

Emotional Load and Risk

Purpose: Some governance responsibilities, such as complaints, exclusions or grievances, can create significant emotional pressure.

This tool helps boards:

- identify emotional pressure;
- share responsibility;
- manage escalation;
- support individuals; and
- reduce avoidable risk.

TOOL 3.1: Stress / Pressure Assessment

Consider a task or activity that may be causing you or the governing body stress or pressure currently. Identify what it is and then use this tool to score in line with the areas below:

Factor	1	2	3	4
Complexity	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Emotional Intensity	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Time Requirement	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High

- **Complexity:** Low to Very High complexity.
- **Emotional Intensity:** Low = little emotional impact; Very High = severe distress likely.
- **Time Requirement:** Low = minimal time; Very High = extensive time commitment.
- **External Advice Required:** Low = none required; Very High = specialist advice essential.

Results

Score	Rating	Response
4–6	Low	Follow standard procedures.
7–10	Moderate	Additional oversight required
11–13	High	Chair and governance professional review
14 or higher	Very High	Specialist advice and enhanced support arrangements

Dependent on your scoring outcome, consider the next tools in order to assess whether further advice or support is needed and for whom.

TOOL 3.2: Emotional Load Risk Assessment (Share the Load)

Ask:

Who is carrying the pressure?

- ☐ Chair
- ☐ Governor
- ☐ Governance Professional/ Clerk
- ☐ Governance Lead

Is support available?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know (seek advice or refer to Chair / Governance Professional / Clerk for guidance)

Should responsibility be shared / delegated?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Reflect on your responses to the questions above and consider the level of pressure and how to address it using the table below. It is important to remember that no individual should carry the weight of any issue or concern alone. There will always be someone who can support or guide – this may be your Trust, governance support provider or a trusted colleague / peer.

Level	Response
Low	Monitor
Moderate	Share responsibility
High	Formal support
Very High	Escalate and review

Case Study Snapshot

Challenge: A governance professional experienced significant pressure when findings from a governance review were challenged by school leaders.

What helped: Professional boundaries were maintained, evidence-based discussions were used and support was sought through governance networks.

Impact: Reinforced the value of peer support and not carrying difficult situations alone.

Related Toolkit Tool(s): Tool 3.2 Emotional Load Risk Assessment.

TOOL 3.3: Post-Incident Review

To support wellbeing and future processes, it is important to reflect on impact and any lessons learned. Below are some questions to ask and a proposed table which can be used to record actions taken, proposed or intended from the post-incident review:

- What happened?
- What worked well and what created pressure?
- What support was available and should anything change?

Area	Detail
Complaint / Exclusion/Grievance / Other	
Likely Pressure Points	
Available Support	
Escalation Route	
Review Date	

Case Study Snapshot

Challenge: Wellbeing concerns were identified amongst those carrying governance responsibilities.

What helped: Peer support from experienced Chairs, access to a named governance officer and signposting to wellbeing resources.

Impact: Improved wellbeing and increased confidence in managing governance pressures.

Related Toolkit Tool(s): Tool 3.2 Emotional Load Risk Assessment and Tool 3.3 Post-Incident Review.