



CANDIDATE PACK

CHAIR



WELCOME

Every 6 minutes someone learns that they are losing their sight. Every five hours, a baby is born with sight problems. In these moments, two profound questions emerge: "Can this be stopped?" "How do I (or my child) live this life?"

The merger of Fight for Sight and Vision Foundation which took place on 1st April 2023 will enable us to address both questions. By combining our strengths and expertise we are now the only significant national funder with the efficiency, capability, and capacity to increase investment in medical research and social improvement. Together we can mitigate both the prevalence and impact of sight loss. We have a clear ambition – to save sight and to change lives.

We are now seeking a new Chair to lead our Board as we establish ourselves in our new form. This is an exciting inflection point for us, and our new Chair will be central in enabling us to achieve our ambition.

We have worked through our merger and have a clear focus and vision, as well as a strong Board and senior leadership team, all of whom are ambitious for the potential impact we can make. Our re-brand early next year will also enable us to amplify our position as a leader within the sight loss sector. Our merger was a critical step in accelerating research which will create a positive impact on the lives of millions of people. We do not want this opportunity to pass us by and that's what makes this Chair appointment such an important and exciting role for the right person.

As our Chair, you will have the opportunity to steer the course of our charity and our sector, shaping our strategies, and advocating for meaningful change. Your vision and leadership will be a driving force behind world leading research into sight loss prevention, and transformative initiatives that enhance the quality of life for countless individuals.

To hear more about what we are looking for in our Chair, please [follow this link](#) to a video. If you want to be part of something that will really make a difference, we'd love to hear from you.

Elizabeth Honer
Trustee, Chair of People Committee



ABOUT US

We are a new organisation forged from two ambitious, grant-making charities: Fight for Sight and Vision Foundation. Our single, unifying mission is to save sight and change lives. It is a mission that reflects two urgent questions everyone faces when they receive. A diagnosis of sight loss: firstly, 'How do I stop this?' and secondly, 'How do I live my life?' Answering these questions will guide our strategy through the next year and as we forge a five-year plan with solid and lofty aspirations.

THE MERGER

Fight for Sight funds breakthrough research and life-changing services to build a more equitable future for blind and partially sighted people. Recent awards include £1.2m across five studies led by scientists and clinicians in Leeds, London and Cardiff to accelerate breakthroughs in multiple sight loss conditions. The Vision Foundation has distributed more than £30m to sight loss organisations that work to inform, include and empower London's visually impaired community. Empowerment is at the heart of what we do; our work focuses on what people can do, rather than what they can't.

The merger will help us to realise a joint ambition to tackle sight loss from both a clinical and social perspective. Our combined organisation is now grounded in data and insight into the science, as well as the lived experience of, sight loss. With this wealth of evidence we're determined to:

- leverage further investment into the sector,
- accelerate clinical progress,
- improve quality of life for people facing or living with sight loss

Crucially, coming together is about growing our influence and impact, not reducing or diluting what we do. So, as we evolve as a merged organisation, we are combining our teams, announcing our new name and fine-tuning our unified mission and strategy – as well as continuing with the important work we're already committed to – you can expect big things from us and it is an exciting time to join us as our new Chair.



OUR FUTURE

Our role is as a grant-maker. We award grants to the scientific community that could lead to scientific breakthroughs and treatments to stop eye diseases from progressing. In the future, we believe research can prevent people from losing sight and reverse sight loss. We invest to advance treatments that will cure eye disease and protect and grow the community of world-class scientists, technologists, and data scientists who can deliver tomorrow's breakthroughs. Historically, Vision Foundation has funded innovations that directly impact people who are blind or partially sighted, from music classes for children to projects that take eye tests into at-risk communities. We invest in programmes, organisations and activities that deliver equity for and with blind and visually impaired people.

As a grant-maker, we are change-makers, accelerators and drivers of impact. We are bold, energetic, challenging, disruptive, tenacious, and determined.

We aren't afraid to tackle the challenges facing the sight loss community, either. Recent campaigns include The Unseen, which unearthed the shocking scale and nature of domestic abuse among blind and partially sighted people, and See My Skills, which addressed high unemployment rates. The charity excels at working in partnership with others towards creating a more equitable society for the sight loss community.

As we progress, we'll scale the impact of projects like these, look beyond the nation's capital, and drive systemic change. We'll need to secure the funds to invest in our trusted partners to achieve our ambitions. We'll continue to fundraise by engaging with supporters and companies through legacies, events such as the London Marathon, and our network of charity shops.

The evidence we commission influences policy and decision-making to demand equality for all.

We'll shortly have a new name that reflects our united ambitions, so it's an exciting time for us and the people we serve.



This is a landmark moment.

The output from your success and our success is nothing less than equity for blind people and treatment for eye disease.

KEITH VALENTINE, CEO OF FIGHT FOR SIGHT / VISION FOUNDATION

OUR FINANCES

The charity is in a strong position financially, with a high level of reserves that we intend to draw down over the coming years as we focus on investing in sustainable growth and increasing our impact. Compared to many charities, we have well diversified income streams, predictable costs, and are in the fortunate position to hold a sizable portfolio of investments. Our plans for the short and medium term are to invest in our income generation infrastructure, and to significantly increase the amounts of funding we can put to our charitable purpose.

OUR BOARD AND LEADERSHIP TEAM

Fight for Sight / Vision Foundation becomes the only organisation in the sight loss sector with an Executive Leadership Team that is made up of 50% of people who have lived experience of sight loss.

[Follow this link to find out more about our executive team.](#)

The board currently numbers twelve trustees, comprising six trustees from each of the “founding” charities, Fight for Sight and Vision Foundation.

The respective Chairs from each founding charity agreed to Co-Chair for an initial transitional period after the merger and are stepping down in order to provide an opportunity to introduce a new leader for our new-formed charity. The Board meets four times a year, or more often as required. We also have a:

- Social Impact & Scientific Research Committee (SISR)
- Finance, Audit, Risk & Resources Committee (FARR)
- People Committee
- Retail Committee

[Follow this link to find out more about our Board.](#)



JOB DESCRIPTION

ROLE PURPOSE:

We are seeking a dynamic and dedicated individual to serve as the Chair of our ambitious merged organisation. As the most senior leader in the charity, you will play a pivotal role in guiding our strategic direction, overseeing governance, and ensuring the fulfilment of our mission to save sight and change lives.

The ideal candidate will have a deep commitment to the cause, exceptional leadership skills, and the ability to foster collaboration, innovation and inclusion within the board, the charity and the wider sector.

MAIN RESPONSIBILITIES:

Strategic Leadership

- Provide visionary leadership and strategic guidance to the charity, aligning efforts with the mission and values of the organisation.
- Collaborate with the board, executive team, and stakeholders to develop and implement long-term strategies that advance the charity's impact and sustainability.

Governance Oversight

- Chair board meetings, ensuring effective governance, decision-making, and compliance with legal and ethical standards.
- Work closely with board members, fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, collaboration and open communication, harnessing different views and opinions.

Engagement

- Represent the charity at public events and networking opportunities to promote our mission and raise awareness about our cause.
- Develop and nurture relationships with key stakeholders, including donors, partners, corporations, government agencies, and the visually impaired community.

Evaluation and Planning

- Collaborate with the board to evaluate the performance of the CEO, ensuring alignment with the charity's goals and objectives.
- Ensure effective succession planning for key leadership roles within the charity.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Essential

- Proven track record of effective leadership in a sector-leading organisation.
- An understanding of governance, and experience of chairing a committee or board.
- Demonstrated ability to build and maintain partnerships with stakeholders, including donors, corporations and government agencies.

Desirable

- Lived experience of sight loss and a strong commitment to addressing sight loss issues and disability rights.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Strategic thinking and the ability to contribute to long-term planning and vision to deliver impact.
- Exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, with the ability to engage diverse audiences.
- Entrepreneurial instincts and a healthy understanding of risk balanced with ambition using sound judgement.

STYLES AND BEHAVIOURS

- High ethical standards and commitment to upholding the charity's values, as well as a passion for advocating on behalf of individuals with, or at risk of, sight loss.
- Collaborative, highly inclusive, fostering trust and valuing difference perspectives.
- Solution-focused, with an ability to see the big picture and be pragmatic.



TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

REMUNERATION

This role is not accompanied by any financial remuneration, although reasonable expenses may be claimed.

TIME COMMITMENT

While the exact time commitment may vary based on the charity's needs and priorities, we anticipate the following general expectations:

- A minimum of four Board meetings per year, plus preparation, review of materials, and other trustee engagement as appropriate.
- Annual Strategy Day with full Board and executive team.
- Additional subcommittee meetings as necessary.
- Meetings with the CEO on a regular basis.
- Representing the charity at high profile events, functions and public engagements to enhance its reputation and partnerships.

LOCATION

Board meetings are currently held in central London.

HOW TO APPLY

We hope you will consider making an application. If you have questions about the appointment and would find it helpful to have an informal conversation, please contact Juliet Brown at Juliet.Brown@starfishsearch.com and we will be happy to arrange a call. To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/fos-chair/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

- Your CV (no more than three sides).
- A supporting statement (no more than two sides) that sets out why you think this role is the right move for you and how you meet the knowledge and experience criteria.

We would also be grateful if you would also complete the anonymous Equality and Diversity monitoring form on the online application process. This form is for monitoring purposes only and is not treated as part of your application.

TIMELINE

The closing date is Sunday 26th November 2023.

Preliminary conversations will be held during the week commencing 4th December 2023.

A decision to review the field of candidates will take place on the 12th December.

Conversations between progressed candidates and the Chief Executive will take place on the 14th and 15th December

Final Panel Interviews will be held during the week commencing 18th December 2023.

Please let us know should you be unable to make any of the dates outlined in the above timetable,