



# Candidate Pack for Chief Operations Officer

Southdown



# Welcome

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If you are **brilliant with people**, and your personal motivation in your career is to use your skills, experience, and expertise to be a **force for good** in society, this is an excellent time to be joining Southdown as part of our newly created C Suite as **Chief Operating Officer**.

I have had the privilege to have led Southdown as Chief Executive for the past ten years, a truly fantastic and unique organisation, based on strong values, an inclusive and collaborative culture, with a desire and passion to make a real and lasting positive impact for the benefit of our local communities.

We have become known for our innovative approaches for care and support, often piloting new projects and programs that address the emerging needs within the community. This is something we are deeply proud of, and we are committed to working with statutory and voluntary sector partners to develop further ways to help reduce pressures on critical health, housing, and adult social care services. We were delighted that this way of working contributed to receipt of two prestigious national awards; Supported Housing Landlord of the Year 2023, and the 'Most Innovative Mental Health Intervention' accolade at the Mental Health Awards 2023.

Equally as important to us is to being the very best employer for our skilled and talented workforce. We invest in the training and development of staff, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to provide high-quality care, whilst also placing a strong emphasis and priority on employee wellbeing, recognising that a supportive and healthy work environment is crucial for delivering excellent services. Being a larger provider within our local sector also enables us to invest in robust and professional central support resources and adopt effective business practices to drive efficiency and value for money.

Over the past year, working with my Board and wider leadership group, with engagement with key external stakeholders, I have led a process of review to ensure that Southdown can continue to grow, develop, and prosper in the years ahead. This is in recognition that over recent years Southdown has grown considerably in size and complexity, requiring us to now consider how we best structure and design ourselves for the future. As an outcome, we have developed a new organisational Service Delivery Model, redesigning how we plan and deliver central support functions and leadership roles, ensuring we possess the right capabilities and resources to work collaboratively with our operational and housing teams to drive real value for our clients, tenants, and commissioners. Alongside the move to a new service delivery model, we will be working with our Board and leadership group over the next six months to review and refresh our five-year business strategy (for which you will be able to contribute), to be agreed and launched from April 2025.



The creation of new C Suite roles, supported by new heads of functions and a strengthened wider leadership group, will lead the strategic direction and business change activities for Southdown, ensuring that we maximise performance and meet our long-term goals.

The role of COO will manage and lead all of Southdown's operational service delivery functions, implementing business strategies plans and procedures, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements, ensuring efficient and effective business operations, setting comprehensive goals for performance, and visible leadership of employee to maximise motivation and employee experience. The key question you will be asking yourself is 'what more can I do to drive operational excellence'?.

To find out more about Southdown and what it is like to work for us do check out our website, which includes some great videos from staff and clients, as well as our independent review on glassdoor.

I feel excited and optimistic about the future for Southdown and look forward to working with new colleagues within the C Suite to drive forward the organisation, whilst preserving what makes Southdown such a wonderful organisation.

**Neil Blanchard, CEO**



# About Us

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Southdown is a Sussex-based, not-for-profit organisation specialising in the provision of care, support and housing services that respond to the needs of local communities.

We were established in 1972 by a group of volunteers who recognised the issues facing people with mental health issues recently resettled in Brighton and Hove from long-stay hospital institutions. They decided to work together to make a difference, ensuring that everyone had the right and opportunity to live well in the community.

At Southdown, we are dedicated to supporting individuals with mental health challenges, learning disabilities, past or present homelessness, addiction issues, and sensory or physical disabilities. Now, supporting around 12,000 people a year, approximately 500 of whom are tenants, employing 750 staff, and with a turnover of c.£32m, we offer personalised support to help each person live their life to the fullest.

## Our Foundations

### We Believe

Everyone has the right to live their life well.

### Our Mission

To provide exceptional community support services and housing which enable people to live well.

### The Difference We Want To Make

Working with partners we create value through developing and delivering innovative and integrated solutions so that:

- People can access timely and appropriate support to help manage their mental health, reducing the risk of deteriorating health, hospitalisation, or suicide.
- People at risk of becoming homeless can access affordable and secure housing, receiving the additional support they need to help them live independently and manage their home.
- People with a learning disability have access to specially adapted housing and adequately funded packages of care to enable them to live and engage in the community.

### Our Income Sources

- Commissioned contracts.
- Rent and service charge income.
- Commissioned packages of support for individual clients.

As a not-for-profit social business, we reinvest any surpluses into service delivery and development.

### Our Value Proposition (what we do best)

- Big enough to be taken seriously, small, and local enough to care.
- Renowned for consistency, quality, reliability, and professionalism.
- Unique capability to act as an inclusive VCSE Lead Provider.
- Being a psychologically informed organisation.
- We influence and innovate.
- We believe in and stand up for our people (clients and colleagues).

## What We Do

We deliver specialist, person-centred and psychologically informed services:

- 24-hour and community care and support (autism and learning disabilities).
- Mental and physical wellbeing community services.
- Peer support opportunities.
- Homelessness prevention and support.
- Learning and employment.
- Social landlord of supported housing.

Please click the links below to learn more about our services.

**Housing:** We are a specialist landlord of supported housing for around 570 tenants and shared owners across Sussex.

**Housing Support:** Homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing our society, with thousands of people living on the streets and in temporary accommodation across Sussex.

**Mental Health and Employment Support:** To support people to get well, stay well and prevent crisis, we provide a range of mental health and employment support services across Sussex.

**Learning Disability Support:** We provide specialist accommodation and support for people with learning and physical disabilities.

## Our Values



### Force for good

We're passionate about making a difference.



### Brilliant with people

We're compassionate, inclusive and welcoming; our colleagues and local communities deserve nothing less.



### United

Together, we can achieve so much more.



### Trustworthy

We're knowledgeable and act with integrity.



### Responsive

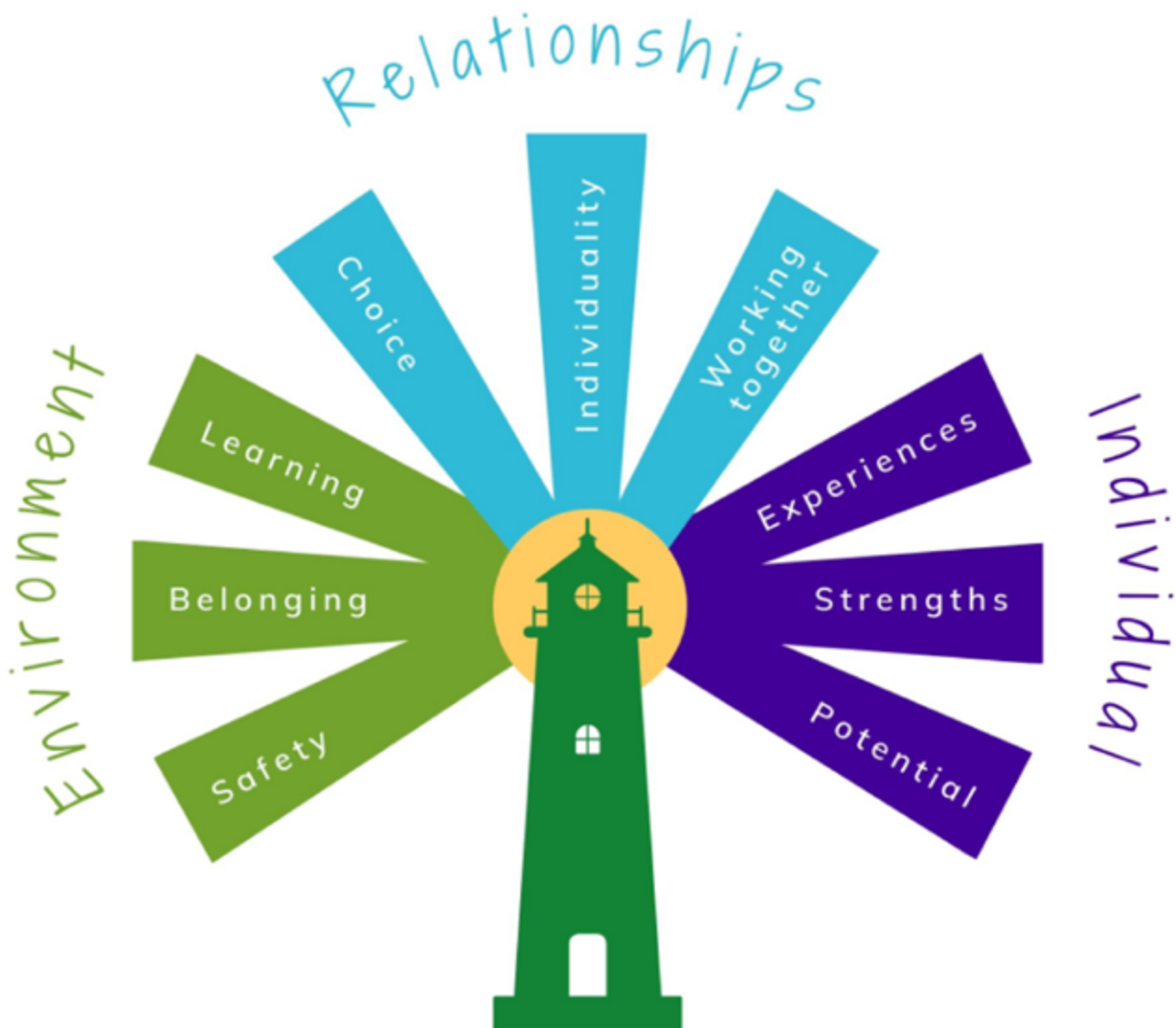
We listen, learn and adapt.

## The Southdown Beacon

In 2023, we also launched our new bespoke psychologically informed framework (The Southdown Beacon). This acts as a practical guide and training tool equipping colleagues with the skills and knowledge to recognise and respond to people's psychological needs.

The framework was co-produced and piloted over 18 months with input and support from colleagues and clients from across the organisation and it has been clinically reviewed by external psychologists, providing additional assurance and quality benchmarking.

As shown in the pictorial representation below, The Beacon comprises of three domains; Environment, Relationships and Individual, with nine 'beams'; each of which acts as a focus for specific training and team discussions as we embed the tool.



## Southdown Beacon

## Our Operating Environment

Southdown operates within a complex and dynamic environment influenced by regulatory frameworks, funding challenges, policy changes, workforce pressures and societal needs.

With over 50 years of experience, Southdown is expert in recognising and responding to the issues, and the need to achieve an appropriate balance between providing quality, safe, accessible, and flexible services, whilst also ensuring that the organisation remains financially viable and continues to invest and plan.

We achieve this through the adoption of robust internal business practices, as well as playing a leading role within local and national sector networks to help lobby, shape and improve the operating environment.

As has been recognised in the Regulator of Social Housing's Sector Risk Profile 2023, providers operating in supported housing, and care and support activities face specific additional risks and challenges. It is a low margin, high risk sector. When operating at such tight margins, the need for effective and proactive risk planning and management is vital.

Southdown is expert in navigating this challenging operating environment, with a strong track record of being reactive to live issues, but also using market intelligence and insight to plan.

## Our Strategy

We are an ambitious organisation, with a commitment to continually innovate, evolve, invest, and grow our services and reach to respond to the changing needs of people within our local communities. We do this by acting as a trusted and preferred strategic partner to commissioners and other stakeholders, including increasingly taking the role of lead provider for other VCSE organisations.

To deliver on our ambitions we operate a five-year business strategy model. This establishes both longer-term strategic priorities and our business objectives, delivered through clear functional strategies which outline the initiatives and activities required to deliver our overarching strategy.

### Strategic Priorities

Following a review in 2023, we agreed four longer-term strategic priorities for 2023-2028:

- **Voice (clients, colleagues, and sector):** Create opportunities to express opinion, respond and influence.
- **Growth in partnership:** Expand the role of Southdown as a sector leader in delivery of community support services and housing.
- **Income generation:** Develop profitable income streams to enable us to have greater autonomy in achieving our mission.
- **Digitally enabled care and support services:** Modernise ways of working to improve systems, data insight, integration, connectivity, and client experience.

### Business Objectives

Southdown has six strategic objectives that describe how we will deliver our business to fulfil our mission. They also act as the basis for our performance goals that we measure our success against.

- **People (our colleagues):** Be an exceptional employer, maximising pay, and development opportunities.
- **People (our clients and tenants):** Provide exceptional services to our clients and tenants.
- **Assurance:** Operate safely and meet regulatory standards.
- **Growth:** Develop partnerships to expand services offered.
- **Finance:** Maintain long-term financial security.
- **Efficiency:** Modernise ways of working to reduce overheads and improve experience.

## Financial Strategy

To support delivery of our Business Strategy and Priorities, our Board approves a financial strategy to ensure our continued long-term financial strength and viability.

Principles underlying the financial strategy are:

- Be financially sustainable, enabling us to invest in staffing, pay and benefits because we want all our clients and colleagues to 'live well' as part of the Southdown community.
- Be competitive (as a contracted delivery partner and employer) through operating efficient and simple processes which enable us to have proportionate central cost overheads.
- Pursue sustainable and managed growth.
- Achieve and evidence effective Value for Money benchmarking.
- Make best use of our property assets through implementation of recommendations in the Housing and Asset Management Strategy.
- Re-invest surplus funds into service delivery improvements for clients and colleagues, and capital investment opportunities to increase homes in management.
- Review our treasury management and investment strategy to maximise returns on cash within acceptable levels of risk.

We are proud of our work and what we have achieved so far, but with a continued and growing need for our services, we have set out our future plans in our 2023-2028 Business Strategy [here](#) (subject to refresh by April 2025).

To review our most recent Financial Report, please click [here](#).

And to learn about the amazing work done throughout the last year by our colleagues, volunteers and commissioning partners, find our Impact Report [here](#).





## Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

We aim to promote equality and diversity both in our service delivery and as an employer. We want all our clients and employees to feel welcome, and we won't tolerate discrimination or unfair treatment.

Our mission is to help people in Sussex communities live well, and we are committed to overcoming any barriers or inequalities that may hinder this for our clients, tenants, staff, and partner organisations.

Since 1972, we have championed the rights of our clients and supported equal opportunities among our employees. We are dedicated to providing the necessary resources, support, choices, and control for everyone to achieve their full potential. We advocate for those we work with and strive to create an inclusive culture where differences are celebrated, voices are encouraged, and co-production is integral to our work. We take pride in our achievements and the positive feedback we receive from external audits.

The principles of equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are central to Southdown's purpose. We believe that a diverse workforce with lived experiences representative of our clients and the broader Sussex communities will help us:

- Remain relevant to our clients
- Make better decisions
- Foster creativity
- Become an employer and service provider of choice

This commitment means integrating EDI into our core values and fostering a truly inclusive culture where individuals feel a sense of belonging rather than pressure to conform. "[This is Us](#)" is our framework for realising this ambition. We view this framework as a living document, continually updated to reflect best practices and the contributions of our people and partners in advancing EDI at Southdown.



# Job Description

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**Job Title:** Chief Operations Officer

**Reports To:** Chief Executive Officer

**Direct Reports:** Four direct reports

## Role Purpose:

Our new COO will lead Southdown operational activities and oversee our registered social housing function ensuring Southdown delivers psychologically informed, high performing services which are compliant with regulatory requirements and ensure our reputation for excellence and quality.

The COO is a member of the C-Suite and requires the highest level of leadership with accountability for policy development, major decisions and assets alongside significant budgetary responsibility and risk.

The role directly supports Southdown's value chain (service delivery model) by overseeing all operational areas with a relentless focus on delivering exceptional services for our clients and tenants. It has accountability for our registered Housing function.

The COO will have both an internal and external focus. It plays a critical role in leading and engaging colleagues in the plans and initiatives that support Southdown's strategy ensuring a tangible impact on business outcomes, driving growth, innovation, and organisational effectiveness. It drives service performance through a culture of disciplined execution and client and tenant centricity where colleagues are enabled to make meaningful decisions that benefit those we work to support, fostering an attitude of continuous improvement and creativity. It works closely with the CTXO to identify and develop service improvement initiatives and leads the implementation of these.

The COO will work closely with the CEO to map and manage stakeholder relationships and sector commitments so that there are clear points of contact and Southdown speaks with a united and informed voice in whichever forum it is represented. The COO will play a critical role in building transformational relationships in the sector to maintain Southdown's reputation as the provider of choice.

## Main Responsibilities:

### C-Suite Leadership

- Leads The Southdown Way – upholds our values, demonstrates our leadership behaviours and creates a psychologically informed environment through the application of The Beacon
- Contribute to the development of Southdown's strategy, objectives and KPI's.
- Engage in setting the position's Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for this position and attain KPI's set by the CEO.
- Provide visible, inspiring, and engaging leadership, direction and decision-making for operational functions and Southdown as whole.
- Build an open, innovative, collaborative, diverse and inclusive culture across teams.
- Support the Board and its appointed committees in their responsibility to ensure robust governance structures are in place and to provide advice and information to the Board regarding organisational performance and direction.

- Acts as the voice of external stakeholders in the C-Suite and supports partnership development and co-production efforts, fostering relationships with diverse partners.
- Enables innovation and change by leading engagement strategies across the organisation.
- Ensure compliance with data protection policies and promote equality and diversity in all aspects of work.
- Deputises for the CEO Executive as required

### **Housing Management**

- Develop and implement strategic plans and initiatives to address housing needs and promote affordable, safe, and sustainable housing solutions.
- Identify opportunities for expanding housing programs, securing funding, and leveraging resources to support organisational goals working with the Director of Housing and Assets and Head of Business Development
- Ensure responsive and quality housing management and property services aligned with regulatory standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing
- Oversee property health and safety compliance and environmental sustainability strategies

### **Operational Leadership**

- Provide strategic leadership and direction to all operational functions.
- Champion data-driven decision-making
- Drives service performance through a culture of accountability, disciplined execution and client and tenant centricity.
- Identifies opportunities for process improvement and optimisation working with the CTXO to design effective solutions and leads the implementation of these across service provision.
- Identify and leverage technology solutions and digital tools to optimise operational processes, enhance productivity, and support business growth initiatives.
- Stay abreast of industry trends and emerging technologies relevant to operations.
- Ensures operations comply with regulatory requirements, industry standards, and quality assurance protocols - implement and maintain systems and processes to monitor and improve product/service quality and customer satisfaction.
- Identify, assess, and manage operational risks that could impact the organisation's ability to achieve its goals - develop and implement risk mitigation strategies to safeguard business continuity and resilience.
- Proactively manages property and care placement voids by working effectively with all stakeholders to find effective solutions.
- Develop and implement contingency plans and protocols to respond to emergencies, crises, or unforeseen events that may impact business operations - ensure business continuity and resilience in the face of disruptions

### **Change Management**

- Champion change and transformation and engage colleagues in the rationale.
- Build change readiness ensuring effective support from central services

## Talent Management and Development

- Make talent identification, development and succession planning a fundamental part of management roles.
- Build capability and capacity through coaching, mentoring and innovative professional development opportunities.
- Ensure teams are structured and skilled to meet service needs.

## Stakeholder Engagement

- Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, including clients, tenants, commissioners, suppliers, partners, and regulatory agencies, to address operational challenges, build relationships, and drive business outcomes.
- Ensure clear points of contact for stakeholders and ensure Southdown speaks with a united and informed voice in whichever forum it is represented.

## Programme Delivery

- Ensures effective representation of operational areas on programme boards and working groups so that solutions work for clients, tenants and colleagues.
- Supports and enables co-production so that services are designed by experts with experience.
- Identify and pursue new business opportunities working with the Head of Business Development, CFO, CTXO, Director of Housing and Assets to assess strategic alignment and plan and develop these.
- Contributes to tender submissions, supports mobilisation and ready's operations for handover of newly designed services and buildings

## Other

- Drives commercial growth and maximises potential while upholding Southdown's values and principles and ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations.
- To carry out any other reasonable duties as requested by the Chief Executive or other designated Senior Staff.



# Person Specification

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## Knowledge and experience

- Experience of engaging and influencing multiple stakeholders e.g., housing, health and social care, the VCSE sector
- Experience of working in a complex and regulated environment with experience of identifying and managing risk
- Evidence of creating a high-performance culture and of motivating and leading large operational teams through transformation and complex change programmes
- Evidence of using data and insight to drive performance improvement
- Strong financial acumen and experience in budgeting, forecasting and financial analysis
- Experienced at creating organisational strategies and contributing to business strategy and development
- Knowledge of delivering capital projects

## Skills and qualities

- Highly emotionally intelligent and people-focused, inspiring trust and commitment while promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion
- A brilliant communicator who fosters a collaborative and positive workplace culture.
- Visible leader who builds and motivates teams through credibility, reliability, and encouragement
- Possesses strong commercial and financial acumen, evaluating performance and identifying improvement opportunities
- Upholds personal integrity, loyalty, and dedication to organisational vision and values.
- Resilient decision-maker with a consultative and collaborative management style
- Inspires teams to embrace change and deliver the organisation's vision transparently and realistically

## Styles and behaviours

- Sharing Vision - Setting a clear, shared vision of success for the organisation
- Sparking Engagement - Empowering, inspiring and developing people
- Sustaining Progress - Recognising achievement and encouraging continuous improvement and experimentation
- Skilfully Executing - Setting stretching performance expectations, reviewing progress and holding people to account to ensure delivery of planned outcomes

## Essential Qualifications and Specific Requirements

- Educated to degree level or equivalent experience
- Enhanced DBS clearance

# Terms of appointment

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## Salary

The salary for this role is c.£100,000 per annum on a full-time permanent basis.

## Location

Lewes, East Sussex.

## Pension

We offer competitive pension contributions (5% from the employer / 5% employee) through salary exchange - an arrangement where employees exchange part of their salary in return for an employer pension contribution. Because the salary is being exchanged rather than paid directly, neither you nor your employees will pay National Insurance Contributions on the amount exchanged.

## Annual leave

Your holiday entitlement is **27 days** paid holiday per annum, pro-rated according to the number of hours you normally work. You will be entitled to **32 days** on completion of 5 years' service.

## Additional benefits

### Essential Car User allowance

You will receive an essential car users' allowance of £1000 per year (pro-rata according to the number of hours you work) paid in 12 monthly instalments with your salary. Business mileage rate is paid at 45p per mile.

### Private Health Care

As a member of the C Suite, you will be eligible for individual private healthcare (currently through Bupa).

### Sick pay

Based on length of service, starting at 5 days on commencement of employment up to six months occupational sick pay after 5 years.



## Financial benefits

- Commitment to paying the Real Living Wage.
- £100 probationary bonus.
- £300 refer a friend cash award.
- Birthday gift card (£10).
- Free Blue Light Card.
- Free Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check: For many roles you'll need a DBS check to clear you to work with our clients. We'll help you with the application and cover the cost.
- Life cover: For staff under the age of 65 years in our pension scheme, we offer a non-contributory life assurance scheme (2xannual salary).
- Interest-free loans: You can apply to us for a loan (up to £1,500) to cover costs like tenancy deposits, travel season tickets, or buying a car.
- Help managing your money: Our employees get free access to financial services and advice through Salary Finance.
- Access to the Easit Network: You'll be able to get discounts and incentives on train, bus, cycle and car journeys.
- Health Cost Cash-Back scheme from UK Healthcare.
- Cycle scheme – option to purchase bike through salary exchange, repaid in instalments.
- Long service cash awards (£50 to £350).
- Team Events - To promote one of our Values, 'United', we want to encourage teams to get together for some social team events. An allowance of £8.00 per person for a summer event and £15 per person is available for a winter/Christmas event - OR you could combine the two and spend £23 per person for an event at any time during the year.

## Work-life balance

- Employee Assistance Programme - Advice & Counselling helpline is provided by UK Healthcare, who hold a membership and accreditation with the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy.
- Flexible working: many of our staff have some kind of flexible working arrangement, such as part time, compressed hours, job share or hybrid working.
- Parental and adoption leave – Occupational maternity / shared parental leave and adoption pay.
- Special leave for emergencies.
- Special leave for moving home.
- Special leave for IVF treatment.
- Career breaks.
- Time off for public duties.
- Training and development
- In-house professional training courses covering a wide range of specialist subjects.
- Support to gain relevant industry professional qualifications where required.
- Specialists working within teams to support development and delivery of best practice.
- Opportunities to join organisational working groups looking at areas including client involvement, health and safety, staff training, diversity and equality, and staff health and wellbeing.
- We also have a robust induction process to support new employees fully understand their role and feel confident and fully prepared. All staff have regular supervision and appraisals to ensure they have the skills and support they need to work effectively and achieve their goals.

# How to apply

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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 [chris.milo@starfishsearch.com](mailto:chris.milo@starfishsearch.com) and we will be happy to arrange a call. To make an application, please go to <http://starfishsearch.com/jobs/southdown-coo> 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 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.

<b>Closing date:</b>	Friday 26th July 2024
<b>Preliminary interviews:</b>	w/c Monday 5th August 2024
<b>Final Panel interviews:</b>	Monday 19th August 2024

