



Service user trustee

Job title	Service user trustee
Reporting to	Chair, Board of Trustees
Contract	Fixed term
Hours	Part time
Salary	Real Living Wage (London)
Location	Home working / London
Closing date	Midday Monday 31 January 2022

We welcome applications from people with transferrable skills and qualities, and people with diverse employment histories and personal backgrounds.

About The Advocacy Project

We help people who are marginalised or vulnerable because of their circumstances make their own choices about their lives. We support them to speak up and help improve important services we all need. We want to make sure people across all age and care groups – including learning disability and mental health – can:

- › voice their concerns
- › understand their rights
- › make effective choices about what happens in their lives

We do this through advocacy services which support people individually, and user involvement projects that help organisations improve the services they offer.

Find out more about us at www.advocacyproject.org.uk

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

Overview

The Advocacy Project is looking for a new trustee with lived experience of mental health issues or a learning disability to join our Board of Trustees. This role represents a fantastic opportunity to be part of an organisation with a mission to support people with learning disabilities, people with mental health issues or older people to say what they want, secure their rights, represent their interests and get services they need.

As a member of our Board of Trustees, you will have significant influence over the success of our charity. With your fellow trustees, you will shape our long-term strategy and be guardians of our vision, mission and values. You will make sure we are led and managed effectively, take the well-being of our service users, employees and volunteers seriously and are accountable to our stakeholders.

This role will take time and commitment – and you will be influencing the steps we take to help build a better world.

Our governance

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 are expected to be advocates of our work and to promote the organisation positively and with passion externally. Effective trustees will challenge the chief executive and the organisation to make sure the aims are being met appropriately and effectively. They will treat all stakeholders, including service users and staff, with respect.

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 role of a trustee is an important one. But research shows that trustees often share similar ages, 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:

www.advocacyproject.org.uk/news/makes-good-trustee/

If you would like information about the service user trustee role in easy read format, please contact Frances Pace:

frances.pace@advocacyproject.org.uk

Being a service user trustee

It's incredibly important to us that service users are at the heart of everything we do – and that includes our governance. We want people with lived experience of the issues we work on to help steer our direction as an organisation.

As a service user trustee, you will have lived experience of a mental health issue or a learning disability. You will have used mental health or learning disability services – either ours, or similar services run by other organisations. You need to have an understanding of advocacy and a passion for helping The Advocacy Project be the best it can be – but you don't need to have previous experience of charity governance.

We currently have two service user trustees, who play a key role on the board and make an essential contribution to discussions and decision-making. We will give you a full induction, with a 'good trustee guide' in easy read format if you would find that helpful. You will be mentored by the existing service user trustees as you build your experience of being a trustee. For each board discussion, we will give you information in a format that's accessible for you, and support you to prepare ahead of each meeting. In all our meetings, we make sure everyone uses straight-forward language to explain their points – because that helps all of us make better decisions.

Time commitment

The time commitment is 5-8 days per year, which usually includes:

- four board meetings of about two hours each, plus reading papers in advance
- one board away day
- four committee meetings plus preparation
- email discussions with trustees and staff between meetings
- commenting on draft strategy documents
- one or two informal social activities
- several meetings, phone calls and email exchanges with staff to offer specialist expertise
- giving feedback to the chair on the performance of the chief executive and other trustees
- engaging in a working group

Since 2020, we have held our board meetings by Zoom. We hope to move to a hybrid meeting style, with some meetings held face-to-face in a central London venue with the option to join by Zoom.

Person specification

Having a diverse board is especially important for us: [read more about diversity on our board](#). We encourage applications from a diverse range of backgrounds and experience.

Essential experience

- Personal experience of using mental health or learning disability services.

Personal qualities

- A strong commitment to The Advocacy Project, its vision, mission, and values.
- Strong interpersonal and relationship-building skills.
- Tact and diplomacy, with the ability to listen and engage effectively.
- Cultural sensitivity; skilled at putting a commitment to equality and diversity into action.
- Good judgement.
- Able to ask probing questions and hold the senior team to account.
- Ability to commit time to perform the role well, including occasional travel in the UK and attending events out of office hours.

How to apply

Upload your application via our website on www.advocacyproject.org.uk/work-for-us

Include your CV and a supporting statement explaining why you think you're the person we're looking for and how your experience meets the person specification.

It's a legal requirement that you are eligible to work in the UK for all our posts.

If you have any questions, please email Judith Davey: Judith.Davey@advocacyproject.org.uk