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# How to challenge your advisers: The questions trustees need to ask

Pension scheme trustees are expected to make decisions on a wide range of topics. These topics are often highly technical, and few trustees have an in-depth understanding of them all.

When faced with recommendations from your advisers, how can you make the best choices? The answer lies in challenging the decisions you are being asked to make. Imagine you need to make a decision on your scheme's direction. Your advisor has briefed you on the options. You do not need more technical details – you probably have those in abundance. You need the information that will enable you to make the best choice, even if the subject matter is outside your area of expertise.

Understanding some behavioural tendencies can help here. For instance, when we weigh up decisions, there is a tendency to fall prey to present-bias. People generally choose what feels good in the here and now over the possibility of a better outcome at some future point. This can be a particular issue with pensions, as the impact of any decisions can be so far in the future.

So you need to play devil's advocate. Ask yourself the difficult questions. 'What happens if we do not make a decision on this?'

Carry out a 'pre-mortem' by asking: if we fast-forward 12 months and everything has gone wrong – why was that? Thinking about a future where things have gone wrong helps us to identify the potential causes. Without this, people tend to err on the side of weighing up the 'likelihood' of things going wrong – which can be difficult to quantify or envisage.

Asking the right questions will enable you to challenge the assumptions you are presented with – and help you to make the right decisions.

**Aon's '10 questions to help trustees challenge their advisers' covers the questions you should ask and the behavioural biases that can impede good choices. You can get a free copy at [aon.com/trustee-effectivenessuk](http://aon.com/trustee-effectivenessuk), or by emailing [talktous@aon.com](mailto:talktous@aon.com).**

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