

# Trustees and Governance



All organisations and groups need to be well governed and run in a democratic way. This fact sheet tells you how to go about setting up a Trustees Board and the role it plays within an organisation.

## What is a Trustee Board?

A trustee board may be called a management committee, an executive committee, a council, or something else. Whatever it is called, the trustee board is the governing body of a charity, and is ultimately responsible for everything the charity does. Committees are set up to help organisations share responsibilities and decision making with other interested and responsible individuals. Committee members may be residents, service users or representatives from relevant agencies such as the Police or Health Authority.

## What is 'governance'?

Governance is about leadership and ensuring that an organisation is effectively and properly run. It is distinct from day-to-day management and operations delegated to staff and volunteers.

## Who are Trustees?

Charity trustees are the people responsible for controlling the management and administration of the charity. No matter what they are called, the voting members of the top governing or supervisory body of a charity are its charity trustees. If someone has this role in your organisation and your organisation has charitable status then they will be a trustee.

## Who can become a Trustee?

Generally trustees are aged at least eighteen. They should be motivated and able to manage their own affairs; they should be able to contribute relevant skills, experience or knowledge. You might want to consider drawing up a 'role description' for your trustees and encourage people interested in joining your board to have an informal discussion with existing trustees about what it involves

## What does a Trustee do?

A trustee should act in the best interests of the charity's beneficiaries and work together as part of team rather than as an individual. They should set aside their personal interests and declare any conflicts of interest as they arise.



### Further support:

SUSTAIN can assist with recruiting and assisting new trustees and committee members. Contact Manjit Johal on **0121 711 3148** or [manjitj@solihull-sustain.org.uk](mailto:manjitj@solihull-sustain.org.uk).

## Be clear about the roles of your Trustees

Below are key Trustee roles:

- Set and maintain vision, mission and values
- Develop a strategy
- Establish and monitor policies
- Set up employment procedures
- Ensure compliance with a governing document
- Ensure accountability
- Select and support the Chief Executive
- Maintain effective board performance
- Promote the organisation

### Trustee network:

SUSTAiN's virtual trustee network provides a regular email bulletin with useful information relating to the trustee role. To join, email [clairem@solihull-sustain.org.uk](mailto:clairem@solihull-sustain.org.uk) with your organisation name and trustee contact details.

## You will need to recruit Honorary Officers from your members

These should be a Chair (to run the meetings), Vice-Chair (to act in the absence of the Chair), Secretary (to take minutes and other administrative tasks) and Treasurer (to oversee financial matters).

## Keep a 'register of interest' of your trustees

This is a record of other interests your trustees or committee members (and their immediate relatives or household members) have that could result in a conflict of interest in matters that may arise. This includes:

- Business and private interests
- Any directorships (including companies limited by guarantee)
- Any other voluntary organisations where there are on the management committee/board
- Any other voluntary organisations where they are a formal member

## Produce Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference are essential and help the board or committee run smoothly and effectively. Terms of Reference should include:

- The purpose, aims and functions of the committee
- Details of membership and election of members & honorary officers
- Frequency of meetings
- Members code of conduct
- Names of honorary officers (see above)
- Conflict of interest

## Try to have a diverse Board or Committee

Your committee will benefit from members who vary in terms of age, gender, faith, ethnic background. This will make sure you get a good spread of experience and views.

## Hold meetings at times which are at convenient for your members

Not all times will suit everyone but find out what most people prefer. Maybe have some meetings during the day and some in the evening. Remember, some people will be volunteers who will be coming outside of their working hours while others may be able to attend as part of their work.

## Familiarise yourself with national core standards for Trustees and Committee members

For comprehensive information about the new national core standards for trustees visit:

[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications/publication.asp?id=3837](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications/publication.asp?id=3837)