



• Candidate Pack

Appointment of Trustee

Thrive at Five

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August 2026 Reference CARAWE



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“The strength in parent, baby and toddler groups means that parents’ relationships and parent perceptions of school is different. I would say some of our strongest parent engagement is with children that aren’t ready for school because parents are coming in and bringing their children at the earliest opportunity... For some parents, schools are now more of a community point. They know staff within schools, they know people within the hubs, they’ve got somewhere to go to... they know where to go.”

System Leader



Aida Cable
Chief Executive

Welcome message

Everything we do is to ensure all children in their early years have the strong foundations they need for life and learning. We bring together and work alongside local communities, families and partners to join up and strengthen the early years system, supporting children to thrive from pregnancy to five..

There has never been a more important time to focus on improving early childhood outcomes, particularly in areas of high deprivation and disadvantage. More than one million of the four million plus children living in poverty in the UK are babies and children under the age of five, and poverty has risen faster in the last decade for children in these families than for those with older children¹. The pressure this is putting on families with young children is enormous, and when parents cannot access services and support, they find themselves isolated, alone, and less able to provide their children with the nurturing care and experiences they need to thrive.

But there are things we can do to change this.

Our place-based teams work in partnership with these communities – those experiencing the highest levels of disadvantage. We seek to act at the earliest stage possible to lay strong foundations and prevent problems arising later in life. To do this, we focus on specific outcomes which are critical to children's development. We are guided by the communities we work in; families, services, voluntary organisations and many others who play a supporting role. Our activities are guided by data and evidence of what works as we test, learn and refine our approach in different areas. The Thrive at Five Playbook captures our learnings of what works best, to enable us, over the coming years, to have the greatest impact in the areas that need it most.

Aida Cable

About us

Everything Thrive at Five does is focused on ensuring all children in their early years have the strong foundations they need for life and learning.

We are a national charity working in communities facing hardship, where too many children do not yet have the support they need to thrive. We bring together families, local partners and services, including local authorities, health, education and the voluntary and community sector, to join up and strengthen early years systems so children can thrive from pregnancy to five.

Thrive at Five is a relatively young organisation but with an already strong national and political profile, having been called out in Parliament for our ways of working in Stoke-on-Trent and showcasing our work at the 2025 Civil Society Summit with the Secretary of State for Education. We have grown rapidly in our first five years. We currently work in Stoke-on-Trent, Redcar & Cleveland, Middlesbrough and West Dunbartonshire. Our staff team will number about 60 people by the end of 2026.

Our goal, everywhere we work, is to achieve long-term, sustained improvements in children's developmental outcomes. One of the ways we measure this in England is through the proportion of children reaching a Good Level of Development at age five, alongside other robust indicators.

Our work is rooted in place and shaped by relationships. We focus on specific locations where too many children are not yet reaching their full potential and systems are under significant pressure, committing to work alongside partners for a minimum of five years. This long-term approach allows time to build trust, embed change and support sustainable improvements in how support for families is designed, delivered and experienced.

What distinguishes Thrive at Five is not just what we do, but how we work. We bring additional capacity, coordination and expertise into local early years systems, helping to build trust, strengthen community connections and ensure families have the knowledge, confidence and support they need.

This is underpinned by a combination of deep local knowledge and relationships, alongside wider expertise from across Thrive at Five, including national insight, research and best practice, to support high-quality implementation.

Alongside delivery, we are committed to learning and continuous improvement. We capture insight from every place we work to develop a practical, experience-informed playbook, helping to strengthen our own work over time and support others to improve early childhood outcomes in communities facing similar challenges.





51%

reduction in the number
of nursery school age
children with significant
language delays from
39% to 19%

5x

more parent, baby
and toddler groups



Shaping early childhood
development together
in Stoke-on-Trent >

54

more practitioners and
volunteer students
trained to support
parents, carers and
children

1800

parents talking together
and being provided
support on Thrive at
Five's Facebook
support groups

Thrive at Five supports approximately 2500 children aged five and under in each of our two fully established programme areas of Stoke-On-Trent and Redcar & Cleveland along with their parents and carers and the whole community around them.

In Stoke-on-Trent – for example – we focus on the electoral wards of Bentilee and Abbey Hulton. Stoke-On-Trent is the 12th most deprived authority area in England: 39% of children in the ward of Abbey Hulton are living in poverty, as are 36% of children in Bentilee, with household incomes 60% below the national average. We first started working in the area in 2021, and since then we have seen significant progress towards a number of our intermediate outcomes.

70%

of our schools saw
more children on free
school meals achieving
the expected level
of development in
early language and
communication by the
end of 2024
(as measured by the
Early Years Foundation
Stage Profile)





Why we're here

Improving outcomes in the earliest years is one of the most powerful ways to create lasting change, not just for individual children, but for whole communities and future generations.

Too many children reach the age of five without the foundations they need to thrive. National data shows that a third of children are not considered school ready by the time they reach Reception, with children in areas of poverty and deprivation most affected. In some of the communities we support, as many as 80% of children are below expected levels of development at age five. These early inequalities are stark, deeply unfair and persist throughout life.

The experiences and relationships children have from pregnancy to five shape every aspect of their development, laying the foundations for future learning, wellbeing and life chances. Children who are below expected levels at age five are significantly less likely to achieve good GCSE outcomes, more likely to experience speech, language and communication needs, and at greater risk of poor mental health and unemployment later in life.

Thrive at Five Appointment of Trustee

Parents and carers play a critical role in shaping children's development. The quality of the home learning environment has more impact on intellectual and social development than parental occupation or income. Yet too often, families do not receive the right support at the right time. Services can feel fragmented, difficult to navigate or stigmatising, and opportunities for early help are missed.

We know that working in a more joined-up and integrated way can change this. Evidence shows that when services collaborate effectively, children's developmental, health and educational outcomes improve, with benefits that last well beyond the early years. Achieving this requires families, communities and services working together to think differently and act collectively.



What we do

We work in communities facing hardship to strengthen early years systems and improve children's developmental outcomes from pregnancy to five.

Our work spans the whole of a child's early journey, from strengthening support for families in the earliest months through to improving the quality and consistency of early years provision and the wider systems that shape children's developmental outcomes. We operate across the breadth of the health, education, public, private and voluntary sectors to help ensure children receive consistent, high-quality support at the right time.

By supporting families, strengthening early years provision and improving how the wider early childhood system functions, we contribute to sustained improvements in outcomes and to narrowing gaps in disadvantage.



[Click to download our latest impact report](#)



How we do what we do

Our work is guided by a multi-pronged theory of change. We recognise that improving children's developmental outcomes requires multiple, reinforcing conditions to be strengthened together, from parent–infant relationships and parental wellbeing to early communication and high-quality early education and care. Lasting improvement depends not on a single intervention, but on coordinated action across the system.

Delivering this kind of change requires deep partnership and a shared agenda. By building a sense of collective ownership of outcomes and maintaining a strong focus on implementation quality, we help ensure effort is coherent rather than fragmented. To do this, enter into partnerships with Local Authorities establishing a backbone organisation in each area where we operate. This structure works with partners across local services and sectors to align priorities, strengthen collaboration, and improve communication across the system so that partners work more effectively together and parents and carers are better engaged with the support available to them.

Our locally recruited backbone teams are key to this work, bringing additional capacity, coordination and expertise into the early years system. These teams include our parent connectors who play a vital role in building trust and engagement with families, ensuring they are actively connected to the support available to them and improving communication across the system.

Backbone teams are supported by Thrive at Five's central team, trustees and Advisory Council, bringing together specialist expertise, national insight and access to the latest research and best practice. This wider perspective strengthens local delivery, supports confident decision-making and enables learning to be shared systematically across places.

Our focus on data, evidence and evaluation is integral to this. We use robust data and independent evaluation to inform decisions, monitor progress and continuously refine delivery. Learning from each place is captured and shared through a practical, experience-informed playbook, ensuring that insight strengthens practice across all our programmes over time.



The role

PURPOSE OF POST

Thrive at Five is now looking to evolve the board of trustees with a new member bringing strategic people, culture, and HR expertise. This appointment will be key to adding critical expertise to the board as the charity continues to grow, developing and then rolling out its second 5 year strategy. The new trustee will be an inspiring dynamic and ambitious individual who is committed to making a significant and lasting improvement in early years outcomes.

The successful candidate will bring a genuine interest and passion in improving early years education. They will be joining a small, committed, and strong board. They will be a proven leader who possesses significant influencing skills and the gravitas to represent the charity at senior levels. They will demonstrate an ability to think strategically about many factors influencing the charity's mission. They will be an engaged, enthusiastic, and creative individual with a passion to help contribute to the development of the charity to scale up, grow and make a really important difference.

Trustees are responsible for providing the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, developing its aims, objectives and goals in accordance with its charitable purposes.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of all trustees include:

- To attend meetings of the Trustee Board and to contribute to discussion, acting as a “critical friend”, contributing to the development, implementation and monitoring of Thrive at Five’s strategy;
- Working constructively with the co-founders, fellow Trustees and the Chief Executive to achieve Thrive at Five’s strategic objectives;
- Promoting and upholding Thrive at Five’s values;
- To act as an ambassador for Thrive at Five, promoting its activities in the wider community and assisting with fundraising activity for Thrive at Five;
- Each Trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board reach sound decisions, including scrutinising Board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing guidance on new initiatives or specific issues.
- The Board meets four times a year, with meetings generally taking place in London and in person.



Person specification

The successful candidate will be dynamic and communicative individual and will bring:

- A commitment to the vision and purpose of Thrive at Five and an alignment with its values;
- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills;
- Proven leadership skills and strategic vision;
- Ability to understand complex strategic issues and be able to analyse and resolve difficult problems;
- Sound, independent judgement, common sense and diplomacy; • Be able to promote and support Thrive at Five in appropriate settings;
- Clear understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, liabilities and responsibilities of Trustees;
- Sound knowledge of charity governance;
- Sufficient time and commitment to fulfil the role; and,
- A genuine passion for improving outcomes for children and families through investment in the early years.
- **The Trustee will work closely with:**
- The Co-Chairs of the Board of Trustees, providing advice and constructive challenge on people, culture and organisational matters;
- The Chief Executive, acting as a trusted adviser and sounding board on the development of Thrive at Five's people strategy, organisational culture and leadership capability;
- Fellow Trustees, bringing relevant people leadership, cultural, organisational and HR expertise to Board discussions and decisions; and,
- The wider leadership team, where appropriate, supporting the organisation to develop the people, culture and organisational capability required to deliver its ambitions.

We seek a Trustee who can:

- Bring senior people, culture, organisational behaviour and HR experience to the Board, providing insight, challenge and advice on the people and organisational agenda as Thrive at Five continues to grow;
- Provide strategic insight into the development of Thrive at Five's people strategy, ensuring that its approach to people, culture and organisational capability supports its purpose, values and long-term strategic objectives;
- Advise the Board and Chief Executive on the people implications of organisational growth and change, ensuring that Thrive at Five continues to develop an effective, inclusive and high-performing culture;
- Bring a broad generalist perspective across the HR agenda, with a strong understanding of reward and remuneration, employment law, employee relations, employee communications and organisational development;
- Provide constructive challenge and guidance on matters relating to organisational culture, leadership, succession, learning and development and employee engagement;
- Provide insight into the development of appropriate reward and remuneration structures, ensuring that they are fair, effective and aligned with Thrive at Five's values, purpose and financial circumstances;
- Support the Board and Chief Executive in ensuring that Thrive at Five's values are reflected consistently in its culture, leadership and employment practices;
- Where appropriate, provide guidance and challenge on learning and development, ensuring that the organisation is building the skills, capability and leadership it needs for the future;
- Bring an understanding of the wider policy and political environment affecting the early years. Experience of engaging with government, policymakers or other public-sector stakeholders would be particularly valuable;
- Use their experience and network to help Thrive at Five understand and, where appropriate, influence policy and practice relating to the early years and the wider people agenda; and,
- Subject to the skills and experience of the successful candidate, there may be an opportunity to establish and chair a People, Culture and Remuneration Committee, providing effective leadership and oversight of the Committee's work and ensuring that its recommendations support Thrive at Five's strategic objectives, values and long-term sustainability.





How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to Thrive at Five on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at **roles.saxbam.com** using code **CARAWÉ**

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is noon on Monday 7th September 2026.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

- Read our [guide to writing cover letters](#)



thrive at five