

Why on earth would you want to become a charity trustee?

There are 168,850 charities operating in England and Wales (as of March 2023). Each one requires a broad range of skills for them to operate and meet their charitable aims – their objectives. Not all charity roles are obvious. There are some behind the scenes roles which aren't always so visible. You may have the skill set to become a charity trustee – you just didn't know you could.

But what could I offer?

An effective trustee board will draw on a range of skills, knowledge, experiences, and attributes.

As a baseline, all trustees should be able to demonstrate personal values such as honesty and reliability as well as be committed to the charity's vision, mission and values. There are many different skills, experiences, qualities, and areas of knowledge that you could offer a charity.



Hard skills	Soft skills
Legal	Problem-solving
Financial	Decision making
Project management	Asking difficult questions
Computer skills	Creativity
Data analysis	Empathy
Writing and presentation skills	Team or lone working
Design	Leadership skills
Marketing and social media	Organised - time management

As well as these, having an understanding of the communities the charity serves is central to its success. People with knowledge and lived experience of the community make valuable trustees; as do young people, who possess an enormous range of qualities which an organisation could utilise. Young people bring enthusiasm, passion and a completely different perspective to their older community members.

Members of the community representing protected characteristics may have personal experiences, which can add value. This can help an organisation to comply with relevant standards and therefore strengthens equality and inclusion practices.

If you have specialist knowledge or expertise you could share that knowledge as well as being a critical friend. You may also have contacts in your field who could offer pro-bono work. Should being a trustee not fit with your lifestyle, you could also consider pro-bono work to aid a local charity.

How can my skillset help others?

Teacher	Strong communicator, good listener, collaborative, adaptable, engaging, empathetic, patient, value real work learning, relationship building, disciplined, organised, fair and respectful.
Police Officer	Honest, confident, social awareness, a responsible attitude, ability to assess a situation, react quickly and take positive action, resilient, ability to remain calm, ability to work alone and in a team, strong communication skills, courage, initiative and common sense, self-discipline, ability to give and receive instructions.
Retail Assistant	Customer service skills, the ability to work well with others, patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations, to be thorough and pay attention to detail, sensitivity and understanding, persuading and negotiating skills, the ability to use your initiative, excellent verbal communication skills.
Bus Driver	Customer service skills, knowledge of public safety and security, able to be thorough and pay attention to detail, patience and the ability to remain calm in stressful situations, knowledge of transport methods, costs and benefits, the ability to work well with others, the ability to operate and control equipment.
Social Worker	Empathy, patience, a caring nature, good communicator, organised, analytical skills, professionalism and good judgement, resilience to stress, and good time management.
Artist	Knowledge of fine arts, being thorough and paying attention to details, the ability to work well with your hands, design skills and knowledge, the ability to think clearly using logic and reasoning, thinking and reasoning skills, and the ability to use your initiative.
Sports Coach	Understanding sport, eagerness to learn, ability to share and demonstrate knowledge, motivational skills, knowing and understanding your athletes, communication and listening skills, ability to discipline, commitment and passion and desire to lead by example.
Religious Leader	Leadership, patience, accountability, humility, family orientated, respectful, lifelong learner, trustworthy, ability to delegate, communication skills, vision, action orientated, a desire to be involved.
Banking Assistant	Excellent verbal communication skills, business management skills, customer service skills, the ability to sell products and services, leadership skills, knowledge of economics and accounting, ambition and a desire to succeed, being thorough and paying attention to details.

What role would suit me?

All trustees share formal responsibility for their charity. There are [6 main duties](#) that a trustee agrees to support including the need to act in the best interests of the charity.

The key roles on a charity's board are:

- Chair
- Vice-chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

These roles are often known as honorary officer roles – with specific duties, which they are authorised to carry out.

There may be a set of committees or sub-groups, which you could take on a role with:

- Finance/budget/fundraising
- Operations/risk and assurance
- Marketing including social media
- Education/training/learning
- Program and events

Who needs your help?

With communities bursting at the seams with charities, you are spoiled for choice.

You could start by thinking about your passions and interests – how do you spend your free time? If it's going to the cinema or theatre then are there options there? If it's walking the dog then is there an animal sanctuary or dogs trust looking for support?



Look at the vision and mission for charities that you are interested in to see if these engage you from the outset. You'll be a more effective board member if you are passionate about the cause and its aspirations. You'll also have a more enjoyable time with the work which is tasked to you, which is important as it'll be in your spare time.

Set boundaries

When you start talking to your chosen charity (perhaps at an interview), explain what it is you're good at and enjoy, what attracted you to them in the first place, how much time you will be able to commit and how flexible you can be with this. Help other trustees to understand what you need from them to be an effective board member and ask them what you can do to support them in return.

Develop your trustee skills/experience

You will likely need some additional training to take on your new role. This may be light touch in terms of knowledge – more about learning new systems or procedures, which may be different from what you're familiar with using. You will also need to alter your approach as you will be volunteering your time, not being paid for it. Respecting your peers as volunteers is a skill that may need to be learnt as you start out as a volunteer.

Where can I get more information?

- Community First Yorkshire trustee [resources](#), including [Being a Charity Trustee](#) and [What do trustees do?](#)
 - [5 minute guides](#) for charity trustees from the Government
 - Charity Commission – [The Essential Trustee: what you need know, what you need to do](#)
 - [Getting on Board](#) - support people from all sectors of society to become charity board trustees
 - [Young Trustees Movement](#) - Changing the image of what a trustee looks like, by shining a light on the impact made by young trustees
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Additional support

Community First Yorkshire can help you with any questions you may have about running an organisation, being a trustee, funding, fundraising, or volunteering. We can support you on a one-to-one or group training basis. Simply fill in an [enquiry form](#) and we'll get back to you.

You can sign up for our news bulletins [here](#):

- Our monthly Funding Bulletin lists updated funding opportunities.
- Our weekly newsletter has information about the volunteer and charity sector, including training courses about funding.

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