



**Head of Children, Schools and Young Adults
(Parental Leave Cover)
Job Description**

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Contract

Fixed term: Parental Leave Cover for 9 months with the possibility of extension (Handover in December 2025, full-time work beginning Wednesday 7 January 2026 – September 2026)

Full-time: 40 hours per week. Minimum 3 days a week at the Book Festival office.
We welcome proposals for flexible working arrangements.

Salary

£36,750 with 3% pension contribution

Key dates

Schools Programme launch: April 2026

Public Programme launch: June 2026

2026 Festival: 15 – 30 August 2026

Background

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is a world-leading cultural festival, with democracy, creativity and ideas exchange at its heart. We celebrate the power of words and writing in all their dynamic and imaginative forms, bringing diverse perspectives together, and empowering our audiences to deepen their understanding of our ever-changing world.

Since 1983, we have welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors to engage with the world's greatest and emerging writers, thinkers, artists, and performers. Each year, we programme innovative events that broaden the horizons and enrich the minds of our audiences, both in Edinburgh and online. These take the form of on-stage conversations, workshops, creative masterclasses, and more, all informed by a culture of open dialogue, curiosity about the perspectives of others, and active embracing of innovative ideas and experiences.

Over the last four decades, we have continually transformed our Festival model to reflect our rapidly evolving world, and ensure our ongoing relevance, with a programme which platforms the most

interesting and inspiring publishing from around the world, and balances today's most challenging topics with exploration of how we can work together towards a brighter future.

A registered charity, we are run by a passionate team who believe in the power of words and ideas to ignite imaginations, foster human connection, and challenge the status quo – as well as offer solace, nurture wellbeing, and spread joy. Our Festival aims not just to open up conversations, but to broaden them too: existing as a space at the heart of civil society where nuanced discussion can happen and a spectrum of perspectives can be explored.

We believe this role and the programmes that we deliver for children, schools and young adults are vital in combating declining literacy rates. By providing exciting and creative ways to engage with books, we aim to inspire a life-long love of reading and writing.

At the heart of our Festival is a commitment to accessibility, inclusivity, and the creation of a truly democratic environment for the exchange of ideas and collaborative thinking. We give a platform to voices who are often overlooked and aim to break down barriers to access for those who might not typically see themselves as a book festival audience. More than just a summer festival, we work year-round with partners in the local community – with schools, libraries, prisons, hospitals, and other community hubs – with the aim of developing engaged, knowledgeable audiences of all backgrounds and ages. The Festival also makes hundreds of events available to watch online via a Pay What You Can model, offering audiences who cannot attend in person the opportunity to take part, and making the Festival truly global in nature.

In 2024, our evolution saw the beginning of a new chapter under the leadership of Festival Director, Jenny Niven. It was also our first year presenting the Festival in our new home of the Edinburgh Futures Institute – an innovative university building created from the stunning renovation of the city's old Royal Infirmary and positioned at the heart of the city's Festival environment. We are excited about the opportunities this offers us to collaborate with new partners and share innovations and a wide range of voices with our audiences, both now and far into the future.

The Team

The Book Festival has a permanent staff of 24 throughout the year, expanding over the spring and summer to a peak of around 150 staff during the Festival. All staff members play a role in the ongoing development of the organisation through several full team planning and debrief meetings during the year. The Directors of each department form the Senior Management Team.

The Head of Children, Schools and Young Adults is a vital part of the Programme Team, and reports to the Director of Programming. Other key relationships include the Festival Director, the Director of Communities and Equalities, the Programme Manager and the Creative Learning Manager. This role will manage temporary producing staff in the lead up and during the Book Festival.

The Role

The post holder should be an exceptionally imaginative and resourceful individual who will work with the Programming Team at the Book Festival to create the world's most joyful, exciting and innovative celebration of books, words and ideas for children and young people in the Schools and Public Programmes.

Our new strategic plan prioritises Relevance, and we are exploring what this means for young audiences, with an increased focus on Young Adult programming in the public programme as well as partnerships with key publishers and brands. Our intention is to develop an inspiring, ambitious, of-the-moment programme which captures the imaginations of young people.

The Head of Children, Schools and Young Adults will be expected to have a high level of up-to-date knowledge on the publishing landscape for children and young people and a commitment to audience development and hospitality, ensuring the best possible experience for all participants, including authors, illustrators, schools and audiences.

Key Responsibilities

Creative programming – Public Programme

- Programme a broad range of public events for children from early years through to young adults across non-fiction, fiction, poetry, illustration, and performance, considering trends in publishing as well as the broader themes and aims of the Festival
- Work with the Director of Programming to ensure the Festival's programmes for younger audiences represent the contemporary political, cultural, and social context and create an environment where young readers can imagine better futures
- Create opportunities for writers and readers to respond to the changing world and ensure the programme reflects and connects with wider thematic streams in the Festival Programme and ensure that the programme promotes reading for pleasure
- Develop the Festival's reputation as a distinctive international forum by welcoming leading and emerging authors from across Scotland, the UK, and the world to share their stories and ideas with each other and our audiences
- Work with the Creative Learning Manager and the Director of Communities and Equalities to bring authors from the Book Festival into community environments, and to ensure that there is a comprehensive and relevant free programme available in partnership with organisations for children and young people
- Champion the Book Festival strategic priorities through creative programming and centre our programming and audience development around Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Access and Care
- Ensure that sustainability and the Climate Emergency is at the forefront of our planning and delivery

- Maintain and embody our organisational values consistently, displaying leadership while fostering a positive and inclusive culture

Creative programming – Schools Programme

- Create an exceptional programme of events for pupils from schools in Edinburgh and across Scotland for P1 – S6, promoting active learning and enquiry and creative ways to engage with reading and writing
- Programme focused events for Primary pupils across site on Primary Schools Gala Day, and for Secondary pupils across site on Teen Takeover Day, and work with the Creative Learning Manager to ensure drop-in activities complement ticketed events
- Maintain a good knowledge and up to date understanding of the Scottish curriculum and education policy to inform the creation of the School Programme
- Work closely with the Creative Learning Manager to ensure that year-round teacher feedback informs the development of the Schools Programme and any CLPL (Career Long Professional Learning) events for teachers and educators

Programme Development

- Work with publishers to maximise commercial opportunities through partnerships and innovative events, while upholding the programming identity of the Book Festival
- Collaborate closely with the Brand and Audience team to analyse data and trends, guiding the creation of programs for children, young people, and schools, while enhancing its crucial role in executing our audience development strategies
- Work with the Director of Programming to understand the organisation's financial context and take shared responsibility for meeting budget objectives, ensuring that the programmes are within the designated budget
- Work with the Development team to ensure partnerships are maintained to the highest standard and commercial opportunities for collaboration and co-creation are maximised
- Work with the Programme, Development and Brand and Audience teams to devise new offers and expand our young adult audience demographic, creating attractive programme content which other teams can effectively champion

Collaboration and communication

- Maintain a wide range of collaborations and partnerships with writers, publishers, cultural and community organisations, and learning providers to create rich and inclusive programmes that inspire and develop diverse audiences
- Work with our bookselling partner, Waterstones, to ensure books are in stock in the Festival bookshop and at signings for the Children and Young People's programme

- Work closely with Waterstones and the Development team to ensure effective delivery of our free books for schools initiative
- Represent the Festival on key external working groups as required, ensuring opportunities for collaborative relationships are maximised, including with other festivals and cultural partners
- Be a public face for the Festival during the Festival, upholding and enhancing our reputation and creating a warm and positive experience for writers, sponsors, participants, partners, and audiences

Management and delivery

- Lead on the project management and delivery of the public programme and schools programmes within the Festival, working closely across the team (including Programming, Operations, Brand and Audience, Front of House and Site & Production) to ensure all events are delivered to the highest possible standard, and all teams are accurately briefed on the delivery needs of the offer for schools, children and young people
- Recruit and manage any supporting temporary staff assigned to events across the Children, Young People and Schools programmes during the Festival
- Support temporary, seasonal members of the Programming team, creating a positive, dynamic culture
- Work with the rest of the Programme Team to maintain an accurate records for planning across all systems including Monday, Artifax and Xero

Person Specification

The successful candidate will possess the following:

Knowledge and experience

- Extensive understanding of trends across children's and young people's writing and illustration, along with the capability to identify and nurture talent
- Have a significant network of connections within the publishing, educational, and/or festival sectors
- Proven ability to manage and nurture complex relationships with diverse external stakeholders, including publishers, authors, facilitators, and creative arts organisations, to drive successful collaborations and partnerships
- A high level of project management experience, and excellent planning and prioritising skills and management of competing deadlines

- Experience in leading, managing, and inspiring individuals with a positive and adaptable approach

Skills

- Outstanding organisation, planning, prioritising, and multi-tasking skills
- An open, responsive, and sensitive approach to working with a range of individuals and groups, and the skills to build productive, long-term relationships
- The ability to motivate others and inspire commitment to the Book Festival

Desirable

- Experience in a festival environment
- Strong proofreading skills
- A strong eye for audience friendly design
- The capacity to translate information into interesting, engaging copy and shaping it to suit a variety of audiences and platforms
- An imaginative approach to content production and audience communications

Staff Wellbeing

The Book Festival has an open and active staff wellbeing culture and is committed to making everyone in our team feel safe, welcome, and included. An Employee Assistance Package is available which offers a variety of levels of counselling, one-to-one personal support, and resilience tools, along with personal legal and financial advice and family support. Several of our team have chosen to be trained in First Aid for Mental Health and our Safer Spaces Policy actively promotes a culture where everyone's experience (staff, artists, partners, and audiences) is valued, and no-one is made to feel unsafe or excluded. We continue to reflect and consult with our team.

Terms And Conditions

The post is based at our offices 121 George Street, Edinburgh and at the Festival site in Edinburgh Futures Institute during August. Normal hours of work are 09:30–17:30, Monday to Friday outwith Festival time. Additional hours are required during the Festival itself, with some long days and working up to six days a week. Flexible/hybrid working is welcomed – our team work from the office at least three days per week and are expected to discuss and agree their work patterns with their manager and team. Time off in lieu is given for days worked outside agreed working patterns.

Employees receive 34 days of paid holiday per annum pro rata including public holidays. Six days are used for the shutdown of the office over Christmas, as well as four of the public holidays - Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Day, 2 January.

The salary for this position will be £36,750 per annum. The Book Festival will pay a contribution of 3% of salary into our approved, auto-enrolment pension scheme. Employees may make voluntary additional contributions through payroll.

Equal Opportunities

The Edinburgh International Book Festival is an equal opportunities employer and a Real Living Wage employer. Our work is framed by a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The Book Festival is a working environment where everyone is treated fairly, and our differences are celebrated as strengths. We actively encourage applicants with diverse backgrounds and experiences to apply.

If you have any specific access requirements, please let us know and we will do our best to meet your needs.

How To Apply

Please complete the online application, using the links featured on our website:
edbookfest.co.uk/about-us/jobs

Ensure you upload your current CV and an application letter, along with answering our recruitment portal questions. Your letter should outline your suitability for the post and why you wish to work at the Book Festival. You may include any other information to support your application.

Closing date for applications: 9am on Monday 20 October

Interviews to be held: w/c Monday 3 November held at 121 George Street, EH2 4YN, or online

If the job description doesn't answer your questions, please contact Tamara Zimet, Director of Programming: tamara.zimet@edbookfest.co.uk

The Edinburgh International Book Festival Ltd has its registered office at 121 George St Edinburgh and is a company limited by guarantee (SC079939) with charitable status (SC010120).