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## **Leading autism charity appoints four new Trustees**

Autism Unlimited has announced the appointment of four new Trustees who will play a key role in guiding the charity to deliver opportunities for autistic children, adults and their families.

The charity, based near Christchurch in Dorset, provides specialist education, care and support and operates Portfield School for primary and secondary school students, Sixth Form and Futures for young people, aged 19-25.

CEO Siún Cranny said: "Since its inception over 50 years ago, Autism Unlimited has existed to support and empower autistic children, adults and their families. We partner with them to find successful solutions through bespoke education, independent living skills and careers.

"Our Trustees play an integral role in our success, overseeing our assets, both physical such as property, and intangible, such as our reputation.

"They are our 'guardians of purpose' and their decisions ensure the needs of our students, residents and their families remain at the forefront of all we do.

"We are therefore very excited to welcome our new Trustees, and their incredible expertise and passion to the Autism Unlimited family."

The new Trustees: Jan Cresswell, Melanie Foster, Emma Williams and Jan Thurgood, all bring extensive personal or professional experience of autism and/or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) education.

Jan Thurgood has experience of autism through her career in children's and adult social services and her personal life. She is passionate about enabling children and adults to fulfil their potential and providing the best possible support and development opportunities to staff.

Emma Williams has both professional and personal experience of autism and has a keen interest in enabling people to reach their full potential and develop skills in their local community, particularly in the area of employment and training.

Jan Cresswell aims to draw on her education leadership experience in her Trusteeship and is keen to see Autism Unlimited become a leading national voice in training employers and shaping inclusive, supportive communities where people living with autism will thrive.

And Melanie Foster also brings a wealth of experience, having begun her career as a special educational needs teacher in London and recently having been part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Autism as Education Development Lead with the National Autistic Society.

Melanie said: "I have always been committed to social justice and enabling all students to feel valued, safe and secure.

"I very much look forward to working with the other new Trustees to contribute to the vital work and continuing success of Autism Unlimited."

Ends

Picture caption: **Guardians of purpose** - (From top left and clockwise) Autism Unlimited's new Trustees: Melanie Foster, Emma Williams, Jan Thurgood and Jan Cresswell.

[www.autism-unlimited.org](http://www.autism-unlimited.org)

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