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Email:
info@trusteenet.org.uk

Charityfair 2008

On 10th June CTN is hosting a Trustee VIP Lounge at Charityfair. See the events page on our website for more information.

www.trusteenet.org.uk/events/charityfair-2008-trustee-vip-lounge

Is there anyone else you know who would like to receive this newsletter?

If so, contact Claire Farmer on 01483 230 289 or claire.f@trusteenet.org.uk

News, information and updates for trustee network organisers

Supporting you to support trustees

CTN is committed to supporting trustees and working with others who share that vision. We recognise the time and effort you put in to organising trustee networks and support activities, and value your role as a network organiser.

This newsletter has been compiled specifically to support you. We hope you will find it a quick and easy way to keep up to date with what CTN and other networks are doing.

It will also highlight resources that you may find helpful, either for your network, or for the trustees you support.

What is a network?

Networks come in all shapes and sizes, and there is no one model for what they should look like. Their key characteristics are that -

- they involve trustees from a number of different charities
- they include opportunities for those trustees to talk to each other, share their experiences and support each other
- there is some regularity to the contact, events or meetings, even if it is only once a year

Examples of what networks might look like are available at - www.trusteenet.org.uk/resources/what-trustee-network

Resources on CTN's Website

CTN's website www.trusteenet.org.uk was relaunched in December 2007 and now has many more resources for trustees.

The resources section is divided into -

- Chairs/vice-chairs
- Trustees
- Networks – including how to set up a network, and copies of Network Focus. In due course we intend to include case studies of networks and resources that networks can use at their meetings, such as presentations and handouts.
- Treasurers and finance
- Pro-bono services for charities – this lists organisations that provide free services for charities.
- Other organisations – This links into a range of other organisations, but also includes a section listing e-newsletters from other organisations that trustees can sign up to to be kept up-to-date.

Charity Trustee Networks exists to support trustees, and we consider networks to be one of the key ways of doing this. Please get in touch if there is anything we can do to support you.

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- [Trustee vacancies](#) – a page for charities to post details of trustee vacancies

Ideas for Networking

Every issue of this newsletter will contain practical ideas for networking exercises and opportunities. Do let us know if you've got any good examples which we can share with other network organisers.

Matching Pairs

Select a range of words which commonly go together in pairs, such as salt and pepper, fish and chips, chalk and cheese, and write each word on a sticky label. As people arrive for the meeting give each of them one of the stickers to wear and tell them they have to find the person wearing the word that goes with theirs. If you want you can give them something to do or discuss with their match, for example, discussing what they want to get out of the meeting or an issue they are facing.

This encourages people to talk to others that they might not necessarily approach, and helps to break the ice as people wander around peering at each other's stickers while looking for their match.

Case Study – Shropshire Charity Trustees Network

Shropshire Charity Trustees Network (SCTN) emerged from a discussion in 2005 between Jean Garner, the then Manager of the Voluntary Support Unit of the Community Council of Shropshire (CCS), and two trustees of Shropshire based organisations. They, along with four other trustees set up a Steering Group.

The initial meeting in April 2005 was convened around the subject of the Charities Bill. Fifty people attended, from a wide range of organisations, as well as groups run by volunteers. The Steering Group facilitated small group sessions to focus on key issues for trustees in their respective organisations. After this the full meeting agreed their priority list for the new network to address:

- Working together - committees, staff, volunteers
- Risk management
- Employment law and use of volunteers
- Staff recruitment
- Staff retention
- The National Occupational Standards for Trustees

They agreed the format of quarterly meetings- dates would be set in advance around a topic with a speaker, and small group sessions would be facilitated by the Steering Group members with the speaker circulating to answer specific questions. The network is now serviced by a Support Unit staff member, who circulates paperwork to individual trustees at their home addresses to ensure that they receive paperwork in time. The network is also publicised elsewhere including newspapers and membership has now topped 200.

A further offshoot is a Chief Officers Forum, which was set up to draw off the increasing numbers of chief officers attending the Network. The Trustee Network now insists on members and attendees being trustees or board/committee members of not-for-profit organisations.

The Network seeks to help organisations to work proactively to improve their governance, rather than only dealing with difficulties as they arise. So far it has provided a mechanism for the more experienced trustees to offer and pass on their skills and knowledge and is boosting their

confidence to do that.

The impact

- Network involvement has stimulated interest and attendance at advice and training services provided by the SRCC
- The quarterly meetings attract an average of 40 people from 35 organisations, some travelling 60 miles round-trip. There is also a quarterly newsletter which goes out to 200 people, as not everyone can attend the network meetings.
- Overall the level of awareness of what trusteeship means is enhanced and advice and information resources available from varied sources are better used
- Tangible changes effected by participating organisations include development or rewriting of employment contracts

Lessons and tips

- Set up a trustee network to cover a county or district which is logical for both organisations and the body facilitating it.
- Networks are a simple but effective way to promote and share good practice - just try it, and don't ignore the impact of the social aspects of a network (bonding, shared values).
- Organising a network doesn't require special funding - make use of free venues offered by participating organisations and expert speakers from companies whose rewards will be publicity and follow-up work.
- Encourage trustee members who have resources and an understanding of good practice to lead meetings on specific issues of concern.
- Tap into the expertise of more experienced members to contribute at meetings and support/help less experienced people.
- It's a slow process for people to absorb unfamiliar ideas, but they are often more inclined to take them on board when peers reinforce what advisers say
- Bear in mind the wide range of knowledge and ability among members, and the need to revisit basic issues when new people join.

Contact details for Shropshire Charity Trustee Network are available at www.trusteenet.org.uk/networks/browse.

Tell us what you want

We want to make this newsletter as helpful and practical as possible, so please let us have your feedback. In particular –

- What content would be most useful for you?
- We aim to send Network Focus out four times a year – is that enough/too often?
- Is this about the right length for an issue of Network Focus?
- Would you like to receive occasional other emails from CTN letting you know about events or offers that may be relevant for you and the trustees in your network?

This newsletter is sent to you by CTN

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If you would prefer not to receive it, please email claire.f@trusteenet.org.uk and you will be removed from our mailing list.

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