

# Solva Care: governance



## Keeping our work on track and doing things the right way

There is a fine balance between making sure that your plans are implemented, kept on track – with the right processes followed – and becoming a complex organisation with cumbersome bureaucratic procedures. Maintaining that balance is always at the forefront of our minds, and we often discuss it to make sure that we get it right in Solva Care. The reason is that we are a grassroots endeavour and we want to protect and continue our grassroots origins. Solva Care was created **by** the community, **for** the community, to **connect** people so that they **all** benefit from being connected. Our volunteers get a lot out of volunteering and those that support and befriend one day may be the very people that need support the next. This is a very different way of thinking and working to those organisations that provide 'services', and help or do things for others.

Nevertheless, our core group of committed and energetic community members, involved in setting up and running Solva Care have been mindful, from the outset, of the need for sound governance. Becoming a charity has focused our minds further, to ensure that we follow the rules and guidance of the Charity Commission of England and Wales<sup>1</sup>. Making sure that your governance arrangements are set up and in order may seem daunting but most of the work is up front and can add to the cement that holds your community together. It can even be social and on occasions fun!

Following is a little taste of our Governance arrangements for our charity that you may find useful.

### The Board of Trustees

Our Board ensures that the aims of Solva Care are successfully implemented. We do this by making plans but leaving some room for flexibility. We also research what the community want, monitor what we do and evaluate the impact of our activities. Solva Care aims to build community strength and resilience by focusing on the maintenance and improvement of the health and

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<sup>1</sup>[gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission](http://gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission)

wellbeing of all. We are still grappling with how to evaluate these big, broad aims, although single issue projects have been much easier to address.

Our Trustees share ultimate responsibility for governing Solva Care and directing how it is managed and run. This involves 6 key duties:

- Ensuring the charity is carrying out its purpose for public benefit
- Complying with the charity's governing document and the law.
- Acting in the charity's best interests
- Ensuring the charity is accountable
- Managing the charity's resource responsibly
- Acting with reasonable care and skill

The role involves understanding the finances of Solva Care and following agreed decision-making principles and processes. Having a good Chair keeps us all on track!

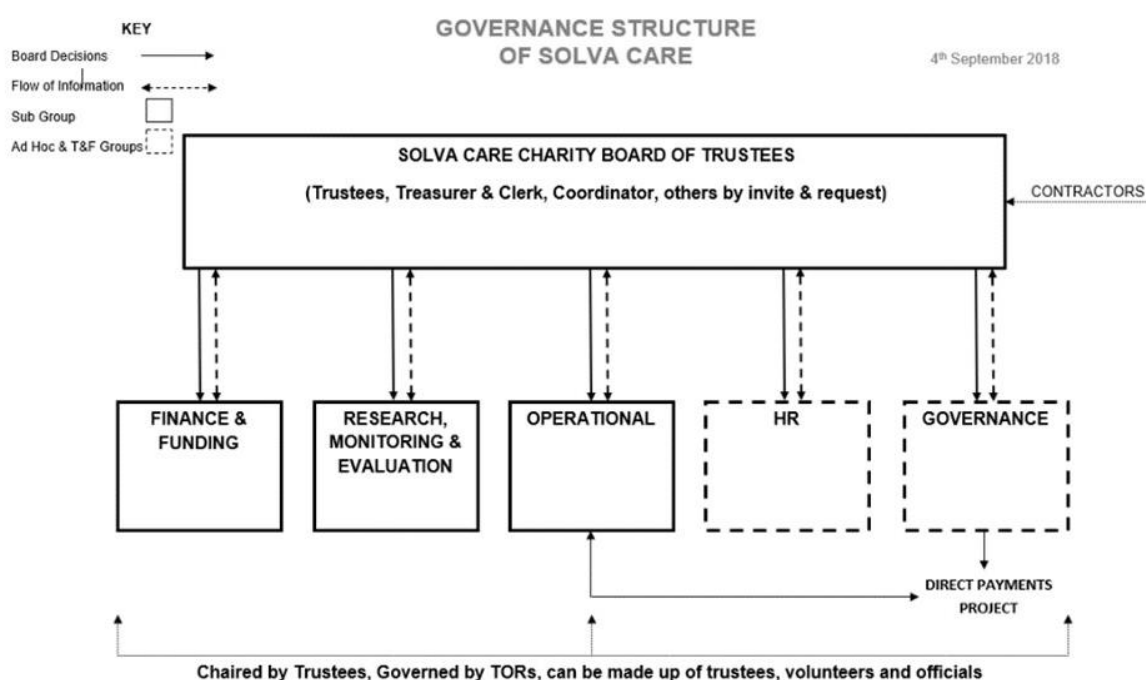
So how do these duties translate into actual tasks for the Board? In keeping with our constitution, which all charities must have, we have defined the key ones as follows:

#### **The Board of Trustees:**

- Develops – with the community and the wider partnership – a medium- and long-term overall plan.
- Directs how the plan is put into action with the resources available.
- Uses existing research on what works best, but also undertakes research and evaluation when necessary.
- Regularly reviews the financial health of the charity and the progress made in delivering the overall plan. Ensures that this is in line with governance arrangements, Charity Commission guidance, and the law.
- Communicates well with the community and external organisations, for joint decision making.
- Acts as an advocate for Solva Care – at all times – and safeguards its grass roots origins.
- Determines the work of the sub and ad hoc groups, and takes advice from them when making decisions.
- Liaises closely with external organisations, including: Solva Community Council; Welsh Government; Pembrokeshire County Council; regional health and social care organisations including Hywel Dda University Health Board; the higher education sector and the third sector.

## Structure

As from January 2019, our Board will meet quarterly – as opposed to monthly – and a newly created subgroup will consider the details of what we do, and how to achieve our aims. The final name of the new 'operational' subgroup has yet to be decided. The revised structure was decided on following a review of our governance arrangements and the need to allow more time at Board meetings for discussion of strategic matters. The other subgroups are Finance and Funding, and Research, Monitoring and Evaluation. We also have time-limited groups taking on certain tasks on a one-off or occasional basis. The diagram below indicates the structure.



## Appointment of Trustees

We have been fortunate in that we have not been short of local people interested in joining our Board. We also have a dedicated place for a Community Council representative. It is really helpful that our Trustees have many skills that have been essential to our success, but sometimes we need to fill gaps by bringing in the experts e.g. to develop our website, and undertake research where an external view of what we do is useful.

We now have a system of appointing new Trustees by interview involving the Chair and a maximum of three Trustees who are already on the Board. The vacancies are advertised locally, and applicants are asked to submit an expression of interest (EOI). The appointments are for two years in the first

instance, in accordance with Charity Commission guidance, then an additional 2 or 3 years, as agreed with the appointed Trustee.

The Chair – a key role – will be voted in at the AGM following the submission of EOIs to the Board of Trustees. The period of office will be for two years with a possibility for re-election if the Board is satisfied with the Chair's performance. The same process is followed for the Vice-chair.



## Meetings and making decisions

- Our sub-groups and ad hoc groups are very active, and the meetings often serve as social gatherings! Their membership is drawn from the community, paid workers and Trustees. They are chaired by Trustees, and are run very flexibly, with meetings held as and when needed. All the subgroups report to the main Board.
- Importantly, anyone from the community can attend our Board meetings either as an observer or to take an active part in discussions. We are looking for ways to encourage such participation and will use our village newsletter as the Community Council already does successfully.

- For reasons of continuity, we require regular attendance by Trustees. If more than two meetings are missed per year, the Trustee may be asked by the Chair to explain the absences, and if appropriate, resign. Luckily, we have never had to enforce such a rule.
- Decisions are made by consensus or by voting with 70% Trustee attendance required to be quorate. Where voting numbers are equal, the Chair has the casting vote.
- The secretariat of the Board is provided by our Clerk, who is paid on an hourly rate. This role is very important as he coordinates meetings, circulates papers seven days beforehand and makes sure that Trustees are updated with information. He also helps with accountability, the production by the Board of our annual report and meeting any separate reporting requirements of our funders.
- Minutes of decisions taken at meetings are kept and circulated to absent members as soon as possible. Although not a requirement of Board of Trustees, we intend to put our minutes on our website in full. They are already available in hard copy on request.
- No major decisions are made at a meeting unless at least 70% of the Trustees are present and no meeting is held unless six of the nine Trustees are present. Three years on and we have never had to cancel a meeting for this reason.

