



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

GUIDANCE

Finding new trustees: what charities need to know



Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Trustee recruitment at a glance | 4 |
| 3. Making a start | 6 |
| 4. Finding potential trustees | 9 |
| 5. Vetting trustees prior to appointment | 12 |
| 6. Appointing trustees | 16 |

1. Introduction

1.1 What is this guidance about?

The Charity Commission is often asked to advise charities on how to recruit, select, appoint and induct trustees. This guidance answers some of the more common questions, and sets out a framework for the recruitment process.

The recruitment, selection and subsequent induction of one or more new trustees into a charity can strongly influence how effective the charity is in the future. Where all works well, it can lead to a balanced and effective trustee board and a well governed and effective charity. However, where these processes are weak, the ability of the trustee board to manage the charity may be affected, and in the worst cases it can lead to major problems for the charity and its beneficiaries.

1.2 'Must' and 'should': what the Commission means

The word 'must' is used where there is a specific legal or regulatory requirement that you must comply with. 'Should' is used for minimum good practice guidance you should follow unless there's a good reason not to.

The Commission also offers less formal advice and recommendations that trustees may find helpful in the management of their charity.

1.3 Scope of this guidance

This guidance covers a range of key areas about recruiting and appointing new trustees. Some of the issues are complex and governed by different laws and regulations relating to different kinds of charity. You should not rely on this guidance to be an accurate or full description of legal matters affecting your charity. It provides a general introduction and overview, and highlights areas where you may need further advice.

1.4 Using this guidance

The structure of this guidance follows the main headings used in the next section. Under each heading, the Commission asks a selection of the relevant questions that new or existing trustees may raise about the recruitment and induction process. Generally it gives a concise summary answer ('The short answer'), and then goes on to provide further explanation and background ('In more detail').

1.5 Other sources of help and advice

There are many resources which trustees can use to help them. The Commission encourages trustees to make use of the expertise of relevant organisations to help them run their charities as effectively as possible.

1.6 Some technical terms used

Governing document: A legal document setting out the charity's purposes and, usually, how it is to be administered. It may be a trust deed, constitution, memorandum and articles of association, will, conveyance, Royal Charter, scheme of the Commission, or other formal document.

Incorporated charity: A charity which is also a company or has a similar legal status as a corporate entity in law.

Trustee: means a charity trustee. Charity trustees are the people who are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of the charity. In the charity's governing document they may be called trustees, managing trustees, committee members, governors or directors, or they may be referred to by some other title.

Trustee board: means the charity's governing body. This may be called the management committee, executive committee or board of directors, or may be referred to by some other title.

2. Trustee recruitment at a glance

This section summarises the main stages in the recruitment of new trustees and sets out a typical sequence of events.

Making a start

(1) A charity identifies the need for new trustees. This may be because vacancies have arisen through resignations, or it may be that existing trustees have decided that one or more new trustees with specific skills are needed to help run the charity more effectively.

(2) The trustees agree what skills, experience and knowledge are needed, and write it down in the form of a short job description and person specification.

(3) The trustees agree responsibilities and a process for recruitment; in doing this, they take care to comply with any specific requirements set out in the charity's governing document. Some of the work may be delegated to a sub-group of trustees, but the whole trustee board remains in full control of the process and decisions.

Finding potential trustees

(4) The trustees consider the best methods of attracting a diverse range of candidates with the skills the charity needs. This may include advertising in the local and/or specialist press and using trustee brokerage services.

(5) Short-listing and interviews take place against agreed criteria. Interviews are carried out by a small panel of trustees, and each candidate is asked similar questions to ensure a fair and objective approach. Notes are kept of each interview.

(6) Preferred candidates are identified and invited to join the trustees, subject to references, formal vetting and approval by the full trustee board. Unsuccessful candidates are notified and thanked for their interest.

Vetting potential trustees

(7) The trustees check that the candidates have not been disqualified from acting as trustees, and candidates are asked to confirm in writing that this is the case.

(8) Candidates are asked to consider and declare any existing or potential conflicts of interest.

(9) If the charity works with children or adults at risk, the trustees seek any appropriate checks from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

(10) In the light of the checks and declarations, the trustees decide to go ahead and formalise the appointment of new trustees.

Making the appointment

(11) The trustees check the charity's governing document to ensure that they appoint the new trustees in a proper and legal way.

(12) The Chair of the charity writes to the prospective trustees, setting out their duties and the charity's expectations of them; they are asked to sign and return a copy of the letter.

(13) An information pack about the charity is sent to new trustees, and a full induction process is arranged. New trustees meet existing trustees and others involved with the charity, such as members of staff, volunteers and beneficiaries.

(14) The new trustees attend their first board meeting and are duly welcomed. All relevant parties, such as funders and the charity's solicitors and auditors, are notified of the new appointments.

3. Making a start

You may be thinking about inviting new members to the trustee board. First, you should make sure you are aware of any relevant requirements in the charity's governing document, such as:

- is there a minimum or a maximum number of trustees?
- how are they to be appointed?
- how long can they stay in office?

You should also consider questions such as:

- what new skills, knowledge or experience does the board need?
- are there specific interest groups that a new trustee could represent?
- should the trustee board be more diverse than it is at present? For example, to include people from different social or ethnic backgrounds or to include people with disabilities

3.1 How important are trustees to a charity?

The short answer

Trustees matter a great deal. It is very important for any charity to have trustees committed to their task and with the skills, knowledge and experience that the charity needs.

In more detail

Trustees play an essential role in the governance of charities. They also have a lot to contribute to their success. For example they can:

- serve as a means of communication with communities that a charity exists to serve
- bring valuable professional or other experience to charities
- help to ensure that charities are well-managed through the appointment of senior executive staff

3.2 What kind of person will make a good trustee?

The short answer

Most people have some skills, knowledge or experience which they can bring to a charity. Trustees should have a strong personal commitment to the charity's aims and objectives. It is also essential that there are no legal or other barriers to a trustee's appointment.

In more detail

When trustees are thinking about recruiting a new trustee or trustees, a good starting point is to look at what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to make sure that the charity is well governed and is run effectively, efficiently and appropriately to its size and complexity. This does not mean that trustee boards should contain experts or specialists to cover every eventuality.

This process is valuable in its own right and the Commission recommends that trustees regularly review the skills of the trustee board rather than wait for a trustee vacancy to occur. Trustee skills can range in nature from financial, book-keeping or marketing skills, through to links with the relevant communities or service users. It is also important that a trustee should have the necessary time and energy to devote to the charity.

An assessment or appraisal of the skills of the current trustees is a good way to identify any gaps which need to be filled. The extent of the assessment will vary depending on the size and nature of the charity. For smaller and less complex charities the assessment can be quite simple, but for larger and more complex charities a more formal and structured approach may be needed.

This assessment, as well as identifying any skills gaps on the trustee board, can help form the basis of a 'job description' for new trustees. This can be a useful way of describing the role to new or prospective trustees, including how much time they will need to commit to fulfilling their new duties. The Commission recommends that job descriptions are prepared for each trustee. A charity will often benefit from trustees who reflect, and have a knowledge of the communities and the areas that the charity exists to serve.

It is also essential that there are no legal barriers to a trustee's appointment.

Further information

The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) produce model role descriptions for charity trustees. ICSA also produces role descriptions which are specifically for chairs, secretaries and treasurers of charities. The **National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee** members can also be a useful tool for drawing up a job description.

You can find more information on who may and may not become a trustee in section 5.

3.3 Should a charity aim to have a diverse trustee board?

The short answer

Yes. A diverse board is more likely to contain a broader range of skills, knowledge and experience than one which is more narrowly based. When preparing to recruit new trustees, a charity should, in general, seek to increase or at least maintain the diversity of its trustee board.

In more detail

Having a diverse trustee board can also help to ensure that the charity is fair and open in all its dealings, for example, in its grant giving or delivery of services.

The Commission believes that the governance of charities will be improved where trustees are recruited from a wide range of backgrounds. This includes trustees from parts of the community which have traditionally not played a large part in charities, such as young people, people from minority and ethnic communities and people with disabilities. Creating a diverse board can also help to increase accountability and public confidence.

There are also some legislative requirements with which charities must comply; for instance the Equality Act 2010 gives 'public authorities' a general duty to eliminate discrimination on certain grounds and to advance equality of opportunity. A person or organisation which is not a public authority but which exercises public functions must also have due regard to these matters. The services provided by some charities are included within this definition, and the legislation is something which an effectively-run charity should want to work towards.

Further information

You can find more details on how to make a trustee board more diverse in section 4.6. The NCVO provides information on the legislative requirements on diversity. WCVA covers many of these and other legal requirements in 'The good employment code-a resource for voluntary and community organisations' and 'An employment guide for community buildings (and other voluntary groups)'.

3.4 Who is responsible for recruiting new trustees?

The short answer (legal requirement)

Responsibility for the recruitment of new trustees rests firmly with the existing trustees. They must oversee the management of an open and efficient process and always act in the best interests of the charity.

In more detail

Existing trustees are legally responsible for the recruitment of new trustees. Trustees of charities that employ staff can delegate some aspects of recruitment to staff, but they must ensure that they retain overall responsibility and control of the recruitment, selection and induction processes.

In recruiting new trustees, the existing trustees must act in the best interests of the charity. In order to ensure this is the case, and that they are in a position to explain to new trustees what is required of them, existing trustees need to be clear in their own minds about the purposes and aims of the charity, as well as their broader duties and responsibilities as trustees.

4. Finding potential trustees

There are a variety of methods which trustee boards can use to recruit new trustees. The Commission's experience and research shows that the traditional methods for recruiting new trustees - personal recommendation and word of mouth - remain the most popular. However, its research work has shown that whilst these methods are still widely used, they are not necessarily the most effective ways of finding the people with the skills which the trustees have identified, as they limit the field from which trustees can be drawn. Using wider and more inclusive methods of searching for new trustees, such as advertising and using trustee brokerage services, can access a wider range of applicants and the Commission recommends that trustees consider these methods.

4.1 Is advertising a good way to attract trustees?

The short answer

Yes. By advertising it is possible to reach out to more people than can be reached by word of mouth, and this can help a charity to attract a greater range of candidates with a wider range of skills and experience.

In more detail

Advertising can be an effective way of reaching a wider group of people, and it gives a charity the opportunity to specify the skills that the trustee board is looking for. Advertising in the press can be expensive, and will not be appropriate for all charities. However, there are some low cost solutions available, such as free notices on local websites, local notice boards or newsletters. To make the most of advertising, trustees should think carefully about where to advertise, and make sure that the advertisement accurately reflects the charity and the skills and experience that the trustees are looking for.

4.2 Can a charity recruit internally for trustees?

The short answer (legal requirement)

Yes, this can be a good way of finding trustees who have the qualities and skills the charity needs. But be aware that there are specific legal requirements if the trustee is also a paid employee of the charity.

In more detail

Trustees may want to consider recruiting new trustees from within their own charity. There may be volunteers within the charity who possess the skills which the trustees have identified, or who could develop these skills with further training and support. If an employee of the charity, rather than a volunteer, wishes to become a trustee, there are particular requirements which the charity will need to comply with, since the law prevents unauthorised payments to trustees.

Further information

You can find more information in **Trustee expenses and payments (CC11)**.

4.3 Can a charity recruit trustees from its users or beneficiaries?

The short answer (legal requirement)

Yes. Trustees who use or benefit from the charity's services are known as user trustees, and they can both enhance the effective management of a charity, and can help to ensure a more diverse and representative trustee board.

In more detail

The decision whether or not to include users as trustees is one that the trustee board needs to consider based on the circumstances and needs of the charity. User trustees can contribute direct experience to the development of the charity's services and help other trustees develop a greater understanding of the users' perspective.

For both user trustees and trustees generally, trustee boards need to ensure that there are procedures in place to manage any conflicts of interest between a trustee's personal interests and those of the charity. It is important to remember that user trustees have the same duties and responsibilities as any other trustee. Their role is to act in the best interests of the charity, not to represent user interests.

Further information

You can find more information about user trustees in **Users on Board: Beneficiaries who become trustees (CC24)**. More information about conflicts of interest can be found in section 5.5.

4.4 Can people with learning difficulties be trustees?

The short answer

Yes, in many cases people with learning difficulties or other mental health issues (through disability or ill-health) can be fully active as charity trustees.

In more detail

One of the eligibility requirements for trustees (see section 5.1) is that trustees must be considered capable of managing their own affairs if they are to be considered capable of managing a charity. While this may rule out some people at the more severe end of the learning difficulties spectrum, many people with learning difficulties will be able to meet this criterion and play an active and responsible role in managing their charity, bringing useful experience and perspective to the trustee board. This applies equally to many people with other mental health issues, both permanent and temporary and caused by either injury or ill-health.

4.5 Can charities get help to find trustees?

The short answer

Yes, a number of organisations maintain registers of potential trustees, or offer a trustee brokerage service, matching potential trustees with vacancies on the boards of charities.

In more detail

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) operates Trustee Bank which allows you to advertise and view trustee vacancies.

There are a number of other sources you can use to find out about volunteering opportunities, including Do-it, which is a national database of volunteering opportunities in the United Kingdom: www.do-it.org.uk/.

Specialist magazines, journals and newspapers also list trustee brokerage services and the local Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) in England, and County Voluntary Councils (CVC) in Wales, may be a source of further information.

Networking with other charities, either from the same local area or offering similar services, can be another way of finding new trustees. This can also be a useful way of sharing information and best practice.

4.6 How can a charity make its trustee board more diverse?

The short answer

You can achieve greater diversity by reaching out into communities that are not presently represented, for example by advertising and by making specific efforts to assist people who might otherwise have difficulties in attending board meetings.

In more detail

Practical ways of increasing diversity on the trustee board include:

- making use of more active, open and inclusive methods of recruitment, such as advertising or using trustee brokerage services
- organising trustee board meetings at the most convenient times, or at different times so that people who cannot attend at a particular time are not excluded
- holding trustee board meetings in a venue which is accessible for people with disabilities
- having a policy in place for paying childcare expenses or providing childcare arrangements
- considering people's needs for translators or sign language interpreters, or for documents available in large print, tape, CD or Braille
- in Wales, taking full account of the bi-lingual society, and ensuring that everyone is able to use either English or Welsh as their language of choice, including receiving written communication in that language

5. Vetting trustees prior to appointment

The appointment of a new trustee to a charity is an important matter. Before appointing a new trustee the trustee board must make sure it is acting within the law, in accordance with the charity's governing document, and that the prospective trustee is not disqualified from being a trustee. The Commission recommends that DBS checks should be obtained for trustees of charities which work with children or vulnerable adults. Charities should also ensure that a prospective trustee understands the responsibilities they are taking on and can be relied on to carry them out responsibly.

5.1 Can anyone be appointed as a trustee?

The short answer (legal requirement)

No. There are legal restrictions on who may be a charity trustee. Additional restrictions may be contained in the charity's governing document. Before appointing a new trustee, the trustee board must make sure that the appointment meets the requirements of the charity's governing document and the law.

In more detail

When preparing to appoint a new trustee, the trustee board must ensure that the person is qualified to act as a trustee. No-one under the age of 18 can be a trustee of a charitable trust or unincorporated association. However, 16 is the minimum age for this role at a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) or a charitable company. Further information on young people as trustees can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Some people are disqualified by law from acting as trustees, unless authorised to do so by a waiver from the Commission. Until 31 July 2018, the reasons for disqualification include:

- having an unspent conviction for an offence involving dishonesty or deception (such as fraud)
- being bankrupt, or entering into a formal arrangement (eg an individual voluntary arrangement) with a creditor
- removal as a company director or charity trustee because of wrongdoing

New reasons for disqualification will be added on 1 August 2018: our **guidance** explains the changes in more detail.

The appointment of a trustee must be in accordance with the charity's governing document, which will set out procedures for appointing new trustees, including any restrictions, such as a maximum number of trustees or an age limit. It is important that trustees follow these procedures. If they don't, this could result in the appointment being invalid.

5.2 How should charities check on prospective trustees?

The short answer

Before appointing a trustee, the trustee board should obtain a declaration from the prospective trustee that they are not disqualified. It should also consult official registers of disqualified persons. The Commission strongly recommends that charities obtain the relevant DBS checks for which the trustee position is eligible.

In more detail

As a minimum, the trustee board should ask new trustees to sign a declaration to confirm that they are not disqualified from acting as a charity trustee.

Trustees can also make use of official registers which record the names of people who are disqualified from acting as charity trustees. These include:

(1) The Individual Insolvency Register maintained by the Insolvency Service, which contains details of:

- bankruptcies that are either current or have ended in the last three months
- current individual voluntary arrangements and fast track voluntary arrangements
- current bankruptcy restriction orders and undertakings

Searches of the Register can be made on the Insolvency Service website www.gov.uk/government/organisations/insolvency-service, by visiting your local Official Receiver's office, or by post or fax.

(2) The register of disqualified directors maintained by Companies House. Searches of the register can be made on the Companies House website, www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house.

(3) The register of all persons who have been removed as a charity trustee either by the Commission or by an Order of the High Court since 1 January 1993.

Charities working with children and adults at risk:

There are legal restrictions under safeguarding legislation on who can be involved in working with children and adults at risk. The DBS undertakes criminal records checks of individuals, which charities can use to ensure that they are eligible and suitable for the trustee role. The type of check that can be made depends on the nature of the charity's activities and the role that the trustee plays.

For example, if your charity provides 'regulated activity' for children or adults, it should request an enhanced DBS check on applicants for trustee roles: where it is satisfied that the role is eligible, this will include a check against the relevant barred list.

The charity should have a policy about how it deals with the disclosure of convictions to ensure that it treats people consistently. More information on such policies is available from the DBS.

Further information

Use the Commission **declaration form** for prospective trustees.

You can find more information about trustees' responsibilities in relation to safeguarding in the **Commission's strategy for dealing with safeguarding issues**.

Find out more about the **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** and how to obtain a check.

5.3 What if prospective trustees have not been checked?

The short answer

The Commission is likely to find out as it uses several ways to monitor whether or not charities are checking the eligibility of their trustees.

In more detail

There are a number of ways in which the Commission monitors whether or not charities are checking the eligibility of their trustees:

- when an organisation applies to register as a charity, the Commission asks all the trustees to complete a declaration confirming that they are not disqualified from acting as a charity trustee
- it carries out annual checks on a random sample of trustees to establish that trustee eligibility checks have been carried out
- it monitors registered charities through the reporting of serious incidents

5.4 What happens if a disqualified person becomes a trustee?

The short answer (legal requirement)

A disqualified person is not able to act as a trustee and their appointment should be ended. If existing trustees have not made proper checks before the appointment, they may have acted improperly.

In more detail

A person who is disqualified from being a trustee under charity law cannot act as a trustee and the individual should either resign or be removed: where the charity's governing document prevents the appointment of a disqualified trustee, then the appointment is invalid. In addition, if problems arise with a trustee, and it emerges that existing trustees failed to make adequate checks, this would be an important factor in the Commission's consideration of whether the trustees had acted improperly.

Further information

You can find more information on protection of vulnerable adults on the [Department for Health website](#).

5.5 What about potential conflicts of interest for prospective trustees?

The short answer

It is a good idea to consider potential conflicts of interest in advance of an appointment. If there is a strong possibility that conflicts of interest might arise following the appointment of a prospective trustee, that may suggest that the trustees should reconsider the appointment.

In more detail

A conflict of interest is any situation in which a trustee's personal interests or loyalties, and those of the charity, arise simultaneously or appear to clash. For example, if a charity awarded a contract to another organisation owned by a trustee, the person in question could face conflicting pressures between maximising profit for his or her company and keeping costs low for the charity.

It is always better to anticipate any conflicts of interest before the appointment of a trustee, than to deal with such conflicts as and when they arise. It is inevitable that conflicts of interest will emerge from time to time, particularly in local communities where interests may overlap, so the potential for conflicts of interest may not be sufficient to prevent the appointment of an otherwise well qualified trustee. It is important to identify the conflicts of interest and to make sure that they are properly managed.

However, if such conflicts are likely to arise frequently, this may affect the ability of the trustee to perform their duties. This is particularly important where personal interests may be significant enough to make it necessary for the trustee to withdraw from meetings so often that they cannot make a useful contribution. If this is the case they should consider standing down or not standing in the first place.

Prospective trustees should be asked about potential conflicts of interest, and these should be declared to those who will decide on the appointment. For example, if new trustees are elected by the charity's membership, the membership should be made aware of any possible conflict of interests, so that they can take this into account when voting.

As a matter of best practice, a charity should have arrangements in place for spotting and dealing with potential conflicts of interest involving trustees. An open approach is good practice. One useful exercise that charities should consider is to ask trustees to submit an annual declaration of actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Further information

A number of organisations provide model conflict of interest policies and a model register of interests, such as The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA). You can find more details on **dealing with conflicts of interest** on the GOV.UK website.

6. Appointing trustees

There are various ways in which trustees can be appointed, including nomination by existing trustees, election by a charity's members, or by virtue of another office which they hold ('ex officio' trustees). It is important that a prospective trustee understands the duties and responsibilities they will be taking on. Once a trustee has been appointed, there are various steps needed to formalise the appointment.

Having recruited a new trustee, it is important to make them feel welcome; to develop their skills, ensure that they are familiar with the charity's work and to introduce them to other trustees and to key members of staff. It is a good idea to have a formal induction process in place.

6.1 How are trustees appointed?

The short answer

Trustees may be elected or nominated by existing trustees, nominated by other organisations, or may become trustees by virtue of another position which they hold.

In more detail

Trustees may be appointed in a number of different ways. For example:

- they can be nominated by the other trustees or by another organisation, such as a local authority
- they may be elected by the charity's members
- they may become a trustee by virtue of a post which they occupy, such as a mayor or mayoress of a town, the chief executive of a local health trust or the head master of a school; such trustees are known as 'ex officio' trustees

Where trustees are appointed or nominated by an outside body, such as a local authority, the charity itself may have less power to control the appointment. However, it can still have influence and this guidance may still be helpful. Like all trustee appointments, any outside body appointing a trustee to a charity is bound by law to do this in the best interests of the charity rather than its own interests. It may be helpful for the charity to set out for the appointing body what is required of a trustee and any particular skills or qualities which the charity is looking for. In order to allow the trustees more control over the appointment, they could ask the nominating body to provide the names of two people for the charity to consider.

Other than in the case of ex officio trustees, the appointment of a trustee becomes effective only once a prospective trustee has formally agreed to accept the trusteeship. The trusteeship may then begin immediately, or on a specified date.

6.2 What other considerations apply to trustee appointments?

The short answer

A prospective trustee should be aware of the legal responsibilities they will be taking on. The appointment should also be made in a way that serves the charity's best interests.

In more detail

A prospective trustee should understand the legal responsibilities which they will assume in becoming a trustee. You can find details of the responsibilities of trustees in the guidance **The essential trustee: what you need to know (CC3)**. The appointment of a new trustee should also be made in a way which serves the best interests of the charity. The following are some of the main areas of good practice when recruiting and appointing trustees which are covered in this guidance:

- identifying skills which the board needs, and preparing 'job descriptions' for trustees - see section 3.2
- using the most appropriate ways of finding new trustees - see section 4
- ensuring that the appointment of a trustee is legal and carried out to best practice standards - see section 5 and 6.3
- providing an induction programme and support for new trustees - see section 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6

6.3 How should the appointment of a new trustee be formalised?

The short answer

Depending on the nature of the charity, various official bodies will need to be informed of the appointment of a new trustee. You may also need to transfer property held in trust by the trustees, amend bank mandates, and inform other interested parties.

In more detail

Following the appointment of a new trustee, trustees must ensure that:

- the Commission is notified of the appointment as soon as possible
- any property belonging to the charity which is held in the names of outgoing individual trustees is transferred into the name of the new trustee
- if the charity is a charitable company, details of the newly appointed director are sent to Companies House

They should also ensure that:

- bank mandates are amended if the new trustee is to be a signatory to the charity's account
- all relevant parties are notified, for example, funders, the charity's solicitors, auditors and other professional advisers

Upon appointment, the new trustee should be formally contacted to welcome them as a trustee and to confirm their appointment. The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) produces sample letters to send to new trustees on appointment.

6.4 What documents should new trustees receive?

The short answer

A new trustee should receive copies of all key documents relating to the charity's work, and to their duties as a trustee.

In more detail

The new trustee should receive key documents relating to the charity, with an explanation of their purpose and effect. In this way new trustees can find out how the charity works and can make an effective contribution to the management of the charity as soon as possible. Not only is this good practice, but it may also be required by the charity's governing document.

Key documents to be given to new trustees should include:

- the charity's governing document
- the charity's latest annual report and accounts
- minutes of recent trustee meetings
- the guidance **The essential trustee: what you need to know (CC3)**, and **The hallmarks of an effective charity (CC10)**
- the charity's policy on dealing with conflicts of interest
- any other key documents which trustees will need, for example, the charity's strategic plan and its vision and values or mission statement

It may also be helpful to provide new trustees with a copy of the **National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee members**. These Standards have been designed to provide advice and to describe best practice on the role of a trustee.

6.5 What support should be provided for new trustees?

The short answer

Charities should invest in the training, support and development of their trustees, as with members of staff, in order to increase the contribution that the board can make to the charity's management. The level of support given will depend on the size and nature of the charity.

In more detail

In an effectively-run charity the induction process marks the beginning of an on-going process of trustee training and development, to ensure that trustees can continue to make an effective contribution to the charity. The level of training and support which trustees need will vary depending on the size and nature of the charity, but trustees may wish to consider some of the following:

- individual training courses
- away days for the whole trustee board, with or without staff

- briefings or workshops as part of trustee meetings
- visiting other charities which carry out similar work

Trustees should periodically review the procedures which they have in place for the recruitment, induction and on-going development of trustees to ensure that these procedures remain effective.

6.6 How should new trustees be inducted?

The short answer

First make sure that the new trustee has received all the key documents set out in section 6.4. The new trustee should also meet other trustees and key people within the charity to better understand its work and any challenges it may face.

In more detail

A proper induction is vital as part of the process of ensuring that trustees can become valuable and effective members of the board as quickly as possible. All charities, regardless of how big or small they are, should consider the needs of the charity and new trustees by providing an induction programme that is suitable for the new trustee and the size and nature of the charity, and which will equip the trustee with the information they need.

For new trustees of smaller and more straightforward charities, a discussion with the existing trustees may be the best way to learn everything which they need to know initially in order to make an effective contribution to the management of the charity.

It may also be useful for new trustees to speak with key people within the charity in order to gain a clear understanding of how the charity operates.

For larger and more complex charities, a more structured induction programme might help the new trustee better understand the work of the charity, and this induction might include:

- introductions to senior management and staff
- introductions to any professional advisers retained by the charity
- visits to see services provided by the charity
- visits to schemes and projects of the charity
- meetings with beneficiaries of the charity
- an assessment of any training required by the new trustee

Further information

The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA) produces a sample induction pack for trustees. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) produces a range of information for trustees, including 'The Good Trustee Guide'.