

# Giving Leadership, Giving Time

Voluntary Management Committees

Governance of the  
Voluntary & Community Sector  
in Northern Ireland  
Research Report 2015





### About the VSB Foundation

In 2003/4 with funding from Atlantic Philanthropies VSB commissioned research on the need for independent funders in Northern Ireland, one of the out workings was the creation of the VSB Foundation. In 2010 Volunteer Now was created as the result of the successful merger of the majority of local Volunteer Centres in Northern Ireland (including VSB) and the Volunteer Development Agency.

The VSB Foundation remained as a small independent philanthropic organisation with a remit to support the voluntary and community sector. The Foundation's mission is to promote social change through strategic interventions that stimulate active engagement, participation and citizenship. A key objective is "to research, evaluate and facilitate participation that enables individuals to become involved in voluntary activity" in this context exploring the governance role undertaken by volunteers is of vital importance to the resilience and sustainability of the sector.

**[www.vsb.org.uk](http://www.vsb.org.uk)**



### About Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd

Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd supports the work and activities of the charity, Volunteer Now. Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd delivers a comprehensive range of training and capacity building programmes, provides assessment against quality standards, and all forms of bespoke support to volunteer-involving organisations. The organisation's volunteering knowledge also enables it to provide expert consultation and research services.

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### Acknowledgement

Thanks to all the management committee members and organisations who took time to complete the research surveys and participate in the focus groups. The success of the project was always dependent on your willingness to engage and share your views.



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## Foreword

A vibrant voluntary and community sector is fundamental to a healthy civil society. Those who govern the organisations within the sector, namely the Trustees, bear a heavy responsibility, as illustrated by the registration requirements of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland in pursuit of its vision for ‘a dynamic and well governed charities sector’. Moreover, the responsibilities of Trustees have become more onerous in recent years as many charities have faced the twin and inter-related challenges of reductions in income (not least from public sector sources) and a growing need for help from individuals adversely affected by the government’s austerity programmes.

Against this backcloth, it was timely for the VSB Foundation to commission Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd to undertake a major research project into the governance of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland, building on research undertaken in 2002/03. The focus of the project was to consider for 2015 the governance role and characteristics, including leadership and accountability, of those who serve in a voluntary capacity as Trustees on Management Boards and Committees.

The research confirms the importance of addressing not only the age imbalance in the membership of Boards and Committees, with 75% of members aged over 45, but also the gender imbalance, with chairpersons, vice chairpersons and treasurers being mainly male and secretaries mainly female, despite more women serving as members. Importantly, the research also highlights good practice in charity governance and reinforces the guidance already available from the Charity Commission and such organisations as Volunteer Now and NICVA.

I was privileged to chair the Advisory Group for the conduct of the research. Its members represented a broad cross section of representation from the sector and government who readily shared their knowledge and expertise. On behalf of Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd, I am grateful to them for their guidance and support.

It is the hope of the Advisory Group that the evidence in this report will inform the sector, funders, policy makers and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland regarding governance issues that relate to the current and future accountability of the sector.

### **John Hunter**

Chairperson, Governance Research Advisory Group



# Introduction

The health & wellbeing of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is dependent on the volunteers who give time to become members of Management Committees/Trustees. Their volunteer role is pivotal in providing the leadership and accountability for all of the work and activities undertaken by thousands of organisations.

The last major study of the governance role of voluntary management committees in Northern Ireland was undertaken in 2003 and a report published 'Committee Matters: An assessment of the characteristics, training needs and governance role of voluntary management committees in Northern Ireland'. This research was commissioned by the then Volunteer Development Agency and the research was undertaken by the NICVA research Unit.

Given the change in charity legislation, the establishment of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and the many challenges facing organisations and groups across the voluntary and community sector, the VSB Foundation considered it was timely to undertake a comprehensive research project that involves asking Committee Members/Trustees and organisations their views.

The VSB Foundation commissioned Volunteer Now Enterprises Ltd to undertake research into the governance of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.

The 2015 research set out to:

- Revisit the 2003 research findings of Committee Matters and compare with what governance of the voluntary and community sector looks like in 2015.
- Consider if the needs of and issues facing Management Committee members/Trustees have changed over the last decade.

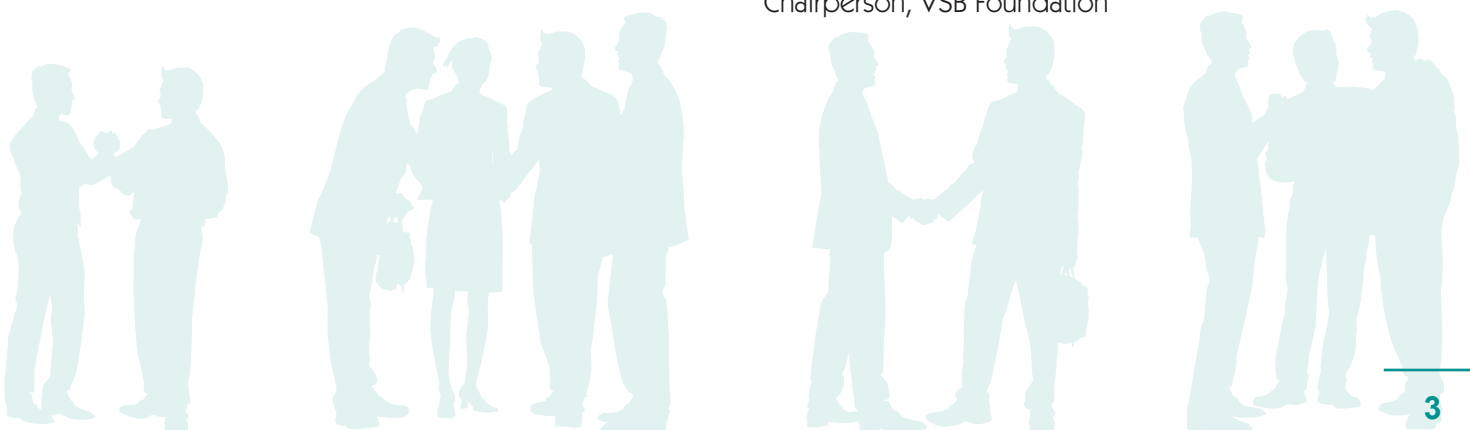
The research focuses attention on the role of Management Committees/Trustee Boards and the findings will inform the sector, funders, policy makers and the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland regarding important governance issues that relate to the current and future sustainability of the sector.

The research project commenced in July 2015 with the establishment of a Research Advisory Group chaired by John Hunter (Chairperson of the Corrymeela Council) and with representation from VSB Foundation, Department for Social Development, Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, NICVA, Developing Governance Group (Youthnet), CO3, University of Ulster, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, NI Sports Forum, Youth Council for Northern Ireland, Rural Community Network, the Fermanagh Trust and Volunteer Now.

As Chairperson of the VSB Foundation I would like to thank the Advisory Group for their valuable input and insight in support of this important and timely research project. Thanks are also due to the staff of Volunteer Now Enterprises Limited for conducting the research and writing the report.

**Brian Gibson**

Chairperson, VSB Foundation



# 1. Context

This research is about leadership within the voluntary and community sector, 'every voluntary and community organisation is led and controlled by a management committee which ensures delivery of its objects, sets its strategic direction and upholds its values'. Code of Good Governance NI. The leaders are all volunteers giving their time to support, manage and develop the sector's activities and services in Northern Ireland. Estimated at over 33,000 volunteers this is a large people resource and deserves the time and attention that this research report 'Giving Time, Giving Leadership' provides.

While the most commonly used term is Management Committee, the committee can also be called Board of Directors, Board of Trustees or Executive Committee. The governing document of the organisation will also be determined by its legal structure and this may be, for example, a company limited by guarantee, a charity or an unincorporated association. What the committee does is referred to as governance in relation to its responsibility and accountability duties. The duties of committees that are either a charity and/or a company limited by guarantee are defined in law and this makes how and what members of management committees do a legal requirement. All of this seems complex and for many volunteers on management committees that is exactly what it is, complex and a challenge to understand and to get it right.

The establishment of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has been a 'game changer'. The Commission is a regulatory body and the emphasis is more clearly and publicly on the role and function of charity trustees as accountable for the organisation and all of its activities. There is a key focus on governance practice and performance. There is also an increasing focus on governance from funders and the general public with the media picking up on stories of poor management in charities that highlights a lack of proper governance oversight and accountability.

Currently the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland is also experiencing challenges in relation to the financial austerity associated with public expenditure. It is evident that this financial environment is not going to change anytime soon. The emphasis is on change, organisations needing to look at what they do and how they do it. The terms partnership, collaboration, mergers, entrepreneurship, enterprise are all discussed as part of the change agenda.

These challenging times require effective and strong leadership. This leadership needs to be found within the management committees of organisations. Good governance is about upholding values, keeping to mission, setting strategic direction and ensuring effective financial and operational management. The well being of an organisation is dependent on the commitment and competence of its management committee. In turn good governance is vitally important to delivering a resilient and sustainable voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland.



## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Definitions

To support an agreed understanding of what was meant by 'governance' and the 'voluntary and community sector' the following definitions were used.

'Governance is about leadership and ensuring that an organisation is effectively and properly run. It has been defined as 'the systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, effectiveness, supervision and accountability of an organisation.' (Code of Good Governance NI)

'The voluntary sector which is defined as encompassing organisations, formal or informal, which meet the following criteria:

- informal or formal (i.e. with or without an adopted governing document)
- independent (not controlled by a for profit organisation or the state; voluntary organisations must have a majority of nonstatutory bodies, appointees or representatives on its board of trustees and a majority of non statutory members)
- self governing
- non profit distributing
- benefits from a meaningful degree of philanthropy i.e. gifts in kind or of time (e.g. volunteers, non paid trustees)
- established for public benefit

This definition includes most charities (for exceptions see below); housing associations; community groups, informal and formal; selfhelp and mutual aid groups; sports groups with community benefit; religious groups with social benefit; campaigning non political groups; community businesses; credit unions.)

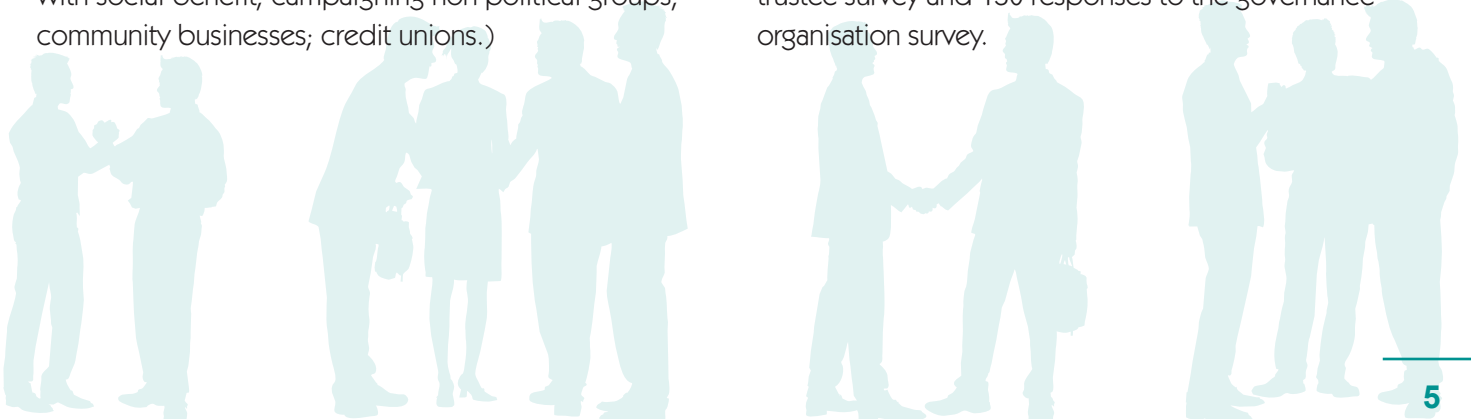
Charities which are not included are: school trust funds, places of worship promoting and supporting religion, statutory charities, statutory museums, independent further education colleges, professional associations, charitable independent schools, charitable quasi autonomous nongovernmental organisations and voluntary aided schools.' (Collis, B (2003) Wales Voluntary Sector Almanac, Cardiff: Wales Council for Voluntary Action)

### 2.2 Surveys and Focus Groups

To facilitate a comparison of trends with the findings of the 2003 Committee Matters governance research two surveys were created (a governance trustee survey and a governance organisation survey) using as a base the questions from 2003 and adding some additional questions for 2015 including about the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The methodology took into account resource implications and the questionnaires were compiled on Survey Monkey and disseminated using the web sites and/or contact databases of the Advisory Group organisations and other key infrastructure networks to access committee members and organisations. To add greater understanding to the results from the survey material a series of six focus groups were organised to take place across Northern Ireland (Belfast, Broughshane, Cookstown, L'Derry and Newry). The focus groups were attended by individuals who volunteer their time to sit on management committees; 31 participants attended the focus groups.

### 2.3 Survey Respondents

In total there were 621 responses to the governance trustee survey and 130 responses to the governance organisation survey.



The respondents to the trustee survey were from every local council area in Northern Ireland and they were involved with a range of organisations. There was a good geographic spread of organisations operating throughout all areas of Northern Ireland. A very small number of organisations (2%) covered the UK or the Republic of Ireland. The spread of organisations by income level is indicative of the diversity across the voluntary & community sector. The majority of organisations (77%) had an annual income of less than £250,000 (35% less than £10,000; 30% between £10,000 and £100,000 and 12% between £100,000 and £250,000). 23% of organisations had an annual income of over £250,000, of these 19% had an annual income between £250,000 and £3million while 4% of organisations had an income of more than £3million.

Similarly the respondents to the organisation survey were from a useful spread of size, the majority (55%) having an income of less than £100,000 with 11% having an income of over £1million. The organisations operated across all areas of Northern Ireland with a small number operating in the Republic of Ireland and the UK. Employment of staff was almost entirely within organisations with an income of more than £10,000. The majority of organisations (41%) employed no full time staff. 36% employed 1 – 5 staff, 20% employed 6 – 60 staff and 3% employed between 91 and up to 500 staff. Organisations who were employers generally employed both full time and part time staff. Organisations were also asked to identify the number of volunteers involved (excluding management committee members). 94% of the organisations involved volunteers. The majority (60%) involved between 1 and 20 volunteers; 22% involved 21 to 100; 7% involved 101 to 500; 5% involved 500+ volunteers.

In relation to areas of work there was a spread across all of the survey topics listed, with the majority of trustee respondents indicating that the topic which best described the work of their organisation was community development (36%) followed by children and young people (19%), health and well being (18%), education and training (17%), older people (16%), young people (15%), children and families (15%), disability (11%). It is important to note that when taken together children, young people and families become one of the largest topic areas.

Respondents to the organisation survey were also asked to identify a sub sector that best described their work. The majority were involved with three closely linked themes: children and families/children and young people/young people (21%). The balance breakdown as follows: 16% were involved with community development; 11% sport and 10% the arts; 8% disability; the rest ranged from older people; support for the voluntary and community sector; women; faith based; community relations and housing. The main beneficiaries were children and young people (32%); the general public (26%); adults (15%); people with a disability (10%); older people (9%); women (6%); men (2%).

The responses from both the trustee and organisation surveys closely mirror the NICVA State of the Sector findings that community development and children and families are very much to the fore in terms of sub sectors that voluntary & community sector organisations are working in. The main beneficiaries were children and young people, followed by the general public and older people. This again mirrors the NICVA State of the Sector findings. (NICVA State of the Sector VI, 2012).





### 3. Findings

In relation to committee terminology while a comparison with 2003 shows a greater usage of the terms Board of Directors and Board of Trustees the most commonly used term for the committee remains Management Committee and this is the terminology that will be used throughout the presentation of the 2015 findings.

Terminology	
Board of Trustees	16%
Board of Directors	29%
Board of Governors	1%
Management Committee	47%
Executive Committee	6%
Governance Board	1%

Findings from both trustee and organisational surveys and the focus groups are presented as integrated information under key themes with reference made, as appropriate, to the 2003 Committee Matters research. It should be noted that those percentages 50%+ have been rounded up and those below 50% rounded down. In some instances totals may not add up due to rounding or multiple responses.

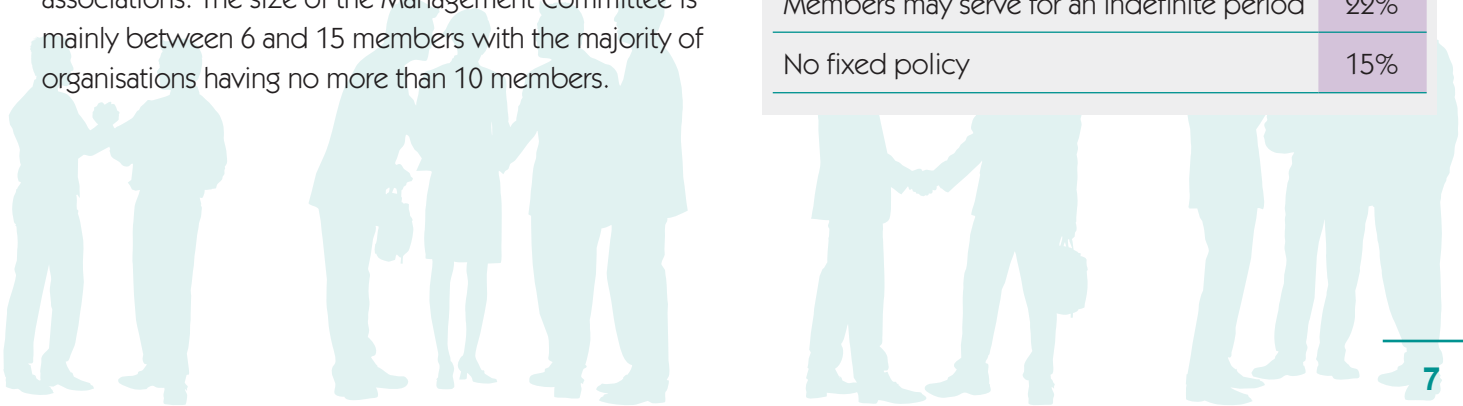
#### 3.1 Management Committee Structures

The majority of organisations were either registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland or awaiting registration; a substantive number, between 33% and 54%, across both surveys were companies limited by guarantee and less than 13% were unincorporated associations. The size of the Management Committee is mainly between 6 and 15 members with the majority of organisations having no more than 10 members.

The majority of committees (71%) meet between five and ten times a year. 50% of the organisations who responded to the survey indicated their management committees have formal sub committees. These include finance (71%); personnel (47%); future planning (39%). The other (32%) included a diverse range however a number of organisations referenced audit, compliance and risk committees, policy, fundraising and programme committees. Those organisations with sub committees are more likely to have an income of over £250,000.

Organisations were asked how long is a term of office for individual committee members, the majority (35%) indicated that committee members serve a maximum of one year (re-elected each year); 28% serve between periods of from two to six years and then retire, the most common term being three years; 22% indicate their committee members may serve for an indefinite period and 15% of organisations have no fixed policy.

Terms of office	
Serves a maximum of one year (re-elected each year)	35%
Serves for a period of two years and retires	4%
Serves for a period of three years and retires	13%
Serves for a period of four years and retires	4%
Serves for a period of five years and retires	1%
Serves for a period of six years and retires	4%
Serves for a period of eight years and retires	0%
Serves for a period of 10 years and retires	0%
Members may serve for an indefinite period	22%
No fixed policy	15%



### Comparison with 2003

In 2003 the most commonly used term to describe an organisation's governing body was management committee. On average the size of management committees was nine members, organisations held nine committee meetings a year with 85% of organisations stating that their average attendance included more than half their committee members. 37% serve on committees where they are elected every year while 28% of committee members are permitted to serve for an indefinite period. 44% of organisations had some form of formal sub committees.

The situation in 2015 is similar in relation to terminology, terms of office, average size and number of committee meetings a year. There are some changes in that the percentage of organisations whose committee members can serve for an indefinite period has reduced and the number of organisations with formal sub committees as part of their governance structure has increased. However in relation to sub committees they are still mostly used by organisations with higher incomes.

### 3.2 Management Committee Composition

In relation to the trustee governance survey 52% of respondents were female and 47% were male. The organisational survey concurs that while the gender majority is female, with regard to the gender of office bearers the majority of chairpersons, vice chairpersons and treasurers are male, while the majority of secretaries are female.

#### Gender

Male	47%
Female	52%
Transgendered	0%
Prefer not to say	1%

Responses were received from a wide age range 18 – 75+ years with the majority of respondents (53%) within the 45 – 64 age group with 75% being aged 45 and over. 24% were between 25 and 44 years. While only two management committee member respondents were aged between 18 and 25 years the organisational survey indicated that 2% of committee members were in that age range.

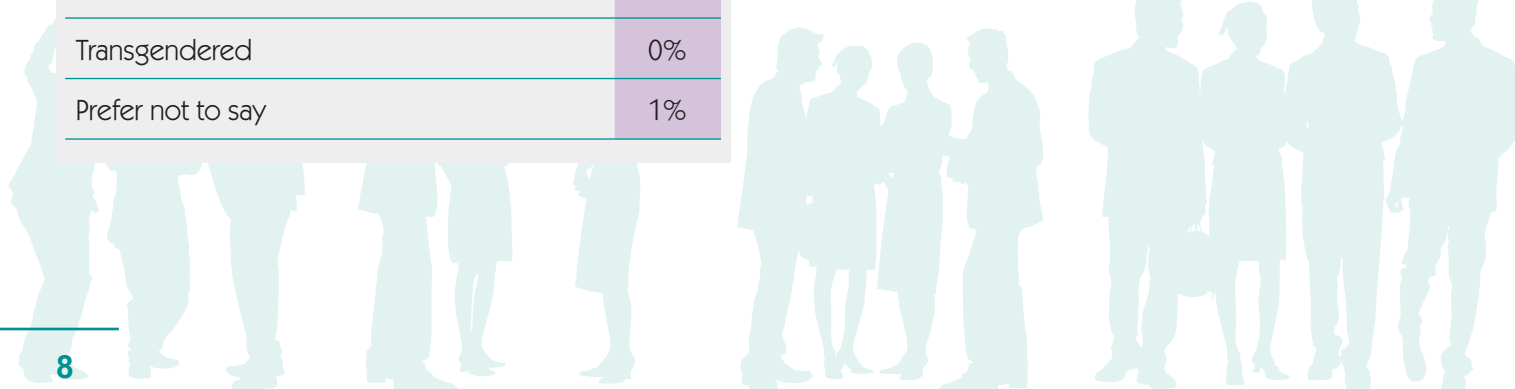
#### Age range

16-17 years old	0%
18-24 years old	0%
25-44 years old	24%
45-64 years old	53%
65-74 years old	18%
75+ years old	3%
Prefer not to say	0%

97% described their ethnic origin as white and 6% indicated they were registered as disabled. 60% were employed, 33% were retired, 6% were unemployed and 1% were students.

#### Registered disabled

Yes	6%
No	92%
Prefer not to say	2%



**Ethnic background**

African	1%
Irish Traveller	0%
Bangladeshi	0%
Pakistani	0%
Chinese	0%
White	97%
Indian	0%
Mixed ethnic group	0%
Prefer not to say	2%

**3.3 Motivation and Time Commitment of Committee Members**

In 2015 the motivations for joining a management committee are because individuals are committed to the cause of the organisation (95%); they want to be more involved in their community (66%), through a sense of duty (65%); they work in the particular field (48%); they have been personally affected by the organisation’s work (40%); they know a board member (20%); or they are representing another organisation (15%).

**Reasons for becoming a committee member**

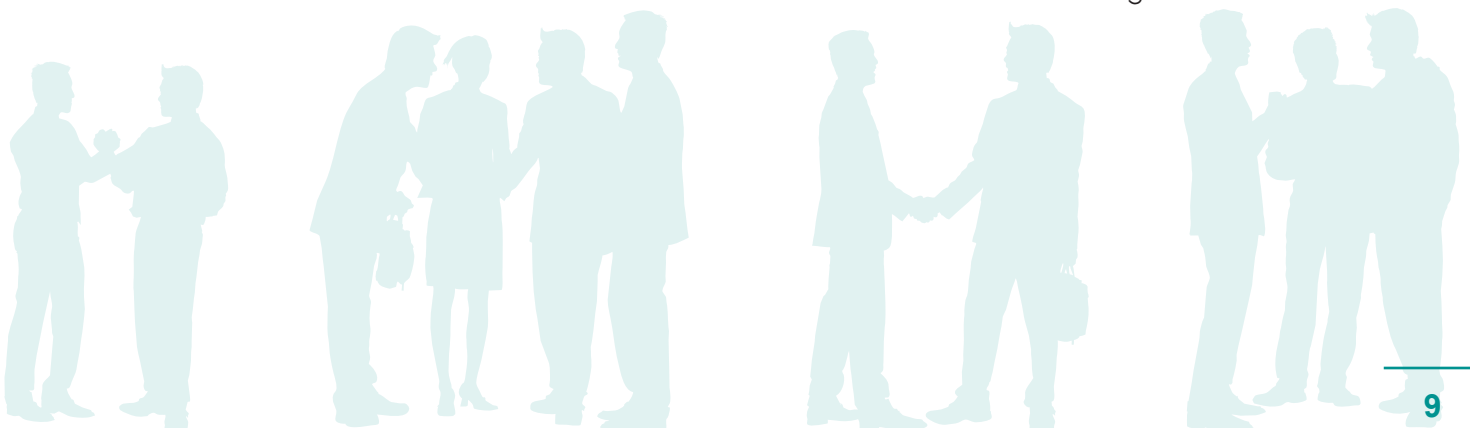
	Very relevant
Committed to the cause of the organisation	95%
A sense of duty	65%
Work in the particular field	48%
Wanted to be more involved in my community	66%
Knew a board member	20%
Personally affected by the organisation’s work	40%
Representing another organisation	15%

Organisations were asked if they monitored the community background of their committee members, 61% indicated they did not, while 39% indicated they did monitor community background.

**Comparison with 2003**

In 2003 54% of respondents were female; 66% were aged 45 and over; and 99% were white. The majority of committee members were female, chairpersons, vice chairpersons and treasurers were male and secretaries were female. It is also evident that substantively more organisations monitor the perceived religious background of their management committee members, in 2003 it was 28%, in 2015 61%. The key similarity with 2003 is that management committees remain mostly comprised of individuals who are female, white and aged between 45-64 years old.

The majority of individuals (41%) had served on their current management committee between 1 & 5 years; 24% had served between 6 & 10 years and 27% had served over 11 years with 4% of these having served 25 years+. 51% of respondents also indicated that they were a member of other management committees.



### Length of service

Less than 1 year	8%
1 to 2 years	17%
3 to 5 years	24%
6 to 10 years	24%
11 to 25 years	23%
Over 25 years	4%

Organisations indicate that the majority of committee members involved volunteer their own time (93%) In 2015 a new question was asked about the time commitment in undertaking committee duties. The responses indicate that volunteers on management committees are giving a large number of hours. 53% are giving between 8 and 16 hours+ a month and 44% are giving 1-7 hours a month. A third of respondents (33%) are giving 16 hours+ a month, e.g. using 16 hours as the minimum this amounts to 3,120 hours a month, 37,440 hours a year for those 195 individuals.

### Time commitment for committee duties

0-1 hours a month	2%
1-2 hours a month	9%
3-4 hours a month	18%
5-7 hours a month	17%
8-15 hours a month	20%
16+ hours a month	33%

### Comparison with 2003

Motivations in 2015 are very similar to those in 2003, the two most important and relevant reasons to join a management committee are because individuals are committed to the cause of the organisation and/or they want to be more involved in their community.

In 2003 the research identified that 81% of individuals serve on a management committee in their own time. The majority of committee members(53%) had served on their committee between 1 & 5 years, interestingly there is a higher number of individuals serving 11years+ in 2015 (27%) than in 2003 (13%). 50% had also indicated they were a member of more than one management committee. The trend remains for individuals to make a long term commitment to their management committee role and to be on more than one committee.

### 3.4 Satisfaction Levels of Committee Members

Management committee members who completed the survey were asked about the levels of satisfaction associated with certain areas of their work. Respondents were very satisfied/satisfied in relation to the following areas – the organisation stands for a worthwhile cause (99%), ensuring the organisation meets the needs of its members/community (97%), like to see the organisation develop (97%), providing help/guidance in my own area of expertise (91%), having contact with a variety of different people (90%) and engaging in debates on policy formulation (70%).



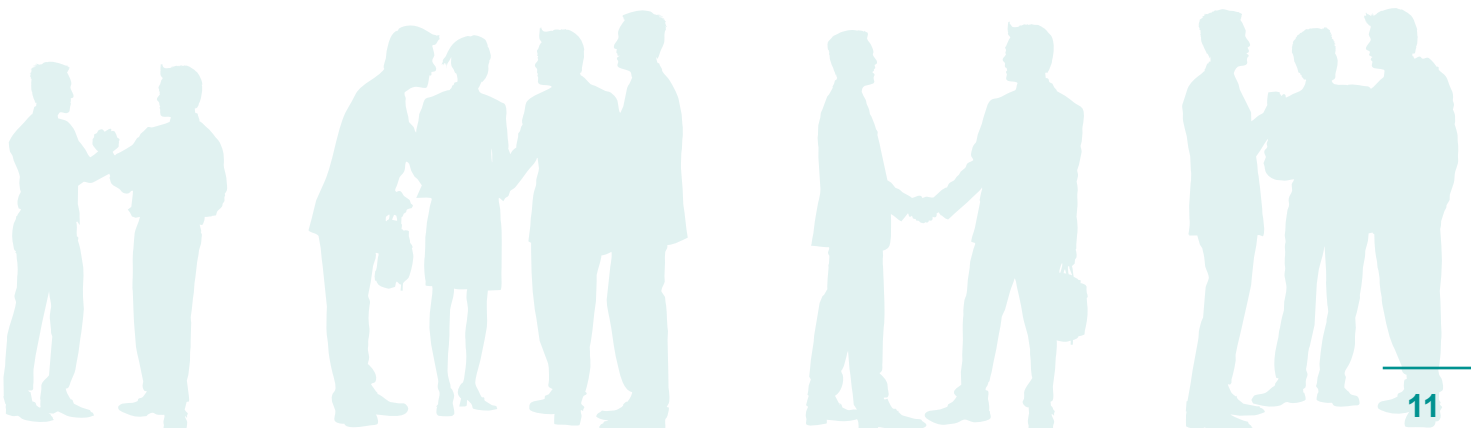
### Level of satisfaction

	Very satisfied/ Satisfied
The organisation stands for a worthwhile cause	99%
Like to see the organisation develop	97%
Ensuring the organisation meets the needs of its members/community	97%
Providing help/guidance in my own area of expertise	91%
Having contact with a variety of different people	90%
Engaging in debates on policy formulation	70%

The survey also included a list of options in relation to the things that could cause committee members to become dissatisfied. Respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the following, in rank order, could cause dissatisfaction; reduced/inadequate funding for the organisation, bureaucracy, insufficient time to do tasks, not being able to do everything that is needed, and lack of support from other committee members.

### Level of dissatisfaction

	Strongly agree	Agree
Insufficient time to do tasks	31%	48%
Bureaucracy	47%	35%
Lack of support from other committee members	35%	41%
Reduced/inadequate funding for organisation	45%	40%
Not being able to do everything that is needed	31%	47%
Poorly organised meetings (no agenda, etc)	38%	29%
Large amounts of information to be digested	24%	40%
Conflict between staff and members	29%	30%
Lack of training and guidance in relation to my role	18%	39%
Lack of contribution from other committee members	29%	39%



### Comparison with 2003

The 2003 satisfaction derived from serving on management committees was attributed to exactly the same factors and ranking as in 2015. Reasons for dissatisfaction were also similar, one of the main reasons being 'reduced/inadequate funding for the organisation'. Other factors high on the list of dissatisfaction are 'bureaucracy', 'not being able to do everything that is needed' and 'insufficient time to do tasks'.

### 3.5 Recruitment of Committee Members

The majority are elected by the membership (63%); 59% are nominated/co-opted by the current committee; 8% are appointed by virtue of a position held in another organisation; 3% are appointed by another body/agency; and 11% of organisations have no formal selection process. The majority of those without a selection process are organisations with an income of less than £10,000.

Comments from individual respondents also indicate usage of open recruitment and services such as Arts and Business Board Bank. The majority of organisations (45%), recruit committee members on an annual basis, these are mostly organisations with an income of less than £500,000; 37% recruit when the need arises or when vacancies occur; 11% recruit every 2-5 years, these are mostly organisations with an income of more than £500,000; and 6% are always/constantly recruiting.

### Recruitment process

Elected (by membership/community)	63%
Nominated/co-opted by current committee	59%
Appointed by another body/agency	3%
Appointed by virtue of a position held in another organisation	8%
No formal selection process	11%

### Recruitment process frequency

Twice a year	0%
Annually	45%
Every 2-5 years	11%
As vacancies occur	15%
When the need arises	22%
Always/constantly	6%
Rarely need to/hardly ever	0%
Never/don't need to	1%

75% of organisations indicate they prepare for the recruitment of new committee members with 68% providing role descriptions; 59% carrying out a skills audit of existing members; 47% using recruitment processes such as application form/references/interviews; and 12% using a dedicated recruitment committee. A few individual comments indicate some organisations prepare informally through informal discussion or personal approaches to potential committee members.



A sizeable number of organisations (25%) do not make any preparation for the recruitment of new committee members, the majority of these organisations have an income of less than £100,000.

Organisations were asked whether they faced any difficulties when recruiting new committee members. 52% indicated they had difficulties sometimes; 23% always had difficulties; 18% never had any difficulties and 7% didn't know. In relation to whether the difficulties were worse than compared to five years ago the majority of organisations (53%) indicated they were the same 18% indicated it was worse; 11% indicated it was easier and 19% didn't know.

**Recruitment difficulties compared to 5 years ago**

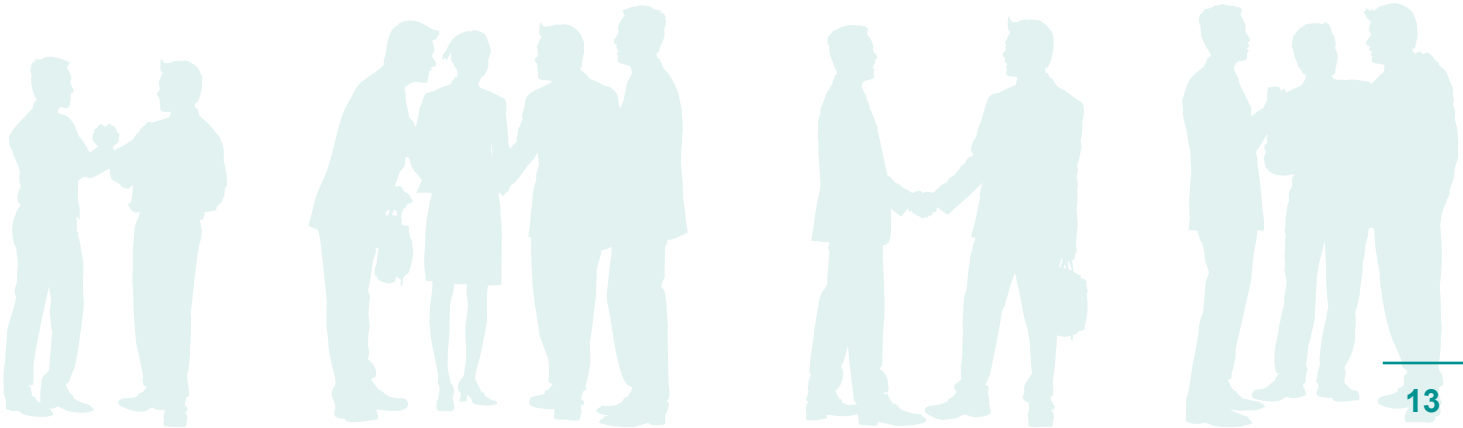
Same	53%
Worse	18%
Easier	11%
Do not know	19%

The main reasons for difficulties in rank order of very difficult/difficult included finding people to make the commitment; finding younger people; finding people who have the skills and experience; people do not want the responsibility; shortage of applicants; and finding people who are interested.

**Level of difficulty recruiting new members**

	Very difficult/ Difficult
Shortage of applicants	60%
Finding people to make the commitment	75%
Finding people who have the skills and experience	66%
People do not want the responsibility	63%
Finding people who are interested	56%
Finding younger people	68%

The main reasons why organisations have not had any difficulties in rank order of very relevant/relevant includes people are interested in our aims and values; good reputation of charity/organisation; we have long serving committee members; we are a small group/organisation; suitable/high calibre experienced people available; small duties involved; it is a matter of prestige/honour to be a committee member; appointments are made through local authorities.



### Reasons for no recruitment difficulties

	Very relevant	Relevant
People are interested in our aims and values	38%	52%
We are a small group/organisation	22%	39%
Members are always willing to join	11%	29%
Large number/pool of people to choose from	4%	17%
Small duties involved	4%	35%
Appointments are made through local authorities	0%	6%
We have long serving committee members	28%	49%
Suitable/high calibre experienced people available	11%	44%
It is a matter of prestige/honour to be a committee member	12%	24%
Good reputation of charity/organisation	40%	44%

Organisations indicated they use a variety of methods when seeking to attract new committee members. The top five being word of mouth/personal recommendation (87%); asking/approaching suitable people (76%); personal contact with users/members (62%); networking with organisations (4%); and asking members/people already involved in the organisation (62%).

The majority of organisations (55%) indicated that they strongly agree/agree that a central register of individuals willing to serve on a management committee would assist with recruitment.

### Comparison with 2003

In 2003 the research identified that 54% of organisations have an election where their members or the community decide on committee members while 7% of organisations have no formal processes in place. 62% of organisations recruited on an annual basis. 59% of organisations reported that they sometimes experience difficulties recruiting new members and the most common method of recruitment was through word of mouth/personal recommendation. 53% of organisations believed that a central register of individuals willing to serve on a management committee would assist in recruitment.

While there have been no significant changes in appointment processes there are some differences between 2003 and 2015. The number of committee members elected by the membership/community has increased. The number of organisations without any formal selection process has also increased.

In 2003 and 2015 over fifty percent of organisations experience difficulties with recruitment; a small decrease in 2015. The most common method of recruitment remains word of mouth/personal recommendation and the majority of organisations still believe that a central register of individuals willing to serve on a management committee would assist with recruitment.





### 3.6 Induction, Training and Support for Committee Members

In 2015, 49% of individual management committee respondents indicated they had been provided with an induction when they were appointed/elected to the management committee.

Management committee induction	
Yes	49%
No	45%
Don't know/not sure	6%

Management committee members involved with organisations with an income over £100,000 are much more likely to have received an induction. The majority of respondents indicated that the main topic covered was responsibilities of committee members (86%), followed by the role of committee members (83%), the constitution or governing document and the organisation (79%), the legal structure or legal requirements (53%) and equal opportunities (55%). 45% of respondents did not receive an induction and 6% didn't know/were not sure.

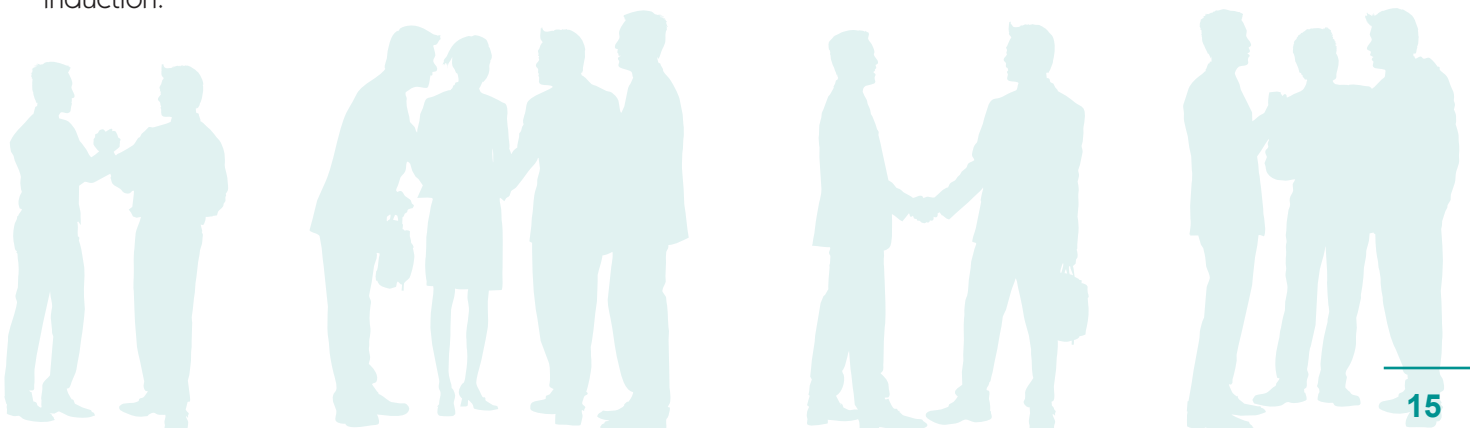
The organisational survey responses indicate that 72% of organisations provided an induction for new management committee members. The key areas covered by induction include responsibilities of committee members/role of committee members/expectations; governing document/legal structures & requirements; the organisation itself and equal opportunities. Additional comments referred to child protection & safeguarding as a topic included as part of induction.

72% of organisations stated they provided information and/or training for committee members. The most used methodology was through printed material; personal briefing by other committee members and/or staff; training workshops/training & induction; a number of organisations use attendance at external courses and a very small minority use online provision. Additional comments referred to external trainers being used, UK wide organisations providing local input and services from support organisations such as Arts and Business.

The survey asked individuals if they had received any training in their role as a management committee member. 57% of respondents indicated that they had received training.

Management committee training	
Yes	57%
No	43%

Management committee members are more likely to have received training in organisations with an income of more than £100,000. While only a minority of respondents were dissatisfied with previous training/support the majority were satisfied rather than very satisfied. The five training/support topics received by most respondents were committee roles and responsibilities, governance, equal opportunities, management skills and fundraising.



A question was posed regarding what type or provision of support/advice would be most suitable. A range of options were listed and these ranked in order of preference were, an updateable handbook, access to professional advice, the provision of training/support on specific topics, access to resource materials, access to a network of fellow committee members, access to a query helpline and open learning/correspondence courses.

Type of support/advice		
	Very suitable	Suitable
Updateable handbook of current good practice	45%	37%
Training/support on specific topics	39%	48%
Access to resource materials	35%	49%
Access to professional advice	40%	45%
Access to a network of fellow committee members	27%	49%
Access to a query helpline	22%	41%
Open learning/correspondence courses	20%	34%

Management committee members were also asked what training/support on specific topics would be important to them. The three top very relevant topics were governance, committee roles & responsibilities and planning (strategic development). The top three relevant topics were committee roles & responsibilities, planning (strategic development) and fundraising.

### Relevance of training/support

	Very relevant	Relevant
Legal responsibilities/issues	30%	46%
Finance management/ investments	30%	44%
Committee roles and responsibilities	34%	44%
Personnel or employment issues	23%	40%
Management of day to day activities	18%	34%
Developing policy issues	22%	48%
Fundraising	33%	44%
Selection and recruitment	19%	33%
Managing/chairing meetings	26%	42%
Planning (strategic development)	34%	44%
Equal opportunities	18%	39%
Governance	36%	39%

Individuals were asked about access to existing support on governance/their role as a management committee member. Respondents indicated they had used the code of good governance publication (48%), diy committee guide website (19%), governance health check (26%), Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (65%), NICVA website (55%), NICVA Governance support service (27%), other voluntary & community sector support organisations (60%) e.g. CO3; Youthnet; Community Change; Volunteer Now; Rural Community Network; NI Sports Forum; Community Networks, public sector support (38%) e.g. Arts Council; Youth Council NI; local Councils.



### Governance resources

The Code of Good Governance publication	48%
www.diycommitteeguide.org website	19%
Governance health check	26%
Charity Commission for Northern Ireland	65%
NICVA website	55%
NICVA governance support service	27%
Other voluntary & community Sector support organisation e.g. CO3; Youthnet; Community Change; Volunteer Now; Rural Community Network; NI Sports Forum; Community Networks	60%
Public sector support e.g. Arts Council; Sport NI; Youth Council; local Councils	38%

Organisations were given the same examples of external resources of information and support and they agreed with the management committee member response in rank order of most used, NICVA website and governance support service; Charity Commission for Northern Ireland; other voluntary & community support organisations; the Code of Good Governance publication; governance health check; statutory sector support; www.diycommitteeguide.org website.

### Comparison with 2003

In 2003 35% of organisations operated a formal induction process for new committee members and this has greatly increased in 2015 to 72%. In 2003 the pattern of induction topics covered was similar with the top three being responsibilities of committee members, the role of committee members, the organisation and the constitution or governing document. Induction is one of the key good practice procedures when recruiting/appointing management committee members.

In 2015 it remains an issue of concern that there are a substantive number of committee members who have not been provided with an induction.

In 2003 top of the satisfaction list for training was 'committee roles & responsibilities' and 'management skills'. In 2015 the most very satisfied/satisfied response was also for 'committee roles & responsibilities' followed by 'governance' and then 'management skills', however it must be noted that governance was not an option on the 2003 list.

### 3.7 Skills of Committee Members

Committee members were asked to identify the specific skills/tasks they are expected to bring/perform in relation to their current management committee. The top seven ranking very relevant were knowledge of relevant work, enthusiasm/energy, managerial skills, knowledge of the local community, to take a particular post i.e. chairperson, governance skills and planning/policy making. The top seven ranked as relevant were financial skills, personnel, public relations, planning/policy making, managerial skills, enthusiasm/energy and knowledge of the local community.



### Relevance of specific skills/tasks

	Very relevant	Relevant
Knowledge of relevant work	62%	32%
To take a particular post (ie Chair)	41%	26%
Enthusiasm/energy	57%	40%
Personnel	27%	41%
Knowledge of local community	41%	38%
Previous work in similar role	21%	33%
Managerial skills	43%	40%
Public relations skills	26%	40%
Fundraising skills	28%	38%
Political skills	10%	24%
Financial skills	27%	42%
Legal skills	8%	24%
Access to funding	22%	29%
IT skills	18%	34%
Property skills	3%	15%
Marketing skills	10%	29%
Governance skills	37%	38%
Planning/policy making skills	36%	40%

When asked to identify the skills they thought were most important for committee members the top seven ranking very important were enthusiasm/energy, knowledge of relevant work, knowledge of local community, governance skills, planning/policy making, to take a particular post i.e. chairperson and managerial skills.

The top seven expected skills were financial, public relations, personnel, managerial, fundraising, knowledge of the local community and planning/policy making.

### Importance of skills

	Very important	Important
Knowledge of relevant work	60%	36%
To take a particular post (ie Chair)	26%	40%
Enthusiasm/energy	66%	33%
Personnel	21%	50%
Knowledge of local community	38%	47%
Previous work in similar role	12%	36%
Managerial skills	26%	49%
Public relations skills	18%	50%
Fundraising skills	24%	48%
Political skills	9%	27%
Financial skills	20%	51%
Legal skills	9%	34%
Access to funding	21%	40%
IT skills	13%	39%
Property skills	4%	18%
Marketing skills	11%	34%
Governance skills	38%	36%
Planning/policy making skills	33%	45%



Organisations were asked about whether the committee contains a suitable balance of skills and experience to effectively guide the organisation. 84% of organisations strongly agree/agree that their committee has the required skills and experience. 92% of organisations strongly agree/agree that their chairpersons and other officers have the appropriate skills and experience to carry out their roles effectively.

### Comparison with 2003

In 2003 the first three reasons why individuals felt they were asked to serve on a committee related to acquired knowledge and personal characteristics as opposed to more professionally based skills i.e. knowledge of relevant work, enthusiasm/energy and knowledge of the local community. While these are similar to 2015 it is interesting to note that managerial skills has joined the top three displacing knowledge of the local community in the rankings.

### 3.8 Committee Role, Governance Practice and Performance

The governance research surveys included a number of statements about the role of the management committee to which respondents were asked to agree or disagree. In relation to management committee members the majority of respondents agreed with the following statements:

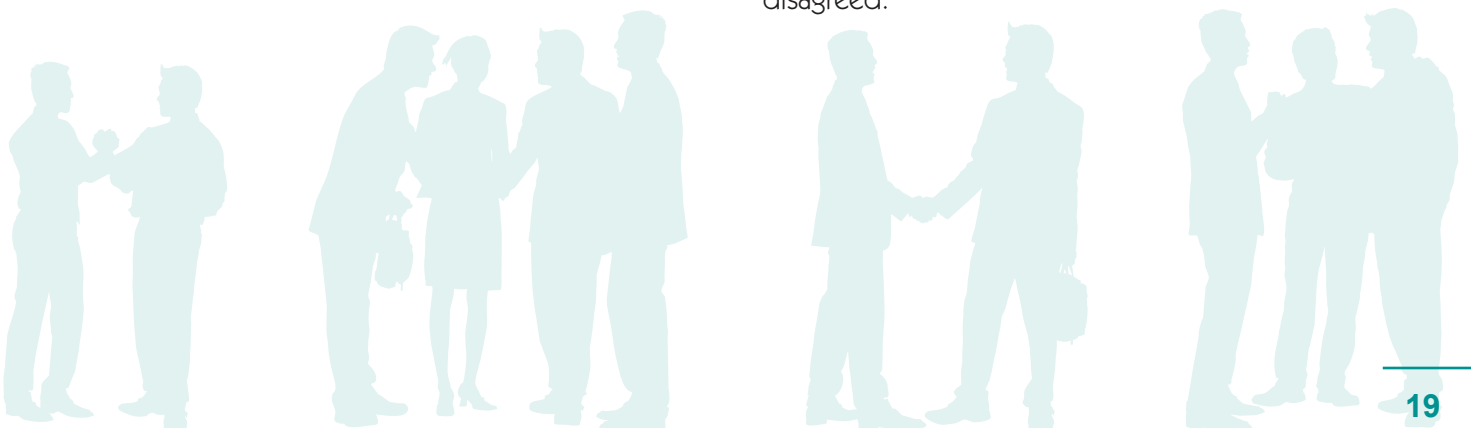
- The management committee has overall control and sets the direction for the organisation.
- The management committee should monitor the performance of the organisation on a regular basis.

- The management committee should review the external environment for changes that may affect the organisation.
- The management committee has overall responsibility for being a responsible employer.
- The management committee has overall responsibility for meeting the organisation's legal requirements.
- The management committee ensures that the senior staff member receives support and appraisal sessions.
- The management committee makes policy decisions that reflect its mission/purpose.
- The management committee should periodically consider whether to discontinue or develop activities/areas of work to meet changing needs.

The majority of respondents disagreed with the following statements:

- The management committee should only become involved when the organisation is in difficulty.
- The management committee should play no relevant role in the strategic development of the organisations.

Two statements had a more mixed response. The majority disagreed with the statement 'only the senior staff member should attend committee meetings'. There was a percentage who agreed or neither agreed/disagreed (45%). The majority agreed with the statement 'the management committee should involve itself in every aspect of the organisation's work and development'. Committee members involved with organisations with an income of less than £100,000 were more likely to agree. There was also a significant percentage (33%) who disagreed or neither agreed/disagreed.



The responses indicate the majority of management committee members recognise the leadership role played by the management committee. They are aware of the corporate governance responsibility for setting strategic direction and being accountable, including legal responsibility, for the activities and actions of the organisation.

The two statements which had a more mixed response are concerned with the role of senior staff and relationship to the committee and the committee's role with regard to the parameters between strategic and operational.

These are often the complex issues about the governance role and relationship that can cause dilemmas for organisations. These issues will often be affected by size and scale of the organisation and the number/level of staff employed.

Organisations were also given a number of statements related to the governance role of management committees. The responses indicate clear agreement to the following statements:

#### Strongly Agreed / Agreed

Their committee is clear about the purpose of the organisation and what it is established to achieve.	96%
Their committee has a clear understanding of the stakeholders in relation to the activities of the organisation.	91%
Their committee is provided with effective administration and support by the organisation.	85%
The role of their senior staff member in relation to the committee is clearly defined.	83%
The views of the stake holders are regularly gathered and considered by the committee.	82%
Their committee establishes clear limited to the authority of the staff, sub committees and working groups.	75%



A number of statements required organisations to indicate yes/no/don't know or not sure. The responses to these are:

### Indicated Yes to the following statements

There is effective financial reporting to the committee as a whole.	95%
The organisation has clearly defined the roles of the chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer.	88%
The committee has well defined policies to guide the organisation's activities.	87%
There is an effective relationship between the committee and the organisation's auditors/independent examiner.	82%
The committee has access to legal and professional advice.	82%
The committee agrees a long term strategy for the organisation to achieve its priorities.	79%
The committee has an up to date understanding of its governance responsibilities under charity and company law as appropriate to the organisation.	78%
The committee has reviewed the organisation's governing document within the last three years.	77%
The organisation has clearly defined the role of the committee, sub committees and working groups.	76%
The committee regularly reviews the external environment for changes that may affect this strategy.	74%
The effectiveness of the auditor/independent examiner is reviewed regularly.	70%
There are suitable processes to ensure an effective partnership between the committee and the senior staff member.	68%
The organisation has an up to date communications policy and/or strategy, including the use of social media.	66%
There is an agreed code of conduct for committee members, which is monitored by the committee.	63%
The organisation has a risk register/plan.	61%
The organisation has a risk register/plan which the committee regularly review.	52%
The performance of the senior staff member is appraised each year.	47%
There are processes in place to ensure a balanced committee in relation to community background.	39%
The organisation operates a committee recruitment, development and training strategy.	34%
There is a system for appraising the performance of the committee and its members.	25%
There is a budget for committee member training and development.	22%



The majority of organisations also identified that their committees had the required skills and experience to carry out their role effectively. In relation to attendance at committee meetings, 93% of organisations indicated that on average 50%+ of their committee members regularly attend meetings, 60% indicated three quarters of their committee members were regular attendees.

However the organisational responses to the yes/no/don't know statements indicates that priority is given to operational rather than governance matters. Committee member recruitment, development, training and appraisal are clearly not being given much attention or investment.

Management committee members were also asked about the performance of their management committee. The majority of the respondents were very positive in agreeing with the following statements. They strongly agreed/agreed that their committee members are fully involved with the decision making process (95%), that committee meetings are effectively run with agenda and relevant information (92%), that committee members are aware of their roles and responsibilities (89%), that committee members are provided with detailed financial information (89%), that the committee provides leadership (89%), that the committee sets the strategic direction (88%), that attendance at committee meetings is good (85%), that the committee maintains and reviews relevant internal controls including managing risk (83%), that the committee regularly reviews work plans and performance (79%) and that the committee members provide the right balance of skills and knowledge (79%).

Individuals were asked if there were any improvements that would allow them to function more effectively on their committee. 40% of respondents indicated yes, 24% no and 36% didn't know/were not sure.

### Improvements

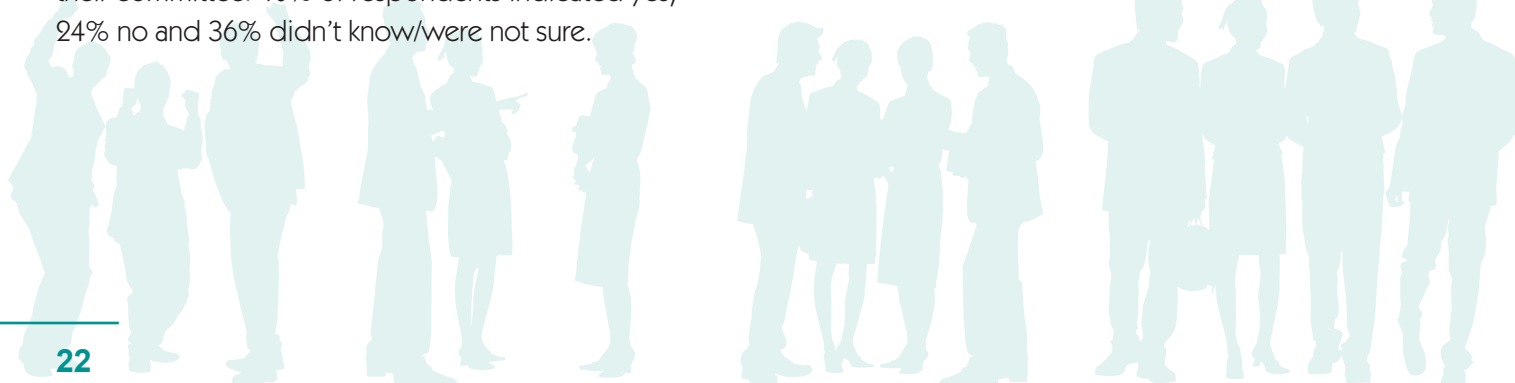
Yes	40%
No	24%
Don't know/not sure	35%

Committee members in organisations with an income of less than £10,000 were more likely to indicate they didn't know/ were not sure about improvements. The largest number of respondents who answered yes to improvements were involved with organisations with an income of less than £100,000.

There was a follow up question about actions that might enable management committee members to function more effectively. Those considered very relevant/relevant were more involvement of members/users, assessment of future committee needs, more time, greater training/advice in terms of their role, clearly presented briefing papers. Actions that were considered not relevant were that the committee needed reduced in size and more frequent meetings.

### Comparison with 2003

The key improvement action identified in 2003 and 2015 is 'more involvement of members/users'. Other rankings of improvements are not similar e.g. in 2015 the second most effective action listed is 'assessment of future committee needs', while the third action was 'more time'. In 2003 'greater training and advice' was second and 'clearer role definition' ranked third. 80% of organisations in 2003 and 93% in 2015 indicated that average attendance at committee meetings was more than half of all the committee members.





### 3.9 Issues of Importance to Committee Members

Committee members were asked about the main issues that tended to be discussed at management committee meetings. The top five issues very frequently/frequently discussed were finance & budgeting alongside report on current issues (96%), planning for the future (95%), funding/fundraising (92%) and provision of services (88%).

There was a difference between the three key issues discussed very frequently finance & budgeting, report on current issues and funding/fundraising and those discussed frequently which were compliance with legal obligations, policy issues and planning for the future. Governance was frequently discussed rather than a very frequently considered issue.

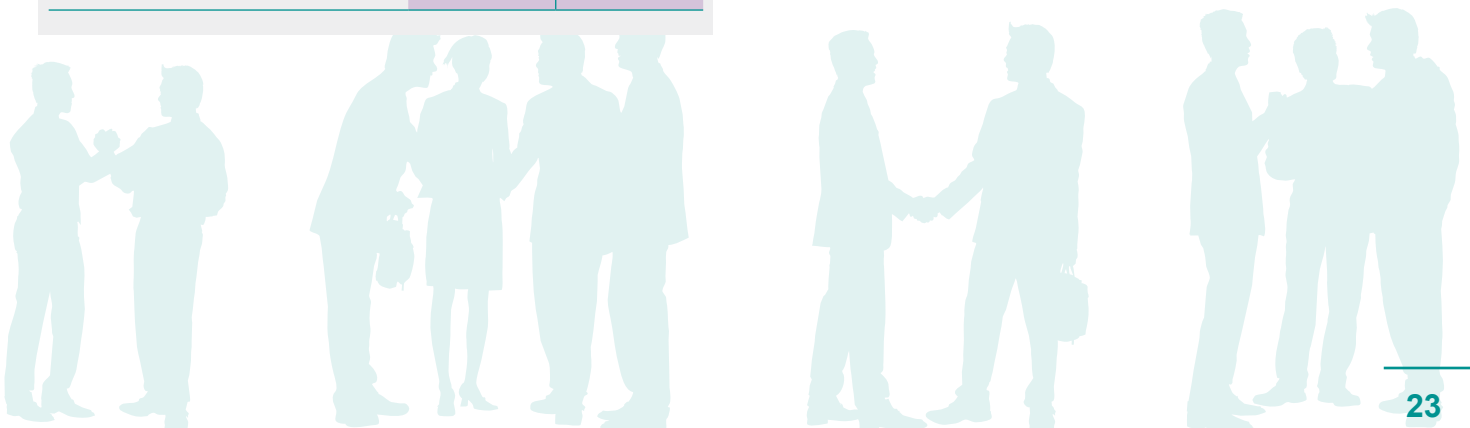
Frequency of issues discussed		
	Very frequently	Frequently
Finance and budgeting	66%	30%
Funding/fundraising	52%	40%
Planning for the future	50%	44%
Compliance with legal obligations	22%	49%
Premises	19%	37%
Provision of services	51%	37%
Report on current issues	64%	32%
Staffing and personnel	32%	42%
Policy issues	26%	44%
Governance	29%	43%

Organisations were also asked about the current most important issues facing the management committee. In rank order of very important the top three issues are planning for the future, finance and budgeting and funding/fundraising. 27% ranked governance as very important and 48% ranked it as important.

Current most important issue		
	Very important	Important
Finance and budgeting	63%	29%
Funding/fundraising	60%	28%
Planning for the future	64%	32%
Strategy & operational planning	45%	43%
Compliance with legal obligations	32%	42%
Premises	21%	32%
Provision of services	41%	44%
Report on current issues	32%	50%
Staffing and personnel	27%	45%
Policy issues	18%	50%
Governance	26%	48%

### Comparison with 2003

The 2003 and 2015 top five frequently discussed issues, finance and budgeting, funding/fundraising, planning for the future, provision of services and report on current issues, are identical.



### 3.10 The Impact of the Establishment of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

The 2015 governance survey provided an opportunity to ask a few questions about charity registration and the role of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. Management committee members completing the survey were asked if they were aware of the legal requirement for all Northern Ireland charities to register with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. 88% of respondents indicated they were aware of the requirement, 5% indicated no and 7% didn't know/were not sure. 59% of respondents indicated they had been called forward to complete a charity registration form, 25% indicated they had not been called and 16% didn't know/were not sure. The majority of respondents were aware of and already involved with the charity registration process. There was a similar response from the organisational survey.

Management committee members who had experience of charity registration were mostly positive about the process and rated the following very positively/positively. The range of Charity Commission for Northern Ireland guidance, using the online application form, compiling the information required, completing the public benefit test, the support provided by helper organisations/umbrella groups, and the registration workshops provided by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

Committee members and organisations were asked to indicate what they considered was the role of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.

In terms of the benefits of having a Charity Commission for Northern Ireland committee member and organisations chose the top three benefits to be the same as those ranked in relation to the role of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. There was a close correlation with the rest of the benefits and role options.

Management committee members and organisations were asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements in relation to the charity registration process. Committee members and organisations agreed that charity registration is positive for the charity and its beneficiaries; that charity registration is positive for the charity sector in Northern Ireland; that there is information and support to assist trustees through the registration process; and that the Commission provides a good range of guidance and support for charity registration.

Role of the Charity Commission for NI

	MC	ORG
Create a public register of charities with up to date information on all NI charities	90%	92%
Regulate charities in Northern Ireland	89%	88%
Investigate concerns about charities	71%	72%
Provide advice to charities	71%	60%
Enhance public trust and confidence in charities	69%	70%
Support Charity Trustees in their role	52%	44%
Promote the effective use of charitable resources	51%	44%
Promote charity compliance with legal obligations	68%	69%
Promote good governance within charities	72%	68%
Provide up to date information on charities in Northern Ireland	66%	64%
Champion the charity sector in Northern Ireland	50%	44%

ORG – Organisations  
MC – Management committee members

However committee member respondents also agreed that the charity registration process is daunting for trustees and an almost equal number both agreed and disagreed with the statement that the charity registration process is straightforward. The responses also indicate that most people agreed with the statements that compulsory registration will put people off from becoming trustees and will also put people off from forming new organisations.

Organisations that had experience of charity registration were mostly positive rather than very positive about the process. Additional comments indicate some concern with the online application form. However there were also references to the useful support provided

by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and other support organisations. In relation to compulsory registration, while the difference was only a small percentage, organisations did agree with the statements that compulsory registration will put people off from becoming trustees and will also put people off from forming new organisations.

The findings from both management committee members and organisations indicates a positive response to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. There is also evidence of some concern about the charity registration process and some fear about the compulsion and complexity becoming a barrier to recruiting trustees and establishing new charities.

### Organisations / Management Committee Members Views on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland

Statement		Strongly agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree
Charity registration is positive for the charity and its beneficiaries	ORG	89%	0%	11%
	MC	85%	1%	13%
Charity registration is positive for the charity sector in NI	ORG	89%	0%	11%
	MC	87%	1%	11%
The charity registration process is daunting for trustees	ORG	55%	12%	33%
	MC	57%	7%	36%
There is information and support to assist trustees through the registration process	ORG	65%	5%	30%
	MC	60%	6%	34%
Compulsory registration will put people off from becoming trustees	ORG	28%	25%	47%
	MC	37%	24%	38%
Compulsory registration will put people off from becoming a new organisation	ORG	29%	25%	46%
	MC	37%	26%	37%
The charity registration process is straightforward	ORG	39%	19%	42%
	MC	26%	24%	50%
The Commission provides a good range of guidance and support for charity registration	ORG	59%	10%	31%
	MC	48%	8%	44%

ORG – Organisations

MC – Management committee members

## 4. Conclusion

In 2003, it was estimated that there were some 33,000 volunteers involved as management committee members. This takes into account the fact that a number of individuals are involved with more than one committee. The total number of volunteer places on committees was considered much higher at 42,315. In 2015 while there is no definitive number for volunteers involved with management committees there is also no indication that the number is any less than the 2003 figure. In reality a huge number of volunteers are giving time to provide leadership to the organisations that make up the voluntary and community sector. The time commitment is substantive to their role. The expectation of what skills committee members require also highlights an important range of knowledge and experience. This includes knowledge of the organisation, enthusiasm and energy, managerial skills, knowledge of the local community, financial skills, governance skills, planning/policy making, personnel and public relations. The majority of voluntary and community sector organisations in Northern Ireland are also charities. The establishment of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland has emphasised the importance of the leadership role of charity trustees. They have a vital part to play in delivering good governance for the charity sector.

The 2015 governance research set out to consider the needs and issues facing management committees. Using evidence from the 2003 Committee Matters research report has helped to identify what may have changed over the past twelve years. It is clear that voluntary and community organisations are facing increasing levels of change, two drivers of change are the financial austerity and an increasing regulatory environment. Organisations indicated that the current most important top three issues facing management committees are planning for the future, finance and budgeting and funding/fundraising. This reflects the current economic challenges where organisations are concerned about

funding and more importantly their future sustainability. One of the participants at the focus groups stated that “the current financial environment is the most challenging I’ve ever known”. A high proportion of organisations also ranked governance as very important/important this reflects the growing expectation of management committees to both lead and be accountable. The 2015 research took the opportunity to seek views on the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and its impact. This is timely given that the Commission has started its work but still has some way to go, looking at current impact can be an indicator of emerging issues.

Looking back at the 2003 research findings, overall there is an overwhelming similarity to 2015. The question therefore is what does little or no change mean for governance within the voluntary and community sector?

### Motivation and Commitment

It is really positive that individuals who volunteer to be on a voluntary management committee remain motivated by the cause of the organisation and to be more involved in their community. Focus group participants spoke about wanting to make a difference, give something back and having a passion for the organisation and what it does. This motivation is mirrored in what gives them the most satisfaction that the work of their organisation is seen as worthwhile and is meeting the needs of its members and/or the community.

**The continuing strong value base aligned to the motivation of committee members is very important. It underpins the governance leadership for the voluntary and community sector. It is particularly relevant to establishing synergy with the charitable imperative of understanding and delivering public benefit.**

### Committee Composition

While there is still a fairly even spread of males and females involved as management committee members, there remains some key issues regarding diversity. There is an ongoing issue with regard to gender imbalance of office bearers with more males than females in these roles although there are more female committee members. However one of the key overarching issues regarding diversity is concerned with the age profile of committees. Management committees remain dominated by individuals who are aged over 45 years. In 2015 the percentage of committee members over the age of 45 had increased since 2003 with little change in the very small percentage of young people aged 18 – 25 years. The majority of participants attending the focus groups were keen to recruit more young people to their committees. While a number of youth focused organisations do recruit young people there is much less success across the majority of voluntary and community sector organisations. Even if they do manage to recruit young people comments from the focus groups would suggest there is an issue around retention. The onus is also on organisations to be flexible and responsive to young people's needs.

The age issue for management committees raises two distinct problems. One, this important volunteer role is failing to reflect appropriate age representation in relation to community demographics. Two, by not recruiting younger members committees remain heavily reliant on an ageing cohort of volunteers with little evidence of succession planning that involves younger people.

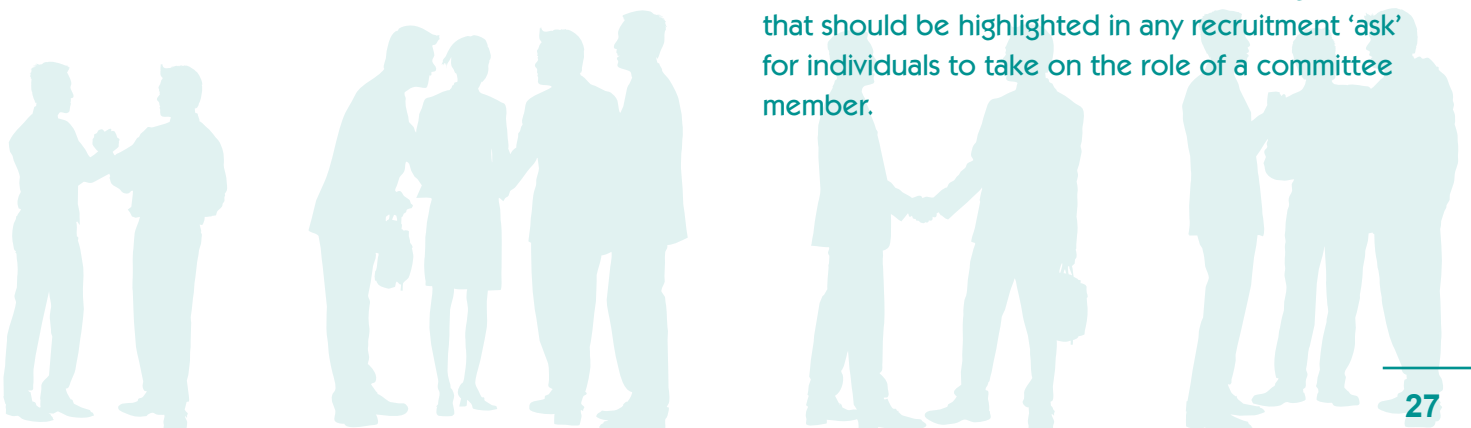
The survey responses (one of the key recruitment difficulties is finding young people) and the focus group sessions indicate that while there is awareness of the problem there is a lack of confidence in finding a solution.

**It is more important than ever, giving the lack of movement in age diversity on management committees, that priority is given to a recruitment campaign that encourages and provides the support to enable young people to join management committees.**

### Recruitment

Almost a quarter of organisations indicated they always have difficulties recruiting committee members and over 50% have difficulties sometimes, while 6% of organisations are constantly recruiting. The majority of organisations indicate that recruitment difficulties are the same as five years ago, 17% indicated it is harder to recruit. Recruitment to committees is a key issue. The main difficulties appear to be finding people to make the commitment, finding younger people and finding people who have the skills and experience. The minority of organisations who never had any difficulties recruiting state this is because people have an interest in their aims and values and the organisation has a good reputation.

**There is a clear correlation between the success factors in recruiting committee members and what gives volunteers on committees satisfaction, namely that the organisation stands for a worthwhile cause and meets the needs of its members/community. Cause and credibility are clearly motivating factors that should be highlighted in any recruitment 'ask' for individuals to take on the role of a committee member.**



Committee recruitment and appointment processes and terms of office have remained constant over the past twelve years. The most common method of recruitment remains word of mouth/personal recommendation, “recruitment is still a tap on the shoulder”, which in itself can limit diversity as there is a danger of ‘like attracting like’.

25% of organisations indicate they make no preparation for recruitment of new committee members, this is mostly seen in organisations with an income of less than £100,000. 11% indicate they have no formal selection process and this percentage has increased since 2003. 27% of committee members indicate they had served on their committee over eleven years with 4% of them having served over 25 years. Regarding setting of terms of office, 37% of organisations indicate committee members may serve indefinitely. The feedback from participants in the focus groups indicates that it is difficult to recruit new committee members and that succession planning is not taking place, one participant said “I have served 25 years as chairperson and don’t know who there is to replace me”.

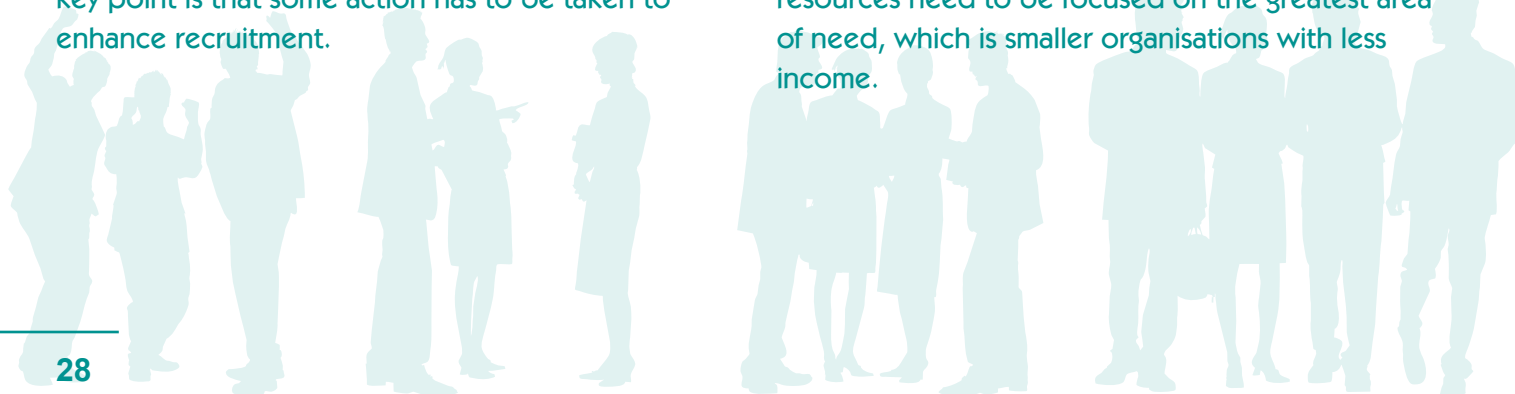
**Over 50% of organisations (similar to 2003) believe that a central register of individuals willing to serve on a management committee would assist in recruitment.** Given that open recruitment is not what most organisations do, relying on word of mouth/personal recommendation, there has to be a question mark over whether organisations would actually use such a service. However given the recruitment problem it may still be an idea worthy of consideration. It would require a promotional campaign to help establish it which in turn could be used to highlight the valuable role and contribution of volunteers on management committees. The key point is that some action has to be taken to enhance recruitment.

### **Induction, Training and Support**

In 2015, 51% of management committee members indicated they had not been provided with an induction and 6% didn’t know/were not sure. However 72% of organisations stated they provided an induction. This is a substantive rise in the number of organisations providing induction in 2003 (35%). While the organisational response is a positive development there are still over 25% of organisations who did not provide an induction. This and the discrepancy between the individual and organisational responses indicates there are a large number of committee members who have not and will not receive an induction into their role. One focus group participant stated, “I didn’t know when I went to the first meeting what was involved”.

The general feeling from participants at the focus groups was also that “training for individual management committees was ‘ad hoc’ with perhaps the larger organisations giving it more of a priority”. Those who had governance training found it “very helpful” and the people who had not had governance training thought it would be “really essential”. Concern was expressed that governance training is expensive and not always accessible.

**Lack of induction provision for committee members remains an issue of concern.** This is one of the building blocks of governance good practice. Another practice issue is that just over 50% of management committee members had received training regarding their role. Induction and training provision is related to size of the organisation. Committee members are more likely to have received both induction and training in organisations with an income of more than £100,000. Access to and provision of support resources need to be focused on the greatest area of need, which is smaller organisations with less income.



Committee members indicated that the most suitable type or provision of support/advice would be an updateable handbook, access to professional advice, the provision of training/support on specific topics, access to resource materials, access to a network of fellow committee members, access to a query helpline and open learning/correspondence courses.

Committee members also identified the training/support on specific topics that would be important to them. Those most relevant included governance, committee roles and responsibilities, planning (strategic development) and fundraising. These match with the key issues facing committees, planning for the future, financial viability and their own leadership, compliance and accountability role.

From the 2015 research there is evidence to show that committee members and organisations are accessing information and support on governance matters. They use the Code of Good Governance publication, NICVA web site and governance support service, the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland web site, other voluntary and community and public sector support organisations and the DIY committee guide web site.

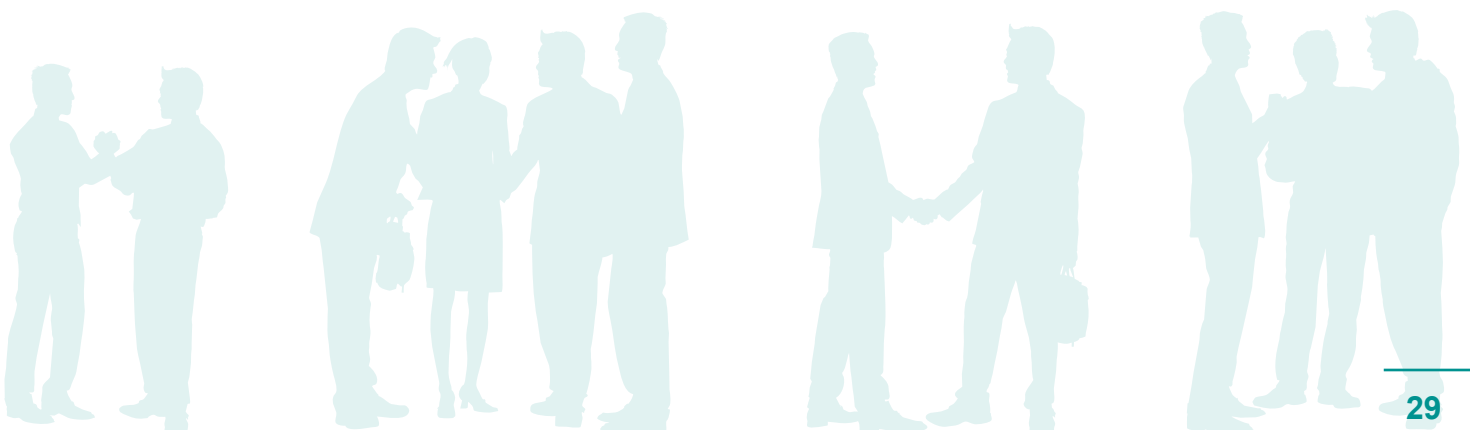
**There are currently a range of governance information, training and support services available to committee members and organisations. The current provision is often stretched to provide access to the services in a timely and cost effective way. It is clear that it is important to highlight and signpost committee members and organisations to what is already in existence and that the resources are found to meet the demand for information and support.**

### Governance Practice and Performance

The survey responses from management committee members indicates that the majority of them recognise their leadership role. They are aware of the corporate governance responsibility for setting strategic direction and being accountable, including legal responsibility, for the activities and actions of the organisation. Organisations indicated that their committees had the required skills and experience to carry out their role effectively. 94% of responding organisations stated that average attendance at committee meetings totalled more than half of all committee members, which is a positive increase from the 2003 findings of 80%. These findings indicate that there is an awareness of good governance practice.

Committee members were also asked about improvements that would allow them to function more effectively. Only 24% answered none with 40% indicating there were improvements that could be made. 36% indicated they were not sure/didn't know about improvements. Those who said yes and those who were not sure/didn't know make up the majority of respondents. This indicates that there are still gaps in knowledge and governance practice, including a need for greater training and advice regarding the role of committee members.

In relation to governance practice and performance the important factor is the size of organisations. Committee members in organisations with an income of less than £10,000 were more likely to indicate they didn't know/were not sure about improvements. The majority who answered yes to improvements were involved with organisations with an income of less than £100,000. This reflects the situation that was also prevalent in 2003.



**Organisations with less resources have the greater need in relation to supporting and developing governance practice. This trend indicates that smaller organisations remain in danger of being left behind and more vulnerable as external expectations and compliance issues grow. Any prioritisation of resources in support of good governance needs to be focused on those organisations with an income of less than £250,000.**

### **The Impact of the Establishment of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland**

The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland was established in March 2009 to deliver the legislative requirements of the Charities Act Northern Ireland 2008. It is a non-departmental public body and is the independent regulator of charities in Northern Ireland. It is responsible for ensuring Northern Ireland has a dynamic and well governed charities sector in which the public can have confidence. Information from the Charity Commission indicates that there are between 7,000 and 12,000 charities in Northern Ireland. The process of charity registration has begun but will take a number of years to complete.

The 2015 governance research project provided an opportunity to ask a few questions about charity registration and the role of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. The majority of respondents to the research surveys, both management committee members and organisations, were aware of and already involved with the charity registration process. They were therefore well placed to give a view on the role of the Commission and their experience of charity registration.

The focus group participants had mixed views about the charity registration process and this also comes through in the survey responses. Some people had a “good experience of going through, really useful” and some people thought the “registration document is complex” and the process was “slow and confusing”. Overall there was a more positive than negative review of the process with a number of organisations highlighting the support they had not only from the Charity Commission but also from voluntary & community sector support organisations.

**The findings from both management committee members and organisations indicates a positive response to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. There is also evidence of some concern about the charity registration process and some fear about the compulsion and complexity becoming a barrier to recruiting trustees and establishing new charities.**

Support organisations within the voluntary and community sector have identified that these issues are of genuine concern to particularly smaller organisations. As the Charity Commission moves its work forward it will be important for it to monitor its impact on organisations. This emphasises and supports implementation of one of its organisational values, which states, ‘our actions, procedures and culture will be proportionate to the burden of regulation on charities of different sizes, to the degree of risk involved and to the potential impact within the resources available to us.’



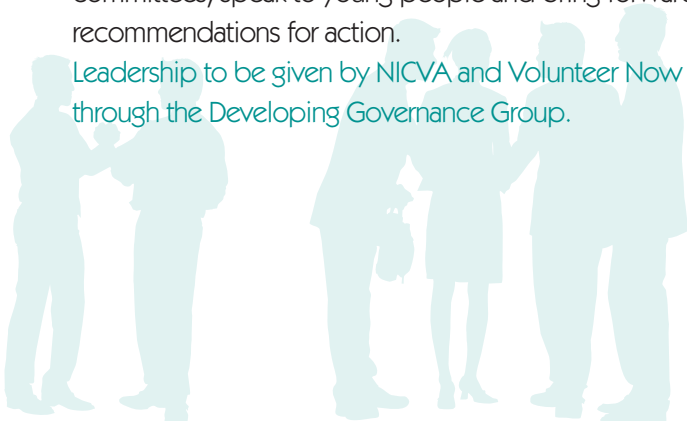


### Recommended Actions

In considering the findings of this research and reviewing the findings from 2003, the Governance Research Advisory Group was mindful of the importance of good governance for the sustainability and growth of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland. It is evident that this needs to continue to be given a priority from within organisations, from support organisations, from government and from funders. The following have been identified as recommended actions with suggestions as to the organisation(s) who should provide leadership to take them forward.

- There should be some public recognition for the importance of the role of management committees and committee members, including highlighting good governance practice. An annual governance award should be established which highlights good governance practice particularly within organisations with an income of less than £250,000.  
[Leadership to be given by VSB Foundation](#)
- The Developing Governance Group should continue to provide leadership to developing and promoting the Code of Good Governance and enhancing access to good governance information and support.  
[Leadership to be given by NICVA and Volunteer Now through the Developing Governance Group.](#)
- Diversity within the composition of management committees is a key issue with a particular need to increase the number of young people involved. Those organisations involved in the Developing Governance Group should make this issue a focus over the next twelve months. Engage with other organisations interested in involving young people on committees, speak to young people and bring forward recommendations for action.  
[Leadership to be given by NICVA and Volunteer Now through the Developing Governance Group.](#)

- Recruitment of volunteers for management committees remains a challenging issue. A recruitment campaign should be developed to encourage and enable individuals to get involved and matched with opportunities.  
[Leadership to be given by Volunteer Now.](#)
- There is a diversity of size and scale within the voluntary and community sector. It is clear that organisations with smaller incomes can find the governance issue a challenge. Providing support to them that is accessible and meets their needs is important and in an environment where resources are limited this can be an issue. Governance health checks are delivered by a range of support organisations involved with the Developing Governance Group. There may be a role for volunteers to provide a level of support. Volunteers could be recruited and trained to provide a governance health check to small organisations.  
[Leadership to be given by Volunteer Now.](#)
- There are some concerns about the registration process and compliance procedures of the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. It is important to take account of the views of organisations particularly in relation to what is proportionate for smaller charities. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland will eventually have information on all charities and this will provide a very important information resource. There is a need for continuing research in relation to governance and mapping trends and the Charity Commission is well placed to undertake this work.  
[Leadership to be given by the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.](#)

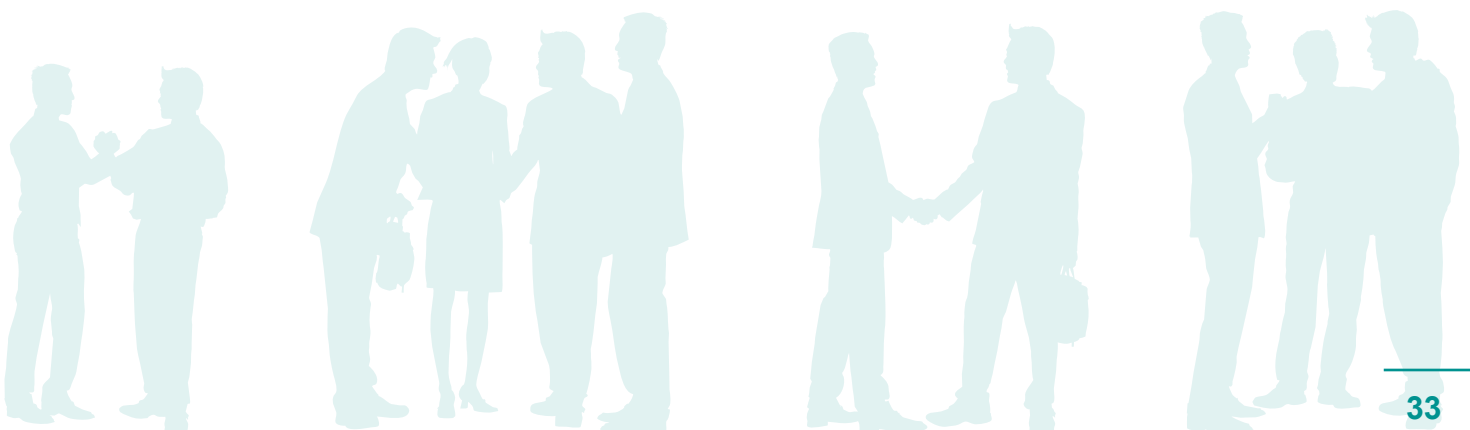


## Committee Matters 2003 Summary Findings and 2015 Research

The information for 2003 is taken from the summary findings as published in the 'Committee Matters' report. The 2015 information indicates the findings from the research presented in this report.

2003 Research	2015 Research
<b>Committee Involvement</b>	
Management committee is the most commonly used term.	Management Committee is the most commonly used term.
On average ten individuals serve on a single management committee.	The majority of organisations have no more than ten members.
<b>Committee Composition</b>	
54% of committee members are female.	52% of committee members are female.
66% of individuals serving on management committees are aged 45 and over. Only 3% are aged under 25 years old.	75% of individuals serving on management committees are aged 45 and over. Only 2% are aged under 25 years old.
7% of committee members are disabled.	6% of committee members are disabled.
<b>Recruitment of Committee Members</b>	
81% of individuals serve on a management committee in their own time.	93% of individuals serve on a management committee in their own time.
54% of organisations have an election where their members or the community decide upon the new committee.	63% of organisations have an election where their members or the community decide upon the new committee.
7% of organisations have no formal process to select new committee members.	11% of organisation have no formal process to select new committee members.
<b>Motivation</b>	
The majority of individuals have served on a committee between one and three years. 13% have served on a committee for more than eleven years.	The majority of individuals have served on a committee between one and five years. 27% have serviced on a committee for more than eleven years.
The main reason for becoming a committee member is the individual's 'commitment to the cause of the organisation' followed by 'wanting to be more involved in their community'. 'Reduced or inadequate funding' and 'not being able to do everything that is needed' represent the two main areas of dissatisfaction individuals associate with serving on a management committee.	The main reason for becoming a committee member is the individual's 'commitment to the cause of the organisation' followed by 'wanting to be more involved in their community'. 'Reduced or inadequate funding' and 'not being able to do everything that is needed' represent the two main areas of dissatisfaction individuals associate with serving on a management committee.

2003 Research	2015 Research
<b>Training and Support</b>	
35% of organisations operate a formal induction process for new committee members.	72% of organisations operate a formal induction process for new committee members.
Almost three quarters of organisations, which have a formal induction process provide 'printed materials' or 'briefings' by staff or the committee members.	The top three methods through which organisations provide information and/or training to committee members includes 'personal briefing by other committee members'; 'printed material' and 'personal briefing by staff'.
The majority of committee members would like to see made available an updateable handbook of current good practice in relation to management committees.	The majority of committee members would like to see made available an updateable handbook of current good practice in relation to management committees.
<b>Structures and Processes</b>	
On average organisations will hold nine committee meetings per year.	A quarter of organisations meet nine to ten times per year. The majority of organisations meet between five and ten times per year.
85% of organisations stated that average attendance at committee meetings totalled more than half of all committee members.	94% of organisations stated that average attendance at committee meetings totalled more than half of all committee members.
37% of committee members serve on committees where they are re-elected every year. This is followed by 20% of committee members serving on committees where they are permitted to serve for an indefinite period.	35% of committee members serve on committees where they are re-elected every year. This is followed by 22% of committee members serving on committees where they are permitted to serve for an indefinite period.
44% of organisations had some sort of formal sub committee(s) with this being far more likely amongst the largest organisations.	50% of organisations had some sort of formal committee(s) with this being far more likely amongst the larger organisations.



## Members of the Research Advisory Group

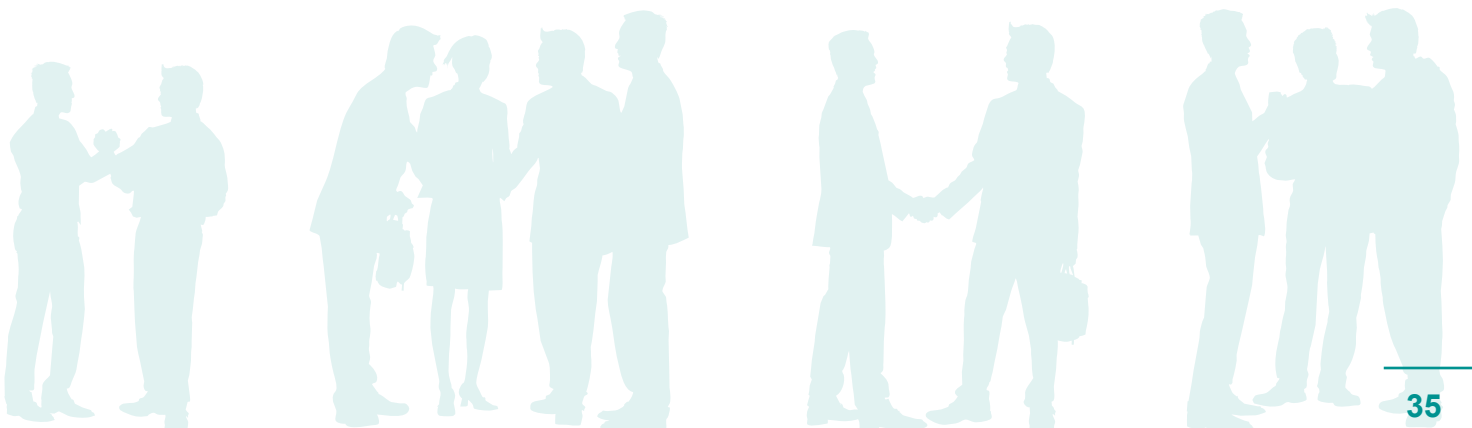
<b>John Hunter</b>	Independent Chairperson (Chairperson of Corrymeela Council)
<b>Wendy Osborne</b>	Volunteer Now
<b>Gaby Doherty</b>	VSF Foundation
<b>Aoife Morrison</b>	Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
<b>Denise Copeland</b>	NICVA
<b>Claire O'Hare</b>	Developing Governance Group (Youthnet)
<b>Gareth Kirk</b>	CO <sup>3</sup> (Action Cancer)
<b>Clare Harvey</b>	Youth Council Northern Ireland
<b>Dr Nick Acheson</b>	University of Ulster
<b>Laurie McCusker</b>	Fermanagh Trust
<b>Lorraine McDowell</b>	Arts Council of Northern Ireland
<b>Jack O'Connor</b>	Department for Social Development
<b>Fergal O'Donnell</b>	Rural Community Network
<b>Ashley Hunter</b>	Northern Ireland Sports Forum (Canoe Association NI)



## List of Respondent Organisations

Brookeborough & District Community Association  
Big Telly Theatre Company  
Kilmore Youth Club  
Youthlife  
Association of Northern Ireland Car Clubs  
Ark Housing Association  
Lower Andersonstown Mothers Support Group  
All Saints Youth Club  
Moneyneena & District Development Initiative  
Causeway Coast Peace Group  
The Croft Community  
Empire Community Centre  
Fermanagh Voluntary Association of the Disabled  
Northern Ireland Environment Link  
Highfield Residents Association  
Creggan Tours & Activities  
Speedwell Trust  
Harper Adams in Ireland  
Harpurs Hill Children and Family Centre  
DU Dance (NI)  
Derryinver Community Association  
Ardoyne Youth Club  
NI Womens Football Association  
Cruse Bereavement Care  
Larne Sea Cadets  
Mid Ulster Talking Newspaper  
MindWise  
British Gymnastics  
North Down and Ards Women's Aid  
Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

Dunsford Arts and Crafts Group  
Replay Theatre Company  
North Coast Community Transport  
Conway Education Centre  
Armagh Pipers Club  
Royal Yachting Association Northern Ireland  
The Loft Youth Club  
Kilcronaghan Community Association  
Visual Artists Ireland  
All Set Project  
Extern Group  
Northern Cricket Union of Ireland  
NI Volleyball  
British Gymnastics  
Mid Ulster Community Services Ltd  
Crossgar Youth Club  
Upperlands Community Development  
Southcity Resource & Development Centre  
Foyle Women's Information Network  
Community Change  
Youth Action Northern Ireland  
Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation  
HomeStart Causeway  
Killyleagh Football Club  
Corkley Development Association  
IFA  
Northern Ireland Association of Aeromodellers  
Ulster Gliding Centre  
ATNNI  
North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum



## List of Respondent Organisations (continued)

Inland Waterways Association of Ireland,  
Newry & Portadown Branch  
Northern Visions  
Volunteer Now  
Young at Art  
Belfast YMCA  
Children's Heartbeat Trust  
PlayBoard  
Larne YMCA  
YouthNet  
Bringing Hope  
Dorsey Youth Club  
Off The Street Community Youth Initiative  
Saints Youth Centre  
Fusion Theatre  
The International North West 200  
Waterside Women's Centre  
Home-Start Causeway  
PlayBoard NI  
WEast Chernobyl  
Warrenpoint Community Partnership  
Atlas Womens Centre  
Star Neighbourhood Centre  
Aghagallon Community Centre  
Mount Masonic Social Club  
NIRWN  
Newry and Mourne Local Voluntary Welfare Group  
Bessbrook District LOL 11  
Strabane Community Unemployed Group  
CAPAA

Old Loughry Heritage Group  
Orchardville Society  
Holy Trinity Youth Centre  
St Malachys Youth Centre  
Womens Aid Armagh Down  
Maydown Community Association  
Men Utd  
St Mary's YC  
Atlas Womens Centre  
Replay Theatre Company  
Rural North West Community Support  
Lisanelly Regeneration Group  
Whiteabbey Community Group  
Boho Woman's Group  
Praxis care  
Scout Foundation NI  
The Resurgam Trust  
The HUBB  
Recon Community Resource Center  
Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful  
Brook NI  
Integrated Education Fund  
The Plum Club  
Pint-sized Productions Ltd  
Victoria Action Group  
Ballymena Substance Users Support Group (PAUSE)  
Lisburn Credit Union  
Willowbank Ltd  
The Brain Injury Foundation  
Action Cancer



## Governance Resources

### Code of Good Governance

The Code of Good Governance can be accessed from [www.diycommitteeguide.org](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org) or for further information contact the Secretariat for the Developing Governance Group which is provided by NICVA and Volunteer Now.

### Developing Governance Group

The Developing Governance Group is made up of the following sector support organisations.

#### Age NI

Tel : 028 9024 5729  
[www.ageni.org](http://www.ageni.org)

#### Supporting Communities NI

Tel: 028 2564 5676  
[www.supportingcommunitiesni.org](http://www.supportingcommunitiesni.org)

#### NICVA

Tel: 028 9087 7777  
[www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)

#### Youthnet

Tel: 028 9033 1880  
[www.youthnetni.org.uk](http://www.youthnetni.org.uk)

#### Volunteer Now

Tel: 028 9023 2020  
[www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

#### NI Sports Forum

Tel: 028 9038 3825  
[www.nisf.net](http://www.nisf.net)

#### Sport Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9038 1222  
[www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

#### Arts & Business Northern Ireland

Tel: 028 9073 5150  
[www.artsandbusinessni.org.uk](http://www.artsandbusinessni.org.uk)

#### Early Years– the organisation for young children

Tel: 028 9066 2825  
[www.early-years.org](http://www.early-years.org)

#### Rural Community Network

Tel: 028 8676 6670  
[www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org](http://www.ruralcommunitynetwork.org)

**[www.diycommitteeguide.org](http://www.diycommitteeguide.org)** A useful resource of practical help and support for management committees/boards which has been developed further to map the information to the principles in the Code. It is also a signposting directory which includes links to all Developing Governance Group members including the training and support they offer.

**[www.nicva.org](http://www.nicva.org)** Specialist human resources, governance and charity law reform sections containing frequently asked questions and various advice notes.

**[www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)** Specialist information and guidance on all aspects of volunteering.

**[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)** Information about equality legislation, plus reports and guidance.

**[www.charitycommissionni.org](http://www.charitycommissionni.org)** Details on charity regulation and registration from the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland.





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[www.vsb.org.uk](http://www.vsb.org.uk)  
Charity No: NIC102757



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Phone: 028 9023 2020  
Fax: 028 9020 0860  
[www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)  
Company Limited by Guarantee No: NI620375