



Candidate Brief

Brief for the recruitment of Two Trustees

SeeAbility

March 2013



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Welcome

Thank you for taking the time to consider joining our Council of Trustees.

At the heart of our organisation is a desire to enrich the life of every person in the UK with sight loss and multiple disabilities. Our name is a good clue to what we are about since we see beyond disability and focus on the abilities of those we support. With the excitement of the Paralympic Games last year, disability has been brought firmly onto the agenda of the population and I strongly believe that there is now an even greater opportunity for SeeAbility to play its part in supporting those with complex needs across the country.

Although I have been involved with SeeAbility for many years, on becoming Chairman last year I set about working more closely with our CEO, David Scott-Ralphs, and the wider leadership team to put together a new five year strategy. This is now about to be launched and involves a change of gear for the organisation. The strategy will enable us to grow our direct support services as well as our very important advisory work, all in a bid to share our specialist knowledge and high quality care with ever greater numbers of those with sight loss and other complex needs. I would categorise this as the start of a new journey and we are looking for new committed trustees to advise and support our already strong Council as well as our fundraising activities.

Yours sincerely

James Deeley
Chairman
SeeAbility



About SeeAbility

History

In 1799 four philanthropists joined together to found a school for blind children in south London - the first establishment in the south of England to cater for the training and educational needs of young blind people. The School for the Indigent Blind as it was then known was incorporated under an Act of Parliament in 1826. The charity moved to new facilities in Leatherhead in 1902, which in their day were considered to be the foremost of their kind in the world. In 1911 the school was granted Royal Patronage by King George V and became The Royal School for the Blind.

During the early years in Leatherhead, the residents were cared for in a very institutional manner, living in dormitory-style accommodation and forbidden to mix with members of the opposite sex. There was little incentive to learn even basic daily living skills as everything was done for them.

In the 1960s living conditions began to improve with the introduction of individual and more private cubicles. By the early 1970s the original training function had been taken over by others and the charity found itself a national centre for 150 adults whose disabilities had caused them to be regarded as unemployable and incapable of independence.

During the 1980s the main building and the ethos of The Royal School for the Blind underwent great change, both in terms of the environment and its philosophy. The dormitories were gradually re-modelled into flats and the charity refocused its energies on enabling people who were blind or partially sighted with additional disabilities to achieve independence according to their individual potential.

Residents became actively involved in making decisions about how to run their home and their lives. They were encouraged to make informed choices, take responsibility for their lives and develop a realistic understanding of the implications of their actions. The aim was to encourage fuller integration into the wider community and the lifestyles associated with it.

In the 1990s the charity expanded its services in community based settings, helping people in their own homes and by June 1994 The Royal School for the Blind became SeeAbility, reinforcing our message "Seeing beyond disability".

Today we are a charity that offers a wide range of services both in SeeAbility's accommodation and in people's own homes. We also offer specialist advisory services for families and professionals.



Who we are

SeeAbility is a specialist registered charity supporting people who have multiple disabilities, including visual impairment, learning and physical disabilities, mental health difficulties, acquired brain injury and life limiting conditions. With specialisms acquired over 200 years, we are the leading experts in this field.

Our **mission** is to enrich the lives of people with sight loss and multiple disabilities across the UK.

We do this by enabling them to:-

- Look after their eyes and vision
- Stay well
- Develop life skills
- Make choices
- Live in a place which meets their needs
- Be a valued part of their community.

Our **values** are:-

We see beyond disability

We work with individuals to realise their potential and help fulfil hopes and ambitions.

We're specialists

We're passionate about growing and sharing our knowledge, so that we can give the very best support.

We care

We put trust, integrity and respect at the heart of our work and do what we say.

Our services

We offer a wide range of tailored, person-centred housing and personal support services to adults with sight loss and multiple disabilities. We own most of our buildings and they are built to a very high quality, customised specification.

Our dedicated staff teams are highly trained and as diverse as the people we support. They are supported by a team of professionals specialising in visual impairment habilitation and rehabilitation, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy.

The charity's accommodation, outreach and day activity services are spread across the south of England, from East Sussex to Devon. They range from 24/7 nursing and end of life care for people with very complex needs and shortened life expectancy, to



semi-independent living in tenanted or shared ownership flats. There are currently 23 different projects, with more in development.

Since 2005, we have been working to transform eye care and vision for people with learning disabilities, setting up eye health facilitation projects and developing a range of training and information material for individuals, families and professionals. We have also developed our campaigning voice during this time and have presented to Ministers and Government departments about the additional eye health needs of those with learning disabilities, who are ten times more likely to have a serious sight condition than the general population.

We have recently gone through a strategic review and we are planning an ambitious new programme of service development in the next five years, as well as continuing to expand our advisory presence across the country. We will also be going back to our roots in beginning to work again with children.

How SeeAbility is organised

The Charity is governed by a Council of Trustees led by a Chairman. The executive and day-to-day management of the charity is led by the Chief Executive, whose leadership team comprises directors of Operations, Finance & IT, Specialist Services and Fundraising & Marketing.

About SeeAbility's Trustees

Charity Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of the charity and ensuring it is solvent, well-run and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.

For SeeAbility the Trustees are Members who have been elected to serve on the Council of Trustees. SeeAbility's constitution allows for a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 12 Trustees, elected for a 4 year term but with the opportunity to be re-elected. The Trustee role is voluntary but out of pocket expenses are paid.

SeeAbility has incorporated status 'in perpetuity' dating back to a special Act of Parliament of 1826. A Charity Commission Scheme dated 1996 updated the charity's constitution.

Equality and diversity is a core value of SeeAbility and we hope to appoint a trustee board that reflects this. We will be looking for this diversity in terms of skills and experience as well diversity of social, cultural and geographical backgrounds. As such we welcome applications from those traditionally under-represented on trustee boards. Following a skills, knowledge and diversity audit, we would particularly welcome applications from those who are disabled (particularly visual impairment).

About the role

The role of the Council of Trustees is to oversee the overall direction and activities of the charity, including its policies and procedures, to ensure that they are consistently applied in accordance with the charitable purposes defined in the objects clause in our Constitution.

The Council of Trustees sets and monitors the strategic direction of the charity, although the implementation of strategy is achieved through the Chief Executive and his leadership team. The Council of Trustees must always act in the best interests of SeeAbility, taking decisions as a group and not as individuals. The Council fulfils its role through meetings of the full Council as well as through various committees; Services and Quality (which monitors and advises on operational and quality matters), Finance & Audit, Remuneration, Nominations and Governance.

Responsibilities of a Trustee

The responsibilities of a Trustee are to:

- Ensure that SeeAbility complies with its governing document (i.e. its Constitution and Byelaws), charity law, and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- Ensure that SeeAbility pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.
- Ensure SeeAbility applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects, i.e. it must not spend money on activities which are not included in the objects, however worthwhile they may be.
- Contribute actively to the Council of Trustees' role in the formulation and review of the strategy of SeeAbility, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- Safeguard the good name and values of SeeAbility.
- Strive for SeeAbility to reflect the full diversity of society in all of its activities.
- Ensure the financial stability of SeeAbility.
- Protect and manage the property of SeeAbility and ensure the proper investment of SeeAbility's funds.

- Appoint and support the Chief Executive and monitor his/her performance.
- In addition to the above statutory responsibilities, each Trustee should attend Council and sub-committee meetings and use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Council of Trustees reach sound decisions. This may involve leading discussions, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, evaluation or other issues in which the Trustee has special expertise; and then always upholding the decisions taken by Council. Every trustee sits on either the Services and Quality Committee or the Finance & Audit Committee.
- Support the SeeAbility fundraising team in raising voluntary funds for the charity either through individual or collective initiatives.

Person Specification

Each Trustee must have:

- A commitment to the mission and value base of SeeAbility.
- A willingness to devote the necessary time and effort.
- Integrity.
- Strategic vision.
- Good, independent judgement.
- An ability to think creatively.
- A willingness to speak his/her mind.
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship (training/information will be offered in this area).
- An ability to contribute effectively to the workings of Council and the appropriate sub-committee.

In particular we are seeking candidates who have practical experience and expertise in the following areas together with an understanding of visual impairment.

- Social care, health sector and commissioning, preferably in their current executive role.
- Finance, project management, property development and finance raising.

Time commitment

The time commitment in being a trustee involves attendance at 6 Council meetings and sub-committee meetings per annum (where possible committee meetings are scheduled for the same day as a Council meeting and immediately precede it). Council meetings are usually held from 6.00-8.30pm in the charity's offices in Epsom. There is additionally an all-day strategy session once a year in January.

In addition to this, it is expected that trustees commit the time to receive a proper induction, which involves attendance at a small number of training sessions, visits to one or two of the services and time with the leadership team. Ideally, every trustee will then make at least one service visit a year and also attend the AGM.

The timetable

The closing date for applications is **Friday 5th April 2013**

Please also note the following dates:

Preliminary interviews Trustees Unlimited – Tuesday 16th, Wednesday 17th & Thursday 18th April 2013

Interviews with nominations committee of SeeAbility – w/c 29th April or 6th May 2013

Introduction to the entire Council – Thursday 16th May 2013

How to apply

To apply for this post, please provide the following:

- a supporting statement, explaining how you believe your skills and experience match the requirements of the role, directly addressing the person specification,
- a short introductory statement demonstrating your motivation for this role,
- a comprehensive CV including details of your achievements in each role, and including details of two referees, one of whom should be your current or most recent employer.

Just to be clear, like most trustee roles, this is an unpaid voluntary post.

Please let us know whether you would be happy for us to contact them as part of the process. Referees will not, of course, be contacted without your prior consent.

All of these documents should be forwarded by email to Melissa.baxter@russam-gms.co.uk with the reference SeeAbility as the subject title.



For an informal and confidential discussion about the role, please contact Melissa.baxter@russam-gms.co.uk 07789 985 225 or lan.joseph@russam-gms.co.uk 07825 267 500. Please note if you are successful in being appointed to the role a CRB check would be carried out.

Disabled candidates who meet the core criteria will be offered an interview with Trustees Unlimited.