

Unipol Adherence to the Charity Ethical Principles
 Version 3 (February 2023)

| Beneficiaries first | |
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| Principle | |
| 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. | |
| Upholding the principle | |
| This means charities should: | |
| 1.a Be clear what their purpose is and who or what their beneficiaries are. | <p>Unipol is a student housing charity, founded in Leeds in 1975 to drive forward an agenda of improving housing standards. From the outset it has been, and continues to be, supported by the University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University and their respective students' unions. Some 45 years later, Unipol remains a unique charity and the largest not-for-profit housing organisation in the UK. It champions the empowerment of students as consumers.</p> <p>Unipol's purpose is encapsulated in its charitable objects. The charity's objects are the advancement of education by providing and managing accommodation and related services for educational institutions, their students and other persons associated with educational institutions and to develop and foster excellence and expertise in this field. The objects are a constant reference point for strategic decision-making by the Board, including the formulation and monitoring of Unipol's three-yearly strategic planning document, the <i>Forward Look</i>. The latest <i>Forward Look</i> 2013-2026 gives a restated and refined set of values which are also given prominence on Unipol's website http://www.unipol.org.uk/about.</p> <p>The charity has determined a set of values which are underscored by new themes, framed with full reference to its objects. These themes are: standards; the charity sets high standards which match its values; Responsibility: both now and in the longer term; Student focussed: caring about its services, trusted and re-assuring; and Leadership: using its expertise to create impact in the sector and innovate. These are supported by its existing values: to be trusted; to be impartial experts; to promote safety and wellbeing; to promote community; to provide value for money; to be ethical; and to be transparent and accountable. In each of its iterations, the <i>Forward Look</i> records that these values will remain at the core of the organisation's actions over each planning period. A clear process has been established for the formulation and approval of <i>Forward Look</i> iterations. This cycle has been in operation since 1991. There is also a clear process for monitoring the progress of its implementation.</p> <p>The objects are underpinned by an organisational mission, the formulation of which takes the objects as its primary point of reference.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team and the Board of Trustees review the charity's objects, values and mission periodically. As part of the review process, the Senior Management Team and Trustees satisfy themselves that the objects are sufficiently clear. Specifically, to remain effective, the Board, as part of its <i>Forward Look</i></p> |

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| | <p>considerations, conducts strategic reviews of all aspects of the organisation's work and functioning, to ensure that:</p> <p>(a) the needs for which the organisation was set up still exist, and its objects as set out in the governing document remain relevant to those needs;</p> <p>(b) the organisation is continuing to meet those needs, and remains fit for purpose; and</p> <p>(c) the needs are being met in the most effective way.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team and Board review changes and progress over the previous three years and set the strategic goals of the organisation for the next three years. The <i>Forward Look</i> is a process that determines the strategic direction of the charity on a three-yearly cycle, based on a statement of the charity's values and continuing purpose. The process has an approved timetable where Trustees are required to have a strategic input. Current arrangements for Trustee engagement with the process comprise an away-day for Directors/Trustees collectively to discuss the meaning, role and future direction of the charity. The Directors/Trustees are assisted by an independent facilitator who reports back to them and the Chief Executive. A staff away-day is also held to enable staff views to form part of these strategic considerations. On the basis of the outputs of the away-day, the Chief Executive drafts a <i>Forward Look</i>, which is, following further consultation, discussed by Trustees/Directors at a special single agenda item meeting of the Board. The revised version is submitted to the subsequent Board meeting for approval.</p> <p>The objects and mission form an integral part of the induction and in-house development of all members of the workforce and the Board. Any changes are notified to existing staff and Trustees.</p> <p>The Unipol's Senior Management Team and Board of Trustees give full attention to how the charity's purposes are carried out for public benefit. Specifically, the Senior Management Team and the Board refer to the guidance contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when annually reviewing the charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities. The Board considers and satisfies itself each year that this task has been undertaken, and this is recorded annually in the Trustees' Report.</p> <p>The Annual Board Peer Review of Trustees asks questions pertinent to Trustees' understanding of the charity's public benefit. The annual Trustees' Report also fully explains the public benefit outputs of the charity.</p> <p>Unipol clearly identifies its beneficiaries in all its communications and tries to ensure, through its trustees, that its partners have a clear understanding of the organisation's aims and objectives.</p> <p>The up-to-date objects and mission are made available on Unipol's website for the benefit of all service users, as well as for staff and Trustees - https://www.unipol.org.uk/governance/objects-of-unipol</p> |
| <p>1.b Carry out their purpose to provide the greatest benefit to their beneficiaries and their cause, regardless of</p> | <p>The primacy of achieving the greatest benefit to the charity's beneficiaries and their cause is firmly embedded in the organisation's values. Unipol has placed its values centre-stage in its strategic planning and operation and enunciates these at every opportunity (on its websites, to tenants and partners and to its beneficiaries). Unipol's</p> |

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| <p>whether this might initially have a negative impact on the reputation or operation of the charity or its leadership.</p> | <p>values are translated into active policies and this is referenced and explained in all iterations of the <i>Forward Look</i>.</p> <p>Unipol keeps under review changes in the external environment to ensure that the greatest benefit to beneficiaries is maintained within the organisation's financial capacity and the constraints placed on it by external factors.</p> <p>For example, the current <i>Forward Look</i> addresses uncertainties in the market environment (tenure reform, the cost of living crisis and the coronavirus pandemic). In relation to tenure reform the charity has taken a potentially controversial stance in opposition to the proposed reforms, lobbying the Government to consider that the private rented sector is not uniform and students have particular tenancy requirements that will be significantly harmed by the proposed reforms.</p> |
| <p>1.c When working with beneficiaries, ensure that their views and experiences are actively listened to and taken account of as part of how the charity operates, facilitating engagement and communication.</p> | <p>Unipol has a number of mechanisms for consulting its beneficiaries: through surveys, feedback, focus groups, social media, a Rate your Landlord scheme, and trustee and partnership involvement.</p> <p>Unipol seeks out and welcomes feedback as part of its activities. The Board is particularly interested to hear about the views of tenants in its properties and those it manages for other landlords and undertakes a number of independently commissioned reports (one annually, the other every two years) on tenant satisfaction. These are analysed at the Portfolio Committee and by the main Board. The survey is benchmarked against other provider performance and so gives a good indication of the strength of Unipol's performance year by year with appropriate action being taken and its impact followed through in subsequent years.</p> <p>Unipol operates an annual student house hunting behaviours survey where around 500 students are approached and asked their views on matters related to information delivery, knowledge of rights, market perceptions and areas of service delivery and these are evaluated and discussed in various groups and committees.</p> <p>The Communications and IT Committee receives tenant internet feedback (again independently commissioned) twice a year. Feedback is received from Members through their nominated Trustees both at meetings and through the Trustees peer review process.</p> <p>Unipol runs a Rate Your Landlord site in Leeds (jointly with Leeds University Union) and Warwick, which provides an effective platform for the student voice to influence housing choice. Performance on its own properties is reported to Trustees.</p> <p>Unipol's social media presence is significant and will continue to contribute to the enhancement of student engagement. The charity has set key targets on social media reach, website referrals and likes. Unipol's already significant blog presence will continue to grow. WebChat is now an important tool for assisting students and this is now embedded into operations with a dedicated member of staff to oversee it.</p> <p>Over the current <i>Forward Look</i> cycle, engagement with landlords and students will be extended. In late 2022 a National Codes Student</p> |

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| | <p>Advisory Group was formed which together with the NUS, will be shaped to give students a wider role in developing and helping to run the Codes. In 2023 Unipol will establish a National Codes Leaders Advisory Group, designed to give senior staff from larger suppliers a wider role in developing the Codes.</p> <p>In 2023 in Leeds, a student housing market assessment, part funded by the Local Authority, University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University will be undertaken to understand changing behaviours from landlords and how this is impacting accommodation supply.</p> <p>The charity has close partnerships with both Leeds University Union and Leeds Beckett Students' Union. Two Project Groups encourage collaborative working and fund certain agreed initiatives to promote good house hunting experiences for students.</p> <p>The students' unions are formal Principal Members of the charity and are represented on the Board of Trustees.</p> <p>The Board regularly reviews the impact of its actions both directly at Board meetings and through its committee structure. These include the satisfaction of student tenants and the views of landlords. The Board is very aware, through discussions at its meetings, of the impact the charity has on its community, stakeholders/partners and wider society and seeks to reconcile any issues in a way that is consistent with its charitable objects, values and resources. When making decisions, Unipol considers the impact of its actions on the Principal Members as well as other education institutions, their student unions, the student population of the cities in which it operates, local authorities, community/resident organisations, landlords and neighbours. The Board recognises the value the charity brings to the higher education sector as a thought leader in student accommodation and Unipol is involved in raising housing standards nationally through the application of its Codes (https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code). Unipol is also an active participant in both the Leeds and Nottingham Rental Standards.</p> |
| <p>1.d Ensure that all relevant policies and procedures are drawn up with the interests of beneficiaries in mind.</p> | <p>Unipol's policies and procedures are predicated on the organisation's objects and mission, which are themselves focussed on the interests of beneficiaries.</p> |
| <p>Integrity</p> | |
| <p>Principle</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | |
| <p>Upholding the principle</p> | |
| <p>This means charities should:</p> | |
| <p>2.a Ensure appropriate systems are in place to help guarantee that all decisions are robust, defensible and free from conflicts of interest.</p> | <p>Unipol's Board maintains a statement of its strategic and leadership roles and of key functions that cannot be delegated. Limits of delegated authority are reported to the Board. The charity's Articles are regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with both the Articles and Objectives.</p> |

Delegation and internal control are governed by:

- a clear list of matters that the Board reserves to itself
- the terms of reference of Committees and Groups that are established for specific purposes
- a schedule setting out the responsibilities of:
 - Directors
 - the Chair
 - the Deputy Chair (Partnerships)
 - the Deputy Chair (Portfolio)
 - the Treasurer.

This schedule also gives some areas of delegated powers. Other powers are decided by the Board in specific instances and these are individually minuted. The Board periodically reviews the matters it wishes to reserve to itself for primary consideration and all the delegated matters it wishes to make to individual trustees, staff and committees. All delegated decisions are reported to the Board, either through minutes of committees or through reports available to trustees.

Unipol has terms of reference for all its committees. The Governance Committee is charged with reviewing these matters and assessing whether all Committees and Groups are working both efficiently and properly and making recommendations to the Board accordingly. All minutes and notes from delegated groups and committees are reported back to the Board. Trustees are represented on those bodies in line with company law requirements.

All the organisation's staff have a job description. All job descriptions are reviewed periodically. Delegations are clear and codified in job descriptions, Board policy papers and terms of reference for specific groups and committees. Delegations are in writing and the charity has set clear limits of financial delegation in respect of the agreed budget, authorisation for expenditure, credit card procedures and limits and bank authorisations. These limits are reviewed annually and those with specific delegated powers for cheque signing and financial authorisation are also reported annually to the Board. The use of delegated authority by staff is monitored by the Chief Executive and reported to the Financial Affairs and Staffing Committee.

Unipol operates a formal conflict of interest declaration system at its Board and Committee meetings - <https://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/the-board/powers-and-procedures/conflicts-of-interest>. This encompasses procedures requiring trustees to complete a register of interest form each year. These are held centrally by the Company Secretary. The Register is available for trustees to view at the first Board meeting of the year (although it can be viewed at any time by trustees, Members and regulatory bodies). Trustees' attention is drawn to this fact by the Chair.

The Chair of the Board reviews each form and determines any disclosed interests which warrant report to the Board. Additionally, trustees are required to disclose any interests that arise between annual registration cycles. Procedures are also in place to require trustees to declare any possible conflict of interest; and to deal with such declarations. The Board has a policy that all interests should be declared either at the commencement of each meeting or just before

the discussion of any item on which a trustee might think they are conflicted. The Chair of the Board draws this to the attention of all trustees at the start of each Board meeting. If a conflict is declared the Chair will recommend one of three outcomes for the Board to agree i) the trustee/s withdraw from the meeting for that item ii) attendance is allowed but the trustee/s would not take part in that discussion iii) the conflict is recognised but allows full participation in the meeting. The Chair seeks the consent of the meeting to the approach they suggest.

The Company Secretary attends all Board meetings and can draw to the attention of trustees any matters that they feel should be declared. Board papers are written to avoid trustees being asked to agree matters that relate to their nominating bodies (who have their own governance systems). Normally, the Board will recommend to a Member a course of action rather than directly agreeing on a course of action where the Member would subsequently need to agree as a body.

The policy includes a procedure to be followed in the event that this policy is breached. Where a trustee has a major or on-going conflict of interest, she or he should offer to resign from the Board. If a trustee did not offer to resign in these circumstances, a difficulty would arise through the nominated trustee arrangement.

Trustees are entitled to claim out-of-pocket expenses for attending meetings and other events in connection with Unipol business. The organisation encourages trustees to claim for expenses incurred as a direct result of work in support of Unipol's business, e.g. dealing with third-party organisations or undertaking training for Unipol. It is Unipol's policy that no trustee should be out of pocket by attending to the organisation's business. Trustees' expense claims are currently governed by the policy and procedures in operation for University of Leeds staff

Unipol houses about six per cent of students studying in Leeds and from time to time a director/trustee will be a tenant of the charity. In order to manage conflicts of interest that arise in this way, the Board has adopted a Policy on Trustees as Tenants. The policy has two arms: where a tenancy has been entered into before a tenant becomes a trustee by an existing director/trustee. The policy has been formulated to protect both the charity and the trustee/director. It provides that at no time is a director/trustee permitted to discuss any aspect of their tenancy within the Board's business; and that they are disallowed from participating in any discussion relating to the Board's determination of any rent level they are liable to pay. The policy includes a procedure to be followed in the event that this policy is breached.

The charity has a Policy on Gifts and Hospitality received by Directors/Trustees. This requires directors/trustees to register any gifts or hospitality accepted by them in the course of their role, along with a record of the source of the gift / hospitality. Such declarations are required to be made to the Company Secretary in the prescribed manner by completion and submission of the relevant form or by registering online, within 28 days of receiving the gift / hospitality, and trustees are reminded of this annually.

Staff fall under the University of Leeds staffing arrangements which makes provision for action where personal conduct falls short of what

is required and could affect the charity. These provide a relatively independent system for reviewing such matters. All staff undertake training on Professional Behaviour and Relationships provided by the University of Leeds.

The conduct of trustees is regulated by Unipol's procedures and also by the procedures of the bodies from which they are nominated. These procedures are predicated on the principle that trustees / employees should not gain any private benefit from their position. Unipol makes no payment to trustees as trustees. Occasionally, Unipol makes payment to a trustee for specific services procured from that trustee. In these cases, the roles of trustee and service provider are kept entirely separate. The rates of pay for such purposes are set in accordance with Unipol's general procurement policies. In all cases, because they involve a trustee, they will be approved directly by the Chair, Deputy Chair - Finance or the Board itself. No trustee is involved in setting their own level of remuneration in any circumstances. All payments made to trustees are declared annually by named individual in the accounts and to the Board.

Considerable attention is made to making clear standards and policies when new trustee is appointed or nominated. As part of their induction, trustees receive a set of information which includes a copy of:

- the legal responsibilities of charity trustees (The Essential Trustee)
- the Articles of Association
- the charity's values
- the Confidentiality of Board papers and minutes the previous three years accounts
- the previous year's minutes for Unipol Student Homes
- the Forward Look
- the guidelines on operational procedures relating to abuse of controlled substances
- the guidelines on operational procedures relating to Unipol's Social Networking site
- the Good Governance compliance document
- extracts from the minutes dealing with the Chief Executive authority to sign agreements
- Directors' Disclosure of Interests
- the Policy on Gifts & Hospitality
- Information Flows within the Charity as a Result of Legal Action
- the secondary documentation dealing with the powers and procedures of the Board
- the Standing Orders for the Discussion of Business at the Board of Unipol Student Homes
- the Statement on the Maintenance of the Board
- Health and Safety Policy for Housing Health and Safety Policy for Offices
- Data Protection and Information Security Policy
- Unipol's Risk Register
- the Diversity and Equality Policy
- the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure for use by Unipol's Directors/Trustees
- the Smoke Free policy
- the Trustees as Tenants Policy
- the Complaints Policy
- Housing Under 18s Policy
- Safeguarding Statement.

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| | <p>Each director/trustee of Unipol confirms to the Company Secretary their agreement to abide by the individual commitments set out in the letter within 14 days of its receipt. Any trustees whose tenure pre-dates this arrangement have made a similar formal commitment.</p> <p>During the recruitment process for Trustees explicit mention is made of the necessity to comply with the values of the Charity and the Nolan Principles. Most trustees are nominated by the Principal Members and there is a natural tendency for trustees to see themselves as reflecting the values and culture of their nominating body. This area is particularly problematic with student elected officers, who often come to the Board fresh from student's union training about how their role is to represent student members. In order to counter these dynamics, Unipol places strong emphasis on the individual aspect of becoming a trustee, both during the induction of new trustees and in formal induction and introduction information given to trustees. Where Members become ineligible to remain in office as a Trustee they would be removed (e.g. Charity Commission Automatic Disqualification Rules).</p> <p>The charity does not use volunteers in its operations.</p> |
| <p>2.b Consider the effect of activities conducted in private life on the reputation of the charity and of charities generally.</p> | <p>The conduct of trustees is regulated by Unipol's procedures and also by the procedures of the bodies from which they are nominated. These procedures are predicated on the principle that trustees / employees should not gain any private benefit from their position. The charity operates a system for the declaration of (potential) conflicts of interests, outlined elsewhere in this document.</p> |
| <p>2.c 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.</p> | <p>There are a number of policies and external audit tools in place to check that the charity's funds are properly used and protected.</p> <p>Financial accountability, scrutiny and financial planning are properly assured by the Financial Affairs and Staffing Committee, chaired by the Deputy Chair - Finance and supported and serviced by the Director of Finance. Between meetings of the committee, the Deputy Chair - Finance and Director of Finance meet regularly to keep these matters under review. The Deputy Chair - Finance meets with Unipol's external auditors together with the Director of Finance and Finance Manager for a planning meeting prior to the annual audit. The Director of Finance is supported and advised by specialist professionals, as required and a quarterly mentoring arrangement has been entered into with the Director of Finance of the University of Leeds.</p> <p>The Committee has an important role to play in financial and staffing oversight and scrutiny, including the authority to examine and initiate internal or external audits within Unipol's financial systems, if/where it considers these are warranted. The Committee meets annually with Unipol's external auditors at the stage the Audit Report is presented for the previous year's audit.</p> <p>The organisation's management accounts are presented quarterly, with commentary provided by the Chief Executive and Director of Finance, to enable the Committee to assess the viability and performance of each section of the organisation. Rent collection is monitored and all rent arrears are presented to the Committee. The Board has made policies in respect of the establishment and maintenance of specific reserves for the long-term maintenance of its portfolio. It also affirms an annually renewable reserves and investment strategy.</p> |

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| | <p>One of the principal areas of risk to the charity's financial strength is failure to let all its rooms to students in an overstocked local market in Leeds or Nottingham. Unipol has a Portfolio Committee http://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/committees/the-portfolio-committee chaired by the Deputy Chair - Portfolio, which has national experts on it with expertise on portfolio development, estates strategy and marketing. The Committee give great attention to lettings, product placement, pricing, marketing, property acquisition and refurbishment. The Board agree a Note on the Shape of the Budget and the Portfolio Committee uses this to set rents as part of the budgeting process. The Committee meets three times a year.</p> <p>Unipol has in place policies on financial authorisation and limits on decision-making by both its staff and trustees. It reviews these policies periodically. The organisation has a set of procedures for trustees' involvement in the payments system and reports to the Board annually on the use of these procedures for review. As part of Unipol's annual external audit the auditors identify any weaknesses in financial controls or reporting arrangements and make recommendations to the organisation about them. The Board itself is provided with management information to test the accuracy of budgeting to actual performance. Given the fact that Unipol houses students from various education institutions, it has a range of data sharing protocols in place which meet the requirements of data protection legislation.</p> <p>Unipol maintains a comprehensive risk register. This was established in 2007 on the basis of advice commissioned from a specialist external consultant, and is the subject of review annually. The identification and management of specific risks is an important and integral part of formulating any new proposals and business plans for new developments. The approach to risk is included in all such submissions to the Board for its approval. Where there may be material risk to the organisation, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties, Unipol is committed to securing appropriate external advice, (including from the Charity Commission) and to keeping its Board fully briefed. Where appropriate, Unipol procures advice from legal and property professionals on its systems and seeks specific expertise if this is not available in-house. Unipol has ready access to in-house expertise from a significant number of professionally qualified staff.</p> <p>Operational risk assessment is carried out in respect of staff, fire safety and premises within the framework of the organisation's relevant health and safety policies. The Board's Committee structure is established to ensure it mitigates its most significant and strategic risks e.g. Financial Affairs and Staffing, Portfolio, Communications and IT and the Governance Committee. The Board agenda's focuses on the delivery of the <i>Forward Look</i> and those matters that might negatively affect implementation of its plans. Due time and consideration are given to financial, reputational, development, health and safety risks in Board agendas.</p> <p>Areas of particular risk are highlighted in Board papers. These are backed up with a risk analysis that is presented to, and reviewed annually, by the Board. The risk analysis is confidential to the Board and Members.</p> |
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| | <p>A section of the Annual Report is devoted to discussion of the Principal Risks and Uncertainties facing the Charity. It talks of new risks and those that are no longer considered a significant or strategic risk as well as looking at risk ownership.</p> <p>Unipol's structure represents joint working between a number of organisations (principally two Universities and their respective Student Unions). The partnership allows each of these bodies, who are regulated either by the Office for Students or the Charity Commission, to jointly manage the risks to its beneficiaries around student housing.</p> <p>Unipol's Articles specifically provide for powers to borrow money and make investments, and place limits on these activities within parameters determined for the organisation by the Charity Commission. Borrowing and investment are monitored by the Board with all loans, together with their interest rate and amounts outstanding being reported to the Board annually.</p> <p>The Unipol portfolio is the bedrock of the charity's viability and it is the best way of ensuring that the charity's mission to enable students to rent good quality, not-for-profit housing is achieved. Futureproofing the portfolio is a primary concern, given the growing importance of housing as the organisation's main income stream. Over the current <i>Forward Look</i> cycle, Unipol will transform its portfolio by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving sustainability through a focus on energy saving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redefine its family portfolio to reduce its resource burden on the charity • • Weighing any future expansion of the portfolio through a risk evaluation framework that considers health and safety, tenure reform, energy efficiency and running costs |
| <p>2.d 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.</p> | <p>Unipol has an approved contractor system and reviews its relationships with third party organisations closely to ensure that it only works with those that respect its values and do not conflict with them.</p> <p>Unipol fundraises only using Unipol staff and will not use third party suppliers for such activities. Like most organisations Unipol enters into contracts with other organisations for them to provide specified property and health and safety services. All health and safety matters are monitored by the Health and Safety Review Board which is chaired by a trustee. Organisations are answerable to Unipol for the work they are contracted to do under the terms of any agreed contract. All contracts entered into are expected to comply with the values of the Charity.</p> <p>Unipol raises the majority of its income (currently 88%) from rents received from its tenants. It has a small number of sponsors and occasionally raises external funds from other bodies. In the case of sponsorship and external grants, the Board specifically approves such arrangements and ensures that it is content that the funding source and the purpose of such funding is consistent with the values of the charity.</p> |

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| <p>2.e 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</p> | <p>A key theme in Unipol's <i>Forward Look 2023-26</i> is the charity's approach to sustainability in its housing and office portfolio, with a focus on energy reduction in the current period.</p> <p>In particular students are being encouraged to more responsible energy use and some alterations have been made to heating infrastructure to enable this.</p> <p>Unipol has benefitted from purchasing carbon-neutral electricity and from undertaking significant insulation within its own portfolio to reduce energy costs. All its new PBSA buildings meet the BREEAM excellence standard.</p> <p>In this Forward Look, the charity aims to concentrate on the promotion of sustainability through energy saving. It is not, at this stage, putting carbon reduction or neutrality at the centre of the strategy, although improved sustainability will cut carbon output by a planned reduction in the use of gas heating. The next Forward Look, from 2026, should seek to identify targets and a timespan to achieve specific levels of carbon reduction. From the improved sustainability measures proposed here, it should be in a good position to do so.</p> <p>In the three-yearly <i>Accommodation Costs Survey</i>, which Unipol undertakes in association with the National Union of Students, there is a regular section on sustainability and the environment, which seeks to gauge and comment on progress on sustainability in the student housing sector nationally.</p> |
| <p>Openness</p> | |
| <p>Principle</p> <p>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.</p> | |
| <p>Upholding the principle</p> <p>This means charities should:</p> | |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Unipol's values and governance, including its core corporate documentation is openly available on its website to all. There are regular news and blog items that highlight particular initiatives and the charity undertakes meetings with partners where its operations are explained and are open to discussion and challenge. Some of Unipol's work relates to commercially sensitive information which could be used by others to for their own commercial advantage (for example detailed information on accommodation suppliers, details of cost and the regulatory shortcomings of their competitors and these cannot be put into the public domain). Unipol sees its social media and website as its key communications vehicles to its beneficiaries and partners but it also produces a full Trustees' Report which details how its values are being fulfilled.</p> <p>The Board should ensure that members are fully consulted about changes and discussions. These consultations also take place outside the Board in respect of policy changes that might affect stakeholders. Additionally, this approach is taken for partners without</p> |

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| | <p>trustee status, including local authorities, RSLs, community groups and Unipol's users. Some of these groups have a wider role within Unipol's committee structure.</p> <p>There are various opportunities for stakeholders to make an input: institutional links with nominating partners, the house hunting behaviours annual survey, and tenant satisfaction surveys, complaints processes, the Unipol Codes and landlord briefings.</p> <p>There is a complaints procedure, which is widely publicised and has an appropriate level of usage. Work undertaken by the organisation to secure user feedback and to measure consumer satisfaction is referenced elsewhere in this document. Tenant complaints are kept on special file and can be consulted by trustees. These complaints are analysed annually and any trends or patterns reported to the Board. The complaints system, is overseen by the Deputy Chief Executive.</p> <p>The accreditation systems that Unipol is a part of provide further complaints mechanism. Substantial publicity ensures high awareness of the complaints system among service users. The complaints mechanism includes a tribunal component which ensures dispute resolution that is independent and guarantees robust accountability.</p> <p>All correspondence regarding deposit deductions and complaints is kept on file for three years and a report on this aspect of the organisation's operations is made to the Board annually. The Deputy Executive is responsible for this function. Any cases involving the Dispute Service Adjudication Service are reported to the Board.</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>Unipol makes its yearly Trustees' Report and Annual Accounts available on its website - https://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/trustees-reports-and-annual-accounts. How the charity's purpose and values are being fulfilled is firmly embedded in the Trustees' Report and the organisation's performance is also reported.</p> <p>Unipol's Board is committed to the highest standards of probity and integrity. The Board ensures that all Unipol's staff have ready access to the University of Leeds's Code of Practice on Whistleblowing. A separate Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure has been adopted by the Board to provide a process for use by individual Unipol directors/trustees - https://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/whistleblowing-policy-and-procedure-for-use-by-uni. The policy provides for a disclosure process to designated persons: the Chair of the Board for directors/trustees the Deputy Chair - Partnerships, of the Board if a disclosure relates to the Chair an independent person as chosen by Unipol's Board in the event of the disclosure relating to both the Chair and Deputy Chairs. This is currently Ms Beatrice Merrick). The Board receives an annual report (if appropriate a "nil" report), on Unipol's receipt of whistleblowing disclosures, including any submitted by staff under the University of Leeds Code of Practice.</p> |
| <p>Establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for all their work, both internally and</p> | <p>All trustees are provided with a statement or letter setting out their duties and responsibilities, which they are asked to sign and return confirming that they have received, read and understood these. When they are appointed, trustees also receive a letter from the</p> |

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| <p>externally where applicable.</p> | <p>Company Secretary which, in addition to containing the formal information already required by the Board and Company Secretary, emphasises the individual aspect of becoming a trustee (including a commitment to upholding the values and objectives of the organisation), not acting on their own on behalf of the Board, or of Unipol, without having proper authority from the Board. Each director/trustee of Unipol confirms to the Company Secretary their agreement to abide by the individual commitments set out in the letter within 14 days of its receipt. Any trustees whose tenure pre- dates this arrangement have made a similar formal commitment.</p> <p>Delegation and internal control are governed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a clear list of matters that the Board reserves to itself - the terms of reference of Committees and Groups that are established for specific purposes - a schedule setting out the responsibilities of Directors and Officers. <p>This schedule also gives some areas of delegated powers. Other powers are decided by the Board in specific instances and these are individually minuted. The officers of the Board have clearly defined powers and are elected annually by the Board. There are specific descriptions of the role and powers of the:</p> <p>Chair Deputy Chair – Partnerships Deputy Chair - Portfolio Deputy Chair - Finance</p> <p>a specific outline of powers for decisions to be taken by officers between or outside meetings.</p> <p>Trustees are rarely involved in operational areas. Where this is the case (for example, in undertaking training, editing, document writing or acting as a consultant), the demarcation of the roles is made clear and if there is any danger of operational and strategic responsibilities overlapping, this is reported by the Chief Executive, or via the trustee themselves, to the Board.</p> <p>Trustees are required to participate in annual performance review.</p> <p>All staff have agreed job descriptions which set out in detail what the Charity expects of them. All job descriptions are reviewed periodically.</p> <p>There is a comprehensive and protracted staff induction programme and further training for all staff to ensure they are competent to carry out their duties. Many staff, c50%, are on fixed term contracts. Staff underperformance is handled through the various processes put in place via the University of Leeds. The Board receives a confidential briefing on staffing issues at the end of each meeting and any action required to hold staff to account can be reported at that point or initiated by the Board.</p> |
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| <p>Right to be safe</p> | |
| <p>Principle</p> | |
| <p>Every person who volunteers with, works for or comes into contact with a charity should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment.</p> | |

All charities have a responsibility to create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who works for, volunteers with, or comes into contact with the charity.

Charities should also be places where people's wellbeing and mental health are valued and promoted, so that anyone working in the charity or coming into contact with the charity is encouraged to value and invest in their own health and wellbeing.

Upholding the principle

This means charities should:

4.a Stand against and have a clear approach to prevent abuse of trust and power including bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination or victimisation in all their activities.

Unipol staff follow the policies and practices operated by the University of Leeds and staff have access to, and know about, policies that exist and can be used if a problem occurs. Unipol does not use volunteers but part-time and temporary staff receive full staff training, induction and appraisal to ensure that they know the employment framework within which they work.

Unipol staff have access to a whole raft of support including mental health first aid (and Unipol has an in-house trainer qualified in this area) and counselling. Unipol works with under 18's and operates Homestay for students and has robust wellbeing policies which are tested by external scrutiny and accreditation. In 2021 Unipol introduced a Safeguarding Statement that detailed its approach and processes in this area.

It is an organisational priority to improve support for wellbeing and to encourage networking: many students struggle with isolation and find it hard to cope with living independently. These difficulties often relate to problems with mental health, the rise of which among students has become a major cause for concern in the sector. With around 25 per cent of students self-diagnosing as having a mental health condition, student support and care have never been more important. Accordingly, the revised National Code for purpose built accommodation operated by the private sector now make significant demands in respect of mental health including crisis training for staff, better signposting and sharing of information about at-risk students.

The charity has increased its own activities in this area, developing the U Experience concept to encompass social events, tenancy support and wellbeing activities. In addition all housing management staff are receive mental health first aid training to be able to better identify, report and refer possible problems and to offer affected students non-intrusive support. Unipol has always seen student support as an important area of its work and the charity is increasing its efforts to foster social integration and counter isolation by providing more communal facilities and events.

Unipol publishes guidance to students on what to do if they feel they are being harassed or bullied by co-tenants. Unipol intervenes in such cases. Students are also reminded that their institution has formal procedures to deal with these kinds of issues.

Unipol also provides guidance on what to do if students feel they are being harassed or bullied via social media.

Unipol's Health and Safety Policy for Offices and Staff contains a section on looking after employees' health, which specifies that

“Unipol has a general duty of care towards its employees and will identify any concerns in the work place in health-related areas. Unipol has access to the occupational health facilities and experts within the University of Leeds who advise on matters where health may be affecting capability or where illness or recuperation may require a short-term change in duties.”

The Board continues to annually review its two health and safety policies, available at:
<http://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/health-and-safetypolicyfor-housing>
<http://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/health-and-safetypolicyfor-offices-and-staff>

The Statement on the Maintenance of the Board, which each Trustee receives on appointment, includes part of a section on values and motivation: have an understanding and appreciation of, and a commitment to, the principles of equal opportunities and diversity and inclusivity with a non-discriminatory approach to cultural differences.

Unipol's policy on equality of opportunity specifies that “everyone has a right to such opportunity and to a good and harmonious environment and atmosphere in which everyone is encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no-one feels threatened or intimidated.” This right is protected in many instances by legislation.

Unipol is formally committed to maintaining a culture where individual differences are valued and respected and which enables everyone to give of their best and helps Unipol to respond more effectively to its residents, other clients and partners. Unipol promotes equality of opportunity and fair participation within the framework of the law; and seeks to be broadly representative of the society that we serve.

Consideration of Diversity is a key feature of the recruitment process for co-opted trustees and something that is reviewed by the Group on Governance when considering the filling of vacancies. A Diversity and Equality statement can be found within the Skills Statement for Applicants for Trustee/Board Members.

Trustees from nominated organisations all receive Equality and Diversity training via their nominating organisations. All Trustees are required to familiarise themselves with the Equality and Diversity Policy and the Company Secretary is able to support them with this at induction. The charity has access to on-line training and all trustees are either required to undertake this or provide evidence that they have undertaken equivalent training within their nominating institutions.

Unipol will not discriminate on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, religion, religious or similar philosophical belief, social class, marital status, family responsibilities, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment or community background.” (from Statement on the Maintenance of the Board)

The charity's Diversity Statement is periodically reviewed, and was recently given greater focus and strength. All trustees will be given some online equality and diversity training in addition to what they may receive from their nominating bodies.

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| | <p>The recruitment of Board members from diverse backgrounds and their supported Induction into the Charity are very important to Unipol. The Governance Committee has the remit to ensure that there is a broad range of Trustees.</p> <p>Staff recruitment is governed by a number of rules and procedures designed to encourage and promote equality and diversity. Unipol has a balanced gender mix at all levels of the organisation. It strives continually to increase its diversity as the mix and balance of its service users change. Unipol's stakeholders are all actively involved in the governance of the charity, either as trustees in the Board or as appointed members within Unipol's committee structure. Elected student officers, themselves determined by direct democratic selection, also provide feedback from student end-users. Unipol has a Diversity and Equality Policy which enshrines the organisation's commitment to providing equality of opportunity. The policy stresses that Unipol maintains a culture in which individual differences are valued and respected and which enables everyone to give of their best and helps Unipol to respond more effectively to its residents, other clients and partners. This policy, and its effective implementation, is the responsibility of the Chief Executive but day-to-day responsibility for its oversight and promotion is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive. The Board receives an annual report from the Chief Executive. Unipol ensures that all employees receive training on diversity and equality and are fully aware of the Diversity and Equality Policy and related procedures. The policy covers communication to users and staff of Unipol. All organisations nominating students for residence in Unipol's accommodation have the policy drawn to their attention and are asked to confirm their commitment and adherence to the same equality values.</p> <p>The organisation continues to operate a Homestay scheme for the University of Leeds Language Centre which is accredited by the British Council.</p> <p>Unipol has a policy on housing students under the age of 18 - https://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/policy-on-housing-students-under-the-age-of-18 Unipol carries out DBS checks on Tenancy Support Officers and residential staff in Unipol buildings which house students under the age of 18.</p> <p>Charity governance is an area full of challenges, particularly following recent high-profile failures relating to volunteering, safeguarding and fundraising at major charities. Unipol is less vulnerable than many to governance failures: it has only a limited fundraising role and its safeguarding procedures are robust and well codified.</p> <p>Unipol fundraises only using Unipol staff and will not use third party suppliers for such activities. Like most organisations Unipol enters into contracts with other organisations for them to provide specified property and health and safety services. All health and safety matters are monitored by the Health and Safety Review Board which is chaired by a trustee. Organisations are answerable to Unipol for the work they are contracted to do under the terms of any agreed contract. All contracts entered into are expected to comply with the values of the Charity.</p> |
| 4.b Create a culture that supports the reporting and | Unipol operates within an open and supportive culture, in which staff and trustees understand that neither they nor their colleagues should |

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| <p>resolution of allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse of any kind or inappropriate behaviour.</p> | <p>tolerate unacceptable behaviour. Unipol ensures that all staff and trustees understand how to raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others or about feeling unsafe. Staff and trustees also understand that they will not suffer recrimination for raising concerns in good faith, even if these are not substantiated.</p> |
| <p>4.c Ensure that anyone working or volunteering for the charity understands the expectations placed upon them, and provide the relevant training to support them in meeting their responsibilities.</p> | <p>Unipol ensures that appropriate induction, development and appraisal of all staff and trustees has due emphasis on understanding the expectations placed on them and ensuring that they have adequate support to meet their responsibilities.</p> <p>Unipol does not use volunteers in its operations.</p> |
| <p>4.d Ensure that anyone who works or volunteers in the charity has access to proper support and advice if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience or witness unacceptable behaviour • raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others • don't feel safe. | <p>Unipol operates within an open and supportive culture, in which staff and trustees understand that neither they nor their colleagues should tolerate unacceptable behaviour. Unipol ensures that all staff and trustees understand how to raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others or about feeling unsafe.</p> |