TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT PACK

October 2026



CYTO

CROYDON YOUTH THEATRE ORGANISATION

Charity Number: 1077861
Company Number: 03572226

The Shoestring Theatre, Oakley Road, South Norwood, SE25 4XG
www.cyto.org.uk











THEME
JAR!






adidas

Welcome from the Youth Board

We are looking for kind, passionate, and hard-working people to join our Board of Trustees at CYTO.

As a youth-led organisation with 120 members, we strive to create a fun and inclusive atmosphere for young people in Croydon. For us as members, CYTO is a safe, warm environment filled with creative opportunities and a chance to embrace individuality and broaden our creative horizons.

As a trustee, you will help to oversee the organisation's governance and development plans, and support CYTO to maintain its legacy as one of the longest running youth theatres in the country.

We work alongside our Board of Trustees to ensure we are listened to and represented in the big decisions about CYTO. If you become a trustee, you could be part of shaping the future of young people's lives in Croydon and helping our creative community grow for generations to come.

We look forward to working alongside you.

- Zoe & Eleni
Co-Chairs, CYTO Youth Board



CYTO Members outside The Shoestring Theatre(Photo: Leon Bach)

Welcome from the Board of Trustees

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of Trustees at Croydon Youth Theatre Organisation (CYTO).

As you'll have gleaned from our Youth Board's letter, young people are not only participants at CYTO; they help shape programmes, influence decisions, and contribute to the future of our incredible organisation. Through weekly sessions, termly productions, leadership opportunities, volunteering, and community partnerships, CYTO supports young people to grow over many years, creating lifelong relationships and lasting impact.

CYTO is an extraordinary place. For more than 60 years, we have used theatre as a tool to help young people grow in confidence, creativity, and ambition. For decades, our venue - The Shoestring Theatre - has been more than just a stage; it is a safe, welcoming home where 120 young people aged 6 to 19 come to discover what they are capable of.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We are keen to grow, and welcoming new trustees to help make this happen is key.
In 2027, we'll be expanding our programming to ensure our provision reaches more individuals aged 6 to 19, alongside continuing to support our alumni members and other young adults beyond the age of 19. Our team is also applying for Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status, so it's an exciting time to get involved!

CYTO's award-winning programme operates from our beloved venue, The Shoestring Theatre. In 2023 we secured a 30-year lease on our building via a Community Asset Transfer from Croydon Council. This lease affords CYTO an incredible foundation, but to honour our history and future-proof our legacy, we have plans to embark on a major capital redevelopment of the building alongside our ongoing youth programmes.
That's where you come in. To steer this transformation successfully and ensure our charity remains resilient, we need a dynamic, skilled, and passionate Board of Trustees. Whether your expertise lies in finance, fundraising, capital projects, legal governance, or another field entirely, your leadership can leave a lasting impact on the next generation of Croydon's young people.

Please read on to find out more about what we do, who we're looking for, and how you can contribute. We look forward to meeting you and exploring how you can help shape CYTO's exciting future.

- Anna Shields and Roger Weeks
Co-Chairs, CYTO Board of Trustees

Who We Are

CYTO was established in 1965 and has been making exceptional theatre with Croydon's young people ever since. We believe every young person deserves the opportunity to discover what they are capable of.

Based in South Norwood, we provide a year-round programme of high-quality workshops, productions, leadership opportunities, and creative development for children and young people in the Croydon. Our team is made up of professional directors, designers and theatre practitioners with the skills to help CYTO members hone their talents and produce excellent theatre.

- **OUR VISION:** A future where every young person has the confidence, creativity, and opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- **OUR MISSION:** To use the power of theatre to inspire young people, develop their confidence and creativity, and create opportunities for them to thrive both on and beyond the stage.
- **OUR VALUES:** Young people first, Creative ambition, Belonging, Opportunity, and Community.



Ride Or Die, March 2026 (Photo: Leon Bach)

What Makes Us Stand Out

Recent data from the Children's Commissioner's Childhood Lottery report highlights the stark challenges facing young people locally, revealing that nearly a quarter of children and young people in Croydon (24.9%) do not feel safe in their local area. Continuing to make CYTO a secure, inclusive, and inspiring creative home for our local young people is more vital now than ever.

Rather than simply delivering drama classes, CYTO does this by combining high-quality, ambitious theatre-making with long-term youth development.

- **Theatre is the means, not the end:** Productions develop confidence, resilience, and leadership alongside artistic skills.
- **Genuine youth voice:** Young people help the organisation through consultation and true influence over its future.
- **A permanent creative home:** The Shoestring Theatre provides an inclusive space outside of home and school where CYTO members rehearse, study, socialise, and belong. It is also a vital community asset hired by other creative groups across the borough.
- **Accessibility:** We work hard to keep our award-winning, high-quality theatre making opportunities affordable, using bursaries and practical support to ensure financial circumstances or additional needs never prevent participation.



Change of Heart, August 2026 (Photo: Leon Bach)

The Role of the Board of Trustees

In line with Charity Commission guidance, trustees have overall control of a charity and are responsible for ensuring it delivers on its core purpose. They lead the organisation, secure its financial stability, and safeguard its values.

In short, your responsibilities as a CYTO trustee will include:

- **Ensuring compliance:** Making sure CYTO complies with its governing document, charity law, and Charity Commission regulations.
- **Protecting assets:** Safeguarding the charity's resources, including our home, The Shoestring Theatre.
- **Strategic oversight:** Working alongside fellow board members and staff to shape CYTO's long-term vision, expansion goals, and capital redevelopment plans.
- **Prudent financial management:** Ensuring CYTO's funds are applied exclusively to our charitable objects with robust financial controls.
- **Collective decision-making:** Attending quarterly board meetings (usually held online) and contributing approximately 4-6 hours per month to strategic discussions.

Role Details: This is a voluntary, unremunerated role (though reasonable out-of-pocket travel expenses can be reimbursed). Don't worry if you haven't been a trustee before! We provide a warm welcome and ongoing support to help you settle into your governance duties.



Peter Pan, December 2025 (Photo: Leon Bach)

What We Offer CYTO Trustees

- **A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE:** A welcoming, creative, and supportive team environment. You will work closely alongside our passionate fellow trustees, Artistic Director, volunteer management committee, dedicated volunteers, and freelance facilitators, while directly championing and collaborating with our dynamic Youth Board.
- **MEANINGFUL IMPACT:** An opportunity to make a tangible, lasting contribution, whether by safeguarding our financial health, fuelling our growth, protecting our mission, or helping shape a physical legacy that will support Croydon's young people for decades to come.
- **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH:** Opportunities to develop leadership, governance, strategic oversight, and cross-sector leadership skills. You'll bring your professional expertise to bear on complex, rewarding challenges within a historic, award-winning local charity that has been transforming young lives since 1965.
- **COMMUNITY CONNECTION:** Full access to CYTO performances, special events, and the heart of our vibrant community life in South Norwood.



Othello, July 2026 (Photo: Leon Bach)

Broadening Our Board

We're looking for trustees with a genuine passion for supporting young people and a belief in the power of youth theatre to change lives.

While CYTO warmly welcomes interest from individuals with diverse professional backgrounds, lived experiences, and fresh perspectives, we are currently actively seeking specialist trustees with expertise in the following key areas:

- **FINANCE:** Ensuring our financial controls, budgeting, and long-term fiscal planning remain robust.
- **FUNDRAISING:** Helping us grow, diversify, and secure sustainable income streams for our future projects.
- **CAPITAL PROJECTS & REFURBISHMENT:** Guiding us through the strategic development and management of our home, The Shoestring Theatre.
- **LEGAL:** Providing crucial guidance on charity law, governance compliance, and statutory regulations.

Please see the following pages for more detailed information on these roles.



A Hint Of Snow White, December 2024 (Photo: Leon Bach)

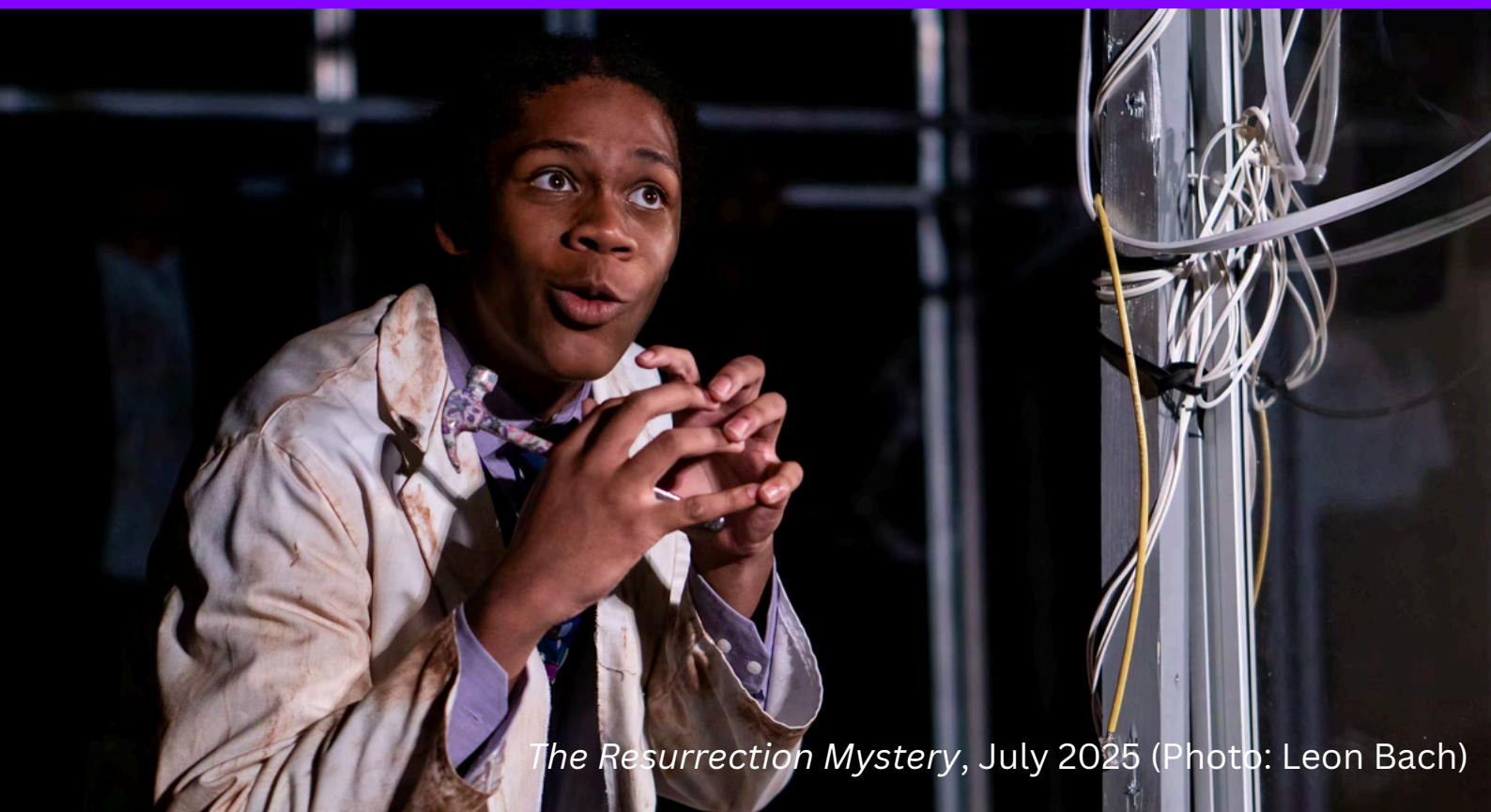
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Other Skills We Value On Our Board

A well-rounded board thrives on varied viewpoints. You don't need a background in theatre (or to be a Croydon resident!) to make a profound impact here; you just need a passion for empowering young people and a commitment to growing our community.
A skills audit of our board has also identified some other areas of expertise that could be strengthened by trustees with specific knowledge:

- **MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS:** Helping us share our story, grow our audience, and reach more young people across South London.
- **EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** Growing our strategic links with Croydon schools, local educators, and home-schooled networks to ensure our programmes reach and welcome even more young people across the borough.
- **HR & PEOPLE MANAGEMENT:** Supporting our staff, volunteers, and organisational culture as we grow.
- **LOCAL BUSINESS & COMMUNITY NETWORKS:** Deepening our roots within Croydon and building lasting local partnerships with business and other arts organisations in the borough.

We strongly encourage applications from people of all backgrounds, particularly those from underrepresented communities, to ensure our board reflects the diverse backgrounds and communities we work with. If you don’t fit neatly into the specific role profiles mentioned, but feel deeply connected to our mission, we would still love to hear from you.



The Resurrection Mystery, July 2025 (Photo: Leon Bach)

Our Current Board

CYTO is governed by a committed Board of Trustees who bring expertise across the arts, education, safeguarding, business, and the voluntary sector. Working alongside our Artistic Director, Andrew McPherson, the board supports, challenges, and guides the organisation while working with staff and young people to build an ambitious, inclusive, and resilient future.

ANNA SHIELDS (Co-Chair of the Board)

Anna Shields is a composer/lyricist, lecturer, and arts facilitator based in Croydon. As the co-director of Starling Arts, she specialises in bringing communities together through group singing and musical theatre. This includes Starling Arts' partnership with the hit West End musical *Wicked*, co-creating and delivering official workshops for schools and community groups. Anna also writes musicals as one half of writing duo Garsin & Shields, and works as an Associate Lecturer at the University of Winchester and Guildford School of Acting. Anna is deeply passionate about using her expertise in community arts and creative education to help develop CYTO and her local community.

ROGER WEEKS (Co-Chair of the Board)

After 35 years with a technology start-up company, Roger Weeks is using his business and management experience to help charities and non-for-profit enterprises. In addition to his CYTO responsibilities, he is the Chair of Enterprise Enfield, Chair of the North London Chamber of Commerce, a non-exec director of RSA IV Limited, and a trustee of the RSA Trust. Roger has lived in Croydon for the last 15 years and got involved in CYTO via his stepdaughter who was a member for many years. Outside of work, Roger enjoys hiking, cycling, travelling and, of course, theatre.

CHERYL GOVAN

Cheryl Govan is a freelance theatre director and writer. Awarded a 'Be Inspired' Olivier Award in 2018 for her work championing young and emerging theatre artists, she previously served as Associate Director at the Stephen Joseph Theatre (Young People and Community) and as Director of Participation with Separate Doors Theatre Company. She is currently a Project Manager for the National Literacy Trust but can also be found running choirs or working with students at LIPA. She is a proud trustee of CYTO.

Our Current Board

DONNA DIGHTON-CROOKES

A former dancer and London College of Fashion and Design attendee, Donna brings creativity and resilience to every endeavour. As a small business owner and CEO of a non-profit organisation, she leads with vision and integrity. Donna specialises as a SEND practitioner, focusing on EHCP and SEND law ensuring young people's rights and needs are met with compassion and expertise. She also works as a wellbeing coach and mental health first aider for young people, advocating for their wellbeing and brighter futures. Donna is CYTO's Safeguarding Lead Trustee.

LAURA PERRY-PORTSMOUTH

Laura Perry-Portsmouth is a Croydon based theatre professional specialising in sales and ticketing and is a former member of CYTO (2012-2016). She has worked in Box Offices for over ten years in venues such as Polka Theatre, Fairfield Halls, and New Wimbledon Theatre. Laura is passionate about inclusive, accessible theatre for young people and is a big advocate for CYTO and the lasting impact it has on its members.



CYTO Members outside The Shoestring Theatre(Photo: Leon Bach)

Focus for this Trustee Recruitment

FINANCE TRUSTEE

Safeguard CYTO's financial health and help secure our long-term sustainability as we enter an exciting new chapter.

You will oversee the financial health of the charity, ensuring robust governance, strategic financial planning, and clear reporting. Your expertise will safeguard CYTO's assets and ensure our funds are effectively used to support our creative youth programmes and the upkeep of our theatre space.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Strategic Financial Management: Guide the board on financial strategy, risk management, and the long-term sustainability of the charity.
- Budgeting & Planning: Assist and guide our bookkeeper in preparing and reviewing annual budgets, cash flow forecasts, and project-specific financial plans.
- Financial Reporting: Present clear financial updates (treasurer's reports) at quarterly trustee meetings to ensure the wider board understands CYTO's current financial position. Assist and guide our bookkeeper and external auditor in preparing annual accounts.
- Governance & Compliance: Ensure CYTO complies with Charity Commission financial regulations, including the preparation and timely submission of annual independently examined accounts.
- Funding Support: Collaborate with the fundraising team to review the financial viability of grant applications and funding bids.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

- Financial Expertise: A qualification or proven professional background in accounting, bookkeeping, corporate finance, or financial management (experience in charity/voluntary sector finance is a plus but not essential).
- Strategic Vision: Ability to look beyond the numbers to understand the strategic direction and operational needs of a youth arts charity.
- Communication Skills: Ability to explain financial concepts clearly to non-financial trustees and staff.
- Integrity: High standards of integrity, confidentiality, and an understanding of the legal duties of a charity trustee.

Focus for this Trustee Recruitment

FUNDRAISING TRUSTEE

Drive CYTO's income generation and help us diversify our funding streams to support our youth programmes and theatre building.

In this role, you will provide strategic oversight and expert guidance on CYTO's income generation. You will help us diversify our funding streams, ensuring the charity can maintain its affordable membership fees, support its youth arts programmes, and develop its home at The Shoestring Theatre.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Strategic Fundraising Oversight: Lead the development and review of CYTO's overarching fundraising strategy.
- Grant & Trust Applications: Identify relevant institutional funders, corporate partnerships, and trusts, and guide the team on writing compelling bids.
- Community & Digital Income: Advise on planning public fundraising campaigns, crowd-funding initiatives, and local community events.
- Corporate & Individual Giving: Explore opportunities for local business sponsorships and donor cultivation schemes.
- Governance & Ethical Compliance:
- Ensure all fundraising activities comply with Code of Fundraising Practice guidelines and relevant Charity Commission regulations.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

- Fundraising Expertise: A proven professional background in fundraising, grant writing, income generation, or corporate partnership development (experience within the arts or youth sectors is a major asset).
- Network & Connectivity: Knowledge of the funding landscape, particularly trusts or foundations that support south London communities or the creative arts.
- Strategic Planning: Ability to analyse opportunities, identify high-yield funding paths, and think creatively about alternative revenue models.
- Communication Skills: Excellent storytelling capabilities with the ability to convey CYTO’s mission and impact to external stakeholders.

Focus for this Trustee Recruitment

PROPERTY & CAPITAL PROJECTS TRUSTEE

Support the board’s expert oversight on the major capital redevelopment of CYTO's home, The Shoestring Theatre.

With a background in construction, architecture, surveying, or capital project management, you will serve as the board’s expert voice on the physical redevelopment of The Shoestring Theatre. Your guidance will ensure that design specifications, contractor appointments, cost controls, and construction timelines are robustly managed and aligned with CYTO's charitable mission.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Strategic Project Oversight: Act as the main advisor to the Board of Trustees on all aspects of The Shoestring Theatre redevelopment project.
- Contractor & Vendor Liaison: Provide expert oversight during the tendering, selection, and management of architects, structural engineers, main contractors, and trade professionals.
- Cost & Risk Management: Monitor project budgets, variations, contingency allocations, and risk registers alongside the Finance Trustee to prevent cost overruns.
- Compliance & Safety: Ensure the project complies with planning permissions, building regulations, health and safety legislation (CDM regulations), and modern accessibility standards (including Part M of the Building Regulations and the Equality Act 2010).
- Phasing & Operations: Advise on the logistical phasing of works to minimize disruption to CYTO's active youth theatre programmes and community usage.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

- Industry Expertise: Proven professional experience in capital projects, commercial/community building refurbishments, construction management, quantity surveying, or architecture.
- Project Delivery: Experience managing multi-stage construction projects from design through to fit-out, handover, and defect correction periods.
- Procurement Knowledge: Familiarity with standard UK building contracts (e.g., JCT or NEC) and contractor procurement processes.
- Communication Skills: Ability to translate complex technical blueprints, structural constraints, and construction jargon into clear, actionable updates for non-technical board members.

Focus for this Trustee Recruitment

LEGAL TRUSTEE

Provide critical legal guidance on contracts, governance, and CYTO's upcoming capital build.

As our legal specialist, you will provide critical oversight on regulatory compliance, risk management, and contractual matters. Your expertise will protect the charity's interests as we navigate a major capital build, update our operational agreements, and maintain high standards of charity governance.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Commercial & Construction Contracts: Review, advise on, and help negotiate commercial contracts, supplier agreements, and construction/refurbishment contracts related to The Shoestring Theatre redevelopment.
- Charity Governance & Compliance: Ensure CYTO strictly adheres to Charity Commission regulations, constitutional requirements, and broader statutory obligations.
- Property & Lease Advice: Provide high-level guidance on property law, lease agreements, and premises-related legal considerations.
- Risk & Policy Oversight: Review and update internal organisational policies, including data protection (GDPR), health and safety, safeguarding legalities, and employment/volunteer agreements.
- Board Advisory: Act as a sounding board for the Chair and trustees, identifying potential legal liabilities or risks before strategic decisions are made.

PERSON SPECIFICATION:

- Legal Expertise: A qualified solicitor, barrister, or experienced legal executive with a current or past practicing certificate (experience in commercial property, construction, charity law, or commercial contracts is highly desirable).
- Analytical & Objective: Ability to quickly digest complex legal documents and translate them into clear, risk-managed advice for non-legal trustees.
- Strategic Thinker: Balanced approach to legal risk, understanding how to protect the charity while enabling its creative growth and capital ambitions.
- Communication Skills: Strong interpersonal skills with a collaborative, pragmatic approach to problem-solving.

How To Apply

We operate a rolling recruitment process, but we are particularly keen to welcome new trustees by the end of November 2026.

To apply, please send a CV and a brief cover letter explaining your interest and relevant experience to both of our Co-Chairs, Anna Shields and Roger Weeks, via the email addresses below:

- annashields@cyto.org.uk
- rogerweeks@cyto.org.uk

Please also complete our EDIB (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging) Monitoring Form alongside your submission.

We review applications as they are received and all applications will be acknowledged.

Successful applicants will be invited to interview with members of the Board of Trustees, Youth Board, and our Artistic Director, Andrew McPherson.

If you would like an informal, confidential chat about the role before applying, please get in touch.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Front cover image: *Ride Or Die*, March 2026 (Photo by Leon Bach)
Montage inclides various CYTO productions and rehearsals (Photos by Leon Bach)
Back cover image: Publicity shot featuring CYTO members for *Britney's Lock*
(Photo by Melanie Lehmann for National Theatre Connections)



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