

# Action for M.E. HR Business Partner Application Pack



## Thank you for considering joining Action for ME

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) has been neglected and stigmatised for decades. It affects hundreds of thousands of adults and children in the UK alone but the continued lack of investment means there is no cure and no effective treatments.

For the first time there is an increased awareness of post viral illness because of the Covid -19 pandemic. After decades of neglect this offers Action for ME an opportunity to accelerate our work for people with ME in a way we have never been able to do before.

There are an estimated 1.3 million people in the UK with ME or [ME-like symptoms](#), including post-exertional malaise: the hallmark symptom of ME. The life-changing symptoms experienced by people with ME are being mirrored by more than half of those with Long Covid.

Our subsidised Healthcare Services complement our Information, Support and Advocacy work and are currently meeting needs that are not being met by the NHS. With bursaries offered for people on benefits, we provide access to GPs, physiotherapists, counsellors and multi-faith spiritual support through our chaplains. But our services are in high demand and waiting lists are growing so you will be joining us at a time of high demand but also one of potentially high opportunity.

Our 2022 – 2027 strategy [Shaping our future together](#) sets out our ambition to end the ignorance, injustice and neglect of children and adults with ME By working together with the ME community and focusing on the most urgent and important challenges, we will accelerate

change for people with ME on a greater scale than has been know before.

We have a talented and committed team at Action for ME where we encourage collaboration and support development and growth. I am delighted that you are considering this role and I hope this pack shows you the part that you can play in ending the neglect of ME for good.



**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

We believe every child and adult with ME (sometimes also called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or CFS) and their families should have access to the care and support they need at the time they need it.

We are a fast-paced organisation that provides support to people with ME, carers and professionals while working to secure change for the future.

## Our vision

A world without ME

## Our mission

Our mission is empowering people with ME to fulfil their potential and secure the care and support they need, while working towards a greater understanding of the illness and ultimately a cure.

Action for ME is the only UK charity providing services, including healthcare, to people with ME and their families. Our purpose is to improve the lives of all people affected by ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, sometimes known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome or ME/CFS). We deliver direct services to better meet their needs today, while taking action to secure change for tomorrow.

For decades people with ME have been neglected due to stigma and a lack of investment. This has led to damaging medical guidelines in the treatment of ME, minimal services to support people with ME, and a catastrophic lack of research investment.

## Our strategy

People with ME are at the heart of everything we do.

In our 2022 – 2027 strategy, we set out four ambitious outcomes which we believe will help us end the decades of ignorance, injustice and neglect faced by people with ME

Underpinning each ambition is our focus on ensuring we reach underserved communities, so they have better access to healthcare, information and services.

1. The lives of people with ME are improved by effective access to the information, support and advocacy they need.
2. The health of people with ME is improved via access to our holistic Healthcare Services, and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline for ME being effectively implemented across NHS services.
3. Increased funding for high-quality research by more researchers leads to effective treatments for ME
4. The UK Government establishes and leads a national strategy for ME

## Our people

### President

Clare Francis MBE

### Chair of Board of Trustees

Roger Siddle

### Board of Trustees

We are an organisation led by people affected by ME, for people affected by ME. We aim to have a minimum of 51% of our Trustees who have, or have had, ME themselves. Our Trustees are unpaid and meet at least four times a year and many sit on one of our four sub-committees.

### Our team

We have a staff team of 40 and approximately 70 volunteers who support our work in a number of different ways. Our head office is in Keynsham (between Bath and Bristol) and we have members of the team located across the UK, including Scotland, working remotely.

### Our services

We provide free Information and Support, Advocacy and Family Support services for adults, children and young people with ME, and their loved ones.

While our Information, Support and Advocacy team does not recommend any specific treatments or management approaches, our Healthcare Services team works with individual patients to offer personalised advice, care and support. We are not able to offer specialist legal, employment or medical advice, or specialist mental health support; instead, we signpost to specialist organisations that do.

Our Healthcare Services clinical team includes a doctor, physiotherapists, counsellors and chaplains, offering individually tailored whole-person care. We are a small-scale healthcare service provider and do not have the complexity that the NHS and other larger providers have.

### Our resources and peer-support

We have lots of information and support on all aspects of living with ME. Our booklets and factsheets are available for free online, or we can be sent by post or email, on topics including but not limited to:

- symptom management and accessing health services
- welfare benefits processes, rights and entitlements
- accessing social care
- liaising with your child's school
- getting reasonable adjustments at work.

Our peer-support forums for adults with ME and 18s and under with ME are free to join and users tell us they feel better supported, and less isolated.

## Job Description

### Summary

**Job Title:** HR Business Partner

**Reports to:** Chief Executive Officer

**Line Reports:** None

**Salary:** Up to £37,000 (independently benchmarked)

**Annual Leave:** 30 days + 8 bank holidays/annum *pro rata*

**Contract Type:** Permanent

**Hours of work:** Monday to Friday

**Office Base:** Fully Remote (UK-based) or Hybrid (Bristol). You must be resident in the UK and have the Right to Work in the UK (documentation will be checked prior to appointment)

**Closing Date:** 5pm, 9 October 2024

### Role Description

As HR Business Partner, you will play a strategic role, acting as a partner to the senior leadership to enable us to deliver as effectively as possible to people with ME. Many of our 35 colleagues have direct experience of ME and, as an ME organisation, we work hard to ensure that we provide reasonable adjustments and support to enable them to make the valuable contributions they do. You will work closely with the Management Team to drive this work. You will need to develop a deep understanding of the organisation and our work, build strong, effective relationships with our colleagues and bring expertise to the various HR functions and strategic business support areas.

### Key Duties

#### People & Culture Strategy

- Work with the senior leadership to deliver the People and Culture and the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plans that enables the delivery of organisational goals
- Drive consistency of the implementation of the Plans
- Work with the senior leadership to review data, analyse trends, providing data-driven solutions/decisions to support cultural development. Use ongoing analysis to test the effectiveness of People and Culture interventions and processes within the organisation
- With senior leadership, manage talent and succession planning

#### Human Resource Management

- Provide first point of contact HR advice and support to colleagues and line managers, ensuring all instances are recorded appropriately
- Manage the compliant use of, and be first point of contact for, colleague queries on the HR IT System (currently BreatheHR)
- Support HR investigations and line managers with grievances, disciplinaries and other similar matters, recording meeting minutes and agreeing next steps.

- Liaise with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB; provides insurance and employment legal advice) on complex HR cases that require external input, either on behalf of or alongside relevant line manager(s)
- Oversee all HR policies and procedures, being guided by relevant internal data and industry best practice, and ensuring they are regularly reviewed
- Complete all required administrative tasks for new starters and colleagues leaving the organisation
- Processing and managing of maternity, paternity, and adoption in line with policies and best practice
- Running of monthly HR reports, to include sickness auditing and dissemination of relevant data to CEO and line managers, if required
- Scope, plan and book/deliver appropriate training across the organisation and for individual employees where necessary
- Managing the recruitment lifecycle, which is to include advertising of vacancies, screening of applicants, interview diary management, referencing and document checks, onboarding coordination
- Manage and administer all changes to contractual terms and conditions with appropriate paperwork disseminated to relevant parties
- Oversee HR support for volunteers, including Trustees and Sub-Committee Lay Members
- Oversee the organisation 'Wellbeing Weekdays' programme (a monthly programme to support colleague contact and wellbeing)
- Support change management processes

### **Business Support/Compliance**

- Contract management for Employee Assistance Programme
- Contract management for IT

### **Other key accountabilities**

- To attend Action for ME meetings, including being part of the Senior Leadership Team, and courses as required
- To service, and be accountable to, the Healthcare Services Sub-Committee to the Board
- To work collaboratively with Action for ME colleagues across all teams
- Keeping up to date with the latest research, best practice and comply with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, working within the organisation's policies and procedures and ensuring that good practice is observed at all times
- Maintain confidentiality in line with relevant policy and procedure, ensuring data consent processes have been followed in relation to data protection.
- Positively promote the work and activities of Action for ME at all times
- Undertake any other reasonable activity in line with the responsibilities of the post as requested by the Chief Executive.

## Person Specification

- A CIPD qualification is expected or equivalent (such as an MBA in Human Resource) or proven demonstrable HR generalist experience of at least three years
- Proven leadership capabilities and solid knowledge of employment legislation and its application
- Proactive team player with strong client focus and problem solving skills
- Experience of developing and supporting managers through change
- An ability to maintain confidentiality and act with discretion and diplomacy is crucial
- Strong analytic skills including an ability to analyse HR data and use it to inform strategic decisions
- Ability to align HR strategies with organisational objectives
- Experience in managing employee relations, performance management and organisational development
- Demonstrable ability to use sophisticated interpersonal and influencing skills to build rapport with a wide range of stakeholders including commissioners, partner providers, senior health & social care professionals, operational staff, volunteers and clients
- Ability to work independently, remotely, under pressure and manage multiple priorities and a high level of organisational and problem-solving abilities
- Ability to manage multiple priorities in a fast-paced environment
- Proficient in using MS Office (including Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and other systems/software

### Attitudes and values

- Self-starter
- Proactive and passionate
- Agile and creative
- Able to give and receive constructive feedback
- Collaborative team player
- Enthusiastic and inclusive
- Acts with integrity
- Adaptable and flexible
- Calm, compassionate and patient
- Resilient and resourceful

## Terms and conditions

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

### 1. 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 ME 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 ME will pay a pension contribution which is currently 4% of salary. Action for ME will not pay into a personal pension scheme.

## **4. Salary payment**

Salaries are paid on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of each month, by direct credit transfer into a bank or building society.

## **5. Flexibility & Wellbeing**

This post may require working outside of normal office hours and travel to attend meetings and events within the UK, including occasional overnight stays. 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.

We offer a flexible working model, in accordance with six working principles developed by the team:

### **a) Your working hours/practices do not disadvantage others.**

This means:

- Your working hours must not impact negatively on the people we are here to serve. The core hours of client-facing services must be delivered and boundaries with/for all clients must be maintained.
- Safeguarding and wellbeing remain a priority. You will reasonably be able to access management support when needed in an emergency and/or safeguarding concerns exist. This may include a 'matrix management' approach to provision.
- Your working hours must not disadvantage colleagues. You need to be available for colleagues/meetings in 'normal working hours' with a good percentage of cross-over time.
- Each team must manage its own outgoing post. Your line manager can provide details of the arrangement for your team.
- Flexibility all round. We all need to work flexibly to achieve the best results, and this will require compromise.
- Good stewardship is maintained. We must continue to be cost effective and efficient, ensuring we deliver value for money and that quality delivery is



maintained. We will need to ensure all legal and regulatory requirements continue to be met.

- If you wish to compress your hours, this is limited to working 5 days in 4 for full time employees and no more than 8.75 hours per day (excluding lunch break) for part time employees

**b) Work where you work best.** You will be supported to work in the location where you can use your talents most effectively and contribute to your team and Action for ME This means you will be supported to work in the office, at home, or a combination of the two in a pattern to be agreed on an individual basis with managers and their team members. There are three broad interpretations of this principle:

- An office is the right place to work for some people. If this is you, and you will be based in the office a majority of your time, (4 days/week or more if full time or 90%+ of contracted time if part-time) you will require a desk and will be provided with one.
- Home is the right place to work for some people. If this is you, and you will be based at home the majority of your time, (4 days/week or more if full time or 90%+ of contracted time if part-time) you will be provided with suitable support to work from home full-time and will use hot desks when in the office.
- Some people need a mix of both home and office. If this is you, and you will be based either 2 days at home/3 days in the office or vice versa model (full time workers) you will be provided with suitable support to work from home and will use hot desks when in the office.

**c) Location doesn't matter.** This means we recruit and retain the best people wherever they live in the UK. All jobs will be advertised as home/flexible/office-based to attract the widest pool of talent unless funding/role requirements dictate otherwise.

- People can change their location. Staff who are currently home-based may wish to become office-based and vice versa. So long as due notice is given, and budgets and existing office contracts allow, a change in preference will be accommodated.
- 'Home' doesn't have to mean 'home' - if you want to temporarily work somewhere else. If you have a secure internet connection suitable for professional meetings remotely, you can work from your house, a family members house, another office or suitable environment you can still work. This means even whilst accompanying family or friends whilst they are on holiday and you are working.

**d) Technology is our friend.** This means:

- Everyone will be equipped to work from home or other location outside the office if required. This means we could cope with future lockdowns or business interruption at short notice if needed.
- We don't wait until people are physically together to hold meetings. People should be able to meet remotely, in person, or a mixture of both at any time. This means we will have suitable video conferencing facilities on site in Bristol to support this.

- Outlook calendars are always up-to-date so that we know where colleagues are working and when they are, and aren't, available for work-related discussions.

**e) Physically being with people and teams matters.**

This means, regardless of whether you are majority office, home or mixed office and home based all staff will commit to the following (unless reasonable adjustments are required):

- Being able to travel to and meet in Keynsham for team meetings no less than twice a year (this may be whole team meetings or individual team meetings).
- Being able to travel and hold 121's in person with your manager at least twice a year. This may be in the office, or it may be in an agreed location out of the office.
- Line managers to meet face-to-face with new colleagues at least once in the first 3 months. Any exceptions to this to be agreed with the Chief Operating Officer
- Annual appraisals always taking place in person.
- Committing to at least one whole team event together each year as a whole Action for ME team (as part of an Away Day).
- Making an effort to find out about other teams and sharing with them what is happening in yours.

**f) Personal leadership is essential**

This means:

- If things aren't working/you spot issues, you take action to redress them at the earliest possible stage; this may include sharing concerns immediately with a manager or working with others to identify a solution.
- Individual performance levels must be maintained. Any reduction in performance will be addressed immediately, in accordance with policy and procedures.

**6. Colleague Benefits**

A summary of the benefits offered to colleagues is as follows:

- 30 days annual leave + bank holidays
- Disability-Related Absence pay currently being piloted
- Recently enhanced sick pay
- Three days compassionate leave with additional days awarded at the discretion of the CEO
- Additional time off for dependant emergencies
- Discretionary unpaid leave
- Flexible working – full flexibility to work where you want and when you want in accordance with six principles developed by the team (about to be reviewed)
- Group pension scheme of 4% employer contribution
- Employee assistance Scheme which includes a range of benefits including counselling
- Cycle to work scheme
- Wellbeing sessions, monthly – focus determined by staff. Budget and time off for attendance provided
- Study Assistance Policy; learning & development – through training, coaching and mentoring (the latter are often secured as a contribution in kind)
- Career breaks.

## How to apply:

Applications should be submitted via our recruitment website here:

<https://actionforme.recruitee.com/o/hr-business-partner> 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 experience, skills and behaviours and provide evidence of how they meet each of these criteria. If you are applying on a job-share basis, please indicate your preferred working hours per week in your application.

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, please don't hesitate to contact colleagues on [recruitment@actionforme.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@actionforme.org.uk)

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

## Key Dates:

9 October, 5pm – Closing date

11 October – shortlisting; shortlisted candidates will be invited to interview

18 October – interviews



*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 ME; 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 ME 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 ME CEO Sonya Chowdhury at a webinar for DecodeME, the world's largest ME DNA study; the campaign banner for our Big Give Christmas Challenge; *InterAction*, our membership magazine, described by many readers as a lifeline.*