

Position Description

Chief Executive Officer – Stepping Stone Group

About Stepping Stone Group

Stepping Stone Trust (SST) is one of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest and most respected mental health and wellbeing NGOs. Founded in 1990 with strong Christian foundations, SST employs more than 250 staff across Canterbury and Otago, with an annual operating budget of around \$20 million. The organisation provides a diverse range of services across 22 funded contracts, including:

- Youth Services – residential, respite, community and mobile support, and school attendance and engagement programmes.
- Family and Whānau Services – Caroline Reid Family Support Service for children and young people whose parents experience mental illness or addiction.
- Adult Services – residential and respite (planned and crisis), mobile medication services, and community outreach.
- Peer-Led and Education Services – Intentional Peer Support, MindWise, Mental Health First Aid, and integrated models of care with general practice and hospital partners.

SST operates through a group structure comprising:

- Stepping Stone Trust – core operational service delivery.
- Stepping Stone Connect Ltd – property management and Community Housing Provider aspirations.
- Deacon Trust Training Academy – workforce training and development, launching the Level 4 Mental Health Certificate in 2026.

SST is a faith-based organisation committed to journeying alongside tangata whaiora and whānau, helping them find recovery, belonging, and purpose. Its leadership and culture are grounded in Christian values, integrity, and compassion, with a strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and culturally responsive service delivery.

Our Commitment

Stepping Stone Trust's leadership and culture are anchored in its Christian mission and in honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Our Chief Executive will lead with humility, courage, and faith, ensuring that SST continues to make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals, whānau, and communities.

The Role

The Chief Executive Officer will lead the strategic and operational direction of the Group, ensuring the effective delivery of all services to enable the Trust to be a mental health and disability services provider of first choice and a leader of innovation in the mental health and disability sector. You will work closely with the Board, Senior Leadership Team, kaimahi, tangata whaiora, whanau, collaborating partners, contract providers and mental health and disability sector networks to not only meet contractual and regulatory obligations but drive continuous improvement across the organisation and the sector.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Leadership

- Lead the development and implementation of SST's strategic plan, ensuring alignment with the organisation's mission, values, priorities and operational capacity.
- Identify emerging trends and opportunities in the mental health and social services sector, balancing innovation with organisational sustainability.
- Guard against mission drift by ensuring new initiatives remain faithful to SST's purpose and scope.
- Drive quality, equity, and innovation in service delivery, ensuring SST continues to model best practice.

Organisational Leadership

- Build and support a high-performing Senior Leadership Team, ensuring clear structures, strong collaboration, and professional development.
- Oversee all financial, contractual, and regulatory obligations, maintaining fiscal sustainability and operational excellence.
- Embed Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments and ensure services are culturally responsive and inclusive.
- Nurture a values-based, compassionate culture that empowers kaimahi and upholds the wellbeing of all staff and tangata whaiora.

Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy

- Strengthen and grow relationships with key funders, partners, and sector networks, including Health NZ, Whaikaha, MSD, ACC, and Oranga Tamariki.
- Represent SST in regional and national forums, contributing to thought leadership and sector advocacy.
- Build meaningful partnerships with mana whenua, Māori, Pasifika, and immigrant communities to ensure services are equitable and responsive.
- Actively engage with other NGOs, peak bodies, and collaborative ventures to enhance system impact and collective voice.

Governance and Reporting

- Support and advise the Board with timely, accurate, and strategic information to inform governance decisions.
- Maintain robust risk management, financial stewardship, and compliance systems.
- Ensure clarity in governance and management roles, fostering a transparent and accountable leadership culture.

Person Profile

Qualifications and Experience

- Proven senior executive leadership experience within health, mental health, social services, or a similarly complex, service-based organisation.
- Demonstrated experience leading people, culture, operations, and strategy at scale.
- Strong understanding of the mental health and addictions sector, including funding and regulatory environments.
- Demonstrated financial and contractual acumen, including budget oversight and multi-agency partnership management.
- Understanding of and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and cultural responsiveness in service delivery.

Attributes and Leadership Style

- Visionary and strategic thinker with a collaborative, empowering leadership approach.
- Authentic, relational communicator who builds trust across all levels of the organisation and community.
- Innovative and courageous, with the ability to balance consolidation with growth.
- Resilient, composed, and values-driven, able to navigate uncertainty with faith and integrity.
- A lived Christian faith, reflected in leadership, decision-making, and relationships.

Key Relationships

Reports to: Board of Trustees – Stepping Stone Trust; Board of Directors – Stepping Stone Connect Ltd

Direct Reports: Senior Leadership Team (approximately 8–10 members)

External Relationships: Funders, government agencies, sector networks, mana whenua, Māori and Pasifika organisations, and community partners.

Location

Christchurch (with travel across Otago, Wellington, and nationally as required).