**Supporting Trustees (UK)**

**[please note - if your Centre has adopted the ‘new’ model Triratna constitution from 2012; or indeed has adopted the structure of CIO< the following info is not relevant anymore and only included here for archive purposes]**

Whenever one of our charities in the UK has received a query from the Charity Commission it has invariably concerned this issue – they are checking up because the charity has indicated on its annual return form that it supports one or more of its trustees.

There are some signs that the commission is becoming more flexible on this issue and that they recognize that, in the case of religious charities, it may be appropriate that someone who works for the charity, and is supported to do so, should also be a trustee.

That said, the underlying principle in charity in the UK remains that trustees should not be benefiting from their position in the charity. You need to approach this issue with care and thought.

If the issue crops up with the charity commission, your charity can present them with an argument about why it is appropriate that a trustee be supported. In the case of Triratna charities this might include:

i) Our constitution allows us to support ordained Buddhists and the trustee is being supported as an ordained Buddhist, not to be a trustee. They are receiving support, rather than a salary.

ii) The supported trustee is an important figurehead (a chair or mitra convenor) in the spiritual community and it is therefore appropriate that he or she be a trustee.

iii) The community is very small with only a few people have the relevant experience and religious commitment to be a trustee. Because the community is small, these are the very same people who are engaged full-time for the charity, and they need support to do so.

iv) The charity has considered what it will do when clashes of interest inevitably occur, e.g. the trustee that has a conflict between their personal interest and that of the charity declares that interest and/or leaves the meeting while that issue is being discussed, and you have also ensured that the supported trustees are a minority on the trustee body.

v) The trustee is a user of the charities services, but it helps the charity be more effective to have users on the trustee panel.

(There is guidance on some of these areas in a charity commission booklet CC24 Users on Board, available on their website.)

If your charity has been feeling constricted by the requirements not to support trustees, there may be more room for negotiation now. Please contact me if you wish to do this as I will be the most up to date on the experience of other Triratna charities and able to advise accordingly. Please don’t do anything thoughtless that may jeopardise your charity status and possibly that of other Triratnas!

Vajragupta, Triratna Centre Support, July 07, updated by Lokabandhu Jan 2013