

Chapter 6

Role of boards of management



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As stated in the National Disability Service (2008) guide for boards of management of disability service providers, the role of boards is to be responsible for:

...ensuring that their organisations are effective, sustainable, responsive and capable of delivering high quality services. Boards are also responsible for ensuring their organisation's compliance with relevant legislation and funding requirements.

Boards may need to lead and support their organisation through changes to the way services are provided, to ensure that they are flexible and targeted to the individual needs of people with a disability, and compliant with the principles and provisions of the new Disability Act 2006.

(National Disability Services, 2008b)

In reviewing or developing a complaint management system in organisations which have a committee or board of management (BOM), it is important to be clear on the role performed by the board as distinct from the chief executive officer. Boards of management should make sure that their organisation has sound internal processes for managing complaints, but not actually be part of the process.

Members of boards and executive leadership groups can sometimes be confused by the reference to management. In some organisations the term 'board of governance' is used to make explicit the focus on governance level issues rather than operational management (Victorian Healthcare Association, 1995). However, it is important that community organisations understand the differences between the two terms.

The main aim of a board of management group is to govern the overall operations of the organisation to ensure it operates in a proper and effective manner. This should not be confused with the day-to-day management of the organisation, which is usually carried out by the senior paid staff member (Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS), 2007). It may be useful to consider the application of the doughnut approach described later (see Chapter 8) for both the board and executive leadership group so that there can be greater clarity about respective areas of responsibility.

In relation to community-based organisations:

Governance means:

- to oversee and monitor
- to provide leadership and direction
- to accept ultimate responsibility for the overall organisation.

Management means:

- (executive leadership group) to undertake the day-to-day tasks and responsibilities for the operations of the organisation according to the policies and standards laid down by the governance body (this usually includes administration, programming, volunteer supervision etc).

Where an organisation has a paid coordinator, manager or executive officer, the responsibility for 'managing' the day-to-day responsibilities usually rests with that person. However, it is the job of the executive leadership group to appoint the appropriate staff for this position and to provide adequate support, direction, policies and procedures to enable them to work effectively.

It is equally important that the executive leadership group adopt an attitude of trust and confidence in staff, so they can 'get on with the job at hand' in a spirit of goodwill and confidence (VCOSS, 2007).



6.1. Role of the board of management in relation to complaints

In this context the responsibility for managing complaints rests with staff, while the board of management (BOM) has responsibility for ensuring the organisation has developed appropriate policies and procedures for managing complaints effectively and in a way which is consistent with the organisation's obligations under the *Disability Act 2006*. The BOM also has responsibility for monitoring any service improvements flagged in aggregated complaints data.

(National Disability Services, 2008b)



Thought

- *Are the people using your service, and their families and carers, provided with information about how to make a complaint?*
- *Are they informed about where they can take their complaint if they are not satisfied with your organisation's management of the issue?*
- *Are you confident that service users, families, carers and staff are not adversely affected if they make a complaint?*
- *Does your board regularly consider trends or issues emerging through complaints and use these to identify potential areas for service improvement?*
- *Does your board schedule periodic review of the organisation's annual report to the Disability Services Commissioner?*

(National Disability Services, 2008b: 22)