

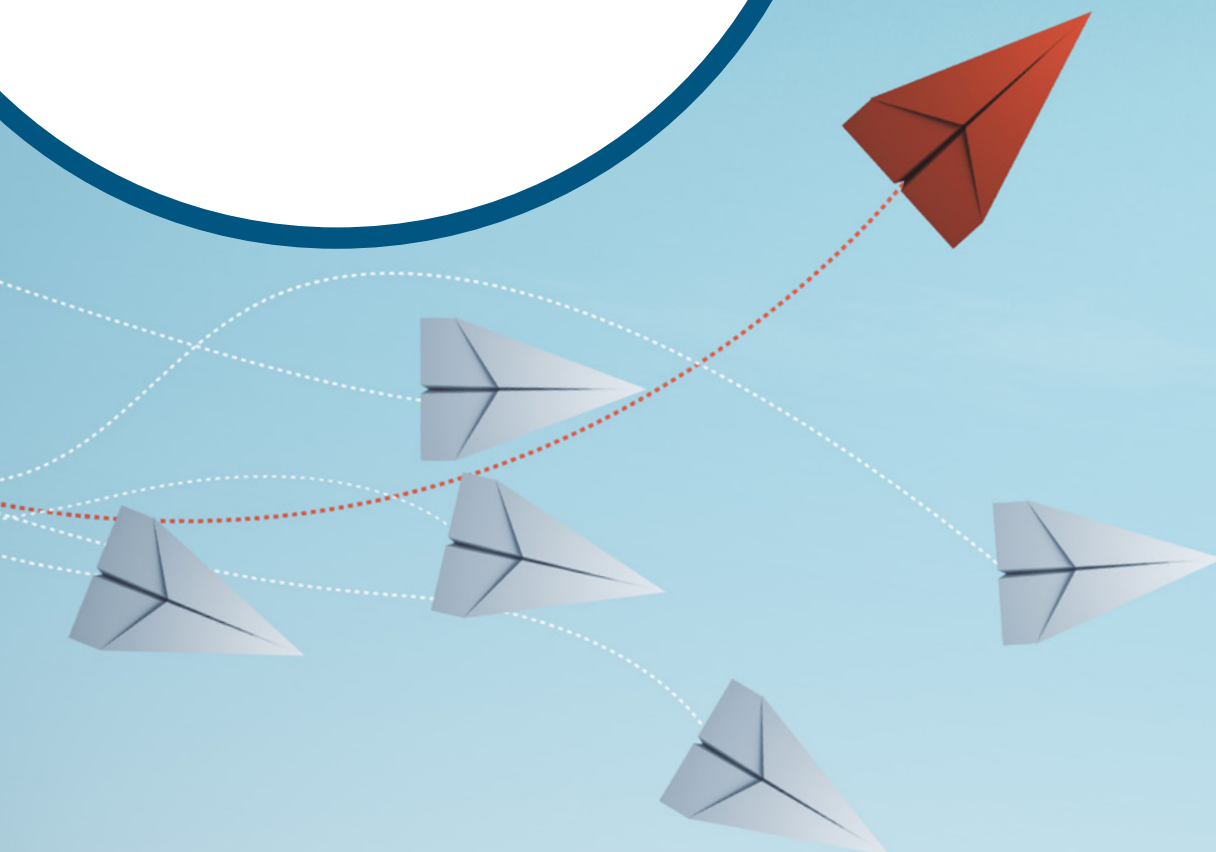


An Rialálaí  
Carthanas

Charities  
Regulator

# Crisis Management for Small Charities:

A 6-step approach



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# About this guide

This guide is a resource for trustees in small charities about how to respond to a crisis.

## What is a crisis?

A crisis is any situation concerning a charity that could:

- threaten the charity's stakeholders or property,
- seriously interrupt the charity's work,
- significantly damage the charity's reputation or its financial viability.

Examples of a crisis:

- Fire or significant storm damage to charity buildings or vehicles
- Theft of charity funds or property
- A pandemic or the effect of pandemic restrictions
- Inappropriate behaviour on the part of a charity trustee, staff member or volunteer
- Safeguarding issues
- Data breaches
- An investigation into the charity by An Garda Síochána, a regulator or other public body
- Negative media reports in relation to the charity

## What to do in a crisis – six steps

**Step 1: Provide support to stabilise your charity**

**Step 2: Review your charitable purpose**

**Step 3: Connect with your stakeholders**

**Step 4: Look for ways to fundraise**

**Step 5: Provide clear leadership**

**Step 6: Put together a crisis communications plan**

# Step 1: Provide support to stabilise your charity

- Arrange meetings of your trustees. (Trustees may also be known as directors, board members or committee members depending on whether your charity is a company or association.)
- Record any decisions taken and why those decisions were taken in the minutes of the meeting.
- Assess your charity's finances and evaluate the level of services your charity can continue to operate. Check in with your staff, volunteers and beneficiaries.
- Make sure your charity continues to implement the **Charities Governance Code** and that there are written minutes of all trustee meetings in line with Principle 5 of the Code.

## Look after your people

Without them, you cannot provide your service.

- Do staff and volunteers feel supported?
- Do you have back-up support if staff and volunteers are not available?
- What are the core activities that support beneficiaries such as service users and their families?

## Assess your finances

- Has the crisis affected the charity's income?
- Have funding activities been cancelled?
- Does the charity have reserves?
- Can you access them?
- What other funding options are available?
- Can you maintain normal day-to-day operations?
- Does the charity need to cut costs?

## Review your services

- Is the charity able to continue providing services?
- How will you operate if the crisis gets worse?
- Can you pause or postpone services?
- Are there other ways to provide services such as collaboration with another charity or public body in the area?
- Which key services do you need to prioritise?
- Are there services that are not vital?

## Check your insurance policy

- Has the charity got insurance?
- Does the policy cover the crisis that has arisen?
- Does the policy require the charity to inform the insurer of the crisis event?



## Step 2: Review your charitable purpose

Why was the charity set up? What is its purpose? Support your charity in line with your charity's values.

- How can you support your charity to continue serving its charitable purpose?
- What critical actions need to be taken to deliver on the charity's purpose?
- Have funder expectations influenced your choice of services? Is this consistent with your charitable purpose?
- Are you providing services that no longer serve your charitable purpose and your beneficiaries?
- If so, should you pause or end these services?

## Step 3: Connect with your stakeholders

Identify the charity's stakeholders. These are the people who have an interest in your charity or could be affected by it. Make sure to connect with any individuals or groups that are part of your charity.

- Prioritise your beneficiaries.
- Talk to your funders, partners, suppliers and service users. In times of crisis, they need to be reassured.
- Reach out to charities offering similar services who may be able to provide support.
- Ask yourself what your stakeholders' needs are and how the crisis will affect them.
- Work together as trustees to support the people who need it the most.

# Step 4: Look for ways to fundraise

Charity revenues will often decline significantly during a crisis.

- Work with your employees and volunteers involved in fundraising activities to find creative ways to maintain funding.
- Engage with your donors to help reassure them.

# Step 5: Provide clear leadership

Visible leadership is crucial in a crisis.

- Communicate clearly. People want to hear clear and transparent messaging from the chairperson of the board or those leading your charity.
- Show understanding and care. Leading with empathy is vital as beneficiaries and employees may be panicked and confused.
- Give as much information as you can even though you may not have all the answers.
- Tell your stakeholders what steps you are taking to resolve the crisis so they know what to expect.



# Step 6: Put together a crisis communications plan

It is important to put plans in place for how your charity communicates and responds during a crisis. This will help ensure clear and accurate messaging during a crisis.

- Consider the crisis events most likely to happen.
- Get external, expert, communications advice, if resources allow.
- Make sure you respond promptly and accurately to any formal requests for information from regulators, An Garda Síochána or other public bodies.
- Prepare and provide clear messaging to stakeholders and members of the public.
- Communicate reassurance to concerned beneficiaries, staff and volunteers.
- Communicate directly with stakeholders as far as possible through telephone calls, texts, messaging and emails to communicate with stakeholders.
- Make sure you control who can post information on the charity's website and social media platforms.
- Take care when posting responses to posts or queries on your website or social media platforms. Be clear and factual when posting updates.

## Summary

As trustees, you are responsible for taking appropriate action in response to any crisis your charity may encounter. By putting a plan in place now, you will be well placed to respond quickly and effectively should a crisis develop.

This guidance was developed using NALA plain English guidelines.





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