Trustees are elected or appointed in different ways depending on the governing document (also known as rules, constitution, or trust deed) and structure of the board. They may be elected by other trustees, members or by an outside body like a local authority.

An effective board keeps its charity on the right track, safeguarding its future. It ensures the charity and its leaders are accountable to beneficiaries, funders and others who support the charity. Boards who function well discuss decisions, consider different perspectives, and always prioritise the interests of its beneficiaries.

Questions about the current board and what could work better:

* In what ways is the board currently working well/not working well at present?
* What skills, experience and knowledge are currently available from the existing trustees? Which voices and experiences are missing from your board discussions?
* What are the priority areas for the board when recruiting a new trustee?

Trustees always work as a collective. Therefore, recruitment is about finding a trustee who will add to the range of skills and experience the board already has.

Points for recruiting a trustee:

* For their specialist skills or knowledge.
* They have first hand experiences using the charity’s services or tackling the charity’s objectives – This will help the boards perception be consistent with the charity’s beneficiaries.
* They differ from current board members - Varying experiences and perspectives help promote diversity and inclusivity.
* For their contacts, influence, or positive reputation – The charity will benefit from a raised profile and fundraising opportunities.

If you consider possible barriers for potential trustees before you start the recruitment process, it will indicate your charity is genuinely welcoming and inclusive.

Removing barriers to new trustees:

* Consider the location and timings of meetings – Does this exclude people with disabilities, those who cannot attend during office hours or because of caring responsibilities?
* Find out if trustees require further support – Do they need accessible meeting rooms, the option to join meetings virtually or to be offered expenses?
* Think about the quality of board papers or documents – Do they make clear points? Is jargon explained? Would relevant graphs and imagery be useful?