

2024 Trustees Report



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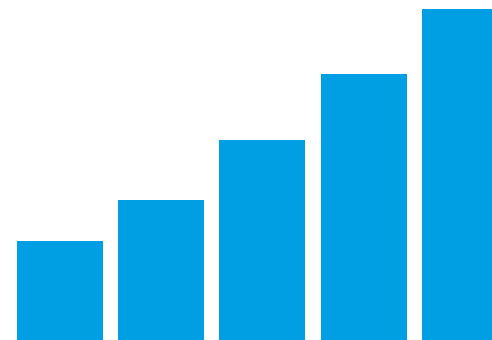
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Executive summary

Strengthening Dorset's Voluntary Sector: 2024 Charity Trustee Survey

CAN empowers Dorset's VCS through advice, training, resources, and advocacy. Trustees, the backbone of charities, ensure organisations operate effectively and deliver on their missions.

This report summarises the findings of a survey conducted among 172 charity trustees in Dorset, aiming to understand their demographics, knowledge of their roles, and needs for support.

- The report provides valuable insights into the composition of the local trustee landscape.
- It assesses the level of understanding trustees have regarding their responsibilities and identifies areas where knowledge gaps exist.
- Based on these findings, the report highlights opportunities to enhance trustee support through targeted training and resources developed by CAN.

By addressing the needs identified in this report, CAN can equip trustees with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective governance, ultimately strengthening the voluntary sector within Dorset and BCP.





Key findings

Trustee Commitment and Impact

The estimated 13,500 trustees across Dorset's 2,417 charities contribute over 1.6 million volunteer hours annually, equivalent to 854 full-time positions costing just under £35M annually.

This highlights the significant impact trustees have on the local charitable sector. (Median time commitment: 10 hours per month)

Trustee Profile

- 80% of trustees serve only one or two charities, demonstrating focused dedication.
- 50% of trustees have served for five years or less, indicating a dynamic environment with ongoing recruitment needs.
- The trustee demographic reflects the local population in terms of gender, sexual orientation and disability, but skews older with fewer under-25s. Targeted outreach strategies can address this gap.

Recruitment and Development

- Nearly half of trustees were personally approached, suggesting more open advertising could be beneficial.
- While trustees understand their core responsibilities, they need deeper knowledge in specific areas, i.e. charity law, employment law, legal reprehensibility etc.

Actionable Insights

- The report findings support the continued focus on core training areas CAN offers.
- The data highlights the need for more accessible resources and targeted outreach to attract younger demographics.
- Exploring alternative recruitment methods beyond personal invitations can widen the candidate pool.



Recruitment & characteristics

Characteristics of trustees serving on boards of charities in Dorset and BCP, based on a survey of 172 respondents.

- **Tenure:** The landscape is dynamic, with nearly half (40%) serving for three years or less, and a significant portion (23%) with 6-10 years of experience. However, there's also a strong foundation of seasoned trustees (18% serving over 20 years). This mirrors the national trend.
- **Number of Charities:** The majority (80%) serve on one or two boards, demonstrating focused dedication.
- **Recruitment:** 48% were approached by someone they knew, suggesting a reliance on personal networks.

Diversity & Representation

- **Gender breakdown** (52% female, 46% male) closely resembles the local population and is more balanced compared with local councillors (39% female).
- **Sexual Orientation:** More trustees identified as "other" (10.3%) compared to local councillors. More research is needed to understand this trend.
- **Age:** Aligned with national findings, over 50's predominate (77.5%) with under 25's at only 1.4%. Younger trustees could be attracted by highlighting skill development and career benefits associated with the role, or social action value.
- **Disability:** Trustees are less representative of the local disabled population (8% vs 19%). Further research will identify potential barriers to recruitment and support for disabled individuals.
- **Ethnic diversity** (12.1%) reflects the local population. However, specific ethnic minority groups are under-represented.

Trustee time commitments

BCP & Dorset

- Trustees reported a wide range of monthly time commitments, ranging from 1 to 160 hours.
- The median time commitment was 10 hours per month, indicating that half of the respondents dedicated less than 10 hours per month, and the other half dedicated more than 10 hours per month.

It is important to consider that the value of volunteers' contributions extends beyond hourly rates. Trustees bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and skills to their roles, and their contributions are essential to the functioning of charities.

The Wider Sector

- There are an estimated 13,590 trustee positions across the county, with each trustee volunteering an average of 10 hours per month.
- This translates to a total of 1,630,800 hours volunteered per year.

Community
Impact: 1,630,800
Hours Volunteered
Annually



Understanding trustees

The most common motivations for becoming a trustee were:

- A desire to give back to the community (72%)
- A passion for the charitable sector (68%)

Trustee knowledge

- Strengths: Respondents demonstrated a strong grasp of their general responsibilities as trustees
- Weaknesses:
 - Employer Role: Knowledge of being an employer for a charity was weak.
 - Charity Law: Understanding of charity law fell short of expectations.
 - Specific Roles: Knowledge of officer roles (chair, treasurer) was uneven.
 - Financial Management: Understanding of principles was lacking.
 - Governance vs. Management: Distinguishing between governance and management roles proved challenging for some.
 - Commercial Activities: Poor understanding of VAT, tax, and trading regulations for charities.

The need for training and resources in these specific areas will ensure trustees are fully equipped to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Trustees reported CAN's services, such as training courses, resources, and helplines, had been helpful in:

- Increasing their knowledge of charity governance (85% of respondents)
- Feeling more confident in their role as a trustee (78% of respondents)

"CAN's online safeguarding course was invaluable in helping me understand my responsibilities as a trustee and ensuring we have robust policies in place to protect vulnerable beneficiaries." - **Anonymous Trustee**



Actionable insights for the VCS

To build a more diverse and representative trustee base and strengthen the governance and impact of the VCS:

- Explore alternative recruitment methods to widen the candidate pool and move beyond relying on personal networks. Nearly half (47.5%) of trustees were approached by a friend, colleague, or the charity itself, reflecting a reliance on personal networks.
- 11.1% responded to advertisements - this emerged as a viable recruitment method, particularly for charities with annual incomes exceeding £100,000. All sizes should consider targeted outreach strategies to attract younger demographics and minority groups to trustee roles.
- 12.4% of trustees directly contacted charities. Promote the benefits and rewards of becoming a trustee to raise awareness and generate interest within your community.

Empower trustees to become better stewards of the charity, ultimately benefiting the organisation and the causes it supports.

- Offer accessible resources and training programs to address knowledge gaps identified by trustees, particularly in areas like charity law, financial management and risk management.
- Demonstrating a commitment to responsible management fosters public trust and potentially attracts more donors and volunteers.



Conclusion

Dorset's VCS thrives on the dedication of its trustees, who volunteer 1.6 million hours annually – equivalent to 854 full-time positions. This translates to a replacement value of nearly £35 million per year, highlighting the immense contribution of these volunteers.

The survey reveals a dynamic environment with a mix of experienced and new trustees. While a majority (84%) serve on one charity, and nearly half (40%) have three years or less of experience, 23% boast 6-10 years of service, and a strong foundation exists with trustees serving over 20 years (18%). This trend mirrors national findings.

Recruitment & Representation

The report underscores the importance of diversifying recruitment strategies. While the "tap on the shoulder" approach remains prevalent, alternative methods like advertising (11%) and proactive outreach (12%) show promise in attracting a broader range of candidates.

The data reveals a need for targeted outreach to younger demographics and minority groups. While the overall ethnic diversity (12.1%) reflects the local population, specific ethnicities are under-represented. Similarly, the number of disabled trustees (8%) is lower than the local disabled population (19%).

Learning & Support

Despite a strong understanding of core responsibilities, trustees identified areas for improvement, particularly in charity law and employer responsibilities. They primarily rely on fellow trustees for support but also value resources from the Charity Commission, the web, CAN, and charity staff. The report indicates a preference for online resources (factsheets, web pages, e-newsletters) and online meetings for information and support.

CAN will leverage these findings to review and enhance its current services for trustees, that cater to evolving needs and preferred learning styles. The focus will be to develop resources that address knowledge gaps and promote the vital role of trustees within the Dorset and BCP charitable sector.

Contact us



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CAN make Dorset's voluntary and community sector stronger.

We provide advice, training, information, services, and a voice for the voluntary and community sector

