

Smile Mediation – Information Pack, Chair/Trustee recruitment

November 2020

Introduction and context

Smile's current Chair is resigning his position when a new Chair is recruited; this is a planned exit as he moves on to the next chapter of his life plan and he would like to stick around until the transition is complete. We all want to wish him well. Currently, the Board comprises four Trustees (including the Chair) and bi-monthly meetings are attended by the Chief Executive Officer.

As a Board, we recognise that recruiting new Trustees/Non-Executive Directors at this time may be difficult, given considerable business and economic uncertainty in the wake of the CoVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, we want to present a realistic and honest picture of Smile, with its opportunities and challenges as we navigate our way through the next few months and years.

Smile has responded positively to the CoVID-19 crisis by developing a new **Listening and Coaching Service**, for people needing more than befriending and less than therapy; we have called this a *First Aid Listening Service*. We have harnessed the skills of our volunteer mediators to provide a service and plug a gap that emerged during early stages of the period of 'lockdown' and extensive restriction in social contact.

Secondly, owing to Government guidelines and 'social distancing' practices, we have launched a **virtual mediation service**; until we can return to in-person, face to face mediation, this approach ensures we can continue to support people in resolving their disputes. Using a video-conferencing platform (Zoom) we have found that people can become engaged in the mediation process. Mediators and clients have shown they are generally confident and competent in using technology and that clients prefer to proceed sooner, rather than wait until in-person mediation resumes. After the initial period of reduced demand for our services (April 2020), we are now experiencing substantial and sustained increase in demand; how do we harness this moment and market the 'magic' of mediation?

Challenges:

Like many small social enterprise and charitable organisations, Smile's finances fluctuate from year to year due to the nature of short-term contracts and grant funding. Prior to the covid-19 outbreak, Smile's board had agreed to develop a growth strategy whilst managing the financial risks. This remains our vision and ambition and following the successful application of a number of small Covid-related emergency grants, Smile has an opportunity to revisit the growth plan and accelerate our ambitions for Smile with all seriousness. Our ability to adapt quickly in this crisis has also provided the impetus and motivation to find ways to thrive rather than survive; for example we are pro-actively exploring a range of organisational models on a spectrum from independent stand-alone organisation, stronger collaborations through to mergers and acquisition.

We are proud of our service:

Accredited Mediation Skills Training - Smile is a volunteer-led service, supported by a small staff team and 35 volunteer mediators, all of whom have been trained to level three standard required by the College of Mediators. We recruit and train new mediators annually to ensure we can flex and meet the demands of our partners.

We have successfully redesigned our accredited mediation skills training during the last two months and delivered it to a group of ten new volunteer mediators using a blended approach; pre-recorded webinars, interactive zoom workshops and a final 'in person' assessment day.

As an organisation, Smile is innovative, flexible and responsive. We have pioneered projects that apply new approaches grounded in our mediation practice.

Hate Crime Awareness Programme delivered two (mediators) to one 'offender'; this intervention was commissioned in 2005/6 by Lancashire's Police and Crime Commissioner and evaluated in 2012 by Prof Paul Iganski from the University of Lancaster. The conclusion of the report stated that offenders taking part in the victim-awareness programme were less likely to engage in racially motivated hate crime. We are working with partners to develop the programme to deliver to professionals working with victims and offenders of hate crime; providing them with the skills, tools and techniques to effectively manage challenging situations and have conversations not confrontations.

We are proud winners of the National Mediation Young Mediator of the Year Award 2020. This recognition has been achieved in partnership with Cherry Fold Community Primary School in Burnley. **Peer Mediation** has led to reductions in conflicts between children in a school; the teaching staff have fully engaged with a mediative approach which is bringing about a cultural change across the school as they have learned to listen to each other and are able to draw on newly developed skills to resolve their own disputes. Good listening is a life-skill which will remain with the children as they mature. This project has led to a

collaborative project across the SW Burnley area, which is in the top 10% deprived areas in the country.

Smile's services are commissioned by public, private and Third sector organisations across the north west of England

Trustee and Chair recruitment

We are now wishing to recruit new Trustees (one of whom would take on the role of Chair of the Board) to enable Smile to move forward. We want the Board to balance a business head and a social heart, thus supporting Smile in delivering a successful business strategy, whilst achieving maximum social value for customers and clients.

Furthermore, in recruiting several Trustees at this time, the Board is intending that its membership begins to reflect the many diverse social, cultural and geographic communities supported by Smile's services. We are committed to ensuring that Trustees bring a deep understanding of the needs and experiences of the communities served.

We are particularly interested in receiving applications from people who have:

- a good understanding of the social enterprise and /or small and medium-sized business sector
- an appreciation of the significance of 'social value' in a business context
- a strong social policy/public sector background
- expertise in finance, HR or public sector commissioning
- experience of the mediation process, whether as a client, mediator or trainer
- an appreciation of the governance role undertaken by the Board of a Registered Charity
- experience of a range of business models in order to 'thrive' when the operating environment is consistently challenging

Chair of the Board of Trustees

We are looking for a candidate who is willing to lead Smile's Board of Trustees in taking courageous decisions, balanced against financial and other commercial risks. We would anticipate that the candidate would have prior relevant experience as a Chair of a public/charity/Third sector Board or of a corporate governance committee. We would expect the new Chair to bring to life Smile's values whilst promoting the highest standards of integrity and corporate governance, and ensuring that quality, finance, and operational demands are held in balance.

See appendix 1 for an outline of the role of Chair and an indication of personal qualities and behaviours.

Process of recruitment

See Appendix 2 for the Recruitment Process and key dates.

Appendix 1

Chair Role Description¹

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being willing and able to lead Smile in partnership with the Chief Executive
Clarity of purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring the board discusses and agrees the purpose and core values of Smile• Ensuring decisions made advance the purpose and values of Smile
Cohesive board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating productive relationships with and amongst board members• Creating the environment for a high performing board team with Board members making effective use of respective strengths and capabilities
Constructive relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring high quality relationships between board members, staff and volunteers that support delivery of Smile's services• Developing and maintaining productive working relationships with the Chief Executive
Considered decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steering the board in identifying key governance decisions to be made• Ensuring well-founded decision-making• Managing potential conflicts of interest to ensure probity is maintained and there is appropriate transparency

Personal qualities and behaviours of the Chair

Motivation and style	Altruism Sense of humour Empowering Friendly and engaging Humble Politically astute
Capacity to lead	Committed to Smile In a position to offer sufficient time to Smile Clear about the role of Board Chair Capable of seeing 'the big picture' Capable of clarifying issues Capable of handling contentious issues Capable of collaborating with board members

¹ Role description and personal qualities - taken from A Chair's Compass, The Association of Chairs (2014)

Personal attributes	Alert, intelligent, creative Confident Reflective and a listener Organised Focussed Open and innovative Thrive on managing accountability and ambiguity
Ability to relate	Flexible At ease with people of all types Non-judgemental Calm
External relationships	Willingness to use own business or personal contacts to advance Smile Preparedness to establish connections and influence with key people on behalf of Smile, i.e. act as an Ambassador for Smile

Appendix 2

Process of recruitment and key dates:

You are invited to submit an expression of interest, approximately 500 words, explaining how you meet the skills and requirements of the Chair/Trustee role and in particular why you would like to be part of the Smile 'family'. CV's will also be accepted to support your expression of interest. **Closing date is Monday 30th November 2020.**

Please return your expression of interest and CV to kainsworth@smile-ltd.co.uk and indicate whether you are interested in the role of Chair and/or Trustee.

Interviews will be held by video-conference week commencing **7th December 2020**

The Board is planning to confirm the appointment of a Chair or an Interim Chair by the **16th December 2020**. The Board is envisaging that prospective applicants may wish to gain additional information and clarification about how Smile's operates as an organisation. Such conversations with the Chief Executive, current Chair and Trustees will be undertaken by telephone and/or video-conferencing.

Chief Executive, Karen Ainsworth – 07791 210 391

Email: kainsworth@smile-ltd.co.uk