



Centris: Annual Report
A review of activities from
January 2008 to December 2008

Centris

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Introduction

This is the annual report of CENTRIS (officially known as the Centre for Innovation in Social Policy and Practice Ltd)

Charity No. 299877

Company No. 2277906.

CENTRIS is an independent not-for-profit organisation committed to the identification and development of innovative social policy and practice.

The period reviewed runs from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2008.

Objects

CENTRIS was established in 1988. Its mission is to support innovative social policy and practice. Its method is to work with partners active in the field to develop solutions to social issues, through a mixture of research and innovatory initiatives.

Its constitution describes charitable objects 'for the benefit of the public to advance education, to promote the relief of sickness and the preservation of health and to promote the relief of poverty, in particular by promoting research into the role of individual self awareness, self development and personal responsibility in these fields, and the dissemination of the useful results of that research'.

Report

Three main activities are reported on:

- **Civil society**
- **Fathers and masculinity**
- **Social justice and philanthropy**

Civil society

CENTRIS has had a longstanding interest in **civil society**, with publications dating back nearly 20 years. From the outset of this work, a key concern has been the independence of the voluntary and community sector. As time has gone on, this issue has risen high up the agenda because of the shift towards government contracting of public services. This may benefit the voluntary and community sector while at the same time making it harder for voluntary and community organisations to retain their independence to pioneer new approaches and advocate changes to established services.

From 2007 through to 2011 CENTRIS is undertaking a five-year rolling evaluation programme to help the Baring Foundation evaluate its '*Strengthening the Voluntary Sector*' grants programme. The study involves baseline assessments with 22 grant recipients and ongoing evaluations throughout the period along with

providing networking and organisational development opportunities to the participants.

During 2008 a major programme of interviews and online surveys set out to test the change in independence and effectiveness of the 22 organisations when compared with the original baseline assessment. The analysis of the survey and the results of the interviews informed a written report which was submitted to the Baring Foundation in December 2008.

In late 2008 Centris undertook some preliminary investigations into *Civil Protection* – specifically to examine the role of the community when dealing with emergencies and disasters. With the onset of global climate change and in particular recent environmental events – like the Katrina hurricane in USA and widespread flooding in the UK – this seems like an issue which will grow in importance and topicality. Centris will build on this pilot work over the course of the next few years.

Families

As part of our ongoing commitment to family policy with an emphasis on **Fathers and Masculinity** Centris updated Child Poverty research for the Government Office for the North East. A report was produced for, and in partnership with, the Association of North Councils. The report addressed basic questions about child

poverty in the North East and included the latest information, statistics and research . It also described developments that had occurred following the launch of the regional strategy.

Social justice philanthropy

Social justice philanthropy remains a core area of work for CENTRIS. Two substantial grants from the Ford Foundation in 2006 have enabled this work to continue during 2008. The first grant was designed to strengthen social justice grantmaking among US foundations, building a coalition of individuals and organisations committed to working together to create new foundations and transform existing ones in favour of social justice.

A knowledge management system was created. This may prove to be a considerable resource for those involved in social justice philanthropy and it is important to build on this resource to develop a global network of organizations concerned with social justice philanthropy.

The second grant was designed to strengthen social justice grantmaking in other parts of the world. This was done through a grant to evaluate the *International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy*, a two-year programme to offer grants, technical assistance and peer learning opportunities to private foundations across the globe. In 2008 Centris was into the second year of this initiative.

A further grant from the FORD Foundation was awarded in 2008. This was a sequel to earlier grants which had run from 2002 to 2007 and which were designed to increase the knowledge and understanding of social justice philanthropy. This particular grant, which runs from February 2008 to September 2009, has two goals: firstly to support the *Working Group on Philanthropy* by disbursing grants, consultancies and other costs to one of its two sub-groups that are looking at a particular aspect of social justice philanthropy : secondly to produce a report on the contribution made by senior figures in the world of philanthropy so that others may benefit from their wisdom and experience.

In 2008 CENTRIS continued to support Foundations for Peace, a network of community and independent foundations working in divided societies. Those involved include foundations in Northern Ireland, South Africa and the Balkans as well as organisations in Israel and Sri Lanka. The aim of the Foundations for Peace network is to support each foundation's work in its own community, and to enable foundations to work collaboratively, and together create a platform for the common aims of social justice, inclusion and peacebuilding.

Structure and operations

The effectiveness of CENTRIS depends on an energetic group of staff, associates, and volunteers, combined with extensive use of modern technology,

and oversight from a skilled group of trustees: Roy Evans, Penny Lee CBE, and Chris Webb. Barry Knight is Secretary to the Trustees, Allan Sked is manager and Monica Lenehan provides administration services. Kevin Briggs is currently appointed as auditor.

Finance

The audited accounts for 2007- 2008, show that CENTRIS is in a healthy financial position. Reserves stood at £520152 at the end of the financial year on 31 July 2008. Of this £274897 was 'restricted' and £245255 was 'unrestricted'. Trustees' policy is to have a level of resources sufficient for effective financial management. Funds in the current account address cash flow requirements, the balance is in an interest bearing deposit account.

Summary of accounts 2007-2008 (year ending 31st July 2008)

Income	£	Expenditure	£
Grants	177938	Technical support	12583
Investment	17265	Project Costs	143475
Fees, sales etc	20024	Administration	5745
		Office costs	4589
		Accommodation	19320
		Sundry inc exchange rate gains	-6264
Totals	215227		179448
Balance Sheet			
Tangible Fixed Assets	6692		
Net Current Assets	513460		
Net Assets	520152		

CENTRIS' future plans

CENTRIS has undertaken a review of its activities and has set priorities for the future. A number of important projects, begun in earlier years, are now coming to fruition. The work on social justice philanthropy, begun seven years ago, has become established and the Ford Foundation now has an established portfolio on social justice. CENTRIS is continuing to support a global network of 'Foundations for Peace', which is a group of private foundations that work to bring peace in areas divided by violent political conflict.

CENTRIS will continue to give high priority to this area, and work with the range of foundations mentioned earlier in the report.

In addition CENTRIS will continue to work on the International Initiative to Strengthen Philanthropy with partners in the UK and around the world.

Risks and resources

CENTRIS has been responsible for running its own office for over 4 years now. The original lease will expire in 2009 and therefore in 2008 CENTRIS began a review of its needs, so that it is prepared and able to make informed decisions well in advance of the expiry date.

CENTRIS minimises risk by using an ongoing review system. The system is IT based and has comprehensive features which alerts users to up and coming issues, reviews dates, logs events and assists in the planning process. Continuous planning and budgetting coupled with regular reporting provides a detailed overview and appraisal of progress achieved

During 2008 CENTRIS reviewed and made further minor amendments to its website but is content that the website is sufficiently structured for its current purposes.

In December 2008 some funds were moved between existing accounts to take advantage of currency fluctuations. This has proved to be very beneficial to the level of reserves held and this will be reflected in the 2008-2009 audited accounts.