

## Rachel Mugan, MA (Cantab.)

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For the past two decades, I have worked to create real, tangible change for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people in the UK by leading, scaling, designing and advising the small charities that transform children's lives. As a charity Founder, CEO, Director, Trustee, Board Chair, and consultant, I understand the power of good organisations—and the challenges they face. As well as a deep experience of frontline service delivery, I bring strategic leadership in organisational management, recruitment and HR (working with paid staff and volunteers, including Trustee boards), and governance to ensure sustainable, high-impact outcomes.

Since volunteering at age 19 on a respite project for children on the edge of care and at risk of exclusion, I have dedicated my career to understanding the impact of poverty and complex disadvantage on families and helping to overcome it. I have worked with thousands of children in their schools and homes, often long term, supporting them through ups and downs from early childhood to adulthood. I have lived alongside young people in crisis and supported young parents and their babies. Through this work, I have developed a deep knowledge of complex disadvantage and what truly helps people to begin to recover from its effects.

At Kids Company, I was privileged to be part of pioneering therapeutic work and was in the eye of the storm when the organisation collapsed in 2015—an extraordinary learning experience. Days later I founded the charity Free to Be Kids to continue the vital work for the children left without support. My proudest achievement has been establishing and growing Free to Be Kids from the ground up—over nine years, it has become a significant force, supporting 1,300+ young people with complex needs. Having stepped away from Free to Be Kids to care for my young son, I've spent the last few years supporting a range of child-centred organisations with scaling and growth at a national level.

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## KEY SKILLS & EXPERTISE

- **Strategic Leadership & Third Sector Organisational Development** – Established, led and provided consultation to a range of small charities, led multi-year strategic plans and large change management processes to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.
  - **Scaling** – Grew Free to be Kids from inception to a turnover of c.£700,000 and created and led the development of Go Beyond in new areas of the country and with new operating models.
  - **People Management** – led large and diverse teams of staff and volunteers. Developed recruitment, training and retention strategies, implemented structured remuneration and reward frameworks and managed performance, disciplinary and grievance processes.
  - **Governance & Risk Management** – Established and chaired trustee boards, implemented risk registers, and ensured regulatory compliance, including recruiting diverse boards with lived experience representation.
  - **Fundraising, Corporate Partnerships & High-Value Donor Engagement** – Designed and executed funding strategies, securing over £2M in grant funding and partnerships with **Axis Insurance, Newton Consulting, Unilever, Children in Need, The Fore, and The Mayor of London.**
  - **Effective Communication** – Designed and implemented communication strategies: rebrands, websites, impact reporting and social media strategies. Experienced media performer.
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## RECENT CAREER EXPERIENCE

### 2025 – Ongoing: Development Director, Go Beyond

Lead the charity's growth strategy and development in new areas of the UK and am designing and implementing a new national operating model to ensure maximum efficiency and best use of staffing/resources without compromising on ethos or quality.

### 2024 – 2025: Maternity Leave and Freelance Consultancy ([www.rachelmugan.com](http://www.rachelmugan.com))

During this period of leave to care for my son, I have undertaken a variety of short-term consultancy projects for small and medium sized children's charities, including: expansion planning for children's charity Go Beyond, advising Chief Scout and Explorer, Dwayne Fields on measuring impact and applying for grant funding for his charity, WeTwo Foundation and a range of coaching and training sessions for both aspiring charity founders and existing charity leaders.

### Co-Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Free to Be Kids (2015 - 2024)

Founded and scaled a pioneering children's charity providing intensive therapeutic residential programmes for children experiencing complex disadvantage and mental health issues. Led all aspects of organisational development, strategy, and operations, ensuring sustainability and measurable impact.

**Key Achievements:**

- **Strategic Growth & Financial Management** – Designed and delivered multi-year strategic plans, expanding to 19 London boroughs and Birmingham. Managed an annual budget of c. £700,000 and led the financial reporting processes for major funders.
  - **People Management** – Led a staff team of 10 and volunteer team of c.300, including many former service users. Managed all aspects of recruitment, HR, and performance management.
  - **Corporate & High-Value Fundraising** – Developed corporate fundraising strategies, securing multi-year funding from major corporates, trusts, foundations and high-net-worth individuals, and implementing corporate volunteering initiatives tailored to funders' CSR goals.
  - **Governance & Board Leadership** – Built and initially chaired the trustee board, before stepping down to take on CEO role. Led governance audits, wrote delegation frameworks, and ensured Charity Commission compliance.
  - **Policy Engagement & Systems Change** – Lobbied government during the COVID-19 pandemic, securing policy clarifications that improved outcomes for vulnerable children.
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**Head of Summer School Operations, Oxford Royale Academy (2015-2017)**

Recruited to lead the operational delivery of a global summer school programme for 2,600 students from 100+ countries. Managed eight residential sites, their managers and a team of hundreds of educators and pastoral staff. I led on risk management, safeguarding and emergency response. I undertook this role whilst establishing Free to Be Kids during my spare time.

**Key Achievements:**

- **Crisis Management & Safeguarding** – Led child protection policies and risk management strategies, acting as Designated Safeguarding Lead. Managed the safety and repatriation of Turkish children during the 2016 military coup attempt.
  - **Stakeholder Management** – Handled high-profile client relations, including engagements with HNW parents and international partners.
  - **Operational Efficiency** – Streamlined operations, improving staff performance and risk protocols during rapid programme expansion.
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**Head of Clinical Operations and Acting Operations Director (Final Title), Kids Company (2010-2015)**

Kids Company was a dynamic charity, delivering trauma-informed multi-disciplinary support to children and young people facing complex disadvantage across London, Liverpool and Bristol. I designed and led therapeutic services to ensure they met children's needs safely, efficiently and consistently.

**Key Achievements:**

- **Service Development** – Designed, implemented and led a multidisciplinary therapeutic intervention programme within a large secondary school in a deprived area of South London, improving outcomes for at-risk students. Typical presenting issues included: extreme poverty and neglect, mental health concerns, child protection concerns, immigration, housing issues and homelessness, criminal justice and gang related issues, sexual health concerns, experience of domestic abuse, and bereavement.
- **Crisis Response & Change Management** – Transformed a South London crisis centre, streamlined operating policies with limited resources, creating a food bank and formal management team, and implementing a triage system for the vulnerable young people who arrived, often at crisis point.
- **Communications & Media Engagement** – Acted as a spokesperson, appearing on BBC News, Sky News, The Victoria Derbyshire Show, The Observer, The Sunday Times, and presenting at The House of Lords.
- **Grant Management** – Managed large grants from Cabinet Office & DfE, ensuring compliance with KPIs.

## EARLIER CAREER

- 2010-2015: Charity and Youth Sector Development Consultant (clients including: Trussell Trust, Phoenix Education Trust, British Council, Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games), UK
- 2007-2010: Youth Development Director (Final Title), Common Purpose, UK
- 2006-2007: Development Officer, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

## TRUSTEESHIPS & NON-EXEC ROLES

- **2025 – Ongoing: Non-Exec Director, Live + Breathe** – Led by musician, activist and founding member of the electropop group, Clean Bandit, Live + Breathe mobilises the communities of South London, especially young, black and minoritised people, to campaign for the clean air they need and deserve.
- **2025 – Ongoing: BBC Children in Need Impact Committee** – assessing applications from projects supporting disadvantaged children and young people and advising BBC CIN's Board of Trustees on which to fund.
- 2015-2018: Chair, Free to Be Kids
- 2010-2012: Governor, Falconbrook Primary School
- 2004-2009: Trustee and Chair, Campus Children's Holidays, (2010 – 2024: Advisory Board Member) – as an entirely volunteer run charity, Trustee roles involved managing the day-to-day operations of the charity as well as the charity's governance.

## EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 2016: Professional Development Certificate, Therapeutic Communication Skills for Work with Children (with Distinction), London Metropolitan University
- 2006: MA, Social and Political Science (2:1), University of Cambridge, UK