



Trustee Recruitment Pack

**Empowering Voices.
Protecting Rights.
Changing Lives.**

Contents

Message from Chair	3
About Vocal	4
History and Impact	5
The Board of Trustees	9
Trustee Role & Impact	11
Role Requirements	12
How to Apply	14

Message from the Chair

Thank you for your interest in becoming a trustee of Vocal Advocacy.

We are a small but passionate organisation supporting people with learning disabilities and communication difficulties across South and West Devon (including Torbay). For over 30 years, we have helped people exercise their rights, make choices, and live independent lives.

Our work is built on strong values: empowering people, promoting independence, protecting rights, and being inclusive.

Our members – people with lived experience – are central to everything we do, contributing to strategy, governance, and advocacy campaigns.

We are seeking new trustees who share our commitment and can help shape our future. Whatever your background, if you are passionate about fairness, inclusion, and giving people a voice, we'd love to hear from you.

Janet Regan
Chair

About Vocal Advocacy

Vocal Advocacy is a small but highly effective independent charity supporting adults with learning disabilities and communication difficulties across South and West Devon. **We help people understand and exercise their rights, make informed choices, and speak up for themselves.**

While our specialism is working with people who have a learning disability, we also support a wider range of groups when funding allows, including people with autism, brain injuries, physical disabilities, mental health issues, older people and those with dementia.

We are proud to have achieved the **Advocacy Quality Performance Mark (QPM)** – the only national quality standard for independent advocacy – on two occasions. The QPM is awarded following a rigorous process of self-assessment, external review and on-site inspection.

We are now preparing for our third assessment, reflecting our commitment to consistently high standards and a strong reputation for quality.

How we Work

In 2022, we were one of just 15 organisations nationally chosen by the Henry Smith Charity to deliver a strategic programme evaluating the cost benefits of advocacy for people with learning disabilities. This funding runs until 2026 and has already shown that investment in advocacy not only benefits individuals but also saves significant public funds.

Vocal is a user-led organisation. Our members – “experts by experience” – are voting members of the charity and play an active role in shaping our direction. Co-production is embedded throughout our work, from local members’ groups to our AGM and whole-organisation meetings.

“Members who use services are involved in all areas of the organisation and there is a real sense of true coproduction and shared ownership of Vocal as an organisation.”

– QPM Assessor

Our Impact

747

People empowered through general advocacy

151

Parents supported through child protection advocacy

74

Accredited training courses delivered

“Vocal Advocacy helped me find my voice and take back control of my life.”

– Client

Our History

Vocal Advocacy began over 30 years ago when a group of healthcare professionals came together, concerned that people with learning disabilities had little say in their own lives. Back then, many lived in large institutions, and their wishes were often overlooked or ignored.

Since then, we've seen big changes—more people living independently and accessing community-based support. But too many still face discrimination, isolation, and decisions made without them.

That's why Vocal Advocacy exists. Our role is to stand beside people, amplify their voices, and ensure they're heard—whether in care planning meetings, in court, or simply in everyday life.

We're here to make sure everyone has the chance to be listened to, respected, and in control of their own future.

“Sometimes I feel I can't find the right word and it is hard to voice my opinions. I want to say something but worry it might be wrong. An advocate gets to know me and knows what I mean. They help me find the right words so I can get my message across.”

– Vocal client

Our Funding

As a small organisation, sustainable funding has always been a challenge, since advocacy must remain free at the point of delivery.

Most of our income has traditionally come from local authority contracts and grants.

We are a strategic partner in the **Devon Advocacy Consortium**, delivering Care Act and statutory advocacy across South and West Devon under a contract secured until 2030.

Expanding and sustaining wider services has been a priority in recent years.

Through new grant funding and an income-generating project supporting parents with learning disabilities in care proceedings, Vocal has grown significantly.

While funding challenges remain, this is an exciting time to join the board as we build on strong foundations.

Vocal Board of Trustees

Vocal is an incorporated charity, and all trustees are also company directors.

As the organisation's governing body, the Board of Trustees is the final decision-making authority.

It is collectively responsible for setting the charity's vision, safeguarding its reputation and financial security, and ensuring full compliance with charity and company law.

The Board works in partnership with our members, staff and volunteers, embedding co-production at every level.

Trustees focus on strategy and oversight, while day-to-day operations are delegated to the Chief Officer and advocacy team, who deliver services on the Board's behalf.

Trustees guide strategy, safeguard values, and ensure co-production is at the heart of everything we do.

What our Members Say

It's vital that people with lived experience shape the recruitment of our staff and trustees. We asked our members what skills and qualities they believe trustees should bring.

- Connect with people and have good communication and listening skills
- Understand people with a learning disability
- Know what advocacy is and how it helps
- Understand people's rights and want to help people have a voice
- Respect personal space, boundaries and trust
- Care about people and that they can improve their quality of life
- Be tolerant and patient
- Be at the 'level' of the members and approachable, able to make the members feel valued and appreciated
- Understand money - perhaps have run a business

Trustee Role Description

Purpose of Role

To ensure, jointly with other trustees, that Vocal acts in accordance with its constitution and complies with legal requirements, and to manage its activities in furtherance of the objects set down in that constitution.

Key Responsibilities

- Ensure Vocal complies with its constitution, charity law and company law
- Pursue the charity's objectives and apply resources in line with them
- Contribute to strategy, policy and performance monitoring
- Safeguard the charity's name, values and financial security
- Approve budgets, accounts and annual reports
- Oversee appointment and performance of the Chair and Chief Officer
- Attend and actively participate in board and committee meetings

Trustee Requirements

- Commitment to Vocal Advocacy and its values of empowerment, rights and inclusion
- Integrity and willingness to devote the necessary time and effort
- Understanding of the legal duties and responsibilities of trusteeship
- Ability to respect confidentiality and act impartially
- Openness to learning and personal development

Person Specification

In addition to the above statutory duties of all trustees, each trustee should use any specific knowledge or experience they have to help the Committee reach sound decisions. This will involve scrutinising papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues and providing advice and guidance requested by the Committee on new initiatives, or other issues relevant to the areas of Vocal's work in which the trustee has specific knowledge or experience.

Skills

- Good communication and listening skills, with the ability to relate to members, staff and fellow trustees
- Strategic vision and independent judgement
- Ability to think creatively and contribute new ideas
- Willingness to speak your mind while exercising tact, diplomacy and fairness
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team, including engaging with our members (“experts by experience”)

Knowledge

- Financial management, budgeting, planning
- Income generation and fundraising
- Lived experience of advocacy
- Social care service delivery and commissioning
- Working with or supporting people with learning disability and an understanding of their lives and communication needs
- Strategic management, leadership and organisational development
- Marketing and communications
- IT and technology
- HR and People strategy

Our skills needs will evolve over time, so we welcome applications from people with a wide range of expertise. This is a voluntary role; while the position is unpaid, reasonable expenses can be claimed in line with our policy.

Time Commitment

- **2-3 whole organisation meetings per year** including the AGM, lasting about 2-3 hours each time . In addition there is an annual social meeting with our members and the staff team, which Trustees are encouraged to attend
- **5-6 board meetings** a year including budget setting and business planning sessions
- possible board development day/ governance session
- **Email and ad-hoc communication** in between meetings

in addition there are opportunities to be involved as volunteers in specific work or tasks as part of our “whole network approach.”

Vocal is proud to be an equal opportunities organisation, committed to building a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone feels they belong. We welcome applications from all backgrounds and encourage you to apply even if your experience doesn't align perfectly with every requirement. If you need any adjustments to support you through the recruitment process, please let us know and we'll be happy to help.

How to Apply

Our Chief Officer or Chair are happy to offer informal discussions about the opportunity.

Application by a full CV together with covering letter telling us why you are interested in becoming a trustee for Vocal and what you would bring to the organisation.

Selected candidates will be invited for interview for which Vocal has a two stage process, which will include an informal session with representatives from our 'members' group and secondly a more formal interview with two trustees and the C.O.

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to fill in a brief formal application form and required to provide two references and a satisfactory DBS at enhanced level.

Once the recruitment process is completed and both parties agree to proceed, new Board members will receive a full induction, tailored to individual needs.

This will include attending our local members groups, getting to know our "experts by experience".

Successful applicants will initially be co-opted to the board, with formal election at the next AGM.

Please express your interest and apply on the Reach website.