

# network focus

December 2009

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## Looking for Bloggers

*We are looking for bloggers to start recounting the stories of their experiences in setting up and running networks. If you would like to start to 'blog', then go to your membership page on [www.trusteenet.org.uk](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk).*

*Just log in and click on your user name and you can begin to blog.*

*To read other blogs go to the "your voice" section and click on "blogs".*

## Season's Greetings from the staff and trustees of CTN

For many 2009 has been a long, hard year dealing with the effects of the global financial crisis and the recession. For many charities, securing funding, whilst an important priority, has had to be weighed against a rise in demand for services and undoubtedly many of you have had to make some difficult decisions. Whatever the challenges of the new year ahead CTN is here to help and advise wherever possible and we hope that via our website and newsletters you will share your experiences so that others can learn, empathise and take heart.

## Making your network work

Some time ago we put together two lists – the first of things which worked well when running a network; the second of those which definitely didn't. The lists are reproduced here below and we would warmly welcome any feed back on either so that we might share your experiences amongst the networking community.

## What works

- Regular communication – particularly by e-mail
- Getting a few influential people to join, then everyone wants to join
- Getting some champions to promote the network
- Building a really good steering group who believe in the network to help and advise
- Trying to ensure a personal and friendly service
- Making it fun to belong
- Providing practical advice which members can really use
- And ...enabling members to network with each other as much and as often as possible.

## And what doesn't

- Assuming that members are networking – they often need someone to help them get going
- Too many meetings – people are too busy – make sure that there is a reason for getting people together and where they

- can see the benefits
- Holding meetings at times and in places that don't suit most members
- Producing a lot of printed material – people don't generally read it unless they are really interested in that particular topic
- Assuming that people will turn up for meetings – they need reminding!

## **West Kent Trustee Network**

The first meeting of this network took place on the 18th November 2009, and Tim Toghill, trustee of Charity Trustee Networks and governance specialist for Citizens Advice Bureau was the speaker.

The meeting was held in a venue provided by the local charity Spadework near Malling. It was attended by 15 trustees from many third sector organisations. The group held a workshop on what the perfect board would look like - how to value trustees' skills and experience - and what it feels like to be a trustee. Motivation was agreed to be a key to trusteeship - why do we do it and what difference can we make.

The group in West Kent liked the concept of networking and agreed that work should be undertaken to create a group. Consideration was made of links with local community groups to widen access to the network. It was suggested that strength could be gained by plugging into other existing networks and sharing their experience of running a regular group.

For more information please contact Jenny Wilders at Voluntary Action West Kent, on 01732 452492 or email her at [jenny.wilders@vawk.org.uk](mailto:jenny.wilders@vawk.org.uk).

## **What CTN can do for you**

CTN's first strategic priority, as outlined in our last Annual Report, is to develop networks and strengthen our relationship with and support to them.

Our aim is to:

- Continue to support networks and establish new ones
- Hold events to support network organisers
- Produce four issues of Network Focus each year
- Work with national federated organisations to support networks among their members
- Employ a dedicated Trustee Networks Coordinator.

CTN encourages networking at all events at which it is represented, and in addition is involved with meetings explicitly for the purpose of trustee networking. CTN can help with planning and facilitation and often provides a speaker.

We have been working with a number of federated and umbrella organisations to support the trustees amongst their members. This includes Citizens Advice, National Association for Voluntary and

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Charity Trustee Networks  
2nd Floor  
The Guildford Institute  
Ward St  
Guildford GU1 4LH

phone: 01483 230280  
website: [www.trusteenet.org.uk](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk)

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Community Action (NAVCA), Children's Heart Federation and the Charity Finance Directors Group. We ran a session for network organisers at last year's NAVCA's annual conference.

CTN has also established a network which we run in Central London. This is not our usual approach, which is to work with others, often local or national infrastructure organisations to support them in developing a network, but it was established to meet a particular identified need in London and is kindly sponsored by Kingston Smith LLP. This also gives CTN an additional opportunity to be face-to-face with trustees and to learn about their issues.

In these challenging economic times it has not been possible to employ a dedicated Trustee Network Coordinator, but we are boosting our development capacity through volunteers.

Please let us know what sort of help and support **you** most need, so we can include it in our forward planning. And don't forget your network members can sign up free on CTN's website to receive regular e-newsletters keeping them up to date and letting them know about new resources, changes in the law, consultations and events.

There are two ways to get trustees to sign up.

- 1) Encourage them to go to [www.trusteenet.org.uk](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk) and register themselves.
- 2) With their permission gather the relevant trustee contact details by filling in the form found here:  
<http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/resources/sign-details-ctn-e-newsletters>

Please email the completed form to [membership@trusteenet.org.uk](mailto:membership@trusteenet.org.uk), or send to 2nd Floor, The Guildford Institute, Ward Street, Guildford, GU1 4LH.

## Send us details of your events

Don't forget to send us details of your forthcoming events as we are always happy to include them on our Events section free of charge on [www.trusteenet.org.uk](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk)

## Network Focus

The next issue of Network Focus will be in February 2010. If there is anything you would like to see in it please email [info@trusteenet.org.uk](mailto:info@trusteenet.org.uk)

Previous issues of Network Focus can be accessed at [www.trusteenet.org.uk/resources/2052\\_](http://www.trusteenet.org.uk/resources/2052_)