

Oily Cart



Oily Cart: Co-Chair recruitment information pack

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In an Oily Cart show, everyone is equal.
Everyone is part of the performance and in a
little bubble of magic. (Sam, Mum to Lucy)

1. Introduction to Oily Cart

Welcome to Oily Cart: the pioneers of Sensory Theatre

For 45 years we have created remarkable, accessible shows that connect with babies, children and young people, and their families.

In this time we have pioneered a whole new artform: **Sensory Theatre**. By pushing theatre beyond words – using not just 5, but all 33 senses – we create immersive wonderlands that never tell children how they *should* watch theatre, but learn from them what theatre *should* be.

Each sensory experience is a space to be who you are, and to be together. We meet every family where they are at, creating theatre in innovative ways that expand choice and access for more families. Our shows can happen in your local theatre, hydrotherapy pool or school hall; on a trampoline or online; at home or even up in the air!

We collaborate with disabled and non-disabled artists of all ages, always considering those who experience the most barriers first.

We are ambitious and curious.

It is an exciting time to join Oily Cart. We are testing lots of new ways for children, young people and their families to influence our work. We may be an established company, but we are committed to keep learning. In everything we do, we ask ourselves: who should we be listening to? Who are we still excluding, and how can we make them welcome in our shows and our company?

We are a registered charity (no. 1000799) but we are shifting our business model so we don't solely rely on public and private subsidy. We are pushing the boundaries with our work locally and globally. Our global advocacy is helping to make theatre more accessible all over the world.

We are lots of different people with lots of different perspectives.

Oily Cart is jointly led by Artistic Director, Ellie Griffiths and Executive Director, Zoë Lally. They lead a diverse staff team of seven part- and full-time staff. They work closely with our current board members, who bring lots of different skills and experiences. This includes:

Taiwo Dayo-Payne (life coach and sibling; Chair of the board); Sue Kingscote (education); Charlotte Wood (Speech & Language therapy); April Sethi (legal, parent, advocate); Linda Davidson (Data tech & Care Experience advocate) and Peter Westaway (finance); Bilie Antimony (theatre); Shania Selvendran (fundraising) and Amy Smith (theatre).

We also work with about 30 talented freelance artists each year, as well as a local group of families with lived experience of disability, who feed into our thinking and ideas.



2. Our mission and values

Our mission is to create **high quality sensory theatre** that **all babies, children, and young people can enjoy** – especially those most excluded. Over the next five years, our priorities are:

- **Shows & Creative Projects:** We create and tour a portfolio of joyful, award-winning and interactive shows in a range of formats. We welcome families into immersive and beautifully crafted worlds of sound, smell, colour and touch, using all 33 senses.
- **Families are at the heart of everything we do:** Families influence and impact our artistic programme, evaluation and advocacy, to make every show radically inclusive. From a new steering group and youth associate programme, to catalysts and prototypes, families are welcomed into every aspect of our work.
- **Exploration & innovation:** We push the boundaries of Sensory Theatre through research and collaboration. Our spirit of curiosity drives us forwards and ensures every aspect of our work is rigorous, playful and meaningful.

In all of our work we consider the sustainability of our resources (people, funds, time and assets) and those of the planet. We strive for the highest quality in everything we do - from production values to caring and meaningful interactions with every individual. Every child deserves the right to world class theatre.

Here is a video that explains more about why we do what we do in the words of the families and artists we work with:



3. Detail about the role

We are proposing a shared Co-Chair role, to encourage collaborative leadership, mutual support and a healthy balance of perspectives, experience and ways of working. It will mirror the successful shared leadership role of the joint CEOs (Artistic Director & Executive Director) that have been in post since 2019.

In this new model, the responsibilities and time-commitments of the role can be shared between two people. This will allow for the role to be tailored to the specific interests and skills of the successful candidates.

The Co-Chairs will share responsibility for providing strategic leadership to Oily Cart and for ensuring the charity is well-governed, financially sustainable and true to its mission. Working in close partnership with each other, the Board of Trustees, and the joint CEOs, the Co-Chairs will help Oily Cart thrive as an ambitious, inclusive and arts organisation.

We recruit all our board members for their specialist skills and knowledge. We value all kinds of knowledge, which you could have gained through your work or personal life.

Time committment: to be shared between 2 people

- 4 x 2-hour board meetings annually
- 4 x 1 hour Finance sub-group meetings
- Approx 4 x 2 hour sub-group meetings per year
- 1 away-day per year
- Monthly meetings (2-3 hours) with the CEOs
- Events: 2-3 events per year

Expected total time: 1 day per month

Term of engagement: up to 6 years for a board member, with co-Chairs able to remain in post for a further year.



Co-Chair key responsibilities

Shared strategic leadership as Co-Chairs

- Build a strong, open working and communicative relationship with your Co-Chair, sharing responsibilities in a way that reflects your skills, availability and interests.
- Work together, with fellow Trustees and the senior leadership team, to set and uphold Oily Cart's vision, mission and long-term strategy.
- Help the Board focus on strategic priorities while maintaining oversight of performance and risk.
- Act as ambassadors for Oily Cart, representing the organisation externally when appropriate.
- Attend and Chair board meetings, and cover for each other when required.
- Attend Oily Cart shows and events (that tour across the UK).
- Be part of working groups.
- Help us make new connections and spread the word about Oily Cart.

Board Leadership & Governance

- Jointly chair Board meetings, setting agendas with the Joint-CEOs, and ensuring meetings are inclusive, focused and effective.
- Support Trustees to contribute confidently, encouraging open discussion and constructive challenge.
- Ensure the Board meets its legal and regulatory responsibilities as a charity and company, including safeguarding and equality duties.
- Foster a positive, values-led board culture grounded in trust, curiosity and accountability.

Partnership with the joint CEOs (Artistic Director & Executive Director)

- Providing strategic support to the Joint-CEOs.
- Be involved in the appraisal, wellbeing and professional development of the Joint-CEOs (shared between the Co-Chairs).
- Maintain clear boundaries between governance oversight (responsibility of the Board) and operational management (responsibilities of the Joint CEOs).

Financial Oversight & Sustainability

- Work with the wider Board (and attend Finance sub-group meetings) to ensure robust financial governance and long-term sustainability.
- Support the company in making the best decisions around the use of its resources (money, premises, assets, staff and time).
- Support strategic thinking around fundraising, partnerships and income diversification, as appropriate to your experience.

Person specification

We are looking for a dynamic and strategic Chair or co-Chairs who bring a broad mix of experience, perspectives and lived experience. We are particularly interested in applications from artistic leaders as well as individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset who can bring corporate insight to drive long-term financial stability and growth. You do not need to meet every point listed.

Essential

- A strong commitment to Oily Cart's mission, values and to inclusive, child-centred arts practice.
- Experience of strategic leadership, governance or senior decision-making (inside or outside the arts).
- An ability to build relationships, listen well and lead collaboratively.
- Sound judgement, integrity and a willingness to ask thoughtful questions.
- Understanding of, or willingness to learn about, charity governance and Trustee responsibilities.

Desirable

- Chairing or Co-Chairing experience, or experience facilitating groups and meetings.
- Knowledge of the arts, cultural sector, education, disability, or work with children and young people.
- A strong commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and access.

"If any politician... requires confirmation of the power and value of theatre then Oily Cart's *When the World Turns* does the job and it does it with a genuine sense of wonder and artists who put aside all ego. They perform with such care." *The Stage*, 2025

4. Equal opportunities & access

Oily Cart is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and actively encourages applications from people who are under-represented in the cultural and charity sectors. We welcome Deaf, disabled and / or neurodivergent applicants, those with lived experiences of disability (such as a parent, carer or sibling of a disabled person) and those from the global majority.

This is an unpaid, voluntary role, but we will use our available resources to make our meetings accessible as possible. We are happy to discuss access needs and flexible ways of fulfilling the role. Examples include:

- Reimburse travel expenses.
- Preparation meetings.
- A support worker.
- An interpreter.
- Board documents available in different formats (e.g. easy read, large print, dyslexia friendly).
- Flexible meeting times which can be in-person or remote.
- Conversations with staff or board members in-between board meetings.
- A 'board buddy'.
- Training in areas like finance and safeguarding.



6. Application process

To apply, please send us a statement that

- tells us **why you want to join our board** and
- **describes the skills or experience you have that could help Oily Cart.** This could include a CV.

This can be

- a written document,
- a video recording
- or a voice recording.

Please send this to Zoë (Executive Director) at zoe@oilycart.org.uk.



The deadline for applications is **Monday 21 September at 10am**



If you have any questions about applying, please contact Zoë:

Email zoe@oilycart.org.uk

Phone 020 8102 0112

Recruitment timeline:

- Applications close: Monday 21 September 2026 at 10am
- Shortlisting and interview process: SEptember - October 2026
- Successful candidates will ideally be appointed to the board at our board meeting (which is also our AGM) on Thursday 3rd December from 6-8pm in person at Oily Cart.

Thank you for your time and interest in this role.