



TRUSTEE RECRUITMENT PACK

SECRETARY ROLE

SWAN Trustee Recruitment Pack – Secretary

Contents

Introduction	Page 3
About SWAN	Page 4
What is a Charity Trustee	Page 6
Why be a Trustee	Page 7
Being a Trustee at SWAN	Page 9
Who can apply	Page 12
How to apply	Page 13



SWAN Trustee Recruitment Pack – Secretary

Introduction

SWAN is a dynamic, rapidly growing, unique and ground-breaking Charity, working to ensure that autistic women, girls and non-binary people in Scotland feel valued, understood and connected.

As an Autistic People’s Organisation (APO), we are run by and for autistic people, with autistic staff and volunteers and a majority of autistic people on our Board. We are the only Charity in Scotland focused on autistic women, girls, and non-binary people. *

We have recently launched a new website and branding, and are in the process of finalising our organisational strategy for the next 10 years. At this time of exciting change and growth at SWAN, we are seeking a new Secretary to join us on our Board for the next phase of our journey.

* SWAN is inclusive of all autistic-identified people – with a clinical or non-clinical diagnosis, NHS or private and self-diagnosed or self-identified.

About SWAN

From its beginnings in 2012, as a small, volunteer-led community group, SWAN has grown into a ground-breaking and award-winning autistic-led charity. For over 10 years, SWAN has delivered services, information and support both for and by autistic women, girls and non-binary people across Scotland, whilst remaining true to its ethos of placing the voices and experiences of autistic women, girls and non-binary people at the centre of everything we do.

We have gone through a period of significant change and growth over the last 18 months, including a new CEO, website, and branding. We are currently in the process of finalising our updated organisational strategy for the next 10 years, to ensure we have a clear purpose and mission for the future, as well as a clear sense of who we are outlined through a set of core values. In this way we can better communicate who SWAN is, what we do, and why we do it.

As the only organisation in Scotland focused on the intersectionality of autism and gender, it is also important our new strategy reflects the changes which have occurred in this area over the past 10 years. This has meant the start of a new journey for SWAN – from an autistic women’s organisation to one where all autistic women and non-binary people are equally welcomed, included, and supported by us.

As awareness and diagnosis grow, there are increasing numbers of autistic women, girls and non-binary people who need information, support and the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of what being autistic means for them, and to live healthy, happy and fulfilling lives.

Our purpose, in line with our charitable purposes, is to generate those opportunities for all autistic women, girls and non-binary people, both within SWAN and in our wider society in Scotland.

We work to achieve this by bringing autistic women and non-binary people together to meet others like them and access autistic-led services and peer support which respond to their whole life experiences.

We connect and empower autistic women and non-binary people, enabling them to work together with our network and our wider stakeholders to influence policy, strategy and decision-making processes.

Together we raise awareness of issues which impact autistic women, girls and non-binary people's lives, and work directly with organisations to help them achieve greater inclusion and autistic-informed service design and delivery.

Please visit our website to read more about who we are and what we do: swanscotland.org

What is a Charity Trustee

Trustees ensure their charity has a clear strategy, and that its work and goals are in line with its purpose. A trustee's role in a charity is to be the 'guardians of purpose', making sure that all decisions put the needs of the beneficiaries first.

They safeguard the charity's assets – both physical assets, including property, and intangible ones, such as its reputation. They make sure these are used well and that the charity is run sustainably.

Trustees don't usually do the day-to-day running of the charity. They delegate this to the staff, led by the Chief Executive. Instead, they play the role of a 'critical friend' to the Chief Executive by giving support and by challenging – in a supportive way – to help them manage effectively. However, in smaller charities with few staff like SWAN, trustees often get involved with more hands-on tasks too.

You can learn more about charity trustees from [SCVO](#) (Scottish Council for voluntary Organisations) or [OSCR](#) (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

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As Chair of the SWAN Board of Trustees, I'm incredibly proud of the difference the staff and volunteers at SWAN make to the lives of autistic people. As an autistic Trustee, my whole identity is honoured and accepted. I love that the small part I play in supporting SWAN's journey gives me so much knowledge and understanding about my own.

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Why be a Trustee

It is estimated that almost half of all charities are looking for trustees at any time, so you will be filling a vital role in the voluntary sector.

Being a trustee can be very rewarding. As a trustee you have the chance to support and shape our work and strategic direction and make a significant contribution to improving the lives of autistic women, girls and non-binary people across Scotland.

You may choose to get involved with SWAN because you are passionate about making a difference; or because you or someone close to you has benefitted from our work. It is also a great way to connect with other autistic people and allies, and to learn more about the not-for-profit sector.

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SWAN has supported me all the way through my autism journey as a late diagnosed autistic woman. It's had such a positive impact on my life that I was keen to give something back by being a Trustee.

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Being a trustee also offers the opportunity for professional development. It can let you gain experience of strategy and leadership, and boost your CV. It will give you experience of being a non-executive director, such as setting a strategic vision, influencing and negotiation, and managing risk.

If you already have significant experience in these areas, it can be stimulating to use it in a different and potentially challenging context. Trustees often say that being a board member has been one the richest sources of learning in their professional lives.

As a trustee, you are part of a team and will have the opportunity to apply your unique skills and experience while learning from others. Working closely with a passionate team of people who have different perspectives is often one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role.

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Part of the value I think I bring to SWAN is bringing different approaches from other experiences I have had, facilitating changes to processes so that they are more autistic-friendly, and helping SWAN develop messaging that will resonate with autistic and non-autistic stakeholders alike.

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Being a Trustee at SWAN

SWAN Board meetings are held on Zoom – currently once every 6 weeks, for around two hours. As we are a small Charity, we do expect Trustees to contribute beyond preparing for and attending Board meetings. Each Trustee has their own roles and responsibilities, and we sometimes hold extra meetings for Board Development, Strategy Development, etc. We currently have 6 Trustees and are recruiting to the Secretary and Treasurer roles.

Regular Trustee duties include:

- Reading Board papers before each meeting to prepare (agenda, minutes, CEO & finance reports, etc.)
- Attending Board Meetings (online) every 6 weeks
Familiarising yourself with SWAN and what we do (we can help you with this)
- Volunteering for extra tasks which come up at meetings – depending on your skills, this might be helping with fundraising, sharing our social media posts, or supporting with HR or policies (less so for the Secretary, who already has defined tasks, unless you have extra time available).
- Checking your SWAN email for any information or requests for responses from other Trustee or the CEO
- Representing and promoting SWAN and SWAN's work

Secretary tasks include:

- Liaising with the CEO and Chair to organise Board meetings, agendas and papers**
- Convening meetings – sharing dates, times, Zoom link, etc. with other Trustees**
- Coordinating minute-taking (SWAN Trustees currently share the role of taking minutes on a rolling rota)**
- Circulating Agenda and papers for Board meetings to the other Trustees & saving them to the SWAN Shared Drive**
- Liaising with the CEO and Treasurer to ensure records are up to date with the Charity Regulator**

You can fulfill the Trustee role from home and, other than Board Meetings, in your own time. We are flexible in how and when you carry out the role as best suits you and we use a combination of email, video calls and text chat tools to keep in touch depending on preferences.

You'll be able to work independently and bring your own skills and ideas to the Secretary tasks if you'd like to, but you will also be part of a friendly, welcoming team and will get all the support, training and information you need to carry out the role.

This role might be for you if you:

- Like being organised – for example keeping diaries and files organised, and getting things done on time
- Are autistic and want to meet other autistic women and non-binary people in a structured role
- Are not autistic but want to meet new people, be an autistic ally and learn more about real autistic people
- Have at least a couple of hours a week to volunteer your time
- Are looking for a meaningful volunteering role which you can do from home
- Are keen to develop new skills, or use your existing skills for a good cause

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Being a non-autistic trustee at SWAN has been hugely beneficial to my personal growth and skills development. I have sought to practice autistic allyship and have learned a lot about what I can do differently to be more inclusive. SWAN has proved to be a generous and safe environment for us all to share our experiences and learn from one another.

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Who can apply

To maintain our majority autistic Board, in line with our values and our constitution, we prioritise autistic applicants. However, we also actively welcome non-autistic applicants with the right skills who are interested in supporting our work and are currently open to both non-autistic and autistic applicants.

We warmly welcome Trustees from a range of cultures, backgrounds, age and experience, whether you have been a Trustee before or are new to the idea.

We are currently under-represented on the Board by trans women, non-binary people, non-speaking autistic people, people of colour and people with other disabilities. We strongly value the contribution that people with these characteristics will bring to our Board discussions and have identified our role in working to improve access and inclusion at all levels of the organisation as a Strategic Priority for SWAN.

How else can I get involved with SWAN

If this doesn't sound like the right kind of role for you, but you are interested in getting involved with SWAN, have a look at the Volunteering page on our website for other opportunities:

www.swanscotland.org/about-us/volunteering

How to apply

Please email us a single page expression of interest outlining your relevant experience and why you'd like to join the SWAN Board as Treasurer. Alternatively, you can send this as an audio or video file.

If you have a CV, LinkedIn profile, website or similar that you wish to send, you may include this in addition to the expression of interest, though this is not essential.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an online interview with a Trustee and the CEO. We will agree a suitable time for the interview, and send you information about what to expect, including the questions we'll ask you, in advance.

Successful candidates are invited to observe a Board meeting and meet the Trustees before official appointment and will be provided with an induction and training.

If you would like to have an informal chat with an existing Trustee or our CEO to find out more about the role, please contact us and we'll be happy to arrange this in your preferred format.

We aim to make everything we do at SWAN as accessible as possible – if you would like this information in an alternative format, or there is anything we can do to make the application process more accessible for you, please let us know.

Please send expressions of interest, or requests for further information, to: lyndsay.macadam@swanscotland.org

Thank you for your interest and support of SWAN