

Recruiting committee members and trustees

This information sheet will help you if you are looking for new committee members. You may have gaps on your committee or your committee may need refreshing with new skills, knowledge and experiences.

Each voluntary and community organisation has a group of people that is responsible by law for running the organisation and making sure it does what it sets out to do. This is known as the governing body. You may call it the management committee or trustee board, and the people who are part of these groups can be called management committee members or trustees. We will use committee and committee member in this information sheet and we will be clear where we are talking about charity trustees.

Recruiting new committee members is the responsibility of existing committee members. You, as committee members, must oversee an open and efficient process and must always act in the best interests of your organisation not your own.

Step one...getting started

Before you rush in, it is worth thinking about the following:

Are you following your governing document?

Your governing document is the rulebook for the way your organisation is run. You must make sure you know what your governing

document says about the committee and follow it, such as:

- Is there a minimum or maximum number of committee members?
- How long can committee members stay in office?
- How do new committee members join the committee, for example election, appointment or being co-opted?

Do you know who can be a committee member or trustee?

Not everyone can be a committee member or a charity trustee - most committee members and trustees have to be over 18 (unless your organisation is a company). The following people can't be a trustee of a charity:

- Anyone who has been convicted of an offense involving deception or dishonesty, unless the conviction is spent
- Anyone who is an undischarged bankrupt or has made a formal agreement with creditors under the Insolvency Act 1986
- Anyone who has previously been removed from trusteeship by the Charity Commission or the courts
- Anyone who is disqualified from being a company director

You should be clear about these restrictions in the information you send to people who

are interested in joining your committee to avoid making it difficult for them at a later stage.

Are you fit and ready to recruit?

- Are you ready and willing to involve new people
- Are you working well together? If not, do you need to deal with any issues or tensions before someone new joins?
- Would we be willing to change where and when we meet to accommodate new people?
- Are we open to fresh ideas and perspectives?

Do you have a plan?

You should spend a bit of time planning the whole process because it will usually take a few weeks and involve a range of people. It is important to be clear what tasks have to be done, by who and when. This is especially important if you need to elect committee members at your AGM. You might find it easier to ask one committee member to oversee and coordinate the process but it shouldn't be this one person doing all the work!

Step two...who are you looking for?

You need to first think who will make a good committee member to make sure you can find the right people with the right skills, knowledge and experience to join your committee.

You should think about:

- What new skills, experience and knowledge does the committee need?
- Does your committee need to be more diverse?

- Are there specific interest groups that a new committee member could represent?

How do you know what skills, knowledge and experience you need?

Try this simple exercise:

- Sit down as a committee and make a note of what skills, knowledge and experience you need to run your organisation well
- Make a note of who in the committee already has these skills, knowledge and experience
- You can then use the skills, knowledge and experience that are left - the gaps - in your advert or other information about the person you are looking for

Can you describe the role to people?

It is hard to ask people to sign up for something they don't understand. One way to solve this is to write a role description that explains:

- What the role of a committee member is
- What the expectations you have of a committee member – how often you meet; if they'll need to be part of a sub-committee
- If the role is to be one of the officers of the committee (chair, secretary, treasurer), what additional roles they will have
- How committee members join and leave the committee and for how long they serve
- What you do about out of pocket expenses
- Anything else that is relevant to your group

Step three...attracting new committee members

You need to think about how it is best to get the message out that you are looking for new committee members.

One of the best ways of doing this is to register your committee vacancy with Newcastle CVS:

- Advertise your role on the Newcastle CVS website and e-inform (Newcastle CVS fortnightly e-bulletin)

If you are clear and consistent, it will make your advert clearer and easier to understand and more likely to attract the right person.

You should also think whether there are any other places you can advertise your vacancy such as asking your current members and users through your newsletter, website or emails; asking your members and committee members to ask people they know; putting up a poster in places your target audience will visit; using social networking such as Twitter or Facebook; and, putting out a press release.

What if people want to know more?

You need to be able to give more information about the committee role when they ask for it. The volunteer centre can help you get your enquiry process right, which may include:

- An enquiry pack (no need for long and complicated) including what the role is and any particularly skills, experience and knowledge you're looking for and information about who can't be a committee member/trustee (see step one)
- A short application form to ask potential committee members to describe how they meet the requirements you are looking for

- Being clear who will be dealing with enquiries
- Being clear whether potential committee members will be interviewed before being elected or appointed
- Offering an informal chat with someone interested in the role by phone, email or meeting them – an informal chat or more formal interview will also give potential committee members the chance to find out more about your organisation and for you to find out if they will be right for the committee
- Knowing how to say no to a potential volunteer
- How you will thank those people who you need to say no to or who don't get elected at the AGM – it may be disheartening for people to not hear anything back from you and may stop them from volunteering for something again, with your organisation or another voluntary and community organisation
- Being able to describe the potential liabilities of committee members and be able to put people at ease

Step four...selecting and appointing committee members

Your plan should include how you will select and appoint committee members. You need to think about how you will select from the list of potential committee members. You need to be confident that anyone joining the committee will be a good addition to the organisation and able to make a positive difference. You do not have to accept everyone who puts themselves forward. As above, will this be via an application form, an informal chat or a slightly more formal interview? If you decide to interview, you need to prepare the questions in advance,

using the information you put together in step two and make the interview as welcoming as possible.

When you have your final list, you need to re-check how the final decision is made on who will join the committee by reading your governing document. Is it existing committee members at a committee meeting, the members voting at the AGM or another way?

Nominating and electing committee members at an AGM

Your constitution or other governing document or your organisation's internal rules may describe how you run elections at AGMs and you must follow these if you have them. The process is usually for existing committee members to nominate the final list of potential committee members to the AGM and for the meeting to confirm election by seconding a nomination; a vote by the current committee members; or, by the members at the meeting.

Keep it legal

You should already have made it clear to committee members and trustee who cannot take those roles in the enquiry pack or another way. You should ask each new committee member to confirm this by signing a declaration that says they are eligible and willing to serve. If you don't already one, just ask Newcastle CVS for an example or help to develop your own.

Step five...welcoming your new committee member

Welcoming your new committee member is an important part of the process, and you should plan this well so they feel welcome and supported, have a good understanding of your organisation and be able to be an active committee member straight away.

What should the induction or welcome process include?

- Tell all existing committee members who the new person or people are and how important it is for all to be welcoming
- A welcome pack including a copy of the governing document; latest annual reports and accounts; minutes of recent committee meetings; newsletters and other publicity material; your organisation's planning documents (strategic plan, business plan, development plan – it may have different names); and key policies and procedures
- A short meeting with the chair or another committee member to find out more about the new committee members especially what skills, knowledge and experience they have (and use this information to update the list of skills, knowledge and experience for the whole committee) and what they are particularly interested in working on while on the committee
- A visit and tour of your organisation to meet staff and volunteers, if you have them, and to see how you work
- Making sure the new committee member understands their role – this might be by giving them information about the role (download our information sheet, Your role as a committee member), copies of guidance documents from the Charity Commission (if you are a charity), a briefing session or training. The whole committee may benefit from a refresher – ask Newcastle CVS if you'd like to find out more about a briefing session or training

What else could you try?

- A buddying system – pair up the new committee member with an experienced

committee member to be able to answer questions and support them

- Prioritising and staggering the information they receive so it is not overwhelming

Step six...evaluation and next steps

Recruiting new committee members is part of developing and growing the committee so it is important to keep the momentum going. When you have recruited someone new, spend a short time checking whether the process went well or if you need to make

changes next time. You could ask your new committee member what they thought and if you could make it easier for someone. You should use all this information to update the recruitment plan you put together in step one to use next time. You may want to write a recruitment policy.

Where can you go for help?

Newcastle CVS can help you with all the issues in this information sheet.

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