

Early Warning and Wellbeing Checks

Purpose: Governance pressures usually develop gradually - early identification of potential red flags allows earlier intervention.

TOOL 4.1: Governance Red Flag Checklist

Score:

Green - Low = 0

Amber - Moderate = 1

Red - High = 2

Yellow – Very High = 3

Indicator	Score
Increasing complaints or other panel activity	
Late governance documentation	
Meeting overruns	
Meetings not quorate for decisions	
Vacancies not filled within a term	
Poor attendance	
Delayed actions	
Board disengagement	
Operational agenda items	
One-person dependency	

Results

Score	Rating	Response
0–5	Low	Normal governance activity
6–10	Moderate	Monitor and review
11–20	High	Action required
21–30	Very High	Governance sustainability risk – urgent action required

TOOL 4.2: Five-Minute Governance Pulse Check

As individual board members, score each area statement below and then use the following tool to collate as a whole board, discuss and action:

1 = Strongly Disagree / 5 = Strongly Agree

Area	Score
Workload My governance workload is manageable	
Role Clarity I understand my governance responsibilities	
Support I know where to seek support	
Effectiveness Governance board time is used effectively	
Culture Governors' challenge in meetings is respectful and constructive	
Sustainability I feel able to sustain my governance role	

Area	Average Score
Workload	
Role Clarity	
Support	
Effectiveness	
Culture	
Sustainability	

Interpretation:

4–5: Healthy / **3–4:** Monitor / **Below 3:** Review and discuss

Chair Review Questions: Are any scores declining? Are there recurring themes? Does action need to be taken?

TOOL 4.3: Governance Board Pressure

Purpose: To help governing boards identify governance pressure early and take proportionate action before effectiveness or sustainability is affected currently:

LOW Normal governance activity Governance is operating as planned. Workload is manageable, meetings are focused and responsibilities are clear.	MODERATE Increasing governance pressure Early warning signs are appearing. Agendas, actions or capacity may need prompt review before pressure builds.	HIGH Significant governance pressure Governance effectiveness is being affected. Action is needed to share workload, strengthen support and reset priorities.	VERY HIGH Governance sustainability risk The board may struggle to operate sustainably without change. Escalation, external support and structural review may be required.
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Read across the four levels below and identify the description that best reflects your governing board today. If most indicators sit within one level, take the action shown.

● **LOW: Healthy Governance**

What it looks like

- Meetings are effective and focused
- Actions are completed on time
- Workload feels manageable
- Roles and responsibilities are clear

Ask Yourself: Are we operating as planned?

Response: Continue current arrangements and maintain oversight

● **MODERATE: Governance Under Pressure - Review**

What it looks like

- Agendas are becoming longer
- Actions are slipping or delayed
- The same people are taking on more work
- Capacity is beginning to feel stretched

Ask Yourself: Are warning signs starting to appear?

Response: Review meeting structure, committee arrangements, workload and priorities

● **HIGH: Significant Governance Pressure - Intervene**

What it looks like

- Attendance is falling
- Key tasks are delayed
- Decisions depend on a small number of individuals
- Governance activity is becoming reactive

Ask Yourself? Is governance effectiveness being affected?

Response: Introduce support, reallocate responsibilities and implement corrective actions

● **CRITICAL: GOVERNANCE SUSTAINABILITY RISK - Escalate**

What it looks like

- Governor vacancies remain unfilled
- Engagement has significantly reduced
- Workload concerns are affecting performance
- Governance arrangements may no longer be sustainable

Ask Yourself? Can the board continue to operate without change?

Response: Seek external support and review governance structures, capacity and succession arrangements.

Discussion Prompt: What is the single most important action we need to take to improve governance effectiveness?

TOOL 4.4: Who is Carrying Too Much?

One-Person Dependency Assessment

Rate each area.

Area	Green	Amber	Red
Chair Dependency	☐	☐	☐
Governance Professional/ Clerk Dependency	☐	☐	☐
Committee Dependency	☐	☐	☐
Link Governor Dependency	☐	☐	☐

Questions:

- Who could share responsibility?
- Is succession planning in place?
- What happens if the individual leaves?
- What action can we take

Example:

Risk - Chair handles all complaints.

Rating - Red

Action - Create panel arrangements and shared oversight.

Case Study Snapshot

Challenge: Monitoring visits and governance responsibilities became concentrated between only two governors because other governors were unable to regularly visit during the school day.

What helped: Responsibilities were reviewed and redistributed where possible.

Impact: The experience highlighted the risks of dependency on a small number of individuals and the impact this can have on wellbeing and sustainability.

Related Toolkit Tool(s): Tool 4.4 Who Is Carrying Too Much? and One-Person Dependency Assessment.

TOOL 4.5: The Governance Health Dashboard

Review Time: Under 10 Minutes

Area	Green	Amber	Red	Priority Action
Workload	☐	☐	☐	
Attendance	☐	☐	☐	
Vacancies	☐	☐	☐	
Governance Documentation	☐	☐	☐	
Meeting Effectiveness	☐	☐	☐	
Complaints	☐	☐	☐	
Capacity	☐	☐	☐	
Succession Planning	☐	☐	☐	

Dashboard Questions

1. What has changed?
2. What requires action?
3. What can be prevented?

Example

Indicator	Status	Priority Action
Attendance	Low	Monitor
Complaints	Moderate	Increase – review policy, procedure and process
Vacancies	High	Longstanding vacancies - recruitment planning

For guidance on next steps for succession planning, please refer to the guidance produced by NAGAS: [Succession Breeds Success 2026](#).