

NCVO Crisis governance: Support for trustees during the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic has presented boards with the challenge of making critical decisions over service provision, operations and sustainability. In last months round up, I set out the [key questions trustees needed to think about](#). This months focus is on what's changed and the main guidance trustees need to be aware of. I also detail the practical support NCVO and others are offering to boards over the coming weeks.

You can read more about the [campaign and lobbying work we've been involved in to secure financial support for the sector](#).

Coronavirus webinar series

Governing during a pandemic, what are the key things trustees need to be focused on?

Next Thursday afternoon, as part of our series on coronavirus and the sectors response we'll be running a webinar for trustees. The session will provide practical tips on key issues trustees should be thinking about and signposting to useful resources to help trustees navigate this uncertain time.

What the webinar will cover:

- What trustees should focus on right now
- Top tips for how this can be achieved remotely
- Key legal and regulatory updates
- How to begin to plan for the future
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[Register for this webinar](#) or for more information on our series, [visit our training pages](#). If you can't make it, you can register anyway and you'll be sent a recording.

Webinars on key legal considerations

Over the past few weeks, we partnered with the law firm Bates Wells to offer webinars exploring the key legal issues associated with coronavirus. You can listen to the recordings using the links below:

- [Coronavirus and your charity – Key legal issues to consider](#) (held March 25)
- [Coronavirus job retention scheme and volunteering](#) (held March 31)
- [Finance and your charity: Navigating the government schemes; managing solvency](#) (held April 7)

Coronavirus guidance for trustees

To ensure there are no barriers to charities accessing support, we've dropped our member paywall for our [practical tools, guidance and online training on our knowhow site](#). This includes access to our [guidance on risk management](#), and updated information on [financial difficulty and insolvency](#). We've also been developing specific [coronavirus advice for organisations](#) on key topics including:

- [Protecting staff and volunteers](#)
- [Contingency planning and other financial implications](#)
- [How charities are helping](#)

- [Involving volunteers](#)
- [Running board and other governance meetings](#)

Other sources of guidance

- The small charities coalition has developed a range of specific [guidance for smaller organisations in managing through this crisis](#).
- ACEVO amongst its work has devised a [series of webinars to support senior managers in building resilience and governing in a crisis](#).

Updates from the Charity Commission

The charity commission has published [specific guidance for charities](#) which'll be of interest to trustees. This includes:

- [How to change your work to support coronavirus efforts and stay within the scope of your charitable objects](#)
- [Hosting legal and effective remote governance meetings](#)
- [The financial support available and use of restricted funds](#)
- [Managing serious financial difficulties caused by coronavirus](#)

Serious incident reporting and coronavirus

The Charity Commissions coronavirus guidance also mentions reporting serious incidents. Charity trustees are reminded they must continue to [report serious incidents using the existing guidelines](#) and in the context of their own charity.

The existing guidance states 'loss of your charity's money or assets' and 'harm to your charity's work or reputation' are included in the list of potential serious incidents.

Coronavirus means that work is disrupted and income is reduced for many charities, yet trustees can't use the far-reaching nature of the pandemic as a reason not to raise matters as a serious incident. Trustees must instead consider the significance of coronavirus in context of their own charity.

This crisis may be impacting all charities and organisations, but it's the significance of that impact on your charity which should be used to determine if a serious incident report is required. In its [set of examples](#), the Commission highlights the following as incidents which warrant a report in the context of a charity:

- Large donations (over £25,000) from an unknown source
- Significant impact on the charity's services
- Significant financial loss
- A sudden loss of 20% or more of charity's income where the charity has no reserves, meaning staff will be laid off and services stopped
- Any other type of incident that appears serious and likely to damage reputation or incur loss of charitable funds assets
- Insolvency

The commission says it understands that from time to time serious incidents will happen – their expectation is that these are reported promptly. We encourage trustees to consider all risks in the context of their charity and report serious incidents linked to the pandemic.

[Dan Francis](#) is NCVO's lead governance consultant. For more regular updates follow [@mynameisdanfran](#) or [@NCVO](#) on Twitter.