Role and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees

The role of the Board of Trustees is to provide effective governance and safeguard the strategic direction of the Sensory Trust. The Trustees hold a position of responsibility and trust, and also one of legal liability should anything go wrong. It is important that people appointed to serve on the Board are aware of what the position involves and are adequately informed to do the job properly. Induction and training for Trustees is provided.

The Board of Trustees are responsible for the overall governance of the Sensory Trust. As Sensory Trust is a Company limited by guarantee as well as a registered charity, the Trustees are also Directors of the Company. The following information is relevant to both their position as a Trustee of the charity and Director of the company.

Collectively the role of the Board is to:
- safeguard the good name and values of the Sensory Trust
- contribute to strategic direction
- ensure that the Sensory Trust complies with company, charity, employment and health & safety law
- ensure that it pursues its charitable objectives as defined in the Articles of Association
- ensure that its resources are applied exclusively in pursuance of its objectives
- ensure the continuing relevance of its mission and objectives
- approve policies, plans and budgets to achieve those objectives, and monitor performance against them
- set and maintain frameworks of delegation, internal control and risk management
- appoint Sensory Trust's Chief Executive Officer (known as the Director) and monitor their performance
- ensure the financial viability of the charity, its stability and good performance
- protect and manage the Sensory Trust assets

Board Member expectations

What should you expect of the Sensory Trust?
- a comprehensive induction process on joining the Board to understand the organisation, its objectives and to gain insight into the operating environment and likely future issues and opportunities
• Board papers to be circulated approx a week in advance of Board meetings – papers include information on operational progress, financial results, major new developments and projects and risk management
• a participative and open style of Board meeting in which all are encouraged to contribute and are listened to
• free access to the other Trustees, the Director and senior staff, to deal with any matters relating to Board membership or the organisation
• opportunities to become involved in the organisation through attendance at Sensory Trust conferences, seminars, study tours, events and meetings.
• a commitment to continuously seek to improve and positively evolve the organisation as a whole, as well as the Board and its operation.

What will the Sensory Trust expect of you?
• a reasonable time commitment – the Board meets three times per year around January, May and September. Trustees are expected to attend these meetings as well as the Annual General Meeting which is currently held on the same date as the September Trustees meeting. Currently meetings are held in the daytime in Bristol, with occasional meetings in Cornwall. In addition communication by phone and or e mail may also be required if and when other matters require the attention of the Board. Overall this is expected to be approx 8 days per year.
• The Director and Trustees have also established a Strategic Advisory Group (SAG). Attendance at SAG meetings is not compulsory. The intention of SAG is primarily to provide a space where Trustees and senior members of the staff team can exchange views about strategic, tactical, and topical issues in more depth and less formally than at Trustees meetings. In that context, SAG is intended as a sounding board to address ideas and issues that have an impact on the development of the organisation.
• read the Board papers and other materials sent to you to enable you to make effective contributions at Board meetings and to the work of the Sensory Trust
• be an ambassador for the Sensory Trust
• understanding of what the Sensory Trust does and why – to be an effective ambassador you need to know who we work with and what we do
• network with your professional community and contacts – as part of being an ambassador ensure that people you know are aware of the Sensory Trust and informed about its work
• a commitment to the aims and work of the Sensory Trust
• a personal commitment to taking the responsibilities of corporate governance seriously
• a willingness to positively represent the organisation at internal and external events

Role and responsibilities of Trustees
1. Governance role

Trustees contribute to the effective governance of the Sensory Trust by:
• attending regular board meetings and making effective contributions
• using any specific knowledge or experience to help the Board reach sound decisions; this involves scrutinising board papers, leading discussions, focusing on key issues and providing advice and guidance
monitoring and reviewing progress against plans and budgets
agreeing budgets and monitoring the overall financial position
ensuring that the Trust and the Board complies with law and good practice and that all regulatory and statutory requirements are met
understanding the differences between executive and governance functions

2. Strategic role

Collectively the Trustees ensure the charity has a clear vision, mission and strategic direction by:

- contributing to reviews of the values and mission of the Sensory Trust
- bringing insight, inspiration, judgement and perspective to contribute to the development of long term strategy and plans
- ensuring that the board monitors and responds to changes in the operating environment
- understanding the importance of managing risk and limiting the organisation’s exposure to significant risks

3. Representative role

Trustees act as ambassadors and champions for the Sensory Trust by:

- accompanying the Director or other Trustees in meetings with key stakeholders as required
- attending or representing the Sensory Trust at meetings, events, conferences and tours involving partners and funders

Knowledge, skills, experience and other qualities

We are looking for Trustees who will bring their own individual range of knowledge, skills and experience to contribute to the overall richness of the Board. It is unlikely that any individual Director will have all of the skills and experiences that the Board collectively requires.

Experience required by the Trustees as a whole (this could be on a paid or voluntary basis):

- planning, architecture (landscape or built environment) and urban design
- regeneration (economic, physical or community)
- green space, parks, leisure and land management
- personal and/or professional experience and understanding of social exclusion issues, particularly in relation to disability
- health and wellbeing
- community engagement and enterprise
- skills, training and education
- children, young people and play
- research
- arts

Specialist skills required by the Trustees as a whole include strategic planning, fundraising, PR/marketing/communications/advocacy, research, partnership working, political awareness, financial management, project management, performance management and evaluation, legal and corporate governance.
We are also looking to incorporate experience of working in a range of sectors, including: public sector (national or local), private sector, social enterprise and the third sector.

**Skills and Abilities to be demonstrated by each trustee:**

- commitment to the purpose, objectives and values of the Sensory Trust
- willingness to devote necessary time and effort
- strategic vision
- communication skills – ability to express balanced opinions and listen to the opinions of others
- understand and accept legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of being a Trustee and Company Director
- be eligible for service as a charity trustee
- ability to maintain confidentiality on sensitive and confidential information
- analytical skills – ability to read and understand complex subject matters and comment, challenge or debate as appropriate
- ability to work in a team

**Terms and conditions of appointment**

Trustees shall hold office for a three year term, following which a further invitation for re-election can be made by the board. We have a rolling programme of one third of the trustees (selected by the length of their appointment) standing for re-election at every AGM.

This is an unsalaried position. Expenses are reimbursed in accordance with Sensory Trust travel procedures (currently 45p per mile or second class public transport).

May 2014