

# Action for M.E. Finance-oriented Trustee Briefing 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.

Our 2016 – 2021 strategy, launched at our 2016 AGM and conference, sets out how we 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 became the only UK charity to support people with M.E. of all ages, after joining forces with national children's charity, the Association of Young People with M.E. 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 mission

Empowering people with M.E. 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.

## 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

### Vice Chair

Alison Deeth

### 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 17 (14.59 FTE), 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 also have a small number of staff and volunteers in Scotland and a staff member in East Midlands.

## Our current strategy: our purpose is to end the ignorance, injustice and neglect experienced by people with M.E.

Children, young people and adults with M.E. are at the heart of everything we do. We asked and we listened, and have identified a number of challenges that continue to exist for people affected by M.E.

Everything we do over our 2016 – 2021 strategy is in service of achieving three goals, which we call our strategic touchstones.

By collaborating with those who share our vision and purpose, we make the most of the resources available to us.

Around 50% of our activities directly focus on targeting information, improving support and reducing isolation to **IMPROVE** the lives of children, young people and adults with M.E.

To be as effective as possible, 30% of our activities focus on facilitating more action, more influence and better understanding of M.E. to **INSPIRE** action at all levels; and 20% of our activities are focused on bringing more research, more money and more people into the field to **INVEST** in change.



## Context

One of our Trustees also fills the role of Treasurer, and our current Treasurer will reach the end of his tenure towards the end of 2021. The Board therefore wishes to recruit another Trustee with financial expertise who will eventually take on the Treasurer role in 2021. This provides the individual with the opportunity to get to know the organisation, our Board of Trustees, and the world within which Action for M.E. operates, before taking over the Treasurer role.

## Trustee role description

Duties of a Trustee are as follows:

1. To ensure that Action for M.E. complies with its Memorandum and Articles of Association, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
2. To ensure that Action for M.E. pursues its charitable objects as defined in its Memorandum of Association.
3. To ensure Action for M.E. applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives.
4. To contribute actively to the Board of Trustees role in establishing a clear and shared vision for Action for M.E., giving firm strategic direction, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets and evaluating performance against the agreed targets.
5. To act in the interests of Action for M.E. and for people with M.E. in general.
6. To safeguard the good name and values of Action for M.E.
7. To ensure the effective and efficient administration of Action for M.E.
8. To ensure the financial stability of Action for M.E.
9. To protect and manage the property of Action for M.E. and to ensure the proper investment of charity funds.
10. To appoint the Chief Executive and to monitor his or her performance and determine his or her remuneration.
11. In addition to the above statutory duties of all Trustees, each Trustee should use any specific knowledge or experience they have to help the Board of Trustees reach sound decisions.
12. To represent Action for M.E. as appropriate.

## Treasurer role description

The Treasurer works in close co-operation with, and provides support and advice to, the Chief Executive, Operations Director (OD) and the Finance and Accounts Manager. In addition to his/her duties as a Trustee, the Treasurer will undertake directly or oversee the delegated responsibilities to staff of the following:

1. Guide and advise the Board in the approval of budgets, accounts and financial statements, within a relevant financial policy framework.
2. Keep the Board informed about its financial duties and responsibilities.
3. Advise the Trustees (and the Executive Team) on the financial implications of the Charity's strategic plans and key assumptions included in operational plans and annual budget, especially those which are outside the agreed boundaries of management authority.
4. Confirm that the financial resources of the organisation meet its present and future needs and that there are appropriate reserves and investment policies.
5. Understand the accounting procedures and key internal controls to be able to assure the Board the Charity's financial integrity is sound.

6. Ensure that the accounts are properly audited, that accepted recommendations of the independent auditors are implemented and provide financial expertise to the Audit, Finance and Fundraising Committee and leadership as its Chair.
7. Formally present the accounts at the AGM, drawing attention to important points, either in a written report or orally.
8. Monitor the Charity's investment activity and ensure its investment policy is consistent with the organisation's policies, aims, objectives and legal responsibilities.

## **Trustee/Treasurer person specification**

1. A commitment to the organisation and its cause, demonstrating an understanding of M.E. and its impact.
2. A recognised financial qualification and relevant financial experience.
3. Ideally, an experience of charity finance, including tax, and pension schemes.
4. Experience and capability to Chair the Audit, Finance and Fundraising Committee.
5. The skills to analyse proposals, examine their financial consequences and make concise recommendations.
6. An ability to communicate financial information clearly.
7. An understanding of Sage Accounting system is desirable.
8. An understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship.
9. A willingness to devote the necessary time and effort.
10. Strategic vision.
11. Good, independent judgment.
12. An ability to think creatively.
13. A willingness to speak their mind.
14. An ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
15. A willingness to participate in the Audit, Finance and Fundraising Committee in the first instance and as Chair once Treasurer.
16. A commitment to working within Action for M.E.'s values and principles of working, including Nolan's "Seven principles of public life":
  - a) Selflessness
  - b) Integrity
  - c) Objectivity
  - d) Accountability
  - e) Openness
  - f) Honesty
  - g) Leadership.

## **Time commitment**

The time commitment expected of a Trustee is broadly five to 10 days per annum, including preparing for and attending Board meetings. The upper end of this scale reflects those who lead committees and take more significant roles, which includes the Treasurer. Additional time may be required dependent on circumstances/needs.

## **Contact details**

For more information or an informal chat, please contact Sonya Chowdhury, Chief Executive ([sonya@actionforme.org.uk](mailto:sonya@actionforme.org.uk)) and/or Roger Siddle, Chair of Board of Trustees ([chair@actionforme.org.uk](mailto:chair@actionforme.org.uk)).