



Adapting Technology ■ Changing Lives

Candidate Brief

Chair of Board of Trustees AbilityNet

November 2017 (2)

1 Equalities Statement

AbilityNet is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, marital status, religion, sexuality, transgender status and working patterns

Remuneration: The role of Chair is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although reasonable expenses for travel may be claimed.

Principal address: Microsoft Campus, Thames Valley Park, Reading, RG6 1WG

Time commitment: A total of circa 24 - 30 days per year consisting of four quarterly Board meetings, discussions with the CEO, usually monthly, plus the possibility of some ad hoc meetings throughout the year consistent with being the Chair of a national IT charity.

Term: Three years initially (but see point 8 below)

Reporting to: Board of Trustees (Executive Committee)

2 Background

AbilityNet is an award-winning charity limited by guarantee, incorporated in the UK and registered as a charity in England and Wales and also separately in Scotland. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association, which created the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed by its Articles of Association.

AbilityNet's purpose is to help improve people's lives by supporting them achieve everything they can at work, at home or in education through the use of digital technology. Our vision is a digital world where everyone is given equal access to digital information systems.

AbilityNet's income and endowments during 2016 totalled £3.6 million which enabled the charity to deliver a total charitable expenditure of £3.4 million. During 2016 AbilityNet grew its operating reserves to £840k thereby giving it an operating buffer of 3.3 months.

During 2016 we directly and indirectly helped nearly 157,000 people through AbilityNet's services of:

- advice and information;
- accessibility consultancy;
- assessments;
- training;
- home support visits; and,
- technical support.

Our estimate of the public benefit value of the free services we delivered in 2016 was approximately £750k.

3 Governance

AbilityNet currently has 12 Trustees, who are also directors under company law; there are three Corporate Trustees – IBM (UK) Ltd, Microsoft Ltd and The Information Technologists' Company who each appoint representatives to the Board; other Trustees are selected for a range of skills to meet existing or emerging needs of AbilityNet.

Potential Trustee candidates, when a vacancy occurs, are interviewed by a panel of Trustees led by the Chair of Trustees. Suitable individuals are briefed by the Chair and Chief Executive before being proposed for appointment to the Board of Trustees. New Trustees receive a full briefing, including an induction pack, which

includes the Memorandum and Articles, minutes of previous meetings and a glossary of terms.

The Board of Directors (Trustees) are responsible for the overall strategic direction and sound financial practices within the charity. They hold Board meetings on a quarterly basis and receive a monthly management report from the Chief Executive which includes management accounts and a report on progress to date.

The Chair, as representative of the Board, also maintains regular contact with the Chief Executive and, where necessary, secures agreement from the Board for urgent action, unless already empowered by the Board to make the necessary decision.

Each member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) is paired with a Trustee to provide a practical link between the SMT and the Board as well as providing the SMT with additional advice and guidance.

4 Role Description

IT accessibility is something most of us take for granted today but many people with disabilities do not have access to the skills they need to also be inclusive citizens within the digital world.

By joining the board of AbilityNet as Chair, you can help the charity meet its growth ambitions and deliver the vision of a digital world where everyone is given equal access to digital information systems.

In simple terms the Chair runs the Board and the CEO runs the charity. In practice this means that the Chair is accountable for guiding the Board of Trustees to set the strategic direction of AbilityNet ensuring that key decisions are made, recorded and actioned. 4

The CEO and Senior Management Team (SMT) are accountable for the details involved in delivering the strategic outcomes set by the Board.

5 Trustee responsibilities

The Board of Trustees are jointly and individually responsible for the:

- overall governance and strategic direction of the charity;
- its financial health;
- the probity of its activities; and,
- developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals in accordance with the governing document, legal and regulatory guidelines.

The Chair will also be expected to perform all such additional duties as are reasonably commensurate with the role of Chair.

All Trustees must hold the charity “in trust” for current and future beneficiaries, together with the following formal responsibilities which are indicative but not exhaustive.

- Ensuring that AbilityNet fulfils its legal responsibilities as laid out in its Articles of Association, as a company limited by guarantee and as a charity registered in England and Wales and separately as a charity in Scotland;
- Ensuring that AbilityNet pursues its objects as laid down in the Articles of Association and that its assets are used exclusively in pursuit of these objectives;
- Approving the annual returns submitted to the Charity Commission and the Scottish Charity Regulator;
- Overseeing the development of strategy and approving the strategic direction and policies for AbilityNet;
- Monitoring the performance of AbilityNet against agreed key objectives;
- Ensuring that AbilityNet remains financially viable and that the financial and reputational risks to which it is exposed are appropriately monitored;
- Ensuring that the Risk Register is actively managed and regularly reviewed;
- Agreeing the annual operating budget and monitoring financial performance in-year;
- Ensuring that AbilityNet is following best practice in both charity governance and business management;
- Providing expertise and insight into key issues; and,
- Trustees must act at all times in the best interests of AbilityNet. They must avoid situations where their personal or other interests conflict with the interests of AbilityNet and must not profit from their role. In carrying out their role, Trustees have a duty of care to act reasonably and prudently and have a higher duty in areas of their own expertise.

As well as the various statutory duties, any Trustee should make full use of any specific skills, knowledge or experience to help the Board make good decisions.

6 Person Specification

Experience:

AbilityNet is seeking an individual who has a strong empathy with its purpose of helping improve people's lives by supporting them achieve everything they can at work, at home or in education using digital technology. Our vision is a digital world where everyone is given equal access to digital information systems.

Experience and a proven track record in the use of IT, team leadership, and financial management, with an appreciation of our work and how it positively impacts the lives of others will be highly beneficial.

Candidates should have:

- Experience chairing a decision-making forum in a charitable, public sector or commercial organisation;
- Demonstrable experience of building and sustaining relationships with key stakeholders and colleagues to achieve organisational objectives;
- A proven track record of sound judgement and effective decision making;
- A history of impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences;
- A track record of commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

Knowledge, skills and understanding:

- Commitment to the organisation and a willingness to devote the necessary time and effort;
- Preparedness to make unpopular recommendations to the Board, and a willingness to speak their mind;
- Willingness to be available to staff for advice and enquiries on an ad hoc basis;
- Good, independent judgement and strategic vision;
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship;
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team;
- An understanding of the respective roles of the Chair, Trustees and Chief Executive.

7 Time Commitment

Candidates should be able and willing to commit at least 24 - 30 days unpaid time to AbilityNet per year. This time consists of preparing for and:

- Chairing four quarterly Board meetings;
- Participating in discussions, usually monthly, with the CEO; plus
- Participating in and sometimes chairing a range of ad hoc meetings throughout the year consistent with being the Chair of a national IT charity.

8 Terms of Appointment

- The initial appointment is for a three-year term, but can be extended as Trustees, including the Chair, may serve for a maximum of four consecutive terms of up to three years each;
- This position is unremunerated; however reasonable expenses are eligible for reimbursement (by receipt).

9 How to Apply

Application is by CV and covering letter. The covering letter should address your personal interest in the role, and how your experience meets the criteria described in the 'Person Specification'.

To apply, please send your CV together with your covering letter to:

Mairéad Comerford,
Head of Human Resources,
AbilityNet, Microsoft Campus,
Thames Valley Park,
Reading, RG6 1WG
Email: mairead.comerford@abilitynet.org.uk

The closing date for applications is: 31st December 2017.

10 Further information and queries

If you would like to have an informal conversation please contact the current Chair of AbilityNet, Dr Michael R Taylor, on 07595 359 506.