**Q&A: Charity trustees – how to become one and what does it involve?**

Volunteering as a charity trustee can be a rewarding way to make a difference and support a charity you care about. But how do you go about becoming a trustee, and what does it involve?

Mel Willson, Volunteer Centre Coordinator at [Community Wor](https://www.communityworks.org.uk/)ks joined us at a Chamber Q&A recently to chat with our Head of Member Engagement & Deputy CEO, Amy Lishman, about what it means to be a charity trustee, how to find the right opportunities, and what it entails.

You can listen back to the Q&A recording [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dbS0OhL7-28), and find some of the key highlights from Mel’s Q&A below.

**Charity trustees: are you eligible?**

Kicking off, Mel started with an explanation of the eligibility and exclusions of becoming a charity trustee. Anyone over 16 years old can become a trustee, but being over 18 years old is usually preferred by most organisations. Being a non-British citizen isn’t a barrier to becoming a trustee, but you should double check that your visa status enables it.

Mel says it’s a myth that you need experience of being a trustee before – the importance is more about operating within the charity’s purpose and having the resources to fulfil your responsibilities as a trustee. It’s all about passion and motivation to make a difference and make a change as part of a charity, along with bringing your own skills and perspective.

**Why do people become trustees?**

Before you start looking – think about your motivations for wanting to be a trustee, and what you want to get from it.

People become trustees for lots of reasons, you might want to be involved in a meaningful cause, develop new skills, or contribute to a community. She emphasized that the intrinsic values of trusteeship often outweigh the practical benefits like enhancing a CV or skill development.

**Where can you find trustee vacancies?**

Once you’re clear on your motivations for being a trustee, you can start looking for trustee opportunities. Community Works has a dedicated platform for volunteer roles, and a dedicated page for trustee roles. If you can’t find what you’re looking for, Mel encouraged direct contact with charities for potential trustee positions, even if they’re not listed on a website.

Community Works’ [Volunteer Centre](https://volunteer.communityworks.org.uk/) is a great place to start looking – whether that’s volunteering or trustee opportunities you’re interested in. Mel also mentioned some other organisations dedicated to advertising trustee positions:

* [Reach](https://reachvolunteering.org.uk/)
* [Charity job](https://www.charityjob.co.uk/)
* [Women on boards](https://wbdirectors.co.uk/)

Amy also added that with nearly 50 members of Brighton Chamber being charities, there are often trustee vacancies on the Chamber’s [Activity Hub](https://www.brightonchamber.co.uk/activity-hub) too.

**What time commitment is involved in being a trustee?**

On average, the commitment on time is about four board meetings a year, but the frequency could vary based on the role and schedule. Mel emphasized the importance of informal discussions (including those about the commitment involved) before applying, to ensure it’s a good fit for both parties.

She also stressed the importance of open communication and flexibility – if you find it’s not the right fit, there may be volunteering opportunities with the charity that could work if you’re not able to commit to being a trustee. Just be realistic on your time and find out more about it what’s required from the charity when going through the application process.

**Are there any common skills and attributes charities are looking for?**

The most in-demand skills are often treasury and chairing experience, although this can vary depending on the specific needs of the charity.

Mel highlighted the importance of passion, motivation, a willingness for strategic development, being able to listen, collaborate, and challenge constructively aligned with the charity’s values. These are often more important than the other skills charities might look for in a trustee.

**What are charities actively doing to encourage trustee applications from a diverse range of candidates?**

Mel discussed the importance of inclusivity and accessibility in the recruitment process for local charities in Brighton and Hove. She highlighted the need for charities to adapt their recruitment strategies, such as offering flexible meeting times, simplifying application forms, and considering alternative methods of communication. She also emphasized the need for transparency about expenses and the significance of having diverse voices on boards.

**With thanks to Mel Willson from Community Works for joining us. Community Works supports charities, non-profits and community groups to deliver positive social action. You can find out more about Community works** [**here**](https://www.communityworks.org.uk/)**, and to explore trustee and volunteering opportunities in Brighton & Hove, head over to their Volunteer Centre website** [**here**](https://volunteer.communityworks.org.uk/)**.**

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