



## **Becoming a Trustee**

**Trustees play a huge part in the success and impact of voluntary and community organisations of every size, from grassroots community groups to large household-name charities.**

There are an estimated 900,000 Trustees of registered charities in England and Wales. Thousands more are Trustees for charities and community groups that are not registered. In England and Wales alone, Trustee Boards look after a staggering £39 billion of funds for some 190,000 registered charities.

Being a Trustee is an important role. Trustees are responsible for the overall running and management of their charity. They also oversee all the major decisions on behalf of that charity.

Trusteeship is challenging and rewarding. Most trustees are unpaid. All use their skills and experience to help their organisation run effectively.

### **What does it take to be a Trustee?**

Being a Trustee is about bringing your own unique insights, vision and support to your organisation. Everyone has skills and experiences that could be useful – from professional skills to simply knowing your local area well.

If you're interested in becoming a Trustee of a registered charity, the Charity Commission's guidance provides useful information about the role and responsibilities:

[“The Essential Trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do”](#)

### **What can I offer as a Trustee?**

A good Trustee is one who is inspired by the cause or organisation they represent.

A typical Trustee will have one or more of the following:

- personal knowledge of the charity's work
- professional skills in key areas, such as finance or communications
- direct experience of using the charity's services
- a passion for the cause

Trustee Boards need people with a range of skills and experience. Particularly helpful skills and experience include:

- direct or indirect experience of the cause or charity you wish to work with
- management
- finance and business
- legal
- public relations
- information technology
- fundraising

Most Trustees are unpaid so their role is voluntary. However, they give valuable time to conduct their essential Trustee duties.

### **What can Trusteeship offer me?**

Being a Trustee is a respected and responsible role.

As a Trustee, you will gain the opportunity to:

- make a difference to the cause or charity you work with
- develop existing skills
- acquire new skills
- gain unique insights and perspectives
- get involved with new networks

### **What is a Trustee?**

Trustees are people who are elected or appointed by an organisation to sit on their governing body, the Trustee Board, and make decisions on behalf of the organisation. They go by many different names including:

- members of the management committee
- directors
- council members
- executive committee members
- governors

No matter what they are called, the voting members of the top governing or supervisory body of a charitable organisation are its Trustees. If you occupy this role and your organisation has charitable status, then you are a Trustee.

### **What do Trustees do?**

Trustees attend meetings with their fellow Trustees (the Board) where they make decisions on behalf of the organisation.

They often have to review information before meetings, have discussions with other Trustees, learn about programmes, services and activities and serve on Board Sub-committees. Many organisations provide training and development opportunities in which Trustees are expected to participate.

## **Working as part of a Board**

A Trustee forms part of a governing body called a Board. A Board is a group of Trustees that makes decisions for the organisation collectively. Typically, the Board discusses an issue or measure during a meeting and takes its decision by a majority vote.

As members of a Board, Trustees have many additional shared responsibilities. These include developing strategy, appointing the Chief Executive and overseeing finances and activities. Some Trustees have special roles on the Board such as the Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary and Treasurer. These are ordinary Trustees appointed by the Board and given limited powers to act on the Board's behalf.

Other Trustees have special expertise, such as financial knowledge or HR experience. Such skilled Trustees can be valuable to the Board but they have no special status. All Trustees are equal. All take their authority from their membership on the Board.