



CHAIR AND TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT PACK

2025



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WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Applicant

On behalf of the Stepping Stones NI team, I am delighted that you have expressed an interest in a role on the Board of Trustees of Stepping Stones NI.

Stepping Stones NI exists to change how society values and engages people with barriers to learning and employment. We see everyone's potential and know that with the right support, people who experience barriers to learning and employment can go on to achieve new skills, qualifications, and employment.

Through our youth, training, employment and community services we provide tailored support to individuals with learning disabilities, autism, health conditions and barriers to learning who want to skill up, develop and get into work.

Our social enterprises serve as realistic training platforms for people with learning disabilities offering opportunities to gain new skills in catering, hospitality, craft and horticulture.

We work with a range of stakeholders and partners and continuously invest in our resources to support our highly skilled team of staff, volunteers, clients and partners to be the best for our people.

We are keen to hear from people with a range of skills to complement our board. At present we would particularly encourage those with a background in finance, PR, HR, legal or the Third Sector to express an interest in our work, who have a passion for inclusion.

If successful you will be joining a skilled and passionate Trustee team, supported by our Senior Leadership Team.

I warmly invite you to take the time to read this information pack so that you can understand what we do and who we are looking for.

If you believe you have the commitment, experience, and passion for our work to make a huge social impact please submit your interest to our Chief Officer, Paula Jennings the first instance: Paula.Jennings@stepping-stones.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Michael Scott

Chair



WHO WE ARE

Back in 1996 a group of driven and passionate parents, carers and business people worked with the health trust to establish Stepping Stones NI. The aim was to provide meaningful training to people with a learning disability so that they had greater opportunities for employment.

We have come a long way since then with four services and six social enterprises which include three cafés, a wedding stationery business, a guild-commended picture framing business and a new horticulture and wellbeing hub at Navigation House, Lisburn. Each business serves as a realistic training platform for our trainees with 100% of our customers money reinvested to support our work.

Our work now extends beyond Lisburn, covering the south eastern region of Northern Ireland, and we work with collaborative partners across Northern Ireland to deliver support people into employment through our UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Programme "Prosper".

We support people who face all kinds of barriers to employment including learning difficulties, learning disabilities, Autism, ADHD and Dyslexia and Mental Health issues.

Our services are designed to meet the needs of clients at different stages of their journey and are tailored to meet their needs and aspirations.

We have links with a board range of employers and see the real and lasting benefit that engagement with the world of work and community can bring.

We know that we with the right support people who experience barriers to learning and employment can live a life fulfilled that includes greater independence, the world of work and a bright future.

Our work could not be achieved without the support of our funders including the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust supporting day opportunities for people with learning disabilities in our social enterprise and UKSPF directly from Westminster that supports people who are economically into work.

WHAT WE DO

Youth Service

Our Youth Service provides 16-24 year olds with tailored support to gain new skills, qualifications and employment.

We offer a programme that includes:

- One-to-one mentoring
- Access to accredited and bespoke training
- Work tasters and work placements
- Community and volunteering projects
- Activities and outings

Our young people tell us that involvement in our Youth Service has helped them to become more independent, meet new friends and gain confidence and self-esteem.

Training and Employment

We have been supporting people with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, learning difficulties and learning disabilities to gain meaningful training and employment for 27 years.

Our team are experienced at supporting people with a range of needs, disabilities and barriers to work, helping people identify jobs they may be interested in, provide work tasters, academies and placements and support with CVs job applications and interviews.

Our dedicated team of Employment Officers are there every step of the way to ensure people gain the training and support they need to get a job and stay in that job. With connections to employers across a variety of industries, we support people to get paid jobs in retail, catering, hospitality, administration and other sectors.





Employers and Businesses

We have been supporting employers to recruit and retain dedicated and loyal staff for over 27 years. We see the benefit of working together.

Every day we support people who face barriers to employment to secure jobs and work placements. We work with employers across a variety of sectors to make this happen.

We see the value in working closely with employers to create opportunities for people with Autism, ADHD, Dyslexia, learning difficulties and learning disabilities. Our Employment Officers successfully support people with a range of difficulties and needs to find a job they love and to stay in that job.

As an employer, we know that other employers' goals are to find the best talent and retain that talent. We also know that when people who face barriers to employment are fully supported they can secure a job and flourish in their role which the employer benefits from.

We work together with employers to recruit talented and dedicated people that will add to the dynamic of their team. We:

- Help them recruit new applicants
- Support applicants through interview
- Provide on the job support

Social Enterprises

We have a range of social enterprises supporting people with a learning disability to advance their skills in catering, hospitality, craft, and horticulture.

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to explore their true talent and develop a pathway to a bright future. Every day we see the value of our work,

we see confidence and social skills grow, we see qualifications achieved and we see the difference our services mean to our people and their families and carers.

The support we receive from our volunteers, funders and the business community is vital to achieving this change.

OUR STRATEGY

Our Vision

A socially enriched world where every individual can take proud steps towards a life fulfilled.

Our Mission

To nurture the potential of people with a disability to thrive in a socially inclusive society.

Our Values

Our Values drive our actions, are at the heart of our culture and it's how we turn up for work each day.

- **Respect:** We respect everyone's right to a life more fulfilled and respect each other in the process.
- **Inspiring:** We inspire employers and the wider community to see disability differently
- **Empower:** We empower each other to make a positive impact on the world and in the organisation, we work

Our Values drive our behaviours and govern our actions. They are at the heart of our culture and define who we are, and how we present ourselves every day.

Our Behaviours

- **Driven:** We are driven, seizing every opportunity to create better lives
- **Honest:** We are honest and always do the right thing
- **Positively Charged:** We are positively charged & passionate to make things possible.
- **Nurturing:** We Nurture all our People to be their best
- **Quality focused:** We always thrive to ensure the highest standard.





Our Objectives

1. To develop services and social enterprises which will provide appropriate training opportunities leading to employment for adults with a learning disability and learning difficulties, Autism, Neurodivergent and barriers to learning.
2. To develop services and programmes to increase the health and wellbeing of our people.
3. To equip individuals participating in projects with knowledge, skills, attitudes and qualifications to enable progression to supported employment.
4. To increase inclusion amongst society, our community and with employers.
5. To live our values in who we are as people and as an organisation.
6. To promote independence and social inclusion amongst beneficiaries participating in projects and services.
7. To provide a quality service to people accessing Stepping Stones NI services and social enterprises.
8. To promote cooperation and develop links with other relevant stakeholders to maximise opportunities for people accessing our services.

Our Focus

We understand now more than ever that skills development and work is just one aspect of an individual's life.

We have therefore broadened our focus and our scope of services to include:

1. Social Enterprise
2. Employment
3. Skills and Training
4. Health and Well-Being

BOARD MEMBER ROLE PROFILE

Every Board Member is accountable to the Board of Trustees and shares their purpose to ensure the good governance of the organisation; contributing to the overall governance and strategic direction of Stepping Stones NI; the development of its Vision and Values; and the development of the organisation's strategic objectives in accordance with the Articles of Association and other legal and regulatory guidelines.

Collectively, members are there:

- To determine the organisation's mission and strategic direction, and ensure that the organisation stays within its remit and within the law;
- Drive strategic planning and review in accordance with the company's defined values;
- Ensure that the services the organisation is providing to its users, and the policies to support the delivery of these services are in line with the mission, aims and objectives and that these arrangements are kept under continuous review;
- Provide leadership and oversee the delivery of results;
- Ensure effective planning and control takes place, to agree targets, including financial budgets and to monitor performance against these;
- Approve and ensure effective corporate governance arrangements are in place and that they are fit for purpose;
- Ensure that the organisation follows governance best practice have the appropriate suite of skills to comprehend and use financial and governance information they are asked to review. The Board should enable this through appropriate recruitment, induction, and development process;
- Ensure that the organisation meets all of its statutory and legal requirements with regards to employment practices, equality obligations and that staff are supported in fulfilling their roles by means of effective staff development processes;
- Ensure that effective audit takes place, approve the annual accounts prior to publication and take on board any recommendations of the auditors;
- Ensure adequate funding is in place for delivery of programmes and services;
- Ensure a high standard of corporate governance and personal behaviour throughout the organisation, including policies and procedures, and an appropriate Risk Management system;
- Be clear about the most significant strategic risks facing the organisation and ensure mitigation steps are in place. Board members should receive regular reports on risk management and ensure board input into the process;
- Challenge and support the CEO;
- Avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, and to disclose any possible conflicts to the Chair immediately.

BOARD MEMBER SPECIFICATION



All members of the Board should have, or acquire as soon as possible after appointment:

- Understanding of the objectives of Stepping Stones NI and current significant issues for the organisation;
- Understanding of Stepping Stones NI's structure, including key relationships;
- Commitment to Stepping Stones NI's vision and values and understanding of Stepping Stones NI's culture;
- Bring an overview of the organisation as a whole and ensure a good balance between oversight and operational involvement;
- Understanding of any relevant legislation or other rules governing Stepping Stones NI;
- Broad understanding of the charity sector, particularly good governance arrangements;
- Ability to constructively challenge decisions and operations of the staff and Board and to offer support when it is needed;
- Willingness to use existing relationships professionally and appropriately only to further the aims and objectives of the charity and its strategic direction;
- Willingness to seek out and foster new relationships which only further the aims and objectives of the charity and its strategic direction.

It should be noted that individual trustees do not have any authority in relation to Stepping Stones NI outside the collective authority of the Board of Trustees, unless specific authority is delegated by the Board.



WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We are seeking applications from those with knowledge and experience at a senior level to ensure the governance of the organisation . In particular, we are seeking applicants who can demonstrate particular skills and experience in one or more of the following areas:

Finance

Individuals with strong financial oversight skills who can support strategic decision-making and ensure the organisation's continued financial sustainability.

Public relations

An individual who can respond to and help shape public relations, marketing and communications ideas suggested by the management team, and who can leverage their networks to help promote the work of Stepping Stones NI.

HR

We're keen for an expert HR professional to help frame an excellent human resources service from the organisation to its internal and external stakeholders, and to help define the culture and behaviours that it wants to encourage.

Third Sector Awareness/Experience

Experience of working in a leadership role within the voluntary and community sector with a passion for making a difference to the lives of people with a disability and/or barrier to learning and employment.

Legal

Individuals with legal expertise who can provide guidance on governance, compliance, and organisational risk.

Health Care Professional

Experience in working in Health Trust with an understanding of learning disability services.

Parent/family member of a person with a disability

We are always keen to hear from someone who is a parent or has a family member with a learning disability or Autism with the skills to ensure good governance.

YOUR TIME COMMITMENT

Board Meetings and Committees

Time commitment is estimated attendance at 5 board meetings per year.

Board meetings are 90 minutes long and every two months, currently held on the last Thursday of the second month starting at 12.30pm with a welcome lunch . (May be subject to change to meet the needs of the board members)

There are two sub committees which meet for 60 minutes, scheduled ahead of each board meeting. All board members are asked to sit on at least one subcommittee, depending on their experience.

- Human Resource, Governance and Nominations (HRGN)
- Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR)

Board Induction and Support

New board members will be offered a full induction programme and supporting materials, with an opportunity to meet clients and staff.

Board Member Role

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ELIGIBILITY

Candidates must disclose any information about their personal or professional life which in the Trustee Board's perception could bring Stepping Stones NI into disrepute, including removals from previous governance roles, current or previous membership of organisations which may conflict with the aims, principles and values of the organisation, or behaviour which might be seen to undermine public confidence and trust.

Candidates must also disclose if they have been convicted of a crime, which debars them from acting as a company director, or they are an undischarged bankrupt or disqualified to act as a company director.

Candidates must disclose any information, which could give rise to a perception of conflict of interest with their role as a Stepping Stones NI Board Member. This will not necessarily result in an inability to serve on the board. Candidates must be over 16 years of age.

APPLICATION PROCESS

If you would like to apply for the position of Trustees with Stepping Stones NI, please send your CV together with a cover letter outlining your skills and experience that you would bring to Stepping Stones NI, explaining your interest in the position.

Please send this to: Paula.jennings@stepping-stones.org.uk

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you soon

