

International Women's Conference

Workshop 4: Routes into Public Life

Five key themes formed the basis of the discussion:

1. What options, opportunities are available to us?

Very wide range of opportunities for women who want a new challenge, want to do something different and make a contribution. These include being a school governor, a magistrate, on the board of a housing association, a trustee of a local or national charity, a non-executive director on an NHS Trust, a Board member of arts, theatre or music bodies, or a non-executive member of the Board of a Government body.

2. What is the role of a Trustee or Board member? What do they do?

Key responsibilities: Strategy, Governance and Money

The 5 'Ss' of a successful member:

Strategy – including strategic thinking and planning

Support – to the Chief Executive and staff

Stretch – pushing or challenging the organisation to do its best

Scrutiny – asking questions, checking the overall health of the organisation, ensuring its policies are being followed

Stewardship – looking at overall financial health and stability, care of assets

(Stakeholders – also important to consider all those with an interest, including service users and ensure the body keeps these in balance)

3. What are the benefits of being a Trustee or Board Member?

- usually this is voluntary work, but often exciting, sometimes scary and very worthwhile
- Valuable experience, new skills and contacts
- Board members see the 'whole picture'
- Useful experience when going for more senior roles
- Develops personal confidence eg on strategy

4. What skills are organisations looking for?

Finance, and IT skills - most useful

Communication skills, marketing, fund-raising, lobbying, legal skills, HR, property

Leadership skills, chairing meetings, analysis, writing papers, staff appraisal.

Performance management, knowledge of local community/area

5. Where do we start?

1. Decide what type of organisation/cause you are most interested in
2. Look at web-sites – most applications now are done on-line
3. 'Volunteer' to spend some time with an organisation in which you have an interest

Contact 'Reach - Volunteers' - organisation which places volunteers with professional experience in UK voluntary organisations – www.reach-online.org.uk

Do an NCVO course – one day, on charity trustee duties:
www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

If thinking about becoming a Trustee - register your interest with:

www.getonboard.org.uk

Other useful web-sites:

www.publicappointments.gov.uk Cabinet Office – Public Appointments Unit

www.housing.org - for housing associations

www.schoolgovernors-oss.co.uk One stop shop for school governors

www.thirdsector.co.uk – advertises trusteeships and voluntary roles

www.appointments.org.uk Appointments Commission – NHS and other public appointments

See also:

Wednesday Guardian - for public and voluntary sector opportunities

Sunday Times advertises non-exec directorships, charities and other public bodies.