



## Supporting trustees

County voluntary councils (CVCs), volunteer centres (VCs) and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) provide information, guidance and support to charities, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises, individual volunteers - and trustees.

It is the estimated 230,000 trustees (or management committee members) in Wales who are ultimately responsible for ensuring their organisations are well run, solvent and working towards the purpose for which they were established. Taking on a trustee role can be challenging and demanding, but Wales' third sector infrastructure organisations have a wealth of experience in providing direct support to individual trustees and trustee boards, and in signposting to further sources of expert advice and guidance.

A brief summary of support for trustees, delivered by CVCs and WCVA under the Partnership Agreement follows:

**Trustee Helpline 0800 2888 329, and trustee information sheets**

The Helpline provides general information, and will signpost enquirers to appropriate sources of support in CVCs and other agencies. Approximately

2,860 enquiries were dealt with by CVCs and Helpline staff during the period April – September 2011. Enquiries requiring a legally informed response are referred to WCVA’s Legal Services Officer.

Basic information is provided on a range of governance matters in a series of 9 trustee information sheets, available for download from all CVC and WCVA websites. Between April – September 2011, over 19,000 were downloaded. Titles include:

- Principles of governance
- Trustee duties and responsibilities
- Governing body structures and honorary officers
- Recruitment, selection and induction
- Training and development for trustees
- Working with the chief officer
- Liability of trustees and governing body members
- Trustee indemnity insurance
- Winding up - the steps involved and alternative options

### **Trustee Wales website**

[www.trusteewales.org.uk](http://www.trusteewales.org.uk) provides comprehensive information on trustee and governance issues, including links to key Charity Commission documents. Between April - Sep 2011, almost 9,400 items were downloaded from this site, which will be revised and restructured as part of WCVA’s new website (due to go live summer 2012).

### ***Trustee news - e newsletter***

To help trustees keep abreast of legal and regulatory issues, *Trustee news* is a free monthly update, distributed via email, with an emphasis on practical guidance and signposting to additional sources of help and advice. Trustees can register online at: [www.wcva.org.uk/emembership](http://www.wcva.org.uk/emembership) See the latest issue, Appendix 1

### **One-to-one support**

CVCs offer one-to-one support for trustees, and also support groups of trustees (trustee networks) in certain areas. Such meetings may include legal, accountancy or other professionals who can provide informed guidance on particular topics. Sometimes, CVCs may provide bespoke consultancy services to organisations requiring more in depth support. Both WCVA and CVCs offer a ‘health check’ service for their members which looks at key governance issues and helps to identify areas of weakness.

Occasionally, some charities develop serious disputes between different elements of a trustee board, and require external assistance to resolve matters. CVC staff have recently received training in mediation skills, to assist them with this often challenging and delicate task (NB training for

infrastructure staff is arranged by WCVA and aims to deliver endorsed and/or accredited courses).

### **Trustee training / seminars**

The infrastructure offers a programme of courses, marketed as part of the *Courses for Communities Cymru* programme, that are tailored to the needs of individual trustees and trustee boards. They are designed to be accessible: reasonably priced and delivered locally. Courses include, for example:

- Roles and responsibilities of trustees and management committee members
- The board and sub-committees
- Recruiting and developing trustees
- Governance

Thirty courses were offered in the period April – September 2011, advertised by CVCs in their newsletters and websites, and on [www.coursesforcommunitiescymru.org.uk](http://www.coursesforcommunitiescymru.org.uk)

WCVA also offers support to trustees through a programme of seminars and national conferences. The next Wales Charity Law conference, on 16 May 2012, for example, is called *Keeping things ship-shape: putting good governance into practice*, and will include presentations from Charity Commission staff and specialist solicitors.

WCVA seminars on a range of topics, delivered by associate accountants, solicitors and other agencies, regularly attract a high number of trustees:

- Charity accounts for trustees (with Watts Gregory)
- An introduction to the Equality Act (with EHRC)
- An introduction to risk management (with Watts Gregory)
- An introduction to trading (with Geldards)
- Beating bully (with Hugh James)

Evening seminars being delivered specifically for trustees will also be held during April to November, in Cardiff, Rhyl and Aberystwyth on:

- Increasing impact through social media – an introduction for trustees
- How young trustees can benefit your organisation
- Planning for financial sustainability – a guide for trustees

### **Employment law / HR advice**

One of WCVA's affinity schemes for its members offers guidance on employment and HR issues, with the option of additional indemnity cover, at a heavily discounted fee. In addition, WCVA in conjunction with Hugh James solicitors, is offering three seminars in the period April – September, which will be marketed to senior managers and trustees:

- Employment Tribunal process
- Disciplinary and grievance
- Performance management

### **Trustee recruitment**

The Charity Commission encourages charities to be proactive and open in their trustee recruitment processes, and WCVA and CVCs have developed cost effective recruitment options: Trustee vacancies are listed (free of charge) by local authority area on [www.volunteering-wales.net](http://www.volunteering-wales.net) , (there are currently 191 'live' on the site); and regularly advertised (free of charge) on [www.recruit3.org.uk](http://www.recruit3.org.uk) (alongside paid jobs and internship opportunities in the third sector).

### **Promoting good governance**

Infrastructure organisations have a key role to play in promoting good governance in the sector. Locally, some CVCs have published general guidance, such as VAMT's *Governance code of practice for the third sector*, produced jointly with the local authority and health board. WCVA will shortly be re-issuing an updated version of its *Good Governance - a code for the third sector in Wales*, which will be free for download from WCVA and CVC websites. A new edition of the popular guide for trustees, *Faith and hope don't run charities (trustees do)* will be launched at the charity law conference in May. This popular publication has been commended for its accessible style and practical guidance (see sample section, Appendix 2).

### **Celebrating trustees**

People who have made an outstanding contribution as a trustee, can be nominated for a special **trustee award** in the annual Volunteer of the Year Award scheme. Local volunteer centres / CVCs can provide forms and further details, or visit [www.wcva.org.uk/voty](http://www.wcva.org.uk/voty) Nominations can be accepted until 13 April 2012, and awards will be announced in June.

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