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## **PATRICIA AIYENURO**

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### **Occupation and position held:\***

Research Assistant / BFA Board Director

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### **Please describe your Fencing Experience & BF Service\***

I have been involved in fencing for over 21 years in various roles. As Head of delegation for the GBR senior, junior and cadet teams, I have had the opportunity to travel with the squad at World and European Championships. I have gained the respect and trust of generations of athletes and parents, as well as building close relationships with personal and ADP coaches. I pride myself on my fairness and impartiality, and believe that the respectful and trusting environment I create as a team manager is essential to future success. Despite the pressure of competition, I maintained good working relationships with coaches and parents on the trips, using my skills of being firm but fair diplomacy, strong communication and a deep empathy for young people and the challenges they face. Being able to make good decisions under pressure when away from my home environment is a key asset that I possess – I have a deep understanding of the international fencing system, and this helps to enable our athletes and assists them with the journey towards international success. I am chair of the board of Trustees OF Camden Fencing Club, one of the UK's most successful community-clubs. I have been successful in supporting young athletes from less well-off backgrounds to be able to participate in Fencing. Fund-raising projects which make fencing more accessible for people to participate in the sport, including children and adults from all backgrounds. I was involved in the launch of a women-only program for women of all ages, religions and backgrounds. I am passionate about inclusivity and equity in our sport and the wider community, and as part of boosting the numbers of under-represented groups in fencing, I plan to extend these programmes to give adults and children from BAME communities access to fencing.

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### **Please describe your Governance/Company Director/Board level Experience: (This can be in private or public sector, sport or non-sporting capacity.)\***

I currently sit on the board of British Fencing and I am an active member of the board. Sitting on the Nominations and International relations committee, as well as being the lead for anti-doping on the board.

I have recently become the board lead for Para Fencing.

Other experience include the following:

**St. Dominic R.C Primary School (2001 – 2004)** School Governor on the board of governors - I sat on the curriculum and finance committee

**Three Acres Community Play Project (2005 – 2014)** I was on the Board of Trustees for this charity and held the position of Chair for 5 years This charity is involved in providing afterschool and holiday provision for children from low income families.

**Camden Fencing Club Charity (2018 – present)** I sit on the board of Trustees as Chair

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**How would you support the strategic objectives of British Fencing? (1. A performance pathway to international success 2. A stronger, empowered diverse and inclusive community of 30,000 fencers, volunteers, coaches and supporters 3. Accessible inclusive swordplay opportunities delivered via partnership programmes 4. A sustainable future supported by high quality governance and infrastructure that is financially resilient 5. Maximise the wider benefits of fencing and the positive impact it can have on people's lives) if elected to the Board:\***

1. I will support development of the Performance Pathway by leveraging my depth of international experience and the wide network of International relationships I have gained through my years of fencing service . An often-overlooked element of Performance Pathways is the development of international opportunities for our referees. Just like fencers, referees need training and experience at international level to succeed in our sport, and I believe I am well-placed to open doors internationally for this element of pathway development. In time, a strong cadre of well-training and respected referees will help to influence how we are perceived as a fencing nation on the international stage and will help our athletes to be seen as part of major fencing power.
2. I would take an active interest in monitoring delivery of strategies to develop and grow the sport at all levels, but especially the community grass-roots level. I believe that it is fundamental to our future health and success as a sport to give time to making our sport stronger at participation level, and if we invest in our volunteers, coaches, referees, officials and supporters it can only make our sport stronger and as a result grow our sport and make it more sustainable. I would and offer any experience and ideas to help facilitate this. I am driven to make fencing more accessible, as a I am aware that many people still do not know where they can get access to affordable fencing classes, and as a sport we need to communicate and facilitate this. We also have an obligation to signpost people to where they can access help once they start to compete, as this is also a barrier in retaining a wider diversity of people in our sport.

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**Fundraising/Accessing funds - in the public and not for profit, health and education sector\***

I have been involved in writing various projects and programmes aimed at grass roots fencing, running successful programmes at grass roots level, fund-raising through local government, and managing events.

I secured funding from London youth and Sport England to run sessions for young women for disadvantaged backgrounds and now want to have a regular session for them to continue fencing for leisure and their well-being.

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**Commercial/Procurement - in the education sector\***

None

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**Sport Programme Delivery – in community/performance/disability sport \***

I have experience in sport development and performance; I have been involved with the GBR squad for over 14 years and have travelled internationally with fencers from Seniors to cadets from all weapons and have a good understanding of fencing at elite and world class level. I have managed Senior, Junior and Cadet teams at European and World Championships as well as several world cups globally. I am well respected by the fencing community.

As a sport, we need to improve our communication strategies in the community to better promote some of the less tangible benefits of fencing. After running sessions with Muslim women's groups, the participants spoke about their improved self-esteem. Fencing is all about integrity, discipline, resilience, support, and accomplishment. These are all strong factors to help young people develop in a positive way, and to bring the best out of older participants. Additionally, fencing's strategic elements teach participants to think for themselves, to analyse the way other people think, to plan and stay calm – and all while having fun and getting healthier! These factors are enormous selling points from a development perspective for young people, and from a community mental health perspective, and we need to relay these messages more widely and effectively for the first time. My wide experience from all areas of the fencing world, from community development and inclusivity through to High Performance, will enable me to build effective communication between all the different entities to help us to work together in promoting our sport.

As board lead for Para Fencing - I was involved in the recent Wheelchair World Cup in Cardiff earlier this year. I hope to be more involved with the development and growth of Wheelchair fencing in the UK.

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**Legal\***

no experience.

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**Please describe any additional skills and attributes that you believe you would bring to the Board if elected. Please study the job description for a Board Director on the British Fencing website\***

I have good management skills and can offer an insight into issues that community clubs may be experiencing. I have experience in club development and how to make clubs more inclusive.

I am resilient and positive and would describe myself as a doer.

Working at the grass roots level for over 15 year I have increased my network of key stakeholders in the sport in the UK as well as in European.

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