



Hospice board recruitment and selection Good practice guide

This publication is part of Hospice UK's Governance Support Programme for hospice boards and trustees



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Foreword

The need for good hospice governance is greater than ever. We know from our members that the challenges faced by hospice boards and leadership teams right across the UK are increasing in number and complexity. Alongside this, the complexity of the strategic decision making required of them is increasing too, along with the risk of negative impact if they make poor decisions.

In 2013, the Commission into the Future of Hospice Care identified rapid demographic change, changes in patterns of illness, increasing financial constraints, and uncertainty about future funding as just some of the challenges that are causing hospices to become more vulnerable.

The Commission said that such pressures are only likely to increase, and in the three years since its final report was published, this prediction has proved entirely accurate. Added to this, in recent years we have seen rising public concern and media scrutiny of charitable fundraising and the quality of charity governance.

The Commission gave a clear message that hospices must adapt now to become fit for the future. It urged hospices to make positive, informed decisions about how they operate and to find new ways of ensuring that hospice care can match future needs. Good governance and effective leadership are central to hospices' ability to respond to these many and varied challenges. Yet it can be hard for hospice trustees to know who to turn to for support and how to tell whether they are getting it right.

This good practice guide is one in a series produced by Hospice UK as part of our Governance Support Programme for hospice boards and trustees. The series covers:

- Appraisal of hospice boards and trustees
- Board involvement in hospice strategy and planning
- Board reports that add value to your hospice
- Developing a balanced scorecard for your hospice
- Developing a dashboard for your hospice
- Effective board meetings in your hospice
- Hospice board recruitment and selection
- Quality governance for your hospice

We are confident that, taken together, these good practice guides will be an extremely useful resource for all hospice trustees and senior staff.

Antonia Bunnin
Director of Hospice Support and Development
Hospice UK

1. What is effective recruitment and selection?

An effective recruitment and selection process will enable your hospice to:

- identify the skills, experience and competencies needed on the board
- attract candidates who collectively meet those needs
- refresh and renew the board
- plan for succession.

2. The benefits of effective recruitment and selection

Good recruitment and selection practice:

- ensures that consideration and attention is given to the knowledge, skills and competencies needed in response to the changing external and internal environment of the hospice
- enables the board to have the right mix of skills, experience and perspectives to meet the needs of the hospice
- ensures a healthy turnover so that the board does not become stale
- enables the hospice to attract candidates from a wide pool of talent
- attracts members with new perspectives and different networks
- enhances the reputation of the hospice as an accessible and inclusive organisation.

In contrast, poor recruitment and selection practice results in:

- lack of planning for the future
- a board populated by long-standing members who hold considerable organisational knowledge but without potential successors to whom they can pass this on
- an inability to future-proof by ensuring members have the right skills to deliver the future strategy.

Recruiting and inducting new trustees is a significant responsibility for the board and needs the support of the hospice's executive; it also offers a valuable opportunity to gain insights from recruits about the hospice's governance practice and its operations.

3. Getting started

Check your governing documents

Before you begin the recruitment process, check your governing documents for information about the minimum or maximum number of trustees you can appoint, how they might be appointed and any information about the length of time they can stay on the board.

The Charity Commission recommends limited terms and length of office which it regards as good practice¹. Having set terms should enable a structured succession-planning process that encourages the regeneration and refreshment of the board at regular intervals; at best it ensures a pipeline of new knowledge, skills and expertise which will better prepare trustees for the future. If you do not have limited terms of office for trustees and key roles such as the Chair, consider updating your governing document.

Plan ahead

It is useful to have a timetable of trustee retirement dates and present it for board consideration as part of its calendar of activities; this will ensure that the trustee recruitment process can be planned in a timely fashion.

Be clear about the role

An important starting point is for trustees to have a shared understanding about their primary legal responsibilities. Make sure trustees have a copy of 'The essential trustee'² published by the Charity Commission.

Other useful guides to being a charity trustee include the NCVO's 'Good trustee guide'³ and Bates, Wells and Braithwaite's guide, 'Duties of charity trustees'⁴.

In addition, the board needs to be explicit at the planning stage as to what is expected of new trustees, for example with regard to membership of sub-committees, attending away days, the likely time commitment and their own learning and development.

Skill mix and competencies

Many hospices have a skills matrix which is used to capture the knowledge, skills and experience of current trustees or to identify gaps; these can be an asset when planning recruitment. It is also helpful to develop a simple competency framework describing the behaviours and skills that will be particularly useful. Appendix 2 offers a list of competencies identified during our work with hospices; they describe behaviours that are likely to be found in high performing boards.

Boards need to consider the weighting of clinical strategic competence versus other expertise to support financial, marketing, facilities and business aspects of governing a hospice. Understanding the changing context of care – medicine, nursing and social care – is paramount to help steer operations in the right direction.

Trustees should also be encouraged to develop as 'generalists' beyond their own particular specialism to enable them to contribute across the spectrum of areas overseen by the board.

(1) The Charity Commission. The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do (CC3), paragraph E5. London: The Charity Commission, 2015.

Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3

(2) Ibid

(3) Moynihan A (ed). The good trustee guide. National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2015.

Available from: www.ncvo.org.uk/component/redshop/themes/9-legal/P16-good-trustee-guide

(4) Bates Wells Braithwaite (BWB). Duties of charity trustees. London: BWB, 2015.

Available from: www.bwblp.com/knowledge/2016/05/24/duties-of-charity-trustees/

4. The recruitment process

Who

It is a governance responsibility to discuss how trustee recruitment should be handled. Many hospices successfully undertake their own recruitment. A few use recruitment professionals (agencies and search selection consultants) and believe that it is worth the investment. The discussion may also help to highlight shared or differing expectations about the involvement of your current trustees in this process.

Promoting the vacancy

Whatever you decide about who will recruit your new trustees, the hospice website should carry information and an invitation to apply; encourage your current supporters to spread the word and email the link to their own networks. Some organisations also invite expressions of interest for potential trustees in an article about the hospice on their website, in their newsletters, in the local media and/or in their shops. If you are recruiting for specific skills or from a specific community think about newsletters or networks they are most likely to use. For example some professional networks have job boards where you can advertise trustee vacancies.

The hospice movement and the third sector in general are becoming more adept at using social media and networking to publicise vacancies. If you have such expertise on your board, harness it, but also seek the advice and support of your executive team.

Clarifying responsibilities

It is critical that the board owns the process of trustee selection, but the chief executive's perspective and support are also essential. One of the key aspects to clarify at the outset is who on the board will lead the recruitment. Leadership responsibility could lie with the Chair, a nominations committee or working group of trustees, with a clear understanding about the role that will be played by the chief executive.

Whoever it is that takes on the work, the board will have the ultimate responsibility for the decision made, so it is essential to have an agreed process for making and ratifying the decision to invite someone to join your board.

See Appendix 1 for an example recruitment process.

You may also wish to mandate the recruitment team to report progress at key stages of the process. This will not only engage all your trustees but also enable the chief executive to keep the senior team and all staff apprised of the process and final decision.

It is always wise to take up references for those to whom you offer a place on the board. It is particularly important to do this before you 'go public' about your appointment (see section 6).

5. Checks and references

There are various checks you should undertake before making your final decision. These include:

- checking that the person is not disqualified from acting as a trustee – candidates should be asked to confirm this in writing⁵
- ensuring that potential trustees have declared all actual or potential conflicts of interest
- seeking an appropriate check from the Disclosure and Barring Service. This is mandatory for hospices that work with children and seen as good practice for adult hospices, particularly since the trustee may come into regular contact with patients
- taking up references: consider what you want to ask about a potential new trustee – this might be about previous board experience and their attendance, contribution, or participation at board meetings; if approaching an employer or personal referee, you might want to ask about their knowledge and skills and what in general they might bring to the hospice; be specific about the expectations your board has of a trustee.

We recommend that you obtain references, even if the potential trustee is personally known to one or more of your board members. This ensures that you have made all the checks possible about a potential new member of your board.

The chief executive or the Chair should be the signatories in seeking references. It is preferable to take up written references so that an official record exists in the light of which the board has made its decision. If a verbal reference is taken up, ensure that a (dated) note is made of the conversation.

You should make any offer of a position on the board subject to references that the hospice considers to be satisfactory (similar to that for an employment contract).

(5) Further information can be found in 'The Charity Commission. Finding new trustees (CC30). London: The Charity Commission, 2015'. Available from: www.gov.uk/government/publications/finding-new-trustees-cc30

6. Diversity

It is accepted good practice to have a board that represents a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints and is representative of the community it serves. When recruiting, boards need to be open to a diverse range of candidates, pursuing recruitment not 'by looking in the mirror, but by looking out of the window'⁶.

Diversity (in relation to trustee boards) can be described as valuing the ways in which differences contribute to a richer, more creative and businesslike environment on trustee boards. Diversity encompasses a broad range of dimensions including age, gender, whether someone is working or not, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, disability, marital status, parental status, physical appearance, religion, political affiliations, life experience, background etc. Think about whether the way the board currently operates is conducive to attracting the diversity of candidates you want. If you always meet during the day this could put off candidates who work full-time. Parents may need help with child care costs.

You can nurture trustee diversity over time; a systematic and open approach to recruitment to board vacancies can help, using a range of

platforms to advertise the roles (see Section 4 above). The objective is to attract as broad and diverse a range of candidates as possible. Board selection solely through word of mouth recommendation can result in a trustee body of inter-connected and similarly minded people - a situation likely to undermine the governance health of the organisation, be perceived as exclusive and thereby alienate potential users, supporters and wider stakeholders.

A useful article by Odgers Berndtson⁷ is slanted towards the commercial sector but still relevant for nonprofits.

(6) Collins J. Good to great: why some companies make the leap... and others don't. London: Random House Business Books, 2001.

(7) Odgers Berndtson. The D word: organisations that fail to embrace diversity-promoting policies could be underperforming and hampering future talent pipelines as a result. March 2016. Available from: www.odgersberndtson.com/media/2565/observe_edition_7.pdf

7. Informing relevant parties

Ensure that once a recruitment decision is made and the person appointed, the hospice informs all relevant parties such as Companies House, the charity's solicitors and its auditors.

Also use the opportunity to publicise the new trustees both internally (website, email to staff, etc) and more widely in the local community.

8. Succession planning

Does your board anticipate changes and rotation of the honorary officers and other trustees? If not, it should, since it is central to good governance to have a process for the rotation of senior and honorary roles on the board (the Chair, vice-Chair if one is selected and the treasurer).

If you have no such plan, consider developing one now. It does not need to be unduly onerous but will keep in view the idea of 'refreshment' of skills, knowledge and ideas. Results from your individual trustee performance reviews (if you conduct these) can provide an indication of the trustees on the current board who are interested in taking on a new role or who are intending to step down and when this might be.

The following examples show good practice we have seen in relation to attracting new trustees and other governance volunteers:

- Open days for those interested in supporting the hospice (any role). At the event, a short presentation is given about the work of the board, its sub-committees and the honorary officers.
- Trustees attend activities/meetings within the local community or communities of interest and make sure they include board recruitment when they talk about the hospice's governance.
- 'Non-trustees' are co-opted to sub-committees or board working groups as a way of effecting an informal introduction to governance work at the hospice. You can make it clear that being a co-opted member does not mean an automatic place on the board but this can be a route to selection.
- Trustees agree to look out for potential candidates and designate one trustee to keep a running list. Those on the list are invited to a briefing meeting or to apply when the next round of recruitment takes place.
- Some boards when recruiting look for individuals with the ability to eventually serve as the Chair of the board or a sub-committee Chair. Some boards make this a criterion for every new trustee recruited and build it into their interviewing procedure.
- It can help to have a Chair elect to ensure a smooth handover. Create a well focused induction programme for the new Chair and treasurer to help them get to grips with the role and responsibilities as quickly as possible, preferably before they take up the role.
- It is essential for the Chair and chief executive to agree how they will work together to deliver good governance leadership. An incoming Chair will need to build an agreed way of working with the chief executive. Often there is an assumption by the chief executive that "the meetings we currently have" will continue, but this may not suit the new Chair. The agreement can be refined over time, but it should not be assumed that what worked before will continue to be appropriate and effective.

9. Exit interviews

Exit interviews with those leaving the board are helpful in capturing knowledge, ideas and suggestions for the future as well as an opportunity to obtain feedback on the current board and the hospice's governance practice.

Using a structured approach to exit interviews ensures that information is captured systematically.

Examples of questions to ask include: what works well; what are you particularly proud of; what might be done differently; what are your hopes for the future of the hospice and its governance practice?

Gathering such information helps to ensure that the board learns from the experience of someone who has been a trustee perhaps for some time and takes account of that learning when recruiting new trustees.

10. Induction

Hospice UK publishes a very comprehensive 'Trustee induction pack'⁸ which contains information and guidance on:

- how hospices are governed
- the role and responsibilities of trustees
- establishing a vision and purpose for your hospice
- maintaining quality of care
- finance
- compliance with the law
- variations for each of the devolved nations in the UK.

Include a variety of activities in your induction programme in addition to providing a pack of information. Some boards have a confidential online site or section of an intranet from which trustees can access information about the hospice and its governance and download the latest and past sets of board papers. Other boards ask new trustees to hold informal meetings with patients and carers seeking to understand how the hospice operates in meeting the needs of those using its services. Other activities we have seen include a series of meetings with the chief executive and each of the senior team.

We recommend an induction programme for those taking up honorary officer roles, even where they have been a member of the board.

(8) Hospice UK. Trustee induction pack. London: Hospice UK, 2013.
Available from: www.hospiceuk.org/governancepublications

11. Trustees who are new to the role and new to the board

New trustees who are also new to the role will require extra support (from the Chair or a designated member of the board) to get to grips with the responsibilities and the expectations, for example, with regard to preparing for formal meetings, attendance at meetings, expected board behaviours, contribution and participation in other settings.

Brief the new trustee(s) in advance of the first meeting and prepare for their introduction and welcome to the board and its members. The following are some of our suggestions:

- Arrange a meeting with the Chair or another trustee with the new trustee(s) before their first meeting to go through the agenda, brief them on key issues and some of the processes and practices of the board meeting. This is particularly useful for new members of the board who are also new to the role of trustee
- Ensure an early item on the board agenda to welcome and introduce new trustees. Each trustee can then introduce themselves, explaining for example, something about their background, how long they have been on the board and which sub-committees they are a member of.
- Create some social time before the formal board meeting starts so that new trustees can get to know existing members of the board.
- Consider offering a new trustee a 'mentor' (another trustee) to support them for the first six months.

12. Learning from the recruitment and selection process

It is a missed opportunity not to learn from the experience of recruiting trustees in terms of:

The recruitment process

What went well and what might be done differently next time? Questions the board might ask include:

- Which methods for recruiting to the vacancy were the most productive and why (advertisement and type of media, cost, number of expressions of interest, suitability of candidates who came forward)?
- How was the vacancy communicated during the recruitment process (who, what and how) and what should we do next time?
- What selection methods were used (nature of the panel, what questions were asked, how formal or informal was the process, were candidates given a tour)?
- What happened after the event (communication with successful and unsuccessful candidates, who, how and when this was done)?
- What was the content of the induction programme? Who was involved in setting it up and delivering it? What worked well and what might we do differently next time?

The hospice and the board

Newly recruited trustees can provide fresh impressions on the hospice, its board and its operation. They can also offer useful feedback on the recruitment process and induction programme. All this can be captured in a conversation with the Chair or the trustee could offer it to the whole board.

Ensure that a note is taken of feedback given, so that it can be referred to when planning the next round of recruitment.

13. What if the selection does not go well?

One of the Chair's duties is to brief new trustees fully, not only on their legal duties but also on the expectations of their fellow trustees.

Naturally, all boards hope that newly recruited trustees will become an asset on the board and fulfil the potential they displayed during the selection process.

But what if this is not the case? What if the new board member fails to attend, fails to prepare for meetings, is unconstructively disruptive at board meetings or fails to display appropriate board behaviour? Where this is the case, the Chair is responsible for making clear to the new trustee any matters of concern and warning that unless progress is made the trustee may be asked to leave the board. It helps to have a trustee code of conduct, and for the worst case scenario, a clear power in your governing document to remove a trustee.

14. Top tips

- Consider instituting a governance or nominations committee to oversee the recruitment and selection process.
- Build in some form of early review for new trustees including a meeting with the Chair to check out both parties' expectations of the role and consider how well the appointment is progressing.
- Keep in touch with new trustees once they have been selected to ensure they are kept informed of any developments or news about the hospice that will be useful to them. It also helps to build engagement, particularly if there is a long space of time between being selected and their first board meeting.

- Reflect and learn from the experience of recruiting and selecting new trustees.
- Even if potential new trustees are known to you or within your personal networks, operate as formally as possible to ensure a professional and justifiable approach is taken.
- Think of induction as a process that extends over the initial period of a new trustee being on the board, rather than being seen as a one-off activity. Don't overload a new trustee with too much information or too many meetings at the same time.
- If in doubt, do not appoint.

15. Resources

Bader BS. Selecting and preparing a Chair elect. Great Boards, Fall 2006.
www.greatboards.org/newsletter/reprints/selecting_and_preparing_a_chair_elect.pdf

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-hallmarks-of-an-effective-charity-cc10>

Appendix 1: An example recruitment process

1. Advert.
2. Information pack containing:
 - welcome pack letter
 - trustee application form
 - equal opportunities monitoring form and pre-addressed envelope
 - trustee role description
 - trustee eligibility policy and legal restrictions on eligibility
 - latest annual review
 - latest newsletter.
3. Acknowledgement of expression of interest and returned document(s).
4. Identify panel or Nominations Committee members – for example Chair plus trustee and chief executive at every interview, two other trustees to conduct tour for candidate. Book space for shortlisting meeting and for interviews.
5. Shortlisting assessment document with agreed criteria for selection.
6. Set up interviews with candidates via email and phone – allow 1.5 hours total, 45 minutes tour with two trustees, followed by 45 minute interview (see Section 4 above).
7. Interview appointment letter plus information about resources and additional reading list.
8. Reference request letter (to two different referees preferably with freepost envelope for reply).
9. Panel interview assessment form and questions; references received attached to cover sheet.
10. Post-interview acceptance and rejection letters and rights/responsibilities document for successful candidates.
11. Opportunity to meet trustees and senior management team members – can be an early evening social before or after a board meeting.
12. Reference chaser letter (if required).
13. Three orientation sessions to be arranged with:
complete as applicable
14. Overview sessions:
 - chief executive and finance director (two separate sessions)
 - clinical and fundraising (two separate sessions).

Appendix 2: A sample skills and competency matrix

Professional skills or competencies

Use to identify current skills, knowledge and experience on your current board.

Map your current trustees against the following to identify skills and knowledge gaps.

The skills matrix should be updated regularly to reflect turnover or other changes on the board. You may also need specific new expertise, for example as a result of legislation or particular changes in the health environment, or to reflect your strategic priorities.

Skill or experience	Board member 1	Board member 2	Board member 3	Board member 4	Board member 5	Board member 6
Senior executive experience in a private or nonprofit sector						
Human resources at a strategic level						
Experience in a health or social care field						
Financial qualification and experience						
Retail experience in a multi-site operation						
Current ICT expertise including social media						
Building/facilities management						
Legal (commercial, employment, property)						
Fundraising and income generation						
Marketing and communications						

Personal competencies and behaviours

You may find the descriptors below useful in the following ways:

- Supporting your board to describe what is expected of trustees, when planning its recruitment campaign.
- Developing useful questions during the selection process for potential new trustees. You can also use them as a basis for exploring prior experience or potential scenarios.
- At individual performance reviews of current trustees, particularly at points of re-election.

Trustees of X Hospice will be expected to:

- recognise the ambassadorial role of a trustee and positively promote the hospice whenever possible
- display commitment in keeping up to date with changes in the internal and relevant external environment
- manage time to ensure attendance at all or the majority of meetings
- commit adequate time to prepare for meetings
- actively contribute to the success of meetings
- be willing to challenge constructively what is presented at board meetings
- stimulate robust, high level thinking to develop ideas and strategies
- accept the need to hold the organization 'line', even where there is personal disagreement
- contribute positively to the development and maintenance of a high performing team
- build positive relationships with other trustees, staff and volunteers (recognising relevant boundaries)
- contribute to the development of the board perhaps taking a lead on an area of special interest
- be open to regular review of board effectiveness
- contribute pro-actively to building a diverse board across a range of dimensions
- seek and respond positively to formal feedback on their performance as a trustee, and be willing to offer constructive feedback
- regard being a trustee as a learning opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills
- take responsibility as a trustee for all aspects of the hospice's work and performance, including those outside their own area of expertise.



Professional Networks

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