

**ACTION FOR STAMMERING CHILDREN
COMPANY SECRETARY
APPOINTMENT BRIEF
OCTOBER 2021**



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Company Secretary at Action for Stammering Children (ASC), this is a great opportunity for the right candidate to join ASC having celebrated its 30th year and supporting almost 100,000 children.

Over 150,000 children in the UK stammer and suffer the frustration of being unable to say what they want to, when they want to. Added to this, they are often mimicked, teased and bullied. They may be anxious, isolated and helpless. Their parents also feel powerless to help and desperately worried about what the future will hold. ASC is the leading charity of its kind in the UK. It supports these children and their families across the UK by funding expert assessment, therapy and training at the Michael Palin Centre in London – opened by Michael 27 years ago. It also supports outdoor adventure residential for children who stammer, which combine speech and language therapy group work with thrilling physical challenges. Our strategy is informed by a brilliant Youth Panel made up of young people who stammer, and our work is supported by an inspiring group of ‘Stambassadors’ – adults who stammer in successful careers. We are also an enthusiastic supporter of research into stammering and new therapeutic approaches.

Thanks to our work, the lives of children and their parents are transformed – they are empowered, resilient and able to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their life including at school, at home and socially. As such, the Charity really does have the power to change lives forever.

We are proud of our strong governance track record, and we are determined to maintain that track record into the future. This is a wonderful opportunity to join a great and inspiring team and one that makes a real and proven difference to the lives of many children and young people.

Throughout this pack you will learn more about our story, our work and our passion. You will also find out more about the role as well as the skills and the qualities we are looking for. If you feel you have the experience and commitment to be our next Company Secretary, we would very much like to hear from you.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Jane Roberts
Chair of Trustees, Action for Stammering Children

ABOUT ACTION FOR STAMMERING CHILDREN

Action for Stammering Children's (ASC) vision is a society where children and young people who stammer have the same opportunities and quality of life as their peers.

The Charity's mission is to ensure that every child and young person across the United Kingdom who stammers has access to effective services and support to help them meet the challenges created by their stammer.

The Charity commissions the delivery of specialist services that transform the lives of children and young people who stammer. We do this by working with the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children in London and by running residential courses in the North of England.

We are the charity which created and continues to support the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering Children in London. This internationally-recognised Centre runs the UK's largest specialist service exclusively dedicated to the assessment and treatment of children who stammer from across the UK. We also support projects aimed at boosting the confidence of young people who stammer and, through our inspirational Youth Panel, we make sure young people who stammer have a voice in the direction of our Charity.

Stammering is a severe communication disability which impairs social, emotional and educational development. Estimates suggest that 8% of children will stammer at some point and approximately 1% continue to stammer into adulthood. Stammering is more common in boys than in girls. It is characterised by repetitions, prolongations and blocking of sounds, and can be accompanied by feelings of isolation, frustration and embarrassment.

Stammering crosses all races, cultures, religions and social groups. It can conceal intellectual ability, affect educational choices and achievement, result in impaired communication skills and it frequently becomes a focus for teasing and bullying. In severe cases, it may significantly affect a young person's ability to achieve their potential and to make a full contribution to society as an adult.

ASC was the inspiration of the late Travers Reid, a successful businessman and a person who stammered, who was determined to help children who stammer throughout the UK. Travers founded the Charity, along with the late Dr Lena Rustin, an inspirational speech and language therapist. Following his appearance in *A Fish Called Wanda*, Michael became Vice President of the Charity and opened the Michael Palin Centre in 1993.

At the core of the Michael Palin Centre's work is the specialist assessment service for any child or young person in the UK, aged 2-18, who stammers. Both parents attend with their child where possible, so that the stammering problem can be fully assessed in the context of each individual family. Families are seen by two specialist therapists who spend a morning or afternoon with the child and their parents during which they can identify and fully understand the factors underlying the child's stammer. The assessment has been developed and refined over the last 30 years, and more recently has evolved to be able to offer the service online, ensuring that we could continue delivering our service through these difficult times. It is the cornerstone of each child's subsequent therapy and greatly increases the likelihood of a successful outcome.

As well as supporting specialist assessments and therapy, the Charity also funds training of speech and language therapists and a programme of research. The training increases the understanding, skills and confidence of speech and language therapists to be able to work with children who stammer. The research programme aims to provide evidence of the efficacy of the therapy as well as to develop

understanding of the nature of stammering and we are funding a PhD looking at stammering and mental health.

Our Youth Panel is made up of young people who stammer and are keen to support the charity. They meet regularly as a group to work together on awareness raising projects and annually with the board to help shape our strategy. They have recently launched an online game which celebrates historic figures who stammered and regularly act as media spokespeople for the charity.

We have a group of 50 'Stambassadors' – adults, in successful careers, who stammer. These people have all filmed videos talking about their careers and their tips for success. They help to show young people who stammer that anything is possible and that their stammers need not hold them back. Last year we ran a careers evening with our 'Stambassadors' and we hope to develop a mentoring programme in the coming years.

Company Secretary - The Role

The role of the secretary is to support the Chair by ensuring the Board functions smoothly. They will be expected to advise the board and leadership team regarding legal, corporate and compliance matters (Companies Acts and Charity Commission rules) answering any questions they might have and seeking external advice when necessary.

Trustee Job Description

ASC is governed by a board of trustees, which comprises:

- the Chair
- the Treasurer
- the Company Secretary
- and up to a maximum of 15 elected trustees

The Charities Act 2011 defines charity trustees as those responsible under the charity's governing document for controlling the administration and management of the charity. The role of the trustee board is to receive assets from donors, safeguard them and apply them to the charitable purposes of ASC. The trustee board must always act in the best interests of ASC, exercising the same standard of duty of care that a prudent person would apply if looking after the affairs of someone for whom they have responsibility. The trustee board must act as a group and not as individuals. In addition to being a registered charity, ASC is a company limited by guarantee, and ASC's trustees are registered as directors at Companies House.

The duties of a trustee board member

ASC takes good governance seriously. The statutory duties of a trustee board member are to:

- ensure that ASC complies with its governing document, its Articles of Association, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- ensure that ASC pursues its objects (purposes) as defined in its governing document
- ensure ASC applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects.
- contribute actively to the board of trustees by giving firm strategic direction to ASC, setting overall policy, defining goals, setting targets, and evaluating performance against agreed targets
- safeguard the good name and values of ASC
- ensure the financial stability of ASC.

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 leading discussions, identifying key issues, providing advice and guidance on new initiatives, and evaluating or offering advice on other areas in which the trustee has particular expertise.

Trustees are expected to read the Charity Commission's Guide CC3, The Essential Trustee, and have knowledge of the Charity Governance Code.

The duties of the Company Secretary

In addition to the general responsibilities of a trustee, duties of the secretary are as follows:

- Working with the Chair and board of trustees, to ensure that the organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document
- Advise the board and leadership team regarding legal, corporate and compliance matters (Companies Acts and Charity Commission rules) answering any questions they might have and seeking external advice when necessary.
- Ensuring compliance under contractual arrangements, and under company and charity law.
- Developing and implementing a process of legal health check and review, for example, auditing the governing document, reviewing property leases, monitoring employment and personnel procedures
- In consultation with the Chair and Chief Executive, the following administrative tasks in relation to:
 - Board meetings
 - Timely circulation of the Board agenda and supporting papers
 - Ensuring that a quorum is present
 - Ensuring that minutes are taken and circulated timely
 - Statutory responsibilities
 - Maintenance of a register of Trustees & Members
 - Appointment/reappointment of Trustees & Members
 - Statutory filings are complete / timely
 - Special Resolutions are issued and filed correctly
 - Statutory and regulatory obligations remain up to date
 - Oversight of policies, procedures and Terms of Reference for the Board and all Committees
 - Fulfilling insurance requirements, such as public and employer's liability insurance
- Sitting on appraisal, recruitment and disciplinary panels as required

Person specification

Each trustee must have:

- a commitment to the mission and vision of ASC
- a willingness to meet the minimum time requirement
- integrity
- strategic vision
- good, independent judgement
- an ability to think creatively
- a willingness to speak their mind
- an understanding and acceptance of the legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- an ability to work effectively as a member of a team and to take decisions for the good of ASC
- trustees value diversity and inclusion.

In addition to the person specification for a trustee, the Secretary should have the following qualities:

- Organisational ability
- Knowledge or experience of business and committee procedures
- Legal qualification
- Experience of sitting on a charity board

Minimum time commitment

We would normally expect trustees to commit at least five board meetings a year, with additional time for reading papers and other communications. The meetings are currently being held on a Saturday morning via Zoom.

- Trustees are expected to attend all board meetings, usually five per year
- Trustees may be asked to join a sub-committees, which may meet two to three times a year as needed, for approximately two hours
- Trustees are expected to support and attend fundraising events.

Trustee terms are for three years. Trustees can be reappointed up to three times, serving a total of nine years.

Remuneration

This is a voluntary role and trustees receive no remuneration. Reasonable expenses can be claimed, in line with ASC's expense policy, for attendance at board meetings and other ASC events necessary for the fulfilment the trustee's duties.

All trustees are DBS checked.

New trustees will receive a full induction.

How to apply

To apply to become the Company Secretary of Action for Stammering Children please send a copy of your CV together with a supporting statement addressing the skills required in the person specification, maximum two sides of A4 to Steven.Gauge@stammeringchildren.org.

Please ensure that your application fully addresses the requirements for the role.

Recruitment Timetable

Any queries please direct them to the Chair of Trustees, Dame Jane Roberts, at her email address, roberjane@gmail.com.