

Thera Trust – Independent Director role description and person specification

Overview

Thera is a charitable group of companies which works across large parts of England and Scotland. It supports around 3,000 people with a learning disability to live the life they choose by empowering people to design the support they want to receive. The Thera Group is led by the charity Thera Trust, which acts as the parent company in setting the charitable purpose, vision and strategic direction.

Trustee role

Thera Trust has recently restructured its £13m charity bond financing to support its future plans. This move had the support of its bondholder investors. Thera Trust is now looking to appoint a trustee to its board who will act in the role of Independent Director, who will:

- perform all the legal and regulatory duties of a trustee and fulfil the responsibilities set out in the role specification section later in this document; and
- serve as a sounding board for the co-chairpersons and support the maintenance of effective relationships between board members and between the board and the Group Executive team; and
- give a voice to bondholders at board level, by ensuring that their views are captured and considered in board conversations and decisions.

The individual will bring professional expertise in the field of finance, social investment and change management. The successful candidate will support the charity to develop its overall strategy as it continues to evolve and grow.

About Thera Trust

Thera is a charitable group of companies which works across large parts of England and Scotland. We support people with a learning disability, who have many ambitions and a range of complex support needs, to live the life they choose.

Thera Group is led by Thera Trust, a registered charity, which sets the vision and charitable purpose. The group provides local care and support, and a range of specialist services to people, through 14 subsidiary companies, each with its own board of directors and management team. The group structure enables local focus, control and accountability, and leadership by people with lived experience of a learning disability. Thera Trust also provides central services in areas such as HR, Payroll, Finance and IT, to the companies in the Thera Group.

Thera's Vision shapes the whole organisation, from the way it behaves, to how it is structured. It makes the Vision real through direct leadership by people with a learning disability. This leadership guides our culture – empowering people to design the support they want to receive from Thera.

Through its companies, Thera supports people at home, in the local community and for short breaks. It also offers specialist services in areas such as financial advocacy, housing, circles of support, employment and training.

Thera facts and figures

Thera has grown from a single company supporting five people in Cambridgeshire in 1998 to a group of companies, with a collective income of over £90m, providing a range of support across the UK for around 3,000 people with a learning disability. It now employs over 3,300 staff and has more than 100 volunteers.

More information about Thera Trust can be found [here](#).

Thera's Vision



Role specification

The Thera Group is structured to deliver Thera's Vision through regional and specialist companies. Each of these companies has its own board of directors and the effectiveness of subsidiary companies and their boards is therefore vital to Thera's continued success.

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To further advance its Vision, Thera Trust has an equal Group Executive team made up of five directors each with equal responsibility for decision-making. Four of the roles are held by appropriately qualified and experienced leaders with the fifth role being held by someone who brings their experience of having a learning disability, along with their previous work experience, to the role. Unusually for a charity, the equal Group Executive team are also full members of the Thera Trust board.

This means that the Thera Trust board oversees a complex governance structure with responsibility for the wellbeing of Thera Trust and the wider group. The successful candidate will play a proactive role in developing the organisation. The main responsibilities for trustees include:

- Helping to define and support the organisation's purpose, vision, goals and activities;
- Guiding the development of the organisation's structure and operations in order to ensure financial sustainability;
- Shaping strategy and overseeing and driving impact;
- Bringing insights about risks and opportunities from specific areas of expertise to the board;
- Driving organisational quality and improvement;
- Drawing on networks, as appropriate, to support Thera Trust's work.

The new trustee will be instrumental in ensuring that Thera Trust fulfils its mission and strategic objectives in a way that is driven by its values and remains financially sustainable.

Additional Independent Director responsibilities

Alongside fulfilling the trustee role set out above, the Independent Director also has the following key responsibilities:

- Representing bondholders and giving them a voice at board level – including by:
 - Attending sufficient meetings with bondholders to obtain a balanced understanding of their issues and concerns;
 - Liaising regularly with bondholders through other channels as necessary;
 - Facilitating links between the board, financial intermediaries and bondholders;
 - Ensuring that there is an effective board communication strategy to provide bondholders with relevant and timely information.
- Working closely with the co-chairpersons to:
 - Sustain strong oversight by the board on progress with the Transformation Plan and the associated financial recovery element;
 - Ensure that the board fully understands the payment schedule agreed with bondholders and maintains effective oversight of Thera's ability to adhere to it;
 - Maintain effective relationships between board members and between the board and the Group Executive team;
 - Assess and ensure the effectiveness of the co-chairperson arrangement.

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The Independent Director will be available to bondholders and other non-executives, to address any concerns or issues they feel have not been adequately dealt with through the usual channels of communication (such as through the co-chairpersons).

Person specification

Thera Trust is looking for a new trustee who will bring energy, enthusiasm and commitment to the charity's mission. Candidates will bring senior-level expertise in one or more of these areas: Finance, social investment, change management. Individuals will bring a strong professional knowledge and the ability to provide scrutiny and constructive challenge to the rest of the board and the Group Executive team. Their experience can come from a range of areas including the public, private or not-for-profit sectors. They will bring a strong commercial mindset.

The successful candidate will be able to work at a strategic level, understanding the complexities of funding delivery, and appreciating the difference between a non-executive and executive role. Although prior non-executive experience is welcome, applications are welcome from individuals who have not held such roles before.

Above all, candidates should have a strong commitment to Thera's Vision, and a willingness to advocate for the rights of people with a learning disability. They will be able to develop positive relationships with both internal and external stakeholders and play an ambassadorial role in representing the charity.

Current board members

Michelle McDermott, co-chairperson

Sally Warren, co-chairperson

John Blundell

Christine Chang

Nicola Coote

Steve Folkard

Ceri Lennon

Elizabeth Lichten

Kate Platts

Christopher Rheinberg

Matthew Smith

Lorna Weston

Steven Whalley

Katie Winn

You can learn more about the Board [here](#).

Terms of appointment

The role is unremunerated. However, reasonable expenses incurred in the carrying out of the duties associated with acting as a trustee will of course be refunded. There

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are six board meetings per year. It is expected that the time commitment for this role will be an average of 1.5 to 2 days per month, including attending board meetings, committee meetings and liaising with the senior management team. Board meetings are held both in person and online.

Induction and further support

A full induction will be provided to make sure that the new trustee becomes familiar with how Thera Group is structured, how the Trust operates and how Thera's Vision has contributed to the organisation's current strategic goals.

Ongoing support in the role will be provided primarily by the Head of Governance.