

Trustee recruitment pack

October 2023

Use your skills and experience to help protect the welfare and human rights of British citizens detained abroad

Prisoners Abroad is a UK-based human rights and welfare charity providing humanitarian aid, advice and emotional support to people affected by overseas imprisonment. We assist British citizens during their incarceration, when they return to the UK and need access to resettlement support, and we also support their family and friends throughout the trauma.

We are seeking 3-4 new trustees to join our board as a result of some trustees coming to the end of their terms of office. We are particularly looking to appoint specialist skills and expertise in:

1. Prison leadership/management in a UK and/or overseas context
2. Upholding human rights in an international context
3. Working for/with relevant government departments (such as the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and Ministry of Justice/HM Prison and Probation Service) at a senior level
4. Bringing knowledge and connections that support fundraising
5. Lived experience (including former beneficiaries of Prisoners Abroad's support, people who have been detained overseas, and family members affected by overseas imprisonment)

We would also welcome interest from others with strategic expertise that could benefit our work, in areas including digital, communications, research/academia, advocacy and influencing changes to policy and practice.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are central to the mission of Prisoners Abroad. We acknowledge that there is a problem with EDI in the charity sector, in relation to race, ethnicity, sex, gender, wealth, class, disability and criminal records. We are committed to working towards changing that.

We value the ability to draw from one's lived experience and to bring insights to an organisation that can develop its work. For many years we have ensured that people with lived experience are meaningfully represented on our board.

You do not need previous trustee experience – we are happy to support anyone who is interested in taking up the opportunity who has the skills and expertise that we are looking for.

In line with our commitment to our diversity benchmarks, we will particularly welcome expressions of interest from women; and from people who are Black, Asian or from minoritised ethnic communities.

Background information to Prisoners Abroad

Founded in 1978, Prisoners Abroad is a unique welfare organisation that provides life-saving services to British citizens detained in prison overseas, to their friends and families and to those returning to the UK. We focus on the welfare needs of individuals often detained in very harsh circumstances. We believe that the punishment of imprisonment is deprivation of liberty and that people in prison should not be subject to abuse or ill treatment. All prisoners are entitled to protection of their human rights, the provision of nutritious food, clean water, fresh air, exercise and freedom from physical and mental abuse, degradation or torture.

Our support and history

Prisoners Abroad is now in its 45th year, and this is a particularly important time and opportunity to help lead the organisation's volunteers and staff in supporting people in prison and their families. Prisoners Abroad works with some 1,200 people in prison, 1,300 family members and over 300 returnees each year. The services we provide range from grants for food and vital supplies to newspapers, magazines and books to help reduce isolation. Our resettlement unit enables returnees to re-enter the community and provides an opportunity for a crime-free future.

Based in London, Prisoners Abroad is a unique organisation – no one else does this work. This is recognised by the service delivery partnership with the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and HM Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS). It may be tough and challenging work that regularly raises new issues, yet it is difficult to think of anything that brings the same level of purpose and meaning.

Our excellence has been recognised over the years by being chosen as a winner of the 2010 Guardian Awards Public Service Awards; by the award of the prestigious Longford Prize; by a Metropolitan Police Commendation; shortlisted for the first Una Padel award by the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies and receiving second prize in the London Homelessness Awards.

Our vision and values

Our vision is that British prisoners overseas and their families survive imprisonment with dignity and face the future with hope. We have clear [values](#), in particular being non-judgmental, helping British citizens, convicted or unconvicted, guilty or innocent, solely on the basis of need.

Our people

Like every charity, Prisoners Abroad has a board of trustees (a group of unpaid voluntary non-executive directors). They ensure the charity is effective in carrying out the purpose for which it was set up. Trustees are responsible for overseeing the work of the charity, ensuring it is financially stable, well-run and fulfilling its charitable obligations. Our trustee board comprises of up to fifteen people from a variety of backgrounds who provide their advice and expertise to guide the staff team in managing the organisation and delivering effective services. The details of our current trustees can be found [on our website](#).

The day-to-day running is delegated to our chief executive, Christopher Stacey. Our leadership team is made up of our chief executive and three heads of department, and our staff team is made up of 26 people in total. The staff team is high performing, stable, committed to the work and dedicated to delivering the best possible services.

Our funding

The organisation's main ongoing challenge is its funding. Our annual expenditure is around £1.7 million and in terms of our income, about a third comes from government through a grant from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and a grant from HM Prison and Probation Service. Approximately a third comes from charitable trusts and about 20% from individual donors. So about two-thirds of our income has to be raised from charitable sources each year. This major task requires the combined strength of staff and trustees to use their networks and contacts to attract new donors and prospects at a variety of levels as well as importantly maintaining long-term relationships with existing supporters. Our current priorities include growing income to achieve greater impact for our service users.

What people say about us

We asked our trustees what they enjoy about being a trustee at Prisoners Abroad:

- *“Being a trustee for Prisoners Abroad challenges me to think differently, be creative and support people who many would find easy to ignore or discount”*
- *“I am privileged to be a part of this board; I am honoured to be trusted with a space to help others; I am passionate about second chances. I would encourage others to get involved now.”*
- *“Being a trustee at Prisoners Abroad means I can help save lives in a way I never thought I could.”*

Here are some quotes from our service users:

- *“To everyone at Prisoners Abroad, a small thank you for all you do for me and indirectly for my family. It's been 20 years now you've been there for me and I just wish to thank you and your organisation for what you do for all us Brits overseas.”*
- *“I was detained in Panama for three years and eight months. It was the darkest period of my life. During this time I lost my father and went through divorce. I was miles away from my family and friends. Thanks to Prisoners Abroad, I made it through those harrowing years. The grant afforded me essential toiletries, food items and phone cards which I couldn't have done without. The cards I received from you guys at Christmas and on my birthday took the edge off my profound loneliness on those occasions and filled me with a warm glow in the knowledge that there were people out there who cared and that I hadn't been forgotten.”*

Role description - Trustee

Role	Trustee
Responsible to	Chair, Board of trustees

Prisoners Abroad is a national charity based in London. We provide a lifeline for British people detained abroad and help them resettle in the UK after release. We also support their families during the prison sentence and after release.

This is an unpaid (voluntary) role with a registered charity and is not remunerated. Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed in line with the Prisoners Abroad's expenses policy.

Overall responsibility

The overall **responsibility** of the board of trustees, and therefore of every trustee, is to safeguard the assets and reputation of Prisoners Abroad and to ensure that the charity achieves its objects and complies with its governing document, UK charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation.

Individual trustees are often recruited based on their expertise and experience in specific areas, where they will help to drive the organisation forward in those areas, increasing the charity's effectiveness for the benefit of its service users and provide support to the board based on their experience and expertise.

Responsibilities

Each trustee will work with the trustee board, chief executive and leadership team to:

- Establish and promote Prisoners Abroad's vision, values, strategic aims and objectives
- Ensure that policies and priorities are in keeping with the aims of Prisoners Abroad
- Contribute actively to the board of trustees by giving clear strategic direction, setting overall policy and defining objectives
- Monitor and review Prisoners Abroad's impact, performance against strategic objectives and key activities, ensuring that all activities fall within the charity's stated objects
- Ensure that Prisoners Abroad functions within the legal and regulatory framework of UK charity law and company law and strives to achieve best practice governance

- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of Prisoners Abroad and, in particular, the performance of the chief executive
- Ensure the financial stability of Prisoners Abroad
- Uphold the fiduciary duty invested in the position, undertaking duties in the best interests of Prisoners Abroad
- Monitor significant changes in the external environment and ensure an appropriate response

Main responsibilities

Strategy

- Take part in formulating and reviewing Prisoners Abroad's strategic aims and objectives
- Contribute where appropriate, specific skills, knowledge and experience in support of Prisoners Abroad's fundraising, financial and administrative activities

Policy

- Be adequately informed about the work of Prisoners Abroad
- Play an active part in ensuring the board of trustees exercises its responsibilities and fulfils its functions
- In any discussion or communication with third parties, adhere to the trustee board's position and Prisoners Abroad's policies, and safeguard the reputation and values of Prisoners Abroad

Practice

- Regularly attend and adequately prepare for meetings of the trustee board and any committees and working groups
- Participate in the induction process and any ongoing training offered for the benefit of trustees
- Take on a 'trustee lead role' in an area that matches their skills, expertise and experience
- Participate in at least one board committee or working group (there is a finance committee, a governance and risk committee, plus working groups such as deaths in custody)
- As appropriate, promote awareness of Prisoners Abroad to third parties
- Perform such other tasks as may be requested from time to time by the board, chair or chief executive
- Respect and observe in practice the delegation of authority and distinction between the role of trustees and those of the chief executive and leadership team
- Maintain good relations and communications with other trustees, chief executive and leadership team

- Declare an interest in any matter in which they or any individual or organisation with which they are connected to stands to gain an advantage, and take no part in the decision made by the board of trustees on that matter
- Maintain confidentiality about all sensitive/ confidential information received

Person specification

The experience, skills and qualities we are looking for are:

Skills and experience

- Experience in one of the areas that is being specifically recruited for in the current advert
- Excellent communication skills with the capacity to express yourself with authority
- Experience in a senior/strategic role in one or more of the following areas is desirable but not essential: financial management, governance, fundraising, charity sector, criminal justice, human rights and the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, research/academia, advocacy/influencing, digital and communications

Personal qualities

- Commitment to the [vision and values](#) of the organisation
- Interest in the issues facing British people in prison overseas and their reintegration when they are released
- Ability to promote the work of Prisoners Abroad, particularly at fundraising events
- Willingness and ability to devote the necessary time and effort to support the organisation
- Sound objective judgement
- Ability to work effectively as a team member

Attendance and expectations

- Trustees are elected to serve for a term of three years and are then able to stand for re-election for a further three-year term. After this there can be up to three additional years, subject each time to a discussion with the chair. Trustees can serve a maximum of 9 continuous years as a trustee.
- Trustee meetings are held every quarter in London and last up to two hours.
- Trustees are encouraged to get involved with project-based working groups and are invited to various internal meetings on an ad hoc basis.
- Reasonable travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed in line with the Prisoners Abroad's expenses policy.

- Trustees are encouraged to demonstrate their commitment to the organisation by making personal financial donations.

Activity and time commitment

- Experience shows that the expected time commitment for a trustee is approximately four hours per month plus travel time to meetings and events.
- Trustees are expected to commit to the activities below as a minimum.
- Communication between meetings is made with trustees primarily via email and so trustees must be comfortable and responsive in its use.

Activity	Approximate time in year one (plus travel time)
Induction held at our office in Finsbury Park, London	Two half days (8 hours)
4 x 2-hour trustee meetings per year held at our office in Finsbury Park, London	8 hours
Scrutiny of papers in readiness for board meeting	8 hours
Strategic development day for trustees and leadership team held once a year	6 hours
Being a 'trustee lead' on an area	8 hours
Participation in a committee or working group	4 hours
Attendance at Prisoners Abroad's fundraising events, including an annual autumn reception and spring fundraising dinner	4 hours
Total each year	48 hours

Trustees with a criminal record

For many years we have ensured that people with lived experience are meaningfully represented on our board of trustees.

There are a range of offences (mainly fraud, sexual offences and terrorism-related offences) that can disqualify some people with unspent convictions from serving as a charity trustee. In these cases, it is possible to apply to the Charity Commission for a waiver to permit someone to take on the role.

We do not require you to disclose the details of your criminal record until we have decided whether we would like to invite you to join our board. At that point, you would be invited to complete a self-disclosure form and if you required a waiver, we would look to support your application for a waiver from the Charity Commission.

If this is a matter of concern for you, please raise it confidentially with Prisoners Abroad's chief executive, Christopher Stacey.

How to apply

We hope you are interested in becoming a trustee of Prisoners Abroad.

To express an interest, please send your CV and a short statement (no longer than 500 words) setting out why the role of trustee interests you, how your values align with ours and which of the specific skills/experience that we are looking for you believe you bring.

Please send these to our chief executive, Christopher Stacey, at christopherstacey@prisonersabroad.org.uk.

We will review all expressions of interest received by **10am Thursday 23rd November**.

You may then be invited for an interview with our chair, Nick Prettejohn, another trustee and the chief executive.

If you would like to discuss the role prior to expressing an interest, or if you have any questions, please email Christopher directly to arrange a call.