

Getting the right Directors

Contact: Eliza Platts-Mills, National Advice Centre,
Community Led Homes

Overview

Getting the right directors or trustees for your community led housing organisation is very important and can be challenging. This briefing describes best practices for recruiting a diverse group of directors to help guide your organisation and includes links to other helpful resources.

How do I find people willing to volunteer their time? How do I find people with a diverse set of skills and experiences? How do I find people who understand what community led housing is all about?

When we say “directors” here, we mean people who volunteer their time to meet as a group once a month or once every other month to give guidance to the CLH organisation. These people are “directors” or “trustees” of the organisation, as opposed to members or staff.

Who do you want on your board of directors?

People who bring energy, time, and a willingness to learn and contribute. People with skills who can help you with your needs, including legal, marketing, finance, local connections, housing professionals, etc.

What are the best ways to recruit prospective board members?

Social media, local media, university campuses, open evenings, professional associations.

What do you need to do once you recruit new directors?

Welcome them to the organisation by giving them a welcome handbook that includes a copy of the organisation’s rules and policies, a schedule of upcoming board meetings, a list of the board member roles and duties; give them a guide to their duties as board members and ask them to sign a written pledge of what they will do as a board member; give them a chance to introduce themselves to the other board members; make them feel welcome and comfortable asking questions; explain the protections, including the directors and officers insurance, that the organisation has in place to help them; set up a system where board members can mentor one another.

What are some good tips for keeping directors happy and engaged?

Think about how long you want each of your directors to serve on the board. You want the period to be long enough that they have to learn about the organisation and then do good work for you, but not so long that it gets to be a burden. Give thought to the best times and places and frequency to meet as a board. Does it make sense to have a meeting over lunch? Or in the evening? Can directors participate by skype?



What are the legal duties of directors? And what is the best way to explain those duties to new directors?

1. Directors have a duty to ensure that the organisation operates in a way that carries out its charitable purposes.
2. Directors have a duty to serve the best interests of the organisation above any other, competing interests. The most common example here is actual or potential conflicts of interest between the director's own interests and the interests of the charitable organisation. The best way to avoid a conflict of interest problem is for the organisation to adopt a clearly written Conflict of Interest Policy, ask directors to review and sign that policy at the beginning of each year, and make sure that the policy is followed.
3. Directors have a duty to use reasonable care, skill, and diligence when carrying out board duties. For example, when reviewing the financial records for the organisation, directors need to engage with the documents enough to understand them and ask questions when they see something that they don't understand. Sometimes the Treasurer of the board will lead this part of the meeting, but it's important for all directors to follow the conversation and ask questions.

This webpage from The National Council for Volunteer Organisations (NCVO) provides additional detail about these six basic legal duties: <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/governance/board-responsibilities/legal-duties-of-trustees>

Frequently Asked Questions:

- **Can board members get paid for their time?** The answer will be found in your organisation's Rules. Typically the answer is no, board members of charitable organisations serve without pay.
- **Can board members get paid for their out of pocket expenses?** The answer will be found in your organisation's Rules. Typically the answer is yes, board members of charitable organisations can be compensated for their reasonable out of pocket expenses.



Contact Community Led Homes

Web:

CommunityLedHomes.org.uk

Tel:

020 3096 7795

Twitter:

[@CommLedHousing](https://twitter.com/CommLedHousing)

Facebook:

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