



Effective charity Boards: Why meeting regularity matters

This factsheet provides guidance for charity trustees on meeting frequency, oversight responsibilities, and governance risks, particularly for charities delivering services to children, families or adults at risk. It is designed to support Boards in understanding their legal duties and identifying areas where improvements may be required.

The role of charity Trustees

Trustees hold ultimate responsibility for the governance and strategic direction of a charity. The role requires:

- **Consistency and active engagement**
- **Strategic judgement**
- **Financial and operational oversight**
- **Decision-making as a collective**
- **Leadership and awareness of impact and risk**

While trustees may delegate certain tasks, **core responsibilities cannot be delegated**. Trustees **must** remain in control of the charity's governance and must be accountable for decisions made in its name. Trustees can only make binding decisions when formally meeting and quorate.

[View our full factsheet](#)

Meeting

Meeting regularity: Why it matters

For charities delivering frontline services, meeting fewer than four times a year is insufficient to oversee risk, performance, safeguarding and finance. Although charity law does not prescribe a strict minimum, sector practice and Charity Commission guidance indicate that:

- **Quarterly meetings** (at least four per year) are considered the baseline for service delivery charities.
- **Small, low-risk charities may meet less frequently**, but this is not appropriate for organisations supporting vulnerable individuals.
- **Many active boards meet between four and ten times per year**, depending on complexity and risk.

The main exception is a small charity that doesn't deliver day-to-day services, for example, a small grant-giving trust that meets twice a year to allocate grants. The correct number of meetings is always as many as necessary to fulfil legal duties and provide effective oversight.

Risks when Boards meet too infrequently

If a board meets fewer than four times a year, several risks increase:

Inadequate risk management

The charity may not respond quickly to emerging risks or changes in its operating environment.

Poor performance oversight

Trustees may lack timely information on service quality, safeguarding concerns, beneficiary outcomes or organisational impact.

Weak financial control

Infrequent meetings limit the board's ability to monitor budgets, financial forecasts and management accounts.

A particular risk is where individuals who are not trustees have been allowed delegated authority without sufficient oversight. Even where there is no suggestion of bad faith, this can expose the charity and trustees to governance weaknesses and potential breaches of charity law.

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Recommended next steps for Trustees

To strengthen governance and ensure compliance with Charity Commission expectations, trustees should:

1. **Increase meeting frequency** to at least quarterly, with additional meetings where needed.
2. **Review internal financial controls** ensuring clear separation of duties and appropriate authorisation structures.
3. **Strengthen reporting on safeguarding**, quality of service, finances and risk.
4. **Review the governing document** to ensure quorum levels, delegation arrangements and meeting requirements are appropriate.
5. **Seek support from professional advisers**, such as a charity specialist accountant, to review governance and compliance arrangements.

Support available

Trustees can access governance support from a range of organisations. Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) including Salford CVS provide free practical advice, training and resources to strengthen governance and help boards improve oversight.

www.salfordcvs.co.uk/

NCVO is the national body to support the VCSE and has a range of articles and tools on trustee responsibilities and good governance practice.

www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/governance/

The Charity Governance Code sets out clear principles for effective boards and is free to access. www.charitygovernancecode.org/

The Charity Commission's published guidance that outlines trustees' legal duties and should be used as a reference point for all governance decisions.

www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance

In addition, trustees may benefit from advice from charity specialist accountants and governance consultants, particularly when reviewing financial controls or board processes.

Using local Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) support, national Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector resources and professional advisers where needed will help trustees strengthen governance and ensure the charity operates safely and effectively.