The Advocacy Project

2026 - 2027

CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

Candidate Information Pack



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WELCOME



Dear candidate,

After more than eight years as Chair of Trustees, I have decided that the time is right for me to step down and allow someone new to lead the Board into its next chapter.

It has been a privilege to support an organisation that makes such a meaningful difference to people's lives. During my time as Chair, I have seen the dedication of our staff, volunteers and trustees, and the impact of this work across our communities.

This is an exciting opportunity for someone who shares our values and wants to help shape our future. We are looking for a Chair who can provide strategic leadership, support an excellent Board and work collaboratively with our Chief Executive and trustees.

I hope you enjoy reading this information pack. If you would like to arrange a conversation with us, please ask the TrusteeWorks team at Reach Volunteering to set this up.

I look forward to meeting you.

Dr Dele Olajide PhD, FRCPsych. FRSA
Outgoing Chair of the Board of Trustees



ABOUT THE ADVOCACY PROJECT

We help people speak up and make decisions about their health, wellbeing and social care. We're here to make sure people across all ages and care groups can understand their rights, make effective choices about their lives and voice their concerns.

Some of the ways we do this include:

- **advocacy services** that make sure people can express their wishes when decisions are being made about their care or wellbeing
- **user involvement** projects that help organisations improve what they offer by listening to people who use their services
- **local Healthwatch services,** which act as health and social care champions for the areas they serve and give people a direct channel to share their feedback
- **accessible communication** - we specialise in producing easy read documents designed to help organisation communicate with people with learning disabilities.

Our vision:
A world in which every person has a voice

Our mission:
To enable every person to have their voice heard, uphold their rights and make choices

Our services are independent, confidential, and free to those receiving them. Together, our teams are standing up for essential rights and supporting people to have a say on the issues that matter to them. We're very proud the quality of our work is being recognised more widely. This is an exciting time for us as an organisation – we're bringing new people on board and exploring new ways of doing things. It's part of our plan to reach more people and have an even deeper impact on their lives. We hope you'll join us.

What we care about

We want everyone to be able to make informed choices and active decisions about how they live their lives. By working with people who are vulnerable or excluded, we address the challenges people face having their voices heard. We're committed to being a strong, well-managed and dynamic organisation so we're best placed to make this happen.

"It is evident that the principles of empowerment and being person led are at the heart of The Advocacy Project's Advocacy Services."
QPM Award

OUR VALUES

WE ARE KIND

We treat people with respect and kindness and appreciate the unique experiences and viewpoints they bring. By creating an organisation where people listen to and value each other, we are building a community where everyone feels included, welcome and heard. We try to understand how others feel and respond with kindness and care



WE ARE HONEST



We always try to do the right thing. That means being honest, fair and open in everything we do. We empower people to make their own decisions: they can trust and count on us.

WE BELIEVE

We have strength, determination and passion. We're committed to delivering high quality support and information that makes a difference. We believe in our mission, the people we support, the power of advocacy, user involvement and co-production, and in each other.



WE ARE STRONG



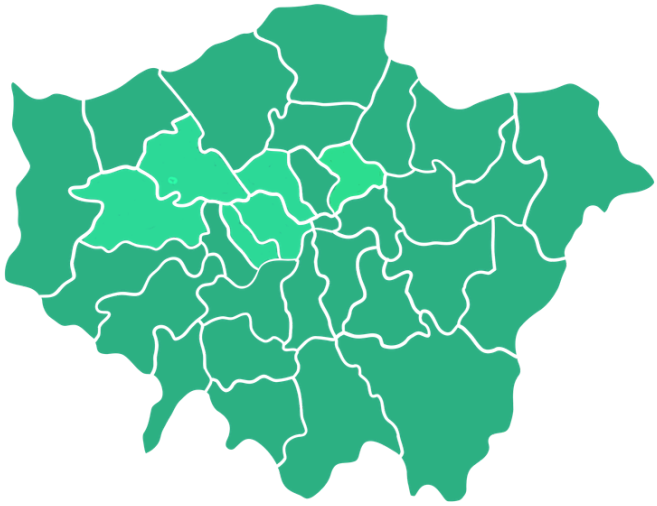
We're problem solvers who stay positive and flexible. We're committed to giving the best support we can, breaking down barriers and pushing through challenges. We work with energy, creativity and joy to help The Advocacy Project thrive.

Where we work and who with

Our current commissioned services cover the London Boroughs of Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Ealing, Camden, City & Hackney, and Brent.

Our spot purchase and paid for advocacy is available anywhere in England.

Our work supports people from marginalised communities and those with learning disabilities, neurodiversity, mental health conditions, older age, or reduced capacity.

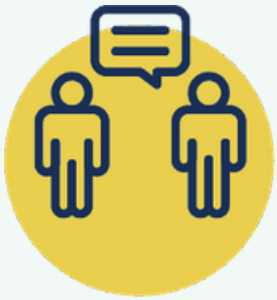


OUR IMPACT



37,000

People who engaged with us or requested information



1,200

People received free advocacy



76

Easy Read documents commissioned externally



600

People taking part in user involvement

HOW WE HELP

Last year (2025-2026), 37,000 people engaged with us or asked us for information, and we provided 1200 people with advocacy. The story below is one example of how we help:



Sophia* was in her late 40s with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia for which she needed 24 hour support. For the last 6 years she'd been living at a community hospital which supports adults who have complex and ongoing mental health needs. She'd been living in this type of care home for some 20 years.

Sophia asked for advocacy support to help her get in touch with her children. She explained to her advocate that contact arrangements were directed by a court order and that she desperately wanted to re-establish contact.

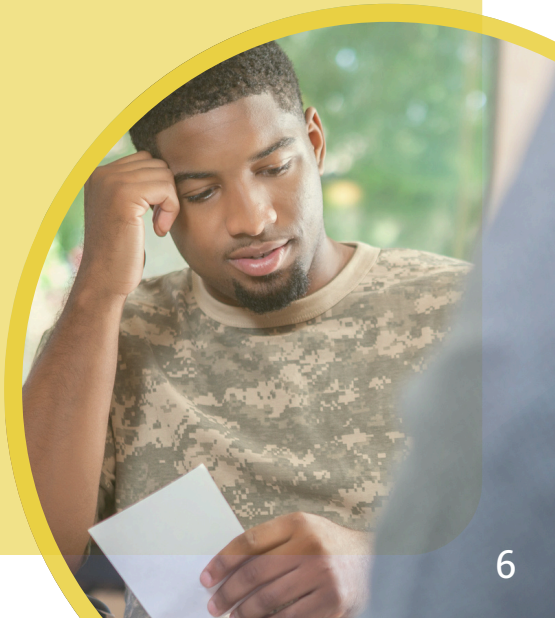
The advocate was able to explain to Sophia that now that her children were adults, any court order restrictions about contacting them would have lapsed. The advocate supported Sophia to understand her options - she could self-advocate and talk directly with her responsible clinician and care coordinator or have the advocate act on her behalf. With support from the clinical team and our advocate, Sophia was reconnected with her children.

*Name has been changed to protect her privacy.

'Luke, a student, contacted us after struggling to access timely mental health support while feeling suicidal. We immediately escalated his concerns to safeguarding teams and contacted the hospital he had approached to ensure urgent intervention.

As a result, Luke was able to access appropriate mental health services and connect with local community support groups. Our borough managers now attend Strategic Participation Group meetings, using cases like Luke's to influence improvements in the council's mental health strategy and strengthen crisis response pathways.'

"Healthwatch Westminster saved me!"



ABOUT THE CHAIR ROLE

The Advocacy Project is looking for a new chair to join it's Board of trustees.

The Chair provides leadership to the Board and ensures trustees fulfil their duties and responsibilities for the values, governance, strategy, objectives and financial sustainability of The Advocacy Project, in line with our mission, legislation and codes of conduct. Working closely with the CEO, they stay focused on the objectives, ensuring decisions are thoughtful and well informed, and help the charity stay committed to the people and communities at the heart of its work. They will provide support and guidance and, where appropriate, challenge the CEO in a constructive manner.

Principal responsibilities

Chair the board meetings in particular by:

- Creating a welcoming, respectful board culture where everyone can speak up and contribute.
- Ensuring the board makes clear decisions on strategy, policy, financial stewardship and risk exposure.
- Monitoring the implementation of the board decisions and ensuring there are clear actions.
- Planning the annual cycle of meetings with the CEO.
- Ensuring the board is diverse, regularly refreshed and incorporates the right balance of skills, knowledge and lived experience.
- Monitoring the performance of the board, its members and CEO.
- Supporting trustee recruitment, induction and development.
- Appointing, supervising and appraising the CEO on behalf of the board. Build a strong, trusting and effective working relationship with the CEO, ensuring s/he is held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives.
- Acting as an ambassador for the organisation and raising The Advocacy Project's profile, including representing us at external functions, meetings and events.

Oversight

- Maintain oversight and effective management of The Advocacy Project's financial and non-financial resources, and that there are systems in place to ensure financial accountability.
- Ensure The Advocacy Project develops a robust annual plan, and monitor performance against it.
- Ensure the board reviews major risks regularly, and that systems are in place to manage and mitigate risks.
- Champion safeguarding, equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility in how the board and charity work.

TERM AND TIME COMMITMENT

Term: Four Years and up to two terms.

Time commitment : approx. 1.5 days per month, which includes:

- Board meetings and prep:
  - Chair four board meetings a year (in-person or virtual). Usually from 4 - 7 pm, in central London. Hybrid participation is possible when required.
  - Read board papers in advance (typically 1 – 2 hours per meeting)
- One annual board away day (full day)
- Monthly supervision meeting with CEO (in person and virtual)
- Quarterly 1-1 meetings (virtual) with trustees
- Annual trustee and CEO appraisals (virtual and in person)

Other occasional commitments:

- Chair trustee appointment panels
- Committee work (approx. 2 – 6 days per year) when required
- Occasional attendance at staff events and service visits
- Responding to email discussions, providing feedback on documents
- Responsible for board governance reviews
- Be an ambassador for the charity



WHO WE'RE LOOKING FOR

What you'll bring

- Enthusiasm for the charity's purpose, values and advocacy goals.
- Leadership experience from a charity, community, public, private or campaigning setting.
- Good judgement, integrity and the confidence to make difficult decisions when needed.
- A knack for guiding inclusive conversations, working through different views and finding common ground.
- A practical understanding of governance, finance, risk and what helps an organisation thrive for the long term.
- Strong communication and relationship-building skills, including with people who see things differently.
- A commitment to sharing power, listening to lived experience and making participation easier.
- The independence, time and energy to give the role the attention it deserves.

Personal qualities should include

- Excellent communication;
- Strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills;
- Good judgement, tact and diplomacy;
- Able to ask probing questions and hold management to account;
- A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Commitment and understanding of safeguarding;
- Commitment to the mission and values of The Advocacy Project.

We actively welcome those with lived experience of mental health or learning disability services.

Ideally, our new Chair will come with an understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

At The Advocacy Project, our vision is a world in which every person has a voice. That belief sits at the heart of our work. For more than 25 years, we have worked alongside people who are often excluded or marginalised, supporting them to have their voices heard, understand their rights and make choices about their lives.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion has always been a natural extension of this work. If we believe that every person should be heard, respected and able to influence the decisions that affect them, then we must strive to create an organisation where our own people experience the same sense of belonging, respect and opportunity.

EDI is therefore not something separate from our work. It is part of who we are, how we work and how we want to grow.

OUR APPROACH TO INCLUSION

We want our Board to reflect the communities connected to our work. We'd love to hear from people with different backgrounds, identities, perspectives and routes into leadership. If you need adjustments at any stage of the recruitment process – or once you're in the role - we'll work with you to make that happen.

The role of a trustee is an important one, but research shows that trustees often share similar backgrounds and opinions.

To avoid a narrow agenda and decisions going unchallenged, greater diversity is vital. In an effort to increase the diversity – and effectiveness - of trusts, the NCVO invited us to work with them to make their trustee guide more accessible.

You can read more about the roles and responsibilities of being a Charity trustee here.



"The Advocacy Project have supported us to work with people with lived experience to improve health outcomes and employment prospects for people with learning disabilities in our local area – I could not have done this without them!

They provide support and insight in a professional way with kindness and compassion and they provide just the right amount of challenge with sensitivity in their role of critical friend.

I cannot speak highly enough of the service and they add real value to the local community."

Senior Commissioning Officer, Carers and Learning Disabilities CWHHE Clinical Commissioning Groups Collaborative

STRUCTURE AND USER COUNCIL

STRUCTURE

The Advocacy Project is a Charity, and a company limited by guarantee. Our objects enable us to have a governance structure with a Board of Trustees. We are have a trustee board and four board committees – Finance, Risk & Audit; HR, Remuneration, Policy and EDI; Business Development and Fundraising; and Information, Communications and Social Media. In line with our values (and with permission from the Charity Commission), we pay Lived experience trustees London Living Wage for their time as trustees if they are service users. The board delegates day-to-day management to the CEO who works with and through the senior leadership team.

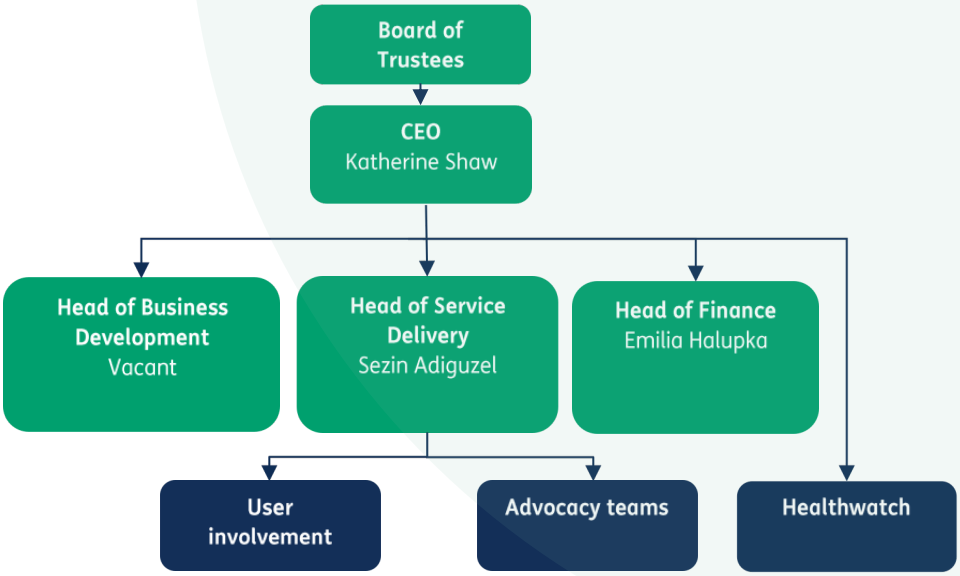
OUR USER COUNCIL

Our passion is for people to be actively involved in the services they use – and this applies to our organisation as much as any other. We have a council made up of representatives from across all our services. They share feedback and ideas from people who use our services and let us know if we're fulfilling the high standard we aspire to. As well as guiding us to improve what we do, the user council helps us choose the right staff.

"Our board of trustees is made up of so many experiences from different walks of life. This is critical to our success as it reflects the people we're here to support. I'm particularly interested in developing our unique selling point in order to have as high an impact as possible in our communities."

Trustee, The Advocacy Project

WHO'S WHO



BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Chair
(Vacancy)



Treasurer
Pankaj Shah



Rachel Gonzaga



Deobrah Finding



Vivienne Modebe



Deputy Chair of Trustees
Roger Skipp



Lived Experience
Trustee (Vacancy)



Rachel Hutchings



Jayesh Patel



Trustee (Vacancy)

SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Katherine Shaw
CEO



Sezin Adiguzel
Head of Service Delivery



Vacant
Head of Business Development



Emilia Halupka
Head of Finance

A SELECTION OF TRUSTEE STORIES

JAYESH PATEL



What experience do you bring to The Advocacy Project?
I'm an enthusiastic chartered management accountant with a unique breadth of experience that spans more than 17 years in various finance, policy and strategy roles across Whitehall Departments and Local Government. I've had the privilege of dealing with lots of people including the most senior elected officials and executive board members. Throughout my career I've built a history of delivering successful projects and providing valuable advice to assist in strategic level decision making. In my current role I manage a team of Finance Business Partners.

What do you like about being on the Board of Trustees?
I wanted to volunteer and develop my professional experience – a trustee role is the perfect opportunity to do both of those things. I looked at a number of different charities to apply to when I was seeking a role. The Advocacy Project stood out as a worthwhile cause, and what really attracted me to it are the case studies on their website showcasing just some of the valuable work.

RACHEL HUTCHINGS

What experience do you bring to The Advocacy Project?
I've worked in the charity sector for almost ten years always within healthcare policy, research and advocacy. I started by managing a helpline where I provided people with information and support around healthcare rights, before moving to the Alzheimer's Society where I led policy and campaigns work on the Mental Capacity Act, human rights and end of life care. In my current role at the Nuffield Trust, my focus is on building a strong evidence base for improving healthcare in the UK and developing impactful recommendations for how to improve access to care, and address health inequalities.



What are you most looking forward to about joining the Board?
The work the Advocacy Project does is so important and I'm looking forward to supporting the organisation to think about how to continue to deliver on its objectives. There's a huge range of work and I'm really excited to learn more about the variety of projects. This is also my first trustee role so I'm keen to learn as much as I can from my fellow trustees about how to do it most effectively.

HOW TO APPLY

The TrusteeWorks team at Reach Volunteering are supporting The Advocacy Project with their Chair recruitment.

Please send applications to: Trusteeworks@reachskills.org.uk

To apply, please submit the following:

- Comprehensive CV or extended biography
- Supporting statement addressing the points in the person specification
- List of any other directorships or trusteeships you currently hold (if not listed in your CV)
- Name and phone number for two referees (we won't contact them without your permission)

Recruitment Timeline:

1. **Application closing date: Monday 4 January 2027**
2. **Initial conversations with CEO: week commencing 11 January 2027**
3. **Formal interviews with panel: week commencing 8 February 2027, (with exact dates to be confirmed)**

Please let us know if you have any accessibility needs should you be called for interview.

Reach TrusteeWorks

The Advocacy Project

