CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - Recruitment Pack

Salary: £62,500–£67,500

Location: Plymouth

Hours: 35 per week

Contract: Permanent

Flexible working: Hybrid Working – Plymouth Based Office and Home Working

Benefits: Pension, Employee Assistance Programme, 34 days holiday including bank holidays

Welcome to Age UK Plymouth

Age UK Plymouth has been supporting older people across our city for over 80 years.

During that time, the lives, expectations and needs of older people have changed considerably – and they will continue to change. Our responsibility is not simply to preserve the services and ways of working that have served us well in the past, but to ensure Age UK Plymouth remains relevant, sustainable and able to make a meaningful difference for generations to come.

Over recent years, we have been through a period of significant change.

The post-Covid environment has brought major changes to public services, commissioning and funding, alongside increasing demand and complexity of need. Like many charities, we have had to think carefully about where we can make the greatest difference and what a sustainable organisation needs to look like for the future.

We have made some significant and sometimes difficult decisions.

We have reshaped our services, consolidated our estate and reduced the size of our organisation. Today, Age UK Plymouth is a leaner organisation with a team of around 25 people, supported by our volunteers and operating from our rented city-centre base and our Memory and Wellbeing Hub.

This has not been about becoming a smaller version of the organisation we were.

It has been about creating stronger foundations from which we can develop, grow and continue making a difference.

We now have a clear strategy for the next three years and an experienced and capable team with considerable knowledge of our services, our communities and the people we support.

We are looking for a Chief Executive who can build on those foundations and help us turn our ambitions into sustainable impact.

About Age UK Plymouth

We believe everyone should be able to live well in later life.

Our work supports people across Plymouth at different ages and stages of their lives. The people who come to us are not one homogenous group and neither are their needs, circumstances or expectations.

Some people need a little information or connection at a particular point in their lives. Others may have a relationship with Age UK Plymouth and our services over many years.

Our role is to understand those different needs, provide excellent support where we are best placed to do so and connect people with others when we are not.

Today, our key areas of work include:

Information and Advice

Our Information and Advice service helps people navigate some of the practical challenges and opportunities that can come with later life.

We provide free, independent and confidential information and advice across areas including welfare benefits and entitlements, housing, health and social care, local services and other issues affecting people's independence, wellbeing and financial security.

Just as importantly, we help people make sense of systems that can sometimes feel complicated or difficult to navigate and connect them with other specialist organisations where they are better placed to help.

Our approach is increasingly flexible, enabling people to access support in different ways while maintaining routes to face-to-face help for those who need it.

Memory and Wellbeing Hub

Our Memory and Wellbeing Hub is our flagship specialist provision for people living with memory loss and dementia and their families.

It includes Plymouth's only specialist dementia day centre, providing meaningful activity, cognitive stimulation, social connection and specialist support in an environment designed around the needs of people living with dementia.

Our wider memory and wellbeing provision creates opportunities for people to remain active, connected and independent, maintain their abilities for longer and access the right support as their needs change. It also provides valuable support and respite for families and carers.

The Hub reflects the direction we want to continue taking as an organisation: building specialist expertise where Age UK Plymouth can make a distinctive contribution while working closely with others to create joined-up support around the individual.

Wellbeing and community support

Our wellbeing work is about helping people remain connected to their communities, maintain their independence and access support earlier.

Our Wellbeing Hub approach brings together information, advice, activities, community connections and access to wider support. Increasingly, we see our role not simply as providing individual services, but as helping create easier routes into the network of support already available across Plymouth.

We work alongside partners so that people do not need to know which organisation provides which service before asking for help. Where another organisation is better placed to respond, we want the route between us to be straightforward.

Our community-based support also includes activities such as our Veterans Sticky Bun Morning, Community Cuppa and Jolly Elders, alongside our work with care homes and other community settings across the city.

These activities may look simple, but connection matters. Creating welcoming places and opportunities for people to meet, participate and build relationships can make an important contribution to living well, maintaining independence and reducing isolation.

Working with others

We know that Age UK Plymouth cannot – and should not – meet every need ourselves.

We are active participants in Plymouth's wider voluntary, community, health and care landscape and work collaboratively through the Wellbeing Network, the Dementia Alliance and relationships with voluntary and community organisations, commissioners, statutory partners, businesses and communities across the city.

We want our work to enhance the contribution of others, not replicate it.

That means sharing knowledge, identifying gaps together, strengthening referral routes and being willing to support another organisation to lead when they are better placed to do so.

Partnership is not an additional activity for us. It is part of how we believe sustainable services for the city should be developed.

Our impact

Where we are going

Our strategy for the next three years is focused on creating a sustainable Age UK Plymouth that uses its resources where they can achieve the greatest impact. That means continuing the work of consolidation where necessary while investing in carefully considered opportunities for development and growth.

We do not believe organisational growth is an end in itself. Nor do we believe Age UK Plymouth needs to provide every service somebody might need as they get older.

Plymouth has a diverse voluntary and community sector with significant expertise already within it. We want to contribute to a city in which organisations complement one another, where good provision is not duplicated and where people can move easily between services without needing to understand organisational boundaries.

We will focus on the areas in which Age UK Plymouth can make a distinctive contribution, develop strong partnerships and create straightforward routes to other organisations when somebody else is better placed to help.

Our ambition is not to do everything. It is to make sure people can access the support they need.

Remaining relevant to the people we support

Ageing is changing – but so are the lives, expectations and needs of the people we support today.

Age UK Plymouth already works with people across a wide age range. Someone in their 50s may need something very different from us from somebody in their 70s, 80s or 90s. Two people of exactly the same age may have entirely different circumstances, expectations and needs.

There is no single experience of getting older.

That means relevance cannot be something we periodically review. Listening, learning, evolving and adapting need to be part of how we work every day.

Our services need to respond to what people tell us, what our communities need and what is changing around us. We need to be flexible about where, when and how people engage with us and recognise that those preferences will continue to change.

For some people, the right support will always be face-to-face. Others will increasingly expect to interact with us digitally, by telephone, in their own community or through a combination of channels.

Technology, data and AI will create opportunities to work differently, but innovation is broader than technology. It can be a new partnership, a different service model, a simpler process or recognising that something we have always done no longer needs to be done in the same way.

We want to be an organisation that builds on what it learns. We will keep hold of the relationships, expertise and approaches that continue to matter, learn from what has worked and what has not and use that knowledge to make what comes next better.

Change is one of the things that keeps an organisation relevant, but change for its own sake is not progress.

Our purpose and our commitment to the people we support provide the constant. Around them, we should always be prepared to learn, evolve and do better.

Our values

People-centred and inclusive – People come first.

We see the person, not simply their age, circumstances, role or need. We listen, treat people with kindness and respect and recognise that different people need different things from us.

We recognise that people do not all start from the same place. We seek to understand and address the barriers and inequalities people experience and play our part in creating fairer access, opportunity and outcomes.

That applies equally to the people we support, our colleagues, our volunteers and those we work alongside. We want Age UK Plymouth to be a place where people feel welcomed, valued, included and supported to contribute at their best.

Compassionate and impactful – Every interaction matters.

We approach people with kindness, compassion and understanding and take the time to listen. We want every interaction with Age UK Plymouth to have value and to make a meaningful difference.

We recognise that impact looks different for different people. Sometimes it is the right advice or support at the right time, maintaining independence or connection or achieving a significant long-term outcome. Sometimes it is simply somebody feeling heard, reassured or having a better day. Both matter.

We value quality of life and quality of time and focus on making the time people spend with us count.

Collaborative and connected – We achieve more together.

We share expertise, build relationships and work alongside the people we support, colleagues, volunteers, partners and communities. We listen and involve people in shaping what we do.

We recognise and build on the good work already happening around us, focusing our contribution where it adds value and working with others so that our services complement and connect with theirs.

By working collectively and making the most of our different strengths, we can create better experiences and outcomes for the people and communities we serve.

Courageous and accountable – We do the right thing, including when it is difficult.

We are open, honest and accountable. We are prepared to challenge, willing to have courageous conversations and make difficult decisions when they are needed. We explain our thinking and take responsibility for our decisions and actions.

We care about the quality of what we do and hold ourselves to high standards. When things do not go as planned, we take responsibility, learn and act. We remain open to changing our minds when evidence or experience tells us there is a better way.

Being adaptable does not mean compromising the principles, quality and purpose that matter to us.

Curious and forward-looking – We keep learning.

We look outward, listen to the people and communities around us and remain curious about what is changing and what could be possible.

We are creative, willing to try different approaches and prepared to question whether the way something has always been done is still the best way to do it.

We build on what we learn, keep hold of what works and continue to evolve so that Age UK Plymouth remains relevant and responsive to the people we are here for.

The opportunity

We are looking for a Chief Executive who combines strategic thinking with the ability to make things happen.

You will inherit an organisation that has already undertaken significant transformation, but the work is not finished.

The next few years will require thoughtful and experienced leadership as we continue strengthening our financial sustainability, develop our services, diversify income, respond to changing needs and build the relationships that will enable us to increase our impact.

This is a relatively small organisation, so breadth matters.

You will need to move comfortably between thinking about our long-term direction and understanding what is happening within the organisation today. You will know when something needs your attention and when the right leadership response is to trust and empower the experienced people around you.

You will be able to spot strategic gaps and opportunities, ask good questions and be prepared to challenge assumptions – including our own.

You will also be comfortable having courageous conversations. Leadership here will sometimes involve making difficult decisions, addressing things that are not working or saying no to opportunities that do not fit our purpose or resources.

You do not need to have been a Chief Executive before.

You may already be leading at this level, be an experienced senior leader ready to take overall organisational responsibility or have developed within an organisation where you have already demonstrated the breadth, judgement and leadership capability required.

We are interested in what you can bring, not simply the job titles you have previously held.

What we need our CEO to do

Build a sustainable and enterprising organisation

You will ensure Age UK Plymouth has the financial, operational and organisational resilience to deliver its purpose for the long term.

You will bring strong business and financial acumen and understand the relationship between our purpose, income, costs, capacity and risk.

You will identify strategic gaps and opportunities and develop sustainable approaches to growth and income diversification.

You will be commercially aware without losing sight of why we exist.

You will know that not every opportunity is the right opportunity and be prepared to make choices about where our resources can create the greatest value and impact.

You will ensure the Board has the information and insight it needs to understand organisational performance, financial sustainability and risk and to make good decisions.

Build relationships that make Plymouth stronger

Our success depends as much upon the relationships we build as the services we deliver ourselves.

You will be a visible and credible ambassador for Age UK Plymouth and build trusted relationships with partners, commissioners, funders, businesses, communities and the wider Age UK network.

You will understand that collaboration is not about protecting organisational territory.

You will look for opportunities to bring organisations together, strengthen referral pathways, share expertise and develop solutions that make the wider system work better for the people we support.

You will be able to influence, negotiate and advocate effectively while maintaining constructive relationships, including when perspectives or priorities differ.

Lead through people and values

Age UK Plymouth has a small, experienced team with significant knowledge and expertise.

Your role is not to have all the answers.

It is to create clarity about where we are going, enable people to use their expertise, establish clear accountability and create an environment in which people can do their best work.

You will be an accessible and emotionally intelligent leader who communicates openly, listens well and builds trust.

You will be willing to challenge and be challenged.

You will address difficult issues rather than allowing them to drift and be able to hold courageous conversations with fairness, clarity and respect.

You will develop people, encourage learning and create space for new ideas while maintaining the standards and accountability expected of a well-run charity.

Our volunteers are fundamental to our organisation and you will ensure their contribution, experience and expertise are valued as part of our wider team.

Keep us relevant for the future

You will keep Age UK Plymouth outward-looking and curious.

You will understand how the lives, needs and expectations of people approaching and experiencing later life are changing and ensure that insight informs our strategic choices.

You will encourage the organisation to think flexibly about how services are designed and delivered so that different people can access support in ways that work for them.

You will be interested in the opportunities created by technology, digital tools, data and AI without seeing technology as an end in itself.

You will create space for innovation and experimentation while maintaining the judgement to distinguish between an interesting idea and something that can genuinely improve our impact.

You will ensure that learning and adaptation become part of how we work rather than something that only happens during periods of formal change.

Above all, you will help Age UK Plymouth continue to evolve without losing the humanity, expertise and relationships at the heart of what we do.

Working with our Board

The Chief Executive works in partnership with our Chair and Board of Trustees.

Trustees are responsible for the governance and strategic oversight of Age UK Plymouth. As Chief Executive, you will provide the leadership, information, advice and insight they need to fulfil those responsibilities effectively and will be accountable to the Board for the performance of the organisation.

You will develop an open and constructive relationship with trustees, ensuring they are appropriately informed while maintaining clarity between governance and executive leadership.

You will support the Board to think strategically, understand opportunities and risks and make well-informed decisions.

You will ensure Age UK Plymouth meets its legal, regulatory and contractual responsibilities and maintains effective arrangements for governance, safeguarding, quality, risk and financial management.

Experience of working effectively with a Board or equivalent governance structure will therefore be important.

About you

We are less interested in a particular career path than in the breadth and quality of leadership experience you bring.

You will have significant leadership experience and be able to demonstrate that you have operated with substantial organisational responsibility.

You will bring:

- strong strategic thinking, with an ability to identify opportunities, gaps and emerging risks and translate strategy into action
- broad business and operational understanding
- strong financial acumen and confidence interpreting financial information, budgets, forecasts and organisational performance
- experience of leading people and organisations through significant change
- excellent relationship-building, influencing and negotiation skills
- the confidence and emotional intelligence to have courageous conversations and make difficult decisions
- experience of empowering, developing and getting the best from capable people and teams
- sound judgement and an ability to think on your feet and make decisions when information may be incomplete or circumstances are changing
- experience of contributing to effective governance and working with a Board or equivalent governance structure
- an ability to balance ambition and opportunity with organisational capacity, financial sustainability and risk
- curiosity about new approaches and an ability to learn, adapt and encourage others to do the same
- a commitment to equality, inclusion and ensuring different voices and experiences inform decision-making
- a leadership style that is open, collaborative, accountable and grounded in purpose and values.

You do not need to be an expert in older people's services when you arrive.

Experience of health, social care or services supporting people and communities may be helpful, but we place greater value on broad organisational leadership experience, strong business and operational capability, the ability to learn quickly and a genuine connection with our purpose.

We are not looking for a particular qualification or career route. We are looking for the experience, judgement, values and leadership capability to lead Age UK Plymouth well.

What you can expect from us

We will provide you with the opportunity to lead an organisation that has been prepared to make difficult decisions about its future rather than stand still.

We will ensure you are supported by an experienced team who care deeply about what they do and bring considerable knowledge of our services, our communities and our city.

We will give you the opportunity to shape how Age UK Plymouth develops over the coming years and to build on the foundations already established.

We will provide you with a Board that is committed to an organisation that is sustainable, ambitious for the people we support and prepared to think differently about how we achieve our purpose.

We will give you the freedom to bring ideas, challenge thinking and build relationships that create new possibilities.

And we will remain focused on what ultimately matters: not the size of our organisation, but the difference we make to people's lives.

Role profile

Job title: Chief Executive Officer
Salary: £62,500–£67,500
Accountable to: Board of Trustees through the Chair
Responsible for: Executive / Senior Leadership Team
Location: Plymouth
Hours: 35 hours per week
Contract: Permanent

Overall accountability

The Chief Executive is responsible for providing strategic and executive leadership to Age UK Plymouth and, working with the Board, ensuring the charity is sustainable, well governed and able to deliver its charitable purpose.

The Chief Executive is accountable for organisational performance, financial sustainability, people leadership, service quality, safeguarding, risk, regulatory and contractual compliance and the effective stewardship of Age UK Plymouth's resources.

The Chief Executive will ensure that the experiences and changing needs of people in Plymouth as they age remain central to the organisation's strategy, decisions and development.

How to apply

We want to understand not only what you have done, but how you think, how you lead and what you could bring to Age UK Plymouth.

To apply, please send us:

- your CV, setting out your career history, experience and key achievements; and
- your responses to the four questions below, which will form the supporting element of your application. Please answer each question in no more than 400 words.

1. Why Age UK Plymouth and why now?
What interests you about leading Age UK Plymouth at this point in its development and what do you believe you could bring to the organisation?

2. Seeing what others may not
Tell us about a time when you identified a strategic gap, risk or opportunity that was not immediately obvious. What did you see, what did you do and what difference did it make?

3. Courageous leadership
Tell us about a significant change, difficult decision or courageous conversation you have led. How did you approach it, how did you bring people with you and what did you learn?

4. Leading through others
Tell us about your approach to leading experienced and capable people. How do you create the space for others to use their expertise while maintaining clarity, accountability and overall organisational performance?

Closing date: Sunday 15th November 2026 – 23:59
First-stage interviews: Thursday 19th November 2026
Final-stage interviews: Wednesday 25th November 2026
Preferred start date: January 2027

Please send your application to: liz.harding@ageukplymouth.org.uk

Informal conversations

We recognise that applying to become a Chief Executive is a significant decision and we want candidates to have the opportunity to understand Age UK Plymouth and the role.

For an informal and confidential conversation, please feel free to contact Liz Harding, Interim Chief Executive, at liz.harding@ageukplymouth.org.uk to arrange a convenient time.

Everyone is welcome

The people who use Age UK Plymouth's services have different lives, experiences, backgrounds and perspectives and we want our organisation to reflect and understand the communities we serve.

We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and particularly encourage applications from people whose experiences or perspectives are underrepresented in leadership roles.

We recruit on the basis of skills, experience, potential and alignment with our purpose and values. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

We also recognise that talented people do not all follow the same career path.

You do not need to have been a Chief Executive before and we will not make assumptions about your capability based simply on your current job title. If your experience has given you the leadership breadth, judgement and capability we are looking for, we are interested in hearing from you.

If you need reasonable adjustments at any stage of the recruitment process, please let us know. We want our recruitment process to enable you to demonstrate what you can bring to Age UK Plymouth.