

Work Rights Centre Trustee

Role description

Work Rights Centre is a charity dedicated to helping migrants and disadvantaged Britons to access employment justice and improve their social mobility. We provide a free legal advice service that changes lives with expert employment and immigration legal advice, and we challenge the systemic causes of injustice with research, parliamentary advocacy, and strategic litigation.

Having started in 2016 with just one advice desk in a public library, we are now one of the leading advocates of vulnerable migrant workers. We were at the forefront of the UK's humanitarian response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and are now leading the sector in advocating for the rights of sponsored migrant workers, particularly seasonal workers and care workers.

We could not do this without 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 oversee the governance of the charity. They shape its strategic direction, scrutinise finances and resource allocation, and support the staff team in developing the policies and procedures needed to comply with legislation and provide an excellent service for the public benefit. 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, reputation, 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 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. They require thorough understanding of the charity's governing document, any conflicts of interest, and the legal framework which governs fundraising, employment, GDPR, and providing advice. Trustees use this knowledge to oversee the functioning of the charity.

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:

Review **key strategy documents**, and support senior staff in producing them:

- 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 and register.

Ensure that the organisation **reports to the Charity Commission** with:

- Annual report and independently reviewed accounts, in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice
- Changes to trustee details and/or 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 have adequate job descriptions and duties, a clear appraisal policy, and opportunities for professional development.
- Staff and volunteers work in a safe and supportive environment.

Participate in the life of the charity, by:

- Attending quarterly Board meetings and reviewing the associated documentation.
- Being generous with your subject expertise, including by engaging at subcommittee level.
- Respecting the complementary roles of charity staff and trustees, and using your expertise to support them.

Skills and Experience

The current charity board would benefit from addition of trustees with expertise in:

- Employment law;
- 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.² 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.³

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, and we would like to extend this to the board of trustees.

Accountability

Individual trustees are accountable to members of the Board, and to the Charity Commission. This role description and associated Governance Guide set out expectations and framework.

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.

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

³ 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.