

Chair Appointment Candidate Information Pack

April 2026





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Welcome

Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Chair of the Patients Association.

The health and care system is at a pivotal moment. The 10-Year Health Plan for England promises a revolution in patient power - shifting care from hospitals to communities, from analogue to digital, from treatment to prevention. We welcome that ambition. But any transformation designed without patients is transformation that will fail them.

That is why the Patients Association exists. No other organisation does what we do: independent of the NHS, independent of any condition, we exist solely to ensure that what patients experience shapes the decisions that affect them.

Our purpose is to raise patient voices across health and care, and to instigate change; the 10-Year Health Plan working group reports cited the key role our work plays in helping to shape national policy.

Our impact is also reflected in our reach and activity. In 2025, our membership grew 18% to 5,330, our helpline answered over 4,200 enquiries, and our Patient Partnership Week drew 864 attendees across seven webinars, a 74% increase on the year before. We delivered 18 commissioned projects and were recognised within the 10-Year Health Plan for our digital health work. There is much more to do, and we are committed to building on this foundation.

We do, however, operate in an extremely challenging financial climate, with an NHS spending freeze, a competitive funding environment, with shifting pharmaceutical pricing, all affecting our income.

In response to this, we have developed a (new?) strategy built around four core services and a clearer account of the impact we create. 2026 is our pivotal year, and the transformation we are asking of the NHS, we are also asking of ourselves. We are proud of what we have achieved in recent years and the difference this is making for patients, but we recognise there is more to do and we are committed to having a greater impact and achieving further reach in the years to come.

In our Chair we are seeking someone who shares our passion for and commitment to our cause. You will bring a fully formed understanding of Board governance, with the skills to lead and develop an effective and high-performing Board.

You will be a compelling and influential leader, with the ability to engage and influence at the highest levels and raise the profile of the Association. You will have well established networks, which will benefit the cause of the Association. You will be comfortable operating in an outward facing, ambassadorial role, where you will need to navigate a complex media and stakeholder environment.

We hope this candidate pack and your further reading will compel and motivate you to progress and if your experience and ambitions align with ours, we welcome your interest and application.

The Board of Trustees
the Patients Association

About the Patients Association

Background

The Patients Association has been a trusted and respected independent voice for patients for over six decades. We hold a unique position covering the interests of all patients across the UK, regardless of their condition, background or where they live, speaking up for the quality of care and experiences they should receive.

Our mission is to amplify patient voices across health and care. We give patients a voice and tools to manage their care, gather their experiences and insights, and translate these into evidence. We use this evidence to influence policy, hold systems to account, strengthen our campaigns, and drive practical improvements in care.

Our ambition for the Patients Association by 2030 is:

- to be recognised as the independent voice advocating for patients
- to equip patient with the tools to navigate their care and have their voices heard
- for our evidence base to make us the go-to partner for any organisation serious about patient-centred care
- to deliver demonstrable impact on policy, services, and patient experiences.

Our core values ensure we never lose sight of what we're trying to achieve.

- **Diversity:** We value diversity by encouraging a trusting, open and inclusive environment for staff, volunteers, patients, and stakeholders
- **Dignity and Respect:** We treat every person with kindness, respect and dignity
- **Inclusive:** We welcome people's differences and believe it is important people are comfortable to be themselves while they are working/engaging with us
- **Partnership:** We work in partnership to make things better for patients so everyone can get and benefit from the health and care they need.

Our Strategic Priorities 2026–2030

Patient engagement

We give patients a voice and the tools to manage their care, gathering patient experiences and insights to strengthen our campaigns, project, and policy work. Through support, digital information, webinars, podcasts and guides, we help patients navigate a complex system.

Policy engagement and influence

We champion the patient voice in national policy. Our approach is both constructive and challenging; we engage with those committed to improvement and we hold the system to account when it fails patients.

National campaigns

We will lead national campaigns on the issues that patients tell us matter most, raising awareness, shifting narratives and driving measurable change. Our campaigns will be grounded in patient evidence and designed to achieve outcomes that patients can see and feel in their care.

Project work and consultancy

We work with organisations across health and care to involve patients effectively and use patient insight to improve services. We are selective: we only work with organisations whose values align with ours and where work can build the evidence base for what good patient partnership looks like.

We will deliver this strategy in three phases:

2026: Establish foundations, make key strategic decisions, launch our first campaign, and set baseline metrics.

2027–2028: Scale successful approaches, expand capacity, deepen partnerships, and grow our reach.

2029–2030: Demonstrate measurable impact, achieve sustainability targets, and prepare for the next strategy cycle.

The Board will review progress quarterly and approve annual business plans, ensuring we remain focused, responsive, and aligned to our strategic goals.

Our Board of Trustees

Julie Thallon - Chair

Julie trained as a nurse in London and specialised in district nursing before a long career in NHS management. She has worked across all types of NHS organisations including executive positions in the NHS, as Director of Nursing, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Performance & Commissioning and Director of Quality. Julie runs her own consultancy company and she is also a Non-Executive Director with the East of England Ambulance NHS Trust.

Mark Blaney – Vice Chair

Mark worked for the NHS in various roles for 17 years, during which time he trained as a CIPFA accountant. He then worked as a Finance Manager in the Probation Service for over 6 years. After a stint of 23 years in public services, he joined the Royal College of Anaesthetists, as Financial Controller. He has been Finance Director at the College for the last ten years. During his time at the College, he was a non-exec director of the London Universities Purchasing Consortium, before becoming their Chair.

Rachel King

Rachel is working as an International Evidence Manager for an international Multiple Sclerosis charity. She leads the Atlas of MS project which provides vital evidence that can be used in advocacy to improve the lives of people with MS around the world. Prior to this she ran her own market research and insight consultancy supporting not-for-profit organisations including patient organisations to help them understand their beneficiaries, employees/volunteers as well as other stakeholders better.

Meryl Davies

Meryl has held senior roles in a number of charities. After a decade in international development, she made the move to UK-based work when she took on the role of CEO of Re-engage, a national charity focused on social isolation and loneliness experienced people over 75. Meryl then joined Morden College as Chief Executive Officer in October 2023. She is passionately committed to the importance of listening and involving people who are most impacted by the work of a charity but too often still don't have a voice in finding solutions.

Wiqas Valji

Wiqas Valji qualified as pharmacist in 2007 and started his clinical career as a hospital pharmacist working for the NHS in London. He then moved into healthcare information technology. For the last decade, he has worked for global IT software companies who provide software to the NHS. His extensive experience in this area has made him a champion of ensuring technology works for both patients and clinicians and contributing to better outcomes and experiences for patients.

Professor Alf Collins

Professor Alf Collins is an internationally respected authority on person-centred care. From 2016-2023, he was NHS England's National Clinical Director for personalised care. Shared decision making, care planning, self-management support, social prescribing and health literacy sat within his policy portfolio, and he led on implementation of Universal Personalised Care, one of five key shifts for the NHS in the 2019 Long Term Plan.

Tom Grinyer

Tom serves as Group Chief Executive Officer for the Institute of Physics. Previously Tom served as Group Chief Executive at the British Medical Association, leading the organisation through the Covid-19 pandemic and restructuring the BMA with a particular emphasis on membership engagement and experience. Prior to the BMA, Tom led the Royal College of Anaesthetists, which grew substantially under his leadership.

Julia Ross

Julia Ross spent over 30 years in NHS management, working at national, regional, and local levels, until her retirement in April 2022. For the last 10 years she was commissioning Chief Executive and System Leader, first in Surrey Heartlands and then in Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire. Julia's career in the NHS encompassed: strategy design and delivery; organisation and leadership development; and citizen engagement, co-production, and communications.

Teena Chowdhury

Teena's professional experience spans the healthcare landscape including the structural, regulatory and operational complexities that shape it. She was the Deputy Director for the Care Quality Improvement Directorate at the Royal College of Physicians, where she worked for over seven years. Currently Teena is the Executive Director for Education at the Royal College of General Practitioners. She plays an active role on boards and advisory groups covering critical topics such as health inequalities, outpatient care, climate change and AI.

Carolin Ott

Carolin Ott is a Senior Associate Solicitor in the human rights department at Leigh Day. She is a dual qualified lawyer, admitted as a solicitor in England & Wales and as an attorney to the New York State Bar. She has experience working on domestic and international human rights law cases. Her work focuses on judicial review challenges and claims under the Human Rights Act 1998 and her cases include a broad range of challenges to public bodies.

Rachel Power – Chief Executive

Rachel joined the Patients Association as Chief Executive in 2017 and has led changes in the charity, resulting in a more engaged membership and an increase in profile for the Patients Association and its goal of embedding patient partnership in the design and delivery of health and care services. Described by The Times as, “the UK’s foremost patient campaigner”, Rachel is a passionate advocate for patient-centred care.

Role Profile - Chair of the Board of Trustees

Role summary

The Chair ensures the board is effective, cohesive and collaborative and acts as an ambassador and visible champion for the Patients Association, alongside the Chief Executive.

They play a critical role in providing overall leadership to the charity and the board of Trustees, ensuring the board fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of the charity and enabling it to achieve its vision. The Chair and trustees have collective responsibility for the running of the charity, acting as a group.

The Chair will bring an authoritative and respected voice to the Patients Association to represent and support its work.

Key responsibilities

Governance:

- Provide clear, engaging and confident leadership, leading an effective Board of Trustees in all its roles. Provide support, oversight and wise counsel on the development and growth of the organisation
- Ensure the board has the right mix of diverse skills, experience and backgrounds to govern the charity effectively, recruiting in a timely and effective manner
- Build a strong and effective board, supporting individual trustees, building relationships and driving a culture of collective responsibility
- Lead the board’s overall development including ways of working, culture and plans for trustee and Chief Executive succession
- Chair meetings of the Board of Trustees, ensuring all board members’ views are heard with decisions made by the board recorded and then implemented

- Recommend the appointment of committee chairs, ensuring the right leadership is in place across the Association's governance structure
- Promote the highest standards of conduct, governance, financial probity and regulatory compliance in line with the Charity Commission regulations and risk management, putting in place appropriate systems and frameworks to enable the Board of Trustees to monitor them
- Ensure there is an appropriate framework in place for delegated authority to any committees and the Chief Executive
- Be prepared to fully participate in own appraisal, conducted by Vice Chair or another trustee
- Regularly review the performance of the board and annually appraise the performance and development of the Chief Executive
- Offer support and challenge to the Chief Executive, on a wide range of strategic issues relating particularly to the long-term sustainability and impact of the charity

Strategy and impact:

- Working with the board, set and oversee delivery of the charity's strategy ensuring it delivers real and tangible impacts for those we serve
- Lead the Board of Trustees' oversight of the charity's impact, ensuring that progress is effectively monitored, measured and reported

Reputation and conduct:

- Live and lead with the values of the Association, placing them at the centre of the Board of Trustees' work
- Promote the highest standards of conduct, ensuring that trustees comply with the Association's code of conduct
- Ensure a full register of potential conflicts of interest is maintained for self and all trustees ensuring transparency and integrity of the board.

Person Specification

Relationships	Working with the Chief Executive, you will be an influential ambassador and advocate for the Association and our beneficiaries with key stakeholders and partners
	You will build and foster positive, productive and collegiate relationships between the board (and individual trustees) and the staff team and ensure that trustees are appropriately utilised and engaged in pursuit of the charity's strategic priorities
	You will represent, when necessary, the organisation at conferences, events and meetings, including with government and the media
	Promote a collaborative culture within the organisation with staff, trustees and key internal and external stakeholders
Attributes	We require a highly motivated and enthusiastic Chair with the time and capacity to lead the board and who is above all passionate about improving purpose/ mission/ lives of beneficiaries
	A commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
	Impartiality, fairness and a respect for confidences
	Strong communication skills
	Excellent diplomatic, negotiation and listening skills
Experience	Significant leadership experience in a relevant organisation working at board level
	Experience of Charity governance or governance in a statutory or public organisation
	Experience of strategic development in a rapidly changing organisation

Demonstrable experience of effective engagement with key external stakeholders
High level of interpersonal skills and ability to build strong and productive working relationships internally and externally
Demonstrable leadership capability and presence
Ability to chair and facilitate meetings effectively, including the ability to summarise debate and make decisions
Ability to manage differing opinions and take the board forward to make collective decisions
Ability to drive collective responsibility
Proven capability to interpret financial reports and lead board discussions on financial strategy, risk management and statutory compliance



Terms of Appointment

Term and remuneration

Our trustees are appointed for a three-year term, which is renewable for a second term.

This role is offered on a voluntary basis. All reasonable expenses incurred in the role are reimbursed.

Time commitment

On average the role will require circa 15 to 20 days per annum. This includes:

- Four board meetings a year (hybrid)
- One board strategy away day (face to face)
- Serving as an ex officio member of the finance and resources committee (four times a year)
- Presenting the AGM
- 1-2-1s with the Chief Executive (mix of online and face to face), to be agreed with Chief Executive on appointment
- Frequent but ad-hoc engagement with trustees
- Attendance at various events such as fundraising or campaigning
- Representing the Patients Association where appropriate and in discussion with the Chief Executive
- Participation in Patient Partnership Week as required and agreed with the Chief Executive
- Some visibility with staff (responsibility to be shared with other trustees).

Our Board meeting and scheduled dates:

Our Board meetings are conducted on a hybrid basis, with at least two a year in person, which currently takes place in London.

Finance and Resources Committee:

1. Thursday 16th April 2026
2. Thursday 16th July 2026
3. Thursday 8th October 2026
4. Thursday 3rd December 2026

Board Meetings:

1. Thursday 30th April 2026
2. Thursday 6th August 2026
3. Thursday 29th October 2026
4. Thursday 10th December 2026



How to Apply

To make an application, please go to <https://starfishsearch.com/jobs/chair/> and click on the 'apply now' button, with the following prepared:

- A CV detailing your career history and achievements. Please include your address and contact details.
- A supporting statement outlining your motivation, responsibility and achievement within previous roles and how your experience aligns to our requirements.
- The names, positions, organisations and contact details for three referees.

We value diversity and are committed to reaching people across a diverse range of communities. We believe that the best boards are those that reflect the communities they serve. We actively encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups who can bring new insights and perspective to our Board.

Recruitment timeline

Closing date for applications:	Monday, 1st June 2026
Preliminary interviews with Starfish Search:	w/c 15th June 2026
Trustee engagement sessions:	w/c 6th July 2026
Interview date:	w/c 6th July 2026
Proposed start date:	Autumn 2026

