



Chief Executive Officer JOB DESCRIPTION

At First Step, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is at the core of everything we do. Working closely with children, parents, staff, volunteers, and the wider community, we are dedicated to creating a safe and nurturing environment where everyone can thrive. Our team is vigilant and proactive to identify and address any concerns, and to follow our robust procedures whenever there is a belief that a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm.

We are equally passionate about championing equality and diversity in our employment practices and the services we provide. First Step embraces inclusion, celebrating the unique perspectives and talents that each individual brings to our organisation. We actively encourage people from all backgrounds - regardless of race, gender, disability, age, marital status, sexuality, religion, background, or personality - to play a key role in building vibrant, sustainable communities. Our commitment is rooted in recognising and valuing the strengths diversity brings to our team and our wider community.

Please note: All applicants will be required to undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, ensuring we maintain the highest standards of safety and trust.

Post Title	Chief Executive Officer
Post Grade/scale	Pt 49 – Pt 58
Hours of Work	The CEO will be expected to devote the whole of their working time and attention to the role. Full time – 40 hours per week with some evening and weekend working, as reasonably necessary to perform their duties
Post Salary	£57,402 - £67,575
Contract Type	Permanent
Post Location	Hornchurch, Essex (with some travel in London, Essex and the surrounding area)
Reports to	Board of Trustees
Responsible for	Senior Management Team

Purpose of the role

This is a hands-on, outward-facing role, leading from the front, championing First Step's profile within the community and igniting the interest of existing and potential supporters and donors.

- Inspire, energise and direct the First Step team of staff and volunteers, to consistently deliver outstanding support for families of children with special needs and or disabilities
- Foster a positive and proactive culture that embodies excellence and compassion at every level.
- Shape and communicate a strong strategy and vision, ensuring that every aspect of our work aligns seamlessly with First Step's objects and values.

- Actively seek out and embrace new possibilities to expand and enhance services, driving innovation to ensure the organisation continues to make a meaningful difference to the community.

Main Responsibilities

Leadership and Strategic Management

To drive the strategic development of First Step through exploring and evaluating innovative options for enhancing and adapting services, always focused on addressing the unique needs and aspirations of children with disabilities and their families.

To approach organisational planning across all operational areas with creativity and vision, devising robust strategies that embrace partnership opportunities, sound financial management, new business ventures, and regular engagement with all stakeholders to inform decision-making.

To stay attuned to emerging trends and developments within the Children and Families sector, assessing what their influence should be on First Step's services. Proactively ensure the organisation's Vision, Objectives and Strategic Plan remain ambitious, relevant and truly impactful in a continually evolving environment.

To work in partnership with the Board of Trustees, staff team and external partners to shape and deliver forward-thinking service provision and in doing so, foster a culture defined by trust, transparency, collaboration and a sense of collective success.

Management

Families & Children

Working closely with the Early Years Leader to ensure:

- The delivery of high quality, impactful services that truly make a difference to families and children in line with our strategic plan.
- The ongoing development and monitoring of each child attending First Step, with evidence of how individual objectives are being met and outcomes achieved.
- Unwavering support is provided to families and carers as they navigate changes in their circumstances, by empowering them to realise meaningful outcomes.
- Innovative areas for service growth are identified, and nurture a strong sense of community and mutual support within First Step.
- Fresh opportunities are pursued to enhance and expand First Step's service delivery.
- Any change management processes are led with transparency and open dialogue, and everyone's voice is heard.
- Robust evaluation and compliance measures are in place and all services meet the highest standards.

Finance

- To maintain a resilient financial framework, drive strategic financial planning and manage resources with efficiency and integrity.
- To oversee the preparation of meaningful and understandable Monthly Management Accounts in a timely manner.
- To lead on the preparation of an annual budget with forecasts for a minimum of 3 years, and ensure that the cashflow of the organisation is monitored.

- To continually scrutinise the financial framework to ensure rigorous standards of probity and transparency are met at all times.

Fundraising

To lead the creation and implementation of a dynamic fundraising plan, ensuring sustainable financial support for the organisation's strategic priorities.

- Proactively drive the research, identification, and securing of diverse funding opportunities.
- Ensure there is a fundraising delivery plan in place and that progress towards its objectives are monitored and reported.
- Ensure the effective stewardship of First Step supporters and donors and that those relationships are nurtured and supported.

Safeguarding

Take on the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead, championing best safeguarding practices that comply with the latest legal requirements and statutory guidance, such as the 'Early Years Framework' and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'.

Make Safeguarding a core priority, as detailed in Appendix A of this Job Description. The responsibilities will include:-

- The appointment of a deputy and additional designated safeguarding leads, ensuring coverage and accountability across the organisation.
- Overseeing the recruitment, selection, and ongoing training of staff and volunteers, embedding safeguarding in every aspect of people management.
- To develop and implement robust policies, procedures and record-keeping systems, ensuring annual compliance reports are submitted to the Board of Trustees.
- Maintain a clear understanding of First Step's responsibilities within the wider context of the Local Authority and the Local Safeguarding Board, ensuring effective collaboration and compliance at all times.

Facilities

Champion the continuous improvement of First Step facilities and equipment, ensuring they consistently meet organisational needs and support a vibrant, inclusive environment.

To encourage innovative use of spaces and resources to maximise their impact for all our beneficiaries.

To ensure rigorous procedures are in place to guarantee ongoing security, maintenance, and cleanliness throughout the building, grounds, external play spaces, equipment, and technology.

You must maintain records of all equipment available for appropriate regulatory inspections.

Governance

Work to cultivate a positive, solution-focused relationship with the Board of Trustees and to support them in fulfilling their responsibilities to create the following outcomes:

- The organisation's Vision and Objects are securely embedded into the daily operations of First Step
- Champion high standards of governance throughout all organisational activities.

- Lead in the efforts to shape, refine and review strategic plans and business/service development initiatives.
- Promote clear and effective communication of financial information, supporting robust financial oversight.
- Strengthen organisational resilience by embedding sound risk management practices.
- Ensure accountability is upheld at every level, with both the Board and CEO demonstrating exemplary responsibility.
- Participate fully in Board and sub-committee meetings, contributing insight and supporting effective governance, whilst ensuring Trustees are fully informed of developments on legal and regulatory frameworks.

External Communications

Take an influential role in representing First Step to the wider community, showcasing its positive impact and advocating for its work wherever decisions are made about services for babies and pre-school children with special needs and disabilities.

- Serve as a passionate ambassador for families and their children with special needs and disabilities, engaging with community groups and external agencies to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are prioritised.
- Champion the organisation's vision and achievements to raise awareness, galvanise public support and spark momentum for fundraising.

People Management

Create an inclusive, nurturing environment where staff and volunteers feel valued and supported, empowering them to thrive in their roles and make meaningful contributions to the organisation's mission.

- Inspire and motivate the team to deliver excellence, championing professional development and encouraging fresh ideas and innovative approaches to service delivery.
- Oversee the implementation and continual review of robust policies and procedures covering recruitment, retention, professional growth, appraisal, discipline, welfare and performance management, ensuring they consistently reflect best practice.
- Lead regular performance appraisals and comprehensive evaluations for the senior management team, ensuring they inspire high standards across their own teams.

General

Champion respect for diversity in every aspect of service delivery and staffing, ensuring mechanisms are in place to address any incidents or complaints swiftly and effectively.

Ensure all policies and procedures are comprehensive, regularly reviewed and fully compliant with regulatory and statutory requirements.

Maintain exemplary health and safety standards tailored to the needs of vulnerable children, families, and visitors, and make certain that all staff and volunteers clearly understand their personal responsibilities.

Embrace any additional reasonable responsibilities as required by the Board of Trustees, demonstrating flexibility and commitment to the organisation's ongoing success.



Appendix A

Safeguarding Requirements and Responsibilities

Serve as the Designated Safeguarding Lead, actively championing rigorous safeguarding practices that align with the latest legal requirements and statutory guidance, including the Early Years Framework, Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Local Safeguarding Board.

Ensure that safer recruitment protocols are thoroughly applied for all staff, trustees and volunteers, with strict adherence to the disclosure requirements for working with children under eight years old.

Appoint a Deputy Safeguarding Lead who is fully trained and prepared to step in whenever necessary, supported by a team of Designated Safeguarding Persons within the organisation.

Maintain a comprehensive suite of safeguarding policies that are regularly updated in response to evolving legislation and statutory guidance.

Deliver ongoing training and up-to-date briefings to all staff, trustees and volunteers, fostering a strong understanding of safeguarding responsibilities and ensuring robust compliance, with transparent processes for escalating concerns.

Establish clear and secure systems for recording and communicating all safeguarding incidents and actions, with access strictly limited to those who require the information.

Undertake regular training as required for the role, in keeping with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Local Safeguarding Board.

Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and maintain awareness of the Local Authority Designated Officer for each area in which the charity operates, ensuring efficient communication when required.

Ensure the charity is represented at every child protection conference involving children supported by the organisation.

Forge strong and proactive relationships with statutory and voluntary agencies, including the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, to strengthen safeguarding networks.

Lead the development of thorough risk assessments for all activities undertaken by the charity, ensuring the ongoing safety of colleagues and clients in both routine and exceptional circumstances.

Present a comprehensive annual report on safeguarding compliance to the trustees and directors, providing insights and recommendations for continuous improvement.



**Chief Executive Officer
PERSON SPECIFICATION**

Values	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Demonstrable passion and commitment to support families of children with special needs and/or disabilities, so that they achieve meaningful outcomes	E
Committed to / Demonstrate the importance of fulfilling First Step's Values in all aspects of the CEO role	E

Experience	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Creating and developing a strategic plan	E
Ability to recognise and manage the need for change	E
Wide ranging experience of managing and leading teams	E
Maintaining a robust culture of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults within an organisation	E
Managing a financial framework	E
Experience or understanding of the structure of voluntary organisations	D
Development of new business opportunities with public, private or voluntary sector partners	D
Previous experience of leadership within the voluntary sector	D
Management of volunteers	D

Communication	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Excellent written, numeracy and verbal communication skills	E
Ability and confidence to liaise effectively with different sectors of the community	E
Ability to communicate our vision, mission and values to internal and external stakeholders	E

Skills and competencies	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Ability to lead and inspire with empathy, passion and commitment	E
Ability to think creatively and develop new ideas	D
Ability and confidence to navigate emotionally charged situations sensitively	E
Demonstrable budgeting and financial skills	E
Effective negotiations skills	D
Ability to prioritise and manage competing tasks often during periods of high pressure	E
Awareness of and commitment to the needs of children with disabilities and their families	E

Other	Essential (E) Desirable (D)
Be available and willing to undertake evening and weekend working for First Step events and Trustee / Sub Group Meetings	E
Have a full driving licence and the use of a car for work purposes	D
To be able to travel when required within London, Essex and the surrounding area	E

Should you require further details or an informal conversation, please contact Mark Halls at recruitment@firststep.org.uk