

Candidate Information Chair of Trustees 2023



Introduction

Dear Applicant,

I am delighted that you are interested in joining VoiceAbility's Board of Trustees. VoiceAbility makes sure that people are heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to have their say in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.



I am immensely proud to have contributed to VoiceAbility's development for over 7 years. The strength of the organisation was shown by our response during the pandemic. We rose to the challenge, maintaining vital support to our clients, as well as providing leadership and resources to strengthen people's voices and rights nationally.

We recognise that our services are needed now more than ever and that will continue over the coming years. With an effective board, accomplished leadership team and skilled staff, the organisation is well placed to achieve yet more. To help to achieve this we are looking to further develop the board through the recruitment of a new Chair.

We are looking for candidates who think strategically, bring proven business skills and judgement, and can demonstrate a strong understanding of charity governance. You will be an experienced and inclusive leader, comfortable with constructive challenge and debate and are able to encourage that in others whilst fostering a collaborative board environment. We are especially interested in candidates who bring social care or health sector leadership - including an understanding of safeguarding at a governance level, or applicants who draw on their direct experience of using health, social care, or welfare services.

An empathy with our values, commitment to our core purpose and high level of competence for the role is far more important than any specific professional sector background. Trustees are volunteers and are highly valued for their contribution to our Charity, your contributions will allow you to make a real difference to VoiceAbility's work and reach in our communities. It will also provide the opportunity to use your connections, professional skills and life experience to make a demonstrable impact.

If you recognise yourself in this description and feel inspired by VoiceAbility's potential to enable people to have a voice, then we very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Sue Brown
Vice Chairperson

To meet the rest of our Board of Trustees, please click [here](#)

Why join us?

VoiceAbility exists to have a tangible positive impact on people's lives. People like Jake, whose care agency was trying to move him out of his home. Jake has a learning disability, and the care agency wasn't respecting his wishes. Our advocate ensured he was able to stay in the home he loved and remained independent. For more stories, please follow this [link](#).

VoiceAbility works with people who are often the most marginalised in society and by joining us as Chair you will have the opportunity to contribute to our impact. As well as the personal satisfaction of giving something back, volunteering with us in this way will afford the opportunity for you to utilise and develop your existing skills to grow our charity.

As well as working with people directly to make our society better, fairer and more inclusive, VoiceAbility has a national influence, shaping policy and having impact on decision makers. We would love you to join our journey.

Who we are

We support people to be heard when it matters most. We've been supporting people to be heard in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing for over 40 years. We're an independent charity and one of the UK's largest providers of advocacy and involvement services.

VoiceAbility came from a merger between two pioneering organisations, Advocacy Partners and Speaking Up in 2010. Advocacy Partners (formerly Advocacy Alliance) was founded in reaction to abuse and conditions in learning disability hospitals and was the UK's first advocacy organisation. Speaking Up created award-winning user led initiatives and products.

Our employee base has grown by 25% in the last 12 months and our ambition is to continue this growth and to develop the services offered.

For a short animation with sign language and subtitles on the big picture of what VoiceAbility does please follow this [link](#).

Our aims

We believe that everyone, irrespective of situation, illness or disability, has a right to:

- Be heard and respected
- Have the same choice, control, and freedom as any other person
- Be safe from violence, discrimination, harm, or abuse

Everything we do is focused on achieving these aims.

About VoiceAbility

We support over 30,000 people across England and Scotland every year. We work with all kinds of people of all ages. Many of our services are specifically for people with physical and learning disabilities, mental health issues or long-term conditions.

We employ over 400 members of staff and have an income of £11m per annum, overwhelmingly from contracts with Local Authorities and the NHS.

Our values

Passionate

Because we are passionate, we:

- Are committed to delivering high quality support
- Make what we offer accessible to all
- Work with policy-makers to safeguard and strengthen people's rights

Empowering

Because we are empowering, we:

- Support people to speak up for themselves and grow in confidence
- Equip people to understand and exercise their rights
- Treat people as individuals with their own unique strengths

Collaborative

Because we are collaborative, we:

- Involve people we support in shaping our organisation and what we do
- Are easy to talk to, considerate and constructive
- Ask for and respond to feedback so that we can improve

Honest

Because we are honest, we:

- Mean what we say and do what we promise
- Make everything clear and transparent
- Maintain independence, confidentiality and professionalism

Resourceful

Because we are resourceful, we:

- Focus on solutions
- Try out new ideas
- Achieve the most we can with the resources we have

Our vision

We will:

- Deliver the best possible quality of support
- Be the provider of choice for the services we offer
- Be the source of authority for expert insight on voice and rights
- Be the place to work or volunteer with, for anyone who shares our aims



Our services

Advocacy services

We are best known for our advocacy services. Advocates are independent professionals who work with people to help them understand their options, know their rights and say what they want. This helps to make sure that people are involved as much as possible in decisions about their lives, health and care, or are represented where required. Advocacy is a statutory right for eligible people. This includes people detained under the Mental Health Act and people who are deemed under the Mental Capacity Act to lack capacity to make decisions about where they will live or the medical treatment they will receive.

An advocate can support someone to:

- Communicate their views and wishes
- Understand their rights
- Understand any processes and decisions they are subject to
- Understand the options they have
- Challenge a decision

Even when someone can't tell their advocate what they want, our advocates will use a range of approaches to establish their views and wishes as far as possible and secure their rights.

Peer mentoring

We also offer support through peer advocates, peer supporters and peer mentors. A peer mentor is a trained volunteer who has had similar experiences to the people they are supporting. They listen and provide emotional support. They also share their own experience and insights, advice and encouragement.

Peer mentors especially benefit people who have learnt not to trust professionals and who feel professionals cannot understand their situation. Peer advocacy can help them to open up, find support and develop their own solutions.

Group advocacy, service user involvement and building community capacity

We support people to meet together, identify common issues, share their experiences and take action. This often involves groups meeting with decision-makers to share their views. Others have developed campaigns that have helped to shape services and solve community issues.



Our strategy

What we're doing to achieve our vision between now and 2025:

1. Diversify the services we offer

Advocacy is crucial but not the only tool people need to be heard and have their rights respected, so we'll widen the range of services we offer that help achieve the same goal.

2. Improve our organisational capability

To do this we will focus on 5 areas:

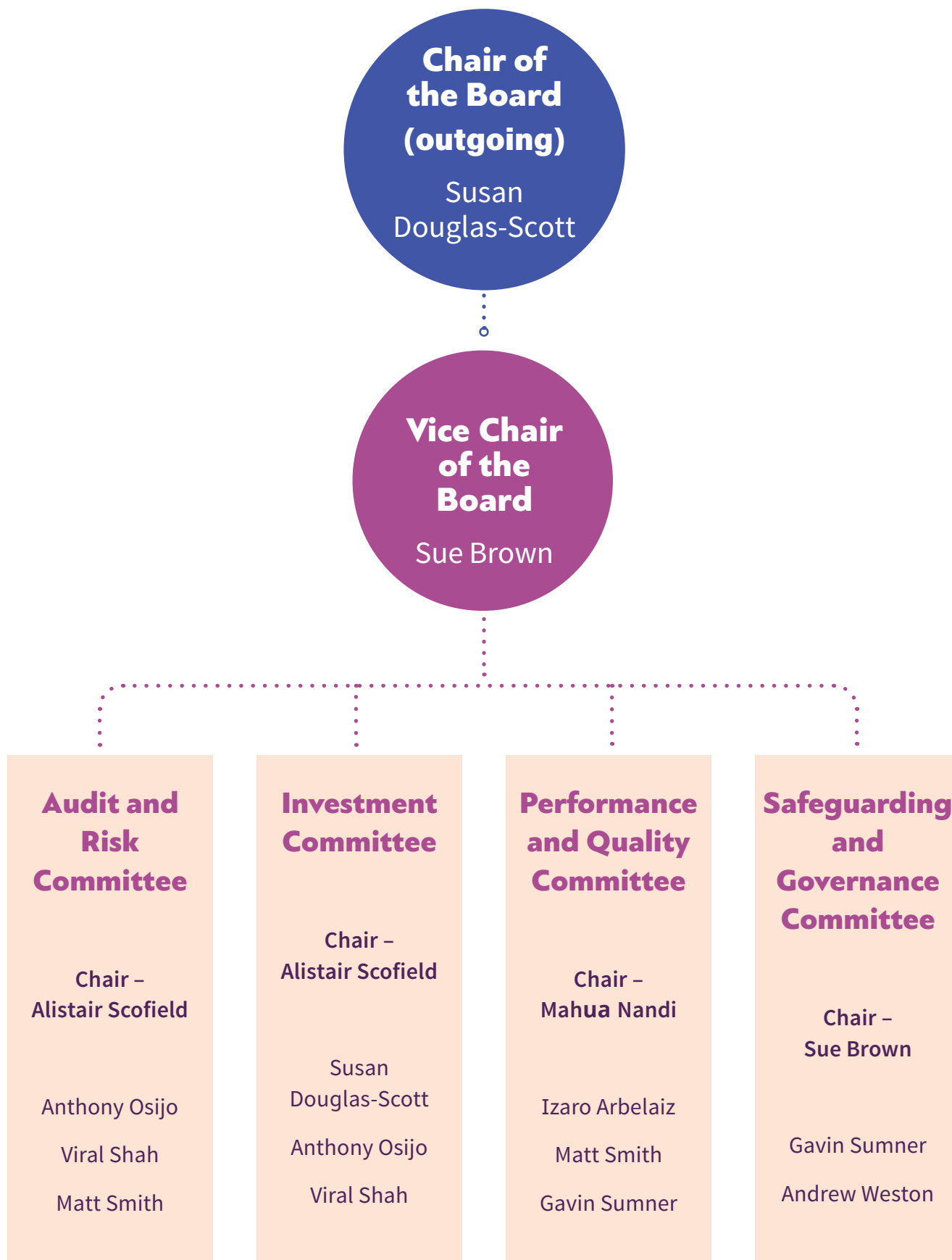
- **Value our people** – create an even more positive working culture and clearer opportunities for staff development and progression
- **Build the basics** - increase clarity and consistency across all our standards, policies, systems and processes whilst maintaining person centred service delivery to individuals
- **Drive quality** - improve our ability to evidence our impact and outcomes
- **Lead the market** - reflect the high quality of our services in how we look and speak as an organisation and in the digital tools we offer
- **Grow authority** - continue to ensure that people's voices are heard, and their rights respected in local and national policy decisions

Upcoming Board Dates

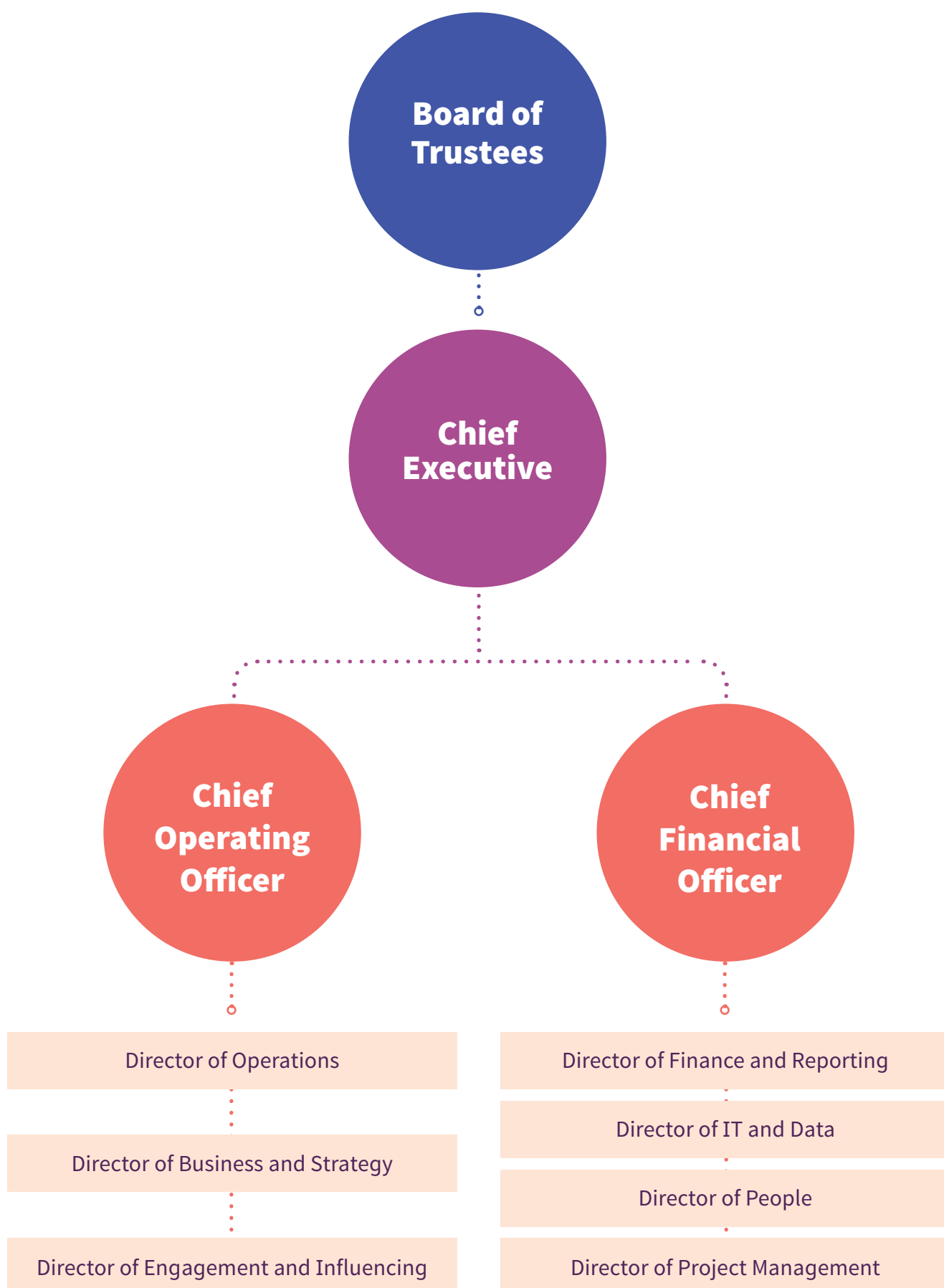
30th January 2024



Our Board



Our Trustees



Role description



Board meetings per year:

Four board meetings per annum. Board meetings tend to be online, but face-to-face, or hybrid meetings may take place from time to time. There would also be a commitment to committee meetings, a board strategy or development day and site visits.

Time commitment:

Approximately two days per month. Please note that this time commitment will be spread across multiple days and is likely to be cyclical.

Remuneration:

This role is unremunerated. Travel expenses as well as other out of pocket expenses directly incurred as part of official Board business will be reimbursed.

Key purpose of the role

The Chair is a critical role within VoiceAbility, providing facilitative leadership of the Board, supporting the delivery of impact and high-quality services empowering clients and their voices. They will be responsible for the effective governance of the charity, ensuring that the Board works collaboratively, enabling each Trustee to fulfil their duties and responsibilities and holding them to account for doing so. The Chair will be responsible for facilitating the Board's strategic thinking and decision-making, ensuring robust governance, regular horizon scanning and assessment of future risks and opportunities.

The Chair will provide support and constructive challenge to the Chief Executive and their senior management team as they work to achieve the ambitious objectives agreed with the Board.

Key accountabilities

Strategic Leadership

- Provide leadership to VoiceAbility's Board, ensuring that the charity has maximum impact for its beneficiaries
- Drive improvements in the Board's own performance to build an effective, high performing team
- Facilitate ambitious strategic discussion and decision making on the board
- Ensure that the Board operates within its charitable objectives and sets a clear strategic direction for VoiceAbility

Relationship with the Chief Executive and the wider management team

- Establish and build a strong, effective and constructive working relationship with the Chief Executive, ensuring they are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives
- Ensure regular contact with the Chief Executive and develop and maintain an open and supportive relationship within which each can speak openly about opportunities, issues and challenges
- Ensure an annual appraisal and remuneration review for the Chief Executive takes place

Governance

- Develop the knowledge and capability of the Board of Trustees
- Ensure an effective and proactive safeguarding culture throughout the organisation
- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees so that trustees can
 - embody the mission and values of VoiceAbility
 - monitor performance in relation to key strategic activities
 - ensure that VoiceAbility's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of probity and performance as required by the Charity Commission and other regulatory bodies
 - manage financial and reputational risk, ensure effective and appropriate use of resources and the financial stability of VoiceAbility
 - fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the effective governance of VoiceAbility

Efficiency and Effectiveness

- Chair Board meetings effectively and efficiently, bringing impartiality and objectivity to the decision making process
- Work closely with the Chief Executive to give direction to Board decision-making and to ensure that meetings are well planned, meaningful and reflect the responsibilities of Trustees
- Monitor that decisions taken at meetings are implemented

Person specification

Priority

- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team and to convene a Board of Trustees to define and deliver a common vision and set of objectives
- A wholehearted commitment to the organisation and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort
- A steadfast commitment to fairness and to promoting diversity, equality and inclusion throughout the organisation
- Commitment to ensuring that clients' voices are represented throughout the organisation, including at board level, and that the governance of VoiceAbility is accessible and transparent
- Strong governance experience

Essential

- An appreciation of, and empathy for, the issues facing VoiceAbility's clients
- A strong social impact focus coupled with a strategic mindset, strong financial acumen, business understanding and the ability to work at pace
- A team-oriented approach to problem solving and to governance
- A sense of humility and a collaborative working approach
- Good, independent judgement and an ability to think creatively and assess opportunities
- A commitment to and awareness of safeguarding
- Honesty and integrity, a willingness and ability to act in the best interests of the charity at all times

Desirable

- Previous Chair experience
- Demonstrable understanding of civil society
- An appetite for embracing risk and driving ambition
- Lived experience as a disabled person and/or of using social care or long-term health services



Queries

If you have any queries on any aspect of the appointment process, need additional information, or would like to have an informal discussion, please contact Melissa Baxter at Trustees Unlimited/Russam in the first instance at **melissa.baxter@russam.co.uk / 07789 985229**. We are committed to safer recruitment practice and pre-selection checks will be undertaken before any appointment is confirmed. The role is subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

How to apply

To apply to become the Chair of the Board of VoiceAbility please provide:

- A copy of your CV with details of two referees (they will not be contacted without your consent)
- A supporting statement outlining your suitability and motivations for applying

Please ensure that your application fully addresses the requirements for the role. So that we can ensure that everyone can participate fairly in the recruitment process, please let us know if you will require any special provision as a result of any disability should you be called for interview.

Finally, please ensure that you have included your telephone numbers, as well as any dates when you will not be available or might have difficulty with the indicative timetable.

All applications should be sent to applications@trustees-unlimited.co.uk with your name and 'VoiceAbility' in the subject line.

Recruitment Timetable

Deadline for applications: Monday 13th November 2023

Interviews: Week commencing 4th December 2023

All interviews will be held via Microsoft Teams. Should video conference not be practical, please still apply and we will discuss reasonable adjustments to the interview process if you are selected.

VoiceAbility recognises that Boards from a diverse background perform better. We are committed to achieving greater diversity in our board, and welcome applications regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

In applying for this role, you agree for your details to be used in accordance with VoiceAbility's data protection policy.

VoiceAbility

☎ 0300 303 1660

✉ helpline@voiceability.org

🌐 voiceability.org

🐦 [@VoiceAbility](https://twitter.com/VoiceAbility)



About VoiceAbility

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