

## Charity Trustee Networks positioning statement

*Charity Trustee Networks (CTN) works to ensure that trustees, and potential trustees, receive support that enables them to be confident, competent and effective in their role. CTN campaigns for the recognition of the value of trusteeship and its role and contribution to society and delivers the voice of the trustee perspective.*

### Current

1. CTN aims to build the number of competent, confident and effective trustees. CTN represents the views of trustees, is 'on the side of trustees' and marshals effort to provide trustees with access to a coherent set of services.
2. There are many in the sector delivering services to trustees including umbrella bodies such as NCVO and ACEVO, the Directory of Social Change, academic institutions such as Cass Business School and private providers like Plaza publications with their title *Governance* magazine, and many consultants. CTN does not aim to compete with these organisations but sees them as an essential resource for trustees.
3. However, it is difficult for trustees to navigate the 'system' to find the most suitable help to meet their particular needs. The problem arises as the 'system' is supply led with a number of independently operating services that often compete.
4. CTN aims to engage in service delivery only where there is a gap in supply not being met by others. CTN prefers to help suppliers enhance their activities to meet unfulfilled demand.
5. CTN believes that services need to be much more easily accessed by the 800,000 trustees working in charities plus a similar number of management committee members of unregistered charitable organisations. Word of mouth recommendations can be so important in access to appropriate services and CTN believes that networks of all kinds have a critical role to play in this as well as in building confidence.
6. CTN is in a critical period in its development. It acknowledges that millions of pounds have been spent producing and marketing products and services in support of governance in the sector but this has not generated the coherent 'system' sought by trustees. Trustees are still finding it difficult to access the services that they need. If this is to change, CTN has an important influencing role to play in coordinating services from the trustee perspective. More of the same will not provide the solution to meeting the needs of trustees but there is a need to do things differently as many other sectors have done when faced with increased demands from customers/stakeholders. It is our aim to encourage trustees to be more vocal in expressing their needs and demanding changes that will facilitate a more coherent service.
7. We know from the experience of other environments, that if purchasers of services are given more say in how services are made available it changes how markets operate. For example, learning from the health sector, CTN will set up informed trustee groups to exert their voice and will seek to ensure funding that supports trustees seeking to improve their governance. CTN will provide an independent and impartial signposting service of products and services available to trustees.

8. CTN will shift its operations and delivery to a new level if the needs of trustees are to be met. Trustees themselves are part of the solution. They can be more demanding of suppliers of products and services; they are in an excellent position to network and identify good practice and the most appropriate providers to meet their needs. Most of all, they can spread the word on the value of trusteeship to society explaining the rewards that come from such commitment and engagement. With appropriate resources, CTN can harness the commitment and enthusiasm of trustees and influence strongly the 'system' to be more co-ordinated and coherent. Well-supported, many more people from all walks of life may be attracted to this important role in society.

### **History**

9. CTN was started in 1998 by a number of trustees who identified the need for an organisation representing trustees. The Charity Commission, welcoming the development, seconded a member of their staff in order to support the fledging organisation.
10. From the start CTN was established by trustees, for trustees, and this remains its unique positioning. At its inception the board realised that to be effective it had to work alongside sector organisations that would welcome support for their trustees. The strongest relationship has been developed with the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) which wanted to support the trustees of local Voluntary and Community Action Services and their members. This development helped form a number of local trustee networks which encouraged face to face meetings and support. There are 25/30 networks that continue to flourish. They encourage CTN to achieve a great deal more.
11. To supplement the development of face to face networks, CTN established a web based trustee support network - *trusteenet* - in 2007. Membership has doubled in 2008/9 and now numbers over 2000, CTN has aspirations that this service should continue to double in membership during the next 2/3 years. *Trusteenetplus* a voluntary subscription service was launched in late 2007 with the intention of providing a range of services for trustees, benefiting from scale and group discounts from suppliers to provide a range of services for trustees. This service has long term potential and is an important part of supporting trustees as well as creating a small unrestricted income stream.
12. Last year CTN launched *trusteefinder*, a basic computer based recruitment service that enables volunteers and charities to list and search trustee positions. This was done in response to the need for better coordination of trustee recruitment, and in close partnership with Volunteer Centres and the National Volunteering database run by Youthnet (*do-it.org*). With some 5000 positions available from day one this was seen as an important first step in building, in collaboration, a coherent recruitment market for trustees.
13. CTN was also a key partner in the development of the Code of Good Governance in collaboration with NCVO, ACEVO, ICSA and the Charity Commission. CTN is a strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector to provide 'the voice of trustees' which it committed until at least March 2011.

### **Conclusion**

CTN acknowledges that doing things differently is a challenge but that it is uniquely positioned and the rewards to trustees and society is great.

#### **CTN affirms that:**

Trustees do great work.

They need and demand support.

CTN is positioned to help deliver access to support needed and will step up to the plate to do this.

And why - because well governed charities meet real need and build our civil society.

