

CTBRIEF CHARITIES

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Radojka Miljevic partner, Campbell Tickell

What the future holds for charities

“Welcome to the first edition of *CT Brief – Charities*, which is specifically for trustees and senior staff in the charity sector. The publication was prompted by our growing work with a range of charities, large and small. As a result, we are alive to the increased levels of anxiety in the sector – whether around financial, reputational or regulatory issues – as well as the heightened political and media commentary in which charities appear to have become ‘fair game’ as headlines.

We are also aware, against this background, of the opportunities that exist for charities to demonstrate that they operate with high standards of governance, deliver value, and achieve significant outcomes. When it comes, the new code of governance for the voluntary and community sector will need to signal and lead a step change for the sector if charities are to give people confidence that their donations and efforts are in safe hands.

Public mistrust

This is a time of growing public mistrust in institutions and service providers of every kind. It was previously more common to find a lack of trust in politicians, journalists and estate agents. Now we see that banks, the police, the health service, care organisations, social housing landlords and charities are all brought into that mix. News headlines are all about senior executive salaries, failures of care and cover-ups.

For some time now, it has felt like a hostile environment for anyone connected with the charity sector. Some might even go so far as to see a witch-hunt, as the more vocal newspapers rake up stories about how ‘bad’ charities are. Meanwhile, many in the sector feel this is a moment of existential crisis for charities, with public confidence ebbing away.

Camila Batmanghelidjh’s striking profile always attracted media attention, some of which benefitted Kids Company, not least through the bedazzlement of government and celebrity donors. More recently though, the

“In such a toxic atmosphere, it is entirely predictable that charity trustees wonder if they want to do this anymore.”



Charities have been subject to negative headlines

effect has been the opposite, with a media feeding frenzy at her expense, and the ignominious demise of Kids Company.

No doubt some took pleasure from embarrassing the BBC through the proxy of former Kids Company chair Alan Yentob.

Others just enjoyed the felling of a ‘tall poppy’. The real concern though has been less widely voiced. How should charities concerned with the growing destitution of vulnerable people get their governance right and avoid following Kids Company into oblivion? In this issue we offer some pointers about getting governance right.

Toxic atmosphere

In such a toxic atmosphere, it is entirely predictable that charity trustees, on occasion overwhelmed, wonder if they want to do this anymore. After all, it is easier to sit on the sofa and shout at the television, rather than make more work and worry for yourself. For many trustees, especially those of smaller charities, their work feels like rolling a boulder up the hill, like the unfortunate Sisyphus in the Greek myth. The recent headlines involving Kids Company haven’t helped and elsewhere in this issue you’ll find lessons drawn from that crisis, as well as some interviews reminding us why volunteering is a ‘win win’ exchange for both organisation and volunteer.

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Alice Smith consultant, Campbell Tickell Restoring public confidence in charity fundraising



“When did you last give to charity? The Charities Aid Foundation’s 2014 UK Giving study found that 44 per cent of people reported having donated to charity in the previous month. An estimated 23 million adults give to the tune of £10 billion per year. That’s around one third of fundraising charities’ income (see box: Charitable donations). So it’s hardly surprising that last summer’s fundraising fiascos gave charity fundraisers, directors and trustees many a sleepless night.

How was your experience of donating to charity? Perhaps that would have been a more pertinent question. Last summer’s string of bad news stories began after the death of Olive Cooke, whose suicide was linked in the press to fundraisers “hounding her” for money.

Lack of trust

What might have been a tragic but isolated incident was followed by *Daily Mail* reports about malpractice by fundraising agencies, damning articles on chief executive pay and the mishandling of data, and the very messy demise of Kids Company. In the autumn, it was reported that public trust in charities had fallen to an eight-year low.

It wasn’t the first time fundraising had been in the spotlight for the wrong reasons, but this time it felt different. It showed that the near-sacred position of charities in the public eye cannot to be taken for granted. Something had to be done to restore public confidence, reform of fundraising regulation being an obvious place to start.

There had been calls for reform before – fundraising governance historically has been hampered by a confusing system with two regulatory bodies (membership voluntary) and two codes of conduct.

Back in 2012, Lord Hodgson’s review of the charity sector recommended that a “sector-funded, public-facing, central self-regulatory body” be established “covering all aspects of fundraising”. Last summer’s media pressure provided the rocket fuel for reform; reviews by Stuart Etherington of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee supplied the finer detail.

A new, independent Fundraising



Essential fundraising: members of the public donate around £10 billion a year to charities in the UK

Charitable donations

23 million
adults give to charity per year.

£10.6 billion
total amount donated to charity by UK adults in 2014

one third
proportion of charities’ income that comes from public donations

£14
average donation in 2014

£10
average monthly amount donated by sponsors

45-64
average age of people most likely to be involved in charitable actions

Source: *The Charities Aid Foundation*



Regulator has been set up (described by some as the ‘last chance’ for fundraising self-regulation). It has asked the 50 largest

fundraising charities to contribute to its set-up costs.

The Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016 makes provisions which would enable the Charity Commission to act as a backstop to fundraising regulation if the need arose. The act also compels charities with an income of more than £1 million to report how many complaints they receive about fundraising and to outline their approach to fundraising in an annual report.

Unpopular proposals

There is further wrangling to come over the next few months. The RNIB has publicly expressed its opposition to the new regulator. Proposals for the implementation of a fundraising preference service, which would enable donors to ‘turn off’ mailings from charities, are being developed by the Fundraising Regulator (an unpopular idea among small charities). The future role and funding of the Charity Commission is also being discussed.

As for public trust and confidence, it remains to be seen what the long-term impact of the events of last summer will be on charitable giving. If you are a donor, perhaps next year you will be asked not just how much and how often you give to charity, but how you were approached and how you felt about the experience.

To discuss the issues raised in this article, email alice@campbelltickell.com



Iain Turner researcher, Campbell Tickell

Should we stay or should we go? Charities and the EU referendum



“In March, the Charity Commission issued guidance for charities that were considering wading into the EU referendum debate. Its purpose was to clarify what charities can and cannot do in regard to campaigning on this significant political issue, but in the ensuing weeks, outcries, dissent and confusion have grown (see box: Timeline of events). So where exactly do charities stand? And how will an ‘in’ or ‘out’ vote affect them?

The Commission’s guidance noted that an ‘out’ vote would result in a loss of funding for a number of charitable organisations, because many are directly funded by the EU. It went on to emphasise that charities should therefore consider the damage that could be caused by failing to manage conflicts of interest, and that “knowing the outcome of the referendum could result in a loss of funding would not in itself justify political activity directed at the UK remaining in the EU”.

Confusion

Various organisations, including the NCVO, challenged the guidance on the day of its publication, suggesting that it ‘set the wrong tone’ and created uncertainty and confusion for those charities wanting to voice their opinion. As a result, the Commission issued clarified guidance. This was welcomed and seen by many as a

Timeline of events

10 February: Friends of the Earth chief executive Craig Bennett posts a video blog on YouTube arguing in favour of remaining in the EU. Other environmental charities begin to give their views.

7 March: Charity Commission issues guidance for charities on EU referendum campaigning. On the same day, NCVO condemns it.

23 March: Charity Commission issues clarified guidance – seen as a climbdown by many in sector.

5 April: NCVO publishes a discussion paper on the EU referendum.

19 April: Rob Wilson, minister for civil society, backs charities wanting to campaign on the EU referendum.

23 June: EU Referendum polling day.

step-down, however it remained fairly strict and may have put off significant interventions from some charities on the debate.

The Charity Commission and the

government don’t appear to be singing from exactly the same song sheet, however. In April, while insisting that charities should stay within the rules, Rob Wilson, minister for civil society, said: “I welcome that charities’ voices could and should be heard as part of that debate.”

Many will welcome this statement, and for some it will vindicate their decision to campaign. But it doesn’t make things any clearer: the government is welcoming the sector’s voice in this debate, but the sector’s own regulator appears to be strongly warning against any involvement.

The interventions from environmental charities have largely focused on their causes, with little focus on the impact leaving the EU would have on their operations. A sensible approach might be that of the Wildlife Trust – while certainly not beating around the bush in terms of where it stands on the referendum, its website explicitly outlines what it is, and is not doing while campaigning. This includes stating: “We are not, and will not, be telling people how to vote.”

Impact

In terms of how Brexit might impact the charities themselves (not their causes), opinion varies. Some in the sector think it will not matter either way, but in terms of facts and stats, things seem to point

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Life after Kids Company – where to from here?

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So where do we go from here? We all need to be aware that even good people will get things wrong. Trustees must find proactive ways of countering the cognitive biases that skew their decision-making. They must beware the natural tendency in boardrooms to find the consensual ‘sweet spot’, or to avoid making life difficult. We shouldn’t expect boardrooms to always feel comfortable or nice. Creative tension and constructive challenge (not to mention plain old scrutiny) are the building blocks for effective governance.

Against this slightly febrile atmosphere, it’s tempting to give up, but trustees need to take heart that there are many things they

can do to improve, sustain, and preserve the quality of their decision-making. Boards need to ensure they find ways of establishing whether their own view of their performance is justified or overly favourable – or simply complacent and lacking self-awareness. Robust reviews of board efficacy are critical to encouraging the kind of reflectiveness and design of board work that underpins a culture that views challenge as something wider than simply checking and scrutinising.

In the meantime, allowing space in the next board agenda to reflect, look at the lessons in the report on Kids Company by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and ask

some searching questions is a good start.

All the lessons from the demise of Kids Company underline the need for a board that can genuinely lead the organisation. Charities must invest in developing the role of the chair, who should have a huge influence on board culture, composition and the design of board work.

Finally, the new code must raise the bar considerably in terms of governance standards, with a compulsion for boards to review their effectiveness annually. These steps are crucial if the public’s faith in charities is to be restored.

To find out how Campbell Tickell can help your organisation, email Radojka@campbelltickell.com

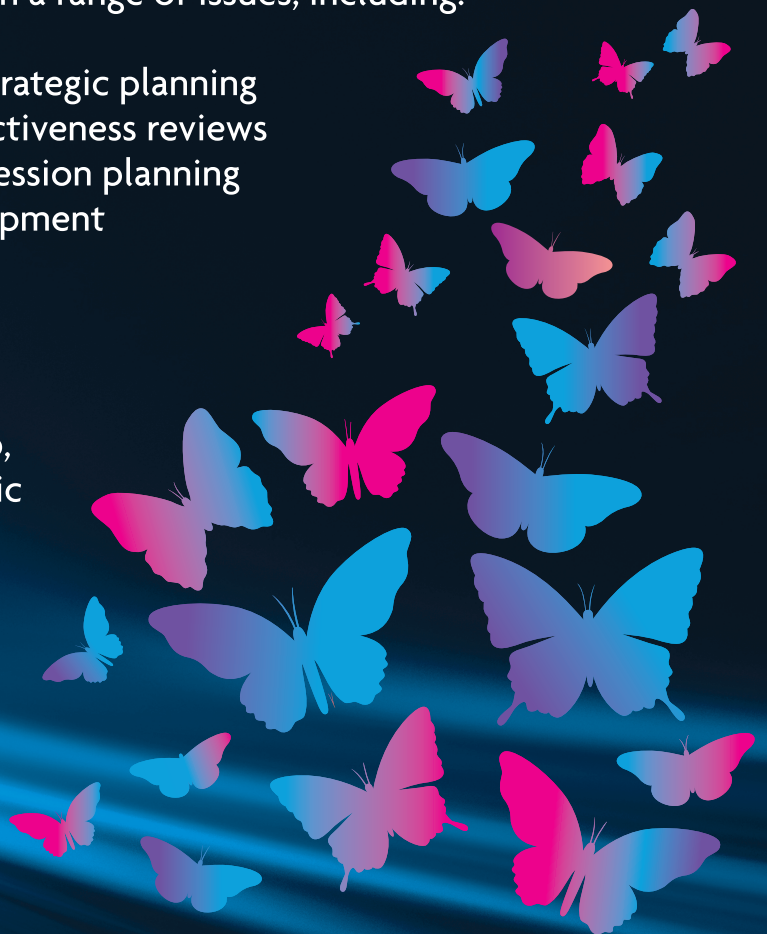
Transformative governance

This is a challenging time for many charities as landscapes – local and national – shift around them, and public attitudes harden around value for money. Many charities are reflecting on the need to transform their governance.

Transformative governance requires Boards to be skilled, proactive, strategic and creative. As a critical friend, we help Boards to become more effective, risk-aware but not averse, and focused on clear outcomes. We have worked with well over 200 organisations on governance. These have included regulators, national and local charities, housing associations, care providers, sports and leisure trusts, and membership bodies. Whatever your size or location, we can help on a range of issues, including:

- Ⓢ Facilitating away days and strategic planning
- Ⓢ Governance and Board effectiveness reviews
- Ⓢ Board recruitment and succession planning
- Ⓢ Board appraisals and development
- Ⓢ Skills matrices and audits
- Ⓢ Coaching and mentoring
- Ⓢ Governance manuals

To talk about how we can help, please contact Radojka Miljevic on 020 8830 6777
radojka@campbelltickell.com





Radojka Miljevic partner, Campbell Tickell

Seven key lessons for good governance



“**T**here are seven key lessons I would highlight from the recent report by the House of Commons Public

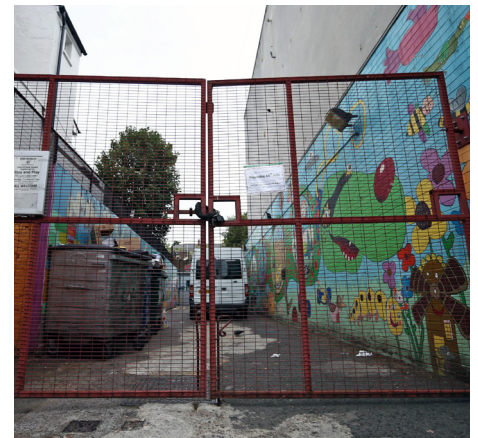
Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC), *The collapse of Kids Company: lessons for charity trustees, professional firms, the Charity Commission, and Whitehall*. This resonates with our long track record in governance and dealing with wider failures.

1 Boards must rigorously examine their own effectiveness. All organisations should think about the activities they will deliver over the next five years and recruit/bring into succession trustees with the appropriate skills. There need to be fixed limits for board tenure to offer insurance against complacency and cosiness. New members can be important agents in bringing issues back to first principles – why are we doing this activity? When did we last review it? There should be robust appraisal arrangements in place.

2 Boards must provide constructive challenge to executive staff, whatever their profile, history or charisma. Founders of charities are often the organisation’s greatest strength and greatest weakness. The membrane between their

personal identity and that of the charity can be wafer thin, making discussion of transformative changes threatening to them. Others may get drawn into the ‘halo’ effect, conferring other attributes or strengths to the founder on account of a particular quality that is rated highly. This appears to have played out at Kids Company: “The admiration... trustees had for Ms Batmanghelidjh’s apparent vision and fundraising capabilities led to a false confidence about other areas of the organisation.”

3 A Board must keep under review whether its charity is effective. This means checking whether its activities and impact are more effective than those of other organisations operating in the same space. Trustees must ask questions such as: how do we know that what we deliver works? And are we more effective than others at doing this? While funders may have various requirements around how this is measured and reported, there is always a simple ethical position that obliges trustees to spend the money of others wisely and be clear with donors about what can – and cannot – be achieved. Kids Company did not invest in robust evaluations of its work, thus rendering the defence of its achievements and reputation more difficult.



Kids Company shut its doors in August 2015

4 Boards must ensure the objectives and work of the organisation are matched by the available resources. There is a theme throughout the PACAC report about Kids Company’s “demand-led” model. It suggests trustees failed to address “the constant risk” that the charity’s commitments couldn’t be matched by its resources. The kinds of charities that offer crisis support and interventions will frequently find that demand for their services is greater than their resources. This has become even more apparent when the sanctions and conditions around welfare payments are creating increased levels of

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Should we stay or should we go? Charities and the EU referendum

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charities in the direction of remaining in the EU. So what are some of the key considerations?

- **Uncertainty** – Law firm Farrer & Co has suggested there are more questions than answers for charities. Will Brexit allow the government to relieve charities from the burden of irrecoverable VAT? Will European charities lose the ability to register with HMRC as charities for tax purposes? Will UK NGOs become ineligible to receive EU grants?

- **Economic impact** – It is widely accepted that, at least in the short term, leaving the EU would adversely affect the UK economy. The impact on charitable donations of a dramatic downturn could be significant. The

2008 financial crisis resulted in a significant decrease in charitable giving (though an economic downturn of that scale is by no means a certain outcome of Brexit).

- **Recruitment** – If the UK leaves the EU, free movement of labour will end and the concern for charities is that this could impact on their ability to attract the right set of skills. That said, the supply of skilled workers in the charitable sector would appear to outstrip demand, with the hunt for third sector jobs remaining fiercely competitive.

- **Direct funding** – Research found that 249 charities received a total of £217 million from the EU in 2014, which would be lost were the UK to leave. However, the UK government paid £13 billion into the

EU budget in 2015. It’s possible that, following Brexit, some of these funds could be redistributed to the charity sector but the likelihood of this is up for debate.

Little has been made of the potential benefits to charities of Brexit by the ‘leave’ campaign. Perhaps they do not see charities and donors as their target vote, or perhaps there simply aren’t many obvious benefits to the sector of leaving. Either way, as with so many other sectors, there is no doubt that the implications of this referendum will be significant. It is no wonder that charities are keen to express their views in whatever way they (legally) can.

To discuss the issues raised in this article, email ian.turner@campbelltickell.com

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destitution. Charities must, therefore, enforce firm boundaries about what is possible – both for trustees in making strategic and investment decisions and for staff about where their work begins and ends. This can be painful, but you have to do this to protect future beneficiaries.

5 Anyone commissioning professional advice – by way of independent assurance – shouldn't allow for any sugarcoating of that advice. In hiring professional advisors and consultants, the board should take responsibility in expecting external advisors to tell the 'warts-and-all' narrative.

In the case of Kids Company, one review "provided none of the information needed to assess the governance of the charity" and reviews were read selectively. Nevertheless, audits over many years were giving Kids Company trustees warnings of various kinds, and the report highlights that these "should have led to a change to the reserves policy, contingency planning for insolvency and substantial downsizing many years before the final crisis".

It seems that the Kids Company Board was not only clinging to a certain narrative, but so too were successive governments, which "failed to carry out adequate due diligence and the charity was given over £42 million of funding from central

Timeline: Kids Company

1996

Kids Company founded by Camila Batmanghelidjh in south London.

2003

Alan Yentob appointed chair.

2015

Kids Company operates 11 centres and has 650 employees.

August 2015

Kids Company closes amid allegations of mismanagement, having received more than £42 million of public funds.

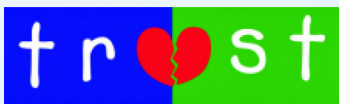
government and was released from the competitive processes to which other charities are subject".

6 Trustees must exercise a firm grip on the financial performance of their charity and use this to inform their decision-making. There must be no false optimism about the true state of the organisation's viability and the basic facts – income, expenditure, money in reserves, cash flow, liabilities etc. Small charities often operate with a degree of precariousness, and especially so at a time when central and

local government funding is dwindling. For a charity of Kids Company's size, with significantly high levels of support, together with a funding structure that will have been the envy of most charities, to have an "historic hand-to-mouth existence" seems rather more extraordinary, and may suggest trustees put off some difficult decisions around restructuring or overheads. It appears Kids Company's cash flow crises were resolved by injections of government cash, thereby giving "tacit approval to an unsustainable and inadequate business model and eroded any incentive for Kids Company to address its own governance and management failings".

7 Trustees ought periodically to seek assurance about the culture and conduct of the organisations they are stewarding. Internal audit, external contractors and staff surveys can all help in this process. The PACAC report throws up a range of examples at Kids Company of practices or events where trustees may have been out of touch with how work was carried out in the organisation. We heard of money being given to service users to buy luxury items, of people in their thirties being helped who appeared to be well outside the scope of the charity's usual beneficiaries.

To discuss the issues raised in this article, email Radojka@campbelltickell.com



Campbell Tickell charity partners 2016/17

Campbell Tickell has chosen to support two charities this year.

We are delighted to be able to assist **Trust Women's Project**, which provides holistic support and advocacy to women who are currently involved in prostitution or who have been exploited through prostitution in the past.

We are also proud to support the **Refugee Council**, which works directly with refugees, supporting them to rebuild their lives. The Refugee Council also speaks up for refugees using its direct work as an evidence base, ensuring refugees have a stronger and more influential voice in decisions that will affect them.



Stephen Bull senior consultant, Campbell Tickell

A board fit for the future



“A new code of governance will shortly land on the desks of charity chief executives and company secretaries. Their board of trustees will be asked to sign up to it. Are they in a position to be able to do so?”

The job of the board is all to do with creating momentum, movement, improvement and direction. If the board is not taking the charity purposefully into the future, who is? It has a role to ensure clear accountability, sound probity and transparency in the way the organisation operates and in the decisions it makes (see box: Questions for trustees).

In order for this to be carried out effectively a board must have a competent chair. I think any code of governance that will be fit for the next five years will have to include something on the chair's role.

It is no good when large charities, which are complex organisations, have a chair who is no more than a well-known figurehead, or someone who does not actively manage the board. That can be the role of the president or patron if necessary.

Recruitment criteria

A chair of an organisation has to be properly recruited based on clear criteria around skills, competencies and behaviours. Their role is to ensure every trustee contributes at

Questions for trustees

- Have you struck the right balance between being entrepreneurial and exercising control over the organisation?
- Are you managing short-term pressures and long-term trends?
- Are you aware of the local versus wider environment issues?
- Do the trustees know what is in their constitution?
- How sure are you that the charity is acting efficiently and effectively? What are options for the future to ensure this? Partnerships? Mergers?
- Do you have a board that adds value to the business?
- Do you as an individual add value to the board?
- Are the trustees taking time out for reflection?
- Does the board of trustees have a healthy attitude to risk management?

meetings, managing those who like the sound of their own voice a bit too much and those who find it difficult to be heard.

They must not allow debate to be stifled and they must support the chief executive. It is the chair who needs to ensure the board is diverse in thought, as well as gender, age and ethnicity. He or she will work with the company secretary to ensure all new trustees have an adequate induction and all trustees are appraised on an annual basis.

They ultimately need to ensure there is a satisfactory churn of trustees on the board so that no one outstays their welcome and that the board of trustees maintains a skill set that is relevant now and for the future.

The upcoming code of governance must also outline the role of the board. In

order for charities to prepare for this, but also as a matter of good practice anyway, the board of trustees must get the basics in place.

The board needs to be of a manageable size. Smaller boards have a real advantage in that they encourage a better debate among all trustees. A smaller board does not allow passengers to be carried and may necessitate a reduction in the number of standing committees to what is really needed. A smaller board will encourage charities to really think about what skills and behaviours it needs at board level.

The model trustee

Board trustees, in addition to having a skill and competency base that adds value to the charity at strategic level, need to have a set of abilities and behaviours that go well beyond qualifications and relevant experience of the charity's core purpose.

All trustees need to be able to ask the right questions and understand the answers, have common sense (never to be underestimated) and self-awareness. My model trustee will turn up to all meetings fully prepared. They will be able to listen to, yet challenge others in a constructive way which furthers debate and leads to collective decision-making. They will be able to see the big picture and not get bogged down in the detail. They will speak up if board papers are too operational or just asking them to rubber stamp a decision that seems to have already been made. Finally, they will always act in the best interest of the charity and to ensure its success as a business.

Periodically the board of trustees should ask itself some big questions as a health check for the organisation. If a board of trustees can do all of this, then compliance with a robust new code of governance will be challenging but achievable.

To find out how Campbell Tickell can help, email stephen@campbelltickell.com



Keeping children safe

At Circles UK our nationwide projects deliver pioneering and proven support that reduces re-offending amongst high risk sex offenders. As the umbrella body for this innovative work, we are an important voice in the policy debates around recidivism and restorative justice. Our new CE therefore has a great opportunity to raise their own and our profile.

With a background in criminal justice you will appreciate that success in this field is very much reliant upon the quality of multi-agency partnerships. As such you will bring an intuitive approach to relationship management when working with our police, probation, health and local government partners. You will also need to maintain important strategic relationships with the MoJ; our current and potential funders; and service commissioners – in an increasingly commercial environment.

As the public face of Circles UK, you will be at ease in talking to and influencing a range of audiences, including the media. Our projects will look to you to champion their critical work and interventions.

Our small and dedicated staff team; the very large and valued group of volunteers; and the geographically dispersed projects will expect the CE to communicate the passion for our purpose and values. So with a senior track record in management, your leadership style will be flexible and collaborative.

Circles work has never been more important. We are growing the number of projects and increasing coverage. Our new CE will work closely with our expert Board in considering future strategic steps.

This is a challenging role that is incredibly rewarding. If you are ready to be inspired and make a lasting impact – contact us to find out more about this unique leadership opportunity.

Contact Kelly Shaw for an informal discussion on 020 3434 0990 or you can download a job pack from: www.campbelltickell.com/jobs

Closing date: 1st June 2016



Iain Turner researcher, Campbell Tickell
Meet the volunteers



Sharron – volunteer for The Food Chain

Sharron volunteers for The Food Chain, which helps people living with HIV in London access the nutrition they need to get well, stay well and lead healthy, independent lives. She started volunteering after hearing about the charity through a friend.

Q What do you do for The Food Chain?

A My main role is cooking in the Food Chain kitchens and serving food to service users. I am a partner at law firm Trowers & Hamlins and my specialism is charity law, so I also give the charity pro-bono legal advice.

Q What do you get out of volunteering?

A A sense of doing good and helping people who need it is what drives me to keep volunteering. But it's not just that, it's also what volunteering gives to me personally – time out of the norm doing something completely different from my day job, and meeting new people who all share the same drive to do something good.

Q What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering for a charity?

A Don't think twice about doing it. It is incredibly rewarding. But choose something that resonates with you in some way. That way you'll remain committed and

get the most enjoyment out of it. For more information on The Food Chain, visit www.foodchain.org.uk



Sharron

Charities have had a rough time of late but millions of British people continue to do incredible work fundraising or volunteering. Here, three friends of Campbell Tickell discuss their voluntary work and fundraising and reveal why they do it.

Helen – volunteer for the National Deaf Children's Society

Helen had known about the National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS) for many years. When she was made redundant, Helen decided to contribute her database administration skills to a charity that wanted her help. For Helen, it was a good way to stay in touch with the working world and maintain social interaction with others. She sums her volunteering up as, "Good for my mind, my health and to contribute to the charity's needs."

Q What is your role at the NDCS?

A I take care of general processing and do research

for them on various events. It really saves time for the team and enables them to devote their time to developing their plans.

Q What do you get out of it and what keeps you going back to volunteer?

A I take pleasure in getting out of the house, being single now as my husband passed away and to be involved with the latest developments and access needs for all deaf children.



Helen

Q What would you say to someone thinking about volunteering?

A I would say it will enrich their life and expand their skills in communicating with others.

For more information on the NDCS, visit www.ndcs.org.uk

Roger – ambassador/fundraiser for Cardiac Risk in the Young

Roger started volunteering and fundraising for Cardiac Risk in the Young (CRY) in 2008 after his son Jack died suddenly in his sleep just before his 18th birthday. Jack was a fit young man who played for Tonbridge Angels and was in the England Schoolboys football squad. He had no history of heart problems and no warning he was at risk.

Q What do you do for CRY?

A Along with acting as an ambassador for CRY, representing the charity at receptions at the House of

Commons, I fundraise through events like the three-day Tour de Kent cycling event in 2013. This year I am cycling to all Tonbridge Angels Saturday away games.

Q What do you get out of being a volunteer?

A It keeps Jack's memory alive and it saves lives, thus preventing the heartache and loss that we have unfortunately gone through.



Roger (right) with MP for Tonbridge Tom Tugendhat and sports minister Tracey Crouch

Q What would you say to someone considering volunteering for a charity?

A The more you put into life, the more you get out of it – in spades. It is a complete win-win. Just do it!

For more information on CRY, visit www.c-r-y.org.uk

What's it like to be a new trustee for a charity? A recent recruit gives us the inside track

“I’m a trustee for a small charity which provides practical support to a particular client group. I used to work in the organisation’s office, so I have first-hand experience of how it operates. I have a full-time job now at a different organisation, but when the charity asked me to consider becoming a trustee, I was keen to get involved.

Having witnessed the positive impact the charity has on the local community, I wanted to be part of the team. I wanted to be part of the team which ensures it can survive and flourish in these challenging times. I also wanted to have a say in setting the strategic direction of the organisation and hoped to make a positive difference.

All hands on deck

As the months speed by, I have learnt to be patient and understand that change does not happen overnight. With just 10 employees it’s all hands on deck to get the day job done, and with limited resources it can be difficult to implement new ideas. But as trustees, we have to take the long view and not get caught up in the little details.

This is my first director role, and the trustees have been very supportive and welcoming. The board is small and close-knit, and all board members have had some prior

New trustee starter kit

Three tips for new trustees:

- Be clear about the value you can add to the board: what are your skills and how do they relate to the charity’s strategy? When have you demonstrated the ability to be strategic?
- Make sure you understand your duties as a company director: the Charity Commission guidance is a good place to start (www.gov.uk/government/publications/

the-essential-trustee-what-you-need-to-know-cc3).

- Be proactive about your own learning: make the most of the board induction process, speak to other trustees, attend the organisation’s events and keep up-to-date with relevant charity news.

Three tips for boards:

- When a vacancy arises on the board, have the conversation about what

skills and attitudes are needed in a new trustee.

- Advertise trustee vacancies in an open way to widen the pool of potential applicants.
- Think about what new, inexperienced trustees need to flourish: a thorough induction process, regular bulletins about your charity’s activities, a review with the chair after six months, a mentor to support them in the first year?

“With just 10 employees it’s all hands on deck to get the day job done, and with limited resources it can be difficult to implement new ideas.”

involvement with the charity, whether as service users, employees, or friends of the organisation. It feels like one big family but, of course, this also has its downsides. It can be hard to express disagreement or challenge someone’s view when it feels like a discussion among friends. Sometimes it is not clear how we, as trustees, can hold staff to account for delivering service improvements.

New trustees need support to find their feet and make their mark (see box: New trustee starter kit). I was fortunate to join a board which was very receptive to new ideas and which actively welcomed me as a young person.

Empowering experience

It’s my first role of this kind, so I’ve learnt all about what it means to be a trustee: my duties as a director, how to read annual accounts, how to develop strategy and business plans. The charity doesn’t have the resources to pay for lots of training courses, but I feel able to ask for help and am encouraged to pursue my own learning.

The experience of being a trustee has been very empowering. I’ve learnt how to have confidence in my views and the value I bring to the board. As someone who is naturally quiet, I have learnt how to assert myself in a group and get my point across.



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Stephen Bull senior consultant, Campbell Tickell
 The evolving role of charity company secretary



“All not-for-profit organisations including charities are facing a growing range of challenges to transform, meet regulatory requirements, and remain viable. Trustees of charities can experience increasing pressure to ensure they retain an iron grip on their charity’s financial viability, good reputation and long-term strategy. The need for effective governance is paramount, and within that, the company secretary role is critical.”

Diverse role

The role of a company secretary is extremely diverse. In a large charity there may be a team dealing with all aspects of managing and running the trustee board and committees for example: ensuring compliance with the law; maintaining the statutory registers and completing returns; disclosure reporting; maintaining

relationships with shareholders; managing internal and external audit, as well as ensuring data protection and risk management.

In medium and small charities, which make up the bulk of the sector, the role can be vested in one person or shared between different staff members, for example the chief executive, PA to the chief executive or finance director or indeed the sole staff member at the charity.

For larger charities, in an ideal world each one would have an appropriately qualified company secretary.

Risk factors

However, we do not live in an ideal world, and charities need to use their resources as effectively as possible. This often means

the company secretarial role can be an addition to someone’s full-time job. This brings up several risk factors:

- What happens if there is a need for the company secretary to take an active role in trustee appraisal, yet the company secretary is the chief executive or charity manager?
- What if the chair of trustees and chief executive (or manager) have certain ‘issues’? Who will give impartial advice, especially, for example, if the company secretary is the chief executive’s PA?
- Who can be the bridge between the trustee board and the senior staff?
- If the company secretary’s workload becomes overwhelming, what happens to their day job – finance manager, chief fundraiser, admin manager?

“Charities need to use their resources as effectively as possible. This often means the company secretarial role can be an addition to someone’s full-time job.”

These are just a few scenarios, but they are realistic ones and need to be explored when considering resourcing for an organisation’s governance function.

Outsourcing

Many organisations have outsourced the company secretary function to external consultants who can offer the service when it is needed. Others have considered grouping together to fund a company secretarial service that operates remotely yet services each organisation on-site when needed.

Some organisations have separated the various functions that come under the company secretarial role but make sure there is one person who oversees work, to ensure no function falls through the net.

The role of company secretary has changed. While there is operational and statutory work that needs to be completed, increasingly the role requires a substantial amount of relationship management. Although this can be extremely resource-intensive (and time-consuming), the benefits of this being sensitively managed are extremely worthwhile in terms of a well-run governance operation and a strategically focused, well-resourced and mature board. *To find out how Campbell Tickell can help, email stephen@campbelltickell.com*



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