



SP-UK

SUICIDE PREVENTION UK

Suicide Prevention UK

trustee Code of Conduct

2024

Introduction and Purpose

trustees have independent control over and legal responsibility for a Charity's management and administration. They play a very important role, almost always unpaid, in a sector that contributes significantly to the character and wellbeing of the country.

trusteeship can be rewarding for many reasons - from a sense of making a difference to the charitable cause to new experiences and relationships. It's also likely to be demanding of your time, skills, knowledge and abilities.

Being aware of the duties and responsibilities covered in this guidance will help you carry out your role in a way that not only serves your Charity well but also gives you confidence that you will be complying with key requirements of the law.

This document summarises the main responsibilities of the Charity's trustees and outlines how they are expected to act in order to meet the standards set by the Charity Commission.

Scope

This policy applies to all Suicide Prevention UK trustees.

Where this document refers to 'your Charity,' it refers to Suicide Prevention UK.

All trustees and prospective trustees must read this document and abide by the code of conduct.

Any trustee who does not abide by this document may be removed as a trustee and reported to the Charity Commission where necessary.

Legislative Guidance

This document outlines the responsibilities of trustees as per the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

For further information, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-what-you-need-to-do>

Trustee Duties

The duties outlined in this policy form the core code of conduct for Suicide Prevention UK trustees.

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

You and your co-trustees must make sure that everything your Charity does helps (or is intended to help) to achieve the purposes for which it is set up, and no other purpose. This means you should:

- Ensure you 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.

Note: 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:

- Ensure 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).

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 judgment. 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, 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, is 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.

Reduce the risk of liability to yourself and the Charity

As a trustee, you must understand potential liabilities that will help you to protect yourself and your Charity and take action to reduce the risk. This includes complying with duties covered in this guidance.

Note: It's extremely rare, but not impossible, for charity trustees to be held personally liable for Charity financial losses, legal claims made by third parties, or criminal acts.

To protect yourself and your Charity, you should:

- Understand your responsibilities as a trustee.
- Act honestly and reasonably.
- Own up to honest mistakes and rectify them where possible.
- Ensure that you and the Charity do not incur any liability to third parties by:
 - Abiding by UK and international law
 - Treating staff (including volunteers) fairly, ensuring that their working conditions are safe and healthy, paying them on time and signing them up for a pension scheme as required.
 - Ensuring that the Suicide Prevention UK premises are safe and healthy places where staff, visitors and others are unlikely to become injured.
 - Paying for goods and services in a timely manner.

Treasurer Duties

The treasurer will, as required:

- Make sure the Charity keeps proper accounts.
- Review the Charity's financial performance.
- Draw up or review policies for finance and investment.
- Ensure that the Charity has robust and effective financial controls in place.
- Liaise with finance staff and with the Charity's independent examiner or auditor.
- Report on financial matters to trustees, management, members, our governing body, and other stakeholders as required.

Chair Duties

The chair will, as required:

- Help plan and run trustee meetings.
- Take the lead in ensuring that meetings are properly run and recorded.
- Take the lead in ensuring that trustees comply with their duties and the Charity is well-governed.
- Act as a link between trustees and staff/management.
- Line manage the Charity's management on behalf of the trustees.
- Act as a spokesperson for the Charity.

Board Meetings – Trustee Guidance

Charity trustees should:

- Aim to attend all meetings, contribute appropriately and effectively, and avoid dominating the contributions of others.
- Always respect the authority of the Chairperson of the Board and the Chairperson of any meeting.
- Bring a fair and open-minded view to all discussions of the Board, maintain a respectful balance between speaking and listening, treat different views with respect, and ensure that all decisions are made in the best interests of the Charity.
- Bring a genuinely independent perspective to enhance decision-making, given that Charity trustees share responsibility for board decisions.
- Ensure their contributions are informed and impartial when presenting views on topics in meetings while listening to and respecting the input and experience of others.

Non-Compliance

Consistent breaches of the Code of Conduct by a trustee may result in the trustee's tenure being terminated.

Policy Date: November 2020

Review Date: April 2024

Next Review: April 2025

Dated and Signed by the Chair and Founder of Suicide Prevention UK: