



your voice   your rights   your choice

# Lived experience Trustee Recruitment Information Pack



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



your voice   your rights   your choice

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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 Katie Banks, who would be delighted to hear from you ([executiveadmin@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:executiveadmin@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
- **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.

## 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

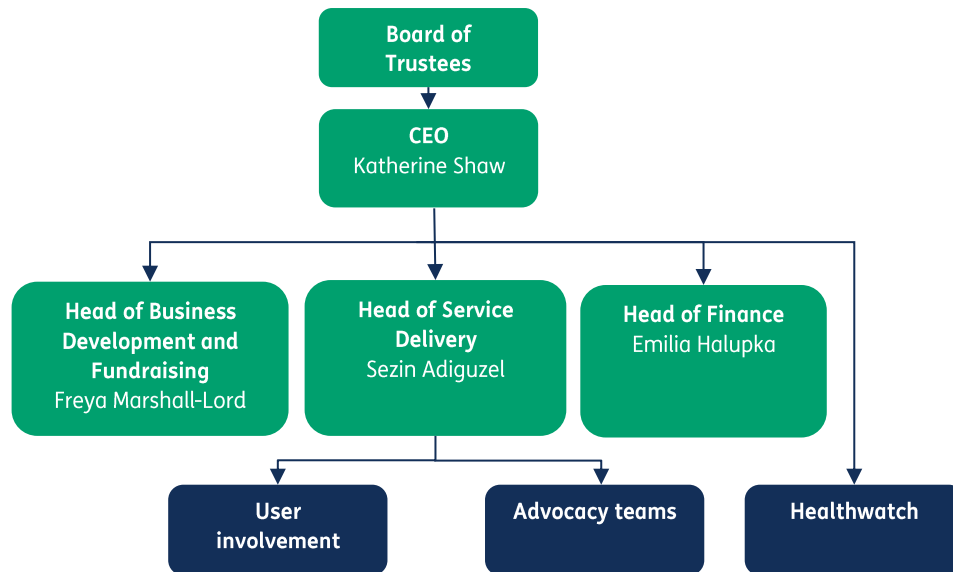
Sophia was in her late 40s with a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia for which she needed 24 hour support. For the last 6 years she'd been living at a community hospital which supports adults who have complex and ongoing mental health needs. She'd been living in this type of care home for some 20 years.

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

				
<b>Chair</b> Dele Olajide	<b>Treasurer</b> Pankaj Shah			
				
Lived Experience Trustee	Rachel Gonzaga	Deborah Finding		
				
Roger Skipp	Lived Experience Trustee (Vacancy)	Rachel Hutchings	Jayesh Patel	Hasib Dewan

## Senior Leadership Team

			
<b>Katherine Shaw</b> CEO	<b>Sezin Adiguzel</b> Head of Service Delivery	<b>Freya Marshall-Lord</b> Head of Business Development and Fundraising	<b>Emilia Halupka</b> Head of Finance

# A selection of trustee stories

## Jayesh Patel



**“As a new Trustee, I’m still very much getting to grips with things, but the staff at The Advocacy Project have been great and I’m delighted to be working alongside such a dedicated group of people. For me, working with people is the best thing about any role.”**

### **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 this website showcasing just some of the valuable work. As a new Trustee, I’m still very much getting to grips with things, but the staff at The Advocacy Project have been great and I’m delighted to be working alongside such a dedicated group of people. For me, working with people is the best thing about any role.

### **What do you do in your spare time?**

I enjoy running, cooking, watching films and visiting places with my partner. I also have a mounting number of DIY projects that I’m trying to slowly navigate my way through.

### **What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about becoming a Trustee?**

It’s a great way to build up knowledge, skills and experience and work alongside people from a range of different backgrounds and disciplines. It’s really a win-win situation – you’re volunteering but also growing yourself.

## Rachel Hutchings



Rachel has over ten years' experience within healthcare policy, research and advocacy. She is currently a Fellow at the Nuffield Trust where she undertakes qualitative research and policy analysis across a range of topics including health inequalities, digital inclusion and social care.

Rachel has a particular interest in involving people with lived experience in her work. She has a BA in Law from the University of Oxford and a Master's in International Human Rights Law from the School of Oriental and African Studies, where her research focused on the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards and Mental Capacity Act.

### **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.

### **What do you do in your spare time?**

I'm a member of a cycling club and really enjoy exploring new places on my bike. I've also recently started gardening and growing my own fruit and veg – only partially successfully so far!

## Rachel Gonzaga



**“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.

We welcome applications from people with lived experience of mental health services, learning disability services, social care services or advocacy. This could be your own experience, or experience as a parent or carer.

Being a trustee can be an important and rewarding role. Trustees read information, take part in discussions, and help make decisions about the organisation. Some of the information can be complex, and trustees have legal responsibilities.

At the moment, board papers are not available in Easy Read.

If the trustee role does not feel accessible for you, you may want to apply to join our User Council instead. The User Council is a group where people with lived experience can share their views, talk about what matters to them, and help shape The Advocacy Project's work. You will be supported to take part, and your views will help influence decisions at The Advocacy Project (please contact Natasha for more information about the User Council - [natasha@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:natasha@advocacyproject.org.uk))

Who we are looking for in a Lived Experience Trustee:

- 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

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 4 pm and lasting until 6.45 pm (with time for a break), 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.



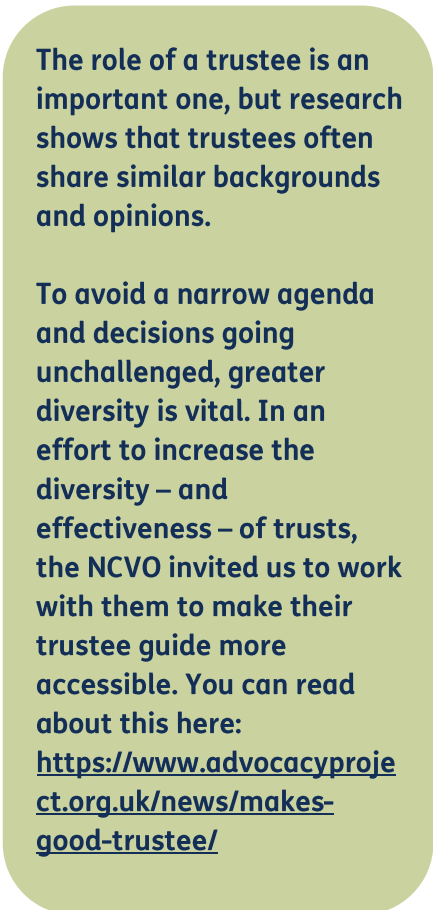
“The independent, flexible and adaptive way you work, ensures that many and different service users get involved.” **Kiran McRobert, Gordon Hospital.**

## 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 send you cv if you have one, or tells us why you would like to apply. You can send an email to: Executive Admin [executiveadmin@advocacyproject.org.uk](mailto:executiveadmin@advocacyproject.org.uk) or call enquiries on 020 3960 7920 to arrange for someone to call you back. Please let us know if you have any accessibility needs should you be called for interview.



**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/>**

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