

# THINKING ABOUT OUTSOURCING?

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR CHARITY ORGANISATIONS



**YOU'RE PROBABLY ALREADY DOING IT...**

If you have a cleaner, a gardener, or a contractor who checks your fire alarms, that is outsourcing. It's the practice of bringing in specialist help for work that falls outside your core team's capacity or expertise.

For small charities, outsourcing is not a last resort. It is often the most sensible, cost-effective way to get the right things done by the right people, without overstressing the people who matter most.

## WHY OUTSOURCE RATHER THAN EMPLOY?

Hiring a member of staff is a significant commitment. Before you go down that route, it is worth understanding what outsourcing offers instead:

**Cost flexibility** - You pay for what you need, when you need it. No employer National Insurance contributions, no pension obligations, no holiday or sick pay. For organisations with variable workloads, this makes a real difference to the budget.

**Immediate expertise** - A good outsourcer arrives with skills and experience already in place. There is no lengthy training period and no learning curve at your expense. Scalability. Need more support during a busy period? Or less during a quiet one? Outsourcing gives you the flexibility to scale up or down without the complications of employment law.



**Reduced risk** - Compliance requirements around building management, health & safety, data protection and financial reporting have all become more complex. Bringing in specialists means you can be confident the work meets the standard required of you.

Outsourcing can be a one-off project, short-term cover, or the beginning of an ongoing working relationship. It's time flexible and works around you.



## WHAT CAN BE OUTSOURCED?

More than most people realise. Here are the areas where charities most commonly benefit from outside support:

### Administration & Charity Management

Correspondence, meeting minutes, Charity Commission returns, policy reviews, setting up a secure virtual office, and much more.

### Bookkeeping & Finances

Accounts preparation, independent examination, trustees' reports, payroll, Charities SORP compliance, and budgeting.

### Website, Newsletters & Communications

Governance, safeguarding, financial oversight, onboarding, and training for new trustees.



### Website, newsletters and communications

Content strategy, website planning & design, email newsletters, blog writing, and social media scheduling.

### Fundraising & Income Generation

Strategy, grant research, donor communications, and application administration.

### Trustee & Team Training

Governance, safeguarding, financial oversight, onboarding, and training for new trustees.

*The right support in the right place changes everything. We can help you find both.*



Modern technology means that most of this can be handled remotely. You do not need someone in the building to manage your inbox, run your accounts, or update your website.

A well-structured mix of volunteers, contractors and employees - each with clear responsibilities - can work together effectively from different locations.





## FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON

Not all outsourcers are equal. A few principles to guide your search: Ask for references. Speak to other organisations they have worked with, ideally in a similar sector. How they work matters as much as what they can do.

**Check alignment.** Will this person respect and reflect your values? For faith-based organisations in particular, the way someone works is just as important as the outcome.

**Be specific about what you need.** The clearer your brief, the better the result. Vague instructions lead to wasted time and money on both sides.

**Use your networks.** Your parent organisation (if you have one), local infrastructure bodies, or sector-specific directories are often the best starting point. Personal recommendation carries more weight than a web search.

**Trial where possible.** A small initial project is a low-risk way to assess whether someone is the right fit before committing to a longer arrangement.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO HAVE IN PLACE...

Before you bring anyone in, make sure the basics are covered:



### A Written Agreement

Even for informal arrangements, a simple contract or letter of engagement sets out what's expected, protects both parties, and prevents misunderstandings.



### Data protection

If your outsourcer will handle personal data (donor records, staff information, beneficiary details) you need a data processing agreement in place. This is a legal requirement under UK GDPR, not optional.



### Contractor vs Employee

Be clear on the distinction. HMRC's IR35 rules apply to the charity sector too. If someone works exclusively for you, follows your processes, and uses your equipment, they may legally be considered an employee. Take advice if you are unsure.



### Clear Lines of Responsibility

Everyone involved - volunteers, contractors, paid staff - needs to know where their role begins and ends. Confusion here costs time and erodes trust.





## THINKING ABOUT BUDGET

You do not need a large budget to start outsourcing. Many organisations begin with just a few hours a month and build from there as confidence and need grow.

A useful framework when setting your budget:

- What is this task currently costing you in staff time?
- What is the cost of it NOT being done, or being done poorly?
- What would a specialist charge to do it properly?

Often, the answer to the third question is lower than people expect, particularly when weighed against the hidden costs of the first two.

Use **SMART** criteria for every project you outsource - goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant** and **Time-bound** will keep things on track, prevent scope creep, and make it straightforward to assess whether you are getting value.

### A Few Final Thoughts...

Check what your parent organisation recommends before appointing anyone. Avoid duplicating work that has already been done elsewhere in your network.

Be mission-minded in every decision. From how you treat the people you work with to the suppliers you choose, your values should be visible throughout.

And review regularly. Things change. The arrangement that worked well two years ago may no longer be the right fit. Build in a review point from the start.



At **MBS**, we have been supporting charities for over a decade. We offer services for every budget - all delivered with the kind of care and attention that smaller organisations deserve but rarely receive.

Whether you know exactly what you need or you are still working it out, we would love to have a conversation.



### Contact Us

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