

Candidate Pack

Collaborate Chief Executive

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About us

Collaborate CIC is at the forefront of pioneering collaborative approaches to social change and public services. As an innovative social consultancy and think tank, we are building the thinking, culture and practice of collaboration to help us meet the challenges of today, together. We work towards a vision of a collaborative society — one that is equitable, caring and sustainable.

To achieve this vision, we act as change partners to public and voluntary sector organisations. We help people to collaborate across sectors, reform public services, put citizens and service users at the centre of their work, develop collaborative and system leadership skills, engage with civil society, and learn together to support change.

We work with a wide range of organisations and sectors. Current and recent clients include Wigan Council, London Councils, Essex County Council, SOLACE, City Bridge Foundation, NHS England, MOPAC, Sport England, Save the Children and the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Partnership. We deliver work alone and in partnership with others. As a social purpose organisation, we also share the learning from our work, create tools and resources to support collaboration, connect change makers and host events.

Ultimately, we believe that people and organisations can create a better future together than they can alone, and we bring this conviction, blended with cutting-edge thinking and practice, to all our work.

Please see [our website](#) for more information about what we do.

Message from Lord Victor Adebowale, Collaborate's Chair

When I set Collaborate up around ten years ago, I felt that collaboration was not something we talked about much in public services, and certainly not something we educated people to do well. I wanted the organisation to change that - to start a debate about collaboration instead of competition, and to support the development of the thinking, culture and practice of collaboration in services to the public. I wanted Collaborate to be a centre of excellence that would work directly with organisations across sectors and with leaders to help them collaborate effectively to improve outcomes and services for people.

My vision for the organisation was always that it would stand on its own two feet, which means functioning as a business through the CIC model. However, I never wanted it to be just a consultancy like any other. We have a role in contributing to the debate about public services, connecting people who are trying to work differently, and sharing our learning with others. So I often describe Collaborate as both 'think tank' and 'do tank', which makes us pretty unusual - we have a voice, but it has legitimacy from the work we do on the ground.

The world has moved on since we set Collaborate up, but I remain committed to this vision, and the need for good collaboration has never been greater after years of austerity. The inverse care law - people who need the most support get the least - is still a big part of the public service landscape. We now see collaboration written into government legislation, new collaborative arrangements being set up across the country, and increasing agreement that public services need to collaborate with people, not do to them. But there remains a gap between the ambition and the reality on the ground, and an important role for Collaborate to help close it.

I am grateful for all that Anna has achieved in her time as Chief Executive of Collaborate, growing both the team and the body of work, as well as building a stronger case than ever for the importance of collaboration in delivering better services to the public.

The platform for a new Chief Executive is stable and strong, and there are real opportunities to grow the impact of this compelling team and its work.

The Board and I see a growing imperative for change and clear opportunities in a landscape through 2024 and beyond and believe Collaborate is uniquely placed, with its experience and its intelligent, committed team, to facilitate collaboration in places and systems to drive social change.

I personally look forward to accompanying Collaborate, along with its new Chief Executive, into its next stage of development through my role as Chair.



Message from Anna Randle, outgoing CEO

Collaborate is a fantastic organisation, which it has been a huge privilege to work for over the past eight years, and to lead for the past five. At Collaborate, I have had the opportunity to work with many of the most innovative and forward-thinking organisations and leaders in the country. I've been able to use all I had previously learned about public services and social change in different fields, and also move my thinking and practice forward through working with our partners and team.

Unlike most other consultancies and social change organisations, we are uniquely cross-sector in our partners and clients. This variety and breadth have been a great learning experience for me and is a great opportunity for anyone who believes in the power of collaboration and enjoys looking at issues from different angles. You never stop learning at Collaborate!

The team is clever and principled - you will learn as much from them as they will learn from you. And the board is made up of longstanding, talented leaders in their own right, who represent the different sectors we work with, and care deeply about the organisation. They have always been incredibly supportive of me, creating the space for me to do my role while providing advice and counsel when needed. Working closely with Victor as Chair has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the role, and one of the things I will miss the most.

I have found that one of the joys of running a small organisation like Collaborate is the sense that you are using everything you've ever learned in the role. As CEO, you can deploy experience across such a wide range of areas - policy, communications, consultancy, business development, relationship-building, thought leadership, finance, HR - it's a uniquely wide ranging and varied position. I have also found it to be a role that brings freedom and opportunity. As a CIC, so long as we can fund it, there is a wide scope to think creatively about how to achieve our mission to establish collaboration as a route to social change both through and beyond the work with our partners - events, thought leadership, movement building and collaboration with other, like-minded organisations.

I think the next few years will bring new opportunities to Collaborate, so it's a great time for new leadership, new energy and new ideas. I think Collaborate has been through its start-up phase, and its initial growth stage, when we've grown our consultancy offer and team, and built the financial stability and infrastructure needed for the organisation to function well. I am sure the organisation will flourish with new leadership, and I'm looking forward to seeing what the future will look like!



Our team

Read more about our people, their skills, experience and interests on [our website](#).

To understand how the people are at the heart of our work and organisation, please read comments from our November 2023 team survey in answer to the question: the best thing about working at Collaborate is...

... the people who work for the organisation who are generous with sharing their skills and expertise.

...colleagues and the support, insight and challenge they offer me. I have a lot to learn from my colleagues

...a supportive culture, the celebration of success and the values of the team.

...the people!

...the people. Such fiercely intelligent, caring people.



...the team

...the people - their knowledge, experience, care for their work and for each other, their humanity as colleagues

...the people are universally smart and committed

...the team. We are a group of people who care, both about our work and each other, and that is something which serves as a real motivator for me.

...my brilliant colleagues from whom I learn so much

... the people and the work culture.

Recent client feedback

Our [5 core strands of work](#) are: reimagining public services; place-based partnerships; developing collaborative leadership; collaborating with communities; and creating learning organisations and systems. Below we share a flavour of our clients' experience of working with us, through some recent feedback.

London Leadership Programme

"Feels like there's lots of hope in the room; a sense of possibility."

"I'm feeling more resilient as a leader; the space is replenishing, not draining. It's a safe environment, creates trust. Not competitive or hierarchical."

"It seems like your skills are in creating an environment that is psychologically enough for people to share vulnerably and to feel comfortable and the art of good conversation."

London Borough executive team away day

"I appreciated the respectful and collaborative way we approached this session. I thought I knew lots about what was going on for you all, but I have learned lots today."

"Today has felt collaborative and I appreciate that people have been honest. Thank you for setting up this conversation in a way that enabled these conversations."

Council Corporate Plan development

"Brilliantly comprehensive...really invaluable.. really helpful...a great starting point for our planning"

HCP development session

"The meeting went well and the Board enjoyed engaging in more strategic 'big picture' conversation. Off the back of this board meeting we are looking to revise the structure of our board meetings to make more space for this type of conversation."

ICP development session

"Thanks for these reflections. You did a great job facilitating yesterday – really good to have your support, thank you. And thanks for your patience in the run up as we worked through the anxieties and tensions! There was a real pivot halfway through the session and an almost tangible change in mood in the room. I think the consensus that was building behind one big idea is really exciting."

Wigan Council, initial feedback on Wigan 'New Era' draft narrative:

"Loved it. Leap from transactional deal, that mainly shifted internal culture in fantastic ways to collaborative future rooted in supporting our residents and neighbourhoods to thrive, with real focus on power dynamics and skills we need to make this happen. Feels entirely the right conversation to be having. You even squeezed in mention of progress with unity which feels a decent summary of the new era."

"Thankyou. I had a jumble of thoughts and ideas swimming around in my head and now it's clear".

Feedback shared by the CEO of a delivery partner in a current contract

"I keep meaning to say I am so impressed with the Collaborate team - the session on Friday was so great, I was blown away by how thoughtful and insightful Sophia, Emma and Malavika were and all Naomi's wisdom and experience! I love the way you all work."

Feedback about our first commissioning training programme

"Really enjoyable, informative, helpful. It's useful to be looking at commissioning differently when so many challenges exist post-pandemic and with the cost in living crisis. The active learning pushed me out of my comfort zone, which isn't a bad thing."

"I enjoyed the training and coming together very much and feel inspired to be brave as a commissioner to bring service users as partners to the table to make decisions that will influence services that matter to them."

Feedback from four-year learning/evaluation programme with client Save the Children, in partnership with NPC

"I wanted to get in touch to relay a big thank you to you and your teams' work in leading the ELC learning and evaluation activity over the last few years. I really appreciate the rigour, the focus on quality and the pragmatism that you've brought to the work and the decisions that we've had to take. You've played a really important partner role in supporting and helping to lead us on that journey..... it would be great to keep a conversation going between our organisations."

ICP facilitation feedback

"Your facilitation was terrific - enthusing us, injecting ideas and learning from other areas, and moving us on with the conversation."

Feedback shared about our evaluation work with a client:

"They created a space that enabled them to really reflect on their work but also that enabled those less directly involved to be a part and build their own knowledge. Others fed back that they've not experienced a session run in that way before and that they really benefited from the approach taken."

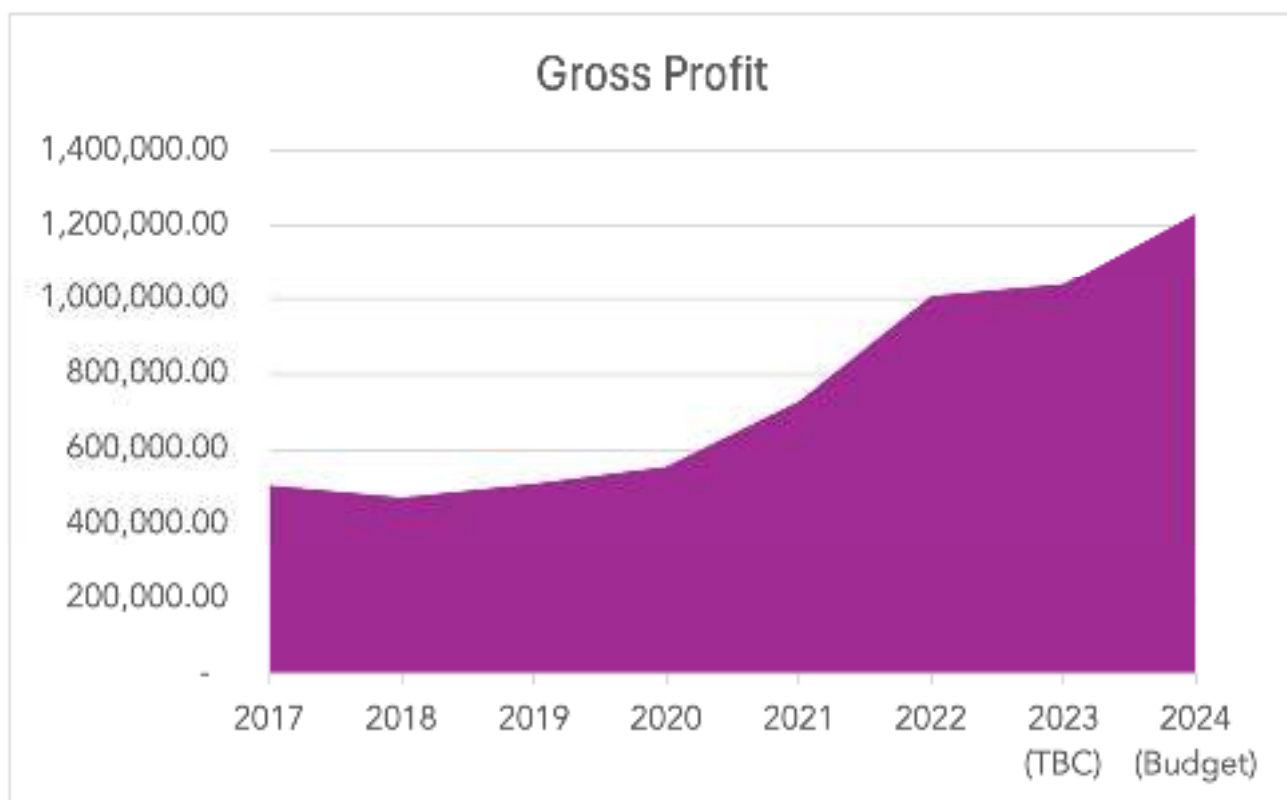
Feedback about the benefits of the Leading Greater Essex leadership programme

"Talking about adaptive change, understanding that we need to work together across systems to respond to complex issues that no organisation alone can respond to - eye opening. The importance of relationships that allows me to be vulnerable in a space of learning too. All the support from everyone!"

Our finances

Below is a brief overview of our recent financial history and performance, showing the growth in the organisation. See [Companies House](#) for more information.

If you would like to discuss in more detail, [Hannah Tomlinson](#), our Director of Finance & Operations, would be happy for you to [get in touch](#).



Job Description: Chief Executive

We are searching for an outstanding, progressive leader of our organisation and the wider movement for social change. Collaborate is an organisation that has developed and grown in recent years, and still has huge potential. The need to find new ways to improve and deliver services to the public has never been more pressing. In the context of long-term austerity, we need to look beyond old solutions, working together across boundaries to improve outcomes. Our new Chief Executive will guide the organisation into its next stage of development, building on all the foundations that have been laid to grasp the opportunity of a landscape where collaboration is far more established as a route to change and new space for change is opening.

As Chief Executive, you will be responsible for the success of the organisation, the leadership and development of Collaborate's growing team and the fulfilment of our mission to establish the thinking, culture and practice of collaboration as a critical means of achieving social change within the UK.

We are seeking a skilled and values-led collaborator who can ensure our work continues to grow in impact and reach. You will need to be well connected and understand the public service reform landscape. You will be committed to the role great collaboration can play and believe in the potential of a purpose-driven social consultancy to contribute to our mission. You'll be comfortable working across multiple sectors and creating the conditions for our partners, clients and team members to thrive.

This role will include:

Organisational leadership

- Lead on achieving Collaborate's mission, bring strategic direction, grow our work in new sectors and places and deepening it in existing ones, in accordance with our emerging refreshed organisational strategy
- Lead and guide others on Collaborate's internal and external work, supporting and mentoring team members on projects with partners across the country
- Work closely with Collaborate's Senior Management Team, supporting them in their roles and creating space for them to lead
- Ensure the team has the support, resources and encouragement it requires to meet the needs of clients, enhance the Collaborate brand and build the organisation's reputation
- Oversee the growth of the organisation, working closely with the Director of Operations and Finance, ensuring the organisation is profitable and financially stable
- Work closely with Collaborate's non-executive Board, producing quarterly board papers and overseeing financial reporting
- Work with the team and Board to grow Collaborate's impact and sustainability
- Exemplify Collaborate's values and behaviours and ensure they are rooted throughout the entire organisation
- Bring your existing networks and relationships to this role and build new ones to extend Collaborate's own reach and enhance its reputation

Organisational and practice development

- Work with colleagues to develop the skills within Collaborate to achieve the ambition to help people, teams, organisations and sectors to collaborate in practice, designing and delivering projects and whole system approaches that will achieve their objectives
- Guide the development of Collaborate's practice and areas of work

- Ensure the organisation is learning from its work, evolving its practice, designing new and improved tools to support its consultancy offer and building the team's skills and capabilities
- Maintain a collaborative, supportive and inclusive culture within Collaborate, looking after the wellbeing of all team members and ensuring there are opportunities for development
- Guide Collaborate's ongoing work on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, helping us develop as an equitable organisation and supporting us to embed considerations of equity more deeply in our work

Business development

- Draw on your existing networks and develop new connections to build Collaborate's profile and reputation as a trusted strategic and operational partner in leading social change and reforming public services
- Develop, win, co-design, and oversee projects in a range of sectors and contexts and provide senior oversight and guidance to colleagues in their own business development work
- Lead the development of existing and new proactive offers to our clients
- Build strong links with other organisations and providers who can offer new opportunities for Collaborate
- Ensure all bids and proposals are of the highest possible quality
- Build long-term and trusting relationships with our partners (including other providers) and clients

Thought leadership in the field of services to the public and social change

- Enhance the external profile of the organisation and build the movement for collaborative social change and public services in the UK through undertaking and overseeing organisational activities including writing reports, blogs and articles and hosting and speaking at events.

Outstanding practice with Collaborate's clients

- Lead projects with senior stakeholders across a range of sectors and areas of work, exemplifying Collaborate's values and practice.

You will be responsible to:

- The Collaborate Board of non-executive directors

You will be responsible for:

- The Collaborate team of around twenty permanent staff plus associates
- An annual turnover of approximately £1.3m (currently)

We are an equal opportunities employer

Collaborate supports flexible working and enables the potential for growth for the team within the organisation.

We seek to be a genuinely collaborative organisation, sharing ideas across the team through weekly team meetings and regular learning sessions. We collectively consider our broader strategy, examine and share learning across our projects, and explore how we might develop our work and our thinking.

As a Living Wage employer, we believe in paying our team fairly and are committed to promoting equity of opportunity for all.

Being equitable, inclusive and fair is not easy or simple and we are challenging ourselves, talking, working and learning about how we can continue to do this better. We aim to create an inclusive working environment in which all individuals are able to make the best use of their skills and are enabled to thrive. Our new Chief Executive will play a critical role in supporting our ongoing development as a more equitable organisation.

Personal Specification

We don't expect that you will already have experience of doing all the tasks above, or necessarily have all the skills and experience outlined below. We have a track record of successfully appointing based on potential rather than simply on past experience and we invite applications from people who can prove they have the aptitude to learn and develop. However, some skills are essential to the role, and all skills below will be important, even if some are developed over time. They could come from a combination of work experience, voluntary and/or personal experiences.

Personal qualities

- Passionate about improving outcomes and the experiences of the people who use different kinds of public services. Curious and motivated about how to achieve that goal. Experienced in trying to achieve social change.
- Excellent collaborative leadership skills. Able to mobilise colleagues, pioneer organisational change and development, and show leadership both inside and outside the organisation (in the wider field).
- Enjoys working in teams and creating the conditions for people to thrive and do their best work. Invites and is responsive to feedback. Good at listening and learning-orientated.
- Confident in building and managing complex stakeholder relationships and dynamics, able to form relationships and work closely with Collaborate's Chair, Board, clients and external stakeholders and team members.
- Values-driven: inclusive, collaborative, constructive and curious.

Skills and experience

Essential

- Knowledge, experience and passion for public service reform. This is likely to be within the public sector, but it could also be within other fields, such as charities, foundations, or the private sector.
- Demonstrable leadership experience. This may be within an organisation or team, but it could also include other leadership experience such as being part of a Board.
- Great people skills. Confident building relationships of all kinds and working with people from a range of backgrounds, sectors, and role types. Credible with senior stakeholders and leaders and able to lead a diverse team effectively.
- Excellent communication skills, including written and verbal communication for a range of audiences.
- Strong business development experience, including building relationships and bid writing, with excellent financial management skills.

Desirable

- Prior experience of team and organisational development
- Excellent verbal and written communicator
- Thrives in a busy, fast-paced environment, comfortable multi-tasking, working on several internal and external issues at once
- Knowledge of local government (Collaborate's biggest client group), the NHS and the voluntary sector
- Management consultancy experience
- Thought leadership experience, for example writing outward-facing, published reports, blogs or articles

- Excellent facilitation skills, public speaking and chairing
- Project management experience
- Board level experience

About the process: applying for the role

We want you to get a deep understanding of our organisation, its people and its work through this process, with the chance to have honest conversations along the way. Please reach out to [Julie](#) at any point if you have questions or would value a conversation and we can arrange for you to speak to whoever would be most helpful.

What	When	With Whom
Consultation – for you to find out more	Throughout the application phase & prior to the first interview	Julie, at Penna Charlie Adan (Board), Anna Randle (outgoing CEO), Hannah Tomlinson (Executive Director)
Application	Closing date: 31 st May	Submitted to Julie Towers, at Penna
First Interview – technical and values-based assessment & interview	18-19 th June Online – 1 hour	Julie, Hannah, Charlie
Engagement – with team, stakeholders	21 st June 2 x 45 minutes	Cross-section of our team Stakeholders – clients, partner organisations
1:1 with Chair	26-27 th June - call	1:1 with Victor Adebawale, Chair
Second Interview	26 th June – in-person	Chair, 2 non-Exec Board, Exec Director

Key contacts:

Julie Towers - Penna

Hannah Tomlinson - Director of Finance & Operations (and Executive Director)

Lord Victor Adebawale - Chair and Founder of Collaborate

Charlie Adan - Non-Executive Director of the Board

We look forward to hearing from you.