

CHARLESTON

JOB TITLE:	Operations Manager (Firle)
REPORTING TO:	Senior Leadership Team
DIRECT REPORTS:	Visitor Assistants and Volunteers
LOCATION:	Charleston in Firle (BN8 6LL)
HOURS:	37.5 hours per week. Primarily Wednesday to Sunday. Some evening, bank holiday and events work will be required.

ABOUT CHARLESTON

Charleston is a place that brings people together to engage with art and ideas.

The modernist home and studio of the painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, Charleston was a gathering point for some of the 20th century's most radical artists, writers and thinkers known collectively as the Bloomsbury Group. It is where they came together to imagine society differently and has always been a place where art and experimental thinking are at the centre of everyday life.

Today, Charleston presents a dynamic year-round programme of exhibitions, festivals and events across its historic Sussex home and Charleston in Lewes. In Lewes, visitors can explore exhibitions, browse the shop, enjoy the café, and participate in community projects, artist-led workshops and educational programmes for schools and higher education groups. Opened in 2023, Charleston in Lewes is the first step towards a permanent Bloomsbury gallery that will bring 100 of the most important Bloomsbury works back to Sussex.

The Charleston Trust was formed in 1980 and is responsible for the care of Charleston's house, interiors and collections, and for opening its sites to visitors. It is an independent charitable trust with a commercial trading arm and currently receives no regular public funding.

MAIN PURPOSE OF ROLE

We are seeking an energetic and highly motivated individual with excellent interpersonal skills to oversee the smooth and safe running of our Charleston in Firle site which includes the galleries, café, shop and all public facing spaces ensuring consistently high standards of visitor experience while supporting the Trust's wider development goals.

The Operations Manager will work to create a positive and supportive working environment for our Visitor Assistants and

CHARLESTON

volunteers, oversee the smooth running of our sites, and provide practical hands-on problem solving.

You will lead the visitor experience at Charleston in Firle, the role requires a hands-on approach with strong operational judgement, a practical mindset, and the ability to balance heritage sensitivity with commercial and audience development ambitions. You will also play a key role in shaping how the site grows, helping to increase footfall, improve visitor experience, and maximise the use of spaces within a site that is actively evolving.

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Visitor Experience and Operational Oversight

- Support the day-to-day delivery of visitor operations and oversee the smooth running of the café, retail and visitor-facing spaces, ensuring a consistently high standard of visitor experience and presentation.
- Support and supervise Visitor Assistants, ensuring staff are clear on daily priorities, responsibilities and tasks, and feel confident and supported in their roles.
- Deliver daily briefings and act as the main on-site point of contact for all front of house staff, including café team throughout the day.
- Act as the main on-site point of contact for operational and visitor-facing queries, troubleshooting issues and supporting the timely and professional resolution of escalated visitor complaints, escalating where appropriate.
- Act as the first point of contact for operational and visitor-facing queries, troubleshooting issues and escalating where appropriate.
- Coordinate opening and closing procedures, ensuring buildings, grounds, and visitor facilities are secure, operational, and visitor-ready, while also carrying out regular site presentation checks to maintain clean, welcoming visitor routes and ensuring signage is up to date and presentable.
- Oversee accessibility across the site, ensuring visitors with access requirements are appropriately supported.
- Manage the ticketing and CRM system for house and exhibition admissions, providing training and support to staff, and encouraging Gift Aid and membership conversions.
- Support the planning and delivery of group visits.
- Work closely with colleagues across the organisation to ensure the efficient delivery of retail, catering, visitor experience and public programme activities.
- Support development of new visitor experiences and activities.
- Support audience research, including surveys and feedback analysis

Retail

- Support front of house with retail enquiries and customer service, while coordinating Visitor Assistants in stock receipt, delivery, and stockroom organisation to ensure accuracy and smooth operations.

CHARLESTON

- Oversee stock handling and reporting, monitoring for discrepancies and escalating where necessary, and support the effective use of Lightspeed and Shopify to maintain accurate transactions, stock management, and reporting.

Staffing and Team Support

- Lead rota planning and staffing coordination across sites in collaboration with the Operations Manager and Venue Manager, ensuring balanced coverage and effective daily operations.
- Supervise Visitor Assistants and volunteers during opening hours, supporting induction, training, development, and performance management, including regular appraisals.
- Work closely with the Volunteer Manager to maintain appropriate volunteer coverage and foster a positive, inclusive team culture.
- Collaborate across retail, café, exhibitions, and events teams to deliver a seamless visitor experience, while overseeing operational needs such as staff room provision and supplies.

Health, Safety and Site Operations

- Conduct regular inspections of the building and grounds, addressing issues promptly and escalating where necessary.
- Support the safe evacuation of buildings in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure compliance with all health and safety policies and procedures across the site.
- Act as designated First Aider, Fire Marshal and Safeguarding Officer.
- Record and report all accidents, incidents and near misses in line with organisational procedures, escalating to the Head of Exhibitions and the Health & Safety Group as appropriate.

General Duties

- Collaborate with the Operations Manager at Lewes to plan Front of House operations, maintaining oversight of the overall Front of House function. Hold regular meetings to agree priorities and ensure consistent delivery across sites.
- Attend one Tuesday morning staff meeting per month.
- Uphold Charleston's values and contribute to an inclusive and positive workplace culture.
- Participate in relevant training and continuing professional development opportunities.
- Ensure compliance with organisational policies, GDPR requirements and relevant legislation.
- Undertake any other duties reasonably required by your line manager.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

- A passion to work with people from all sections of the community.
- Strong IT and trouble shooting skills.
- Excellent written and verbal skills with a meticulous attention

CHARLESTON

- to detail.
- Excellent organisational and administrative skills.
- Proven ability to manage and prioritise a diverse workload.
- Ability to self-start and work on initiative.
- Experience of supervising a team in a heritage venue or arts space in a customer facing role.
- Clear understanding of the role of volunteers and their impact within an organisation.
- Excellent interpersonal skills and the ability to build strong relationships with colleagues, volunteers and key stakeholders.
- The ability to respond and adapt to challenges and emergency situations.
- Flexible, hands-on approach to working in a team.
- Good understanding of the Equality Act and a passion for accessibility.
- Experience of leading emergency procedures.
- Able to access Charleston in Firle site across whole year.

Desirable skills and experience

- Experience using CRM database and ticketing systems.
- Interest in art, galleries, museums, and literature.
- Experience working with a large group of mixed contract types and volunteers.
- Experience with creating a daily rota and staffing.
- Knowledge of local walking routes, gardens, points of interest, and the surrounding area to support visitor engagement and enquiries.

HOW TO APPLY

Charleston is committed to equal and equitable opportunities, and to becoming a workforce that represents the diversity of our community. We positively encourage applications from Disabled people, Global Majority people, and working-class people, as people from these groups are currently underrepresented in our organisation.

Application deadline: 9am, Wednesday 8 July 2026

Interview: date: Wednesday 22 July 2026

To apply, please email a covering letter of no more than 1 page detailing how you meet the person specification, along with a CV to jobs@charleston.org.uk.

Please also complete a voluntary equal opportunity monitoring form [here](#).

All positions at Charleston are offered subject to the following conditions:

- Receipt of satisfactory references.
- Proof that you are legally entitled to work in the UK.

CHARLESTON FEST

For further questions about the role, please email Dr Darren Clarke,
Head of Collections and Research: d.clarke@charleston.org.uk.