

Getting on board

While the recent failure of banks has highlighted the weakness of corporate governance, NPC's recent report on trusteeship, *Board matters*, argues that the problems of charitable governance remain largely hidden from view. We ask two charity trustees what makes good governance.

NPC's work measuring well-being in Italy

NPC has recently completed some research for an Italian foundation interested in measuring the impact of the 'daily centres' it funds, comparing the UK and Italy. A daily centre is a place where children, many of whom struggle at school or have poor home lives, go on a regular basis to get help with their homework, develop positive relationships with trusted adults and try new, skill-building activities outside the school day.

The research compared daily centres in Italy with charities in the UK with similar models, focusing on what outcomes they want to achieve and developing a framework for assessing their success. We found that organisations in both countries recognise improvements in well-being as one of the main differences they can make to the lives of the children they work with. Interestingly, those in Italy place better relationships with others as the most important indicator, whereas those in the UK emphasise improved self-esteem.

However, most organisations in both countries concentrate on hard outcomes and currently do not try to measure whether children are happier as a result of their work. By using tools such as NPC's well-being questionnaire, they could see whether children have improved their well-being after attending the centres for a certain period of time. Perhaps more importantly, by sharing results with others like them, they could learn which approaches work best, and which create the most impact.



Dr Ian Jones is chair of the trustee board of Edinburgh Cyrenians, a charity tackling and preventing homelessness. He joined the board nine years ago, and

works as Director of Human Resources within the NHS.



Emilie Goodall at age 27 is the youngest member of the board for The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a child protection charity specialising in working with

people perpetrating and affected by child sexual abuse. Emilie works as an Investment Manager at the social investment fund Venturesome; she previously worked as a research analyst at New Philanthropy Capital.

Attracting younger trustees

Emilie Goodall joined the board of The Lucy Faithfull Foundation 18 months ago. *'It's a commitment and you have to feel passionate about the cause,'* says Goodall. She gained in-depth knowledge of the charity after analysing its work for NPC's report on child abuse. However, she admits that being a trustee is not something that most of her friends in their twenties have even considered.

Trustee boards tend to be made up of older, retired individuals. This is one issue highlighted in NPC's latest report, *Board matters*. It found that nearly half of trustees are 60 or older, and highlights that this lack of diversity can undermine a charity's mission.

Ian Jones feels his charity, Edinburgh Cyrenians, has benefited from appointing younger trustees. *'We have a few younger board members and it's great. They get*

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good board experience in a relatively safe environment, and we benefit from their energy and enthusiasm. They bring different opinions and experiences.'

Goodall reinforces the opinion that being a trustee brings two-way value, both for the individual and the individual's employer, and for the charity. *'I'm lucky that my employer recognises that me being a trustee is a valuable thing. I'm not just giving my skills but I'm learning at the same time, and my employer sees this as beneficial to my development.'*

Neither Jones nor Goodall would claim that being a trustee is an easy job. *'The hardest part I find is conversing with other board members or senior management in work time,'* says Goodall. *'I don't want to call them on Sunday mornings but I also have a day job.'*

Effective inductions

NPC's report highlights the importance of a good induction for new trustees, and comments that few charities spend enough time on this. Jones believes it is important for charities to put effort into inducting new trustees. *'We recognise that trustees are individuals with different skill sets, so the induction has to fit with what they need. At Edinburgh Cyrenians we give them lots of information about what it means to be a trustee and about the charity, and they meet with the charity staff and visit projects. By*

learning about the charity early on, they will be able to comment confidently on the important matters discussed in the meetings.'

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Dr Ian Jones, Chair of trustees,
Edinburgh Cyrenians

NPC's report also found that charity trustees often find it hard to review their work and see if they are doing a good job. Each year Jones says the senior staff at Edinburgh Cyrenian judge the board against a number of dimensions and look for areas of weakness, which the board then focuses on. Goodall's board also sets milestones and checks progress on financial decisions that are made.

Playing a key role

Trustees are as central to a charity's success as a director is to a business, and in today's tough times, the role of trustees will be more important than ever.

'The board has a key role in shaping and steering the charity's agenda,' says Goodall. 'It provides the checks and balances around strategic decisions, confirming that the right questions have been asked and the right options have been investigated.'

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Emilie Goodall, Trustee, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Jones agrees that the importance of a charity's trustees shouldn't be underestimated. *'The board should be a source of different skills and experiences that senior management can draw on. Too often the work of the board only comes into the forefront when a charity is in trouble,'* says Jones, *'which, as we have seen in the financial world, is often too late.'*

Eleanor Stringer and Jane Thomas

Life behind bars

Following a series of 'Seeing is believing' visits to Wandsworth Prison, NPC reports back on what life is really like on the inside—and how to make prisons more effective.



Leaving the leafy green of Wandsworth Common, it's difficult not to feel a sense of claustrophobia as you pass under spirals of barbed wire and through the locked gates into Wandsworth Prison. It's a very different image from newspaper stories that portray prison life as 'cushy' and prisoners as spoiled.

'It's certainly not like Butlins, which is what some people tend to think,' says Bobby Cummines, reformed offender and chief executive of the charity UNLOCK.

'Prison should be about rehabilitation but instead it's a destructive thing. There are a lot of angry people in there who think the world doesn't care about them so why should they care about the world? When they come out they just carry on committing crimes like before.'

A cycle of reoffending

Bobby's comments are reinforced by findings in NPC's recent report, *Breaking the cycle*. This is an update on our earlier report, *Inside and out*, which looks at life in

prison and after release. It highlights the fact that two thirds of prisoners reoffend within two years of leaving prison, committing at least one million crimes. The report argues that improving this situation does not just require the punishment of offenders—it requires effective services that tackle people's problems and turn them away from crime.

'People need to be doing purposeful activity, not shut in their rooms playing Playstation and watching TV,' says Bobby, whose charity improves the social and financial inclusion of people with past convictions. He argues that members of the public who see these things as luxuries are wrong. *'The reason prisoners are given toys like Playstations is because it's a way to sedate people, which means you don't have to provide these people with meaningful activities.'* A good prison, he says, is one that sets people up for a different life when they come out, by helping them with education, with jobs, and with housing.

Charities lead a number of schemes that provide the help and opportunities prisoners