

Patrons, Presidents and Trustees

This information sheet sets out the difference between the roles of Patron, President and Trustee.

Patrons

Many charities and voluntary organisations seek the public support of well-known or well-connected people to act as Patrons. The primary role of a Patron is to lend credibility and support, they do not play a formal part in the organisation.



Patrons are usually listed on headed notepaper, appeal literature and publicity material to help raise awareness and support for the charity.

When you are choosing someone to act as your Patron, make sure that they:

- share the values of the organisation
- understand their role
- know precisely what they will be asked to do.

Your organisation will need to create a role description or identify your expectations of what you want your Patron to do.

Some questions to ask yourself first:

- Do you just want to use their name, or are you seeking contributions of time and effort?
- Will they have any membership rights?
- Will they be expected to attend your AGM or particular events throughout the year?
- Some patrons can require a little of your time - do you have the capacity and should you have them for a fixed term in case things do not work out as planned?

Presidents

In some organisations, the posts of President and Vice President exist.

There are often two interpretations of President:

1. President used as an alternative to Chair - in this case, the post-holder is also a trustee.
2. President as an honorary title and the post-holder acts as a figurehead with no responsibilities. This title is sometimes used for the person who founded the organisation, or who has been involved for a very long period of time.

The governing document should explain precisely what the role of the President is, if they have voting rights (as a Trustee) and what their responsibilities might be.

Trustees

A trustee is someone who has been elected to be part of the governing body of an organisation. A trustee can also be called: a committee member, a board member, or a director. A Trustee has voting rights, attends committee meetings and is responsible for leading and governing the organisation appropriately.

Finding the people you need

Once you are clear about the roles and who you are looking for, you can start the recruitment process.

Patrons: past supporters, local celebrities and well-known people who will act as a figurehead all make good candidates. Patrons should be agreed upon by consensus of the committee.

Trustees: the membership of the organisation, people in your networks, people known as existing trustees for other organisations all may make suitable trustees.

Also think about how you will approach prospective contacts - the direct personal approach is often best if someone is already familiar to you, but also consider a carefully worded letter or email. If you don't have someone specific in mind then you need to advertise your trustee vacancy far and wide to get the best response possible.

Additional Support

Community First Yorkshire can help you with many aspects to running your community group or voluntary organisation, from governance to funding, trustees to 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.

If you are looking for trustees, you could advertise your role on our [Volunteering in North Yorkshire](#) (VINY) directory.

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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