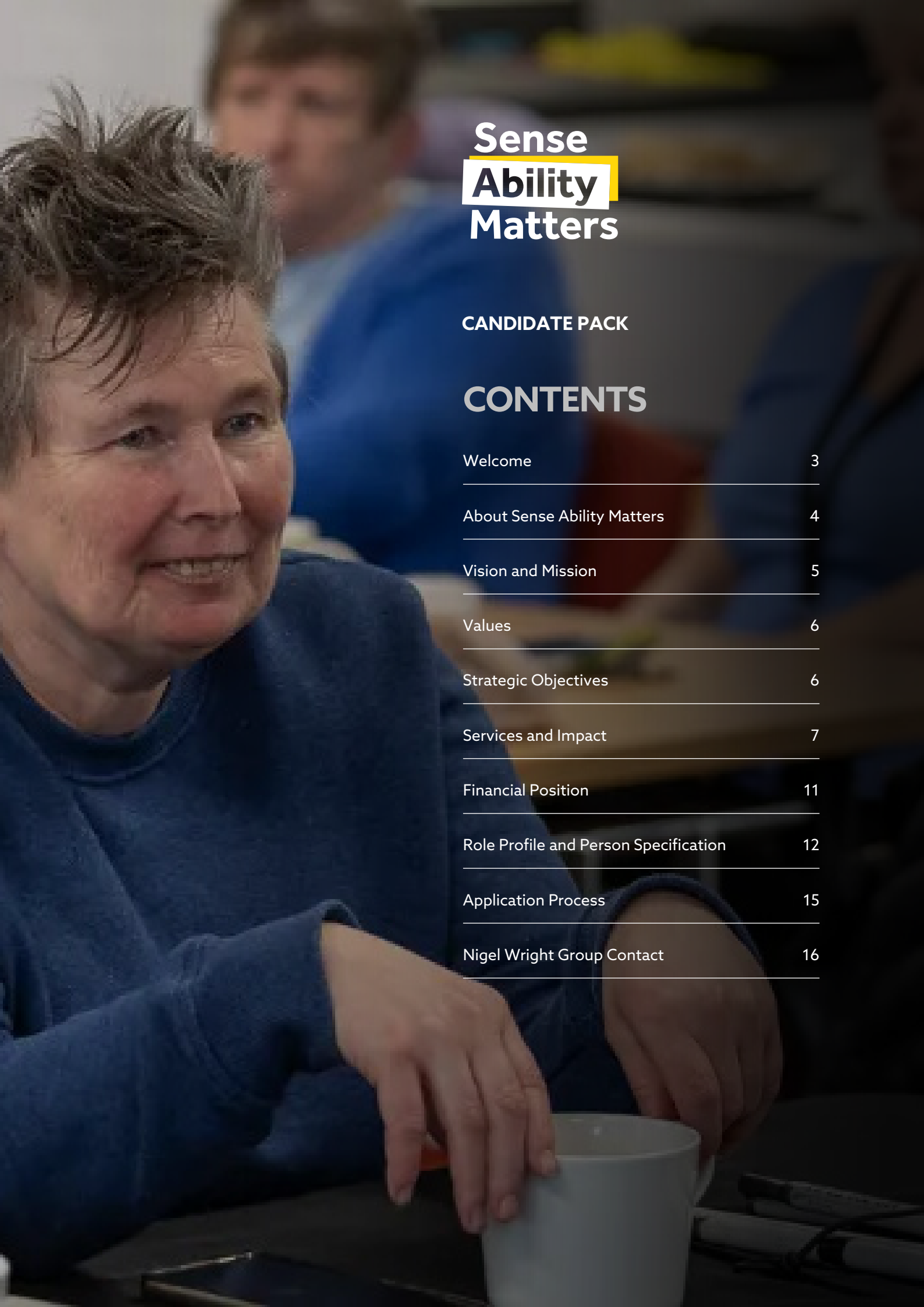


**Sense
Ability
Matters**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

CANDIDATE PACK



Sense Ability Matters

CANDIDATE PACK

CONTENTS

Welcome	3
About Sense Ability Matters	4
Vision and Mission	5
Values	6
Strategic Objectives	6
Services and Impact	7
Financial Position	11
Role Profile and Person Specification	12
Application Process	15
Nigel Wright Group Contact	16

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive Officer at Sense Ability Matters, also known as SAM. This is an important and exciting appointment for the charity as it looks to build on a period of stabilisation and move confidently into its next phase of development. SAM supports people across South Tyneside and Gateshead who have a sensory impairment, are disabled, or live with a long-term health condition, existing to serve its community rather than to make a profit.

Over recent years, SAM has strengthened its financial position, developed appropriate reserves, broadened its charitable objectives, relaunched its name and brand, and continued to deliver strong outcomes across its services.

The charity has also relocated to Gateshead Civic Centre and New Green Street in South Shields, giving it a more established operational base across the communities it serves.

The next Chief Executive will inherit a respected, community-led organisation with a committed Board of Trustees, experienced staff, dedicated volunteers and a clear purpose: to empower people, help them live independently, improve wellbeing, and influence positive change. This is a role for a visible, values-led and commercially minded leader who can balance strategic ambition with hands-on leadership, ensuring SAM remains sustainable, relevant and impactful for the future.



ABOUT SENSE ABILITY MATTERS

Sense Ability Matters is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee. Its charitable objects are to relieve blind and partially sighted people, Deaf and hard of hearing people, and those with any disability or long-term condition in Gateshead and South Tyneside, including through the provision and maintenance of a comprehensive and coordinated service, and by advancing public education through such a service.

The charity's services are shaped by its members, while its Board of Trustees oversees strategy and quality. The Board includes trustees with lived experience of sensory loss or disability, and the staff team delivers services day to day with support from volunteers. Together, the organisation combines professional expertise with personal understanding of the communities it serves.

SAM has evolved from its origins in sight-loss support to include hearing support and wider lifelong disability services. Its delivery model includes contracted services, grant-funded initiatives and partnership activity, primarily across Gateshead and South Tyneside. The charity works with local authorities, NHS and healthcare partners, individuals and families, and wider voluntary and third-sector organisations.



VISION AND MISSION

SAM exists for one reason: to make sure that a sensory impairment, disability or long-term health condition doesn't stop anyone from living a full, connected life.

SAM works with people across South Tyneside and Gateshead to help them stay informed, feel empowered, and build the resilience to face whatever comes their way. Behind that work is a team of professionals and people with lived experience of disability and sensory loss. The team don't just understand what the community needs, many of them have lived it themselves.

Their vision is for disabled people and those with sensory loss across the region to feel informed, empowered and resilient.

SAM works towards that by:

- Giving people the tools they need to live independently and make positive decisions.
- Helping people build resilience and wellbeing when times are tough.
- Making sure everyone can access clear, reliable information, advice and guidance.
- Pushing for positive change locally, regionally and nationally on behalf of the community.

Each person receives tailored support, designed around what they need and when they need it.

Services include:

- Rehabilitation
- Enablement assessments
- Personalised support plans
- Information and advice
- Community and peer support
- Group activities
- Employment support
- Digital support



VALUES

SUPPORTIVE

Respond and adapt to the needs of the community.
Respect and value everyone equally and work together to achieve shared goals.

TRUSTWORTHY

Be accountable, open and honest. Act with integrity and do what it takes to support those in need.

CARING

Be friendly and warm. Take time to listen, promote inclusivity, and treat everyone with dignity and respect.

PROFESSIONAL

Strive to be the best. Actively seek new ideas and innovation to bring about positive change. Rely on evidence to make decisions and challenge themselves to be bold and resourceful, even in the face of adversity.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

SAM's strategic objectives are to be the leading service provider for sensory impaired and disabled people; influence change locally, regionally and nationally; diversify its income generation portfolio; and champion the interests of members, beneficiaries and the sector.

As the organisation looks ahead, it is focused on maintaining current services while developing employability and transition pathways, advocacy, and broader engagement with people with lived experience to improve health pathways and increase access to local services.

SERVICES AND IMPACT

During 2024/25, SAM directly supported 5,573 individuals across its services. Its work included personal holistic assessments, intensive rehabilitation, information, advice and guidance, low vision services, digital support, Community Voice activity, Living Well with Sight Loss programmes and volunteer-led tele-support.

The charity's reported outcomes demonstrate the difference its services make: 87% of people reported being able to live more independently, 92% reported feeling more confident and empowered, 84% said they felt less isolated, and 93% reported an improvement in emotional health and wellbeing.

SAM provides assessment and rehabilitation services as statutory provision for local authorities under the Care Act. In Gateshead, this service focuses on sight impairment, while in South Tyneside the service includes sight impairment as well as Deaf and hard of hearing support.

The organisation also delivers a wide range of additional services, including counselling, low vision clinics, accessibility audits and training, Community Voice, peer support, rehabilitation and enablement, digital and cyber security support, welfare rights advice, equipment support and telephone support services.



87%

of people reported being able to live more independently



92%

of people reported feeling more confident and empowered



84%

of people said they felt less isolated



93%

of people reported an improvement in emotional health and wellbeing

SERVICES AND IMPACT

SAM: AT THE HEART OF SUPPORT

SAM empowers disabled people and those with sensory impairments to live independently and with confidence. They do this through person-centred assessments, vision rehabilitation, and enablement support.

SAM's expert, tailored advice includes counselling, practical skills, and advocacy helping people feel informed, resilient, and ready to thrive. They also support unpaid adult carers through Connected Caring, a dedicated service in South Tyneside offering guidance and support for those who look after others.

23RD

South Tyneside is the 23rd most deprived local authority in England, Gateshead is 36th.

22%

22% of Gateshead and 23% of South Tyneside residents have a disability or long-term health condition (national average: 18%).



SERVICES AND IMPACT

SERVICE USERS



COMMUNITY VOICE

SAM's Community Voice partnership, led by those with lived experience, drives local change and peer support. They help people build confidence, reduce loneliness, and engage in grassroots activities.

The need

71% of disabled people locally have experienced negative attitudes. 69% are worried about getting out and about, and 44% are concerned about safety.

Impact

- 875 people engaged
- 239 with sensory impairments supported
- 25 accessing volunteering pathways
- 17 new community activities launched
- 80% report better confidence, reduced isolation, and improved wellbeing after taking part.



WELL CONNECTED

SAM's Well Connected project provides digital skills support, a tech lending library, and cyber security guidance.

The need

Good Things Foundation research showed that 25% of disabled people lack basic digital skills. Among their service users, a quarter struggle to access information and 19% seek digital support.

Impact

- 1,345 people supported
- 571 intensive interventions
- Confidence online rose from 33% to 88% after cyber security guidance.

SERVICES AND IMPACT

SERVICE USERS



LOW VISION CLINIC

A unique low vision clinic in Gateshead integrating health, social care, and community services for early intervention and support.

The need

Ophthalmology is the busiest outpatient specialty, making up 10% of waiting lists.

Impact

- 267 clinics delivered
- 474 assessments completed
- 1,113 people supported
- 81% who used the service felt more confident, 72% more independent.



FINANCIAL POSITION



Financial performance in 2024/25 provided stability for SAM, and continues into 2025/26.

Income for 2024/25 was £729,383, compared with £752,142 in 2023/24, while expenditure was £695,539, compared with £677,231 in 2023/24. At 31 March 2025, the charity held total reserves of £473,873.

The charity's main core contracted income has remained stable, and it has performed well against this income by achieving required performance

indicators. Key income streams include Gateshead Council, South Tyneside Council, the National Lottery Community Fund, NHS North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, and Fight For Sight / Vision Foundation – National Resilience Fund.

The Charity Commission record for Sense Ability Matters Ltd. shows that charity reporting is up to date. For the financial year ending 31 March 2024, total income was £752,142 and total expenditure was £677,230. It also records 19 employees, 5 trustees and 13 volunteers.

ROLE PROFILE AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Position Overview

The Chief Executive Officer will lead SAM through its next stage of organisational development, building on a more stable foundation and leading the charity towards long-term sustainability, growth and greater community impact. The role will require a leader who can define and deliver strategy, diversify income, strengthen partnerships and represent the organisation with credibility across public, health, voluntary and community sectors.

This is a pivotal leadership role at a time when SAM is seeking to move from recovery and consolidation into future growth. The successful candidate will develop a strong and effective relationship with the Board of Trustees, ensuring excellent governance, transparent communication and effective delivery of strategic priorities.

The Role in Practice

The Chief Executive Officer role at SAM combines strategic leadership with significant operational responsibility. While the successful candidate will be expected to shape the organisation's long-term direction, diversify income, strengthen partnerships and deliver future growth, they will also play a hands on role in leading the day-to-day operation of the charity.

Working closely with the senior team and frontline colleagues, the CEO will oversee service delivery across SAM's sites and programmes, ensuring services remain high quality, financially sustainable and responsive to the needs of members, beneficiaries and commissioners. This includes leading and developing staff, monitoring organisational performance, addressing operational challenges, managing resources effectively and ensuring the charity continues to deliver excellent outcomes for the communities it serves.

The role also requires a close and constructive partnership with the Board of Trustees. As the principal link between governance and operations, the CEO will provide the Board with clear advice, insight and assurance, ensuring Trustees have the information needed to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. The successful candidate will build strong relationships with Trustees, support robust decision making and work collaboratively with the Board to translate strategic ambition into practical delivery.

Success in the role will require someone who is equally comfortable operating at both strategic and operational levels: a visible and approachable leader who enjoys being close to services, people and communities, whilst also providing the vision, innovation and external leadership needed to guide the organisation through its next phase of development.

ROLE PROFILE AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Key Responsibilities

- Lead the development and delivery of SAM's strategy, balancing commerciality with charitable purpose.
- Diversify income streams and reduce reliance on traditional grants and cyclical tendering.
- Strengthen relationships with local authorities, NHS and healthcare partners, funders, voluntary sector organisations, members and beneficiaries.
- Act as the visible external ambassador and public face of the charity.
- Maintain strong governance, financial sustainability and operational accountability.
- Build organisational capability and shape the future structure of the charity alongside the Board.
- Ensure services remain inclusive, accessible, high quality and responsive to the needs of the community.
- Lead, support and develop the organisation's team and oversee the effective day-to-day delivery of services across the charity.
- Champion the voices and interests of people with sensory impairment, disability and long-term health conditions.

Candidate Profile

The successful candidate will bring proven senior leadership experience, ideally as a Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive or equivalent senior leader ready to step into a CEO role. They will have a demonstrable track record of scaling, transforming or developing organisations, with particular strength in income generation, partnership development and sustainable growth.

They will be commercially astute while remaining strongly values-led, with the ability to operate effectively in a small, resource-constrained organisation. A hands-on, visible leadership style will be essential, as will the ability to build trust with staff, trustees, commissioners, funders, partners, members and beneficiaries.

Experience working within or alongside the public sector, commissioned services, health, social care, charity or voluntary sectors would be advantageous. Experience of the charity or not-for-profit sector is desirable, and candidates should demonstrate strong alignment to SAM's purpose, communities and values.

ROLE PROFILE AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Essential Criteria

- Proven senior leadership experience, ideally as a CEO, Deputy CEO or equivalent senior leader ready to step up.
- Track record of organisational growth, development, transformation or income diversification.
- Strong commercial acumen and ability to develop sustainable revenue models beyond grants and tenders.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement, partnership-building and external networking skills.
- Ability to operate in a small, hands-on, resource-conscious organisation.
- Strong understanding of governance, financial sustainability and organisational accountability.
- Values-led leadership style aligned with inclusion, accessibility, independence and community impact.
- Ability to work effectively with a Board of Trustees and support strong governance.
- Excellent communication and influencing skills across diverse audiences.
- Resilience, adaptability and a pragmatic approach to leadership.

Desirable Criteria

- Experience within the charity, not-for-profit or voluntary sector.
- Experience working with public sector commissioners, local authorities, NHS or healthcare partners.
- Experience of commissioned services, funding bids, grant income or contract management.
- Understanding of sensory impairment, disability, long-term health conditions, inclusion or accessibility.
- Experience of leading organisational change in a small or medium-sized organisation.
- Strong regional networks across Gateshead, South Tyneside and the wider North East. Suggested based on role context; the source confirms the operating geography but does not specify this as a formal requirement.

ROLE PROFILE AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

Leadership Style

SAM is seeking a leader who is visible, collaborative, pragmatic and values-led. The organisation's scale means the CEO will need to be both strategic and hands-on: comfortable shaping long-term direction while remaining close to service delivery, people, partners and beneficiaries.

The successful candidate will bring ambition to drive change and growth, while protecting the charity's community-led ethos, charitable integrity and commitment to inclusion.

Location and Working Arrangements

SAM operates from Gateshead Civic Centre and New Green Street, South Shields. The CEO will need to be able to maintain a visible presence across the charity's locations and attend meetings with partners, funders and stakeholders.

The role requires regular presence across SAM's Gateshead and South Tyneside locations, as well as attendance at external meetings and events. Candidates should therefore be able to travel independently and flexibly across the charity's operating geography.

APPLICATION PROCESS

To apply, candidates should submit:

- An up-to-date CV.
- A supporting statement outlining their interest in the role and how they meet the person specification.

NIGEL WRIGHT GROUP CONTACT



CHARLOTTE OWEN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

E: charlotte.owen@nigelwright.com

Tel: +44 191 269 0662

Mob: +44 780 951 6681