



# Candidate Pack for **Director of Operations**



# Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Director of Operations at Affinity Trust.

I joined Affinity Trust recently as Chief Executive, following the retirement of my predecessor after 18 years of dedicated leadership. It's a real privilege to lead an organisation with such a strong legacy—and an exciting future.

Since its inception over 30 years ago Affinity Trust has continued to grow and we currently support almost 1,000 children and young people, and adults with a learning disability or autism across England and Scotland. Our support is provided in people's homes and communities, and a small number of care homes across a wide geographical spread of locations. With just under 2,500 dedicated employees, we are a large, values-driven not for profit organisation committed to person-centred support.

Despite the well-known challenges facing our sector, we remain in a strong financial position and are navigating these headwinds well. We have a clear and ambitious strategy for sustainable growth, and in 2025 we will be investing further in leadership development across the organisation—supporting our people to thrive as we grow. We're entering a new chapter, with several changes across our Executive Team.

Our previous Director of Operations has taken up a new opportunity as CEO of another organisation—an achievement we are proud of and one that reflects the strength of leadership Affinity Trust develops. Our Director of Quality & Improvement has recently left us for a career break, and we are grateful for their contributions in strengthening our quality and improvement framework. In the meantime, we have an experienced individual who has joined us as Interim Director of Quality & Improvement and who brings significant expertise in regulation and quality assurance, and we will undertake the permanent recruitment later in the year. We also re-established the roles of Director of People and Finance Director from the previous Corporate Services structure.

These changes represent a rare opportunity to join a refreshed and ambitious Executive Team, ready to shape the future of Affinity Trust together.

As an Executive Member of the Board the Director of Operations has a vital role in helping us achieve our goals. You will be responsible for leading operational delivery across all our locations. Key priorities will include ensuring regulatory compliance and consistently high standards of person centred support; embedding and maximising the benefits of our recent digital transformation ensuring we have a strong foundation for growth; continual improvement in operational productivity; building strategic relationships with external partners such as Local Authorities and ICBs to support growth and innovation and working with others such as the Director of Business Development to maximise growth opportunities and supporting those we support have a voice in the sector.

This is a role that requires regular presence across our locations, building strong relationships with colleagues and seeing first-hand how we support people. While there is flexibility to work from home, it's essential that you organise your time to be visible, connected, and present in the right places—ensuring you're leading effectively and meeting your and the organisation's objectives.

We are looking for a collaborative and visible leader who has experience in leading and managing dispersed teams—bringing people together to work as One Team. You will be someone with strong people skills, patience, and resilience to engage and retain colleagues and ensure they feel supported and developed in the vital work they do every day.

You will bring a deep understanding of the needs and aspirations of the people we support, and you'll place these at the heart of our decision making and operating model. You will also have a passion for continual improvement, be able to multitask and embrace change, and be confident in working with external stakeholders to influence and support wider transformation across the sector.

If you share our ambition, our values, and our belief in what's possible—we'd be delighted to hear from you.



**Kerry Dearden**  
CEO

# About us

Be Part of Something Extraordinary: Affinity Trust is one of the social care sector's best-kept secrets — but not for long. With a bold new CEO, Kerry Dearden, at the helm and a forward-thinking, visionary Board committed to growing our reach and deepening our impact, we are entering a transformational new chapter.

As a national charity supporting children, young people and adults with learning disabilities and autism to live their lives, their way, Affinity Trust has over 30 years of experience delivering high-quality, person-centred support across England and Scotland. We empower almost 1,000 people in 296 locations, working in close collaboration with 72 Local Authorities and nearly 70 housing associations. We provide support in settings that include supported living and residential care to bespoke, complex needs support — always grounded in compassion, flexibility, and respect.

Now, we are looking for an exceptional Director of Operations to join our Executive Team — someone who shares our values and vision, and who thrives on meaningful challenge, collaborative leadership, and the opportunity to drive real change.

## Why This Role Matters

This is a pivotal, high-impact role. As Director of Operations, you will play a central part in delivering our strategy, enhancing the quality and reach of our person-centred support, and ensuring operational excellence. You will lead and inspire dedicated teams across England and Scotland, champion innovation working with the Director of Business Development, and shape the future of support for children and young people and adults with a learning disability and autism.

Most importantly, you will be instrumental in realising our guiding belief: that with the right support, anything is possible. This role is key to *Achieving More Together* — our commitment to growth, inclusion, and co-production with the people we support.

## What Sets Us Apart

A dynamic, values-led culture built on trust, learning and continuous improvement

A passionate, skilled workforce making a real difference every day

A highly engaged, progressive board and executive leadership team. The opportunity to influence nationally, while remaining deeply connected to individual lives and communities

## Our Purpose

Supporting people to live their life, their way.

## Our Values

- People are at the heart of everything we do – We listen, we learn, we build on strengths.
- We work together – We are one team. We value people's strengths and differences.
- We give our best – We do what matters. Good days and bad, we take responsibility.
- We have courage – We try new things. We are creative, adaptable, and always moving forward.

This isn't just another leadership role — it's a chance to be part of something truly meaningful, at a time of growth and momentum. If you're a compassionate, courageous leader ready to shape the future of social care, we'd love to hear from you.





## Making Independence Possible

At Affinity Trust we create opportunities for people to lead their best lives. Everything we do is rooted in the belief that with the right support, people with learning disabilities and autism can live full, rich, and meaningful lives — lives where they are in control and wherever possible we empower them to make their own choices, pursue their goals, and participate fully in their communities.

As our new Director of Operations, you will play a central role in shaping and growing the support, we provide to help bring this vision to life. Here's how we're already making a difference: To learn more about the support we provide — and how you could be part of it — please [click here](#).

## Supported Living: Empowering Choice, Building Lives

Supported living give people the freedom to live in their own homes and stay connected to their communities — with flexible support designed entirely around them.

We work in close partnership with each person to create a personalised support plan, which is regularly reviewed together with the individual and the key people in their life, ensuring the support evolves as their goals and circumstances change.

We go far beyond support and care. We empower people to make decisions, pursue ambitions, and build real, lasting independence. Our teams work closely with individuals and those who matter most to them, co-creating personalised plans that adapt as goals evolve. It's about giving people control, confidence, and connection.

## Community-Based Support: Living Fully Together

We support people to develop the skills and confidence to live life to the fullest. Whether it's managing daily routines, discovering new interests, making friends, or joining in with local life — our community-based support helps people explore what independence means to them.

This isn't just support — it's partnership, encouragement, and belief in each person's potential.



## Residential Care: Quality, Not Quantity

We operate a small number of high-quality residential care homes, each supporting no more than six people. These homes provide warm, inclusive environments where people with complex needs can feel safe, respected, and supported to live their lives, their way.

## Children and Young People's: Creating Brighter Futures

Established in 2018, the Children and Young People's Division is growing fast and making a powerful impact. We offer two specialist support arrangements:

### Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)

Working with children and young people with complex needs, PBS helps reduce behaviours that challenge and enhance quality of life — all while aiming to prevent hospital or residential placements. Each practitioner works intensively with 1-2 young people over 24 months, creating personalised strategies that truly make a difference. These support pathways are currently available in Bradford, Wakefield, Greater Manchester/Lancashire, Gloucestershire, and Bristol.

### Keyworking

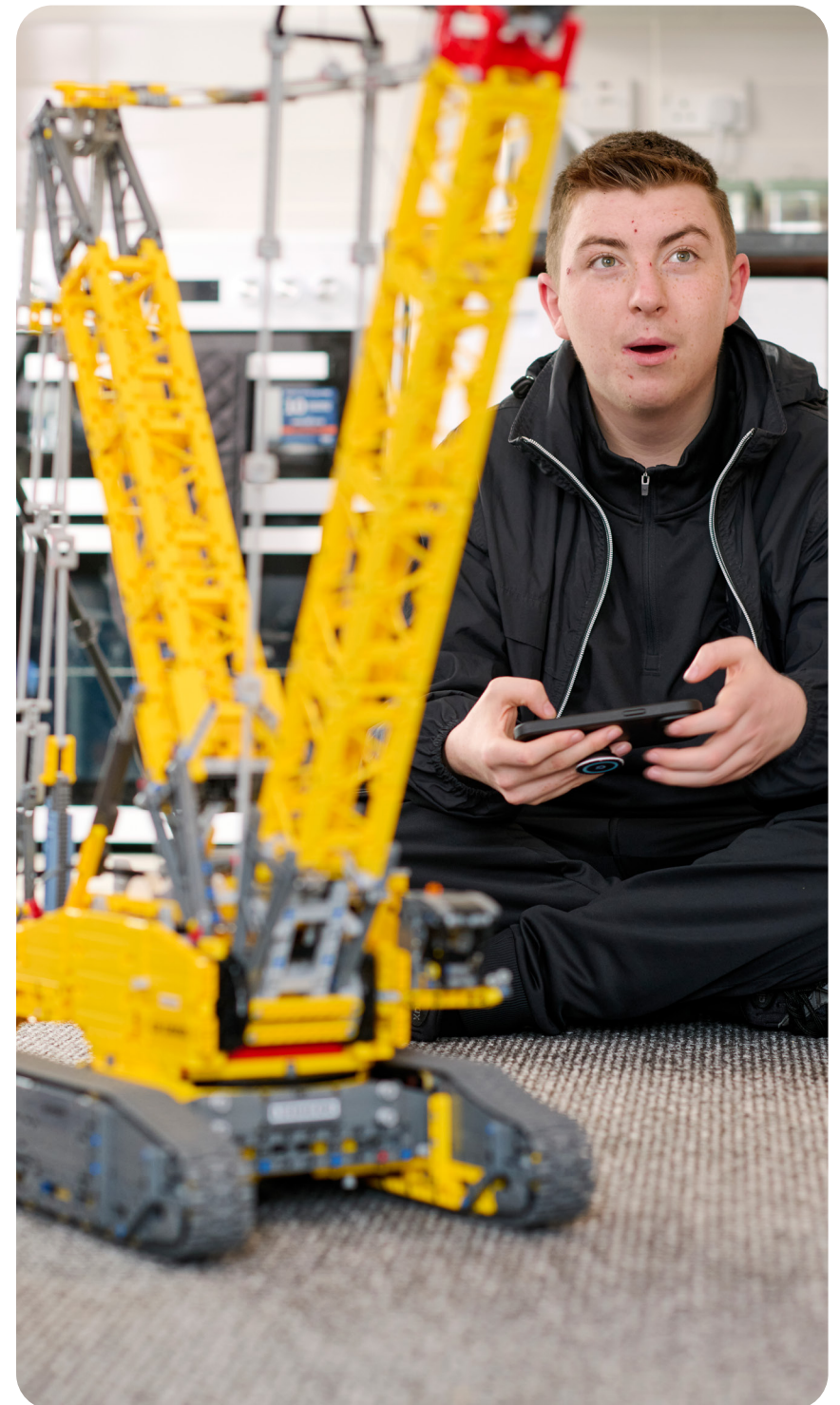
Our Keyworkers coordinate holistic, person-centred support for up to 10 children and young people at a time — ensuring that no young person falls through the gaps. From preventing hospital admissions to amplifying young voices, this support is all about building strong networks of care. Currently delivered in Derbyshire, it's already changing lives — and we're just getting started.

Looking ahead, the division has ambitious plans to expand its PBS and Keyworking footprint and to develop new initiatives.

This is a unique opportunity to lead this growth and help shape the future of our support for children and families.

This is the moment to join Affinity Trust and help us build on a proud legacy — while boldly shaping the future of support and inclusion. With innovation, heart, and strong operational leadership, we know we can do even more.

And with you on board, we will.



## Finance; a strong foundation, an exciting future

Affinity Trust is in a position of real strength — and we're building from solid ground following a few years of significant investment in digital transformation. As we close 2024/25, we're on track to finish the year with a small profit along with a healthy cash balance.

Looking ahead to 2025/26 despite sector headwinds we anticipate a strong operating financial performance — one that will enable strategic investments in what matters most:

- Enhancing pay and recognition for our incredible Support Workers ensuring our standard pay offer is above the National Living Wage
- Launching a comprehensive leadership development programme to grow the next generation of inclusive, values-driven leaders
- Continued investment in quality assurance

We're proud to be entering the third year of our 2023–2028 organisational strategy, and even prouder of what we've achieved so far. Highlights include:

- Establishing a national co-production group with the people we support
- Completed the roll out of new Digital IT systems that empower our teams and streamline how we work
- Maintaining strong CQC and Care Inspectorate ratings across our registered provision
- Expanding our reach by securing new contracts and welcoming more people into our support
- Unveiling our new organisational values and visual identity, reflecting who we are and what we stand for

This is an exciting moment in Affinity Trust's journey — with strong leadership, financial stability, and a clear strategic direction, we are poised for meaningful, sustainable growth.

And to view our most recent annual report, please click [here](#).





# Our Strategic Aims 2023-28

We are in the second year of our five year Strategic Plan, which sets out how we will continue to develop as an innovative provider of high-quality person centred support.

While working through the enormous challenges faced by the social care sector over the past few years, we have also undertaken a comprehensive review of all our systems and processes. This Transformation Programme has included the digitalisation of major systems for Operations, Rostering, HR and Finance resulting in an operating platform which will drive improvements to the delivery of support while creating a better working environment for our staff.

The challenges presented by the economy, the labour market and the underfunding of social care will continue to have an impact, as we look to deliver our strategy, but we are in a strong position to overcome these challenges and take the Affinity Trust forward with the people we support at the heart of all that we do.

Our five core aims below are the pillars of our strategy and will shape everything we do over the next five years:

## Enable people to live great lives



- ✓ We will provide person-centred support driven by choice and opportunity for everyone, with regulator ratings of GOOD or better in both England and Scotland.
- ✓ Our technology will enable evidence of great outcomes for people we support.

## Support more people to live at home



- ✓ We will help people to transition from hospital back into the community.
- ✓ We will increase the number of people living in their own home in communities of their choice.

## Be a workplace where our people will grow and develop



- ✓ As part of our core values we will continue to be an inclusive and diverse workplace, and recruit more managers with protected characteristics.
- ✓ Through our investments in technology we will improve our employee experience.
- ✓ We will focus on the health and wellbeing of our people and provide continued development opportunities.

## Actively partner, collaborate and influence



- ✓ We will be a collaborative and useful part for evolving health systems, local authorities and other providers to improve outcomes for people we support.
- ✓ We will advocate alongside the people we support and their families to transform social care policy and practice.

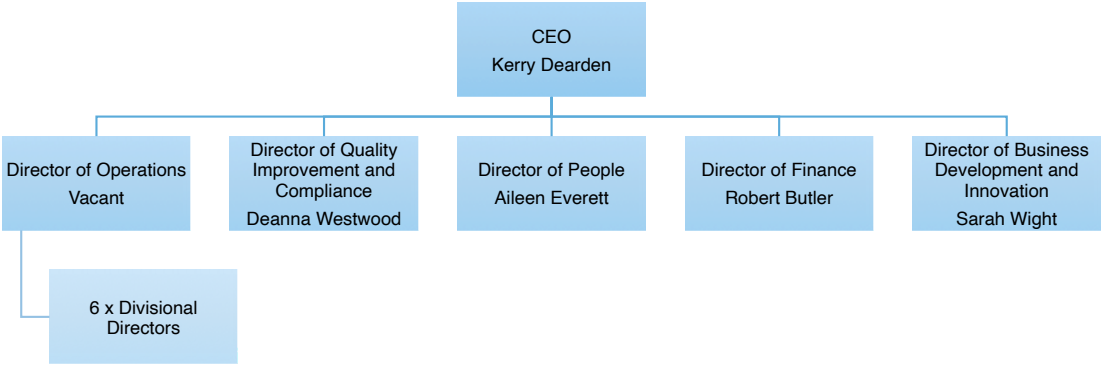
## Be financially fit to meet our ambitions



- ✓ We will ensure financial sustainability and healthy reserves enabling us to continue to grow, innovate and invest to improve the lives of people we support.
- ✓ We will continue to find more efficient ways of working, making every pound count.

# Our Executive Team

To learn more about our executive team, please [click here](#).





# Job Description

**Job title:**

Director of Operations

**Reports to:**

Chief Executive

**Responsible for:**

Divisional Directors (6) and their Operations, and Support Managers, and Support Workers and Executive Admin.

**Role purpose**

The Director of Operations will be a visible leader responsible for overseeing the operational management of all support locations across the organisation, ensuring that person centred support is provided to the highest standards and in line with regulatory requirements. This role will lead the development and execution of operational strategies, maintain excellent quality of support, deliver cost effective operational efficiency, and enhance satisfaction of those we support.

To build mutually beneficial relationships with partners and be part of the Executive Team.

Act as the nominated individual for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in the event the role of Director of Quality Improvement and Compliance is vacant.

## Main responsibilities

**Strategic Development & Performance Monitoring**

- Work closely with the CEO and the senior leadership team to develop and implement the organisation's strategic goals.
- Ensure that operational approaches, systems and expectations enable Affinity Trust to be recognised as a leading and progressive provider.
- To support and sometimes lead on the acquisition, development and implementation of new initiatives achieved through tenders, negotiated commissioning and direct referrals, working closely with the Director of Business Development and Innovation.
- Lead the development and implementation of operational plans that drive organisational growth, quality improvement, and operational efficiency.
- Monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) and operational data to assess the effectiveness of support programmes and initiate corrective action where necessary.
- Prepare and present reports to senior leadership and the board on operational performance, including areas for improvement and growth opportunities.
- Ensure contracts are delivered in accordance with terms and conditions.

**Operational Leadership**

- Lead and manage the operational delivery of support pathways across multiple regions ensuring consistency in high-quality person-centred support.
- Develop and implement operational strategies that align with the organisation's goals and objectives.
- Ensure the efficient management of resources, including staffing, budgets, and delivery of support.
- Maintain oversight of operational performance, including financial performance, quality, and compliance with regulatory bodies (CQC, Care Inspectorate, etc.).
- Drive the implementation of best practices and continuous improvement initiatives across all support arrangements

# Job Description

## **Team Management & Development**

- Lead, mentor, and develop the divisional operational teams to ensure they meet performance targets and maintain a high level of colleague engagement and development.
- Foster a positive, values-driven culture that focuses on person-centred support and the development of our colleagues.
- Develop and maintain a culture which encourages all colleagues to hold positive aspirations for the people they support and work creatively to achieve these.
- Ensure effective communication across teams and encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

## **Compliance & Risk Management**

- Ensure all support models operate in full compliance with relevant health and social care regulations, standards, and best practice.
- Oversee risk management procedures and ensure any issues are identified and addressed promptly.
- Act as the lead for ensuring that support arrangements meet internal and external audit and inspection requirements.
- Work closely with the Director of Quality Improvement and Compliance to ensure high standards of safety for people receiving support and adherence to best safeguarding practices.

## **Budget and Financial Management**

- Oversee the operational budget and ensure effective financial management and cost control within the divisions.
- Ensure support provided is delivered within agreed budgets while maintaining high standards of person-centred support.
- Identify opportunities for operational efficiencies and cost-saving initiatives without compromising the quality of support we provide.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

- Develop and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders, including commissioners, regulatory bodies, those we support, families, and other relevant partners.
- Act as a representative of the organisation at meetings, conferences, and forums related to the Children, Young People, and Adult Social Care sectors.



# Person Specification

## Knowledge and experience

- Senior leadership experience in the social care sector, ideally at director level or equivalent, leading large-scale operations.
- Experience in learning disabilities, autism care, supported living, and young people is desirable.
- Proven operational leadership – Significant experience leading large, multi-site teams across diverse regions and areas of support delivery
- Experience of working with Local Authority Commissioners and other key stakeholders in the care sector.
- Proven track record of building strategic relationships and partnerships, including with commissioners, people we support, and other external organisations.
- Budget and resource management experience – Demonstrated ability to oversee large operational budgets and allocate resources effectively.
- Experience in business development – Ability to identify new business opportunities and negotiate with payors or partners to expand our support offer
- A degree or relevant professional qualification in social care or equivalent experience in the social care sector.
- Full driving license and own vehicle with regular travel for operational requirements and meetings.



# Person Specification

## Skills and abilities

- Effective communication skills in a range of different circumstances including presenting complex information to stakeholders at all levels.
- Ability to build and maintain strategic relationships both internally and externally, ensuring alignment with organisational goals.
- Demonstrated strategic leadership and people management skills – experience in motivating, empowering and developing teams to achieve operational objectives.
- Strong financial and commercial acumen – Ability to oversee and manage large budgets, implement cost control measures, and drive operational efficiencies.
- Ability to balance operational delivery with organisational needs – ensure operational objectives are met without compromising organisational priorities or quality.
- Analytical mindset – Ability to interpret complex data and make informed decisions based on insights and trends.
- Risk management expertise – Proactively identifying and mitigating risks, resolving complex challenges independently when necessary.
- Resilience and adaptability – Capable of remaining effective and positive under pressure and adapting to changing environments.
- IT literate – Proficient in using various management systems and technologies.
- Knowledge of SONA, Nourish, RADAR business systems.

## Styles and behaviours

- Professional role model – committed to being an ambassador for the organisation and its values.
- Willingness to work flexibly – Ability to travel, attend meetings and work overnight when required.
- Committed to personal development – Dedicated to ongoing learning and improving professional capabilities.
- Be part of an on-call rota if required.



# Terms of Appointment

## Salary

The salary for this role is c.£110,000 with a £5,720 car allowance per annum on a full-time permanent basis.

## Location

Head Office is based in Thame, Oxfordshire with national travel required.

## Pension

Up to 6% matched contribution available through salary sacrifice.

## Annual leave

30 days annual leave, plus bank holidays.

## Additional benefits

Private healthcare, life insurance, blue light discounts, more rewards and benefits can be viewed [here](#)



# How to Apply

We're delighted that you're considering this opportunity to join Affinity Trust at such an inspiring and forward-looking moment in our journey. If you're passionate about making a real difference, driven by purpose, and ready to help shape the future of support for people with learning disabilities and autism, we would love to hear from you.

If you have any questions or would welcome a confidential, informal conversation about the role, please contact [chris.milo@starfishsearch.com](mailto:chris.milo@starfishsearch.com) — we will be happy to arrange a call. To apply, please visit <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/affinity-trust-dir-ope/> and click the 'Apply Now' button. You will be asked to submit the following:

- Your CV (maximum three sides)
- A supporting statement (maximum two sides) outlining why this role is the right next step for you, and how your experience aligns with the knowledge and criteria set out in the person specification.

We also encourage you to complete the Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form as part of the online process. This information is used for monitoring purposes only and will not form part of the selection process.

We look forward to receiving your application and learning more about what you can bring to this important leadership role at Affinity Trust.

<b>Closing date:</b>	Thursday 5th June 2025
<b>Preliminary interviews:</b>	w/c Monday 23rd June 2025
<b>Final Panel interviews:</b>	w/c Monday 14th July 2025



