

# Action for M.E. Adults Advocate Application Pack



## Thank you for considering joining Action for M.E.

I joined Action for M.E. in September 2012 and am delighted to be working with a staff and volunteer team and Board of Trustees who are passionate, dedicated and determined.

We aim to meet need now to improve the lives of people with M.E. while taking action to secure change for the future.

A small organisation that regularly punches above its weight, we are leading, with others, a growing community of supporters working to create real change on the scale so urgently needed at a local, national and international level.

In April 2017, we began supporting children and young people with M.E., after joining forces with national children's charity, the Association of Young People with M.E. In January 2022, we began offering Healthcare Services following our merger with the ME Trust. This provides an exciting opportunity to raise more money to reach more people and raise much needed awareness and understanding

I believe that Action for M.E. can, and will, make a major contribution to creating the change that is so desperately needed.



**Sonya Chowdhury**  
Chief Executive

## Our values

Shared values are held with high regard in our organisation and reflect how we seek to work with our supporters, partners and other key stakeholders. They reflect the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour that we value in each other and underpin our whole approach and culture.



## About us

Action for M.E. takes action to end the ignorance, injustice and neglect that people with M.E. face day-in, day-out.

The charity was founded by Sue Finlay in 1987 and since then has been working tirelessly to tackle the inequality experienced by people with M.E.

M.E. (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis) is a chronic, neurological illness affecting an estimated 250,000 adults and children in the UK. It may be diagnosed as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS, or M.E./CFS).

People with M.E. experience severe, persistent fatigue associated with post-exertional malaise, the body's inability to recover after expending even small amounts of energy, leading to a flare-up in symptoms.

Even in its so-called mildest form, M.E. can have a significant impact on an individual's life, and not just on their health. A lack of understanding and awareness about M.E. means patients can experience disbelief, and even discrimination, from friends, family, health and social care professionals, employers and teachers.

## **Our vision**

A world without M.E.

## **Our purpose**

We take action to end the ignorance, injustice & neglect experienced by people with M.E.

## **Our people**

### **President**

Clare Francis MBE

### **Vice President**

Martin Arber

### **Patrons**

Lord David Puttnam CBE

Lord Melvyn Bragg

Julie Christie

Alan Cook CBE

### **Chair of Board of Trustees**

Roger Siddle

### **Board of Trustees**

We are an organisation led by people affected by M.E. for people affected by M.E. We aim to have a minimum of 51% of our Trustees who have, or have had, M.E. themselves.

Our Trustees are unpaid and meet at least four times a year and many sit on one of our four sub-committees. Board meeting location alternates between London and Keynsham.

We have a staff team of 34 (24 full-time equivalent) and approximately 55 volunteers who support our work in a number of different ways.

Our head office is in Keynsham (between Bath and Bristol) and we have colleagues working remotely across the uk.

## **Healthcare Services**

Following our merger with The ME Trust in February 2022, we are now able to offer Healthcare Services alongside our Information, Support and Advocacy Services.

## **Our approach**

Action for M.E. is committed to patient-led care, supported by robust biomedical evidence. We recognise that people with M.E. may have experienced stigma and disbelief about their health. We fully support research into the biological causes of the illness.

We support people to manage the physical symptoms of M.E. with medical advice and intervention, and physiotherapy. We also acknowledge that any long term illness can have psychological effects, and we therefore offer counselling, emotional support and spiritual direction for people who find that helpful. M.E. has a wide spectrum of severity and symptoms, and there is no one size fits all.

Our model is one of individually tailored whole-person care. That means we seek to support people with M.E. in whatever way is right for them as an individual physically, emotionally or spiritually. We also offer encouragement and support to families and carers.

## What we do

At Action for M.E. we understand how difficult it can be to find good clinical advice and support. While NHS provision

remains patchy across the UK, we are working to ensure that everyone affected by M.E. has access to diagnosis, treatment and care. We offer consultations with a Doctor, Physiotherapist, Counsellor, or Chaplain. In order to provide whole-person care, some people choose to access the services of more than one health professional at the same time, and the clinical team make internal referrals where appropriate.

Our services are available for people aged 13 and above, in the UK.

## Fees

As a charity, we charge fees only to cover our costs. We aim to keep our fees affordable, and help is available for those in financial need through a bursary scheme.

## Job summary

<b>Job title</b>	Adults Advocate
<b>Responsible to</b>	Head of Support Services
<b>Responsible for</b>	Not applicable
<b>Salary</b>	£25,132.92 pro rata
<b>Hours of work</b>	Part-time (17.5 hours per week)
<b>Contract type</b>	Permanent
<b>Annual leave</b>	30 days pro rata + 8 bank holidays per year
<b>Location</b>	Keynsham office or home-based anywhere in the UK
<b>Application deadline</b>	Noon, Tuesday 7 May 2024

## Job purpose

Having been paused to new referrals, Action for M.E.'s free, independent, Adults Advocacy service will soon be re-opening. It's one of our range of free [Support Services](#) that work with adults, young people, and/or families living with M.E. We support colleagues across the team to take part in and share reflective practice, self-care, peer-support and training.

Our Adults Advocacy service offers non-statutory, single-issue, instructed advocacy for adults with a confirmed diagnosis of M.E. We encourage self-advocacy where possible, though many of our clients are too severely affected by M.E. to be able to take undertake this.

As an Adults Advocate, you will manage a caseload of clients, as well as inputting and contributing to the triage process along with your Advocacy colleagues. You will meet with clients by phone, email, Zoom and/or SMS; we can also facilitate communication by post if this is required. We are not able to offer home visits or face to face meetings.

Our current team comprises:

- another part-time Adult Advocate
- our Projects and Participation Senior Practitioner, who manages our small team of Advocacy volunteers
- Advocacy volunteers.

The team is managed by our Head of Support Services, supporting effective collaboration and liaison with our Information & Support service, which is the first service many clients encounter when they contact Action for M.E. looking for help and support.

A lot of clients come to Adults Advocacy with a range of things they want to achieve, so supporting them to consider and prioritise their most important goal is key. Examples of goals we have supported clients with include:

- identifying and bidding for accessible housing that meets their needs
- having their GP surgery put reasonable adjustments in place so they can access appointments
- helping other professionals working with them understand how M.E. impacts them so they can support them better.

Here's feedback from some of our Adults Advocacy clients:

- "Feel you've done a marvellous job with my GP. It's people like you that make life a bit easier for people like me who are struggling through no fault of their own."
- "You were the ONLY professional body and individual that took me seriously and I am indebted to you."
- "I appreciate all you have done and your extraordinary patience and concern during the time I have corresponded with you. You have been unfailingly kind and understanding toward me."
- "You have been a great support in sorting out the issue with my doctor and providing the impact statement. You have helped me feel more confident in trying to advocate for myself."

## Key duties

### Maintaining a caseload

- Contribute to triage of waiting list cases, led by the Head of Support Services.
- Work with clients allocated to you to identify the single issue for advocacy and their desired goal; complete an advocacy agreement; and undertake agreed actions in pursuit of the client's advocacy goal.
- Empowering your clients to self-advocate where possible.
- Signpost the client to additional support for emerging additional needs that are not addressed by advocacy.

### Safeguarding and record keeping

- Identify safeguarding concerns as they arise and escalate these appropriately, in line with our Safeguarding Policy.
- Record appropriate, up-to-date case notes in line with our Services Recording Policy.

### Evaluation and improvement

- Attend supervision, case reviews and team huddles to reflect on your practice and share peer-support.
- Gather outcomes and satisfaction data from clients to inform service evaluation and improvement.
- Identify opportunities for service improvement and development, working with the Head of Support Services to implement these.

## Other key accountabilities

- Attend Action for M.E. meetings and courses as required.
- Work co-operatively within the Action for M.E. team structure, supporting the work of other teams when appropriate, as agreed with the Head of Support Services.
- Keep up-to-date with best practice and comply with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, working within the organisation's policies and procedures and ensure that good practice is observed.
- Positively promote the work and activities of Action for M.E. at all times.
- Ensure that internal and external communications are consistent with Action for M.E.'s position on key issues.
- Undertake any other reasonable activity in line with the responsibilities of the post as requested by the Head of Support Services or any member of the Management Team.

## Person specification

*All are essential unless otherwise stated.*

### Qualifications

1. Level 2 qualification in Advocacy or equivalent demonstrable experience.

### Experience and knowledge

2. Experience of providing support services to disabled people and/or people living with long-term health conditions, including M.E./CFS if possible.
3. Experience of advocating for vulnerable adults as part of a service or organisation, managing a varied case load.
4. Experience of using a client database and/or casework management system to log client contact, notes and agreed actions.
5. Experience of using self-reflection to aid professional development and peer-support.
6. Knowledge and understanding of The Care Act 2014, The Mental Capacity Act 2005, The Human Rights Act 1998, The Equality Act 2010 and GDPR, with relevance to advocacy.

### Skills and abilities

7. Excellent interpersonal and relationship-building skills, taking an empathic and non-judgemental approach.
8. Excellent active listening and written/oral communication skills.
9. Effective research skills, with the ability to present a range of information in an accessible format.
10. Ability to work within agreed service delivery parameters, policies and procedures.
11. Ability to set and maintain clear boundaries to manage expectations of clients and external agencies.
12. Ability to appropriately support clients in distress, while looking after your own well-being.

13. Ability to take an outcomes-focused approach and gather impact and outcomes data.

## Terms and conditions

Outlined below are some of the main terms and conditions of employment relevant to all employees of Action for M.E.

### Probation

All posts are subject to three months' probation. During this probationary period, either party may give the other one week's notice in writing to terminate the employment. After successful completion of the probationary period, the notice stated on your contract of employment will apply.

### 2. Annual leave

The holiday year runs from 1 April to 31 March. In each holiday year in addition to bank and statutory holidays the holiday entitlement for a full time employee is 30 days (includes 3-4 days to be taken at Christmas as directed when the office is shut).

### 3. Pension scheme

Action for M.E. operates a group pension scheme on an auto-enrolment basis. All employees will join the scheme on the completion of three month's service unless they choose to opt-out. Action for M.E. will pay a pension contribution which is currently 4% of salary. Action for M.E. will not pay into a personal pension scheme

### 4. Salary payment

Salaries are paid in arrears on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of each month, or the Friday proceeding the 24<sup>th</sup> if this date falls on a weekend, by direct credit transfer into a bank or building society.

### 5. Flexibility & Wellbeing

We offer a flexible working model, in accordance with six working principles developed by the team. All of our team work remotely for at least part of their working week, with the option to use our Keynsham office, should they wish or need to. We utilise technology to ensure that we remain connected as a remote team.

We provide access to an Employment Assistance Programme and an optional monthly wellbeing session for all colleagues, regardless of hours worked with sessions determined by the team. Some recent examples of wellbeing sessions held include: a guided meditation on the theme of spring/renewal, book club discussing a book of the team's choosing.

## How to apply:

Applications should be submitted via our recruitment website. Along with your CV your cover letter should, in no more than two A4 pages, explain your reason(s) for applying for this role and how you fit **all** aspects of the person specification set out above.



Strong applicants will list each person specification bullet point related to qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills and behaviours, providing evidence of how they meet each of these criteria.

We are proud to be a member of the Disability Confident scheme and offer a guaranteed interview to applicants who can clearly demonstrate, via their written application, that they meet **all** essential criteria set out in the person specification.

Should you have any questions about the role, or require any reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process, including applying in a different format than the one listed above, please don't hesitate to contact our recruitment team on [recruitment@actionforme.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@actionforme.org.uk)

Please note that any applications sent directly to any Action for M.E. mailbox will not be considered.

## Application timetable

<b>Deadline for applications</b>	Noon Tuesday, 7 May 2024
<b>Shortlisting</b>	By Friday 10 May 2024
<b>Interviews (to be held online)</b>	Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 May 2024



*Cover image shows, top left to right: Jake, Ian, Paul, Dan, Chris, Rich and Matt who ran and cycled the virtual length of America's Route 66 highway – 2,280 miles - to raise £4,500 for Action for M.E.; Christmas Angels knitted by our supporters to send to young people with the condition; the ME/CFS Priority Setting Partnership research project logo; Olivia, who has had M.E. for ten years, taking part in our 2021 #yearsinlockdown campaign.*

*Bottom left to right: Prof Chris Ponting, patient representative Andy Devereux-Cooke, Solve ME/CFS Chief Scientific Officer Dr Sadie Whittaker and Action for M.E. CEO Sonya Chowdhury at a webinar for DecodeME, the world's largest M.E. DNA study; the campaign banner for our Big Give Christmas Challenge; *InterAction*, our membership magazine, described by many readers as a lifeline.*