



What it means to be an elected member of the BSSH Council

When an individual agrees to become a member of Council for The British Society for Surgery of the Hand (referred to as “BSSH” or the “Society”), they become **a member of the senior management team** of the membership body that is the Society.

As a member of the senior management team, the individual takes on joint and several liability for all of the decisions taken by that senior management team during their period in office. The senior management team takes ultimate responsibility for all of the actions of BSSH, and for everything that is done in the name of BSSH by anyone whether employed by BSSH, a volunteer for BSSH or a supplier to BSSH.

Because the Society is structured in law (as it pertains to England and Wales) as a charitable company limited by guarantee, when an individual becomes a member of Council, they also automatically become **a director of the company** and **a trustee of the charity**. As the senior management of a charitable company in business in England and Wales all the usual range of business related legislation applies to BSSH – such as company law, charity law, tax law, employment law, and health and safety regulations.

Although slightly different rules apply to all of the above three roles, it is those that apply to a trustee of the charity which bring with them the most wide ranging and onerous levels of individual responsibility. Being a trustee of a charity is no different to being the trustee of a pension scheme, the executor of an estate upon death, or the trustee of any other type of trust.

However, the Charity Commission (as regulator of all charities in England and Wales) provides a substantial range of specific guidance for trustees which can be accessed for free through its website at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission. The recently revised publication “**The essential trustee**” is a key source of information for anyone thinking of becoming a member of Council and can be downloaded [here](#).

The Charity Commission has also produced some helpful 5 minute videos for Charity Trustees on important topics such as delivering purpose, making decisions and conflicts of interest which should be viewed [here](#).

The key to being a trustee is to ensure that you devote sufficient **time, thought, energy** and **skill** to fulfilling the obligations expected of you within your role.

In summary, those obligations are as follows:

- Ultimate responsibility for everything the charity does;
- Specific responsibility for the proper administration of the charity;



- Duty to act with prudence in all matters;
- Must act collectively and in the best interests of the charity; and
- Must safeguard the current and future assets of the charity and ensure that those assets are applied to further the charitable objectives of the charity.

BSSH charitable objectives:

The objects for which the Society is established are for the public benefit, to promote and direct development of hand surgery and to foster and co-ordinate education, study and research in hand surgery, including:

- (a) to optimise treatments and outcomes for patients with hand related pathology or injury;
- (b) to promote the prevention of hand related injuries and pathologies;
- (c) to disseminate the knowledge of Hand Surgery among members of the Society, the Medical Profession and the general public.

In trying to achieve its charitable objectives (as stated above), BSSH has identified **patients** as being the **ultimate beneficiaries** and **improved care** as being the **ultimate benefit** it is striving to achieve.

The Society undertakes a **range of activities** all of which are **designed to disseminate information** as it pertains to the specialty and in most cases the success of those activities depends upon the level of engagement with the membership and the extent to which the information on the specialty can be disseminated **through the membership**.

For more information or to be put in contact with a current member of the BSSH Council to discuss their experience, please contact the BSSH Secretariat on secretariat@bssh.ac.uk