



A FUTURE WITHOUT
DOMESTIC ABUSE

Trustee Handbook



Welcome from the Chair

You have taken a small step towards making a big difference.

The fact that you are reading this handbook and considering becoming a Trustee with Next Chapter demonstrates a willingness to use your time, skills and experience to make a difference to others. We thank you for your interest and for considering what part you can play in our mission.

Key Statistics & Context

- **Prevalence in Essex:** Domestic abuse accounts for **40% of all violent crime in Essex**.
- **Impact on Children:** Around **1 in 5 children** are exposed to domestic abuse, with children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse recognised as victims in their own right.
- **National Context:** In England and Wales, women remain significantly more likely to be victims of domestic abuse (approximately **1 in 11 women** compared to **1 in 15 men** experienced domestic abuse in a single year).
- **Impact of Next Chapter Support:** **71% of our clients** report having an improved outlook for the future after engaging with our services.

Domestic abuse can take many forms, it isn't always physical violence or the threat of it. Coercive control and emotional, financial and digital abuse can all have a devastating impact on survivors and their families.

At the heart of becoming a trustee at Next Chapter is a commitment to creating a future where people affected by domestic abuse can live free from harm, fear and injustice. Whether that commitment comes from professional experience, personal values, lived experience or a combination of these, our trustees share a determination to help survivors rebuild their lives and shape a better future.

This handbook describes what matters to everyone at Next Chapter, our values and culture, board roles and governance expectations based on standards from organisations including NCVO and the Association of Chairs.

Sarah Janes, Chair of the Board of Trustees



About Next Chapter

Our History & Legal Framework

- **Legal Status:** The Next Chapter (East of England) is a registered charity (Charity No. 1058295) and a company limited by guarantee (Company No. 02266883).
- **Dual Role:** Because Next Chapter is a charitable company, board members act as both Charity Trustees and Company Directors, with responsibilities under both charity and company law.
- **Coverage:** We work across Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford.
- **Women's Aid Membership:** In accordance with our Women's Aid membership, our board maintains a majority of women holding Trustee roles, with the key roles of Chair and Vice-Chair held by women.

Vision, Mission & Organisational Values

Our Vision

A world where everyone can live safely, with dignity and respect, free from domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our Mission

Grounded in the voices of survivors and the strength of our communities, we empower individuals and families to rebuild their lives, free from harm, fear and injustice. Work collectively toward a safer, more equitable future for all. We advocate boldly for lasting change to end domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Our Core Organisational Values

- **Courageous:** We are brave and have strength for the people we support. We empower them to have a voice and where they are unable, we will speak the truth and advocate on their behalf. We will always speak up and challenge unfairness. We will challenge all forms of domestic abuse and support all victims and survivors, whilst protecting our women-only spaces and uniting in the challenge against violence against women and children.
- **Trustworthy:** We will develop trusting relationships, providing an emotionally and physically safe environment for the people we support. We will be honest, respectful and reliable. We will always do the right thing and do what we say we will.
- **Inclusive:** We are diverse, welcoming, approachable and inclusive as employers, service providers and people. We promote unity, fairness and respect; challenging ourselves to remove barriers and ensure equal access for those who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.
- **Responsive:** The people we support are at the heart of all we do. We ensure the support we provide is flexible and tailored to the needs of individuals. We are collaborative, understanding, compassionate and sensitive.
- **Exceptional:** We are proud to be experts in our field, striving to always be the best we can be, to innovate, lead and to exceed expectations. We are committed to developing and skilling our staff to the highest standards and to being generous with our knowledge to increase awareness and understanding across our partner organisations.
- **Teamwork:** We value and respect each other and celebrate our differences. We value each other's knowledge and opinions, and understand the benefits of positive and constructive communication - we listen and hear each other. We know that we are always stronger, happier and more effective when we work together. We strive to always support each other and learn from each other.



What is a Trustee? (Governance Standards)

Under charity law, trustees share ultimate responsibility for governing the charity and directing how it is managed. The Charity Governance Code provides a framework for good governance and helps Boards consider how effectively they are fulfilling that role.

The 6 Core Duties of a Trustee (Charity Commission CC3)

1. **Ensure the charity carries out its purpose for the public benefit:** Ensure activities directly align with Next Chapter's governing document and objects.
2. **Comply with governing documents and the law:** Adhere to charity law, company law, employment regulations, safeguarding duties, GDPR/data protection and equality legislation.
3. **Act in the charity's best interests:** Make independent decisions in Next Chapter's best interests, free from personal interest or external bias and identify, declare and appropriately manage conflicts of interest.
4. **Manage resources responsibly:** Act as prudent stewards of funds, safeguard assets and property, manage risks and avoid over-indebtedness.
5. **Act with reasonable care and skill:** Give sufficient time, thought and energy to the role, utilising personal professional skills (e.g. housing, legal, finance, social care, HR) to inform governance and oversight.
6. **Ensure the charity is accountable:** Ensure statutory accounting and reporting requirements are met and that Next Chapter can demonstrate that it is well run, effective and appropriately accountable to its stakeholders.



Overview of Key Services

Safe Accommodation

- **Family Refuge:** Purpose-built accommodation providing specialist safe accommodation for women and children fleeing domestic abuse.
- **The Nest (Complex Needs Recovery Refuge):** Combined specialist domestic abuse and substance misuse recovery support for women with complex needs.
- **Dispersed Housing:** Flexible safe housing options across Colchester for everyone.

Community and IDVA Services

- **IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor):** High-risk intervention, crisis safety planning and civil/criminal court support.
- **Community DAP (Domestic Abuse Practitioner):** Support for medium and low-risk survivors, including delivery of the RISE group recovery programme.

Children and Young People (CYP) Services

- **CYP & YPVA Support:** Specialist support for children up to age 14 and high-risk young people aged 14 -19.
- **Hand in Hand Programme:** Safe space for non-abusing parents to understand abuse trauma and support their children's recovery.



Board Roles & Officer Summaries

Chair of the Board

- **Role Purpose:** Provides strategic leadership and direction to the Board, ensuring effective governance, board cohesion and legal compliance.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Leads strategic planning, sets board agendas, and chairs meetings.
 - Fosters a healthy, constructive relationship with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), balancing support with strategic challenge.
 - Oversees CEO annual appraisals, succession planning and board development.
 - Represents the charity publicly and acts as a final adjudicator for high-level grievances or disciplinary matters if required.

Vice-Chair

- **Role Purpose:** Supports the Chair in board oversight, deputises in the Chair's absence and leads specific governance working groups or internal board reviews.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Assumes chair duties during absence or conflict of interest.
 - Leads on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives within board governance.

Treasurer

- **Role Purpose:** Leads board oversight of financial strategy, financial management, reporting and internal controls.
- **Key Responsibilities:**
 - Monitors budgets, management accounts and financial risks alongside the Finance Lead/Manager.
 - Ensures compliance with statutory accounting practices and liaises with external auditors.
 - Advises the board on reserves policy, strategic financial planning and CEO/staff pay structure reviews.

Trustee Commitments & Time Expectations

Commitment	Frequency & Duration	Notes
Board Meetings	7 per year (2 to 2.5 hours each)	Held in the evenings; ~50% in-person, ~50% online
Board Away Day/AGM	1 per year (full day, ~10am–4pm)	Usually held on a Saturday
Preparation Time	~45 mins per meeting	Reading board papers, reviewing accounts, formulating questions
Task & Finish/Committees	1–2 per year (as required / volunteered)	Specific strategic projects or sub-committees
All-Staff Away Day	1 per year (working day)	Opportunity to meet staff and understand operational work
Link Trustee	1 hour, 4 times per year	Time to develop greater understanding of a specific area of the organisation, providing insight and feedback to the Board
Training and CPD	Approx. 1 hour per month	Opportunity to develop skills and knowledge relevant to the organisation and sector
Average Monthly Total	~2–4 hours per month	Including ad-hoc advice and governance duties



Good Governance Checklist for New Trustees

To support your onboarding (recommended by NCVO & Charity Governance Code):

- ☐ **Read Essential Charity Commission Guidance:**
 - CC3 - The Essential Trustee
- ☐ **Review Key Organisational Documents:**
 - Memorandum & Articles of Association (Governing Document)
 - Latest Annual Report and Audited Accounts
 - Current Risk Register & Strategic Plan
 - Safeguarding Policies, Whistleblowing Policy, Data Protection Policy, Staff and Trustee Privacy Policy, and Code of Conduct
- ☐ **Complete Administrative & Regulatory Requirements:**
 - Sign Trustee Declaration of Eligibility & Fit and Proper Persons form
 - Complete the information and documentation required for appointment as a Company Director and registration with Companies House
 - Complete Conflict of Interest Declaration Form
 - Complete Enhanced DBS Check
 - Sign Confidentiality Agreement
- ☐ **Induction & Staff Meetings:**
 - Schedule induction meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive Officer
 - Conduct an introductory visit to Next Chapter office/service facilities

