

# Trustee and Chair Recruitment Candidate Pack

The only dedicated, independent, anti-poverty, housing advice and homelessness prevention charity based in Kettering, Northamptonshire



[www.accommodationconcern.co.uk](http://www.accommodationconcern.co.uk)



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## About Us

Accommodation Concern was established in 1987, evolving from the shared vision of local day centres, clergy, and Councillors of all political persuasions. The vision was for a single organisation to work with people affected by homelessness locally and those in a precarious housing position.

We know that prompt and accurate advice may help service users to make informed choices and can often help prevent the trauma, emotional, physical and financial cost of homelessness.

Accommodation Concern prevents and alleviates poverty, need, hardship and distress, by delivering advice, support and preventative services designed to end homelessness. Our goals is always to build independence, resilience, improve wellbeing, and enable people to be the best they can.


The charity offers a wide range of needs led free services which are mainly accessed by adults, although there are an increasing number of younger members of the Kettering and North Northamptonshire community who are rough sleepers, homeless, sofa-surfing, in temporary accommodation or living in poverty.

Positive outcomes and impacts achieved includes enabling access to accommodation, social welfare, debt solutions, benevolent funds, and varied resources; sustaining at risk tenancy; increasing distribution of nourishment and hygiene resources; and improving independent learning especially transferable life skills.

The charity provides a Kettering town centre-based advice service through appointments (and drop in) during the working week, along with planned outreach advice clinics at various sites across Northamptonshire including Mind Crisis café's, staffed by a team of paid employees and volunteers.

Since 2016, a supported accommodation housing unit (Pioneer Project) acted as a pilot for the charity offering direct accommodation to single homeless people including packages of support services to help with their independence and sustained tenancies. This has grown significantly to 9 houses (34 beds) and 6 intensive Rough Sleeper Initiative funded flats for those with complex needs.

The charity's annual turnover is now around £1.3 million. This has grown significantly in the past 5 years to enable Accommodation Concern to be proudly one of the main charities working in this field locally.



In the past five years we have grown from a charity with an income of £500,000 to over £1.3 million.

In the first three months of 2024 we have so far unlocked £1 million of financial gains for our clients.

# Our Purpose

We are here to prevent and relieve poverty, hardship and distress.

And we exist:

- To assess and provide people with the information, support, and skills they need in order to escape debt, access housing, feed their families and secure the benefits they are entitled to.
- To provide supported accommodation to people who would otherwise be homeless and provide training for them to be able to maintain their own home in the future.

We will do this by:

- Undertaking holistic assessments to understand the complexity of issues that clients are facing before identifying the areas we can offer advice with.
- Giving high quality accurate housing, debt and benefit advice in way that is accessible and helpful to the client.
- Provide high quality supported accommodation housing that provides the learning opportunities for residents to leave being able to maintain their own tenancies.

# Our work impacts on individuals

## **Sophie – Mould & Overcrowding**

Sophie approached Accommodation Concern in 2020 she was living in a one-bedroom housing association property with her husband and 2-year-old daughter. Their living conditions had started to impact on Sophie's mental and physical wellbeing as the family were having to live in hazardous conditions caused by severe mould, mould mites and overcrowding. Sophie had previously tried to access the local authority choice-based lettings scheme but due to previous rent arrears was declined access. These arrears were from a previous tenancy that had accrued following her relationship breakdown. She had been classed as a "non-qualifying person" by the scheme and felt she had no way of moving on from this situation.

Initially the Housing Advisor provided advice and support to resolve the poor living conditions. They contacted the housing association and they agreed to provide specialised industrial extractor fans to be fitted in the property to help reduce the mould. They then arranged for the local pest control team to visit the property to treat the issue of mites. The advisor then mediated with the housing association for compensation due to the loss/damage to Sophie's belongings. Although this helped improve the immediate issues in the property, short term it was important that the severe overcrowding was also reviewed, as the housing association stated that 3 people living in the cramped conditions had been the main cause of the mould developing.

The housing advisor contacted the previous landlord where there were arrears and was able to mediate with and set up an affordable payment plan to repay the debt. This then meant that Sophie was able to re-apply for housing with the local authority, giving her the opportunity to bid for a suitable property.

Sophie previously worked for the NHS for many years prior to having her daughter and hopes once they have a forever home she will be able to return to fulltime employment.

## **P – Rough Sleeper housed due to Covid 19**

P is a well-known rough sleeper who had many evictions behind her, debts, substance abuse issues and a history of domestic violence. The council had no duty to offer any housing due to previous intentionality decisions and private landlords would not consider her due to her previous history, so there were few options available. In March 2020, when the Covid19 pandemic hit, councils were required to provide safe accommodation for all rough sleepers under the 'Everyone In' guidance from central government.

Accommodation Concern Outreach team supported P to move into a one bed self-contained flat provided by KBC under Covid regulations and sourced furniture for the property. As part of the Covid support hot meals were delivered daily by volunteers and our staff undertook regular support visits to the property. During this time, we supported P to apply for benefits she was entitled for and start to address her issues when she felt ready to. We were also able to provide activities to keep her occupied whilst lockdown was in place. P decided she wanted to stop her substance issues and engaged with support to do so. She also took pride in keeping her property clean and sourcing items to make it feel more homely. Over the months she reconnected with family and grew in confidence, so much so that she approached her GP for anti-anxiety medication.

P has excelled in this new opportunity, which would not have happened without the pandemic and moved to a new lifetime home with a local housing association.

# Trustee and Chair Recruitment

We are looking forward to welcoming up to three new trustees to our board. The Trustees are jointly responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of the charity, its financial health and developing the organisation's aims, objectives and goals. This is an opportunity to be part of a regenerating charity with a key role in the town focused on alleviating poverty locally.

We have identified that our organisation will particularly benefit from skills in fundraising, marketing, finance and an understanding of the challenges around the running of a small charity that is growing. We are also fully committed to increasing the diversity of our board.

A more diverse board will:

- understand better the needs of all sections of the community
- offer a broader range of perspectives about issues
- be more creative in generating ideas and solutions
- improve decision making.

To this end we want to recruit people with different skills, life experiences and from different backgrounds.

We would especially welcome applications from those who have experienced homelessness in any form or are from an ethnic minority background.

We are also looking for a new Chair to join us. Our current Chair will remain on the board, as Vice Chair initially, to support the new incumbent. Please note that this vacancy has arisen as our Chair's job role has changed and they cannot commit the hours they believe the charity deserves.

# Role Description for a Trustee

The duties and responsibilities of a trustee are as follows:

- Ensuring that the organisation pursues its stated objects (purposes), as defined in its governing document, by developing and agreeing a long-term strategy
- Ensuring that the organisation complies with its governing document (i.e. the trust deed, constitution or memorandum and articles of association), charity law, company law, employment law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- Ensuring that the organisation applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its charitable objects (i.e. the charity must not spend money on activities that are not included in its own objects, however worthwhile or charitable those activities are) for the benefit of the public
- Ensuring that the organisation defines its goals and evaluates performance against agreed targets
- Safeguarding the good name and values of the organisation
- Ensuring the effective and efficient administration and governance of the organisation, including having appropriate policies and procedures in place
- Understanding the responsibilities and liabilities of being a trustee
- Undertaking induction and relevant training as identified for the role
- Ensuring the financial stability of the organisation
- Protecting and managing the property of the charity and ensuring the proper investment of the charity's funds
- Following proper and formal arrangements for the appointment, supervision, support, appraisal and remuneration of the Chief Executive
- In addition to the above statutory duties, each trustee should use any specific skills, knowledge or experience they have to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions. This may involve scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, supporting working groups, focusing on key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, or other issues in which the trustee has special expertise.

## Person specification

- A commitment to the organisation
- A willingness to devote the necessary time and effort
- A willingness to listen to others and share your views and opinions
- Strategic vision
- Good, independent judgement
- An ability to think creatively
- An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- An ability to work effectively as a member of a team

# Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life

Like all charities, we require our trustees to have a commitment to Nolan's Seven Principles of Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

The Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

More details can be found below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

<https://www.good-governance.org.uk/blog-post/the-nolan-principles/>

We also have a Trustee Code of Conduct to help ensure good working relationships and standards of behaviour.



# Trustee Code of Conduct

As a trustee of Accommodation Concern I agree to abide by the fundamental values that underpin all activities of Accommodation Concern. These are as follows:

## **Accountability**

Everything Accommodation Concern does will be able to stand the test of scrutiny by the public, the media, the Charity Commission, members, stakeholders, funders, parliament and the courts.

## **Integrity and Honesty**

These will be the hallmarks of all conduct when dealing with colleagues within Accommodation Concern and equally when dealing with individuals and institutions outside it.

## **Transparency**

Accommodation Concern strives to maintain an atmosphere of openness throughout the organisation to promote confidence of the public, stakeholders, staff, charity regulators and parliament.

## **Law, Mission and Policies**

I will act within the governing document of Accommodation Concern and abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

I will not break the law or go against charity regulations in any aspect of my role of trustee.

I will support the objects and mission of Accommodation Concern and act as their guardian and champion.

I will develop and maintain an up-to-date knowledge of Accommodation Concern and its environment.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

I will always strive to act in the best interests of the organisation as a whole and not as a representative of any group, considering what is best for Accommodation Concern and its present and future beneficiaries. I will declare any conflict of interest, or any circumstance that might be viewed by others as a conflict of interest, as soon as it arises.

I will submit to the judgment of the Board and do as it requires regarding potential conflicts of interest.

## **Person to Person**

I will not break the law, go against charity regulations or act in disregard of organisational policies in my relationships with fellow trustees, staff, volunteers, members, service recipients, contractors or anyone I come into contact with in my role as a trustee.

I will strive to establish respectful, collegial and courteous relationships.

Where I also volunteer with the organisation I will maintain the separation of my role as a trustee and as a volunteer.

## **Protecting the Organisation's Reputation**

I will not make public comments about the organisation unless authorised to do so.

Any public comments I make about Accommodation Concern will be considered and in line with organisational policy, whether I make them as an individual or as a trustee.

When I am speaking as a trustee of this organisation, my comments will reflect current organisational policy even when these do not agree with my personal views.

When speaking as a private citizen I will strive to uphold the reputation of the organisation and those who work in it.

I will respect organisational, board and individual confidentiality.

## **Personal Gain**

I will not personally gain materially or financially from my role as trustee, unless specifically authorised to do so, nor will I permit others to do so as a result of my actions or negligence.

I will use organisational resources responsibly. I will document expenses and seek reimbursement according to procedure.

I will not accept gifts or hospitality without the prior consent of the Chair.

**In the Boardroom**

I will strive to embody the principles of leadership in all my actions and live up to the trust placed in me by Accommodation Concern.

I accept my responsibility to ensure that Accommodation Concern is well run and will raise issues and questions in an appropriate and sensitive way to ensure that this is the case.

I will abide by board governance procedures and practices.

I will strive to attend all board meetings, giving apologies ahead of time to the Chair if unable to attend.

I will study the agenda and other information sent me in good time prior to the meeting and be prepared to debate and vote on agenda items during the meeting.

I will honour the authority of the Chair and respect their role as meeting leader.

I will engage in debate and voting in meetings according to procedure, maintaining a respectful attitude toward the opinions of others while making my voice heard.

I will accept a majority board vote on an issue as decisive and final.

I will maintain confidentiality about what goes on in the Boardroom unless authorised by the Chair or Board to speak of it.

**Enhancing Governance**

I will participate in induction, training and development activities for trustees.

I will continually seek ways to improve board governance practice.

I will strive to identify good candidates for trusteeship and appoint new trustees on the basis of merit.

I will support the Chief Executive in their executive role and, with my fellow board members, seek development opportunities for them.

**Leaving the Board**

I understand that substantial breach of any part of this code may result in my removal from the Board of Trustees.

Should procedures be put in motion that may result in my being asked to resign from the Board, I will be given the opportunity to be heard. In the event that I am asked to resign from the Board, I will accept the majority decision of the Board and resign at the earliest opportunity.

Should I resign from the Board I will inform the Chair in advance in writing, stating my reasons for resigning.

Additionally, I will participate in an exit interview.

# Chair

## Main responsibilities

In addition to the general responsibilities of a trustee, duties of the chair include the following:

- Providing leadership to the organisation and the board by ensuring that everyone remains focused on the delivery of the organisation's charitable purposes in order to provide greater public benefit.
- Chairing and facilitating board meetings and checking that decisions taken at meetings are implemented.
- Giving direction to board policy-making.
- Representing the organisation at functions and meetings, and acting as a spokesperson as appropriate.
- Bringing impartiality and objectivity to decision-making.
- With the chief executive:
  - Planning the annual cycle of board meetings and other general meetings where required, for example annual general meeting
  - Setting agendas for board and other general meetings
  - Developing the board of trustees including induction, training, appraisal and succession planning
  - Addressing any conflict within the board and within the organisation, and liaising with the chief executive (if staff are employed) to achieve this
- Liaising with the chief executive to keep an overview of the organisation's affairs and to provide support as appropriate
- Leading the process of supporting and appraising the performance of the chief executive
- Sitting on appointment and disciplinary panels where required
- The vice-chair acts for the chair when the chair is not available and undertakes assignments at the request of the chair

## Essential

In addition to the person specification for a Trustee, the Chair should have the following qualities:

- Commitment to Accommodation Concern's objects, aims and values and willingness to devote time to carry out responsibilities
- Strategic and forward-looking vision in relation to the charity's objects and aims
- Understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of Trusteeship and adhering to Nolan's seven principles of public life.
- Strategic leadership skills
- Experience of working with committees and our volunteers
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences
- An understanding of the challenges facing UK small/medium sized charities in maximising income streams and donor cultivation

## Desirable

- To have knowledge and/or experience of the national and local landscape around poverty, homelessness and/or debt.
- Experience of involvement/partnership working with the voluntary sector.

## Time commitment

The board currently meets once a quarter in the evening at 6pm. We also have sub-groups for HR, Governance and Finance which meet as required in between the board meetings at times to suit them. Each trustee attends the subgroup most aligned to their skills and interests.

There may also be additional training and workshops for trustees to attend to which will help further their role, skills and knowledge. We strongly encourage our Trustees to participate in further learning and development relevant to the charity.

We anticipate that the time commitment is about two to three hours per month.

## How to Apply

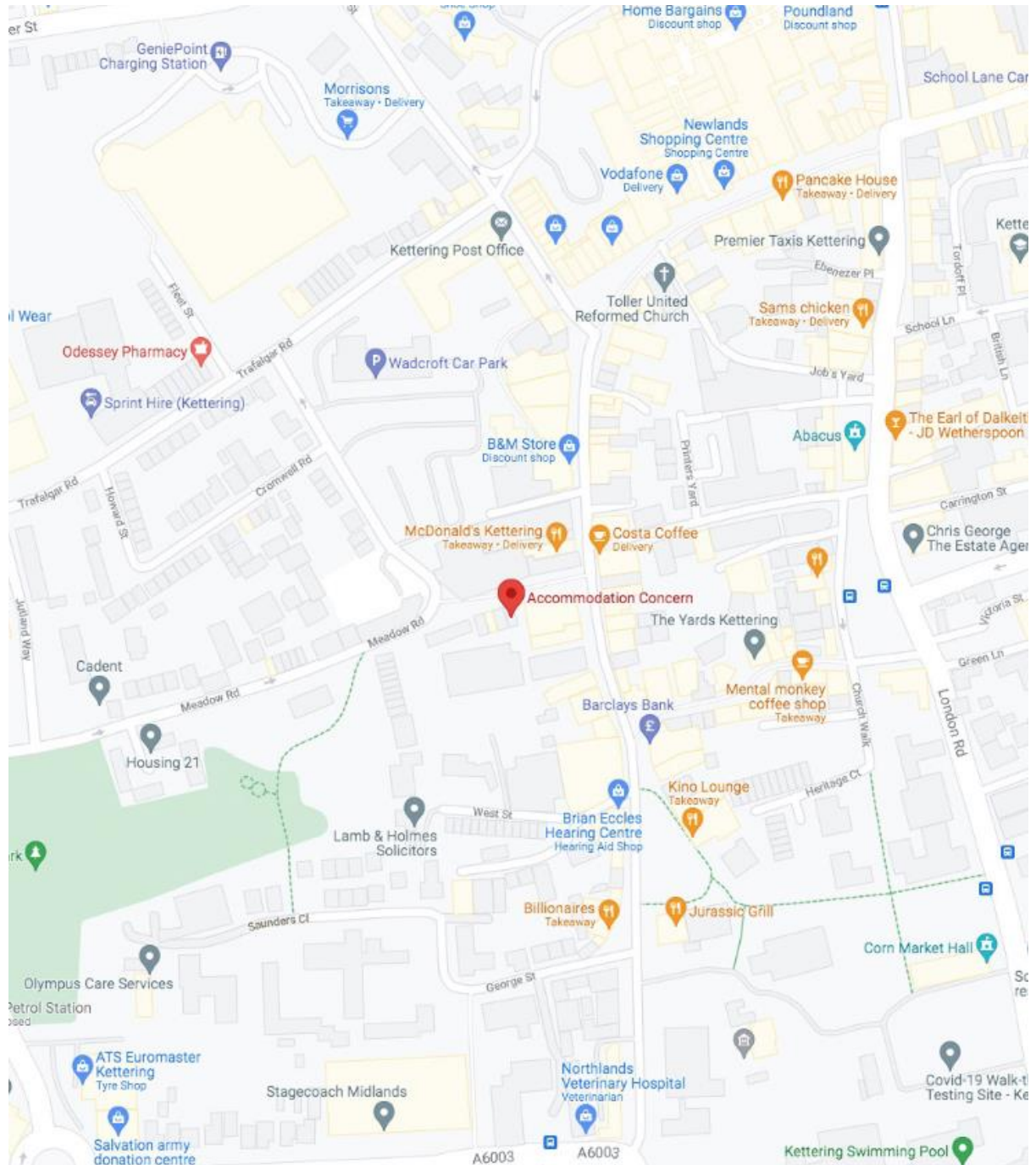
Applications should be made to Rachel Mallows, our external support with the recruitment of Trustees, in the first instance (**[rachel@themallowscompany.com](mailto:rachel@themallowscompany.com)**).

To apply 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. Rachel will speak to every applicant, and if necessary organise a quick online meeting to chat about the opportunities in more detail.

**Please note our closing date of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024.**

# Location

1 Meadow Road, Kettering NN16 8T





Accommodation  
Concern

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## Advice, support and housing for a better tomorrow

### HQ Address

Accommodation Concern  
1 Meadow Road  
Kettering  
Northamptonshire  
NN16 8TL

### Phone

Office  
01536 416560

### Online

Email  
[help@a-c.org.uk](mailto:help@a-c.org.uk)

Website  
[www.accommodationconcern.co.uk](http://www.accommodationconcern.co.uk)