



Knight Charity Governance

Chris Knight

THE POLICY MAGIC



knightcharitygovernance.uk

The Policy Magic

Policies can be essential but are easily overlooked.

Ideally, an area of charity life which is prone to regulation, complexity, inconsistency, neglect, or personal whims can be nailed down by writing a policy. Thus, a series of thorny issues will be transformed by an agreed way of working which is clear, compliant, adhered to and consistent. You merely need to commit to creating or commissioning such a thing, then following rather than ignoring it.

How do you conjure up this exemplum? And do so repeatedly, in many different areas of charity life? There are plenty of people who will help or sell you policies. Otherwise, there is sadly no trick to this. However, there is, if not a magic formula, then a sound working model. It goes something like this

Aims and remit: set out the aims of this particular policy area and its remit, which will also by default set its limitations

Values: next, include a reminder of the values of the charity and that this policy conforms to those and, if relevant, fulfils certain specific values

Decision making: you should describe and circumscribe the decision making remit relevant to the policy, namely who has authority to make decisions in connection with the different functions of the policy area

Constitutional issues: note how the policy dovetails with the charity's governing document, other governance processes and the authority and remit of the trustees

Guidance: provide links to the Charity Commission's or other guidance which is relevant to the policy's remit (The Fundraising Regulator, Information Commissioner, and so on)

Communications: you need to explain who is responsible for communications as regards the policy's area of work; how they should do that, to whom and how often

Specific issues: each policy area will have matters which are particular for its operational area and these should also be outlined, with what should be done, when, how and by whom; for some areas these will be very detailed and address precise requirements, for instance policies for safeguarding, data protection and financial matters

Difficulties: every operational area encounters difficulties, so those relevant to the policy area should be considered and the policy so far as possible should set out what should happen in response to such things and who should be responsible

Record keeping: for compliance, transparency and learning lessons, clear records of the charity's dealings in the policy area should be kept

A policy should be relevant and tailored to the charity concerned; a policy might be either a single page or very many pages for different charities. If there are legal or regulatory requirements you'll need to include these and probably engage expertise in doing so. However, the above can be used as a useful starting point and a framework.