

Trustee Responsibilities May 2025



Aims and Objectives

- To understand what governance means
- To understand the principals of good governance
- To examine the duties of a Trustee
- To explore the role of the Committee and its responsibilities
- To look at what it means to be a charity in Northern Ireland



Governance

“... is the process by which a governing body ensures that an organisation is effectively and properly run.... Governance is not necessarily about doing; it is about ensuring things are done”

(Sandy Adirondack)



Code of Good Governance

- The Code of Good Governance was developed by Volunteer Now in partnership with the Developing Governance Group
- 5 principles
- Not everything under each principle will be applicable
- Governance health check
- <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/>



1. Understanding its function in delivering organisational purpose

The members of the board are equally responsible in law for governance. They are collectively responsible for ensuring that the organisation remains faithful to its purpose.



What does it involve?

- Setting and upholding the vision, values, and reputation of your organisation.
- Understanding your legal duties, and fulfilling them
- Ensuring the Stewardship of assets
- Reviewing and overseeing the work of the organisation
- Working in the interests of your beneficiaries and/or members.



How do I show this?

- Make sure that everything your charity does and every decision you make as trustees has the purpose of Girlguiding at its heart.
- Make sure you read the Public Benefit Guidance produced by the Charity Commission, and that you complete your public benefit statement in your Annual Monitoring Return
- Comply with your constitution and policies
- Make sure that any assets you have are looked after and managed well – this includes making sure that the properties are all vested in the Trust corporation.
- Develop a long-term strategy for how you will deliver guiding
- Have an awareness of the broader environment you are operating in
- Make sure you are working in the best interest of our young members



2. Working as an effective team

The board will ensure that it has an effective balance of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to deliver organisational purpose.



What does it involve?

- Structuring meetings effectively including preparation, frequency, recording and communication.
- Ensuring that all board members, including office bearers, understand and fulfil their respective roles.
- Accessing external advice when necessary.
- Developing and maintaining a positive working relationship within the board and with volunteers and staff.



How do I show this?

- Ensure meetings have an appropriate agenda, that they are held regularly, that quorums are met, that you keep good minutes - including records of decisions made, and that there are regular reports from committees if appropriate
- Make sure that all members of the committee are aware of their role descriptions, and that they provide regular updates on their areas
- Be well prepared in advance of meetings
- Be loyal, attend regularly and be on time
- Participate in discussion, help shape decisions, ask questions!
- Act together, take joint decisions
- Take proper professional advice if you don't have the answers



3. Maintaining control, making effective decisions and managing risk

The board has ultimate responsibility for setting the vision and strategy and overseeing the activities of the organisation. While the board may delegate some of its functions to paid staff, boards must regularly review internal controls, risks, performance, policies and procedures



What does it involve?

- Developing and monitoring organisational plans and budgets.
- Understanding and complying with all legal, contractual and regulatory requirements that apply.
- Making proper arrangements for the recruitment, remuneration, supervision, support and appraisal of all staff including the most senior member of staff.
- Making proper arrangements for managing and supporting volunteers.



How do I show this?

- Strategic and Financial planning
- Develop risk management procedures – Risk Register
- Make sure that systems are in place for handling money and the operating bank accounts
- Provide leadership – make sure results are delivered and performance is monitored
- Take legal responsibility for the organisation e.g. insurances, requirements of the Charity Commission
- Make sure that accounting records and the state of the finances are reported regularly to the meetings of the executive



Remember...

The whole Committee is responsible for the finances of the charity and not just the Chief / County Commissioner and Treasurer – The committee should know and understand the financial position of the charity

4. Acting with integrity

The board should act at all times with honesty and probity in the interests of the organisation and its beneficiaries and members.

The board ensures that the organisation's performance and interaction with its stakeholders are guided by the values, ethics and culture put in place by the board



What does it involve?

- Act according to high ethical standards.
- Act in the best interest of the charity
- Identifying, understanding and managing conflicts of interest and loyalty both within the board and across the organisation.
- Encourage inclusive and accessible participation of beneficiaries and members.
- Understanding, and complying with, your safeguarding responsibilities.



How do I show this?

- Remember the Promise and Law!
- Avoid conflicts of interest – If they happen, make sure they are managed properly.
- To not financially benefit personally – only out of pocket expenses and payment for goods and services can be paid
- Filling in your related party certificate and submitting it to GGU
- To always act in the best interest of the young members
- Promote Equality, Inclusion and Diversity – also consider who you might be excluding
- Comply with your safeguarding responsibilities, treating safeguarding as a way of working rather than a compulsory training.



5. Being open and accountable

The board leads the organisation by being open and transparent, accountable and responsive.



What does it involve?

- Ensure open and effective communication and engagement with beneficiaries, members and stakeholders about the organisation and its work.
- Consider organisational responsibilities to the wider community, society and the environment.
- Put in place arrangements to deal with complaints constructively, impartially and efficiently.
- Demonstrate public benefit/impact in line with your organisational purposes.



How do I show this?

- Be accountable – regular minutes, AGMs, reporting to funders
- Reply to emails, as well as sending minutes and accounts to level above in a timely manner
- Consider the broader community impact of our organisation, and think about how you can better serve your community while being true to our mission and purpose.
- Deal with complaints fairly and transparently – and in a timely manner
- Assess the impact of your work – both positive and negative!
- Serious Incident Reporting to the Charity Commission



Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

- As a charity in Northern Ireland, you have a duty to comply with the provisions in the Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008. This includes:
 - A duty to come forward to be entered on to the *Register of Charities*.
 - A duty to keep your record on the register up-to-date (in particular, the names of your trustees)
 - A duty to file your Annual Monitoring Return, accounts, trustee annual report and independent examiners/auditors report with the Commission within 10 months of the end of your financial year
 - A duty to retain your accounting records for at least 6 years after the end of their period.

What is a serious incident?

- The Commission regards a serious incident as an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in, or risks, a significant:
 - loss of charity money or assets
 - damage to charity property or
 - harm to the work of the charity, its beneficiaries or reputation.
- You should also tell the Commission if you have:
 - reported a charity trustee or volunteer to your local Health and Social Care Trust Gateway team regarding a safeguarding issue. Or
 - reported an allegation of abuse or mistreatment of one of the young members, or anyone associated with the charity, to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Serious Incident Reporting

- If a serious incident occurs, The Committee are required to report what happened to the Commission and to outline what steps they have taken to fix the issue.
- You will separately need to inform your next level up, Girlguiding Ulster and Girlguiding UK.
- The Commission will also ensure that the committee take appropriate steps to limit the immediate impact of the incident and prevent it from happening again.

How do you do it?

- Fill out the Concerns About Charities form
- Make sure you have the following information to hand:
 - Who you are and your connection to the charity
 - The authority you have to report on behalf of the Committee
 - Who in the Committee is aware of the incident
 - What happened and when the Committee first became aware of it
 - Action being taken to deal with the incident and prevent future problems
 - Whether and when it has been reported to the PSNI or another regulator/ statutory agency (including official reference numbers)

Resources

- DIY Committee - <https://www.diycommitteeguide.org/>
- Girlguiding UK – Trustee responsibilities - <https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/information-for-volunteers/commissioners/legal-responsibilities/being-a-trustee/>
- Charity Commission – Public benefit Guidance - <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/manage-your-charity/register-your-charity/the-public-benefit-requirement/>
- Charity Commission – newsletter - <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-essentials/commission-newsletter/>
- Charity Commission – Serious Incident Reporting - <https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/concerns-and-decisions/serious-incident-reporting-a-guide-for-charity-trustees/>
- Volunteer Now – training programmes for working with volunteers – <https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/>
- Open University – Free Courses - <https://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses>
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales – Trustee Training - <https://www.icaew.com/technical/charity-community/trustee-training-modules>
- Cranfield Trust – Webinars - <https://www.gotostage.com/channel/cranfieldtrusttraining>

