

What to do when your Board has major problems

Many more Boards than you realise go through bad patches when serious arguments, mass resignations and even criminal action makes running your charity very difficult. It is important to recognise that you aren't alone in this situation and that you can get through this with a little care and thought. Below are a few tips on how to handle things so that you can move to a more positive future.

- 1) Try to divorce your feelings about what has happened from the actions you take - don't mix up your role as a Trustee or Director with any personal issues.
- 2) Concentrate on what your organisation and, more particularly your service users, need. Don't waste time and resources on trying to deal with issues that aren't, in the long term, or importance to them such as personal differences between Board members.
- 3) Use your organisations constitution as the basis for all formal actions. You may take some necessary actions that aren't overtly stated in the constitution but never act against it.
- 4) Communicate clearly, in writing where possible, using as few words as possible so that you and the person you are communicating with can be sure what is being said. Get a friend to sense-check before sending.
- 5) Don't be afraid to just repeat the same message over and over.
- 6) Don't have any important conversations informally. Make sure there's a written record with dates. If you have to speak to someone 1-2-1 make sure a witness is present.
- 7) Work out what the key steps are to getting back on track. Prioritise them and share with other people - for example senior staff members - who need to be kept informed and confident in the future.
- 8) If what has occurred could lead to reputational damage, think about how to manage this in advance with a clear and positive message.
- 9) You may find it useful to take legal advice.
- 10) Mediation from an external person can help to settle some Board issues by making sure all parties have the chance to be heard.
- 11) If a serious breach has occurred, for example financial fraud or major safeguarding you will need to report this to the Charity Commission.

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