** – the ability to see the bigger picture, contribute to discussions about Access Dorset's future and understand the balance between strategic priorities and the needs of the community.
- **Leadership potential** – the confidence and willingness to supportively lead others, or the aspiration to develop these capabilities, with the potential to progress into the Chair role in the future.
- **Numerical literacy** – confidence in understanding financial information and using it to inform decision-making, ask appropriate questions and provide constructive challenge.
- **A collaborative approach** – the ability to work positively with Trustees, staff, volunteers and members, encouraging different perspectives and contributing to a supportive and effective Board culture.
- **Strong interpersonal skills** – the ability to listen, build trust, communicate clearly and help bring people together.
- **Commitment to Access Dorset's values** – a genuine belief in inclusion, wellbeing and independence, and an appreciation of the importance of lived experience and the contribution of the community.

Experience of working within a Board, committee or other governance environment would be helpful, but is not essential. What matters most is the ability to contribute thoughtfully, work collaboratively and provide leadership and constructive challenge when required.

We particularly welcome applications from people whose perspectives and experiences reflect the diverse communities Access Dorset serves.

Role Description - Trustees

About the Role

This is an important time to join the Trustee Board at Access Dorset. As a community-rooted and user-led charity, we are looking to strengthen our Board with the addition of two new Trustees as we develop our organisation, build on our financial stability and look to the future.

As a Trustee, you will work alongside fellow Board members to provide strategic leadership and ensure Access Dorset remains well governed, financially sustainable and true to its mission and values. You will have an opportunity to use your skills, experience and perspective to help shape the future of an organisation supporting disabled people, older people, neurodivergent people, and carers across the local community.

You do not need previous Trustee or Board experience. What matters most is a commitment to Access Dorset's values, a willingness to learn and the ability to contribute constructively to a collaborative Board.



Key Responsibilities

As a Trustee, you will:

- Contribute to Access Dorset's strategic direction, long-term vision and priorities.
- Help ensure that the organisation remains focused on its charitable purpose and the needs of the community it serves.
- Provide appropriate oversight of the charity's finances, resources, risks and sustainability.
- Support good governance and ensure the organisation meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities.
- Ensure that Access Dorset's work reflects the social model of disability and the voices and experiences of the people it supports.
- Provide constructive challenge, support and independent judgement as part of Board discussions and decision-making.
- Contribute to the development and review of organisational plans, policies and performance.
- Help develop partnerships and relationships that support Access Dorset's work, funding pipeline. and future sustainability.
- Use your professional skills, knowledge, networks and connections to support the organisation where appropriate.
- Keep informed about issues affecting Access Dorset, the communities it serves and the wider charity and community sector.
- Attend and actively participate in Board meetings and other relevant activities.
- Act with integrity and in the best interests of Access Dorset, observing the responsibilities and principles expected of charity Trustees

We are looking for people who share Access Dorset's commitment to inclusion and social justice and want to make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged people in our community.



You do not need previous Board or Trustee experience.

We are particularly interested in people who bring relevant skills, experience or perspectives, combined with the curiosity, commitment and willingness to learn that will enable them to contribute effectively as a Trustee.

Skills and Experience

The Board would particularly welcome additional experience in one or more of the following areas:

- **Finance and financial literacy**
- **Governance**
- **Strategy and strategic leadership**
- **Partnership working**
- **Local authority or local government experience**, particularly experience relating to adult day opportunities.
- **Leadership**
- **Business development and external networking**
- **Fundraising and/or corporate partnerships**

Experience of working in the charity or community sector would also be valuable, particularly an understanding of the contribution and challenges of smaller, locally rooted charities.

We are keen to develop relationships with businesses across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole (BCP) and the wider area, including SMEs as well as larger organisations. Experience of business development, networking or building external relationships would therefore be useful.

What You Will Bring

Whatever your professional background, we are looking for Trustees who can demonstrate:

- A genuine commitment to inclusion, equality and social justice.
- An understanding of, or willingness to learn about, the social model of disability.
- Strategic thinking and the ability to take a broad view of the organisation's needs and future.
- Good judgement and the ability to make independent, balanced decisions.
- The confidence to ask questions, offer constructive challenge and listen to different perspectives.
- Strong communication and collaborative working skills.
- A willingness to contribute actively to the Board and support fellow Trustees.
- A commitment to acting with integrity and in the best interests of Access Dorset.

Why Join Our Board?

Joining the Access Dorset Board is an opportunity to use your skills, experience and perspective to make a meaningful difference in your community.

By volunteering as Vice Chair or as a Trustee, you will play an important role in helping shape the future of a genuinely community-rooted and user-led charity, supporting our work to improve inclusion, wellbeing and independence for disabled people, older people, neurodivergent people, and carers.

You will have the opportunity to:

- **Make a difference** by using your skills and experience to support a charity tackling disadvantage and removing barriers to participation.
- **Help shape our future** by contributing to Access Dorset's strategy, priorities and long-term development.
- **Use your voice and perspective** to help ensure that the organisation continues to reflect the needs and experiences of the community it serves.
- **Develop your experience** in charity governance, strategic leadership and organisational development, with support from a collaborative Board.
- **Build relationships and make connections** within the local community and with organisations and businesses that can help Access Dorset develop its work.
- **Work alongside a committed team** of Trustees, staff and volunteers in a warm, inclusive environment where different perspectives and lived experiences are valued.

For anyone looking to develop their governance experience, this is also an opportunity to learn, contribute and grow alongside an organisation that places its community at the heart of what it does.

Becoming a trustee is a meaningful and fulfilling experience, giving you the chance to influence positive change. You will be joining a friendly, inclusive team that believes in inclusion and values every contribution.

Our Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

At Access Dorset, we believe that everyone is of equal worth and that a diverse mix of voices, experiences and perspectives makes our organisation stronger. As a user-led and representative charity, we are committed to ensuring that the people who use our services and the wider community have a meaningful voice in our work and in the decisions we make.

We know that inequality and discrimination can create significant barriers to people's participation, wellbeing and independence. We are committed to challenging those barriers and to ensuring that equity, diversity and inclusion are reflected in the way we work, the services we provide and the way we govern our organisation.

We particularly welcome applications from disabled people, neurodivergent people and those with lived experience of inequality. However, **you do not need to have personal experience of the communities we support to become a Trustee.** We value lived experience, but we also need people who bring different professional backgrounds, perspectives and skills. What matters is a genuine commitment to inclusion and social justice, a willingness to listen and learn, and a belief in the importance of removing barriers for disadvantaged people.

We are committed to creating a Board where people feel welcomed, respected and able to contribute fully. We will continue to learn and develop as an organisation, ensuring that different perspectives are heard and valued and that our approach remains consistent with the social model of disability.

We are also committed to making reasonable adjustments throughout the recruitment process and during your time as a Trustee. If there is anything we can do to support your application or participation, please let us know.

Time Commitment

We currently expect Trustees to commit approximately 4–6 hours per month, although this should be regarded as a guide rather than a fixed requirement. For the Vice Chair, the expectation will be 6-8 hours a month reflecting additional involvement between meetings in supporting the Chair and Board.

The time commitment will include attending Board meetings, reading papers in advance and contributing to occasional activities, working groups or discussions between meetings.

Over the past 12 months the Board has met monthly, reflecting the recent financial and organisational challenges, partnership discussions and work to secure Access Dorset's future sustainability. Moving forward into 2027, it is expected that Board meetings will reduce to once every two to three months.

Meetings have been held in person and via teleconference during the daytime. The Board is open to consideration to moving towards evening meetings, to make them more accessible to people who are working or have caring responsibilities. A combination of online and in-person meetings is also likely, with some in-person meetings remaining important to support the accessibility needs of existing Trustees and maintain a strong connection with the Access Dorset community. Trustees will not be expected to attend every Access Dorset event, although we would hope that Trustees can support one or two events in Bournemouth each year where possible. There will also be an annual strategy day and, once the new Trustees are in place, a team-building and development day involving Trustees, staff and volunteers. Attendance at these is encouraged.

The time commitment may occasionally increase around significant organisational matters, such as strategy development, budget setting or other issues requiring additional Board input. We recognise that Trustees will have different circumstances and commitments and will aim to work flexibly wherever possible.

How to Apply

Reach Volunteering's TrusteeWorks team is supporting Access Dorset with the recruitment of new Trustees.

We want the application process to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. You do not need to apply using a conventional CV and written application. You can choose the format that best allows you to tell us about yourself and why you are interested in becoming a Trustee.

You could apply using:

- A CV
- Written responses
- A supporting statement or reference from someone who knows you
- A short video
- Your LinkedIn profile, where appropriate
- Or a combination of these

Whatever format you choose, we would like to understand two things:

1. Why would you like to become a Trustee of Access Dorset?
2. What skills, experience, knowledge or perspective would you bring to the Board?

You do not need previous Trustee or Board experience to apply. We are interested in what you could bring to Access Dorset and your willingness to learn and contribute.

Access Dorset will be reviewing applications and interviewing candidates as the campaign progresses, so we encourage you to apply as soon as you are ready rather than waiting until the closing date.

If you would like an informal conversation before applying, please get in touch with the TrusteeWorks team. We are very happy to discuss the role, the application process or any questions you may have.

Deadline for applications: Monday 9th of November 2026 by 9am.

**Please send your application or any enquiries to:
trusteeworks@reachskills.org.uk**