

Recruitment pack

Board Trustee

March 2021

Dear Applicant,

Role of Board Trustee

Thank you for your interest in this role. In this pack, you'll find information that will tell you more about our organisation and the role of a board trustee. Please note that on this occasion we are seeking to recruit three people to join the board of trustees with effect from July. We are particularly looking for people who:

- Have previous experience as a charity trustee and have business management skills. Examples of the skills that the board needs include marketing and communications, human resources, EDI, legal and risk management.
- Have experience of autism, either personally or through a family member or through a professional role.
- May have served in a volunteer role with an NAS branch.

We will welcome applications from people living across the UK, including Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

To apply, please send a CV and covering letter to response@peridotpartners.co.uk inserting "Trustee – NAS" into the subject field. Your letter should indicate why you are interested in the role, and why you believe you have the skills and experience to meet the person specification. Details for two referees are also requested.

You also have the option to download and complete an equal opportunities monitoring form. We ask for this information for equal opportunities monitoring purposes, in line with our commitment to equality and diversity. However, you do not have to complete this form if you prefer not to.

The deadline for submission of applications is 7th June and interviews will be held during the week commencing 14th June. Given the Covid-19 situation, interviews will be held via a video conference link.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss any aspect of trusteeship at the NAS, please email jennifer@peridotpartners.co.uk or call on 07519 070 497. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Carol Homden'.

Dr Carol Homden CBE

Chair of Trustees

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About The National Autistic Society

We are the UK's leading autism charity. Our goal is to help transform lives, change attitudes and create a society that works for autistic people.

We were formed in 1962 by a group of parents who were passionate about ensuring a better future for their children. Today, we provide information about autism to millions of people every year, run pioneering education and social care services and influence policy, public attitudes and business practices.

Across the UK, we have more than 3,400 staff employed in a wide variety of roles, from teaching staff to family support workers; campaign officers to speech and language therapists; and helpline advisers to administrators. We have 7 schools, over 60 social care services and a network of 116 volunteer-run branches.

You'll find more information about us on our website: www.autism.org.uk.



Our vision, mission and values

All our work is guided by our vision, mission and values, which have been developed alongside autistic people and family members.

Our vision

We want to see a society that works for autistic people.

Our mission

To **transform lives** by providing support, information and practical advice for the 700,000 autistic adults and children in the UK, as well as their three million family members and carers.

To **change attitudes** by improving public understanding of autism and helping businesses, local authorities and government to provide more autism-friendly spaces, deliver better services and improve laws.

Our values

- **We learn from real experience.** We've spent over 50 years working together with people on the autism spectrum. No one has more practical knowledge of autism. But we move with the times and we understand that there's always more to learn.
- **We tell it like it is.** We share what we have learned about autism, so that more people can make informed decisions and lead the best lives possible.

- **We inspire.** We celebrate progress, open up new possibilities, spur people into action and motivate change.
- **We are courageous.** We won't accept ignorance or inequality, and we'll never stop pushing for more understanding, greater support and a better world for people on the autism spectrum.

What we do

We have over 23,000 members, more than 115 branches and provide:

- information, advice, training and volunteer-delivered emotional support to millions of autistic people and families in the UK every year
- specialist residential, supported living and day services for adults
- specialist schools, Cullum Units on mainstream school sites and education outreach services for children
- employment support and social programmes for autistic adults
- information and training for health, education and other professionals working with autistic people and their families
- policy advice to all four national Governments and advice to drama and documentary-makers on how to portray autism accurately
- support to employers, businesses and public services on how to be more accessible and inclusive of autistic children and adults



Our story

We started in 1962 as a small group of friends who were frustrated at the lack of understanding and help available for us and our children. Since then, we have grown into the UK's leading autism charity.

1962. First meeting of founding parents

A group of parents come together to start what will later be called The National Autistic Society.

1965. Sybil Elgar School opens

Sybil Elgar is asked by some of the founding parents of the NAS to teach their children. Since it opened, over 400 students have attended the NAS Sybil Elgar School in Ealing, London.

1967. First issue of *Communication* magazine

The first issue of our members' magazine was published - now called 'Your autism magazine', it won the 2014 Charity magazine of the year award.

1968. Helen Allison School opens

Due to the popularity of our first school, Sybil Elgar suggests the NAS opens a second school in Gravesend; it is named after the first General Secretary, Helen Allison, upon her retirement.

1974. Somerset Court opens

The residential community in Brent Knoll, Somerset opens to provide continued support and care for students leaving Sybil Elgar School, and others.

1974. Radlett Lodge School opens

The school is in Radlett in rural Hertfordshire and supports children and young people with autism aged four to 19. Since it opened, over 300 students have attended the school.

1976. Robert Ogden School opens

The school, originally situated in Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham and called Storm House, is in Thurnscoe, near Rotherham in South Yorkshire. The school supports children and young people on the autism spectrum aged seven to 19. Since it opened, over 500 students have attended the schools.

1982. Renamed *The National Autistic Society*

In 1982 the charity change its name from The National Society for Autistic Children to The National Autistic Society.

1992. *Autism Accreditation* launched

The National Autistic Society and a network of affiliated local societies launch the quality assurance programme.

1995. *EarlyBird* starts The EarlyBird training programme is for parents whose pre-school child receives a diagnosis of autism.



1997. Autism Helpline opens

The helpline is established started in order to answer the increasing number of calls and enquiries the organisation receives.

1997. Jane Asher becomes our President

Jane, having already been a Vice-President for some years, is made President of the NAS in recognition of all her hard work for autistic children and adults.

2003. Countess of Wessex becomes our royal Patron

Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex takes over this role from Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal.

2009. Autism Act passed following years of campaigning

The *Autism Act 2009* becomes the first ever disability-specific law in England, after campaigning by thousands of our members, supporters and partners.

2013. Our first free school opens.

The NAS Academies Trust opens its first free school, Thames Valley School, in Reading.

2013. Ask autism is developed and launched.

Ask autism is an online training course developed and delivered by autistic people. It provides an 'insider' perspective of autism to give a unique understanding of how people on the autism spectrum would like to be understood and supported.

2015. Church Lawton School opens in East Cheshire.

This is our second free school and teaches children on the autism spectrum from 4-19.

2015. We hold the first ever World Autism Awareness Week

2015. The first NAS Cullum Centre opens at Salesian School in Surrey.

This is the first of four purpose-built specialist centres we develop with Surrey County Council within mainstream secondary schools in the area, thanks to generous financial support from the Cullum Family Trust.

2016. The National Autistic Society launch Too Much Information

The charity's biggest ever campaign, Too Much Information aims to increase public understanding of autism and included an award-winning film which reached 65 million people.

2019. A purpose designed and built Resource Centre in Belfast opened in the autumn

This purpose-built centre with state of the art technology was the first day provision specifically for autistic adults in Northern Ireland.

2020. The NAS Vanguard Free School opens in Lambeth

After a lengthy gestation the Vanguard school opened in January this year and is the organisation's third free school.



Looking forward

We are proud of what we have achieved but we know only too well that there is still much more to do. Our vision **and** mission still hold true and remain the focus for everything we do. However, as the economic, social and political landscape changes our strategy must reflect this. We have therefore produced a five year plan that focuses our work around four critical areas of activity — the 'pillars' of our strategy.

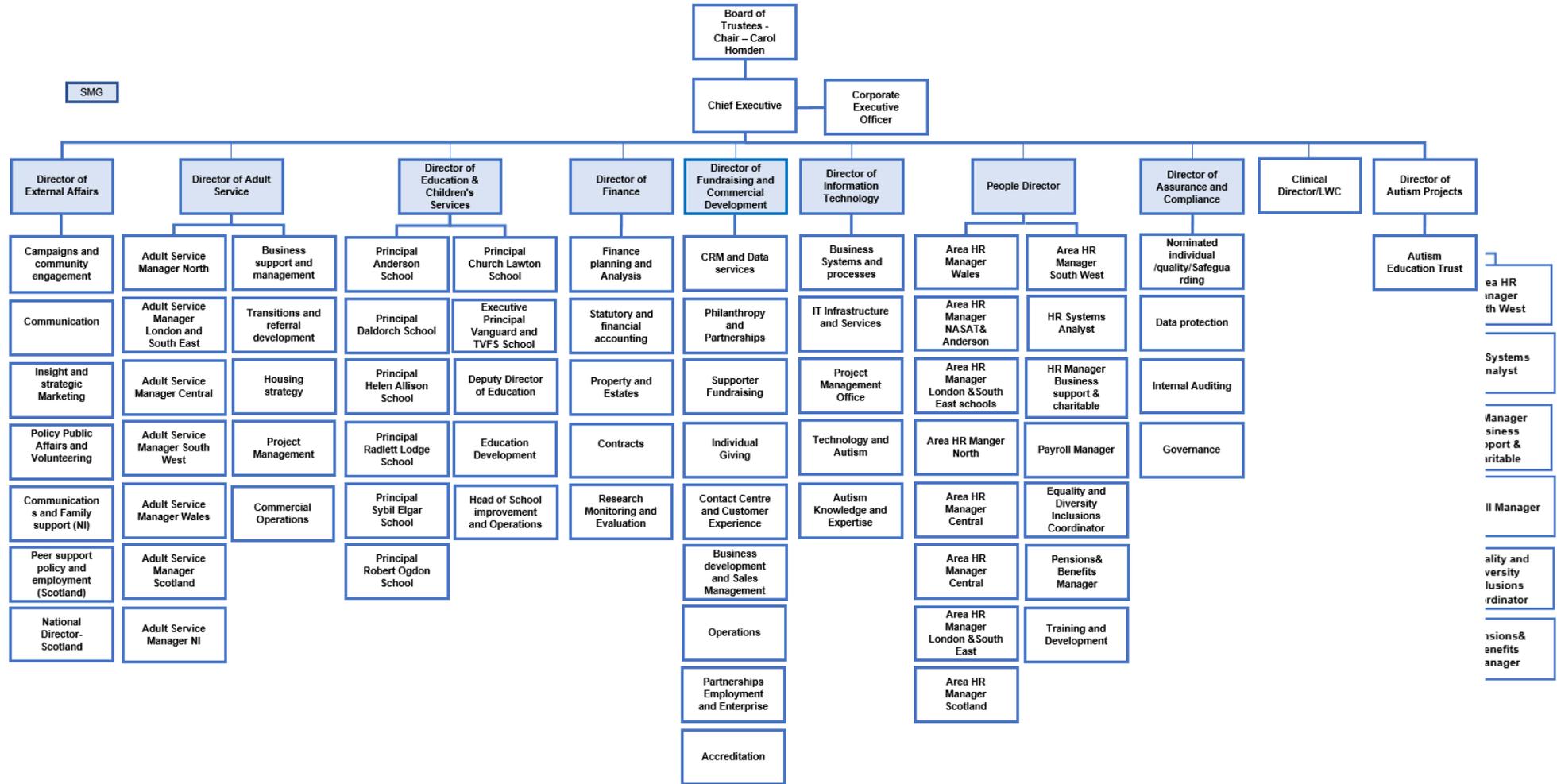
These are to;

1. Deliver social change at a local level that will transform peoples understanding of and attitude towards autistic people and their families
2. Become a partner for life for those people we support by providing them with the information and support they need at critical life stages from pre-diagnosis to entering older age
3. To continue to strive for excellence in all of our services that we provide to autistic people helping them to lead the life they choose
4. To support the knowledge and practice of professionals working in the field of autism with training, conferences and consultancy

Underpinning these pillars are three enablers

1. We have to work to ensure that our autism expertise reflects the latest thinking and research
2. In a tough financial environment much of what we do relies on charitable funding — our ambitions are large and so is the price tag. We therefore need to make sure we continue to grow our fundraising and commercial activities so that we can foot the bill and deliver the scale of impact we dream of
3. All national organisations seeking to make a national and international impact require excellent support services — people behind the scenes that provide the people on the frontline with the support they need to do their job to the best of their ability. We have to make sure that all of these services behind the scenes are run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Our structure



About the Board of Trustees

The board

The Board can have up to 16 trustees and meets, typically, four times a year. The October meeting generally extends over two days and combines a regular board meeting with a strategy day.

The board committee's structure

The NAS Board of Trustees has five standing Committees, which are used to provide the detailed scrutiny of complex issues which cannot reasonably be undertaken at a main Board meeting, thereby facilitating the presentation to the main Board of a focused framework, analysis and recommendation from a trustees' viewpoint.

These standing Committees are:

- Plans & Resources
- Services Quality & Development
- Education Quality & Development
- Audit & Risk
- Brand & Commercial Development

In addition, there is a Scotland Reference Group that provides advice and feedback on issues specifically related to Scotland.

In brief, the purposes of the standing Committees are as follows:

Plans & Resources

- Take the lead on developing and implementing mid to long-term operational plans, considering opportunities for growth (including by acquisition), identifying future trends and making recommendations to the Board on priorities for resource allocation;
- Take delegated responsibility on behalf of the Board for overseeing the financial framework of the charity and the effective use of its assets so as to ensure continued financial viability, reporting to the Board as appropriate;
- Take responsibility for the oversight of Human Resources management and performance;
- Take an overview of the charity's property portfolio;
- Monitor corporate performance against agreed indicators and targets.

Services Quality & Development

- Ensure high quality and consistent standards of practice are maintained throughout all contracted services with particular reference to the advancement of outcomes for individuals being supported;
- Monitor levels of service user satisfaction;
- Monitor compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements within contracted services, and compliance with the philosophy of choice, independence, inclusion and rights that underpins those regulations;

- Oversee service development to ensure contracted services evolve with the changing environment and Board expectations regarding outcomes.

Education Quality & Development

- Ensure high quality and consistent standards of practice are maintained throughout all NAS Group schools. These include independent schools, free schools and all other education based services for children that are regulated by Ofsted (England) or Education Scotland (Scotland) and delivered by the NAS through other channels. Also included are autism units based in mainstream schools and other non-regulated educational activities for children;
- Monitor the governance of schools owned, operated or managed by the NAS Group and ensure compliance with the law, regulations and the achievement of standards set by the Department for Education and by the regulators.
- Monitor the financial performance of the education services provided by the NAS Group to ensure their long term sustainability and timely investment for their planned future development;
- Monitor compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements with particular reference to the safeguarding of children;
- Monitor the outcomes of pupils and students against agreed targets relating to academic performance and social and behavioural norms.

Audit & Risk

- Oversee the external and internal audit processes and compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, ensuring a framework for accountability;
- Examine and monitor the effectiveness of risk analysis and risk management; and to
- Take responsibility for monitoring the management of risk.
- Oversee the governance of the charity, ensuring it is effective and fit for purpose.

Brand & Commercial Development

- Support the Executive in increasing the generation of unrestricted income for the charity, in particular by developing new mechanisms through which funds might be raised;
- Oversee the development of the NAS brand and brand proposition, ensuring that all opportunities to exploit the value of the charity of the brand are maximised;
- Ensure maximum impact is obtained through the alignment of all campaigning activity (fundraising, media and political);
- Assist in the development of, and to consider and make recommendations to the Board upon, fully thought through business plans brought forward by the Executive;
- Oversee the development and expansion of social enterprises that address the needs of autistic adults and ensure opportunities for people with an ASC to participate in meaningful activity;
- Encourage and attract experienced entrepreneurs and business people to be co-opted onto the Committee;
- Encourage and support the growth and engagement of the NAS Membership and NAS Branches; and to
- Ensure compliance with all statutory and regulatory obligations associated with primary and non-primary purpose trading.

Scotland Reference Group

- Facilitate and support the mission of the NAS and the delivery of its strategy in Scotland;
- Provide advice to the Board on the best approaches to the implementation and development of services, taking account of Scottish practice, the Scotland constitutional context and other related factors;
- Support the NAS Scotland Senior Management Team in whatever ways are practicable;

All trustees are expected to sit on at least one Board committee and the aim is that none will sit on more than two.

Trustee Role

Trustees are responsible, in a non-executive capacity, for the overall governance of the NAS, developing its aims and goals, pursuant to its charitable objectives, within legal and regulatory requirements and guidelines. Trustees act as a body (but are accountable individually) to determine the overall strategic direction and to oversee the performance of the charity. Whilst Board and Committee work is inevitably a key focus, each trustee has a duty continuously to develop their knowledge and understanding of the charity and throughout their term of office to make a positive impact on its people and activities.

The roles of the trustees may be split into those concerning the work of the charity as a whole, and those covering the work of the Board, as follows.

Roles Concerning the Work of the Organisation

- To serve the objects and needs of the charity, and only those objects and needs, focusing on the prime aim of improving the lives of autistic children, adults and families.
- To be familiar with all aspects of the charity's work and the legal and practice contexts and constraints in which the charity operates, by visiting services and undertaking learning and development activities by way of personal initiative and through discussion with the Chair of Trustees;
- To shape and periodically redefine the Vision, Mission and Values of the charity;
- To form the charity's strategy, set corporate policy and agree goals and targets;
- To establish broad policies, including matters to be reserved for Board decision, ensuring they are in keeping with the charity's objects;
- To allocate resources between the various and diverse activities of the charity and to balance different stakeholders' interests insofar as this is in the best interests of the charity;
- To appoint and support the Chief Executive, establishing a constructive working relationship;
- To provide clear strategic direction to the Chief Executive and executive management team, agreeing performance measures for the organisation as a whole, and monitoring performance against those measures;
- To ensure regulatory compliance by taking appropriate and necessary steps to:
 - (i) ensure that the charity pursues legitimate objectives and adheres to the principles and objects laid down in its constitution which should be periodically reviewed in order to ensure it remains fit for purpose as the charity evolves;
 - (ii) ensure that the charity applies its resources effectively and solely pursuant to its objects;

- (iv) ensure the charity's financial stability;
- (v) ensure the assets of the charity are safeguarded;
- (vi) ensure the proper investment of the charity's reserve fund(s).
- To safeguard the good name and ethos of the charity.

Roles Concerning the Work of the Board

- To comply at all times with the Board Rules and the Trustees' Code of Conduct, particularly at meetings of the NAS Board, when otherwise exercising the functions of a Trustee and when serving on any Committee.
- To attend all Board, allocated Committee(s) and General Meetings of Members whenever reasonably possible to do so, explaining any absences to the Chair of Trustees/Committee as relevant;
- To use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they bring to the table to help the Board reach sound decisions – this will involve scrutinising Board papers, leading or contributing to discussion, focusing on the relevant issues, and providing advice and guidance to the Chair and Chief Executive on areas in which the individual trustee has special expertise;
- To raise an issue in open meeting or, if concerned that the Board's intended direction is not in the best interests of the charity, with the Chair outside it;
- To accept collective responsibility for decisions of the Board and to uphold those decisions;
- To maintain Board confidentiality;
- To facilitate the recruitment and induction of new trustees;
- To contribute to the monitoring of the Board's performance and that of its Committees, including offering and receiving performance appraisal.

Trusteeship is a serious responsibility, particularly in a charity of the stature and complexity of the NAS, and requires an active role in its governance. Reading Board and Board Committee papers, attending meetings, continuous personal development and remaining informed about the charity's activities and the environment in which it operates, require time and self-sacrifice.

Please note that trustees are unpaid volunteers although out of pocket expenses are reimbursed.

Person specification

All Committee members need certain qualities, such as integrity, passion and commitment, but not every member needs the full range of experience required by the Board as a whole. Some members will need to have experience of the nature of autism, or of care practice, whilst others can offer experience of business management, schools and education, care provision or other relevant professional skills.

The current specific need is for three individuals with a range of management skills and some prior experience of charity governance. They will also have knowledge and experience of autism, obtained either by reason of being autistic themselves, having a family member who is autistic or through working in a professional capacity with people who are autistic.

More generally:

Each trustee must have:

- a commitment to the charity and to equality of opportunity within a diverse environment;
- a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort;
- an understanding and acceptance of the responsibilities of trusteeship;
- an ability to work at a strategic level, think creatively and criticise constructively;
- good, independent judgment with a willingness to speak their mind, but with a willingness to be persuaded and/or accept and uphold the views of the majority;
- an ability to add value by being creative in framing the real issues and in bringing a fresh, discerning and authoritative perspective to addressing those issues;
- an ability to be objective and to challenge assumptions;
- an ability to work effectively as a member of a team, and to respect confidences;
- In short: a commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Board as a whole needs skills and experience in the following areas:

- lived experience of autism at all ages (either having a diagnosis or being a parent/carer);
- human resource and legal matters
- organisational management and strategic planning in commercial, statutory and non-profit organisations;
- Risk and compliance;
- business and financial management;
- education and care, including risk management, safeguarding and quality management;
- marketing and campaigning;
- public affairs and public relations;
- fundraising and income generation;
- commercial development and trading.

The ideal Board would also have:

- a satisfactory age, gender and ethnicity mix;
- a mix of parents who have autistic children or adult family member(s);
- a mix of parents who have a family member with low and high support needs;
- autistic trustees across the spectrum (linked to appropriate benefit/outcomes and participation mechanisms).