



# Brief for Candidates Chair



# Welcome

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Dear applicant

Thank you for your interest in joining us our next Chair of the Board of Trustees at Think Ahead.

We are the national charity that promotes and develops the mental health workforce in health and social care. Mental ill-health can turn lives upside down and it affects our whole society. One in four adults in England have experienced mental ill-health, and a third of families include someone with a mental health problem. Improving people's mental health can transform lives, and supporting people with their mental health is good for everyone in society. We urgently need access to better, more consistent, person-centred support – enabling everyone to flourish, transform wellbeing, improve our society, and boost our economy.

At Think Ahead, we believe that advocating for, promoting and co-producing a social approach to mental health within the health and social care workforce is essential to address the national challenge. We also believe sharing knowledge and learning in workforce development, service design and innovation helps to build a more effective response to the growing need for mental health support and ultimately enables and empowers people, their networks, and their communities. We are delighted that our funding to deliver our flagship mental health social work training programme is secure for the next few years; and we are building a new strategy which will see business growth in the next five years, taking our mission from strength to strength, and expanding our reach, influence and impact in the sector.

Our founding Chair, Professor Dame Carol Black GBE, steps down in the Autumn of 2024. We are seeking a credible and profiled successor to lead our Board, support our organisation and engage with a significant range of stakeholders as we navigate the next exciting phase of development and growth. As Chair, you will help us drive forward an ambitious and pioneering strategy while ensuring our governance remains of the highest possible standard. It is likely that you will have been involved with another organisation active in the mental health, or broader social care, field. Whatever your area of professional expertise, you will be a highly experienced and intuitive non-executive leader with advanced skills in diplomacy, strategic reach, integrity and personal presence.

We are a collaborative Board, made up of individuals who are themselves highly accomplished, working supportively with our CEO, Philippa Mariani, and her Executive Team. Effective influencing, interpersonal and communication skills will be essential for this high-profile appointment, along with a genuine personal commitment to our mission and values. We also want to ensure any appointee is committed to promoting diversity in its broadest possible sense.

If you believe you have the personal qualities, skills and experience we are looking for, we very much look forward to hearing from you.



**David Croisdale-Appleby**  
Vice Chair

# About Think Ahead

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Mental health is an urgent national challenge. But against a backdrop of the increasing need for mental health specialist expertise and trauma-informed practice, there is a crisis in recruitment and retention in the health and social care workforce.

This means delays in accessing clinical and social care and support, casework overload, unprecedented levels of workforce turnover and increased vacancies, along with too few people choosing mental health social work, social care and support as a career. We cannot hope to improve mental health without investing in the workforce and changing public perceptions of mental health careers.

Think Ahead promotes change and innovation in workforce development and is well-known for its successful adult social work programme. Launched in 2016, we have trained nearly 1,000 people through our accelerated two-year, practice-based mental health career development pathway, culminating in a post-graduate qualification and a Master's degree in social work.

The Think Ahead flagship programme focuses on social factors that affect mental health and wellbeing –like housing, employment, access to education, discrimination and relationships with family and friends; and we use evidence and innovation to find what works and get things done.

## Our Vision

Is a thriving mental health workforce - one that has the investment it needs to support people to live the life they want and deserve.

## Our Mission

We attract, recruit, train, develop and promote a thriving mental health workforce to enable and empower the most effective support for everyone experiencing mental health problems.

## Our Values

In pursuing our goals, we each aim to be:

**Inspirational.** We set ambitious goals, and we attract and lead others to achieve our vision.

**Inclusive.** We respect everyone, build networks, and act in partnership.

**Genuine.** We are honest with others, we seek feedback, and we reflect on ourselves.

**Determined.** We stay on course, we set the right pace, and we don't give up.

**Effective.** We use evidence and innovation to find what works and get things done.



## Our Strategy

Think Ahead has ambitious new plans to extend its evidence-based learning, research and workforce expertise right across the health and social care workforce.

Our new strategy will focus on:

- Embedding an extended programme of workforce development and career pathways in health and social care to have a broader impact on the future and sustainability of the mental health workforce, building on our learning, knowledge, evidence, skills and expertise.
- Expanding our flagship mental health adult social work programme to make sure that social workers are at the heart of mental health services and to ensure that everyone has access to a dedicated and inspired workforce.
- Enhancing our external relationships to shape and influence workforce policy and practice, model excellence and become the delivery partner of choice for mental health workforce policy-makers and providers.
- Putting our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and listening to the voices of people with lived experience at the heart of everything we do.

## Further information

To read out more about our innovative work please visit [click here](#).

For financial information see our [Annual Report 2022/2023](#) and to better understand the impact of our work see our [Impact Review](#).

To hear stories from social workers and people they support, visit [about mental health social work](#).



# Our current Board



**Professor Dame Carol Black GBE is our founding Chair of the Board of Trustees who is stepping down in Autumn 2024.** She has provided a dedicated commitment to the organisation since we were founded in 2014. As a former consultant rheumatologist, she provides expert advice to the Department of Health and Public Health England on a range of health and social care policy areas, conducting many reviews and consultations. She is also the Principal of Newnham College Cambridge and Chairman of the Nuffield Trust for health policy.



**Dr Ruth Allen, Board Member** is Chief Executive of the British Association of Social Workers and has been a qualified social worker since 1994. Formerly Director of Social Work for South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust and Research Fellow at St George's University of London, she is currently Chair of the national Social Care Strategic Network for mental health, and an advisor to the Chief Social Worker for adults. She is currently working with the Department of Health on the 'Social Work for Better Mental Health' initiative and is a spokesperson for social work and social care in a variety of other forums.



**Professor Kamaldeep Bhui, Board Member** holds a wide range of roles across mental health, research, and academia. He is Professor of Psychiatry at the Department of Psychiatry and Nuffield Department of Primary Health Care Sciences at the University of Oxford. He is also Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at East London NHS Foundation Trust and Editor in Chief of the British Journal of Psychiatry at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, amongst other roles. He has a strong interest in preventing health inequalities and improving mental health services for diverse communities. His research interests include multimorbidity and ethnicity, and ethnic inequalities in experiences and outcomes of severe mental illness.



**Levi Chambers-Cook, Board Member** was a participant on the Think Ahead programme from 2016 to 2018, joining in our very first year. She started her social work training with South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, and has since moved to Manchester where she continues to practise as a mental health social worker. Working in a Community Mental Health Team, she supports people experiencing a range of severe mental health problems, such as psychosis, personality disorders, and eating disorders. She is currently training to become an Approved Mental Health Professional at the University of Manchester.



**Professor David Croisdale-Appleby OBE, Vice Chair** is also Chair of the Government Standing Commission on Carers, Dementia UK, and the Public Health Advisory Committee at the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. He is also the board member for Higher Education, Medical Education and the NHS Leadership Academy at Health Education England. A former Chair of Skills for Care and Hft, in 2014 he authored the Croisdale-Appleby Review, Re-visioning Social Work Education for the UK government. He is the UK Ambassador to the Nelson Mandela Legacy Programme, including the creation of the first specialist paediatric hospital for the 14 nations of South African Development Community.



**James Darley, Board Member** is the Chief Executive of Transform Society. Previously, he headed up the Teach First graduate recruitment department and saw Teach First grow from a 'modest' recruiter to become the largest graduate recruiter in the UK. He was previously European Head of Graduate Recruitment at Credit Suisse and the Chair of the Board for Police Now and is currently on the Board for Unlocked Graduates.



**John Lawlor, Board Member** joined Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust in June 2014 as Chief Executive. He is also Chair of the Children and Young People's mental health inpatient Quality Improvement Taskforce across England. His earlier career included roles as a Chief Executive of a Primary Care Trust in West Yorkshire between 2010 and 2013 and as Chief Executive of Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust between 2006 and 2009. Prior to his NHS career, he worked as a Civil Servant in the Department of Health and prior to that as a schoolteacher in South Yorkshire.



**Sharon Rice-Oxley, Board Member** is a partner and co-founder of Q5, an international consultancy specialising in organisation change. She has been a consultant for over 20 years and has worked with a wide range of FTSE 100 companies across most industries both as an external and internal consultant supporting leaders of those businesses to review, change and ensure their organisation is fit and healthy. She previously worked at BAA and Accenture. She is a fellow of the CIPD and has an MBA from City University Business School. Sharon leads the Q5 foundation which works with a number of mental health charities including Think Ahead and MQ.



**Nicholas Timmins, Board Member** is a former public policy editor at the Financial Times and is currently a senior fellow at the Institute for Government and the King's Fund. He is also a visiting professor in social policy at the London School of Economics, an honorary fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and author of the award winning *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State*, along with other publications including *A Terrible Beauty: A short history of NICE* (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence). He worked previously for the science journal *Nature*, the Press Association, *The Times* and *The Independent*.



**Jayne King is the most recently appointed Trustee** who recently retired as Director of Finance at the British Library after eight years. Prior to this she had a long career as the Director of Finance for a large Metropolitan Probation Trust. Jayne is values driven and has a passion for ensuring high quality and value for money in public services. Her long accountancy career has spanned social housing and care, higher and further education, criminal justice, libraries and culture. Jayne is a Non-Executive Director of the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group, is a Fellow Chartered Certified Accountant and has an MBA from the University of Durham. She lives in North Yorkshire and enjoys table tennis, photography and travelling.



# Main duties and responsibilities of the Chair role

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The Chair provides strategic leadership to the Board of Trustees, working with and guiding the Chief Executive, collectively ensuring the delivery of the organisation's vision, mission and charitable objects. The main responsibilities of the role are:

## Strategic leadership and promoting Think Ahead

- Set the vision and strategic direction for a high profile national organisation.
- Offer leadership to the organisation and Board that ensures clear strategic direction and impact through effective investment and deployment of resource.
- Work with the Executive to create a positive culture: role model, champion and hold others to account for demonstrating the behaviors that underpin our ethos.
- Be available to represent the organisation externally, with partners and key stakeholders including the Department for Health and Social Care, regulators, partner organisations in the mental health sector, and opinion formers.
- Provide clear leadership with regard to Think Ahead's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the mental health workforce and the organisation itself.

## Effective governance and compliance

- Promote and keep under review good governance and the highest standards of performance and propriety.
- Ensure compliance with statutory requirements and that the organisation pursues its objectives as defined in its founding document.
- Set the risk appetite of the Board and ensure that major risks and opportunities are regularly reviewed and addressed.
- Develop the culture, knowledge and capability of the Board and ensure its ongoing development, including annual appraisals with Board members.

## Managing Board Business

- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees to ensure high-quality, inclusive debate and well-informed, timely decision-making, in the best interests of Think Ahead.
- Ensure Trustees are fully engaged, contribute well, and take collective ownership of decisions made regardless of individual position.
- Work with the Chief Executive to ensure that agendas and meetings are well- planned and that that decisions are implemented and monitored.
- Work closely with Committee Chairs to ensure their delegated remits are met.
- Foster a positive and constructive relationship with between individual Trustees and between Trustees and the Executive.

## Working with the Chief Executive

- Line manage the Chief Executive, ensuring they are supported, continue to develop in the role and are held to account for achieving agreed strategic objectives.
- Ensure regular contact with the Chief Executive, maintaining an open relationship and providing a sounding board.
- Liaise with the Chief Executive, maintaining an overview of emerging priorities.

# Person Specification

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## Knowledge and experience

- Clear understanding of the role of Chair in delivering effective strategic leadership to an organisation, and of leading and developing a strong and diverse Board.
- Strong understanding of the principles of good governance and financial oversight, and of the respective roles of the Board and Executive in working together.
- Direct experience of leading or supporting engagement with external stakeholders that unlock opportunities for funding and support (direct experience of working with government is an asset but not strictly essential).
- Credible personal track record of providing inspiring and engaging strategic leadership; it is likely that you will have held a non-executive leadership role previously, as Chair, Vice or Committee Chair or as Senior Independent Director.
- Good understanding of the mental health sector, and the funding, public health, public policy and other questions it faces.
- Experience of promoting and supporting diversity, equity and inclusion for another organisation and / or across sectors, systems or workforces.

## Skills, abilities and personal qualities

- Undisputed personal stature, presence and integrity.
- Low ego style: capacity for self-reflection and works by using emotional intelligence.
- A strategic thinker who sees the bigger picture.
- Highly effective influencing, communication and interpersonal skills.
- Robust chairing skills, with the ability to facilitate discussion and debate with a highly accomplished group of Board members.
- Fosters group and collective accountability and sets the tone for the organisation.
- Able to lead a diverse board by holding the tension between differing perspectives and achieving progress.
- Personally flexible and has the required availability to undertake the role.
- Deep commitment to the mission and values of Think Ahead.





# Terms of appointment

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## Remuneration

This role is offered on a voluntary basis. Reasonable expenses incurred in the course of the role will be reimbursed by the organisation.

## Time commitment

This role requires around 1-2 days per month, which includes quarterly Board meetings and one or two strategic away days per year.

## Location

Board meetings currently take place in person either at the Think Ahead office in Farringdon/Chancery Lane or at a location nearby in London.

# How to apply for this appointment

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**We hope you will consider making an application to become our next Chair of the Board of Trustees, at Think Ahead. To apply, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/thinkahead-chair/> and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:**

- a CV (no more than three sides) or equivalent biographical information
- a short covering letter that explains your motivation and availability and confirms that you would not be subject to any conflict of interest
- please tell us if there are any dates during the selection process (outlined below) when you would not be available to participate.

We would also be grateful if you would also complete the 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.

The closing date is **Friday 7th June 2024**.

## Selection timetable

Closing date	Friday 5th July 2024
First stage discussions	w/c 8th & 15th July 2024
Agreement of the shortlist	w/c 22nd July 2024
Informal conversations	Late July/ August 2024
Final interviews	w/c 9th September 2024

## Forward board meeting dates

22nd October 2024  
12th December 2024