



Swindon Trustee Network

Trustee Handbook

February 2007

Produced by the
Swindon Trustee Network



Introduction

Congratulations on becoming a trustee. This handbook should help you to put your abilities to good use for the benefit of the organisation you have joined. The intention is to include easy to understand information to help you make sense of the role you have agreed to take on.

Its contents will be periodically reviewed and updated. Any comments you may have to improve its effectiveness will be greatly appreciated.



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Being a Trustee – how your skills will be improved

Serving as a trustee provides an excellent opportunity to develop the following skills and competencies through participating in strategic planning and management:

Adaptability

Become effective in unfamiliar and changing surroundings

Leadership

Experience of responsibility, delegation and influencing

Problem solving

Gain experience in identifying issues and determining solutions

Communication

Learn to listen, negotiate, and express views constructively

Creativity

Learn to challenge convention and come up with new ideas

Resilience

Learn to cope under pressure and in the face of obstacles

Decision making

Develop your judgement and readiness to take unpopular decisions

Project management

Practise setting priorities and monitoring plans to bring in results

Developing staff

Set staff targets, coach, counsel, and evaluate performance

Collaboration

Work together with people from different backgrounds to achieve a common goal

Business awareness

Enhance your understanding of how an organisation operates within external constraints

Customer awareness the customer

Look at issues through the eyes of

Technical skills new context

Practise your expert knowledge in a

Thousands of others already find being a trustee a rewarding way to make a difference to the lives of those in need or to help improve the local environment.

Remember, although you take on shared responsibility for the good management of an organisation when you become a trustee, you don't have to be perfect!.



Swindon Employees in
the Community Network

What do trustees do?

Trustee boards have twelve main roles. Not all will apply especially if you are a smaller group that does not employ staff.



1. **Set and maintain vision, mission and values**

The trustee board is responsible for establishing the essential purpose of the organisation. They are also responsible for guarding the ethos and values of the organisation.

2. **Develop strategy**

Together, the trustee board and chief executive officer develop long-term strategy. Meeting agendas reflect the key points of the strategy to keep the organisation on track.

3. **Establish and monitor policies**

The trustee board creates policies to govern organisational activity. These cover:

- Guidance for staff
- Systems for reporting and monitoring
- An ethical framework for everyone connected with the organisation
- Conduct of trustees and board business

4. **Set up employment procedures**

The trustee board creates comprehensive, fair and legal personnel policies. These protect the organisation and those who work for it. They cover:

- Recruitment
- Support
- Appraisal

- Remuneration
- Discipline

It also recruits and selects new trustee board members.

5. **Ensure compliance with governing document.**

The governing document is the rulebook for the organisation. The trustees make sure it is followed. In particular, the organisation's activities must comply with the charitable objects.

6. **Ensure accountability**

The trustees should ensure that the organisation fulfils accountability as required by law to the Charity Commission, the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise and the Registrar of Companies (if it is a company limited by guarantee). The organisation should also be accountable to donors, beneficiaries, staff, volunteer, and the general public. This means publishing annual reports and accounts.

7. **Ensure compliance with the law**

Trustees are responsible for checking that all the organisation's activities are legal.

8. **Maintain proper fiscal oversight**

The trustees are responsible for effectively managing the organisation's resources so it can meet its charitable objects. The trustee board:

- Secures sufficient resources to fulfil the mission e.g. funding
- Monitors spending in the best interests of the organisation
- Approves the annual financial statement and budget
- Protects the organisation against liability by providing insurance

- Seeks to minimise risk for the organisation
- Participates in fundraising (in some organisations)
- Ensures legal compliance

9. **Select and support the chief executive**

If necessary, the trustee board creates policy covering the employment of a chief executive. They also select and support the chief executive and review their performance.

10. **Respect the role of staff**

The trustee board recognises and respects the domain of staff responsibility. At the same time, it creates policy to guide staff activities and safeguard the interests of the organisation.

11. **Maintain effective board performance**

The board keeps its own house in order. It engages in:

- Productive meetings
- Effective committees with adequate resources
- Development activities
- Regular performance reviews
- Partnership with consultants where necessary

12. **Promote the organisation**

Through their own behaviour, their governance oversight and their activities on behalf of the organisation trustees enhance and protect the reputation of their organisation. They are good ambassadors for the organisation.



Induction

All new trustees should have some form of induction and be given an induction pack to keep as an information resource. It should include the following



Documents

- The organisations Governing document (constitution or memorandum & articles)
- Standing orders and terms of reference for committees, sub-committees and working groups
- Set of the most recent board papers and minutes and dates of next meeting
- Annual Reports and Accounts for the last three years
- Policy documents including equal opportunities and financial controls

Information about the Organisation

- A brief history of the organisation
- Mission statement
- Structure of the organisation – committees, sub-committees and working groups, user* groups, staff and volunteers
- The organisation's staff structure and the job description of the senior member of staff
- Information about the premises
- Newsletters and publicity
- Business plans, strategic plans, action plan

Information about the Trustee's Role

- Task descriptions of Trustees and Honorary Officers
- Profiles and contact details of existing Trustees
- Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of Trustees
- Code of conduct and trustee agreement
- A trustee skills audit



Running an Annual General Meeting

If you're worried about organising an Annual General Meeting - The first step is to consult your **governing document**

(Constitution or Memorandum & Articles).

This will help you sort out the timing,

framework and business. It should refer to:-

- What has to be voted on.
- Quorum, Membership and notice periods

Timing

The constitution should also tell you the notice period for the Annual General Meeting that must be given to **members**, e.g. 21 days notice.

If you are presenting resolution(s) it may be longer (e.g. 28 days)

Business (the agenda)

The business of an Annual General Meeting usually includes:

- Welcome and apologies for absence
- Approval of the previous years minutes
- A financial report for the year (or receiving of the audited accounts, if this is appropriate)
- A report of the activities in the year (Annual Report)
- The election of trustees/directors (management committee) and perhaps officers (chair, secretary and treasurer)
- Any Resolutions that have been proposed (usually relating to the governing document)
- Appointment of auditors for the next year.
- Any Other Business (frequently none at an AGM)

Quorum

This is the number of voting members of any group that have to be present at a meeting for decisions to be valid, Again this should be defined in your constitution. If a meeting is inquorate then there should be a clause in your constitution telling you what should happen – usually a postponement of the meeting. **Make every effort to avoid this!**

Before

Notice of AGM to your members (usually 21 days minimum – **your governing document should provide exact details**) giving date, time and venue.

Non members do not legally have to be informed but it is good practice to do so by personal invitation and notices in the press (local newspapers and voluntary sector newsletters)

Things to take to the meeting

- Sufficient copies of Annual reports and Accounts and the Minutes of the previous years AGM
- Spare copies of Agenda and any resolutions
- Attendance Sheet (Members should sign in)
- Membership list to check off and give **voting slips**. You may have a pre prepared attendance sheet listing those coming and indicating who are members
- Have independent Tellers available to count any votes (election of trustees & resolutions).

During

- An appointed person to record the minutes which should include:-
 - Full details of any motions and amendments
 - Proposers and seconders of motions
 - Results of votes announced by the person chairing the meeting.

Ten Top Tips for effective meetings



1. Provide snacks/nibbles to welcome people to the meeting.
2. Make sure everyone has all the relevant information well in advance.
3. Keep the agenda as short as possible – ideally one piece of paper.
4. Discuss the most important items early in the meeting when participants are most alert.
5. Place a watch or clock in a prominent position so you are able to keep an eye on the time.
6. Remind people of the agenda when they stray away from it.
7. Be selective with information and avoid overload.
8. Encourage members to give their opinions by asking open questions (Why do you think that? What do you think about that? How do you think this can be done?)
9. Write up minutes straight away using notes taken at the meeting.
10. Ask members to give honest feedback on your performance as a chairperson.

Sources of Help



Swindon Trustee Network

This is a support network for potential and existing trustees. Members meet on a bimonthly basis and hold additional training activities.

Members make themselves available to skill share with newer trustees e.g running an AGM

The network has a selection of resources including Charity Commission and Governance Hub publications

For further information contact

Tel John Phipps on 01793 538398

email john@vas-swindon.org

Looking for New Trustees

Contact Swindon Trustee Bank at Swindon Volunteer Centre on 01793 420557.

Charity Commission

The Charity Commission has a wealth of helpful articles and leaflets (can also be ordered free of charge) that can be downloaded from their website.

The Charity Commission can be contacted about any charity related matter:-

Charity Commission Direct

PO Box 1227

Liverpool L69 3UG

Tel 0845 300 0218 minicom 0845 3000 219

phone lines open 8 – 8pm Mon - Fri 9- 1pm Sat.

fax 0151 703 1555

email enquiries@charitycommission.gov.uk

website www.charitycommission.gov.uk.

Governance Hub

www.governancehub.org.uk/

The governance hub website has a wealth of valuable information, for potential and existing trustees, that can be downloaded free of charge.

Reducing the risks – a guide to Trustee Liabilities

Trusteenet – National Network of Charity Trustees

www.trusteenet.org.uk/

National email forum for trustees - membership is FREE

Information about other Trustee Networks

Downloadable resource material

The Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators (ICSA)

www.icsa.org.uk/

Has downloadable resources e.g.

Trustee officer job descriptions

Specimen Induction pack

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service ACAS

<http://www.acas.org.uk/>

Acas Helpline answers your employment questions in one confidential phone call.



08457 47 47 47 Monday - Friday 08:00 - 18:00



**08456 06 16 00 for Minicom users
Monday - Friday 08:00 - 18:00**

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