

Preparing for a Trustee Interview

Effective preparation is key to success in trustee interviews. Begin by researching the organisation's mission and priorities and ensure you understand the responsibilities of trustees and the principles of good governance. Take time to reflect on how your professional experience can add strategic value at board level.

When answering questions, structure your responses clearly and succinctly. Use examples from your current or previous roles where appropriate that show how your skills and judgement align with the board's needs and expectations.

Board interviews cover topics such as:

- Your motivations for applying; 'why them, why you and why now'?
- Your understanding of the organisation and passion and alignment with their values
- How your skills and experiences will benefit the board, organisation and beneficiaries
- Your communication and teamwork skills
- Your understanding of charity governance and the role and responsibilities of a board Member vs member of the team
- Approach to appropriately challenging views or decisions on the board
- Your understanding of any internal and external challenges and / or opportunities that the charity might be facing (e.g. funding, regulation, national policy changes, EDI focus, digital innovation etc.)
- Ability to commit the time needed to become a board member (the commitment required should be set out in advance, as this can vary significantly for each organisation)
- Willingness to become an ambassador for the charity at events etc.

Things to avoid:

Even strong and experienced candidates can fall short if they approach board interviews in the wrong way. Boards are looking for individuals who can contribute at a strategic level, not just recount career highlights. To stand out, avoid these common mistakes:

- Over-emphasising operational detail: Focus on your ability to think strategically and add value at board level, rather than day-to-day achievements.
- Insufficient research: A lack of understanding about the organisation's mission, structure, or current challenges can suggest you are unprepared.
- Unclear commitment: Be ready to provide direct answers about your availability, capacity, and any potential conflicts of interest.

Trustee interviews are about judgement, governance, and insight. The panel wants to see how you think, not just what you've done.

Ensure your answers are relevant to the charity and aligned with the board's priorities; for example, if their focus is long term strategic growth and diversity of funding, demonstrate how you can contribute to this, rather than discussing your extensive experience in rescue / turnaround situations if this isn't relevant.

How to Prepare:

- Rehearse answers to questions on risks, regulation, and financial pressures.
- Ask thoughtful questions that show curiosity about strategy and governance.
- Keep answers structured, use strong examples, and show you can think strategically.

A two-way process:

It's easy to see trustee interviews purely as an assessment of your suitability for the board. But they're also an important opportunity for you to decide whether the organisation is the right fit for you.

Trustees give their time and expertise on a voluntary basis, so it's vital to be sure that this is the right organisation, at the right moment in your career. That means considering whether its mission resonates with you, whether its governance is strong, and whether you can realistically commit the time required.

Use the interview to explore this. Ask thoughtful questions that show curiosity about strategy and governance—for example, about the organisation's priorities, culture, approach to risk, and future challenges. This not only demonstrates your engagement but also helps you decide if you can contribute effectively and meaningfully as a board member.

Summary:

Remember - good preparation demonstrates more than knowledge - it shows you're ready to add real value as a trustee.

Resources:

[The Essential Trustee](#)

[Public Leaders Appointments' Trustee Training Sessions](#)

About Public Leaders Appointments' Trustee Development Courses

At Public Leaders Appointments, we believe that great trustees require investment in their development, whether they are new to the role, or more established and would benefit from a knowledge refresh. Our Trustee Courses are designed to help current and aspiring trustees deepen their knowledge of governance, regulatory obligations, strategic leadership and board effectiveness.

We deliver these courses to individual Boards, tailored to the charity's unique needs, and as open courses, in a variety of locations and online.

[Browse our upcoming Trustee events here.](#)

If you'd like to discuss whether a particular board role is right for you, or explore governance training bespoke to your organisation, please get in touch:

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