

A close-up photograph of two young women. The woman on the left has dark, curly hair and is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. The woman on the right has long, straight brown hair and is also smiling, looking down at a smartphone she is holding. They are both wearing light-colored, textured sweaters. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

Chair Candidate Pack 2023

A note from our Interim Chair

Thank you for considering the opportunity to be the next Chair of Solace Women's Aid; a charity with 48 years of experience in developing and delivering essential services for women and girls across London. We exist to end the harm done through violence and we support more than 30,000 people a year.

The last couple of years has shone a spotlight on how organisations like Solace have to be able to step-up when times get harder and harder for the women in our society. We have seen an increased need for our services during the pandemic and have worked closely with our partners and commissioners to meet that need.

However, going back to July 2020 and the tragic murder of George Floyd, some of our staff began expressing a loss of trust and not feeling heard. In response, we commissioned a piece of research around ethnicity, diversity and inclusion, developed and set in motion a new equity, diversity and inclusion strategy and introduced a critical new Head of EDI role. However, the pace of organisational change wasn't quick enough and in 2021 we became the subject of a negative article in the press. Much has improved and moved forwards since that article, but it was a difficult time for everyone.

We are proud of the steps taken under the leadership of our interim CEO, driven forward by the Executive and closely overseen by the Board through an additional Oversight Committee. We commissioned an external organisational culture review to explore how we could develop the right internal culture, values and ways of working to support all of our stakeholders, and are currently implementing its findings. The Board of Trustees and Executive are committed to listening and increasing their internal visibility as part of this important work. We are open to discussing our progress with all candidates during the recruitment process and will welcome your questions.

Because of the challenges we have faced and the work we have progressed, it's an incredible time to join as Chair; a role which is vital to delivering our new strategy and pushing forward the progress on our organisational development and equity, diversity and inclusion strategy.

Having had the privilege to serve on the Board for more than six years and as the Interim Chair since the end of 2021, I have always been deeply impressed with the commitment, values, expertise and sheer determination of the women who work and volunteer in this remarkable organisation. The work Solace delivers is emotionally tough and complex, and we are fortunate to attract and retain incredible staff.

I am also proud of the diversity we have worked at pace to achieve within our Board of Trustees and as Chair, you will continue to oversee the appointment a wide range of women from different cultures and communities to bring varied perspectives, skills and experiences to the leadership of the charity. Many of our trustees, staff and volunteers are themselves survivors of domestic and sexual violence and as such, are a vital resource.

As our next Chair, you will bring your experience, energy, skill and time to lead Solace as it continues to develop; rooted in your feminist values and a collaborative mindset. Together with the Board and Executive Team, you will be motivated by the knowledge that you play a key role in a charity where women and children are the highest priority, and dedicated to helping survivors achieve independent lives free from abuse.

We look forward to receiving your application.

With best wishes,
Kirsty Telford, Interim Chair, Solace Women's Aid

About Solace Women's Aid

At Solace Women's Aid, we have continued to reach more people than ever before, supporting 29,205 women, children, young people, and men across all our services in the past 12 months. 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

Our vision is of a world where women and children live their lives free from all forms of Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG).

Mission

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

Values

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

We are:

- Feminist in our understanding of Violence Against Women and Girls
- Women and children focused and empowering
- Diverse and anti-discriminatory in all its forms

We are committed to:

- Social justice and human rights
- Service users having a central voice within the organisation
- Working in collaboration with other agencies to develop a community wide response to Violence Against Women and Girls
- Continuous improvement



**Changing lives
through our holistic
services**

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:

Accommodation

Safe refuge and move-on accommodation for women and children made homeless due to domestic or sexual abuse.

Advice & support

Ongoing support for survivors in the community.

Rape crisis

A range of services to women and girls 13+ who have experienced any form of sexual violence at any time in their lives.

Young people

Prevention work for families and young people living in the community, alongside advocacy and crisis interventions.

Therapeutic services

1-2-1 counselling, group work and specialist holistic therapies help women recover from traumatic abuse.

Multiple Disadvantage

Providing specialist, tailored services for women experiencing multiple disadvantages.

Training

Through training courses, our national Centre for Excellence and consultancy we help organisations to improve their response to domestic and sexual abuse.

Partnerships

Collaboratively working with other organisations, we harness our joint and complementary expertise for the benefit of women and children.

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 Commitment to Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Equity Diversity and Inclusion is at the core of our work. Our 2021 to 2027 organisational strategy builds on our history and growth and is underpinned by three core principles of: intersectional feminism, partnerships & collaboration, and being service-user and evidence-led. As an organisation working intersectionally, we took time to review our approach to our feminism in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement. We provide support to Trans Women, and have reflected on recognising the intersectional impact of disability and class.

As the largest service provider for survivors of male violence against women and girls (MVAWG) in London and one of the largest in the country, our mission to end male violence against women and girls will not be achieved without also tackling the intersecting and overlapping barriers and discrimination that women and girls from marginalised backgrounds experience.

We strive to address the multiple and intersecting experiences of discrimination, disadvantage and oppression experienced by our staff, volunteers and the women and children we work with. They are at the heart of everything we do and as we grow as an organisation we commit to listening, reflecting, and responding so that our work to end male violence against women and girls, and to support survivors is intersectional, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory.

We are deeply committed to inclusive working practices, so during the application process we commit to:

- Paying for childcare and care costs whilst you are at interviews.
- Paying for your travel costs to the office and back for interviews.
- Making any reasonable adjustments – for example ensuring we have a sign language interpreter organised in advance if you'd like them.
- Providing this document in a Word document format readily available to download.
- Offering a guaranteed first stage interview with Inclusive Boards for disabled candidates who meet the minimum requirements for the role.

If there is anything else you are concerned about or think we could provide, please let us know.

About the role

Solace is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for England and Wales. 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 is seeking a new Chair to lead its Board of Trustees to fulfil their responsibilities for the strategic direction and overall governance of the organisation. This is an exciting opportunity to help drive the success of a growing organisation that makes 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 all 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.

The individual will have a proven track record of setting, agreeing and attending to an organisation's strategy and supporting organisational culture change. They will be an experienced leader, able to develop and ensure the Board works effectively. It is essential that the Chair has prior trustee experience; although experience of being a Chair or a strong base of governance knowledge would be a significant advantage.

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

Experience:

- Significant experience as a non-executive, ideally as a Vice Chair or Chair.
- 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.
- An understanding of work in the Violence Against Women and Girls sector
- 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.



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).



**Help us to secure a
safer future**

Additional information

Location

Board meetings are held via video call or at our London office.

Time commitment

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

Conflicts of interest

All candidates will be asked to declare any conflicts of interest. This will be examined to see if an actual conflict exists.

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.

Remuneration

This position is unremunerated, reasonable expenses are covered.

How to apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Inclusive Boards on behalf of Solace. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following by **23.59 02/04/2023**.

A detailed CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.

A covering letter (maximum 2 sides) highlighting your suitability for the role and how you meet the person specification. Please note that the covering letter is an important part of your application and will be assessed as part of your full application.

Details of two professional referees together with a brief statement of their relationship to you and over what period of time they have known you. Referees will not be contacted without your prior consent.

If you have further questions after reading this pack, please email Solace@inclusiveboards.co.uk or call 0207 267 8369.

Please visit www.inclusiveboards.co.uk/opportunities to apply online or send your CV and cover letter to Solace@inclusiveboards.co.uk

INCLUSIVE BOARDS

About Us

Inclusive Boards is the UK's leading board diversity practice. We have worked alongside over 300 organisations to provide support with Board recruitment, development and governance reviews. We strive to be at the forefront of equity and diversity, and believe that everyone should be represented at Board level. Additionally, we also provide bespoke training sessions on a variety of subjects including personal branding, inclusive recruitment practices and board structures and governance as well as delivering leadership development programmes for underrepresented leaders across a range of sectors.

Contact us today

Improve diversity on your Board, please don't hesitate to contact us via hello@inclusiveboards.co.uk.

To join a Board, sign up to become a candidate via our website and be notified of the latest opportunities as and when they become available.



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