



Chief Executive Officer

Appointment brief • December 2025

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About us

Who we are

FoodCycle is a UK national charity that runs volunteer-powered community dining projects which combine rescued surplus food, spare kitchen space and local volunteers to provide free, hot, sociable meals. Our model sits at the intersection of food-waste reduction, anti-poverty work and loneliness prevention: shared mealtimes are the delivery mechanism that produces environmental, social and community outcomes.



We work in support of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by tackling food poverty, food waste, bringing communities together and supporting health and wellbeing.

Our work delivers against six of the UN Sustainable Development Goals: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Reduced Inequalities, Responsible Consumption and Production and Climate Action

We benefit from strong local goodwill, demonstrable impact and award recognition. Our work is nationally scaled but locally delivered through volunteer-led Projects.

Our aims

- **Connect communities**

Help strengthen and build resilient communities by bringing people together to share healthy, delicious meals.

- **Support mental health, wellbeing and reduce loneliness**

Enhance the health and mental wellbeing of all by creating welcoming spaces for people from all backgrounds and walks of life to have conversations together.

- **Nourish the hungry**

Improve nutrition and reduce hunger by cooking healthy meals for those in need, leading to improved food knowledge and changes in behaviour.

- **Promote sustainability**

Change attitudes to food and society's impact on the environment by cooking with surplus ingredients.

- **Inspire change**

Share the virtues of our community dining model and the voices of our guests to gain greater support and speed our expansion, enabling us to help more people and more communities.



What we do

Our work locally has an impact nationally as our tireless volunteers roll up their sleeves and help to:

- Connect communities
- Support mental health, wellbeing and reduce loneliness
- Nourish the hungry
- Promote sustainability
- Inspire change

In practical terms, FoodCycle delivers regular three-course community meals using rescued surplus food, supported by volunteers (chefs, hosts, food collectors). The national team is small and provides systems, safeguarding and project support; Projects are volunteer-led and local. The key strands of our work are:

- Community dining projects (main delivery).
- Volunteer mobilisation, training and retention.
- Schools pilots (recently successful in London; launched in Birmingham).
- Corporate engagement and events (Food Invention Challenges, volunteering programmes).
- Trading and earned-income pilots (our new kitchen in Manor House, and various social enterprise opportunities).
- Check-in and community support activities that reduce social isolation.

Our operational systems are strong, including a strong Salesforce CRM system, and a new finance system). We have very strong safeguarding and food-safety procedures in place.

Our culture is friendly, non-hierarchical and guest-centred: our leaders including the CEO are visible in Projects and comfortable with practical delivery.

Our impact

- Since our foundation, FoodCycle has mobilised thousands of volunteers to cook and serve hundreds of thousands of meals across dozens of communities - turning surplus food into nutritious, meat-free, three-course meals and giving both sustenance and dignity to people struggling with food poverty. In 2024 alone we saved 320 tonnes of food from going to waste, provided 162,991 community meals, and harnessed 162,810 volunteer hours. Guests report substantial improvement in wellbeing: 91% say they met people from different backgrounds, 83% feel happier after sharing a meal, and 78% feel less lonely. Many also report healthier eating - 76% eat more fruit and vegetables and 70% have positively changed their eating habits. Through our work we reduce food waste, tackle hunger and isolation, and build more connected, healthier communities.

Strategic priorities

Our current strategic priorities are to:

- Stabilise and diversify income so core delivery is sustainable.
- Define and embed a core offer that can be scaled selectively (community dining; schools; trading pilots).
- Strengthen the national centre so local Projects have reliable support and our current strong processes, procedures and safeguarding is upheld.
- Grow earned income and deepen corporate partnerships.
- Raise FoodCycle's national voice on food poverty, food waste and community-based solutions.

Our current position

FoodCycle has grown at remarkable pace, moving from around 20 community projects in 2023 to 100 by 2025, with plans to expand into Scotland next. Volunteer energy remains the heartbeat of the organisation: around 9,000 people are currently on the database, and in busy periods as many as 1,000 new volunteers sign up each month. In some of our urban locations demand is so strong that we even hold waiting lists for hosts and chefs.

Annual income sits at roughly £2m. Trading activity and corporate partnerships are on an upward trajectory, though the loss of a major corporate donor has created some income gaps. The board is watching the financial position closely, particularly the gap between income and expenditure. Staff costs make up the largest fixed spend, but finance systems are solid and trustees bring strong financial oversight.

Leadership and governance are steady and hands-on. The Chair, Mary McGrath – formerly FoodCycle’s CEO – offers both experience and operational insight, and trustees are engaged, working through dedicated committees covering governance, fundraising and trading, and audit and risk. Current CEO Sophie Tebbetts, promoted internally about two years ago and who herself carries deep organisational knowledge, will step down at the end of May; short-term leadership cover can be arranged.

Operationally, the charity has a capable but fairly lean national team. Several senior managers are still relatively new to the sector, and the fundraising function is stretched. The organisation has become more professional over recent years, with improvements such as registered kitchens and stronger safeguarding practice, though some institutional knowledge has inevitably been lost as founders and long-serving colleagues have moved on.

Challenges and opportunities

Key challenges

- **Fundraising & income volatility:** We are heavily reliant on transactional income, with few standing donors, and a recent loss of a large donor has left a funding gap. Fundraising capacity needs rebuilding and professionalising.
- **Scaling risk & infrastructure:** Rapid growth to c.100 projects has exposed capacity limits; future expansion must be matched with infrastructure and people.
- **People & leadership transition:** The CEO departure will remove substantial operational knowledge.
- **Volunteer management:** High demand and long waiting lists in some areas create expectation and reputational risk if not managed.
- **Costs:** Staff overheads are the biggest fixed cost; trading pilots and corporate income must be grown to offset volatility.

Key opportunities

- **Scale schools programme:** Successful pilots offer a route to sustainable, geographically diverse income and impact.
- **Earned income & Manor House:** Manor House kitchen and trading activity could become a reliable trading arm and commercial offering to corporates.
- **Corporate partnerships:** Strong potential for deeper corporate engagement and converting one-off activity into longer-term partnerships.
- **Advocacy & profile:** National prominence of food poverty presents opportunities to influence policy and raise profile with MPs and commissioners.
- **Strong systems and volunteer goodwill:** Salesforce and finance upgrades plus a large, committed volunteer base are solid foundations for organisational growth.

Our new Chief Executive Officer

Role summary

FoodCycle is seeking a collaborative, visible and commercially minded CEO who can steady the organisation during transition, secure its financial base and lead strategic, evidence-driven growth while protecting the volunteer-led, guest-centred culture.

What success will look like

First 6-12 months

- Agree and sign off a focused 12-month operational plan and clear milestones within a 3–5 year strategic framework.
- Stabilise the team: visible leadership across Projects, develop the SMT.
- Produce a prioritised and credible fundraising plan.
- Build trust with volunteers and key stakeholders (regional leads, project leaders) through a programme of visits and engagement.
- Work with the board / treasurer to present a credible near-term financial plan.

First 12–18 months

- Demonstrate measurable progress (i) in diversifying income (recurring individual giving, corporate partnerships, trading revenue); and (ii) against the fundraising plan.
- Establish clear thresholds for opening new Projects (infrastructure, staffing, funding).
- Progressed pilots (schools, Manor House) with commercial pathways agreed.
- Improved retention and morale in the national team and evidence of strengthened fundraising pipeline.

18 months – 3 years +

- A more balanced, predictable income mix and healthy reserves.
- Sustainable, quality growth in Projects (including Scotland) supported by strengthened national infrastructure.
- FoodCycle firmly recognised as a credible national voice on food waste, food poverty and community dining.

Culture & leadership style

- Warm, visible and practical - comfortable in Projects and with frontline delivery.
- Collaborative with an engaged board and a hands-on Chair; committed to preserving volunteer trust and guest dignity.
- Curious and evidence-driven - tests ideas at small scale and scales what works.

Job description:

Chief Executive Officer - FoodCycle

Location: FoodCycle, 82 Tanner Street, London, SE1 3GN, with regular travel to projects and to visit stakeholders as required

Contract: Full-time, permanent (35–37.5 hours/week)

Salary: circa £75,000

About the role

Lead FoodCycle through a period of consolidation and sustainable growth: stabilise leadership and finances, professionalise and diversify income, protect the volunteer-led, guest-centred model and scale proven pilots where evidence supports it.

Purpose of the role

The CEO will provide strategic and operational leadership to FoodCycle, working with the Chair and board to set a clear 3–5 year strategy and to deliver a focused 12-month plan. The postholder will be accountable for financial sustainability, income generation, safeguarding and food-safety compliance, volunteer experience, staff leadership and the charity's external profile.

Key areas of responsibility

Strategy & leadership

- Lead the co-creation and implementation of a 3–5 year strategy and an annual operational plan with measurable milestones.
- Provide visible, inclusive leadership that reflects FoodCycle's values; be present in Projects, champion guest dignity and maintain the volunteer-first culture.
- Build and develop a strong senior leadership team and ensure appropriate delegated authority and clear operational ownership.
- Foster a culture of evidence-driven decision-making and continuous improvement.

Income, commercial development & fundraising

- Own the income strategy: diversify and grow income across trusts, individual giving, corporate partnerships and trading/social enterprise.
- Professionalise corporate engagement and convert one-off activity into longer-term partnerships.
- Develop and evidence trading opportunities (e.g. Manor House kitchen, events, corporate products) to contribute a meaningful proportion of income.
- Work with the fundraising lead and board subcommittee to design and deliver a pipeline for recurring income and major donors.

Finance, risk & governance

- Ensure robust financial management, cashflow forecasting and reporting; present clear options and mitigations to the board and treasurer.
- Maintain and strengthen risk management, compliance and internal controls; act as accountable officer for safeguarding and health & safety.
- Support and work with trustees, prepare papers for board and subcommittee meetings, and implement board decisions effectively.

Operations, safeguarding & quality

- Ensure the national office provides consistent, high-quality support to volunteer-led Projects (operational guidance, safeguarding, food-safety, policies and training).
- Set clear thresholds and go/no-go criteria for opening new Projects to protect quality and reputation.
- Oversee systems and data-use (CRM/finance) to inform decision-making and capture impact.

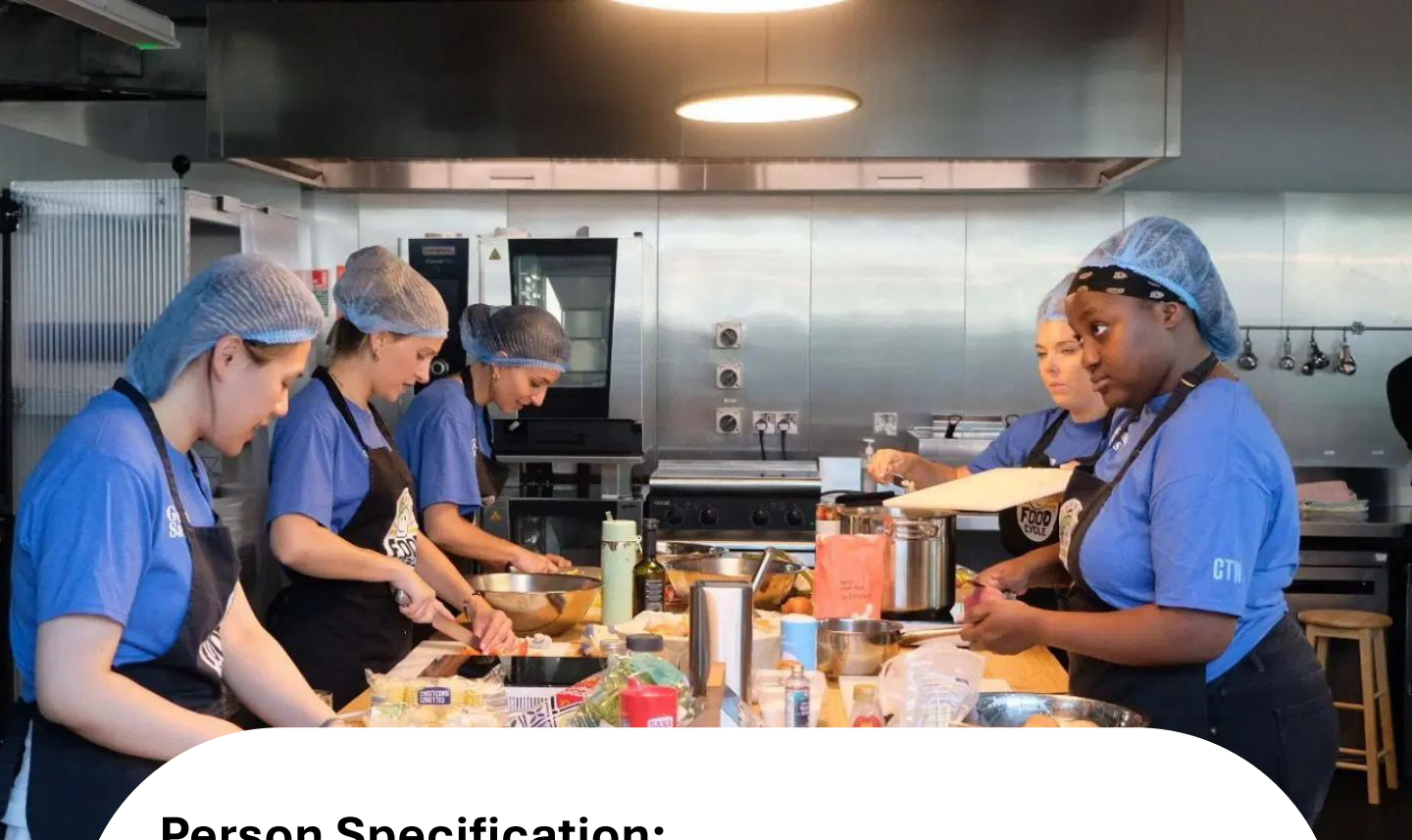
Volunteers & programme delivery

- Protect and grow volunteer trust and engagement: regular Project visits, clear communications, and appropriate recognition and development.
- Ensure the operational model remains guest-centred and responsive to local need.
- Strengthen approaches to recruiting project leaders in harder-to-reach areas.

External affairs, advocacy & profile

- Be FoodCycle's principal ambassador: build relationships with corporate partners, local authorities, MPs and sector bodies.
- Translate impact and operational insight into compelling evidence and policy influence.
- Raise FoodCycle's profile to support fundraising, partnerships and national credibility.





Person Specification:

Essential experience, skills & knowledge

- Senior leadership experience delivering and scaling people-facing services, with evidence of stabilising operations and improving performance.
- Proven track record of generating income across multiple streams - trusts, corporates, individual giving and/or trading - and converting partnerships into sustained support.
- Strong financial stewardship: comfortable owning budgets, forecasting, managing cashflow and discussing risk with the board and treasurer.
- Excellent people and change management: building high-performing, cross-functional teams.
- Demonstrable ability to work with large volunteer cohorts - recruiting, motivating and protecting volunteer trust and engagement.
- Data-driven performance management: sets clear KPIs, uses CRM/finance systems and translates impact into compelling evidence for funders.
- Strong stakeholder, partnership and political navigation skills: builds relationships with corporates, local authorities, MPs and delivery partners.
- High-quality communication and ambassadorial skills - public speaking, media handling and storytelling for supporters and policy audiences.
- Comfortable working with an engaged board: shapes papers, provides clear recommendations and receives robust challenge.

Essential personal qualities

- Values-driven - passionate about food justice, dignity for guests and volunteer leadership.
- Visible, warm and pragmatic - willing to be hands-on in Projects and comfortable with frontline delivery.
- Decisive and resilient - able to have difficult conversations with compassion.
- Curious and analytical - asks “why?” and pilots intelligently rather than pursuing untested scale.
- Collaborative and politically savvy - works well with volunteers, staff, trustees and corporate stakeholders.
- Organised communicator - clear priorities, delivers on commitments and builds trust quickly.
- Right to work in the UK and satisfactory DBS checks will be required.

Desirable experience & knowledge

- Direct experience in the food, community food, public health or supermarkets/food industry (commercial or charity side).
- Experience of taking pilots to scale (for example schools or regional roll-outs) and setting go/no-go criteria.
- Track record in developing trading/social-enterprise activity and meeting commercial targets.
- Demonstrable success embedding EDI in service design and internal culture.
- Experience of influencing policy or convening sector partners using evidence of impact.





Terms of Appointment

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| Job title: | Chief Executive Officer (CEO) |
| Salary: | Circa £75,000 |
| Contract: | Permanent |
| Hours: | Full-time (typically 35–37.5 hours/week) with regular evening attendance for events as required |
| Location: | FoodCycle, 82 Tanner Street, London, SE1 3GN (flexible working) |
| Reports to: | Chair and Board of Trustees |
| Holiday entitlement: | 26.5 working days (this includes 3.5 days for the Christmas close down) plus additional holiday for length of service, up to a maximum of 30 days. |
| Pension: | Staff are automatically enrolled after three months into our pension scheme unless you choose to opt out. |
| Other benefits: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training: We believe in the development of our staff - we are committed to providing relevant training and development opportunities to all staff.• Team away days and socials: With a workforce based all over the UK we have annual all team in-person, away day, team get-togethers, regional socials, virtual all team check-ins and informal on-line catch-ups – we’ve even started a virtual book club!• Flexible working: We encourage flexible working and allow staff to manage their own schedules. Some roles will require occasional evening and weekend working.• Health Care: Staff can claim money back on healthcare bills and includes access to telephone counselling and online GP appointments.• Wellbeing Hour: Staff are encouraged to one hour per week (on top of their regular break time) to use for their personal wellbeing. This could involve taking a walk, going to the gym or having a longer lunch break. |

How to Apply

If you would like to apply for the Chief Executive Officer role at FoodCycle, please send the following:

- An up-to-date CV outlining your employment history, academic and professional qualifications, and contact details
- A completed Registration Form
- A Supporting Statement (no more than 2 x A4 pages), which:
 - Demonstrates how you meet the criteria outlined in the Person Specification
 - Explains your interest in becoming the Chief Executive Officer of FoodCycle

Please submit your completed application to **executive@harrishill.co.uk** to arrive by **9am on Monday 19th January 2026**

Timeline

Applications close: 9am, Monday 19th January 2026

Shortlisting: w/c 26th January 2026

First stage interviews (remote): w/c 2nd February 2026

Second stage interviews (in person in London): w/c 9th February 2026

Please state in your application if you have any commitments during the interview period that may coincide with these dates, or if you require any special provisions should you be called forward for interview. For any queries or to arrange a confidential conversation, please contact **Jenny Hills at Harris Hill** (executive@harrishill.co.uk) with your availability.

Find out more about FoodCycle:

- Our website: [FoodCycle](#)
- Our page on the Charity Commission's website: [Charity Register](#)
- Our Social Impact Report 2023 (PDF) - recent impact data, case studies and performance metrics: [FoodCycle](#)
- Schools / community meals (schools programme page): [FoodCycle](#)
- Community meals / find a local project — location finder and guest information: [FoodCycle](#)
- Our Trustees: [FoodCycle+1](#)



Advertisement

Chief Executive Officer - FoodCycle

Location: Vauxhall, London (flexible working; regular travel to Projects and for meeting with key stakeholders required)

Salary: circa £75,000

Contract: Permanent, full-time (35–37.5 hours per week)

Are you ready to lead FoodCycle through a period of consolidation and sustainable growth, protecting its volunteer-led, guest-centred model while building reliable income streams and scaling proven pilots?

About FoodCycle

FoodCycle is a national charity running volunteer-powered community dining projects that combine rescued surplus food, spare kitchen space and local volunteers to deliver free, hot, sociable three-course meals. Our work sits at the intersection of food-waste reduction, food-poverty relief and loneliness prevention. Nationally scaled but locally delivered, FoodCycle has grown rapidly, enjoys strong volunteer goodwill and is developing promising trading and schools pilots to strengthen sustainability.

As our next CEO you will:

- Shape strategy & impact - co-create and implement a clear 3–5 year strategy and a focused 12-month operational plan with measurable milestones.
- Stabilise leadership & culture - provide visible, warm and practical leadership across Projects; develop the senior team and protect volunteer trust.
- Secure financial sustainability - own the income strategy, diversify revenue across trusts, individual giving, corporate partnerships and trading, and present credible cashflow plans to the board.
- Build commercial & trading capacity - drive Manor House and other trading pilots towards viable, repeatable income models.
- Safeguard quality & risk - ensure robust safeguarding, food-safety and operational thresholds for opening new Projects.
- Raise profile & partnerships - act as FoodCycle's principal ambassador to corporates, funders, local authorities and policy audiences.

Who you are

- A senior leader with experience stabilising and growing people-facing, delivery-focused organisations.
- Proven at generating income from multiple streams, with commercial fluency to develop simple trading models and convert corporate engagement into lasting partnerships.
- Financially literate - comfortable owning budgets, forecasting and discussing risk with trustees.



- Excellent at people and change management - able to build and motivate small national teams and large volunteer cohorts.
- Data-driven, curious and pragmatic - tests pilots, embeds what works and sets clear go/no-go criteria for scale.
- Values-driven and visible - passionate about food justice, guest dignity and volunteer leadership.
- Right to work in the UK and satisfactory DBS checks required.

Why FoodCycle?

- Lead a nationally recognised, volunteer-led movement tackling food waste, food poverty and social isolation.
- Play a pivotal role growing promising trading and schools pilots to create sustainable income.
- Work with an engaged Chair and committed board, and a small, passionate national team.
- Be part of a friendly, non-hierarchical culture where leaders are visible in Projects.

For full details of the role including how to apply, please download the full appointment brief. For an informal and confidential conversation about this position, please contact Jenny Hills at Harris Hill at executive@harrishill.co.uk with times to speak and (optional but appreciated) a CV or professional profile which will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Closing date for applications: 9am, Monday 19th January 2026

As leading charity recruitment specialists and a certified B Corp, Harris Hill is committed to high and ever-improving standards of equitable and inclusive recruitment. We actively welcome applications from all sections of the community regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexuality and other protected characteristics.