



# SPORTS GOVERNANCE GUIDE

NORTHERN IRELAND

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## INTRODUCTION

This guide provides the sport and recreation sector with an overview of good governance practice.

It aims to provide organisations with principles, behaviours and case studies of what good governance looks like. This is a vastly debated topic at present with several high profile examples of sporting organisations experiencing difficulties due to poor governance standards.

This guide aims to help sport and recreation bodies to meet the demands and expectations that they face on a regular basis. By showcasing good governance, organisations provide confidence to members, partners and funders.

The five principles of the Code of Good Governance 2016, and additional sports specific good practice and behaviours to support each principle, are outlined. Case studies also provide additional context to the principles and show how the organisations have developed their own governance standards. Many sports organisations, whether they are a governing body, club or umbrella organisation, will use different terms for their committee, board or executive. For the purposes of this guide the term committee is used.

Sport NI and the Northern Ireland Sports Forum are members of the Developing Governance Group, along with partners including Volunteer

Now and NICVA. This group produced The Code of Good Governance which was revised in 2016. Following on from the work of the group, several governing bodies and umbrella groups came together to discuss the benefits of additional governance support for the sector.

There are governance codes in the United Kingdom and Ireland which are relevant to the sector, but the group agreed to work from the local Code of Good Governance, with support from the governing bodies Governance Network.

Representatives from Disability Sport NI, Irish Athletic Boxing Association, Irish Football Association, Outdoor Recreation NI, Ulster GAA and Ulster Rugby joined the NI Sports Forum and Sport NI on the working group. We thank these organisations for their support in developing the guide.

We hope that you find it useful and ask that you visit [www.sportsgovernanceninet.net](http://www.sportsgovernanceninet.net) to receive further information and support which will benefit your organisation. Many resources can also be found on the DIY Committee Guide website including a Governance Health Check which is a practical, step-by-step means of ensuring your organisation is adhering to the key principles of the Code of Good Governance, as well as identifying areas where you may wish to make changes or improve.



# PRINCIPLE 1

## **An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by understanding its role and responsibilities.**

The members of the board are equally responsible in law for board actions and decisions. They are collectively responsible and accountable for ensuring that the organisation is performing well, is solvent and complies with all its obligations in terms of:

- Setting and safeguarding the vision, values and reputation of the organisation.
- The rules set out in the governing document.
- Their legal duties.
- Their stewardship of assets.
- The organisation's operating environment.
- The structure of the organisation.
- Overseeing the work of the organisation.

### **Good Practice/behaviours**

Members of executive committees of sporting and recreational organisations should receive training at the beginning of their time on the committee to:

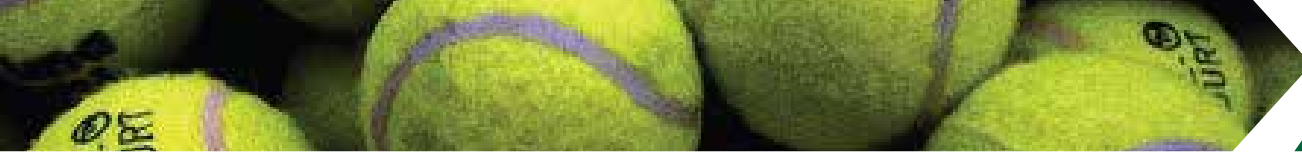
1. Agree the values that underpin the organisation.
2. Agree a clear mission and vision for the organisation.
3. Be aware of the mission, vision and values of their organisation, and how to keep its reputation high.
4. Gain knowledge of the governing document (constitution/articles of association) as a useful and regular source of guidance, especially during elections and membership or equality discussions.
5. Develop an understanding of legal responsibilities, e.g. safeguarding, fraud, financial practices and charities legislation should all be considered.
6. Understand expected behaviours individually and collectively.

This training should be repeated biannually.

### **The executive committee should also make sure that:**

7. Any assets are recorded, protected, and used to meet the organisation's objectives. Decisions regarding assets should be guided by the constitution.
8. A volunteer/staff handbook is prepared, to help members understand their roles and responsibilities.
9. The organisation fits its setting, and can implement change to suit needs. It should make sure all committee members stay involved and in touch, taking an interest in sporting success, for example.





## PRINCIPLE 1 CASE STUDY

### Downshire Tennis Club



Downshire Tennis Club, Hillsborough, Co. Down, is a role model for how a club can contribute to the delivery of the Ulster Tennis strategy which runs up until 2021. Within its strategy, Ulster Tennis has set out an agreed vision and plans for continuous improvement, introducing people to tennis, developing facilities, programmes and players and supporting the community.

Downshire Tennis club fully endorses this strategy. The club is led by a strong committee structure, with 30 volunteers who have clear roles and accountabilities. Talented people with skills to support the strategy are co-opted at any time during each year, with a brief for each role and the freedom to act and achieve their objectives. Committee meetings are held monthly. Courtesy and discipline are encouraged by raising issues in advance with the relevant people.

The Club has experienced dynamic growth in recent years. Costs have been reduced and fundraising and sponsorship increased. Additional surpluses have been reinvested in continuous improvement in club programmes, ensuring members obtain value for money and enjoy friendship and fun.

The Club's finances have improved significantly and as a result the club has been able to invest in capital projects.

Sub-committees focus on development of key areas of the club's business and ensuring new committee members and other volunteers can be integrated and supported. Continually refreshing and blending committees is crucial to the implementation and oversight of the work of the organisation.

Downshire Tennis Club firmly believes that exceptional development and financial sustainability will be achieved and sustained by implementing a long term development plan, and targeting and recruiting talented people who work well together as a team, in pursuit of a common cause to provide exceptional service to their members and community.

## PRINCIPLE 2

### **An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by working well both as individuals and as a team.**

The board will have a range of appropriate policies and procedures, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours to enable both individuals and the board to work effectively. The board will plan for its own development and renewal by:

- Finding and recruiting new board members to meet the organisation's changing needs in relation to skills, experience and diversity.
- Providing suitable induction for new board members.
- Providing all board members with opportunities for training and development according to their needs.
- Periodically reviewing their performance both as individuals and as a team.

#### **Good practice/behaviours**

- 1.** Discuss and identify gaps within the current committee structure and develop a role description for these positions. Publicly advertise roles on websites such as, those of community & sporting organisations. Recruitment should not be limited to inside the organisation. This could require an amendment to the governing document.
- 2.** All committee members should have a specified term of service and term limits. They should be re-appointed or replaced on a staggered basis to assist with succession planning and ensure corporate continuity. It is recommended that term limits should be 4 x 2 years, 3 x 3 years or 2 x 4 years.
- 3.** Have a formal induction policy. This policy should include new committee members having the chance to meet staff and volunteers and visit events, games and training to gain an insight to the organisation's activities.
- 4.** An annual review should be conducted with individual committee members. This may be done formally or informally. This review should identify training and development needs. This information should be fed back into the overall assessment of committee performance.
- 5.** The committee should carry out a yearly review of its performance informed by committee members, staff and volunteers. This review should be led by the chair and findings and feedback should be given to the committee as a whole. Any matters for committee members and staff should be dealt with separately.



## PRINCIPLE 2 CASE STUDY

### Canoe Association Northern Ireland



The Canoe Association Northern Ireland (CANI) has changed its structure from an association to a limited company with charitable status. CANI were guided through the process by a solicitor who ensured that all appropriate steps were taken to successfully make the transfer and advised on what systems needed to be in place. Sport NI also contributed financially to the costs of changing the organisation's status. The change provides greater governance assurance and also will enable CANI to avail of the benefits associated with being a charity. This process took almost two years and involved every level of the organisation and significant input from the CANI committee and the Development Manager.

As CANI is now a limited company the Council has changed to a Board of Directors and new terms and conditions for the Board have been developed. Each Director has a role description, which ensures all key aspects of the organisation receive the focus of a non-executive director. Director's terms of office have been re-written so that at each Annual General Meeting (AGM) one-half of the directors must retire from office and after six years' service a director must retire but may be co-opted back if required. New directors are appointed at the AGM to replace those that retire. There is also the provision to appoint independent directors to join the board to fill any gaps in skill sets.

Knowledge retention is important so CANI are in the process of identifying training for directors to ensure breadth of skills within the board. To support new directors, an induction process is provided. To monitor performance and provide training and support, all directors receive an annual appraisal by the chairperson following which plans are made to support director's development. A skills audit is also carried out to identify any missing skill sets across the board and measures are taken to address the gaps.

Along with the legal change the subcommittee structures have been reviewed and are now fit for purpose to reflect the change and growth of the organisation. This has involved changing the roles of the committees from 'decision making' to 'advisory' and inviting people from outside canoeing who bring fresh ideas and challenge the norm.

CANI is now better protected and in a better position to develop as a company and a charity.

## PRINCIPLE 3

### **An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by ensuring delivery of organisational purpose.**

The Board has ultimate responsibility for directing the activity of the organisation and delivering its stated purposes. It will do this by:

- Ensuring organisational purposes remain relevant and valid.
- Providing public benefit.
- Developing and agreeing a long term strategy.
- Developing operational plans and budgets.
- Monitoring progress and spending against plans and budget.
- Amending the plan and budget as appropriate.
- Evaluating results, assessing outcomes and impact.
- Maintaining a positive working relationship with volunteers and staff including the most senior member of staff.

#### **Good practice/behaviours**

- 1.** Agreeing clear decision making and delegation powers, e.g. to individuals within the organisation, to staff, or creating appropriate committees with delegated authority, such as an Audit Committee.
- 2.** Develop a 3-5 year Strategic Plan in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders e.g. clubs, governing body, local authority. This plan should be clearly linked to the purpose of the organisation.
- 3.** Delivery of a strategy and a supporting annual operational plan remains the responsibility of all committee members. This should be kept under review, along with the input of committee members, led by the chairperson
- 4.** Regular review of performance against strategic and operational plans.
- 5.** Identifying new and innovative partnerships and expansion opportunities for the organisation.
- 6.** Celebrating achievements and recognising public benefit.
- 7.** Long term financial planning with the organisation to ensure increased income generation, e.g. public funding, and sponsorship.





## PRINCIPLE 3 CASE STUDY

### Ulster Camogie



CUMANN  
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ULSTER CAMOGIE

Ulster Camogie has come a long way in a very short period of time thanks to the hard working Ulster Camogie Council, the Executive and most of all consultation with stakeholders. Ulster Camogie had a Strategic Plan in place from 2009-2015 but this plan faced difficulties in the implementation period and although many of the targets were achieved, it lacked a solid backbone as it had not been developed through consultation with the Camogie Association, Ulster GAA, Sport NI and clubs.

The Ulster Camogie Council wanted to develop a fresh, realistic plan which embraced the changing environment and to ensure that organisational purposes remained relevant. As a body Ulster Camogie has undertaken extensive work to strengthen its governance and leadership. This was key to forming a Strategic Plan which could be grasped by all. The process started with a number of in-depth consultation events throughout Ulster with players and volunteers at every level. This was assisted by Ulster GAA who Ulster Camogie are closely aligned to, supported and advised by. Ulster Camogie implemented an Integration Policy across Ulster which has led to improved relations across all codes of the Gaelic Games family.

It is important that all structures within Camogie in Ireland are going in the same direction so it was essential that the Ulster Camogie strategy *Buille go Bua* (Striking for Success) compliments the National Camogie Development Plan *Our Game Our Passion*. Throughout the process, the National Development Officer provided support and Ulster Camogie also benefitted from financial and development support from

Sport NI. Through a renewed focus on its organisational purpose Ulster Camogie developed its strategy for 2013-2017.

#### **The five themes of *Buille go Bua* are:**

- Governance: Strengthening Ulster Council
- Coaching & Games: Achieving High Standards
- Club & Community Development: Building Capacity across Ulster
- Enhancing Camogie Profile: Improving Marketing Camogie
- Schools & Higher Education: Developing the Education Sector

Ulster Camogie are continuing to achieve the targets set throughout *Buille go Bua*. This has been done through continued evaluation of results, assessing outcomes and impacts with close consultation on a quarterly basis with the Ulster Camogie Council, County Boards and staff, where short term targets were set to ensure the plan continued to progress towards a long-term goal. Ulster Camogie have continued to develop Governance, Coaching and Talent systems with support from Sport NI over the period of this strategy.

As Ulster Camogie implements the strategy they are reaping the rewards in participation, and performance in players and volunteers at every level.

## PRINCIPLE 4

### **An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by exercising appropriate control.**

As the accountable body, the board will maintain and regularly review the organisation's system of internal controls, performance, and policies and procedures, to ensure that:

- The organisation understands and complies with all legal and regulatory requirements that apply to it.
- The organisation has appropriate up to date internal financial and management controls.
- It regularly identifies and reviews the major risks to which the organisation is exposed and has systems to manage those risks.
- Delegation to committees, staff and volunteers (as applicable) works effectively and the use of delegated authority is properly supervised.
- Proper arrangements are in place for the recruitment, supervision, support, appraisal and remuneration of all staff including the most senior member of staff.
- Volunteers are managed and supported.

### **Good practice/behaviours**

1. Regular and scheduled review of policies to ensure they are appropriate and up to date to reflect the needs of the organisation, good practice and relevant legislation.
2. Financial and management controls documented. Reviewed regularly and training provided to relevant people (board/executive committee) so that they understand their responsibility in relation to these controls.
3. Putting in place a comprehensive risk register to identify and mitigate any risks, which is reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year by the committee.
4. Terms of reference clearly defined for committees, sub committees etc. and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure relevance. Terms of reference for sub committees should also be time bound where relevant.
5. Recruitment of staff and voluntary committee members is carried out through a structured recruitment process which is open and transparent.
6. Support or training is provided to committee members so that they understand their role and what is required of them.
7. New committee members are given a settling in period to ensure both parties are happy with the appointment and are also provided with clear role descriptors.
8. Agreeing clear decision making and delegation powers e.g. to individuals within the organisation or creating appropriate committees with delegated authority e.g. Audit Committee
9. Co-opt or recruit new committee members from outside the organisation to increase the capacity and diversity of the organisation.



## PRINCIPLE 4 CASE STUDY

### St Peter's GAA Club Warrenpoint

St Peter's GAA Club Warrenpoint operates a fully integrated one club model for GAA, Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football with one Senior Management Committee (SMC) and 9 core sub-committees. For a large club operating with many teams and volunteers, creating clear terms of reference has allowed the club to ensure good governance and leadership with appropriate control of the club's activities.

The SMC is the controlling body of the club with all the business and affairs under its ultimate control. The SMC is supported by Executive Officers, responsible for areas of development within the club that align to their skill set. Officers are provided with documented roles and responsibilities, allowing them to report back effectively to the SMC. One key responsibility is outlined throughout each role description and that is to support the implementation of the club's 5 year development plan.

St Peter's also provide's significant information on its website. All members of club committees from the SMC, Executive and subcommittees such as Hurling, Football, Camogie, Finance, Communications, Cultural and Social, are listed on the website so members are aware of who is responsible for specific activities. Subcommittee Chairpersons meet with relevant members of the SMC to agree on activities for the year ahead with all activities linked to the club development plan. Members can also find the roles of the Officers and Committees on the website.

Recruitment of members to the club is clearly outlined through a structured process and newly recruited coaches to the club have to go through an application process requiring coaches to abide by several club policies and procedures. Applications must be accompanied by a reference form from another member or relevant person. The club has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures which include Disciplinary,

Complaints and Appeals, Equal Opportunities, Codes of Conduct for Administrators as well as relevant safeguarding policies. All of these are again found on the club website.

Risk Management is considered pivotal to promoting future growth of the club and preserving existing assets. An annual risk assessment is carried out reflecting the club's risk appetite, and risk management is imbedded in club strategic planning and corporate governance, including club policies. The club operates strong financial management controls including annual budgets, quarterly accounts, and Internal Financial Control Procedures covering income, purchasing, expenditure and banking.

St Peter's has a strong ethos of communication with its membership. The clearly outlined roles and responsibilities allow the SMC to effectively manage activities throughout the year.

## PRINCIPLE 5

### **An effective board will provide good governance and leadership by behaving with integrity and by being open and accountable.**

The board will be open, responsive and accountable, acting at all times with integrity, in the interest of the organisation and its beneficiaries. The board will:

- Act according to high ethical standards.
- Identify, understand and manage conflicts of interest and loyalty.
- Maintain independence of decision making.
- Ensure open communication by informing and consulting people about the organisation and its work.
- Listen and respond to the views of beneficiaries, service users, funders and supporters with an interest in the organisation's work.
- Handle complaints constructively, impartially and efficiently.
- Consider organisational responsibilities to the wider community, society and the environment.
- Consider organisational responsibility in promoting equality and good relations.

#### **Good practice/behaviours**

- 1.** Act as guardians of the sport by applying high sporting ethical standards at all times.
- 2.** Ensure that key policies are in place, underpinned by appropriate training and support including:
  - Code of Conduct,
  - Conflict of Interest
  - Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals
  - Safeguarding
  - Anti-Doping
  - Selection Procedures
- 3.** Include the ability to use disputes resolution services/organisations within the governing document to mediate or resolve disputes.
- 4.** Have mechanisms in place for the completion of vetting requirements.
- 5.** Consulting with athletes, participants, members and stakeholders via appropriate communication methods for different audiences, for matters such as developing rules, regulations and selection procedures.
- 6.** Ensuring all processes and decisions are transparent, whether they involve sporting or organisational matters, and that communication methods are appropriate for relevant stakeholders
- 7.** Promote and monitor equality and diversity e.g. by engaging in The Equality Standard process and ClubmarkNI accreditation scheme through Sport NI.
- 8.** Publishing the organisations key documents such as strategic plan, constitution, meeting minutes on the organisation's website.



## PRINCIPLE 5 CASE STUDY

### Disability Sport NI



Disability Sport NI is Northern Ireland's main disability sports organisation working with children, young people and adults who would like to participate in sport and active recreation. The organisation works with people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities of all ages and with schools, disability groups, sporting organisations and clubs to ensure that everyone can benefit from the health, social and education benefits of sport and active recreation. The organisation believes that every person with a disability has the right to participate in all aspects of life and is committed to building a more inclusive society where people with disabilities have the same opportunity as non-disabled people to lead a full, active and healthy lifestyle through sport and active recreation.

During 2014-2015 Disability Sport NI carried out a governance review, which led to the following key improvements:

#### **Board Restructure**

A new skills based Board was recruited through an open selection and recruitment process and are now appointed on a rotational basis for a maximum term of two four year cycles.

#### **Standing Items**

In line with good practice the agenda for Board meetings now include conflict of interest, equality and the risk register.

#### **Code of Good Governance**

The Board of Directors have adopted 'The Code of Good Governance' and now follow its five principles on an ongoing basis

#### **Policies and Procedures**

All key policies and procedures are now routinely reviewed by the Board of Directors on a three year cycle.

#### **Equality Standard**

Disability Sport NI was one of two organisations in Northern Ireland to achieve the preliminary level accreditation in 2014. The organisation plans to work towards the next level within the coming years.

#### **Consultation with Stakeholders**

During 2015-2016 as part of the development of the new 'Active Living: No Limits 2021 Action Plan', a plan to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a disability in Northern Ireland through participation in sport and active recreation, Disability Sport NI consulted widely with athletes, participants, member groups and key stakeholders. The plan was launched by the Department for Communities Minister in October 2016.

#### **Communications & Engagement Strategy**

To improve communication with athletes, participants, member groups and key stakeholders in early 2017 the organisation implemented a new communications and engagement strategy and appointed its first Communications & Engagement Officer.



## Links for further information and reference:

### Sports Governance NI

This website will provide information relevant to your organisation such as Anti-Doping, Selection Criteria, Gambling, Safeguarding and Equality

### Sports Governance NI

### DIY Committee Guide & Governance Health Check

This website provides additional resources such as policies, templates, advice notes and the Governance Health Check document

### DIY Committee Guide

### Northern Ireland Sports Forum

NI Sports Forum are the recognised umbrella organisation for the voluntary sector of sport in Northern Ireland and act as the "Independent Voice of Voluntary Sport in Northern Ireland".

### NI Sports Forum

### Sport Northern Ireland

Sport Northern Ireland is the leading public body for the development of sport in Northern Ireland.

### Sport NI

### Irish Governance Code for Community & Voluntary Bodies

A Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland.

### Irish Code

### UK Sport Code - A Code for Sports Governance

The Code for Sports Governance which was jointly produced by Sport England/ UK Sport sets out the levels of transparency, accountability and financial integrity that will be required from those who ask for Government and National Lottery funding from April 2017.

### UK Sport Code

### Sport & Recreation Alliance Voluntary Code

The Voluntary Code was designed to enable sport and recreation organisations to aspire to and maintain good governance. It is a tool to help Boards perform their role by outlining seven simple principles

### SRA Code





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