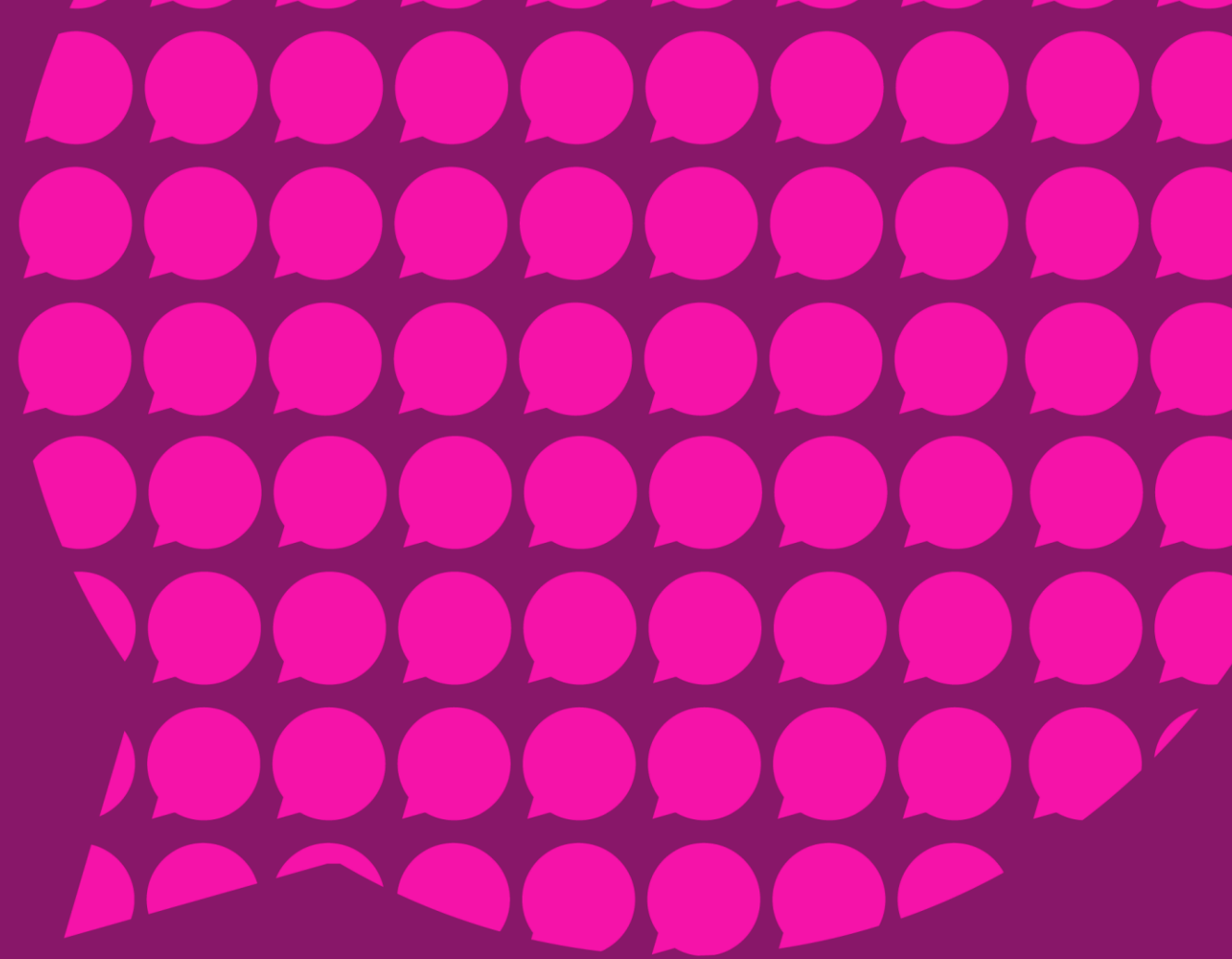


Effective chair  
Effective board  
Effective non-profit



# Presentation for Bond, 4 June 2026

Liz Lowther, Chief Executive

# Top 5 challenges facing chairs, 2025

1. New to chairing, need confidence building
2. Difficult trustees/challenging board behaviours
3. Financial difficulties, insolvency, closures and mergers
4. Difficult relationship with CEO
5. Formal grievances and complaints



Source: Association of Chairs 'Chairs in Need' project, 2025

# 10 things our 2026 research told us

1. Only 4% think their board is highly effective
2. Nearly 1 in 3 CEOs describe their board culture as cautious
3. Just 41% say their board is open to risk
4. Only 43% of CEOs and 66% of chairs think their board has the diversity and skills it needs
5. 59% have experienced challenging board behaviour
6. 45% of boards have regular governance or board effectiveness reviews
7. Two thirds have seen effective governance in action
8. The newer you are, the more exposed you are
9. Investing time in building relationships and trust are key advice for new chairs or CEOs
10. The single best piece of advice? Communicate openly and honestly from day one

Source: [Association of Chairs, ACEVO and nfpResearch: board behaviours and dynamics research, 2026](#)

# 10 actions NGO boards can take now

1. Have a trustee code of conduct and scheme of delegation in place.
2. Carry out regular governance reviews, chair and trustee appraisals.
3. Make time to build board relationships.
4. Regularly update your risk management framework and risk register.
5. Review essential policies and procedures including safeguarding, use of social media and AI.
6. Proactively address financial sustainability issues.
7. Be prepared to respond to external threats.
8. Review your recruitment practices to make them as open, inclusive and accessible as possible.
9. Ensure lived experience on the board from the communities you serve.
10. Provide learning and development for trustees on inclusive cultures and practices.

# AoC resources and further reading

- Our free EDI guide '[It starts from the top](#)' provides reflections and recommendations to help boards.
- AoC [governance templates](#) include chair and trustee appraisals and reviews (some are member-only).
- Recent AoC [blog on organisational culture and risk](#), authored by Sabrina Segal of the Risk Collective.
- Our [free financial leadership guide](#) is particularly helpful for boards of smaller organisations.

## Further reading:

[Association of Chairs resources](#)

[AoC resources on equity, diversity and inclusion](#)



# It starts from the top

Reflections and recommendations on equity, diversity  
and inclusion for charity and non-profit chairs and boards



Association  
of **Chairs**

Effective chair  
Effective board  
Effective non-profit

# Thank you.

Any questions? Email: [info@associationofchairs.co.uk](mailto:info@associationofchairs.co.uk)

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