

CHANGE MAKERS

News and views from the Third Sector
Issue 2

ALEXIS JOHNSON

An interview with the Executive Principal
of Doncaster Deaf Trust

Also in this issue:

What being a trustee really means in these testing times?

As the not-for-profit sector faces
a new set of challenges, Rachel
Hannan shares with us why the role
of Trustees is increasingly valuable.

The new need for workplace diversity to help recovery

We delve into how workplace
diversity is a source of essential
competitive advantage, particularly
in the current, challenging times.



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Welcome to the latest edition of Change Makers

What an extraordinary difference a few months can make. The uncertainty driven by the political landscape in the conclusive months of 2019 seemed to develop into a degree of stability with the result of the General Election and clarity that Brexit would indeed 'get done'.

Since then, we have seen the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic which has undoubtedly had a profound impact on both our personal and professional lives. The economic impact on both a global and local scale has led to unprecedented challenges for charity and not-for-profit organisations, as well as the individuals working in, and benefiting from, the sector too.

As a consequence of activity restrictions from many not-for-profit organisations it has become clear that it is now more important than ever to acknowledge the key role these organisations play as well as their benefit to wider society and what would be lost without their contribution. We're certainly in turbulent times, those who operated during the 2008 financial crisis will know that in such circumstances taking well-informed advice and positioning our organisations to bounce back as best as they possibly can will be key in the coming weeks.

In this edition of Change Makers, we meet two interesting individuals who are each leading organisations with unique challenges and you can hear more about their stories. Following on from the success of the latest Change Makers Dinner held at Clifford House in Sheffield, Rachel Hannan shares with us what she's learnt about the role of a Trustee, and given recent events the importance of the role as the sector faces new sets of challenges. Also, in this edition, Alexis Johnson from The Doncaster Deaf Trust talks us through his career to date and the challenges facing organisations committed to providing special education needs. Alexis gives a valuable insight into the importance of inclusive education and the benefits of collaborative working partnerships in the sector.

We'll also be looking at some of the recent top trends in the Charity and Not-For-Profit sector and diversity in the workplace, focusing particularly on how organisational diversity can provide a source of competitive advantage in difficult and turbulent times.

If you would like more information about any of our events, or you would like to share your unique story, or that of your organisation, in a future edition of Change Makers, please feel free to get in touch with me directly.

As always, we gratefully welcome any feedback or suggestions for future editions that you may have to offer.



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What we're seeing in the Charity Sector

Partnerships and joint ventures

Charity and not-for-profit organisations have historically tried to undertake new programs and initiatives on their own, which can often identify numerous holes in their skill sets.

Given recent events and the new challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we can expect organisations to share initiatives and best practice to try and overcome difficult times together. Strategic partnerships could well be a means of organisations supporting one another to navigate difficult scenarios ahead, maintain efficient operations, retain critical mass and work towards new short and long term goals.

Maintaining engagement in a rapidly digitalising world

It's fair to say, technology has been crucial for organisations given the impact of social distancing and the need to maintain communication in new, challenging times.

As a consequence of the shift towards video communication and digital working, the way in which individuals absorb and take on information is changing too. This means many non-profit organisations are starting to look strategically at how they reach their target audiences. There is a growing need for additional creativity across social media and marketing strategies. In particular, many non-profits are being challenged to develop clear and impactful branding through

a constant stream of content to stay present and avoid getting lost in the noise online.

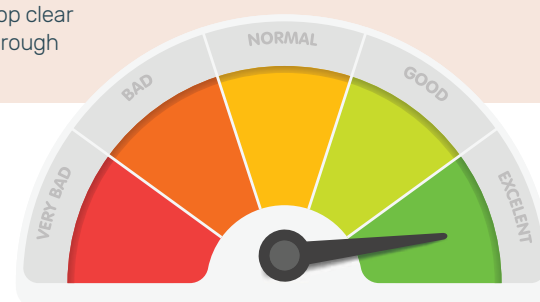
Long-term, the use of technology and management platforms to control fundraising events will continue to play a crucial role. The proliferation of platforms such as justgiving, crowdfunding and virgin giving had made fundraising processes far more accessible for millennials.

Operational efficiency

The operational efficiency of a charity and not-for-profit organisation is undoubtedly a key area of focus for many and will be crucial when looking to spring out of the pandemic once lockdown is lifted.

While it must be acknowledged that although they aren't corporate businesses intending to make profits, they should still function professionally, efficiently and operate as such in

order to make the best use of funds for maximum return. The encouragement of employees and volunteers can have a real impact on operational improvements by questioning and assessing processes to drive efficiency. Often, an emphasis on how non-profit organisations conduct their projects can be a strong contributor to increasing engagement and securing public support.



Tightening up on security

The rise of cyber security issues during the COVID-19 pandemic and also due to increased pressure from the international data privacy laws such as GDPR, charities and other non-profit organisations (as well as businesses) will potentially be looking to beef up their data security measures in 2020.

In a recent survey conducted by charitydigital.org.uk an alarming 25% of charities reported at least one cyber-attack last year and over 100 data breaches were reported to the ICO in the second half of 2019.

Of the charities that suffered cyber breaches, the total average loss as a direct result of was around £9,470 a year. An alarming statistic if you consider the number of organisations effected in the sector.

The risk of organisational cyber breaches undoubtedly increases as businesses push to enable employees to work from home during this period of social distancing so this will definitely be high on many priority lists.

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An alarming statistic if you consider the number of organisations affected in the sector.

Wider understanding of charity and not-for-profit organisations post COVID-19 pandemic

As an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can expect an increased public understanding and appreciation of the contribution and importance of charity and not-for-profit organisations.

Long running trends have historically shown that the proportion of public who give to charity fluctuates little and the financial support rarely sees exponential growth. Having been front and centre of the pandemic, third sector organisations have received increased media and public focus and MPs have pressed the government to

provide additional funding for the sector to help it weather the turbulent storm.

Recent events have prompted unprecedentedly high fundraising responses, notably the 100-year-old colonel Tom Moore who rallied the nation and raised £32m for the NHS which will drive and inspire others to support these organisations now and in the future.

The impact of COVID-19 on charity reserves

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations estimates that a minimum of £4.3bn in income has been lost as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and many are beginning to think this is just tip of the iceberg when it comes to funding drops in the sector.

Since the onset of the pandemic, organisations are experiencing increased demand for their services as people self-isolate and vulnerable individuals need increased levels of care. With incoming funds on the decline many charities and not-for-profit organisations are having to rely on emergency reserves.



What being a trustee really means in these testing times?

Rachel Hannan,
Experienced Chair, Non-Executive Director, Business Angel & Advisor

Our latest Change Makers dinner took place earlier this year and focused on the role of charity Trustees and was held at the wonderful Clifford House in Sheffield.

We were privileged to see just what an amazing asset this venue is for St Luke's, Sheffield's Hospice, and hear how they use it, alongside their other services, to make a real and positive difference for the people they so brilliantly support who have terminal illnesses.

We were joined by Rachel Hannan, who shared with us what she's learned about what being a Trustee really means, what you should expect

from your Trustees and what they need to do the role well. Given recent events and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the role of Trustees has become all the more crucial, particularly as Charity and Not-for-profit organisations are facing a new unprecedented set of challenges.

[Continues overleaf →](#)



What being a trustee really means in these testing times? (continued)

Here’s some of the thoughts Rachel shared about her experience of working on charity boards and why being a Trustee is still one of the most rewarding things you can do.

“The role of charities and not-for-profit organisations has never been more critical, with the vast, varied and much needed services and support provided by these organisations increasingly expected to plug the gaps in recent years. Consequently, there is perhaps, also an increasing need for us to find our voice and fight our corner to increase the support from government, the public sector and the business community. And we might also need to be prepared to think creatively and work more in partnership with other sectors than ever before, to ensure charities and community groups and those they support survive and thrive.

Charities are also under more scrutiny than ever before due in part to some high profile scandals in some large organisations, and also because of increased information in the public domain and on social media. As well as highlighting the importance of expertise, efficiency & innovation in our teams, this also underlines the importance of good governance and an effective Board of Trustees.

Over the years I’ve learned what an effective Board looks like and how it works with the Executive team. First and foremost, you need people as Trustees who understand what’s expected of them – who are undertaking the role of Trustee for the right reasons, and who are prepared to dedicate the necessary time.

Many people who take on the role of Trustee don’t always realise that they take on important legal responsibilities. So, it’s critical to have a good induction process and make sure they understand, and are comfortable with the fact, as the Charity Commission guidance states, “Trustees have independent control over, and legal responsibility for, a charity’s management and administration” – so it’s Trustees, not management that ultimately have this legal responsibility.

Many of the responsibilities of a Trustee are as you would expect. For example, ensuring their charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit, complying with their charity’s governing purpose and the law, acting in their charity’s best interests, managing their charity’s resources responsibly, acting with reasonable care and skill and ensuring the charity is accountable. However, to do all of these effectively, you need to have the right level of oversight and information, without encroaching on ‘operational’ territory.

The key to this is often in the relationship between the Trustee Board and Executive team. Each need to understand and respect the role of the other and be able to support and challenge each other in a constructive way. Not adversarial, but not too cosy either. So good communication, trust and strong, but appropriate relationships are critical.

You also need people who understand the difference in the roles between the Trustees and the management team and the governance structures involved. The Board is responsible for setting the direction and the overarching organisational strategy which ensures the charity’s purposes are being adhered to and delivered on. However, they should be advised by, and do this in consultation with, the ‘professionals’ – the management team.



The CEO reports and is accountable to the Board of Trustees via the Chair – the Board should not get involved, in or interfere with, the day-to-day running of the charity, which should be delegated to the management team. However, appropriate reporting, checks, scrutiny and support need to be in place to give the board confidence about how things are going – given they are ultimately accountable.

The strength of the Board will also depend on having a diverse range of people, skills, experience, backgrounds and perspectives, but all sharing a genuine commitment to what the charity does and stands for. So, there also needs to be a good fit in terms of the culture and ambition of the organisation and those on the Board.

First and foremost, you need people as Trustees who understand what’s expected of them – who are undertaking the role of Trustee for the right reasons, and who are prepared to dedicate the necessary time.



While the ‘rewards’ of being a Trustee may not be ‘material’ and the responsibilities significant, it is nevertheless one of the most rewarding roles I have undertaken.

In today’s world, simply being a ‘good egg’ or a friend of the CEO or Chair is not qualification enough to be appointed as a Trustee. You have to bring valuable skills, experience, knowledge and networks, and be able to complement those of the other Trustees.

Which brings me to my final, and perhaps most important point. Board members, as well as employees, need to deliver. There’s no room for passengers, so you need a Chair who has the respect of the Board and management team and is willing to address issues and when necessary, have difficult conversations.

Whilst dealing with performance issues can be a tricky challenge in any role, it can be particularly sensitive with Trustees, given it is generally an unpaid role. However, regardless of the remuneration, or lack of, performance should be judged on whether they are meeting the requirements of the role and discharging their responsibilities effectively. The vital importance of the role requires a level of commitment and performance that transcends all else. It is the responsibility of the Chair, supported by other Board members, to make sure those in the position understand and execute the role well.

So, for those of you considering becoming a Trustee, if you understand what’s involved and have a true commitment to the charity’s aims, it could be the most rewarding thing you’ve ever done.”

Well-run charities can give the private sector a run for its money in terms of areas like innovation, creativity, resilience and efficiency, often admittedly due to ‘necessity being the mother of invention’. Given the source of their funding and the purpose for which it’s been given, I’d also argue that charities should aim to be more efficient, more cost conscious, and more business-like than any other type of organisation. Their overarching purpose is to deliver for, and get the best possible results for, the people the charity is there to serve and support. This is where the focus and loyalty should lie, not to employees, not to management and not to Trustees. So, how people perform in a charity, and how it’s addressed when people are not performing is critical.

This is an issue that charities don’t always find easy to tackle, but addressing it, both on the Board and in the team, is vital, or ultimately the people the charity is there to support will miss out.

So you need a Chair who has the respect of both the Board and the Management Team and is willing to grasp the nettle when required for the greater good.

While the ‘rewards’ of being a Trustee may not be ‘material’ and the responsibilities significant, it is nevertheless one of the most rewarding roles I have undertaken. Inspiring, thought provoking, enjoyable and yes, challenging, are just some of the words I’d use. Being a Trustee has also helped me learn a great deal, sometimes think in a different way – and it’s helped me gain insight and experience that’s been useful in many other aspects of my business and personal life. So, for those of you considering becoming a Trustee, if you understand what’s involved and have a true commitment to the charity’s aims, it could be the most rewarding thing you’ve ever done.”

Why workplace **diversity** is crucial to help business recovery

As a consequence of recent events and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Charity and not-for-profit organisations are facing challenges on a scale unlike they've seen before. Which is why workplace diversity is a source of essential competitive advantage that should be utilised to ease recovery.

In a short survey conducted by our team in the first three weeks of lockdown, we asked 97 clients and contacts whether they felt workplace diversity was important for long and short-term business recovery. 86% of participants agreed that it was.

Now, hiring a diverse group of employees is not only crucial from an equality and moral perspective, it can be pivotal to a company's strength and survival.

One of the most important benefits of having a diverse group of employees is that you'll have a range of people who have differing points of view and life experiences that back these up. For example, someone who is 55 and has decades of experience in your

industry may bring different ideas to the table than someone who's in their early twenties and fresh out of university. This doesn't mean either viewpoint is better or worse than the other, they're just different and both can be equally as valid.

Having a diverse team can add a different dynamic to team meetings and strategic discussions, as varied outlooks and experience levels can lead to healthy debate and more thorough problem solving. You might just find a member of your team comes to you with a completely different viewpoint than your own and presents an idea for development that you'd never otherwise have thought of.

One of the biggest things preventing talent leaders from actively implementing diversity is a fear that disagreements will hamper productivity. Statistically speaking however, organisations who are less diverse (in both gender and ethnic terms) are 29%* more likely to be less profitable.

People from different backgrounds also bring with them their own unique set of skills that can be useful for your organisation. Some employees may be strong in some areas where others are not and vice versa.

But, together, they cover a whole range of skills and knowledge groups that make for a stronger team and therefore business because of this.

Diversity within an organisation can be incredibly important for business reputation. Business reputation will only become more positive when organisations demonstrate their

organisation is to hiring candidates from diverse backgrounds, you must also make sure that once they get the job, the workplace environment is conducive to them thriving in their role. Ensure that

Someone who is 55 and has decades of experience in your industry may bring different ideas to the table than someone who's in their early twenties and fresh out of university.

commitment to diversity through clear outreach and recruitment. A business that is well-known for having a diverse workforce and being a great place to work will attract top-talent and improve retention rates which will undeniably make your organisation stronger.

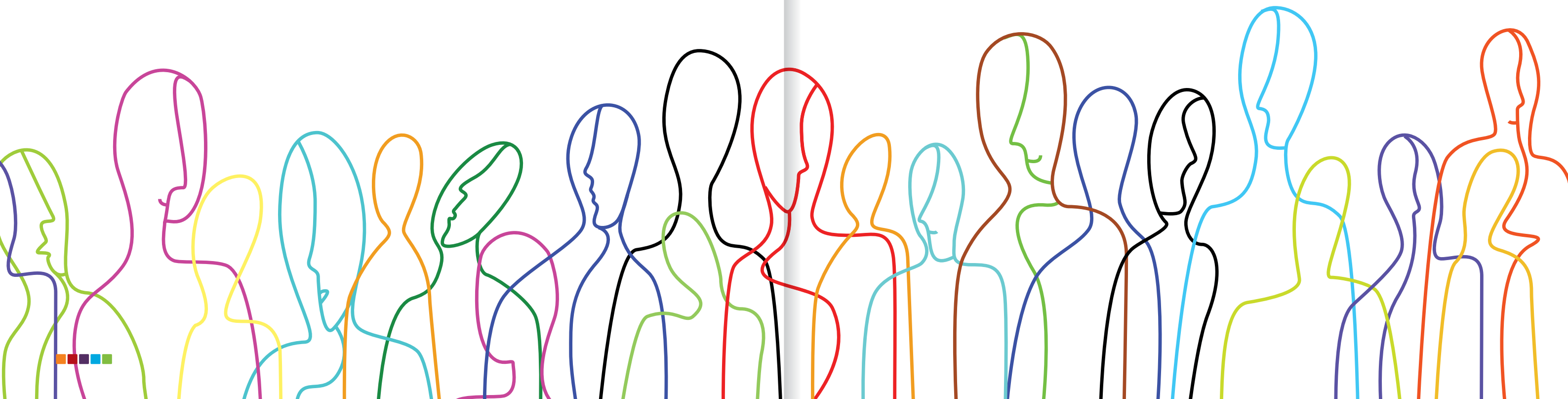
One important thing to remember is that no matter how committed your

everyone's viewpoint is respected and considered and that every single team member feels valued. This will set up a workplace culture where everyone is happy to give their opinion and knows that they'll never be dismissed in discussion. This is the best environment to future-proof your organisation, grow in strength and succeed long-term.

Statistically speaking, organisations who are less diverse (in both gender and ethnic terms) are

29%*
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less profitable

*Source: Delivering through Diversity, a report by
McKinsey & Company



What makes you unique?

with Alexis Johnson

This interview was conducted back in February of this year, before the outbreak of COVID-19 and some of the new challenges facing the charity and not-for-profit sector presented themselves.

Alexis Johnson is Executive Principle of The Doncaster Deaf Trust. The Trust's mission is to advance education training and care for deaf and hearing impaired children and adults, as well as assisting individuals with a broad range of disabilities and special educational needs.

Alexis' extensive strategic leadership and management experience in the Education sector varies across all age levels. Having undertaken roles in various provisions including that of Vice Principal in two Specialist Colleges and Head Teacher in an Independent Special School,

his expertise lies in helping individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities. In this article, Alexis highlights the challenges the sector has faced over time and the importance of inclusivity and collaborative working partnerships.

Q1 Can you tell us about your career to date and how it has led to your current role?

Okay, so I've been involved in special education now for about 25 years and I started off working in a general further education College working primarily with those who had special needs or those who just have learning needs. At that time, when I first started, there was very little support for special education needs, nor access to adaptations – the idea of inclusion hadn't really come about. It was in 1996 I think, when the Tomlinson's report on inclusive learning changed all that. So, I started off teaching GCSE and A-level and access to higher education and then I was given a class to work with in a Portakabin in the car park who all had learning difficulties and disabilities and actually, that was how I learned.

I learned more about teaching from that class than I ever did teaching GCSE or A-level classes. It was more challenging because there was a much wider range of profiles in the class. Some had physical disabilities, some had communication difficulties and some had social and emotional mental health problems and so

there was this real variety of individuals, their specific needs and learning styles. There were individuals who could access and complete GCSE level work, but there were others who could only do very low level reading and writing, so I had a real diverse mix within the group and it taught me a lot about how to differentiate something and make something accessible to all.

If I was teaching something in English, for instance, a comprehension task or some other topic from the curriculum, then I knew I had to make sure that I delivered it to suit all ability levels. I did this by introducing the topic, checking understanding and allowing those who were competent and confident to begin working on it. For others, I would need to break things down more, particularly with individuals with really low levels of understanding. Rather than quiz them with "What's this paragraph about?", I would look at how a sentence is constructed, which would involve more focus on identifying the difference between a verb and a noun.



What makes you unique? with Alexis Johnson

It's really key in special education, you have to differentiate. No matter what it is, whether it's learning hairdressing skills or studying for A-Levels, you have to recognise that all people learn differently and if you have someone with special needs or a learning difficulty, those differences in learning styles are exacerbated.

So, we have to consider how we can facilitate challenges with learning and allow people access to topics within a curriculum or programme.

Inclusive learning then came along and, by chance, a role came up in that team for what was called a 'Basic Skills Coordinator'. None of the more experienced people in our staff room wanted to do it because there was no additional money attached to it. It was a situation where they turned to me and said "You're new, this is just right for you Alexis".

So, I took the role on and it then developed into a management role and then a position came up somewhere else and I went for it having built up some experience. And although I'd taught for many years, I began to move towards focusing on leadership and management around special education needs and how you do that within a



college or a school. I ended up working for two different general FE colleges and then I went to a special college as a Senior Leader and from there I became a Vice Principle and then a Head-Teacher of a special school.

Q2 So, please tell us about your career to date and how it has led to your current role

It's really about understanding the diverse nature of the children and young people that you work with when they've got special needs because there's always a certain complexity to it.

For example, someone may have a primary diagnosis of being deaf, however, there may be other challenges and learning difficulties to consider alongside this. I've really worked to understand the nature of children, young people and the adults that we work with so I can explain to others what we're trying to achieve and engage them. These people could be Local Authority Personnel, Social Workers or someone in the private sector. There's a wide array of people that you have to explain what you do to, and it's really important that you break things down and explain as clearly as possible, as there's often a lot of very complex jargon and terminology involved.

People hone into details straight away. I've worked with a lot of specialists over the years who don't break things down for people. Unless you know what you're talking about,

it can be really difficult to speak to someone who isn't familiar with special education needs. I think when you get to my level in an organisation like this, it's about explaining things simply. Even people who work in mainstream education may not have a strong level of understanding.

Often, what happens is people in organisations will make assumptions like 'A deaf person can't do that' or 'A person with learning difficulties couldn't do that', so you're always working against the medical model of disability. What we promote here is the social model of disability, which is, as a community, we work to adapt to that learning difficulty rather than look at disability as an obstacle.

We need to look at our processes and the way that we do things in society and communities in general and say: "We can adapt this"; "That person can come along and do this and be included". So, you know the core mission really is to promote the social model of disability.

What we promote here is the social model of disability, which is, as a community, we work to adapt to that learning difficulty rather than look at disability as an obstacle.



When the job came up I was excited about the prospect of applying because I knew about the potential and the massive opportunity to help deliver such a brilliant service.

Q3 What attracted you to working at The Doncaster Deaf Trust?

It was a good ten years ago that I met with my predecessor and some of the staff here and I was immediately impressed with what they were doing. I've known that they've always been a high-quality service provider with a breadth of incredible services.

It's always had a very good reputation, so when the job came up I was excited about the prospect of applying because I knew about the potential and the massive opportunity to help deliver such a brilliant service.

I also saw it as a real privilege to take the role on, particular as my predecessor had been here so long (20 years). Despite the school having been running over 90 years, I was still only the 12th Head Teacher, which is testament to the investment and commitment individuals put into it.

The same can be said for the Chair and Trustee roles, the Trust has only ever had about 12 or 13 Trustees, and want to go the distance and stay on the journey.

Q4 So, how do you think the sector has changed and evolved since you started at the Trust?

It's changed massively over the years. Back in the 90's there was very little funding around for special education and it was almost like a closed shop, and was secretive in some ways. The funding regimes were different, there was no Ofsted when I first started, and quality checks were done by local authorities. In colleges, it was the 'Further Education Funding Council' which was a very light touch, not particularly vigorous or robust and it wasn't difficult. Then the introduction of inclusive learning, especially in further education, changed everything. Colleges had to become more inclusive environments by law and through the Discrimination Act and other legislation we started to see a real impact.

In the early noughties there was a lot of really positive things starting to happen in the sector. Special colleges were struggling, however, they made a deal with Ofsted that they'd be inspected every year which was a really good move. There was a real aim to raise the game and quality. Special schools have always been good, they didn't have the same issues as special colleges.

It was around 2009, when we had the recession, that things started to change again. The period up to 2009 was very well-funded and there were lots of funding opportunities, plenty of development initiatives around quality and provision around the curriculum. After the crash, all the provision and funding seemed to disappear. In particular, colleges, general FE and special colleges took the hit. The schools weren't as badly affected, they felt the impact but not as badly.

The numbers of individuals within special education started to decline as a result and were having to go through mainstream education. I'd say this was often to the detriment of the children's education. It's not been an easy ride, but I would say that nowadays, local authorities are looking at different ways of engaging with special educational needs and, as providers, we've had to operate more like businesses rather than like Charities.

Continues overleaf ➡

What makes you unique? with Alexis Johnson

Here at the Trust we've implemented more of a business model and looked at our approach to how we work with local authorities and that's been to everyone's benefit.

The decisions on placements or where a child goes are always varied. It can depend on a range of factors, but local authorities are trying to ensure that children and young people have the right provision. It's not an easy task as the health and inquiries pointed out, there's a problem in the SEN (Special Educational Needs) system that's not easy to solve. It'll take a lot of planning, coordination and partnership work and it's about looking at different ways of funding placements.

I really like the partnership approach, collaboration and partnership is a key strategic driver for us and especially me. I think it's the only way that you can grow and develop your provision.

Q6 Tell us about the work you have been doing currently, and what impact it's having on your local region or your students.

Our recent work has been about working with the Head Teachers and the Principals in the region for schools and colleges as I'm trying to promote collaboration and partnerships around special education.

We've got some fantastic schools and colleges in the region and we have some brilliant leaders and excellent examples of leadership. What I'm always advocating, or promoting, is the voice of special needs and all those in the high needs funding block. I'm trying to have an impact and I'm working at getting people to engage in conversations, dialogue and planning. I want to encourage people to have strategic vision around the promotion of special education, so that's why we're currently working with schools, local authorities and colleges to drive this.

We're trying to do this with a range of partners, there's the NHS and Sheffield City Region for example. It's around promoting the inclusion of those with learning difficulties into that bigger picture.

So, we've got things like the Specialist Employability Service as well that we're really trying to develop because of the impact that

Q5 So, what do you think the biggest challenges are in your sector currently?

It's definitely funding and partnership working. Again, whatever strategy we come up with, those core threads run through it. It's issues around safeguarding and quality that you need to get absolutely right, but that's a given. It's also how you develop your provision and how you work in partnership with those who fund that provision. The children will always present us with challenges, but we must be creative, adaptable and flexible enough to meet those needs, no matter what we are presented with. Ultimately, it's working closely with local authorities and working out what the best partnership approach is to give children and young people the opportunity to benefit from special education.

It's not 'one size fits all'. Special education is very personalised to each individual child.



could have on those people who are currently unemployed or those employed but looking to develop their career. Again, it's all about engaging with a wide range of partners to get people to consider and include those who need that high level of specialist support.

We'll be moving out of DWP (Department of Work & Pensions) to look at other funding streams to support some of the work we do. To be included in DWP funding now, you've actually got to have a lot of money in the bank. To re-contract with the DWP we actually needed £20million, so we had to look at alternative options to find the funding.

Ultimately, we have to keep the service going so the individuals we support don't lose out.

The children will always present us with challenges, but we must be creative, adaptable and flexible enough to meet those needs, no matter what we are presented with.

It's all about engaging with a wide range of partners to get people to consider and include those who need that high level of specialist support.



A brief history of
Doncaster Deaf Trust

Doncaster Deaf Trust can trace its history back to 1829 when Reverend William Carr Fenton set up a school to help young deaf people receive an education to equip them to become self-supporting adults.

Throughout the Trust's history, there has been a consistent belief in the importance of deaf and hearing impaired children and young people receiving specialist intervention to help them achieve their full potential.

In order to provide the earliest possible specialist intervention and to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to succeed in employment, Doncaster Deaf Trust has overseen the development of:

Nursery

School

College

Care Home

Q7 What advice would you give to organisations or individuals in a similar position to yourself?

Keep up with communication at a strategic level with people like myself to get conversations and dialogue going, look at potential opportunities where you can partner up and do joint work. It doesn't have to be in the same arena, we could partner up with a Local Authority with clinical commissioning or with the NHS for example.

You know there's a whole range of people that we could partner up and work with for similar benefit where each organisation and the individuals that we serve get the benefit of the partnership approach.

Q8 Do you think your approach is quite unique, the fact that you're really open and not scared of sharing?

Yeah, I think strategically, people who back away from sharing and collaborating are going to miss out on this opportunity. If you are honest and open enough with somebody enough to say "Look, I want to work with you and to do this, we need to look at this way of funding it" you'll be on equal footing and can have great success. If you have those honest conversations about the financial element of things, that will stand you in good stead rather than trying to hoodwink people, otherwise you'll limit your ability to grow and access other services.

So yes, I think it's crucial. We are outward facing, we are open and transparent and we will always have a clear dialogue with people about what our issues are. There'll never be any secret about what we're trying to do and achieve, as it's for the benefit of those we serve.

You're about to make the hire, what next?

The first few days and weeks when a new employee joins your organisation are absolutely crucial for how they see your organisation and their place within it.

When you consider the challenging and uncertain times we find ourselves in as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic the transition into a new working environment is an understandable daunting prospect. This period of trepidation is very much exacerbated further due to social distancing restrictions and the increase in compulsory remote working.

We know as well as anyone that finding the best talent to undertake any role takes effort, so it's imperative that we continue to nurture the new employee long after the moment they first cross the threshold or join the team video call.

Interestingly, a recent study showed that employees are

69%

more likely to stay with an organisation for three years or more if they experience an excellent onboarding process at the start. We anticipate this to be even more vital in the coming months.

Positive employee onboarding means engaging with, and preparing your new employees right from the first point of contact and maintaining that engagement on their first day in the job and far beyond. Of course, every employee is different, but it can be assumed that they all want to feel appreciated, respected and welcomed in their new role and working environment.

Even before a new hire enters an office for their all-important first day, there are numerous opportunities which can contribute towards their overall onboarding experience.

Employee onboarding often isn't a complicated process. It can involve simple touches like:



Sending a personalised message from a Manager welcoming them



Offering a virtual office tour



Providing early access to a company intranet so they can familiarise themselves with the systems

These seemingly small efforts can have a significant impact on building and developing the relationship between an organisation and employee in its earliest stage.

A bespoke, branded onboarding/welcome pack can also help as it shows due care, attention and commitment to their development within the organisation. It is often the smaller details such as an onboarding pack that contribute towards a feeling of assurance, structure, appreciation and integration with their new colleagues. It can also help to lay foundations of loyalty, foster feelings of pride for your brand and build trust – all things that will be invaluable to your employee retention and their output for the organisation. Plus, every employee has a network and if they spread the word via social media or word of mouth about their great experience it'll make your organisation incredibly more attractive to future talent.

On the first day itself, there are several things you can do to help create a positive impression. Often it's the simple things that seem obvious, but are too often forgotten. Making sure their desk is set up,

correct equipment is available and their full day is planned out are no-brainers, but it's frightening how many people feel like a spare part on Day One.

Developmentally, the onboarding process plays a crucial role in ensuring all employees are singing from the same hymn sheet, and living and breathing the company values. It's an opportunity for talent leaders to highlight key positive behaviours, performance metrics and expectations of their team members. This transparency and direction gives management line-of-sight and employees key targets and structure from the beginning.

An effective onboarding experience will ultimately help build a strong foundation for the intrinsic elements that make up a fantastic place of work. This in turn will contribute to better staff retention rates and will crucially drive and attract new talent to your door.





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Brewster Partners are specialists in the identification and attraction of Senior Managers, Directors, CEO's, Non-Executives and Trustees.

Working collaboratively with our clients, we take the time to understand their culture, their values, and exactly what they are looking for from a new senior hire. We are confident that our extensive network of senior executives, online resources and bespoke approach enables us to provide our clients with the highest quality service available.

Some of the clients we have worked with

