

Work Rights Centre Trustee

Role description

The Work Rights Centre is a charity dedicated to ending in-work poverty. Every week two multilingual teams of advisers in London and Manchester provide free and confidential consultations to vulnerable migrants and ethnic minority Britons. We help beneficiaries access their employment rights when they have been breached, and equip them with the skills to access better jobs, social security, and security of immigration status.

Since we first opened our clinic in 2016 our advisers have assisted thousands of individuals in rebuilding their lives. Gradually, we are also accumulating the knowledge and resources to pursue our mission of ending in-work poverty through campaigning and policy change, with a view to enacting long-term change.

To this end, we rely on good governance from our Board of Trustees. This is what this role sets out, in conjunction with the Guide to Governance.

About the Board of Trustees

Trustees are expert volunteers who meet once a quarter in the context of Board Meetings, and participate in additional sub-committee meetings. As governors of the charity, the board of trustees have two foundational objectives:

- **Ensure that the charity fulfils its legal obligations**, and follows best practices set out by the Charity Commission. According to the Charity Commission, the mission of the Board of Trustees is to ensure that the charity carries out its purpose for the public benefit, that it complies with the governing document and the law, that it is accountable and resources are managed responsibly. To this end, you must act with reasonable care and skill, and always in the charity's best interest.¹
- **Ensure good governance**. This is about fostering an environment where the charity has the vision, resources, and team cohesion to achieve its mission. It is about understanding the charitable mission of the Work Rights Centre, and taking a lead in upholding the procedures, policies, and organisational infrastructures needed to deliver it.

Both of these objectives take a great deal of skill and tact. They take a candidate who can focus on the big picture, leading on strategic moments of organisational formation, but also a candidate who will empower the operational staff to believe in, and deliver on, the charity's mission.

¹ [Charity Commission for England and Wales \(2020\) Guidance. The essential trustee: what you need to know. what you need to do.](#)

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of Trustees revolve around the two main objectives set out above. Much of this is about having the right knowledge - of the charity's governing document, any conflicts of interest, and the legal framework which governs fundraising, employment, GDPR, and providing advice to adults at risk. Trustees use this knowledge to oversee the functioning of the charity.

But there is also a practical element to governance which falls within Trustees' responsibilities. [The Charity Commission Essential Trustee Guide](#) provides a detailed overview. In summary trustees have a duty to:

Support the production and review of key policies:

- Business plan - setting out the strategic aims the charity will undertake, and resources needed to that end.
- Governance guide - setting out the framework for delegating duties across the Board and staff, with appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and reporting.
- Financial policy - setting out the fundraising strategy, financial controls and KPIs, how and for how long accounting records should be kept, protections against financial crime.
- An annual budget.
- A reserves policy.
- Risk policy.

Ensure that the organisation reports to the Charity Commission with:

- An annual return and, depending on the charity's size, annual accounts.²
- Changes to trustee details and the governing document.
- A record of any serious incident.

Secure the sound management of staff and volunteers by making sure that:

- The charity complies with relevant legislation - including employment, pension, equality and health and safety law.
- Staff and volunteers have adequate job descriptions and duties, which set out decision making authority.
- Staff work in a safe and supportive environment.

All of this requires an element of active participation in the life of the charity, by:

- Attending quarterly Board meetings;
- Acting as responsive, supportive mentors for staff and volunteers.

² Charities whose income is over £250,000, and all charitable companies, must prepare their accounts and trustees' annual report in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice - Accounting and Reporting by Charities (Charities SORP).

Skills and Experience

The charity would benefit from trustees with expertise in:

- Frontline service delivery in the third sector.
- Employment law;
- Immigration law;
- Social security law;
- Policy influencing, particularly on employment, migrants' rights, and social security;
- Financial management.

We are also looking for Trustees who recognise the fact that governing a charity is about a balance of scrutiny and support. The Directory for Social Change has drafted an excellent guide for trustees DOs and DON'Ts.³ In summary, we want you to be:

- An active player - who recognises that the work of trustees is not limited to scrutiny during Board meetings, but also a careful reading of Board papers and accounts, signing grant agreements, and the adoption and regular review of key policies;
- A team player - who will lead on governance, but empower operational staff with the freedom to deliver the charity vision;
- A seasoned manager - with an ability to identify opportunities, risks, and the key resources the charity needs to deliver on its mission;
- An excellent communicator - who can engage meaningfully in board meetings, committee meetings, and personal communication when needed;
- Emotionally intelligent - who acknowledges that team morale and trust are as foundational to the charity as its bedrock of written policies and procedures.⁴

Finally, the Work Rights Centre is a charity founded by migrants, for migrants and vulnerable Britons. Many of our staff have had lived experiences of the issues encountered by our beneficiaries. If this is also you, if you have had experience of working in unscrupulous or unsupportive environments, if you have felt intimidated by formal justice but you now trust that you can be part of a change, please apply.

Accountability

Individual trustees are accountable to members of the Board, and to the Charity Commission. They do not have a line manager. However, this Role description and associated Governance Guide set out expectations and framework.

³[10 Things Terrible Trustees Do and Brilliant Trustees Don't](#)

⁴ According to Charity Commission regulations, you cannot be a trustee if you are bankrupt (undischarged) or have an individual voluntary arrangement (IVA), if you have an unspent conviction for certain offences (including any that involve dishonesty or deception), or if you are on the sex offenders' register.

How to apply

Please email the CEO, Dr. Dora-Olivia Vicol, at olivia.vicol@workrightscentre.org with an updated CV and a cover letter outlining why you support the mission of the Work Rights Centre, and what you think you have to offer to the Board. Olivia will collate applications, and introduce candidates to the Chair of the Board, who will organise interviews.