

Photo by Dan Martin

Trustee Recruitment Pack

Large-Print Plain Text Version

“Upswing demonstrates the real possibilities that emerge when circus, dance and theatre meet and meld.”

The Guardian

Thank you for your interest in Upswing. If you are reading this, you are already curious about a company that does not wait for permission to imagine new futures.

Upswing is entering a significant stage of growth. Our work is increasing in scale and ambition, our home in Staffordshire is strengthening, and our touring activity

continues to expand across the country and internationally.

We are a contemporary circus company with clear purpose and creative energy. We believe in the power of stories, in the importance of representation, and in the ability of circus to bring people together in meaningful ways.

We make work that moves people. It is guided by lived experience, grounded in community and delivered with imagination. This next chapter calls for leadership that shares our confidence and our humanity.

We are a registered charity and are governed by a board of trustees. Trustees are the people who lead the

charity and decide how it is run. Being a trustee means making decisions that will impact on people's lives. Our trustees help guide Upswing with insight, generosity and strategic clarity, making a difference to local communities and wider society.

Trustees use their skills and experience to support their charities, helping them achieve their aims. Trustees also often learn new skills during their time on the board. The Trustee role is voluntary, with reasonable expenses reimbursed.

If what you read here resonates, we would love to hear from you.

“Telling a story through contemporary circus is a feat attempted by many, but achieved by regrettably few.

Upswing make it look easy.”

The Stage

About Upswing

Upswing is a leading contemporary circus organisation, founded in 2006 by Artistic Director Vicki Dela

Amedume. An award-winning ACE NPO, and the UK’s only female, Black-led contemporary circus charity,

Upswing has become a vital creative force shaping what circus can be today.

Storytelling sits at the heart of Upswing’s practice.

Through movement, skill and imagination, we create work that captivates audiences and sparks connection.

Our approach celebrates difference: we collaborate with artists and communities whose experiences are too often under-represented, creating spaces where diverse perspectives meet to unlock new ideas and ways of seeing.

Our productions are artistically ambitious and socially resonant, engaging audiences in conversations around culture, connection and identity. These values are embedded not only in what we make, but in how we work.

Upswing delivers its mission through four interconnected focus areas, each guided by clear objectives:

Our Company - A diverse and ethically led organisation where lived experience, creativity and responsibility shape our culture. We work to ensure our team reflects the communities we serve.

Our Work - Productions that travel across borders and artistic forms, from Berlin to Bradford, from hospital wards in Stoke to Broadway. Our storytelling is clear, bold and rooted in shared experience.

Our Sector - A commitment to developing artists and practitioners, especially those from the Global Majority. We create pathways into sustainable careers through development programmes, peer networks and creative opportunities.

Our Community - Creative engagement that reduces barriers to participation and builds belonging. This includes work with libraries, digital creative health tools, family experiences and long-term community partnerships.

Upswing is a place where artistry, equity and imagination are held with equal care.

Our Board helps guide this balance and ensure it thrives.

“For me as a black artist and maker, one of the most pressing problems we have is to see beyond the surface. Circus creates a democratic space to explore the extraordinary qualities that bind not divide us.”

Vicki Dela Amedume, Artistic Director

“Upswing is fueled by inspirational, forward thinking artistic vision. We are very fortunate that this incredible artistic work is part of our cultural landscape.”

Frank Sweeney, Previous Trustee

Why this moment matters

Upswing is preparing for a significant shift in how we create work, how we support artists and how we connect with communities. The past two years have brought real momentum:

- *Princess and the Pea* our most recent production for children and families has reached a major international platform, selling out its Broadway run and now scheduled for further international dates.
- *SHOWDOWN*, after opening and running for 4 months in Berlin, our most ambitious production to date toured across the United Kingdom, strengthening our national and international presence,

- Our creative and organisational base in Staffordshire has grown, placing high-quality contemporary circus in a region where access to the artform has historically been limited.
- A new business model is being established that allows us to focus on artist development and retention, community engagement and organisational resilience.

This phase of work will see our artistic ambition and social purpose expand hand in hand. To sustain this trajectory, we need a Board that can think boldly, act with clarity and help us plan for the future with confidence.

We are a company in motion, embedding our work in Staffordshire, building deeper local partnerships,

expanding internationally and investing in the development of a cohort diverse artists into a regular company. We believe in the ability of circus to spark imagination, build trust and open doors to new perspectives.

We work with care and ambition. We balance artistic excellence with a commitment to representation and community impact. We take creative risks, but we do so with intention and purpose.

If this vision inspires you, we would be delighted to hear from you. You would be joining a company that is ready to grow, to create bold and surprising new work, and ready to build future of the artform we love and the communities we serve.

“Upswing consistently produces artistically bold output with a strong commitment to social purpose. Being a trustee, and carefully ensuring the organisation is always true to itself and delivering work that is distinctive, is an extraordinarily rewarding experience.”

Caroline Meaby, Chair of Upswing’s Board

We are recruiting a new Chair and Trustees who bring curiosity, conviction and care. We welcome people with a range of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

We especially welcome applications from the Global Majority, disabled people, neurodivergent people, LGBTQIA+ communities and individuals with strong connections to Staffordshire and the Midlands.

We are particularly interested in people with skills in:

- Governance and chairing experience
- Organisational development and change management
- Producing, touring or cultural sector leadership
- Community engagement and/or creative health partnerships
- Digital strategy and audience development
- IT, AI and cyber security
- Fundraising, philanthropy or corporate partnership development

Experience can be gained in many ways. We are open to people who have followed a non-traditional route into leadership or who bring lived experience that will strengthen our Board.

What You Will Bring

You do not need a background in circus. You do not need to know everything.

You simply need to bring commitment, courage and a willingness to learn and share.

We are looking for individuals who:

- Can think strategically and speak thoughtfully
- Act with integrity
- Are curious and open minded
- Offer steady guidance and constructive challenge
- Communicate with clarity and kindness
- Will champion Upswing in new spaces
- Understand or are willing to understand the responsibilities of charity governance

Upswing thrives on creative exchange. We are seeking new Trustees who value honest conversations and shared purpose.

Time Commitment, Practicalities and Support

The Board meets four times each year, with an additional Away Day, while sub committees, especially Finance, meet when required. Trustees should expect to contribute around six to eight days per year, and the incoming Chair can expect around ten to twelve days of commitment. Meetings are held in a hybrid format, with growing activity taking place in Staffordshire. These roles are voluntary, with reasonable expenses reimbursed, and all new Trustees receive a full induction that includes governance support and optional training.

We are happy to discuss any adjustments that would support you to participate fully.

How to Express Interest

We want to hear from you in a format that feels natural.

We assess what you say, not how you present it.

You may apply with:

- A written statement
- A video
- An audio message

Please keep submissions to a maximum of two pages or five minutes.

Please also include a short CV.

Tell us:

1. Why you want to join Upswing at this moment.
2. What insights, experience or lived perspectives you bring.
3. What you hope to gain from trusteeship and what support you might need.

Send your application to **camille@upswing.org.uk**.

You will also receive an anonymous Equal Opportunities form.

Recruitment timeline

Deadline: 8th June 2026

Shortlist confirmed: 15th June 2026

Informal conversations with Outgoing Chair, Artistic

Director & Executive Director: w/b 22nd June 2026

Board meeting observation (in person or on
Zoom): 27th July 2026

Onboarding and induction (references and conflicts of
interest check): September-October 2026

1st board meeting: 2nd Nov 2026

If you'd like an informal conversation before applying,
contact camille@upswing.org.uk to arrange a call or
Zoom.