



Challengers 

Head of
Fundraising

Challengers

Candidate Pack

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“To transform the lives of disabled children, young people and their families through the power of play”

Challengers' Mission



01. Executive Summary

Are you ready to be part of something truly transformative? For 45 years, Challengers has pioneered spaces where disabled children and young people experience the freedom of play, friendship, and inclusion—essentials that every child deserves. But today, its mission is more critical than ever.

Demand for Challengers' play and youth services has never been higher. But public investment in these services is severely squeezed. As such, fundraising activity has grown in importance.

This role will report to the Chief Executive Officer and be part of the charity's Senior Leadership Team (SLT). You will also work collaboratively with your peers, to lead a culture of ambitious achievement and will play an instrumental role in implementing change and developing our organisational direction and accompanying strategy.

The post-holder will work particularly closely with colleagues in Communications and Service. Using an insight-led approach, they will develop key audiences, have a hunger for income generation, and ability to deliver excellent stewardship and long-term value.

Joining Challengers means making a real difference. If you're passionate, dedicated, and ready to transform lives, come help this charity to reshape the future, one play session at a time.

The appointed candidate will be offered a salary of between £41,000 to £55,000 GBP (gross) per annum, based on experience. This role will be based at Challengers' Head Office in Guildford and postholder would be able to be home-based for up to 40% of their time.

To upload your documents via Society's website, [click here](#). The deadline for receipt of applications is **midday on Monday, 6 January 2025**. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview in mid-late January.



02. About Challengers

Challengers is a charity that gives disabled children and young people the opportunity to play, have fun, and make friends in a safe and supportive environment, offering their parents and carers invaluable respite in the process. It supports children aged 2-18 across the South East of England.

In the UK, 60% of disabled children experience severe social isolation, with many losing confidence, even in interactions with family and friends. This isolation extends to parents, three out of five of whom feel socially excluded due to the unique demands of caregiving.

The continuous responsibility of caregiving weighs heavily on families, with over 70% of parents of disabled children experiencing anxiety or depression. The lack of support services contributes to exhaustion, as families often struggle to balance caregiving with their own well-being.

Challengers was established to help address these urgent needs. It currently has capacity to help 750 disabled children and young people each year, but there are many more families who are asking for help.

In launching its new [2024-2029 Strategy](#), the charity is looking to scale its impact in time for its 50th anniversary. This involves an ambitious plan to grow its voluntary income from just under £1.1 million per annum to over £1.6 million within the next two years.

The Chief Executive and Current Direct Reports



Gen Dearman
Chief Executive Officer



Alison Sarkar
Finance Director



Paul Wilson
Head of Service



Ella Arbelaez-Rodriguez
Head of People and Culture



Jennifer Carling
Head of Communications

The first three of these roles, *plus the Head of Fundraising*, form Challenger's Senior Leadership Team.

For more information about Challengers, please visit www.disability-challengers.org

03. The Fundraising Team

Challengers is committed to a fair and ethical approach to all its fundraising practices. It strives to build long-term and sustainable relationships that will maximise income for the charity not just today, but into the future.

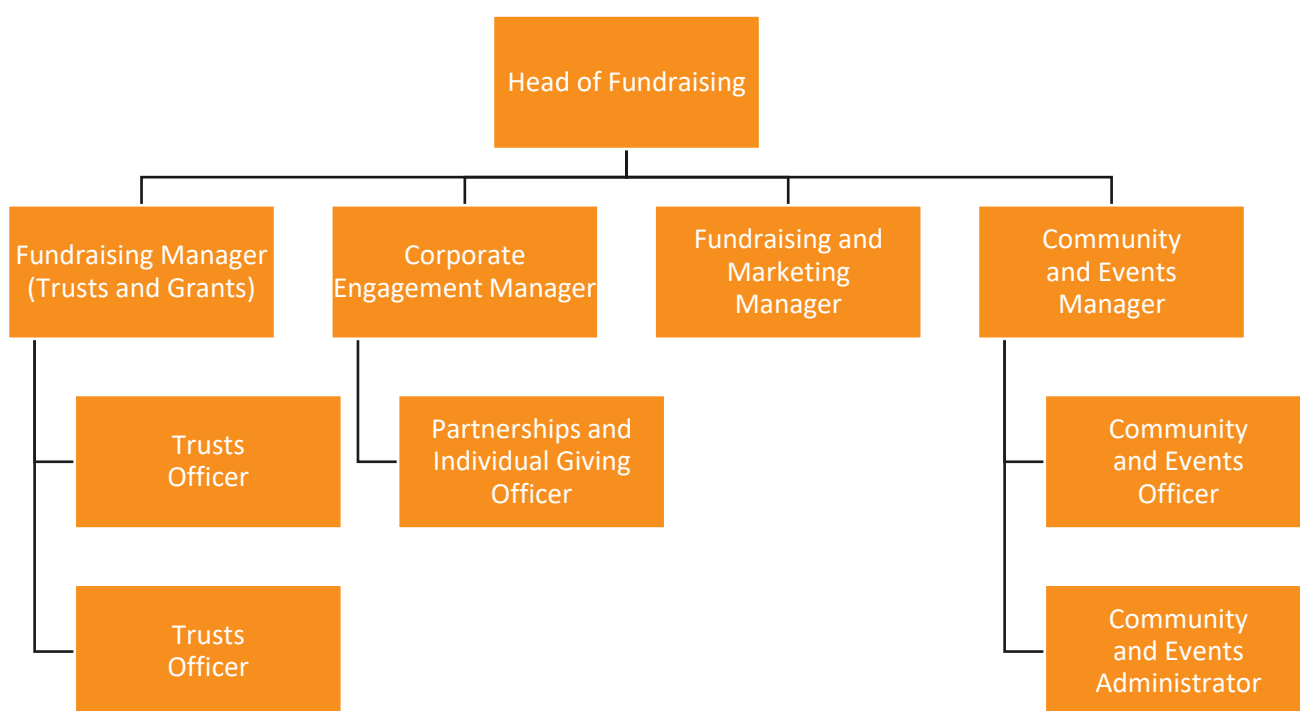
Despite the continued challenges of fundraising since the pandemic, and now with the Cost-of-Living crisis too, Challengers has still been able to increase its philanthropic income significantly over recent years.

For example, its recent Big Play Appeal raised over £300,000 to fund the building of a new, accessible and inclusive adventure playground at the charity’s Guildford play centre.

Trusts and Foundation income has grown most significantly, and the charity also receives generous support from many local companies, individuals and community groups through donations, staff fundraising, and events or street collections.

Challengers is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and signed up to the Fundraising Preference Service. It complies with the revised standards outlined in the Fundraising Regulator’s Code of Fundraising Practice for the UK and has its own Ethical Fundraising Policy and Vulnerable People Policy. The charity does not work with Professional Fundraising Organisations or Commercial Participators to solicit donations and has a strict policy of neither passing on supporter data or purchasing fundraising data from a third parties.

Challengers has recently invested in its fundraising capacity, giving it confidence that it can continue to make progress and reach its £1.6 million target by 2026/27. The team is currently comprised of:





Play is important for cognitive, physical, social, and mental wellbeing. It helps children to build confidence, self-esteem, and creativity, and to learn how to interact with others. (Not to mention, it's fun!) Sadly, too many disabled children miss out on play due to physical impairments, lack of accessible facilities, or shortages of time, money and support.

That's where Challengers comes in. The charity removes these barriers by providing truly inclusive play and leisure that everyone can enjoy and join in with, no matter how complex their needs are.

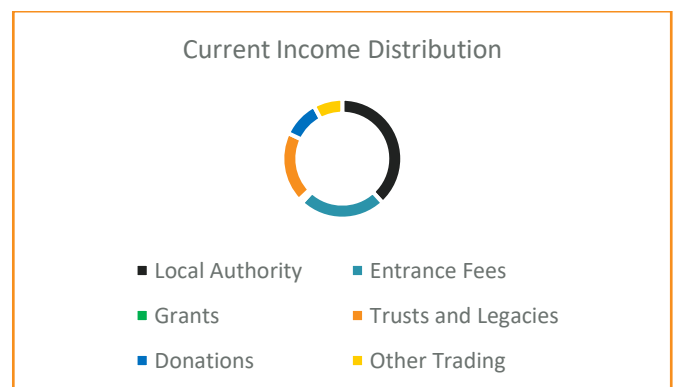
Its services are run from buildings in Guildford and Farnham, and through partnerships with schools and venues in Richmond, Kingston, Basingstoke, Winchester, Eastleigh and Chichester. They include:

- **Pre-school** – for children aged 2-5;
- **Play schemes** – for children aged 4-12;
- **Youth schemes** – for young people aged 13-18;
- **555 Service** – urgent support to young people aged 8-18 who are out of education.

For many families with disabled children, Challengers is a lifeline that they simply wouldn't be able to cope without. Parents use the charity's schemes to gain respite from the demands of their caring responsibilities. They can relax and enjoy time away from their child, knowing that they are safely cared for by trained staff and having a great time with their friends.

Having regular access to short breaks services, like Challengers, helps to keep families strong and together. It's vitally important for the whole family, not just the young person who attends.

But these services cost money, and Local Authority budgets – traditionally Challengers' largest form of support – have been chronically squeezed over recent years. As such, a strong emphasis has been on growing income from philanthropic sources:



04. Role Description

Reporting to the CEO, the Head of Fundraising will lead a skilled and dedicated team, developing and implementing a dynamic new fundraising strategy that aligns with Challengers' wider organisational direction. By crafting a compelling Case for Support, you will help to generate strong, consistent and sustainable levels of funding from a variety of income sources.

As an active member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), you will also work collaboratively with your peers, to lead a culture of ambitious achievement and will play an instrumental role in implementing change and developing our organisational direction and accompanying strategy.

The post-holder will work particularly closely with colleagues in Communications and Service. Using an insight-led approach, they will develop key audiences, a hunger for income generation, and ability to deliver excellent stewardship and long-term value.

Key responsibilities will include:

Strategy and Leadership

- developing and executing a comprehensive fundraising strategy to increase revenue from a diverse range of sources, including individual giving, corporate partnerships, trusts, grants, and community events;
- playing an active role as part of the SLT in the wider long-term direction of Challengers.

Team Leadership

- lead and inspiring the fundraising team, setting clear goals, providing mentorship, and fostering a culture of collaboration, innovation, and excellence;
- managing risks and ensuring compliance with all donor requirements, legal standards, regulatory guidelines and policies.

Relationship Management

- cultivating strong, meaningful relationships with existing and potential donors, corporate partners, and grant-making organisations, ensuring exceptional stewardship and engagement;
- being an engaging and visible external ambassador for the charity.

Income Diversification

- identifying and implementing new fundraising initiatives and revenue streams that align with Challengers' mission and growth plans.

Campaigns & Events

- overseeing impactful fundraising campaigns and events that increase visibility, engagement, and financial support for Challengers' programs.

Financial & Impact Reporting

- working closely with the Finance team to develop accurate income forecasts, monitor fundraising budgets, and report on outcomes to the CEO and the Board of Trustees.

The postholder will need to be able to travel for business, including being able to transport charity materials for events if required. Some evening and weekend work will be expected.

As with all roles, the postholder may be asked to carry out other duties as responsibly required by the CEO.

05. Person Specification

Joining Challengers means making a real difference. If you're passionate, dedicated, and ready to transform lives, come help this charity to reshape the future, one play session at a time.

The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate evidence of the following skills, capabilities and experience:

Essential

- experience in senior fundraising roles with a proven track report in securing five figure funds from multiple revenue streams;
- a strong and compassionate approach to leadership;
- a track record of successfully motivating, developing and leading teams;
- exceptional interpersonal skills;
- the ability to build relationships and influence stakeholders at all levels;
- evidence of establishing and cultivating strong donor relationships that have delivered substantially increased income;
- financial literacy, with experience of developing and delivering budgets and interpreting numerical data;
- the ability to present information accurately and accessibly;
- sound working knowledge of the principles and application of the fundraising code of practice, Charity Commission regulations, GDPR, other applicable legislation and best practice.

Desirable

- experience in the development of an individual donor programme, including donor marketing;
- evidence of developing and growing Major Donor relationships;
- experience in using a CRM database such as Salesforce or Raiser's Edge (Challengers uses Salesforce);
- full competency with Office 365;
- a prior understanding and empathy with the Social Model of Disability.



06. Appointment Details and How to Apply

Challengers is being assisted in this appointment process by the executive search firm Society (www.society-search.com). Applications are welcomed from candidates of any background, culture, ability or identity.

Applications should consist of:

1. a concise covering letter (ideally no longer than two pages), addressing the criteria in the Person Specification;
2. an up-to-date curriculum vitae;
3. names and contact details of three referees (although referees will only be approached at the final stage of the process, and only with your express permission).

General advice on how to write a [strong CV](#) and [strong covering letter](#) can be found on our website.

To upload your documents via Society's website, [click here](#).

The deadline for receipt of applications is **midday on Monday, 6 January 2025**.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview in mid-late January.

An appointment will be made subject to receipt of satisfactory references. The appointed candidate will be offered a salary of between £41,000 to £55,000 GBP (gross) per annum, based on experience.

The role will be located at Challengers' Head Office in Guildford (GU1 1TU). However, there are flexible working options and the postholder would be able to be home-based for up to 40% of their time.

We are committed to ensuring that anyone can access our application processes. This includes people with hearing, sight, mobility, and cognitive impairments. Should you require access to this document in an alternative format, wish to apply in a different format, or need any other reasonable adjustments made for you (including at interview), please contact us at inclusion@society-search.com. We also welcome suggestions or comments about any more general access improvements we should consider.





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Society is a global executive search firm and a certified B Corporation. 10% of our profits go to charitable causes through The Society Foundation. With colleagues in the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand, we solve senior hiring challenges for responsible businesses and purpose-driven organisations around the world.

We believe that the right candidate, placed in the right organisation at the right time, can initiate a chain reaction of transformative change that will help to deliver a more inclusive and sustainable future.

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