

Becoming a Signs of God Trustee: FAQs

If you are interested in serving Signs of God and supporting our work as a Trustee, please read on!

Can anyone become a charity trustee?

Adults over the age of 18 can become trustees. Anyone who has been disqualified from being a company director cannot become a trustee. Also, those who have been convicted of deception or another offence that relates to dishonesty and anyone who is an undischarged bankrupt cannot be a trustee.

Anyone wishing to become a trustee must remember that they are legally responsible for the running of the charity – This means they need to feel able to learn how the charity operates and feel able to be responsible for and make decisions about financial and legal issues.

Can anyone become a Signs of God trustee?

Only current members of the Signs of God core team are eligible to be elected as a charity trustee.

What support is there available to new trustees?

Support is tailored to each new trustee, but we aim to offer a 'buddy' to each new trustee – A current trustee who can answer questions and who can offer guidance to the new trustee.

The trustees are also always really approachable – No question is a stupid one!

What do trustees do?

Trustees are responsible for ensuring that the charity runs smoothly, meets its legal responsibilities and continues to do work that meets the Charity Objects (the charity's aims which it must legally follow and are in its constitution). The trustees ensure the accounts are clear, ensure that the charity has suitable policies and procedures and supports volunteers. Trustees must ensure the charity runs in line with Charity Law and the guidance from the Charity Commission. They are all jointly responsible for this – one trustee is not more responsible than any other.

For Signs of God, the responsibilities include working alongside the administrator, contributing to trustee discussions at trustees meetings and by email, making decisions about charity activities and working with the core team and other volunteers. Signs of God trustees are more involved in decision-making about activities (for example, topics for workshops) than trustees might be in other charities. Signs of God trustees may also take on

other voluntary work, like any member of the core team or other Signs of God volunteer, which may be over and above their charity role.

How much time would I need to commit to being a trustee?

Signs of God has 3 or 4 trustees meetings per year. Trustees should commit to all of these, plus attending the AGM. It is usual for a trustees meeting to take one day, including travel. In between there is a need to respond to emails. This is variable, and probably involves an additional one or two days per year.

If trustees take on other voluntary responsibilities, or if they agree to get involved in some specific work for Signs of God this time commitment may increase, but this will usually be for short periods of time while an activity is being planned and carried out.

Would I need to do any preparation/training before taking up a trustee post?

All trustees should read this document (The Essential Trustee) before they take on the role:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-what-you-need-to-do>

Trustees should also ensure they have read and understood the Signs of God constitution.

The Guide to Good Governance may also be useful:

<http://issuu.com/sambrierley/docs/code-for-small-orgs/17?e=0>

Also, ask any questions at this point!

Are trustees paid expenses?

Trustees receive travel expenses for all trustees meetings. This is paid in line with the Signs of God policy – standard class public transport and mileage at 40p for the first 100miles and 25p for miles above 100 miles.

Trustees cannot be paid for their trustee role by law. Occasionally Signs of God may ask a trustee to undertake a specific role, such as delivering training, because they are the person with the skills for this role, and then a gift may be offered. This is not ever payment for being a trustee and any level of gift is voted on by all core team members at the AGM, not just decided upon by the trustees. This ensures any payments are made in the most transparent way possible.

How long does a trustee stay on the board before being re-elected?

The Signs of God trustee term is 3 years. Trustees can stand for reelection after 3 years if they wish (and the rest of the trustee board are happy for them to continue).

How many trustees are needed for a quorum?

At trustees meetings the quorum is two, or the number nearest to one third of the total number of trustees, whichever is the greater.

(The Constitution also allows for the quorum to be increased by the trustees – this increase would need to be decided upon and recorded in the minutes of a trustees meeting.)

Would I have any personal liability for my decisions?

Trustees are legally responsible for all the decisions that make.

However, trustees are covered by trustees indemnity insurance (the trustees need to ensure this is renewed each year as it is a legal requirement). This insurance means that, unless a trustee acts dishonestly, or without due care, they will not be liable for any failing of the charity. This means that if the charity runs out of money, or if someone believes the charity has done something to harm them and sues, the insurance should cover this, unless trustees have been negligent.

Where can I find policies and previous minutes?

The Signs of God website has a trustees area – a private area of the site where the minutes are uploaded. As this area is developed, all charity documents will be available in this area, including the constitution and policies and procedures.

How do trustees keep in touch with each other?

Mostly, trustees communicate by email, although sometimes other methods are used to have discussions in between meetings.