These principles aim to support charities, their governing bodies and those who work and volunteer in and with them in recognising and resolving ethical issues and conflicts and make charities a safer place.

This is intended as an enabling document that draws together and underpins what many charities do already, and which all charities aspire to do.

These principles set out a framework for the ethical execution of charitable purpose, regardless of the charity’s size, type or area of operation. They can help charities in their decision-making and in developing relevant policies and procedures.

‘...actively consider the principles and how they can be integrated in all their work and decision-making’

All charities should proactively champion ethical behaviour and reflect and apply their charitable values in any activity they undertake, in addition to meeting their legal and regulatory requirements.

Governing bodies, staff and volunteers should actively consider the principles and how they can be integrated in all their work and decision-making.

Individuals at every level of the organisation should be held accountable for modelling the behaviours set out by the principles.

When following the principles and in all their work charities should:

- Respect every individual’s dignity and rights to privacy and confidentiality.
- Commit to challenging any instances of sexism, gender inequality and other power imbalances that leave some people at risk of harm.
- Value and improve diversity in their governing bodies, workforce and volunteers.

These principles have been developed by NCVO with the support of an advisory group comprising charities of all sizes, working both domestically and internationally and through an open consultation with the charity sector.

‘The principles should be viewed as a benchmark of good practice’

• These principles provide an overarching framework to guide decision-making, good judgement and conduct. They do not provide a set of rules that prescribe how one should act in all situations.

• Endorsement of the principles is voluntary, but all charities are encouraged to reflect on the principles in their work and decision-making. The principles should be viewed as a benchmark of good practice, and by reflecting them in its work an organisation is more likely to maximise the difference it makes and champion its values.

• The principles are intended as complementary to existing sector codes such as the Charity Governance Code and individual charities’ codes of conduct. They are not a substitute for charities’ own codes of conduct.
Charities agree to uphold the following principles throughout their work:

**BENEFICIARIES FIRST**
Charities have a responsibility to carry out their purposes for the public benefit. The interests of their beneficiaries and the causes they work for should be at the heart of everything charities and those who work and volunteer in and with them do.

**INTEGRITY**
Charities and those who work and volunteer in and with them should uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and personal conduct at all times.

**OPENNESS**
Charities should create a culture and space where donors and supporters, as well as the wider public, can see and understand how they work, how they deal with problems when they arise and how they spend their funds.

**UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE**
This means charities should:
- Ensure appropriate systems are in place to help guarantee that all decisions are robust, defensible and free from conflicts of interest.
- Consider the effect of activities conducted in private life on the reputation of the charity and of charities generally.
- Ensure their resources are managed responsibly and their funds are properly protected, applied and accounted for, including policies and procedures to combat the risk of bribery, fraud, corruption and extortion.
- Exercise due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of commercial partners and individuals, to seek support or collaboration from those with ethical values that are consistent with those of the charity.
- Be sensitive to the impact of their activities on both the natural and human environment by:
  - making responsible use of their resources
  - adopting sustainable working practices
  - undertaking initiatives to promote environmental responsibility.

**UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLE**
This means charities should:
- Operate a presumption of openness and transparency; subject to complying with existing legal and regulatory requirements, charities should be willing to share information about how they work, ensuring it is easily accessible.
- Publish, or (for the very smallest charities) at least make available on request:
  - annual reports: this should include a section explaining how the charity’s purpose and values are being fulfilled
  - their approach to safeguarding, bullying and harassment
  - their complaints procedure
  - their whistleblowing policy.
- Establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for all their work, both internally and externally where applicable.
APPLICATION OF THE CHARITY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

The Charity Ethical Principles set standards that are often higher than those required by law. However, the Principles cannot override the legal obligations of charity trustees and those who work in charities.

Reference to the principles to inform the development and review of policies and procedures can support charities in recognising and resolving ethical issues and achieving best practice.