Chair & Trustee Candidate Brief

Recruitment of four Trustees, including a new Chair

2026

A fulfilled life for everyone affected by spinal cord injury

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in joining the Board of the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA). This is an important moment for the charity. SIA has achieved more than 50 years of supporting people affected by spinal cord injury and is now firmly focused on delivering its ambitious Strategy 2030.

Our Trustees are central to that ambition. They are responsible for the governance and strategic leadership of SIA. They are the assurance to our 25,000+ members that SIA will do everything within its power to remain financially sustainable, well governed and relentlessly focused on the needs and aspirations of people living with spinal cord injury and their families.

With two Trustees recently coming to the end of their term, another stepping down for personal reasons, and our present Chair, Faisal Hussain, coming to the end of his term in April 2027, **we are now looking for four new members including a new Chair.**

Our aim is that everyone appointed through this process will have lived experience of spinal cord injury. We want to attract candidates from a wide range of backgrounds, communities, professions and life experiences, bringing different perspectives and skills to the Board.

At least one of the Trustee vacancies is intended for a financially qualified individual who can bring strong professional financial expertise and provide additional depth and support to the Finance & Operations Committee. We are also seeking to strengthen the Board in other areas such as charity leadership and governance, fundraising and entrepreneurship, membership, communications and policy-influencing.

But all aspiring, values-driven applications will be welcome. For the role of Trustee, it is not essential for you to have followed a traditional Boardroom path to make a valuable contribution. We are interested in your judgement, values, lived-experience, perspective and the skills you can bring to SIA's future.

If you share our ambitions and values and believe your lived experience, skills and perspective can help SIA make an even greater difference, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

About the Spinal Injuries Association

SIA is the expert, guiding voice for life after spinal cord injury. Its vision is simple and ambitious: a fulfilled life for *everyone* affected by spinal cord injury.

People living with spinal cord injury (SCI) are at the heart of SIA's work. The charity provides specialist support and advocacy, connects people to a national network of services and community support, builds specialist knowledge across health and care through training and education, and campaigns for systemic change.

SIA today

SIA supports a growing membership of more than 25,000 people living with or affected by SCI. Its 2025 annual report records 82 staff, 12 full Trustees and six Associate Trustees at year end, with lived experience embedded across the organisation.

SIA is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. The Board is the charity's governing body and Trustees are also directors for the purposes of company law.

Strategy 2030

Our vision and purpose

- Our vision is a fulfilled life for everyone affected by spinal cord injury.
- Our purpose is to be the expert guiding voice for life after spinal cord injury.

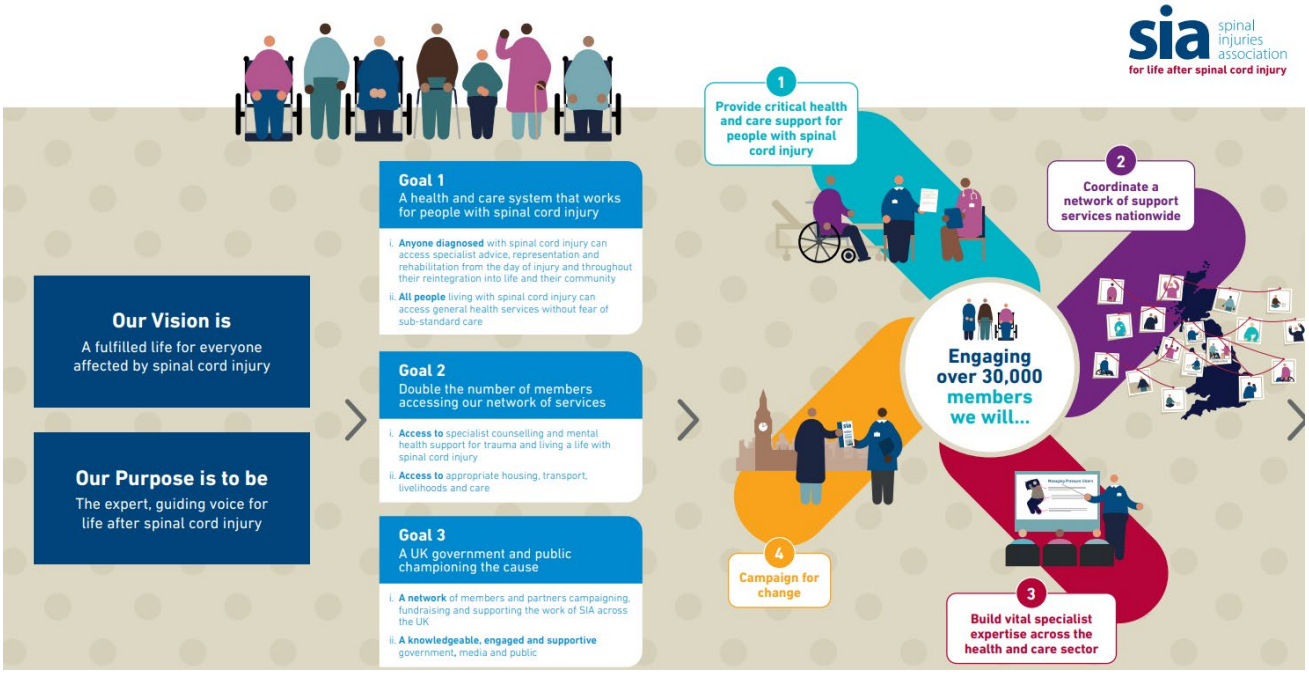
Why Strategy 2030 matters

SIA's strategy starts with the reality faced by people with spinal cord injury and their families. Too often they encounter stretched or inappropriate health and support services, barriers to accessing carers, transport, livelihoods and housing, and a lack of public awareness of this lifelong condition.

The strategy is therefore not simply about growing SIA. It’s about changing the environment in which people with SCI live: improving access to the right health and care, connecting more people to specialist support, building expertise across the wider system and ensuring that the SCI community has a stronger voice with government and the public.

Our three goals to 2030

- **A health and care system that works for people living with spinal cord injury.**
- **Double the number of members accessing SIA's network of services.**
- **A UK government and public championing the cause of people living with spinal cord injury and their families.**



How we will achieve this

SIA is pursuing four connected approaches to deliver its Strategy 2030 goals:

- Provide critical health and care support for people with spinal cord injury - including specialist frontline support and guidance, advocacy and representation, and access to appropriate support.
- Coordinate a network of support services nationwide - connecting people to trusted partners, local community groups and specialist services able to meet diverse needs.
- Build vital specialist expertise across the health and care sector - through training and education, research and development, knowledge-sharing and policy and practice.
- Campaign for change - through national campaigns, member-led campaigning and wider public engagement.

The Board's role in Strategy 2030

The incoming Chair and Trustees will join SIA at the halfway point in the delivery of Strategy 2030. Their role is not to manage the strategy operationally, but to provide the leadership, oversight, challenge and support to enable SIA to turn its ambition into sustainable impact.

The Board will need to maintain a clear line of sight between SIA's purpose, the three strategic goals and organisational performance; test whether investment and resources are producing meaningful impact; oversee financial sustainability and risk; and ensure that growth does not come at the expense of quality, accessibility or the needs of the SCI community.

Crucially, the Board must ensure that lived experience remains central to SIA's decisions. All four appointments in this campaign will therefore be people with SCI, bringing different perspectives and experiences to a Board responsible for delivering a strategy shaped around what matters to the community.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR OUR NEW CHAIR AND TRUSTEES
Strategic oversight | Impact and outcomes | Financial sustainability | Support | Constructive challenge | Member voice and lived experience | Partnership and influence

Impact and reach

During 2024/25, SIA's work included:

- 3,205 sessions delivered by the clinical specialist team, supporting 1,114 people.
- 574 counselling sessions, supporting people with SCI as well as friends and family.
- 1,438 peer support sessions delivered through the support network.
- 28 regional community support groups and an expanding network of specialist organisations.
- Training and education delivered to 2,265 healthcare professionals.
- Major campaigning activity on paralysed bowel care, women's health and the case for a national spinal cord injury strategy.

Financial context

SIA has grown its reach and activity while continuing to manage its finances within a clear reserves and investment framework.

Gross income 2024/25	£4.096m
Total expenditure 2024/25	£4.193m
Balance used from Designated Reserves	£100k
Free unrestricted reserves	£1.160m
Designated reserves (including property)	£2.311m

Income in 2024/25 increased by 6% compared with the previous year. SIA's annual report describes the deficit as planned, supported through designated reserves to enable continued investment in expanding services and strategic priorities. https://www.spinal.co.uk/about-us/reports-and-publications/

The Board and governance

SIA's Articles provide for a Board of between nine and fifteen full Trustees. Trustees may serve up to three terms of three years. As far as practicable, at least 75% of the Board should have lived experience of spinal cord injury and the Board should be diverse and reflective of society. For this recruitment campaign, SIA has determined that, if possible, all four successful candidates will live with SCI.

The Board meets at least four times each year and delegates detailed oversight through committees. SIA's current committee structure includes the Finance, People and Operations Committee, alongside committees focused on Business Development and Programmes.

SIA has also introduced Associate Trustees to broaden expertise, strengthen succession planning and provide additional input through Committee and advisory activity. This recruitment, however, is specifically for four full, voting Trustees.

Roles	Chair of Trustees and three Trustees
Status	Voluntary; reasonable expenses reimbursed
Location	UK-wide, with a mix of in-person and remote activity
Board meetings	At least four Board meetings each year normally in person, plus committee and development activity
Term	Three years, with potential renewal in line with SIA's Articles (and not more than three Terms)
Eligibility	If possible, all four appointees will have lived experience of spinal cord injury (SCI)

Trustee responsibilities

- Contribute actively to the development and delivery of SIA's strategy and charitable purpose.
- Ensure SIA complies with its governing documents, charity law, company law and other relevant regulation.
- Act in the best interests of SIA and the people it exists to serve.
- Ensure the effective and efficient administration of the charity and the appropriate use of its resources.
- Maintain oversight of financial sustainability, solvency, reserves, investment and risk.
- Approve key strategies, plans and policies and monitor organisational performance.
- Support, challenge and hold the Chief Executive and senior leadership team to account.
- Safeguard SIA's reputation, values, culture and commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Prepare thoroughly for Board and committee meetings and contribute independent judgement to collective decisions.
- Act as an ambassador for SIA and, where appropriate, build relationships with members, partners, supporters and stakeholders.
- Declare and appropriately manage conflicts of interest and uphold the highest standards of conduct and governance.

Our next Chair

The Chair will lead the Board at a significant point in SIA's development.

The Chair's primary role is to create the conditions for an effective, inclusive and high-performing Board, drawing out the contribution of every Trustee while maintaining clear accountability and a constructive relationship with the Chief Executive.

They will line-manage and support the CEO to maintain momentum behind Strategy 2030 and ensure that the Board keeps focus on its three goals, the impact of SIA's four strategic approaches, organisational capacity, financial resilience and the voice of people with SCI.

Key responsibilities of the Chair

- Provide inclusive and values-led leadership to the Board, ensuring strong governance and collective accountability.
- Chair Board meetings effectively, enabling open debate, constructive challenge and clear decision-making.
- Maintain a strong, supportive and appropriately challenging relationship with the Chief Executive.
- Ensure the Board remains focused on strategy, impact, financial sustainability, risk and the needs of the SCI community.
- Lead Board succession, development and effectiveness, ensuring the right balance of skills, lived experience and diversity.
- Build trust across the Board and between Trustees and the executive team while maintaining clear governance boundaries.
- Act as a senior ambassador for SIA, representing the charity with members, partners, government, funders and other stakeholders.
- Champion equity, diversity and inclusion and ensure that different voices and experiences shape Board thinking.
- Lead the Board through difficult or sensitive decisions with sound judgement, calmness and integrity.

What we are looking for in the Chair

- Lived experience of spinal cord injury and a strong personal commitment to SIA's vision and purpose.
- Significant leadership experience at Board-level (Executive or Non-Executive), with the credibility and judgement to lead a national charity Board.
- A strong understanding of good governance and the distinction between strategic oversight and executive management.
- Experience of bringing people together around a shared purpose and building consensus without suppressing challenge.
- Excellent interpersonal, listening and communication skills, with a collaborative and inclusive leadership style.
- Strategic perspective and the ability to navigate complexity, ambiguity, risk and change.
- Confidence as an ambassador and relationship-builder across diverse stakeholder groups.
- The time and commitment to be visible, engaged and available beyond formal Board meetings.

What we are looking for in all Trustees

All four appointees will have SCI. Beyond that shared lived experience, SIA wants to appoint people with varied backgrounds, skills and perspectives who can collectively strengthen the Board.

Essential qualities

- A clear commitment to SIA's vision, purpose and values.
- The ability to use lived experience thoughtfully at Board level while recognising the breadth and diversity of the wider SCI community.
- Strategic thinking and the ability to understand complex issues, assess evidence and focus on what matters most.
- Sound, independent judgement and the confidence to ask constructive questions.
- An ability to work collaboratively, listen well and respect different views and experiences.
- Strong personal integrity and a clear understanding of collective responsibility.
- A commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- A willingness to learn about and fulfil the legal duties and responsibilities of a charity Trustee and company director.
- Sufficient time and energy to prepare for and participate in Board, committee and development activity.

Building a representative board

Alongside the qualities required of every Trustee, SIA is keen to strengthen the collective Board through a broad mix of professional backgrounds and experience. We do not expect any one candidate to bring all these areas but we are particularly interested in candidates who can contribute experience in one or more of the following:

- **Charity leadership, governance and strategy** – Senior leadership or governance experience within a charity, membership body, social enterprise or other purpose-led organisation; strategic planning and oversight; organisational development; board effectiveness; governance, risk and assurance.
- **Financial expertise** – One of the Trustee vacancies is intended for a financially qualified individual. We are particularly interested in experience of financial strategy and oversight, financial planning and reporting, audit and assurance, risk, reserves and investment, and supporting long-term financial sustainability.
- **Entrepreneurship and commercial activity** – Experience of building or growing organisations, services or ventures; commercial strategy; enterprise and trading activity; partnerships; innovation; diversification of income; or bringing an entrepreneurial mindset to sustainable growth.
- **Membership, marketing and engagement** – Experience of membership organisations, community or customer engagement, marketing, communications, brand and audience development; using insight to deepen engagement and ensuring that the voices of members and communities shape strategy and services.
- **Policy and influencing** – Experience of public policy, government relations, advocacy, campaigning or influencing; understanding how policy is developed and changed; and building relationships across government, public services and wider stakeholder networks.

These areas are deliberately broad. Candidates may bring relevant experience from the charity, public or private sectors, from their professional career, voluntary activity or wider lived experience and applications are welcome from those who don’t have the experience above. The priority is to build a balanced Board with complementary skills, perspectives and experiences, rather than appoint four people with similar backgrounds.

Diversity of experience

SIA is intentionally seeking a diverse field of candidates. We warmly welcome interest from people currently under-represented in charity governance and from candidates whose route to a Board role may be non-traditional. Diversity includes - but is not limited to - ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, geography, socio-economic background, type and level of SCI, route to injury or diagnosis, professional background and life experience. We are interested in the perspective you will add to the Board, not simply the positions you have previously held.

First-time Trustees are welcome

Previous Trustee experience can be helpful, but it is not essential for the Trustee roles. SIA will provide induction and support, and values curiosity, judgement, lived experience and the willingness to contribute as part of a collective Board.

Commitment and terms

Term of office

Trustees are appointed for a three-year term, with the potential for renewal for up to two further terms, subject to SIA's Articles and the needs of the Board. The positions are voluntary and reasonable expenses are reimbursed.

Time commitment

Trustees should expect to commit time (amounting to approximately eight days per year) to:

- Preparing for and attending at least four Board meetings each year.
- Participating in at least one Board development or strategy day annually.
- Serving on a Board committee and preparing for and attending its meetings.
- Ad hoc meetings, working groups or calls where required.
- Occasional SIA events, member engagement, stakeholder meetings or ambassadorial activity.

The Chair will need to commit additional time for contact with the Chief Executive, Board planning, Trustee support and development, and external representation. The exact pattern will be discussed with shortlisted candidates but amounts to approximately 25 days per year, which varies depending on business need.

Board and Committee meeting dates for 2026/27 are as follows:

Board of Trustees	21st November (Q2), 27th February (Q3), 15th May (Q4)
SIA Enterprise Committee	1st February (Q3), 26th April (Q4)
Business Development Committee	3rd February (Q3), 28th April (Q4)
Programmes Committee	4th February (Q3), 29th April (Q4)
Finance, People & Operations Committee	8th February (Q3), 4th May (Q4)

Induction and development

New Trustees receive an induction covering legal duties, SIA's governing documents, committee structure, services, strategy, business and fundraising plans, financial performance and reserves. Trustees also complete mandatory training, including safeguarding, and are encouraged to undertake further development relevant to their role.

Appointment process

If you are interested in these opportunities, we encourage confidential conversations with our recruitment partners Public Leaders Appointments:

- Anna Jay – MD – anna@publicleadersappointments.com
- Melissa Stewart – Consultant – melissa@publicleadersappointments.com

How to apply

Please submit:

- **A CV**, no more than *three* pages.
- **A supporting statement**, no more than *two* pages, explaining your motivation and how your experience, skills and lived experience meet the requirements set out in this pack.
- As part of Public Leaders Appointments' commitment to inclusive recruitment, we invite candidates to complete a short, confidential equality monitoring questionnaire. Participation is voluntary and the information is kept separate from the selection process. It is used only for anonymised reporting and to help us evaluate the reach and inclusivity of our recruitment work. **Equality monitoring form**: PLA Diversity Insights – Equality Monitoring – Fill in form (Please use code: **SIA-BOARD-26**)

Application details

Closing date: Midday on 9th October 2026
Shortlisting: Week commencing 19th October
Meeting with CEO and Team [online]: Week commencing 9th November
Interviews [In person at our HQ in Milton Keynes/online]: Week commencing 9th November
Appointed Chair and Trustees will be invited to join our Board meeting on 21st November at SIA House, Milton Keynes/online.

Applications to be submitted to: applications@publicleadersappointments.com

Our office is fully accessible, however, please do note any specific requirements prior to your interview.

Please state clearly whether you wish to be considered for the Chair role, a Trustee role, or both. Candidates interested in the finance-focused Trustee vacancy should also highlight their professional financial qualification and relevant experience.

Selection

The process will be designed to enable a rounded assessment of candidates' skills, lived experience, values, judgement and contribution to the collective Board. SIA is committed to an accessible and inclusive process and will make reasonable adjustments where required.

Successful candidates will be subject to appropriate due diligence and eligibility checks before appointment, including checks required for charity Trustees and company directors.

Further information

We encourage candidates to explore SIA's work and strategy before applying:

- SIA website: spinal.co.uk
- Strategy 2030: spinal.co.uk/about-us/our-2030-strategy/
- Current Trustees: spinal.co.uk/about-us/our-trustees/
- Annual Report and Impact Report for year ending 31 March 2025.

A final word

SIA exists so everyone affected by spinal cord injury has the support, information, opportunities and voice they need to live a fulfilled life. The next Chair and Trustees will have an important part to play in making that ambition real.

If you share that ambition and believe your lived experience, skills and perspective can help SIA make an even greater difference, we would be very pleased to hear from you.