



# GOVERNANCE FACTSHEET – THE BASICS

## What is a board?

- **Responsibilities of your board**
- **How your board governs**

Use this page to learn about what a board is and how it works.

Every charity has a board (also called a governing body).

A board is a group of elected or appointed individuals. They're all responsible for the governance and strategic direction of an organisation, and hold legal liability.

### **To govern a charity means to:**

- define its long term direction – furthering its objects or purposes as set out in its governing document
- make sure that it's effectively and properly run with legal and other obligations met – and be accountable to those with an interest or a 'stake' in the charity.

### **A board may not always be called a board: Other names include a:**

- management committee
- council
- executive committee
- board of trustees
- board of governors or directors

The board consists of trustees which is a formal role.

## Responsibilities of your board

Although charities and boards vary in size and structure, all trustees and all boards share some key roles and responsibilities to govern effectively and remain compliant. These include:

- Furthering the charity's overall purpose, as set out in its governing document, and setting its **direction and strategy**.
- Making sure the work of the charity is **effective, responsible and legal**.
- **Safeguarding people as well as finances, resources and property** and making sure they're used to further the charity's purposes.

- **Being 'accountable'** to those with an interest or stake in or who regulate the charity.
- **Being clear** about the people who carry out work for the charity – trustees, staff, volunteers – setting up and respecting boundaries between the governance role of the board and operational or day to day matters.

Making sure **the board operates effectively** by taking account of good practice, as mentioned in the [Charity Governance Code](#).

## How your board governs

Most of the board's work takes place at board meetings where trustees act together. Boards often work on big issues at meetings, making key decisions, monitoring activities and then delegating day to day work to others – staff, volunteers, sub-committees or individual trustees.

In small charities, boards are likely to be involved in day-to-day issues as well as governance issues. In these charities, trustees should still clearly define when they are working on day-to-day issues and when they are working on governance issues. This is to help make sure the board is carrying out its overall responsibilities.