



**National Survivor  
User Network**

# **CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**CONTRACT: PERMANENT**

**SALARY: £61,800**

**HOURS: FULL TIME (5 DAYS PER WEEK)**

**LOCATION: HOME-BASED FROM THE UK WITH  
OCCASIONAL TRAVEL**

**DEADLINE: 23:59, SUNDAY 11TH FEBRUARY 2024**



# A LETTER FROM AIMZ RUSHTON, CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Hello there,

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about the role of CEO at NSUN. This welcome pack will provide you with all the information you need to apply and let you know what we're looking for in our next CEO. NSUN is a unique, progressive charity that prioritises anti-oppression and social (in)justice work. If you are as excited by our work as we are, we sincerely hope that you will consider submitting an application to join us.



## Who We Are

NSUN is an England-wide network of people and groups with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma. We are committed to a plurality of understandings of mental distress, knowing that peoples' lives are complex, mental health is complex and the landscapes that we work in are complex. We are led and fully staffed by people with lived experience of mental ill-health or long-term mental distress. We are a truly user-led national mental health charity, the only one of its kind, and we are needed now more than ever.

NSUN works to shift power and resources within mental health: we take an intersectional, critical and political understanding of mental ill-health, distress and trauma, understanding that radical approaches to social, racial, and disability justice are inextricable from mental health. We are trying things through different approaches, learning from and with others doing similar work in adjacent spaces.

Our work is fresh, it's exciting and it's emerging: often, we do not know exactly what it will look like and where it will lead. What's important is that we actively try new ways of working for mental health justice. What we do know is that the traditional ways of doing policy, capacity building and infrastructure support can uphold harmful structures and erase marginalised voices.

## Where We've Been

By 2020, NSUN had established ourselves as a credible, values-driven charity that had a significant voice within the national mental health arena. We had successfully brought together people and groups that were advocating for, and achieving change, within their localities and regions based on their lived experiences. Since the pandemic and the impact that this has had on people's mental health in a myriad of ways, our work has become even more relevant. Public awareness and understanding of mental ill-health, distress and trauma has significantly increased, and the majority of charities are now talking about the value of lived experience and co-production.

However, being a truly user-led charity remains an outlier, and grassroots community groups working in and around mental health continue to be under-resourced. NSUN being led by and for people with lived experience means that we are committed to social and racial justice, taking an approach to mental health and disability that is inseparable from the material circumstances of our members. So, over the past four years, we have entered into an exciting new phase of our work, including refocusing on supporting communities to flourish on their own terms and building new structures with intention of abolishing old, harmful and inequitable approaches and systems.

Here are just some of our highlights:

- We have grown significantly. Our income has increased from £236k per annum in 2020, to an expected income in excess of £940k at the end of March 2024. Our staff team has grown from two, to 9 and what we hope to be fourteen during 2024, and our membership has also grown, now standing at 6,000 members.
- We have seen that people's lived experiences of mental ill-health within policy spaces are often othered, and reduced to the experience of an individual, instead of being seen as collective knowledge. The framing of this within traditional policy silos erases the complexities of marginalised identities and communities. This knowledge and insight has led us to reflect on **our role and complicity within the policy eco-system**, and who we are serving by formulating policy within the current structures.
- We have undertaken a period of strategic reflection to help us create the vision of the change we want to see, and the steps we need to take as an organisation to get there.

- This has led to our Theory of Change that underpins everything that we do to build and distribute lived experience knowledge; grow collaborative spaces through coalitions and networks; build an alternative approach to mental health policy; and work with funders to redistribute resources to grassroots groups.
- We have reflected on the cost that this work has on both trustees and staff and have put in place ongoing reflective practice sessions delivered by an external facilitator.
- We have centred racial justice in our work, including through Synergi, an ambitious and complex programme of work, funded until September 25, focused on the intersection of racial justice and mental health and centred on lived experience and community action.
- We're hosting a number of projects, providing varied infrastructure support to allow groups the space they need to consolidate, grow and deliver incredible work and peer support.
- We have run several micro-grants programmes so that resources can be distributed to those that other funders often fail to reach. The groups that have been awarded these micro-grants do incredible work in and around mental health within their communities but often go unseen, unheard and are under-resourced.
- We have developed and nurtured deep and productive relationships within and beyond our sector, in the infrastructure, mental health, disability and human rights spaces, so we have a good understanding of who is doing what work. Our work is inherently relational and based on intertwined community links.
- We have strengthened our governance through new trustee appointments, training and development, and we have made changes to our legal structure and our membership offer.

## **Where We're Going**

In June 23, our former CEO, Akiko Hart, after more than 3 years leading NSUN through this period of reflection and transformational change, moved onto a new role. Over the last seven months, our incredible team has continued to deliver this work and we're now really excited to be ready to look for our new CEO, to continue to implement our strategy, consolidate our growth, and lead us through the next phase of our history. We are now looking for somebody to consolidate and continue to implement the strategic and practical changes we have made, as well as bringing their own ideas and approaches to the table.

You might be an existing CEO, or this might be your first CEO role. The key challenges for our next CEO will be to provide encouragement, support and strong leadership to the staff team so that they can continue to do the incredible work that they do.

Our next CEO will also need to ensure that we can continue to have strong relationships with our funders, partners and key stakeholders within the mental health arena and beyond. We need somebody who can understand and embrace the complexity of our work and can hit the ground running to ensure that we deliver on our multiple programmes of work and secure funding to meet the needs of the organisation into the future.

Above all, it is essential that our new CEO has a deep and demonstrable commitment to NSUN's values, advancing NSUN's work on anti-oppression and social (in)justice and an intersectional, critical and political understanding of mental ill-health, distress and trauma.

We are excited about our future and we hope you are too – thank you for your interest.

**Aimz Rushton**

**Chair, Board of Trustees**



# ABOUT NSUN

NSUN is a charity and a membership organisation. We are a network of grassroots, user-led mental health groups and people with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma. We connect, support and amplify the voices and work of our membership and work towards the redistribution of power and resource in mental health.

NSUN is a user-led organisation, and all staff and trustees have lived experience of mental ill-health, distress or trauma.

Over the past couple of years, NSUN has scaled and changed. This is an exciting time to join an organisation which is growing and embarking upon a **new strategic direction**, focussed on doing things differently in mental health and beyond.

Our recent accounts can be accessed **here**.

The successful candidate will need to demonstrate a strong understanding of NSUN throughout the recruitment process. As such, we would encourage applicants to read the following pages on the NSUN website as a starting point for researching the organisation:

- **What We Do**
- **Our Mission, Vision & Values**
- **History & Glossary**
- **About Our Members**
- **Campaigns & Policy Work**

You may also find it useful to read through some of our member blogs on our website, to get a feel for the work we do and our membership. Here are some examples:

- **Psychiatric Hospital Left Me Suicidal and Homeless – We Need A Human Rights-Based Approach to Mental Health Care**
- **State Violence and Distress: The False Separation Between Migrant Justice and Mental Health**
- **Self-Harm and the Internet: A User-led Critique of the Proposed Online Safety Bill**

# ABOUT THE ROLE

We recognise this is a multifaceted role and are keen to attract candidates from a wide range of backgrounds. You may already have been a CEO, or this may be your first CEO role. We are looking for someone who has experience of strategically and operationally leading people and programmes of work, but this does not necessarily need to be through formal senior leadership team-level experience. What is most important to us is that we appoint a values-driven leader with a strong commitment to advancing NSUN's work towards the redistribution of power and resource in mental health.

Accordingly, we have listed the essential elements of the role below, and a range of beneficial elements, recognising that one candidate may not bring everything. We are committed to supporting skills and experience gaps for the right candidate.

**The deadline for applications is 23:59 on Sunday 11th February 2024.**

NSUN is a user-led organisation: lived experience is at the heart of our work. We particularly welcome applications from under-represented and/or marginalised communities, including people from racialised communities, disabled people and those who identify as neurodivergent.

Please note: in your application you do not need to disclose personal and/or health information; we are interested in how you use or are informed by lived experience, rather than specific details.

For an informal conversation about the role, or if you have any questions about this recruitment pack or require it in a different format, please contact our recruitment partner Carroll Lloyd, Director, NFP Consulting on 07765 001 033 or email [carroll.lloyd@nfpconsulting.co.uk](mailto:carroll.lloyd@nfpconsulting.co.uk).



# MAIN TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- **Contract:** permanent
- **Salary:** £61,800, full time
- **Location:** home-based/remote from within the UK. NSUN does not have a physical office. Occasional travel for team meetings will be required (travel costs are reimbursed)
- **Hours:** 5 days a week, although **enquiries about flexible working are welcomed and applications for 4 days per week will be considered.** Normal full-time hours of work are 35 hours per week, worked between Monday to Friday between 9am and 6pm, with a minimum of 7 hours per day (not including an hour for lunch)
- **Responsible to:** Board of Trustees
- **Direct reports:** Synergi Director, Senior Communications and Membership Manager, Senior Communities and Grants Manager, Policy Manager, Operations Manager
- **Holiday:** 25 days per annum rising by 1 day per year to a maximum of 33, plus statutory holidays
- **Pension and benefits:** NSUN offer an automatic enrolment pension scheme starting with employee and employer contributions of 3.5%, with the option of employer matched contributions to 6% and an Employee Assistance programme (EAP) and an optional Health Care plan with HSF
- **Probationary period:** 6 months
- **Notice period:** 1 month during probation and 3 months following successful end of probationary period
- **Disclosure and Barring:** due to the nature of our work, you will be required to have a check with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for which NSUN will cover the cost. NSUN is an equal opportunities employer and seeks to encourage applications from all sections of the community. Having a criminal record will not necessarily exclude someone from obtaining or retaining a paid role with us.



# JOB DESCRIPTION

## **Strategy and Leadership**

- Work with the NSUN Board to ensure progress in line with NSUN's strategic direction, Theory of Change and values, and ensure these underpin all decision making and activity
- Identify and manage organisational risk and compliance

## **Operations and Delivery**

- Lead the team in strategic and operational planning and delivery, ensuring there are effective plans and systems in place
- Alongside the Synergi Director and Synergi team, ensure the delivery of Synergi
- Lead on the promotion and development of NSUN's work, raising NSUN's profile and maximising its reach and opportunities for collaboration with the membership and external stakeholders
- Act as ambassador for NSUN, building relationships with stakeholders in order to advance NSUN's strategic aims
- Ensure that NSUN is able to measure and articulate the impact of the work, across all workstreams

## **Finance and Fundraising**

- Ensure that the financial position of NSUN remains secure and sustainable
- Together with the Finance Lead set and monitor performance against NSUN's annual budget
- Hold overall responsibility for NSUN's fundraising strategy and securing funding
- Be a primary point of contact for trusts and foundations, building and developing relationships

## **Management**

- Model and nurture an inclusive and supportive organisational culture that upholds NSUN's values
- Lead a lived experience-led organisation, and value and implement structures and processes which reflect this
- Provide effective line management for direct reports, supporting their personal and professional development and successful delivery of their work

# PERSON SPECIFICATION

## Essential values

- A deep commitment to NSUN's values, and advancing NSUN's work on anti-oppression and social (in)justice, including anti-racism and trans rights
- An intersectional, critical and political understanding of mental ill-health, distress and trauma, with a commitment to a plurality of understandings of mental distress
- A commitment to continuing NSUN's abolitionist work, as part of our current strategy

## Essential skills and abilities

- The ability to listen and work collaboratively, and also make decisions
- The ability to deliver complex programmes of work, with many moving parts – with the ability to be both responsive to events, and plan strategically for the future
- Strong interpersonal skills, empathy, and the ability to communicate effectively and proactively with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders, including the team, the Board, members, grassroots groups, funders, and policy makers
- The ability to be able to pull people together across teams and motivate them to deliver common aims and targets
- The ability to deliver, implement and communicate strategic developments within organisations, plan capacity and translate organisation strategy and vision into operational objectives

## Beneficial skills and abilities

- External representation work, including media or public speaking

## Essential knowledge

- Knowledge of the mental health lived experience landscape, the “service user”/survivor movement, and/or user-led work in mental health, including current issues and debates and the political context
- Understanding the experiences and needs of grassroots groups

- Knowledge of mental health, racial justice, social justice, migration or other adjacent policy and/or campaigns work
- A deep knowledge and understanding of power dynamics and an ability to understand and identify how this plays out in the voluntary sector

### **Beneficial knowledge**

- Knowledge of the regulatory framework for UK charities e.g. financial reporting, the regulation of fundraising, risk management, and the employer responsibilities more generally e.g. HR and Data Protection

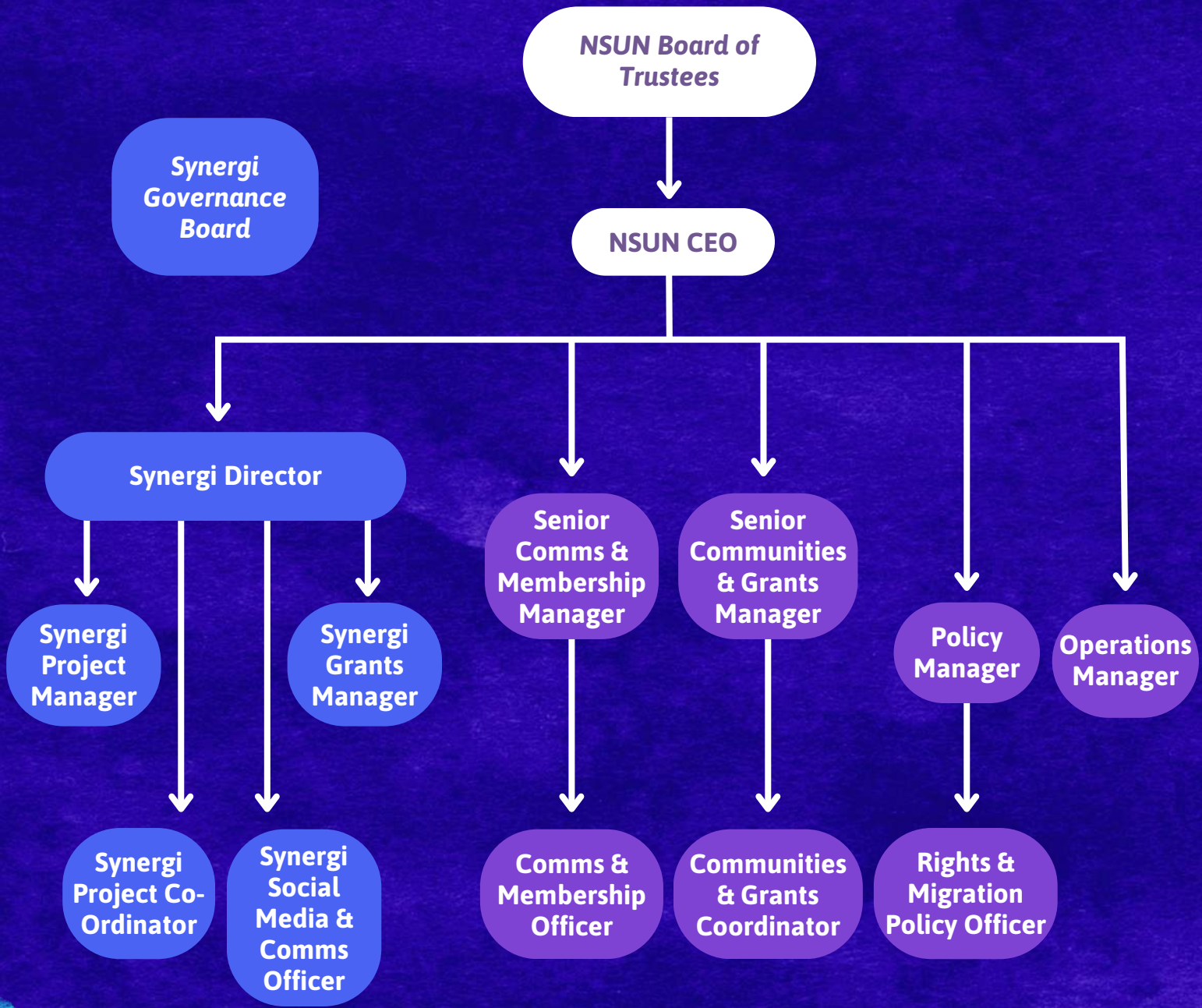
### **Essential experience**

- Lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma, which may include racial trauma. (Please note: you do not need to disclose personal and/or health information; we are interested in how you use or are informed by lived experience rather than personal details)
- Managing values-driven teams with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress and trauma
- Experience of partnership working with other organisations
- Substantial programme or organisational leadership in a relevant organisational context
- Ability to bring overarching values into strategy development and implementation, applying them to complex organisational and political contexts
- Experience of fundraising, particularly trusts and foundations fundraising/bid-writing
- Experience in building, maintaining, and utilising successful relationships with all people from different backgrounds, either within the mental health landscape or similar sectors

### **Beneficial experience**

- Experience working with and reporting to Boards
- Experience of working in organisations or leading e.g. grassroots campaigns work that foregrounds social justice and ethical practice
- Experience working in a small or growing charity
- Experience of financial oversight or management
- Experience in supporting lived experience in teams
- Experience of delivering work through teams remotely

# TEAM STRUCTURE



# WHAT THE STAFF TEAM ARE LOOKING FOR

The following quotes are taken from the NSUN staff team's responses to a question about what they were looking for in the new NSUN CEO.

[To read the full responses from the team, click here.](#)

Someone who is curious and critical, who comes from a place of genuine interest in our work and shares our values

Trauma-informed management style

Transparent

Anti-racist (and understanding of current anti-racist struggles in England, and beyond)

An intersectional approach to mental health

Explicit stance on anti-racism, trans rights, migrant and disability justice

Advocate for trans liberation

The ability to provide support for people they line manage, understanding that staff have lived experience that might be impacted by the job

An intersectional, critical, and political understanding of mental ill-health, distress, and trauma

Understands the experiences and needs of grassroots groups led by and for people with lived experience of mental ill-health, distress & trauma

A participatory and collaborative approach to leadership

Understands and is open about their positionality and privilege

Willing to have difficult conversations

Able to lead both strategically and operationally

Someone who can bring stability and direction to the work while being flexible and open to new learning, approaches and contributions

Willingness to be vulnerable

Aware of the power they hold as CEO

Non-defensive practice - working relationally with the ability to self-reflect and say where they may have made mistakes

Commitment to a plurality of understandings around mental distress, and ways of coping with them

Abolitionist

Progressive and values-based leader with a commitment to social justice and anti-oppression, including anti-racism and trans rights

Willing to build a shared vision for the organisation with the team

Lived experience of mental ill-health, distress, and trauma, with some depth of knowledge/critique around more stigmatised diagnoses

Listens to feedback

# WHAT THE BOARD ARE LOOKING FOR IN OUR NEXT CEO

- In the context of the charity space, someone who can manage complex and sometimes competing interests in the mental health space – balancing taking opportunities with still steering the ship towards our goal
- Keep people focused on a vision that sometimes feels far away through experience of working with radical ideals in constricting and challenging political contexts.
- Strong radical politics and understanding of how to put them into practice specifically in relation to politicised mental health, e.g. demonstrable experience of organising, writing, and/or other activities considering: prison, police, or psych abolition in relation to mental health; mental health and neoliberalism; mental health and workplace organising; mental health and austerity/welfare policy.
- strong leadership experience, but this may be in a different context to the advertised role, and may be represented by e.g. experience of community or workplace organising
- Great knowledge of mental health and mental health workforce
- Experience gained of turning concepts into clear strategy, plans and impact (this could be from CEO/leadership experience or from union organising, community organising, and/or other types of solidarity work)
- Inspires trust and confidence quickly both from within and outside
- Confident and outward-looking with a strong desire to collaborate with others in pursuit of our goals
- Lead by example and live our values, amplifying the voice of those with mental ill-health, distress and trauma at all levels of the organisation
- Thinking ahead with a progressive attitude to continue the planning of the organisation.

# WHAT THE BOARD HAVE AIMED TO DO OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS

- Convening and capacity building a space for those wanting to make change especially those working at the forefront of mental health and social justice
- Striving for better than best practice in DEI
- Fighting for those most profoundly affected by mental health problems (and social injustice) to counteract the risk of resources going to the visible and vocal not-so-affected
- We have learned when a seat at the table is worth it and when it's not
- Carved out quite a different space to the one we occupied before that actively supports grassroots work much better
- Setting strategic direction in redistributing power and resource in mental health
- Distinguished between working operationally and strategically
- Looking at the challenges of discrimination and nurturing racial and cultural equity within a mental health space
- Interest in intergenerational trauma, forced migration and mental health
- Making our vision and mission powerful
- Realistic expectation of dealing with operational team and board
- Being able to handle conflict internally and externally.



# APPLICATION AND INTERVIEWS

For an informal conversation about the role, please contact our recruitment partner, Carroll Lloyd, Director, NFP Consulting on 07765 001 033 or email [carroll.lloyd@nfpconsulting.co.uk](mailto:carroll.lloyd@nfpconsulting.co.uk).

**Apply online at:**

**<https://nfpconsulting.co.uk/executive/job/24003>**

Application is by way of CV with a Supporting Statement that should set out your motivations for applying and how your experience to date meets the scope of the responsibilities and person specification:

- You should explicitly address how you meet the essential points in the person specification and address any desirable points that you feel you also meet.
- Your application must specifically demonstrate both your understanding of NSUN's values and how your lived experience of mental ill-health, distress or trauma has informed your ways of working and your interest in this role. Please note: you do not need to disclose personal and/or health information or specific details.
- As a general guide, your Supporting Statement should be around two sides of A4.

Please let us know if you require any adjustments to the interview process for you to participate and we will do our best to accommodate these.

**Closing date: 23:59, 11th February.**

Selection process and timescales:

**Stage 1: week commencing 26th February**

First round of screening interviews will be conducted by NFP Consulting and will be held via Zoom.

## **Stage 2: week commencing 4th March**

The shortlist of preferred candidate/s will be invited to an informal meeting with some members of the staff team. The purpose of this interaction is so that you can ask questions about the organisation, their roles, and their engagement with NSUN as you wish.

## **Stage 3: week commencing 4th March**

Formal panel interviews will be conducted by NSUN and will be held via Zoom on either the **7th or 8th of March**.

We will send you the interview questions the day before and during the interview you will be asked to do a 10-minute presentation to the panel. The details of what's required in the presentation will be sent to you at the end of the preceding week.

All applicants who attend an interview will be offered feedback. It is not possible for us to give individual feedback if you have not been selected for an interview.

Thank you very much for your interest in this role. We look forward to hearing from you.





**NATIONAL SURVIVOR USER NETWORK  
C/O BEEVER AND STRUTHERS  
150 MINORIES  
LONDON  
EC3N 1LS**

**020 7820 8982**

**INFO@NSUN.ORG.UK**

**WWW.NSUN.ORG.UK**

**REGISTERED CHARITABLE  
INCORPORATED ORGANISATION IN  
ENGLAND (NO.1135980)**

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