

Finding and supporting young trustees: A checklist for charities



An effective trustee board is likely to have trustees with a variety of skills, knowledge and experience. Young people can bring particular perspectives, and a new enthusiasm for the cause. Being on a trustee board will also benefit young people, for example, by having the opportunity to develop useful influencing, decision-making and management skills.

This checklist is intended to help charities identify the questions and issues to consider when thinking about recruiting young people to their board, what would be the best way to do this and how they could support young trustees once they are appointed. **'Young' in this context means anyone aged 16-24. There are additional considerations when recruiting anyone under 18, as explained in Part B of the checklist.**

The Checklist

A: Thinking about recruitment

- Has the charity carried out an assessment of its board's skills and experience, and identified any gaps that young trustees could fill?
- Is the charity clear about its reasons for involving young people? For example, does the charity particularly want to:
 - Benefit from new ideas and perspective?
 - Benefit from young people's energy and enthusiasm?
 - Identify new ways of doing things and harnessing technology?
 - Increase its networking opportunities?
 - Become more diverse, representative and accountable?
 - Enable young service users to inform and influence decision-making within the charity?
- Is trusteeship the most appropriate way of involving young people in your charity in order to achieve this outcome? For example, if they are service users, will they be interested in governance and finance, or are they only interested in the services they receive?
- Would the charity benefit from involving young people in other ways instead as a first step, for example as volunteers or members of an advisory group?
- How will your charity ensure a meaningful approach to involving young people, which avoids falling into 'tokenism'?
- Are the existing trustees prepared for the arrival of younger trustees, especially if this represents a significant cultural change?

B: Legal and related considerations

- If the charity is aiming to recruit **trustees under 18**:
 - Has the legal position been checked?¹
 - Has the charity considered obtaining CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks for the other trustees, as part of its overall safeguarding policy?

¹ Under trust law, the minimum age for trustees of a trust or unincorporated association is 18 years. The minimum age for directors of charitable companies is 16. Please refer to the Commission's guidance *Involving young people in running a charity (Trustees under 18 - can it be done?)* for more information on the legal position of trustees under 18.

C: How do you identify and encourage young people to apply for trustee roles?

- What contacts or links does the charity already have with young people who might potentially become trustees, or become involved in the charity in other ways? Have you considered:
 - Existing young volunteers with potential to become trustees?
 - Other young people who are already interested in your charity?
 - Using or developing relationships with organisations that already involve young people? (For example, universities, colleges of further and higher education, students' unions in higher and further education.)
- How could you communicate to young people the potential benefits of becoming a trustee? Have you considered staggering communication, so you inspire young people first, explaining the role and what they can contribute, and then going into detail on trustee responsibilities?
- Does your trustee recruitment material need to be reviewed to enable a wider audience to be reached?
- How could you most effectively use different methods of finding young trustees, such as online social media?
- How could you effectively involve young people in your communications to help in reaching out to other young people?

D: How will you support young trustees?

- What support will you provide to enable young people joining the board to understand:
 - Their role?
 - The work of the charity?
 - How board meetings work generally and each item of business being discussed? For example, are the board papers easy to understand, and are the meetings at convenient times?
 - How they can take part in the discussion and persuade people to listen to their ideas?

Support could include, for example, a mentoring or buddy system and induction/training that is tailored to an individual's learning needs and abilities.

- What policies and arrangements are in place, or need to be put in place to deal with:
 - Conflicts of interest
 - Confidentiality
 - Supporting, and considering how best to involve young people (particularly under 18s), if discussions about the charity's work may involve matters of a potentially distressing nature?

Please refer also to:

- *Finding New Trustees: What charities need to know* (CC30) for guidance on recruiting, selecting, appointing and inducting trustees, including CRB checks.
- *Start as you mean to go on: Trustee recruitment and induction* (RS10) for a checklist of questions to consider when recruiting, selecting and inducting new trustees generally.
- *Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector*, which clarifies the principles behind good governance and includes help with decision making, accountability and the work of boards. The Code was produced by the sector, for the sector.