

Director

Candidate brief 

October 2025



1st Place

Contents

3	Welcome
4	About 1st Place
4	Family support
4	Our nurseries
5	Forest School
6	Our twentieth anniversary story
7	Context for the appointment
8	Organisational chart
9	Job description
13	Person specification
15	Summary of terms
16	How to apply





Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming our next Director.

1st Place is a local success story. Born out of the vision of parents and children in 2005, we are now the recognised voluntary sector provider of early years and Best Start Family Hub services in Southwark.

The challenges facing the families and communities we serve are ever present. We live in economically difficult times, which impacts the greatest on people who are already disadvantaged.

Through the high quality early years education and family support services we provide we can offer the best possible opportunity for children and parents to thrive and to achieve the promise of their potential. The early years are our foundation for our future.

We seek a new Director who can take us forward to achieve even more and to expand our geographical reach within the borough. This will be done only through vision and by partnering with other local providers of complementary services, commissioners and other potential funders of who there are many and as yet untapped.

Together we can help children to thrive, support parents to excel in their most important of endeavours and build successful and caring communities.

It's a bold ambition but one we both cherish and believe that we can achieve.

We hope that you are equally inspired and that you will want to be our next Director who takes us further along the path to making our vision a reality.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Karen Walker
Chair of Trustees



Ben Asmah
Vice Chair of Trustees





About 1st Place

Founded in 2003, 1st Place was born from the vision of local children and parents as part of the Aylesbury Sure Start Programme in 2005.

The aim was to provide a special place where children and their families came first. Parents could find the support that they needed, different professionals could get to know each other, and partners could learn to change the way that they work to make their services better for local families.

To this day, our families still lie at the heart of what we do and we are proud of our long-lasting relationships with parents and their children. Many of our families continue to support us even when they have moved out of the area, and a number of our staff and volunteers began their links with 1st Place as parents.

Family support

1st Place Children and Parents' Centre is now a Best Start Family Hub. Best Start Family Hubs work in partnership with a range of service providers offering health and support services, activities and training to families in the local area. Along with our partners and supported by Southwark Council, 1st Place provides and connects families with support and activities in the Borough, Bankside and Walworth locality.

Our nurseries

1st Place nurseries are located in SE5 and SE17 and offer full and part-time childcare, Monday to Friday, 8.00am – 6.00pm for children aged 6 months to 5 years. Both nurseries are open in the school holidays.

Our nursery fees offer a competitive rate and include meals, snacks, and reusable nappies. We also offer government funded places for 15 and 30 hours.

At 1st Place, we believe that every child is unique and full of potential. Our nurseries deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and provide a learning experience inspired by the Reggio Emilia approach.

We value children as individuals with unique needs, abilities and potential. We foster a culture where children are respected as social beings and can feel safe to express





themselves. We see children as creative thinkers and researchers, and we encourage them to explore hands-on experiences that spark curiosity and wonder. Here, childhood is valued in its own right along with the understanding that what children do is significant now and for the future.

Our approach is based on the Reggio Emilia educational philosophy, which includes:

- Encouraging children to take the lead in their learning.
- Nurturing children's ideas and theories.
- Community support and parental involvement.
- Recognising and celebrating the many ways that children have of expressing themselves (also known as 'The Hundred Languages of Children').

Forest School

Forest School offers children the chance to spend more time outdoors, moving freely, exploring nature, and building confidence. It supports healthy development, encourages independence, and helps children thrive physically, emotionally, and socially all while having fun in the fresh air.

Our Forest School programme is a learner-led process of individual development. Everyone is supported to engage in, and with, the natural environment in a way that is suitable for them. It uses child-centred play, exploration, and supported risk-taking to help participants learn to successfully navigate physical, social or emotional challenges through experiential learning.





Our twentieth anniversary story

This year marks 20 years since 1st Place Children and Parents Centre opened.

We were born out of the Sure Start local programme. Launched in 1998, it was a flagship of the Labour government of the time. Sure Start was driven by local partnerships of voluntary groups, parents and local authorities in the most deprived areas.

Apart from five core areas including outreach services, play and healthcare, local programmes offered services based on locally defined needs. In 1999, as one of the 60 'trailblazer' districts, the Aylesbury Plus Sure Start was founded, the first of seven programmes in Southwark.

Over the last 20 years, 1st Place has grown from a Sure Start programme serving the Aylesbury Estate, with a purpose built Sure Start Children's Centre. Between 2009 and 2016 we grew from one day nursery to three sites and two further Children's Centres. And in 2023, we became the first Children & Family Hub in Southwark, helping children, young people and their families access the support they need. Through this, our partnerships have flourished.

Working with other charities and voluntary organisations, health services and schools means we can provide more specialist services to ensure that children get the best start in life.

We are proud of the partnerships we have forged over the last 20 years, some of which began with the Sure Start programme. By working with and listening to families and other professionals, we give help and support when its needed most – in a child's earliest years.

Through the provision of community early help services, activities and courses to families in the local area, along with our partners and supported by Southwark Council, 1st Place connects families with support and activities at our centres and across the Borough Bankside and Walworth locality in the northwest of Southwark.



For more information

Visit our [website](#)

Read our latest [Impact Report](#)

Read our latest OFSTED inspection reports:

[Chumleigh Street](#) 2024

[Hampton Street](#) 2025



Context for the appointment

We are first and foremost a hub of support for families with young children, from birth to rising five years and beyond which to enable both children and parents to thrive.

This includes health, parenting, as well as early years education through open access services and our highly regarded day nurseries.

Our senior team is excellent and our team of family support and educators of both staff and volunteers are dedicated and inspirational.

Our next Director may bring a knowledge of family support or be familiar with the philosophy that underpins our approach to early years education, but this is not an essential requirement.

To continue to be a successful we must approach our services as a business. It is inevitable that we have to operate in this way to make the best use of the resources we have available and to be able to demonstrate the value of what we bring to the future of the borough.

But our future success not only depends on financial prudence. It rests on continuing to deliver excellence in the services we provide. This forms the foundation of the partnerships what we need to maintain and cultivate with local providers, with commissioners and with other potential funders.

Standing still and resting on our achievements over the past twenty years is not an option nor is it desirable.

1st Place seeks a Director who is 'hands on' in interacting with the children and families we work with and who provides the support to senior managers that enables them to continue to excel in all we do through OFSTED inspection, contract reviews and charity regulation.

We are now a complex operation with many moving parts. The people and communities that we support face complex challenges that manifest themselves in many ways some of which can be challenging and with that comes risk.

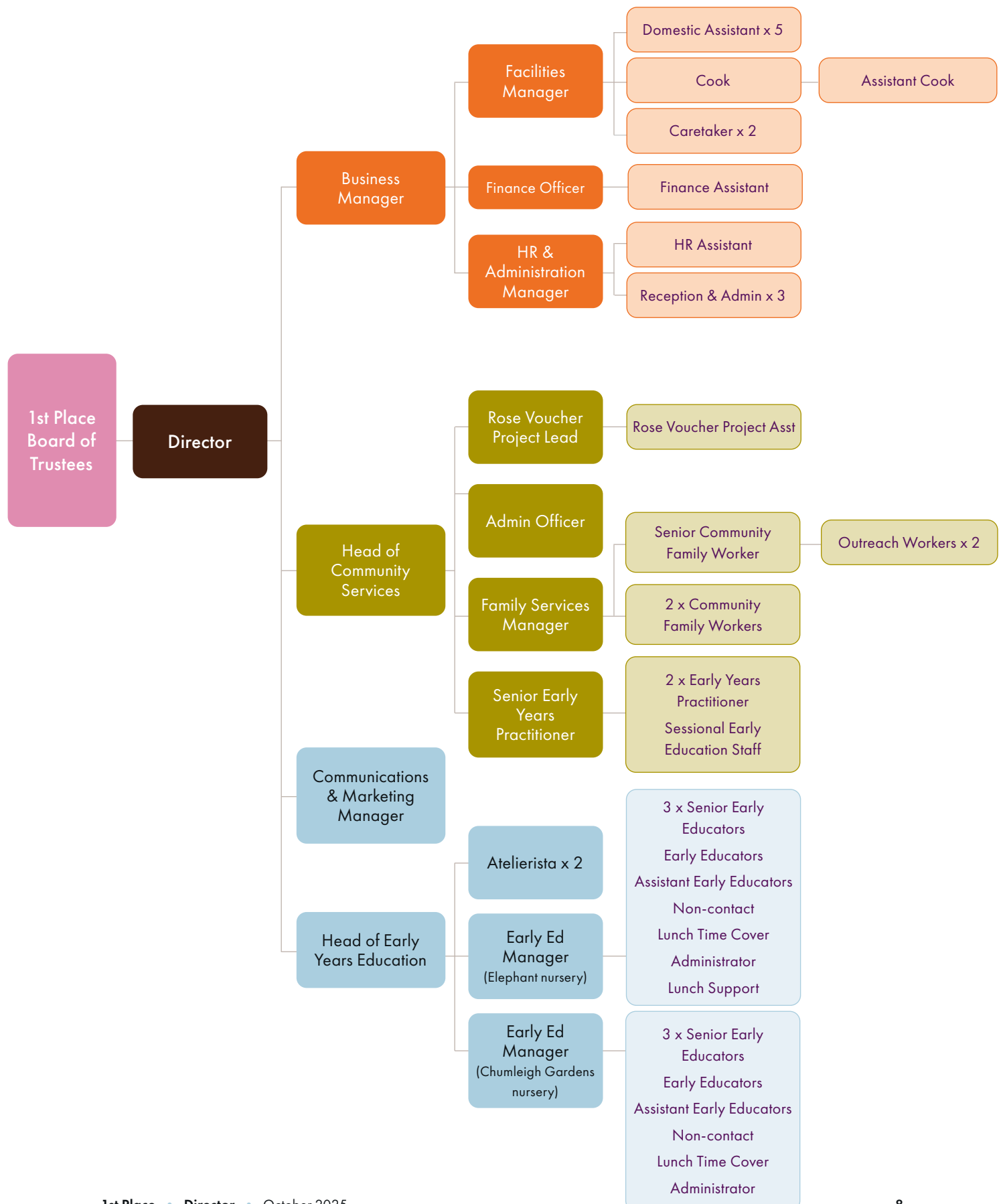
Reputation is everything and it is the foundation that will enable us, and you, to build our profile to take out message out to partners and supporters.

Get our foundations right and everything becomes possible.





Organisational chart





Job description

Job title

Director

Purpose of job

To provide the inspiring leadership, strategic foresight, and operational oversight that ensures that 1st Place continues to be “the place where children and families come first, the place where caring for the environment is second nature” and that it is the go-to choice provider for partners, commissioners and funders.

To ensure the provision and improvement of joined-up services for children and families in our reach area.

To provide strategic leadership and management for 1st Place, to enable the continued development of the charity, its staff, services and profile to the benefit of the local community.

Salary

c. £70,000 pa

Responsible to

1st Place Board of Trustees

Responsible for

- Head of Early Years Education
 - Head of Community Services
 - Communications & Marketing Manager
 - Business Manager
-



Strategic planning

- To work with the Board and other stakeholders to develop the strategic direction of 1st Place.
- To analyse and plan for future needs, developing annual budgets and services that identify need driven priorities and expected outcomes within the local, and national context.
- To formulate and review the overall aims and objectives of 1st Place in consultation with the Board and all staff.
- To produce and implement long-term Business and Strategic Plans.
- To lead the strategic direction for the marketing and promotion of 1st Place activities and services.
- To ensure 1st Place vision and innovative approach, based on a developing model, inspired by the Reggio approach are effectively communicated.

Statutory oversight

- To ensure there is a robust and transparent policy development, review and implementation to ensure best practice and legal compliance in all areas.
- To ensure that all 1st Place provision meets criteria for OFSTED registration and inspection.
- To advise and assist the Board in the exercise of its functions, including attending meetings and compiling reports as required.
- To act on behalf of the Board of Trustees as delegated company lead, ensuring compliance with Charity Commission and Companies House requirements, and that statutory returns and governance obligations are met in a timely and accurate manner.

Budget and resource management

- To analyse and plan for future needs, developing annual budgets.
- To be accountable for the efficient and effective deployment of people and resources to meet specific objectives in line with strategic planning.
- To ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the organisation through the management of 1st Place resources.
- To ensure the long-term financial sustainability through the development of income generating activities and the pro-active sourcing of funding.
- To ensure that the charity accounts effectively for all its activities to funders and other stakeholders.





Quality assurance

- To ensure that all 1st Place services are outstanding and that best practice is both adopted and disseminated by the wider team.
- To ensure that there is a positive learning environment across 1st Place which makes efficient and effective use of available resources.
- To ensure that 1st Place aims, objectives and policies are implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- To ensure that within the organisation there is a clear commitment to the principles and practice of equity, diversity and inclusion for all, and that this is promoted and pursued throughout the activities of the organisation.
- To ensure there are effective and positive systems for communication throughout the centre at all levels.

Stakeholder engagement

- To ensure that parents/carers and the local community are fully involved in shaping the development of 1st Place.
- To ensure that people feel that the process is a partnership and is responsive to local needs.
- To ensure that partnership with parents is actively developed in all the centre's activities from governance to individual family involvement.
- To pro-actively seek out partnerships with statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies which broaden and develop the quality of services.
- To ensure that the interests of children and families are represented by actively participating in local and national planning bodies and fora.

Safeguarding and welfare

- To have lead responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all users of 1st Place and its services.
- To ensure that socially excluded and isolated families are included and involved in the centre and have equal access to all its services.
- To develop and maintain an organisational culture that is supportive, inspiring and family focused.
- To ensure that opportunities for personal development, growth and achievement are encouraged and facilitated for all children, families and staff involved with 1st Place with the aim of Improving life chances for all.
- To ensure that staff are led, managed and supported effectively on a day-to-day basis to enable them all to carry out their professional responsibilities.



People management

- Managing direct reports, setting objectives, monitoring performance and developing personal development plans.
- Conducting appraisals in line with corporate policy and practice.
- Overseeing the development and application of the people policies that make 1st Place a workplace of choice for both staff and volunteers.
- Championing the professional integrity of the charity and modelling its values that embraces diversity and that values and celebrates individual contribution.





Person specification

The person specification describes the essential and desirable characteristics (skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications) that are needed to carry out the duties in the job description and will be used as the basis for short-listing and interview.

Essential knowledge and experience

- Relevant senior leadership experience of managing multi-disciplinary teams delivering direct services at a community-level in partnership with other providers
- Experience of working in a diverse community.
- Understanding of and commitment to community development approaches and the involvement of service users in service planning, delivery and evaluation.
- Experience of operating in compliance with quality assurance frameworks, e.g. inspection, employment legislation and reporting.
- Experience of strategic financial planning and budgetary management.
- Knowledge and understanding of Equal Opportunities Employment Policy, and commitment to equal opportunities in practice.

Desirable knowledge and experience

- Senior management experience of managing services for children and their families in a multi-agency partnership.
- Knowledge and understanding of the educational, developmental, and health needs of children and families.
- An understanding of relevant legislation concerning children and families.
- Knowledge of child protection issues and policies and relevant Southwark Safeguarding Children Board procedures.
- Acts as Company Secretary, with proven experience (or strong understanding) of charity governance, regulatory compliance and reporting to the Charity Commission and Companies House.
- Experienced in successful business development, income generation or fundraising.



Essential qualifications and education

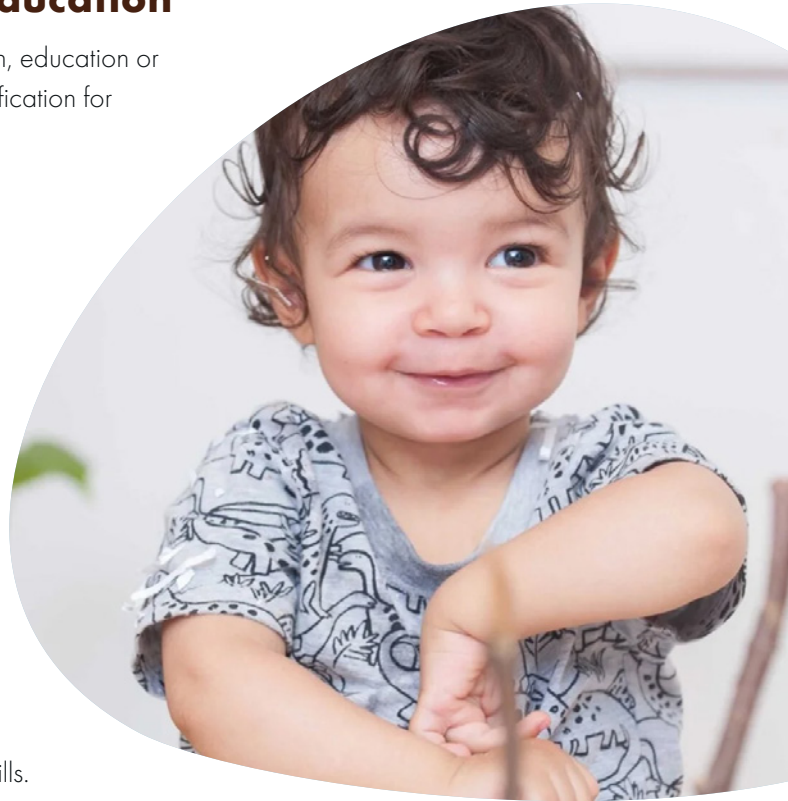
- Education and professional development to the scope of responsibilities or substantial evidence of qualified by experience.

Desirable qualifications and education

- Holder of relevant degree level qualification in health, education or social care or NPQICL (National Professional Qualification for Integrated Centre Leadership).

Skills and abilities

- Ability to deliver strategies for promoting the ethos of the charity.
- Ability to lead and manage a multi-disciplinary staff team to work towards the goal of making the Centre 'the place where children and families come first; the place where caring for the environment is second nature'.
- Ability to prioritise and improve equity, diversity and inclusion of access to employment, progression and services and to assess the effectiveness of measures taken.
- Excellent communication, interpersonal and social skills.
- Ability to negotiate and consult effectively at all levels and with all partners.
- Non-judgemental and flexible approach to work.





Summary of terms

We aim to be an employer of choice and one where individual contribution is valued and celebrated. Currently our staff benefits package includes:

- Annual Leave – 25 days plus Bank Holidays rising to 30 days after five years. Plus discretionary days between 24th December to 1st January.
- NEST Pension with 6% employers' contribution. An existing pension can be accommodated.
- Death in Service Benefit.
- Cycle to Work Scheme.
- Interest Free Season Ticket Loan.
- 40% discount on nursery fees at 1st Place.
- Smart Health App.





How to apply

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact our recruitment partner, NFP Consulting:

Simon Lloyd Director | NFP Consulting
07961 988 523 simon.lloyd@nfpconsulting.co.uk



Please apply online with Word Documents at: www.nfpconsulting.co.uk/1stplace

Application is by way of CV with a Supporting Statement that should set out your motivations for applying and how your work experience to date meets the scope of the responsibilities. As a general guide, your Supporting Statement should be around two sides of A4.

Closing date: 16th November 2025

Selection process and timescales

Stage 1: Week commencing 24th November 2025

First round of screening interviews conducted by NFP Consulting.

Stage 2: Monday 1st December

Candidates taken forward to the final interview stage will be invited to visit us and have a tour of one of our sites and meet informally with staff and parents.

Stage 3: Monday 8th December

The final round of interviews will be held in person and on-site.

Accessibility

Please let us know if you have any special requirements which we might need to consider in relation to the selection process, e.g. attending interview, completing any part of the selection process. Any requests will not be taken into account in the selection process.

