

Actors' Benevolent Fund

Member Trustee Candidate Information

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September 2023



Welcome

These are incredibly challenging times with a rising cost of living combined with an ongoing scarcity of funding for the Arts, resulting in fewer opportunities for actors, actresses and stage managers, and a rise in incidences of mental health problems. There is a growing need to respond to the changes within our society and profession, and we are seeking individuals with the passion to join an inspirational team to make meaningful and sustainable change to our community.

As a working actor and even before I became a part of the profession, I have gained so much from the entertainment community: the spirit of ensemble, the respect for telling stories of people from all walks of life, and the power this has to change lives. It changed mine. I became a trustee to give back to this extraordinary group of artists and practitioners. I firmly believe we are stronger when we look after each other and work together.

As a trustee you will be able to help shape the charity's vision and its programmes so that we can reach more beneficiaries. There is an immense sense of reward and purpose in providing much needed help to those who are suffering, and I am sure you will enjoy the role. Being a trustee is a privilege and I have learned so much along the way. I was never a trustee before joining the ABF's Board, so don't let a lack of board experience put you off. Your journey as a trustee will be guided by support, allowing you to thrive and make a lasting impact. Together, we can inspire transformative shifts and foster a resilient, interconnected community.

Dr Esh Alladi

Chair



Our history and purpose

Sir Henry Irving founded the Fund in 1882 with a number of other actors and stage managers. Over 140 years Presidents have included Sir John Gielgud, Sir Lawrence Olivier and Dame Penelope Keith. Before he became King, our Royal Patron was Prince Charles who took over the role from HM the late Queen Elizabeth II in 2000.

The charity world has changed significantly in recent years. Society rightly expects charities to deliver their purposes effectively for public benefit. Presently, the ABF is going through a process of reform to maximise the help it delivers and to ensure it is the most effective and impactful steward of its resources.

Draft:

Vision: An empowered and thriving performing arts profession.

Mission: To always be there for actors and stage managers when they need our support.

Values: Kindness, Integrity, Inclusivity

Members

The ABF is a membership organisation with a yearly charge of £20. The only criteria is to be from the acting or stage management fraternity. Members vote at an AGM and put us in touch with people who might need our help. We currently have 700 members.

Supporters from outside the acting and stage management world can join us as friends.

What are the ABF's future plans?

It is an exciting time at the ABF. We have just welcomed our new Chief Executive Officer, Alison Wyman, who will be developing and building the charity's strategic vision and plans to realise this. It is our ambition to increase the reach and impact of the ABF within the full diversity of the acting and stage management community, helping many more people and making an even greater difference. This includes expanding and engaging in the following areas in particular:

Financial Support: We are already offering a new Cost of Living Grant to provide emergency support for those who have suffered due to the recent economic downturn. We are looking to further expand and diversify our grants.

Mental Health and Wellbeing: We are already engaging with other charities and organisations to provide more talking based therapies across the country. We want to expand this provision to help more people.

Workshops: We are aiming to provide skills-based workshops to help people survive the industry and everything it can throw at them.

Marketing: We are looking at ways to expand our reach through social media and podcasts in order to make more people aware of the charity, and to educate, inspire and entertain our colleagues, members and friends.

Fundraising: We want to develop our income and fundraising strategies such that we can continue to provide meaningful and sustainable change now and into the future.



About the Actors' Benevolent Fund

For over 140 years, the Actors' Benevolent Fund has supported actors and stage managers experiencing hardship due to injury, illness, or old age. In today's challenging climate, the ABF also provides emergency grants in the face of the cost of living crisis. The ABF plans to expand and broaden the amount and forms of help it provides to meet the needs of today's actors and stage managers and support them to sustain viable careers, as well as continuing to help those no longer able to work.

The ABF is managed by a small staff team at Adam Street just off The Strand in London and led by a Council of trustees who are all also members of the ABF.

Who do we support?

The actors and stage managers we support today fall into two main groups:

- some are unable to work because of their health, an injury or old age
- others have immediate needs because of the cost of living crisis.

In addition, inspired by the great actor-manager, Sir Henry Irving and his fellow founders of the ABF, the Fund is developing plans to provide support in areas such as mental health, therapeutic interventions, and more extensive person to person support. This gives a second focus to the ABF's work: keeping actors and stage managers in sustainable careers. After careful financial management and careful stewardship by previous trustees, the ABF is well resourced with millions to distribute so is well able to execute its plan to help many more actors and stage managers than previously.

What do we help them with?

Today, many receive help managing their household expenses, including a regular weekly payment and contributions towards bills. From time to time, we're able to help with larger, one-off payments, such as disability aids or kitchen appliances. We also offer benefits advice to ensure they are getting all the support they're entitled to. But, perhaps most importantly, we offer a friendly support service to make sure people know they're still a part of the acting and stage management community.

What does 'friendly support service' mean?

Many beneficiaries and those applying for help also want to discuss their situation and be heard by a friendly voice. Others will only be open about their needs and feel able to ask when they have talked with a welfare adviser. Either way, the ABF team help guide towards the best help the Fund can give, the benefits they are entitled to and towards other help from, for instance, other performance charities with a different but relevant focus for their situation.



Testimonials

"The ABF has been a lifesaver at very difficult times; when I was in need, they went above and beyond and helped so much. Being in this industry, we know that sometimes it can be tough but manageable, but since Covid and now the fuel bills and cost of living crisis, it's even harder to balance the books and pay the bills. Thank you again for all your help."

- Anonymous

The emotional and financial support I received from the ABF, was a godsend! I was unable to work and earn money and I was anxious and panicked about how I was going to support myself. Another actor friend told me about the support she had received from the ABF during her time of need. I applied for a grant and received more than financial support. I received empathy and kindness, which goes a long way to making someone feel better. It certainly helped me and I'm grateful that this service exists. Thank you!"

- Anonymous



We are looking for some new Trustees

In 2023, we are looking to recruit member trustees.

Most of all, we are looking for trustees who are allied with our aim of helping actors and stage managers of all ages and backgrounds, and who empathise with the culture of today's most effective and forward-looking charities.

We would particularly welcome applications from:

- Stage Managers
- Those with connections to/from theatres outside of London and throughout the UK

We welcome applicants from all backgrounds.

Time commitment

Council meetings are every two months at the Adam Street premises, with an option to join virtually. Council meetings normally take place on the last Thursday of the month. You are expected to attend all meetings. If you are not available, you can pass on your apologies, but must read any documents supplied and pass on any comments you may have.

If you are not able to attend regularly, you may be asked to resign your trustee position.

You may also be elected to a Council Committee, meetings of which will be additional to Full Council meetings. Currently these are the Nominations, Finance, Governance, HR and Marketing & Outreach Committees.

The Beneficiaries and Grants Committee is a key committee allocating funding to individual beneficiaries and agreeing grants policy to recommend to Council. This meets monthly. All trustees are members but we normally ask a quorum of at least 3 to attend, though all are welcome.

There is normally an away day each year.

Papers are sent out in advance of meetings so that you have an opportunity to study them. They normally consist of key strategic proposals, and reports on matters such as finance and investments, safeguarding, HR and governance.



The role of a Trustee

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the ABF, developing its aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the Articles of Association, legal requirements and regulatory guidelines.

It is collectively responsible for promoting the success of the charity by directing and supervising the charity's affairs. Its role is to provide leadership within a framework of prudent and effective controls which enable risk to be assessed and managed.

For more information on trustees' main legal responsibilities please refer to Charity Commission's guidance 'The essential trustee (CC3)' and Appendix One.

As a trustee you must:

- Ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit
- Act in the charity's best interests
- Manage the charity's resources responsibly
- Act with reasonable care and skill
- Ensure the charity is accountable

As a trustee, you must:

- Always act in the best interests of the charity – you must not let your personal interests, views or prejudices affect your conduct as a trustee
- Act reasonably and responsibly in all matters relating to your charity – act with as much care as if you were dealing with your own affairs, taking advice if you need it
- Only use your charity's income and property for the purposes set out in its governing document
- Make decisions in line with good practice and the rules set by your charity's governing document, including excluding any trustee who has a conflict of interest from discussions or decision-making on the matter

For more information about the role of a Trustee, click [here](#).



The role of a Trustee

Individual Role and Responsibilities

For more information on trustees' main legal responsibilities please refer to Charity Commission's guidance 'The essential trustee (CC3)'.

1. To actively seek to further the strategic objectives of the organisation and to act in its best interest at all times;
2. To actively contribute to setting policy and strategic direction;
3. To sit on committees and working groups as required;
4. To provide advice and guidance in subject areas where the Trustee has particular expertise to the Board and Chief Executive where appropriate;
5. To regularly attend, prepare for and take a full part in meetings;
6. To maintain the fiduciary duty invested in the position, undertaking such duties in a way that adds to public confidence and trust in the charity;
7. To disclose any potential conflict of interest;
8. To maintain confidentiality about any sensitive/confidential information received in the course of duties as a Trustee.
9. To undergo an induction upon appointment and ongoing training to remain alert to, and aware of, their duties and responsibilities, and of the environment in which they operate.
10. To maintain good communications and working relationships with the other Trustees and to by and support the collective decisions made by the Board;
11. To act as an ambassador for ABF;

Collective Responsibilities

1. To approve and own the strategic direction for the organisation including its vision, aims and strategies and to guide ABF to achieve its aims in the most efficient and effective manner consistent with organisational values and approach;
2. To approve strategic plans, budgets, reserves policy and position and authorisation limits;
3. To ensure that the policies, plans and budgets of the organisation are in keeping with its aims;
4. To monitor and evaluate the progress of the organisation against its strategic aims, objectives and financial targets;
5. To monitor regularly the context and operating environment in which ABF works and to address emerging issues that may impact on strategy, implementation of plans or reputation with key stakeholders;
6. To ensure an ongoing risk assessment and management process is in place across the organisation that is informing policies, procedures and plans and that Trustees are updated on this and advised of any significant changes as they occur;
7. To take ultimate responsibility for the management and administration of the charity, employ and supervise a Chief Executive and delegate to him/her the day to day management of the organisation and implementation of the strategy;
8. To ensure that the organisation functions within the legal and financial requirements of a registered charity – financial, charitable, health and safety, data protection etc;
9. To approve annual reports and accounts for ABF and any subsidiary companies;
10. To ensure that a process for declaring interests is in place.



How to Apply

ABF Members:

- An up-to-date CV; and
- Either a supporting statement of no more than 2 sides of A4 or, if you prefer, a video of no more than 4 minutes long, detailing why you would like to be considered, your relevant experience and expertise, what you think you can bring to the role and what you hope to gain from the role.

All applications are being handled by our recruitment partner, Trustees Unlimited (part of the Russam group). Please email your application to applications@trustees-unlimited.co.uk with **Actors' Benevolent Fund** in the heading.

If you have any difficulty uploading your application or if you would like to have an informal and confidential discussion about the role, alternatively please contact Melissa Baxter or Ian Joseph on:

melissa.baxter@russam.co.uk | 07789 985 229

ian.joseph@russam.co.uk | 07825 267 500

Closing date for applications: Monday 30th October 2023 (extended deadline)

Preliminary Interviews with Trustees Unlimited for ABF Members: 13th - 15th November 2023

Nominations Committee Interviews: 27th – 29th November 2023

Actors' Benevolent Fund AGM and Elections: w/c 15th January 2023

All eligible shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview with the nominations committee, with independent representation on it.

Regardless of interview, all eligible candidates for a member trustee role will be presented to members for their vote at the AGM.

The nominations committee will be looking for dynamic and skilled individuals who will help the ABF in its goal to reach more of our community, embodying the innovation, kindness and passion of the ABF's founders.



