

Join our board of trustees

Help shape the future of Big Leaf Foundation and make a lasting difference to the lives of displaced young people in Surrey.

We're looking for one or two new trustees to join us as we enter the next phase of our development. This is an opportunity to bring your skills, experience and perspective to a charity that supports young people to build relationships, develop their skills and feel part of their communities.

Interested? Read on to find out more about Big Leaf, our approach and the role.

Big Leaf
Foundation

about us

Our vision is of a community where displaced young people are valued, supported and given the opportunity to create better outcomes for themselves.

Big Leaf Foundation is an award-winning charity working with displaced young people aged 15-25 across Surrey.

Our aim is to provide a nurturing programme of activities, projects and events that focus on combating social isolation, connecting young people to their communities and improving wellbeing.

Displaced young people are so much more than the status they have been given. They come with hopes, talents, determination and strength. For us, it's not about proving their worth, but about creating spaces where others can recognise it too.

Through our programmes, we provide opportunities for people to connect across communities and for the young people we support to build skills and a sense of belonging that can sustain them into the future.

Our projects range from sports, music and creative arts to full-day English language schools, specialised casework and residential workshops, alongside leadership programmes, summer schools and progression opportunities.

All of our projects are built with the focus of helping young people feel more empowered within their own lives, their local communities and Big Leaf itself.

The young people we support have all been forced to leave their homes. Many fled conflict, political or religious persecution. Some were trafficked, others were kidnapped from their families and forced to train as child soldiers, and some were promised the dream of a better life and smuggled to the UK at huge cost.

We are currently supporting over 250 young people from 23 different countries. The majority of young people we support arrive as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) and 63% of our beneficiaries are 15-18 years-old.

Separated children arrive alone, often in shock and without language or cultural understanding. They have to navigate their new lives, and the long and complex asylum system, without the support of family or friends. Even for those who come with family or through resettlement schemes, the experience can be overwhelming, confusing and incredibly difficult.

But despite trauma, anxiety and an asylum system that seems focused on destroying their rights, these young people are resilient, strong and determined. They are full of hope and optimism and given the proper support, they can thrive in the UK and in their new communities.

> **"Until now, Big Leaf has been the best thing that has happened in my life in the UK. Through Big Leaf, I met people who were in the same situation as me, and I realised that I am not alone." HN**

our approach

We believe meaningful change begins with listening and we work with our young people to create spaces where they feel safe, heard and supported.

We stand alongside young people as they navigate life in a new place, offering consistent support shaped by care and trust. Many of the young people we work with have experienced profound trauma, and we respond through relational, non-clinical support that prioritises stability and connection. In doing so, we help build communities that recognise their strengths, talents, and potential.

our anchors

Our anchors ground our work and guide our choices. These are not abstract ideals, but lived principles that influence our decisions, relationships & priorities.

Belief

We believe in the young people. They are resilient and capable and we see their potential in their growth in skills, knowledge, confidence and emotional maturity. We recognise their agency and expertise in charting their own paths, supporting their peers, and shaping our work. We hope that, through working with Big Leaf, they start to believe in themselves and that this belief enables them to build their lives with confidence and purpose.

Love

Young people need a stable foundation in order to grow into adulthood, and none more so than displaced young people who have lost their homes, families, and communities. When things are difficult, the only way forward is to remain grounded in love. We are not afraid to demonstrate love and be a consistent presence where young people can find friendship and begin to build a new sense of family. Holding this at our core is an active choice when so much else is out of our control.

Connection

We believe in the power of community, rooted in trust and honest relationships. Connection is essential for our young people, and we all benefit from closer bonds and deeper understanding. We bring people together to share different ideas and perspectives, while finding threads that connect us. This also applies within Big Leaf, where we are at our best when we lean on and learn from one another.

Equality

We aim to create a safe, inclusive environment free from bias, prejudice and hierarchy, where young people can grow and explore their potential in a non-judgemental space in which all participants are equal. We challenge ourselves and the young people we work with, to see difference as a strength and to be open to new ideas and experiences.

the way we work

Across all our work we prioritise five ways of working:

Youth Leadership

We listen to young people and create opportunities for them to shape our work, develop their skills and take on leadership roles.

Partnership

We work with local organisations, agencies and businesses to create stronger referral pathways, opportunities and a welcoming and resilient community.

Lifting young people's voices

We create space for displaced young people to share their experiences in ways that feel right for them, while celebrating their achievements and contributions.

Informed by best practice

Our work is grounded in practical experience, academic learning and trauma-informed approaches. We support young people to grow in independence, build healthy relationships and connections within their communities, while prioritising safeguarding and careful risk assessment.

Positivity

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about the opportunity

We are a friendly and committed board of 7 trustees supporting the brilliant staff team of 7, and we are looking to grow the board by one or two people. Current trustees have expertise in safeguarding, fundraising, finance, policy, and charity strategy and governance. We operate a rotating Chair model of governance, where different trustees take on the Chair role for eighteen months.

We are ambitious to respond to the needs of the young people we work with, and to keep strengthening Big Leaf organisationally in order to provide the best support and advocacy for our beneficiaries. This is an exciting opportunity to help lead Big Leaf Foundation in the next phase of its development and to use your skills and experience to make a lasting difference to the lives of displaced young people in Surrey.

The most effective Boards are ones that benefit from individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets and we are particularly keen to hear from people with lived experience of forced displacement and/or direct experience in one or more of the areas listed below.

While trustees might have distinct areas of responsibility, all trustees are responsible for ensuring the charity fulfils its charitable purposes, and for helping to take strategic and financial decisions.

We are seeking individuals with:

- commitment to our vision, mission and values;
- excellent teamwork and leadership skills and effective decision-making;
- willingness to commit time and effort to the role;
- good, independent judgement, strategic vision and ability to communicate ideas;
- history of impartiality, fairness and commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

We are particularly keen to hear from individuals with skills and experience in one or more of the following areas:

- fundraising;
- risk management;
- organisational transition

Please read on to find out more. If you would like an informal chat with our current Chair of Trustees about the role, please email chair@bigleaffoundation.org.uk

about the role

The trustees are jointly responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, its financial health, the probity of its activities and developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines.

All trustees should also be aware of, and understand, their individual and collective responsibilities, and should not be overly reliant on one or more individual trustees in any particular aspect of the governance of the charity.

Remuneration | voluntary (+ expenses)
Location | Surrey with key project hubs in Redhill and Guildford
Hours | flexible but estimated at 2-4 hours per week; to include bi-monthly trustee meetings and attendance at min. 2 projects per year and a strategy planning day
Commitment | a term of 2 years with option to renew for a further two terms

meetings

The trustee board meets approximately six times per year with meetings lasting up to three hours; meetings are held online and face-to-face alternately. We also ask that trustees attend a minimum of two Big Leaf projects per year as we strongly believe this contributes to a better understanding of our organisation, how we work and the young people we support.

sub-committees

We are in the process of establishing new working groups to oversee/deliver specific areas of work including: Evaluation and Monitoring and Youth Voice & Leadership. These will sit alongside our existing Safeguarding, Risk Management and Finance & Fundraising sub-committees. Each committee is expected to meet several times per year and report back to the trustee board at bi-monthly meetings. No individual trustee will be expected to join more than one working group.

safeguarding

Safeguarding is embedded in Big Leaf and all trustees, staff and volunteers receive safeguarding training through our safeguarding partner, SafeCIC, as part of their induction and every two years thereafter. We have a range of policies in place to support good practice, including safeguarding, health and safety, lone working and codes of conduct for trustees, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries. Big Leaf also has a Safeguarding sub-committee that meets once a fortnight to discuss safeguarding and update policies and processes as needed. Successful applicants will be required to undertake a criminal record check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

duties of a trustee

The statutory duties of a trustee are to:

- Ensure the organisation complies with its governing document.
- Ensure that the organisation pursues its objectives as defined in its governing document.
- Ensure the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives – the charity must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objectives, no matter how 'charitable' and 'worthwhile' those activities are.
- Contribute actively to the Board of Trustees' role in giving strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the good name and values of the organisation.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation.
- Ensure the financial stability of the organisation.
- Protect and manage the property of the organisation and to ensure the proper investment of the organisation's funds.
- If the organisation employs staff, to appoint the Chief Executive Officer and monitor his or her performance.

In addition, with other trustees to hold the charity “in trust” for current and future beneficiaries by:

- Ensuring that the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction and is focused on achieving these.
- Being responsible for the performance of the charity and for its “corporate” behaviour; ensuring that the charity complies with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Acting as guardians of the charity’s assets, both tangible and intangible, taking all due care over their security, deployment and proper application.
- Ensuring that the charity’s governance is of the highest possible standard.

Trustees should make full use of any specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the board make good decisions and all trustees must adhere to our Trustee Code of Conduct.

how to apply

Please send your CV and a covering letter explaining your reasons for wanting to be a trustee at Big Leaf to finance@bigleaffoundation.org.uk. You are welcome to submit a video as an alternative to the covering letter if preferred.

We are aiming to conduct interviews before Christmas with a view to new trustees starting early 2027. The application process will involve an initial informal conversation with our Chair, an interview, and a visit to one of our projects. There may be opportunities to meet other members of the Big Leaf team through your application.

Find out more about Big Leaf Foundation
www.bigleaffoundation.org.uk