



your voice your rights your choice

Lived experience Trustee Recruitment Information Pack



Our vision is a world in which
every person has a voice



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Welcome

Dear candidate

As the Chair of The Advocacy Project, I'm delighted you're interested in joining our Board of Trustees and helping us take this incredible organisation on to its next stage of development.

We're known for our relentless focus on quality and also for the robustness, diversity and inclusivity of our governance. I've always held service user voice, rights and choice close to my heart throughout my career as a clinician, academic and policy maker and so, it's wonderful to be leading an organisation that does this as a matter of course – day in and day out.



I hope you enjoy reading this information pack. If you would like to arrange a conversation with us, please contact Katherine Shaw, CEO, who would be delighted to hear from you (Katherine.shaw@advocacyproject.org.uk)

I look forward to meeting you.

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

“Working at the Advocacy Project I feel hugely valued as an individual, with my skills being recognised and appreciated, and as such I am given opportunities to develop and use my unique skillset in projects outside my normal role.”

Ealing Advocacy Team

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
- innovative **Personal Health Budget** projects that allow people to access items and services to improve their wellbeing.

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.

Your role in our future

As Trustee, you will help ensure we deliver on our mission, providing oversight and guidance to make sure The Advocacy Project is sustainable, making the best use of all our assets and meeting all our legal requirements. The role of Lived Experience Trustees is to help bring insight of those with lived experience to governance and decision making. You will act as an ambassador for the charity promoting the mission, vision and values both internally and externally. Working closely with our newly appointed CEO, and the board, you will play a vital role in influencing the strategic direction for the next five years.



Synergy – our speaking up group for people with learning disabilities

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.

The Lived Experience Trustee is the key link between the User council and the board and would be expected to attend council meetings 4-6 times year and share updates.

Our board of trustees

We believe good governance is about genuinely holding ourselves to account for making a positive difference to the people we work with. We are proud of the diversity of our board as it reflects the communities we work in. The expertise our board provide through lived and professional experience means we're properly informed to make the right decisions about what we do.

All trustees and staff have access to our free confidential care service. People can call the service about anything that's bothering them – whether work related or something in their personal life. Staff can arrange counselling through this service.

Making The Advocacy Project an even better place to work is a core objective for the charity. We all strive to create an environment where staff feel supported, know their contribution is valued, and are enabled to do their best work. We are known in the sector for the strength of our learning and development programme. We have monthly online staff briefings where we share news and updates, with different staff members talking about their work. Each quarter all staff are invited to an in-person meeting to build links between teams and share best practice. Our volunteer trustees will work with the CEO and SLT to develop a new organisational strategy, both supporting and challenging the executive team to enable The Advocacy Project to grow and thrive, and through this, achieve 'a world in which every person has a voice'.

We hold the Advocacy Quality Performance Mark. We're a Mindful Employer, and a Disability Confident Employer

"I'm particularly interested in how we can leverage the good work we do and extend our reach without losing the effectiveness of the present organisation."

Roger Skipp, Trustee



How we help

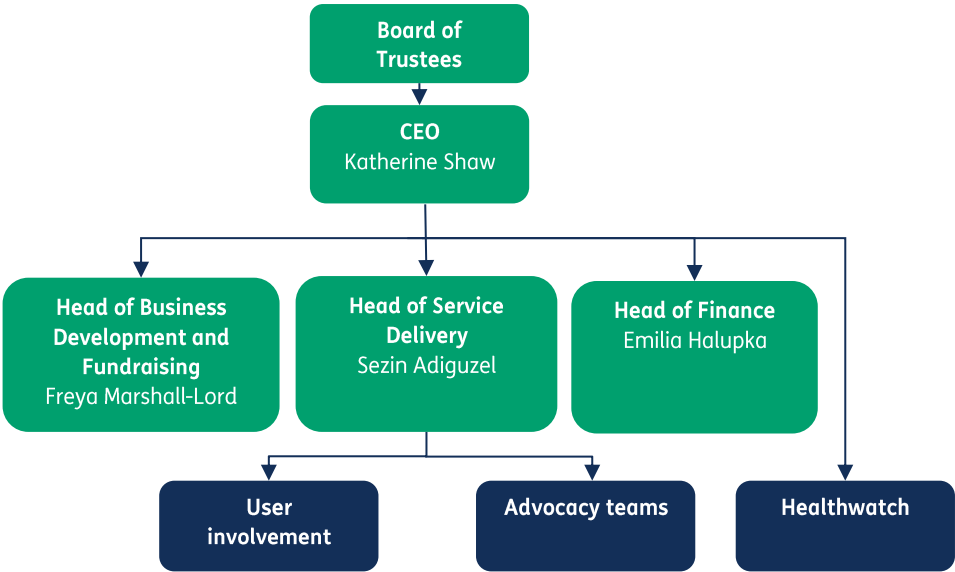
Sophia was in her late 40s with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia for which she needed 24 hour support. For the last 6 years she'd been living at a community hospital which supports adults who have complex and ongoing mental health needs. She'd been living in this type of care home for some 20 years.

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.

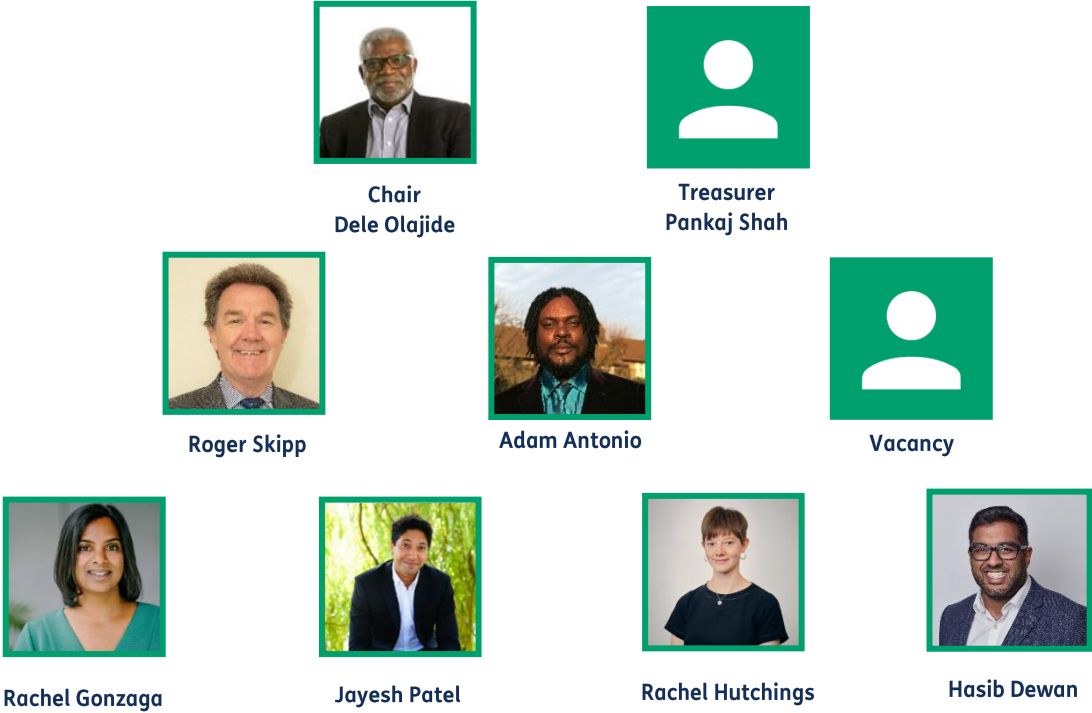
The advocate was able to explain to Sophia that now that her children were adults, any court order restrictions about contacting them would have lapsed. The advocate supported Sophia to understand her options - she could self-advocate and talk directly with her responsible clinician and care coordinator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

With support from the clinical team and our advocate, Sophia was reconnected with her children.

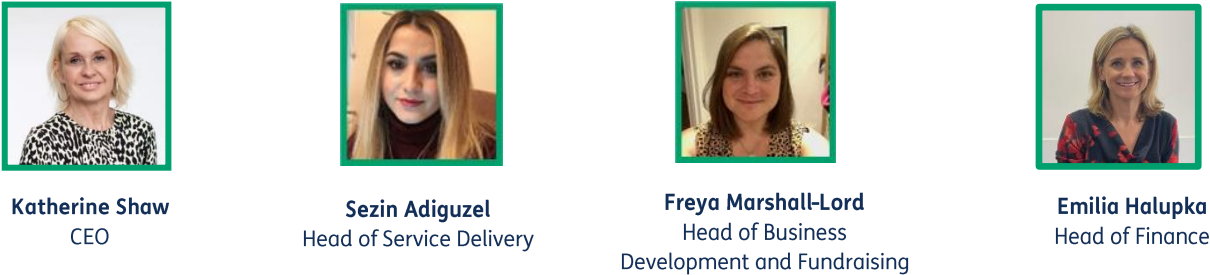
Who's who



Board of trustees



Senior Leadership Team



A selection of trustee stories

Roger



“Advocates help protect and articulate the needs, desires, wants and concerns of people who can’t do that for themselves because of their circumstances” - it’s seeing people struggle with the social stigma around mental health that inspires Roger to continue to be involved with organisations that make a difference in this way.”

What do you like about The Advocacy Project?

“Lots of things – particularly that the organisation is innovative, not just ticking over. The passion of the people involved means it punches above its weight. I particularly like the ways it brings people together around important topics, for example the parliamentary reception and ongoing professional seminars. The Advocacy Project is very clear in its goals and objectives, with a grounded focus on what it’s trying to achieve.”

What are your areas of interest on the board?

“I’m focused on how the charity develops in terms of income streams. What interests me is how we can leverage the good work we do by bringing in more income and extending our reach without losing the effectiveness of the present organisation. One of my strengths is asking questions; making space to reflect on why and how we’re doing something, probing to help everyone come to the right conclusion.”

What do you like to do in your spare time?

“I’m married with two grown up step-children and I love getting out and about with my family. I’m also interested in classic motoring and enjoy pottering in the garden.”

Adam



Adam Antonio became a Trustee as he felt he could use his own experiences to give others a voice at the board table. “We are opening doors by giving people a voice and showing them there is support out there.”

What’s important to you about The Advocacy Project?

“I found out about The Advocacy Project through someone I know who works in the social care field. I thought it would help me, as I am close to someone who has a mental health condition.

There’s a stigma around mental health; the doors are closed for people with disabilities. But The Advocacy Project is opening these doors by giving people a voice and showing them that there is support out there.”

What do you like about being on the board of trustees?

“The trustee board at The Advocacy Project is diverse in terms of cultures, abilities, disabilities, experiences, ideas and outlooks. This means we have more informed conversations. No question is a silly question. Everyone’s point of view is heard and valued.”

What do you do in your spare time?

“My background is in art and design; I have a knack for putting ideas on paper then designing and bringing them to fruition. I originally studied art and interior design. I was also keen to learn how to develop properties – from the ground up – so I studied architecture too.

In my spare time I go to art and design classes. I also enjoy writing music lyrics. In the past I have been on BBC television, singing with a gospel choir as part of the Sainsbury’s Choir of the Year competition. I also enjoy doing Tai Chi.”

Rachel



“Don’t worry if you feel your skill set and experience aren’t 100% within the remit of the charity. If you choose a charity with a cause you feel passionate about, the role will be very rewarding, you will be motivated to learn more about them and the space they work in, and your different perspective will be appreciated.”

What experience do you bring to The Advocacy Project?

“I’m a healthcare communications and patient advocacy consultant with experience spanning senior agency roles, pharmaceutical in-house communications and health charity communications.

In my time in agency, I worked across communications and government affairs, and led their patient advocacy practice. Before this, I held global and UK communications roles at a global pharmaceutical company, which included overseeing internal and external communications as their UK Communications Director.

I started my career in the press office for a large UK medical research charity, where I developed a passion for campaigning and creating change to improve the lives of patients by telling their stories. I love using my science background to translate complicated concepts into plain English.”

What do you like about being on the Board of Trustees?

“I know how challenging it can be to see things from an outsider’s perspective when you are embedded in an organisation, especially when you’re working for a charity that is trying to achieve a lot with limited resources. I love the idea of being able to help bring a fresh, outside perspective to help solve problems and challenge decisions, with contributions that are grounded in my experience.

The Advocacy Project is an incredibly charity helping to give a voice to people who can’t easily speak up for themselves, and they do this through many different routes. I’ve enjoyed learning about the range of projects the charity works on, and I like the fact that the staff and board truly reflect the diversity of the communities the charity serves.”

Serving as a Lived Experience Trustee for The Advocacy Project

We are seeking two Lived Experience Trustees to join our board.

Do you have lived experience of either mental health or learning disability/social care service either as a direct user or as a parent/ carer of someone who is or has used these services, especially advocacy? The role of Lived Experience Trustees is to help bring insight of those with lived experience to governance and decision making. You will also attend our Service User council which is held 4-6 times a year for 2-3 hours. This is normally held during the day. The role of Trustee role can be both challenging and rewarding, we recommend that people applying are not actively accessing mental health services at present and have had at least 3 months since their last time accessing community-based services or 6 months since accessing inpatient mental health service.

Who we are looking for

- Lived experience of mental health issues or learning disability either personally or as a parent/carer.
- Interest in shaping and influencing the future of The Advocacy Project
- Understanding and awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion issues.
- Experience of or understanding of providing constructive user involvement feedback and influencing at meetings or committees
- Ability and willingness to engage with sometimes complex ideas and documents
- Ability to understand the importance of and present the views of other service users and carers, as well as your own, when required
- Ability to understand and the legal role and responsibilities of trusteeship
- Ability to work well with people who may hold different views
- Active participation in meetings
- Good communication skills
- Ability to attend quarterly board meetings and user council meetings in person

While Trustee roles are normally voluntary, we do not want affordability to be a barrier for those with Lived experience therefore we pay Reward & Recognition (R&R) for any duties you undertake as a Trustee.

Reward & Recognition will be paid in vouchers or by BACS into a bank account.

Please note that it is important to be aware of how R&R payments affect your personal financial situation. If you need help to clarify if and how R&R would impact on any benefits you may be receiving, we can signpost you to get advice.

Reward and Recognition payments are for involvement as a Trustee for The Advocacy Project as a person with lived experience. This is not an employment relationship with The Advocacy Project.

Time commitment

Approximately 25-30 hours per year. Trustee meetings are held quarterly normally starting at 430 pm while user council meetings are held 4- 6 times a year and start at 2pm. All meetings are held at the Stowe Centre in Royal oak.

Trustees are expected to commit time to studying papers, preparing for and attending meetings, following up on specific tasks with other trustees, liaising with the chief executive or other staff and attending events such as fundraising or advocacy events.

“The independent, flexible and adaptive way you work, ensures that many and different service users get involved.” **Kiran McRobert, Gordon Hospital.**

Our governance

Volunteer Trustees need to be wholeheartedly committed to The Advocacy Project’s vision and work and set a standard of conduct for the entire organisation by acting with utmost integrity at all times. They’re expected to be advocates of our work and to promote the organisation positively and with passion externally. Effective trustees will provide challenge for the chief executive and the organisation to make sure the aims are being met appropriately and effectively. They’ll treat all stakeholders, including service users and staff, with respect.

How to apply

Please submit the following to HR@advocacyproject.org.uk:

- 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)

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 about this here: <https://www.advocacyproject.org.uk/news/makes-good-trustee/>

If you have any questions, please contact HR@advocacyproject.org.uk / 020 8106 0640.

The Advocacy Project is fully committed to equality of opportunity and diversity and we warmly welcome applications from all suitably-qualified candidates. We welcome applications regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, disability, or age. All applications will be considered solely on