Bethany Antonia in LAVA by James Fritz. Photo: Robert Day

fifth word.

TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT PACK

SEPTEMBER 2026

(updated October 2026)

WELCOME

Fifth Word is looking for two to three new Trustees to join us as we start an exciting new chapter.

This is a special time to join Fifth Word. We've recently become a registered charity and are taking this opportunity to build new partnerships and explore new sources of funding. This includes working with community partners and leading venues, building stronger connections with underrepresented communities in the East Midlands, and producing more new plays while supporting even more writers.

With the launch of our second year-long Fifth Word Playwrights programme and our recent Pop-Up Plays, we are expanding how we reach audiences and support emerging writers and strengthening our role within the regional new writing landscape. Over 2026, we will be updating our Business Plan, developing our artistic programme for 2027–2032, and securing long-term trust support for our productions and community work.

Our Board of Trustees is vital to Fifth Word's success, making sure the organisation is run responsibly and effectively. We are recruiting two to three new Board Members with relevant skills to oversee company activity and share our values.

We are keen to work with people who have knowledge of the theatre sector or fresh perspectives from other professions. We are particularly looking for candidates with skills in Finance and Accounting, Fundraising (especially individual giving), Legal & HR, Diversity and Inclusion, or Programming and Producing. We'd also be glad to hear from anyone with an interest in future board leadership. We especially welcome applications from people with lived experience of the communities we work with across the East Midlands and from those under-represented on charity boards. Previous board experience is not required, and we'll support you to grow into the role.

Thank you so much for your interest, and we would love to hear from you.

Laura Ford
Artistic Director & CEO

We Need New Names by Mufaro Makubika Photo: Robert Day

ABOUT FIFTH WORD

Fifth Word is an award-winning theatre company based in the East Midlands, founded in 2007. We are passionate about discovering, supporting, and producing the most exciting playwrights of today. We work closely with communities that are often overlooked, supporting people to tell their own stories through different art forms.

We produce and tour plays that are powerful, bold, and accessible, connecting particularly with young people (ages 14–25) and under-represented communities across the UK. We aim to shift perspectives, bring people together and inspire a love of theatre.

Our community projects connect closely with our productions and are shaped by the people who take part. We focus on breaking down barriers, supporting creative ambition, developing new talent and creating space for new voices to be heard.

Previous Productions

Our world premieres include:

- **Pop Up Plays: TRANS IT** by Tabby Lamb, directed by Bryony Shanahan and **LAD** by John Booker, directed by Daniel Bailey (in collaboration with Derby Theatre & Curve, with support by Fuel)
- **LIBERATION SQUARES** by Sonali Bhattacharyya, directed by Milli Bhatia (co-produced with Nottingham Playhouse/in association with Brixton House/National Tour; 2024)
- **WE NEED NEW NAMES** adapted by Mufaro Makubika, directed by Monique Touko (co-produced with New Perspectives/in association with Brixton House/National tour; 2023)
- **LAVA** by James Fritz co-directed by Laura Ford & Angharad Jones (co-produced with Nottingham Playhouse 2018; Soho Theatre/National Tour 2022)
- **ALL THE LITTLE LIGHTS** by Jane Upton, directed by Laura Ford (Nottingham Playhouse/Arcola Theatre/ National Tour 2017 – Writers' Guild and OffWestEnd nominee)
- **WRECK** (2017), **AMATEUR GIRL** (2014), and **BONES** (2011/12)

Liberation Squares by Sonali Bhattacharyya, Photo: Ali Wright

Lad by John booker, Photo: Jonathan Pryke

COMMUNITY & PARTICIPATION

SEE ME, Photo by For fourth

Over the last six years, we've run 12 major participation projects alongside partners including Nottingham City Libraries, Mansfield Museum and Nottingham Playhouse.

Key recent projects include:

- OUR STORY: Our flagship community engagement programme capturing and preserving the untold experiences of Nottinghamshire's trans and gender diverse community through oral histories, photography, and film, alongside a series of original audio plays (Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund)
- SEE ME: A touring exhibition and podcast series created by young Muslim women in Nottingham, documenting inspiring local figures (Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund)
- YOUR VOICE: A film project with disadvantaged young people in Mansfield, equipping them with creative skills and producing two short films (Funded by Arts Council England, Awards for All, Make Notts Safe Community Chest Fund, and Evan Cornish Foundation)
- WE NEED NEW STORIES: A project with young people of African and migrant heritage in Nottingham, gathering oral histories of Zimbabwean migrants, leading to a pop-up exhibition and podcast series (Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund)

Writer Development

We're industry leaders in writer development, launching initiatives like Fifth Word Playwrights group and our previous Most Promising Playwright Award with Nottingham Playhouse. We've supported writers like George Devine Award winner Jane Upton and UK Poetry Slam Champion Toby Campion with their first productions.

Fifth Word Playwrights, Photo: Kate Spencer

OUR KEY AIMS

IDENTIFY AND NURTURE TOMORROW'S MOST EXCITING PLAYWRIGHTS

ENABLE GREATER PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS ACROSS THE EAST MIDLANDS

INVEST IN DIVERSITY

AMPLIFY UNDERREPRESENTED VOICES

PRODUCE WORLD CLASS NEW WRITING ACROSS THE UK

CREATE RELEVANT URGENT PERFORMANCES FOR NEW & YOUNGER AUDIENCES

Liberation Squares by Sonali Bhattacharyya, Photo: Ali Wright

OUR CORE VALUES

Creating high quality work that has the power to change perceptions and drive positive social change.

EXCELLENCE

Widening access to people who are under-represented in the arts

OPENNESS

Empowering creativity in everyone and platforming under-represented voices in society.

CREATIVITY

Creating inclusive and positive experiences for all participants. Celebrating diversity and equality. Challenging discrimination.

INCLUSIVITY

Embracing digital technologies and creating work outside of the traditional theatre space to reach more people.

INNOVATION

Working in partnership to create the best possible experiences for communities and audiences.

COLLABORATION

All the Little Lights by Jane Upton, Photo Robert Day

OUR CURRENT PROGRAMME

Over 2026/27 we will be:

- Touring the **Our Story** interactive exhibition across libraries and museums, featuring five new audio plays by **Chris Bush, Jo Clifford, Mika Onyx Johnson, Lettie Precious and Luke Skilbeck**
- Touring **LAD** by John Booker (directed by Daniel Bailey), one of our inaugural Pop Up Plays Commissions, country wide to reach the most underserved audiences and create a bridge for new audiences into studio and midscale work
- Continuing development on our current commissions:
  - a new play by **Sophie Ellerby**
  - a new play by **Nathan Ellis**, co-commissioned with Derby Theatre
  - a new 'Pop Up Play' by **Finley Rose Townsend**
- Launching the second iteration of our flagship **Fifth Word Playwrights** programme for East Midlands playwrights, including a year-long programme of workshops and a dedicated writers in residence strand, in partnership with Derby Theatre
- Instigating new commissions and holding research & development processes for other plays in development
- Launching a newly reimagined engagement strategy focusing on place-based work

We Need New Names by Mufaro Makubika Photo: Robert Day

GOVERNANCE AT FIFTH WORD

Fifth Word is a newly registered charity with a Board of Trustees who provide strategic oversight, make sure we meet our legal responsibilities, monitor our progress and oversee our finances. Day-to-day leadership and artistic work are led by Laura Ford, our Artistic Director & CEO, working alongside a wider staff and freelance team. The Board works closely with the Artistic Director and Executive Producer, bringing their experience and expertise as well as providing constructive challenge and support when needed.

Our Trustees are strong supporters of Fifth Word's work and our role in the theatre sector. They regularly attend performances and events to support the company and help build relationships with partners and supporters.

Our current trustees are Ellen O'Hara (current Chair), Jo McLeish, and Amanda Wallace.

All Trustees share responsibility for decisions made by the Board. Each term lasts three years, with the option to renew for up to nine years total (or longer if the Board agrees).

Please note, this is a volunteer, unpaid role, but we cover reasonable out-of-pocket expenses. Trustees need to be based in the UK and eligible to act as a charity trustee under UK law.

New Trustees will receive an induction and support to help them understand Fifth Word and their responsibilities.

For more information about being a charity trustee, visit here.

Meetings

Trustees attend four Board meetings a year. Meetings last two hours and are usually held online, though we expect Trustees to attend at least one in person each year. We send out the agenda and reading materials one week before each meeting.

Trustees are also expected to generally advocate for and champion Fifth Word's work; and to provide specialist advice and expertise as required and as appropriate on an ad-hoc basis outside of Board meetings. In total, Trustees usually commit the equivalent of 6-7 days per annum to their role.

DESIRED SKILLS & EXPERIENCE

We are looking for trustees who:

- are committed to advancing Fifth Word's vision and mission, and upholding Fifth Word's values;
- can think creatively and strategically and work collaboratively as part of a team
- are committed to equity, diversity and inclusion
- are willing to understand and uphold the responsibilities of being a charity trustee
- can commit the necessary time and energy to the role
- have an interest in and enthusiasm for theatre and the arts

We welcome applications from a broad range of candidates. At this point, we are particularly looking for candidates with experience in one or more of the following:

- Finance and Accounting
- Fundraising, particularly individual philanthropy
- Legal
- HR
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Programming and Producing
- Partnership building / working with high-level partners (public or private sector; venues, arts organisations, academic institutions, local authorities, community organisations, other charities)

We welcome expressions of interest from people of all backgrounds and are committed to building a diverse and inclusive Board. We actively welcome interest from people who are currently under-represented in the arts and cultural sector.

Fifth Word Playwrights, Photo: Tom Platinum Morley

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, please email info@fifthword.co.uk with the subject line "Trustee Application – [Your Name]", including:

- A description of why you are interested in becoming a Trustee of Fifth Word and the specific skills/experience that you could bring; either in the form of a letter (no more than 2 pages), or a video or audio file (no more than 5 minutes)
- An up-to-date CV
- Contact details for one referee who knows you professionally

Please also complete our anonymous Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form.

Deadline: Please apply by 13th November 2026, midday.
If you would like to have an informal conversation about this opportunity, please contact

Laura Ford, Artistic Director & CEO, on laura@fifthword.co.uk.

Next Steps

- We will contact everyone who applies to confirm we have received your application
- We will arrange an informal conversation with the Chair of the Board and the Artistic Director & CEO for anyone we think is a good fit. These will be held in the week commencing 30th November, either in-person or via Zoom.
- We may then contact candidates' referees.
- Any new Board Members must be proposed to the Board and would be formally appointed at a Board meeting in January 2027.

If you are interested in being a member of our Board, we would love to hear from you!

Our Story, Photo: Roxanna Barry