

Could you be our next Chair?

Bluecoat is seeking a new Chair as **Peter Mearns** will be stepping down at the end of his term in March 2025.

This is a key appointment which will lead Bluecoat into our centenary year, 2027, when we will mark 100 years since our incorporation as the first arts centre in the UK.

This is an exciting time at Bluecoat as we start to realise the ambitions of our ten-year strategy: *Bluecoat 2030*. As Chair you'll play a leadership role in helping us achieve these ambitious goals – including welcoming more than 1 million visitors every year.

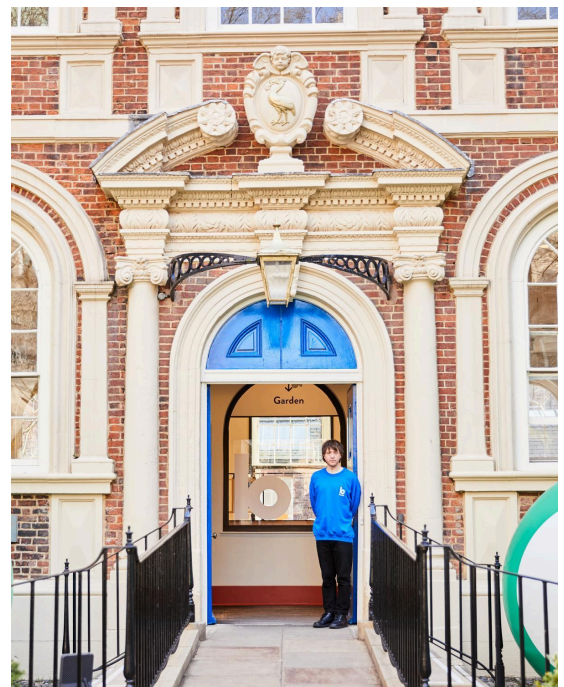
Who we're looking for

We are looking for someone who has proven leadership ability and is committed to Bluecoat's work: creating new ways for everyone to experience the arts.

If this sounds like you and you also have:

- A passion for the arts.
- The ability to contribute time to the board –availability and willingness to attend meetings and time to support the Chief Executive in practical ways
- Previous experience as a Chair – ideally with a combination of artistic and social enterprise organisations.

And can personify the pillars of Bluecoat's identity (set out below) we would love to hear from you.



A bit about us

Bluecoat is Liverpool's contemporary arts centre, a working home for artists, and a place where audiences can experience art in new ways.

A bustling cultural venue that sees 700,000 visits each year, our city centre location, our building's heritage, and our hospitality business attract an audience diverse in age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and socio-economic background.

We offer a dynamic programme of exhibitions, live events, workshops and discussions covering a range of art forms including visual art, music, dance and literature. Our participation programme enables people who might otherwise face barriers to engagement to be involved in the contemporary arts. Bluecoat, based in a grade I listed building, is also home to a community of creative retailers, working artists' studios, a cafe and a bistro.



Our history

Our building, with its distinctive architecture, is the oldest in Liverpool city centre. Built 300 years ago as a charity school for poor children, it has been an arts centre for the past century.

Bluecoat's eighteenth-century origins are connected to the sea, when many merchants supported the school with funds derived from maritime trade, including transatlantic slavery. We continue to interrogate this and other colonial histories through exhibitions, performances and projects, working with artists and communities, as well as ongoing research.

Bluecoat has always played a major part in Liverpool's cultural life, from hosting the likes of **Picasso** and **Stravinsky** during the early twentieth century, to developing relationships with artists such as **Yoko Ono** and **George Melly**. Our public programmes have attracted national acclaim for hosting leading figures from the arts and entertainment worlds while nurturing new talent locally.

Surviving wartime bombs and turbulent political and economic times, Bluecoat remains a symbol of Liverpool's resilience and creativity. Today, it's more popular than ever, with a mix of architecture, arts, shops, café, a garden to relax in, and a wealth of stories. Find out [more about our history](#).



Our vision

Things are changing at Bluecoat. Our ten-year strategy is focused on being a space for the public to experience contemporary art and visual culture in new and exciting ways. As a worksite for artists we will experiment with new ways of bringing process and progress into the public domain, working in purposely inclusive ways with artists who find this an exciting prospect.

We will open-up our building's cultural legacies to artists and audiences through interpretation, engagement and research. Evolving our hospitality and catering is a key element in achieving this vision.

Our brand

A recent rebrand gave us four new brand pillars, a communications principle, visual identity and tone of voice. The four pillars each represent a priority for the coming years – not necessarily where we are, but where we are heading:

1. Breaking new ground

Bluecoat is Liverpool's contemporary arts centre - the first, the original. A place defined by 100 years of radical thought and creative reinvention. An independent arts centre that continues to nurture artistic talent and break new ground. Part of Liverpool's past, key to its future, Liverpool has the fastest growing city centre population in the UK, growing 181% between 2002-2015.

2. Unlocking the creative process

Bluecoat brings people into the heart of the creative process, creating new opportunities for individuals and communities to interact with artists as they work. A place not just to look at but to engage with art.

3. Inspiring curiosity

Bluecoat is a creative playground, a supportive space in which to unearth new ideas and embrace something out of the ordinary. It is a place that sets out to inspire: here, you can make, debate, and participate in new and unexpected ways.

4. Purposefully inclusive

Bluecoat is an inclusive home for artists and creative practitioners. A place that sees potential in many voices under one roof. A platform for artists with different viewpoints and from backgrounds under-represented in the sector. Here, artists can find their voice and share their work with a wider and more diverse public.

Our ambitions

In common with many arts organisations, Bluecoat faces resourcing challenges but at the same time we have clear and exciting ambitions for growth:

- to increase the diversity and reach of audiences, to over 1m onsite visitors annually by 2030;
- to renew our commitment to champion artists from diverse backgrounds;
- to deepen impact by sustaining long term work with children, young people, families, older people and others from communities facing challenges;
- to extend our footprint into new premises, providing enhanced civic and cultural amenities in the city centre and further afield;
- and to reduce dependency on public funds, changing our business model to become a successful and expanding social enterprise, increasing the ratio of earned income three-fold by the end of the decade.

A combination of skills is needed to guide us through these development paths.



How can you play a part?

The role of Chair is an opportunity to lead this evolution of Bluecoat. Across our organisation we value collaboration, sharing knowledge, and lively debate. We're looking for a Chair with experience and expertise to bring new perspectives – and to play a pivotal role in our future growth.

What we're looking for

We're looking for a Chair who can help us to achieve the aims of our strategy [Bluecoat 2030](#). You'll need to understand and support our purpose and vision too.

We are open to co-chairing and other shared leadership models

What we need in our new Chair:

- 1 Good people skills, collaborative style, proven capability as a chair and a team leader, a good listener, experienced with boards
- 2 A commitment to and an understanding of the arts, with an ability to advocate for their value
- 3 Good networking skills, ideally with an extensive address-book
- 4 Dynamism, energy and enthusiasm alongside patience and a methodical approach to governance.
- 5 Knowledge of the political, social and economic context locally and nationally within which Bluecoat operates'
- 6 Financial awareness, literacy and confidence
- 7 An understanding of the fundraising environment, with experience and networks that will be useful for Bluecoat
- 8 And understanding of the commercial and social enterprise aspects of Bluecoat's work
- 9 A commitment to Bluecoat's artistic programme, and an ability and willingness to advocate for it
- 10 Time: including availability and willingness to attend meetings and time to support the Chief Executive in practical ways

- 11 Alignment with Bluecoat's values
- 12 Someone who can credibly personify Bluecoat's brand pillars



The essential information

When do the Board meet?

We meet quarterly and hold two away-days per year.

What other time commitments are there?

The Chair meets monthly with the Chief Executive and attends other meetings and events from time to time

How do I apply?

This is a two stage process.

The first stage is to send a one-page expression of interest setting out what you would bring to Bluecoat plus a CV or summary of your experience:

recruitment@thebluecoat.org.uk

After this a small number of shortlisted candidates will be invited to make a full application.

Is there a closing date?

The closing date for expressions of interest is the 5th of October

Want to know more?

Find out more about Bluecoat and our work: thebluecoat.org.uk

Check out our social platforms: Facebook: facebook.com/theBluecoat | Twitter: [@thebluecoat](https://twitter.com/thebluecoat) | Instagram: [@the_bluecoat](https://www.instagram.com/the_bluecoat)

For an informal conversation about the role of Chair at Bluecoat please contact our current Chair Peter Mearns: peter.mearns@live.co.uk or Bluecoat's chief executive Mary Cloake: mary.c@thebluecoat.org.uk

Equal opportunities

Bluecoat is committed to becoming an inclusive and diverse organisation and positively encourages applications from suitably qualified and eligible candidates regardless of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender status, religion or belief, marital status, or pregnancy and maternity. Bluecoat is an equal opportunities employer and will provide reasonable support throughout the recruitment process to applicants who have a disability.



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If you are interested in finding out more about the expectations of a Chair's role in an arts organisation you may find useful the guidance set out by the Cultural Governance Alliance [here](#).

