



CANDIDATE PACK FOR CHAIR

solace



WELCOME

Solace is seeking a new Chair to lead the charity through an exciting period in its history. Our Board of Trustees are a vital part of Solace Women's Aid and bring great diversity of thought, skill, talent, and experience into their roles to ensure we deliver empowering, supportive, and high-quality services for women and their families.

This is an exciting opportunity to help drive the success of a growing organisation which for the last 50 years has made a profound and positive impact on the lives of women who have suffered from violence and abuse. We are looking for someone who values the equality of women, is passionate about their wellbeing and the challenges they face in violent and abusive environments. An interest in Solace's work and approach are essential as well as an ambitious outlook for Solace's future.

You will be well respected and have active networks in the public or private sectors and will be able to bring these to their support of Solace's work. You will bring a proven track record of setting organisational strategy and supporting culture change. We are looking for an experienced leader able to develop and ensure the Board works effectively and with good knowledge of the charity funding environment. You will bring strong financial literacy skills combined with good business acumen. We are looking for a leader with some prior experience of being a Chair who has in-depth insights into what constitutes good charity governance. The role demands someone who is politically astute; and able to act as a representative and spokesperson to create and identify business opportunities for Solace.

If you have the time to give to the role as well as a strong commitment and motivation to keep our remarkable organisation moving forwards we would love to hear from you.

Board of Trustees



ABOUT US

At Solace, we have continued to reach more people than ever before, supporting 18,862 women, children, young people, and men across all our services in the year 2023/24. Being able to touch the lives of so many, be it in our core support services or through our prevention work, means that we have been able to live up to our vision to support more survivors, and at the same time, use the power of education and training to work towards ending violence.

VISION

A world where everyone is able to live safe and independent lives which are free from gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation.

MISSION

We exist to end the harm done through gender-based violence. Our aim is to work to prevent violence and abuse as well as providing services to meet the individual needs of survivors particularly women and children. Our work is holistic and empowering, working alongside survivors to achieve independent lives free from abuse.

Solace has an inclusive definition of women including trans women. Our services seek to support and represent trans women and non-binary people. We understand that trans women and non-binary people are affected by misogyny and the patriarchal frameworks that cause harm to cis women and girls.

VALUES

Solace's core values reflect our history; developed in consultation with staff, service users.

We are working to be:

- Feminist and intersectional in our understanding of male violence against women and girls (MVAWG)
- Survivor led, trauma informed and empowering
- Diverse, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory to create a fully inclusive environment for staff and service users

We are committed to:

- Social justice and human rights
- Service users having a central voice within the organisation
- Working in collaboration with other agencies
- Continuous improvement

OUR HISTORY

We are Solace. For 50 years we've supported women and children in London to build safe and strong lives. Futures free from male abuse and violence. We know that women across London are experiencing domestic and sexual violence right now. Some will die as a result. Whatever form violence comes in, from rape and trafficking to relationships based on psychological or financial control, we work to end it.

We believe every kind of abuse should be challenged, never tolerated. But we know escaping violence can be the hardest thing to ever do. That's why it is so important we're here. We find creative and innovative ways to support thousands of women and children each year from crisis to recovery and independence. But if we want to reach everyone living in fear of violence with our life-saving services, we can't do it on our own.

That's where you come in. Stand with us to end violence and abuse now.

OUR SERVICES

Our mission is to give women and their children futures free from abuse and violence. We find creative and innovative ways to support thousands every year through:

- Solace offers advice, crisis support and advocacy to survivors, helping them to rebuild their lives. Safe refuge and move-on accommodation is vital for women and children made homeless through domestic or sexual abuse.
- Our 1-1 counselling, group work and specialist holistic therapies help women recover after experiencing traumatic abuse. Our rape crisis service offers a range of services to women and girls who have experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives.
- We deliver a range of services to children and young people, including prevention work, for families and young people living in the community. Specialist, tailored services for women with multiple disadvantages and special needs, including mental health needs and problematic substance use training.
- Partnership working is central to our approach to provide a comprehensive range of specialist support to meet the needs of women and children. Our expert training service works with organisations to improve their response to domestic and sexual abuse.
- The growth of our emergency response is needed for families facing an increase in the severity of abuse and power and control. With increased demand since the first lockdown stretching resources, we must reach more women caught in the domestic abuse pandemic, preventing homelessness and addressing the mental health crisis. We need to equip and support our frontline teams quickly so they can rise to this exceptional and continuing challenge.

OUR GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

Board of Trustees

Solace is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. We have reporting responsibilities to Companies House and the Charity Commission. The organisation is governed by a Board of Trustees, which is made up of up to 12 members from across a range of professional and life experiences.

Solace's board is made up of up to 12 members, who are recruited, selected and approved by the Board of Trustees. Solace's Board is a diverse group, made up of leaders from a wide range of backgrounds, including the youth and community sector, business, media, finance, central government and law. Our sub committees are also supported by a number of Expert Advisors.

Solace's Executive Team

The Executive team is comprised of our CEO, Director of Finance and Business Support, Director of Services and Director of Business Development. [Find out more about our People here](#)

Finances

For the financial year 2023/24, total incoming resources was £14,315,000 (2022/23 £15,156,000) with funding from statutory partners, trusts and foundations, corporates and the public which have helped Solace maintain essential services during the year. The total reduction in income of £841,000 (5.7%) compared to prior year is primarily due to the planned closure of the Labyrinth Project in December 2022 and cessation of services in Southwark in March 2023. The dip in activity does not capture a number of new projects which came online towards the end of the financial year which will partially rebalance activities longer term. The mix of income between services has remained relatively stable between years.

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job title: Chair

Key relationships: Board of Trustees, CEO and Executive Team

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide regular support and leadership to the Chief Executive and ensure that Solace is run in accordance with the decisions of the trustees and the charity's Articles of Association
- Lead the trustees and Chief Executive to develop and deliver strategic plans for the charity.
- Liaise with the Chief Executive to prepare for Board and committee meetings and ensure that the business is covered efficiently and effectively in those meetings.
- Undertake the leadership role in ensuring the Board of trustees fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of Solace.
- Act as the channel of communication between the trustees and the staff, in situations where it does not undermine the Chief Executive
- Welcome, induct and support new trustees and ensure their effective participation.
- Work to build a team culture at Board level.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

The Board is responsible and liable for the governance and functioning of Solace and is accountable in varying degrees to a variety of stakeholders, including beneficiaries, funders, the Charity Commission, Companies House, and other regulators.

Trustees must give close attention to the governing document and ensure that Solace meets the growing demand within the voluntary sector and the wider general public, for charities to be open and accountable for their actions and inactions.

Trustees should consider the wider implications of the decisions they make, and to communicate widely the formal reasons behind such decisions or actions, and above all else, they must adhere to any legal and regulatory requirements applicable to Solace's activities.



PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential skills and experience the Chair must have:

EXPERIENCE

- An understanding of work in the Violence Against Women and Girls sector
- Significant experience as a non-executive including holding a prior Chair position.
- An understanding of UK charity governance.
- An ability to network with both internal and external stakeholders.
- Sensitivity and discretion in dealing with staff and service user issues.
- Significant experience and success in leading groups of people in either a professional or voluntary capacity to achieve results.
- Significant experience of chairing meetings.
- Significant experience of managing, motivating, and developing people.
- Strong experience of developing, deploying, and evaluating strategic plans with a view to maximising impact and benefit.
- Experience of financial management.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Exceptional leadership skills; able to cultivate effective collaboration but also comfortable in taking responsibility for difficult choices.
- Effective strategic communicator: able to articulate Solace's vision and engage and inspire others both within the organisation and externally.
- Highly effective relationship and alliance building abilities.
- Sound judgement with high capacity for self-reflection.
- Capacity to support both Board and Executive development.

ATTRIBUTES

- Dynamic leadership style that guides and inspires the Board and Executive to fulfil their respective responsibilities.
- A strong personal commitment to improving Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
- Collaborative approach with excellent interpersonal skills.
- A strong personal commitment to Solace's vision and mission.

Solace values diversity, promotes equality and challenges discrimination. We encourage and welcome applications from women of all backgrounds. The post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, will be subject to an enhanced DBS check and open to women only (exempt under the Equality Act 2010).

TERMS OF THE APPOINTMENT

TIME COMMITMENT

Solace's Board meets four times per year, at its offices in Camden, London and there are two away days. The overall time commitment for the Chair is expected to be around 2-3 days per month.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

The initial appointment is for a two or three-year term but can be extended for two further terms for a maximum of nine years.

The position of Chair is voluntary, but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.



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 Rebecca O'Connor rebecca.oconnor@starfishsearch.com and we will be happy to arrange a call. To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/sol-wom-aid-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: How your skills and experience fit, why you are interested in the role and Solace Women's Aid and what you see as the main issues women's organisations are facing today

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.

Final Panel interviews: w/c 2nd June 2025

