Scripture Union

LEADING WITH CONFIDENCE.

TRUSTEE FUNDRAISING MINI-PACK

A practical guide for confident, compliant and encouraging trustee leadership.

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WELCOME

This mini-pack has been created to help trustees feel more confident and equipped when it comes to fundraising.

For many boards, fundraising can feel like the uncomfortable agenda item. Trustees may care deeply about the cause yet feel unsure how they personally contribute to income generation. Some assume fundraising is the responsibility of staff. Others worry about the legal complexities. A few may even shrink back from the conversation entirely.

At the same time, many charities rely significantly on public donations and voluntary income to deliver their mission. When fundraising is governed well, it does more than bring in money. It strengthens sustainability, builds public trust, raises the charity's profile, and deepens engagement with supporters.

THIS PACK EXISTS TO:

· Clarify trustees' legal responsibilities in fundraising

· Make fundraising governance accessible and achievable

· Build confidence rather than pressure

· Encourage a supportive culture between trustees and staff

· Strengthen accountability while keeping it practical

You are not expected to become professional fundraisers. But you are expected to steward your charity wisely. This guide is designed to help you do that well.

HOW TO USE THIS MINI-PACK

This is not a technical legal manual. It is a governance companion. You may choose to read it individually as a trustee; work through sections at a board away day; use the annual questions as part of a governance review; or share relevant sections with new trustees during induction.

Each section combines narrative explanation with practical prompts to help you translate responsibility into action.

1 WHY FUNDRAISING IS A TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITY

Many trustees feel hesitant about fundraising. Some worry they are not "natural askers." Others assume it is purely a staff function. Some simply feel unsure what is legally required of them.

But fundraising is not primarily about asking people for money. At its heart, it is about stewardship: carefully nurturing and using the resources, relationships, and opportunities entrusted to the organisation. In this context, stewardship goes beyond managing funds; it's about stewarding the organisation itself, ensuring it can deliver its mission effectively, maintain its impact over time, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Fundraising, done well, strengthens the organisation, its people, and the communities it serves.

> *When trustees lean in rather than shrink back, fundraising becomes stronger, and so does the charity.*

Most charities rely, at least in part, on public donations to fund their work. Getting fundraising right does far more than generate income. It helps your charity raise its profile, explain its impact clearly, and build meaningful connections with people who care about the cause and want to make a difference.

As trustees, you are responsible for ensuring your charity can carry out its purpose. Income is part of that responsibility. You may not personally run campaigns or write grant applications, but you are collectively accountable for ensuring fundraising is legal, ethical, well-planned and properly overseen.

2 YOUR LEGAL DUTIES IN FUNDRAISING

Fundraising sits squarely within your trustee duties. The law requires that you:

- Comply with all relevant legislation
- Only raise funds for your charity's purposes
- Only use funds for the purposes for which they were raised
- Manage resources responsibly
- Ensure openness and accountability
- Act with reasonable care and skill in the charity's best interests

You should also register with the Fundraising Regulator and follow the Code of Fundraising Practice. The Code sets out standards that apply to charities and fundraisers across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Complying with the law and following the Code is not a bureaucratic exercise. It protects your charity's reputation. It encourages the public to give with confidence. It strengthens trust, not just in your charity, but in the wider charitable sector.

Some charities must state in their Trustees' Annual Report whether they follow the Code. Even where this is not mandatory, trustees should be confident that fundraising practice meets required standards. If you are unsure what laws apply to a particular fundraising method — for example telephone fundraising, raffles, or commercial partnerships — take reasonable steps to find out, whether by reading guidance or seeking professional advice. Ignorance is not a defence, but reasonable care is expected.

LINKS www.gov.uk/government/publications/charities-and-fundraising-cc20/charities-and-fundraising · www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code

3 WHAT A "FUNDRAISING TRUSTEE" REALLY DOES

Some boards appoint a trustee with a specific fundraising focus. This can be helpful, but it is important to understand what that role is, and what it is not. A fundraising trustee is not a one-person income department. They are not expected to personally raise all the money.

Instead, they act as a champion at board level. They help ensure fundraising is regularly discussed, that plans are robust, and that risks are properly considered. They may bring sector knowledge, ask informed questions, or support staff in shaping strategy.

In many cases, the most valuable contribution of a fundraising trustee is cultural. They normalise fundraising conversations. They help other trustees feel more confident. They keep income generation visible and strategic. However, even if you appoint a fundraising lead, all trustees remain collectively responsible.

4 HOW ALL TRUSTEES CONTRIBUTE, WITHOUT BECOMING FUNDRAISERS

Trustees often assume contribution means personally asking friends for donations. In reality, there are many ways to support fundraising that feel natural and manageable.

Trustees are ambassadors. The way you speak about the charity (e.g. in professional circles, at community events, on social media) shapes how others perceive it. A simple conversation about why you care can open doors.

Trustees also hold networks. You may know business leaders, church leaders, philanthropists, local authority officers or community influencers. Introducing staff to someone for a conversation is often far more powerful than making a direct ask yourself.

Equally important is governance. Asking thoughtful questions about income strategy, sustainability and risk strengthens fundraising. Ensuring plans are realistic and aligned with purpose helps staff succeed.

Finally, trustees set the tone of commitment. When trustees demonstrate belief in the mission, through time, advocacy and, where appropriate, personal giving, it sends a powerful signal internally and externally.

5 PLANNING FUNDRAISING EFFECTIVELY

Fundraising should never be accidental. Trustees must ensure it is planned. Planning begins with impact. What difference is the charity trying to make? What income is required to deliver that impact? How does fundraising sit alongside other income sources?

Trustees should be satisfied that there is clarity about:

- Which fundraising methods will be used
- Which methods will not be used (for ethical or reputational reasons)
- What values shape the charity’s approach
- How much will be invested
- What income is expected
- What risks exist

A fundraising plan does not need to be long or complex, especially for smaller charities. But it should exist, and trustees should understand it. Planning also includes practical safeguards: how funds will be handled securely, how restricted funds will be tracked, and how performance will be monitored. Fundraising without oversight is a governance risk.

6 UNDERSTANDING FUNDRAISING COSTS

There is no set percentage that a charity must spend on fundraising. Costs vary widely depending on cause, method, maturity and ambition.

Trustees sometimes become anxious about "overheads." However, responsible investment in fundraising can increase long-term sustainability. A poorly resourced fundraising function often underperforms.

Your role is not to minimise cost at all costs. It is to ensure that spending decisions are thoughtful, justified and in the charity’s best interests. You should understand why money is being invested and what return, financial or strategic, is expected.

7 MANAGING FUNDRAISING RISKS

Every fundraising activity carries risk. Trustees must identify, review and manage these risks as part of their wider governance responsibilities.

Risks may include lack of expertise, underperforming campaigns, reputational concerns, fraud, data protection breaches, or mismanagement of restricted funds. Working with vulnerable groups or running emotive campaigns can create additional sensitivities.

If your board lacks fundraising expertise, one response may be to recruit a trustee with relevant skills. Alternatively, training or external advice may be appropriate. Delegation does not remove accountability. Trustees must receive sufficient information to understand how fundraising is operating and whether risks are being managed.

8 RESTRICTED FUNDS: A COMMON GOVERNANCE PITFALL

One of the most common areas of confusion involves restricted funds. If you raise money for a specific project, those funds are legally restricted. This means they can only be used for that particular purpose and must not be mixed with general income. In practical terms, this might involve setting up a separate budget for the project within your budget, tracking income and expenditure carefully, and reporting back to donors on how their money has been spent. Doing this well ensures transparency, builds trust with supporters, and helps your organisation manage its resources responsibly.

If plans change, or if you raise more or less than expected, legal complications can arise. For this reason, trustees should ensure appeal wording includes a secondary purpose explaining what will happen if circumstances change.

Careful wording at the start prevents difficulty later. This is a governance responsibility, not merely a fundraising detail.

9 DELEGATING FUNDRAISING BUT REMAINING ACCOUNTABLE

Trustees may allow staff, volunteers, individual trustees or even a trading subsidiary to fundraise on behalf of the charity. You may also work with professional fundraisers or commercial participators. These arrangements can bring expertise and reach, but they also carry legal requirements.

Due diligence is essential. You must be satisfied that any partner is suitable, aligned with your values, and compliant with fundraising law. Written agreements are required and must contain specific legal details. Fees or proportions agreed must be reasonable and in the charity's best interests.

Even after entering into an agreement, trustees must monitor it regularly. Accountability cannot be outsourced. Ultimately, the legal and ethical responsibility for how the charity operates, spends money, and delivers its mission rests with them. In practical terms, this means trustees should review progress reports, check that funds are being used as intended, ensure policies are followed, and ask questions if something doesn't seem right. By staying actively engaged, trustees protect the organisation, its reputation, and the people it serves, while building trust with donors and stakeholders.

10 PROTECTING THE CHARITY AND ITS FUNDS

Fundraising creates exposure to fraud and financial crime. Trustees must take reasonable steps to protect the charity. This includes secure handling of cash, oversight of Gift Aid claims, monitoring suspicious donations and ensuring compliance with data protection law.

Fraud can occur internally or externally. Criminals may misuse a charity's identity for phishing or fake appeals. Trustees should ensure there are clear reporting routes and that serious incidents are escalated appropriately. Good governance here protects both finances and reputation.

11 TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC TRUST

Charities must be open and accountable about fundraising. All charities must produce accounts and a Trustees' Annual Report explaining where funds came from and how they were spent.

Larger charities must disclose additional information about fundraising, including complaints, compliance with the Code, and how vulnerable people are protected from undue pressure.

Transparency is not merely regulatory compliance. It is the foundation of public trust. When donors understand how their money is used and see evidence of impact, confidence grows.

12 TEN QUESTIONS TRUSTEES SHOULD ASK ANNUALLY

Each year, trustees should step back and ask:

- [ ] Do we have a clear, proportionate fundraising plan?
- [ ] Is it aligned with our charitable purpose?
- [ ] Are we compliant with fundraising law and the Code?
- [ ] Are risks identified and reviewed?
- [ ] Are restricted funds properly managed?
- [ ] Are fundraising costs justified and in our best interests?
- [ ] Are third-party relationships properly monitored?
- [ ] Are staff adequately supported and resourced?
- [ ] Are donor data and funds properly protected?
- [ ] Are we transparent and accountable in reporting?

These questions strengthen governance without overwhelming the board.

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FUNDRAISING IS NOT A BURDEN TO CARRY ALONE, BUT A SHARED, CREATIVE, MISSION-ENABLING TASK.

FOR TRUSTEES

SECTION 13

SUPPORTING THE STAFF WHO LEAD FUNDRAISING

Fundraising can be demanding. Income is influenced by external factors beyond staff control. Trustees can either create pressure or create partnership.

Understand that relationship-based fundraising takes time

— How long does it realistically take to build relationships with different types of supporters?

— Are we giving staff enough time and space to nurture these connections without unnecessary pressure?

Avoid setting unrealistic targets without resourcing

— Do our targets reflect the capacity and resources available?

— Are we providing staff with the tools, budget, or team needed to meet expectations?

Celebrate progress, not just outcomes

— How do we recognise small wins or improvements in fundraising efforts?

— Are we acknowledging the effort and engagement that led to progress, even if income goals aren't fully met?

Provide introductions and advocacy

— Which contacts in our networks could help open doors for fundraising opportunities?

— How can we personally advocate for the charity within our circles or sector?

Invest in systems and training

— Are our fundraising systems up-to-date and efficient?

— What training opportunities could strengthen our team's skills and confidence?

Ask constructive, not critical, questions

— Are the questions we ask focused on understanding and improvement rather than blame?

— How can we use our oversight role to support problem-solving and strategy?

> *When trustees and staff operate as partners, fundraising becomes strategic rather than reactive.*

FINAL REFLECTION: FUNDRAISING AS STEWARDSHIP, LEADERSHIP AND CALLING

Fundraising is not simply about income generation. It is about trust. It is about stewarding resources that do not belong to us but have been entrusted to the charity for the sake of its mission. It is about protecting reputation, building confidence and ensuring that the public's generosity is honoured with integrity and care.

At one level, fundraising is practical. It involves planning, budgeting, compliance, monitoring and governance. As trustees, you are responsible for making sure those foundations are strong. But at another level, fundraising is relational and, for many charities, deeply spiritual.

When someone gives to your charity, they are not just transferring money. They are expressing belief, belief in the cause, belief in the impact, belief in the possibility of change. Fundraising invites people into participation. It gives supporters the opportunity to align their values with action.

Seen this way, fundraising is not about pressure. It is about invitation. It is not about extracting money. It is about offering people a meaningful way to make a difference.

For charities rooted in faith, fundraising can also be understood as an expression of stewardship and trust in God's provision. Resources are not ultimately secured through anxiety or control, but through faithful planning, wise governance and courageous leadership. Trustees play a vital role in creating an environment where faith and prudence sit together, where prayer and policy, vision and vigilance, belong in the same conversation.

Even for charities without an explicit faith foundation, there is something profoundly human about fundraising. It connects generosity with need. It turns compassion into action. It allows communities to take shared responsibility for the change they want to see.

As trustees, you set the tone. If fundraising is treated as awkward or secondary, others will sense that. If it is treated as integral to mission, grounded in integrity and approached with confidence, that culture will spread too.

You do not need to become professional fundraisers. You do not need to be the loudest voice in the room. But you are guardians of the charity's future. Your curiosity, encouragement and willingness to engage matter. Your readiness to ask thoughtful questions matters. Your openness to using your networks matters. Your belief in the mission matters.

When trustees support fundraising, it becomes less fearful and more fruitful. Ultimately, fundraising is about enabling impact. It is about making sure that the people your charity exists to serve are not limited by avoidable financial fragility. It is about turning vision into reality.

So do not shrink back from this responsibility. Step toward it with courage. Approach it with integrity. Engage with it as stewards. Because when fundraising is led well at board level, it does not just secure income, it releases mission.