



The voice of independent advice

## **The Governance Project**

The Governance Project is a two year project funded by the Big Lottery. It aims to improve the skills and knowledge of trustees and not-for-profit company directors and to help them function well in a regulatory, policy and funding environment that is increasingly challenging.

The Governance Project was developed jointly by Law Centres Federation and AdviceUK following requests for training and support from Trustees and Management Committees of advice agencies and Law Centres in London.

Much of the training available and published material for trustees and Management Committees in the not-for-profit sector, is very general in nature. Requests for help to both AdviceUK and Law Centres Federation have been for something more relevant to the day to day issues that Trustees face, particularly in respect of organisations providing legal advice services.

### **Effective Governance Manual**

An Effective Governance Manual containing eight individual seminars on separate governance or policy areas has been produced. It covers governance, board roles and responsibilities, planning, finance, fundraising, human resources and policy and regulatory issues affecting the legal advice sector. The manual and its associated training has become an invaluable resource for trustee boards.

### **Governance healthcheck and self-assessment tool**

We have produced a detailed 'governance healthcheck' as a key tool for assessing an organisation's state of governance. The information provided by the healthcheck forms the basis of any one-to-one development support and or training programme that we offer to the trustees of an organisation.

An easy to use self assessment tool enabling groups to review their own governance development needs has also been produced and is available on the AdviceUK website.

## **The Governance Project enters its second year**

The Governance Project successfully completed its first year in December 2008 and has now developed an ambitious work programme for its second year:-

### **One-to-one trustee development and training**

We are looking for 12 boards of trustees to work with this year. We can offer one-to-one development support for the board based on a full Governance Healthcheck or self assessment. We also have a seven module learning programme for trustees based on the Effective Governance Manual. The learning programme can be delivered as part of the one-to-one development support or can be accessed on a stand alone basis.

Our Effective Governance programme of seven learning modules comprises:

1. Introduction to the Effective Governance learning programme and advice centres
2. Policy and regulatory issues affecting advice centres
3. Governance
4. Board roles and responsibilities
5. Strategic planning
6. Fundraising and finance
7. Human resources

If you wish you can select only those modules of interest to you or we can tailor the modules to your needs. Please call us if you would like to discuss your requirements.

### **Briefings**

We shall be producing four further briefings this year to go with the series that were so well received last year. The first, due in March 2009 will follow on from the fourth in last year's series and continue the HR theme with a discussion on the role of Trustees should a redundancy situation occur in your agency. Further briefings will follow later in the year such as one covering the Legal Services Commission's plans for bidding for Social Welfare law Contracts in 2010.

### **Seminar – 25 February 2009**

We shall be holding a one-day seminar on the issues raised by the shift from grant funding to a culture of contracts where partnerships, consortia or mergers have become a pre-requisite. Trustees will need to be aware of the risks involved in participating in such a venture and how those risks can be managed or mitigated. A speaker from Sayer Vincent, a specialist firm of consultants and auditors for the charity sector, will help guide trustees through the maze. Other details will be announced shortly.

### **Mentoring sessions**

In year one of the project we piloted a new style of mentoring session. A small number of groups of a similar type, eg those with an LSC franchise were invited to a mentoring session on a single topic such as dealing with poor performing staff. A group that had successfully dealt with the problem led the debate and attendees were then able to share experiences and support each other in small groups. The format proved very successful and groups have asked for more sessions.

In response to requests we shall be offering six sessions this year and we are in the process of negotiating with a group of HR professionals to offer one-to-one HR mentoring. We hope to be able to give details of this service in the near future.

### **Governance conference**

In addition to the London Advice Conference scheduled for October this year the Governance Project will be holding its own one-day conference for trustees in early summer focussing on issues directly aimed at improving or enhancing effective governance. Details of the full programme will be made available in due course.