

# THE DEAF HEALTH CHARITY SIGNHEALTH

## **Trustee Appointment Brief – February 2019**

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### **Contents**

1. Introductory Letter
2. Background and Context
3. Vision, Mission and Values
4. Organisation Chart
5. Role, Responsibilities and Duties
6. Person Specification
7. Recruitment Timetable
8. How to apply

## 1. Introductory Letter

Thank you for your interest in joining SignHealth as a Trustee.

SignHealth is a national charity that strives to ensure that Deaf people have appropriate accessibility to healthcare services and information. Our organisation was established in 1986 and for over 30 years we have been providing services that improve accessibility and health outcomes for Deaf people across the UK.

While there are over 70,000 sign language users in the UK, most healthcare providers do not provide adequate accessible support for Deaf patients. Deaf people are twice as likely to develop mental health issues and tend to have poorer health than hearing people.

We deliver services and we campaign. We provide three types of service – social care, psychological therapy and domestic abuse. We are the only organisation to run an NHS IAPT compliant therapy service in sign language and the only organisation to run domestic abuse services for Deaf people run by Deaf people. We played a key role in the development of the Accessible Information Standard and strive to ensure this is understood and implemented across the NHS and social care. In 2014 we published a significant report called [Sick of It](#) and in 2015 we were named as Disability Charity of the Year.

We have recently refreshed our strategy, enhanced our governance and relocated our Head Office. We now have a bold three year plan aimed at growing the organisation in order to better achieve our purpose.

While over half of our staff and volunteers are Deaf, we want to employ and work with more and more Deaf people wherever we can. As we enter this new and exciting phase, we are seeing to recruit a number of dynamic Trustees to join our Board.

You'll find more information below on what it means to be a Trustee at SignHealth. We hope you are as excited as we are about our future - if you feel you have the skills, experience and passion to join us, then please come and join us!

Yours faithfully,



Jackie Driver  
Chair

James Watson-O'Neill  
Chief Executive



## 2. Background and Context

SignHealth is a national charity that works to improve Deaf people's health and wellbeing. The majority of health and social care information and provision are not supported by sign language, leaving many Deaf people at a significant disadvantage. It is estimated that approximately 70,000 Deaf people use British Sign Language in the UK and it is clear that there is much more to do in terms of raising awareness, campaigning for change, and supporting others to deliver essential services.

SignHealth was established in 1986 as the Anastasia Trust, and was initially focussed on providing access to mental health services for Deaf people. In 1991 the organisation re-launched and became Sign. In the years that followed, Sign began expanding its facilities and acquiring housing services to serve as care homes. The organisation's first housing project opened in Balham, with a second scheme opening the following year in Manchester. This was followed by three more housing schemes in the following years in Leeds, London and Birmingham. The residents living in our care homes are often referred to us from long term institutional care or hospitals. Residents are encouraged to learn new skills and build up their self confidence in order to become independent. In the mid 1990's Sign began developing and expanding various outreach services to support Deaf people in their communities.

In 2005, Sign rebranded to SignHealth and began focussing on wider health work rather than just mental health. SignHealth is now deeply respected by health and social care professionals and has well-established advocacy, counselling and domestic violence services. The organisation has also worked extensively with the Department of Health and Social Care on research projects and initiatives.

SignHealth offers psychological therapy services for Deaf people in British Sign Language. All of our qualified therapists are fluent in BSL, and many of the therapists are Deaf.

DeafHope is a service that supports Deaf women and men who are experiencing or have suffered from domestic abuse. Qualified therapists provide practical and emotional support to Deaf people in these circumstances and help them to rebuild their lives. This project has also led to the establishment of Young DeafHope, an initiative that works with young Deaf people to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence.

The charity is funded by Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups, trust funds, grants, voluntary donations and various fundraising initiatives.

### **3. Vision, Purpose and Values**

#### **Our Vision**

Our vision is a world where there are no barriers to good health and wellbeing for Deaf people.

#### **Our Purpose**

SignHealth's purpose is to improve the health and wellbeing of Deaf people.

#### **Our Values**

##### **Person-centred**

- We are committed to delivering a personalised service for each individual.

##### **Involving**

- We talk with and listen to Deaf people about their thoughts and opinions.

##### **Enabling**

- We support Deaf people to live independently and to access information to make their own choices.
- We support our staff and volunteers to fulfil their role with appropriate training and development.
- We aim to employ a high percentage of Deaf staff and volunteers.

##### **Expert**

- We are respected and trustworthy.
- We provide a high quality and professional service.

##### **Respectful**

- We recognise and respect and value Deaf culture.

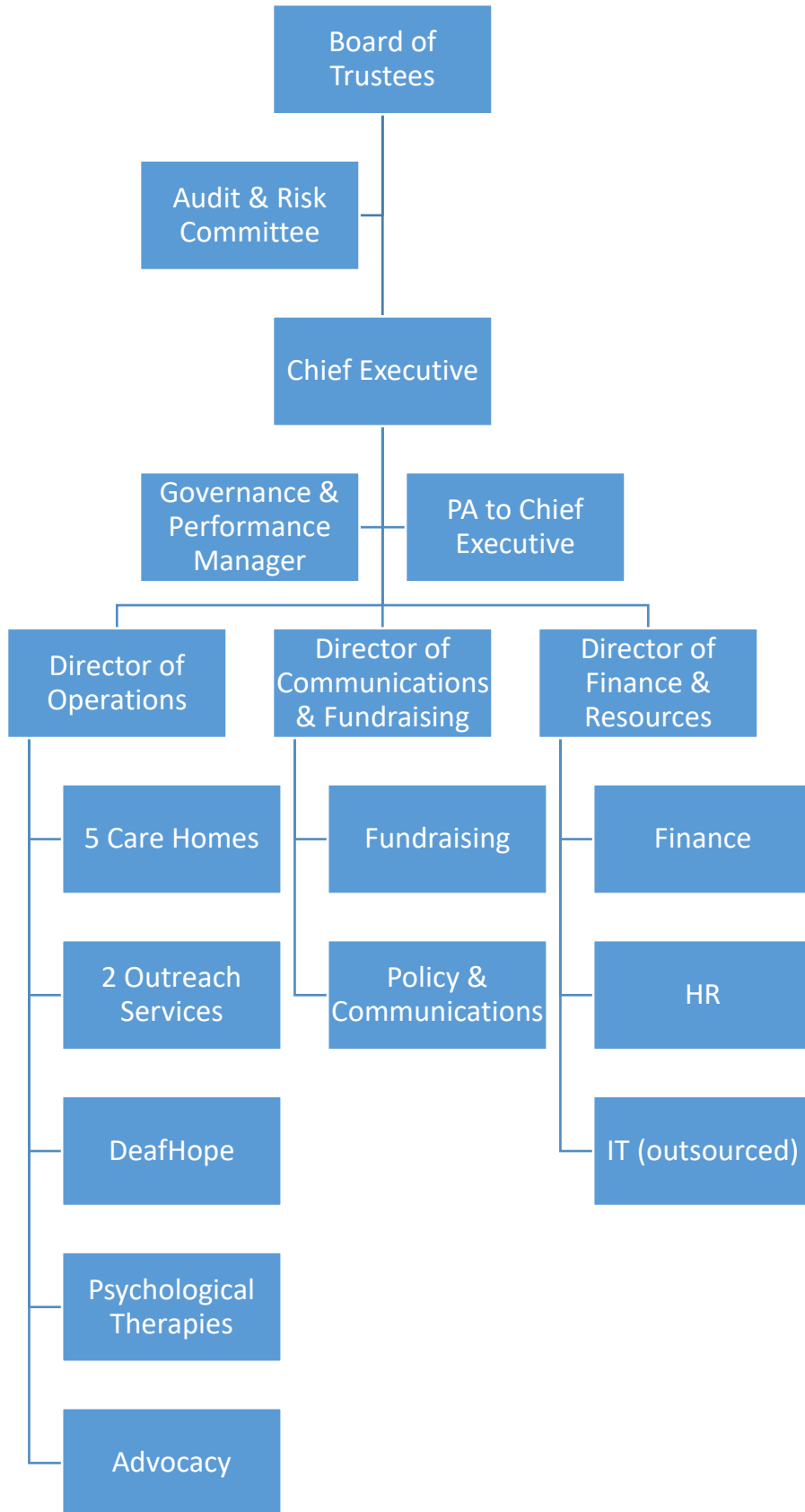
##### **Influential**

- We respond to local, regional and national agendas and take opportunities to develop our work.
- We work with our partner organisations.

##### **Safeguarding**

- We work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk.

## 4. Organisation Chart



## **5. Role Profile, Responsibilities and Duties**

### **Role Profile**

Trustees act as the guardian of the vision, purpose and values of SignHealth, acting in its best interests and working constructively with other Board members and staff to:

- achieve and maintain excellent standards of governance
- ensure SignHealth's purpose and objectives are achieved
- ensure that SignHealth is managed and controlled appropriately and maintains its financial sustainability
- demonstrate that SignHealth is accountable to its legitimate interest groups, funders and stakeholders
- ensure SignHealth works within the requirements of the law, regulation, its funding bodies and best practice standards

### **Key Responsibilities**

To take part in formulating and regularly reviewing the strategic aims of the organisation, and to collaborate in providing the direction of SignHealth's ongoing development

To work with the other Trustees in ensuring that the practices and policies of SignHealth are in accordance with its mission

With other Trustees, to exercise effective control of the organisation, ensuring that it functions within the legal and financial requirements of a charitable organisation and in accordance with best practices

### **Specific Duties**

- Develop, review, and safeguard SignHealth's strategic aims, and assist in their implementation
- Attend the quarterly meetings of the Trustee Board and briefing meetings as required
- Monitor and evaluate the organisation's financial and operational performance against its strategic aims, exercising efficient control and ensuring best practice
- Work towards SignHealth's vision, purpose, and values
- Ensure all of the organisation's policies are in accordance with its aims and values
- Attend all training and development activities and opportunities, including the induction process upon taking up the role of Trustee
- Work as an efficient member of the team within the Trustee Board
- While reflecting the values of the organisation, protect its assets and integrity
- Forge and maintain efficient relations with the Executive team and the staff, engaging with members and stakeholders as necessary

**As part of the Board, Trustees will:**

- Ensure compliance with the Charity Commission requirements and its guidance
- Devote sufficient time and energy to SignHealth, including preparing for meetings and keeping up to date with the Deaf community, mental health, domestic abuse and social care sector issues;
- Contribute specific skills and experience in the monitoring and safeguarding of the organisation's performance
- Attend and participate in any Board induction, training, briefing, the annual away day or other development activities, and the Board appraisal scheme
- Register all interests that might have a bearing on SignHealth's work and declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest as and when they arise
- Represent SignHealth positively to all external stakeholders and interested groups
- Collaborate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a risk management framework in order to safeguard the assets and reputation of the organisation.

## 6. Person Specification

### Part One

You should be able to demonstrate and provide evidence of the following criteria in your written application:

- A record of proven and significant achievement in your own field
- An understanding of the type of work undertaken by SignHealth and a commitment to our aims and values
- Successful experience of operating on a Board or a major committee in a charitable, public sector or commercial organisation
- Demonstrable experience of building and sustaining relationships with key stakeholders and colleagues to achieve organisational objectives
- Confident and effective communication skills with a range of audiences and the ability to challenge in a constructive way
- An empathy with or lived experience of being Deaf, being part of the Deaf community, and using Deaf services

We are keen to hear from Deaf people, particularly those with experience of mental health issues and mental health services.

In addition to this, a background in one or more of the following areas would be welcomed:

- Financial management and accountancy
- Operational experience in social care, psychological therapy or domestic abuse
- Charity governance and management
- Income generation and commercial growth
- Marketing and communications
- Diversity and Inclusion

### Part Two

Alongside the criteria above, the following items will be evaluated further at interview:

- A proven track record of sound judgement and effective decision-making
- Strong understanding of the respective roles of the Chair, Trustees, and Executive team
- Enthusiasm and time to commit to the role of Trustee
- A background of involvement within the not for profit and voluntary sector
- Strong networking skills
- Commitment to promoting SignHealth's vision and values
- A high degree of emotional intelligence and the ability to work as a team



## 7. Recruitment Timetable

Early February 2019	Trustee roles advertised
February 2019	Informal meetings with James Watson-O'Neill, Chief Executive
07 March 2019 pm	Trustee candidates observe SignHealth's March Board Meeting
Before Easter	Panel interviews for trustee candidates
23 & 24 May 2019	Trustees appointed and attend SignHealth's Board Away Day and May Board Meeting

## 8. How to apply

If you are interested in applying for this role, please contact SignHealth's Governance & Performance Manager, Craig Nightingale, by email to [cnightingale@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:cnightingale@signhealth.org.uk) providing:

- A supporting statement. This should clearly set out how you meet each of the criteria set out in the person specification. You should provide evidence in your statement; and not simply a broad claim to have done it - give us examples and dimensions; tell us what this achieved and how it helped meet your organisations' goals.
- A comprehensive CV including details of your achievements in each role.
- Details of two referees, one of whom should be with regards to your current or most recent board level role, and 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.

Please ensure that you are available for to observe the SignHealth Board meeting on 07 March 2019, as well as the Board Away Day and Board Meeting on 23 and 24 May 2019.

Please let us know of any access requirements you may have. BSL interpreters and Speech-to-Text writers will be available at the Board Meetings and Away Day, and will be booked for any meetings scheduled as part of the recruitment process.

If you would like to have an informal conversation about becoming a Trustee at SignHealth please contact James Watson-O'Neill, Chief Executive, on 07957 562 832 (text and voice) or [jwatsononeill@signhealth.org.uk](mailto:jwatsononeill@signhealth.org.uk)