

CHANGE MAKERS

News and views from the Third Sector
Issue 4

Q&A with...

LARA BUNDOCK

CEO, Snowdrop Project

Also in this issue:

What makes you unique?

Mark Skipper, DL, Chief
Executive, Northern Ballet

Samantha Dixon, CEO,
Weston Park Cancer Charity

How has Covid-19 affected the housing association sector?

by Lee Bloomfield, Chief
Executive, Manningham
Housing Association



**Brewster
Partners**™

Charity &
Not-for-Profit
Recruitment



06

**What makes you unique?**

Samantha Dixon, CEO of Weston Park Cancer Charity discusses her career to date and the work that the Charity does in and around the Sheffield region.

12

**How to tell a story effectively – Seven need to know tips.**

Stories are almost always central to the reasons why individuals choose to donate time, effort or money to a charity or not-for-profit.

16

**What makes you unique?**

Chief Executive of Northern Ballet, Mark Skipper DL, talks about his career to date and the current challenges facing the entertainment industry.

22

**How has Covid-19 affected the housing association sector?**

by Lee Bloomfield, Chief Executive, Manningham Housing Association.

24

**Q&A with Lara Bundock**

We talk to the CEO and founder of the Snowdrop Project, a Sheffield based charity, which provides long-term support to empower survivors of human trafficking to move on from their past.

30

**Why Charities and Not-For-Profits should champion cognitive diversity?**

We discuss how cognitive diversity refers to the way in which people absorb information, process it and then react to it.

Welcome to the latest edition of Change Makers

A very warm welcome to the latest edition of Change Makers magazine. Wow, what a year 2020 proved to be. Although this latest edition comes to you in unique and uncertain times, one thing we are sure of is the importance of resilience and strong leaderships as organisations forge ahead into 2021.

There has undeniably been a great deal of hardship across all sectors and to some there has been a rare and unprecedented opportunity, either way it is clear that the not-for-profit sector has cemented itself as a crucially important part of our society. I mentioned in the last issue that it is incredibly important that leaders in this sector continue to benefit from well-informed advice and this support must continue through into 2021 and beyond.

2020 has challenged the Charity and not-for-profit sector (and indeed many other sectors), but the resilience, flexibility and adaptability shown is testament to some of the fantastic leadership across organisations in this industry.

Uncertainty will undoubtedly still play a part in 2021 as Brexit once again creeps onto our front pages, but the welcome news of the Covid-19 vaccine could well be the springboard for leaders to adopt an optimistic outlook for the new year.

In this edition of Change Makers, we take a look at some of the changes we can expect to see in the coming months. We check out the extent to which technology will underpin organisational strategy going forwards as Covid-19 led to a seismic shift of fundraising online.

We were delighted to catch up with Samantha Dixon, Chief Executive of Weston Park Cancer Charity. Samantha has been working in the voluntary sector for over two decades in a variety of fundraising, operational and leadership roles. In this interview Samantha provides an insight into the incredible work done at Weston Park and how her career to date led her there.

Mark Skipper provides us with a fascinating insight into the world of The Northern Ballet. Mark's diverse career started in banking which is quite a step change from the Northern Ballet where he has supported the creation of over 40 new productions since becoming Chief Executive.

Lara Bundock, CEO and founder of the Snowdrop Project, shares with us her delight at being able to watch the organisation grow to what it is today, as well as work with some of the most dedicated, passionate and caring people she has met.

And finally, Lee Bloomfield, Chief Executive of Manningham Housing Association does a deep dive on the impact of Covid-19 on the housing association sector.

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.



Nigel Brewster,
Partner and Chief Executive,
Brewster Partners
Recruitment Group

@ nbrewster@brewsterpartners.co.uk

☎ 07758 112 002

🌐 LinkedIn with Nigel Brewster

What we're seeing in the Charity Sector



Charities to take a more sustainable approach to tech

For many working from home has become the new normal, however with this digital evolution organisations need to understand the impact that technology is having on the planet. Although sustainability is a relatively new area for many, it is imperative that organisations within the charity sector come together to take further action on climate change.

Small changes can be made in order to become sustainable when retiring old devices. Organisations should look to pass on the technology to others. There are many schools, community organisations and projects that can utilise these. It is also important that organisations establish a baseline for their tech carbon footprint, and to prioritise this in order to make significant progress.

Organisations carbon footprint can be measured in many forms, such as building it into business KPIs, and reporting on it regularly. Leadership teams should continue to follow through with tangible actions, and write further steps and actions into organisational policies for the future.



Tech savvy board members becoming increasingly important

As more charities move to fundraising online, it is important to ensure that charities have a board with knowledge of technologies and how these can best help.

Some non-profit teams may be feeling somewhat disadvantaged as they do not have the time or funds to hire a full or part time digital marketing professional, but companies should analyse their board composition to see if there is room for growth. With the importance of technology growing alongside the current pandemic, it is not only important to have board members that understand tech, but also to have those who enjoy it. If non-profit

business had more board members with a knowledge of IT, this would help them bridge the gap they may have against others who have a digital marketing professional and help propel them further.

Not only will this help with issues such as online fundraising, it will also become an asset as the world moves to a more tech heavy world where cyber security and AI will become all too important.

Disparities continue amongst Leadership Level

New research has shown that male charity chief executives are considerably more likely to be paid more, lead larger organisations, receive appraisals and get feedback from the chair than their female counterparts.

Published by the charity leaders' body, Acevo's Pay and Equalities survey 2020 shows that although the pay gap has narrowed slightly, significant inequality still remains.

The figures showed that the pay gap had decreased from 13.8 to 12.1, however the survey which was based on 500 charity leaders did show that 37% of male Chief Executives received an appraisal, compared with 22% of female leaders. Alongside this the figures also showed that only 62% of females received feedback from the chair, compared to 73% of males.

The persistent pay gap among charity CEOs represents a stubborn trend over time. Acevo, which has conducted a pay and equalities survey for more than 15 years has also noted that there has been no progress on representation of BAME Chief Executives.

Although many of these factors are not new within leadership levels, faster progression needs to be made to ensure fairness across organisations. Covid-19 has shown that organisations can react and change quickly, and businesses should utilise these skills to tackle the current disparities.

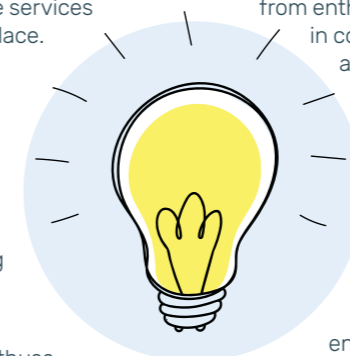


Charities to seek new ways to fundraise

It's no surprise that charities are seeing new and unique challenges in regards to organising events. Fundraising events are often the lifeblood of charities, providing resources that allow organisations to deliver their services, and also keep them engaged with the people who believe in their work and help to spread the message.

Charity services are in demand more than ever, but the events that would usually fund these services are now unable to take place. With a global recession looming and recent estimates saying that Britain's GDP will shrink by over 10% alone this year, charities need to put emphasis on ways they can bring in funding and new supporters.

A study from charity fundraising specialist Enthuse did indicate that levels of giving had increased during the first UK Lockdown.



This was partially due to people saving income on other activities, but also from enthusiasm for involvement in community causes. There is also a strong inclination the young people may begin to support charities more, due to the perceived lack of support charities have received from the government. With this the charity sector need to focus on ways to keep communities engaged, whether this is with virtual events, or more frequent communication to ongoing supporters.

Utilising automated email marketing to build deeper relationships with supporters

Email marketing automation is used across many sectors, and is something we often come across in our day to day lives. If you have ever been sent a follow up email asking if you would like to upgrade a seat for a flight, or received an email to say you still have something in your basket that you were looking at a few hours ago, chances are this was email marketing automation.

In using email marketing automation charities can utilise the 70.5% higher open rate and 152% click through rate in order to build deeper relationships with supporters, and therefore raise more money. There are many benefits to this system, with one of them being that you can schedule marketing emails to run alongside campaigns that are organised, improving not only optimisation, but also helping your campaign to run seamlessly.

You can also set up trigger emails, that will communicate with a new donor, or if it is a donors birthday for instance.



In order to raise more money, charities need to focus on building up their database, this can be supported via email marketing automation as it helps to define journeys and workflows for big sets of data. It will not only help your organisation to engage with your donors, it will also help you get a better understanding of your supporters and what they need.



Trust in Charities has fallen within the public

Although the NHS, supermarkets, small businesses and the Royal Mail have all recorded higher levels of public trust over the summer, the same cannot be said for charity organisations.

Trust in the government reached a record high of 33% in May and other institutions have also seen an increase, however figures shown from the research consultancy nfpSynergy has shown that the portion of public who said they trusted charities 'quite a lot' or 'a great deal' has fallen from 63% to 59% this August.

In May 2013, charities reached a record high of 66% however in just two years this has fallen to a low of 53%. It is crucial that charities focus on engaging with the public, aiming to better communicate the excellent work many have done throughout the pandemic and beyond, so that people remain feeling safe and supported. Although the public are often aware of the work charities are doing, due to the vast size of the Covid crisis it may be hard for them to see exactly what difference a charity is making.

What makes you unique?

with Samantha Dixon, CEO,
Weston Park Cancer Charity



Samantha Dixon is an award-winning Charity CEO with a diverse 20+ year career in charity leadership positions. For the past seven and a half years, Samantha has led Weston Park Cancer Charity whose primary purpose as a charity is to help create a better life for those living with, and beyond, cancer in and around the Sheffield region.



Q1 Can you tell us about your career to date and how you got to where you are now?

I graduated in 1992 at the height of a recession. Most of my friends went onto graduate schemes in accountancy or law. I too got a place at Law School but I knew it wasn't really for me. The problem was I didn't know what was me!

I had never considered the voluntary sector. It wasn't promoted to graduates, or professionalised, in the way it is today.

I started studying with the Chartered Institute of Marketing and got some post-graduate qualifications through them. I then went to work for ABB a large global engineering company in a business development role but it didn't feel the right fit for me – I didn't gain any job satisfaction but I had no idea what alternative there was for me.

In 1996 I had my first child and went onto maternity leave which is when I started doing some voluntary work for Barnardo's. Although it only involved putting Christmas raffle tickets into envelopes I became interested in the work of Barnardo's, so when a job appeared as a corporate National Account Manager with them I went for it. The cause appealed as I had learnt about the work of Thomas Barnardo and I thought I had transferable skills from the private sector, even though I knew little about working for charities.

I was delighted to get the job which involved developing partnerships with companies such as Mars, Gap, Butlin's, Barclays and setting up cause-related marketing campaigns and corporate partnerships with them. It was my first foray into the voluntary sector and I loved it, staying for three years. It was my first real experience of a sector in which there were viable professions and that a 'values-based' organisation gave me

Eventually I was made redundant and my last role before I left was as Director of Fundraising for Countries and Regions. I had quite a varied career, moving from a commercial role to wider operations and leadership, I really loved it and gained a lot from it.

I came to Weston Park Cancer Charity seven years ago as their Chief Executive. When I arrived I found a fairly homespun

I realised then what a powerful brand the charity had but also that it was not fulfilling its potential and, as a marketer that was something I could do something about.

more personal satisfaction than I had hitherto experienced.

We then moved up to Yorkshire in 2002 and I took a commercial role at Age UK, raising income for Age UK Rotherham, which, at the time, had a turnover of about £1m per annum. I then went to the Prince's Trust, originally as Head of Commercial Development for Yorkshire and the Humber, and then various other roles following promotion. I became the Regional Director for Yorkshire and The Humber which involved supporting 5,000 young people each year and ensuring the business for the region ran smoothly.

but well-loved charity brand – it's fair to say it has now grown significantly in size and scope. When I first applied for the position, I didn't really know a lot about the work of Weston Park Hospital (who as a charity we support) but I soon found so many people who had such positive stories to tell of loved-ones supported at the hospital or even stories of their own treatment – there was such warmth towards the cause. I realised then what a powerful brand the charity had but also that it was not fulfilling its potential and, as a marketer that was something I could do something about. Over the seven years I've been here we've grown significantly, partly organically, but also through takeovers. In fact we are about to complete our second takeover, which will give us a new set of services supporting cancer patients and their families in Chesterfield and I'm really proud of that.

Despite Covid-19, we are still trying to improve the lives of cancer patients across the region and we have an ambitious five-year strategy. It was written prior to Covid-19, but it's still valid and relevant, possibly even more so. We aim to support a total of 47,000 people over the next five years to 2024, a significant increase on what we were doing before.



What makes you unique? with Samantha Dixon



Q2 Can you tell us a bit more about the work of Weston Park Cancer Charity?

We're a regional cancer charity supporting those across South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire. Research shows that one in two people will develop cancer in their lifetime, a figure I still find staggering. We want to create the best life possible for those affected by cancer, whether that's a patient or whether it's someone looking after somebody with cancer.

Each year we raise approximately £3 million and we then invest in high-quality local cancer research, and improving treatments and creating support. The main way in which we provide support is through our cancer support service, which is currently based at Weston Park in Sheffield. Due to Covid we have had to temporarily reduce the number of services we can offer and also

the way these are offered – more digitally – provided services or via telephone but no group activities.

If you are affected by cancer in any way you can call us, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, where you can speak to, a qualified health care professional such as a nurse or a radiotherapist, employed by the Charity. Our team can help you with whatever concerns that you've got about cancer. We also offer welfare advice (you can get support from a welfare advisor who can help you get the right support regarding your finances) mindfulness, legal advice, emergency grants to name a few. Essentially, if you are affected by cancer and you have concerns get in touch and we will provide specialist, expert support for free.

Q3 Do you fund Cancer Research?

There has been a lot in the national press particularly about recent concerns in the reduction of medical funding due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many people don't realise how much medical research funding is supported by charities – they assume it is all funded by government or the NHS. As research charities have had their income reduced they have had to make decisions to reduce the amount they invest in research. It has brought to light how precarious the funding arrangements are for a lot of the important research we undertake as a country.

About half of our annual expenditure goes towards cancer research. Sheffield is a world-leading research centre for some kinds of cancer research such as bone and breast and we are delighted to be contributors to the work of these teams in the university and hospital.

What still surprises me is how many people approach the Charity wanting to support cancer research and their reasons for doing this. They may themselves be cancer patients or they may recently have lost a loved one but their desire is for future generations not to be affected in the way that they have been, for other families not to suffer in the same way. They feel that, by donating to us to fund cancer research they are affecting change for the future, which they are. I am still surprised by how altruistic people can be in these circumstances.

Although we do fund some research which takes place in laboratories, the majority of our funding goes on clinical trials. A clinical trial tests new treatments, ways to reduce side effects of treatments and to control symptoms. A clinical trial may benefit the patient themselves or it may help to bring the drug onto the wider market and available on the NHS.



So, if you live in our region you may be invited to take part in a clinical trial taking part at Weston Park, part-funded by our charity. I always say though that we have a very 'Yorkshire' approach to our successes in Sheffield, but certainly in relation to the cancer research which is being undertaken – let's shout about it some more!

Q4 What do you love about working in the sector?

Trite though it may sound what spurs me on is the thought that we're actually making the world a better place; I'm not so worried about lining my own pockets or those of share-holders. The sector attracts people with a similar outlook and values-base and if that's not you, then it's probably not the sector for you.

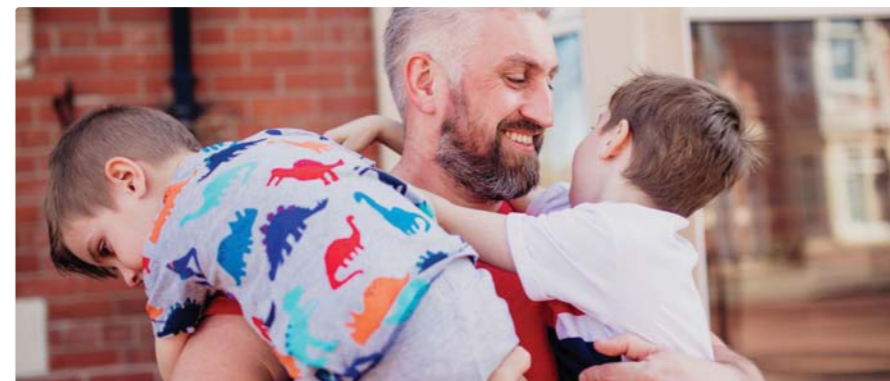
Many people think that working for a charity must be easy but it's not – it's a complex business. Unlike a company, who might just be focussed on making a profit, we have to consider how we make money but then, most importantly how

that, generally, the size of the giving public has declined since 2010 and that this decline is likely to continue. Whilst the onset of Covid hasn't helped matters there is a bigger reason I think. Many organisations, like Weston Park Cancer Charity, have responded positively during the pandemic, ramping up delivery through increasingly imaginative ways, despite a significant downturn in income. During the same period, public trust in charities has stagnated and the number of people who can recall a charity which has responded to the pandemic is low.

Many organisations, like Weston Park Cancer Charity, have responded positively during the pandemic, ramping up delivery through increasingly imaginative ways, despite a significant downturn in income.

we spend it to have the greatest effect on those we set out to support. It is a quite complicated and intricate thing to balance. I also feel that fundraisers have a very tough job and have to be highly-skilled at what they do, as well as highly-motivated. Selling a product is one thing, selling an intangible is known to be more difficult. Selling an intangible from which the buyer is probably not going to benefit personally is the most difficult – that's what a fundraiser has to do. This is against a backdrop of reduced income and stagnant public trust in charities. Recent research by NFP Synergy, sector leaders in this type of thing has shown

This can be partly explained by the fact we are quite a disparate sector lacking a membership body that champions our cause, engaging with government and the media, fighting for our corner. The ironic thing is that as a sector, we're great at campaigning for other people. We're fantastic at shouting about all sorts of inequalities which others face, but when it comes to actually standing up for ourselves and saying, as a charity sector, we do make a difference and supporting us is important, we're not very good. Frequently charities are the safety net to so many people in society and we need to market ourselves much better.



Q5 Can you talk us through how you support families too?

There's a few things that make us special as a charity when it comes to support. One is that you can access a qualified health professional, and have a call on the phone. We don't ask for an appointment, you ring us, and we might have to call you back in a couple of minutes, but you'll be able to speak to somebody and put your concerns to rest.

What we find is that there's a lot of support generally, for the patient because they are the subject of treatment, but actually the carers are the people who are getting up in the night to help with things, taking people to appointments, taking a lot of the emotional burden. We do have a Carers group at the centre, but our support is there whenever it is needed. Often carers just need to unburden or talk through difficulties and we will be signposted for support.

What makes you unique? with Samantha Dixon

Q6 How do you advertise what you do to ensure people utilise the services you provide?

It's been quite challenging through Covid because this is the time that we should be there for more people, but a lot of the channels of communicating with people aren't available, such as just walking past a poster or being signposted from the hospital, so we've had to be quite imaginative. Our marketing team has been more crucial than ever before. For the first time we've done some radio advertising and we're really grateful to them for their support.

A lot of our marketing focuses on telling people that support is there for them and they can pick up the phone. We're trying to be as imaginative as possible at making people aware that we're still open for business as we're aware that they're probably needing our services more than ever. The marketing team have been doing a great job, certainly on social media where we have been running a campaign on Instagram about Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Their value has probably increased significantly for this period and I'm glad to say I think it's become much more professionalised.

The standard to which we work has had to increase because there is so much more scrutiny of charities. Everything is now debatable as to whether it is necessary or effective as we are



scrutinised by the fundraising regulator. We have to continue to raise our standards which is the right thing to do because we are custodians of people's money, and we are working for vulnerable people.

We're trying to be as imaginative as possible at making people aware that we're still open for business as we're aware that they're probably needing our services more than ever.

I think the sector is getting really big and we have a lot of smaller charities that are struggling to survive. These charities are at times just trying to get enough money in to pay the rent which makes you question whether they are able to do what they were set up to do. I think there'll be some changes as a result of Covid-19 in the sector going forwards. I would say overwhelmingly, that my views of the sector are much more positive than they were previously but I think there's still so much more that could be done. My biggest bugbear is that is that we just don't seem to stand up when we take a beating in the press. Whether it's about executive pay or whether it's about fundraising techniques, we need to fight so people look at all the great things we do and the impact that we have. Look at the people that we help that otherwise wouldn't be helped, we need to amplify that message.

We're lucky in Sheffield, in that we have quite a large proportion of graduates who will stay here, certainly for their first and second careers. We have the opportunity to get some really bright people working for us. The challenge for us as an organisation is making sure there's a career pathway for them and development opportunities so that they keep ahead of the game and we continue to get the best out of them.

Working for a charity is difficult. You're dealing with emotionally challenging things on a day-to-day basis and whether you're a fundraiser or a nurse, people are telling you their story about why they are there and it's usually heart-wrenching. We at Weston Park certainly have a very good team spirit, so we kind of celebrate our successes.

I think the other thing that we could get better at as a sector is working in partnership. If people are giving a pound, it's better to know that charities aren't fighting one another to get that pound. Ultimately we need to find a way for organisations to work together with the client in mind. We at Weston Park have a working partnership with a couple of other local charities and have a brilliant relationship with them. One of these partnerships is with Age UK in Sheffield.

They have a fabulous service called the 'Independent Living Coordinator Service', but they struggle for unrestricted money. We have the ability to fundraise, but why would we set up a service that they're already doing brilliantly? So we work together to help fund their service which benefits older people, older cancer patients and helps individuals make the necessary adaptations to their homes to give them independence.



Q7 After a challenging and eventful 2020, what will be your focus going forwards?

Last year was supposed to be a transformational year in terms of income, partly because it was the 50th anniversary of Weston Park Hospital.

We had so much activity planned and a number of mass participation events which weren't in our calendar previously. As Covid-19 struck, the opportunity to run these events disappeared straight away taking with it the quarter of a million pounds we would have generated.

Whilst that's not brilliant, what we're focusing on now is how we come out of this year in the greatest shape we

can. It's been a real challenge but it's allowed us to kind of refocus on what we should be doing in the future so there's learning from that. For me, the most important thing for our charity is our people and that means keeping them well so they can support our clients. People are working so hard, in quite isolated environments sometimes and they're listening to quite challenging stories from people all the time. We really need to ensure that we keep our resilience levels up, continue to look after our people and make sure that they are always feeling supported.



Q8 What advice would you give to somebody?

I would say, don't go to work for a charity thinking it will be something 'nice to do' and that it will be easy. Do your homework, because this is it, these roles can be challenging, there'll be rewarding, but you need to go in understanding what's expected of you really. But that you can make a career out of it, you can really make a difference to the

communities that you live in and go home with a real sense of satisfaction at the end of the day. I would say make sure that if you want to learn and develop, make sure that you're talking to the organisation you work for, and see what they can offer and if they have the right opportunities. It's probably something we're not quite as good at still as a sector.

Together at every step

We're here to care for anyone living with cancer, or supporting someone else, as we get through this - together at every step.



For one in two of us, cancer will change everything.

When it does, so can we. Weston Park Cancer Charity is here to face cancer with you.

Our services, advice, therapies and support are for you and the people close to you, helping everyone to live with and beyond cancer.

The funds we raise also support vital, pioneering research and clinical trials led by the exceptional medical experts at Weston Park Cancer Centre.

It's our job to care in every sense for our patients and their families. Our help is free, and we're here for you, together at every step.

Weston Park Cancer Support
23 Northumberland Road,
Sheffield S10 2TX
T: 0114 553 3330
E: CharityTeam@
WPCancerCharity.org.uk



HOW TO TELL A STORY EFFECTIVELY

SEVEN NEED TO KNOW STORYTELLING TIPS

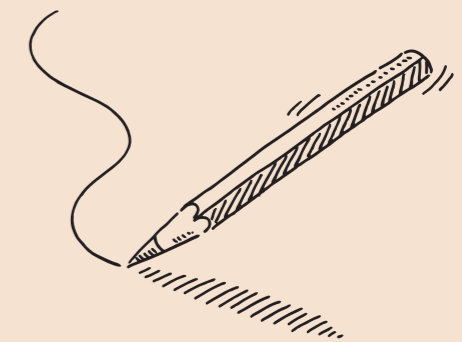
Stories and meaning are at the heart of all charities and not-for-profits. In fact, stories are almost always central to the reasons why individuals choose to donate time, effort or money to a charity or not-for-profit. This is why stories are fundamental to everything charities do and to the way in which they engage employees, volunteers, donors and potential future donors and supporters.

While concentrating on storytelling might seem too overwhelming and time-consuming for small charities who are just managing to keep on top of everything, it's important in order to keep supporters engaged throughout. Showing what the charity or not-for-profit does, how it does things and why it does the things it does, can really hit home with individuals and make all the difference.

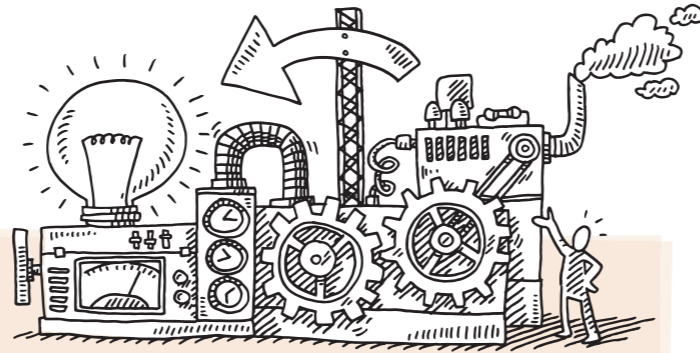
Stories can be delivered in all manner of different forms. This includes case studies, social media posts, marketing brochures, leaflets, blog posts,

articles in newspapers, user-generated content and so much more. Using a mixture of different forms is good practice for charities and not-for-profits so they can reach as wide an audience as possible and get the most potential benefit.

On the next page are seven essential storytelling tips for charities and not-for-profits to create the best possible content...



How to tell a story effectively *continued*



1

PUT STORIES AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE CHARITY

In order to gather stories to share with past donors and would-be supporters, it's vital to put storytelling at the forefront of everything the charity or not-for-profit does. Everyone should know how vital storytelling and getting the right content for this is – from the CEO right down to the volunteers.



If there isn't already a dedicated person or persons for storytelling, try to identify someone who would be suitable for this role. Once someone has been chosen, ensure they involve themselves with different teams so they have an overview of what's happening, make them known to everyone within the organisation and encourage everyone to share stories, successes and anything else they think might be relevant.

It may also be a worthwhile idea to organise sessions for the sharing of stories and updates on projects etc, that the chosen storyteller can curate content from this.

2

LET PEOPLE KNOW WHAT YOU NEED FROM THEM TO CREATE A GREAT STORY

It's not reasonable to expect people to know exactly what is needed for successful storytelling, so it's crucial to set up processes to gather the information required. Outline what is needed for a great story and ask for images and videos to go with them too, if appropriate.

If stories are already a part of the charity or not-for-profit, a key place to start is by showing which ones are good examples of what is required to help people know where to begin.

3

REMEMBER, NOT ALL STORIES WORK FOR ALL PLATFORMS

Not all stories will work for all platforms. What works on Twitter probably won't work on a marketing brochure and it certainly won't work in exactly the same format. When starting with content, starting with a blank canvas and crafting it to any format it will work well on is the best way forward.

Don't try to force content to fit on platforms it won't work on.

4



IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT

One thing that holds many charities and not-for-profits back is the feeling that their storytelling has to be absolutely perfect before they put it out there. This certainty isn't the case and having some content is definitely better than no content at all.

Spreading word about the organisation is far more important than having everything be completely polished and perfect. Begin today with something, no matter how small, and more content can be honed and further crafted down the line as experience levels rise.

Mistakes will almost certainly be made, however, if board members, leaders, volunteers and employees within the charity or not-for-profit are all in alignment with the storytelling initiative, the storyteller(s) can benefit from the support and guidance of those around them if something does go wrong.

5

BE SENSITIVE

When a charity or not-for-profit shares a story of a beneficiary it's so vital to ensure that they are ready to tell their story and are happy with the words and way it is shared. When writing the content on behalf of a beneficiary, or editing words they've written themselves to fit whatever format it's intended for, sending the story back to the beneficiary for their approval is the right thing to do.

It's also crucial to consider anonymity for beneficiaries where necessary in order to keep them safe. Proper processes should be in place to ensure someone's identity is not revealed when it shouldn't be and the challenge then is to still show personality and variety whilst keeping identity secret. This can be done through the sharing of personal works – poetry, photographs, spoken words, music and more.



6

SHARE, SHARE, SHARE, AND THEN SHARE SOME MORE

Sharing stories with volunteers and staff within a charity or not-for-profit is a powerful way to spread the message further, as many will likely share this with their own network.

This works especially well as staff and volunteers are usually there because the cause is something they care about and that really means something to them, so they'll be more likely to spread the word to others.

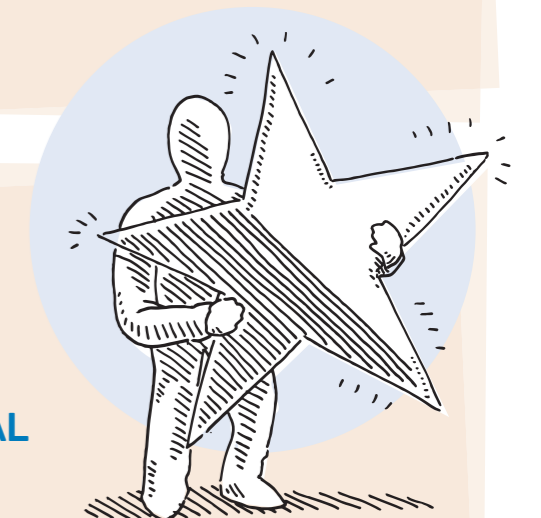


7

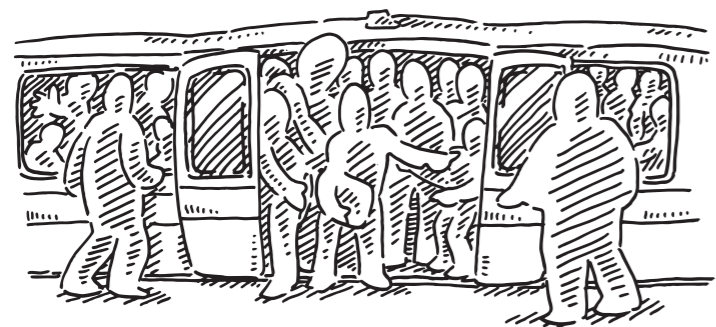
DON'T FORGET TO CONSIDER INTERNAL STORYTELLING

Internal communications can also be a formidable tool for charities and not-for-profits and shouldn't be overlooked. This can be utilised to connect staff to the organisation's strategy and purpose, to build pride in success stories, to shift mindsets, to drive change within the organisation, to pass on knowledge and for many more purposes.

Storytelling, both internal and external, is a crucial part of a larger purpose and strategy for any charity or not-for-profit.



Helping leaders, volunteers, employees and beneficiaries share stories, experience and knowledge can bring about positive action, drive change and drastically improve engagement and donations. Curating stories and sharing them in the correct way on the right platforms can build a transformational culture and a charity or not-for-profit that is built for lasting success and to help those who are most in need.



Northern Ballet



What makes you unique?

with Mark Skipper DL
Chief Executive, Northern Ballet

Mark Skipper has been Chief Executive of Northern Ballet since 1996. Mark started his career in banking before joining Northern Ballet as Deputy Stage Manager in 1987. He was promoted to the role of Company Manager and then Head of Planning before being appointed Chief Executive. Since then he has supported the creation of more than 40 new productions and overseen the creation of a purpose-built home for the Company.

Q1 Can you please tell us some information about your career to date?

I started work at Northern Ballet in 1987, but my first career was in banking which was very different. I worked for Barclays bank, and it was during this time that I started to have an interest in performing in amateur theatre and then in stage management.

I got to a point around 1985/86 where I realised I no longer wanted to work in banking and wanted to focus on theatre, so I left a mid-level role at Barclays and started working in stage management. After a couple of years of working on operas and musicals, I started working at the Kings Theatre in Southsea, Portsmouth. In 1987 Northern Ballet Theatre came on tour to that theatre and happened to be looking for a new Deputy Stage Manager (DSM).

The DSM controls all the lighting cues, sound cues and scene changes. Although score reading is advantageous in musicals and opera, with ballet you have to be able to read music because everything is set to the musical score. Luckily, I had been a pianist since I was little so I had good ability in score reading. I applied for the job and ultimately began working with the company.

The first ballet I worked on was called 'A Simple Man' about the artist L S Lowry, which was choreographed by Gillian Lynne (who also choreographed Cats and Phantom of the Opera). I was DSM for a while, and was then promoted to Stage Manager which, instead of giving all the cues, you oversee the running of all technical areas of the show including scene changes. After that I became the Company Manager, dealing with the administration of the Company whilst on tour; I did that for about 6 or 7 years.

In 1995 we had a new Business Director, and she created a new role of Head of Planning to manage the planning of the Company's extensive tour. I did that for a few months but by the summer of 1995 I was acting as the Executive Director after the sudden departure of the Business Director. The Company then formally recruited for the Executive Director role, which I interviewed for, and was appointed and started officially in the role in May 1996. I have been the Chief Executive (formerly titled Executive Director) ever since. Having worked my way up through the Company and particularly on the touring side, I know exactly what goes on in each department and that means you can always understand each department's perspective.



What makes you unique? with Mark Skipper DL

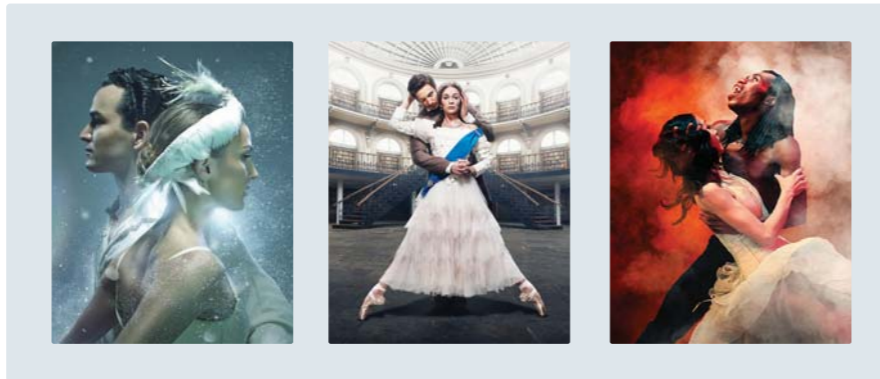
Q2 Is your role now more commercial?

I believe it is more commercial to a degree, but first and foremost it is about the art and ensuring we can create and tour as extensively as possible. We still tour more than any other ballet company in this country because over the years we have been able to stay at an appropriate size and not allowed the company to grow extensively. Some companies have grown so much it becomes too expensive to tour and they might only go to five towns or cities outside of where they are based, whereas we are still going to around 20 with our full-scale work.

Our business model works because of our size and we are the only company who can make a financial contribution from touring. By that I mean that if you take away our core costs, such as the dancers, and look at the actual cost of touring with transport costs, orchestra costs, marketing costs, etc. and place that alongside the income we get from selling tickets, we generally make a small contribution back to our core budget. It is becoming more difficult to make that contribution though because of increased costs and we cannot keep raising ticket prices as there is a price point above which people cannot afford to go.

Over the years we have progressed well with fundraising. We have always been successful with corporate support going back to BT in the early 90s, Halifax/HBOS from 1996-2001, then Leeds Metropolitan University for a while and most recently first direct. Our extensive tour makes us a good vehicle for corporates who need to engage with their customers and worked especially well for an organisation like first direct who don't have branches for their customers, so it is an important way to engage with them. At the moment, however, we do not have a national tour sponsor and are working hard to develop a relationship with someone new.

A lot of the focus of my job is to secure income and raise funds, whether that is by making sure we are programming a balanced repertoire, securing support from Arts Council England, and of course supporting the fundraising team with their relationships with donors.



Q3 Was the Leeds venue purpose built for you?

Northern Ballet was founded in Manchester in 1969, we then moved to Halifax in 1990 in response to the need to pursue funding. We moved to Halifax on the basis that we were going to receive an increased revenue grant from the local authority and a purpose-built facility for the Company with plenty of studios and room for a school. Things did not progress exactly as planned and by 1996 it was time to move again. Fortunately, we were approached by Leeds City Council who offered us a good level of funding with the willingness to help build us a purpose-built facility in the centre of Leeds.

We moved to Leeds in 1996 and eventually got our new building in Quarry Hill in 2010, so it did take a little while but at least that is a legacy that I will always leave behind for the company. We went from a less than ideal re-purposed secondary school in the north of Leeds with two Gymnasiums as studios, leaky ceilings, and classrooms as our offices, to a beautiful purpose-built facility in the centre of Leeds. The building instantly changed the way the company was perceived. For anyone coming to visit us

and seeing our impressive glass fronted building with seven studios, a theatre and a ballet school they realise it is something you want to get involved in. For me personally, accomplishing this has to be my greatest personal achievement.

We tour extensively, and our position in this country is of a company that really reaches people, especially in many towns and cities that do not get any other ballet. We have a dedicated repertoire of children's ballets too. We started creating short ballets for children in 2012 and the great thing about them is that even today there is nothing else created specifically for preschool children. Other companies perform versions of ballets like The Nutcracker and Swan Lake that are contracted from the full-length versions and made more accessible, but they are nothing like what we began creating in 2012 specifically for that preschool age. Our children's ballets are about 40 minutes long, with proper sets and costumes and live music. We have created seven of these productions to date which we have toured extensively and also adapted for TV with CBeebies. We also began showing them in cinemas in 2019.



The children's ballet project started thanks to a £20,000 investment from Leeds City Council which was awarded to us to offer something to local communities. Since then the children's ballets have developed and are now supported by Arts Council England. They are something that young families can enjoy together, and we have kept the pricing low, so it is accessible to everyone from all economic backgrounds. Occasionally we will even put on a show for free because we know that sometimes even £1 is expensive and we want to make it available to as many people as we can.

For us, our business model is not about being profitable but maximising our resources to ensure we can create a new full-scale ballet and new children's ballet every year and tour them extensively whilst still maintaining a reasonable financial position. As a charity, our aim is to make ballet as accessible as possible, which we can do thanks to the support from companies like yourselves and other supporters.



Northern Ballet

Q4 How have you found it over the last few months during lockdown?

This year is our 50th anniversary so it has not been exactly as we had planned! In October 2019, we had our first ever live broadcast into cinemas in the UK and overseas with Dracula from Leeds Playhouse on Halloween. Although we began streaming productions into cinemas earlier that year, this was our first live cinema stream. On 4 January we had our 50th Anniversary Celebration Gala to celebrate our 50th anniversary. Following this we had planned two new full-length productions for the anniversary year. The first was Geisha, which had its world premiere on the 14 March, but then that was it. On 16 March, the government closed theatres which was hugely disappointing and distressing for all those that had taken a lot of time creating the production. The premiere was different than usual as we could not hold events and receptions to avoid having people close together in function rooms. That said the evening went brilliantly and was received extremely well by audiences and

critics. I always joke that it is the most successful production we have ever done that closed after just one night!

We should then have embarked on an extensive UK tour that would have run from the end of March all the way through to June with Geisha plus a revival of Cinderella. We were also supposed to be touring our children's ballet Little Red Riding Hood, which had premiered in October 2019. Little by little, as Covid-19 got more severe, things began to get cancelled and it became quite difficult because we didn't know how long things would continue to be affected and when we might be able to perform again. Week by week, we had to cancel performances and rebook them for later in the year, or 2021, and that in itself is quite hard. Ultimately as the pandemic has continued, a lot of these rescheduled performances got cancelled or postponed again.

We have now got to a stage where we just do not know when theatres will be able to reopen properly and



What makes you unique? with Mark Skipper DL

Q4 continued

consistently. The government has provided a road map, and we did get to stage four that meant that we could perform with socially distanced audiences but currently we have stepped back to only be able to perform for camera with no audience present. We need to get to stage five where things would get back to normal and allow touring to become financially viable again. Whilst at stage four, we held a two-week run of performances at Leeds Playhouse in October with socially distanced audiences, however with the latest lockdown, we are once more unsure of when theatres will reopen. Ultimately, since all of our performance plans for autumn/winter 2020 have slowly eroded away and many of our tour venues remain closed in the medium to long term, we know we won't be performing live again to an in-house audience until at least May 2021.

During the first lockdown over spring/summer, we had a hugely successful 'Pay As You Feel' digital season which raised over £40,000 in donations. Our Communications team recently won an award for this (Best Use of Content Marketing) at the Northern Marketing Awards. Moving forward though, we are now sharing new content on a pay-per-view basis and will continue to release new 'Pay As You Feel' content this spring.

It is a very challenging time for all of us. Looking back on when I started in this career, I have never been in a position where live performances were not able to take place. We would have breaks between our seasons, but I have never gone this long without live performances.



Q5 Has this had an impact on your dancers, and has it been difficult to keep them motivated?

From the beginning of lockdown in March we sent everybody home including staff and the dancers. We encouraged the dancers to do what they could to stay fit because we did not know then if they would be dancing again in the near future. They were all doing classes in their own homes, utilising whatever space they had. That continued through April, May and June. In July, as restrictions began to ease a little, we were able to get them back into the studios in smaller groups to begin training and rehearsing again. We put a lot of systems in place to make the building Covid-secure including one-way systems around the building, temperature checks on arrival and masks to keep them safe.

At the peak of the first lockdown, we placed 85% of staff, including the dancers, on furlough through the government's Job Retention Scheme which has absolutely been a lifeline for us. We received an emergency grant from Arts Council England during the summer, this was a fund created to ensure companies stay financially viable. We were also awarded a significant grant from the government's Culture Recovery Fund which will be another lifeline.

Overall, the Company is in reasonable health, and our supporters and donors have been amazing and continued to make contributions even though we have not been able to offer them the benefit of attending events. We have continued to do as many events as possible online.

Our biggest concern now is how and when will we be able to return to proper large-scale performances and what limitations we might come up against. How soon will we be able to tour again is another big question, since it is a fundamental part of our Company's ethos. When the time comes, we want our customers to feel safe enough to return, as without them we cannot make touring viable. In many cases, not performing is better for us financially compared with performing to socially distanced audiences. However, we are a ballet company, and we should be producing, performing and touring new shows; that is what we need to try and get back to as soon as possible.

Q6 Would you say the financial planning is the biggest issue you have at the moment?

I think it is about trying to rationalise between wanting to get back to performing and looking at the financial risk of doing that. It is a risk to spend money to put a production together and then have no way to recoup it if you end up not being able to perform or performing to a drastically reduced audience.

In some ways it may be taken out of our hands as at the moment, many of the theatres we perform at have decided to remain closed into early 2021 for safety or financial viability reasons, so we have

nowhere to stage our larger scale works. Thankfully, many of our venues have also received funding from the Culture Recovery Fund to sustain them during their closure and we hope they will start to open again soon.

Venues have a balance of product like ours and commercial shows (musicals mostly). The commercial shows will find it more difficult once performances are allowed to take place again because usually, they would plan and book years in advance. As we go to the same

theatres every year, we already have a slot allocated to us. This gives us much more flexibility when planning our tour and repertoire for 2021. As Geisha had only one performance out of the 60/70, we had planned, we hope to finally tour that in 2022. We had to postpone Merlin, which would have been our second world première of this year but have been able to reschedule that from this autumn to autumn 2021. Hopefully by then we will be able to perform as normal again.



Q7 What advice would you give to someone wanting to move into a role similar to you, or are already in that role?

Always look for the positive in any situation and always look for a solution. I think working in theatre is great, but I think that after the pandemic, it is going to become more and more challenging. For me though it has been a great choice. I may not earn as much as I would have done if I had stayed working with Barclays, but it is such a rewarding role to be in and an environment where you are creating something, and giving pleasure to so many people. There are so many exciting areas to get involved with working in theatre whether that is the technical/production side or in one of the administrative support areas like marketing, fundraising or finance.

The good thing about this industry is you do not necessarily know where you will end up. I started off at the bottom, but with my business background I managed to get to where I am now. I never regret the years at Barclays because without that time I would not now be able to run a £10M business. Northern Ballet is still a business but for me, the product is far more exciting than banking or producing a physical item. The only difference is that in my job it is the balance between not needing to create a significant profit but earning enough to support our creativity and to allow us to pursue our artistic vision.

About Northern Ballet

Northern Ballet is a powerhouse of inventive dance. Bold and confident in our approach, we engage, involve and move our audiences. We reach a diverse range of people through passionate storytelling, a mastery of classical dance technique and an absolute commitment to our leading role as an international ambassador for world-class dance.

Northern Ballet

Northern Ballet,
Quarry Hill, Leeds
LS2 7PA

T: 0113 220 8000
E: info@northernballet.com
W: northernballet.com

How has Covid-19 affected the housing association sector?

by Lee Bloomfield, Chief Executive, Manningham Housing Association

Manningham Housing Association (MHA) has a proud track record of delivering homes and services to diverse communities in Bradford and Keighley. We aim to provide good quality affordable homes and services for those in the greatest need in the Bradford district, and over two thirds of our homes have three bedrooms or more. Over 80 per cent of our residents are of South Asian origin, but we cater for all of those in housing need.



2020 has been an incredibly challenging year for everyone. The housing association sector is no exception.

Founded in 1986, Manningham Housing Association (MHA) manages more than 1,400 homes for around 6,000 people in Bradford and Keighley. Over 80 per cent of our residents are of black and minority ethnic origin which, as numerous studies around the world have confirmed, makes them especially vulnerable to the dangers of Covid-19.

Whilst the Government's restrictions have made it necessary for most MHA staff to work remotely since March, I am proud that the needs of our residents have been met throughout this period. And we have not simply hunkered down, waiting for the metaphorical storm to pass and some

form of normality to return. That is not the MHA way. Instead, we have worked hard to make the present the best it can be for the communities we serve, and plan for a brighter future that we can all embrace.

MHA is the first housing association in the country to be officially accredited for our work in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. It is a badge we wear with pride. Guided by our Community Investment Strategy, MHA's dedicated community partnership team have overcome inevitable complications associated with the pandemic to progress several high-profile schemes to bring people together and involve them directly in what we do. For example, five locally recruited volunteers have played pivotal roles in project delivery such as hosting online coffee mornings, an IT club and

MHA is the first housing association in the country to be officially accredited for our work in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. It is a badge we wear with pride.

Zoom training, and have led arts and crafts sessions at our popular locality hub. Their efforts are greatly valued and, as individuals, have also enabled them to move closer to the labour market by gaining hands-on work experience and access to bespoke skills training.

We have established an e-community partnership network of 25 organisations from across Bradford district with that number growing all the time.

They include Hollings Youth Association and Unity Boxing with whom we are delivering joint schemes to improve the quality of life for young people, boost their mental and physical wellbeing and highlight the cherished place they hold at the heart of a vibrant local community.

Looking ahead, MHA has just been successful in securing major Government funding to launch a new project, Building Bridges Bradford, to promote shared values across the district's diverse population. Activities will include workshops, online training sessions and community events, all in Covid-safe environments.

I look forward to the day when I can welcome all MHA staff back to their normal places of work. Then we can properly celebrate the news that we

have retained our Customer Service Excellence quality mark which is awarded to public and private sector organisations deemed to provide services that are efficient, effective and place customers at the heart of the service provision.

In his final report, the assessor praised the team for going the extra mile to support people and ensure that our absolute commitment to inclusion was maintained despite the Covid-19 restrictions. I am proud of them all.



Lee Bloomfield,
Chief Executive,
Manningham
Housing Association



manningham
HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Bank House 30 Manor Row
Bradford West Yorkshire BD1 4QE

Telephone: 01274 771144
Email: info@manninghamha.co.uk

Q&A

with Lara Bundock, CEO, Snowdrop Project

Lara is the CEO and Founder of the Snowdrop Project. It has been her delight over the last few years to grow Snowdrop to where it is today and work with some of the most dedicated, passionate and caring people she has ever met.

Q1 Can you tell me a little bit about your career to date and how you ended up in your current role?

I feel like I simply fell into my current role, which probably isn't the usual thing to say. I studied psychology and sociology at University which wasn't the original plan as I thought I was going to do Physiotherapy. I had unfortunately messed up my A levels and didn't get the right grades so I decided to study something I was interested in, which ended up being a pretty good decision. My entire family has a medical background which I thought would be a major influence but instead I ended up doing something different and my family were completely supportive of this.

At the end of university I wasn't sure what to do, which is probably quite common, so I just applied for lots of different jobs. I'm originally from Skipton but I had fallen completely in love with Sheffield; it feels like a bigger version of where I grew up which I think is the reason I love it. I applied for lots of jobs in the Sheffield and South Yorkshire area and I eventually got

a job as a social work assistant in child protection in Doncaster. That job was a baptism of fire, I operated more as a social worker because there was so much work. After a while I decided that if I was going to do the job, I may as well train as a social worker.

After spending a year working I went back to University to do a Masters in Social Work. I then spent some time in child and adolescent mental health services in Barnsley. It was at this time that I volunteered at one of the safe houses for victims of trafficking in Sheffield. This also happened to be the start of the nationwide government support for victims of trafficking. Prior to this, there had been a pilot project in London. In 2011 the government decided to start combatting the issue nationally. Three months later I got a permanent job working in the safe house. At this point I started to see there was a major problem with the way that the government was providing support.

Continues overleaf →



Snowdrop
PROJECT

For further information,
please contact:

Lara Bundock, CEO,
Snowdrop Project

T: 0333 880 5008

E: info@snowdropproject.co.uk

Q&A with Lara Bundock



The people who were referred had been very severely abused, tortured and exploited for months, if not years, but all we could offer was six weeks in the safe house. This period of support is attached to whether the government believes them and fits our definition. Therefore, it isn't just a case of the person coming to the safe house for support and saying they had been trafficked, they had to go through individual assessments by the Home Office. Not only were they trying to recover, but they also had to prove that they had been trafficked and exploited. For as long as that decision takes to be made, they were allowed to be supported but as soon as a conclusion was drawn the support would end. If it was a positive decision they would get two more weeks and if it was a negative decision we would have to exit them within two days. Professionally, ethically and morally this was a real challenge, it meant that you often had to exit someone with no further support when you knew that they were not ready to live independently and would be vulnerable to further harm, potential homelessness and destitution. I would regularly receive phone calls from housing officers, GPs, Solicitors or from the clients themselves, asking for help, questioning why I had terminated much needed support. The reports I got included homelessness, exploitative relationships, missing people, mental health deterioration, drug and alcohol problems and isolation.

However, there was a girl who was the tipping point for me. I thought she was quite independent and seemed motivated and I managed to sort her

some accommodation within two weeks. A month later, I received a call from the housing association, to tell me they were concerned about her and whether I could help. Technically, I am not allowed to do so. You're not allowed to send letters, or continue to support them but I would unofficially go out to people to see what I could do. In this particular circumstance I went to see her and found she was curled up on a futon without much clothing and no heating. This was in the dead of winter. Surrounding her were bottles

It was an issue around the country, every safe house was saying the same thing and that was that the victims needed support for longer.

of alcohol, she had previously had an alcohol problem and when she moved the isolation and fear had led her back to that. Within a month, she had been targeted and was in another exploitive relationship and was having flashbacks. I remember leaving that flat and thinking I can't keep putting a sticking plaster on something that in reality needs attending to properly. I decided I couldn't do it anymore.



I had previously done a lot of outreach work, mostly with children, going into people's homes. I thought if you can do outreach work with children, surely you can do that with victims of trafficking and that's when I came up with the idea to design a training program for volunteers to help look after people. The training was based on all the things someone may

face when they move out of the safe house and looked at all the things people would need to be trained in to support them. The charity I worked for said they wouldn't be able to support me to do it but if I could find one other person to do it alongside me I should give it a go. Fortunately, Rachel (our now Head of Operations) had previously worked with refugees and migrants and had just been made redundant. She said it sounded great, she had her redundancy pay and lots of free time due to being pregnant so we set it up together.

We launched on the 1st May, 2012 in a church hall and we were grateful to have over 100 people turn up. Fast-forwarding four or five months later we did our first training program for volunteers and began supporting eight or nine people. About six months in, I got a phone call from an MP who said they had heard about what we were doing and wanted to meet with us.

We went to London and met with the All-Party Parliamentary group for Anti-Trafficking and they grilled me about what I was doing; they asked whether what I said was just theory or actual practice. I told them that we were supporting eight people and he said that was eight more than anywhere else in the country. As we were the first in the UK

to provide long-term support, he wanted us to talk to more people of influence. The lack of long-term support was, and still is, an issue around the country. Every safe house was saying the same thing, that victims of trafficking needed support for longer. As we'd actively started doing something, people looked towards us to tell them what we did, how we did it and what we were learning.

We operated as a small community organisation for a few years but in 2014 we decided to go for charity status; this took us nine months to achieve. As there was no one else in the country doing what we were doing, we had to prove why it

When I originally started in 2011 there were 700 people referred through the system, whereas last year there were 10,000 so it has skyrocketed.

was charitable, how we were achieving our charitable objectives, and how we would be measured and monitored. They really put us through the ringer which was understandable, but hard work. Charity status changed everything. It allowed us to properly start fundraising as before we weren't allowed. During the journey of the two previous years, I realised I couldn't run Snowdrop and work at the safe house at the same time (which is what I'd been doing), so I ended up leaving and working full time for free. I thought this would be for a short time but I ended up doing that for just over two years which was really hard. There were some very kind people in Sheffield that wanted to support me invited me to live in their spare room. I sold my furniture and left a five bedroom house to live in their spare room. My parents and friends also supported me, and that was how I lived during those two years.



Q2 After taking such a huge step, what were some of the immediate challenges you faced?

At the beginning all the money we received went into the charity operations. The first thing we did was a sky dive. One of the women we had supported decided to do it alongside us and that was really powerful. We raised about £12,000 and that was the money that paid for our first year of premises that was around 1,000 Sq. Foot.

We weren't sure where the rest of the money was going to come from so we were just living on a prayer at that point. We managed to run our services that were mainly operated by volunteers and received a lot of office furniture for free. We had one office, a community room and two counselling rooms. The services we provided started as a social work program of outreach and advocacy but we had two counsellors approach us and asked if we were interested in their services. They designed a counselling program alongside supervision from The Helen Bamber Foundation who specialise in therapy for people who have been tortured and traumatized.

We then started community activities and a house renovation program. The community programs include ESOL, dance, Mums and toddlers and sewing classes. The house renovation program is for clients who have been entitlement to and obtained a council house. The houses are usually bare and undecorated. It is essentially a shell. We help clients to furnish and decorate the properties, as many of our clients don't have a community or money to help them. We take volunteers with two to three days' notice and turn houses in to homes in 48hrs. We encourage clients to decide on their own paint colours, and we rely heavily on donations for furniture from the people of Sheffield. Within two days we get to give the clients a proper home. I think because they've

had their trust broken so many times, we have to work quite hard to gain this from them and sometimes the house renovation project is the turning point.

On a personal level, the two years I worked without being paid and the amount of work we were putting into the charity almost led to a breakdown. There were many people worried about me and my health but I didn't want to give up when I had gotten so far. This almost breaking point prompted me to 'go big or go home'. With that focus we decided to apply for a big grant from the lottery and they were really supportive during the application process. In the final decision phone call, they told us that they don't usually help charities that haven't already had funding but as we had systems and process, clear outcomes for clients and functioned as though we already had a steady income, they wanted to see what we could achieve when we actually did have funding. Our one condition was that in three years, if we came back for more funding, we weren't allowed to ask for 100% funding again. Last year we went back for the same amount of funding but it was only 32% of our income because of the successful growth of our services. Yet again we have been successful with this to increase our capacity even further. We have moved rapidly from support 8 clients to 167 and 77 dependent children.

I believe that part of the success of our charity is the strength of the snowdrop team members. We don't have a high turnover of staff as we try really hard to look after our staff and volunteers. For example, we're really committed to people's mental wellbeing and health so we provide one-to-one therapy for all our employees once a month which is done by external people.

Continues overleaf →

Q&A with Lara Bundock

Q2 continued

I think when you are in an industry that deals with people that have experienced trauma, there is a higher chance of you being affected by secondary trauma and your own mental health struggles. I don't think enough is done in this industry to look after staff mental health and it's a huge asset to do so because who you employ is what makes or breaks the success of achieving that charities aims.

In the charity world, the staff you employ are the essence of the organisation. You're not supplying a product you're supplying a package of support and the staff are an essential part of that. Without good staff, you can't provide a reliable and trustworthy service so it's really crucial to look after them and keep them in the best health. We could not find the right fit for our recent Counselling manager and it was our first experience of going through an agency and I was so impressed. The person we have employed is like gold dust. Already she has proactively joined a Sheffield forum for trauma specialist, done extra-curricular training and exploring how we can improve our therapeutic offer to clients with different traumatic experiences.

From when we had our first lottery funding we've gone from no employees to now having 17, expanding across South Yorkshire, going from supporting 8 people to 167 and most recently, owning our own building. We've only been running formally for four and a half years but had to move buildings three times. This inconsistent base can be damaging to providing effective support to our clients, so being able to get a stable base for them is a great asset. We are so excited to make the building a place that clients love to visit and staff feel proud to work in.

Q3 How has Covid-19 impacted you in the last 4 months?

We didn't furlough anyone and our support became more virtual, but as a result it also became more regular. We found that when people could come to see us before covid, they would attend sessions for an hour or more, whereas during the pandemic most case workers found that clients appreciate shorter but more regular contact. The calls were shorter because there was less to talk about but was often the only interaction they were getting all day. An additional challenge was the lack of connectivity. Many of our clients don't have Wi-Fi or smart appliances so many of them were

We also set up mini coffee mornings with their case workers, volunteer and our team administrator to provide some face to face friendly interactions.

A proportion of our clients were in the shielding or vulnerable category so we set up regular delivery of food parcels so we could ensure they were getting enough food to stay healthy. During the start of the pandemic we had quite a few mental health crises and we were there to help in referring them to the right support. Our own counselling team set up over the phone, zoom or WhatsApp sessions and interestingly from that we have



suffering from extreme isolation because they couldn't connect to the outside world, or take part in activities. Some of them also have children so there was the extra pressure that the children couldn't access online learning from schools.

The calls were shorter because there was less to talk about, some people said that our service was the only interaction they were getting all day

Through grants we were able to create something we call the digital library that allowed us to buy and loan tablets to the clients that were disconnected. We set them up with My-Fi devices so they could take part in online lessons, keep in contact with family, access health support etc.

found some clients preferred this. Going forwards we will keep this as an option alongside the traditional face to face counselling. I think some find it easier and less threatening being able to speak to someone virtually rather than face to face or easier if they have childcare needs. It's been quite interesting to reflect on some of the benefits we've seen since the pandemic. We all want to get back to working in the offices around the team, but there's definitely been a few things people have learnt that we don't want to let go of. We underwent a staff survey to see what people were finding positive about corona, what they were finding hard and what they think we could improve. One of the positive changes is the move to weekly staff meetings where each service talks about what has been happening for them.

Staff have reflected that they enjoy hearing what every department is doing. I think sometimes we get so focussed on our own work we don't really see what others are doing, so the team is enjoying seeing what each other are doing at the moment, and I think we will keep that moving forward.

Our fundraising strategy has had to change significantly and I'm so proud of the team for how they have managed this. We created weekly virtual quizzes

at the start of lockdown to raise some money, arranged virtual marathons that could be done over a period of time and launched a summer scavenger hunt for families to do around Sheffield.

The South Yorkshire community and our donors have been so supportive over this period. I have been bowled over by the continued encouragement and backing of those around us and it has allowed us to continue to deliver our services throughout.



Q4 What advice would you give someone who is looking at setting up a charity similar to yours?

The best piece of advice I had was to find one other person to set it up with you. So important. There are so many challenges that you face and it takes far longer than you can imagine. I don't think I could have managed to keep going on my own. If you have someone beside you, there is a shared challenge and battle and you can support each other when it gets tough.

Secondly, although there is a big goal in the end, I think it's always important to celebrate the small wins. If you don't you just end up felling exhausted. We've created a culture in the organisation of celebration. The work is very hard, traumatic and takes a long time for a client to get to their goal, so we celebrate the small wins along the way.

We have a 'Yay' board for whenever something good happens and we can put it on the board and celebrate it.

And finally, make sure you take time for yourself. Surround yourself with people who remind you of who you are. Part way through I lost sight of myself in the aim and drive to succeed and I learnt a lot from that. I learnt that I am a human as well as a founder/entrepreneur and there are many other things that make me who I am. Having good friends around you and hobbies and interests that bring you life and rest, it fuels the energy you need to keep going after the amazing vision that most charities have at the heart of them.



ABOUT US

We are a Sheffield based charity, that provides long-term support to empower survivors of human trafficking to move on from their past.

Empowerment is the essential value behind every action of the Snowdrop Project. Making decisions and choices for ourselves is often something we take for granted but for many of the people we work with this basic right has been stolen. Snowdrop seeks to support those who have had their freedom taken away to live again; we advocate for social change and we give voice to those still trapped in slavery today.



Castle Green,
7 Castle Street,
Sheffield
S3 8LT
T: 0333 880 5008
E: info@snowdropproject.co.uk

WHY CHARITIES AND
NFP'S SHOULD CHAMPION

COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

by Paula Barber, Associate
Director, Charity & NFP

Cognitive diversity relates to differences in perspectives and differences in information processing styles and is not related to gender, age, or ethnicity. Instead, it refers to the way in which people absorb information, process it and then react to it. The way in which individuals take in information and choose to act upon this will differ between everyone and this is because people process things and think in different ways.

Having a high level of cognitive diversity within a workplace should make for a more inclusive, open and collaborative space where all individuals have the opportunity and space to put forward new ideas, plans and ways of doing things. Celebrating and championing cognitive diversity means actively seeking out people who process things in different ways and curating a team of people who perform intellectual activities uniquely.

It can be incredibly tempting (and, in fact, human nature) to want to work with people who think and act the same way as we do, however, this can lead to many problems within a workplace. This can mean a space with no innovation – a stagnant workplace where creativity doesn't flow and there isn't the generation of fresh, new ideas on a regular basis. Organisations need this to grow, move forward and thrive, especially during the current pandemic where everything is so turbulent and massively changed from this time last year.

One reason why individuals are programmed to want to surround themselves with and work with those who are similar to them is simple – fear. Fear of the unknown and fear of new ideas and ways of doing things. As human beings, it is easier and more comfortable to stick with what we know and what we're familiar with, however, this can massively hold an organisation back from reaching its full potential.

One of the many benefits of having a workplace with a high level of cognitive diversity is that different employees will come up with different ways of solving problems, carrying out processes and doing even the simplest of tasks. All of these new ideas and suggestions put forward by employees who think differently can add up to big changes for an organisation if they're willing to embrace them.

Cognitive diversity also means having people who have different perspectives on things which can be incredibly helpful for organisations. By actively searching for volunteers, employees and board members who have different cognitive makeups, charities and not-for-profit organisations will end up with a creative and innovative space.

It is not enough, however, to seek out and hire those with different cognitive natures to our own. Organisations must work hard once candidates join their organisation to ensure that all opinions, ideas, suggestions and ways of doing things are welcomed and valued so that individuals feel able to bring their ideas to the table at any time.

All too often, leaders within organisations either consciously or subconsciously suppress cognitive diversity as they make decisions and respond to others suggestions or ideas with their own cognitive makeup and biases at the forefront of their mind. This can lead to shutting down other people's input and

Leaders must strive to always encourage 'different' and not stifle it and diminish it. Having a workplace where cognitive diversity is addressed in a positive way will mean volunteers, employees and board members feel comfortable asking questions, giving their opinion and putting forward suggestions as they know fresh thinking and different perspectives are always welcomed.

All of this helps to create a positive and inclusive culture within an organisation and makes sure everyone feels as though they can participate without worrying about how their suggestion or opinion will be received.

Seeking out cognitive diversity for an organisation must begin right at the start of the hiring process. So often in a hiring process questions such as 'is this person the right fit for our company?' come up and often that can be the wrong question to ask. Instead, it would be more prudent to question whether the person can bring something different to the charity or not-for-profit.

One of the many benefits of having a workplace with a high level of cognitive diversity is that different employees will come up with different ways of solving problems, carrying out processes and doing even the simplest of tasks.

ideas and creating a negative culture which can lead to people being afraid to disagree with leaders.

Instead, leaders must work hard to ensure their own cognitive way of thinking, processing and reacting to information doesn't affect the way in which they receive information and ideas from others. Leaders who embrace new things and welcome new ideas and ways of doing things will witness their team becoming faster and better at problem solving leading to strong competitive advantage.

Embracing diversity in all its forms will make for a better culture within a charity or not-for-profit, make for a better brand which is more attractive to volunteers, employees, supporters and board members and make it better able to reach a wider audience. Committing to celebrating and attracting a high level of cognitive diversity will benefit not just individuals but whole organisations massively.



We get **Unique People**TM

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

