

Cross Party Group Volunteering and the Voluntary Sector

Minute

7th November 2014, 18:00 – 19:30

Adam Smith Rm (CR 5), Scottish Parliament

Convenor: Margaret McDougall MSP

Topic: Trustees Week

In attendance:

Margaret McDougall MSP (Convenor), Annabelle Ewing MSP (Vice-Convenor); Fiona McLeod MSP; Stephanie Guerin, Jane Grant, Fiona Barlow, Cat Campbell, Phil Rowsby, Catherine Thwaities, Paul O’Kane, Paul White, Paul Okroj, Liz Watson, Susan Murray, Paula Duncan, Sheila McPherson, Joyce Munro, Kathryn Wane, Martin Docherty

Apologies :

Martin Avila, Nail Sommerville, Alan Bigham, Amie Blackaby, Gillian Lithgow, Louise McGinty, Morven McLean, Mike Melvin, Marie Oliver, Sara Preston, Lara Rivans, Susan Swan, Emma Whitelock, Elspeth Malony, Ella Simpson, Victoria McRea, Lesley Muirhead, Moira Tasker, Ian Crawford, Fraser Hudgton, Andrew Lindsay

- 1. Welcome and introductions:** The Convenor warmly welcomed everyone to the meeting of the CPG, which was then followed by a round of introductions.
- 2. Minutes and matters arising:** The minute of the last meeting was agreed and moved by Annabelle Ewing MSP and Seconded by Joyce Munro. The Convenor updated the Group working being undertaken to highlight the role of volunteers during Trustees Week they had been involved in i.e. Motion and Volunteer Scotland event. The Convenor also welcomed Paula Duncan of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and Paul White of SCVO the guest speakers for the evening.
- 3. Trustees the OSCR Perspective:** The Convenor welcomed Paula Duncan Engagement Manager of the Office of the Charity Regulator General Manager, to the meeting who would be presenting on OSCR and Trustees Week. Paula outlined OSCR role in Trustees Week:
 - Hands up Trustees Week in Scotland in partnership with organisations across the UK and also Ireland.
 - Partnership recognises the need to celebrate the role of Trustees
 - Trustees Week seeks to recognise the diversity of Trustees and Trusteeship across Scotland 23,000 charities
 - Recognises the diversity in size, in objectives and outcomes for Scotland Trustees

Paula emphasised the diversity of organisations that require trustees in terms of size, geography and income and the varying level of decisions they have to make. Paula made the comparison of a local Brownie branch to a large Development Trust. It was also noted that these decisions, however, can be stressful and there are personality clashes.

It was also noted that in recent years charity law has changed and that in terms of planning charities need to consider more effective models of strategic governance similar to a businesses approach. Therefore, strategic planning is important but this can add extra pressure onto trustees.

Estimated 168,000 charities trustees in Scotland – however, tend to be white men of a certain age and not representative of country as a whole.

Two questions: what can you get from being a trustee and what can you bring to a charity?

The main point was that trustees are people like you and me.

- 4. Trustees Week Paul White:** Paul highlighted that 73% of organisations in Scotland have no staff at all therefore the role of trustees is vital and they are very active. Paul also noted that the role of a trustee is to direct and control an organisation.

Paul also raised the issue of language – people don't always see themselves as trustees.

Paul stated that regardless of the differing size and scale of organisations – the decisions made by trustees matter just as much and that there are a range of different relationships trustees have from funders to other board members.

Paul shared his own experience with the CPG. As chair of a credit union which has loaned about £10 million he felt a certain pressure but Paul is also a trustee with a pipe band. He makes a different contribution and uses different skills in these roles. Paul also noted that as a white man of a certain age he was probably a typical trustee.

Paul also highlighted that people can gain so much in terms of experience; make such a significant contribution and many connections by being a trustee.

Paul also made reference to the Third Sector Governance Forum.

5. Discussion and Q&A

Members asked a range of questions and discussion points

- Trustee understanding of role and consequence of decisions made
- How can we manage people's expectations of Trustees?
- Resource and targeting them to meet needs such as updating Trustee skills on a regular basis
- Diversity requires support; could the Community Empowerment Bill support the diversification of Trusteeship?
- Ability to draw upon existing skills bases

- Improvements in OSCR online resources and new website
- New resources are in line with a new direction with easy to access material, easy to contact, and events in local communities.

In addition OSCR are working with Voluntary Action Scotland to enable sign posting to local Third Sector Interfaces

- Issue of quality assurance and good governance processes
- Impact of aging population and reduction in volunteering numbers on Trustees
- Impact of long term Trusteeship and lack of movement in diversity
- Cross boarder issues with other regulators
- Future direction of volunteering should influence Trustee requirements
- Do we need more volunteer Trustees or more volunteers undertaking specific task to assist volunteer Trustees?
- The fear the legal obligations and those areas where there may be consequences for the individual was raised and it was noted that some obligations for trustees can be very onerous. In response to this it was stated the people need to access training as helps alleviate people's fears. Yet it was also noted that in removing the fear people also had to remain aware of the responsibility.
- There's a need to build capacity in particular in light of the forthcoming the Community Empowerment Bill to ensure people have the necessary resources to access the new rights coming.
- We've got to ask ourselves why people are put off from participating. The example of Glasgow Disabled Scouts was raised as they have a number of young people its board due to the direct approaches made to individuals and the offer of training, support and reassurance.
- It was raised that the skills we have to carry out our day to day lives – money, risk assessment, networking – all apply to being a trustee so people have more to offer than they might think.
- The possibility of networking between trustees was raised.
- Questions were asked of OSCR including: 'is there a fear of OSCR' and 'what is OSCR doing to make it easier for trustees and to give them assurance?' Paula responded that OCSR is creating new guidance and new forms. There are also changes coming to the website including online templates and people being directed to their local TSI. Paula also noted that OSCR are trying to get out of the office and engage with trustees. She acknowledged that being a trustee is difficult but emphasised the need to recognise that these things have been set down in law.
- The important point was made that we mustn't forget that trustees are volunteers. Do we need to address volunteering first and then show that trusteeship is one way of volunteering? Got to look at our recruitment methods for trustees and share what works. It was asked if OCSR noted the differing ways? Suggestion that boards should evidence how people got there.
- It was noted that trustees can be employers and that can be very scary. The need for training needed in particular for those HR elements of the role, i.e. hiring

and firing was emphasised and there was another discussion about the importance of language especially for smaller organisations.

- Paul from SCVO noted that most of the examples we know of are when things go wrong as that's when people get in touch, for example, with SCVO's Information Service. It was noted that SCVO can help organisations access free legal advice but there's a need for this must be better promoted.
- The question of access training and support for trustees was raised and Paul from SCVO responded that the biggest challenge is time and space. There are a number of ideas as to how we can improve access to information and supporting trustees including providing online services allowing you to train in your own home in your own time. Holding events at differing times and places was another idea and the example of holding the Trustees Conference on Saturday was noted. The need for a strong informal network of trustees who can share knowledge and experience was also raised and Susan from SCVO highlighted a [LinkedIn](#) group which offers such support.
- The diversity and trustees and volunteers was seen as critical. Need to target people and create roles that attract/enable those beyond the pale, male, stale, stereotype. It was noted that the costs of being a trustee- i.e. travel, can be prohibitive to the diversity of trustees.
- Katherine (Xchange Scotland) offered her reflections on her personal experience noting that it can be very hard due to geography and parenting duties to attend meetings. Time is the biggest issue. She was very keen to see more online resources and networks. People will find time and space to get involved. Need to make the support out there more overt!
- Xchange has a focus as a youth organisation on having young people as trustees and as such grows its talent internally asking people whether becoming a trustee could be the next step for them.
- The issue that some organisations have had the same trustees for decades and that these people do not always want change was raised. On occasions like these the difficulty of making emotional/professional decisions in regards to what is best for the future of the organisation comes to the fore.
- Many trustees who have been in post for some time or have particular professional qualifications/experience perhaps don't feel they need CPD. Issues were also raised around the need to keep people motivated – but professional – and how people can come to an organisation with their own agenda.
- Questions were asked as to what we can do next such as create an online training portal or an information sharing site. Paula suggested that in the future OSCR could have a tick of quality assurance for training, websites etc. and noted that OSCR is looking at its social media strategy.

Margaret thanked the speakers for their contributions and for everyone for such a healthy and interesting discussion.

6. Opportunities to Engage with other Cross Party Groups

Members discussed the opportunities to engage with Cross Party Groups which may inform debate and impact volunteers and the voluntary sector

7. Action Points and Date of Next Meeting

The secretariat raised the issue of the next meeting highlighting that we have a work programme for 2014/15 set out. However, given the Smith Commission and prospect of further devolution the secretariat asked if there was any appetite from the group to try and put a discussion on this into the programme. No members at the meeting indicated they wanted to see a change in the programme.

The Convener reminded the group that the date of the next meeting is Tuesday 20th January at 13:00. This is the first of the lunchtime meetings as proposed by the secretariat last year to give people more opportunity to engage with the CPG.

8. Any Other Competent Business