



Candidate Pack for Chief Executive

SECONDSTEP

PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST



WELCOME



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in becoming the next Chief Executive of Second Step.

For nearly 40 years, Second Step has been a pioneer in the South West, putting mental health first for thousands of people. We began in the mid-1980s with a simple but radical premise: that people need more than just clinical care - they need a home, a community, and a "second step" toward a positive future.

Today, we are the leading voluntary sector mental health and multiple disadvantage provider in Bristol and the West of England. We are proud of our deep-rooted partnerships with the NHS and local authorities, and prouder still of our unique approach to recovery - trauma-informed, co-produced with our clients, and led by the powerful empathy of peer support.

This is a pivotal moment for Second Step. Our long-standing CEO is moving on after leading a period of significant growth, and as the world around us continues to change, the need for our services has never been greater. The ongoing impacts of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis mean our communities are facing a significant increase in mental health needs.

We are nearing the end of our "Succeeding Together" strategic plan (2023-2026). This has been more than just a document; it's our roadmap for building an inclusive culture, embedding trauma-informed practice at every level, and ensuring that lived experience is at the heart of everything we do. You will be coming in at a perfect time - to build on the incredible success we have achieved to date and help shape our future.

We need a leader who shares our core values - hope, courage, trust, diversity, and a commitment to learning - someone who can manage the real complexities of a major service provider without ever losing sight of and connection with the people we exist to serve.

As Chair, I am seeking a leader who can guide our 350-strong team with strategic clarity, operational excellence and compassionate leadership.

You will join an organisation committed to fostering a respectful, inclusive and high-performing culture, where fairness, accountability and continuous improvement underpin everything we do. Together, we strive to create a safe and supportive environment in which every colleague is valued, able to contribute fully, and has the opportunity to thrive.

If you believe like us that everyone affected by mental health can create a positive future, and you have the leadership experience to help us drive system-wide change and make us operationally fit for the future, I look forward to hearing from you.



Best wishes,
Kelvin Blake
Chair of the Board, Second Step

WHAT WE DO



Second Step provides community mental health and wellbeing support to people across the South West, working alongside people with severe and enduring mental health needs, those experiencing common mental health challenges, and individuals facing multiple disadvantage.

Our services are recovery- and strengths-based, informed by psychological, adversity- and trauma-informed approaches. We believe that, through hope, courage and the right support, people can find ways to change their lives for the better.

We take a holistic approach, supporting people to access the services they need while providing practical assistance. We focus on building resilience, confidence and agency, enabling people to manage their own circumstances, strengthen connections within their communities, and draw on their lived experience.

Our continued focus is on helping people achieve lasting, positive change.

Our role complements and adds value to the work of other organisations, and we strive to be a trusted and influential system partner. We work across the mental health, homelessness and complex needs sectors, both locally and nationally. As the lead delivery partner for Bristol's Changing Futures programme, we work collaboratively to transform services for people experiencing multiple disadvantage while influencing future policy and funding at both local and national levels.

By taking a system-wide perspective, identifying barriers to support, and listening to the experiences of our diverse client group, Second Step helps shape and enable change across the wider system. Through this work, we support some of the most vulnerable members of our communities to lead healthier, more fulfilling and independent lives.

Our services operate across [Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Somerset, Swindon](#) and [Wiltshire](#).

HOW WE WORK

Psychological, adversity and trauma informed

We acknowledge the context of trauma and adversity and seek to understand how these experiences affect people's lives. We want to know what has happened to people and what help they feel they need. In short, we prioritise this psychological understanding and [trauma informed approach](#) in everything we do.

Recovery

Recovery is personal and unique to everyone. When we talk about recovery, we mean working in a way which helps people build resilience, notice triggers, share expertise, mend relationships, and find a way through.

A person's recovery is shaped by the things that happen in life, what they need from others to feel safe and how the communities in which they live and the services they use help them. In short, we help build safe and trusting relationships with people.

Peer support

Our staff are uniquely placed to offer empathy and encouragement to clients because many have used mental health and other support services in the past. Since 2009 we have employed peer support staff specifically to share their mental health experiences with clients. The introduction of peer support workers was pioneering. It set us apart and ensured a unique approach to support work which has been adopted by many more organisations.



Co-production

We aim to involve the people who use our services (past and present) to help shape the way we deliver them. Coproduction is the process of involving clients equally in this process ensuring that they are valued for their lived experience. In this way we believe we can create services which offer people both choice and control.



OUR VISION

We believe in a world where everyone affected by mental health problems can create a positive future.

OUR MISSION

We promote mental health and wellbeing by supporting people and communities to build brighter futures.

OUR VALUES



Believing in hope and courage

Recovery becomes a reality when we are confident, courageous and inspire hope in one another. This is when change can happen and we can achieve great things.



Succeeding together

We're at our best when we work together - staff, service users, carers and partners - making the most of each other's talents and strengths.



Building trust

When we act with integrity, when we strive to be honest with ourselves and those around us, we can build strong bonds of trust.



Celebrating diversity

We value our differences, understanding that being kind and respectful to each other makes us strong.



Learning and growing

By listening and thinking about how we can learn from our actions, we can help create real change for ourselves and inspire those around us.

Our Impact

Our 2025/26 impact report can be viewed [here](#)

Our strategic plan 2023 – 2026 can be viewed [here](#)

JOB DESCRIPTION



- Job title:** Chief Executive
- Reports to:** The Board via Chair of Trustees.
- Direct reports:** 5 direct reports including 2 members of Executive Team

Role purpose:

Second Step is a values led organisation that has grown significantly since our small beginnings. Our primary task is to support people with mental health problems and multiple disadvantage to thrive. We have ambition to grow further, to provide quality support services to people with mental health and other related support needs. We promote a trauma informed approach and encourage participation and involvement from service users, staff and Board members.

The environment in which Second Step operates is challenging and requires a robust, adaptable, sustainable and resilient approach to enable Second Step to thrive - balancing delivering today and ensuring the health of the organisation for tomorrow. It currently operates in Bath & North-East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, South Gloucestershire, Swindon Wiltshire and Somerset.

The overall purpose of the Chief Executive role is to:

1. Provide strategic leadership to deliver Second Step's mission, values, and long-term sustainability – including required transformation to deliver operational excellence
2. Lead the organisation to continue to develop a culture of collaboration, accountability and psychological safety to deliver high-quality, trauma-informed, inclusive services with measurable impact.
3. Act as the organisation's principal ambassador, developing and sustaining strong partnerships with commissioners, system partners, and voluntary sector alliances.

JOB DESCRIPTION



Main responsibilities:

Strategic Leadership

- Provide vision and leadership that directs the organisation in accordance with the overall strategy and values balancing the performance of the organisation today with ongoing improvement to enable business development and delivery of operational excellence.
- Lead Second Step's values and behaviours, including embracing a trauma informed and inclusive approach, ensuring they are embedded across all levels of the organisation and reflected in decision-making, leadership and service delivery.
- Inspire and empower colleagues through visible, compassionate and inclusive leadership, fostering a culture of trust, collaboration and continuous improvement with appropriate delegated decision making.
- Champion the staff voice by encouraging open communication, feedback, innovation and shared learning.

External Relations and Advocacy

- Build and maintain strategic partnerships, collaborations, alliances and networks to strengthen Second Step's influence, visibility and impact on mental health.
- Communicate effectively and build relationships with commissioners, other stakeholders, our clients and the public.
- Speak up for our clients and their challenges to promote better services.

Organisational Development

- Promote innovation and forward-thinking approaches to service design, performance management, and customer experience, aligned with Second Step's strategic ambitions.
- Champion a culture that values lived experience, client voice and engagement. Advocate for the needs and rights of those with mental health needs and multiple disadvantage ensuring Second Step remains a trusted voice in local and national conversations about mental health and complex needs.
- Lead and embed a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, ensuring that Second Step services are responsive to the diverse needs of its clients and that its workforce is inclusive, representative, and supported to thrive.

Governance and Compliance

- Ensure that Second Step has systems in place to effectively monitor performance and enable appropriate reporting and action to be taken to deliver high quality services that meet contractual and legal requirements.
- Ensure that proper systems of financial control, risk assessment, risk management, and legal and regulatory compliance are established and maintained.
- Ensure that the trustees are properly informed and that sufficient information is provided to the Board to enable them to form appropriate judgments and discharge their responsibilities.
- Keep abreast of all external factors affecting Second Step and ensure that these are responded to appropriately and communicated to the trustees and executive team and senior leadership team.

PERSON SPECIFICATION



Skills, Knowledge and Experience

- Significant Senior Leadership experience, ideally gained through working for more than one organisation in a relevant sector (Voluntary, Health or Local Authority) at Director or CEO level.
- Track record of operational delivery including delivering service improvement, transformational change or organisational growth, successfully leading people through change.
- Evidence of establishing/overseeing governance and performance systems to enable a Board to effectively monitor performance, deliver contractual obligations, manage risk and facilitate appropriate decision making.
- Excellent communication skills with the ability to inspire, influence and engage a wide range of stakeholders including staff, commissioners and partners.
- Proven ability to build and sustain strategic and system partnerships across statutory, voluntary, and community sectors.
- Demonstrable evidence of creating commitment to inclusion, equity and diversity through embedding inclusive practices for service users and staff.
- Strong understanding of mental health, homelessness and multiple disadvantage policy, commissioning structures and the wider health and social care landscape, with the ability to navigate and influence complex place-based systems and partnerships.
- Understanding of psychological, adversity and trauma informed approaches, the value of lived experience, and a commitment to co-production, with evidence of listening to and responding to client voices.
- Experience of financial oversight, including budgeting, risk management, and new business development.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Styles and behaviours

- Values-driven, compassionate, and committed to improving mental health outcomes.
- Emotionally intelligent, with the ability to build trust and rapport across diverse groups and partners.
- Resilient and adaptable, able to maintain clarity and calm under pressure.
- Adaptable leadership style underpinned by an authentic, and accountable approach with a focus on performance.
- Strategic thinker with practical approach that enables strategic ambitions to be translated into deliverable plans.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT



Salary

The salary for this role is c.£110,000k per annum on a full-time permanent basis.

Location

162 Pennywell Road, Bristol, BS5 0TX

Pension

After three months' service you will be automatically enrolled in our pension scheme if you are eligible. The Association will contribute 6% of gross basic salary into the scheme if you contribute at least 3% of gross basic salary.

Annual leave

We offer 26 days, plus 8 bank holidays (pro-rata for part-time working). An additional day's holiday is granted to all staff after 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 full years' service, subject to a maximum of 5 working days.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS



Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

Our EAP scheme is hosted by BUPA and is a confidential telephone line where staff, their partners and any children over the age of 16 living at home can seek advice on a range of personal and work-related issues.

Sick Pay

Our Sick Pay scheme is service-related and pays incrementally between 1 weeks' full pay and 1 weeks' half pay for new entrants and 13 weeks full pay and 13 weeks half pay after 5 years' service.

Enhanced Maternity Pay

We offer enhanced maternity pay.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Second Step is part of the Cycle to work initiative which allows employees to claim tax relief on the cost of a new bike and accessories.

Eye Care Vouchers

All employees are entitled to an eye voucher which can be redeemed against the cost of eye test or glasses required for VDU work.

Flexible Working

Second Step aims to provide employees with as much flexibility within their working hours as possible to enable a better work/life balance. We offer flexible working, flexi-time and blended working dependent on job role.

Team Development Days Out

Each year, every team is given an allowance to spend on a team day.

Free Flu Vaccinations

Second Step funds the cost of an annual flu jab.

HOW TO APPLY

We hope you will consider making an application. To make an application, please go to [Starfish link](#) and click on the apply now button, with the following prepared:

[APPLY NOW](#)



- 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.

Closing date: Friday 17th July 2026
Preliminary interviews: w/c 27th July 2026
Final Panel interviews: w/c 10th and 17th August 2026



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