



Governance, Structure and Management of Empathy for special children.

Empathy is a registered charity and a user led Organisation.

The Articles, adopted in 2013, lay down the rules of governance and accountability (please see Appendix 1) and state that a board of trustees will be elected annually to oversee and manage the charities affairs.

Empathy is an employer; employing around 10 casual staff at any one time and a Contractor and currently holds a contract with Shropshire council for the provision of short breaks services.

A Chief Executive Officer is employed, on a part time basis, by the board to facilitate all that Empathy does.

Young Trustees and Parent Representatives from the Local Management Committees ensure that all users have an equal voice at board level.

Staff have their own management structure and a voice through representation to the board from the team leads. (Please see Appendix 2 for the structure model)

Empathy is an Organisation like few others, it is often described by its users as a Family. Our users young or old, with and without difference are our beating heart. They are absolutely central to all we do and why we do it. Whilst this ensures drive and passion at board level, it can also present challenges for the board. Not always is the user led way the most cost effective way and the emotional attachment created by this strong ethos can be difficult to step back from and be objective.

The Trustee role.

Trustees work at a strategic level and whilst they may choose to be involved in the day to day running of groups, fundraising events etc it is not part of their trusteeship.

A Trustee Role is rewarding but is not to be taken on lightly. The role is a commitment and may at times have a heavy work load.

We are constituted to ensure that trustees have no financial liability for the Organisation but as a registered charity trustees are agreeing to run the Organisation with the guidelines set out by the charities commission.

As laid down here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3>

For Empathy those responsibilities translate to

Terms of Reference for the Board of Trustees:

- To take overall responsibility for everything that Empathy does; it's projects, its staff, its users.
- To give strategic direction, determining and safeguarding the reputation, aims and objectives of Empathy
- To take the decisions required for the proper control and management of Empathy.
- To lead the fundraising strategy and ensure Empathy has a sound, stable and sustainable financial future.
- To ensure that there is a clear structure for governing the organization, including defining the role of its subsidiary locality management committees, any focus groups or sub-committees
- To ensure that Empathy has adequate financial resources for its activities including a breakeven budget, and the appropriate financial policies, procedures and controls in place
- To ensure that Empathy complies with its own governing document, relevant laws and the requirements placed upon it by its funders and/or other bodies
- To review the risks to which Empathy is subject, take action to mitigate these risks and to ensure sound risk management
- To act as a responsible employer.
- To ensure that the principles of equality and diversity are upheld and that Empathy is fair and open to all families that have children within the remit and within the local community, in all of its activities
- To seek assistance from experts in areas where the trustees lack the necessary skills
- To act prudently to protect the assets and property of Empathy
- To act collectively and effectively in the interests of Empathy
- To induct every new trustee
- To develop and maintain relationships with key stakeholders

These are achieved through some **Central activities** defined as

The specific activities that will be undertaken centrally by the Trustees will include:

- Overall governance of Empathy to ensure that it is run safely, fairly and legally
- Provision of literature, policies and insurance
- Securing funding to facilitate the business plan.
- Ensure the effective recruitment and management of all staff.
- Provision of training, where necessary
- Provision of advice and support to the Locality Management Committee (LMC)
- Management of the bank account and the production of the annual accounts and annual report
- Ensuring compliance with legal and charity governance requirements
- Business planning and budgeting
- Liaison with the CEO to ensure good communication between the board and the users
- Support the young trustees to ensure every user has an equal voice.

How much time will it take?

That depends on your area of expertise and if you choose to take on a specific role within the board.

For example

The Chair can expect to be in contact with the CEO most weeks,

The Treasurer and Secretary fortnightly to monthly

The rest of the board may be asked to look at something a meeting by meeting basis in time for the next meeting.

Work tends to come in chunks but on average a trustee should expect to give around 1 - 2 hours a week of their time to Empathy.

Roles within the board

Officers	Other Roles
Chair -	Health and Safety Lead
Vice Chair -	PR and Marketing Lead
Secretary -	Fundraising Lead
Finance Officer	Safeguarding Officer
	Data Protection Officer
	Parent Reps from each of the areas

This not a definitive list and roles will be reviewed following an annual skills review, at the first meeting following the Annual General Meeting. Descriptions of the roles and the responsibilities can be found on our website. Trustees do not have to take on a specific role but will be asked to contribute to these main areas of work throughout the year.

Trustees are also expected to attend board meetings periodically. The guidance below gives details of what to expect;

Meetings of the Trustees

- Meetings to be held as often as board business requires but a minimum of four times a year
- A formal record will be kept of each meeting of the trustees
- The day and time of meetings will be arranged to suit most trustees, but every effort will be made to ensure that no one member is continually prevented from attending meetings
- Business will be conducted efficiently
- Comments on agenda items and/or board papers from trustees unable to attend a meeting are to be given, where applicable, to the Chair of Empathy in advance of the meeting for inclusion during board discussions
- Three trustees will constitute a quorum for trustee meetings.

Attendance at meetings:

- In addition to the trustees, any co-optees and the minute taker, if applicable, can attend meetings
- A prospective trustee may be invited to attend a meeting with the consent of the Chair
- The trustees may invite any expert brought in on an ad hoc basis to advise the board to attend all or part of a meeting
- Our constitution states that any Trustees who does not attend any meetings with sending apologies within a period of 6 months can be removed from the board.

More information about the individual roles can within the board can be found

If you felt you could spare some time to join the board and ensure that the special families of Shropshire can access the support and opportunity to "let their colours shine".

Please email

CEO Sam Goddard – sam@empathyforspecialchildren.org

Or

The Current Chair – chair@empathyforspecialchildren.org

Or call us for an informal chat on 07495947987

