



Refugee Support Devon

# Candidate Pack

## Chair

## 2024



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# Letter from the Chair



From the present Chair to the prospective new Chair: Welcome to Refugee Support Devon (RSD) and thank you for taking an interest in our prospective vacancy for the Chair of our Board of Directors (usually referred to as Trustees). This is a voluntary position.

RSD has been supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Exeter and across the county for over 20 years and has built a community of committed, dedicated staff, volunteers and community supporters. We are all proud of the essential work that we continue to deliver, to support some of the most vulnerable in our community.

Elsewhere in this pack you'll find information about the charity and when we meet as a board or in committees. But for the moment I'd like to say that we are a very engaged and active board, devoted to RSD's mission and determined to overcome the challenges charities like ours face at this time. The board usually consists of 8-10 trustees drawn from a variety of backgrounds and representing a range of ages. Two of our trustees have been asylum seekers themselves and so have first-hand experience of the immigration system. I feel we are a great team and I have drawn much inspiration from the enthusiasm and commitment of the other trustees as well as our staff. I can reassure you that the team would offer you plenty of support!

Being RSD's Chair for the past 11 years has been a rewarding and at times challenging experience, but I feel the time has come for me to step down. A new Chair would bring fresh perspectives to the Board's strategy. If you would like more information or to have an informal conversation with me about the role of Chair, please contact Reach TrusteeWorks who will be happy to assist.

With kind regards,  
Jenny Longford  
RSD Chair

# About Us

We are an independent charitable company, based in Exeter and serving the whole of Devon (within the Devon County Council Boundary).

We were formed in 2001 in response to the impressive local volunteer support to asylum seekers dispersed to Exeter (2000-2004). We initially formed a charity called Refugee Support Group Devon (charity commission no: 1092410), then chose to become a 'company limited by guarantee without share capital' in 2011 when we changed our name to Refugee Support (Devon) Ltd.

## Our Vision

We want Devon to be a county where men, women and children who have been forced to flee from their homes in other parts of the world can find the protection they need, rebuild their lives in safety and dignity, and achieve their full potential.



# Our Mission Statement

As a local charity, independent of statutory agencies, we support refugees and their families to ensure that they are given the protection they need, are able to settle successfully in the local community, can reach their full potential, rebuild their lives in safety and dignity and be treated with respect and understanding, as equal members of society.

## Our Goals

**Provide** relief to refugees and their families living in Devon who are in conditions of hardship or distress

**Support** refugees and their families in settling in the local community and to preserve and protect their wellbeing

**Provide** a voice for the local refugee community

**Promote** education of the general public about the issues relating to refugees and asylum seekers

**Offer** a voluntary service with opportunities for training and skills development available to service users and the wider community



# Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

As a charity, we need a diverse range of people on the Board to represent all aspects and areas of the wider Devon community and the people we support.

We are proud to be an equal opportunities employer and we value the contribution each individual makes to our work. We have striven to build a diverse and inclusive working environment where all staff feel empowered, respected and valued.

We aim to achieve a Board and workforce that is diverse and inclusive, reflective of the communities and individuals we support throughout the region. We are committed to diversity and inclusion in our recruitment processes. We particularly encourage applications from people with lived experience of the UK asylum system.

Applicants are encouraged to highlight any specific adjustments needed to enable participation in the recruitment process.



# Role Description

The Chair leads the board of trustees, ensuring that it governs the charity effectively, in service of the charity's vision and mission. The Chair leads in an inclusive way, supporting the board to work together well, and providing support and challenge to the manager. The Chair is also an ambassador for the charity.

## Chair Role

- Provide strategic leadership to the charity and the board, ensuring that Refugee Support Devon (RSD) achieves its mission.
- Work in partnership with the manager and team to achieve our mission.
- Lead the board in ensuring that it fulfils its responsibilities for the governance of the organisation.
- Recruit, induct and support other trustees as required.
- Optimise the relationship between the board and RSD's staff and volunteers.
- Plan and chair the board meetings and the AGM, with others as appropriate.
- Organise and play a leading role in committee meetings as required
- Act as a spokesperson and figurehead for RSD.

## What impact will you have?

This is an exciting time to join the Trustee Board at Refugee Support Devon. As Chair you will play a key role in enabling us to continue supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and empower them to rebuild their lives in safety in Devon. The role will enable you to put your professional skills to great use to the benefit of individuals who have had to flee their homes and livelihoods. It will also give you the opportunity to develop your insight and expertise into all that is involved in the management of a growing charity.

# Who we are looking for

## Essential

- Experience of being a trustee or a CEO. (You do not need to have been a Chair before)
- A keen sense of strategic purpose.
- An inclusive leadership style: able to inspire and support everyone to participate on an equal footing.
- The ability to listen and engage effectively. You are comfortable with challenge and debate and are able to encourage that in others whilst fostering a collaborative board environment.
- An understanding of issues facing refugees and asylum seekers.
- A strong personal commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Be responsive. As a small charity, things sometimes 'come up' that require the Chair to advise, support or give consent to. It is very helpful to have a Chair who is available and responsive.

In addition to the above, the Chair will automatically be a trustee and have the responsibilities and qualities of all trustees.

## Responsibilities of all trustees:

- Support and provide advice on RSD's purpose, vision, goals and activities.
- Approve operational strategies and policies, and monitor and evaluate their implementation.
- Oversee RSD's financial plans and budgets and monitor and evaluate progress.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the organisation.
- Ensure that key risks are being identified, monitored and controlled effectively.
- Review and approve RSD's financial statements.
- Provide support and challenge to RSD's manager in the exercise of their delegated authority and affairs.
- Keep abreast of changes in RSD's operating environment.



- Contribute to regular reviews of RSD's own governance.
- Attend Board meetings, adequately prepared to contribute to discussions.
- Use independent judgment, acting legally and in good faith to promote and protect RSD's interests, to the exclusion of their own personal and/or any third party interests.
- Contribute to the broader promotion of RSD's objects, aims and reputation by applying your skills, expertise, knowledge and contacts.

### **Essential qualities and attributes of all trustees:**

- Willingness and ability to understand and accept their responsibilities and liabilities as trustees and to act in the best interests of the organisation.
- Ability to think creatively and strategically, exercise good, independent judgement and work effectively as a board member.
- Effective communication skills and willingness to participate actively in discussion.
- A strong personal commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Enthusiasm for our vision and mission.
- Willingness to lead according to RSD's values.
- Commitment to Nolan's seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.



# Terms of Appointment

## Terms of Office

- Trustees, including the Chair, are usually asked to commit to a term of 3 years, with an option to renew for a further 3 years.
- This is a voluntary position, but reasonable expenses will be reimbursed.

## Time Commitment

### Estimated as equivalent to 2-4 days per month

- Attending 7 early evening Board meetings and one Saturday meeting annually. Currently meetings are held alternately remotely or in person at RSD's offices in Exeter Community Centre.
- Bi-monthly daytime scheduled meetings with the manager with flexibility to respond swiftly to the occasional ad hoc issue when needed.
- Attending additional committee meetings as needed. These usually take place during the day on Zoom.



# How to Apply

Reach Volunteering are supporting Refugee Support Devon with their Board recruitment. Please submit your CV along with a covering letter stating why you wish to join the organisation and how your skills would add value to the board. Completed applications should be sent to the Reach TrusteeWorks team:

[trusteeworks@reachvolunteering.org.uk](mailto:trusteeworks@reachvolunteering.org.uk)

For an informal chat with the current Chair of Refugee Support Devon, please contact the Reach TrusteeWorks team who will be able to arrange this.

The closing date for applications for this position is Sunday **13th October 2024**, and we will contact you during the following week to let you know if we wish to interview you. We expect interviews to be held remotely via Zoom during the week of the **14th October 2024**. Following interview, we would contact the successful applicant's referees and there would be a handover meeting with the current Chair by way of initial induction.



Refugee Support Devon



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TrusteeWorks