"A lot of people care, but they don't understand. When I come here, they understand."
Group Member 2019

Trustee Recruitment Notes for Applicants

Heart Wood is a developing charity founded in 2019, based in Hexham, Northumberland, that offers men person-centred group therapy in a nature setting. Our particular person-centred approach sees improved mental health as enhanced contact with self, others and the shared reality.

Person-centred in this context is the approach formulated by Carl Rogers in the 1940s and 1950s and developed by him, Warner M, Mearns D and Thorne B, Sanders P, Prouty G, Van Werde D and many others since then. It is radical and counter-cultural and based on thoroughly researched evidence which shows that in particular relational conditions, people can find enormous capacities for personal growth or healing.

Our small team are passionate about Heart Wood's vision which is "to nurture and develop the Heart Wood therapeutic model and to share it with the world". We are looking for like-minded people to join our management committee as Trustees to support us in fulfilling the charity's aims. Trustees oversee the development and delivery of Heart Wood's strategy and provide support to the Heart Wood team.

"We're all patients and we're all healers"
Group member 2024

For more information about Heart Wood and our team, please visit our website www.heartwoodcharity.org

"What they do up here is unlike anything I've been on. Even it's just a case of sitting around a fire and having a bit of soup and having a chat, it's just totally not like anything you know. When I've gone to therapists before it's been sort of one on one in an office, or it's in a classroom and it's... the vibe isn't there."
Group Member 2023

WHAT WE DO AT HEART WOOD

We offer free-of charge, person-centred group therapy for men, including those who are suffering with complex and enduring poor mental health. We work in a natural environment around the fire. The majority of the men we work with have lived through early trauma and they generally cannot engage with existing services.

What we offer is truly radical and counter-cultural in how it recognises people as the experts on their own experiencing. We offer an open-ended, high quality relational intervention with small manageable group sizes, that gives the men as much agency to find their own way forward as we can.

Chip Ponsford (Founder and Lead Therapist) and Rab Erskine (Mentor to Heart Wood and Lead Therapist) have developed this way of working in a way that is driven by Pre-Therapy and Contact work. They are both members of the Pre Therapy International Network (www.pre-therapy.com). This way of working is very much focused on the here and now. It's a non-interpretive way of relating which is proven to provide a safe environment in which people can re-connect with enormous resources within themselves.

We offer group work, as this provides an additional opportunity for the participants to not only be offered a constructive and positive relationship with therapists, but also to contribute to, witness and learn from others' experience.

Chip and Rab are supported by qualified and experienced co-facilitators: person-centred counsellors / psychotherapists, Blossie Pearce Lawson, Richard Thomas and Carolin Blaske, and Kirsty Daley Sapiain Torres - a dramatherapist who embraces the person-centred approach.

We are working towards becoming a Centre of Excellence by publishing about our work and offering training courses for qualified therapists.

WHY OUTDOORS AND WHY MEN?

- The natural environment of woodland is therapeutic. Research shows that, for example, blood pressure lowers and people relax in a nature setting – a state essential for processing or integrating traumatic experience.
- Research shows that men are much more likely to engage with outdoor therapy with activities than with indoor options. Our work combines group psychotherapy with mindful creative and fun woodland activities such as walking, bushcraft and creative / expressive activities.
- Mental health is a major issue recognised in many recent policy documents. It is no secret that this is the case and yet men are less likely to seek help with their mental health issues.
- Men have measurably lower access to the social support of friends, relatives and community and are isolated
- Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 49. The North East had the highest national suicide rate in 2018 (ONS)
- Men are significantly less likely to access statutory indoor services, yet there are no other therapist-led outdoor mental health support services on offer.

FUNDING

Heart Wood is funded through grants and fundraising initiatives. Currently we have three main funders - National Lottery, Ballinger Trust, David and Ruth Lewis Family Charitable Trust – and seek funding annually from a number of smaller Trusts and Foundations. We raise additional funding through fundraising events.

FILM

We have made a short powerful film about our work which we recommend seeing. Please contact us if you'd like to watch it.

TRUSTEE APPLICATION

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

A full list of the skills and experiences we would like across the whole team in Heart Wood are detailed below. We do not expect applicants to have experience in all of these and we can offer training to develop experience in several areas.

We are looking for people who can bring:

- Empathy for the lives of our target beneficiaries and a passion for improving the lives of vulnerable people.
- A commitment to Heart Wood's therapeutic approach
- The skills and experience to contribute to the delivery of Heart Wood's aims and purpose, and to ensure it operates effectively

All trustees to have, or to be working towards, the following skills and experiences:

- Insight into the impact of complex trauma and/ or social isolation on a person's emotional well-being
- Understanding of and personal commitment to Heart Wood's therapeutic approach
- Understanding of the role of a trustee and basic knowledge of charity governance and law
- Basic knowledge of charity finances and accounting
- Experience of board membership/ trustee role
- Team working, listening skills, empathy, communication
- Managing conflicts of interest, judgement and decision making
- Organisational skills and flexibility

Skills and experiences required **amongst the trustees**:

- Lived experience of the issues facing our target beneficiaries
- Deep knowledge of relevant therapeutic approaches
- Good knowledge of metal health/ therapy sectors
- Significant experience of finance/ accounting
- Significant experience of governance/ accountability frameworks and reporting
- Significant experience of fundraising and grant applications
- Experience of setting vision and developing strategic plan
- Experience of overseeing delivery of strategic plan and outcome evaluation
- Capacity to act as an ambassador for the charity with stakeholders, at external events etc
- Access to local / national networks
- Experience of safeguarding
- Experience in risk management
- Knowledge/ experience in HR practice
- Leadership capability
- Experience of acting as Board Chair

Other knowledge and experience useful to Heart Wood:

- woodland/ nature engagement activities
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policies
- stakeholder management
- communications/ PR / social media

- Health and Safety policies
- IT/ data protection etc
- contracts, procurement, estates
- legal skills

REQUIREMENTS

Trustees are expected to work collectively to:

- Understand and uphold the vision, purpose and values of Heart Wood
- Help define the strategic direction of the charity
- Promote good governance, including implementing policies and activities to achieve objectives
- Ensure the charity operates efficiently and complies with legal requirements
- Provide support to and maintain good relationships with the charity's staff and volunteers
- Bring expertise, experience and contacts.

Full Charity Commission guidance can be found here.

TIME COMMITTMENT

- A minimum of four Committee Meetings per year (usually Wednesday evenings via Zoom)
- One or two in-person meetings per year (in local woodland)
- Occasional individual meetings with Heart Wood staff or Chair
- Availability to meet more frequently to contribute to sub-committees, offer opinions and support, or answer queries.

Heart Wood Trustees positions are voluntary and unpaid. Travel costs are reimbursed for Trustees required to travel and who do not live locally.

APPLICATIONS

If you are interested in joining our small, committed team, please complete this short form:

Expression of Interest

If you would like an informal conversation with the Heart Wood Chair before applying, please contact Emma who can arrange this.

Emma Ponsford (Manager)
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