

# PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

National Youth Choir  
(15-18 Years)

**Freelance Contract**  
Application information pack

# INTRODUCTION

National Youth Choir is delighted to invite submissions from exceptional choral directors interested in applying for the role of Principal Conductor of National Youth Choir (15-18 Years).

A new conductor will be awarded a contract on a freelance, self-employed basis for four years from autumn 2025 to oversee creative planning and delivery for the choir. Alongside our Creative Director, Lucy Hollins, the creative team, the Principal Conductors for our other national choirs, and the wider National Youth Choir team, the conductor will directly contribute to the achievement of National Youth Choir's vision. They will also contribute to National Youth Choir's ambitions as a national and international community and champion of excellent and inclusive youth singing for young people from all backgrounds.



# CONTRACT SUMMARY

- Role:** Principal Conductor,  
National Youth Choir (15-18 Years)
- Annual Fee:** Up to £15,150 for core work. Fee will vary depending on the number of courses and volume of strategic work undertaken. Further fees are payable for leading auditions and other additional work. See details below.
- Contract terms:** Self-employed contract for services. Contract offered from Autumn 2025 for a period of four years, with potential for extension.
- Location:** Principal Conductors can be based anywhere in the UK or internationally, however they must be able to travel to specified venues and locations where delivery will take place and must be eligible to work in the UK.
- Contract Manager:** The Principal Conductor will be accountable to the Creative Director.



## WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

**We are looking for an outstanding choral director, who has significant experience of successfully developing and delivering exciting and inspirational choral training and performance programmes at the highest level, for and with young people.**

Applicants for this opportunity should demonstrably share our values and our belief in the importance of inclusive practice and representation. This will help us ensure we address barriers so that all young people are able to access singing and to develop their musical skills to the highest levels.

With the oversight of the Creative Director, they should understand how to shape and deliver inspirational programmes and projects for the choir that reflect the breadth and diversity of choral music and push the boundaries of what choral music can be. The Principal Conductor must be committed to valuing and empowering the voices and input of young people as collaborators in the creative process for the choir.

The Principal Conductor of National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) will be expected to bring excellent networks to the organisation, to support the development of the choir, its performance outcomes and associated partnerships, ensuring it offers unique, relevant and sector-leading opportunities for participants and audiences. The conductor should also be comfortable as a figurehead, committed to championing our work and connecting with young people, emerging artists, audiences, funders and other stakeholders. They should be open to working and programming collaboratively and actively contributing to strategy, organisational planning and fundraising.

National Youth Choir is committed to building a more representative and inclusive sector. Our music policy embraces repertoire including classical, contemporary and new music from a wide range of cultures and choral traditions. It is a priority in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion planning to develop a more representative choral workforce. Candidates should have a good knowledge of a breadth of choral repertoire; we are interested in hearing from candidates who come from a range of choral and vocal traditions.



# ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIR

**More than a choir:** a community with a shared passion for singing and the life-changing opportunities it can offer.

Founded in the North of England in 1983, National Youth Choir has evolved from a single choir of 100 outstanding young singers to become a nationwide community and champion for youth singing. We stand for artistic excellence, creative diversity, and openness and relevance to all. We are driven by the passionate belief that all children and young people, regardless of individual circumstance, should be able to make music with others. Each one of them should have the opportunity and support to discover and explore their musical talent, achieving excellence at the highest levels.

Over the last ten years, National Youth Choir has been on a transformational journey, putting young people right at the heart of our community. We have expanded our profile, national reach, educational and creative programmes, and created new pathways in music progression for young people and aspiring professionals. We have taken direct action to be more representative and inclusive, delivering against ambitious aims to open up access and achieve life-changing musical and personal impact for more young people from a wider range of backgrounds.

We aim to lead the way in youth singing, developing new and accessible creative and educational approaches to inspire and engage young people at all stages of their development. Delivered by experts in their field, our programmes offer the highest standard of musical engagement, training and performance to stretch, challenge and excite participants.



Our creative programme comprises four interconnected strands engaging several thousand young people each year:



### **Education: National Choirs**

Offering around 900 of the country's most talented singers aged 9 to 25 musical, personal and educational development through intensive residential and online training with professional conductors, musicianship and vocal coaches, and guest artists. Our three choirs are currently National Youth Choir (18-25 Years) – incorporating the National Youth Chamber Choir; National Youth Choir (15-18 Years); National Youth Choir (9-15 Years). Entry to the choirs is through our annual national auditions programme.



### **Performance**

A unique programme of opportunities for participants to create and share music with audiences through a range of creative outputs including live concerts, broadcasts, festivals, special events, digital recordings and music videos. Including co-creating and performing new works from leading and emerging composers. We continue to grow exciting partnerships and collaborations, bringing our music to wider audiences – over 60,000 people through live performance and more than two million people through streams and broadcasts each year.



## Learning & Engagement

Opportunities for young people to be inspired by singing together, discovering and progressing their vocal experience through joined up regional and national pathways. Engaging over 3,500 young people each year, this programme has a particular focus on engaging young people who face barriers to accessing creative opportunities. It comprises long-term strategic partnerships to reach more young people and create more sustainable singing opportunities in targeted areas, alongside a national on-demand programme of inspirational singing workshops and events.



## Emerging Professional Artists

Training programmes supporting exceptional young choral musicians, leaders and composers – particularly those under-represented in the sector – to develop sustainable music careers. Ten emerging professional artists are supported each year through our Fellowship, Young Composers and Young Conductors schemes, developing skills and creative practice, creating new work and growing their professional profile and networks.

As we move into our fifth decade with a refreshed vision, we have ambitious strategic plans to develop capacity and resources to grow as a community. We look to develop our role as a national champion for youth singing, and become even more accessible, relevant and impactful for many more young people from the widest range of backgrounds.

# VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

## Our vision

Through excellence in singing, creating music, training and support, we help young people develop the confidence and skills to realise their greatest potential.

National Youth Choir is the place to come to for all young singers who want to be inspired, stretched, challenged and nurtured. We want to be a household name, which young people nationwide who love singing together aspire to join, from the widest range of backgrounds.

## Our mission

Nurturing talent, reaching new audiences and inspiring new ambitions.

Our mission is to build a nurturing nationwide community where young people can explore a diverse range of music, enjoy singing together and share their creativity. We champion the power of singing, opening up opportunities so that more young people from all walks of life can find and use their voice.

## To achieve our mission we are:

1. Striving for excellence in everything we do, delivering inspiring, ambitious and relevant creative programmes with young people at their heart.
2. Expanding our reach, opening up opportunities for young singers and emerging professionals from all backgrounds across the UK to develop their potential;
3. Raising the public profile of National Youth Choir, our purpose, values, and the impact of singing, increasing awareness and engagement;
4. Developing organisational resilience, ensuring we have resources, capacity and structures to achieve ambitions and show our impact.



# OUR CORE VALUES

## Young people are the heart of our community

We focus on delivering the best possible experiences for young people and enabling them to fulfil their potential. We give a platform to young voices and empower them as co-creators to shape National Youth Choir, so it is relevant and inspiring to them.

## We're a welcoming and safe community where everyone can belong

We create an inclusive culture of belonging, opening up access for all young people to be able to sing and to be part of the National Youth Choir community, and creating a caring supportive environment where participants can flourish. Our programmes and people – participants, audiences, staff and trustees – are increasingly representative of our national community.

## We aspire to achieve excellence across everything we do

Creative excellence is central to our culture. For us this means providing inspiring learning experiences and the best possible care as well as delivering excellent creative outputs and supporting young people to fulfil their musical potential. We develop and share sector-leading practice and approaches and strive to become even better by reflecting, listening and learning from others.

## We're creative, imaginative and fun

Our creative programmes are exciting, challenging and diverse, promoting new music and exploring new approaches with energy and passion. We're not afraid to push boundaries and find new ways of doing things, and we are committed to supporting and developing the pipeline of musicians – singers, composers, conductors and leaders.



# BRIEF FOR THE PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR ROLE

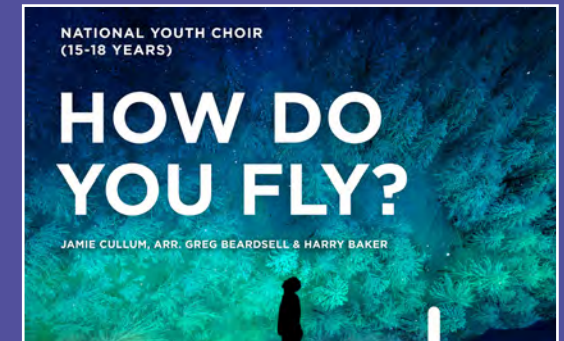
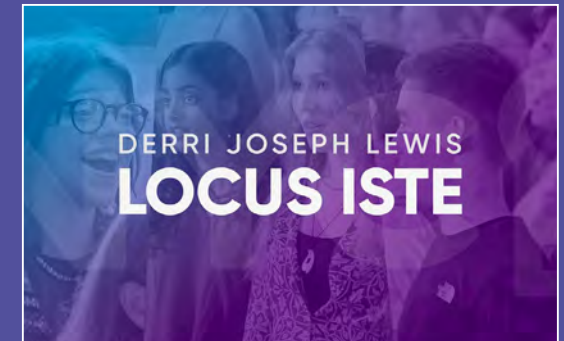
**The individual undertaking the Principal Conductor contract will enable the ongoing and successful development and delivery of the National Youth Choir (15-18 Years).**

National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) is a mixed SATB choir made up of more than 400 young singers, from school years 11 to 13. Entry to the choirs is by audition, which takes place in October/November each year, as well as through targeted auditions as part of our SING! programme.

There are currently three residential courses for National Youth Choir (15-18 Years): one in Spring and two in the Summer. Creative outcomes include live concerts, audio and video recordings, and broadcasts. Click on the thumbnails on the right hand side of this text to explore some of our recent projects.

We enjoy a wide range of collaborative projects with other musicians and artists from different disciplines. The Principal Conductor will be supported to seek out exciting new opportunities, partnerships and collaborations, bringing their own creative expertise and imagination to shape the future programme for the choir alongside our young people.

The Principal Conductor of National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) will be responsible, alongside the Creative Director, for the creative leadership of the choir.



# Key responsibilities

The key specialist services required for the role comprise the creative planning, delivery and oversight of the National Youth Choir (15-18 Years). This includes conducting and having a creative/strategic overview of the choir, and being responsible for delivering the highest possible creative and learning outcomes for participants, in a safe and inclusive environment. The postholder will also contribute to wider organisational strategic planning, fundraising and advocacy, as a specialist contributor to National Youth Choir's extended senior team.

## **Specific outputs to be delivered include, but are not limited to:**

- 1.** Providing creative leadership and direction to the National Youth Choir (15-18 Years), working with the National Youth Choir team to develop and deliver activity of the highest quality, consistent with National Youth Choir's strategic aims, objectives and EDI priorities;
- 2.** Undertaking all creative planning required for residential courses and other related activity (including programming, performance outcomes, schedules, staffing, recordings, commissions, collaborations, and partnership development);
- 3.** Conducting up to three residential courses annually, ensuring the highest possible creative standards, and an inspirational, inclusive experience for all participants;
- 4.** Leading and managing the music team on residential courses, and contributing to the professional development of creative staff, Emerging Professional Artists and volunteers during programme delivery;
- 5.** Working with the wider creative team to develop musicianship and vocal strategies consistently across the choirs;
- 6.** Taking part in strategic, creative planning and evaluation meetings and occasional visits to other choir activities, to provide specialist creative advice and input into National Youth Choir planning processes, and to support co-ordinated planning, delivery and review across the whole of National Youth Choir's programme;
- 7.** Supporting the operational planning of residential programmes and non-residential activities for the choir, including liaison with National Youth Choir management, operational and pastoral staff as required;
- 8.** Acting as Head Panellist for National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) auditions, and working with us to develop strategies to broaden access and progression pathways into the National Youth Choirs;
- 9.** Developing new opportunities for the National Youth Choir (15-18 Years), using their own contacts and networks;
- 10.** Acting as an advocate for National Youth Choir, our aims and values by proactively developing networks of music, education, philanthropic and media contacts, and participating in media and communications activities and opportunities relating to the role;
- 11.** Working with National Youth Choir's Development team to support relevant fundraising activities, including: assisting cultivation and stewardship of prospective supporters, funders, sponsors; attending events and prospect meetings; and being a public face of our fundraising;
- 12.** Undertaking any training deemed necessary or relevant to the delivery of the role, including training to fulfil statutory obligations, or to comply with National Youth Choir policy.

We will annually agree specific deliverables and key dates with the Principal Conductor.

## Additional activities

**Depending on their background and interests, the Principal Conductor may also be invited to undertake additional work on an ad hoc basis, which is agreed to be outside of the scope of this contract. There is no expectation or obligation to do so. Such work and appropriate contractual arrangements and remuneration will be agreed separately. This may include:**

- Acting as creative lead/conductor for delivery of additional activities relating to the choir (i.e. outside of the scope of the residential courses);
- Delivering additional training/mentoring activities, for example to our pool of freelance staff or Emerging Professional Artists;
- Delivering activities as part of our wider Learning & Engagement programme;
- Acting as a guest conductor for one of our other national choirs;
- Engagements with our programme partners at regional and national events.



## Quality standards

National Youth Choir aims to provide creative and learning experiences of the highest quality and will be working to and reporting against a Quality Framework during the delivery of this contract. We therefore will require the services provided by Principal Conductors to be delivered to a high standard and will agree a set of appropriate success measures relating to expected quality outcomes for each programme/activity.

We will undertake a contract review with the Principal Conductor after six months and twelve months, and an annual contract review thereafter.

We expect all contractors to deliver in a way that is consistent with our policies, procedures and practices and to behave in a manner consistent with our values and code of conduct at all times.



# Key responsibilities of National Youth Choir

## We will:

- be responsible for Principal Conductor contract management and monitoring the delivery of agreed outcomes, with the lead for contract management being the Creative Director, supported by the Executive Producer;
- provide co-ordination across National Youth Choir programmes to ensure they are complementary and of consistent standards, and that they collectively contribute towards the achievement of our organisational aims and objectives;
- make all operational arrangements for the choir's activities to be delivered including for course and performance venues, booking and member communications, marketing and PR, contracting of course staff and guest artists, course/event logistics, supply of specified and agreed music and other performance requirements e.g instruments, sound, projection etc;
- set and manage all programme/activity budgets;
- be responsible for providing appropriate operational and pastoral staff to contribute to the successful delivery of choir activity;
- make arrangements for all strategic planning meetings in terms of facilities and venue (where applicable).



# SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

**Successful tender applicants should be able to demonstrate the following skills, experience and attributes, which we believe are essential for successful contract delivery:**

- Significant relevant experience of choral direction/conducting at a high-level, including working with young people aged 15 to 18;
- commitment to principles of excellence, inclusion and representation;
- commitment to safeguarding, member welfare, and youth voice, including an understanding of best practice in safeguarding and data protection;
- understanding of best practice in the youth music and music education sector;
- experience of overseeing the strategic creative planning for choral ensembles, and ability to deliver creative programmes with outcomes including live and broadcast performances, and audio/video recordings;
- extensive knowledge of diverse choral repertoire, and the ability to create programmes/projects that are innovative, engaging, accessible and relevant for both singers and audiences;
- experience in commissioning new choral works and leading creative partnerships and collaborations (across disciplines);
- understanding of young voices and their development, particularly in relation to this age group;
- experience of leading musicianship training;
- experience of providing creative leadership for projects and programmes, including managing and mentoring self-employed artists, volunteers and trainees;
- ability and willingness to contribute more widely to strategic discussions and planning, and to share practice;
- commitment to working collaboratively to ensure ambitious, joined-up programming, planning and delivery across the organisation;
- ability to bring excellent networks to inform programme development and support advocacy and fundraising;
- confidence in communicating with a range of participants and audiences, including the media, as an advocate and spokesperson;
- experience of monitoring and evaluating creative programmes and projects.



# SUMMARY TERMS AND CONDITIONS

**The Principal Conductor contract is offered as a self-employed contract for services. It is offered for a four-year period from Autumn 2025. There is potential for the contract to be extended beyond the initial four-year period for further terms.**

## **Contract commitment:**

- Conducting up to three courses per year (nine days per course)
- Up to twelve days of strategic and creative planning per year

The fee available for the contract, based on the assumptions above, will be up to £15,150. We will agree the core commitments and dates prior to the start of each contractual year. We are happy to discuss the schedule in more detail after shortlisting.

## **Auditions:**

The Principal Conductor will also have a key role to play as one of our head panellists for National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) annual auditions. This commitment will vary from year to year. The current rate for head panellists is £350 per day.

## **Additional fees:**

Additional fees will be paid for extra work outwith the scope of the contract, including special events, Learning & Engagement work, leading training sessions, and appearances with the other National Youth Choirs.

Fees exclude any applicable VAT but are inclusive of all other tax payable by the contractor. Authorised expenses incurred within the UK may be reimbursed in line with National Youth Choir's expenses policy.

All fees are subject to the agreed quality standards being met. If agreed measures of quality are not achieved, National Youth Choir may reduce the relevant proportion of the fee by up to 5%.

The Principal Conductor will be accountable to the Creative Director as contract lead for National Youth Choir, who has oversight of organisational creative vision and strategy.

Individuals awarded a Principal Conductor contract are required to undergo an enhanced DBS check (or provide evidence of this via the update service) and are required to undertake training in Safeguarding and Data Protection.



# SELECTION PROCESS AND SCORING FRAMEWORK

**Tenders will be initially scored and shortlisted on the basis of the information provided in an application – details of which are in the next section below. Applicants will be considered against the following criteria:**

- Relevant professional conducting and vocal leadership experience;
- Demonstration of specified skills and experience required for successful delivery of the contract;
- Quality of proposed creative approach and ideas for the choir in relation to National Youth Choir’s aims and organisational values.

We will only shortlist applicants who confirm the ability to work in the UK.

**Following shortlisting we will run a three-stage selection process with shortlisted applicants as follows.**

## **Stage 1:**

- Thursday 20th March 2025: a panel interview with Creative Director, Lucy Hollins, National Youth Choir staff and external specialists. This will be followed by further shortlisting.

## **Stage 2:**

- Tuesday 15th April 2025: a first audition with National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) on their Spring residential course. This will be followed by further shortlisting.

## **Stage 3:**

- Wednesday 20th August 2025: a second audition with National Youth Choir (15-18 Years) on their Summer residential course, and a second interview with Creative Director, Lucy Hollins, National Youth Choir staff and singers, and external specialists. This may include a presentation.

We may also choose to have some more informal discussions with candidates during the process, for example meeting other members of the National Youth Choir team.

The final scoring of shortlisted tenders will be on the basis of the information provided in the application, and the conducting and interview elements of the process. We may also take references into consideration when making our final decision. Scoring will be based on the following framework:

<b>Contract Selection Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum points</b>
<b>Conducting and programme delivery:</b>	<b>50</b>
Relevant professional conducting experience;	
Excellent leadership skills appropriate to the age, development stage and ability of the choir;	
Specialist knowledge of young voices;	
Evidence of innovative programming for this age group;	
Ability to lead a team and a commitment to working collaboratively.	
<b>Creative and strategic leadership:</b>	<b>40</b>
Strong creative vision;	
Relevant experience in creative and strategic planning;	
Strong communication skills;	
Ability and willingness to support development of National Youth Choir partnerships and networks;	
Ability to make a strong contribution to organisation-wide strategy, fundraising and advocacy.	
<b>Commitment to upholding and promoting National Youth Choir's values and aims</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

# TO APPLY FOR THE CONTRACT

At National Youth Choir we are committed to transparent selection across all our opportunities and we are awarding this contract through an open application process.

Applicants should submit the following application information via email to:

**[apply@nationalyouthchoir.org.uk](mailto:apply@nationalyouthchoir.org.uk)**

by Monday 3rd March 2025 at 12 noon.

with the role title in the subject line:

- a **CV**, including details of two referees who can confirm your suitability for the contract. This should be no more than two sides of A4.
- a **video OR written personal statement** which outlines (a) your suitability for the role, and (b) your initial vision for National Youth Choir (15-18 Years). This should be no more than a six-minute video statement or two sides of A4 if written.
- a **five minute video of you rehearsing a group of singers**. Ideally, this rehearsal footage would demonstrate your work with the relevant age group, but we recognise the difficulties this might present; please get in touch to discuss this if necessary. Using a phone or tablet to record will be sufficient quality, as long as we can hear your voice clearly in the video.
- a completed **[Equal Opportunities Monitoring form](#)**.
- a completed **[cover sheet](#)**.

If submitting a video, please send via a private weblink (e.g. to Youtube) or via file transfer using WeTransfer. Please do not attach large video files to your email application.



We are keen to draw from a wide pool of experienced conductors and submissions are welcome from both UK-based and international applicants. However, applicants must be eligible to work in the United Kingdom, and National Youth Choir will not cover any international travel expenses for attendance at selection events, or to enable attendance at courses and performances.

We are happy to discuss any access needs or accommodations to support you in taking part in the contract selection process. Please email Emma Coulson at **[apply@nationalyouthchoir.org.uk](mailto:apply@nationalyouthchoir.org.uk)** to arrange a discussion.

## FIND OUT MORE

You can find out more about National Youth Choir at [www.nationalyouthchoir.org.uk](http://www.nationalyouthchoir.org.uk) and via our social media and content channels:

Click the links below to find out more:

**Facebook:**

[facebook.com/nationalyouthchoir](https://facebook.com/nationalyouthchoir)

**Twitter/X:**

[twitter.com/natyouthchoir](https://twitter.com/natyouthchoir)

**YouTube:**

[youtube.com/@natyouthchoir](https://youtube.com/@natyouthchoir)

**Instagram:**

[instagram.com/nationalyouthchoir](https://instagram.com/nationalyouthchoir)

**Spotify:**

[nationalyouthchoir.org.uk/listen](https://nationalyouthchoir.org.uk/listen)

### Principal supporters & partners

Supported using public funding by



**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



PETER  
SOWERBY  
FOUNDATION

LEVERHULME  
TRUST



Garfield Weston  
FOUNDATION

**DORICO**

**BLACK  
LIVES IN  
MUSIC**