

## BEING A TRUSTEE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If you have unanswered questions, we've put together a list of FAQs to cover some of the basics. The Governance Hub website (<http://www.governancehub.org.uk>) also has a section dedicated to aspiring trustees.

### Q. What do trustees do?

A. Trustees are the people responsible for ensuring that a charity or community group has a clear strategy, that it remains true to its original vision, and that it complies with all necessary rules and legal obligations. Collectively, trustees are commonly known as the board. They have a number of formal roles and responsibilities, which include appointing key people and keeping a check on the organisation's finances and activities.

### Q. What questions should I ask myself when thinking about becoming a trustee?

- What skills and experience do I have to offer?
- Would being a Trustee at METRO inspire me?
- Can I commit the regular time and energy?

### Q. What sort of questions should I ask?

#### • *What are the aims of the organisation?*

A. See METRO's website [Embrace difference | METRO Charity](#)

#### • *Can I see the organisation's annual report and accounts, annual review, strategic plans and governing documents?*

A. See METRO's website for the annual review [What we do | METRO Charity](#) The other documents are available on request.

#### • *What work would I be doing, and is there a role description?*

A. Depends on your skills. Yes, there are role descriptions for each specific role & a general role description for non-specific membership.

#### • *How much time would I need to commit?*

A. At METRO we hold our Board of Trustee (BoT) bi monthly for approx. 2 1/2 hours. Trustees are also likely to be asked to commit time to take on a specific role as an officer of the BOT, become as a member of a sub-committee, working party or project group or undertake a range of other one-off tasks. Outside this it is expected that BoT members set aside time to read documentation and prepare for meetings. There are of course

the obligatory engagements such as Annual General Meeting and occasional meetings with external agencies depending on involvement.

- ***What sort of induction would I receive?***  
A. A full BoT induction to the organisation and further training specific to your role.
- ***Would I be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses?***  
A. . Yes
- ***Who would supervise me and how?***  
A. A mentoring system has been developed for new members and your support will be agreed within this structure.
- ***What policies does METRO have in place to deal with any risk?***  
A. Financial protocols, Health and Safety Policy Grievance Policy, Disciplinary Procedure, Volunteer Policy, Risk Assessment Register, Full Employers liability Insurance which also covers Volunteers
- ***Would METRO require references or run police checks on me?***  
A. Yes METRO takes up two references at application stage and then on acceptance a DBS (formally CRB) check will be carried out.
- ***Do I need to declare anything when I join?***  
A. Yes, you will be asked to complete a “Declaration of Interests form”. You will be given guidance in doing so by the CEO and /or other BoT members.

### **Would I need to do any preparation before taking up a trustee post?**

You should watch the annual review [What we do | METRO Charity](#) You should also read the annual report and accounts, strategic plan and governing documents. These documents are available on request, but will also be covered as part of the Trustee Induction/Probation/Mentoring process. These may be dry and legal, but they are our main documents that govern and describe key aspects of our work. We would also suggest that you familiarise yourself with the organisation as much as you can so that you have a clear idea of who we are and what we do. We will invite you to sit in on a number of trustee meetings before you complete your induction/probationary process.

### **Is there support available to new trustees?**

As a new member of the BoT you will be allocated a supervisor/mentor. The CEO, senior managers and existing members of the BoT will always be available to offer advice and help. There is plenty of other support and advice available for both new and existing trustees. **The Governance Hub** pulls together many of the most important publications on trusteeship into one place on its website (<http://www.governancehub.org.uk>). They also operate a free helpline for all governance related issues on **0800 652 4886**.

The Charity Commission has free publications, which offer in-depth advice on being a trustee, in particular *The Essential Trustee: What you need to know*. You can contact them on 0845 300 0218 for a full list of publications, or access it via their homepage (<http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk>). They are happy to give advice over the phone or in writing about matters affecting the running of a charity.

### **Would I have any personal liability for my decisions?**

It is extremely rare, but not impossible, for charity trustees to be held personally liable:

- To their charity for a financial loss caused by them acting improperly
- To a third party that has a legal claim against the charity that the charity cannot meet.

Understanding potential liabilities will help you to protect yourself and your charity by taking action to reduce the risk. This includes complying with duties covered in charity commission guidance.

Further information on liabilities can be found in section 10 of the Charity Commission's guidance: *The Essential Trustee*

[The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

### **Are trustees paid?**

No. METRO trustees are unpaid, and must not benefit in any way from their connection with the charity. There are limited exceptions to this rule which the board would consider if and when they occurred

### **Can anyone become a charity trustee?**

Most people over the age of 18 can become charity trustees, but a few are not eligible.

Those who have been disqualified as company directors and those who have been convicted of an offence involving dishonesty or deception are some of the people who usually cannot become trustees.

People under 18 can only become trustees of a particular type of charity