

Bliss

for babies born
premature or sick



Chair

Candidate Information Pack

Nov 2025

Welcome

I am really delighted you are interested in joining Bliss as Chair!

Bliss was founded in 1979, and for more than 45 years we have been dedicated to ensuring that every baby born premature or sick in the UK has the best chance of survival and quality of life. We are a thriving national charity with a stable income of over £2m per year, over 35 staff and many active volunteers. We have significant influence in neonatal care, including through partnerships with a wide range of companies, government bodies, other charities, and with neonatal health professionals, and our work makes a difference every day for the 90,000 babies born premature or sick and needing neonatal care each year, and their families. Most recently, we successfully led the campaign to introduce a new law which provides up to 12 weeks' paid neonatal leave for both parents when their baby is admitted to neonatal care for 7 days or more, which will make a huge difference for babies and families.

Our work encompasses campaigning, information and support for parents, and training and quality improvement for health professionals, and is focused on ensuring that all babies can have their parents at their cotside throughout their neonatal stay. We know that babies do best when their parents are able to take a lead role as partners in their care on the neonatal unit, but we also know that there are many barriers in the way of this happening.

This is an exciting time to join the board. We recently launched our new four-year strategy (2025–2029), placing equity at the heart of our work. With NHS reforms, the upcoming 10-Year Plan, and increased scrutiny of maternity and neonatal services, there's a real opportunity to raise Bliss' profile and improve outcomes for premature and sick babies across the UK.

We are looking for a Chair with a strong understanding of charity governance, who can lead inclusive discussions and who is passionate about what we do.

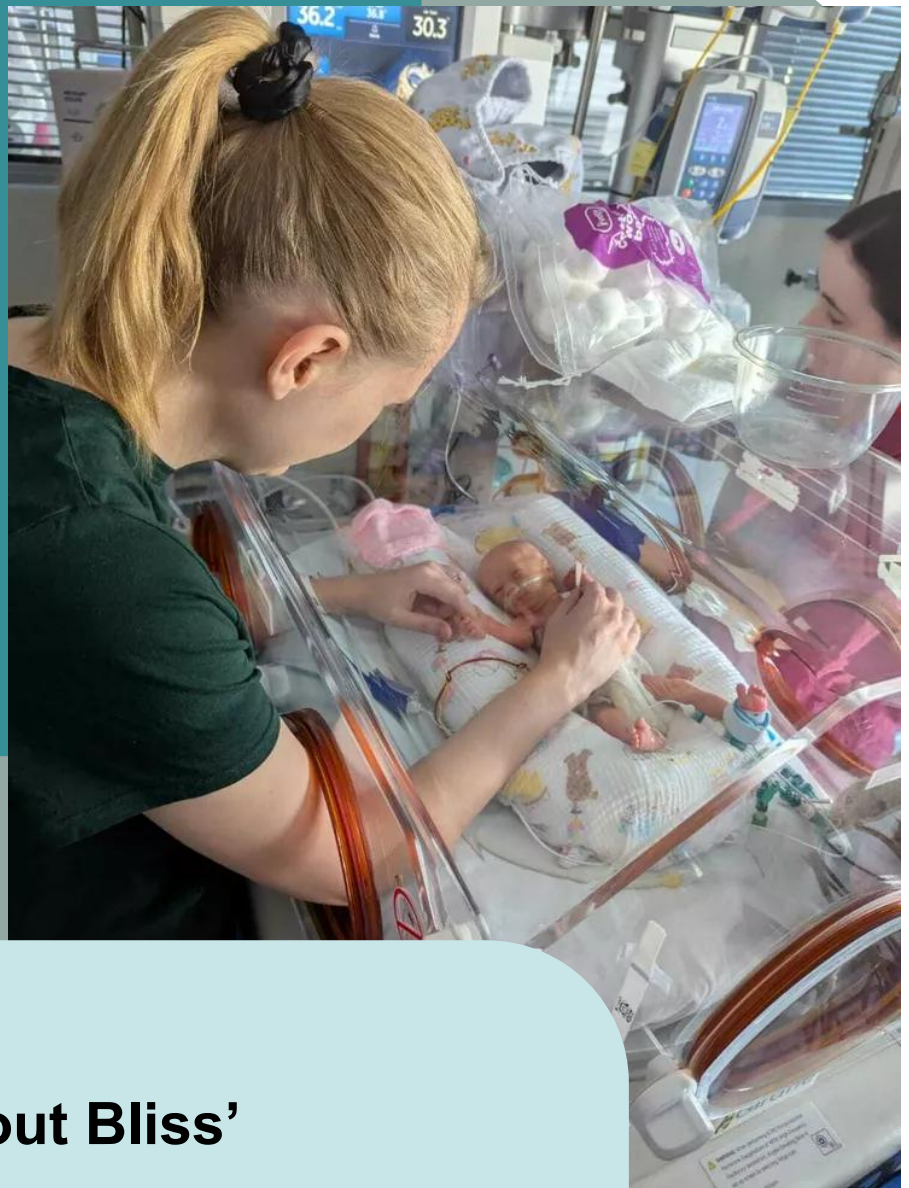
Warm wishes,

John Calder

Chair of the Board of Trustees

“A real turning point for me was when I was visited by a Bliss volunteer.”

- Janie



**“Without Bliss’
informative website,
Sam would've missed
out on so much time
with Orla”**

- Faith

About us

Who we are

Bliss is the UK's leading national neonatal charity. We have a head office in London and a separate registered Scottish charity, Bliss Scotland, as well as a trading subsidiary, Bliss Sales. We have significant partnerships with a wide range of companies which include household names such as Pampers and Tu at Sainsbury's, as well as government bodies and other charity sector organisations. Bliss' work has an impact in all corners of the UK, and we play a major part in championing and developing the services for the 90,000 sick and premature babies who are born needing neonatal care in the UK each year, and their families.

What we do

Bliss' vision is that every baby born premature or sick in the UK has the best chance of survival and quality of life. We aim to strike a balance between the work that we are doing to improve outcomes for the babies born premature or sick and in neonatal care today, and the work that we are doing to improve outcomes for babies born premature or sick in the future. Find out more about our work at <https://www.bliss.org.uk/>.

At Bliss, we champion the right of every baby born premature or sick to excellent neonatal care, experience and outcomes. We achieve this by improving care, giving voice to babies, and supporting parents to be partners in care. As we enter a new strategy period, we are strengthening our commitment to tackling neonatal inequalities and putting equity for all babies born premature or sick at the heart of everything we do. We are proud of the progress we have made to date in this area, and of the learning we have done to understand more about inequities in neonatal care. This has been underpinned by extensive involvement with families as well as partnership work with community and grassroots organisations. But there is so much more to do, with data showing that babies from Black and Asian backgrounds and those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds continue to face a range of poorer neonatal outcomes, including higher rates of pre-term birth and of neonatal mortality.

Our [strategy](#) itself is focused on three strategic pillars, prioritising equity of care, equity of voice and equity of support for all neonatal babies and their families. Across each of these pillars, we will take a data-driven approach to developing more work which is deliberately targeted at groups facing specific inequalities, as well as continuing to deliver universal services for the whole neonatal population. With this foundation of data and evidence, combined with digital development, we intend to offer a more diverse range of personalised services for parents, meeting the specific information and support needs that are individual to each family on their neonatal journey.

We will work more often and more closely with community organisations, including as partners directly in the delivery of services. We will ensure that our work with and for health professionals applies an equity lens to the delivery of Family Integrated Care, now the primary model of neonatal care delivered in the UK, but with much further to go in ensuring that all babies and families benefit from this approach to working in partnership with parents. And we will relentlessly champion the voices and interests of babies in what remains a challenging external environment for health services and for families.



Our impact

Policy that keeps parents and babies together

After years of Bliss campaigning, the *Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act* came into effect in April 2025, securing up to 12 weeks of paid leave for an estimated 60,000 parents every year—a landmark step towards ensuring that every baby can have their parents at their cotside when they need them most.

Professionals empowered to deliver family-integrated care

Our Baby Charter quality improvement programme now shapes practice in 45% of UK neonatal units, benefiting more than 20,000 babies over the last 12 months.

Working with researchers to improve neonatal care for the future

Dr Shalini Ohja, Professor of Neonatal Medicine at Nottingham University and lead investigator on the FEED1 research trial, said *"As a researcher, I find Bliss's support invaluable - we cannot do research without active partnership with the families of the babies we care for. Bliss helps us ask the right questions and design studies that meet the needs of families and babies. I am so grateful to the members who give us their time and expertise. This partnership helps us do better research to improve care and outcomes for sick and preterm babies of the future."*

Supporting parents and carers to be partners in their babies' care

128,587 parents turned to our digital information for reassurance and guidance over the last year, while 6,567 parents received face-to-face support from our cot-side volunteers and 1,837 found community in our private Facebook group. 92% of parents accessing our online information told us that we helped improve their confidence in caring for their baby.

Our vision, mission & values

Vision

Bliss' vision is that every baby born premature or sick in the UK has the best chance of survival and quality of life.

Mission

Bliss champions the right of every baby born premature or sick to excellent neonatal care, experience and outcomes. We achieve this by improving care, giving voice to babies, and supporting parents to be partners in care.

Our core values

Trusted

We are entrusted to give voice to all babies born premature or sick.
We believe that trust is earned and our actions must always be based on what is best for babies.

Supportive

We believe that developing supportive relationships is at the heart of what we do, and only by supporting others are we able to achieve our goals.

Ambitious

We always go the extra mile to deliver excellence and seek improvement in all we do.

Our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion

Bliss exists for every baby born premature or sick in the UK to have the best chance of survival and quality of life.

We recognise that right now, vulnerable babies from a racially minoritised background, or from lower socio economic backgrounds, are disproportionately affected by health inequality, which has a direct impact on babies' health and outcomes in neonatal care.

In our strategy, we are committed to taking a bolder approach in using the lens of health inequality to identify and address how we can make the biggest difference for all babies born premature or sick.

You can read more about our commitment to EDI and how we are holding ourselves accountable on our website [here](#).



Chair opportunity

With our current Chair's term concluding in October 2026, we are now seeking a new Chair to lead the charity, amplify our impact, and help shape the future for the communities we serve.

Our new Chair will be an experienced Trustee or Board member with proven ability to manage meetings effectively and foster productive, inclusive discussions. They will bring energy and drive, ensuring robust governance and alignment between strategy and operations. Beyond these essentials, the Chair will:

Champion fundraising: Recognising that income generation is the fuel for our growth and impact and supporting Bliss to set stretching but achievable goals.

Provide strategic leadership: Guiding Bliss forward and helping define future ambition.

Model inclusive and collaborative leadership: Drawing out diverse viewpoints, encouraging constructive challenge, and maintaining mutual respect.

Demonstrate strong chairing skills: Keeping discussions focused, achieving actionable consensus, and managing board dynamics effectively.

We are looking for a Chair who will embody our values, champion inclusivity, diversity and equity, and help us realise our ambition for even greater impact. This is a hugely rewarding role, working with a skilled, diverse and engaged board and a talented and committed senior leadership team.



The role of the Chair

As a charity, Bliss has a Board of Trustees, led by the Chair. Trustees have overall responsibility for the charity – for making sure Bliss is doing what it was set up to do, delivering its plans, spending its money wisely, and remaining financially stable. Bliss' Board of Trustees makes decisions which have a real impact on our work, our staff, and on the babies and families we support.

The Board currently consists of a Chair and twelve other Trustees (for further information see our [website](#)). The Chair also leads the Board of Bliss Scotland, which is separately constituted with four Trustees, two of whom are independent. Alongside the Chair, three other Officers of the Board support the Chair's leadership: the Vice Chair, the Treasurer (who also chairs the Finance, Risk & Fundraising Committee), and the Chair of the Impact and Delivery Committee.

As our Chair (thanks to Eastside People), you will have access to membership of the Association of Chairs, a fantastic resource of peer support and guidance for your role. If you'd like to learn more about chairing, you can access A Chair's Compass, a useful guide focusing on the challenges and opportunities of being a Chair.



Job description

Location	London/Online
Time Commitment	The overall time commitment is approx. 2.5 days per month (see additional information below).
Salary	This is a voluntary role. Reasonable expenses can be claimed.

The Chair of Trustees plays a pivotal role in the leadership of Bliss. They are responsible for supporting the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT), leading the Trustee Board, and acting as an ambassador for the work of the charity. The Chair sets the agenda, style and tone of Board discussions – both formal and informal – to promote inclusive and constructive debate and ensure that the Board delivers effective governance and decision-making.

Main responsibilities

- Lead the Board of Trustees, ensuring Trustees meet their legal duties and that the Board performs its role effectively
- Ensure that the necessary skills, experience and expertise are represented across the Board of Trustees, and encourage and facilitate open and inclusive discussions which allow each Trustee's voice to be heard
- Take overall responsibility for the effective management of Board meetings, including agenda and paper preparation, meeting management and follow up
- Provide support, guidance and performance feedback to the Chief Executive, including regular meetings (at least monthly). Give feedback to the CEO on view of performance of the SMT
- Set the objectives for and carry out the annual performance appraisal of the Chief Executive, ensuring that this reflects input and feedback from the whole Board as well as from the staff team
- Foster positive working relationships between Board members, and between Trustees and members of SMT
- Engage and provide feedback to Trustees on their performance

- Build strong working relationships with all Trustees through informal and formal opportunities for discussions, as well as undertake annual performance reviews of Trustees
- Ensure Bliss is fit for the future – including working with the CEO to ensure that the composition of the Board over time reflects both the skills required and the diversity of Bliss' beneficiary population.
- Be an ambassador for Bliss, including representation at both internal and external events as required

As with all Trustees of Bliss, the Chair has certain specific responsibilities:

- To hold the organisation in trust and ensure public confidence in all our activities
- To determine the overall strategic direction of the organisation
- As a critical friend – to provide both challenge and support to the Chief Executive and the senior management team.

The Chair, with the support of the other officers of the board, leads the Trustee Board, which must act collectively and at all times in the best interests of the charity:

- To ensure that the charity complies with its governing document, charity law, company law and any other relevant legislation or regulations
- To ensure that the charity uses its resources effectively and in line with the charity's purpose
- To give firm strategic direction to the organisation
- To safeguard the good name and values of the charity
- To appoint and support the Chief Executive and monitor his or her performance.

Who we're looking for

- **Governance focus:** Knows good governance, ensuring that Bliss' strategy and operations are aligned.
- **Meeting management:** The ability to manage meetings effectively and inclusively, ensuring that discussions are productive and focused.
- **Strategic vision:** Future-oriented with an ability to see the bigger picture, able to spot emerging opportunities, champion innovation and support the development of new income streams to ensure the charity's long-term sustainability.

- **Relationship management skills:** A diplomat and people person who inspires trust and can engage effectively with a range of stakeholders.
- **Leadership track record:** Significant collaborative leadership experience, ideally in the role of Chair or as Senior Manager of a similar-sized organisation.
- **Change management:** Comfortable seeing organisations through periods of change and managing risk/uncertainty.
- **Able to commit time and passion:** Approximately two or more days per month, with flexibility for in-person and virtual engagement, and a genuine commitment to Bliss' mission and values.

Time commitment – additional information

The role is voluntary and the time commitment will vary. As a guide, however, the commitment is as follows:

- Five Bliss Board meetings a year, generally in the afternoon. Typically, three of these meetings are held in person in London, and two are held virtually on Teams.
- Three Bliss Scotland Board meetings a year, held virtually on Teams.
- An in-person Board away day once a year.
- The Chair is expected to chair all main Board and Bliss Scotland Board meetings, and work closely with the Chief Executive and Vice Chair on the preparation of papers and meeting follow-up.
- The Chair is typically expected to attend the majority of the sub-committee meetings, which are all held online; the Finance, Risk & Fundraising Committee (FRFC) meets 5 times a year, and the Impact & Delivery Committee (IDC) meets 3 times a year. Between Board meetings, there is often other charity business to attend to, and prompt consideration of necessary issues is expected. Typically, this can be dealt with remotely, but on occasion may require ad hoc meetings in person.
- The Chair will also be invited to attend a range of other events arranged by the charity, including fundraising events such as the London Marathon, Baby Charter accreditation neonatal unit visits, parliamentary receptions and networking events. The expectation is that the Chair can represent the Board at one to two of these events at least during the course of the year.
- In addition, the Chair is expected to work closely with the Vice-Chair, officers of the Board, Chief Executive and his or her senior management team to support the

development of the charity through ongoing advice and support, including monthly meetings with the Chief Executive and other ad hoc meetings or phone calls as required.

- The Chair role is for an initial **4 year term**, with the opportunity then to be re-appointed for a second 4 year term (the maximum amount of time on the Board for any Trustee, including the Chair, is **2 terms of 4 years**).



Ready to apply?

Eastside People is supporting Bliss in the recruitment of these roles. Please [click here](#) to apply by submitting your CV and a cover letter **both in Word doc format**.

Please use the cover letter (max 2 pages) as an opportunity to add to the information you have shared in your CV and ensure that you cover the following:

- Why is Bliss' work important to you and how can you contribute to the charity as our Chair?
- How do you ensure board meetings are focused, inclusive, and lead to clear decisions?
- How would you go about ensuring that our many stakeholders are heard and represented at Board level?

You are welcome to send your cover letter in writing, or as a video or audio clip, alongside your CV. Any video or audio submissions should be emailed to bernice@eastsidepeople.org.

If you would like a call to discuss the role in more detail, please email Bernice Rook to arrange a convenient time at bernice@eastsidepeople.org. Having a call of this kind will not influence the success or otherwise of your application.

We want you to have every opportunity to demonstrate your skills, ability and potential. If you have a disability or require reasonable adjustments during the application or interview process, please contact us so we can support you appropriately.

Bliss' Chair, CEO and Trustees will be hosting a 30-minute drop-in session on Mon 8th Dec at 12 pm via Teams. This is an opportunity to learn more about Bliss and what's involved in joining our Board. You can register to attend ([here](#)).

The closing date for applications is Mon 5 Jan.

Longlisting interviews with Eastside People will take place mid-January, with shortlisted candidates invited to panel interviews with Bliss during the week commencing **2 February**.

Shortlisted candidates will then be invited to take part in open sessions with staff and Board members, with **final interviews scheduled for the week commencing 23 February**.

Bliss is an equal opportunities organisation. We actively welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds, cultures, beliefs, and lived experiences. We strive to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve and are committed to equity and inclusion at every level of our governance.

Finally

We understand AI can be a helpful tool, but please use it with caution and ensure your application is personalised and accurate.



Eastside People

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