

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS for election of Chair of the WCN. Sept 2024

CANDIDATE 1. Catherine Mahony, CEO of Unfold

In my time working in Westminster, I've been struck by the collaborative spirit in the VCS community: we help each other out, we share information and we work together so that people in Westminster can thrive. I think it's important to recognise that this isn't just down to luck - there are things we do, choices we make and resources we use to create this environment. Part of it is about having space and time to come together, share, learn and take action and I've valued the benefits of that over the last few years.

As Chair of the WCN, I'd like to hold that space so that the rich range of experience and expertise can be shared, and I undertake to represent our vibrant community where needed, advocating for the resources and support the VCS in Westminster needs.

CANDIDATE 2. Nadia Taylor. Chair of Carers Network Westminster

I have extensive leadership and management experience including people and project management and delivery, licensing law, as well as risk assessment, strategic planning and analysis, procurement and contract management and compliance in addition to a wide range of inter-personal skills.

I am a dedicated campaigner for rights and equal opportunities for unpaid carers and the disabled, and have a genuine commitment to social justice, equality, diversity and inclusivity gained whilst managing and delivering employment and empowerment projects for the Midlands Refugee Council and locally in West London, as well as representing migrants at the Home Office.

Since 2009, I have been representing and amplifying the voice of the community in West London as I have divided my time between public appointments. Apart from chairing Carers Network Westminster, I am also currently serving as an elected member of the Children and Education Policy and Accountability

Committee, having been a school governor for 8 years, as well as Chair of Healthwatch LBH&F and a member of the North West London Carers' Council. I have a thorough understanding of the role of trustees in governance, as well as the specific responsibilities which the role of Chair entails.

I am very proud of my work as Chair: I have steered Carers Network Westminster through the challenges of the Covid pandemic and the lockdown, led the search for a new Chief Executive on two separate occasions, and most recently, masterminded the recruitment of several new trustees to strengthen the Board.

I am a highly persuasive and effective community advocate. My drive to help the community of unpaid carers in three London boroughs has resulted in several notable achievements: I was successful in attracting a 3-year corporate sponsorship for Carers Network by the Portman Estate. I was instrumental in the organisation's being selected as one of the Charities of the year of the last Lord Mayor of Westminster and was invited to discuss adult social care and carers' rights at the House of Lords as well as on a webinar panel whose other participants were her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and HRH The Princess Royal.

In addition to acting as an effective community ambassador, I would like to highlight some of the other skills I can offer WCN as a Chair. As mentioned previously, I have considerable experience in engaging with external stakeholders for the purpose of forging new relationships and exploring fundraising opportunities and new income streams. A case in point is my securing corporate sponsorship for my organisation resulting in an unprecedented level of unrestricted funding during that period. This has enabled the Charity to not just continue the crucial services that our beneficiaries have come to know and rely upon but to explore new opportunities to reach ever more carers including young adult carers as well as working carers.

As Chair of the Board of Trustees and a member of the Finance and Resource Committee, I have played a pivotal role in providing strategic guidance enabling the organisation to remain financially viable and weather a very challenging climate for small charities. I have built long-term relationships with commissioners from Westminster and the two neighbouring boroughs, and

having closely engaged with them, I successfully negotiated, 18-month extensions to our core contracts thus ensuring financial stability for the organisation.

Under my leadership, Carers Network was able to develop a new brand identity through the launch of our new website two years ago, heralding a new era of digital services, expanding further our outreach and enabling us to reach a greater number of vulnerable service users.

I also have experience of managing organisations through periods of significant change. In the past, as a school governor leading on curriculum and safeguarding, I was instrumental in negotiating the transfer of the school from a single school status to joining a multi-academy trust while still retaining a level of autonomy and maintaining a positive staff morale. More recently, as Chair of Carers Network, I managed a restructure which required confident judgement and decision-making as well as focus on ensuring the long-term sustainability of a small organisation which has existed for over 30 years.

I lead a strong and diverse Board, actively engaged with and committed to the charity, ensuring that we deliver against our charitable objectives as well as evaluate our performance and service delivery while keeping a close eye on finances to ensure continuity of service provision regardless of eventualities.

I would be delighted to join forces with existing colleagues at WCN so that collectively we can shape and deliver expert services as well as pave the way to better socio-economic outcomes for our community.

I am confident that I will make a valuable contribution to Westminster Community Network and provide a strong and committed leadership as Chair. I would be very grateful for your vote.