

Trustees' duties at a glance

This is a summary of trustees' main legal responsibilities. It is taken from the Charity Commission's online guidance (worth a look):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-commission-guidance>

Are you eligible to be a charity trustee?

You must be at least 16 years old to be a trustee of a charity that is a company or a charitable incorporated organisation (we are a CIO), or at least 18 to be a trustee of any other charity.

You must be properly appointed following the procedures and any restrictions in the charity's governing document.

(Our governing document is here: <https://www.maindee.org/uploads/documents/MU-CIO-Constitution-Amended-September-2019.pdf>)

You must not act as a trustee if you are disqualified, unless authorised to do so by a waiver from the Commission. The reasons for disqualification are shown in the disqualifying reasons table and include:

- being bankrupt (undischarged) or having an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA)
- having an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception)
- being on the sex offenders' register

You can read the [automatic disqualification guidance for charities](#) which explains the disqualification rules in more detail.

There are further restrictions for charities that work with children or adults at risk.

Ensure your charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit

You and your co-trustees must make sure that the charity is carrying out the purposes for which it is set up, and no other purpose. This means you should understand the charity's purposes as set out in its governing document

- plan what your charity will do, and what you want it to achieve

- be able to explain how all of the charity's activities are intended to further or support its purposes
- understand how the charity benefits the public by carrying out its purposes

Spending charity funds on the wrong purposes is a very serious matter; in some cases trustees may have to reimburse the charity personally.

Comply with your charity's governing document and the law

You and your co-trustees must:

- make sure that the charity complies with its governing document
- comply with charity law requirements and other laws that apply to your charity

You should take reasonable steps to find out about legal requirements, for example by reading relevant guidance or taking appropriate advice when you need to.

Act in your charity's best interests

You must:

- do what you and your co-trustees (and no one else) decide will best enable the charity to carry out its purposes
- with your co-trustees, make balanced and adequately informed decisions, thinking about the long term as well as the short term
- avoid putting yourself in a position where your duty to your charity conflicts with your personal interests or loyalty to any other person or body
- not receive any benefit from the charity unless it is properly authorised and is clearly in the charity's interests; this also includes anyone who is financially connected to you, such as a partner, dependent child or business partner

Manage your charity's resources responsibly

You must act responsibly, reasonably and honestly. This is sometimes called the duty of prudence. Prudence is about exercising sound judgement. You and your co-trustees must:

- make sure the charity's assets are only used to support or carry out its purposes
- avoid exposing the charity's assets, beneficiaries or reputation to undue risk
- not over-commit the charity

- take special care when investing or borrowing
- comply with any restrictions on spending funds or selling land

You and your co-trustees should put appropriate procedures and safeguards in place and take reasonable steps to ensure that these are followed. Otherwise you risk making the charity vulnerable to fraud or theft, or other kinds of abuse, and being in breach of your duty.

Act with reasonable care and skill

As someone responsible for governing a charity, you:

- must use reasonable care and skill, making use of your skills and experience and taking appropriate advice when necessary
- should give enough time, thought and energy to your role, for example by preparing for, attending and actively participating in all trustees' meetings

Ensure your charity is accountable

You and your co-trustees must comply with statutory accounting and reporting requirements. You should also:

- be able to demonstrate that your charity is complying with the law, well run and effective
- ensure appropriate accountability to members, if your charity has a membership separate from the trustees
- ensure accountability within the charity, particularly where you delegate responsibility for particular tasks or decisions to staff or volunteers