

A Toolkit for Trustees for Directors of Services for Women in Scotland

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Rape Crisis Scotland

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Based on an initiative by Rape Crisis England and Wales

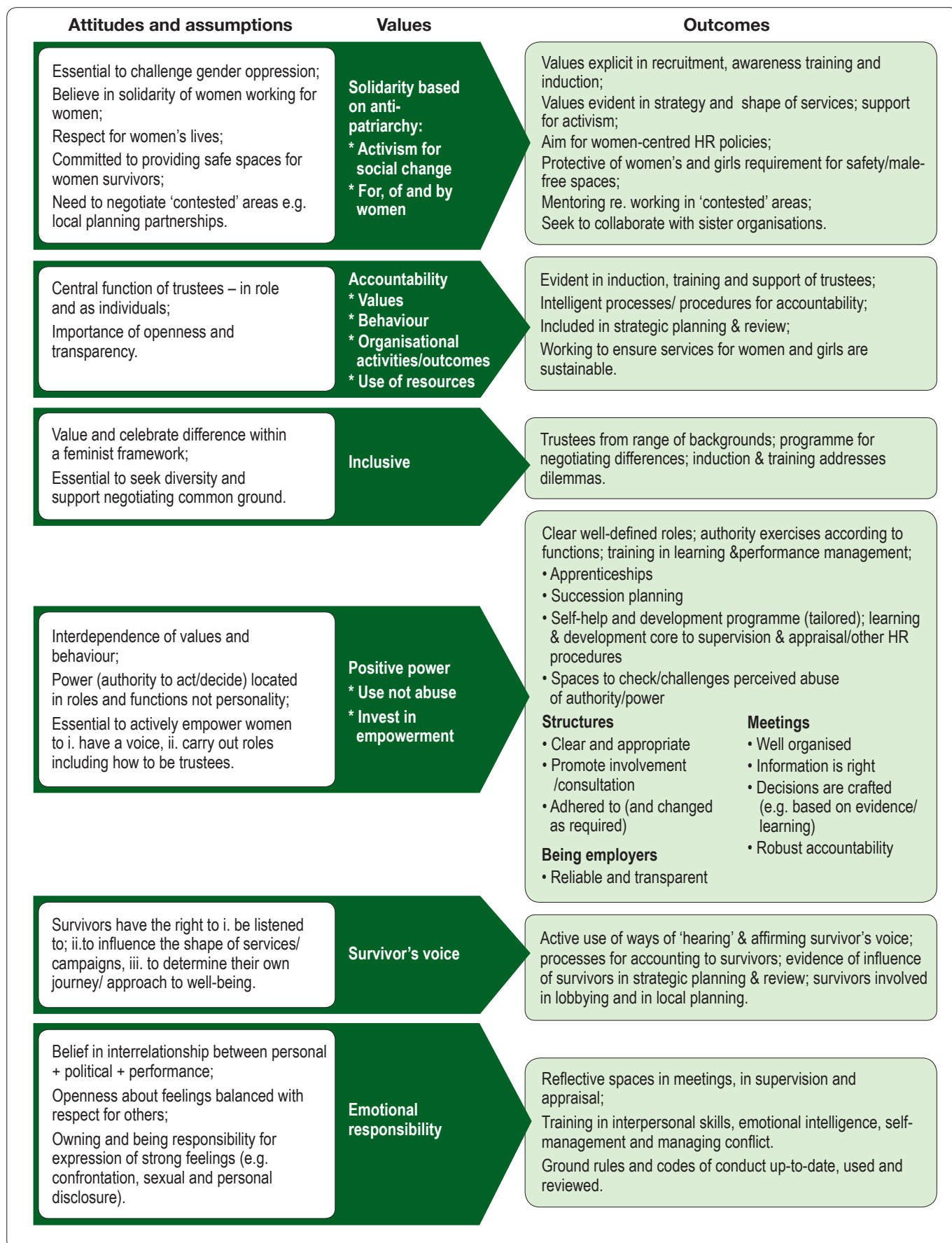


Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The audit	1
3. Using the audit	1
4. Values.....	2
Being an activist.....	2
Being accountable	3
Inclusive	4
Positive power	5
Service user’s voice.....	6
Emotional responsibility	7
5. In conclusion	8
6. Guidelines	9
Dilemma about being an activist	9
Working in ‘contested areas’ i.e. in partnership with agencies/ people indifferent or hostile to feminist values.....	10
Counteracting or preventing Secondary Vicarious Trauma (SVT) and ‘burnout’	10
Being accountable	12 & 13
Board capacity to make informed decisions.....	14
Inclusive	15
Positive power	16
Service user’s voice.....	17
Emotional responsibility	18

Throughout the toolkit resources are suggested as well as the relevant standard. Note: For RCS member centre boards only – Resources will be available through the RCS website: members pages. To access this site and register for login please contact the RCS Information and Resources worker – Eileen.Maitland@rapecrisisScotland.org.uk

Feminist Governance 'Model'



1. Introduction

This toolkit is designed for charities providing services for women and girls and that are centred on feminist values. This version is orientated to Rape Crisis services in Scotland.

The toolkit is for the Trustees, Committee or Board of Directors of charities to use to self-assess, develop their governance and strengthen the services clarity and adherence to feminist values.

The toolkit can be adapted for:

- Collectives
- Rape Crisis Centres in Scotland
- Rape Crisis Centres in other nations (i.e. England and Wales and Northern Ireland)
- Women's Aid in Scotland and other nations

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Each of the four sections can be use independently or as interrelated exercises and information.

2. The Audit

The Audit is for Trustees to have a means to self-assess their approach to governance, i.e. governance based on feminist values. The feminist framework, adopted here, comes from the model identified by the Feminist Governance Project (CRFR Briefing no.70) based on interviews and focus groups with Trustees of services for women and girls who have or are experiencing Gender Based Violence.

3. Using the Audit

It is intended that individual Trustees annually answer the questions listed in either all or selected sections with a view to sharing their responses during their governance practice review. Trustees would then discuss the results together, as the Board and selected themes are discussed with the appropriate staff and volunteers of the service e.g organisational review day.

To support the on going commitment to developing a supportive learning culture the organisation could host a facilitated session of the themes from the annual review day. Consequently the Trustees will have a reasonably sound assessment of what to celebrate and the challenges and can decide on learning and action plans.

4. Values

Value: Being an activist

This means being committed to challenging gender oppression; of arguing for services for, of and by women.

Attitudes and Assumptions - include

- Believing in the solidarity and benefits of women working for women
- The importance of respecting survivor’s voices and self-determination
- Commitment to providing safe spaces for those who need it
- Challenging misconceptions and social tolerance of gender based violence and holding perpetrators accountable
- Respecting that survivors may or may not share these views and must be listened to respectfully.
- When operating within a context of interagency cooperation and collaboration, place survivors needs as core to all coordinated responses. This could mean the service works with agencies with different values e.g. local planning partnerships.

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if the functioning of the Trustees of your service ‘rate’ a ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘somewhat’.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Committed to providing opportunities to celebrate individual survivors ’s strengths.			
Creating methods of feedback for meaningful participation of survivors to assess the impact of the services and support within the organisation towards ending gender based violence.			
Ensure women-only spaces.			
Feminist values are explicit in recruitment and induction of all Trustees.			
Making explicit the Ethos & Values of the organisation (internally and externally e.g publications, funding applications, blogs and – This is a feminist organisation.			
Awareness training for Trustees in feminist values, gender equality and the causes of gender based violence.			
Organisational values and ethos discussed when formulating strategy and business plans.			
Encourage activism and advocacy that challenges gender inequality (e.g. giving talks, writing articles, blogs, and social media).			
Ensure support for those in contact with partners agencies whose values (e.g. Criminal Justice) are different or in opposition to feminist values.			
Seek to collaborate with and support sister organisations.			
Partner with other VAWaG organisations to advance access to support information, advice, quality services and advancement of gender equality.			

Value: Being accountable

This has three elements: (i) taking responsibility for adhering to values (e.g. in terms of attitude and behaviour), (ii) taking responsibility for decisions about the use of resources (e.g. funding and reputation) and (iii) being able to account for the decisions-made, and for consultation and communication about the decisions.

Attitudes and Assumptions – include

- Accountability is core to a Trustee's duty, as an individual and as a group
- Investment in robust informed decision-making based on what is perceived to be best for present and future survivors using and requiring support
- Commitment to consultation and communication with key 'stakeholders' such as staff, service users, volunteers and partners.
- Openness and transparency valued, including making power dynamics transparent and able to be challenged, ensuring integrity (e.g. conflict of interest policy and code of conduct agreed by Trustees).

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if the functioning of the Trustees of your service 'rate' a 'yes', 'no' or indeed an between 'somewhat'.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Working to ensure core services for survivors are sustainable, e.g. prioritising and protecting core support services, evidencing gaps and barriers to unmet needs.			
In relationships and activities Trustees protect and advance the interests of survivors, e.g. negotiating with funders; investing in feedback and evaluation.			
Importance of accountability evident in induction, training and development of Trustees roles i.e. written in policies, reflected in governance practices and talked about generally.			
Seeking to make decisions based on sound information and advice (e.g. identifying strategic priorities).			
Seek to ensure decision-making is transparent and that the decisions made are accessible (e.g. accountability to staff via minutes on intra-net) minus confidential items/discussions and robust conflicts of interest policies and practice.			
Actively consulting and communicating with staff and volunteers e.g. newsletter; Away Days, involvement in sub-committees and 'survey monkeys' for feedback.			
Seek to where possible provide staff and volunteers with beneficial and reasonable terms and conditions, (e.g. Living Wage; family and carer's leave).			
Ensure clear communication with partners, funders and other associated agencies/stakeholders (e.g. knowing, and reviewing, what information goes to which organisations).			
Annually review structures for planning and accountability.			

Value: Inclusive

Committed to treating all associated with the organisation with equal respect and actively seeking diversity. An effective diversity strategy goes beyond legal compliance and seeks to add value to an organisation, contributing to cultural well-being and engagement.

Equality is about treating people fairly and equally regardless of their appearance, beliefs, age, background or lifestyle. Diversity is about recognising that there are differences between people and taking these into account when we relate to them

Attitudes and Assumptions – include

- Necessity to value and celebrate diversity
- Commitment to respect the diversity of Survivors and positively engage in anti-discriminatory practices
- An effective diversity and inclusion strategy which can support an organisation’s aims and objectives
- The need to actively, reflect a commitment to diversity in recruitment, promotion and influencing of priorities and practice
- Support negotiating common ground and seeking conflict resolution when needed- being transparent and considerate in this negotiation.

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if your trusteeship ‘rates’ a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘somewhat’.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Be clear about which values are core (i.e. non-negotiable) to the organisation and how to discuss these with potential Trustees.			
Actively strive to recruit Trustees from a range of backgrounds (e.g. out with VAWaG sector) and experience (e.g. using advertising; targeting communities (e.g. LGBT) or professions (HR/finance).			
Provide all Trustees with Equality and Diversity awareness training during their induction and enabling updates / refresher sessions.			
Induction and training of Trustees explores dilemmas when managing differences and stresses necessity to be respectful and to address conflict constructively.			
Include and respect survivors of different ages, ethnicities, religions, abilities and sexual orientations e.g. avoid tokenism.			
Strive to keep trustees involved e.g. updates if missing meeting due to personal / work commitments ; use of IT such as Skype for sub-committees; use of co-option.			
Code of practice/ conduct in place for supporting and negotiating differences (e.g. training in managing conflict and access to mediation)			
Check the influence of dominant groups and individuals, being alert to who exercises the most influence, e.g. gets delegated more, or less, authority, responsibilities and tasks.			
Ethos of listening respectfully to women who may or may not share the values of the Centre/service. Being transparent about how this ‘listening’ influences decisions and is acted on.			

Value: Positive power

Using the authority of Trustees to develop best practice, enable and support staff and empower survivors. Not to abuse or misuse the authority as individual Trustees or as a group.

Attitudes and Assumptions – include

- Understanding the interdependence of values and behaviour.
- Power - i.e. the authority to act/ decide - located in roles and functions not personality or alliances (i.e. power through role and function is accountable and transparent whilst when it is located in personality it is not open to scrutiny).
- Work in ways that are women focused and committed to power for women including a sharing of power amongst women in the organisation.
- Making formal and informal power transparent and holding each other to account over the uses of it e.g. code of conduct policy / practice for the organisational roles. Promoting a culture of collaboration and consultation within the organisational encouraging feedback from staff and volunteers on the strategic direction and leadership of the Trustees and actively use this to strengthen the governance.
- Respecting, and facilitating, the roles and functions of others, e.g. the Manager or Team Leaders. Trusting and respecting the autonomy of lead staff roles and responsibilities.
- Committing to a process of self-reflection - being conscious of the way I use my authority in the Trustee role.
- Support opportunities and safe spaces to discuss power, authority and influence as a Board, and as an organisation.
- Essential to actively empower women to (a) have a voice and (b) carry out roles including how to become Trustees

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if the functioning of the Trustees of your service 'rate' a 'yes', 'no' or 'somewhat'.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Clear well-defined roles, role boundaries, and structures e.g. details of remits and how roles relate included in induction.			
Authority exercised according to role and functions e.g. governance guidance gives examples of good practice and includes values, rights and responsibilities.			
Training in learning and performance management (e.g. devise and use action plans to scrutinise progress).			
Programme for empowering and developing e.g. apprenticeships, succession planning, investing in board development programmes.			
Ensuring effective arrangements for supervision and appraisal for staff, and the equivalent for volunteers, e.g. external support and/or 1:1s for Manager, feedback survey amongst staff and volunteers.			
Collaborative and co-operative with fellow Trustees.			
Well organised meetings e.g. good preparation, well organised paperwork before and after the meeting and effective use if the time in the meeting.			
Well-made decisions in meetings (i.e. based on sound information and robust discussion/ problem-solving).			

cont.

Clear and appropriate structures that promote involvement and consultation – so that staff and volunteers and survivors meaningfully influence policies and priorities.			
Striving to be reliable and fair employers: employee rights and terms and conditions.			
Meetings where there is a space to check / challenge how authority and power is used.			
Clear and appropriate structures that promote involvement and consultation – so that staff and volunteers and survivors meaningfully influence policies and priorities.			

Value: Service user’s voice

Service users – core survivors accessing the organisation plus family , friends and colleagues etc.

Dedicated to respecting the individual service user seeking feedback on their experiences of the service and finding ways survivors can shape the service and the organisation.

Attitudes and Assumptions – include

- Service users have the right to be listened to.
- Service users have the right to influence the shape of services and campaigns.
- Service users have the right to determine their own choices and approach to their health and well-being.

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if the functioning of the Trustees of your service ‘rate’ a ‘yes’, ‘no’ or indeed an between ‘somewhat’.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Organisational service user involvement policy and practice – including an induction for all staff, volunteers and board members.			
Active use of ways of ‘hearing’ and affirming the voice of service users, e.g. using art, drama, IT, newsletter and /or social media; include service users in Care Inspectorate assessments.			
Processes in place for the work of the Board to be accountable to all service users e.g. development of survivors led support groups, use of ad hoc workgroups/ focus groups that include survivors.			
Evidence of influence of survivors in strategic planning and review e.g survivors consulted in the planning, development, direction and evaluation of services.			
Survivors involved in lobbying and local planning processes, i.e. Trustees responsive to survivors needs and supports their voices in the development of services and campaigns.			
Encourage the mentoring and support of women to be apprentice as Trustees, develop leadership skills and take up career opportunities			

Value: Emotional responsibility

Being aware and accountable for strong feelings, personal stressors and the managing of conflict/ differences.

Attitudes and Assumptions – include

- Belief in interrelationship between personal + the political+ performance.
- Belief in the importance of reflecting on the use of power and influence.
- Openness about feelings balanced with respect for others and boundaries of relationships.
- Acknowledging, reflecting on and being responsible for expression of strong feelings (e.g. confrontation, disclosure of your personal details or circumstances).

Audit

Reflect on each statement then decide if the functioning of the Trustees of your service 'rate' a 'yes', 'no' or indeed an between 'somewhat'.

	Yes	Somewhat	No
Induction of Trustees to include the impact on a workplace of working with violence and inequality (e.g. 'burnout').			
Spaces in meetings to reflect on the concerns of individuals wellbeing.			
Opportunities for raising issues / concerns and reflections in supervision , appraisal and team / board meetings.			
Training, for all, in interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and managing conflict – induction and learning development plans.			
Ground rules and/or organisational code of conduct up-to-date, used and reviewed.			
Trustees, as individuals, to personally reflect on the way they use power – create safe supported spaces for conversations.			
Trustees ensure that they do not use feminism as a tool to avoid conflict or criticism e.g. regarding it as 'unfeminist' to challenge staff member's poor practice.			
Trustees recognize and respect differences of opinion – seek to understand.			

5. In conclusion

1. What are we doing well that is to be celebrated?

2. What are any issues and concerns?

3. ACTION List – what steps would strengthen and sustain governance in your organisation?

4. What might be the timeline for making the changes?

5. What resources will be needed?

6. Who could help (internal or external)?

7. What would a successful result(s) look like?

6. Guidelines

Dilemma about being an activist

Case study 1

Eastoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustees: Nazreen and Christine

Nazreen thinks the Rape Crisis Centre should sign up to the local Sex Workers Action Group, which is lobbying for Sex Worker's rights, and for this to be on the Centre's website. A few months ago, the trustees had decided to openly support a local group of women Care Leavers and published blogs on their website. Christine thought they should do the same, if not more for the Sex Workers Action Group. She justified this to Christine, a fellow Trustee, 'I believe that sex worker's should have the same protections as other workers and that we need legalisation to improve conditions for the women in the sex industry'. Christine objected because she felt this was Nazreen's personal view and did not agree that this should be seen as the view of the RCC.

Their discussion got rather tense and so they agreed to take Nazreen's proposal to the next Board meeting.

The Board members debated the proposal, respecting Nazreen's reasons for putting it on the agenda, but did not decide to formally align the RCC with the Sex Workers Action Group. The Board members were careful to say that although they supported sex worker's rights to services any activism in support of the group in the name of the RCC was outwith the organisational values as defined by the trustees. 'Of course', the Convenor of the Board said to Nazreen, 'it's your personal choice being involved with the Sex Workers Action Group but it is vital this does not interfere with your role as a RC Trustee'.

Nazreen was not pleased with the outcome of the discussion but agreed she had been listened to and understood that, although she, Nazreen, differed in her views from other Board members, being a Trustee meant adhering to the core values of the organisation and protecting its reputation.

Nazreen requested that she have time, over the next few weeks, to consider her position as Trustee of the RCC. She later wrote to say she had decided to resign as RCC Trustee as becoming a spokesperson for the Sex Workers Action Group was not compatible with her duties as a Trustee of the RCC.

Trustees Nazreen and Christine are right to discuss dilemmas about values, as is their Board in protecting the values of the organisations and being careful about how the RCC is perceived. The values at the heart of the work of a Rape Crisis Centre explain the motivation for what is offered, to whom and how. A core common value base is essential for the Board, staff and volunteers to act together and stresses the importance of talking values at recruitment and induction, as part of training, at Away Days and during supervision and appraisals. These values are fundamental to shaping the nature of services and who participates in them. They are pivotal to Trustee recruitment and induction.

Activists committed to ending gender based violence believe providing information and support is not enough; it is necessary to challenge attitudes to the abuse of women and children. Rape Crisis Scotland is unequivocal in this. They state on their website: 'We believe in taking action to change attitudes and to improve services for those who have been raped or sexually assaulted'.

The campaigning may take many forms: writing articles, negotiating with partner organisations based on the expressed needs of survivors or promoting the importance of the solidarity of women working for women – the evidence for which has the support of independent research. Moreover Scottish charities can campaign for social change. Charity Trustees must make sure that their activities are in pursuit of their charitable purposes; and always bear in mind that the charity trustees' duty is to act in the best interests of their charity.

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Values in action:

- The Rape Crisis England and Wales / Scotland statement of values and how these are demonstrated in the standards for rape crisis centres and services (e.g. 5.3 and 7.6)

- Ideas for including values in the recruitment, selection and induction of Trustees
- The evidence for women only services
- Trustees self-assessment framework from Rape Crisis Scotland

Working in ‘contested areas’ i.e. in partnership with agencies/ people indifferent or hostile to feminist values

Case study 2

Westoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustee: Luisa Outreach Worker: Yasmin

Luisa came in early one evening to the RCC office to help with the funding application to Big Lottery Scotland. She said hello to Yasmin and asked if she was well. Yasmin replied ‘yes thanks, I am just reflecting on what happened today’. Yasmin went on to say, ‘as I am the Prevention Worker, I went to see a showing of the new ‘This is Not Consent’ video at a School and heard how, at an earlier showing, a couple of the boys started abusing one of the girls whose naked picture had gone viral. The teaching staff quelled the disturbance and took the girl out of the room’. Yasmin went on ‘the girl had been suicidal and only recently agreed to come back to school. The boys’ cruelty has shaken me’ concluded Yasmin.

Luisa listen a while more and made them both an herb tea. Having checked about the support available to Yasmin, and her use of supervision, Luisa said, as much to herself as Yasmin, ‘it is essential we Trustees remember what is asked of you workers when the job requires navigating hostility towards women and girls’. Luisa made a mental note to pass on the information to the other women on the Board.

Working in situations where there is hostility or indifference to feminist values, i.e. in ‘contested areas’ is unavoidable if an organisation or group is committed to social change. It is essential but can be emotionally demanding, especially over long periods.

As employers Trustees need to be aware of, and acknowledge the significance of the emotional demands on staff and volunteers and consider what kind of ethos of support and what staffing procedures are needed to sustain them. It is useful to consider this support as distinct from performance management; this is to allow for the impact of the professional and political on the personal and could take the form of a space for the worker to debrief and reflect.

Counteracting or preventing Secondary Vicarious Trauma (SVT) and ‘burnout’

Case study 3

Eastoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustee: Marcia Team Leader: Ese

Marcia went to get an herb tea and met Ese clearing up after lunch. ‘That was a useful presentation on Secondary Vicarious Trauma (SVT) but I am not sure how relevant it is to our Centre’ Marcia said ‘we have as good a structure for support and supervision as any Centre I’ve known’. Ese was quiet for a moment then said ‘you were not here two years ago. Ada, the Manager, went on long term sick diagnosed with SVT. We were used to calling it ‘burnout’ then; that described what happened rather well’.

‘What happened?’ asked Marcia. Ese said ‘Ada was great; conscientious always did the extra mile. She did extra hours when Anita was on maternity leave, as we couldn’t afford a proper cover, and again when Ali was off sick. She saw us through the deaths of two clients’. ‘She sounds very special but she got too tired and needed a break’ said Marcia. ‘Burnout is more than being exhausted!’ interjected Ese, ‘giving so much for so

long drains you physically and emotionally; in the end you damage your health, even undermine your immune system'. 'Wasn't she given the support she deserved?' responded Marcia. 'Well we missed the symptoms' muttered Ese, 'we were cross as she had changed, she was not as cheerful or as helpful and was even off hand about our clients and off sick a lot'. Marcia said 'she had done her time then; Ada was not motivated any more'. 'No, not that!' retorted Ese, 'Ada, we later realised, had become 'burnt out'. 'Sorry, I did not mean to be dismissive' Marcia said quickly.

'What we learnt from Ada', said Ese thoughtfully, 'that it's often the most motivated who suffer SVT or burnout; Ada's commitment meant she tried to protect us from the stress of working with violence, tried to keep meeting demands that were, over time, beyond her capacity to sustain. She couldn't keep supporting; but we had got used to her doing it'.

'Now I understand I am converted to SVT and burnout prevention' said Marcia 'and it is essential so are all my fellow Trustees. I will put it on the next Board meeting agenda so we can, in consultation with staff, develop the arrangements for sustainable support that Ada needed and deserved'. 'Good, thank you' said Ese smiling 'it will help ease my guilt about my part in what happened to Ada. She had been a first class Manager'.

Burn out: what is it?

Burn out is a popular term for the mental or physical running down after a period of chronic unrelieved job-related stress culminating sometimes in physical illness. The person 'burning out' may lose concern or respect for other people becoming derogatory and cynical about them; a way of dehumanising the clients or staff who once mattered very much. Causes of burnout include stressful work environments, lack of support, lack of respectful relationships amongst staff or volunteers, long hours, chronic understaffing and the pressure of responsibility for providing high care over long periods.

Secondary vicarious trauma (SVT): what is it?

First what is primary posttraumatic stress disorder? Posttraumatic stress disorder (can be referred to as PTSD) may be diagnosed in someone who has experienced, witnessed or was confronted with a traumatic event and responded with intense fear, helplessness or horror. Secondary trauma is defined as indirect exposure to trauma through a first-hand account or narrative of a traumatic event. The vivid recounting of trauma by the survivor and the counsellor's subsequent cognitive or emotional representation of that event may result in a set of symptoms and reactions that parallel PTSD (e.g., re-experiencing, avoidance and hyperarousal). Secondary vicarious trauma (SVT) might also be referred to more loosely as 'compassion fatigue' or in some circumstances as 'burnout'.

Trustees have responsibility to act to prevent burnout or secondary vicarious trauma (SVT). Good governance of services working with gender based sexual violence means making sure there is,

- Quality supervision- that includes support, debriefing sessions as well as discussing performance, i.e. achievements, good practice and issues with expectations.
- Support and oversight of the Manager by the Board in place. This could be by Board members(s) chosen by the Board and / or an outside mentor. For these arrangements to work requires clarity about expectations, accountability, skills required, confidentiality and the management of any conflicts of interests.
- An ethos of safeguarding the staff and volunteers of Trustees being explicit about duty of care and not relying on 'self-care'; and having HR reviews that include staff and volunteer wellbeing, healthy workplace and the effectiveness of arrangements for support and supervision.
- A culture of consultation and involvement.
- Diversity of types of work i.e. so that there is a variety of demands and rewards in a worker's workload that balance out or at least prevents the demands becoming unsustainable. For example a workload that has front-line and training or policy work.
- Inclusive and appreciative relationships, for example events that celebrate the contributions of volunteers and staff.

- An ‘activist’ element in all workloads, i.e. acting for social change can help to counteract the strain staff and volunteers experience assisting women contending with physical and sexual violence. An example would be a staff member who is a counsellor also being part of a workgroup devising post cards to leave in training venues or with partner organisations.

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

- Information on burn out or secondary vicarious trauma.
- Governance and feminist organisations.
- RCNSS – specific standards, policies and practice.

Being accountable**Case study 4****Westoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)****Trustees: Martina and Eve Team Leader: Miriam**

Eve and Martina were tired and anxious. Cuts in funding to the RCC had put everyone under enormous strain. Eve and Martina were two of the four Trustees left of eight women at the start of the year.

They had just made two very good staff members redundant as the prevention posts were not funded anymore; despite the need for education in schools.

Now Eve and Martina were to go to the staff room to talk with staff, at the latter’s request. ‘Demand’ more like’, thought Martina. Morale was very low, tempers short with staff covering people off sick and the lost posts. Furthermore, Trustees had resigned saying they did not have the time required did not help.

‘We will have to take the staff’s anger on the chin’, Eve muttered to Martina, ‘Making good women redundant is not consistent with feminist values.’

Once they were seated Miriam said she spoke on behalf of the staff team. ‘Losing Tania and Kay has been awful and it is going to be tough to cover the work without them. However, we want you to know we think you have been brave and fair in the way you have carried out the redundancies, thank you.’

Eve burst into tears.

Eve and Martina understand that as Trustees they are ultimately responsible for the use of resources and outcomes of the RCC and must protect the service so that it exists in long as well as short term. As they discovered, this duty of sustainability does not always sit easily with the expectations of feminist Trustees adhering to values promoting women-centred HR policies. Ideally, able and needed staff are not made redundant and staff on maternity leave get the best conditions. However, what if the RCC has not got the necessary funds? What must always shape Trustee’s decisions is what is best for survivors who are experiencing violence, now and in the future.

It is vital that staff and volunteers, as well as Trustees, know and expect this and do not feel disempowered or betrayed by decisions their Board are forced to make. Trustees face a paradox. How to do difficult things, such as make women redundant, and yet be appreciated and supported for doing it.

What will help is an ethos of openness and transparency about the Board and its work; of how the Board functions and the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of their decisions making. This means accessible minutes and reports sound conflicts of interest policies and practice that do not shy away from being accountable and explaining their decision-making to staff and volunteers.

Also important is that all know about and understand the primacy of certain core values and duties, i.e. what is not negotiable by Trustees, for example in the story the commitment to long term sustainability of the organisation.

Being accountable

Case study 5

Eastoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Staff member: Lucy Team Leader: Ese

Walking back together from a briefing meeting with the Trustees. Lucy, a new worker asked her Team Leader, Ese, 'do you usually have so many meetings with the Trustees here? After a brief hesitation Ese said 'I wondered why you looked rather despondent'. 'Well' replied Lucy 'with the all the various consultations and updates I shan't be getting much work done!'

Heading for the kettle Ese suggested they have break and discuss the situation. 'You remember at your interview we explained at some length that the Centre was taking on, or more to the point taking over, the Safe Helpline, a local service that is insolvent. It is not straightforward because of the Helpline's debt and pension liability; it's quite a risk for us. Some of the Trustees were against the takeover because of the risk'. 'But', broken in Lucy, 'the Helpline is crucial!' 'Yes, indeed' replied Ese, 'but it is a risk and we all know it is, and I for one, don't want to damage the Centre, or lose my job because the acquisition isn't viable'. 'Me neither' said Lucy now very worried.

'However, continued Ese, 'our Trustees are pretty experienced having been through the move from collective to having a Manager. They are committed to regular consultations and briefing. The Convenor keeps saying 'there will be no surprises'. Curiously what's helping a lot is having a Manager. She is good at reporting to the Board and feeding back to us, and at deciding when that's not enough and calling a joint meeting of Board and staff'.

'That isn't what happened in my last place,' said Lucy, 'over our heads the Trustees decided on cutting our pay; relationships got so bad the Trustees wouldn't come in to the Centre'. Ese said, 'so you are OK about there being so many meetings are you Lucy?' 'Yes,' Lucy said smiling', makes me feel I can trust the Trustees and get on with my work!'

A Board's commitment to consulting with staff and volunteers in a meaningful and helpful way is important in the best of times but especially so when making changes, when cutting services and jobs and when job satisfaction is threatened. Trustees can be 'invisible' to the front-line staff and volunteers as they meet in the evenings and are not able to come in to the Centre during the day; and /or where there is not an ethos of joint meetings and Away Days. It is the Boards responsibility to create opportunities for staff to ask questions, challenge and problem solve in supportive ways.

The Board is not alone in its responsibilities for ensuring trust in their governance; it is also the responsibility of Team Leaders, the Manager, or Chief Officer (if there are these posts). Senior staff are a key conduit between frontline staff and the Board; passing on information/ explanations to staff and volunteers and feeding back to the Board on the wellbeing and impact of the processes for informing and supporting staff and volunteers through periods of organisational change.

The quality of the relationship between Board and staff members is a powerful factor in the reception and outcomes of difficult decisions in difficult times. What helps in hard times, is that in harmonious times the Board,

- consults with staff and volunteers in a meaningful and helpful way
- ensures the role and responsibilities of trustees for staff and volunteers is clear and understood;
- actively connects with staff and volunteers;
- reinforces the responsibility of the manager or chief officer to feedback on the wellbeing of staff and volunteers - especially during organisational change reporting on the processes for updating and supporting staff and volunteers.

Board capacity to make informed decisions

Case study 6

Westoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustee: Luisa

‘What training are you going to this Saturday at the RCC?’ asked Luisa’s partner.

‘Update for Trustees on SORP,’ she replied.

‘Whatever is that?’ he retorted.

Luisa replied: ‘SORP stands for ‘Statement of Recommended Practice’; something to do with financial accounting; the rules are changing about how the WA reports publicly on its management of the money.’

‘Not your cup of tea,’ said her partner, ‘you normally avoid anything to do with figures.’

‘We get public money’, Luisa responded, ‘not enough of it mind, but we would get much less for the WA if we got a reputation for incompetent reporting.’

‘Well, good luck,’ he said still sounding sceptical.

Luisa replied laughing, ‘the course is called ‘SORP for Dummies!’

At the beginning of the course the trainer said being confident about the basics of financial matters was, for Trustees of RCC, a feminist issue.

‘Right on’, thought Luisa, ‘now give me this SORP’.

Sound decision making is central to Trustees carrying out their roles and functions. It is not always easy but decisions can be made with confidence if Trustees know they are well informed, are deciding on the basis of evidence and have the skills and experience amongst their number - or seek, even buy, the expertise they need from Advisors or Co-optees.

It is not unusual in a lot of charities for Board members without financial expertise to leave oversight to those who have; understandable but unwise. All Board members have shared responsibility and are equally accountable and therefore liable if there are serious financial problems.

If it is not the case already consider reviewing the composition of the Board and governance practice annually. Also do a ‘skills audit’, i.e. ask each Trustee to tick, on a list of governance and strategic skills required by the Board currently or in the foreseeable future (e.g. procurement or marketing), their skills and /or experience. Then, comparing the existing and required skills, identify the gaps to be filled by targeted recruitment or co-option or by inviting specialist to attend meetings to inform specific items on the Board agenda.

Whatever skills may exist amongst fellow Board members if you do not understand some point or conclusion do ask and if necessary ask again, even again!

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Making informed decisions:

- RCNSS- inclusion guidelines (??)
- Board learning and development plan + Trustee needs assessment
- Example of a skills audit
- Example of a conflicts of interest policy

Inclusive

Case study 7

Eastoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustees: Shona and Marcia

Shona, the Chair of the Trustees, had put a lot of energy into arranging a Board Away Day and had been pleased to get a good deal with the hotel. The morning was for the Trustees to be together then the staff to join them at lunch. However all was not well.

The Board was reviewing the recent trustee recruitment process. They had advertised in professional and local newspapers and contacted 'Changing the Chemistry' [dedicated to improving diversity on Boards in all three sectors]. There was some satisfaction with the results except no one with disabilities had come forward, let alone been selected.

'Well, on reflection, I think it's too early to include women with disabilities' said Marcia 'as a wheel chair user I couldn't recommend another person using one to join us'. Shona flushed deep red. 'OK', she said, 'Again I am very sorry you had so much trouble getting into the hotel. I did not realise being in a wheel chair meant using a dark, dirty back entrance; or that the disabled toilets were poorly maintained. I rang the hotel management numerous times to check and eventually, given what they said; I assumed all would be well'. After a silence Shona said miserably, 'look, things do go wrong however hard you try'.

Marcia said soothingly 'what I am thinking about is the old lift in our building. It quite terrifies me; it's like a lift in a horror movie. I have been stuck between floors too many times. Once in the Centre things are fine'.

'We must talk to the Factor again' said Shona, 'but I don't hold out much hope. The trouble is the rent is so reasonable and our grant is going to be cut again'.

After some discussion the Trustee decided to consult staff about a service for survivors in a 'satellite' centre in accessible premises, perhaps a health centre or community hall; and then to consider using any of the rooms for some of the Trustee's meetings. They also agreed that finding new premises would have greater priority in the RCC strategic plan once funding allowed for it. Not that any of them were very hopeful about it.

It is the duty of Trustees to ensure the RCC adheres to legal and ethical commitments to inclusion. This means taking inclusion seriously at Board level as well as for staff and volunteers. For example all women who wish to take up a board role in RCCs should have access to a fair, transparent recruitment and then given tailored support to take on the role with confidence.

Inclusivity also holds for survivors. Feminists believe in the solidarity of women working for women and challenging the inequalities that means gender based violence is tolerated, and perpetrators are not made accountable. To hold these values and provide advice and services to all survivors who require them is to face a number of predicaments. Many feminist Trustees will be aware that:

- There are survivors who need assistance who do not share these views;
- Feminist views and values are a broad church, quite how they are understood and acted on is a source of debate, and on occasions they will be considerable differences;
- In providing a service it is essential to ensure inclusivity of the diversity of users of the services and respect them whether or not they share the values of the services.

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Inclusivity:

- Questions about values to consider for a Trustee selection panel
- An exercise for developing a framework for values for your RCC
- Best practice standards and models
- Guidelines for managing differences.

Positive power

Case study 8

Westoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustees: Ligia, Ming-Yan, Eve

Getting into Ming-Yan's car after the RCC Trustee's meeting Ligia said to Ming-Yan: 'Eve is bullying me. She shouted at me in the kitchen during the break and I thought 'that's enough, I am leaving''.

Checking they could not be overheard Ming-Yan asked 'Why don't you tell her?'

'I am scared of Eve', confessed Ligia.

'How about the other Trustees and I give you support? One of us could be with you. It should help both of you to talk openly and to help find a resolution.'

'I will find it very stressful, Eve is very bossy', replied Ligia.

Ming-Yan said, 'Eve is not going to enjoy it either. What's important is that you voice your concerns, for your sake, Eve's and indeed for all of us Trustees'.

A feature of feminist thinking and values is the uses and the abuses of power and authority – by individuals, groups and institutions. Indeed there have been many experiments in living and /or working in ways that share power and minimise levels of authority. One of the hardest things learnt from these, and other collective or democratic communities, is that formal and informal power issues still occur and sometimes can be highly problematic. This in part is because of there being few formal ways for containing informal leadership struggles or for responding early to controlling or bullying behaviours (whether intentional or not).

Ming-Yan is wise to encourage Ligia to talk with Eve and seek a resolution, ideally for both parties. Eve has a right to be heard and understood (which is not the same as being agreed with), i.e. for the Trustees to be aware of how Eve perceives her situation. It could be that Eve, through commitment her to the RCC, is overloaded with work and being tired has a short fuse. It might be Eve is emotionally worn out. As a long term Trustee she has been surrounded by the damage done sexual violence. Trustees can 'burnout', just like frontline workers. A sad symptom is an individual venting negative feelings on those who are closest, be they family or colleagues.

It helps if,

- Organisations having a code of conduct which trustee can sign up to and refer to in meetings or when there are problems
- In the guiding document there is a section on attending to and resolving differences both between Board members and between staff and Board members
- Hosting specific training on personal power as part of induction for trustees or after a review of Board relationships and effectiveness
- Making use of Ensuring Good Governance within RCCs – Chapter on Working together
- Bullying & harassment policy to include making explicit the range of unacceptable behaviours and attitudes, not just for staff and volunteers, but also for Trustees

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Positive Power:

- Examples of Trustees Code of Conduct
- Information and guidelines on (a) lateral violence and b) basic steps in a process for managing perception of bullying by / amongst Board members.
- Paper on positive power and empowerment??

Service user's voice

Case study 9

Eastoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustees: Marcia, Sam

Marcia and Sam left the Board meeting feeling pleased even elated. The meeting had included reports from two women who had acknowledged they had previously used the RCC and now were on the local community planning committee. The women, Sharon and Kylie, were on the Community Safety Committee and had been for 12 months; participating fully after the first few meetings. The increase in Sharon and Kylie's confidence and self-esteem was clear.

After completing their report Sharon said the best bit was when a police officer had said you are not 'victims' or 'survivors' you are local planners. Kylie said in the meeting 'we are both survivors and local planners and feel all the more valued for it'.

Marcia smiled at this recollection then said, 'Giving Sharon and Kylie a 'voice' had changed them, empowered them.'

'Yes', replied Sam, 'but more than that it means they are have joined us in the business of making change happen.'

The heart and soul of a RCC is the survivors who have, are and will use the advice and services offered to them. It is central to Trusteeship, whatever the charity; to have as the primary focus what best helps the 'beneficiaries' (i.e. the people or cause to which the charity is dedicated). Yet how do Trustees know what matters to service users (and potential users) and how do Trustees know the impact of the services and/ or those who provide them? Listening to the voices of the users is fundamental to the role of the Trustee.

To 'listen' is not straightforward; using a RCC is confidential to the individual and survivors come from all backgrounds and ways of life. Despite these complexities many RCCs have pioneered creative ways of 'capturing' the voice of women and children.

The story of Sharon and Kylie's success reveals another aspect of the service user's voice; having the voices of service users heard by those deciding social policies, practice and expenditure. Survivors who are involved in activism and change are powerful forces in challenging attitudes of partner agencies. Providing service users with confidence, skills and pathways to policy makers is part of the activist role of feminist provision. It would not be every woman's choice but if coming back for group support and an 'apprenticeship' as a change agent was on offer then some will grab the opportunities, grow and make social change.

What might does this mean in practice?

- All strategic plans and policy changes [see NSS Standards] would be informed by,
- Partner agencies forums – local and national consultations on survivors needs
- Peer support group for survivors – if consent is given to participating in the consultation
- Seeking survivor's feedback e.g.
- Anonymous consultations – online
- Survivor feedback form
- Operational manager would provide – qualitative outcome information to the trustees re: survivor voices based on what survivors tell workers, focus groups etc.

Resources (via www.rapecrisisScotland.org.uk)

Service User's voice:

- Ideas on 'listening' to the survivors voice
- Examples of projects offering group support and opportunities for learning and development.
- RCNSS – external summary document

Emotional responsibility

Case study 10

Westoun Rape Crisis Centre (RCC)

Trustees: Ligia, Luisa? Eve?

'Well' exclaimed Ligia 'that was some meeting! Who needs to go the theatre for drama?' 'Indeed' replied Luisa 'I am exhausted from all the tension. I ate a whole tube of 'Juicy fruits''. 'For a change I felt sorry for Eve, normally I find her bossy' said Ligia

Luisa started the car then said, 'Alana had a point that after all the work the sub-group had done finding new premises it was a shock to find people questioned moving at all. But her behaviour! Demanding that the staff left the meeting and then accusing us of lack of respect for her as the founder of the service'.

'To be fair Alana was very upset and she had a right to be, she has dedicated her life to RCC' argued Ligia. 'That is true' admitted Luisa, 'but it is unacceptable to me for Alana to demand that much personal influence. It is not consistent with feminist values about not abusing personal power.'

'Well the informal authority of founders has long been a feature of feminist organisations, they get very invested and we benefit from it', said Ligia somewhat dismissively, 'I think Alana feels she is entitled be angry with us and to show it'.

'Being angry is one thing, how it is expressed is another. That why we have our Code of Conduct' responded Luisa. 'Ah! That's when I felt sorry for Eve', exclaimed Ligia, 'there she was, as Chair, trying to draw attention to the Code, and wanting move on, when Alana leaps up and accuses her of being 'unfeminist', of being controlling and bureaucratic'!

Ligia went on, 'it is a credit to Eve that she had the presence of mind to close the meeting and get agreement for date to meet again to address the issue of the new premises.'

'A date for more drama' replied Luisa grumpily. 'Not necessarily' said Ligia 'I am going to bring the Code of Conduct on a banner and act in solidarity with Eve!

The ethos in a women's organisation can make it a very special place for openness and emotional honesty. But 'sisterhood' can turn sour. Unmet expectations and disappointment can mean women turning on one another and Board members trading blame and criticism. Indeed behaviour that reflects the various issues survivors might experience.

And so in the story Alana points the finger in anger at Eve implying she was being 'unfeminist' and therefore lacking credibility. It has been known for Board members to avoid making difficult decisions because deciding between competing views seemed 'unsisterly' and Managers when challenge about their poor practice, or not being properly supervised, trained or formally qualified, claiming that it was not feminist to do so; this was to be, in some 'unsisterly' way, hierarchical.

It is both feminist and good trusteeship to value emotional responsibility, to seek to avoid abusing both personal and position power and to balance the honest expression of feelings and respect.

To help maintain an ethos of emotional responsibility it is useful to:

- Talk about the obligations of emotional responsibility at induction and annual reviews or appraisals.
- Have a code of behaviour or ground rules or rules of engagement that are up dated and referred to in formal and informal meetings.
- Have a space in meetings for people to raise concerns (e.g. a standard item at the end of the agenda of staff or Board meetings).

And perhaps most important as an individual Trustee that YOU,

- Are conscious of how you use your power regardless of your position in the RCC.
- Fostered effective and respectful relationships.
- Mentor and support other women to develop feminist trusteeship - and so develop the next generation of feminist leaders.

Resources (via www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk)

Emotional responsibility:

- RCS Best Practice: Ethos & Value.
- Examples of code of behaviour, ground rules and rules of engagement.
- Example of a policy giving the individual the right to raise issues in Board meetings.
- RCC core training (??).

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