

# Trusteeships. Adding another string to your bow!



In today's job market, jobseekers need to demonstrate they have skills, experience and attributes to offer over and above the next person. One way of doing this is becoming a trustee. Here, newly appointed Chairman at Thames Hospicecare Martin Jervis explains how easy it was for him to become a trustee and encourages others to do the same.

**T**rusteeship offers a fantastic way for people to gain new skills and experience, learn from others as well as gain insight into the third sector and how charity governance works. It is also an ideal route for people to take who want to switch industry sectors from the private sector to the third sector or for people who have reached a pivotal career point where they want to put something back.

According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), currently one in five charities has a trustee vacancy and many are crying out for young people and people from diverse backgrounds to work as trustees to help them balance their boards and inject energy and ideas into their organisation as well as ensure their board is reflective of society. Too many charities still recruit trustees by word of mouth or through their own networks.

Thames Hospicecare is an independent charity that provides palliative care for adults with cancer and other life limiting illnesses. Our aim is to achieve the best possible quality of life for each person, their family, friends and carers through our range of In-Patient, Community and Out Patient Services, which we provide free of charge. The organisation is governed by a board of Trustees and is run on a day-to-day basis by the Chief Executive, Jacqueline Clarke and the Senior Management Team.

I joined Thames Hospicecare with 32 years' corporate experience working in international business and technology. My desire to become a trustee was motivated by the fact that I felt I wanted to give something back at his stage in my life and, my father who had spent his career working in social services and health care, was another source of inspiration.

## Becoming a trustee

I had discussed openly my desire to become a trustee to colleagues and acquaintances in the charity sector. Learning this news, Trustees Unlimited approached me to see if they could find me a suitable trustee role to match my interests and experience.

I hadn't sat on a board before so I didn't think it was appropriate for me to become a Chairman immediately. However, when I was interviewed by the board and learnt more about the organisation I

was persuaded to become Chairman Elect and four months later, I formally accepted the position of Chair.

Trustees Unlimited played a vital role in helping me prepare for the interview. I was given a very detailed brief about the role and Trustees Unlimited also pointed me to other useful resources and information about becoming a trustee, so I was clear about what to expect from the role and I had a clear understanding of the responsibilities of a trustee and this was essential.

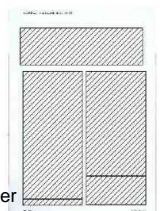
## Finding my feet

When I joined Thames Hospicecare I found my feet quickly thanks to a thorough induction process and helped also by the fact that through my work at Blackbaud I had many clients in the charity sector so I had a keen understanding of the issues and challenges facing an organisation like Thames Hospicecare, including changes taking place in healthcare commissioning and the impact of Big Society.

Thames Hospicecare has a team of highly talented board members – three of which were newcomers like me and a dynamic and very supportive Chief Executive. I was surprised immediately by the effectiveness of the committees and by the number of actionable items that resulted from our meetings. There is a clear focus on where the organisation is going, rather than where it has been, and this is very refreshing.

One of my primary roles as Chairman is to ensure the organisation remains aligned to a clear mission with a tangible and forward looking plan. Another goal for me is to encourage greater participation from board members at meetings to make sure every meeting is inclusive and everyone is 'heard'.

To do this I am introducing professional development courses and workshop training sessions and twice a year bringing in inspirational speakers who will focus on the issues of the day. My focus is on facilitation and in creating



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consensus and ownership amongst trustees.

I recognise there are challenges ahead. There are huge changes going on in our sector in terms of commissioning and funding. The success of our organisation depends on our being flexible and adapting to change quickly. I feel very fortunate I have a dynamic, vibrant and talented board and a very good Chief Executive that is committed to a clear business plan and I am confident that this combination will enable us to grow and build on our success. **Hr**