

Salvesen

mindroom

Centre

For the Appointment of Chair



FWB Park Brown

Executive Search

Contents

Introduction	1
Background	2
Potential Candidate Criteria	7
Further Information	10

Introduction from Alan Thornburrow, CEO

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our remarkable charity and this unique opportunity to become its next Chair.

Salvesen Mindroom Centre (SMC) operates at the forefront of equality, diversity and inclusion, furthering the work that many others have so ably led on issues including gender equality, racism, sexuality and mental health and wellbeing.

The term neurodiversity is not new but our collective understanding of it remains relatively underdeveloped. Stigma, stereotyping and exclusion abound in the workplace, in education, public health and the criminal justice systems to name but a few. This is not from lack of willingness to learn but rather that the topic is only now entering the public discourse at scale which therefore presents significant opportunities for Mindroom to play a leading role in social change.



Slowly but surely, we are beginning to understand more about how each of us experiences and processes the world around us. More and more public figures including Mindroom Ambassador Rory Bremner (who was diagnosed with ADHD in his fifties), Lewis Capaldi (who recently shared his diagnosis of Tourette syndrome), Greta Thunberg (who was sadly derided for her Autism) and Richard Branson (who credits his Dyslexia with the creativity that has enabled his career) are sharing their own neurodiversity stories which is helping to create the conditions for others to do the same.

Academic research, not least from our sister organisation, the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre (part of the Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences at the University of Edinburgh) is in parallel advancing the neuroscience and psychology of neurodiversity.

Together, these developments create the ideal conditions for an organisation such as ours to step into the limelight: we have the opportunity to create the conditions for all to thrive and to secure change at a scale that is befitting of the challenges neurodivergent people face.

For over two decades, we have directly supported neurodivergent children, young people and their families to flourish; helping them to access education, move into adulthood, secure employment and much more. We believe that It Takes All Kinds of Minds to make society whole. Only by unlocking the potential in ourselves and each other, can we truly face the challenges of our time and realise a world where we are all included and can participate fully.

We very much hope you share our unshakeable passion to make our vision a reality and steer what promises to be a genuinely exciting chapter ahead.

Background

SMC is a charity that champions all forms of neurodiversity and supports all kinds of minds. Our mission is to be a leading centre for change, in how we live, work and learn. We achieve this through support, education, advocacy, and research.

Neurodiversity recognises that each person's brain processes information in a unique way, meaning that we all think, feel and learn differently. It provides an empowering framework for understanding differences between people and is used to highlight the positive qualities possessed by those with a neurodevelopmental condition - a move away from the more pathological terms of learning disorder, difficulty, or disability.

SMC was founded in 2000 by Sophie and Robin Dow, parents of a child with a unique chromosomal deletion. From the beginning our mission was to ensure that no mind is left behind, and we are now the leading charity on neurodiversity in Scotland, building international recognition for our expertise and research.

We have hosted six very successful international conferences since our charity launched. Our first conference 'See The Bigger Picture' was held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) in 2003, and we returned to the EICC in 2023 with 'It Takes All Kinds Of Minds' which brought together 1000 delegates from 24 nations to hear from eminent researchers, practitioners and, crucially, people with lived experience of neurodiversity.

As parents, Robin and Sophie found it to be unacceptable that there was nowhere to turn to for expert advice and support. They wanted to ensure that their daughter, Annie, and all children and young people and their families, would have a hopeful and dignified life, and they determined to change the landscape.

Since our founding, the charity has transformed from a 'kitchen table' enterprise to a significant force in the world of neurodiversity. First becoming Mindroom and then Salvesen Mindroom Centre as the result of a generous donation from the AEH Salvesen Trust, the charity now employs 27 staff. In addition, our work is supported by a number of champions, volunteers and freelance training providers.

To find out more via our website, visit: <https://www.mindroom.org/>.

Our Services

Direct Help & Support

Each year we support around 1000 individuals and families to secure a better deal for the young person in their life. Parents or carers of a neurodivergent child or young person, may have experienced times of feeling worried, uncertain and isolated.

Children or young people may be having difficulties in school and it's unclear where to go next for advice or where to find out about the kinds of support a child or young person can expect in school and in the wider community. Or parents may simply be uncertain about their rights and where to go for support.

Similarly, a young person may need help being heard in decisions that affect their life, or may be worried about the big transitions in life between different stages of education or moving into adulthood.

Our multidisciplinary team of Advice and Outreach Specialists will listen to the difficulties individuals are experiencing and will offer support to work through these challenges. We aim to support, inform and empower all our beneficiaries. Our team includes former lawyers, educational psychologists, occupational therapists, nurses, teachers, social workers and business consultants.



Advocacy

As much as we would dearly love to support all neurodivergent individuals, this is simply not possible. Instead, we work with employers, government and the third sector to collectively influence change at scale. Our services include:

Training

We offer a wide range of courses throughout the year which cover a basic introduction to neurodiversity all the way through to more complex topics such as workplace adjustments or focused sessions on particular neurodevelopmental conditions.

Consultancy Services

Our bespoke consultancy services allow us to cater to the needs of our clients and include strategy development, reviewing of policy documents, providing briefings on specific topics, reviewing the language used in employment documents, or providing information, advice, and guidance as required.

Sharing Best Practice

To facilitate knowledge exchange, we promote sharing of best practice and progress in the field including hosting a series of employer round table events throughout the year where delegates from our partner organisations can attend and contribute. Our links to academia further this and draw on international good practice across a wide range of disciplines.

Accessing Best in Class Resources

We research and curate an extensive library of resources to educate and inform individuals and organisations. These include guides for employers, research and policy briefings on specialist topics and tools and resources for parents, carers and young people.

Research

We are in the unique position of having access to a highly respected research centre which, together with our deep understanding of the lived experience of neurodivergent people, allows us to create novel insights and resources to educate and inform decision makers and public opinion.

There have been many significant developments in the SMC story of success to date including:

- Holding 6 international conferences.
- Establishing the Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre at the University of Edinburgh. The Centre's Director is Professor Sue Fletcher-Watson, and it sits within the University's Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences.
- Developing new support services embracing work directly with children and young people, transitions work in schools, peer support for parents and carers and a stakeholder group of neurodivergent young people.
- Establishing a highly regarded Neuroinclusion at Work programme, working with national and global employers who want to improve the lives of their neurodiverse workforce as well as attracting and retaining new talent.
- Attracting new funding from a growing range of funders from across the public and private sectors, through Trusts and Foundations, and Service Level Agreements.
- Establishing the prestigious Annual Salvesen Lecture - now in its fifth year - featuring pioneering thinking and practical studies on the subject of neurodiversity. [Click here for more information.](#)

The list goes on – this is a charity that has huge ambition, creativity, drive and unrivalled expertise in the world of neurodiversity.

How Do We Help?



We work directly with families, providing information, advice and one-to-one support



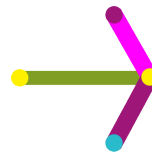
We support and advocate for children and young people under the age of 25



We help plan for transitions for secondary school pupils



We produce literature, training and resources for professionals, parents and carers



We collaborate with partners to raise awareness and reach more people who need our help

Our People



Our Team



Our Ambassadors



Our Trustees

Our Supporters



Potential Candidate Criteria

We are looking for a passionate and energetic chair who understands equality, diversity and inclusion from a personal or professional standpoint. Specific experience of neurodiversity is not a prerequisite, but we are insistent upon a shared passion to advance the work we do and the impact we can create in the world.

The candidate's qualities need to align with where SMC is going over the next 3-4 years as we continue our journey to become the 'go to' organisation for advice, information, research and expert knowledge on neurodiversity.

Our Chair will be a strong ambassador who is at ease in high profile situations and adept at developing relationships across a wide range of sectors including business, local and national government and public sector NFP. At the same time, our Chair will have a high regard for the lived experience of all the children, young people and families we support and will be an authentic advocate for societal change.

Overall the Chair has the responsibility to lead the Board and therefore the organisation to enable it to fulfil its purpose. The Chair ensures an effective relationship between the Board and the senior leadership team as well as external stakeholders, and acts as a spokesperson and figurehead as appropriate. The role of Chair is not merely an administrative or passive one – we are looking to appoint someone who can help us achieve our ambitions of excellence, growth and financial sustainability.

Our new Chair will be joining us at a time when we are making a transition to a fully funded service delivery model and making great strides to diversify our income. Knowledge of the charity sector and the challenging funding climate in the third sector are essential in this role. You will bring the expertise to make a positive contribution to our progress and ongoing financial stability.

SMC has a very talented staff team and our Chair should have an approachable manner and a genuine interest in the people who are at the heart of the organization, taking the opportunity to meet team members on suitable occasions.

As Chair of Board and at general meetings, you will collaborate closely with the CEO to determine the order of the agenda; ensuring that the Board receives accurate, timely and clear information; keeps track of the contribution of individual directors and ensures that they are all involved in discussions and decision-making.

Essential Skills;

- Provide inspiring leadership within a framework of effective controls which enables risk to be assessed and managed
- Support the CEO in setting SMC's strategic aims, ensuring that the necessary financial and human resources are in place for the business to meet its objectives, and review management contribution
- Represent our values and framework internally and externally
- Talk confidently about neurodiversity and the work of the organisation
- Bring a global perspective, ideally with international experience and networks
- Advise on papers submitted to Board meetings, to attend and chair Board meetings
- Constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy
- Provide independent advice and counsel to the Chief Executive and act as a sounding board on all strategic matters on a regular basis
- Keep abreast of the activities in the business by spending time with Directors and Senior Management to fully understand how the business operates and to provide a different perspective
- Appraise the contribution of management in meeting agreed goals and objectives
- Help ensure that financial information is accurate and that controls and systems of risk management are robust
- To attend, where appropriate, company gatherings and events

In addition, we are looking for;

- A demonstrable track record of success at Board level, ideally at both an Executive and Non-Executive level
- Knowledge and understanding of the third sector and the essential differences between NFP and the private sector
- The ability to spend a specific amount of time, probably up to 20 days per year, in the business
- An excellent understanding of best practice corporate governance, charity regulations, Board dynamics, Board effectiveness and strong business ethics

- The ability to create a culture where debate is encouraged with NXDs and a fully engaged management team
- Combine effective challenge and support and build supportive relationships across the Board
- A trusted, influential and well-respected individual
- Independence, integrity and effective communication skills

General Skills;

- Integrity and high ethical standards
- Sound judgement
- Willingness to challenge
- Ability to communicate ideas
- Sensitivity, openness and awareness of non-verbal communication
- Persuasiveness, confident and self-assured
- Leadership and ability to gain respect and attention
- Critical thinking, creativity and strategic awareness
- Business acumen, ability to identify new business opportunities
- Forward perspective, willingness to embrace change and innovation
- An inquiring and inquisitive mind – with an ability to assimilate, assess and analyse information
- Co-operation and teamworking
- An ability to identify potential problems and deal with risk

Time commitment

Up to 20 days per annum

Meeting frequency

Quarterly Board Meetings

Regular 1:1's with CEO

Engagement with the Senior Team and Directors

Willingness to support and provide access to external stakeholders, decision makers and influencers across the public, private and third sectors



Further Information

For further information or a confidential discussion, please contact Ailsa Sutherland on: applications@fwbparkbrown.com

Or alternatively, you can contact our Edinburgh office by phone on +44 131 539 7087.

FWB Park Brown
T: +44 (0)131 539 7087
www.fwbparkbrown.com

FWB Park Brown

Executive Search