

Trustee application pack

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We value, welcome and respect all the differences that make us who we are, including: age, cultural background, disability and mental health, ethnicity and race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and social background.

For an informal discussion please contact Operations Manager Diana Wray at diana@ivar.org.uk.

Letter from our Chair

A close partner of IVAR's once described us as "like a drawstring bag". As Chair of IVAR, it is a privilege to support an organisation that pulls people together, joins up perspectives, and builds bridges in a world that often feels divided.

Social change doesn't happen in a vacuum; it requires the right conditions for frontline charities to thrive. For 25 years, IVAR has stood alongside the small organisations that are the heartbeat of our communities. But against a backdrop of immense economic and political pressure, we are using our voice more urgently. We are no longer just sense-makers but bold advocates for a funding system built on trust, not transactions. We sit in that vital, sometimes tension-filled space between small charities and the foundations that fund them, ensuring that those on the front line have the resources, power, and resilience to meet the social change needs of today.

Being a trustee at IVAR is about more than governance oversight. We are a collegiate, diverse, and informal team with a learning culture at our core. We don't just tolerate a difference of opinion; we actively seek it. We want a board of different voices and perspectives that will challenge our thinking and push us to be bolder. It is high-commitment but low-ego. We are open to people who haven't been trustees before as we are able to provide support to help you develop your confidence and knowledge of good governance

At this critical juncture in the organisation's evolution, we are seeking up to five new trustees to help us deliver an ambitious, collaborative, and cross-sector strategy that truly puts charities in the driving seat of change. Beyond the statutory duties of governance and financial control, we need critical friends who will use their specific expertise - whether in, financial planning, campaigning, strategic communications or AI ethics - to scrutinise our work and champion our cause.

If you have an appetite for challenge, a heart for social justice, and a desire to build the conditions for a stronger voluntary sector, I would love for you to join us in our next chapter. Help us ensure IVAR stays healthy, hopeful, and fit for purpose.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kamna Muralidharan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single blue stroke.

Kamna Muralidharan
Chair of the Institute for Voluntary Action Research

About IVAR

IVAR exists for charities, especially the smallest and least heard.

We challenge the imbalances that hold the voluntary sector back: asking who holds power, whose knowledge shapes decisions, and how resources flow. We learn alongside our partners, bringing energy that's drawn from evidence and experience. We are determined to solve problems together - however granular, however overwhelming.

We are a close-knit team of researchers and practitioners, energised by real conversations, who care about whose voice gets heard, and who measure success by whether something actually changes. We bring people together, ask the questions others don't, and push for change that sticks.

If you're excited by ideas, motivated by making change, and eager to bring clarity to complexity, you'll feel right at home here.



Senior Researcher Sonakshi Anand presenting at workshop for Maudsley Charity

Our strategy

Our enduring focus is to strengthen the voluntary sector and transform the funding system, so that charities can do their best work.

In our 2025-2030 strategy we are committed to:

- **Strengthening charities:** Expanding our peer support and learning offer for charity leaders, generating useful, usable research and resources and building stronger networks of smaller charities connected to IVAR.
- **Transforming the funding system:** Driving forward Open and Trusting Grant-making, influencing more equitable, flexible and confident funding and learning practices across trusts, foundations and public agencies.
- **Being a healthy, fit-for-purpose organisation:** Sustaining a strong and diverse research portfolio, embedding equity in all that we do, investing in our people, and maintaining the systems and culture needed to deliver our best work.

Our values

- **Grounded:** We deal with practical problems, challenges and opportunities. We start by helping to pin down what really needs to be addressed.
- **Collaborative:** We know that those with direct experience of an issue are key to resolving challenges and opening up opportunities.
- **Curious:** We listen and learn with an open mind, and we always want to hear a wide variety of perspectives.
- **Human:** We offer encouragement, humour and empathy. We know it's not always easy and we'll be frank about challenges.
- **Hopeful:** We create spaces for difficult discussions and use our voice and networks to inspire conversations that drive change.

Our people

We are a small, dedicated team of 13 staff, nine trustees and a network of associates and advisors, who have worked in and around the voluntary sector as volunteers, staff, leaders, trustees and researchers.

“Being a Trustee for IVAR has been a rewarding experience. The SLT is open and keen to discuss strategy and the options open to the organisation, and the discussion is always stimulating and enlightening, and fellow Trustees are generous in sharing their rich experience. Board meetings are not just about strategy and governance – we also manage to have fun.”

Tim Jones, IVAR Trustee and Treasurer



Some of our current and former trustees at IVAR's 25th birthday celebrations

What we do

- **We convene:** We bring charities, funders and communities together - deliberately and on equal terms. We don't just link people. We design and hold the spaces where real conversation becomes possible.
- **We learn:** We are a trusted learning partner who doesn't arrive with conclusions. Drawing on 25 years of relationships with charities and funders, we help organisations make sense of what they already know - and build the evidence for what needs to change.
- **We challenge:** We ask who holds power, whose knowledge counts, and how resources flow. We use evidence to name what needs to change - and to unstick the funding practices that hold charities back.

Being a trustee at IVAR

Being a trustee at IVAR has been inspirational for me. Being able to help guide such important work, and such a talented team, has been endlessly rewarding. It's given me so much food for thought for my day job working in grant-making. The board is a respectful, insightful place full of incredible people wanting to make a difference – we're really keen to welcome new thinking into that space.

Ruth Stephens, IVAR Trustee

We are encouraging a wide range of people to come forward: your background, life and work experiences, approach and values are just as important to us as your knowledge or experience of the UK voluntary sector. We are open to people who haven't been trustees before as we are able to provide support to help you develop your confidence and knowledge of good governance. What follows should give you an idea of the kinds of responsibilities you can expect to carry, alongside your fellow trustees and with the support of the staff team.

Main purpose of the role

As a member of the Board of Trustees you will be responsible for setting IVAR's strategic goals, priorities and direction. You will use your knowledge, skills and experience to ensure IVAR stays true to its charitable objects. You will represent the interests of all our stakeholders and act as an advocate for the organisation.

With the support of the staff team and professional advisers, trustees at IVAR are expected to:

- Set and maintain the strategy and values.
- Ensure IVAR complies at all times with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Maintain proper financial control and ensure IVAR applies its resources exclusively in pursuit of its charitable objects, as defined in the governing documents.
- Support the operational management of the charity.

You will be required to follow the statutory duties of a trustee, [outlined here](#). In addition to these, each trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board reach sound decisions. This may involve scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives or other issues in which you have particular expertise. Trustees are also actively encouraged to become involved in specific projects outside of board meetings, drawing on their own networks and experience to help support staff in their work.

Person Specification

The Board is looking to appoint up to five trustees and will be seeking a blend of skills, expertise and life experiences that complement its current make-up.

We are looking for trustees who:

- Share an affinity with IVAR's charitable objects and values
- Be proactive, enthusiastic and ambitious in supporting IVAR to achieve its strategic aims
- Have exceptional listening skills as well as an appetite to speak your mind, within a learning culture where this is supported and encouraged

While we welcome applications from all, based on a recent audit of our current Board we are particularly hoping to find people with:

- Direct experience of working in the voluntary sector
- Confidence with numbers, to support financial planning and oversight
- Expertise in the use and ethics of AI
- Expertise in influencing or campaigning
- Networks in the public sector, including direct experience of working with public agencies
- Experience of communications - particularly translating research and evidence into public-facing messages

If you feel that we are describing you in any of the above, then we'd love to hear from you.



IVAR Associate Charlotte presenting at a Connecting Health Communities event in St Helens

Key Details

We are looking for up to five new trustees to join [our Board](#) from November 2026

- Term:** Trustees serve an initial three-year term and are eligible for re-appointment for an additional consecutive term of three years. In exceptional circumstances or when particular skills are an ongoing requirement, this may be longer.
- Remuneration:** The role of trustee is unremunerated, although reasonable out of pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
- Meetings:** Quarterly:
- February: In person, normally 2pm to 5pm
 - May: In person, normally 2pm to 5pm
 - July: Online, normally 2pm to 5pm
 - November: In person, normally 10am to 4pm (an "Away Day" & AGM), with a dinner the night before.
- Trustees are expected to attend at least three meetings a year.

In addition to participation in quarterly board meetings, trustees are encouraged to find other points of connection with IVAR staff and their work. Currently, these include: chairing IVAR's Open and Trusting Grant-making Steering Group; advising on fundraising; reviewing management accounts and setting budgets; and safeguarding. Over the course of a year, you should expect to commit the equivalent of at least 8 days to being a Trustee.

- Location:** In person meetings are held at IVAR's office at The Foundry, Vauxhall, SE11 5RR (near Vauxhall and Oval stations).

Application process

- Closing date:** 21 August
Screening Interviews: 7 – 18 September
Panel Interviews: 5 and 6 October
First meeting: 17 or 18 November

Thank you for your interest in joining IVAR's Board of Trustees.

If you would like an initial, informal conversation about being a trustee at IVAR, please contact Operations Manager Diana Wray, at diana@ivar.org.uk.

To express an interest in becoming a Trustee, please send the following to applications+IVAR@allysondavies-consultant.com by 21 August:

- A letter (no more than one page) explaining why you are interested, and outlining what you would bring to the role.
- A copy of your CV
- A copy of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Optional Disclosure form (attached at the end of this pack).

Form downloaded from <http://www.allysondavies-consultant.com/job-board/>.

Data Protection Note

Any personal data you provide (e.g. addresses, telephone numbers, employment history) will be used for recruitment purposes only, and only shared with individuals involved in the recruitment.

Data will be stored securely: electronically (on IVAR's cloud-based IT system) and in hard copy.

Data related to unsuccessful applicants will be deleted six months after the end of the recruitment period. If your application is successful and you take up the role, the information will be used in the administration of your work with us.

If you have any questions about the processing of your data, then please contact IVAR's Data Protection Lead diana@ivar.org.uk