

**Governance and Public Services: Trustees' experiences of the
changing role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector**

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Abstract

Governance and Public Services: Trustees' experiences of the changing role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector - Lindsey Metcalf

Social policy developments during the past three decades have profoundly changed the way in which welfare services are provided, by substantially increasing the role of voluntary organisations in the delivery of 'contracted out' public services in a 'mixed economy' of welfare. Policies implemented by successive Conservative, New Labour and Coalition governments during this period have promoted a key role for the voluntary sector as providers of public services in a range of areas including social care, health, housing, education and criminal justice (Griffiths, 1988; HM Government, 1990; Cabinet Office, 2006; Department of Health, 2010b; HM Government, 2010a).

Such policies to shift responsibility for public service delivery onto the voluntary sector raise significant implications for voluntary organisations and the volunteer charity trustees charged with their leadership and governance. Although offering opportunities for some voluntary organisations, the public services contracting environment also presents a number of challenges for the voluntary sector. These include questions about the extent to which charities can maintain their independence, financial insecurity arising from short-term contracts, and the ability of organisations to remain focused on their charitable objectives and principles. Furthermore, complex and lengthy bidding processes and onerous monitoring and reporting obligations place a disproportionate burden on smaller charities with fewer staff and resources.

This thesis analyses such social policy developments that are facilitating an increasing and diversifying role for the voluntary sector in welfare delivery, and assesses their impacts on volunteer charity trustees. It draws upon primary empirical research to elicit the experiences and perceptions of trustees occupying roles on the boards of local charities within this radically shifting policy environment. In total, 46 qualitative interviews were conducted: 25 with trustees of local voluntary sector organisations, 10 with Chief Executives (or equivalent) of local voluntary sector organisations, and 11 with representatives of influential 'policy community' organisations at both national and local levels.

The thesis identifies the multiple and complex ways in which the changing policy landscape impacts upon voluntary organisations and, in turn, their trustees. It reveals significant ambiguity in how the trustee role is defined and perceived; varying levels of confidence among trustees about their ability to meet their responsibilities; and inconsistency in the training and support available to them in fulfilling their roles. The thesis offers a significant contribution to knowledge about the experiences of trustees responsible for governing and steering charities through the complex challenges arising from contemporary social policies.

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Glossary of Terms

ACEVO	Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DCLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
LCVS	Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services
NAVCA	National Association for Voluntary and Community Action
NCVO	National Council of Voluntary Organisations
OTS	Office of the Third Sector
OCS	Office for Civil Society
PCT	Primary Care Trust

1: Introduction: The changing role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector

Voluntary organisations and the shifting policy landscape

In the past thirty years or more, a number of social policy developments have profoundly changed the way in which welfare provision in the UK is delivered, resulting in a fundamental reconfiguration and marketisation of welfare services, with major implications for the voluntary organisations increasingly charged with responsibility for welfare delivery. Within this context, this thesis assesses the implications of such policies for voluntary sector organisations and explores the experiences and perceptions of volunteer charity trustees responsible for the leadership and governance of such organisations.

Between 1979 and 1997, Conservative administrations progressed a policy imperative to 'roll back the frontiers of the state' by substantially increasing the role of voluntary (and private) organisations in welfare delivery via a system of contracting out public services in a 'mixed economy' of welfare. The Griffiths Report recommendations for the reconfiguration of social care provision (Griffiths, 1988) - emblematic of wider policy shifts during this period that introduced market-based principles to health, housing and education provision – restored the voluntary sector's role as a central player in welfare delivery, following a period in which the emerging 'welfare state' had largely dominated as the primary provider of welfare services.

While successive New Labour governments between 1997 and 2010 sought to distinguish themselves from such New Right Conservative policies, the prominent role of voluntary organisations in public service delivery was key to their 'third way' approach to welfare reform. As such,

New Labour administrations continued to contract out public services and sought to harness what they viewed as the distinct characteristics and ethos of voluntary organisations, emphasising their central role in both implementation of key social policy goals and front-line delivery of welfare services. An emphasis on ‘professionalisation’ and ‘capacity-building’ (HM Treasury, 2002; Home Office, 2004), together with the introduction of a ‘Compact’ (Home Office, 1998) to govern the ‘partnership’ between government and what they termed the ‘third sector’ (Alcock, 2010a)¹, underpinned New Labour’s specific approach to the promotion of voluntary organisations as major providers of public services.

Further continuities are apparent in the emerging social policies of the Coalition government, elected in 2010. The Coalition government’s ‘Big Society’ agenda reflects an ideology that seeks to limit government responsibility for welfare and promote the role of non-statutory service providers where “*expensive state provision has failed*” (HM Government, 2010a: 3). Measures introduced to reduce state responsibility include a National Citizen Scheme to encourage teenagers to develop their “civic responsibility”; the transfer of responsibility for healthcare commissioning

¹ The concept of a “third sector” is a contested one. The emergence of the concept can be traced as a development during the New Labour administration (Alcock, 2010a), and is reflected in the government’s creation of the Office of the Third Sector in 2006. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government subsequently rejected the term, and re-named the former Office of the Third Sector as the Office for Civil Society. As well as the term “civil society organisations”, the Coalition government has favoured the expression “voluntary, community and social enterprise sector” (HM Government, 2010a).

The terms ‘voluntary sector’ and ‘third sector’ are used interchangeably within this thesis. The term ‘charity’ is used in its legal sense to refer to organisations that have been recognised as charitable in law (see Charity Commission, 2012). The term ‘voluntary organisations’ is also contested. For the purposes of the thesis, this term refers to organisations meeting NCVO’s definition of voluntary organisation, that is all registered charities but excluding those controlled by government, independent schools, faith groups, housing associations and trade associations (see Clark et al., 2012: 17). During interviews, participants have used a number of terms to mean the same thing, including ‘voluntary organisations’, ‘charities,’ ‘voluntary and community organisations (VCOs)’, ‘third sector organisations (TSOs)’ and ‘voluntary groups’. The terms ‘non-profits’ and ‘not-for-profits’ also appear in some of the literature, particularly in studies from the USA.

to private GP consortia; and schemes to encourage people to take “social action” in their local areas (HM Government, 2010a; Department of Health, 2010a).

Furthermore, the Coalition government has indicated its intention to open up an even greater number of public services to non-statutory providers (including voluntary organisations and other ‘civil society’ organisations), confirming that the trend of contracting out public services to the voluntary sector is set to continue. The “*Building a Stronger Civil Society*” strategy (HM Government, 2010a) signalled that such non-statutory providers should play a significant role in the provision of criminal justice and offender management services, employment support and welfare to work schemes, and greater numbers of health and social care services.

The ways in which the voluntary sector’s role in welfare provision has changed and developed in the past three decades invokes a sense of historical resonance in reflecting the various shifts during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the relationship between government and voluntary effort and their respective contribution to addressing welfare needs (see Chapter 2). Despite such discernible continuity, the policy changes over the past thirty years or more can also be conceived as radical new departures representing a neo-liberal turn, characterised by a decisive shift toward marketised welfare provision. This ‘reinvention’ of public services whereby government ‘steers’ not ‘rows’, and non-statutory agencies - including voluntary organisations – assume increasing responsibility for service delivery has major implications for welfare provision. It also impacts profoundly on the size, shape and nature of the voluntary sector and, in turn, on the responsibilities that bear down on volunteer charity trustees.

As a result of such policies, the size and role of the voluntary sector has increased significantly. The sector’s income increased by 77% from £20.7 billion in 2000/1 to £36.7 billion in 2009/10 (Clark et al., 2012: 31). Moreover, the financial relationship between the voluntary sector and the

government has become increasingly important, and the sector's income from statutory sources increased by 61% during the same period. Governments' emphasis on contracting out is reflected in the rise of voluntary sector income earned through competitive contracting and a corresponding decline in statutory grants: the voluntary sector's income from contracts with statutory agencies increased by £6.7 billion (157%) in real terms between 2000/1 and 2009/10, and in 2009/10 was worth £10.9 billion (Clark et al., 2012: 41).

Furthermore, voluntary sector organisations now deliver an increasingly wide range of public services in areas such as social care, health, housing, criminal justice and education. Examples include the provision of residential care for the elderly; support for vulnerable adults continuing to live at home; reducing teenage pregnancy; 're-engaging' young people not in education, employment or training; tackling child poverty; challenging 'anti-social behaviour'; preventing homelessness; education and therapy for children with speech impairments; running public leisure centres and swimming pools; providing training to offenders; addressing unemployment; and providing community transport (Cabinet Office, 2006; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009; Department of Health, 2010b). As such, voluntary organisations can be understood as being responsible not only for meeting their legal and constitutional obligations (for example, where applicable, compliance with charity law) but, increasingly, as expected to assume responsibility for public service delivery and to contribute to policy objectives. Such issues are examined in detail in Chapter 3.

The closer relationship between voluntary sector organisations and government implied in contractual partnerships, and the changing role and responsibilities of voluntary organisations and their trustees, raises a number of important questions. To what extent are voluntary sector organisations able to maintain their independence? Does their relationship with funders affect their autonomy to direct and govern their organisations as they see appropriate (Shaw and Allen, 2009; Smerdon,

2009)? Does a conflict of interest arise when voluntary organisations act as both service provider and advocate for service users (Taylor, 1992; Neilson, 2009; Corcoran, 2011)? Are the processes of competing for public service delivery contracts and fulfilling monitoring requirements compatible with the role and ethos of the voluntary sector (Onyx et al., 2010)? Concerns have also been raised about whether voluntary organisations will increasingly experience ‘mission drift’ as a result of chasing available funding opportunities that distract them from their core aims and objectives (Kendall and Knapp, 1996; Chater, 2008). There is evidence that some organisations entering into service delivery contracts experience a number of financial challenges, including insecurity and uncertainty arising from short-term contracts and difficulties in recovering the full costs of providing services (Scott and Russell, 2001; Charity Commission, 2007a; Clark et al., 2010). Crucially, evidence suggests that the consequences of the shift to a ‘contract culture’ raise a range of different implications across the sector as a whole, reflecting the heterogeneity of voluntary organisations. The importance of recognising this diversity in the sector cannot be overstated – most significantly the impact of policy is experienced in different ways by smaller charities and local organisations, compared with national charities with multi-million pound budgets – although this is sometimes overlooked (Harris, 2001a). Complex and lengthy bidding processes, cumbersome monitoring and reporting requirements, and the legal obligations and risks associated with employing staff and providing services place a disproportionate burden on smaller charities without the resources and expertise enjoyed by substantially sized national (and in some cases international) organisations (Cornforth and Simpson, 2003; Rochester, 2003). As such, concerns have been raised that small charities may become ‘squeezed out’ by larger ‘business-like’ organisations more able to compete in the welfare ‘marketplace’ (Kramer, 1992; Charity Commission, 2007a; Clifford and Backus, 2010). Indeed, the penetration of business imperatives that promote competitiveness, professionalism and efficiency, and the emergence of ‘hybridised’ organisations (Billis, 2010) that straddle the increasingly ‘blurred’ boundaries between private, public and voluntary

sectors have profound implications for the identity, role and distinctiveness of voluntary organisations in the broadest sense and raise equally challenging issues for the volunteer charity trustees charged with their leadership and governance.

Governance and Trustees

This thesis derives from the policy context outlined above, and takes as its central focus the experiences of trustees² charged with the leadership and governance of voluntary organisations operating within this environment. The term governance is used throughout the thesis primarily to mean the organisational governance of voluntary sector organisations. Trustees' governance responsibilities include ensuring the organisation complies with the law, maintaining oversight of the organisation's finances, directing the affairs of the charity in accordance with its mission, objects and public interest obligations, maintaining the independence of the charity, and managing resources such as staff and property. While trustees hold the ultimate responsibility for charity governance, it is important to acknowledge that other actors, both internally and externally, have a role in and influence over organisational governance. For this reason, chapters 5 and 6 in particular examine trustees' internal and external working relationships, for example with paid staff and with funders, and consider the implications for governance.

The broader sense of the term 'governance' - as utilised in the extensive literature examining the 'hollowing out' of the state and a corresponding shift towards complex, multi-level public governance arrangements involving a variety of non-state actors (see for example Rhodes, 1994; Newman, 2005) - also has relevance to the thesis. As government increasingly contracts out services to voluntary sector providers, it has

² The term 'trustee' is used throughout the thesis, although participants also made reference to other terms, such as 'management committee member' or 'board member', and the terms 'board' and 'board member' are most commonly used in the USA literature.

increased its 'arms length' control of these mechanisms through the use of service-level agreements, contractual terms and conditions, regulation and monitoring requirements. These processes contribute to the policy environment in which voluntary sector organisations are operating and the context to trustees' experiences of their organisational governance responsibilities. In this 'public governance' context, organisational governance is also becoming increasingly complex, as a result of the increasingly blurred boundary between public and voluntary sectors, and the emphasis on 'partnership working'. As Stone and Ostrower (2007: 417) highlight, *"in reality, the boundaries between nonprofit governance and public governance are increasingly fluid and overlapping."* Chapter 3 considers some of the issues for voluntary sector organisations and their trustees arising from 'dispersed' forms of government, contracting out of public services and the increasing distance between statutory agencies and operational delivery.

Given the range and importance of issues arising for the voluntary sector as a result of such social policy developments, the role of charity trustees - responsible for steering their organisations through these challenges - is crucial. There are just over 810,000 trustees serving on the boards of some 180,000 charities in England and Wales (Charity Commission, 2010). Charity trustees are legally defined as *"the persons having the general control and management of the administration of a charity"* (Charities Act 2011, Section 177). The Charity Commission provides the following description:

"Charity trustees are the people who serve on the governing body of a charity. They may be known as trustees, directors, board members, governors or committee members. Charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of a charity." (Charity Commission, 2008c: 3)

Trustees are generally unpaid volunteers (although there are some exceptional circumstances in which they may receive payment, as detailed in Chapter 7). Trustees have *"ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity"* (Charity Commission, 2008a: 6). Among their

responsibilities are the duty to ensure the charity complies with charity law, other legislation and the terms of its governing documents; the duty to prudently manage the financial affairs of the charity and maintain the charity's solvency; and to ensure the charity is well-run and efficient (Charity Commission, 2008a: 6). In charities with paid staff, trustees are the legal employer of such staff and have responsibility for complying with employment legislation.

As Harris (2001a: 171) argues, boards of trustees constitute "*the very heart of voluntary organisations*" and Scott and Russell (2001: 58) claim that the role fulfilled by trustees is one of the voluntary sector's "*defining characteristics*". As discussed in Chapter 4, my own experience as a volunteer trustee in a number of small charities addressing issues such as domestic violence, inequality and mental ill-health, and community-driven research and education has strongly influenced my interest in the implications for trustees of the changing policy environment. It has also led me to understand that the role of trusteeship is often overlooked - despite its key function in UK charities – and that there is a general lack of awareness among the general public about the existence or function of trustee boards and the significant responsibilities fulfilled by people volunteering in this particular role.

Trustees have also been overlooked, to an extent, in the research literature – as Macmillan (2010) notes, there has been a tendency for researchers to focus on the perspectives of paid staff in voluntary sector organisations and, as a consequence, the views of trustees and other volunteers have sometimes been neglected. UK studies that *have* taken trustees and trustee boards as a main focus include Rochester's (2003) study of the role of trustee boards in 26 small voluntary organisations; and Harris's (1998) work that considered the implications of social policy for charity trustees. Two surveys commissioned by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations provide some quantitative data on the characteristics of charity trustees and their boards, including data on the availability of training and support (Working Party on Trustee Training,

1992a; 1992b; Cornforth, 2001). Equally, the increasing role of the voluntary sector in public service delivery and in policy implementation is reflected in a steadily growing body of literature concerned with investigating how voluntary sector organisations are governed. Much of this literature is centred on North American studies of non-profit organisations and their boards, and has considered issues such as board composition, staff-board relationships and measuring the effectiveness of non-profit boards (see for example, Widmer, 1993; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Brown, 2007; Stone and Ostrower, 2007; Callen et al., 2010).

There remain, however, a limited number of recent qualitative studies that focus on the specific implications for charity trustees of UK social policies toward the voluntary sector at a local level. This thesis aims to address this relative shortage of qualitative studies of trustee perceptions and experiences, by drawing upon primary empirical research conducted with trustees and senior staff of local charities operating in Liverpool and Merseyside, that provide public services³ relating to welfare in the broadest sense. Examples include bereavement counselling, residential care for dementia patients, support and advice for people with a range of physical and mental health conditions, housing for women and children fleeing domestic violence, and advocacy for the elderly and/or asylum seekers. In addition, the fieldwork within local voluntary organisations has been accompanied by a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with senior representatives of voluntary sector and government policy organisations both locally and nationally. The thesis centres around the following core aims:

³ For the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘public services’ is used in a general sense to refer to services provided for the public benefit and funded by public resources. Crucially, however, the problematic nature of such a definition and contested nature of the term is acknowledged, particularly in light of social, historical and political developments examined throughout the thesis, such as the blurring of public/private boundaries, the creation of markets in public services and changes to funding and accountability mechanisms resulting from the contracting out of public services. Such challenges of defining the ‘public’ in ‘public services’ are discussed in the extant literature – see for example Newman and Clarke (2009).

- To systematically analyse social / public policy developments that are facilitating an increasing and diversifying role for the voluntary sector in welfare delivery;
- to explore emergent forms of civil society (based upon 'partnership' between state agencies and the voluntary sector) and their implications for public service accountability and governance;
- to assess the impacts of such developments upon volunteer trustees across a range of local / regional voluntary sector agencies and analyse how trustees perceive and experience their roles within this context;
- to evaluate the implications of the above processes for the necessary skill sets of volunteer trustees together with their recruitment, training, supervision, support and accountability; and
- to critically examine official representations (rhetoric) of the trustee role, their alignment with operational realities and the actual experiences of trustees (reality).

As such, the interviews explored a range of issues relating to the core aims of the research, including: recruitment processes; training and support needs; tasks fulfilled by trustees; internal and external relationships; and the perceptions of trustees of the issues affecting their organisations within a radically changing policy environment. By qualitatively eliciting the experiences of trustees occupying roles within this policy environment, the research offers a significant contribution to the limited extant body of knowledge about the experiences and perceptions of trustees of UK charities.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis seeks to locate the primary empirical research within its historical and political contexts. As Rochester (2011) argues, the history of voluntary action has to some extent been neglected, despite offering

much in terms of interpreting and understanding contemporary issues facing the voluntary sector. Chapter 2, therefore, historicises the development of voluntary action within the UK, by examining the respective roles fulfilled by statutory and voluntary agencies in addressing welfare needs during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It explores the multiple motives that have driven efforts to address welfare needs and the diversity of forms that voluntary effort has taken. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates that the boundaries between and the appropriate scope of statutory provision relative to voluntary sector contributions to welfare are contested, and that the relationship between government and voluntary sector is a continually shifting 'moving frontier' (Finlayson, 1990).

From an analysis of historical trends, continuities and changes, Chapter 3 concentrates on more contemporary policies relating to the role of the voluntary sector in welfare provision, by focusing on the period from 1979 to the present. Building on and developing many of the themes introduced in Chapter 2 - for example the contested and shifting boundaries between statutory and voluntary welfare responsibilities - this chapter traces the policy developments during the 1980s and 1990s that promoted a key role for voluntary organisations in welfare delivery through the contracting out of public services. It is argued that, although successive political administrations have each had distinct priorities in their approach to the voluntary sector, together the social policies of the past thirty or more years represent a neoliberal turn in which successive governments of different ideological hues have sought to apply market-based principles to welfare provision and shift responsibility for public service delivery onto voluntary sector agencies. This has implications at a number of levels.

Forms of 'dispersed' government characterised by increasing space between the state agencies that commission services and the voluntary organisations that provide them raise important questions about accountability and transparency in public services (Smith and Lipsky,

1993; Newman, 2005). Furthermore, while voluntary sector organisations delivering public services are ostensibly independent from government, they must comply with a complex array of performance management standards, regulatory requirements, and monitoring and reporting processes prescribed in public service contracts (Cairns, 2009). As stated, the closer relationship with the government implied in contractual partnerships also raises questions about the extent to which trustees can maintain the independence of their organisations, for example in terms of their freedom to direct and govern the charity; to campaign or to criticise or lobby government; and to manage potential conflicts of interest when charities act as both service provider and advocate to service-users. In addition, contracting raises other concerns, such as the risk of ‘mission drift’, financial challenges arising from short-term contracts and full cost recovery and a disproportionate burden for small charities. Given that trustees are signatories to contracts and are legally responsible for the governance of voluntary organisations facing these multiple pressures, previous research evidence that indicates weaknesses in the recruitment and training of trustees is of particular concern (Working Party on Trustee Training, 1992a; Low et al., 2007), and underlines the need for more comprehensive and nuanced understandings of the experiences of trusteeship and the ways in which policy impacts upon trustees.

Having provided the historical, political and theoretical foundation for the thesis in Chapters 2 and 3, Chapter 4 accounts for, and reflects upon, the research design and the methodological approach adopted in the primary empirical research. The empirical research for this thesis was conducted in the city of Liverpool (and surrounding county of Merseyside) where, shortly after the General Election and the formation of the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrat Party Coalition Government in 2010, Prime Minister David Cameron chose to launch the “Big Society” concept. The city was one of four specified “vanguard” sites in the UK, although it withdrew as one of the Big Society pilot sites some seven months after the launch, in response to central Government ‘austerity measures’ that Liverpool City Council argued were responsible for a 48% cut to its local

voluntary sector spending budget (Wiggins, 2011b). In many ways Liverpool was an appropriate location given its long history of voluntary sector activity, as this chapter elucidates. Its key role as a major commercial port contributed to a rapid increase in population during the nineteenth century. As a consequence, the city experienced some of the worst poverty, ill-health and over-crowded living conditions in the country as its public infrastructure and housing supply came under immense strain. Conversely, Liverpool's commercial prominence also produced a local aristocracy of wealthy families, some of which contributed significantly to the city's reputation for philanthropy and voluntary action (Simey, 1992: 18). In recent decades, Liverpool has experienced disproportionately high levels of unemployment resulting from its reliance on the declining shipping industry, and today, Liverpool remains a city with high levels of deprivation and poor health. As a result, the local voluntary sector maintains a key role in addressing the city's welfare needs.

In total, 46 qualitative research interviews were conducted with trustees and senior staff of local charities, representatives of local and national voluntary sector umbrella organisations and policy-makers. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted using an interview guide designed to create opportunities to discuss various aspects of trusteeship, including motivation; recruitment processes; training and support; responsibilities; challenges; and other key aspects of participants' experiences and perceptions of the role. The interview transcripts were analysed using a grounded theory approach to identify emergent themes throughout the research process. Furthermore, a reflexive approach to the research was adopted, and critical reflections on the fieldwork processes are included in this chapter.

The findings of the primary empirical research are presented in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. The first of these chapters examines the early stages of a trustees' 'journey', exploring the factors that motivate people to volunteer as trustees, their experiences of the recruitment process, and

participants' perceptions of the attributes needed by an effective trustee. Evoking themes of heterogeneity and diversity evident in the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, the data suggests that the factors that motivate trustees to volunteer are complex and multi-faceted, and that approaches to trustee recruitment are varied and inconsistent. Chapter 5 also presents evidence that some organisations attach great value to recruiting trustees with 'professional' or 'business' skills - consistent with the trend of professionalisation in the sector (as discussed in Chapter 3) - and argues that this raises implications for board diversity, voluntary sector identity and ethos, and clarity in the boundary between paid staff and trustees.

Similar core themes of blurred boundaries and diversity of experience run through Chapter 6, which presents the data relating to the responsibilities and tasks of trustees, and the training and support available to them in fulfilling the role. The data reveals that participants perceived that trusteeship entails a significant level of responsibility, although they had mixed experiences of what the role actually entailed. The chapter argues that narrowly defined representations of the role that focus on the core legal and governance responsibilities risk underestimating the wider contributions made by trustees – particularly those in smaller charities with fewer paid staff – who sometimes undertake a broad range of both operational and strategic tasks. In navigating the multi-faceted and often ambiguous elements of the role, trustees sometimes experience a steep learning curve. Significantly, around half had not received any training to equip them for their responsibilities. The chapter presents data that identifies a number of potential barriers to trustee training – particularly for trustees of smaller charities. As a result, support and training for trustees is inconsistent and at times difficult to access.

Chapter 7 provides further evidence of a divergence of trustees' experiences and perceptions of the role, revealing variation in the degree to which trustees feel confident in fulfilling their responsibilities and in the amount of time they commit to the role. The chapter also examines

participant experiences of working relationships, both internally (trustee-trustee and staff-trustee) and externally (with funders). Trustees do not work in isolation and other actors have a role in, and influence upon, organisational governance (Saidel and Harlan, 1998). Chapter 7 also explores participant's perceptions and experiences of organisational issues arising from the policy environment in which they are operating. Such perceptions and experiences resonate with many of the themes considered in Chapter 3, including charity independence, funding challenges, mission drift and, in particular, the implications for trustees, staff and their organisations of the emerging contracting environment. There was broad consensus that the policy environment has impacted on trustees, who perceive an increasing level of responsibility and the need for greater knowledge and skills to equip them for the role. However, recalling another key theme evident throughout the thesis, the data indicates that policy implications are experienced differently contingent on the size of charity. The challenges faced by trustees in smaller charities entering into a contracting environment – including extensive and complex tendering processes, precariously short-term funding arrangements, difficulty in achieving full cost recovery, and demanding monitoring and reporting requirements – are particularly acute.

Chapter 8 concludes the analysis of the data by focusing upon multiple aspects of the trustee experience, and considers participants' conceptualisations of key policy implications for trusteeship, both in present conditions and in the future. It argues that voluntary organisations are under pressure to 'professionalise' and to adopt commercial practices and business-like policies, systems and processes. Some trustees and staff conceive of charities and businesses as becoming increasingly similar in nature, although there is also some evidence of resistance to business imperatives, highlighting the inherent contradictions in policy discourses that exalt the distinctiveness and ethos of the voluntary sector while simultaneously emphasising their need for increasing professionalism, entrepreneurialism and competitiveness. Furthermore, the chapter engages with contemporary debates over the

future of trusteeship, by analysing participants' perspectives on the question of whether trustees should be remunerated. Lord Hodgson's (2012) review of the Charity Act 2006 recommends to ministers that 'large' charities should be granted powers to pay their trustees. However, the data presented in this chapter indicates that the issue remains controversial with some trustees and charity staff expressing concern about the issues that would be raised by any future move away from the voluntary nature of trusteeship.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis, arguing that policy developments over the past thirty years or more are representative of the continually shifting relationship between government and the voluntary sector, and raise multiple and significant implications for voluntary sector organisations. The thesis provides evidence of the multiple ways in which this changing policy environment impacts directly on the volunteers fulfilling trustee positions and leading voluntary organisations through the consequential challenges they face. While offering potential new opportunities to charities, the contracting out of public service delivery to voluntary organisations and their promotion as key players in the implementation of social policies has presented – and continues to present – a number of challenges for voluntary organisations. These include critical strategic and operational decisions at organisational level to enable charities to navigate a potential minefield of fragile funding arrangements, funder relationships and contractual obligations – balanced alongside broader, sector-wide contributions to defining and constructing an appropriate scope, role and identity of a 'voluntary sector' and its boundaries with both government and the private sector. Making sense of the complexities of this continually shifting policy context is further complicated by the diversity of size, activity and composition of organisations loosely grouped under the 'voluntary sector' banner. This thesis argues that the motivations, responsibilities, perspectives and needs of trustees are similarly diverse and heterogeneous. By eliciting the qualitative experiences and perceptions of trustees, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the implications of social policy

developments for trusteeship and of the experiences of trustees occupying these key leadership roles within the voluntary sector.

2: Historical context: the shifting boundaries between statutory and voluntary sector welfare

Introduction

This chapter historicises the development of voluntary action within the UK from the early part of the nineteenth century, analyses the relations between the government and voluntary organisations and engages the debate about the extent of voluntary involvement in welfare delivery pre- and post-welfare state. It provides the historical context to more contemporary developments that are examined in chapter 3, in which the voluntary sector has assumed an increasing role in the delivery of public services within a ‘mixed economy’ of welfare. This historical overview is necessarily concise, and focuses on key milestones and points of significance relating to the major themes underpinning the thesis. As Rochester (2011) argues, the history of voluntary action has been to some extent neglected, despite the fact that it has much to offer in terms of interpreting and understanding the voluntary sector today. This chapter examines the political and socio-economic drivers that have contributed to a shifting policy landscape whereby the scope of state and voluntary sector responsibility for welfare provision has been renegotiated and redefined. It considers the ways in which their relationship has evolved, and the implications and insights such evolution offers for an understanding of current social policies and their impact on voluntary organisations and their trustees.

“Moving Frontiers”

Historical analyses of welfare provision in the UK are contested and the respective roles played by government and the voluntary sector are subject to varying forms of interpretation. Some historians have characterised the emergence of the British welfare state as a linear development (Bruce, 1968), in which statutory agencies assumed increasing levels of responsibility for welfare and eventually came to largely replace the role of voluntary organisations (Prochaska, 2006; 2011). Others, however, have argued that such a teleological interpretation is unhelpful and suggest that social policies of the past thirty years alone – that have encouraged voluntary organisations to become providers of public services - serve to remind us that the picture is much more complex (Finlayson, 1990; Rochester, 2011). Indeed, the ‘mixed economy’ of welfare - that emerged during the period beginning in 1979 and has since consolidated - does not necessarily represent a linear shift from statutory to voluntary providers, but rather reflects a complex history of continuities and changes in the history of British welfare, in which a ‘mixed economy’ has always been present in one form or another (Lewis, 1995; 1999a). Such policy developments during the 1980s and 1990s that forged a greater role for voluntary organisations in the provision of welfare (discussed in detail in chapter 3) undermine historical accounts emphasising a graduated linear shift from voluntary provision to the emergence and consolidation of the welfare state (Crowther, 1988; Gladstone, 1999a). In fact, it is more accurate to see the relationship between government and the voluntary sector - and their respective roles in welfare provision – as being shaped around “moving frontiers”, (Finlayson, 1990), contested imperatives and ‘blurred boundaries’.

1800s: The Poor Law and the expansion of charity

Opinion varies among historians as to when modern British welfare originated. Thane (1996: xiii) identifies the 1870s as a key point in understanding the emergence of the welfare state since, she argues, “*it was around that time that important demands began to arise for the state*

in Britain to take a permanent, as distinct from a temporary and residual, responsibility for the social and economic conditions experienced by its citizens". Others argue that an understanding of modern welfare is rooted in new social relations invoked by industrialisation and take the early 1800s and the advent of the industrial revolution as their starting point (Fraser, 2003; Harris, 2004). The industrial revolution profoundly transformed the country's political, economic and social structures. Industrialisation caused a massive expansion of towns and cities to which huge numbers of previously agrarian workers migrated, leading to severe overcrowding and causing the rudimentary sanitation facilities to become overwhelmed. These factors presented major threats to public health as both waterborne and airborne diseases, such as cholera and typhoid spread through city slums (Hobsbawm, 1999: 64). The Great Famine drove hundreds of thousands of Irish people to Britain during the 1840s, particularly in cities like London, Liverpool and Manchester, where they comprised one of the most impoverished sub-sections of the poor (Thompson, 1963: 469). Furthermore, the intensity of child labour in industry increased, and children were employed in highly dangerous conditions in industrial sites such as mines, mills and factories (Thompson, 1963: 366). Britain's leading role in industrialisation during this period created vast wealth for the upper classes, but simultaneously created an unprecedented deterioration in the living conditions experienced by the working class population (Hobsbawm, 1999: 138). As a result, the demand for welfare services grew rapidly during a period of intense industrialisation. As this chapter goes on to examine, such demand was addressed – albeit often inadequately – by a 'mixed economy' of welfare including: statutory provisions under the Poor Law; philanthropy and voluntary effort; self-help; and mutual aid.

A key piece of legislation was the Poor Law, introduced in 1834. This "New" Poor Law replaced what became known as the "Old" Poor Law, the foundations of which derived from a number of Acts passed during the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and arguably "*owed as much to concerns about the preservation of public order as they did to the relief of*

poverty” (Harris, 2004:40). The New Poor Law of 1834 was introduced following the publication of the Poor Law Report, which was arguably the most significant milestone in the history of British social policy (Englander, 1998; Harris, 2004). The report was strongly critical of existing poor relief under the Elizabethan “Old” Poor Law. It argued that the system of subsidising wages undermined the incentives to work and demoralised independent workers who were not receiving relief. The report recommended sweeping changes that would distinguish between the ‘indigent’, unable to work, and the merely ‘poor’, who should be incentivised to work to support themselves and their family. Furthermore, it recommended the establishment of workhouses, that would help to ensure only ‘genuinely’ destitute people would benefit from assistance since, it argued, only those willing to accept the conditions imposed on them would agree to enter the workhouse (Englander, 1998: 31).

In reality, the recommendations proved impractical to implement in full and the New Poor Law was implemented through a combination of inter-related processes including eligibility tests for outdoor relief for able-bodied workers, and workhouses for many other categories of ‘pauper’ including women, children, the sick and the elderly. The underpinning principle of such ‘relief’ was that it should serve a deterrent function, being as “unpleasant and monotonous” as possible (Harris, 2004:50). Johnson (1986: 444), drawing parallels with some contemporary attitudes to state welfare, highlights the harsh nature of the provisions made under the Poor Law:

“The belief that many forms of state welfare interfere with and diminish work effort and private thrift has a long heritage. It was a guiding principle in the drafting of the ‘less eligibility’ clause of the New Poor Law in 1834, whereby relief payments were set at a level that imposed on the beneficiary a lower standard of living than that of the poorest independent labourer... and it was the rationale behind the late-Victorian ‘crusade’ against the granting of out-relief (i.e. doles) to able-bodied paupers, substituting instead incarceration in semi-punitive workhouses for those who could not or would not work”.

Within this context, there was great diversity in the type, scale, scope and contribution of charities established during the mid- to late-nineteenth century, with notable examples including Dr Barnardo's homes (established in 1869); the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1884); and the Salvation Army (1865). Some charities created institutions, such as hospitals, homes for prostitutes or dwellings for the elderly, while others provided financial benefits to those in need, or established relief funds in response to famine in India or severe unemployment in London (Thane, 1996: 20). Voluntary organisations also worked with offenders and their families, establishing Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies (Mills et al., 2011: 193).

Some of the most important contributions made by charitable organisations centred on the development of health and education services. As well as providing services such as health-visiting, dispensaries, convalescent homes and care for the deaf and the blind, voluntary hospitals were established by charitable organisations (Cherry, 1996). In addition, voluntary organisations played a key role in the establishment of schools, including the development of Sunday schools from the 1780s onwards (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969: 296).

The difficulties in ascertaining the extent of the contribution made by charities - partly owing to the fact that charitable expenditure was not recorded - have been acknowledged (Harris, 2010: 27). However Charles Booth's (1891) work to survey the extent of poverty in London, offered some evidence of the significant degree to which the poor relied on assistance from charities during the nineteenth century. Combined with evidence of the large numbers of Friendly Societies and other forms of self-help (Finlayson, 1994: 135), a picture emerges of a patchwork of welfare provision - offered by an expanding sphere of voluntary action - that played a significant role in supplementing the limited and basic provisions of the statutory Poor Law.

Motivations and drivers of voluntary action

Multiple, and often contradictory, motivations for voluntary action can be drawn from historical analyses. One interpretation suggests that the prevailing philosophy during the 1800s emphasised individual rights and responsibilities over collective responsibility. As such, statutory assistance was not expected to offer significant levels of welfare, since individuals were thought to be responsible for themselves. There was, however, some acceptance of the principle of charity for individuals *unable* to help themselves:

“The dominant view in the mid-nineteenth century Liberal state, as expressed in the reformed Poor Law of 1834, emphasized individual property rights and self-responsibility over mutual responsibilities, rights and obligations among individuals and social groups. The indigent and helpless retained a right to support from others provided their indigence was judged to be no fault of their own.” (Thane, 1996: 13)

Harris (2004: 67) argues that until the end of the late-eighteenth century it had been widely accepted that the statutory authorities were primarily responsible for relief of poverty, except in extraordinary circumstances such as crop failure or other crises that meant that charity would provide assistance. However the new Poor Law provided for only incredibly basic relief, based on the assumption that charity should be primarily responsible for the welfare needs not otherwise met by means of self-help or mutual-aid. Since the new Poor Law offered such basic, and even punitive treatment of the poor, it fell to charity to fill the gaps in provision. Some employers took a more lenient approach than that prescribed by the Poor Law legislation, by supplementing wages; improving employment conditions and extending medical care, motivated by what Thane (1996: 13) describes as a *“mixture of philanthropy and conviction that the carrot was a more effective means of increasing productivity than the stick”*.

Religion can also be identified as a key driver for charitable effort, much of it fuelled by the belief that in order to 'save souls' it was first necessary to alleviate poverty (Morgan, 2007: 74). Around three quarters of charities established in the second half of the nineteenth century, including Barnado's and the YMCA, were founded on evangelical principles. Roman Catholics and Jews were also responsible for establishing educational, health and welfare services for settled and new immigrants, including the first Hebrew Philanthropic Society, established in Liverpool in 1808. By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Jewish charities were providing a range of educational and welfare services to the community, arguably a means of mollifying anti-Semitism by demonstrating that Jewish immigrants would not impose a 'burden' upon the rest of society (Thane, 1996: 20; Harris, 2004: 63). Similarly, Catholic organisations provided significant amounts of welfare support for the large Irish Catholic populations that were becoming established in cities such as London, Manchester, Glasgow and Liverpool (Thane, 1996: 21).

Some forms of voluntary action emerged as mechanisms for self-help and mutual aid. These included savings clubs; working-class schools; food cooperatives; insurance schemes; and trades unions (Jones and Novak, 2000: 35). The Friendly Societies originated as gatherings of local men who met socially and agreed to pay a regular contribution to a fund to which they would be entitled to benefit if the need arose. During a period of rapid industrialisation such Societies offered support and protection to workers who moved to new towns for work and who, if becoming unemployed, might need assistance with travel costs to find work in other areas. Membership of such Friendly Societies grew steadily during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During the end of the nineteenth century, and the early part of the twentieth century, their growth accelerated, rising from 2.75 million members in 1877 to 6.6 million in 1910 (Green, 1999: 20).

Green (1999: 22) argues that such Friendly Societies differed greatly from charities in terms of their ideology. While charitable action was focused

on helping others, subscribing to a Friendly Society was a means of self-help and the ethos of such societies was mutual aid:

“they often spoke of benefits as an entitlement and membership as creating solidarity. But their solidarity was that of individuals who had given something towards the common good. There was genuine reciprocity.”

The distinction between mutual aid societies and philanthropic organisations is also stressed by Penn (2011: 19) who characterises the former as a relationship between equals – an *“impulse from below”*, as opposed to the unequal relationship between the philanthropist seeking to assist others – driven by an *“impulse from above”*. The Societies were based on a principle of independence in terms of supporting members to be self-supporting during times of financial hardship. They were administered in accordance with an ethos of participation and democracy, and members were encouraged to hold office and develop the skills to do so (Green, 1999: 33; Penn, 2011: 21). Novak and Jones (2000: 46) argue that forms of self-help such as the Friendly Societies offered working class communities a *“defence against the outside world”* and also represented an implicit critique of government policy, offering members a means to avoid having to apply for Poor Law relief.

Thompson’s (2011) work provides evidence that in some regions, self-help and mutual-aid were primary sources of welfare provision. During the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the South Wales Coalfield, for example, lacked hospitals, almshouses or charities and support for workers and their families was largely provided through voluntarism in the form of self-help and mutual-aid, albeit supplemented by a controversial employer-led provident fund for miners injured in colliery accidents. Thompson (2011: 85) argues that the Monmouthshire and South Wales Miners’ Permanent Provident Society, established in 1881 by a prominent industrialist, may have been motivated by both a desire to undermine trades unions by offering similar membership benefits and by anti-state

sentiments in that it sought to avoid incurring employers' liabilities under government legislation.

As has been demonstrated, nineteenth century voluntary action was driven by a variety of motivations. In the same way that contemporary forms of volunteering and charitable effort are driven by multiple motivations (as discussed in Chapters 3 and 5), those engaged in nineteenth century voluntary effort were driven by a variety of concerns, including: religious belief; altruistic care for those overlooked by statutory provisions; a desire to control or inspire productivity among workers; or a spirit of independence or mutual solidarity. The diversity of impulses to voluntary action undoubtedly contributed to the heterogeneity of activities undertaken by the voluntary 'sector' and to the contested opinions as to the appropriate scope and boundaries of voluntary effort.

The Charity Organisation Society (COS) and the 'voluntarist - statist' debate

The contestation surrounding the relationship between statutory authorities and charitable organisations – and their respective roles – is encapsulated in the 'voluntarist-statist' debates of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The struggle over reform of the Poor Law has been characterised as a battle between the 'voluntarists' (such as the Charity Organisation Society (COS) who wanted to keep state and charity as separate spheres of action), and the 'statists' (who lobbied for greater state involvement in welfare provision) (Penn, 2011: 23).

In response to criticisms that the multitude of charities that had been established in the nineteenth century were uncoordinated and duplicated efforts to relieve poverty, as well as concerns about the impact on the behaviour of charity recipients, the COS was established in the late 1860s (Roberts, 2003). Its stated main objective was "*the improvement of the condition of the poor...by bringing about co-operation between charity and the Poor Law*" (COS 1898: 1). It gained a reputation for its

patronising attitude towards the poor, embodied in the distinction drawn between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ cases (Englander, 1998: 22). The COS was also vehemently opposed to greater statutory intervention, expressed in terms not dissimilar to contemporary rhetoric relating to the ‘Big Society’ (Cameron, 2010):

“Society has not yet ceased to trust in the independence of the individual citizen as the pivot on which civilised society must revolve. It will continue to struggle against the encroachment of the ‘preventing’, ‘curing’, ‘providing’, and ‘compelling’ State. We still believe that the great broad stream of progress is away from the regimentation of the State in the direction of liberty and personal responsibility” (COS, 1910: 212).

Leaders of the COS claimed that indiscriminate charity ‘hand-outs’ would discourage the poor from helping themselves and lead to ‘demoralisation’. However there is evidence that they failed to convince other charities to adopt the same stance:

“As fast as the C.O.S. and its followers on the ‘strict’ Boards of Guardians cut down the number of recipients of outdoor relief, the Salvation Army and a host of other bodies opened soup kitchens and set about dispensing indiscriminate charity of the kinds which the Charity Organizers regarded as most demoralising” (Cole, 1945: 20).

In particular, the distinction between the ‘deserving’ and the ‘undeserving’ poor was incompatible with the views of many evangelicals for whom any soul was worth ‘saving’ (Thane, 1996: 22). Religious commentators opposed to both COS and to the punitive regime prescribed by the Poor Law argued that it was a Christian duty to assist those in distress (Cole, 1945: 20; Daunton, 2007: 182). Other critics disliked the patronising and intrusive ethos of the COS exemplified by the visits paid by upper-class philanthropists to the homes of the poor in order to verify their levels of destitution (Finlayson, 1994: 124). Among the COS’s most well-documented critics were Beatrice and Sidney Webb. Beatrice was initially a member of the COS, but later became aware of the limitations of the philosophy to which it subscribed, particularly as a result of her work

assisting her cousin Charles Booth with his survey of the extent of poverty in London (Booth, 1891). She and Sidney Webb were critical of both the COS and of the Poor Law, and became central campaigners for reform, arguing for the complete abolition of the extant Poor Law system in favour of statutory provision to ensure minimum standards of welfare (Webb and Webb, 1909). Responding to assertions that private charity and statutory authorities should occupy separate 'spheres', Beatrice and Sidney Webb argued against such a 'parallel bars' theory of the relationship between statutory and voluntary action, instead advocating an 'extension ladder' theory in which charities would serve only to supplement a national minimum standard of welfare – which they envisaged should be provided by statutory authorities. The Webbs (1909: 547) argued that financial assistance to the poor should not be paid out directly by amateur volunteers and charitable organisations, but that instead such welfare provision should be coordinated by statutory agencies. Rather, they proposed, voluntary organisations were better suited to "pioneering" and experimental work such as the funding of schools, almshouses and other institutions. Ultimately, the Webbs were unsuccessful in their campaigns for the complete abolition of the Poor Law, although the reforms that took place in the early part of the twentieth century represented the beginnings of a shift towards greater statutory welfare.

1906-11: Liberal Government Reforms

The reforms introduced by the Liberals during the period 1906-11 have been characterised as an "*important watershed*", that changed "*profoundly the frontiers between statutory and voluntary forms of social service*" (Penn, 2011: 23). During the preceding thirty years, various economic and social changes had taken place, which influenced this shift towards greater state intervention in welfare delivery. Events during the 1860s such as the Lancashire 'cotton famine' (as a result of the civil war in America) had underlined the point that destitution could arise from

events outside of workers' control and that the Poor Law provisions alone were inappropriate and inadequate. Charities had stepped in to offer relief during the crisis in Lancashire but also in London during a period of mass unemployment in the late 1880s (Harris, 2010: 28). Over one-third of volunteers for the army during the Boer War were unsuitable as a result of ill health or malnutrition (Lund, 2002: 70; Stevenson, 1984: 42). Furthermore, early surveys of living conditions in London and York by Charles Booth (1891), and Seebohm Rowntree (1901) respectively, provided evidence of the extent of poverty and distress within Britain's cities and drew renewed attention to such social problems. The extreme poverty experienced by Britain's industrial cities (see for example the discussion in Chapter 4 in respect of Liverpool) indicated that the level of need was beyond the scope that could be provided for by philanthropic effort. Self-help and mutual aid mechanisms were also limited - in spite of the important role played by the Friendly Societies it is important to note that these mutual-aid associations in the main only helped the strata of the working class able to afford subscriptions and had relatively little impact upon the most extreme cases of hardship (Cole, 1945: 21; Finlayson, 1994: 137). For Jones and Novak (2000: 46), the strength of collective working class institutions such as the Friendly Societies, and the hostility towards the government that they represented, became a source of considerable concern to the ruling class and influenced Liberal government policy reforms that introduced statutory old-age pensions and social insurance. Severe unemployment reached a peak during 1902-3, and workhouses in London became critically overcrowded. Not only did this lead to public demonstrations by unemployed workers, but it again drew attention to the inadequacies of the Poor Law workhouse system.

The general election in December 1905 was located within this context and resulted in victory for the Liberals. Thane (1996: 69) postulates that the new Liberal Government's caution on social action can be attributed to both a serious shortage of available revenue (in part owing to the Boer War) and to a large Conservative majority in the House of Lords, who repeatedly hampered the Liberals' social reform attempts. Despite this,

the Government during this period successfully introduced a range of reforms that were hugely significant in the development of British welfare.

One of the first contributions of the new Government was to make provision for school meals, in response to growing pressure from various quarters. The Charity Organisation Society were vocal opponents of school meal provision – be it voluntary or statutory – since, they feared, it would undermine parental responsibility to provide for their own children and undermine the principle that the family should be the primary provider of welfare (Hendrick, 1994: 105; Lewis, 1999c: 254). However, Booth's (1891) survey had highlighted the extent of poverty experienced by children in London and there was a growing awareness that the efforts of numerous voluntary agencies to provide meals for underfed school children in various cities across the country (from around 1860) were insufficient to address the scale of the problem. Trades unions and social groups campaigned for statutory provision of meals, highlighting the difficulties of educating underfed children, and articles in the *British Medical Journal* called for state intervention to address concerns about the physical state of the population and the malnutrition of the future generation (Hendrick, 1994: 106). The Education (Provision of Meals) Act 1906 emphasised the importance of cooperation between statutory local education authorities and voluntary organisations in the non-compulsory provision of meals for children attending elementary schools – local education authorities were not compelled to provide school meals until further legislation in 1914 (Harris, 2004: 158; Hendrick, 1994: 111). Further measures were introduced, arguably in response to concerns about the physical fitness of the population as well as driven by a concern to improve the moral respectability of the working class family as a source of social stability (Hendrick, 1994: 127). The Education (Administrative Provisions) Act 1907 established a national school medical inspection system, which was operational by 1908, and was concerned with ensuring public health by preventing the spread of infectious diseases, providing a measure of the physical health of the nation's children and contributing towards rearing a healthy population. The Children Act 1908

reinforced existing legislation that sought to prevent cruelty to children, and introduced new measures including those relating to the reform of the juvenile justice system; protection of children's safety; prohibition of juvenile smoking; and regulation of foster care (Hendrick, 1994: 122). As Hendrick (1994, 126) argues, such legislative measures that increased the degree of statutory intervention in children's welfare represented the view that children were *"the citizens of tomorrow; to be reared through a delicate balance of responsibility between the agencies of the State and their natural parents."*

One of the most significant welfare reforms was the introduction of old-age pensions, which Harris (2004: 159) argues *"marked the beginning of a fundamental and decisive shift in the funding of welfare provision away from local authorities and bodies such as the Boards of Guardians, towards the central state."* Although the Labour movement - supported by Charles Booth - called for universal pension entitlement, the anticipated cost to the Treasury was thought to be prohibitive. The Government was reluctant to introduce a form of means-testing, however, for fears that pension provision would become associated with the Poor Law and stigma attached to its recipients. It became necessary to limit provision of the proposed old-age pension in other ways, such as on grounds of age, citizenship status and the behaviour of potential recipients. The resulting Pensions Act 1908, although welcomed by many older people, granted aid only to recipients meeting specific criteria, including a requirement to demonstrate 'respectable behaviour', in an echo of the Poor Law principles:

"[The Act] granted a pension of between 1s. and 5s. per week to those over the age of 70 with annual incomes of between £21 and £31 10s., provided that they had not been imprisoned for any offence, including drunkenness, during the ten years preceding their claim, were not 'aliens' or wives of 'aliens' (i.e. residents of Britain who had not taken British citizenship; the largest such group were immigrant Jews), and could satisfy the pension authority that they had not been guilty of 'habitual failure to work according to his

ability, opportunity or need, for his own maintenance and that of his legal relatives” (Thane, 1996: 77).

The enactment of state pension provision did not pass without controversy. During the passage of the Bill through Parliament there were criticisms of the principles of state welfare (by a minority of Liberals concerned it would discourage self-help) alongside claims that the proposed rate of pensions was inadequate. The COS opposed the principle of state pensions, expressing concern that it would undermine *“the natural obligations of employer to employed, neighbour to neighbour, and friend to friend. All these obligations constitute the repairing force and cement of society, and in displacing them we may be creating a void which the State can never supply”* (COS, 1907: 245). The Government responded to its critics by arguing that it was a necessarily cautious, experimental beginning to state intervention in welfare.

Following the introduction of the old-age pension, the Liberal Government took steps to address ill-health, and established a national health insurance scheme, which benefited the majority of wage-earners (Cole, 1945: 22). Thane (1996: 78) argues that the national insurance legislation, like much of the Liberal Government’s other reforms, was designed to encourage cooperation between statutory and voluntary institutions. The scheme would enable workers whose income was inadequate to allow them to subscribe to the Friendly Societies to make insurance contributions through the post office. The administration of the statutory scheme was conducted by Friendly Societies and trades unions – as Thane (1996, 78) notes – *“this placated their fears that national insurance would replace and destroy them and provided a ready-made and cheap machinery of administration”*.

Further, the Liberal Government also introduced legislation that gave statutory agencies – firstly those at local level and later nationally – powers to establish employment exchanges (Thane, 1996: 89; Harris, 2004: 160). Similar exchanges had initially been established by local

philanthropists, but as a consequence of the reforms, a nationalised network of exchanges under the control of the Board of Trade was in operation by 1909. Additional measures to improve the terms and conditions of workers included the introduction of a minimum wage for specific trades to address the extremely low piece-rate wages of workers engaged in “sweating” or working in small factories or homes to make articles such as clothing or lace (Harris, 2004: 160). A final example of the welfare-related reforms made by the Liberal Government in this period was the 1909 Housing and Town Planning Act that had important implications for the improvement of housing conditions by facilitating the closure of unfit dwellings and encouraging longer-term planning of towns and cities that would be less over-crowded and more conducive to the health of the population (Thane, 1996: 89; Harris: 2004: 161).

Taken as a whole, the numerous reforms instigated by the Liberal government during this period mark a distinct shift towards greater statutory responsibility for welfare, largely driven by an increasing awareness by the extent of poverty and ill-health among the working class population and concern about the consequences of this for Britain’s ability to defend the Empire and for its economic efficiency (Gladstone, 1999b: 16). Despite this shift, the debate between ‘statists’ and ‘voluntarists’ - about whether state or charity should be responsible for welfare - persisted, although the COS indicated that it was resigned to making the best of what they saw as an unfavourable situation:

“We have to accustom ourselves to a new social outlook which vitally affects all voluntary charitable efforts. Whatever opinions we may hold with regard to State action in the field that has hitherto been regarded as the domain of charity, our energies must be directed towards turning this action to good account” (COS, 1914: 45).

As Brenton (1985: 17) points out, at the time no one envisaged an alternative perspective on the debate – one which would see a blurring of the boundaries between statutory action and voluntarism in the form of public subsidies for charities and the “consequent transformation of

voluntary bodies in some degree or another into agencies of the state". As the government gradually assumed greater responsibility for welfare provision during the early part of the twentieth century, so too the role of charities became expanded and some statutory grants to charities became available:

"Lloyd George's budget of 1914 included for the first time estimates for grants to organisations active in maternity and child care, provision of home helps and work with the blind. For many voluntary bodies, this development marked a first stage in a process of eventual replacement by statutory forms of provision, as it became clear that the public authorities considered them no longer adequate, even in an agency role, for certain tasks. For some, the agency role and public subsidy, however minor, became a key to survival, supplementing their own charitable revenues and marking out a distinct place for them vis-à-vis the statutory sector." (Brenton, 1985: 17)

The voluntary sector's reaction to increased statutory involvement in welfare was mixed. Finlayson (1994: 166; 194) argues that *"one reaction of voluntarism to a growing and more positive state presence was to cooperate and converge with it"* and cites examples of children's charities welcoming statutory assistance to support their aims of increasing specialism and professionalism. The Salvation Army also appealed to the government to intervene to provide funds to expand the reach of work that the charity had piloted. Furthermore, the network of 'Guilds of Help' and 'Citizens Aid Societies' were examples of charities working to complement the work of statutory authorities, by helping to advise citizens about their entitlement to statutory assistance (Finlayson, 1994: 168). However, there is also evidence of on-going distrust and discontent on the part of voluntary organisations in response to the Liberal welfare reforms. The Charity Organisation Society opposed the reforms, fearing that a more active state would lead to a less active and more dependent citizen (Finlayson, 1994: 194). The COS also criticised the inefficiency of statutory agencies and condemned what they saw as *"an administration that appears chaotic"*, arguing that *"all these statutory bodies...depend... on the help of voluntary workers to make their administration effective"*

(COS, 1914: 45). Finlayson (1994: 199) presents evidence of early concerns about the potential threats to charities' independence (a contemporary issue that is discussed in Chapter 3) and fears that working more closely with government could lead to a "*loss of identity and control*".

In summary, this period can be interpreted as offering both opportunities and challenges to voluntary action. On the one hand, the government was provoked - by the scale and complexity of social problems that voluntary effort alone could not address - to assume greater responsibility for welfare provision (Kramer, 1981: 37). On the other hand, despite contestation and debate surrounding such a shift, elements of the voluntary sector demonstrated greater willingness to come together and work with statutory authorities to meet welfare needs.

1914-1945: Consolidation of the shift towards statutory provision

While the period of Liberal-led reforms from 1906 to 1914 represents a highly significant shift away from voluntary action towards statutory responsibility for welfare, Finlayson (1994: 198) argues that it would be incorrect to assert that these years represented the birth of the British welfare state and that to do so would be "*to run the risk of embarking, once again, on the 'Welfare State escalator', or 'collective train', and to ignore the penetration of new ideas and practices by old.*" He argues that, following the reforms, the economy of welfare remained mixed and that, although statutory provision grew significantly, there remained a role for voluntary agencies, as they were needed by the government to act as agents for implementation of welfare measures. Examples included the Friendly Societies and trades unions administering the statutory national insurance scheme, as well as charities supporting work in the areas of child welfare, mental health and blindness (Penn, 2011; Stewart, 2011). The reduced, but not entirely eradicated, role of the voluntary sector again demonstrates the constantly moving "frontier" between the state and the voluntary sector (Stewart, 2011: 32).

This period saw a gradual consolidation of the shift towards increased statutory provision of welfare (Stevenson, 1984: 297). Legislation was introduced that expanded old-age pension provision. Pensions were also made available to blind people aged 50 or over. Later, pension provision for widows was also extended. Other examples included the introduction of legislation that facilitated an expansion of council housing. Lewis (1995: 85) argues that while many voluntary organisations became keen to defend the autonomy of the voluntary sector, there was less consensus about the continuing extension of statutory provision and its implications for voluntary action. The COS remained the primary voice expressing opposition to the government's welfare role and to the idea of closer cooperation between the two sectors:

"The state-aided voluntary society, to some a contradiction in terms, and to some a counsel of despair, is not, we hope, the only alternative to the extinction of voluntaryism." (COS, 1920 cited in Lewis, 1995: 85).

The COS was, however, becoming less influential, and the majority of voluntary sector commentators agreed with the extended statutory welfare functions, which they viewed as progressive (Lewis, 1995: 86). Most supported the view that the government should provide basic services, and the voluntary sector's role became conceptualised as an experimental one in which to pioneer new work or as a suitable mechanism for the provision of highly individualised work. Despite the COS's reluctance to work with statutory agencies, other organisations were prepared to do so, and to enter in a form of 'new partnership', albeit as a supplement to statutory welfare provision (Lewis, 1995: 86). There was agreement that one area of work that was within the remit of voluntary agencies was personal social work (known as 'social administration' at the time) (Lewis, 1995: 92). Related to this, voluntary organisations undertook 'child guidance' activities, the development of which Stewart (2011) traces back to the 1920s and 1930s. They also provided voluntary birth control clinics that, alongside voluntary health

visiting services, were staffed by large numbers of women volunteers (Stevenson, 1984). Charities also carried out work to support groups in society that were overlooked by statutory provision, such as single mothers and their children.

A number of new needs emerged, to which voluntary agencies responded. For example, Cole (1945: 24) highlights the role they played in building village halls and community centres, moving their focus from the destitute individual (as had been their priority previously) to a focus on supporting communities and social cohesion. Voluntary organisations during this period also played a role in lobbying for social reform and legislative change in areas including public health, housing, employment conditions, child allowances, nursery schools and family planning provision (Cole, 1945: 27; Stevenson, 1984: 319). Charitable trusts such as the Peabody Trust and the Carnegie Trust financed the building of libraries and supported innovative experiments, some of which would subsequently be taken over by the state (Cole, 1945: 27; Stevenson: 1984: 318).

Another development that was significant for the relationship between the statutory sector and voluntary associations was the establishment of the Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB). In order to administer the UAB and its case work and means-testing for unemployment benefits, the authorities needed to recruit a large army of case-workers who would undertake visits to applicants' homes. This kind of visiting casework had previously been undertaken mainly by charity volunteers, and many of these staff transferred to work for the statutory Unemployment Assistance Board:

"The consequences were momentous. Social workers who had worked previously for the voluntary bodies or for the Boards of Guardians were metamorphosed into national officials doing the same job of investigation as direct servants of the State; and the professional bodies of social workers came to consist of a mixture of 'public' and 'voluntary' elements. The unity of the professions helped to break down the old antagonisms. Cooperation between public and private agencies became much easier on account of personal relations between the employees of the two groups." (Cole, 1945: 23)

The period from 1914 until the 'birth' of the welfare state in the 1940s heralded many challenges for voluntary organisations, although at the same time the two World Wars in particular produced many welfare needs that were partly fulfilled by charitable or voluntary action. Perhaps one of the primary challenges to voluntary effort during both the wars was the loss of human resources. With the mass recruitment to the army, fewer people had spare time to offer for charitable activity (Finlayson, 1994: 205; Prochaska, 2011: 37). As Prochaska (2011: 37) argues, this was exacerbated by the transfer of women in to the jobs vacated by men fighting in the Second World War, resulting in fewer women to lead on philanthropic work as they had done before. He argues that the Second World War had a much greater impact on voluntary organisations than the First World War, since many charities were forced to close or were destroyed by the bombings. Enormous numbers of Sunday schools were destroyed by bombing, for example, including 32 in the first air raid of the Blitz in Sheffield alone. The Sunday School Union's London headquarters, library and offices were also destroyed. As Prochaska (2011: 38) writes, the Sunday schools were well-established centres of social work, and the damage they incurred impacted greatly on the significant work they carried out in providing meals, clothing and shoes to 'needy' families. Similarly, bombings also destroyed many city missions, churches, orphanages and other charitable institutions. An estimated 15,000 places of worship – also sites of many charitable organisations - sustained damage or were destroyed. Hospital provision was also critically affected, firstly as a result of the endemic shortages of trained nurses to staff the voluntary hospitals and later as these institutions also incurred bomb damage:

“Aerial bombardment damaged or destroyed so many of the nation's hospitals, dispensaries, nursing facilities and appeal offices. Scores of nurses were found dead or injured among the rubble. Statistics on bombed hospitals are fragmentary, but by July 1941, in the London region alone, seventy-three voluntary

hospitals had suffered bomb damage, most of them severely, with thousands of beds permanently lost.” (Prochaska, 2011: 41)

Furthermore, in response to the high demand for welfare services during wartime, statutory agencies assumed an increasing responsibility for the coordination of a range of activities, including food and clothing rationing, provision of foster homes for children, the organisation of mass evacuation, the requisition of surplus housing and the establishment of emergency hospitals. Arguably, this contributed to a change in attitudes about the appropriate role of the state and acclimatised people to a more proactive role for government in the provision of public services (Gladstone, 1999b: 37).

In summary, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a burgeoning consolidation of the shift toward statutory welfare provision that represented important changes in the relationship between government and the voluntary sector. As Harris (2010: 33) puts it, “*it is difficult to deny that they worked much more closely together at the end of it*”.

1945 – 1979: Post-War Reconstruction and the Welfare State

The establishment of the British welfare state in the late 1940s had major implications for the relationship between the government and voluntary organisations. Arguably, the momentum for an historic shift in the government’s role in welfare provision began to build during the Second World War - an event that can be conceived as a catalyst for these emerging social policies (Sullivan, 1999: 119; Fraser, 2003: 238). The civil service had experienced significant growth and the government had assumed responsibility for coordinating responses to wartime welfare needs, offering legitimacy to an increasingly central role for the state in public service provision and coordination. Furthermore, Gladstone (1999b: 36) suggests, members of the working classes were increasingly viewed as “*soldiers and citizens*”, rather than as the idle trouble-makers of previous years (although, as Glennerster (2007: 13) argues,

acceptance of an emerging welfare state was also influenced by the fact that the middle classes stood much to gain). In the closing stages of the Second World War, the government came under increasing pressure to give serious consideration to the task of reconstruction. The publication of the Beveridge Report (1942) coincided with deepening optimism about the possibility of a British victory in the War (following success at the Battle of Alamein) that may have facilitated a positive reception for Beveridge's ambitious promises of social reform (Gladstone, 1999b: 39).

The package of reforms introduced in response to Beveridge's (1942) 'five giants' of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness included social security provision; the establishment of the health service; education; housing; and unemployment benefits and services. Taken together, these reforms represented a consolidation of the shift towards statutory provision, in which the government assumed primary responsibility for meeting comprehensive welfare needs.

While, as Brenton (1985: 19) suggests, it may have been possible to imagine a scenario whereby voluntary agencies assumed delivery of statutory functions via contractual or subsidy arrangements, the reality was that that local government authorities became the primary direct providers of welfare. She argues that there was political opposition to the voluntary sector, particularly the Labour Party's commitment to universal statutory provision, provided principally through local authorities and municipal services. Others, however, have argued that the Labour Party's hostility to voluntarism is a myth and that the Party was critical only of class-based and patronising forms of charitable effort but consistently supportive of voluntary action rooted in self-help (Deakin and Davis Smith, 2011: 69).

Thane (2011: 124) argues that established voluntary organisations were unsure of their new role within the emerging welfare state and experienced a period of uncertainty in the immediate post-war period, although she notes that this is a relatively under-researched area in the

history of voluntary action. There were widespread fears among charities that donors would be discouraged from continuing to offer financial support as a consequence of the new universal statutory provisions (Starkey, 2011: 160). The work of some voluntary organisations became assumed by statutory agencies as a consequence of the emerging welfare state. Cook (2004: 716) asserts that voluntary hospitals, for example, experienced the reforms negatively as their premises (and their role) were “*seized by the state*” and in some cases they sought to avoid the transfer of hospitals to statutory control by arguing that they were “homes” and not “hospitals”. Prochaska (2011: 47) laments the ‘decline’ of charity that he maintains resulted from the impact of two world wars and Britain’s increasing secularisation, and contends that following the creation of the welfare state “*the outlook for the charitable services looked bleak*”.

However, a number of new charities began to emerge during this period in response to unmet needs beyond the government’s welfare plans, and in the decades that followed, a new wave of voluntary organisations emerged that both complemented welfare state provision and campaigned against its shortcomings. A number of campaigning organisations were created from the 1940s onwards to lobby for the needs of disadvantaged groups, including Help the Aged, the Association of Parents of Backwards Children (now MENCAP) and The Spastics Society (which was later re-named SCOPE) (McKay and Hilton, 2009: 13). New groups were created to provide support for users of illicit street-drugs from the late 1960s onwards (Berridge and Mold, 2011: 123). As concerns about environmental issues grew, a number of organisations were established to raise awareness and campaign for policy change, including the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (1970), Friends of the Earth (1971) and Greenpeace (1977) (McKay, 2011: 85).

The ‘rediscovery’ of poverty - following the work of academics that revealed the persistence of poverty among sub-sections of the population despite the provisions of the welfare state (see, for example, Townsend,

1962; Abel-Smith and Townsend, 1966) – prompted the emergence of voluntary organisations established to lobby government and to raise awareness of welfare inequalities (Lowe, 1995). Arguably the emergence of such organisations provided an outlet for New Left activists and those disillusioned with the Labour Party to campaign for social change (Evans, 2009). The Child Action Poverty Group (1965) was one such group, as was Shelter (the homeless charity), established in 1966 (McKay and Hilton, 2009: 13). The Disabled Income Group (DIG) was created in 1965 in response to gaps in government provision for disabled women and successfully campaigned for a register of disabled people and active promotion of available support (Thane, 2011: 127).

Other associations, many of whom were linked to new social movements, developed to campaign for equal rights for minority groups. These included the Minorities Research Group (1963); the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (1964); the Gypsy Council (1966); the Women's Liberation Movement (1969); and the Gay Liberation Front (1970) (Thane, 2011: 128). As well as these new organisations, many more-established organisations adapted or reformed in response to changing social issues. Evans (2009: 151) cites the example of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child, which was renamed the National Council for One Parent Families in 1970 as divorce and single parenthood (both male and female) became more prevalent. During the 1980s, the AIDS/HIV pandemic provoked groups of gay men and lesbians in cities such as London and Manchester to establish forms of voluntary assistance in response to perceived homophobia within statutory services. Additionally, Jones and Novak (2000: 38) argue, various forms of voluntary "self-help" provision such as this emerged to fill particular gaps in statutory welfare provision, such as women's clinics and rape support services; and immigrant community projects.

Therefore, while the introduction of the welfare state in Britain was significant for the voluntary sector's role – and meant that their role as the primary providers of welfare was superseded – Beveridge's reforms did

not represent a death sentence for the voluntary sector. Many organisations - old and new – stepped forward to provide specialist or innovative services, albeit while negotiating a new relationship with government. In some cases, voluntary organisations positioned themselves as supplementary to government by providing ‘extra’ services such as hospice care and in others they fulfilled the function of ‘challenging’ statutory services or lobbying for changes in provision (Alcock, 2011: 161).

Summary

Evidence from the past two hundred years demonstrates that the relationship between voluntary action and the government has shifted at various points in time and that the boundary between the two can be seen as a “moving frontier” (Finlayson, 1990). A number of phases can be identified in the history of this relationship and of the role of the voluntary sector in welfare (Lewis, 1999b; Alcock, 2011). During the nineteenth century, the statutory Poor Law provisions for persons in need were so basic that voluntary effort acted as a significant source of welfare support, with little or no obstruction from the government. In a second phase, from the early twentieth century, the government began to assume greater levels of responsibility for welfare – to an extent driven by concerns about the extent of poverty and the challenges this presented to the country’s economic competitiveness and ability to defend the Empire - as evident in the Liberal government’s reforms. Voluntary organisations complemented the role of statutory agencies by providing innovative services that responded to under-developed government provision. Following the Second World War that demonstrated the inadequacy of relying on patchy and uncoordinated voluntary effort, and amid a spirit of post-war optimism, reconstruction and renewal, the emergence of a more comprehensive welfare state resulted in another shift in the relationship between charities and government. As Beveridge’s (1942) plans for universal and comprehensive welfare provision underpinned by the goal

of full employment were implemented, statutory provision became the primary form of welfare services. As a consequence, voluntary agencies adapted and emerged to fill gaps in statutory services, to respond to changing social needs or to challenge and lobby government for changes to welfare services. As discussed in Chapter 3, a further phase can be identified from 1979 onwards which represents a shift towards voluntary organisations as significant providers of welfare services on behalf of government agencies via contracts, and policy discourses which present the relationship between the sector and the government as a “partnership”. Therefore, rather than seeing the development of the welfare state in Britain as the cause of a ‘decline’ in charity (Prochaska, 2006) it is more helpful to situate such developments in the second half of the twentieth century - as well as more current debates about government and voluntary welfare provision – within this historical (and socio-economic - political) context of a continually shifting and complex relationship.

It is also important to note that the perceived motivations of philanthropists and those engaged in voluntary action are varied and contested. Within the history of voluntary action in welfare it is possible to trace examples of religious evangelicalism and a motivation to promote moral values, as well as concerns about the ‘patronising’ attitudes of philanthropists. Voluntary action has at times been criticised for being amateurish and inadequate, as well as being praised as an innovative and flexible pioneer. Not only serving as a reminder of the diversity of voluntary action and the difficulty in representing it as a unified ‘sector’ with a shared history and philosophy, the complex history as summarised in this chapter highlights the ways in which representations of the sector are ‘politicised’ and must be understood in relation to political ideology about its relationship with government at any given time (Kendall, 2010; McKay, 2011: 80). Historical examples of voluntary organisations folding, adapting or emerging in response to political and historical developments are echoed in contemporary challenges faced by the sector, as discussed in the next chapter.

Furthermore, the rigorous debates about the respective roles of government and charity in which the COS were engaged during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries indicate that contestation about the most appropriate modes of delivery for welfare are not new. Nor is the divergence between voluntary organisations content to work closely with the government to supplement statutory services and those who position themselves as independent 'challengers' to government.

Having examined this historical context, Chapter 3 will go onto consider the implications of policy developments implemented since 1979 by Conservative and New Labour governments, the latter of which Alcock (2011: 158) argues introduced "*a period of rapid policy change, with a rise in the profile of voluntary action to rival, if not outstrip, that in any...earlier periods*".

3: The Contemporary Policy

Context: Welfare ‘markets’, ‘Big Society’ and Charity Governance

Introduction

The last chapter historicised the development of voluntary action within the UK, examined the relationship between government and the voluntary sector and assessed the voluntary contribution to welfare delivery pre- and post- welfare state. This chapter analyses contemporary policy responses relating to the role of the voluntary sector in welfare provision, in particular the contracting out of public services and the increasing interest in governance arising from this. The implications of this process on a number of levels are considered. The chapter argues that the past thirty years of UK social policy - while representing specific ideological inflections and successive governments’ expectations of voluntary agencies - overall represent a neo-liberal turn in which a ‘third sector’ has emerged and assumed increasing levels of responsibility for the delivery of welfare services and the implementation of government social policies. This increasing role and responsibility for the sector raises issues about governance and has a number of implications for the volunteer trustees charged with leading and directing the organisations within it.

1979-1997: Contracting between government and voluntary sector – the purchaser-provider relationship

As discussed in the previous chapter, the history of the relationship between government and the voluntary sector is a long and complex one. For the purposes of this thesis, it is argued that the Conservative Government that came to power in 1979, and successive administrations led by Margaret Thatcher (from 1979 to 1990) and John Major (from 1990-1997), introduced policies that represent a specifically neo-liberal

approach towards the relationship between government and the voluntary sector, primarily that of introducing market-based principles to welfare and 'contracting out' of public services to non-statutory actors.

During the 1980s, Conservative governments implemented health and social care policies (Griffiths 1988; HM Government 1990) that introduced a key role for the voluntary sector in the provision of public service delivery in a marketised welfare system. A raft of policies and legislation⁴ implemented during this period promoted a split between the purchasers and the providers of services and introduced market-based principles to health, housing, education and social care (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993; Holden, 2008). The Griffiths Report (1988) focused on social care services, but was emblematic of a wider policy shift that increasingly involved non-state providers in a mixed economy of welfare. Written by Sir Roy Griffiths, a director of J Sainsbury who was appointed by Margaret Thatcher, the Griffiths Report heralded massive changes to the way community care for the elderly, mentally ill and physically disabled would be provided. The report outlined a role for statutory services as a means of "filling the gap", for needs not met by informal carers (family, friends and neighbours), deemed to be the primary providers of care. Recipients of social care would be subject to a means test to determine their ability to pay for services and responsibility for community care increasingly shifted from central government to local authorities, emphasising the latter's role in assessing local priorities and individual needs. The report advocated a move away from large, statutory-run residential institutions, which were to be replaced by ostensibly more tailored packages of care designed to meet the individual needs and choices of service users. The emphasis was placed on providing non-residential care in peoples' own homes wherever possible. Yet while local authorities were expected to commission the necessary non-health services, they were no longer required to be the primary direct providers. This was one of the most significant contributions made by the Griffiths

⁴ See for example Housing Act 1988, Education Reform Act 1988, and white papers on health (Department of Health, 1989a and 1989b).

Report in the history and development of Britain's welfare services - and of the voluntary sector's role within it - the marketisation of welfare delivery. A strong emphasis was placed upon opening up opportunities for private and voluntary sector organisations to bid to provide care services, with local authorities being discouraged from acting as primary providers of 'community care':

"Social services authorities should not be allowed to become monopolistic suppliers of residential and non-acute nursing home care...Central government should not fund a general expansion of local authority run homes. The objective should be to encourage further development of the private and voluntary sectors." (Griffiths, 1988: 20)

While the Griffiths Report contained a number of important policy recommendations affecting health and social care services, the most significant point for this thesis is the emphasis on the voluntary sector as a leading player in the implementation of policy reform. The report underlined the fact that voluntary (and private business) organisations would be actively encouraged to bid to undertake service delivery:

"Voluntary organisations were propelled into the centre of the social policy stage with an expanded role in welfare provision. Instead of meeting social needs in ways which complemented, supplemented or provided an alternative to the state, voluntary organisations increasingly took responsibility for delivering 'mainstream' services which were previously provided by statutory bodies." (Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny, 2001: 3).

Indeed, Griffiths explicitly sought to introduce market principles to welfare provision and increase consumer choice by encouraging private and voluntary organisations to become the main providers of services. This model is described by Le Grand and Bartlett (1993) as "quasi-marketisation", and they argue that some providers do not necessarily seek to make a profit, and that purchasers are often represented by third-parties who have delegated authority to make choices on behalf of the direct users:

“These welfare quasi-markets thus differ from conventional markets in one or more of three ways: non-profit organisations competing for public contracts, sometimes in competition with for-profit organisations; consumer purchasing power either centralised in a single purchasing agency or allocated to users in the form of vouchers rather than cash; and, in some cases, the consumers represented in the market by agents instead of operating by themselves.” (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993: 10)

Nonetheless, a picture emerged whereby voluntary organisations became providers and contractors, bidding for government contracts to run public welfare services (Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny, 2001).

The policy discourse stressed that the voluntary sector had an important role to play in the delivery of public services within this new model of ‘marketised’ welfare provision. Kendall and Knapp (1996) suggest that the sector was a useful ‘instrument’ for the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s; a time characterised by struggle and tensions with largely left-wing local councils. Contracting with voluntary organisations offered a means of ‘rolling back the state’, consistent with the ideological objectives of the “New Right” whilst simultaneously speaking to the ‘urban left’s’ support for disadvantaged groups of women, ethnic minorities and recipients of state welfare (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 7). The policy direction claimed that opening up public service provision to the voluntary and private organisations would “*widen consumer choice, stimulate innovation and encourage efficiency*” (Griffith, 1988: 1), but much was made of the other positive attributes that the voluntary sector could offer, including flexibility and responsiveness, as well as providing a voice for disadvantaged groups and representing the ‘community’ (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 6).

The purchaser-provider model brought opportunities for voluntary sector organisations prepared to assume this new role, most obviously via new funding streams made available by contracting out services. However, the same opportunities brought with them a number of risks and threats to the sector, that will be examined later in this chapter.

1997-2010: 'Partnership' between Government and the 'Third Sector'

Just under a decade after the Griffiths Report had been published, the first New Labour administration, elected in May 1997, launched the 'Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England' (Home Office, 1998). This had arisen following a recommendation from the Deakin Commission⁵ that a Concordat be developed to set out the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996).

The Compact set out a "*general framework and an enabling mechanism to enhance the relationship between Government and the sector*" (Home Office, 1998: 1). It specified a series of key principles that should underpin the relationship and listed a number of undertakings by Government and the voluntary sector respectively. There was a strong emphasis on the value of working in "partnership", and furthermore an explicit acknowledgment of the voluntary sector's independence and entitlement to undertake campaigning activities. The Compact was not a legally binding document, and was specifically concerned with the relationship between the voluntary sector and *central government*, since local government authorities were encouraged to develop their own versions at a local level (Home Office, 1998).

⁵ Alcock (2010c: 5) provides the following explanation of the Deakin Commission: "*This was an independent inquiry established by the NCVO and chaired by an academic, Nicholas Deakin. Its remit was to review the challenges facing the voluntary sector in the coming new century and to outline how these might be met. The recommendations focused significantly on relations between government and the sector and argued that these could be improved through a more structured and proactive approach by both sides. It was suggested that this could be framed within an over-arching concordat governing, directing and improving policy and practice in relations between the two. The Deakin Commission was independent of government, but Deakin himself had had a close affiliation with the Labour Party as well as with the voluntary sector.*"

In addition to the Compact, other New Labour policy documents reinforced the 'partnership' message, both in terms of service delivery and policy goals. The Local Government white paper *"Strong and Prosperous Communities"* (DCLG, 2006) implied a role for voluntary sector 'partners' in helping to tackle some of the most challenging problems:

"Many of society's most intractable problems can only be dealt with by agencies working together to tackle them at community level." (DCLG, 2006: 1.14)

Cited examples of some of the "difficult cross-cutting issues" included *"climate change, social exclusion, and anti-social behaviour"* (DCLG, 2006: 1.29). In a section specifically focused on the voluntary sector, the white paper went on to give specific support to the role for voluntary sector organisations in delivering public services:

"Some parts of the sector will wish to play a greater role in the delivery of public services. This should be embraced, not only because it will better meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities, but because it also has the potential to deliver value for money and efficiency." (DCLG, 2006: G8)

As well as making explicit reference to the financial and efficiency benefits that could be achieved when services are delivered by the voluntary sector, the white paper asserted that voluntary organisations were better placed to target 'hard to reach' groups. Ultimately New Labour's policy, as stated in this document, was to make the voluntary sector an *"effective partner of local government in shaping places and leading and building strong, cohesive communities"* (DCLG, 2006: G20). This aim in effect gave the voluntary sector a central role in the implementation of the government's agenda on a policy level, while also explicitly maintaining their practical service delivery role. Recalling core strands of Conservative government policies during the 1980s, the white paper stated the government's policy to encourage a 'mixed economy of provision' of services and explained that the development of commissioning guidance would support this aim, as well as the aims of

other government policies, such as those pertaining to children's services and health services⁶ (DCLG, 2006: G16).

The language of New Labour's policies recalled Griffiths by placing emphasis on the notion of 'partnership' between the government and the sector. That said, for Lewis (2005), this signalled a shift from the 'instrumental' notion of the sector held by the previous Conservative government. She argues that New Labour had "better" intentions in terms of their vision of the relationship between state and voluntary sector and suggests that this vision went much wider than the Conservative focus on the voluntary sector as alternative providers of services. In successive policy documents, New Labour outlined the contribution the voluntary sector would make to "*help reinvigorate public services*" "*revitalise local communities*" and "*promote social inclusion*" (cited in Lewis, 2005: 124). As Lewis points out, however, this rhetoric of partnership was not always consistent – she cites the example of a 'FutureBuilders'⁷ document that referred to the *shared* vision of the government and the voluntary sector, but later suggests that the sector would contribute to the *government's* vision (Lewis, 2005: 126). Lewis concludes that despite the rhetoric of 'partnership' between government and the voluntary sector, in reality successive New Labour administrations failed to create the basis of an equal partnership. She questions whether this equality would actually be achievable and suggests that changes to the sector as a result of the 'contract culture' introduced by the Conservatives in the previous decade may have actually presented a barrier to the partnership approach envisaged by New Labour. For Lewis, the boundaries between the voluntary sector and private sectors had become blurred by the market-driven values of

⁶ Cited examples include the *Every Child Matters* white paper and the *Our health, our care, our say* white paper (DCLG, 2006: G16)

⁷ Futurebuilders is a fund set up by Government but administered by an organisation under contract. It "*provides loan financing, often combined with grants and professional support, to third sector organisations in England that need investment to help them bid for, win and deliver public service contracts.*" (Futurebuilders, 2011)

contract delivery and performance management. The resulting fragmentation and professionalisation of the sector, along with the unequal nature of its 'partnership' with government may undermine its ability to encourage bottom-up participation and the community development role that New Labour implied voluntary sector organisations would provide:

"there is a strong sense of the voluntary sector continuing to be conceptualised in relation to, and harnessed to, the goals of government. Whether in respect of specific services involving welfare-to-work programmes, urban regeneration and social services, or the more general commitment to 'community building' through local participation, voluntary organisations have been seen primarily as part of an area-based strategy to combat social exclusion. The fact that their own goals may differ in substance or in emphasis is not acknowledged." (Lewis, 2005: 126).

Fairclough goes further in his critique of the notion of 'partnership' put forward by New Labour. He notes that 'partnership' has been a key word in the policy discourse of the New Labour administration and argues that the term was often used in respect of their policies of 'privatisation' – a word New Labour preferred not to use to avoid antagonising the trades unions and 'old' Labour power bases. He suggests that the term 'partnership' has been used to put a more positive spin on their policies, disguising what Hall (2005: 323) has described as New Labour's "*creeping privatization*" (Fairclough, 2000a). Despite the rhetoric of 'partnership' and also 'participation' evident in the discourse of New Labour governments, the balance of power between the state and 'participants' or 'partners' was not equal, a fact masked by a "*progressive patina*" in their policy discourse designed to appeal to voters and citizens (Fairclough, 2005:15).

The significance of language is also evident in the emergence of the term 'third sector' during this period. The official definition adopted by New Labour was broad, and the inclusion of 'social enterprises' hinted at blurred sectoral boundaries:

“The Government defines the third sector as non-governmental organisations that are value-driven and which principally reinvest their surpluses to further social, environmental or cultural objectives. It includes voluntary and community organisations, charities, social enterprises, cooperatives and mutuals” (HM Treasury, 2007: 5).

The New Labour government created the Office of the Third Sector within the Cabinet Office in 2006, bringing together social enterprise and voluntary sector policy areas for the first time. As Alcock (2010a: 15) argues, this ‘strategic alliance’ was largely accepted by voluntary sector practitioners since it resulted in significant additional resources for the voluntary sector. The inclusivity implied in the ‘third sector’ discourse played down the heterogeneity of voluntary organisations and facilitated the promotion of a ‘unified’ sector that could offer a credible alternative to state and market as a provider of welfare (Alcock, 2010a; Kendall, 2010). In this way, the construction of a ‘third sector’ can be understood as contributing to New Labour’s ‘third way’ project and a means of positioning itself as distinct from both the ‘statist’ model of the Left and the market-based ideology of the Right:

“By claiming to support the third sector, New Labour’s pursuit of an agenda of ‘modernization’ had an ideological double differentiation aspect: on the Left, from ‘Old Labour’, which it could be rhetorically asserted was ‘statist’; but also in relation to the Right, from previous Conservative administrations (1979 – 1997), which New Labour’s architects claimed had left the third sector at the periphery of its ideas, and revealed its lack of commitment thereto through its policy practices. In the contest over ideas, New Labour could paint the Conservatives as continuing to cleave to a reactionary, ‘exhausted’ two sector model built around narrow neo-liberal or market fundamentalist tenets with little space for a third sector.” (Kendall, 2010: 244).

Evidently, despite the fact that the semantic representation of government policy concerning the voluntary sector’s role had changed under New Labour from a dichotomous purchaser-provider split to one of a ‘partnership’ relation with government, it was also clear that there was to be no reversal of the paradigm under which market principles would be applied to public service provision and voluntary sector organisations

would be expected to take a key role in delivery of these. In her critique of the Compact, ten years on, Zimmeck (2010b) argues that the New Labour government's main focus in the document had been on *"encouraging organisations to buy into its agenda for public service delivery – to diversify their funding streams, act like 'social enterprises' and contract for the provision of more public services"* (Zimmeck 2010b: 128). It has been argued that the subsequent development of parallel compacts in other countries - including Canada, Spain and Estonia - emerged from a similar global context of state retreat and a corresponding increased role for the voluntary sector, particularly in public service delivery and input into policy (Casey et al., 2010: 71).

To support the implementation of their policy goals in relation to the voluntary sector and public service delivery, New Labour introduced a range of measures aimed at increasing the capacity of organisations in the sector. The 'ChangeUp' programme was launched in 2003/4 following a HM Treasury review (HM Treasury, 2002) that identified the support needs of voluntary sector organisations in order to prepare them to deliver public services. This support was defined in terms of skills, knowledge and infrastructure for participating in the contracting process. At first the programme was managed by the Home Office, until 2006 when responsibility was passed to 'CapacityBuilders', a non-departmental public body which was largely funded by the Cabinet Office. ChangeUp established a set of national "hubs", focused on the areas of governance, performance, finance, volunteering, workforce development and information and computer technology (ICT) (TSRC, 2009). The Governance Hub, which is particularly salient for present purposes, produced a raft of guidance for voluntary sector leaders outlining recommended practice in managing their organisations, including a Good Governance Code of practice (Code Steering Group, 2010) and documents on an extensive range of topics including risk management, trustee recruitment, board effectiveness and decision-making. This proliferation in governance guidance for how voluntary sector organisations should operate has implications for charity trustees both in

terms of the direct impact on trustee recruitment and board meetings, as well as in terms of their role as leaders of charities under pressure to conform to these new expectations. These issues will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

It could be argued that the driving imperative of New Labour policies was to improve the 'terms and conditions' for voluntary sector providers of welfare services, rather than offering a fundamental change from the policy introduced by the Conservatives of contracting out such services. As such, New Labour's Compact represented a policy consistent with Conservatism in some respects, although with a distinctive emphasis on improving the nature of the relationship between the government and the voluntary sector (Lewis, 2005). For Hall (2005), however, the emphasis on partnership is designed to support the neo-liberal agenda of New Labour and, he argues, this involved a "*seamless*" connection between the New Right and New Labour, based upon a "*silent revolution in governance*" (Hall, 2005: 325). In contrast, Harris (2010) argues that the Conservative and New Labour governments had differing motivations for their promotion of greater voluntary sector involvement in service provision. While the Conservatives sought to limit expenditure on welfare provision, New Labour's interest was in expanding and diversifying the framework of social welfare provision (Harris, 2010: 37). The continuities and changes within the policies of these administrations can be understood as representative of New Labour's 'third way' discourse which, Levitas (2005) argues, allowed the party to position itself as a credible alternative to the New Right Conservative administrations led by Margaret Thatcher and John Major, while still appealing to both Labour's traditional voters and new electoral communities – since "*differentiation from the old left announced that New Labour had changed, appealing to new constituencies of support*" (Levitas, 2005: 112).

In addition to debate over the ideological convictions and particular policy imperatives of respective Conservative and New Labour administrations, there is also disagreement about the extent to which voluntary sector

organisations were able to benefit. While it has been argued that the Compact succeeded in improving the “terms and conditions” that voluntary sector organisations were subject to (Lewis, 2005) for example, others have criticised the Compact’s failure in improving the security of funding arrangements and the ability of organisations to recover the full costs of providing services (Zimmeck, 2010b). Furthermore, Alcock (2010a: 16) argues that larger charities enjoyed the most benefit from government schemes to ‘support’ the sector, and the smaller charities were least likely to access schemes such as ‘Futurebuilders’. The differential impact of social policies upon organisations of different sizes is key, and a theme that is discussed later in this chapter, as well as emerging throughout the empirical data for this thesis.

The final stages of the New Labour administration during 2008/9 witnessed an economic recession in the UK and other major world economies that sparked growing anxiety about an impending ‘crisis’ for the voluntary sector. NAVCA (2009) reported that voluntary organisations were experiencing an increased demand for services – particularly advice on issues such as debt, unemployment, redundancy, housing and benefits – and a corresponding reduction in income as a result of the economic downturn. Similar findings were produced by a survey commissioned by the Charity Commission (Carole Goldstone Associates, 2009), and Dame Suzi Leather, the Chair of the Charity Commission, claimed the sector would face a ‘double whammy’ of increased needs among service users and reduced income from donors and other funders (cited in Taylor et al., 2012: 8). Such concerns led to substantial lobbying for government support by voluntary sector umbrella bodies (Taylor et al., 2012), eventually resulting in a government-voluntary sector “summit” and the launch of a government action plan and £42.5M injection of government funding into schemes to support the sector (HM Government, 2009). In their retrospective review of these developments, however, Taylor et al. (2012) argue that there was little evidence of actual impacts to underpin the anxieties about the anticipated effect on voluntary organisations of the recession, and that the ‘rhetoric of

crisis' was largely constructed. Such rhetoric provided something of a "unifying force" for the voluntary sector's policy community, and the sympathetic reaction from government leads Taylor et al. (2012: 36) to argue that the period *"can be seen almost as a high-water mark in relations between the New Labour government and the sector. The previous 13 years had witnessed the mainstreaming of the sector; an expansion of sector infrastructure and effectively the emergence of a sector 'policy elite'. In this context partnerships and alliances (albeit strategic ones) between sector and government had flourished."*

2010: Coalition Government and the 'Big Society'

Following the General Election of May 2010, the newly formed Coalition government moved to outline its policies toward the voluntary sector, encapsulated in its 'Big Society' concept that – although described as Prime Minister David Cameron's "great passion" and a key strand of the Conservative Party election manifesto (Conservative Party, 2010) – was initially vague and largely misunderstood by voters during the General Election (Alcock, 2010b: 380). The vagueness and ambiguity of the 'Big Society' rhetoric initially made it hard to quarrel with, since it ostensibly spoke to the values and interests of many people in the UK who support voluntary action through volunteering and charity donations. However, 'Big Society' was intended to differentiate the incoming government from New Labour's 'Big State' (Alcock, 2012: 4), offering *"new opportunities to shape and provide innovative, bottom-up services where expensive state provision has failed"* (HM Government, 2010a: 3). It also promised a antidote to the 'broken Britain' inherited from the previous administration (Hancock et al., 2012).

Liverpool – the fieldwork site for the empirical research of this thesis – was the chosen location for the Prime Minister's launch of the 'Big Society' programme. His launch speech indicates an ideology that shifts

responsibility from government to non-statutory actors, including citizens, businesses and voluntary organisations:

“The Big Society is about a huge culture change where people, in their everyday lives, in their homes, in their neighbourhoods, in their workplace don’t always turn to officials, local authorities or central government for answers to the problems they face but instead feel both free and powerful enough to help themselves and their own communities. It’s about people setting up great new schools. Businesses helping people getting trained for work. Charities working to rehabilitate offenders. It’s about liberation - the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power from elites in Whitehall to the man and woman on the street.” (Cameron, 2010).

Subsequent policy documents published in the first year of the Coalition government’s term of office introduced measures consistent with such an ideology, including the establishment of a ‘National Citizen Scheme’ to encourage teenagers to develop their “civic responsibility”; the transfer of responsibility for healthcare commissioning to private GP consortia; and schemes to encourage citizens to take “social action” in their local areas (HM Government, 2010a; Department of Health, 2010a). Further measures implemented under the ‘Big Society’ banner included the creation of a Big Society Bank (utilising money from dormant bank accounts to encourage social enterprise) and the establishment of four ‘vanguard’ Big Society locations. Somewhat embarrassingly for the Coalition, Liverpool subsequently withdrew as one of these sites seven months after the launch, in response to central Government ‘austerity measures’ to which Liverpool City Council attributed responsibility for a 48% cut to its local voluntary sector spending budget (Wiggins, 2011b; Hancock et al., 2012). As Alcock (2012: 6) argues, *“quite what the [other three sites] achieved is far from clear from the reported activities, beyond isolated examples of new local transport schemes, taking over of local pubs and delivering improved broadband coverage.”*

The Coalition government’s *“Building a Stronger Civil Society”* strategy (HM Government, 2010a) indicates that – consistent with previous

Conservative and New Labour administrations – this government envisages an important role for voluntary organisations in the delivery of contracted out public services. The strategy aims to “open up public services” and encourage non-statutory providers to play an even greater role in wider areas of public service delivery, including criminal justice and offender management, employment support and welfare to work schemes, and greater numbers of health and social care services.

Clearly, such policies represent continuity with previous administrations that have endorsed market-based welfare delivery via contracts. Indeed, Levitas (2012: 330) argues that the ‘Big Society’ is largely a continuation of New Labour’s approach, and identifies that both were inspired by the communitarianism ideology of Amitai Etzioni. However, there are also signals that suggest discontinuities with New Labour’s approach. Firstly, following the General Election, the new Coalition government rapidly moved to distance itself from the term ‘third sector’ – an identity that had emerged during the New Labour years. The *Office of the Third Sector* was renamed *The Office for Civil Society* in a move that signalled distance between the new government and New Labour, but that also created an opportunity for wider input into the ‘Big Society’ – potentially by businesses, social enterprises and other forms of ‘civil society’ and not necessarily limited to voluntary organisations (Kendall, 2010: 253; Alcock, 2012).

Secondly, while New Labour policies to contract out public services were underpinned by a raft of measures to ‘support’ the voluntary sector and build its capacity, the Coalition government policies to “open up public services” are accompanied by its withdrawal of several forms of voluntary sector infrastructure and support. These include the axing of the Commission of the Compact - despite the Coalition’s stated continuing commitment to, and new revision of the Compact (HM Government, 2010b) – and the closure of the FutureBuilders and ChangeUp schemes. Funding for infrastructure bodies under the Strategic Partners scheme is being phased out and, most significantly, the Government’s deep cuts to

local authority budgets have had an unprecedented impact on the funding of voluntary organisations (Alcock, 2012: 7). Set within the context of unprecedented Government cuts to welfare spending that “*impinge directly on the poor, the young, the sick and the disabled*” (Levitas, 2012: 322) – such developments raise questions with major historical resonance about the voluntary sector’s capacity to meet the welfare needs of increasing numbers of citizens with no entitlement to state welfare support.

The empirical research for this thesis was conducted during late 2009 and the first half of 2010, in the lead up to the General Election that resulted in the formation of the Coalition government and at a point when research participants could only speculate about the election outcome and the implications for voluntary sector organisations. As Taylor et al. (2012) argue, with the benefit of hindsight it is easier to see that anxieties about the impending crisis for the voluntary sector during the recession period of 2008/9 were not entirely realised – and that in many ways the “real” crisis was still to follow. The incoming Coalition government seeks to shift further responsibility from statutory bodies to non-statutory providers, however this is combined with a true ‘double whammy’ to the voluntary sector of increased welfare needs and deep funding cuts. As this policy environment continues to develop under the Coalition government, the implications for voluntary organisations and their trustees continue to unfold.

Implications of Government Policy

The previous section has outlined the social policy landscape in which the voluntary sector has been operating over the past thirty years. These key policy developments have emphasised an increased role for the voluntary sector in public service delivery and a contractual purchaser-provider relationship between the government and voluntary sector organisations.

This section examines the implications of such developments on a number of levels. Firstly, the implications for the relationship between the government and the sector will be critically examined. A number of commentators (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993; Taylor-Gooby et al., 2004; Eikenberry, 2009) have challenged the principle of applying market imperatives to welfare delivery and the transfer of responsibility from the government to alternative, including voluntary sector and private sector, providers. Secondly, the significance of these developments for the voluntary sector and its constituent organisations will be considered. This includes concerns about whether contracting with government compromises the independence of the voluntary sector and the potential impact upon the size and shape of the sector as organisations are expected to fulfil an expanded role with increased responsibility in the welfare arena. At an organisational level, questions have been raised about the capacity of charities to deliver on these expectations and about the governance arrangements in place to ensure appropriate accountability and financial propriety. Since trustees are ultimately responsible for the leadership and governance of such organisations, an analysis of the implications of social policy developments from a trustee perspective is imperative. Therefore the chapter concludes by considering evidence regarding the capacity and effectiveness of trustee boards and the ways in which trustees are recruited, trained and supported. These factors are critical in reaching an understanding of the issues faced by these unpaid individuals who are charged with governing and managing voluntary sector organisations that fulfil increasingly significant roles in delivering public services and implementing government policy on behalf of government agencies.

Implications for Government-Voluntary Sector Relations

The policies of contracting-out public welfare delivery to voluntary sector (and private) providers, introduced by Conservative administrations during the 1980s, have been characterised as contributing to the process of “hollowing out of the state” (Rhodes, 1994). As Rhodes (1994) has

argued, Conservative Governments during this period questioned what services needed to be delivered by the state, and sought to shrink the public sector. The transfer of responsibility onto non-statutory agencies, including voluntary organisations, had the effect of distancing ministers and senior civil servants from operational delivery, and as Rhodes (1994: 141) argues, eroded accountability for services.

It has been argued that ‘hollowed out’ claims have been overstated however, and that the government and related state agencies continue to play a central role in governing and have retained their capacity to exercise forms of power both directly and indirectly as a coordinator of networks of non-statutory actors (Newman, 2005; Bell and Hindmoor, 2009). As Newman argues, although neo-liberal discourse promises a smaller government, what it actually delivers is a dispersed form of government, exercised through “technologies of power” and evident in the ways in which “coercive” policies seek to control citizens, for example by reducing levels of welfare benefit entitlements (Newman, 2005). New technologies of power are used to achieve “*shifts in who people think they are, how they should relate to each other, what they can legitimately expect from the state and what the state can legitimately expect from them in return*” (Newman, 2005: 12). This “dispersed” form of government takes place through multiple agencies coordinated through an “*array of network and partnership arrangements*” (Newman, 2005: 11). The contracting out of public service delivery to voluntary sector ‘partners’ can be seen as emblematic of the new governance practices that Newman describes.

The shifts towards delivery of welfare services by non-statutory actors represents a shift of the government’s role whereby it is ‘steering but not rowing’ and raises questions about the clarity of accountability set out within contractual relationships between government and non-statutory players. As Sterling (2005) highlights, such emergent forms of governance have implications for democracy:

“Like other elements of new governance practice, partnerships largely tend to bypass traditional mechanisms of representative democracy.” (Sterling, 2005: 140)

The shift from government as direct provider of public services towards a form of “indirect government” (Salamon, 2002) in which non-statutory actors, including voluntary sector organisations, provide such services and implement public policy has the potential to blur the lines in terms of accountability and responsibility. For example, how can we ensure that welfare services and social policies are delivered in the public interest, when they are entrusted to voluntary sector and private providers? (Stone and Ostrower, 2007). Furthermore, what are the implications of non-state providers taking on roles in which they “represent” the state to citizens? (Smith and Lipsky, 2003: 98). The contracting out of welfare provision places distance between the institutions that deliver public services and those that raise the taxes to pay for them, potentially affecting the clarity citizens have about where their taxes are being spent (Salamon, 2002: 38). In this way, Hall (2005) claims that the discourse of governance evident throughout policies to contract out service delivery is intended to blur the distinction between the state and civil society (2005: 324).

Miller and Rose (2008: 80) characterise the introduction of markets into the system as a strategy to “*reshape the forms of economic exchange on the basis of contractual exchange*”. They argue that the shift of health and welfare away from public provision and toward privatisation and marketisation - as witnessed during the neo-liberal turn of the past thirty years or more - does not give autonomy to the actors in this system of delivery, but rather increases the extent to which they can be governed:

“Relocating aspects of welfare in the ‘private’ or ‘voluntary’ sector does not necessarily render them ungovernable. To be sure, different procedures of translation and alliance are entailed when ‘political’ institutions are ‘de-centred’ in networks of power. But the opposition between state and non-state is inadequate to characterize these transformations.” (Miller and Rose, 2008: 81)

Building upon Foucault's (1991) work on governmentality, Miller and Rose describe the processes by which non-state actors come to govern themselves, by adopting techniques that are promoted by programmes of government, for example in the form of bureaucratic management processes, education and marketing. Hence if voluntary sector providers take on responsibility for delivery of public services, it follows, based upon Miller and Rose's work, that the government would retain the power of regulation and influence over these organisations and the services that are being delivered. That is, the voluntary sector providers of welfare would not have the autonomy to run such services entirely as they like, but are likely to self-govern their own activities in the sense of complying with governance guidance and particular standards of expected services. Examples of ways in which voluntary sector organisations are expected to become 'professionalized' and comply with quality and governance standards in this way (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Cairns, 2009) are discussed later.

For Dean (2010), the promotion of public service delivery by voluntary sector organisations on a contractual basis represents a feature of the neo-liberal post-welfarist reconstruction of the "social". This may not amount to a "death of the social" but rather its re-emergence as a group of 'quasi-markets' in which welfare services are provided by non-profit and for-profit actors. Dean argues that regulatory authorities are able to survey, normalise and optimise the activities of such agencies that, although ostensibly 'independent', can still be managed and regulated under a form of 'performance government':

"From the perspective of advanced liberal regimes of government, we can witness the utilization of two distinct, yet intertwined technologies: technologies of agency, which seek to enhance and improve our capabilities for participation, agreement and action; and technologies of performance, in which these capacities are made calculable and comparable so that they might be optimised."
(Dean, 2010:202)

Similarly, Carmel and Harlock (2008) argue that government policies that encourage the contracting out of public services to voluntary sector providers, together with the raft of government policies and guidance on voluntary sector governance, provide evidence that the voluntary sector is being instituted as a 'governable terrain'. Emphasising the significance of language, they suggest that government discourse constructs voluntary organisations as a distinct 'third sector' of "*generic service providers*" that are expected to behave in ways that support market-based provision of services. Governance and capacity-building support offered to these organisations by the government privileges organisational forms, performance standards and activities that support their capacity to provide services, rather than generic 'capacity-building' that might support other aspects of their work such as advocacy and campaigning (Carmel and Harlock, 2008:164). Pick et al.'s (2011: 394) work also implies that voluntary organisations, and their volunteers, are being constituted as governable subjects that serve to relieve government of its responsibilities for welfare provision:

"When volunteers are seen as active citizens; they are 'good citizens' demonstrating personal responsibility. Within this governmental perspective, good citizenship behaviour is reinforced by emphasizing the centrality of individual voluntary action within strong communities. Through constructing volunteering in this way, the intention is that individuals respond to and incorporate 'volunteering-as-active-citizenship' as part of their identities, allowing government to gradually divest itself of its responsibility for welfare."

As has been outlined, overarching the distinct constructions of the relationship between government and the voluntary sector that have been features of Conservative and New Labour administrations since 1979, is a discourse of voluntary sector organisations as public service providers and a shift towards contracting as the preferred mode of delivery for welfare services. This shift is emblematic of a wider, neo-liberal discourse that is not confined to the UK (see, for example, Salamon, 2002; Eikenberry, 2009) and raises a number of questions about the implications for public governance, accountability and democracy as non-

statutory actors, such as private and voluntary sector organisations, assume responsibility for welfare delivery. In turn, such processes invoke significant implications for trustees charged with governing voluntary sector organisations. Theories of governmentality (Miller and Rose, 2008; Carmel and Harlock, 2008) are useful as a means of understanding ways in which government potentially maintains its control over these non-statutory actors through specific technologies including professionalisation, monitoring requirements and governance guidance. The ways in which voluntary sector organisations, and their trustees, have experienced increasing demands to act 'professionally', adopt specific monitoring processes and demonstrate 'good governance' will be examined in more detail in the following sections.

Implications for Voluntary Sector Organisations

Commentators have paid considerable attention to the potential implications of contracting to voluntary sector organisations (Smith and Lipsky, 1993; Deakin, 1996; Saidel and Harlan, 1998; Scott and Russell, 2001; Davies, 2008). During the period when the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s sought to promote the role of voluntary agencies as providers of social care, some analysts attempted to anticipate the implications for the UK voluntary sector by drawing on the US experience, where a similar model of contracting was already in place (Gutch, 1992). More recently, concerns remain about charity independence and financial security as voluntary sector organisations continue to play a significant role in service delivery (Charity Commission, 2007a; Davies, 2008; Neilson, 2009; Bowlby and Lloyd Evans, 2011). The implementation of Conservative policies to shift delivery of health and social care services from state authorities to private and voluntary agencies resulted in a significant injection of funds into the voluntary sector during the 1990s. While this extra funding presented opportunities for voluntary agencies, such as the chance to expand their work and employ more paid staff, inevitably it came with caveats, and raised

concerns about the potential threats and negative implications for the sector. This section examines some of the potential opportunities and challenges for the voluntary sector as the model of contracting-out of public services to voluntary sector organisations has been increasingly institutionalised.

Perhaps one of the single biggest areas of concern arising from the increase in the number of voluntary sector organisations contracting with the state to deliver public services is the issue of charity independence (Smerdon, 2009). The issue of charity independence can perhaps be considered in terms of a number of closely related issues: the autonomy of the board of trustees to direct and govern the charity (Shaw and Allen, 2009); the charity's freedom to campaign or to criticise or lobby government (Onyx et al., 2010; Mosley, 2011); the potential for conflicts of interest when charities act as both service provider and advocate to service-users (Neilson, 2009); and issues arising from a perceived 'blurring of the boundaries' between public, private and voluntary sectors (Taylor, 2001; Stone and Ostrower, 2007).

The first of these issues, the extent to which charity boards have the autonomy to lead their organisations, has a direct impact upon trustees. Boards of trustees are guardians of charity independence, charged with ensuring that their organisations maintain their autonomy and independence in their relationships with external agencies (Charity Commission, 2008b). The closer relationship with the government implied in contractual partnerships has led to questions about the extent to which trustees can maintain the independence of their organisations (Shaw and Allen, 2009). One way in which the difficulty in maintaining independence manifests itself is through the imposition by the contracting partner of specific monitoring standards (Gutch, 1992; Cairns et al., 2005; Cunningham, 2008). By insisting on particular quality or performance indicators, often in addition to systems already in place, funders can restrict the freedom of organisations to decide upon their own systems of setting and maintaining standards (Cairns, 2009: 40). Furthermore,

onerous monitoring and reporting requirements reduce the amount of time and resources that organisations can direct toward other activities or aims. Evidence has also been cited of attempts by statutory bodies to create groupings of local voluntary groups under fora with prescribed governance structures which, it is argued, disguise the differences in ideology and approach of the different organisations involved and threaten their attempts to speak with an independent “voice” (Cairns, 2009: 41). A survey by the Charity Commission in 2007 acknowledged that there is some threat posed to charities’ independence by the influence funders might exert over decision-making. The majority of respondents to the survey agreed or mostly agreed with the statement “*our charity is free to make decisions without pressure to conform to the wishes of funders*”. However 18% either disagreed or mostly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that in some cases voluntary sector independence is threatened (Charity Commission, 2007a: 15). However it has also been noted that the reported threats to the sector’s independence may “easily be exaggerated” (Commission on the Future of the Voluntary Sector, 1996: 40).

A second aspect of independence exposed to threat by a system of contracting out of public services to the voluntary sector is the freedom of charities to run campaigns that criticise the government, or to lobby governments on behalf of the communities and service users that they seek to represent. An unequivocal example of the state curtailing the freedom and independence of charities can be found in the USA, where Republican governments under Ronald Reagan and George Bush ‘gagged’ charities from mentioning (let alone providing) abortion as an option in healthcare (Rosenman, 2009). In the UK, fears have been expressed that the introduction of contracting will make it more difficult for organisations to maintain their critical voice, either as a result of self-censorship of political campaigning activity (Dunn, 2007) or in response to requirements set out in contracts (Deakin, 1996; Kendall and Knapp, 1996). Onyx et al.’s (2010) Australian study of the advocacy activities of voluntary sector organisations found evidence that organisations were

keenly aware of how their activities would be viewed by government funding 'partners' and that this influenced the ways in which they fulfilled their advocacy roles. The authors argue that "*overt political advocacy is repressed and in decline*" in the context of 'partnerships' between the government and the voluntary sector, and suggest that the latter is employing new, less overtly "radical" advocacy tactics and strategies in response (Onyx et al., 2010: 59). These findings were echoed in a US study that found that, while contracting with government did not necessarily reduce the advocacy activities of voluntary sector organisations, the nature of these activities were changing. Organisations were found to be employing "insider tactics" such as participating in government committees, rather than "indirect tactics" like boycotts or demonstrations, to influence policy or regulation (Mosley, 2011).

Thirdly, the emergence of contracts for public service delivery has important implications in cases where voluntary sector organisations aiming to represent users of public services also become providers of the same services. The closeness of the relationship between the contractor and provider in such cases leads to questions about whether a conflict of interest arises when a voluntary sector organisation fulfils both of these roles simultaneously (Taylor, 1992). In Chater's (2008) study of homelessness charities, one organisation reported that service users perceived their relationship with charities differently to that of statutory services and were more likely to approach the former. Of course, this 'approachability' could be lost if service users begin to perceive charities differently in light of their increasing 'closeness' to government. The same study highlighted the way in which contract relationships with the Government prevented homeless charities from working with asylum seekers with housing needs (Chater, 2008). In the criminal justice field, concerns have been raised about the bids by consortia including charities to run private prisons. Particularly controversial was the bid by Nacro, a voluntary organisation with a reputation as an advocate for penal reform. While ACEVO issued a statement offering support to the bid, on the basis

that the sector had much to offer in delivery of public services, others argued that Nacro's bid had "serious implications" for charity independence and furthermore raised critical questions over the extent to which charities could simultaneously act as provider and campaigner (and in this case, advocate for offenders) (Neilson, 2009; Corcoran, 2011).

Government policies have stated that the sector is "independent" (Home Office, 1998) and have sought to ensure that the sector's right to campaign is upheld (Griffith, 1988: 26). The voluntary sector's independence and distinctiveness has been emphasised (Kendall and Knapp, 1996; 2001), yet as the sector takes on increasing responsibility for service delivery and policy implementation, often alongside private sector providers, there is a risk that this distinctiveness will be lost. It has been argued that the application of market-based principles is resulting in a "blurring of the boundaries" between the sectors (Taylor, 1996; Lewis, 2005; NCVO, 2009). If indeed the voluntary sector has been better placed than statutory or private providers to deliver public services since they are able to "*better meet the diverse needs of individuals and communities*" (DCLG, 2006: 56), their distinctive strength and independent character may be eroded by government policies that encourage them to conform to government standards and 'professionalisation'. Given evidence of the ways in which contracting can place pressure onto voluntary sector organisations to conform to new regulation, operating procedures and financial accounting methods (Taylor, 1996; Cairns et al., 2005; Cunningham, 2008), there is the risk that their organisational culture becomes subsumed by the requirements of the contract-awarding body and that they will come to resemble organisations in other sectors as they adopt behaviours that are the norm in statutory or private sector organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Taylor, 2001). In conforming to the standards and procedures imposed upon them by those they have contracts with, voluntary sector organisations are at risk of becoming homogeneous neutralised entities, and there is a threat to the distinctiveness it has been presumed the

sector will offer (Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 235; Osbourne and McLaughlin, 2004). As such, as well as raising doubts about the voluntary sector's ability to maintain its independence in campaigning, representing service users and in steering its own strategic direction, contracting presents a challenge to the continuing existence of a distinctive, if diverse, voluntary sector independent from the statutory sector or private enterprise.

Closely related to the issue of charity independence is the risk that organisations will experience 'mission drift', characterised by a *"loss of focus on their charitable purpose and prioritizing their activities for dominant funders instead of serving their users or beneficiaries"* (Chew and Osbourne, 2009: 45). Commentators have expressed concern that the practice of contracting can induce organisations to chase funding opportunities, even those that fall outwith their core mission and objectives (Gutch, 1992; Kendall and Knapp, 1996: 232). Unless they maintain a close focus on their organisational aims, charitable objectives risk being 'distorted' in the pursuit of new areas of work that will attract contracting opportunities. In some cases, pressure may come directly or indirectly from funders; in others voluntary organisations themselves may be tempted to gradually shift into specific and quantifiable areas of work that are more likely to attract contract funding. Furthermore, the levels of energy required to deliver work once a contract is awarded can lead to other, pre-existing areas of work being neglected (Taylor, 1992; Osbourne and McLaughlin, 2004).

Research evidence about the manifestation of mission drift presents a contradictory picture (Macmillan, 2010: 19). Although some commentators have argued there is limited evidence of mission drift actually happening in practice (Chew and Osbourne, 2009), research commissioned by NCVO to examine the impact of contracting on voluntary organisations found evidence that voluntary organisation representatives were concerned about mission drift and faced pressure from statutory agencies to develop particular public services (Alcock et

al., 2004). Furthermore, findings from a Charity Commission (2007a: 17) survey suggested that “*charities delivering a public service are more likely to be affected by ‘mission drift’ or pressure from funders and less likely to involve trustees in decisions about what activities or projects the charity will undertake*”. Bennett and Savani (2011) conducted research into three case study UK charities identified as having experienced mission drift. One charity had extended into providing a range of research, equipment and services under local government and NHS contracts – none of which had been part of their original mission. The other case study organisations had similarly expanded into new areas, and one reported having developed a deep understanding of the funder’s systems, activities and preferences. The study identified that the charities had developed a number of strategies for managing the implications arising from their contractual relationship with statutory agencies, but nevertheless concluded that the organisations viewed mission drift as an “inevitable” consequence of large-volume contracting with government (ibid., p.227).

The introduction of ‘contracted out’ welfare services has presented a number of financial implications for the organisations involved. Certainly the trend has, for some organisations, represented an opportunity to significantly increase income as a direct result of winning contracts. The involvement of the sector in public service delivery has grown rapidly (Clark et al., 2010: 31). NCVO figures show a continuous upward trend in the levels of income voluntary sector organisations earn through contracts, and a decline in direct grant income. Contract income for the sector was worth £9.1 billion in 2007/8, an increase of £5.1 billion in seven years (Clark et al., 2010: 47). However these contracting opportunities are only available to some, and the organisations not awarded contracts obviously do not benefit from this extra income. The largest organisations are much more likely to be involved in public service delivery and conversely, the smallest organisations in the voluntary sector receive the lowest proportion of statutory funding (Clark et al., 2010). In fact, for organisations not involved in contracting, they may actually

experience increased financial difficulties as other sources of funding decrease (Clark et al., 2010: 47), resulting from government's privileging of contract funding over direct grant funding.

In the case of organisations that are both willing and able to enter into contracting arrangements, the path is not always smooth and there are some well-documented financial challenges facing them. Firstly, voluntary sector organisations contracted to deliver public services on behalf of government departments are vulnerable to the dangers associated with short-term contracts and rapidly changing priorities (Taylor, 2001; Cunningham, 2008; Clark et al., 2010). The Griffiths Report, commissioned by the Conservative government in the 1980s, provided that financial arrangements between the parties involved in social care contracts should be clear and easily understandable, that reasonable notice should be given of changes to funding and short-term project grants should not be used for ongoing work (Griffiths, 1988). More recently, the Compact, issued under New Labour, emphasised the importance of "long term, multi-year" funding and other measures to improve the financial stability of organisations (Home Office, 1998: 9).

Despite these initiatives that emphasise the importance of stable funding, there have been concerns that in practice organisations struggle with rapidly changing government priorities that impact upon their funding and service delivery programmes (Batsleer, Cornforth and Paton, 1992: xi; Cunningham, 2008). Evidence has been cited of voluntary agencies being preoccupied with managing what has been termed "*a precarious patchwork of short-term funding*", with a significant proportion of staff hours being spent on funding issues (Scott and Russell, 2001: 52-3). The Charity Commission has noted that some charities enter into multiple contracts or funding arrangements and that this raises questions about the amount of time needed for management of such funding, although other charities have welcomed the flexibility such a system allows (Charity Commission, 2007a: 20). Smaller organisations are most likely

to report dissatisfaction with the length of funding contracts with statutory bodies (Clark et al., 2010).

A second aspect of the financial difficulties experienced by organisations relates to the extent to which they are able to recover the full costs of delivering work under contract. There is evidence that organisations often fail to achieve 'full cost recovery' as new projects rely on piecing together different funding strands and funding arrangements do not always cover 'overhead' costs such as management, premises and administration (Scott and Russell, 2001: 52; Charity Commission, 2007a: 20; Zimmeck, 2010b). In a survey by the Charity Commission, only 12% of charities delivering public services were able to recover their full costs in all cases (Charity Commission, 2007a: 9).

As well as potentially threatening the continuity of service provision for service users, financial instability impacts on organisations and their trustees in respect of their responsibilities as employers of staff. Employment conditions tend to be less secure than in the private and public sectors (Clark et al., 2010: 73) and this problem can be exacerbated by the short term nature of some government contracts. If an organisation loses its contract to deliver services on behalf of central or local government, it is probable that it will need to make staff redundant (Scott and Russell, 2001; Cunningham, 2008). As well as presenting opportunities to organisations in terms of increased income for new staff and new areas of work, therefore, contracts to deliver services and the consequential funding environment can also introduce increased responsibilities for complying with employment legislation for these new staff (Becker et al., 2011). There has been a significant increase in the numbers of voluntary sector staff employed in social care (and a decline in public sector workers in this area) as a consequence of policies to shift service provision from the statutory to the voluntary and private sectors. Between 1999 and 2008, the voluntary sector workforce grew at a higher rate than the public or private sectors (Clark et al., 2010: 69). A large proportion of all voluntary sector staff are employed in the social work

sub-sector (Clark et al., 2010: 31). For organisations that move to employing paid staff for the first time, recruitment will need to be undertaken, new policies will need to be developed and trustees are likely to need training to understand their responsibilities as employers. This is potentially problematic given evidence within the data - as presented in Chapter 6 - that training for trustees is often inconsistent at best. Where the risks of short-term contract funding are realised and contracts are not renewed, organisations need to spend time and resources to understand and comply with redundancy and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE)⁸ regulations. Given the prevalence of short-term and insecure funding arrangements, the practicalities of complying with employment statute present organisations with a considerable burden.

The voluntary sector is incredibly diverse (Alcock, 2010a; Clark et al., 2010) and as a result it experiences the policy environment in different ways. During the years following the publication of the Griffiths Report, commentators expressed concern that it would favour larger organisations at the expense of smaller charities (Taylor, 1992; Gutch, 1992). Drawing on his study of the US experience of contracting, Gutch (1992) noted that government agencies had tended to contract with larger organisations except when there was a specific intention to work with a small body with particularly local links. Kramer (1992) also argued that the “contract culture” would be experienced differently by organisations depending on their size. He claimed that large national organisations would be more likely to regard such policies as an opportunity, as opposed to the “dangerous threat” posed to small, community based organisations less able to compete (Kramer, 1992: 186). Recent figures published by NCVO suggest that the level of income an organisation receives from statutory sources is linked to organisational size, with 79% of the sector’s statutory income being received by large and major organisations – those with annual incomes of over £1 million (Clark et al.,

⁸ Legal regulations by which employees’ terms and conditions may be protected when their employment transfers from one organisation to another (in this case, as a result of a contract being awarded to a new organisation).

2009: Section 5). While 73% of major organisations receive state funding, only 8% of the smallest, “micro” charities obtain money from statutory sources (Clark et al., 2010: 48).

Examples of the difficulties facing small charities were highlighted in Rochester’s (2003: 116) study, which focused on the “*liability of smallness*”. Workload usually fell to a small number of key individuals in the organisation, leading to the risk of “burn-out” among the active minority. Many of the agencies in the study were financially vulnerable and reliant on short term funding, which typically required annual review and renegotiation. As a result there was little time for the board of trustees to focus on strategic or long-term planning. (More recent figures show that the smallest organisations in the voluntary sector are most likely to report dissatisfaction with the length of government funding contracts - see for example Clark et al., 2010). Additionally, the restricted resources within these small organisations meant that they had a reduced capacity to access external networks and support or undertake training and development (Rochester, 2003). Harris (2001) has also found evidence that smaller charities are at a disadvantage to larger ones in terms of their ability to provide training and support to trustees in adapting to new social policy initiatives. Other researchers have echoed these concerns, highlighting the particular challenges that smaller organisations experience (Cornforth and Simpson, 2003; Hutchinson et al., 2009). The particular challenges facing trustees of smaller charities are borne out by the data presented in the thesis, and Chapter 8 discusses these in more detail.

The findings of a Charity Commission survey (2007) suggest that such concerns about the disproportionate impact on smaller charities remain. The survey found that larger charities do predominate in public service delivery. It predicted that smaller charities are likely to form consortia in the future to overcome perceived barriers. Furthermore the survey recognised that, without measures in place, “*there may be a risk of creating a restricted market where only those charities above a certain*

size and capacity can successfully compete for future delivery of public services." (Charity Commission, 2007a: 21). A report by the Audit Commission (2007) also found evidence that smaller charities were less able to compete for contracts, even though they were interested in doing so. Evidence has been presented by Clifford and Backus (2010) that suggests that in social care, medium and larger organisations have tended to benefit more than smaller agencies from increases in statutory funding, although they argue that claims of "Tesco-isation" of the sector (whereby the very biggest charities would grow the most) have been overstated. Both the New Labour and the Coalition governments have indicated that they view mergers and other forms of substantial collaboration between smaller voluntary sector organisations as having potential benefits, such as improved efficiency or financial resilience (Cairns et al., 2011).

Boards and Trustees

The first part of this chapter examined contemporary developments in social policy that have resulted in voluntary sector organisations taking on greater responsibility for public service delivery and policy implementation. It has also outlined some of the implications for voluntary sector organisations arising from such policies. Since trustees are often signatories to service delivery contracts (Harris, 2001a) and the guardians of charity independence and financial security, the ways in which this policy environment affects voluntary sector organisations particularly impacts upon their boards of trustees.

Harris's (2001) study of social policy impacts upon boards of trustees identified that heavy burdens are being placed upon them as they need to compete for resources and comply with legal, regulatory, monitoring and accountability requirements. Despite such responsibilities, the level of and quality of the support available to trustees, together with their ability to meet these challenges, has been questioned. A study for the Office of

the Third Sector found evidence that recruitment, support and training practices for charity trustees are often wanting (Low et al., 2007). Earlier research found that some trustees were not aware that they *were* trustees, and there was a lack of clarity about responsibilities (NCVO, 1992; Widmer, 1993; Charity Commission, 2002). Evidence that the role is not always clearly defined or understood in practice is echoed in other studies of trustee boards. Harris (1989: 325), for example, found a gap between policy and practice in terms of what was expected of committee members. For example, on paper trustees in a local CAB service were expected to complete grant applications, but in practice neither staff nor the board actually expected committee members to get involved with this process. The lack of clarity about the role a trustee is expected to fill in part arises from the blurred boundaries between the role of senior paid staff and volunteers (Harris, 1989; Saidel and Harlen, 1998; Mole, 2003; Vernon and Stringer, 2009), an issue that is exacerbated in smaller organisations (Rochester, 2003: 124).

Given the significant responsibility attached to the trustee role, an understanding of what types of people make up the trustee boards of the UK's charities and how they come to occupy these positions is critical, and a range of guidance publications address the issue of trustee recruitment (Lesirge et al., 2006; Charity Commission, 2005; Dalton, 2011). As with many other issues affecting charities and trustees, it is difficult to make generalisations given the diversity of the voluntary sector and experiences differ greatly dependent on the size of the organisation (Cornforth and Simpson, 2003; Clark et al., 2010). Various methods of trustee recruitment are in use across the sector, ranging from very informal 'word of mouth' approaches to formal application and interview based recruitment procedures that would be comparable to recruitment practices for paid senior staff in other sectors. Chapter 5 explores trustees' experiences of the recruitment process and the implications arising from the various recruitment methods adopted by voluntary organisations.

It is perhaps difficult to agree on which of these potential methods is most 'appropriate'. The recruitment of trustees on a very informal basis, without relevant policies and procedures in place, can raise a number of potential problems. It has been suggested that boards often invite new members from their own existing networks who are 'just like them', reinforcing the reported lack of diversity on trustee boards (Charity Commission, 2010; Clark et al., 2010) and who, due to thinking in similar ways, are unlikely to challenge the board's practices or introduce new ideas and approaches. This lack of a willingness to challenge results in, at best, missed opportunities for improvement and change, but at worst, threatens board accountability and transparency, exposing the organisation to the risk that mismanagement or even corruption or wrongdoing will go unchecked.

Furthermore, there is a lack of consensus about who is responsible for the recruitment of new trustees, despite guidance from the Charity Commission (2007b) that trustees should retain overall control of the process. In some organisations the trustees themselves, typically led by the Chair, manage the entire process from identifying a need for new trustees to finding them. In others, the Chief Executive (or equivalent) leads on recruitment, or it is a combined task between staff and trustees. In any case, there is always potentially a risk that the field of candidates invited to join the board will be too limited and that new board members will be too 'close' to the Chair or Chief Executive or that conflicts of interest arise. Perhaps as an acknowledgement of these issues some organisations adopt more formal methods of recruitment and advertise trustee vacancies more widely rather than simply approaching specific individuals directly (REACH, 2012; Trustees Unlimited, 2012). As well as having the advantage of potentially attracting a wider pool of candidates, this offers organisations the opportunity of specifying particular skills that they are seeking in their trustees. This relates to an interesting issue – examined in Chapter 6 - about whether the skills that trustees are expected to hold have changed. As discussed, one implication of greater contracting and public service delivery has been the increased

expectation that voluntary sector organisations will operate on a more ‘professional’ basis informed by management techniques and processes, raising the question of whether trustees with particular skills will become increasingly in demand.

Trusteeship can also be viewed through the lens of the volunteering literature and this offers useful perspectives from which to consider the role and the issues affecting trustees (see, for example, Musick and Wilson, 2008; Rochester et al., 2010). The fact that the majority of trustees are unpaid *volunteers* can be overlooked, as the responsibility that comes with the trustee role tends to distinguish it from other volunteering positions. Whereas in some organisations where volunteers work alongside paid staff, the work of volunteers is led or supervised by paid staff (in some cases a volunteering manager), trustees are technically the employer of paid staff and have a very different relationship with them. Often trustees are fairly remote from the organisation, attending committee meetings several times a year, sometimes at different times and locations to the main day-to-day operations of the charity. In organisations with several or more paid staff, it is common that only the most senior member will attend board meetings and trustees are therefore less “visible” to other members of staff and volunteers. For these reasons, trustees are not always viewed as volunteers like people volunteering in different roles and often do not have the support of volunteering managers, recruitment and induction procedures and volunteer policies in quite the same way as those in other voluntary roles. In spite of this, the extensive body of literature on volunteering (see, for example, Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Yeung, 2004; MacNeela, 2008; Rochester et al., 2010; Cnaan et al., 2011) does have potential relevance to an understanding of trusteeship, since the voluntary dimension of the role provides insights into the motivations, support needs and other issues affecting the individuals in such positions.

Rochester et al. (2010) identify three main perspectives on volunteering within the extant literature. They argue that what they term the “dominant

paradigm” has gained ground as a result of government policies to increase the role of the voluntary sector in public service delivery and that this trend has fuelled the recent rise of the “volunteering industry”. From this perspective, volunteers can be understood as a significant, unpaid workforce that help to deliver services provided by typically larger-scale voluntary sector organisations with contracts for public service delivery. These volunteers are broadly categorised as being motivated by altruism (although as the authors also point out, research into volunteer motivations is often problematic and limited by volunteers’ own awareness of and willingness to be honest about their true motivations). This representation of volunteering has been embraced by policy-makers and suggests that volunteers require formal and skilled recruitment and management (Rochester et al., 2010: 11). A second perspective on volunteering has been the “civil society paradigm”, which suggests that volunteering is rooted in self-help and mutual aid, rather than for altruistic reasons. Thirdly, the understanding of volunteering as “serious leisure” (Stebbins, 1996) or as a form of “activism” (Lyons et al. cited in Rochester et al., 2010: 13) suggests other motivations for individuals using their time in this way – perhaps as a way of developing skills and knowledge, career development or expressing themselves through hobbies, sporting or political activities. For Rochester et al. (2010) however, there are a number of ways in which these three broad perspectives should be combined and they suggest that in reality the primary motivations for volunteering are ambiguous and hybridised (Rochester et al., 2010:15) – a point reflected in trustees’ experiences as discussed in Chapter 5.

The implication of this for an understanding of trustees’ experiences is that there are multiple explanations for volunteering as a trustee and varying understandings of the resulting focus and needs of people in the role. In some situations it might be appropriate to consider trustees as requiring the formal and extensive recruitment, support, procedures and management implied in the “dominant paradigm” that views them as voluntary support to large and professional service providing organisations, reflected in official guidance (Charity Commission, 2007b).

However in other cases, there is incongruence between the official guidance on skills requirements for trustees in public service delivering organisations and the motivations or attitudes of volunteer trustees to their own role and to the place of their organisations in such contracting opportunities (Pick et al., 2011). Harrow and Palmer (1998) argue that social policy can make a false assumption that trustees are a homogenous group willing and equipped to take on heavy responsibilities and call for further attention to the often “overlooked” problems in trustee recruitment and retention. Their work to develop a “typology” of trustees identified seven types, based upon their perceived motivations, which ranged from social cachet to a search for political or social change or a desire to contribute the work of the charity (Harrow and Palmer, 1998). The data presented in Chapter 5 reflects this diversity of reported motivations among trustees.

Zimmeck (2010a: 91) argues that successive governments over the last half century have committed resources and energy to the promotion of volunteering as a policy goal in support of a programme of reform to public service delivery, including the outsourcing to voluntary sector organisations. New Labour, she argues, were particularly “hyperactive” in terms of these activities to promote volunteering. Zimmeck (2010a: 97) traces the rise of fall of the government’s emphasis on, and investment in volunteering during New Labour’s term and argues that the government *“moved from viewing the third sector as valuable in its own right to viewing parts of the third sector as valuable in proportion to their ability to deliver government’s particular (and evolving) agenda – social inclusion, social cohesion, provision of public services and future Olympians”*.

Ilcan and Basok’s (2004) work also concludes that the state takes an instrumental view of the value of volunteering as means of achieving government objectives. Writing from a governmentality perspective of the impact of the Canadian government’s policies to contract out public service delivery to voluntary sector organisations, they argue that volunteers have been transformed into “responsibilized service providers”

(2004: 141). They suggest that the state's programme of outsourcing services to the sector under governance contracts has transformed the sector into a deliverer of services, which has in turn trained its volunteers to assume service provision duties. This process, they contend, has shaped individual citizen's attitudes towards their own volunteering and, furthermore, has detracted from other social justice advocacy or community education activities as organisations and volunteers become focused upon their duties as providers of services. For Pick et al. (2011), volunteers have been constructed as "active citizens" in advanced neoliberal discourse, an understanding which they claim is at odds with evidence from elements of the volunteering literature that suggest that volunteers are largely motivated by personal, rather than community, motivations (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Yeung, 2004).

The significance of these arguments for trustees is twofold. Firstly, as has been highlighted, trustees are volunteers themselves. In this respect they can be seen as the direct focus of government policies to encourage volunteering activities. Secondly, as the leaders of voluntary sector organisations, trustees can be viewed as representing their organisations and are affected by the impacts of government policy toward the sector and the organisations within it. Furthermore, as the figure-heads of their charities, trustees can indirectly be viewed as the "employer" of other volunteers carrying out different roles with particular organisations.

An understanding of the issues affecting trustees is important, therefore, given their critical role as leaders of voluntary organisations and particularly within the contemporary policy climate. Until recently, relatively little research evidence was available about the issues affecting charity trustees and boards (Harris, 1989; Cornforth, 2003). However there is a rapidly growing interest in the area and a number of studies, particularly in the US, have begun to address issues of relevance to trustee boards (see, for example, Mourdant and Cornforth, 2004; Miller-Millesen, 2003; Brown, 2007; Callen et al., 2010). In addition, there has been an increased interest in the ways in which trustees govern their

organisations, driven in part by the Governance Hub programme and the development of guidance and training about how trustees should ensure their boards run “effectively” (for example, Lesirge et al., 2006; Sinclair Taylor, 2006; Dyer, 2008; Hudson, 2009; Code Steering Group, 2010 and 2011; Dalton, 2011).

In an echo of critiques of public service contracting which argue that governments have taken an instrumental approach to the voluntary sector and put pressure on it to professionalise and ‘capacity build’ in readiness, it has been argued that the emerging discourse relating to volunteers also takes an instrumental approach, emphasising the areas where volunteering can be “used” to support the government’s agenda (Zimmeck, 2010a; Pick et al., 2011). Ilcan and Basok (2004) argue that that volunteers have become “responsibilised citizens”. Trustees are affected by these issues in two ways. Firstly as volunteers themselves they may experience the formalisation of volunteering practice, a trend that potentially threatens “*the spirit of volunteering and the creativity, sociability, and autonomy which underpin it*” (Rochester et al., 2010: 230). Secondly, they experience directly the increased demands for “good governance” and carry the burden of responsibility for public service delivery as they lead organisations within the “*governable terrain*” of the voluntary sector (Carmel and Harlock, 2008).

Summary

This chapter has examined a range of social policy developments since 1979 that have progressively increased the role of voluntary sector organisations in the delivery of public welfare services. Conservative administrations in the 1980s and 1990s found an opportunity to progress their agenda of “rolling back the frontiers of the state” by involving voluntary (and private) bodies in welfare provision. New Labour’s policies were heavily focused on the concept of ‘partnership’ between the government and the voluntary sector, albeit not necessarily a partnership

of equals. Their policies highlighted a key role for the voluntary sector as providers of services, but also in supporting and implementing the Government's policy goals in areas including social exclusion and climate change. Early indications in the incoming Coalition Government's agenda suggest they aim to increase contracting out of public services to non-state bodies, including charities. This is combined with wider citizen involvement goals as a core element of their Big Society campaign.

Although distinct priorities and themes can be identified in relation to these successive governments, the overarching goal of using voluntary sector organisations as significant providers of public services under contract with statutory agencies runs through their policies in a continuous thread. What these administrations have had in common is a commitment to the principle that market-based principles can, and should, be applied to welfare and that the voluntary sector should be a key player in providing these services. As such, their welfare policies represent a neo-liberal turn in thinking about the ways in which health and social care services should be delivered.

The ways in which the voluntary sector has been encouraged to participate in these welfare 'markets' can be interpreted as government taking an instrumental approach towards the sector. Conservative, New Labour and Coalition governments have all been explicit about the role they see for the sector in achieving government aims in terms of welfare. Increasingly, the sector has been used as a means of delivering wider policy aims as well as a central bidder for welfare provision contracts. A raft of measures have been introduced by government to underpin this, and it has become a priority to strengthen the 'capacity' of the sector to participate in these ways. The work of the Governance Hub, for example, has represented a significant awareness-raising programme about how charities should govern themselves and offered extensive lists of guidance and advice on organisational governance. Some have taken a critical view of this interest in supporting the sector through 'capacity-building', arguing that it is specifically targeted at skills and knowledge for

competitive contracting rather than supporting charities' own aims and missions. Furthermore, the development of much governance 'guidance', as well as explicit requirements within contracts, encourages organisations to conform to the standards and expectations of the government bodies they wish to gain funding from.

This consolidating cross-party policy context has inevitably had implications for the voluntary sector as well as the trustees responsible for the governance of individual organisations within it. For some organisations opportunities have opened up for them to deliver new areas of work and access new streams of funding through participation in the marketised model of delivery.⁹ For other organisations, it has not been possible (or in some cases desirable) to become involved in contracting opportunities and they have also found it increasingly difficult to secure grant funding as contracting becomes the state's preferred method for engaging with the sector (Clark et al., 2010: 47). For those that do win contracts, the resulting income is likely to be accompanied by significant new contractual obligations, such as specific quality standards, financial reporting procedures and monitoring requirements, as well as new risks, such as legal liability and employer responsibilities. There is evidence that smaller organisations experience these challenges as disproportionately difficult, one factor underlying fears that smaller organisations will be 'squeezed out' of the market or forced to merge, leading to suggestions that the shape of the sector as a whole will become distorted. As the voluntary sector increasingly works more closely with the government to achieve the latter's aims, concerns have increased about the implications for charity independence. The situation raises questions about whether or not voluntary sector organisations are induced to stray outside of their core mission in pursuit of contract opportunities, discouraged from criticising the bodies with whom they seek contracts or compromised in their ability to advocate for and

⁹ NCVO estimates that 22% of the third sector (38,000 organisations) have a direct financial relationship with the state, and that larger organisations are much more likely to receive funding from the state (Clark et al. 2010: 48).

represent service users. Ultimately, the additional pressures upon those charities operating in the marketised environment are, it has been suggested, causing a blurring of the boundaries between different sectors as charities start to lose their distinctiveness and conform to norms and expectations of the state or adopt behaviours resembling private commercial organisations. If this is the case, there is a real risk that the very 'unique' characteristics and benefits that policy-makers suggest the sector provides will become eroded. In this way, the UK's voluntary organisations are being transformed in ways that represent a loss to our society in terms of the values, ethos and character with which they tend to be associated.

Trustees, charged with the responsibility for governing their organisations, are undoubtedly affected by the issues raised for the sector by contracting. They are often the signatories to contracts and carry legal responsibility for the financial affairs of the charity and its obligations as an employer of staff. As well as leading the charities through the challenges of the policy environment that has been outlined, trustees have experienced increased attention and scrutiny about the ways in which they fulfil their roles as governance has become a key issue for the sector. There has been growing interest in the role of trustees, the ways in which they are recruited, their motivations and the support and training they have access to in carrying out this volunteer role. The empirical research presented here aims to contribute to the body of knowledge about the ways in which they experience their role within this changing policy environment.

4: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents and reflectively analyses the research design and methodological approach that underpin the thesis. The options that were considered during the process of designing the research are discussed and the methods that were selected to explore trustees' experiences - principally qualitative research techniques and a grounded theory orientation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) - are justified.

In total, 46 qualitative interviews were conducted: 25 with trustees of local voluntary sector organisations; 10 with Chief Executives (or equivalent) of local voluntary sector organisations; and 11 with representatives of influential 'policy community' organisations at both national and local levels. (Here, "local" is defined as the county of Merseyside.) A detailed description of the process of selecting research participants from these three groups is given in the following section.

The chapter discusses and reflects on the experience of employing the methodological approach and the issues and challenges that arose during the research process. Furthermore, the chapter considers the ethics of the research, including measures taken to protect participant confidentiality and comply with relevant University of Liverpool and British Sociological Association guidelines. Finally, the techniques used to prepare and analyse the data generated are discussed.

Overview

A central aim of the research is to elicit trustees' experiences, perceptions and conceptualisations of their roles during a time of significant and

substantial social policy reform. Accordingly, the research seeks to assess the impacts of social policy developments relevant to the voluntary sector, specifically from a trustee perspective. In addition, interviews were conducted with senior charity staff and with members of the policy community, to elicit views on trusteeship from other related perspectives. To achieve these aims, the research and analysis was conducted using an approach based on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This method involves taking an inductive approach to the data, a *“type of reasoning that begins with a study of a range individual cases and extrapolates from them to form a conceptual category”* (Charmaz, 2006: 188). Although the grounded theory method has been both contested and adapted (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008), it has become the most widely used qualitative research method (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Its key elements, which I have adopted in this study, are its *“systematic, inductive and comparative approach”* and the *“researcher’s persistent interaction with their data”* (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007: 1). My approach to data analysis - using grounded theory principles - is detailed later in the chapter. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews informed by a schedule (see Appendices A, B and C) were used to elicit the views of participants and to place trustees’ own perspectives and experiences at the heart of the research. Furthermore, I sought to acknowledge my own place as researcher within the study and adopted a reflexive approach (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Harris, 2001b; Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This is also discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were adopted as the primary research methodology to create an opportunity for the *experiences* of individual trustees to be explored in depth (see Appendix D). The research addresses a relative shortage of qualitative research studies of trustee experiences, and supplements the available quantitative evidence pertaining to the experiences of individuals volunteering as charity trustees (Working Party on Trustee Training, 1992a and 1992b; Cornforth, 2001). The research here contributes to filling the gaps in

knowledge about trustees' own perceptions and lived experience of the role. As such, individual trustees (rather than charities) are the primary unit of analysis and the selection process (as detailed in the following sections) sought to recruit participants with a diversity of personal characteristics. In addition, the research acknowledges the fact that, in some cases, individuals volunteer as trustees for multiple organisations, and some participants reflected on their experience of being a trustee in more than one organisation (as discussed in Chapters 5 to 8). Furthermore, earlier research into issues affecting trustees has often centred on the perspectives of paid charity staff or has been limited to interviews with Chairs of trustee boards (Harris, 2001a: 183; Rochester, 2003: 116). The qualitative interviews with trustees occupying various committee roles in this study have placed trustees' own perspectives and experiences at the heart of the research.

Given research evidence indicating differences in perspective between trustees and senior paid staff within voluntary agencies (Harris, 1989; 1992) and of tensions between paid staff and members of trustee boards (Widmer, 1993; Chadwick-Coule, 2011), interviews were carried out with senior members of staff in a small number of voluntary organisations, usually the Chief Executive or a Deputy, who work closely with the trustees of their voluntary organisation and are usually present at trustee meetings (see Appendix E). The interviews with these senior staff members explored parallel themes to those examined in the interviews with trustees to provide an insight into particular perspectives relating to policy issues or aspects of the trustee role. The rationale of these interviews was to identify and explore the perceived implications of social policy developments upon organisations within the sector and, in turn, upon the trustees charged with governing such organisations.

A further aim of the research was to critically examine official representations of the trustee role, and the extent to which these align (or not) with operational realities within voluntary agencies and the experiences of trustees. Therefore, interviews were sought with a

number of individuals representing organisations at both national and local levels that make up what I have termed the 'policy community' to supplement analysis of current government policies and the grey literature relating to the role of voluntary organisations, their relationship with government (and the state more broadly), and the role and responsibilities held by volunteer trustees. At a national level, the 'policy community' comprises a number of government departments including the Office of the Third Sector¹⁰, the independent charity regulator The Charity Commission, and the key national umbrella bodies that represent the views of the voluntary sector, trustees and chief executives, such as the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO). At a local level, representatives of local umbrella bodies representing the sector and offering training and support to trustees were included, as well as senior representatives of the local Primary Care Trust and local authority who have responsibility for commissioning services from voluntary sector agencies. A full list of the organisations represented within the 'policy community' interviews can be found at Appendix F.

A detailed description of the process of selecting research participants from the three groups (trustees, senior staff and policy community representatives) is provided in the following section.

Contextual background to the fieldwork site

Liverpool, the city at the centre of Merseyside, is the fieldwork site for the empirical dimension of this research, and has a long history of voluntary sector activity. This is in part due to its history of social and economic polarisation extending across a continuum of extreme poverty and poor living conditions (during the industrial revolution and beyond) and its wealthy merchant class, including families such as the Rathbones, who

¹⁰ The interview with the representative of the Office of the Third Sector was conducted shortly before it was subsequently renamed the Office for Civil Society following the formation of the Coalition Government in 2010.

contributed significantly to Liverpool's reputation for voluntary effort (Simey, 1992: 18).

During the nineteenth century the town's population experienced a huge and rapid increase as a consequence of it being a major importing and exporting port. The population rose from 4,240 in 1700 to 222,954 in 1841, placing the town's public health, sewage and drainage infrastructure and housing supply under enormous strain. Liverpool experienced even worse conditions than the other industrial towns in Britain that were struggling with extreme poverty and overcrowding during the period - arguably as a result of the fact that industry preceded the development of the town - and suffered from an extreme lack of facilities (Simey, 1992: 7). In response to the severe shortage of housing for incoming workers from Ireland and elsewhere, many houses were converted into multiple dwellings or "courts". The tiny allocations of space per head resulted in people living in squalor and disease. Over 2,300 people were living in Liverpool cellars in 1801, and courts in Liverpool were on average 12 times smaller than those in Birmingham (Simey, 1992: 10-11). Dr. Duncan, the first UK public health officer was based in Liverpool and regarded the city to be the most unhealthy town in England during the 1840s, and it had higher mortality rates than other major cities in the country (Miller, 1988: 1,11).

Conversely, Liverpool also produced a local aristocracy of families who built their fortunes on commerce. During the nineteenth century, Liverpool produced more millionaires than any other English city outside London (Lane, 1997: 30). In response to the extreme welfare needs in Liverpool, a number of charitable institutions were established by the city's wealthy merchants. Liverpool, therefore, developed a long tradition of philanthropy and social reform. Charles Booth, who famously documented the extent of poverty in London was, in his earlier life, a Liverpool shipping merchant (Simey and Simey, 1960). With his cousin, Beatrice Webb, he made a major contribution to the campaign for Poor Law reform. Equally, the Rathbone family were well-known for their

commitment to philanthropy in Liverpool (and indeed, continue to provide charitable funds to the present day). Elizabeth Rathbone, along with Kitty Wilkinson, opened the country's first public baths and wash-house in Liverpool, as a response to the first cholera epidemic in 1832 (Miller, 1988: 36; Rathbone, 1927). Her son William Rathbone assumed responsibility for a district of the District Provident Society in 1849, and founded the District Nursing Service in 1859. He later became involved in the reform of workhouse nursing, which became influential across the country (Simey, 1992: 89). William Rathbone's daughter, Eleanor, went on to make her mark in the history of voluntary effort in the city. She volunteered as a Friendly Visitor before becoming involved with the University Settlement. She then played a key role in the establishment of a School of Social Work within the University of Liverpool, working alongside Elizabeth Macadam, also known for her contribution to social work and social reform (Simey, 1992). Later, Eleanor Rathbone became the first woman elected to the Liverpool City Council and an independent Member of Parliament. She was involved in a number of campaigns for social reform, in particular the campaign for family allowances.

Significant charities operating in the city during the early nineteenth century included the Central Relief Society of Liverpool, which was established in 1863 to "*provide the necessities of life for deserving families who through sickness on the part of the breadwinner, lack of work or unavoidable misfortune of any kind, were in need of help*" (cited in Miller, 1988: 30), together with the Stranger's Friend Society and the District Provident Society (Simey, 1992). By the 1890s, there were various other charities established in Liverpool, ranging from hospitals; institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb; lodging houses; homes for aged seamen; several almshouses; day nurseries; five institutions for the 'training and protection' of women and girls; and a number of temperance societies. Many of the organisations still operational in the city today have a long history. Examples include the Parkhaven Trust (originally the Maghull Homes for Epileptics from 1888); Merseyside Jewish Community Care (with 125 years of history); Nugent Care (originating from the work

of Father Nugent in Victorian Liverpool); Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services (founded 1909); and PSS (1919). Despite this range of voluntary effort in evidence this provision “merely scratched the surface” of need and housing, employment, public health and education needs extended far beyond the scope that could be addressed by charity (Miller, 1988: 38; Lane, 1997: 53).

As in other cities, voluntary organisations continued to play a significant role in addressing welfare needs during the twentieth century. Significant numbers of the working classes were living in poverty during the post-war period. Large sections of Liverpool were left derelict after the Second World War bombings, and the city had disproportionately high levels of unemployment and insecure work as a result of the decline in the shipping industry upon which Liverpool heavily depended (Lane, 1997; Todd, 2008). Since the second half of the twentieth century, Liverpool has been at the centre of a raft of policy initiatives in attempts to address its poverty and social deprivation, many of which have involved contributions from the voluntary sector as well as statutory authorities¹¹ (Rooney, 2003). Liverpool remains a city with high deprivation and poor health. The life expectancy of people in Liverpool is significantly lower than the national average (Joint Health Unit, 2010) and the city’s health, educational attainment and deprivation levels are considered to be significantly worse than the England averages (Department of Health, 2011). The city’s voluntary sector continues to carry out a diverse range of work in response to such welfare needs.

¹¹ Examples include the Educational Priority Area designation (1968-72); Shelter Neighbourhood Action Project in Granby (1969-72); Vauxhall Community Development Project (1970-75); Inner Area Study (1973-76); Urban Aid Programme; Third European Poverty programme; Community Empowerment Fund and a myriad of other development projects and funding streams (see Rooney, 2003: 211).

Selection of Participants - Trustees

The challenges of ‘mapping’ the voluntary sector at a local level are well documented (Soteri-Proctor and Smith, 2003; Pharoah and Williamson, 2008; Mohan, 2012) and the problems associated with trying to identify a comprehensive list of voluntary sector welfare organisations in Merseyside became apparent very early during the research. An important aspect of the problem is the contested definition of a voluntary or ‘third’ ‘sector’ (Alcock, 2010a). Since many local organisations are not registered as charities, they do not appear on the Charity Commission Register or its searchable database¹². The Commission’s website allows searches for specific charities if the exact name or charity number is known, but does not allow the user to generate a full and reliable list of, say, all charities within a particular geographical location. Alternative sources of information about local voluntary sector organisations are the local Councils for Voluntary Services (or equivalent organisations), of which there are five in the Merseyside area¹³. Furthermore, there are many voluntary organisations that, for a variety of reasons, are not in contact with either the Charity Commission or local umbrella bodies like Councils for Voluntary Services, and as a result are ‘below the radar’ in terms of appearing on local lists of voluntary sector groups (McCabe et al., 2010).

Even where lists of voluntary organisations or charities exist, a further challenge is presented in identifying the trustees of a particular organisation. As discussed in Chapter 1, for the purposes of this research I use NCVO’s definition of ‘voluntary organisation’ that refers to all registered charities but excluding those controlled by government, independent schools, faith groups, housing associations and trade

¹² Charities with an income of under £5,000 do not appear on the Register of Charities (Mohan, 2012).

¹³ The main local infrastructure organisations are: Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services; Sefton Council for Voluntary Service (CVS); Wirral CVS; Knowsley CVS; and Halton and St Helens CVS (the latter was formed in 2010 following a merger of St Helens CVS and Halton CVS).

associations (see Clark et al., 2012: 17). As such I use the Charity Commission definition of a charity trustee¹⁴ (albeit acknowledging the alternative terms many individuals in the role use, such as Management Committee members or board members) to select research participants. It was, therefore, not possible to construct a sampling frame of all charity trustees within Merseyside, due to the constraints of not being able to conduct a comprehensive search of the Charity Commission Register by geographical location, and not being able to identify named trustees for all welfare charities within the area in a way that was totally reliable and up to date.

As a result of the issues in defining and identifying the local voluntary sector, and the individuals volunteering as trustees within voluntary sector agencies, the selection of research participants was determined by a number of approaches that aimed to target volunteer trustees directly. This kind of purposive sampling enabled the recruitment of research participants who were trustees, but also allowed the widening of the range of the sample by ensuring that it contained instances of 'infrequent types' (Weiss, 1994: 23). For example, I made specific attempts to identify and recruit for interview some younger trustees, in light of evidence that only 0.5% of trustees are aged 18-24 (Charity Commission, 2010: 3). In a similar way, participants with differing lengths of service in the role, different roles on the board of trustees, and volunteering in different types of voluntary sector organisation were recruited to the study. The research arises within the context of the increasing involvement of voluntary sector organisations in welfare delivery and developments that have seen a greater role for charities in the provision of public services. The individuals who were recruited for interview were, therefore, deliberately drawn from organisations focused on welfare

¹⁴ "Charity trustees are the people who serve on the governing body of a charity. They may be known as trustees, directors, board members, governors or committee members. Charity trustees are responsible for the general control and management of the administration of a charity" (Charity Commission, 2008a: B2)

provision, broadly defined. In order to reflect the diversity of the sector, participants were sought from a mix of charities, in terms of size and the kinds of services provided. However, given evidence that small charities may be disproportionately affected by policy shifts and reforms within the wider sector (Audit Commission, 2007; Charity Commission, 2007; Clark et al., 2010; Clifford and Backus, 2010) as examined in Chapter 3, specific efforts were made to target participants from smaller organisations during the interview recruitment process.

The primary methods used to recruit participants included direct phone calls to charities (in which I asked to be put in touch with trustees) and circulating an advert aimed at trustees via a number of different networks including local volunteer bureaux and voluntary sector umbrella bodies. As well as current trustees, two research participants were ex-trustees who responded to the advert, offering to share their experiences of the trustee role while reflecting on the reasons that they had resigned. Snowball sampling techniques were also used to identify potential research participants, both trustees and staff members, based on the recommendations of those working and volunteering in the local sector. A number of other studies focussing on participants who volunteer have successfully employed purposive sampling methods, including snowball techniques. Lie and Barnes' (2007: 231) study of older volunteers purposely sampled interviewees to include three specific groups of participants, allowing them to gather the views of current volunteers, former volunteers and service users. Similarly, Yeung (2004: 27) employed purposive sampling to seek "information rich cases" in her study of the motivations of volunteers in Finnish churches. A snowball recruitment method was also used as one of two methods in a study of nonprofit health and social care volunteers in Ireland, allowing researchers to interview volunteers in two indepth case studies (MacNeela, 2008). Snowballing methods have also been selected to reach "hidden populations", for example in research into drug users, offenders or other marginalised or stigmatised groups (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; van Meter, 1990). While charity trustees may not form a

stigmatised population, their sometimes infrequent and distanced contact with their own organisations can mean that, to an extent, trustees constitute a ‘hard-to-reach’ or ‘distant’ group. Atkinson and Flint (2001) cite an example of snowballing techniques being used to access elite groups as well as the marginalised, and consider the method to be particularly useful where respondents are few in number. A number of other advantages to the method have been highlighted by Noy (2008), who argues that snowballing forces the researcher to relinquish a certain amount of control and can empower participants. He suggests that by paying attention to the sampling process itself, as well as to the interview data, researchers can take an ethnographic approach to snowballing and gain insights into the groups they are studying and the networks and links between participants (ibid.). Obviously, snowballing methods of participant recruitment have their disadvantages, and a frequently cited concern is their potential lack of representativeness and the extent to which generalizations can be made (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Denscombe, 2002). As stated, in order to mitigate the impact of this within the research, different categories of participants were recruited (e.g. differing levels of experience, organisational activity and personal backgrounds) and a level of detail about the participants and the selection process are included within the thesis – see also Appendices D, E and F (Denscombe, 2002). Furthermore, my research makes reference to other studies into issues affecting trustees that has been undertaken using different methodologies (such as quantitative surveys into trustee recruitment and training), in the spirit of what Williams (2000: 222) refers to as “*an openness to the adoption of alternative strategies to improve the representativeness of research, and ... a willingness to admit the limitations of one’s research*”.

In summary, the final sample of trustee participants consisted of 25 interviewees (this included three participants who were ex-trustees). The group was mixed in terms of ‘race’, sex and age (see Table 1). They included trustees with varying lengths of volunteering service in their organisations, ranging from over ten years to less than one year’s

experience. Approximately half of the sample occupied an 'honorary role' such as Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary or Treasurer; the rest fulfilled standard trustee roles. The organisations they volunteered for were registered charities in Merseyside, and ranged in size from those with a turnover of less than £40,000 to those with annual turnovers of over £20M. At the smaller end of the range some charities were run solely by volunteers and some had a very small number of paid staff. In the biggest organisations, the organisations employed significant numbers of paid staff, including senior staff who managed the day-to-day operations on behalf of the trustees. Definitions of charity size are contested. The Small Charities Coalition (2011) defines a "small" charity as one having an income of less than £1 million per year. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (Clark et al., 2010) categorises those charities with an annual income of under £100,000 as small (and those with under £10,000 per annum as "micro"). The Charity Commission (2011) defines small charities as those with an income under £250,000 per annum. Using income levels as an indicator is problematic as a small organisation's income can fluctuate significantly from year to year as a consequence of funding received. In addition, contracts or grants received may be restricted funds for a specific short-term project. Furthermore, using income levels as a means of defining charity size does not necessarily reflect the numbers of staff or volunteers within the organisation, the scale and impact of its work, or its degree of influence. Nevertheless, income levels remain the most commonly used method of defining charity size. If the NCVO definition of small charity is adopted (less than £100,000), six participants in this study were from small charities (five trustees and one staff member) – the remainder being from larger organisations.

The types of work carried out by the organisations included a wide variety of social care and welfare activities, including advice, advocacy, education, grant-making, housing provision and service provision. They worked with diverse groups of service users including children, the elderly, women, refugees, disabled people and black and minority ethnic

(BME) groups (see Table 2). A summary of the individual participants is included in Appendices D, E and F.

Table 1: Characteristics of research participants (Trustees and Staff)

	Trustees	Senior Staff
Sex		
Male	13	5
Female	12	5
Age¹⁵		
18-24 ¹⁶	2	0
25-29	0	0
30-39	5	2
40-49	9	2
Over 50	9	6
'Race / ethnicity'¹⁷		
Self-identified as 'ethnic minority'	5	1
Other	20	9
Role		
Chair	8	n/a
Other honorary role ¹⁸	4	n/a
'Standard' trustee role	10	n/a
Ex-trustee ¹⁹	3	n/a
Chief Executive Officer ²⁰	n/a	8
Deputy Chief Executive Officer	n/a	2

¹⁵ Although research participants were not directly asked to disclose their age, many disclosed their age in the course of the interview. Where they did not, figures are based on an estimate of their approximate age. The age of participants was particularly relevant in the case of 'trustee' interviewees, given a reported lack of diversity among trustees. 0.5% of trustees are aged 18-24 and over two thirds of trustees are aged 50 or over (Charity Commission, 2010).

¹⁶ The Charity Commission defines a "young trustee" as someone aged 18-24

¹⁷ Although participants were not directly asked to disclose their 'race' or 'ethnic background', specific efforts were made to recruit trustees of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) organisations. This figure refers to the number of participants who chose to disclose their 'ethnic status' as 'BME' during interviews.

¹⁸ This includes trustees who act as Vice-Chair, Treasurer or Secretary in addition to their 'standard' trustee duties.

¹⁹ Cases where the participant had resigned or retired from their role

²⁰ Or equivalent. In some charities the most senior paid role was known by another title, such as "Manager" or "Coordinator"

Table 2: Characteristics of participants' organisations

	Trustees ²¹	Senior Staff
Organisation Classification		
Social Services	16	5
Health	4	1
Advocacy	4	3
Development and Housing	3	1
Education and Research	3	1
Primary Beneficiaries of Organisation		
General public / multiple groups	13	4
Children and young people	6	0
Refugees and asylum seekers	4	0
Defined ethnic group	2	2
People with disabilities	2	1
Women	2	0
Families	1	1
Elderly	0	2

Selection of Participants – Staff

Ten members of charity staff were interviewed (see Appendix E for details). Participants were selected on the basis that they occupied one of the most senior paid roles in a local voluntary sector organisation, and worked closely alongside the board of trustees, including attending trustee meetings. Depending on the size and structure of the organisation, the individuals in these roles had differing job titles, including Chief Executive, Manager or Coordinator. In two cases, Deputy Directors were included in the sample, provided they still had a seat at the trustee board meetings and, therefore, worked sufficiently closely with trustees to be able to comment on the roles and responsibilities of trusteeship. Staff participants were recruited in the same ways as trustee participants, using adverts, direct approaches and snowball techniques. Two participants occupied both a trustee role in one organisation and a senior staff role in another, and volunteered to participate in each type of interview to discuss the differing roles. This reflects a common trend

²¹ Several participants volunteered as trustee of more than one organisation and, as a result, the total number of organisations in Table 2 exceeds the number of trustees interviewed.

whereby trustees of voluntary sector organisations may also work in the sector as their paid employment, and allowed an opportunity for these participants to compare and contrast their experiences of different organisations within the same sector and to reflect on issues of trusteeship from both perspectives. In the cases of five out of the ten participants, interviewees worked in the same organisations as one or more of the trustee participants. This potentially raised issues relating to confidentiality, which are discussed in the 'Ethical Considerations' section of this chapter.

Selection of Participants – Policy Community

In addition to interviews with 25 trustees and 10 senior staff, 11 interviews were carried out with representatives of the “policy community”, including policy-makers and those with a role in influencing policy relating to voluntary sector organisations and their trustees (see Appendix F). In the first instance, relevant organisations were identified on the basis of a literature review, internet trawl and recommendations of those in voluntary sector networks. In most cases, I then wrote to the organisation, explaining the nature and aims of the research, and requesting an appointment to interview a senior person who was able to represent the policies and position of the organisation. There were some exceptions to this approach – I was able to use personal contacts to gain access to two of the participants, and a further two were approached following recommendations of participants I had already interviewed (that is, using a form of snowball sampling). Having a pre-established connection in these ways may have facilitated obtaining interviews with individuals who, as senior civil servants, may be considered a form of ‘elite’ participant. In such cases, establishing credentials as a researcher and explaining the research can be particularly critical in persuading the prospective participants to take part in a study (Richards, 1996; Lilleker, 2003). Recruiting these participants was facilitated by making contact via a third party’s introduction. The timing of the General Election in May

2010 had a minor impact on the fieldwork, since some of the participants working in the civil service preferred to delay interviews until after the Election in order to avoid potential conflicts with the 'election purdah' period prescribed for civil servants during election campaign periods.

Fieldwork Sites

Interviews were carried out at a range of locations, primarily to suit participants' convenience. The majority of staff interviews were carried out at the offices of their organisations during working hours. This was also the case with most policy community interviews, although a small number of participants requested meetings at alternative venues to fit in with their travelling or meeting schedules. While some interviews with charity trustees took place at their charity premises, a significant number requested meetings at their workplace, home or in a public place. This reflects the fact that as trustees, these individuals volunteer their time on a part time basis and occupy other roles, including paid work, at other times. In addition, trustees are usually not physically based at the charity premises, and indeed may work or live some distance from the charity. During the course of the interviews, many trustees told me that their physical attendance at the charity premises was limited to several times a year, mainly for trustee meetings. Furthermore, the fact that some trustees have busy lives involving paid work, family responsibilities and sometimes multiple volunteering roles was reflected in their requests for flexibility in both time of day and location of interview. As the researcher it was necessary to demonstrate this flexibility and be well organised, as participants often wanted to rearrange meetings (date, time or location), at relatively short notice. One trustee interview was conducted by telephone, using a telephone pick-up digital recording device to record the discussion, with a trustee of a Merseyside charity who lived and worked in London. Finally, it is worth noting that one trustee specifically requested to meet with me at the university, as she was very concerned

with confidentiality and did not want anyone connected with her charity to know that she had participated in the study.

It is interesting to reflect on the impact that the location of the interviews had on the fieldwork. In those instances where trustee interviews took place in the work location (not charity) of the participant, or indeed in a public place away from the charity, it was perhaps easier to form an impression of the trustees' life away from their charity role, and how their volunteering may have fitted into this. For example, some trustees were in paid roles that were sufficiently senior, flexible or autonomous to be able to invite me into their workplaces, use the facilities of their employers and participate in interviews during working time. For others, interviews had to be fitted into lunch hours in public places close to their offices, and participants were more conscious of the time in order to return to work punctually. For some of the trustees who were retired from paid work, it was evident that they chose to spend a greater amount of time volunteering at the charity and were, as a result, more likely to meet me at the charity premises and have a greater degree of familiarity with that location. Where research interviews took place at charity premises, this allowed me the observational opportunity to form impressions of the organisation and some of the staff, volunteers or service users. For example, when I arrived at a community centre for one of the early interviews, I was struck by the large number of service users arriving at the centre, the seemingly chaotic busy-ness of the building and the obvious fact that volunteers were under a lot of pressure from the demands and numbers of service users. The interviewee's discussion of some of the funding pressures the charity faced were corroborated by evidence visible to me of the poor state of repair of the building, the cold and draughty meeting room, the large numbers of service users arriving in obvious need and the frantic activity of volunteers. Given that this particular trustee also volunteered in the centre in a service user-facing role, the fact that the time they were giving to the interview was at the expense of time otherwise used supporting service users was far more apparent to me than in interviews that took place with other trustees at

locations outside their charities. In a similar way I found myself forming impressions of organisations while waiting in reception areas, by observing the state of the building, information on notice-boards, charity brochures and leaflets, and the activities of people using the charity premises.

Data Collection Instruments: Eliciting Experiences

A semi-structured interview guide was designed, drawing on themes identified during the literature review as being key issues of relevance to trusteeship (see Appendices A, B and C). For instance, in view of quantitative research evidence that found weaknesses in the recruitment and training processes for charity volunteers (Low et al., 2007), participants were asked to describe their own experiences of these processes. Given discussions in the literature about the nature of the relationships between staff and trustees (for example see Harris, 1989; Cornforth, 2003; Chadwick-Coule, 2011) the interview guide specifically prompted discussion about these relationships within the participants' organisation. To address the research aim of assessing the impacts of social policy developments upon trustees, questions were included that explored the issue of contracting for public service delivery and the potential impacts on charity independence (Charity Commission, 2007a; Smerdon, 2009; Shaw and Allen, 2009). Other prompts within the interview guide focused on: the decision-making processes among trustee groups; the levels of and sources of support available; the degree of confidence individuals had in understanding and carrying out the role; their motivations; and the challenges encountered, with the aim of exploring key aspects of the experience of volunteering in such a role. The interview guide was designed to provide an element of structure and consistency, ensuring that similar themes and questions were discussed with all participants. However flexibility was built in to the interviews to allow space for the participants to raise and discuss the issues that they felt were of most importance to themselves and most relevant to the

research in terms of expressing their own experience. This was done by initiating interviews with an open question asking the interviewee to share their 'own story' of being a trustee, to prompt a reflective account of how and why they became involved in the role. In addition, one of the prompts in the interview guide invited interviewees to identify and discuss any other issues they felt were important to someone seeking to gain an understanding of the role.

The interview guide was tested during a pilot study consisting of five interviews, four with trustees and one with a member of senior staff. During the pilot study, interviewees were asked whether they felt the questions being asked were appropriate to the research aims and offered the opportunity to suggest additional questions that they felt would benefit the study. During the pilot all five participants stated that they felt the questions were appropriate and that all key issues of relevance to trusteeship had been covered. As a result the interview guide was not changed, and was adopted for use in the main study. A decision was taken to keep the final question about whether the questions had been appropriate and comprehensive during the main study, however, as it was a useful prompt for inviting participants to add any further points that were of key importance to their own experience, and which may have been missed by assumptions implicit in the design of the interview guide.

For consistency across the three different groups of interviews, parallel interview guides were used to prompt discussion of the same themes but from the perspectives of trustee, staff member and policy community (see Appendices A, B and C). For example, while trustees were asked to relate their own experiences of the recruitment process in their organisation, staff members were asked to describe how trustees in their organisation were usually recruited. For the interviews with representatives of the policy community, participants were asked to comment on what they felt were the main issues in the areas of trustee recruitment, training and support, relationships between staff and trustees, or relating to the trend for voluntary sector organisations to enter

into contracts to deliver public services, for example. Depending on the organisation represented, some policy community interviewees felt that certain areas were outside their remit or area of knowledge, and chose to focus on the interview prompts they felt able to comment upon on behalf of their organisations. Again, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed space for members of the policy community to introduce new areas of discussion that they felt were particularly important to the sector and more specifically to trusteeship.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted following the ethical practice guidelines of the British Sociology Association (2002). In addition, details of the proposed methodology were submitted to the Department of Sociology, Social Policy and Criminology, School of Law and Social Justice Ethics Committee for approval in accordance with University of Liverpool procedures. Research participants were provided with an information sheet (see Appendix G) detailing: the nature of the research; the funders; their rights to withdraw from the study; collection and storage of data; and contact information for the researcher, supervisor and university Research Governance Officer. This sheet was provided both at the time the invitation to participate was accepted (usually at the time we agreed an appointment to meet for the interview) and again at the start of the interview. Before commencing the interview, research participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns about the information contained in this sheet or about the research process, thus enabling them to take an informed decision about whether or not to take part in the study. They were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix H) to confirm that they were prepared to participate. Also prior to the interview, participants were asked for their permission to record the interview using a digital recording device. All participants in the study consented to this, although one participant did ask me to turn off the recorder for a section of the interview in which they disclosed some

information they felt was particularly sensitive, relating to some negative publicity the charity had received. All participants were informed that the digital recordings would be transcribed and offered copies of the transcripts. At their request, two participants were provided with copies of their interview transcripts.

The British Sociological Association (2002) guidelines on anonymity and confidentiality were followed in order to protect those individuals participating in the research, as well as the charities that they represented. All research data, including contact information, interview recordings, interview transcripts and research notes were stored securely on a university networked computer with password protection that could be accessed only by me. With the exception of 'policy community' participants, whose permission was sought to reproduce their views as representatives of the organisations for which they worked, interviewees were guaranteed anonymity. This was achieved by assigning a pseudonym to each trustee and staff member recruited to the study. Only these pseudonyms were used in interview transcripts and data analysis, hence breaking the link between the data and identifiable individuals (British Sociological Association, 2002). Furthermore, the identities of the charities for which the participants worked or volunteered were removed from the data. For each organisation, I assigned a descriptor that would give a general indication of the type of work the organisation carried out, for example "Disabled Social Care" or "Health Research", without revealing the actual name of the charity (see Appendices D, E and F). In particular instances where research participants raised questions about confidentiality during the interview, I offered them the chance to suggest such a descriptor for their organisation.

Kvale (2006: 497) argues that "*ethics becomes as important as methodology in interview research*" due to the power dynamics at play during qualitative interviewing. He warns of the myth that can see research interviews being constructed as 'dialogues' with implied equality of power between researcher and participant. For Kvale, the researcher

can only achieve objectivity and ethicality if explicit attention is paid to acknowledging the power dynamics at play. Throughout this research I have taken seriously the responsibility to consider ethical issues, and have reviewed my conduct regularly to ensure I have honoured the commitments I have made to participants as Mason (1996) suggests. For example I reviewed transcripts to ensure they were appropriately anonymised and reviewed research notes to check which participants had requested copies of transcripts. In some cases, I interviewed different individuals from the same organisation. I took care to honour my commitment to keep their identities and data confidential. For some of these, participants were unaware that someone else in their organisation had also been interviewed. In other cases, the participants shared this information with each other openly. When I met some of these individuals, they acknowledged this to me, for instance saying “I believe you met with our Chair last week”. In these circumstances I took special care to ensure that I did not reveal any of the details provided to me by another participant, and refrained from repeating or discussing anything I had learned in the other interview(s). I exercised similar caution in all interviews where a participant made reference to external organisations or individuals in the wider voluntary sector, and refrained from revealing which organisations or individuals I had met with or sharing information about other organisations that I had learnt during the research. In addition to this emphasis on ethical conduct throughout the research, I have responded to the concerns that Kvale (2006) highlights by seeking to take a reflective approach throughout, paying explicit attention to my own role in the research and acknowledging ways in which this affects participants and their relationship with me as researcher.

Reflexivity

As stated, I have adopted a reflexive approach to the research and have tried to remain conscious of my own role as researcher, paying attention to my own insights and reactions as I take part in the conversations with

interview participants. This approach reflects an interpretive standpoint that acknowledges my own role as social actor, as well as that of the participant, in shaping the interaction between researcher and research participant: *“because the interviewer and interviewee interact and influence each other, the interviewer has to be self-aware, examining his or her own biases and expectations that might influence the interview”* (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 30). As Weiss (1994: 146) discusses, a number of factors may shape the interview experience. He describes his own experiences of a number of “bad interviews” in which the researcher struggles to feel engaged or to listen closely, or the participant is not relaxed and perhaps lapses in concentration. In my own experience of the fieldwork process I have certainly experienced different feelings during different interviews. In some, I was aware that I identified particularly strongly with an interviewees’ views or experiences and in others, I felt it harder to establish a rapport with an individual. Unlike Weiss, I do not wish to impose a value judgement by labelling the latter as ‘bad’ interviews. However I have sought to notice and reflect upon my own emotions, feelings and reactions to participants during the interview process.

Margaret Harris (2001b) has argued that reflexivity, and a recognition of the place of self, are particularly important in voluntary sector research. She calls for researchers to acknowledge that voluntary organisations are part of “our everyday world” and to elucidate their own involvement in the voluntary sector, since it undoubtedly influences and inspires their interest in voluntary sector research. For Harris, such reflexivity and honesty is critical if the process of knowledge construction and interpretation is to be examined (Harris, 2001b: 756). My own interest in this area of research has inevitably been influenced by own experiences of being a trustee in four different organisations over a number of years (as described in Chapter 1). Although I have adopted an inductive approach to the research, my personal experiences will inevitably have affected my understanding of the literature, my choice of interview questions to ask and my interpretation of the data collected during

interviews. For these reasons, it has been important for me to remain conscious of my own place within the research and to seek ways to reflect upon my reactions and thoughts during the process. As Stanley and Wise (1993) contend, the researcher's presence is inevitably central within all research, whether acknowledged or not. As such, I explicitly acknowledge and reflect upon my 'presence' within this research and the relationship and interaction between myself and the research participants. During the social interaction within the research interview setting, interviewees have inevitably formed opinions of me at the same time as I have formed opinions of them and sought to understand their experiences and perceptions. This interaction is a two-way process, that will inevitably have shaped the discussions and the data generated. In the same way, I inevitably will have drawn upon my own experiences to try to understand and make sense of the experiences that others shared with me during this process – as Stanley and Wise (1993: 161) put it *“being alive involves us in having emotions and involvements; and in doing research we cannot leave behind what it is to be a person alive in the world”*.

Examples of my obvious “presence” in the research arose in interviews where participants asked me about my own interest in the subject and about my own experiences of trusteeship. Some interviewees assumed I had a level of expertise in some of the issues discussed and asked for my input or advice. One participant, for example, asked me for suggestions about how to advertise for new trustees. Another asked me (after the interview, while showing me out) if I knew of any trustee vacancies or where he could find adverts since he was seeking a new trustee role. One of the policy community representatives that I interviewed asked me about research reports that she could read.

These examples highlight the fact that qualitative interviews are a two-way social interaction in which the researcher is not necessarily the only person asking questions. Nor is the relationship between researcher and the researched necessarily confined to the time allocated to the formal

'interview' while the tape recorder is running. One participant contacted me several weeks after we had met for the interview, wishing to update me on one of the issues that had come up in the interview – namely that his experience as a volunteer trustee had facilitated a career move from the private to the voluntary sector and that he had just been offered a job in a well-known national charity. The use of snowball sampling also led to ongoing communication in some instances, for example one Chief Executive who had taken part in an interview later copied me into emails with her peers in other local charities, in which she suggested they might also like to get in touch with me should they be interested in participating in the study. Such examples demonstrate the fact that I developed rapport with participants and gained their trust during the research process.

I used a research journal throughout the fieldwork to record my own reactions and emotions during interviews, and this served as a tool to assist me in remaining conscious of my 'presence', as discussed above. In one interview, the participant explained that her motivation for taking part in the research was to seek an opportunity to discover if her experience of being a trustee was 'normal' and whether the challenges she faced were unique to her or common to other trustees. She shared with me her feelings of guilt and anger, as well as the sense that she was 'out of her depth' in the role with little support. While remaining focused on listening and asking questions, I experienced feelings of empathy and concern for the participant and became aware of my own judgement that the organisation was perhaps failing to provide adequate support for this volunteer. The participant's request for validation of her experience raised questions for me about the most appropriate way to respond. I felt it would have been inappropriate to avoid answering questions and sharing my own experiences and views, given I was asking her to do exactly that. At the same time I felt slightly uneasy and worried about a risk of the discussion becoming more like a counselling session than a research interview. Weiss (1994: 136) discusses a similar experience during his research in which a respondent appeared to be seeking

reassurance, and his similar uncertainty on reflection about whether or not his response had been adequate and appropriate. Interestingly, he also reflects upon that fact that people experiencing a sense of isolation may be motivated to participate in qualitative research studies for this reason, and may find the interview experience valuable because of the experience of talking and being listened to, even if the researcher simply listens and offers no advice (Weiss, 1994: 122). Reflection upon this experience in this particular interview has allowed me to note the potential for volunteer trustees to feel isolated in the role and to experience a lack of support or of someone to turn to for reassurance and advice.

Data Analysis

In the spirit of a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008), I remained open to emerging themes and analysis throughout the research process, rather than confining analysis to a separate period after data collection. This was done by maintaining a research diary in which to note ideas and interpretations of data that arose both during data gathering during interviews with participants, and during the processes of transcribing data and checking transcripts. An inductive approach was adopted, whereby I allowed concepts to emerge from the data rather than imposing hypotheses or pre-established concepts on the research – albeit balanced with, and informed by, my previous experience as a trustee, as acknowledged earlier in this chapter. The data analysis has been an iterative process, beginning during the data collection period but also consisting of repeated readings of interview transcripts to ensure consistent application of codes and to seek patterns and connections across the data. Corbin and Strauss (1998: 12) argue that theories “grounded” in the data in this way (rather than based on speculation or experience) are more likely to resemble “reality” and “*offer insight, enhance understanding and provide a meaningful guide to action*”.

I used line-by-line coding of interview transcripts and memo-writing, consistent with grounded theory methods, to identify categories and meanings within the data, and avoided assigning pre-conceived interpretations onto the data. Charmaz (2000: 515) describes the process as follows:

“Through coding, we start to define and categorize our data. In grounded theory coding, we create codes as we study our data. We do not, or should not, paste catchy concepts on our data. We should interact with our data and pose questions to them while coding them. Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material [...] and may lead us in unforeseen directions. Unlike quantitative research that requires data to fit into preconceived standardized codes, the researcher’s interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes in grounded theory.”

I used computer software to support the process of data analysis, an approach that provides a number of advantages, such as efficiency in data management and organisation of the large volumes of complex data generated in qualitative research (García-Hortaa and Guerra-Ramos, 2009: 151).

Despite the increased popularity of computer software to support qualitative data analysis, there is no consensus on the most suitable software package. While a number of authors have evaluated the relative merits of various software packages designed specifically for this kind of research (Dohan and Sanchez-Jankowski, 1998; Hwang, 2008; Schiellerup, 2008: 165;), others have found that such tailored Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDA) packages are unnecessary, since general purpose software can be adapted to offer the functions required (La Pelle, 2004; Ryan, 2004). For example, La Pelle’s (2004) research found that Microsoft Word can be used as an inexpensive tool with a relatively small learning curve to undertake qualitative data

analysis. Having evaluated the university-provided package, “Nvivo”²² in terms of the needs of the research, I decided to use a generic software package, “Notebook for Mac”²³ rather than a specific CAQDA package. This software allowed me to complete numerous functions to support my analysis of the data, including organising interviews transcripts; writing memos; coding data; creating a codebook and quickly and efficiently retrieving interview segments.

Firstly, all transcripts were imported into the software and a checklist of participants (using pseudonyms) was established to monitor progress with coding. I read through each interview transcript and assigned ‘codes’, where I had identified re-occurring concepts within the data that I felt warranted further analysis. These codes were marked-up in the data using the Keyword function within the Notebook software. I compiled a codebook during this process whereby I assigned a definition to each code to ensure these were applied consistently across the complete set of data. The complete set of codes was reviewed in order to refine definitions, merge categories where duplication occurred and identify codes that could be more appropriately interpreted as being sub-categories of other codes. This coding process was conducted iteratively and the interviews re-read so that newer codes identified in interviews later in the list could be applied to earlier, previously coded interviews where appropriate.

During the process of reading transcripts and applying codes, it was also possible to assign participant attributes, using the “Sticky note” feature of the software. In this way, transcripts were marked-up with information about the participant, such as the fact that they occupied a special role as part of their trusteeship (e.g. Chair or Treasurer). Using the software it

²² NVivo is a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis software package, developed by QSR International.

²³ “Notebook” is a multi-purpose note-taking and data-organisation software package for Apple Mac computers, developed by Circus Ponies Software.

was then possible to conduct a search to recall all participants who share this particular attribute, a useful tool later in the analysis process.

Having coded the individual transcripts using the software's "Keyword" function I was able to run searches by each keyword (code) to create a list of all participants whose interview contained that specific code, count the instances of that code and to collate all relevant extracts of interviews (across the entire set of data) where that particular concept had been discussed. For example, I was able to select a code such as "lacking confidence" and collate all instances where this concept was discussed in the interview. This integration stage allowed a deeper reading of examples of the concept among different interviewees and a comparative analysis of the similar, and different, situations in which participants reported their lack of confidence while carrying out the trustee role. It was also possible to view staff and trustee interviews side-by-side, allowing me to compare the perceptions of these two categories of participant in relation to a specific concept. In this way I began to establish emerging themes within the data that provided evidence of commonality of experience among participants, although also paying special attention to exceptions (Weiss 1994). Memos were created throughout the stages of coding, integration and review to record my thoughts and ideas about specific themes as they emerged during my work with the data.

The final stage was to consider the relationships and connections between the themes that had emerged from the data, in order to create a framework. Evidence from the literature review, my research aims and my interview guide were useful to verify and make sense of my interpretations and analysis of the data collected during the research and presented in this analytical framework (as discussed in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

Chapter 5: Trustee motivation and recruitment processes

Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 set out the historical and policy context to the research, in which social policies have created shifts in the role of the voluntary sector and its relationship with government, resulting in a number of implications for the independence, identity, financial security and responsibilities of charities. Given their role as guardians of charity independence and their governance and leadership roles within voluntary sector organisations, an understanding of the implications for trustees is critical. This chapter is the first of four chapters that present the research data and findings relating to the experiences and perspectives of charity trustees within this wider context. It begins by examining the factors that originally motivated participants to volunteer as charity trustees. Following on from this initial interest or motivation, participants experienced various recruitment processes. In many cases, this was an informal 'word of mouth' form of recruitment. Other participants responded to an advertisement and experienced a more formal recruitment process. The chapter considers some of the implications of the different methods of trustee recruitment employed by charities, particularly in light of the Charity Commission's (2007b) concern that the popularity of personal recommendation as a recruitment practice is limiting the pool of potential trustees at the expense of diversity. One consideration for charities when filling vacancies on their trustee boards is the kind of skills and attributes that are required. The chapter presents participants' perceptions of the necessary attributes for trusteeship, and the extent to which they are able to meet these requirements. In examining trustees' perceptions of the attributes required of a successful trustee and the recruitment processes employed by charities with trustee vacancies, evidence emerges of the high value placed on business skills, echoing

the professionalisation of the voluntary sector discussed in Chapter 3. A wide range of other skills are also valued among trustees, suggesting that organisations often attempt to build trustee boards with a extensive list of skills and experience. The chapter concludes by considering some of the implications of these findings.

Motivations

Relatively little research evidence exists on what motivates people to volunteer as charity trustees. The motivations of volunteers more generally have received greater attention in the extant literature (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen, 1991; MacNeela, 2008; Musick and Wilson, 2008; Yeung, 2004). Although the methodological challenges involved in discerning volunteer motivation have been acknowledged (Musick and Wilson, 2008: 56; Rochester et al., 2010: 120), a complex set of psychological and sociological theories have emerged, including models based on altruistic and self-oriented motives and multi-factor models. Rochester et al. (2010: 10) have identified three main 'paradigms' (as outlined in Chapter 3). From the perspective of what they termed the "dominant paradigm", volunteers are conceptualised as an unpaid workforce helping to deliver public services, and motivated largely by altruism. The "civil society paradigm" views volunteers' motivations as rooted in self-help and mutual aid. A third 'paradigm' considers other motivations for volunteering, such as skills development or self-expression.

A national survey of volunteering conducted for the Office of the Third Sector (Low et al., 2007) identified a variety of motivations to volunteer. The most popular reasons for volunteering reported by survey respondents included "to improve things / help people" (53%); "the cause was important to me" (41%) and "I had time to spare" (41%). In addition to these motives, the survey found a range of other factors – both altruistic and self-oriented – motivated people to volunteer (Low et al.,

2007: 34). A Canadian study focused on developing a quantitative tool to measure board member motivation indicates that volunteers on charity boards are similarly motivated by a variety of factors. Whilst altruistic reasons were found to be the most important motivating factor reported by board members, the study revealed that motivation consisted of various aspects such as enhancement of self-worth; learning through community; helping the community; developing individual relationships; making a unique contribution to the board; and self-healing (Inglis and Cleave, 2006: 97-98).

Similarly, participants in this study identified a variety of potential motivations for becoming a trustee, and it is evident that individual trustees may be motivated by multiple factors, including altruistic and self-oriented benefits:

"I've gained a great deal of knowledge and work experience. I actually think it's a really good thing to help other people improve their lives, which is what charitable organisations should actually be about... I enjoy it, the practical hands-on in the helping to manage the building... I just get a sense of doing something that's decent and worthwhile." (Annette, Trustee)

"It's probably for my personal development more than anything.... I thought the idea.... the actual purpose of the charity was really commendable. I love the fact that it's a local one and – yeah - it was going to give me the opportunity to see how a charity runs, how it operates and, you know, feel like you're making a difference." (Hannah, Trustee)

Many participants reported being motivated by making a contribution to the mission and objectives of the charity, and by feeling that what they are contributing to is 'worthwhile':

"I think often when people volunteer to join the Board of a charity, they're orientated towards the mission of the charity, and they're thinking about doing good. They're not thinking about being a lawyer or being an accountant or being a company director, they're thinking about helping the kiddies." (Paul, Trustee)

"I don't see the point of being part of a board that has nothing to do with you. And your life." (Lucy, Trustee)

"You do it because you're interested in it. If I wasn't interested in it, I would encourage other people to take my place" (Nicholas, Trustee)

"I make a contribution to the cause to which I'm committed. And I find it enjoyable and worthwhile" (Ken, Trustee)

A small number of participants noted that they were particularly motivated to volunteer for a local charity, rather than a national organisation. A key theme emerging from the interviews was the sense of working to "meet local needs". Participants expressed pride in the work that they were supporting in their own local areas, and some remarked that they felt compelled to volunteer in a charity situated within their own community.

"It's not a national charity, it's a local charity. They [the trustees] can identify with that, the fact it's local to where they are, where they work or where they live or both. I think, you know, that's quite a strong motivation." (Patricia, CEO)

"I'm from that area you see, so I'm aware of the issues. I don't live there now but that's where my origins are." (Frank, Trustee)

"I know that it is a much-needed resource. It's the only resource in the northwest that is a [work of organisation] project. It is only small. It needs to be protected." (Dayo, Trustee)

One trustee described how he had been called upon to help out when other members of the local community identified many refugees in need locally. Another trustee perceived that parents in her local area were, like her, struggling to find childcare. This motivated her to establish a childcare charity:

“The school didn’t have a before- or after-school club ... there was an assumption that all the parents would be there at the beginning and the end of the day to collect their kids and that mothers and some fathers would be at home, home-making and there to collect the children. There was a real shortage of good child-minders... [We surveyed the local parents and demonstrated] there was a real demand. Enough to justify [setting up a childcare charity].” (Dana, Trustee)

Another example of trustees responding to local need was the case of Alice, who volunteered to join the board of a local organisation at risk of closure when a call for help went out among her local community:

“People said ‘oh I believe [name of charity] is in trouble and they are looking for help’. And so we just turned up. Because [the charity] was an integral part of the community of [name of area] and a very important part of [name of area]. There are women there who’s grandchildren are now coming to the centre, so that’s how old [the charity] is. So there were women in the community who didn’t want to lose that. So that’s how they were able to galvanise the support and get it back up and running.” (Alice, Trustee)

There is evidence that some trustees’ initial interest was prompted when they identified that they could offer help or skills to a charity or cause:

You have an opportunity as a charity Trustee to give something that is much more valuable than just a standing order [donation] to go to Oxfam once a month, you can actually give your experience, and the wealth of your knowledge to an organisation.” (Paul, Trustee)

“The reason I became a trustee [at the charity I was previously a volunteer in] is because I thought this is my charity, I can stay here for as long as we keep funding going and maybe being on the committee I can see what goes on behind the scenes and help in some way” (Andrew, Trustee)

As well as reflecting on their own motivations for volunteering, some participants commented on the perceived motivations of other trustees. A small number of participants identified motivations that drove people to become trustees for the ‘wrong’ reasons. For example, they were critical

of people that were attracted to the position for the title of 'trustee' or the status. Some expressed the view that people who had the 'wrong' motivations for becoming trustees might not put sufficient effort into fulfilling the role:

"If people want to get involved it's a good thing to do. It's the involvement. I don't think you should just be a trustee, sit there and say nothing. If people want to... get a little badge on their names or something to say I'm a trustee, they should stay away. What charities need are people to get involved and say 'I'll do that'. If an action comes up, 'I'll have a go at that'. That's what charities need." (Colin, Trustee)

"It is often seen as prestigious and a positional thing. I'm sure there is an element in quite a lot of trustee appointments in thinking "I've made it" rather than reflecting on the job you need to do and how it might be quite different from the things you've done before." (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

In addition to concerns about people being attracted to trusteeship for the status, a minority of participants felt that being motivated by personal 'agendas' or to enhance their curriculum vitae were inappropriate reasons for taking on the role:

"What we try and avoid is picking people up who are just doing it to pad their CVs or doing it because they like to be professional committee members or doing it because they have got a single issue axe to grind and they feel that one of the best ways to do it is to use the [charity name], and so they'll come along very dissatisfied with some treatment that a family member's had lately with a statutory agency and then try and use the [charity name] to make it into a social policy issue and gather evidence for this single cause." (Gary, Trustee)

This was not a universal view, however, and there is evidence that other participants viewed self-oriented benefits such as gaining work experience as acceptable:

"I think I'd suggest [to potential new trustees] that they found something that they will get something out of, either because they're doing something they really believe in, or alternatively that

they'll get a lot of professional development out of it, almost treat it is as a bit of sort of CPD, continuous professional development, from their day job. Which I do as well, I do get a bit of that out of it." (Bill, Trustee)

In addition to revealing a range of reasons for their initial motivation to volunteer, participants identified a variety of factors that sustained their interest and motivation:

"Because I had only limited time the charity work had to be something meaningful and because the work of this organisation effects everyone, its massive, I decided to stay. Another reason why I've stayed... people are really, really nice and they are doing things for the right reasons. Other places I see people maybe have a will to power. Its nothing like that here." (Andrew, Trustee)

"And like a lot of voluntary sector organisations, we're all quite good friends and we all know each other, or we're all friends and know each other. So that's good but that has its challenges, it really does. It's very, very good because it means you know you can trust, you know you can get on with, you know the person's there for the right reasons but at the same time, it has its problems because if you do have issues with an individual, it can be more difficult to address those." (Julia, Trustee)

"We never sit down and pat ourselves on the back, but ... there is a number of people that think we've done really well this year, or in past years. It is a struggle, you don't see benefits quickly. And some people who are the recipients of the projects they don't see the benefits of it quickly either. But in time you know that if they are going through your project, you know that they will come out good. So that's quite reassuring." (Dayo, Trustee)

"I think it has left something really, really valuable for that community. I have been part of that. A big part of it. I feel quite proud, actually that I've been involved in it...it has left a legacy. It is carrying on and people really benefit from it. For me, that is wonderful. Its wonderful to have been involved in that." (Dana, Trustee)

"It fits in probably with... it does fit in with my values. I have a personal philosophy that believes if I have been lucky enough in this society to get a reasonable education and to have a

reasonable job ... that I should give something back. And I work with a wonderful group of talented, funny, innovative women.”
(Charlotte, Trustee)

These positive benefits experienced by trustees, balanced with the challenges and negative aspects of the role are key in influencing the overall experience of trusteeship and sustaining an individual's desire to remain in the role. As Dwiggins-Beeler et al. (2011) argue, motivational factors alone are insufficient to sustain a volunteer in their role. The remainder of this chapter, and those that follow it therefore examine multiple aspects of participants' experiences of trusteeship, including the extent to which their initial expectations were fulfilled and the factors that had influenced some trustees to resign from the role.

Recruitment of new trustees

While motivation is highly important in inducing an individual to volunteer, identifying an opportunity to realise this motivation is critical. People are most likely to volunteer when they feel both “willing and able” to respond to a charity's need for help (Musick and Wilson, 2008: 49). Paradoxically, although a crucial process, research has indicated that recruitment practices for volunteers are weak or non-existent (Low et. al., 2007). Furthermore, the Charity Commission (2005) has identified that 39% of charities experience difficulties in filling vacancies on their trustee boards. They also note that 66% of large charities, and 72% of small charities, have found it difficult to attract trustees with the necessary skills.

Recruitment by “word of mouth” or personal recommendation is the most common method of attracting new trustees although – as discussed in Chapter 3 - this has been criticised for potentially limiting the pool of potential recruits and failing to increase board diversity (Charity Commission, 2007b: 9). Guidance from a range of sources recommends that advertising vacancies should be considered as an option (ACEVO, 2007b: 37; Charity Commission, 2007b; Dyer, 2008: 200) and a range of

trustee recruitment services have emerged, ranging from free advert listings (NCVO, 2012; CTN, 2012) to full brokerage services at a cost to charities (REACH, 2012; Trustees Unlimited, 2012).

In this study, just two participants had become trustees by responding to an advertisement; the majority of trustees interviewed having been recruited to their organisations via word of mouth or personal recommendation.

“Well [Charity A] I was asked to be involved... by the [then] Chief Exec of Liverpool Voluntary Services - I think he was always on the look out for people who he thought would actually be helpful with the voluntary sector - so that’s how I became involved with [Charity A] and [Charity B], and in fact it has always been word of mouth and people asking me. [Charity C] was different... we actually set up [Charity C].” (Annette, Trustee)

“That particular management committee only has people from BRM backgrounds on the committee as part of the ethos of the organisation. So if you happen to be from one of the BRM groups, plus you’ve got the expertise in housing or childcare, finances, whatever, you know you’ll be headhunted to go on there (laughs).” (Dayo, Trustee)

Five participants had become trustees as a result of being involved with new organisations that went on to become registered charities. In these cases, founding members were expected to become trustees to satisfy the requirements of the Charity Commission. For others, their entry into trusteeship was gradual:

“In fact there wasn’t one particular point where they actually said to me, “so you agree to be a trustee then?” I remember actually saying to the coordinator of the charity, the main employee there, that yes I was happy to be a trustee there, but I think I volunteered that. So it was like a gentle approach to encourage me to come to meetings, to then see if it captured my interest and if I had a role to play.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

“I was just going to be a volunteer! (laughs) Well, I was in Australia on a holiday when I got an email to say I’d been nominated as treasurer! And it had been agreed in my absence (laughs). So this is how....it was organic....just ‘you’re going

to be a trustee'.... 'Oh you're good at this, you be this'." (Alice, Trustee)

It was not unusual for trustees to be recruited as a result of their prior involvement with the charity as a volunteer or through their family or professional connections:

"I wouldn't say I had the passion for what the charity is about, it was just that my wife was working there and that's what got my interest. Just to help out." (Colin, Trustee)

"They wanted a lawyer. My (law) firm has done work for [Charity name], I haven't. One of my partners was approached and the last thing he wanted to be was a trustee at that time so he mentioned it me. I was interested ... I thought it is a good thing to get involved in pro bono thing to give something back to the community, also in particular [this charity] because it is a [health charity] and my mum died of that [condition]." (Jonathan, Trustee)

"I actually worked for [charity] ... until 1999... and then I retired, but [charity] has a wonderful way of recycling people! So to cut a story short, in 2001 I was invited to become a trustee." (Pauline, Trustee)

Many participants in the research here had been directly asked to become trustees, and perceived that this influenced their decision to volunteer. This view accords with literature that indicates that personal contact and being asked to volunteer is an important factor in volunteer recruitment (Musick and Wilson, 2008: 288; Rochester et al., 2010: 132), and suggests that despite criticisms of recruitment through personal recommendation (Charity Commission, 2005), the method has its advantages.

"Well, a few years ago, I met the Executive Director here who's been a family friend for many, many years and he asked me to come on board as a Trustee... he said, 'Oh, would you come and help us?' and I said, 'Yeah, okay, no problem.' So I came on board for a number of years. I was already a Trustee with a couple of other organisations as well, so I thought yeah, I might as well, you know, a bit of payback and help out in the community." (Issac, Deputy Manager and former trustee)

“It’s very flattering to be asked, which I think is often the way these things work. People feel flattered to be asked.” (Matthew, Trustee)

“I’d be more likely if somebody asked me. I don’t like saying no when it’s face to face. When it is in the paper, or sent home in a school letter, you just go ‘oh no, I’m not really into that at the moment, I haven’t got the time for that’. But when someone has actually taken the time to personally ask you, you kind of go ‘yeah, okay, I could do that.’” (Lucy, Ex-Trustee)

Although most trustees in the study had experienced word of mouth recruitment, the interviews with senior staff revealed a greater diversity of trustee recruitment practices in use. There was a broadly equal split between senior staff that reported their organisations used word of mouth recruitment; those that advertised; and those using a mixture of the two methods. Participants offered examples of how their organisations had used both personal recommendation and advertising to attract trustees:

“We have recruited through an advert to one of those roles. Recently it is back to the other way, which is [through] the contacts we have. Because the person available... we knew he would become available having resigned from another major organisation. We just approached him because it was too good an opportunity to miss.” (Mark, CEO)

“We tend to have people lined up rather than having to advertise. We’ve also worked with the Chamber of Commerce who will do some volunteer recruitment work for us. We’ve also considered advertising in the Society Guardian...” (Gary, Trustee)

Some senior staff members reported that their charities were changing and formalising their approach to trustee recruitment, and perceived that advertising vacancies could attract new trustees with different perspectives and an openness to change:

“Initially, I approached people I knew and trusted. That’s not the case now. The last four or five appointments we’ve made have

been by advert and everybody has a fixed term of three year maximum term with an option to go to a second term but no longer. I just think that's good governance." (Matthew, Trustee)

"I think one of the difficulties is that charities potentially become a little bit self perpetuating because the Board recruits the new Board and I think that there is an element ... I mean, it happens in business, it happens in all sorts of walks of life. But people look for people who are like them and what they bring, "Oh yes. This is a good person", and what they're actually saying is, "This person agrees with me". (Jennie, CEO)

However, organisations that placed advertisements for their trustee recruitment were not always successful in attracting suitable candidates. One participant recalled an interview with a potential trustee where it became clear that they were not suited to the role. Others explained that there were not always sufficient applicants in response to advertisements:

"Yeah, well we do have a recruitment policy where we have an equal opportunities recruitment, so we put out an advert... You don't always manage to get people through an advert, I have to say... If we don't get people through advert, we might say, you know, do people know people who could be interested and get them to apply." (Christine, CEO)

The study here reveals evidence that some of the more formal options for trustee recruitment may be difficult for smaller charities to employ. For example, one participant highlighted the fact that placing adverts in newspapers was prohibitively expensive:

"I think if people realised how interesting it is, that there would be more people coming forward. But a part of the difficulty as well is it's quite expensive to advertise, and you see the big national charities advertise for trustees on the back page of the Sunday Times job ads, and that's seriously expensive recruitment." (Bill, Trustee)

Local volunteer centres are a low cost means of recruiting volunteers, but there was little evidence that charities had successfully recruited volunteer trustees via this route.

“We did go to the volunteer bureau but they don’t seem to get those kinds of volunteers that we need.” (Alice, Trustee)

As one participant explained, he had tried to find a trustee vacancy via his local volunteer centre but was unable to identify an opportunity that he felt would make best use of his professional management skills:

“I actually went through the, I had a look at the...was it the Volunteer Centre? I did go down that route, but the majority of the things that seem to come through there are the helping out on a Wednesday morning in a charity shop, and, not knocking people that do that, that’s just not getting the best leverage out of what I can do.” (Bill, Trustee)

The findings indicate that as well as differing in their approaches to recruitment of trustees, organisations differ in terms of who leads the recruitment exercise. In some, the trustee board, led by the Chair, takes responsibility for filling trustee vacancies. In other organisations, the Chief Executive takes the lead in finding new trustees for the board. In some cases, the task of trustee recruitment is shared between the board and the Chief Executive, with the Chair and CEO both sitting on a recruitment panel for example. This diversity of approach is reflected in the diverging opinions of participants about where the responsibility for trustee recruitment should rest. Guidance from the Charity Commission (2007b: 11) makes explicit that legal responsibility for trustee recruitment rests with the trustee board and that they should retain overall control of the process, even if they delegate elements of the task to staff. However, the findings of this research indicate that, in practice, staff sometimes play leading roles in the process of finding new trustees for their organisations. Some participants felt very strongly that the board or Chair should recruit new members, and that CEO-led recruitment was

inappropriate in view of the fact that the board should hold the CEO to account in their work:

"[Recruitment is led] always by the Chair. I don't think that the chief executive has a place at all in recruiting trustees. I think that is a dangerous road to go down. We may meet people and make a mention to the Chair. I am involved in a number of networks where I see people with different hats on. I think it is a complete folly to have a chief executive choosing trustees. Absolutely not." (Mark, CEO)

"The board of trustees in the previous organisation I was in was basically selected from friends and followers and admirers of the manager of the charity. It was basically her fanclub. And I wasn't a member of the trustee committee because I was a member of staff but I remember thinking that the trustees... all they had to do was turn up for meetings, listen to how wonderful the boss said she was and vote her a pay increase." (Sian, Trustee)

However others felt that the CEO and senior staff team are often better placed to identify the attributes needed among new trustees:

"I think I would say speak to the Chief Exec, speak to the Senior Management Team and ask them what they need in a trustee. Because I think there's an element of, 'I know somebody, they'd be a good trustee' in the board themselves and the difficulty with that is that you tend to get people who may or may not be providing what you need, bringing other people in who are like them who may or may not provide what they need, and so you know, you get people who are very similar coming in and I think if the Senior Management Team were consulted, they would know whether they are getting what they need and therefore they know what they want." (Jennie, CEO)

"And if I was to say what are the ingredients of being a successful trustee recruiter, you need a strong, assertive, dynamic Chief Exec. Because she targets the people; she looks at it, she thinks 'I need someone with that', or 'I need someone with that', and then she goes and pursues them" (Mick, Trustee)

Some participants raised the issue of diversity among trustees, in particular making reference to concerns about the under-representation of young people in trustee positions (Charity Commission, 2010). Good

practice guidance emphasises the benefits of recruiting individuals from diverse backgrounds to serve as trustees, pointing to increased accountability, access to skills and knowledge and transparency (Charity Commission, 2007b; Lesirge et al., 2006). A recent report by the Charity Commission (2010: 3) used focus groups to investigate potential reasons for the under-representation of young people in trustee positions, noting that fewer than 0.5% of trustees are aged 18-24. Its findings suggested that young people lack awareness of trusteeship, were concerned about the heavy responsibility and time commitment and lacked confidence that they had appropriate attributes to offer to the role.

Two of the participants in this study were trustees aged 18-24 and they offered similar perspectives to those in the Charity Commission research, identifying a lack of awareness and concerns about required prior experience as potential barriers to increasing the numbers of young people serving as charity trustees:

"I suppose speaking to my friends and my course-mates, they don't know what a trustee would do and so when they're looking to do volunteering or work with a charity, they look more towards ... collections or fundraisings or they'll go work in a soup kitchen two days a week" (Kirsty, Trustee)

"I think... you go into being a trustee for the experience. You don't necessarily have a great deal of that, there are only so many years you can have under your belt working in a company. But maybe if they outline their expectations of a trustee who's younger, and just say, look, we don't expect you to be aware of things which some senior director of all sorts of companies would be, but you know we still really value a fresh perspective and if you've got some good ideas, that's great. I suppose you just have to reassure them [young people] more than anything that they've got something valuable to contribute. Because I think you just don't necessarily think that you would do. Its only because its been suggested to me by other people who know what charities value that I even got involved. I would have thought it was something for me to do in ten, twenty years time. You don't necessarily consider it." (Hannah, Trustee)

Interestingly, one of the 'young' trustees in the research revealed that she might favour older people if she were recruiting to fill trustee vacancies, since she perceived that they would be more likely to have greater levels of experience to offer:

"I think when you're looking for that external trustee role, I don't know if it's just stereotypical but you're looking for someone with experience and so that's normally conducive to someone that's older and has experienced more and, probably, one would hope for somebody who had been a trustee before. I don't think we'd necessarily not consider anyone who's younger, I think it depends on levels of experience and the sort of trustee that you would like but I think, I don't know for certain, but I'd probably go for someone older, if it was me." (Kirsty, Trustee)

One of the older trustees participating in the research also commented on the relative lack of young people taking up trusteeships, and perceived a change in the ways in which people undertake voluntary action:

"You find youngsters who've been gaily marching against things and for things, going to camps and yet never dream of sitting on a committee to organise it. For yet my generation, its the British thing to do – if something needs doing, set up a committee! Nowadays if something needs doing get on Facebook and Twitter and organise it." (Peter, Trustee)

One participant perceived a potential tension between the aim of recruiting young people as trustees and the need to ensure trustees have appropriate skills and experience to fulfil their legal responsibilities. One suggestion was that young people could be invited to join boards as observers initially, to give them an opportunity to prepare themselves for the legal responsibilities of trusteeship:

"I love the idea that a board ought to be encouraging people, a young person say, onto a board, who acknowledges they don't have the skills and knowledge and experience and competencies. But on day one of signing up they have the legal responsibility and how do we marry those, I don't quite know. Perhaps we ought to be looking at some models whereby a new trustee arrives and we encourage young people onto a board by having them as observers for a period of time and allowing them to work with the

board but not yet take the legal responsibility. Or we just encourage people to dive in and you have the responsibility, much like I did, didn't really understand it, but what's the risk of that, is that really wrong? But I quite like the idea that there is some sort of introduction that understood... where you're getting people on without them having to know everything. Because you are legally responsible but you ought to have opportunities to be learning as you go along." (CEO, Charity Trustees Network)

The data offers evidence that concerns about having the right skills and experience to undertake the trustee role are not confined to young trustees, however. As discussed in Chapter 6, participants of all age groups experienced a lack of confidence in the role and were concerned about whether or not they had an adequate level of knowledge and understanding in certain aspects. Furthermore, many participants were conscious of their legal responsibilities and experienced a level of anxiety about legal liability. As such, opportunities to learn skills and knowledge while in the trustee role and actions which would increase trustees' confidence and understanding are likely to be beneficial not only in the recruitment of younger people as trustees but for supporting trustees more generally.

Commentators have also expressed concern about other aspects of diversity, for example by arguing that people from black and racial minority (BRM) groups are under-represented in trustee positions (ACEVO, 2007a). The issue was also raised during the participant interview with the Charity Commission's representative:

"There is an issue with diversity you know, in terms of age and probably gender and certainly in terms of ethnicity. Some organisations really do struggle to get BME representation on their board". (Director of Charity Information, Charity Commission)

A small number of participants were volunteering as trustees in organisations - such as women's organisations or black and racial minority organisations - that restricted membership of their boards to trustees of particular backgrounds:

"[In one of the charities I'm a trustee of] we are actually looking for new people and we will be advertising but we will be specifically saying in the advert that we're looking for women, because men cannot be on the management committee. Its in the constitution and its all agreed and that. But it will be saying specifically women from a BRM background." (Dayo, Trustee)

Two participants were from faith organisations that required trustees to be able to work within the religious ethos of the charity. In one of these the participant admitted that they had struggled to recruit non-Muslims to their board despite opening their recruitment to all groups.

Two participants observed that they were from a group under-represented on their organisation's trustee board and sensed that they were a 'token' representative:

"There is something about being black and being a woman on a MC. They are mostly white men, and also white women. It doesn't bother me, but it did initially. I felt I wasn't being heard. There is an issue about not being taken seriously. I was only consulted about race, when something has got race in its title. It would be interesting to ask men about how they see women on a MC. All my organisations have a woman in the Chair but it is still rare. When I leave [charity name] they will find it hard to replace me with another black member, as they have always struggled to recruit BRM members." (Dayo, Trustee)

"I did kind of feel as though - you see they got a lot of praise off OFSTED because they had a parent on the board - so I do feel as though I was the token parent. And the fact that I'm black as well." (Lucy, Trustee)

In summary, participants had experienced a variety of methods of trustee recruitment, and the degree to which staff or trustees led on this also varied from organisation to organisation. However, there is strong evidence that word of mouth and personal recommendation remain the most common methods of attracting new trustees. Despite official guidance that favours advertisement as a recruitment method to promote diversity, and perceptions that a lack of diversity on boards remains an issue of concern, many participants preferred word of mouth as a way of

attracting new trustees. They perceived that such an approach avoids the expense and ineffectiveness of advertisements, and that directly inviting people to volunteer offers an effective means of persuading people to become trustees. These findings raise important questions about how useful and relevant official guidance on trustee recruitment is to voluntary organisations, and the extent to which such guidance acknowledges the heterogeneous needs of different sized organisations within the sector. Furthermore, the continuing prevalence of word of mouth approaches to trustee recruitment and persisting concerns about the lack of diversity among trustees is particularly pertinent given their increasing level of involvement in delivering contracted out public services and responsibility for meeting the needs of a diverse group of service users.

Attributes of an “ideal” trustee

Discussions about methods of recruiting new trustees to an organisation often led to conversations about the types of people that would be ideally suited to the role. The Charity Commission provides the following advice on this matter:

“When trustees are thinking about recruiting a new trustee or trustees, a good starting point is to look at what skills, knowledge and experience are needed to make sure that the charity is well governed and is run effectively, efficiently and appropriately to its size and complexity. This does not mean that trustee boards should contain experts or specialists to cover every eventuality.”
(Charity Commission, 2007b: c2)

Guidance for charities within the ‘good practice’ literature recommends that boards undertake a skills assessment or use other means to identify the skills required of new trustees (Lesirge et al., 2006; Dyer, 2008; Code Steering Group, 2010). A minority of participants in this study confirmed that their organisations do carry out skills audits and maintain lists of the ideal mix of skills they were seeking among the trustee board.

Following Harris's (1998: 182) research that found that charities were increasingly seeking trustees with specialist or business skills, many of the participants in this study noted that professional skills such as finance and management experience were particularly valued:

"You want some core skills on the board. To raise money you need people involved in that in the past. If you are going to do trading, you need someone from business. It is good to have a lawyer or banker because they bring general experience. If you are going to do certain areas like research, education or health type things, or sports even, it is useful to have someone who has done that sort of thing at a reasonably high level either in local government or national government or areas where they can open doors and connect you to the right people." (Jonathan, Trustee)

"We do policy work, we do influencing and campaigning work. So we need trustees who have expertise in that area to contribute. And we do work in research. We need trustees who understand research processes. But we also do a lot of stuff around raising money and keeping the organisation afloat. You know, the business side of things. So we need people with a business background. There isn't a generic trustee that we need. We need people to fill all the different slots." (Jennie, CEO)

In one organisation, the original trustees and founders had stepped aside in a belief that people with professional skills were needed to take the charity forward:

"So you've gone from a group of kind of women who were marvellous and set up a small organisation, but actually who stepped back six, seven, eight years ago and said we're no longer the people to take this; we need to get some professional women" (Charlotte, Trustee)

The interview with Debbie, a charity Deputy CEO, revealed her perception that technical business knowledge was an important attribute for trustees of the organisation:

"You can't just have someone who is well-meaning and wants to help people. Because the decisions that are being made are much more about business process really." (Debbie, Deputy CEO)

However, a trustee from the same charity indicated that she felt pressurised by the expectation that she should have a thorough financial and legal knowledge. She perceived that her knowledge of the client group had been a key reason that she had been invited to join the committee, but indicated she felt this was now undervalued:

“I think that it should be okay for me to be a trustee and not have all these specialisations, because I think my general knowledge of the client group is very good and my general knowledge of some of the services and issues involved, that’s very good.” (Sian, Trustee)

The expectations placed upon trustees and the kinds of knowledge and skills they have, therefore, may not necessarily accord with their motivations for volunteering and the type of contribution they want to make to the charity.

This emphasis on professional skills, even among volunteers, can be seen as symptomatic of an increasing trend towards professionalisation within the sector, an issue that will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Furthermore, it raises implications for a number of the issues examined in Chapter 3, including concerns that a focus on commercial and business skills may be at the expense of other roles voluntary sector organisations, such as advocacy or campaigning.

There is a potential tension between the aspiration to attract professional skills to the board and attempts to increase board diversity. If organisations place a strong emphasis on the need for professional skills and work experience, they risk deterring potential trustees without these skills from applying for the role. Campaigns to attract younger trustees (Charity Commission, 2010) are likely to be undermined by trustee recruitment processes that require trustees to have pre-existing skills acquired from extensive experience in the workplace. Service-users are another group who will potentially be deterred from volunteering as

trustees if there is an expectation that all members of the board should be able to demonstrate skill in professional skills such as law and accountancy. Again, this has implications for charities keen to demonstrate “user involvement” by recruiting service users to their trustee boards (Charity Commission, 2000). One potential solution would be to offer training to the required level of skill to trustees once they are in the role, although as discussed later there is evidence that some trustees have not been offered training and that there are some barriers to them accessing the training they require. Furthermore, the data shows that many organisations were trying to recruit lawyers, accountants and other business professionals to their boards, which indicates that candidates with pre-existing, high levels of skills are valued over people with the potential to learn the skills for the trustee role ‘on the job’.

A further tension exists between the notion of recruiting professionals such as lawyers and accountants as trustees, and the fact that each trustee on the board holds legal responsibility for the fiscal and legal affairs of the charity. Participants discussed the fact that it is difficult to acquire a high level of knowledge in all areas of a charity and that inevitably some trustees would be relied upon to provide particular knowledge and skills.

“At [our charity] you have a chairman who was chief executive at [well-known company], so he has done a lot of business dealings and met a lot of business people. When it comes to talking about shops for [our charity] he has been there. He will pick up a balance sheet and tell us what is going well, what is going bad. You just have that experience. I don’t have the experience in retail so I would go to him.” (Jonathan, Trustee)

There were mixed feelings about the kind of situation where an individual trustee shares responsibility for governance and decisions made by the board, but lacks confidence in certain technical skills and therefore relies on other trustees. Some trustees felt more comfortable than others with the idea of relying on their fellow trustees for particular areas of knowledge or skills, feeling that a mix of trustees complemented each

other. Ken, a lawyer by profession, explained that in his trustee role other members of the board relied on his legal training, but that everyone had something to contribute:

“They would look to me on legal issues. We have as well on the board a retired and very senior nurse... we look to her on technical issues in relation to nursing. We have someone else who has been a fundraiser and we look to him in relation to fundraising. But we share the thing around. We have an accountant as well. So we share the load, we have different expertise, we all bring different things to the party.” (Ken, Trustee)

While some participants viewed reliance on others as inevitable and understandable, others perceived it as an uncomfortable risk:

“There’s a lot which I don’t really understand. Like the financial stuff scares me [laughs] and it is quite daunting to just go into something when you feel like you’re supposed to be an expert. Well maybe not an expert but doing the best you can. And you just hope...there are other trustees that are stronger in the area of finance. Its quite daunting I suppose to just have to put your trust in them.” (Hannah, Trustee)

The Director of Strategy of the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) highlighted another potential issue arising from the expectation that trustees should bring professional skills and experience to the role. On the one hand, trustees need a sufficient level of understanding of the issues being discussed in order to fulfil their responsibilities. This may include an awareness of the risks, legal obligations and financial position of the charity. However if professionals with management, finance or legal expertise are recruited to the board, he argued, there is a risk of the boundaries between paid staff and trustees becoming blurred:

“They are not there to do the Chief Exec’s or finance guy’s job.” (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

“The tension is if you have paid staff - and it is completely different if there are no paid staff - and you recruit trustees with skills... there is a tension between you have paid staff, you have trustees with those skills, are they stepping on each others toes, do the staff then think the trustee board is delving in to operational matters. There needs to be plenty of communication... you don't want to bring in skilled people [as trustees] and then say stay off our patch because you do strategic and we do operational.” (Head of Governance and Leadership, NCVO)

The complexities of the relationship between trustees and paid staff are considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

One trustee expressed her fears that trustees from a business background might not work in the best interests of the charity, and could put them under pressure to close due to a lack of profitability or financial viability:

“That was the other worry if we brought in business people onto the board, would we be influenced by...if we had a super-duper accountant from one of these accountancy firms and I can see him saying ‘well look girls by the end of March you’ll be out of business, I suggest you fold now’. We know what they’d do. And would we buckle under?” (Alice, Trustee)

As well as professional or business-related skills, some participants felt that good candidates for trustee positions would be people able to represent the community or understand the needs of service-users. Other useful attributes suggested by participants were the ability to advise the Chief Executive while also remaining independent and able to scrutinise the work of paid staff:

“At board level, the chief executive needs someone who is able to give a general overview and pearls of wisdom which they have developed over thirty years in their business.” (Jonathan, Trustee)

“Because as a trustee you are in effect ensuring that employees are doing the right thing with the money that has been spent by external people to promote the cause. You need to be a bit independent of them.” (Ken, Trustee)

“We’ve been trying to ensure that we’ve got the right sort of people working on the board. And by the right sort of people I mean people who represent the interest of the people who we’re there to serve and from the communities that they serve, people who have got a set of skills which are useful to the board, so we’re always looking for people who either have got a legal expertise, financial expertise, and that’s accountants, people who have got a detailed knowledge of the local authorities direction, people who are good with aid things like buildings and facilities and health and safety and disability, discrimination.” (Gary, Trustee)

Overall, there is evidence in the data that organisations were attempting to form boards with a mix of people bringing a variety of different skills. The strongest emphasis was placed on professional skills, particularly those who were able to understand the financial and legal implications of issues being faced by charities. Such an emphasis is symptomatic of the increasing pressure on charities to adopt ‘business-like’ practices and concerns about the blurring of the boundaries between private and voluntary sectors – issues that are taken up in Chapter 8. Taken as a whole, many different skills and attributes were sought, raising implications for the abilities of charities to attract such an extensive list of skills and experience among a small group of volunteer trustees. Given the significant numbers of vacancies on trustee boards – and this challenging ‘wishlist’ of trustee attributes - the recent review (Hodgson, 2012) of the legislation pertaining to remuneration of trustees is pertinent, and is examined in Chapter 8.

Summary

In summary this chapter began with the first stages of a trustee’s journey, by examining what had motivated participants to volunteer for the role. Understanding what motivates people to volunteer is a complex issue and the data indicates that trustees are driven by a multitude of motivations. The motivational factors reported by participants in this study included both self-oriented and altruistic drivers. Some participants emphasised their desire to contribute to the charity’s objectives, or had responded

directly to a perceived need or cause that they felt they could contribute to. Some participants were motivated to volunteer as trustees by the opportunity it presented to develop skills and work experience.

The findings also indicate that 'good practice' recommended by the policy community in relation to trustee recruitment is not consistently adopted by smaller, local charities. Although guidance generally recommends that trustees should take lead responsibility for filling vacancies and that formal recruitment methods (via advertisement) are preferable, the data indicates that some charities do not adopt such practices and find these recommendations impracticable. For example, there was evidence that in some charities, paid staff play a major role in finding new trustees and that it is not uncommon for trustees to be recruited informally by word of mouth or personal recommendation. There was a perception among some participants that, despite policy guidance to the contrary, there are advantages to such informal methods of recruitment, for example lower costs and the ability to appeal directly to potential trustees who knew the charity and were likely to support it. Some trustees acknowledged that they were more likely to volunteer when directly asked to. Although the data also indicated that some participants had experienced more formal recruitment processes, including advertisement and interview, it was clear that voluntary organisations adopt a variety of practices and that one size does not fit all.

A further theme emergent from the data is that of the increasing professionalisation of the voluntary sector and the impact this is having on the construction of trusteeship. Although the Charity Commission (2007b) has indicated that charity boards of trustees should not need to include specialists or experts on every subject, the data indicates a widespread perception among participants that professional skills and business-related experience are highly desirable attributes in a charity trustee. This raises a number of issues. Firstly, it has implications for the relationship between trustees and paid staff since the distinction between their roles may become blurred (see chapter 6 for further discussion of

this). Secondly, if expectations of the skills trustees should have are set too high, many potential trustees may be deterred from applying for the role, and existing trustees may lack confidence that they are able to attain the level of skills and knowledge expected of them. Furthermore, there may be a mismatch between a charity's aspiration to be 'professional' or business-like and the factors that motivate trustees to volunteer – such as their appreciation of the charitable nature of the work. Finally, some trustees indicated that too much emphasis on business-like qualities undermines the distinctive ethos of the voluntary sector and risks eroding the qualities that set charities apart from commercial entities. This discussion is expanded in Chapter 8.

Taken together, these inconsistencies between policy and practice indicate that charities – and trustees - are not homogeneous. As Harrow and Palmer (1998) observe, there is great diversity in trustee types and motivations, and a greater understanding and acknowledgement of this by policy-makers would be welcomed:

“the continuing implicit assumptions in British public policy of similarity among trustees - that they are all strategy makers now, that they are ripe for training, and that they are fully ready to take on their "heavy responsibilities" - must continue to be challenged.”
(Harrow and Palmer, 1998: 183)

Chapter 6: Trustee responsibilities and training needs

Introduction

The previous chapter presented evidence that trustees identify a wide variety of different skills and attributes that they perceive to be important in fulfilling the role, although a strong emphasis was placed on value of 'business' skills or professional knowledge of financial and legal matters. The data also indicates a trend in recruitment practices for targeting potential trustees with these skills. Participants' views on these issues were to some extent influenced by their understanding of the role and responsibilities of trustees. Their perceptions of the scope and remit of the trustee role is examined in some detail in this chapter. Reflecting the heterogeneity of experiences evident in the data presented in Chapter 5, the data presented here reveals a lack of consensus about the role and tasks that should be undertaken by trustees. Participants in the study were undertaking a diversity of tasks and this differed from organisation to organisation. However, the data suggests that despite divergent views on the precise scope of the tasks appropriate to the trustee role, there is consensus about the fact that trustees experience a heavy burden of responsibility. This has important implications for their training and support needs. The final section of the chapter concerns participants' experience of training, and presents data that indicates some potential barriers to trustees receiving adequate training and support to help them fulfil their responsibilities.

Responsibilities and tasks of trustees

The Charity Commission (2008a) defines the responsibilities of charity trustees in their publication "The Essential Trustee". The responsibilities include ensuring the charity complies with relevant legislation, remains

solvent and adheres to its charitable objectives and governing documents (for example its Constitution), but can be summarised as follows:

“Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.” (Charity Commission, 2008a: 6)

Trustees have legal responsibility for their charities and trustees may become personally liable in a number of situations, such as where an organisation commits a criminal offence, fails to comply with statutory duties (such as health and safety regulations) or breaches of contractual obligations (Sinclair Taylor, 2006), although as Dyer (2008: 40) emphasises, it is unlikely that trustees who have acted “honestly and reasonably” will be found personally liable by the Charity Commission. The Commission itself states that:

“Trustees may be personally liable for any debts or losses that the charity faces [...] This will depend on the circumstances and the type of governing document for the charity. However, personal liability of this kind is rare, and trustees who have followed the requirements on this page will generally be protected.” (Charity Commission, 2008a: 6).

In addition to the Charity Commission’s legal definitions of trustees’ responsibilities, there is a raft of ‘good practice’ guidance that sets out expectations of trustee boards in areas such as financial controls, ethical standards, recruitment and training of trustees, operational planning and monitoring and internal and external accountability (for example, Charity Commission, 2002; 2003 and 2007b; Dyer, 2008; Hudson, 2009; Code Steering Group, 2010 and 2011).

Despite previous research findings that indicated a lack of awareness among some trustees of the responsibilities of the role (Working Party on Trustee Training, 1992a), the majority of trustees in this study were aware

of their legal responsibilities and perceived that the role entailed a high level of responsibility:

“I think you go into this for noble reasons and then at some point you realise that you are accountable. If this business fails, the trustees are legally accountable. We all know that we are accountable.” (Alice, Trustee)

“The role of the Board in terms of the Charities Commission is to ensure financial probity [...] at the end of the day the buck stops with us...” (Charlotte, Trustee)

Some trustees perceived that the role involves a big responsibility in terms of the impact their actions and decisions have on others. They acknowledged, for example, the implications for staff and service users:

“You get your induction and you think “ooo this is quite a big responsibility” and although you know that from being on a board as a senior management team [staff] member [in another organisation] and as someone who is not totally thick, having that responsibility is another thing entirely. So it is the commitment that keeps you going, it is the belief in what they do that keeps you doing what you do.” (Bridget, Trustee)

“It is quite a responsibility as well because you’re not only making decisions that affect the service delivery but you’re also making decisions which affect peoples’ income and peoples’ lives and everything, you know, your actions might have a direct affect on a number of mortgages or housing situations or employment status. So it can be at times a tough role.” (Gary, Trustee)

Others described the responsibility in terms of the number of different tasks involved, and the range of knowledge required:

“If you’re doing the job seriously which we all five of us endeavour to do, the demands on trustees are far greater [now], you’ve only got to go onto the Charity Commissioners website and see the stuff that’s there. Go onto things like Governance Hub website, go and download all the books. It’s almost as if and, again, it’s a balance, are we now in the era, perhaps we’re already there, are we in the era of the professional trustee? It’s a big job, none of us are complaining but it’s a big job.” (Pauline, Trustee)

Although a significant number of participants perceived that trusteeship entails considerable responsibility, there were mixed experiences of the kinds of tasks that the role included. This accords with previous research in the USA that identified ambiguity about what is expected of non-profit board volunteers (Wright and Millesen, 2008) and a UK study that found a lack of clarity over the board's role in some agencies (Rochester, 2003). The research findings here suggest that trustees are undertaking a range of different tasks, and that the role played by trustees varies from organisation to organisation:

"There's issues of recruitment, selection, potential discipline, all kinds of different things that you have to be involved in." (Annette, Trustee)

"As a trustee I take a responsibility to actually look after clients. And volunteers. If we don't look after volunteers we haven't got any clients. I take the role seriously. One eye is on the funding and where we will be in the next 18 months, and the other eye is all about the clients. We have the volunteers to take care of. That is part of the role of a trustee I think, not just sitting ticking boxes, and going okay what flavour biscuits shall we have this week. I think we have 60 or 70 volunteers at the moment." (Andrew, Trustee)

"We have two [trustees] who sit on the awards panel for staff awards. Also they will interview for key jobs." (Mark, CEO)

One participant, who was a trustee for two different charities, experienced contrasting levels of involvement within her two voluntary roles:

"My experience is quite varied really. [First charity] is a far more a managerial role and always has been a managerial role. Even down to the fact that I've been involved in restructuring and all that sort of thing.... [Second charity] is that, but its already very practical hands on. You'll find me trimming hedges and things like that as well, in relation to that sort of work, so there's quite a broad spectrum of activity there I'd say." (Annette, Trustee).

Some participants viewed the trustee role as involving managerial responsibilities and as taking a high-level strategic view. They tended to see more operational tasks as the responsibilities of paid staff or volunteers.

"I think my understanding is that a trustee should just oversee everything that is being done in accordance with rules to best of my knowledge and not actually, sort of, sticking your oar in and saying 'actually I think next week you should be doing this, and why are you spending time doing that?'" (Hannah, Trustee)

"Understanding what the difference between operational and strategic management is vital." (Matthew, Trustee)

Other trustees had undertaken tasks that were more "hands-on" than the governance responsibilities outlined by the Charity Commission definition of trusteeship:

"I did a lot of a work up here, with the rooms, I spent three or four nights every week painting and carpeting the counselling rooms." (Andrew, Trustee)

"Most of us do volunteer for events that involve the community because its about the trustees being seen as well." (Alice, Trustee)

"Most of us do casework. Some of us can't do immigration casework, but the others do the sort of social casework that -- it's mainly directing people to the places where they can get assistance themselves. We go out to schools, to colleges, to universities ..someone just went down to London... to give talks, and they have the asylum seekers who are destitute with them. And ... a prison visitors group, because many of our asylum seekers are put in prison for working or whatever. So we visit detention centres and places throughout the country." (Michael, Trustee)

"Trustees do get involved in raising funds by holding quiz nights and other things." (Mick, Trustee)

One trustee admitted that she was unsure what her role was:

"I feel quite confused about what the role of a trustee [is], what the role is. And when I see it written on paper it looks different again, the duties that I've seen set out formally are quite scary in some respects." (Sian, Trustee)

There are a number of possible explanations for the heterogeneity among participants in terms of the kinds of tasks they undertake in the organisations for which they volunteer. Drawing on DiMaggio and

Powell's (1991) use of institutional theory, Edwards and Cornforth (2003) identify a number of factors that influence the way boards define their role. They argue that in addition to organisational size (are there paid staff or volunteer to take on the operational tasks?) and organisational culture (historically, what have trustees in this organisation been responsible for?), external influences shape the role played by board members. These include *coercive* pressures to comply with legislation and regulations; *normative* pressure to conform to recommended 'good practice' guidance; and *mimetic* pressure to replicate practices in other organisations, either other charities or norms practised in the public or private sectors (Edwards and Cornforth, 2003: 80).

There is some evidence from the research here to support this, with trustees citing multiple issues that influence, to a degree, the tasks they become involved with. A number of trustees identified the need to clearly define their responsibilities and tasks in relation to those of paid staff in the organisation, an issue that is examined in greater detail in the following chapter. One trustee noted that in his charity's organisational culture it was usual for several members of staff to attend trustee meetings – a norm he was critical of since he perceived it drew trustees into operational discussions:

"The presence of permanent staff meant that much of the meeting was managerial rather than executive." (Paul, ex-Trustee)

One participant noted that expectations of funders meant that trustees were responsible for reading and signing certain documents:

"The requirement is that a trustee or the Company Secretary or both are required to sign applications, certain applications, especially tenders. We find tenders are quite complex and require the board of trustees to have a look at them, just to be aware of what we're applying for." (Issac, Trustee)

In several cases, individuals took on more than one role in the organisation, acting as trustee as well volunteering in a different role. This led to them undertaking a wider variety of tasks within the charity:

“I became a trustee only about 12 months ago. I’ve been a volunteer here since 2004... I joined the committee, and I was still seeing clients on a regular basis as a volunteer.” (Andrew, Trustee)

“Two of the board members are volunteers as well. They volunteer as advocates.” (Graham, CEO)

This situation is acknowledged in a recent Code of Governance, developed by a group of national voluntary sector umbrella bodies with support from the Charity Commission, and aimed at small charitable organisations. It recommends that trustees who also volunteer in another aspect of the charity should take care to keep the two roles distinct:

“Not everything a board member does for an organisations is automatically part of their board role. If they are also involved in day-to-day work as a volunteer, then they need to keep this separate from their work as a board member. It is important that they are clear about which role they are undertaking at any given time.” (Code Steering Group, 2011: 6)

Finally, the size of organisation and the number of staff and volunteers inevitably influences the extent to which trustees take on operational tasks in addition to legal governance responsibilities. Dayo, a trustee of three charities of different sizes observed the contrast in trustee roles:

“It’s the same role in the large organisation and the small organisation. But the small one has fewer resources. So the time and commitment may differ. For example, complaints. In the [large] Housing Association, they have a [complaints] panel. In the smaller organisation everyone is involved because there are fewer people.” (Dayo, Trustee)

To summarise, the tasks undertaken by trustees are not homogenous and – beyond the legal governance responsibilities set out in Charity

Commission regulations – the definition of the trustees' role varies from organisation to organisation. A number of factors - including organisational size and organisational culture - may account for the wide range of tasks undertaken by trustees, ranging from strategic governance activities to operational, 'hands-on' tasks. Despite this heterogeneity of experiences of the role, there is broad consensus that trusteeship entails a high degree of responsibility and an ambiguous role definition, raising important implications for the training and support needs of trustees, which are examined in the following section.

Training and support - needs and provision

A number of publications indicate that there have been concerns over the adequacy of trustee inductions and training (Working Party on Trustee Training 1992a; 1992b; Vernon and Stringer, 2009). Cornforth and Simpson (2002: 461) found that levels of training provision varied significantly among charities, and that larger charities were more likely than small organisations to provide training for trustees. Numerous voluntary sector "good practice" publications recommend that induction be provided for all new board members and that steps should be taken to identify and meet the training and development needs of trustees (ACEVO, 2007b; Charity Commission, 2008c: D2; Dyer, 2008: 108; Code Steering Group, 2010). Recently, the Charity Commission (2011) urged charities to address the issue of trustee training, citing their own survey results that indicated that two fifths of charities did not provide any training or support for their trustees.

The importance of training availability is underlined by the comments of many participants – around a quarter of trustees had experienced what they termed a "steep learning curve" in the role. This challenge to acquire new knowledge or skills was experienced both when initially becoming a trustee and in fulfilling the role, when new problems or issues were encountered for the first time. Some examples of the kinds of organisational issues that trustees found challenging to cope with

included organisational growth and development at one end of a continuum and staff redundancy and project closures at the other:

“[Initially] I didn’t know what was actually going on and I had the sense of not really understanding the language that was around you and the stuff that people were talking about – managerial stuff, and also project stuff which was quite beyond me at first so...its like a huge learning curve when you’re first involved.” (Annette, Trustee)

“Probably for at least the first couple of meetings I didn’t say much. I watched in a creative way, but getting a feel of ... the trustees’ meeting. They always made me extremely welcome, I hasten to add, but you are on a sharp learning curve.” (Pauline, Trustee)

“We brought in advice from industrial lawyers, about how we deal with staff and redundancy because we didn’t know any of this, we had to learn as we were going along. ... We wanted to do it correctly we didn’t want to have any law suits or industrial tribunals, which we couldn’t have afforded to pay for. Everything was done legally. Again, a big learning curve.” (Alice, Trustee)

Around half of the trustees in the study had received training in some form or another to support them in the role. This varied both in content and in format. Many trustees received an induction when they joined the organisation in which they met other trustees and staff members, were introduced to the organisation’s policies and procedures and were given an overview of the work of the charity. In some cases this ‘induction’ was in written format and consisted of various documents being offered to the new trustee:

“When I joined the board of trustees there was a formal induction scheme which was very much sort of paper based training and information about what the role and the responsibilities were” (Gary, Trustee)

One participant explained that new trustees were directed to the Charity Commission guidance:

“When a trustee comes on board we direct them to the Charity Commission website and tell them to read, you know, the good practice for trustees, and things like that. But instead of us printing out and churning out and training people, we expect them to have the wherewithal to go and look and let it be on their head if they don’t look at it.” (Colin, Trustee)

Participants had mixed views on the kinds of written guidance offered by organisations such as the Charity Commission. While some were aware of it and had found it a useful resource, others did not know what was available or had not used it:

“I’m afraid to read it at this stage. I haven’t heard of it but I’m afraid to see, because I just expect to see a load more tasks, I feel more stuff will be imposed on me or else I’ll be made aware of various legal and financial liabilities that I’ve got” (Sian, Trustee)

Two trustees in the study had attended external training courses run by the local Council for Voluntary Services (CVS). A small number of participants explained that their organisations offered regular away days or in house training sessions for board members in order to keep their knowledge up to date, although this tended to be in the larger and better-resourced organisations:

“We are committed to at least one training day per year, and as and when we will have briefing papers, because so much is changing.” (Pauline, Trustee)

“On all of the committees [that I serve on] we have a board members day, or business plan days or away days that also look at the role, and they are usually on a yearly basis. We look at our role, we see where we’ve got gaps and we try to fill that gap - either with training or drawing someone else in to fill that gap. Its ongoing training.” (Dayo, Trustee)

The training content experienced by trustees was varied. Many participants had been briefed on subjects related to their legal responsibilities as a trustee, for example based on guidance from the Charity Commission or related to understanding charity accounts. Others had received training or briefing on issues relating to the operational work

of the charity. These included changes to legislation and regulation such as independent safeguarding, care quality standards and the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Given ambiguity and inconsistency of the trustee role (discussed earlier in this chapter), the variety of training provision offered to trustees is perhaps unsurprising.

All of the staff interviewed indicated that their organisations made training available to their trustees. However, the format, content and consistency varied:

“We have a very clear [induction] process pack, you know, so that once appointed and once all of the checks have been done, I would see them and take them through the organisation explaining the organisation. I would take them or get someone to take them around to all of the services ... and make sure they're familiar with all of the services [and] take them through the papers so that they know what to expect in Board papers.” (Cindy, CEO)

“It’s more ad hoc I would say really. I mean, training is available but I would say it’s more ad hoc and it would be more as people joined the organisation we might identify what sort of training that people have.” (Jennie, CEO)

“LCVS who are the main voluntary sector services organisation in Liverpool, they run these type of courses all the time. The Charity Commission have information, quite extensive information, on roles and responsibilities of trustees and what they’re supposed to do, so if you go onto their website, there’s a whole link and a series of bits of information on trustees and roles and responsibilities, and what you need to do. So there is training there. It’s just that probably not everybody knows that it’s there.” (Issac, Deputy Manager)

The interviews with Debbie and Sian, who were from the same charity, revealed different perceptions of the availability of trustee training:

“We’ve got a trustee induction. And a trustee handbook which states our key policies and obviously if people get involved in anything it is expected that they will do the work that leads into that. We have a trustee day every year where they go and get together and its facilitated. They can identify issues that they want to work on as a trustee board. We have a newsletter that goes to

all trustees, service users, partners and that offers options on training..." (Debbie, Deputy CEO)

"I can't say I've had any training, no. [...] I did have induction. I didn't find it very useful. It seemed to me to more about people who already knew a lot about the organisation talking about the organisation. I felt out of my depth already I think at that stage..." (Sian, Trustee)

Around half of the trustees interviewed reported that they had not received any training at all for the role:

"[I had] no training. No. Not at all." (Dana, Trustee)

"No, we've had no formal training." (Frank, Trustee)

"It took me about three years before I understood how things worked (laughs). Because most small charities and even some large charities don't necessarily induct their trustees. They don't show you the ground rules. You might get some very basics of what we do but you don't get a full sense of how the machine works, basically. It was like learning on the ground and I had that for several years really. Attending meetings, wondering at certain points what they were talking about, and sometimes saying what does that acronym mean and what does this mean, but not interrupting them too much because otherwise you'd be interrupting all the time. So I just picked it up gradually." (Nicholas, Trustee)

A representative of Charity Trustees Network perceived that some trustees were reluctant to undertake training, even where it was available. She felt that some trustees with professional backgrounds such as doctors and lawyers may feel patronised by the term 'training', or that to acknowledge training needs implied an admission of incompetence for the job:

"Training is a bit of a difficult word for a lot of trustees, they think 'why would I need training?' and I understand that. Its quite often how it is presented. If it is briefings or updates, that just sits better." (CEO, Charity Trustees Network)

A small number of trustees felt that they didn't need any training because they brought skills and understanding with them from other roles:

“I had been a lawyer for quite some time, so I understood the legal responsibilities. So I felt quite sort of equipped to do it without training.” (Ken, Trustee)

“It’s going to sound terribly arrogant, but I didn’t necessarily feel I needed it [training], but I think the Board would have benefitted from it.” (Paul, Trustee)

Other trustees, however, were able to identify specific areas in which they felt they would benefit from training:

“I think I’d like to become more competent in the area of finance because we are very dependent on the financial advisor who comes in ... and I do feel very out of my depth with that. I suppose some training in that would be really useful. I don’t know how you’d really get that.” (Hannah, Trustee)

The interviewees revealed some of the reasons why trustees are not always able to access training. Some had experienced a financial barrier, since the cost of even relatively cheap or subsidised courses proved prohibitive for some of the smallest organisations:

“LCVS do run courses for trustees but they always are in the day time. They always used to be free but now they’ve started charging. Now, we’re volunteers. We don’t get an income. I get paid [in my day job] but its minimum wage. I can’t afford £50 for the course, for a half day course.” (Alice, Trustee)

“They did say they were going to teach me all about fundraising, and explain what all the terms meant on the budget sheet. But that never came around. I can understand because they’ve got to pay for the training.” (Lucy, Ex-trustee)

A second barrier to trustee training was time. Several trustees explained that external training opportunities, such as those offered by the local CVS, were usually run during office hours and were, therefore, difficult for working trustees to attend. In addition, some trustees felt that they were already struggling to find sufficient time for the trustee role and could not make extra time available on top of board meetings to attend courses.

“If you went to LCVS or the charity network they’d say that they’re always giving out information about courses that are available. But a lot of these places are set up during the day and most people are working any way. So its not easy.” (Colin, Trustee)

A further difficulty identified by participants was that organisational challenges and crises led to training becoming a lower priority:

“We were firefighting. We knew there was training out there. As I’ve said we’ve been firefighting for nearly 3 years. We had this massive debt that we had to deal with. And things happening with the building. There were staff issues that had to be dealt with. So we’ve had advisors but we’ve never done any training as such as trustees.” (Alice, Trustee)

“I asked ... I wanted to go on a kind of training course down in London and there was a prospect of going on one but somehow it disappeared. I think it got lost in thewe had sort of a crisis about a year and a half ago.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

In addition to discussing formal training provision, participants were asked about the other forms of support and information that were available to trustees. No trustees made reference to having accessed support from national voluntary sector umbrella bodies (for example the National Occupational Standards framework for trustees (UK Workforce Hub, 2006); or NCVO or ACEVO resources). However, a small number trustees had received support from local sources, including the local Councils for Voluntary Service:

“We’ve had financial and fundraising guidance [from LCVS], also use of their database of potential funding bodies, we’ve had business development guidance or charity development I think they call it, and also we’ve had some advice on website linkage. And yeah, strategic planning as well in terms of management of the charity.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

“I was advised a lot by LCVS from day one. [Advisor] at LCVS has been absolutely fantastic... Everything really, from being able to just phone up and say, ‘Help,’ or you know, email and say, ‘What on earth am I doing?’ you know. Legal advice on setting up ...he sat down with me over quite a few sessions and formulated our constitution when we became a community group so we didn’t

need to worry about the wording or the structure of it.” (Julia, Trustee)

Although there is evidence here that some organisations and their trustees had received valued support from LCVS in these kinds of ways, it is important to highlight that since the fieldwork interviews were conducted, LCVS has experienced substantial cuts to funding and the loss of significant numbers of staff, as a result of government ‘austerity measures’ that have resulted in a 50% reduction in the levels of funding for the city’s voluntary sector (Hardwick and Coffey, 2011: 403). Similarly deep cuts to voluntary sector funding have been experienced across the country (Kane and Allen, 2011). This casts obvious doubt over the continued availability of support to local charities and trustees from local infrastructure bodies.

Two trustees had access to specialist support from outside advisors on legal and employment issues, although they acknowledged the cost implications of this:

“The level of support that you can never afford ... if there’s a personnel issue here [in my paid role] I’ve got a whole department to go to. If we have personnel issues at [my charity], - fortunately we’ve not had many – well where do you go? We do things like we pay a retainer to an accountants and they’re very good. We pay a five hundred pound retainer through our local CVS to a company who gives us personnel advice. You can’t really do any more than that.” (Charlotte, Trustee)

“We brought in advice from industrial lawyers ... Obviously initially free, but then there is a cost implication but you can get some of this for free. Because ours was quite complicated we did have to pay in the end.” (Alice, Trustee)

The data provides evidence of trustees drawing on their skills, knowledge and experience from other aspects of their lives to help them cope with the challenges experienced in the role. This may be particularly valuable where they have not had specific training as part of the trustee role to

prepare them for the issues they encounter within the charity. Some of the participants highlighted the ways in which knowledge and skills from paid employment were useful:

“For example when the policies and procedures were being reviewed there were a couple of things that I spotted were missing, because we did something similar [in my paid role]” (Bridget, Trustee)

“The majority of our trustees - 80% - are older people. They’re over 50 years of age. And with that comes a lifetime of experience. We’ve got people who have been non-executive directors of a Primary Care Trust, people who have been very senior in health and social care. So they understand the strategic issues that we face.” (Barry, CEO)

One participant felt her experience as a trades union representative contributed to her understanding of some of her legal responsibilities as an employer in the trustee role:

“There’s issues of recruitment, selection, potential discipline, all kinds of different things that you have to be involved in. And again, through actually being a charitable trustee I learnt more about that side of it, plus the fact that I was a shop steward, and now I’m a manager in local government, so all those things are actually brought to bear right across.” (Annette, Trustee)

However, one research participant who had many years experience in the voluntary sector, including having been a trustee of several charities, perceived a decline in the committee skills that new trustees could bring with them to the role:

“When I first started in this game, the community activist as trustee was the norm. I’ve worked in housing co-ops and people who could barely read or write knew what they wanted out of their housing and they’d be very confident indeed on the committee. But two things have happened, I think, over the years. One is that a lot of the skills people picked up at work - everybody’s been a union branch secretary, everyone’s run the social club or whatever - through some experience they’ve been socialised into this kind of work. Either through the church, or work, or both. The decline of both religious observance and work, in Liverpool has been

catastrophic. And I often find, particularly with younger people, that they don't have any confidence at all about being a trustee because they are not at all sure what it is. Because they haven't had that sort of socialisation." (Peter, Trustee)

His perspective raises questions about whether or not newer trustees can draw upon committee skills that may have traditionally been gained through church or union activism. Nevertheless, the data has indicated that trustees do draw upon knowledge, skills and experience gained other arenas to help them fulfil their responsibilities. This is an important resource, given the inconsistency of formal training and support experienced by the trustees in the study. This inconsistency is likely to have implications for their confidence in fulfilling their responsibilities as trustees, an issue that will be examined in greater detail in the following chapter. Despite the increasingly central role assumed by voluntary sector organisations in public service delivery and policy implementation - and the subsequent emphasis on governance and capacity-building - the evidence suggests that some trustees experience barriers to accessing high quality, relevant, and consistent training to support them in fulfilling the sector's key leadership roles.

Summary

As in Chapter 5, the data presented here underlines the heterogeneity of trusteeship and indicates that not all trustees perceive the role in the same way. A key way in which trustees' experiences differ is evident in their perceptions of the scope of the role and their responsibilities. Some trustees' experience of the role closely resembles the governance focus outlined in the Charity Commission's description of trustee responsibilities. Other trustees undertake a much broader range of tasks in their organisations, volunteering to fulfil more operational tasks such as maintaining the charity premises in addition to their more strategic governance role. Again, the diversity of models of trusteeship in evidence indicates that the experience of volunteers in this role varies significantly from charity to charity (and, indeed, even within the same

charity), suggesting that their support requirements vary and that guidance needs to be flexible and accommodating of these multiple constructions of trusteeship. In other words, policy definitions of trusteeship that are restricted to legal and governance issues underestimate the significantly wider contributions that volunteer trustees make to a range of more practical and operational tasks within their organisations.

Furthermore, the role ambiguity evident in this study presents potential challenges for trustees in comprehending and fulfilling their full responsibilities. Despite previous research evidence that found that significant numbers of trustees lacked understanding of their role, the majority of trustees in this study were aware of their legal responsibilities, and perceive that trusteeship entails a significant level of responsibility (in spite of inconsistency over the specific tasks involved). Participants generally felt that training and support for trustees is important, and around a quarter of trustees in the study stated that they had experienced a 'steep learning curve'. Around half of trustees in the study had received some form of training, although the content varied. Broadly equal numbers had received no training at all and although some didn't feel they needed it, there was evidence that some trustees who wanted or needed training had not been able to access it. The data suggests that larger organisations tend to be better able to offer training to their trustees, with smaller charities sometimes facing a financial barrier. Other factors that present a barrier to trustee training include lack of time. Some trustees felt that time spent dealing with crises or 'fire-fighting' in their organisations meant that training had become a lower priority and balancing work commitments with volunteering also posed a challenge for some trustees, particularly where courses were run during working hours. There are some indications that the support offered by the local CVS is particularly valued, raising implications for the continuing provision of such training and support given recent cuts to funding budgets which have been experienced in the form of significant reductions to the staffing and resources of the local CVSs, as well as the services they provide.

The ambiguity of the trustee role and the inconsistency of training and support available to trustees raises important implications for their motivation and their perceived confidence and competence. The following chapter discusses these issues, and considers how well-equipped trustees feel to tackle the various organisational challenges that they identify as arising from the policy context discussed in Chapter 3 - for example financial security, mission drift and charity independence.

Chapter 7: Trustees' confidence and working relationships

Introduction

The previous two chapters reported the research findings relating to trustees' experiences of the early stages of their involvement in the role. They explored their motivations for volunteering as trustees, recruitment processes that they had participated in, as well as the training and support available to them. This chapter continues to present findings relating to trustees' experiences of the role, by focusing upon their perceived levels of confidence and competence in fulfilling their responsibilities. It goes on to report the findings – based on interviews with trustees, senior staff and policy community representatives – concerning the nature of the working relationships that trustees have with both paid staff and other trustees. Furthermore, the chapter examines participant's perceptions and experiences of organisational issues arising from the policy environment in which they are operating. These echo many of the themes considered in Chapter 3, including charity independence, funding challenges, mission drift and, in particular, the implications for both trustees, staff and their organisations of the emerging contracting environment. There is evidence that the impact of the policy context is experienced differently contingent on the size of organisation. The chapter concludes by addressing this, by exploring the ways in which participants' experiences of policy-related challenges are framed by organisational size and their resultant capacity to cope with the changing environment.

Levels of confidence among trustees

Research carried out for the Office of the Third Sector (Low et al., 2007) revealed that volunteers on management committees were more likely to perceive that they needed advice and support than volunteers carrying

out other activities. 18% of generic volunteers interviewed felt that they needed advice and support, but for those in committee roles the proportion rose to 37% (Low et al., 2007: 45). In an earlier survey among trustees (Working Party on Trustee Training, 1992a) a third of trustees identified that they had an urgent need for more training and support. A lack of clarity of role and responsibilities was also identified as a concern, with only one in three trustees actually being consciously aware that they *were* trustees (fewer among local charities).

In light of these findings - and the inconsistency of induction and training provision as discussed in Chapter 5 - trustees' levels of confidence is a pertinent issue, albeit one that has received relatively little specific attention in the extant literature. Trustees were asked about how confident they felt in fulfilling their role. They had mixed feelings on this issue. Around half of the participants stated that they felt confident in carrying out the trustee role, or at least certain aspects of it:

"Yeah. No surprises. I knew exactly what it would entail. There wasn't anything that came my way that I wasn't anticipating. Prior to that I'd worked with boards in a lot of jobs that I've done so I was accustomed to working with boards, reporting to the boards etc. so I knew where the lines were between leadership and day to day management. I had that." (Frank, Trustee)

"Without sounding immodest, I feel confident and I feel confident of the rest of us because I know we have all made the time commitment to do it." (Pauline, Trustee)

However, more or less equal numbers of trustees interviewed felt that they lacked confidence in aspects of the role. Following Brown et al.'s (2012) USA study - that found that length of service as a board member was a strong predictor of confidence levels - some trustees had particularly experienced this lack of confidence when they were new to the role:

"At first I was very, very quiet. Because I just wasn't sure how to act. It seemed as though they had all been there for years and they knew how everything ran." (Lucy, ex-Trustee)

"Someone said, 'Well, we need a group of trustees.' And I said, 'What do they do?' And they said, 'We don't know, but we've got to be a trustee.' So I said, 'Okay, I'll be a trustee.' I don't know what it is... obviously -- and I've read all of the things on governance which this is a fancy term, I believe, for what we are doing. Anyway, the person got all of the forms on what they do as a trustee, and trying to ensure that we did do it within the legal act and so on. But, basically, I'm a person who is -- I hope I'm trustworthy. So I know nothing about trustees except having read it, because I had to read it. And when you have to read it, you usually ignore it after a while, because it's so frustrating with all of the jargon." (Michael, Trustee)

Several trustees experienced a feeling of confidence in some, but not all, aspects of the role. There was a sense that a trustee's level of confidence could actually be undermined by the official guidance issued by the Charity Commission (see, for example, Charity Commission, 2007c; 2008a; 2008c), with some people feeling reasonably confident about the overall running of the organisation, but less confident when checking their activities against recommendations in the guidance literature:

"I feel very confident, but its....then I start going on the Charity Commission's website, I read it and go 'ooh'. In running the organisation, I feel confident. Whether I go about it the right way as compared to what is written down with the Charity Commission, I'm not that sure about. The job is getting done but you don't really do it to the letter. I think people write things down to try and cover every eventuality. I'm happy with the way its being run." (Colin, Trustee)

"I feel confidence about management and direction of a charity, but I don't feel confident necessarily about all the legal obligations and all the fiscal obligations." (Nicholas, Trustee)

As one participant explained, she initially felt sufficiently confident to accept the position as trustee, but soon felt out of her depth when she perceived that more was being expected of her:

'Well initially I felt quite prepared. Because as secretary I assumed that my role was taking minutes, and attending meetings, considering the content of what was put before us at meetings, attending some relevant public events, assisting occasionally with interviewing new staff, that was it. So I felt very capable of doing

all that. I've a lot of experience in taking minutes. I enjoy it. I know I'm good at producing minutes. But it was...it gradually turned out to be something a lot different from what I'd thought. I don't know if this was because the work of the committee changed or I became more aware and involved, or perhaps more was asked of me when I was no longer on a voluntary basis, I was a formal trustee, but it turned out to be much more demanding than I'd expected." (Sian, Trustee)

Around a fifth of trustees interviewed agreed that the reality of the role differed from what they initially anticipated. This experience of unmet expectations tended to relate to the amount of work involved and the amount of time trustees were expected to give to the role. There is evidence that such a situation sometimes arose when trustees were not given a realistic estimate of what was expected when they first became involved with the organisation:

"I mean I think [name of charity] now have got much better at being very clear with trustees about what's going to be expected of them, and we have a formal process and all the rest of it; but then the organisation was at a point where quite frankly they were just looking for people that they thought might do something...and it was all like 'Oh well, come onto the Board and you'll enjoy it and it will be inspiring' and actually it has been very hard work. Well it was just much more involved, it took much more of my time than I expected, and... but actually it was more rewarding than I could have ever anticipated." (Charlotte, Trustee)

"It was just said to me, 'do you want to be on the board?'. And I said I'm a bit busy, and they said its only an hour, two hours a month. I said okay then, it'll look good on my CV. So and then it was as each process came up, they'd tell me about it then. They never told me when I initially joined. If I'd have known I had to read reams of paper and CRB check²⁴ and find all the papers proving who I was, I've have said no." (Lucy, Ex-Trustee)

These findings echo research by the Charity Commission (2003: 12) that found that 25% of charities underestimated the amount of time required

²⁴ A Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check is an official background check on individuals, paid or voluntary, who will potentially be working with vulnerable adults and children.

from trustees. In addition, several trustees felt that too much had been asked of them or expected of them. In some cases, this related to the type of work they were asked to do. Hannah, a trustee with a legal background, perceived that she had been expected to provide free legal advice outside her remit:

“I think they will always look to save money and try and use you for free, but that’s not going to be enough for what they need, and that is where problems are going to arise so you’ve just got to be really confident about putting your foot down about where you’re prepared and what you can and can’t do.” (Hannah, Trustee)

In other cases, the sense of being “asked for too much” related to the amount of time trustees were expected to devote to the role:

I want to say to her [the Chief Executive] ‘I haven’t got time; I haven’t got time’. I attend the Board meetings, you know, I put in... but I can’t go on... I can’t go on forever, and most of my similar, you know my fellow Trustees, unless they’re retired, and there are one or two, are in a similar situation. Just can’t give her as much time as she perhaps would like.” (Mick, Trustee)

It became clear from the interviews with trustees and senior staff that the amount of time that trustees dedicate to the role varies greatly from organisation to organisation. The level of involvement ranged from attending a board meeting four times a year for some trustees, to fortnightly or monthly meetings and a range of tasks outside of these, for other individuals. This reinforces the point made in Chapter 6 that there is significant variation in the experience of trustees in different organisations – often contingent on the size of charity - and that the tasks undertaken by trustees vary greatly.

Relationships between trustees and paid staff

The relationship between trustees and paid staff, and particularly the Chief Executive Officer, is an important one, and has received

considerable attention in the good practice guidance (Dyer, 2008: 142; ACEVO, 2007b; Charity Commission, 2008a: 7). In organisations with paid staff, it is the responsibility of the board of trustees to recruit, appoint, manage and appraise the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent – they may be referred to as Coordinator or Project Manager for example) (Dyer, 2008: 137; Dalton, 2011). Trustees may also take responsibility for recruiting the other members of staff, for example in small organisations with only a small number of paid workers. In charities with larger staff teams, trustees are likely to delegate this responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer, although they may retain an involvement in the appointment of senior staff and in setting the remuneration for these roles. The Charity Commission (2003) identifies the point at which a charity employs staff for the first time to be a key milestone in its lifecycle. In light of its findings that employment is consistently reported as one of the most problematic issues that charities face, it recommends that the relationship between staff and trustees be carefully managed, with a clear division of responsibilities:

“When charities take on staff there should, ideally, be a clear divide between governance - the role of the trustees (who are also directors if it is a charitable company) - and management - the role of the chief executive or management who direct the daily running of the charity.” (Charity Commission, 2003: 27)

However, the report goes on to acknowledge that this can be difficult to achieve in smaller charities with fewer paid staff:

“When there are only a few staff in place and trustees are still involved in the daily activity of the charity, the division of labour between governance and management can be difficult to maintain.” (Charity Commission, 2003: 27)

This underlines the evidence presented in the previous chapter that indicates that trustees in some charities take on more operational or ‘hands on’ tasks, particularly in smaller charities with fewer paid staff to whom tasks can be delegated. Hence, just as the line management roles and degree of involvement of trustees varies from organisation to

organisation, there is also diversity in the ways in which the boundaries between staff responsibilities and trustee responsibilities are delineated:

“Remember that what is a board role in one organisation may be a staff or volunteer role in another.” (Dyer, 2008: 141)

This point resonated in interviews with members of the policy community who emphasized the importance of the boundary between staff and trustee roles but acknowledged that such a boundary is not always easy to identify:

“There is a fine line where trustees’ responsibilities stop and a line where, because we will often get say a CEO saying ‘tell my board stay off my patch because that is operational’, and we will say well actually there is no boundary.” (Head of Governance and Leadership, NCVO)

Previous research has investigated the nature of the relationship between trustees and staff in voluntary organisations. For example, Harris (1989: 317) found evidence of tensions between staff and trustees, with the former complaining that trustees on management committees interfered with their day-to-day activities, preventing paid workers from using their professional skills effectively. She found that trustees were also unhappy with the relationship, in some cases feeling ‘pushed out’ by staff or constrained from contributing as much as they would like to and in other cases anxious about suggestions from staff that they should actually be doing more as trustees. Harris argues that ill-feeling between staff and trustees is not uncommon and often results from “*uncertainties about ‘who appoints whom,’ ‘who controls whom’ and ‘who does what’*” (1989: 318).

Otto’s (2003) study of chairs and senior staff in voluntary, statutory and commercial organisations found evidence that the demarcation of roles was problematic across all three sectors. While the potential for confusion and conflict was not unique to voluntary sector organisations, chairs and chief executives in these organisations found it more difficult

than their peers in the commercial sector to manage this difficulty. Otto (2003: 147) attributes this to an extent to the part-time, voluntary nature of trustee role and the personal values held by people in voluntary organisations. She argues that the relationship between voluntary chairs and managers is essential and that it requires the chair to perform potentially conflicting roles as both the line manager and 'trusted friend' of the Chief Executive.

Trustees in the study presented here were well aware of the potential difficulties in recognising the boundaries between the roles of paid staff and voluntary trustees, but for the most part felt positive about how they managed this issue in their organisations:

"If I was getting too involved, I'd trust [the CEO] to tell me. She would say, 'Listen, this is what we've got officers for' and she would tell us. The working relationship between a chief exec and their trustees is so important. It shouldn't be cosy, it should be competent and hopefully - and it is here - a pleasant interaction for all of us." (Pauline, Trustee)

"Its difficult because I'm currently trying to gauge what the relationship is and how it works. I mean the CEO and the running of the charity itself, and the trustees, and I don't want....I'm really conscious of not treading on their toes and I suppose sort of micro-managing. You've got to get that balance..." (Hannah, Trustee)

A minority of participants had, however, experienced situations where there was confusion or disagreement about whether decisions and tasks were more appropriate to the board of trustees or to paid staff, echoing the inconsistency of approach identified by Dyer (2008):

"I said [to the CEO] 'We've never discussed this. I don't like seeing things in a board paper that I've not discussed with you.' And she said 'I don't think it's a board decision.' I said 'I think it is a board decision. It's a policy decision.' So there was a difference of view there." (Matthew, CEO)

"I feel that a lot of the work that the committee are doing is actually the business of paid workers, [for example] writing policies, preparing funding bids, preparing events, analysing work-based practices....and seeking to improve them." (Sian, Trustee)

Following Harris's (1989) work, there was some evidence in this study of tensions and disagreements between paid staff and trustees. However such instances were not universal and there was evidence, in equal measure, of positive working relationships between trustees and paid staff. Examples of potential strain in the relationship arose from different views on priorities or from differing expectations:

"You know, so there were those tensions in terms of understanding what the priorities are, and the priorities are not to paint more rooms in the building so that they look nice, the priorities are to get more money in and to get our profile as professional and slick as possible in order to demonstrate the great work that we're delivering." (Charlotte, Trustee)

"It can be frustrating. I like to see things done in a particular way and also quickly. Across all the organisations [I volunteer in], I feel that the paid staff could do more. They come to meetings and I feel they haven't done enough research – it hasn't been done thoroughly in the first place. There can be a bit of frustration or tension. The paid staff probably think the management committee should do more." (Dayo, Trustee)

The tension was felt on both sides, and some of the Chief Executives interviewed felt that their trustees could be doing more:

"I think they're confident in carrying out their role. I think probably the Senior Management Team would like more of them. I don't mean in numbers. I mean in terms of ... I think we feel we ought to get a bit more. I think we feel what they do, they do very well. But what they don't do creates a little bit of a gap in the organisation." (Jennie, CEO)

"I don't feel that they [the trustees] provide me with anything. You know, this to me, it's like running my own private company, my own business. It's like, you know, it's great. I've got loads of autonomy, I've got all the rest of it, I don't cheat people on time and things like that but...nobody manages me at all." (Patricia, CEO)

Conversely, there was no shortage of positive comments from both trustees and paid staff about the positive nature of their working relationships:

*"I feel I've got a good working relationship with the board."
(Graham, CEO)*

"I ultimately find it rewarding because I enjoy volunteering. I enjoy the people that I work with. I've got a smashing manager and a smashing management team down there now. And because they're hard working and committed it makes my job as the Chair a lot easier." (Gary, Trustee)

*"There aren't many organisations around where you have the same chief officer and the same board of trustees for 30 years. And we have grown together, so there is an element of trust there."
(Gordon, CEO)*

The specific relationship between the Chair of the board of trustees and the Chief Executive Officer was raised by a number of participants, underlining Otto's (2003) observation about how pivotal this relationship is in voluntary organisations. Although one trustee indicated that they found it difficult to manage this relationship due to a perceived power imbalance, there were several positive examples where the right balance appeared to have been achieved:

"It's hard to get the right balance and when you've got a very assertive and strong and confident Chief Exec you've got to be confident in challenging them. And you've got to also risk upsetting the Chief Exec if you feel that she's not giving you what you want, and I guess this is a... you know, the advantage of having a strong Chief Exec is that you get good leadership, strong leadership; the disadvantage is it makes challenging a little bit more tricky..." (Mick, Trustee)

"Well, I meet with the Chair every two weeks and when I joined the organisation I basically sort of said I would like us to meet every two weeks and he has really supported me in that. We meet every two weeks and go through whatever is happening. Whenever I've asked him for advice or support ... he tends to be quite hands off, because he believes that Chief Executives should be allowed to

get on with it and I would very much concur with that. But whenever I've asked him for support he has always done whatever I've required, so the relationship works really well.” (Jennie, CEO)

“The Chair I would say he has a sort of fairly shrewd idea of what is going on, I report to him by exception if something goes wrong I will go and see him straight away; I would write to him or ring him up.” (Gordon, CEO)

“I see the chairman quite a bit. We speak on the telephone. We have lunch together and meet.” (Mark, CEO)

Trustee - trustee relationships

As Harrow and Palmer (2003: 97) note, trustees are expected to take collective responsibility for decision-making and for the legal stewardship of their organisations:

“The legal framework requires trustees to act together, taking collective responsibility for decisions.”

This collective responsibility, combined with the heavy responsibilities of the role (as examined in Chapter 6) means that the working relationships between trustees are vitally important. The majority of the participants in this study reported having good working relationships with other trustees in the organisation:

“We all do trust each other and we work well together” (Pauline, Trustee)

“I very much like and respect the other members of the board. The Chair is very competent and hard-working and organises meetings superbly. She accomplishes a lot in a short time and is very pleasant and appreciative towards all present.” (Sian, Trustee)

There was a sense among participants that having positive working relationships with their colleagues on the trustee board contributed to their enjoyment of the role and their ongoing motivation:

“Generally I would say that the majority of us don’t actually spend time together privately. But there is an affiliation, you feel a sense of informal family or affiliation, a kind of loyalty to the group. And I think if you’re searching for the meaning of trusteeship and why people stick at it for a while, its not just simply for the charitable benefit that comes to whatever the charity is doing - I mean obviously that’s important - but its also the sense of community that comes in doing that together with other people.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

“I think I have a good working relationship [with the other trustees], its very informal here and that’s what I like about it to be honest. Another reason I’ve stayed is that its informal. [The Chair] is very up to date with the day to day runnings and what is going on. He has a great agenda, everything is laid out, everything is professional, and I like that approach. Its very informal but the committee is run like a tight ship. It starts at half five, all the issues are dealt with, [the Chair and the Coordinator] email dates and we’re kept informed of what is going on.” (Andrew, Trustee)

“[Relationships between the trustees] are really good. I’ve got very close relationships ... because really out of a cast of eight or nine there’s only two or three of us who actually do the work (laughs) so you work quite closely with people.” (Annette, Trustee)

A minority of participants admitted to having a less positive working relationship with their trustee colleagues:

“I preferred interacting with the actual staff who did the real work rather than with the board members. There were people on the board that I didn’t quite understand what they were doing there. I don’t understand what a priest has got to be on a board for. It just seems strange how people have been selected to go on the board. I don’t know.” (Lucy, Trustee)

A common theme that arose in the interviews was a perceived inequality in the workloads and levels of involvement among trustees. This concurs with Harris’s (1989) work that identified trustees with differing levels of participation:

“In contrast with these management committee members who feel they should be doing more, there are also committee members who take an opposing view and adopt a minimalist approach to the implementation of their role. Some, for example, have been made

very anxious by suggestions from their staff that there might be more to their role than occasional attendance at committee meetings and social gatherings.” (Harris, 1989: 318)

Around half of the trustees interviewed reported that the work was not evenly distributed among trustees and that some contributed significantly more than others.

“Some of them are so busy that they’re just on the Board as advisory people really, they don’t really play an active role.” (Issac, Senior staff member)

“It feels like some people are really sacrificing themselves and overworking. I try not to, and in a number of optional things will try not to be noticed and hope that I’m not asked to do much. But in stuff that’s required of every member of the committee, if its circulated to everyone there is no escaping it.” (Sian, Trustee)

“The problem is that you will always get out of, say, a group of ten trustees, you’ll get three or four who work their backside off, and the others who you won’t see a lot of. And that’s a problem. But it is something you must learn to live with.” (Annette, Trustee)

Participants observed that the main causes of an unequal workload among trustees were threefold: a result of an individual being too busy to contribute more; caused by the trustees’ lack of confidence; or an indication of them being motivated by the wrong reasons, for example to gain status. Clearly these explanations relate closely to other themes emergent from the data. The unequal distribution of work among individual members of a trustee board and differing levels of involvement reinforces the point that trustees’ experiences are varied and diverse. The role ambiguity identified in the previous chapter is exacerbated by the fact that workloads and levels of involvement differ from one trustee to another, presenting further challenges to policy discourses that represent trusteeship as a homogeneous and narrowly defined role. Furthermore, the disproportionately high workloads borne by a small number of ‘core’ trustees in some organisations raise potential consequences for the ability of voluntary organisations to recruit and retain trustees to their boards. The increasing trend to recruit trustees

from professional backgrounds - identified in Chapter 5 – raises questions about whether such trustees are able to commit sufficient time to the voluntary role. Finally, the evidence that some trustees undertake a minimal level of involvement raises questions about whether recruitment processes are effective and attracting people with sufficient motivation and commitment, and whether training and support processes are facilitating a full and effective contribution from all trustees once they are established in the role.

Trustees' relationship with external stakeholders

As discussed in Chapter 3 the changing policy environment - including the increasing trend for voluntary sector public service delivery via contracting - has raised a number of concerns about threats to charity independence (Smerdon, 2009; Shaw and Allen, 2009). The Charity Commission (2007a: 20) has emphasized the need for trustees to be sufficiently involved in decision-making, to be free to act in the best interests of the charity and to avoid undertaking activities outside the charity's objects and powers in order to gain funding. It has expressed concern over its own research findings that indicated that only 26% of charities surveyed who were delivering public services agreed they were free to take decisions without pressure to conform to the wishes of funders (2007a: 17).

During the interviews presented here, participants also raised various points in relation to the threats to the independence of their charities, and the implications for trustees. Some trustees had experienced situations that caused them concern over their ability to maintain their autonomy as leaders of the organisation, and perceived that external stakeholders such as funders posed a potential threat to the independence of the charity. For example, given the significant reductions in local authority budgets, there was a concern that charities contracted by the local authority would experience pressure to deliver services at reduced costs:

“That’s where it’s going to be interesting times, if one had a crystal ball for the third sector, say, over the next three years, I think it’s going to be really challenging because one wants to keep to high standards, you do have missions statements, you do have your values [but] local authorities are turning around and saying you have to cut your expenses by 25%.” (Pauline, Trustee)

This is a pertinent issue, particularly given the deep cuts to voluntary sector funding as a result of the Coalition Government’s ‘austerity measures’ (Kane and Allen, 2011; Alcock, 2012: 7), as discussed in Chapter 3.

Another way in which trustees’ autonomy to direct the activities of their charities is potentially threatened is by the terms and conditions imposed by funding bodies. Following Cunningham’s (2008) research that found charities resisting, with varying levels of success, attempts by local authority funders to influence employment terms and conditions such as job-grading, holidays, hours and unsocial hours payments, there was some evidence here that trustees had experienced pressure from external funders. One trustee reported how her organisation had decided to turn down funding from a particular funder because it came with the caveat that they should not employ a particular member of staff:

“We went to another charitable funder ... and asked them to support us in these first 18 months and again, they were dictating who we should employ. They would have given us money if we had changed particular personnel in the organisation. We said no. We lost that. But we had to keep to our principles.” (Alice, Trustee)

Participants reported other examples of how their relationship with funders had the potential to threaten the independence of trustees to run their charities as they see fit. Cairns et al. (2005) identified that charities often adopt quality monitoring systems in response to pressure, or anticipate pressure, from external funders. Similarly, this study found evidence that organisations’ procedures are influenced by the standards or monitoring requirements imposed by funders:

“And now with the ludicrous way of obtaining money, we have to tick boxes. I mean - the people you meet, I am meeting, they are totally destitute many of them, you know. And yet we have to fill in boxes - what we gave and who we gave it to and when we gave it, and how often we gave it. And we have to fill in forms, and then we send the forms off. And that's the only way we can get money to give to these people.” (Michael, Trustee)

“In order to look good for funders we have to tick so many boxes. And that is what so much of the committee work is about, being able to demonstrate having the sort of structures and policies in place which I think are out of proportion to a small organisation like ours”. (Sian, Trustee)

“Our local authority and Primary Care Trust are our main funders and they now work... they now talk in a language that's about outcomes and impact and performance management, and delivery, and performance indicators. And [our charity] is struggling to meet those requirements.” (Charlotte, Trustee)

Gary, another trustee, felt that charities with more detailed and robust policies were more likely to score higher points in commissioning tenders for public service delivery contracts. As a result there is pressure to develop more complex policies and procedures in order to present the organisation in a more favorable light to potential funders:

“What drives [our policies and procedures] is actually the requirements of funders now. So for example, our local authority in Liverpool as a bare minimum would expect you to have a policy on CRB checking your staff. And there is a danger that it becomes too detailed and bureaucratic and you spend more time trying to make sure you keep to the policy than doing anything useful.” (Gary, Trustee)

A second aspect of charity independence, as discussed in Chapter 3, is the freedom of voluntary sector organisations to campaign or lobby government (Rosenman, 2009; Onyx et al., 2010; Mosley, 2011). A number of participants perceived part of their role as providing a ‘voice’

for service users and highlighted the importance they attached to protecting their charity's independence in this respect:

"I do want to make sure when I'm sitting on the board, you know, even if I don't say anything, if there is anything I think is against [service users'] interests then I like that I'm able to voice that if necessary." (Kirsty, Trustee)

"Its quite interesting how contract culture, I think its held up as a potential answer to a lot of funding, but actually, its incredibly dangerous as well, for charitable organisations because you actually have to adopt the agenda of the local authority." (Annette, Trustee)

The representative from the Government's Office for the Third Sector also acknowledged such concerns about whether funding from statutory bodies impedes organisations' freedom to criticise or lobby statutory agencies and their policies:

"I think that sort of concern about how you challenge your funders, whether its your statutory funders or whether it is through grants or contracts, is becoming a big issue for third sector organisations particularly when the money is going to start dropping off, leaving these organisations rather exposed. How do you put across an important point about government policy if you are being funded by government?" (Head of Third Sector and Social Enterprise, Department for Communities and Local Government)

The Chief Executive of a local advocacy charity gave an example of a potential threat to a third aspect of charity independence. He explained that his charity had, on more than one occasion, been asked to bid for contracts relating to work with their core group of beneficiaries, but in new areas of work. The board of trustees had declined these invitations to tender in order to protect the core mission of the organisation. They perceived that taking on service delivery roles would create a conflict of interests and threaten the charity's independence to act as an advocate for clients:

"Both the local authority and CVS have said "Would you take this on?" We went back and said no because it was taking us into service delivery. And there is a huge area of conflict of interest

there for [our trustees] because if we are managing advocacy, how would you then manage a service delivery that your advocacy plans may have a conflict with.” (Graham, CEO)

Concerns about charities experiencing ‘mission drift’ in order to access new sources of income is an issue closely related to charity independence (Osbourne and McLaughlin, 2004) and was examined in some detail in Chapter 3. During interviews, a number of members of the policy community concurred that the risk of mission drift was indeed a threat for voluntary sector organisations in the current economic environment:

“In terms of governance issues, a mission creep is another one that commonly comes up. I think it's always been a problem, and I think one of the things that has helped, and is helping with that, is the requirement for charities to report their public benefit now. Because it means that trustees have to sit down and basically go back to their charitable purposes and say “this is what we're set up to do; are we doing it?” So I think that mitigates against it. But mission creep, in my view, is around chasing funding, pure and simple, trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.” (Policy Manager, Office of the Third Sector)

“We are very pro the sector's role in delivery, but that has to be on the consideration that any organisation bidding understands why this contract would further their mission and if it doesn't they shouldn't do it.” (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

“The other area around contracting is that it tends to tempt organisations into mission drift... Mission drift is a bit of a risk.” (Programme Manager, Merseyside ChangeUp)

The data provided several examples of participants who had experienced situations in which their organisations were faced with decisions that could potentially affect how closely they held to their original mission statements or led them to shift into new areas outside their core aims and objectives to attract funding:

“We need to make money, we need to generate income, so we rent a lot of space out. We are in danger of becoming a landlord rather than keeping our cores aims, which is around women and

children. But we have to do that to be able to sustain ourselves.”
(Alice, Trustee)

“I mean, again, I’m being taped, but... I’ve gone along with things which I wouldn’t have done ... in other words, I’ve disagreed to some extent with what has gone on, the priorities, you know. Because we’ve moved over, very much over, to being dependent ... we tend to be directed by where we can get the money from so that we are distorted in our vision.” (Michael, Trustee)

Despite concerns, the majority of trustees were keenly aware of the need to remain mindful of the charity’s core aims and mission statement when taking decisions about the organisation’s future. There was a perception that trustees should be cautious not to ‘chase’ funding where it would lead them into areas that did not fit well with their strategic aims and main charitable purpose:

“Well, things change. I think we’ve evolved over the years but whatever we’ve evolved to do, we’ve always kept our [beneficiaries] focus. We have evolved but we haven’t evolved just to get that pot of money. I’ve seen quite a few, a couple of local community groups, one of them particularly a local arts community group quite close to us, who will move their projects where the money is.” (Julia, Trustee)

“In a sense, we’ve moved now into delivering a public service, but we’ve still got our own bits, you know, and I think it’s also the trustees role to decide where the funding fits in with the ethos of the organisation. Because we don’t chase money for money’s sake, because there is a principle around what we do and if we’re going to go outside that, then there has to be...the trustees have to discuss where that fits in with the principles of the organisation. You know, ‘we’ve been approached to do this, does this stand inside our Memorandum and Articles of Association²⁵ or doesn’t it, and if it doesn’t, do we want to change them so that we can accommodate doing that work?’ And in most cases, they haven’t wanted to change the direction.” (Patricia, CEO)

²⁵ Documents that detail the setting up of and running of a Company’s internal affairs, and that may include reference to the charity’s aims and mission.

Trustees, funding and the contracting environment

The funding environment was an area of considerable concern to trustees in the study. Most of the trustees had experienced anxieties about the financial instability of their organisations and the potential pitfalls encountered in decisions and negotiations relating to the financial responsibilities of the trustee role. Their experiences echoed the issues discussed in Chapter 3 including relationships with funders, the short term nature of contracts, the resources needed to secure and maintain funding agreements and the risks posed to charities by various forms of funding arrangement (Clark et al., 2010; Charity Commission, 2007a; Cunningham, 2008). For at least half of the trustees, funding difficulties were one of the most worrying and difficult aspects of their role:

“There is always the worry of funding. I see my role as an important role in helping an organisation like this keep going, because there were some forerunners to my joining the committee, some people who really did a lot of work to nurture the organisation before I did. I feel like I’m just following on in their shadow really. Trying to keep the place buoyant. Because if We’ve got maybe another 18 months of funding and if the funding is pulled like a lot of organisations are in Liverpool, then we will probably never come back.” (Andrew, Trustee)

“Funding is so, so scarce at the moment. As in we are always looking to raise funds in any way, shape or form. And one of the projects, at the moment, we are struggling for funding. And if the funding doesn’t come through, I won’t say which one, but the project might close. That is a big threat, and a big challenge for us.” (Dayo, Trustee)

There is evidence in the data presented here that for trustees volunteering in smaller charities, funding concerns are particularly acute. Some of the participants discerned that larger organisations had an advantage over smaller charities in bidding for and securing funding. For example, some trustees explained that the process of applying for funding was resource-intensive and noted that in small charities, this placed a disproportionately large strain on organisations with few or no paid staff. Their anxieties mirror the findings that emerged from

Rochester's (2003: 116) study of small organisations encountering what he terms a "*liability of smallness*".

"We haven't got any security at all. I mean we have the three years until August 2011, but after that God knows. We could always go to Big Lottery Fund, but that's a joke again. Again, people who know how to fill in a Lottery bid... there's funding managers that know the words, the spin to put on it. We don't have a funding manager." (Colin, Trustee)

"The charities that thrive are not necessarily the charities that deserve to thrive, it's the charities that have geared themselves up to present themselves in the best possible light and have maybe even employed people to do that. And generally that tends to be the bigger players. Because they've got the resources to do that." (Nicholas, Trustee)

In the smallest charities, trustees acknowledged that they were heavily reliant on one main funder and as a result felt that the charity was vulnerable:

"If Liverpool City council changed their approach one year, you know cut back, we would suffer, we would lose part or all of our grant for our full time employee and that would be an incredible problem for us." (Nicholas, Trustee)

"I would say about 95% of our money comes from the Primary Care Trust. And if they suddenly said, 'well, we can't see the need for you', then we'd be out on our backs then." (Colin, Trustee)

All of the staff interviewed were from charities that were engaged in contracting to deliver public services. Around three fifths of the trustees had experience of contracting in at least one of the charities they were involved in. Two trustees were unsure about whether or not their charities had bid for public service delivery contracts (their degree of involvement will be discussed later in this section). Participants were asked about their experiences of the contracting process and their views and perceptions of this specific form of funding arrangement. Closely reflecting the literature that identifies a lack of full-cost recovery as a key problem for many charities funded under public service contracts,

participants indicated that this was indeed a concern. Cunningham (2008: 1047) for example, found evidence of charities struggling as the unequal 'partners' of statutory funders and coming under pressure to subsidize public service delivery by drawing on charities reserves to make up the shortfall in contract funding. A survey by the Charity Commission (2007a: 3) revealed that only 12% of charities delivering public services recovered their full costs in all cases. Policy community, trustee and staff participants in this study all acknowledged the problem and indicated that trustees needed to be mindful of this potential pitfall:

"Very often charities end up subsidising government-funded services because they haven't budgeted properly. Trustees should be aware of that, asking the right questions, making sure that they are not going to end up subsidising it and they will get enough money to deliver the service properly." (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

"What they [the trustees] would want to know is that any contract that we've got at minimum, at absolute minimum covers every single cost of providing the service – at best makes a surplus to invest in other things as well. We do have a rule - not a rule - an aspiration, that each service should standalone and not have any cross-subsidy. That's a bit difficult at the moment." (Matthew, Trustee)

"The biggest challenge at the moment, you know, with the contracting culture...and local authorities having to cut costs and, you know, they try to pass all those onto the charities. Sometimes they say to the charities 'Well you're a charity, what are you going to put into this?' and we're saying 'But the Government are saying that these types of services need to pay for themselves; you need full cost recovery' you know...So there's this continual battle, isn't there, going on about that type of thing." (Christine, CEO)

In addition to the potential difficulties arising in a contracting environment if charities struggle to recover the full costs of providing services, public service delivery raises a number of other implications for charities, highlighted by the Charity Commission (2007d) in their publication "Charities and Public Service Delivery". It advises trustees to be aware of the potential financial, governance, service and reputational risks of entering into contracts (2007d: 18). Some of the participants in the study

here were conscious of such issues and identified potential 'hazards' that charities may encounter in the contracting environment:

"It is another area where trustees need to have a keen understanding of procurement and contract law, but also what they are signing up to because you can have hidden consequences. Or you can only claim at the end of the quarter or only if you deliver the output. What happens if you spend the money and couldn't deliver the output? It isn't your fault the person didn't meet the standard that you were training them to, you did your best. Paying by result, you can end up losing as well. All of that becomes a bit of a hazard." (CEO, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services)

"Very little funding comes without caveat. You get very few totally altruistic funders. All state funding comes with key performance indicators that don't necessarily match what we want to do, and that is a factor." (Graham, CEO)

"If we don't meet the KPIs²⁶, if we haven't done the financial calculations well and it turns out it costs us more than we get back... there's a lot of doing the tender, setting it up, monitoring it, managing the whole process is risk assessment." (Jennie, CEO)

"I think the two new recruits we have made... in a sense we have got them really, I suppose, to cope with this bigger risk agenda which is out there which comes with the territory of contracting." (Mark, CEO)

Some trustees were keenly aware of their responsibilities to be fully informed of and manage the potential risks that the contracting environment presents:

"I think you need to be [aware], you know getting your head around TUPE²⁷. Because it's a large staff team there can be major consequences both financially and organisationally." (Bridget, Trustee)

"We've got to make sure that proper contracts are entered into, that there are no conflicts of interest, and that the contract remains in the interest of the charity. You've got a responsibility to the

²⁶ Key Performance Indicator

²⁷ Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) are regulations that protect employees' terms and conditions their work is transferred from one organisation to another.

people who fund the charity, the charity and the third parties.”
(Ken, Trustee)

However, it was evident from participant remarks that, in many cases, trustees in their charities had little understanding of, or little or no involvement in, the process of negotiating, signing and monitoring contractual arrangements:

“They [the charity] fill a gap which public services don’t do and they assist people to access public services, but I don’t think they directly bid, but then again I don’t know because I don’t understand so much of what is going on.” (Sian, Trustee)

“[I’m] not closely involved. I’ll know what it is, I’ll know what’s required, I’ll know what the targets are, I’ll know what people...I suppose if that’s a closely involvement, it is. So I know about the practical things to do with it, because I’m quite interested in things like that. But I don’t get involved in negotiating them, things like that.” (Annette, Trustee)

“Informally I’ve had conversations with our CEO as a trustee because I think in order to do that properly [trustees being involved in contracting decisions] the CEO would have to put more effort into training the trustees around commissioning. Because most of the trustees I suspect - unless they work in the public sector - probably don’t understand what commissioning is about.” (Mick, Trustee)

In some cases, participants perceived that understanding funding contracts was a role for paid staff, rather than trustees:

“It’s not really in this project the trustees’ role to be worrying about, ‘Is this a commission that we should be taking on or not?’ If that was their job, then they might as well be running the project and be managers.” (Julia, Trustee)

“It’s more of an operational issue really because of the nature of the contract. But I don’t know... maybe we should see [the contracts] more. That’s an interesting point you’ve raised there. I haven’t really thought about that. Haven’t thought about it at all.” (Mick, Trustee)

As with other core themes, the inconsistency of approaches in part reflected the diversity of the voluntary sector and the different implications for larger and smaller charities. For example, trustees in small charities with few paid staff were more likely to be directly involved in writing bids and attending meetings:

“Then another big contract that we’d gone for, it was a very large contract called the Health Trainers, I was involved with writing the tender for that.” (Gary, Trustee)

In contrast, trustees of larger organisations with bigger staff teams tended to delegate hands-on involvement in the contractual process to staff:

“Trustees wouldn’t be involved in contract discussions or negotiations and nor should they be really – if the executive team are doing their job well.” (Matthew, Trustee)

Other evidence of the different implications for small and large charities emerged from the data. Echoing the findings of Morris’s (2000) Merseyside-based empirical work that found evidence that smaller charities were relatively disadvantaged in the contract culture, participants in this study identified a number of challenges facing small charities struggling to adapt to and compete within the contracting environment. Morris (2000: 413) found evidence that small charities felt unprepared for the shift from grant to contract funding, perceiving that it had “crept up on them”. Her analysis of the funding arrangements established between local authorities and charities revealed inconsistent terminology and confusion over their legal status. Although one might expect (or hope) that over a decade later there would be greater clarity over the distinction between grants and contracts - and their legal foundation - data from my research revealed similar themes. One example arose in the interview with the Director responsible for commissioning many social care services from charities in Liverpool, who

was incredulous that the board of a charity had failed to understand the terms of the contract into which they had entered and perceived that they did not comprehend how contractual funding agreements operated:

“I’ll give you a case study actually...where a voluntary sector organisation, without naming them, won a contract, quite a substantial amount for them, and they never read the contract. They never read the specification. And they got into this panic, and they suddenly rang to say we are withdrawing, and I’m thinking ‘why?’. And I took myself as a Director with four of my officers and went and met the board, and they were shocked that we took the time to do this. Because I needed to understand where did we go wrong? And what became very clear to me is the board members never were aware of what the contract said. What became clear again is the board members have not taken the time to read, they have not taken the time to understand what their business plan is going to look like, they just reacted, they believed that we should have given them, it was about £200000, just give them £200000 and they can do whatever they want to do with it.” (Director of Integrated Adult Health and Social Care, Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trust)

From the perspective of a trustee of a small charity, however, it is clear that, the prospect of moving from grants to contracts can be a daunting one, as this interview illustrates:

“At the moment we’ve got three years of [grant] funding. And we don’t know after three years what we’ll do. You know. We hope that in six months we’ll be negotiating for an extension. We haven’t got a clue. There are moves now for it to be more on a contractual basis. We’re worried about that too because what they tend to do, they are talking about as if we are big conglomerates putting in a tender. We don’t know how to put a tender in. We have one member of staff and all the board are volunteers, most of them counsellors. We don’t know how to put a tender in.” (Colin, Trustee)

As Morris (2000) points out, while smaller charities may not be formally excluded from bidding for contracts, the fact that funding arrangements are not tailored to small charities places them at a disadvantage. They have limited resources and cannot draw on the expertise of full time

'contract managers' employed by many large charities to negotiate, monitor and manage funding arrangements. Their access to legal advice may be limited. Furthermore, she argues, they are often in a weak "take it or leave it" negotiating position, as opposed to being the equal partners that the Compact implied they should be (Morris, 2000: 416). Another participant in my study illustrated some of the practical challenges facing trustees of small charities who were confronted with the expectations and requirements of the contracting environment when their grant funder switched to contracting. This underlines the point that entering into contracts is not always a *choice* for trustees:

"We have had cases... for example, a group of parents of children who had a particular disability. Over a period of time they got a group together because they wanted to take ownership of the support of their own children. They applied for a grant, year in and year out, of £50,000 and that bought them the support the children needed. The next minute that was rolled over to a massive tender mission of 276 pages. The bottom line is an organisation that has never done that is faced with what the hell do they do. They wanted to win it, but they had massive barriers in front of them." (Programme Manager, Merseyside ChangeUp)

Members of the policy community emphasised their concerns about the ability of small charities to successfully engage with the contracting environment, pointing out that large charities may be more attractive to commissioners of services due their abilities to deliver on a larger scale. In addition, the high levels of time and skill needed to complete lengthy tender documents and manage the risks, monitoring requirements and legal implications place small charities at a relative disadvantage:

"I think one of the problems for the third sector is that if you look at the numbers of third sector organisations there are thousands, hundreds and thousands across the country. They are quite small, they are quite local and that then works against them because even if they are doing really good things they are probably doing it on a really smaller scale." (Head of Third Sector, Department for Communities and Local Government)

“There is a massive threshold step before you are able to deliver public services. That is a concern for me, that we are moving completely away from the idea of civil society. What we are actually simply creating is a broader, competitive, capitalist market where the only distinguishing factor is the legal form of the entity.”
(CEO, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services)

Participants were asked about the implications of the contracting environment for trustees. Some participants were unsure as to whether the trustee role changed when charities became engaged in public service delivery via contracts, or were unable to point to specific implications. This reflected the evidence discussed above that some trustees had limited involvement in, or understanding of, contracting processes. Despite this, there was a strong sense from many other participants that the ‘contract culture’ raises important implications for trustees leading charities, and that in some sense it is influencing the roles and responsibilities of trustees. Firstly, participants considered that, as a result of the contracting environment, trustees’ level of responsibility has increased:

“[Our trustees are] responsible for services that some people would class as statutory services because they’re paid by statutory authorities. So our trustees are not just responsible for services that you run from voluntary income, they’re also responsible for statutory services.” (Christine, CEO)

“[Contracting] changes the [trustee] role in the sense that they become employers more. That’s probably the most, because service level agreements require people to actually deliver something, you employ somebody so from their point of view as employers, they become, you know, not huge employers but they’ve got responsibilities and that’s been the biggest change because actually understanding what those responsibilities are has been quite difficult for [the trustees].” (Patricia, CEO)

“I think the trustees are governing and are ultimately responsible for an organisation that is delivering a service. If you are contracting to deliver a certain national health service or residential service or care in the community, they you have to do that and if you don’t that is a problem.” (Jonathan, Trustee)

Furthermore, participants in the study identified the need of trustees for greater knowledge and skills in order to equip them to fulfil their responsibilities within this context:

“If for example you are in an organisation that delivers services and in order to survive you are going to have to compete for local authority funding contracts, then you do need to understand the commissioning process, you need to understand financial responsibility, all those sorts of things. Whereas if you are just a trustee of a church hall organisation you don’t do you?” (Head of Third Sector, Department for Communities and Local Government)

Trustees also raised concerns about the increased risks that contracting exposes them, and their charities to – Chapter 8 presents this data and discusses these concerns in more detail. The wider implications of contracting in terms of the role of the voluntary sector and its relationship with government (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) raises issues about how trustees understand their role as guardians of charity and potentially has implications for their motivation in the role:

“At the start it confused them [our trustees]. There was always a feeling amongst the older generation of trustees certainly, of “why are we going this, isn’t this the Government’s job”? Why are we being asked to do it?” Whereas their managers would be saying to them, ‘go for it, go for it, go for it, because it keeps our jobs safe’. Although they would never have said that, that was what was meant.” (Peter, Trustee)

Given the large number of trustee vacancies on charity boards, and the under-representation of young people as trustees, public perceptions of contracting out public service delivery to charities and the impact on motivation to volunteer within charities are areas ripe for further research.

Summary

The divergence of trustee experience is a key theme emerging from this chapter as elsewhere. While around half of the trustees in the study

reported feeling confident in their role, a similar proportion expressed a lack of confidence in their competence for the role. Interestingly, there is a view that official guidance (such as Charity Commission publications) actually undermines individuals' confidence that they are adequately fulfilling their trustee responsibilities, rather than reinforcing their confidence and competence. This attitude appears to arise from the discord between the standardised official representation of what the role should entail and the often ambiguous and diverse experience of trusteeship in practice. As the data demonstrates, the types of tasks undertaken by trustees and the amount of time spent on trustee duties varies significantly between individuals and charities. In many cases, trustees' expectations of the role – based upon official representations as well as the information provided during the recruitment process – are not met in practice, with participants reporting that they are asked to take on more tasks and responsibilities than they had anticipated. These issues present a potential challenge to policy-makers who provide guidance materials, and indicate a need to reflect this diversity without overlooking the resource limitations of smaller charities nor imposing unrealistic expectations in the form of a “one size fits all” approach.

The quality of working relationships experienced by volunteer trustees is key to their effectiveness in the role as well as contributing to their enjoyment and continuing motivation. In the majority of cases, trustees experience good working relationships with other trustees and feel that this is an important contributory factor to their motivation and desire to continue in the role. There is also evidence of positive working relationships and mutual respect and cooperation between trustees and paid staff. The delineation of trustee and staff roles is inconsistent however, echoing previous research that has reported a blurred boundary between staff and trustee roles (Harris, 1989; Otto, 2003). There were examples in the study where this ambiguity led to tensions and disagreements between paid staff and voluntary trustees, raising potential implications for their efficiency as well as their enjoyment of their roles and for trustee retention.

The findings support many of the concerns raised in the extant literature about the changing environment in which voluntary organisations are operating. Following Cunningham (2008) and Cairns (2009) there is evidence that trustees face difficult challenges to maintaining the independence of their charities. This pressure is particularly evident in the face of extensive and prescriptive monitoring requirements imposed on charities by external funders. Examples of the difficulties reported by participants also include potential conflicts of interest with their advocacy role and attempts by funders to influence the employment of paid staff.

The funding environment is causing appreciable anxiety to trustees. This is particularly manifest in small charities with fewer resources to dedicate to funding applications and monitoring. Participants from all groups (trustees, staff and policy) discern that the funding situation is worsening and there were numerous examples within the data of participants' fears for the financial futures of their charities. A closely related area of significant disquiet is the increasing tendency of funders to prioritise contract funding over grant funding, and the pervasive growth of the contracting environment. As well as increasing the financial challenges trustees are tackling, participants identified a number of risks that contractual funding arrangements pose to their charities. Again, the data suggests that in relation to smaller charities, the concerns of trustees, and the challenges they are confronted with, are amplified.

As well as raising obvious questions about the survival of individual charities and the impact of the sector as a whole, the level of anxiety experienced by trustees about the organisational challenges posed by the external environment has potential consequences for their resilience within the role and the continuing recruitment and retention of volunteers to fulfil these positions. Furthermore, the data indicates that this changing policy environment impacts directly on trustees in terms of increased responsibility and increased expectations that they should have greater levels of skills and knowledge to equip them for the challenges presented

by contracting and other organisational challenges. The increasing pressures and anxieties experienced by many trustees, combined with inconsistencies in the availability of training and support, raise serious questions about whether individuals will be prepared to continue to volunteer as leaders of charities in the future. The following chapter examines the data relating to participants' views on the shifting policy environment as well as their predictions about the future of voluntary action and of trusteeship.

Chapter 8: Trustees and the policy environment

Introduction

The previous three chapters have presented the data relating to participants' perceptions of and experiences of various aspects of trusteeship. This chapter continues in that vein with a particular focus on participants' conceptualisations of the impact of the policy environment on trusteeship, both in terms of present conditions and predicted future implications. Firstly, the chapter examines a blurring of the boundaries between the voluntary sector and the private sector. It presents evidence that voluntary organisations are increasingly under pressure to adopt commercial practices and approaches, and observes that many participants apply business-like language and attitudes in describing the work of their charities. It considers the implications for trustees of this 'hybridisation' (Evers, 2005; Billis, 2010), both in terms of the demand on them for more business-like processes and systems in their charities, and in respect to the ways they make sense of their own roles within this context. Secondly, the chapter addresses the continuing debate over the payment of trustees, and presents participants' views on the matter. It goes on to report the data relating to their experiences of consolidating bureaucratisation, auditing and monitoring, alongside decreasing trust and the particular difficulties experienced by smaller charities within an increasingly competitive environment. Finally, the chapter examines the factors that are key to the retention of trustees. It examines the reasons that lead some trustees to consider resignation, and reflects upon the challenges for charities in minimising trustee turnover and sustaining trustees in the role.

A blurring of the boundaries

As detailed in Chapter 3, social policy changes in the UK over the past thirty years represent the 'marketisation' of welfare provision. The increasing trend for public services to be 'contracted out' has led to a blurring of the boundaries between public, private and voluntary sectors. As a result of similar neo-liberal policies in the US, Salamon (1993: 17) observes a "*striking expansion of commercial activity on the part of non-profit firms, blurring the distinction between non-profit and for-profit providers, raising serious questions about who will serve those in need*". Indeed, recent work by McKay et al. (2011) concludes that some UK charities are "succumbing to market forces" as indicated by the significant increase in the amount of income they acquire from commercial sources. Commentators' observations about the increasing commercialisation of voluntary sector organisations, and the emergence of 'hybrid' organisations (Evers, 2005; Billis, 2010) that transcend traditional distinctions between the voluntary and private sectors are to some extent reflected in the experiences of participants in this study. For example, several participants – particularly those in larger organisations – conceived of charities and private sector businesses as becoming increasingly similar in nature:

"Very large charities are not dissimilar to a large public company, really. A large public company which has lots of employees and makes a profit, well a large charity will have lots of employees and the profit is put back in the charity. That is the only difference, where the profit is going. One, the profit goes to the shareholders and in one the profit goes back to the organisation." (Jonathan, Trustee)

"I see our Trust - our charity - as a not-for-profit business. And we run it very professionally." (Cindy, CEO)

"I firmly believe that charities are simply businesses that do good things. And if you don't run a charity as if it was a business, you wouldn't stay in business, especially in this climate." (Jennie, CEO)

Furthermore, some participants placed a high value on the characteristics of private sector businesses and implied that they viewed such features as being of benefit to voluntary sector organisations adopting similar approaches:

“In the last eight or nine years, when I first got into the third sector, the image of charities was very much sort of twin set and pearls and very old fashioned and the third sector meant third class. In the last, certainly in the last five or six years we’ve all had to become a lot more commercially minded, a lot more business-like. There’s a lot more competition for the money that’s available to the other services out there. And we’ve gone away from applying for grants to bidding for tenders now, which is a whole different set of skills. And particularly in the job that I’m doing now which is essentially raising unrestricted income for this agency, and it is useful to have that background in the real world if you like, the commercial world. But I’ve seen the, I suppose, the quality of this organisation improve and match if not exceed a lot of private and public sector organisations.” (Gary, Trustee)

“You have to be quite tough, I think, to be effective. The charitable sector isn’t about being incompetent because it’s a charity. It’s about actually functioning as a business within a charitable framework. That’s what it’s about. You’ve got to be hardnosed sometimes.” (Matthew, Trustee)

“My expectation was that as a trustee, I should be operating as a Director of a business, and for me, trustee is kind of a compound responsibility. If it’s an incorporated charity, you have all the responsibilities of a Director of a company, but you also have responsibilities of trust. So you have obviously trust for the funds you are handling, trust for your donors, trust for your staff, trust for your beneficiaries, trust for the reputation of the charity, and things like that. So I don’t see how a kind of charity business should be any less rigorous than a commercial business.” (Paul, Trustee)

“I have forty years now in the third sector, but they used to call it voluntary sector at the beginning, of when it was all pretty little and, if I’m honest, pretty amateur. That’s not to put down the work that was done. Whereas, in the time that I have been involved with [this charity], which is now twenty-five years, and all third sector, I imagine they’re probably saying this, we are businesses and whether we like it or not, it ain’t going to go away and, in many ways, it’s led to hiking up the standards which is good and in terms of governance, good accounting, good business management, appropriate organisation structures.” (Pauline, Trustee)

These perceptions among trustees - that being “business-like” is positive or necessary for their voluntary sector organisations - may simply reflect the realities of the policy environment in which they are operating whereby there is an increasing role for the voluntary sector in bidding for contracts and becoming self-sustaining through social enterprise or commercial income-generating activities. The interviews with two members of the policy community underlined the expectation of policy-makers that voluntary organisations should increasingly behave like businesses:

“Personalisation is another interesting agenda - social care, budgets devolved, service users... [Voluntary sector organisations] will have to act like retailers and get people to buy from them which means a completely different business model. They have to promote themselves differently, market themselves differently, and build brands they may not have had with service users before.” (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

“The majority...or most of the voluntary sector...they’re not business orientated, they are not entrepreneurial. They are real operational people, grassroots, they kind of love their community. And it was a challenge for them when we said ‘well hold on you need to start becoming like a business. And you need to start being held accountable back to the kind of resource allocation system rather than be accountable to your punters coming through the door’. Some of the third sector we found that the governance arrangement was very, very weak.” (Director of Integrated Adult Health and Social Care, Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trust)

Fairclough (2000b: 147) argues that the use of language serves to actualise new forms of social relationship, forms of activity and values enshrined in policy discourse. It is interesting to note, therefore, the ways in which voluntary sector participants in this study appear to adopt the language of business in describing their experiences and understandings of their role. Following Dart’s (2004) case study of a Canadian non-profit organisation that identified the use of business jargon and rhetoric, there is evidence of business language being incorporated into the discourse and structures of voluntary organisations:

“We work to a three year strategic plan and business plan. We have a very astute Director of Business Support ... You’ve got to be thinking ahead because of good employment law you’re into things like ninety day redundancy, all of that, and so, yes, it’s brought a whole extra dimension that trustees need to be aware of and an element of business competence that you have to be aware of. [It is] very useful to have a business person and a project manager on your [board of] trustees.” (Pauline, Trustee)

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is evidence that the contracting environment has placed voluntary organisations under considerable pressure to adopt the practices and systems imposed by funders and, as such, it is perhaps unsurprising that the vocabulary of business has penetrated into the voluntary sector. As Eikenberry (2009: 583-4) argues, *“models of business and professionalism...are increasingly held up as the best way for nonprofit and voluntary organizations to operate, even as scholars and practitioners also cite diversity and pluralism with the nonprofit and voluntary sector as one of its most valuable contributions to society.”* She calls for voluntary sector leaders to contribute to promoting a ‘democratic’ and ‘participatory’ discourse to counter the market ideology that is increasingly penetrating the voluntary sector.

There was some evidence in the research here of resistance to market imperatives, indicated by trustees who were explicitly conscious of the pressure to conform to business imperatives and who argued that there is a distinction between the values and practices of voluntary and private organisations:

“You’re not running a business. Businesses are for profit, to profit without consideration to other people except to the business itself. So the economic agenda of business and profiteering is designed to actually some extent exploit others, to maximise profit, to charge as much as possible if you can get the revenue. Well that’s the whole basis of business enterprise. And you know, I’m not making a moral judgement of that, that’s what businesses do. But that isn’t what charities are about. Charities aren’t about exploiting others and maximising profit over others to the gain of other people. Charities aren’t run on those principles and yet they find themselves using the same language.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

"If you'd had a business person come in... it made sense to close [our charity] down [laughs], financial sense to close it down and cut your losses, get rid of it, sell the building and make a profit on the building. It made absolute sense. They are coming at it from a business model. Because one of the things that is being done with charities is to get them to move more towards a business model. Hence they call them these 'social enterprises' rather than profit-and-loss, you know you must make a profit or you're doomed. Charities, we don't want to make a profit. We just want to make enough money so we can pay the staff and all of that. We don't want to make a profit. But you have to make a profit really in order to do the things you want to do. So.... We don't want to go to that end of business where you have to be so brutal as to not offer childcare in this area." (Alice, Trustee)

Several trustees discerned differences in the way that the voluntary sector operates in relation to private sector companies, indicating that its distinctiveness has not been entirely undermined by discourses of professionalisation, managerialism and enterprise:

"The charitable sector is full of mavericks in many ways, who are great innovators, really get things started. But actually as a long term sustainability can be an absolute nightmare because they can't progress it." (Annette, Trustee)

"One thing I've noticed is the way charities operate at a much slower pace [than commercial organisations]." (Hannah, Trustee)

One participant cautioned against the attitude that charities must highly value and adopt private sector practices, arguing that voluntary sector organisations are richer in the sense of their values:

"[Private sector businesses] are there to make a return. There is a lot we can learn to improve our competence from how they do it - their governance and accountability and so on - but we have a greater fund of goodness in our organisation. So we can learn, but I think they can learn a hell of a lot more from us. I really believe that." (Mark, CEO)

There are apparent contradictions in the prevailing policy discourse and in the data relating to trustee and charity staff perspectives relating to the

comparisons between private and voluntary sectors. While some government policies have emphasised the distinctiveness of the voluntary sector and the unique contribution it can make to service delivery and policy implementation (DCLG, 2006), there is also a strong drive from government to encourage voluntary sector organisations to improve their capacity to survive in a competitive, commercial environment (Lesirge et al., 2006; Sinclair Taylor, 2006) and conform to standards and processes that are the norm in the private sector (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). This tension was acknowledged by some of the policy community participants responsible for commissioning services from voluntary sector organisations:

“On the one hand we are expected to develop third sector organisations in playing an increasingly big part in the delivery of public services and on the other hand we are expected to develop them to get more business-like and all the rest of it.” (Head of Adult and Social Care Commissioning, Liverpool Primary Care Trust)

In an interview with another participant with responsibility for commissioning services, he strongly reiterated the message that voluntary sector organisations should learn to become more business-like and professional, yet also indicated that he valued their characteristics that set them apart from private sector organisations:

“The private sector do have their own niche, totally. And we do rely on them, especially around what I call institutional care. The heavy end type. But when you look at intervention, intermediate care, the private sector can do it fairly well. But I would say the voluntary sector can do it far better, a) because of their commitment, b) because of their knowledge of the area they work in. I think they are more honest and there is an element... I don't want to sound... of naivety. They are not there to make the money. So they are naïve in terms of business and that is kind of refreshing. And when you are talking to them, when I hold meetings with the voluntary sector, my tone of voice is very different to [when I meet with] the private sector.” (Director of Integrated Adult Health and Social Care, Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trust)

The tensions and contradictions were also highlighted by members of the policy community, who pointed to concerns that voluntary sector and private organisations were treated differently in the competitive tendering process. On the one hand, a senior official in Liverpool Primary Care Trust noted that small businesses had complained that they did not have access to free capacity-building support offered to small charities. On the other hand, senior members of the policy community from Merseyside ChangeUp and LCVS perceived that voluntary sector organisations were disadvantaged relative to private businesses in the rules governing profit-making outlined in public service delivery contracts:

“There is an issue in relation to examples of where if you are a private sector organisation, you are allowed to show surplus and if you are third sector you aren’t allowed to. We heard of cases in the northwest where there was a different arrangement for a private sector. When they got to drawing the contract, the private sector organisation just writes it off as a surplus. With the voluntary sector, any money left over has to be sent back. What is wrong with making a profit? What is a social enterprise? I’m not sure what the difference is between a social enterprise and third sector business. For some, business is masquerading as social enterprise.” (Programme Manager, Merseyside ChangeUp)

The increasing blurring of the boundaries between the sectors and emergence of ‘hybrid’ organisations clearly raises implications for trustees. Not only are they expected - or even required - to respond to the increasing demands to make the charities they lead more ‘business-like’ in terms of systems, processes and language, they must also make sense of their own roles as volunteers within this changing context. Arguably, as the distinction between private and voluntary sector organisations becomes blurred, so too the roles of company directors and charity trustees become increasingly opaque:

“Public services, which traditionally would have been provided by social services, like day care and those sorts of things... a lot of those are run by charities. If you are doing that sort of work, you are becoming much more of a business and that, by definition, means that the charitable trustees who govern those organisations, who deliver those services are looking much more

like directors of private companies rather than volunteer charity trustees for Mrs. Smith's charity." (Jonathan, Trustee)

If the trustee role continues to become increasingly concerned with delivering commercial outcomes in a competitive environment, this raises serious issues for the sector's values, character and independence, together with its ability to attract volunteers to the boards of charities. As one participant summed up, their motivation and commitment to the trustee role is strongly connected to their perception of the voluntary sector as distinct from other kinds of organisation:

"I've always been a very strong believer in charities, and nobody was called the voluntary sector, or the third sector in my earlier days. Because I've worked in the public sector I just thought... I just knew there were charities. I've always felt strongly about the value base of a charity. I like the idea of a voluntary community organisation, of the value base, of the independence - which is really important - but still being able to run professionally; but I just like the whole mix of the sector." (Mick, Trustee)

The impact of blurred boundaries between sectors, therefore, raises implications that directly connect to the factors that initially motivate individuals to become charity trustees – discussed in Chapter 5 – and their continuing willingness to remain as volunteers in the role, which will be explored further in this chapter. It is also an issue central to contemporary debates about trustee remuneration, as the following section explores.

Participants' reflections on policy developments

During the interviews, participants raised a number of matters relating to the wider policy environment, both in the present and in the future. This was principally in response to a question about whether they saw the trustee role developing or changing during the next decade, but discussion also emerged from more general questions about the important issues for trusteeship. The debate surrounding whether or not trustees should be offered payment for fulfilling their trustee duties was

touched upon in a number of interviews. Generally, trusteeship is a voluntary and unpaid role (aside from the reimbursement of expenses incurred). As the Charity Commission (2008d: 3) states:

“The concept of unpaid trusteeship has been one of the defining characteristics of the charitable sector, contributing greatly to public confidence in charities.”

However the Charities Act 2006 introduced a provision for trustees to receive payment for services they may provide (outside their trustee duties) to the charity in limited circumstances. It may be possible for a trustee to be paid for supplying building work or consultancy services (for example) to their charity, provided the Charity Commission’s (2008d) detailed guidance is adhered to. The law does not generally allow for trustees to be paid for their duties as trustees. This is only possible in “exceptional circumstances” and is likely to require additional authority from the charity’s governing document, or from the Charity Commission or Courts (Charity Commission, 2008d: 35). While payment of trustees for their standard duties remains highly unusual, the issue continues to cause debate within the sector. At the time of writing, the sector is awaiting the Government’s response to the Hodgson Review (2012) that recommended that the status quo be retained for ‘small’ and ‘intermediate’ charities, but that the law be changed to allow ‘large’ charities to remunerate their trustees without prior permission from the Charity Commission.

Some participants observed that non-executive directors of some public bodies, such as hospital trusts for example, receive relatively attractive remuneration for the role, and reflected upon this when considering whether they felt that charity trustees should be paid:

“There’s a debate that’s been going on in the sector continuously about payment for trustees. Now whether that will raise it’s head again, I don’t know. I don’t know what the new government’s view is, but the sort of traditional view in the sector is very much around the voluntary nature of trusteeship. This debate is, I think, about

the quality of trustees; their role, particularly in large, service delivery organisations. And if you make the comparison with housing associations, for example, where their board members are generally paid, and if you make the comparison with the private sector where non-executives get paid ... I think there is a point of view in the sector that it should be easier for charities to pay trustees for being trustees in order to attract the sort of professional skills that they want to attract to those charities. And that does fly in the face of the current ethos of the voluntary nature of trusteeship.” (Policy Manager, Office of the Third Sector)

There is a lack of consensus on the subject of trustee remuneration among the voluntary sector policy community, however, and this was reflected in interviews with representatives of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO). The latter would welcome policy that enables trustee remuneration, while the former are more cautious and emphasise the value of preserving voluntary trusteeship. This divergence of opinion possibly reflects their different stances on public service delivery by charities, something that AVECO is a strong supporter of, and that may underpin their support for paid trustee boards with skills to rival the boards in other sectors (who may be their competitors in public service delivery arenas):

“We wouldn’t say that it is never right to pay a chair or a board but we would be much closer to the Charity Commission perspective that there has to be specific circumstances such as ... it is huge. Some of the larger housing associations it could be appropriate in those cases, but we would say that voluntary nature of trusteeship is one of the things that is a defining principle of the whole trusteeship itself” (Head of Governance and Leadership, NCVO)

“Our position is really very pragmatic. I think there is a slight danger of some things like this, they can become highly logical. Our position is that if a charity feels it needs to pay for a particular reason, such as getting the right people or covering loss of earnings, then it should be able to and it should be able to make that decision. It should be empowered to understand what the beneficiaries need. To me it is quite easy to see how a modest investment in a few very good people can bring about that reward many times over by the board making good decisions. Not saying

that good people only want to be paid, many would do it without being paid, but it shouldn't be an ideological barrier to solving a realistic problem that they're finding it hard to recruit. If a bit of remuneration helps them get over that barrier, I don't see a reason why they shouldn't be allowed to do it." (Director of Strategy, ACEVO)

The practical reality for most small charities is that they could not afford to pay their trustees, as a number of participants highlighted. Indeed, if payment of trustees is introduced, it is very likely that only large charities will adopt the practice, potentially further widening the fracture between large and small charities. Some participants were not opposed to the principle of paying trustees, but recognised that it was unrealistic for most small organisations:

"More often than not you don't claim your expenses because money is tight for the organisation." (Dayo, Trustee)

"I don't think there is any principle to why you shouldn't pay them. But ... in very many cases, charities won't be able to afford it." (Ken, Trustee)

Since most charities do not currently pay their trustees, they are able to benefit from the voluntary time offered by individuals with high levels of skill. If there was a general expectation of payment, some participants argued that they would not be able to 'afford' to attract highly skilled trustees:

"I mean the likes of our Chair ... he's had such an amazing CV throughout his career, he's just so, so good at what he does, he's just got a very good business mind and I can't imagine what salary he'd need, and I don't think the charity can afford him, but he can at least give that in the time that he can volunteer." (Hannah, Trustee)

The majority of trustees interviewed were not comfortable with the suggestion that trustees be paid:

"I am aware there is a move in the third sector, charity and social enterprise, to begin to pay some charity trustees. Some charities do pay their trustees. There seems to be a move that way. There are an awful lot of people in the sector - and I am one of them - who don't think it is a great idea. The concept of the sector is that it is voluntary. I think there is a movement there within the third sector to try and do something about the lack of people wanting to be trustees. This issue of paying them is something I am not totally comfortable with. I think it is a volunteer thing." (Jonathan, Trustee)

"You might change the motivation of why someone is involved as a trustee because they are actually turning up because they are getting paid not because they care necessarily about what is going on. So again I would have reservations." (Nicholas, Trustee)

"The idea of paying trustees is absolutely abhorrent." (Peter, Trustee)

"Would being paid have made any difference to me? No, it wouldn't. I wouldn't do it for the money." (Charlotte, Trustee)

"I would prefer that they weren't paid... and I think that is all to do as well with the true spirit of volunteering really." (Christine, CEO)

This has implications for the future recruitment and retention of trustees. Since many current trustees indicated that they felt trusteeship should be voluntary, they – and others with similar viewpoints – may be deterred from the role should policy change in the direction towards paid trusteeships. On the other hand, individuals that currently don't serve as trustees may be attracted to the role by the introduction of trustee remuneration. There is little extant research evidence on the impact that payment of trustees would have on recruitment and retention, implications for the ethos and values of board decision-making, nor its effect on board composition and diversity. In light of this, and the continuing debate surrounding the matter - as evidenced by the government's recent review (Cabinet Office, 2012; Hodgson, 2012) - this is an area ripe for further research.

When thinking about the future of trusteeship, participants often reflected on the implications of the policy and funding environment for small charities, and highlighted some of the challenges facing trustees leading these organisations. A key example given was the monitoring requirements placed upon charities under funding agreements. There is a perception that these place charities and trustees under pressure, but also divert resources away from the core charitable work of the organisation:

"I think the new world is challenging. I do, I think the whole restructuring with certainly the way our work is funded is going to be horrendous for [the trustees]. And for us [the staff] and I don't think we have got eyes around it in a sense, on how we are going to report. There was a day long time ago when the health authority used to see me at the beginning of the year and give me a large cheque and go away and never saw me ever again, and actually funnily enough we did some of our best and most creative work in that period. But since we are micro managed now in the whole contract compliance, target setting I have the opinion that the art of bureaucracy has not increased the quality particularly. And actually the relationship with trust actually was more productive and certainly we spent a lot less money examining our own entrails then we do now." (Gordon, CEO)

There was recognition that charities accepting public funds should be accountable for how the money is spent, but concerns about the bureaucracy and lack of trust that current monitoring expectations entail:

"We get a lot of money from that [grant / donations] and they trust us basically. And that doesn't exist in the other system [contracting], you know. There's no trust with any of it." (Michael, Trustee)

"Charities take contracts under tender and every penny they spend has to be accounted for. They have to prove quite often. There will be a growing responsibility to the public. I think you dip your hands into the coffers and you need to know what you are getting yourself into. You are involved in public money. I think that is what is going to happen if people don't know how to deal with it. I don't think that in the next few years the taxpayer will be content with the idea that they are giving up their money to a charity at the same that charity is getting their money in a forced way." (Chair, Directory of Social Change and Commentator on third sector policy)

One trustee made the wider point that charities are increasingly expected to provide services that the government are not providing. As well as raising questions about how essential services should be provided, and by whom, it raises issues for funding and which charities can access financial support from government:

“The problem is the way society is now, there’s so many things that you - I’m not just talking about us, I’m talking in general - so many things that you would expect to be covered by government or some other organisation that is thrown out and left to a charity. And what you tend to find with charities is that if they’re a flavour of the month then they will get the cash.” (Colin, Trustee)

Concerns have been expressed about the impact on the shape and nature of the voluntary sector of applying market principles to sector funding and of encouraging charities to bid for contracts to deliver public services. As discussed in Chapter 7, there is evidence that smaller charities struggle to compete with large organisations in a competitive funding environment. Anxiety about the longer-term implications of this for the diversity of the voluntary sector was reflected in the interview with the Chief Executive of the local CVS who worried about the squeezing out of small, local charities:

“I think it is changing the sector in the city as well as nationally and internationally. Most voluntary organisations are grassroots, small and local. What we are moving towards is it isn’t just voluntary organisations that are doing health and social care, but private companies are coming in. Inevitably what that means is you will get a concentration of activities, so the trend for public bodies is they don’t have the time and resources to deal with two hundred contracts with local organisations so they will just get a couple of big organisations to do it. Then you end up with the same sort of effect as you have had on the High Street where you lose the small shops and end up with the monolithic department store or High Street brands.” (CEO, Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services)

Voluntary organisations have been increasingly encouraged to consider the benefits of mergers and collaborations with other organisations in the

sector (Cabinet Office, 2010), an expectation often underpinned by the eligibility requirements of potential funders (Harris et al., 2002). When interviewed, the representative from the Office of the Third Sector indicated that he saw potential costs and efficiency benefits to mergers, although he detected resistance to pursuing this option among some trustees:

“There is a reluctance and resistance often amongst charities and a competitiveness as well amongst charity trustees to say ‘why are we doing this and they’re doing that, and this other charity is doing that?. We’re all doing pretty much the same thing. Why don’t we all get together and form one charity, cut down on the administration costs and the overheads, and achieve more bang for our buck?’”
(Policy Manager, Office of the Third Sector)

A small number of participants in this study – in the main confined to those associated with larger charities – had experience of formally collaborating with other organisations for mutual benefit. For example, one trustee explained that his charity was a member of a bidding consortium consisting of several large charities in the region that sought competitive advantage in bidding for public service delivery contracts:

“[There’s] a bidding consortium, it’s been put together to ... it’s not anti-competitive but it’s to allow us to, as a group, to be able to go for bigger contracts and add more value to the bids because we’ve got a sort of wide base of experience and a larger turnover, I suppose, in terms of numbers, a lot more sort of income and reserves as a group.” (Gary, Trustee)

One participant was anticipating a merger with another charity. While there would be practical issues to resolve, such as duplication of trustee boards and senior staff, he viewed the potential merger as positive for the complementary work of the two organisations:

“We are in conversations at board level now of potential merger of which there are more pros than cons really. There is a logic to being a single point of access. The practical elements of it are it would have two chief execs, and two boards. That is for [the trustees] to sort out really. We’ve been working collaboratively ever since we both took over the jobs in that sense. There is no

competition around what we do. There are only two [charities working within our remit]. We just happen to work with different age groups. So there was a sort of sense around we already work collaboratively.” (Graham, CEO)

However, there is also evidence that trustees perceive barriers to working collaboratively with other charities, not least as a result of the increasingly competitive funding environment. This was particularly evident among participants from smaller charities. In some cases, other voluntary organisations were perceived as a threat:

“Charities are in a climate of competition. Small charities will get eaten up. Beneficiaries will suffer if charities become too big. You end up with half the staff and double the clients.” (Dayo, Trustee)

Some in the sector were keen to develop networks and communities of mutual support amongst local voluntary groups:

“Wherever we can, we will try to help other organisations because, well, it’s part of the community mandate, to be honest, so this unwritten law, you’ve got to help them.” (Issac, CEO)

However in practice, there had been situations where this had proved difficult given the funding environment, which could lead to competitiveness and suspicion:

“It is also possible you’ll have two boards competing for one lot of funding. That almost prevents collaborative working.” (CEO, Charity Trustee Network)

“We contacted a load of [other charities], specifically to do with [the work of our organisation]. Just to get together and talk about the issues that we are having and learning points – like how did you get over it, and joint help. And whether to go in for joint bids and lotteries. That’s the big thing at the moment - the government loves it if you can join together. But we didn’t get much response back. I mean people in other charities are uncertain, they don’t know what your motive is for getting together, you know. ‘Are you trying to muscle in on us or?’ Its lack of trust. But it would have been good to have a charity forum – ‘what’s your problems and how did you get round it?’ - you know. But it didn’t take off.” (Colin, Trustee)

A further implication for trustees of the policy environment relates to trustee liability and the perceived risks associated with the role. The issue of trustee liability is discussed in a number of guidance publications (Ford, 1993: 37; Dyer, 2008:40; Charity Commission, 2008a; Dalton, 2011: 116). The Charity Commission acknowledges that trustees may be worried about their personal liability if something goes wrong in respect of their role as a trustee. The Charities Act 2006 granted the Commission powers *“to relieve trustees from personal liability for breach of trust or duty where they have acted honestly and reasonably and ought fairly to be excused”* (Charity Commission, 2007c: F2). However the data indicates that participants in the study remain keenly aware of the issue of personal liability and perceive that the trustee role does entail an element of risk:

“Trustees realise they have this limited time yet enormous responsibility. If something goes wrong, it should be the trustees’ fault in a sense because they have the wrong person in charge or the wrong policies and they haven’t checked the risks. It is a real pressure in that regard. Because they have limited time, where does the needle fall in the balance between risk and trust?” (Mark, CEO)

“I’ll start with the worst! Its... I think you go into this for noble reasons and then at some point you realise that you are accountable. If this business fails, the trustees are legally accountable. We all know that we are accountable. Obviously we have got liability cover but there are legal requirements on us.” (Alice, Trustee)

“Well if the place goes under, I could be liable for any debts.” (Andrew, Trustee)

“I’d never been a trustee before. So I didn’t really know the obligations. I was given a sheet showing bare obligations and things like trustee liability being limited, but that we had a duty to make sure that financial regulation was proper and that if you didn’t do proper financial regulation then in some sense we would be liable. But as long as we saw to it that decent financial regulation was done, then if things went wrong that we would be okay. So in terms of our own protection, that was the main thing that I understood.” (Nicholas, Trustee)

A small number of participants identified the connections between the changing policy environment (in particular the move towards contracting as the norm), the increasing risks for organisations resulting from this and the implications for trustees. There was a view that risks associated with trusteeship are likely to increase:

“Sadly, I think the role of a trustee in 10 years’ time I think will be much more kind of... people protecting themselves against the legal risk. And I think that, if that’s the way we’re going, I think that will probably be a disincentive for people to become Trustees or to take risks.” (Jennie, CEO)

“I think trustees can find that they are not aware of the implications and that of going for contracts. Because there are staffing implications, there are contractual terms... what if one of the parties doesn’t fulfil them? What are the repercussions of that? What if someone goes broke? What are the repercussions of that? I think a lot of organisations have taken on local authority staff because they have outsourced the welfare rights function or a debt function to the sector and then the sector organisation has picked up all the terms and conditions of those local authority staff. Which is huge, I mean pensions, pay, conditions, the whole thing. I think you worry.” (Head of Governance and Leadership, NCVO)

These concerns accord with Scott and Russell’s (1997: 28) research that concluded that the challenges associated with ‘contract culture’ increased the demands on trustees. They indicated that this was potentially a factor in the increasing difficulties charities are encountering in filling trustee vacancies. Given the evidence that charities increasingly face a multitude of challenges in terms of their independence, financial security and legal responsibilities, the pressures on trustees continue to rise. In smaller charities, with few or no paid staff, the demands on trustees are particularly acute. Given their legal responsibilities for “directing the affairs of a charity” (Charity Commission, 2008a: 6), trustees are inevitably the people shouldering the burden of responsibility for steering charities through this shifting policy environment and managing the associated risks and liabilities if anything goes wrong. The subsequent section considers what is needed to sustain trustees’ motivation and

capacity to fulfil the role, and examines the evidence relating to the decision of trustees to remain in, or resign from, charity boards.

Retention of trustees and decisions to resign

There is little research evidence about the factors that influence charity trustees to continue to volunteer in the role or to resign as trustees (Harrow and Douthwaite, 2005). However studies investigating the retention or turnover of volunteers more generally indicate that volunteer *motivation* alone is not enough to sustain an individual's willingness to fulfil a voluntary role (Dwiggins-Beeler et al., 2011). Individuals' actual *experience* of the role has been shown to influence the retention and turnover of volunteers. For example, the degree to which expectations are met, training and support are available and assignments are sufficiently challenging have been identified as important factors in volunteer retention (Jamison, 2003). In addition, organisational communication has been found to be positively associated with job satisfaction, which has in turn been linked to volunteer retention (Dwiggins-Beeler, 2011).

As Jamison (2003: 115) notes, "*voluntary organizations incur substantial costs recruiting, training and replacing volunteers*". She argues that in addition to the financial costs of volunteer turnover, their departure "*affects continuity, client welfare, and agency morale*." In addition, there are concerns about the numbers of trustee vacancies on charity boards and the difficulties in recruiting new trustees (Charity Commission, 2010: 2), suggesting that voluntary organisations can ill-afford difficulties in retaining the people already serving as trustees. Conversely, Lord Hodgson's (2012) review identified that - in some charities - the *lack* of trustee turnover presents a potential problem, and recommended that charities be required to prescribe a maximum term of office for trustees. Such a practice is already in place in some charities:

“You can do a maximum I think of nine years but ... every three years you’re up and I think that’s important because there’s nothing worse than having people who’ve been on a governing body or a trustee group forever because they get stale, you can become unencumbered, you can just go off the boil.” (Pauline, Trustee)

There is limited research evidence available to inform debate on the issue. However, Harrow and Palmer (1998) underline the relevance of considering the reasons for trustees’ departure and the impact it has on the organisation:

“It seems likely that the sector has always experienced problems with finding trustees, but that the effects of trustee departure—abrupt and disruptive as well as planned and sequential—have gone largely unreported and un-researched. Similarly, the impact of trustee departure on the behavior and expectations of those trustees who choose to remain has also been unexamined.” (Harrow and Palmer, 1998: 182)

The issue of trustee departure remains a neglected area in the research literature, although one pilot study of exiting trustees by Harrow and Douthwaite (2005) highlighted the loss of organisational knowledge that voluntary organisations experience when trustees leave their role.

In the study here, a number of participants explained that that they had thought about when and how to resign from their position as trustees. One trustee shared that he was thinking about whether he should leave as he felt he was only managing to do the bare minimum in the role due to other commitments. He felt that ideally trustees should contribute more outside of board meetings but was personally unable to at that time:

“I am concerned about my own position at [the charity] in that I feel I can’t give it much time at the moment which is bothering me. I haven’t said that to them yet.” (Jonathan, Trustee)

Participants referred to a number of other factors that may cause trustees to resign from the role. Some organisations with older trustees had had to recruit new board members when trustees had retired or died. One

participant cited a trustee colleague who resigned following bereavement, and others knew of trustees who had left due to work commitments. There is also evidence that a change in organisational direction or its leadership can contribute to an individual's willingness to remain in the role:

"When we were doing the transitional stuff into business management, away from community support, there were resignations and people really not feeling that they could carry on being part of it anymore." (Debbie, Deputy CEO)

"It's not for everyone, because we've had a couple of Trustees over the last couple of years who've joined and then left. You know, you might not take to the Chief Exec, you might not take to the Board, you might not really be into the issue, a culmination of all three" (Mick, Trustee)

One ex-trustee, Dana, explained that a lot of thought and planning preceded her resignation. She worked to recruit and train new trustees to take over the running of the organisation, before she felt ready to leave:

"I wouldn't have gone unless I felt it was being left in good hands." (Dana, ex-trustee)

Dana and the two other founding members of the charity coordinated their resignations so that they didn't all leave at the same time. A founding trustee of another charity expressed similar views about the need to ensure the charity was on a good footing before resigning:

"I'm not at the point yet where I can distance myself from it and I think that's partly because it's not financial stable enough to have been stable for at least three to four years, so that I'm quite happy...to say it's safe and to move on." (Julia, Trustee)

Two of the participants were ex-trustees who had resigned from the position as a result of their disagreements with policies and decisions made by the board. The first explained that she felt the board's attitude towards its paid staff was judgemental and prejudiced. The issue came to a head during a discussion about whether to offer staff subsidised childcare services and other trustees expressed concern that staff might

be dishonest in their tax credit claims. The participant was so offended by this that she decided to resign from the charity.

The second participant, Paul, had very recently resigned from his charity as a result of his belief that the trustees were failing in their legal responsibility to maintain the organisation's solvency and protect its financial security, as well as suspicions that the Chair and staff were undermining decisions taken by the board. Paul eventually decided to resign from the organisation, but only once he felt he had exhausted all attempts to influence them to improve their governance mechanisms. He felt a responsibility to try and address the problems rather than resigning without doing so:

"There had been a major churn of trustees in the previous year, and I'm not sure if that's because they had served so many years that they felt they'd done enough, or whether they were abandoning the ship. But I spoke to these friends of the charity, and was urged to make a bit of a fuss, and that that would be of more service than just slinking away. And also, what the other trustees that resigned probably don't realise is that slinking away doesn't actually absolve you of any of the responsibility for decisions that have been made on your watch." (Paul, ex-Trustee)

The Chief Executive of Charity Trustee Networks, a national support organisation for trustees, explained that her organisation often received contact from individual trustees in similar situations, where they are concerned about the way an organisation is being run, but feel like a lone voice:

"For a single trustee on a board, goodness knows it's hard to make a difference. And there are sometimes deep seated difficulties. We talk to a lot of trustees who ask who can they talk to, and of course it is always the enlightened ones who are talking to us and struggling with a board of people whose behaviour is challenging." (CEO, Charity Trustee Networks)

The findings, therefore, indicate that individual trustees within the study did not take the decision to resign lightly, and that even when considering leaving the organisation they remained mindful of their responsibility to

the charity. This manifested either in terms of attempting to resolve problems and influence change, or to plan their departure to ensure a successor was in place.

Furthermore, the experiences of the ex-trustees elicited in the research indicate that dissatisfaction with organisational decision-making or culture can be a contributory factor to trustees' resignation from their positions. Given Harrow and Douthwaite's (2005) research that found a surprising degree of 'silence' among trustees about their motivations for leaving, this raises issues about whether opportunities are being missed to identify potential governance shortcomings or other problems signalled by a trustee's departure. Their research design purposefully excluded trustees "*whose departure had been especially difficult*" (ibid., p67) in order to maintain the study's focus on organisational learning and the potential benefits of exit interviews. Although the experiences of ex-trustees was not a main focus on the empirical research here, the data that has emerged indicates that further research into trustee departures – including exit stories from trustees experiencing 'difficult' situations has the potential to offer rich insights into the more hidden aspects of the trustee boardroom such as crises and conflict, and the implications for voluntary sector governance.

Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented participants' reflections upon, and experiences of, the policy environment and its implications for voluntary organisations.

There is evidence that participants' experiences reflect the increasing commercialisation of voluntary sector organisations and the resulting blurring of the boundaries between the private and voluntary sectors. Some participants appear to have adopted the language associated with business and competitive enterprise, and some aspire to adopt business-

like practices within their charities. The pressure to do so is evident in policy discourses examined in chapter 3 that encourage voluntary organisations to bid competitively to deliver 'contracted out' public services in a mixed economy of welfare. This expectation is reinforced by some members of the policy community – including one of the voluntary sector's main representative bodies, AVEVO – that encourage voluntary organisations to behave professionally, become enterprising and to compete alongside private sector organisations in a welfare 'market-place' (ACEVO, 2007a).

Despite this, and reflecting the continuing theme of heterogeneity within the voluntary sector and among trustees, some participants are critical of this phenomenon. They argue that there is a distinction between the voluntary sector and the private sector, and that the particular values of voluntary action should be valued and protected. This perspective may account for participants' attitudes to the idea of remuneration of trustees. The majority of participants feel that trusteeship should remain a voluntary and unpaid role, indicating that - at some level - they perceive a distinction between charity trustees and their (paid) equivalents on the boards of public and private sector companies. This view runs contrary to Lord Hodgson's (2012) recent recommendations that charity legislation be changed to allow large charities to remunerate their trustees. Furthermore, the issue again reaffirms the divergence of opinion between the two main umbrella bodies within the voluntary sector, with the National Council for Voluntary Organisations appearing more resistant to trustee remuneration than the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations.

Participants further reflected on the implications of policy developments such as the increasingly competitive contracting environment. There is evidence that trustees are challenged by the increasing monitoring and auditing requirements imposed by statutory funders and anxious about the precarious nature of funding arrangements. In particular, there is evidence that the challenges for smaller organisations are particularly

acute. Some participants voiced concern about whether smaller charities will struggle to survive and noted examples of how – despite some perceived benefits – funding pressures are presenting barriers to collaboration and cooperation between charities, who may perceive each other as competitors.

Some participants expressed their opposition to the wider policy discourse of contracting out welfare provision, indicating their dismay that voluntary organisations are increasingly responsible for the provision of care and services and that they felt should be state-provided. Trustees also perceive an element of risk to their role, and some feel that the risks are increasing due to the contracting culture and the increasing complexity of trustee responsibilities. Taken together, these issues warrant further research into whether the perceived risks associated with trusteeship and the changing nature of the voluntary sector are deterring potential trustees and contributing to the difficulties in recruiting new volunteers to the role.

There is relatively little research evidence about the factors upon which trustee retention or turnover hinge. As discussed in earlier chapters, participants pointed to a number of reasons that had motivated them to volunteer, and claimed a number of benefits including personal development and a strong sense of achievement in an area that they felt was worthwhile. Of course, turnover of trustees is inevitable and in some organisations there is evidence that this is carefully planned, through maximum terms of office set out in governance documents, or through succession-planning activities. In contrast, other organisations experience more unpredictable and ad-hoc trustee turnover. Reasons that ex-trustees gave for resigning included personal commitments and lack of time, or their disagreements about how the charity was being run. In several cases it was clear that the decision to leave was not taken lightly by trustees - who took steps to resolve conflicts or to identify successors before they actually left the charity – underlining the sense of commitment, loyalty and responsibility of trustees. Unplanned trustee

resignations raise challenges for voluntary organisations in terms of a loss of knowledge and the costs of recruiting successor, but – as the data here indicates – may also signal the existence of deeper problems at board or organisational level. As stated, more research in this area would be welcome.

Overall, the research has revealed evidence of the ways in which the impacts of the social policy environment and the increasing role for the voluntary sector in public service delivery are being felt. The voluntary sector is under pressure to adopt business-like practices, to professionalise and to measurably demonstrate its efficiency and competitiveness. At organisational level, charities are experiencing the challenges of the increasingly difficult funding environment and the demands from funders for them to evidence ‘outcomes’ and performance against monitoring requirements. The research data demonstrates that the implications of such policy developments are also being directly experienced by charity trustees. Despite often ambiguous role descriptions and inconsistent access to support and training, these volunteers are navigating through personal and organisational challenges to steer the charities they lead through this fast-moving, challenging and complex policy environment.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Implications

Summary of Key Findings

This thesis has set out to systematically analyse social policy developments that are facilitating an increasing and diversifying role for the voluntary sector in welfare delivery and to explore emergent forms of civil society based upon 'partnership' between the state and voluntary sector. It has argued that policies implemented by successive governments since 1979 - while representing specific ideological inflections and successive governments' expectations of voluntary agencies - overall represent a neo-liberal turn in which a 'third sector' has emerged and assumed increasing levels of responsibility for the delivery of 'marketised' welfare services and the implementation of government social policies. Such policies have promoted an increasingly central role for the voluntary sector as providers of public services in a diverse range of policy domains including social care, health, housing, education, the environment and criminal justice (see, for example: HM Government, 1990; Cabinet Office, 2006; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009; Department of Health, 2010b; HM Government, 2010a).

A central aim of the empirical research presented here has been to assess the impacts of such social policy developments on one specific group - namely volunteer trustees occupying roles on the boards of local charities. It has examined the experiences and perceptions of charity trustees who govern and lead organisations through the changes and challenges that arise from the shifting policy context. Importantly, it has presented the voices of trustees who – while fulfilling a key role in the leadership of the voluntary sector – have to an extent been neglected in policy discourses as well as in voluntary sector research. The thesis argues that the changing social policy climate is impacting upon charity

trustees in multiple ways, both directly and indirectly, and presents in-depth qualitative insights into their first-hand experiences of fulfilling trustee roles within this context. Trustees – as leaders of voluntary organisations, signatories to public service delivery contracts and ultimately responsible for ensuring that charities comply with their legal and financial obligations – are undoubtedly affected by the radically changing policy environment. The shifting role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector - and the growing interest in charity governance and accountability as a result – makes a greater understanding of trusteeship and the experiences of trustees particularly pertinent. Notwithstanding this, there is a relative dearth of studies in this area and the research presented here extends knowledge in significant ways by illuminating the first-hand experiences of trustees, senior staff and other significant players in the policy community. By articulating the voices of these groups, Chapters 5 to 8 have demonstrated the means by which trustees and others are experiencing the impacts of the shifting policy landscape and the changing role and responsibilities of the voluntary sector (as examined in Chapters 2 and 3). Furthermore, the primary empirical research presented here provides valuable insights into trustees' experiences, motivations, anxieties and concerns, working relationships and conceptualisations of their roles and responsibilities. In this way, the thesis also contributes to an understanding of the attitudes, perspectives and support needs of volunteer trustees at a particularly significant policy juncture.

A key finding of the research here is that - contrary to previous research that found that significant numbers of trustees lacked understanding of their responsibilities - the majority of trustees in this study were aware of their legal responsibilities, and perceive that trusteeship entails a significant level of responsibility (in spite of inconsistency over the specific tasks involved). However, the research here has found that trustees of local charities have heterogeneous perceptions and experiences of the role, including multiple motivations for volunteering as trustees, differing conceptualisations of the scope of the trustee role and varied levels of

confidence in their abilities to fulfil their position as trustees. Furthermore, the research has found some examples of inconsistencies between policy and practice – for example that good practice recommendations by the policy community relating to trustee recruitment and training are not consistently adopted by local charities, and that a number of barriers to accessing training are experienced by some charity trustees. It has shown that there is some ambiguity over what the trustee role actually includes, and that trustees' initial expectations of the role are not always realised in practice. A further key finding of the research is a widespread perception that professional skills and experience are highly desirable attributes among charity trustees. This finding reflects a wider trend of professionalisation of voluntary organisations and the prevalence of business-related language and practices. Although some participants aspired to adopt such business-like practices in their organisations, the research found evidence of some resistance to this phenomenon, as well as a significant level of opposition to policy proposals that would further professionalise trusteeship by permitting remuneration of trustees. Finally, the research has revealed that many of the challenges for the voluntary sector in the extant literature in relation to the contracting out of public services remain issues of key concern for charity trustees at a local level. Despite developments such as the Compact (Home Office, 1998) and a significant emphasis on organisational 'good governance', the research here reveals that challenges such as mission drift, charity independence and financial security remain key concerns for trustees leading their organisations within this context.

Applicability of the findings and areas for further research

While the empirical research here has focused primarily on trustees and staff of registered charities (at the core of the 'voluntary sector' as defined by NCVO (Clark et al., 2012: 17)) operating at a local level, the thesis has also provided a detailed examination of the complex and shifting policy context in which such organisations are located alongside charities,

statutory agencies, private companies and other 'hybridised' forms of organisation forming a complex model of 'contracted out' welfare delivery. As such, the research findings may have some applicability to volunteer committee members operating in other types of organisations that comprise 'civil society' in a wider sense (including informal organisations, sports clubs and other organisations with management boards occupied by volunteers) or indeed to other organisational forms (such as private companies and social enterprises) bidding to deliver public services under contract and operating within the policy environment that has been examined within this thesis. That being said, the detail of such questions has not been a central focus of this thesis and further research would be needed to assess the precise extent of this wider applicability and to determine the implications of the policy landscape for different organisational forms and for boards operating at the 'blurred boundaries' identified within the thesis.

In the face of the significant – and ongoing - challenges being experienced by the voluntary sector arising from social policy developments, the thesis indicates a number of areas that are ripe for further research. In light of the relative shortage of qualitative studies of the experiences of UK charity trustees, there remains a need for additional research into the experiences and perceptions of trustees fulfilling positions on the boards of both small and localised, and large national organisations. Such opportunities for further critical examination of the contrasting experiences of trustees of large and small charities are of particular value given contemporary policies developments, discussed below, that have the potential to deepen the divide between charities of different sizes. Should the Hodgson Review (2012) recommendation to allow the largest charities to remunerate their trustees be implemented, further research to understand the full implications of such a significant shift will also be vitally important. Furthermore, there is scope for further research into the factors that motivate people to both join and leave trustee boards. As the thesis identifies, there continue to be a significant number of trustee vacancies across the voluntary sector, and charities

appear to experience particular difficulties in attracting young trustees (Charity Commission, 2005; 2010). Chapter 8 identified a specific shortage of evidence relating to trustee departures, indicating a need for research to elicit the stories of people resigning from trustee roles, particularly as a result of 'difficult' situations and organisational conflicts or crises. Equally, the radically changing roles and responsibilities of voluntary sector organisations and of charity trustees identified in the thesis raises questions about the ways in which the general public understand and conceive of the increasing role of charities as key public service providers. In particular, the implications of this for the voluntary sector's continuing ability to recruit and retain members of the public willing to serve as voluntary trustees is an area ripe for further research.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The key themes emerging from the data and the pivotal issues raised by the research are particularly pertinent given current policy directions and developments since the research fieldwork was conducted. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government policies since 2010 represent both continuities and discontinuities with previous New Labour administrations that drove forward a model of welfare delivery via contracting with voluntary organisations. The current government has sought to differentiate itself from the previous administration, by introducing its 'Big Society' concept as an alternative to New Labour's apparent 'Big State' (Alcock, 2012: 4) and a solution to the 'broken Britain' ostensibly inherited by the new Coalition (Hancock et al., 2012). Significantly, the Coalition government abandoned the term 'third sector' – a term that emerged during New Labour's administration and that arguably supported the notion of a homogenous, unified sector able to contribute to their 'third way' project – in preference of a 'civil society' concept that is not limited to voluntary organisations and allows for a wider input into its 'Big Society' aims by business, social enterprises and other entities (Kendall, 2010: 253;

Alcock, 2012). Despite signalling its distance from New Labour in such ways, the Coalition government is rolling out a policy programme that will serve to deepen and widen the contracting out of public services initiated by previous administrations since 1979. The “*Building a Stronger Civil Society*” strategy aims to “open up public services” and encourage non-statutory providers to play an even greater role in wider areas of public service delivery, including criminal justice and offender management, employment support and welfare to work schemes, and greater numbers of health and social care services (HM Government, 2010a). The Government’s explicit aim to shift responsibility for public services onto voluntary and private sector providers via contracting is reinforced in the recent *Open Public Services White Paper*.

“We do not have an ideological presumption that only one sector should run services: high-quality services can be provided by the public sector, the voluntary and community sector, or the private sector.” (HM Government, 2011: 9)

Such acute pressures faced by voluntary organisations and their trustees are becoming significantly intensified as a result of the Coalition government’s policies toward the voluntary sector and as a consequence of changes in the wider political context since the research fieldwork was conducted. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition’s policies to deepen and extend the involvement of voluntary providers in public service delivery are accompanied by the withdrawal of funding for much of the key infrastructure and capacity-building support for voluntary organisations introduced by New Labour (Alcock, 2012). The FutureBuilders and ChangeUp schemes have been closed and - despite its stated commitment to a revised Compact (HM Government, 2010b) - the government has abolished the Commission for the Compact. Most significantly, the Government’s policy aims to ‘open up’ public services are accompanied by deep public spending cuts - or ‘austerity measures’ - that are resulting in far-reaching and very substantial cuts to local authority budgets and unprecedented reductions in voluntary sector funding (Alcock, 2012). Such public spending reduction drives are also

evident in major reductions to the numbers of public sector jobs alongside extensive welfare 'reforms' that serve to drastically reduce eligibility for a range of state benefits and cut incomes for families – measures that are disproportionately impacting upon vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, single parent families, the elderly and the disabled (Levitas, 2012). As a consequence, charities are faced with a 'double whammy' of unprecedented funding reductions and higher demand from people needing their help to cope with the adverse impacts of government welfare policies.

The magnitude of such challenges facing the sector as a result of Coalition policies has led Taylor et al. (2012: 36) to reflect that, with hindsight, the final years of the New Labour administration were a "*high water-mark*" for government-voluntary sector relations, whereby voluntary organisations benefited from an "*atmosphere of recognition*". The current stark financial climate has led to predictions that the upward trajectory of statutory funding for voluntary organisations over recent years will be radically reversed as a consequence of government spending cuts, resulting in "*division and decline*" of the sector (Alcock, 2012: 8). As such, it is highly likely that the real crisis for voluntary organisations is "*still to come*" (Taylor et al., 2012: 37)

Policy considerations

It is important that policy makers be aware of the ways in which such policies to contract out public services within a mixed economy of welfare raise multiple and complex implications for voluntary organisations and their trustees. Given the current Government's commitment to extending marketised welfare provision via 'contracting out' across a wide range of services, emerging policy developments herald further major impacts for the voluntary sector and profound challenges for trustees. Data presented in Chapter 7 indicates that some charities experience challenges to their autonomy and independence as a result of the contracting environment – including the pressure to develop new policies

to strengthen their success in commissioning processes and the requirement to adopt the systems and processes prescribed by statutory funders. The research reveals that the contracting environment is a source of appreciable anxiety to charity trustees – their experiences echoing many of the issues identified in Chapter 3 including: the short term nature of contracts; the resources needed to secure and maintain funding agreements; concerns about ‘mission drift’; and the risks posed to charities by various forms of funding arrangement (Clark et al., 2010; Charity Commission, 2007a; Cunningham, 2008). Furthermore, the research here demonstrates the disproportionate challenges faced by trustees of smaller charities more vulnerable to funding cuts and without large staff teams to whom responsibility for such tasks can be delegated.

The research here has demonstrated that charity trustees are affected both directly and indirectly by the policy environment yet, despite this, policy documents toward the voluntary sector rarely make specific mention of these somewhat ‘hidden’ leaders of voluntary organisations. Furthermore, where policy and good practice guidance does exist, it is often overly prescriptive and can fail to take account of the heterogeneity of trustee experiences as demonstrated by this research. It is clear from the research that there are some examples of inconsistencies between policy and practice – for example that good practice recommendations by the policy community relating to trustee recruitment and training are not consistently adopted by local charities. For example, as the data presented in Chapter 5 demonstrates, trustees and senior staff in some voluntary organisations perceive that personal recommendations might have advantages over more formal trustee recruitment methods. It is important that policy makers take account of the reasons why some charities may continue to adopt practices that are at odds with official guidance and acknowledge that one size does not necessarily fit all.

Of particularly current relevance to policy makers are the research findings pertaining to the remuneration of trustees. Lord Hodgson’s (2012) recommendation to change the legislation pertaining to trustee

remuneration is controversial and the source of much current debate. His assessment of the main arguments for and against payment of trustees does little to shed light on his ultimate decision to recommend that large charities be granted the power to remunerate their trustees. The review acknowledges the divergence of opinion within the voluntary sector on the issue, stating that:

“those who are in favour of a general power to pay cite the need to reach those who are unable to take the role unpaid (those who need to work full time, say), to improve board diversity, and those with high levels of professional skill. They point to the illogicality of a policy which permits a charity to recompense a trustee for a specific professional service (e.g. chartered surveyor) but not for the no-less-important skills of general commercial management.” (Hodgson, 2012: 39)

This is the only statement in the review that points to the potential advantages of trustee remuneration. Indeed, it goes on to identify an extensive list of disadvantages or risks that may arise from such a policy change, including: concerns that payment *“fundamentally undermines the voluntary principle”*; that it *“risks creating an unlevel playing-field between organisations that can and cannot afford to pay trustees”*; that the majority of the public are opposed to payment for trustees; that it may not attract trustees *“for the right reasons”* nor with the *“characteristics and skills charities need”*; and that there exists a *“danger of abuse”* (ibid.,: 39).

It is unclear, therefore, on what basis Lord Hodgson justifies his proposal to maintain the status quo for small and intermediate sized charities, and to allow charities with an income of over £1 million to pay their trustees. The research evidence presented in Chapter 8 demonstrates the controversy that such a policy change would be likely to attract – the majority of participants perceiving that trusteeship should remain a voluntary role. This viewpoint is echoed by the recent joint letter from seven leading voluntary sector infrastructure bodies – including NCVO – calling upon the Minister for Civil Society to reject the proposal (Ricketts, 2012). ACEVO, in contrast, has welcomed the recommendation that

large charities be granted powers to pay its trustees, arguing that “*this has to be right*” (Lockyer, 2012). If the review’s recommendations are accepted, such a policy change would raise serious questions about the voluntary sector’s identity as distinct from public and private sector organisations as well as further deepening the divide between large and small charities.

Voluntary Sector considerations

The research also has important practical implications for voluntary organisations and their trustees. The thesis has revealed the means by which radical policy developments have increasingly shifted responsibility for public service delivery onto voluntary organisations. This in itself has resulted in increased levels of responsibility being imposed on trustees charged with steering their charities through the challenges presented by the contracting environment. Trustees perceive that they require new knowledge and skills to navigate the complex array of issues arising from such policy developments, including precarious funding arrangements; threats to charity autonomy and independence; increased organisational governance requirements and onerous contractual obligations. At the same time, the research reveals significant ambiguity in how the trustee role is defined and perceived; varying levels of confidence among trustees about their ability to meet their new responsibilities; and inconsistency in the training and support available to them in fulfilling their roles. Voluntary organisations should be aware that their trustees need training and support to respond to the challenges posed by the policy environment, and it is important that trustees and staff are well informed about the potential risks and implications arising from public service delivery contracts. The research identified a number of barriers to training are experienced by some charity trustees. Some identified the local CVS as a key source of such support, yet the future of such services is in significant doubt given recent deep funding cuts and the withdrawal of infrastructure support to the voluntary sector. It is important that voluntary organisations are able to provide appropriate training to

trustees and that government makes a commitment to supporting them to do so, in order that trustees are properly equipped for the responsibilities and challenges arising from the contracting environment.

More broadly, a recurrent theme emerging from the research has been the ways in which the application of market principles to welfare provision and the penetration of business imperatives into the voluntary sector are experienced by trustees of local charities. The research here provides evidence of organisations adopting business-like language and facing pressure to adopt the practices of commercial organisations and indications that the trustee role is becoming increasingly professionalised. It is important that voluntary organisations consider the consequences of accepting such imperatives, particularly given current policies that make explicit the government's expectation that voluntary organisations should become increasingly 'business-like' going forward:

"Civil society organisations (charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups) will need to embrace new skills, partnerships and organisational models if they are to seize the opportunities that lie ahead. It will be vital for civil society organisations to improve their business skills, become more entrepreneurial and strengthen their governance." (Cabinet Office, 2010: 6).

The issues raised by the need for voluntary organisations to compete with private businesses in a welfare 'marketplace', as discussed in the thesis, are likely to become even more acute given the prominence of the private sector in the government's 'Big Society' approach. A high profile example of the success of private sector organisations in winning public service delivery contracts is the major 'Work Programme' tender to provide help long-term unemployed people back to work in which, as Alcock (2012: 7) notes, *"virtually all of the major contracting agencies were large private companies, with smaller third sector providers expected to become involved only at the level of sub-contractors"*. The relationship between voluntary organisations and private businesses need not necessarily be competitive, however. An example of a voluntary-private sector collaboration can be seen in the commissioning process for the National

Citizens Service (NCS) scheme – a core component of the ‘Big Society’ strategy. One of the leading bids to deliver the programme was submitted by a consortium of four voluntary organisations working alongside the global private sector company Serco – the same company already engaged in a similarly controversial partnership with voluntary organisations to build and run a prison (Levitt, 2012).

Such developments raise further critical questions about the implications arising from ‘blurred boundaries’ and cross-boundary relationships in a mixed economy of welfare, and voluntary sector staff and trustees are encouraged to consider the wider implications of their engagement in contracting and their response to the pressures to adopt business-like language and practices. Debates about what constitutes the distinctiveness of the voluntary sector – and concerns that such distinctiveness is being weakened by the processes that result in voluntary organisations becoming ‘professionalised’ and more ‘business-like’ in order to deliver public services on behalf of government – are complicated by the lack of a clear definition of what constitutes the voluntary ‘sector’. If - as Alcock (2010a) argues - the concept of a unified ‘sector’ has been largely constructed to suit the strategic purposes of policy-makers (and, to an extent, voluntary sector actors), the task of identifying, promoting and preserving the unique characteristics and strengths of such a ‘sector’ becomes particularly challenging. As this thesis has demonstrated, the impacts of policy developments are experienced differently from organisation to organisation. The experiences of large, national organisations and smaller, local organisations are particularly divergent and there is similar heterogeneity among the main players in the policy community.

On the other hand, the diversity of the sector potentially offers continuing opportunities to challenge the prevailing ideology of voluntary sector organisations as (at best) ‘partners’ of the government or (at worst) as incorporated ‘agencies of the state’. While many voluntary organisations – particularly the larger ones - will inevitably continue to assume

increasing levels of responsibility for public service delivery as long as policy discourses continue to promote such market-based approaches as an appropriate model of welfare provision, the heterogeneity of voluntary organisations offers the possibility of spaces for resistance and opportunities for voluntary sector actors to shape a role for the voluntary sector that challenges its dominant construction as an instrument for public service delivery and policy implementation. Eikenberry (2009) puts it another way – calling for voluntary sector leaders to develop a ‘democratic discourse’ that allows voluntary organisations to ‘refuse the market’. With greater critical discussion of the implications arising when charities enter statutory contracts, some voluntary organisations may choose not to engage with the contract culture, avoiding reliance on statutory funding and contributing to alternative conceptions of the role of the voluntary sector.

Trustees – as this research has demonstrated – play a key role in the governance and leadership of voluntary organisations and are faced with increasing responsibility and challenges as a consequence of radical shifts within the policy context. Despite having received relatively little attention from academics and policy-makers, trustees fulfil key decision-making functions within charities. Given their strategic governance role within organisations, trustees have opportunities to contribute to decisions about whether charities should pursue public service delivery contracts, to position their organisations as ‘partner’ or as ‘critic’ of government, and to determine the ethos and purpose of their work in supporting the charity’s beneficiaries. As this research demonstrates, in many cases, trustees of local charities are also engaged in more operational tasks, making a significant voluntary contribution to charities that is not confined to their governance role. Although they experience the impacts of ‘top-down’ policy, trustees are also uniquely placed to influence and shape the future direction of the sector ‘from the bottom up’. The question remains whether - given the significant pressures they face and the inconsistent support they are offered - trustees are able to realise such opportunities.

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Interview Guide: Trustees

Introduction

Firstly I'll ask you to tell me about being a trustee in your own words. Please talk for as long or as little as you like.

Secondly I'd like to ask you some questions about different aspects of being a trustee.

At the end I'll ask if there is anything else you'd like to talk about or to tell me. Are you okay with me recording this and taking notes?

Section 1

Can you tell me your "story" of your role as a trustee here?

Prompts: Can you tell me about how you first became involved?
Can you tell me about what you do here?

Section 2

Trustee recruitment, getting involved

Can you tell me about how you first became involved?

What was the recruitment process like?

Were you asked to join the board or did you initiate it?

Induction and training

What was your first meeting like?

How prepared did you feel to be a trustee?

Can you tell me about any training you've had?

Have you learnt anything in your time as a trustee?

Experiences of the role

Can you tell me about what you do here?

What is a typical trustee meeting like?

What are the best and worst things about being a trustee?

How much time do you spend on your trustee role?

How is your role the same or different to when you first joined?

Overall, what has been your experience as a trustee here?

Has the role or the environment you're working changed over time?

Motivations

Why did you decide to become a trustee?

Have your motivations remained the same or changed?

Would you recommend trusteeship to others?

What, if anything, do you get from being a trustee?

Do you think do you will stay in the role?

Relationships

What are your relationships with other trustees like?

How in touch with the organisation are you on a day-to-day basis?

To what extent do you have contact with service users? What about volunteers?

How would you describe the relationship between the staff and the board?

What kind of relationship do you (personally) have with staff in the organisation?

As a trustee, what relationships do you have outside your organisation (e.g. funders, partners)?

Support and confidence

How confident do you feel in carrying out your trustee duties? Why?

Have you ever needed support or information to help you in your role?

What support is available to you as a trustee?

What advice would you give to someone considering becoming a charity trustee?

What, if any, challenges do you face as a trustee?

Decision-making / governance

How are decisions made in your organisation?

How do you go about making decisions as a board of trustees?

Can you paint a picture for me of a typical discussion at a board meeting?

Who gets involved in making the decisions? Are some people more involved than others?

Can you tell me about how the organisation is managed?

Do trustees have the information they need to run the organisation?

How is governance dealt with in your charity?

Contracting and independence

Can you tell me about any public services that your charity delivers or about any contracts with other organisations?

How involved with these are the trustees?

In what ways, if any, do funders influence the decisions trustees make on behalf of the charity?

Is your role the same or different since your charity started bidding for contracts?

Trusteeship

Do you feel the role and responsibilities for trustees will be the same in, say, ten years time?

What are the positives and the negatives about having a trustee board running a charity?

Do you think charities need a trustee board?

In your view, what are the main issues for charity trustees in general?

How could more people be encouraged to become trustees?

What would make your life easier as a trustee?

Section 3

Is there anything else you think I should have asked you about?

Anything else you'd like to tell me about your experiences as a trustee?

Anything else you'd like to add?

Interview Guide: Senior staff

Introduction

Firstly I'll ask you to tell me about your role in your own words. Please talk for as long or as little as you like.

Secondly I'd like to ask you some questions about different issues related to charity trustees and trusteeship

At the end I'll ask if there is anything else you'd like to talk about or to tell me.

Are you okay with me recording this and taking notes?

Section 1

Can you tell me about your role here?

Prompts: Can you tell me about how you first became involved?
Can you tell me about what you do here?

Section 2

The Trustee Board and Trustee recruitment

Can you tell me a little about your organisation's Board of Trustees?

What is the recruitment process for trustees like?

Does the organisation approach potential trustees, or do individuals offer to be trustees?

What is your own involvement in the appointment of trustees?

Induction and training

Have the trustees in your organisation had any training?

Do new trustees get an induction?

What involvement (if any) do you have in training the trustees?

How well-equipped are the trustees on your Board for their role?

Experiences of the role

Can you tell me about what trustees do in this organisation?

What is a typical trustee meeting like?

How much time do trustees spend on their role?

Is your experience of working with the trustees the same or different to when you first joined the organisation?

Has the role of the trustees changed over time?

Has the environment you're working in changed over time?

Overall, what has been your experience of working with the trustees?

Motivations

Why do you think the trustees here became trustees?

What, if anything, do you think they get from being the charity's trustees?

Do you think the membership of the trustee board will stay the same or is it likely to change?

Relationships

What are your relationships with the trustees like?
How in touch with the organisation on a day-to-day basis are they?
To what extent do the trustees have contact with service users? What about with volunteers?
To what extent do the trustees have contact with individual members of staff?
How would you describe the relationship between the staff and the board?
What relationships do trustees have with others outside your organisation, e.g. funders or partners?

Support and confidence

How confident do the trustees seem in carrying out their role?
Do the trustees need support or information to help them in their role?
What support is available to the trustees in your organisation?
What advice would you give to someone considering becoming a charity trustee?
What, if any, challenges do the trustees face?

Decision-making / governance

How are decisions made in your organisation?
How does the board of trustees go about making decisions?
Can you paint a picture for me of a typical discussion at a board meeting?
Who gets involved in making the decisions?
Are some people more involved than others?

Contracting and independence

Can you tell me about any public services that your charity delivers or about any contracts with other organisations?
How involved with these are the trustees?
In what ways, if any, do funders influence the decisions trustees make on behalf of the charity?
Is the trustees' role the same or different since your organisation started bidding for contracts?

Trusteeship

Do you feel the role and responsibilities for trustees will be the same in, say, ten years time?
What are the positives and negatives about having a trustee board run a charity?
Do you think charities need a trustee board?
In your view, what are the main issues for charity trustees in general?
How could more people be encouraged to become trustees?
What would make your life easier when you are working with trustees?

Section 3

Is there anything else you think I should have asked you about?
Anything else you'd like to tell me about your experiences as a trustee?
Anything else you'd like to add?

Snowballing – do you know any trustees or other CEOs who might be willing to participate in the research?

Interview Guide: “Policy Community”

Introduction

Can you tell me about your organisation and its role in relation to charity trusteeship?

Can you tell me about your role in the organisation?

Which of your organisations’ policies have relevance to charity trusteeship?

Trustee recruitment

In your view, what are the main policy issues for recruitment of charity trustees?

How can charities attract more people to become charity trustees?

Induction and training

In your view, what are the main issues relating to the training of trustees?

What kinds of training do you feel trustees need?

Trustee experience

Has the role of trustee changed over time?

Has the environment trustees are operating in changed over time?

Relationships

In your view, what should the relationship between staff and trustees be like?

To what extent should trustees have contact

- with service users?
- With the charity’s staff?
- With volunteers?

What kinds of relationships outside the organisation (e.g. with funders) would you expect a trustee to have?

Support and confidence

Do you perceive that trustees understand and feel confident in carrying out their duties?

What support is available to trustees?

What advice would you give to someone considering becoming a charity trustee?

What challenges are faced by trustees?

Do you have confidence in trustees’ capability to carry out their responsibilities?

Decision-making / governance

What are the key policy issues in relation to charity governance?

How do you feel decisions should be made in charities?

Who do you feel should be involved in decision-making in charities?

Should decisions originate from trustees or staff?

What information do trustees need to effectively run the organisation?

How should governance be dealt with in charities?

Contracting and independence

What are the key policy issues raised by charities contracting to deliver public services?

To what extent are trustees affected by contracting?

Are you concerned about funders influencing the decisions being made by charity trustees?

Is the charity trustee role the same or different in organisations bidding for contracts?

Trusteeship

Do you feel the role and responsibilities for trustees will be the same in, say, ten years time?

What are the positives and negatives about having a trustee board running a charity?

Do you think charities need a trustee board?

In your view, what are the main issues for charity trusteeship in general?

What, if any, changes would you like to see?

Closing points

Is there anything else you think I should have asked you about?

Anything else you'd like to add?

Snowballing – any other contacts you think it would be useful for me to talk to about these issues?

Research Participants: Trustees

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Description of Organisation</u> ²⁸
Peter	An organisation providing support to refugees
Nicholas	A grant-making charity working in community development
Sian	A welfare charity supporting members of a specific minority group
Hannah	A charity offering welfare support to people with a particular health condition
Charlotte	An organisation supporting women with welfare needs
Michael	A refugee support charity
Colin	An organisation offering counseling services
Andrew	An organisation offering counseling services
Matthew	An organisation providing social care for people with a particular disability
Annette	A charity offering advice to groups working with disadvantaged communities
Pauline	A faith-based social care charity
Bill	An organisation providing social care for people with a particular disability
Mick	A charity supporting women experiencing domestic violence
Kirsty	An advice and welfare charity working with students
Alice	A women's BME charity
Lucy	An organisation providing children's after-school care
Dayo	A charity supporting women who have experienced domestic violence
Steve	A housing charity
Jonathan	A health research and grant-making charity

²⁸ This description is intended to give an indication of the range of agencies that participants were working with, without compromising confidentiality. Where participants were trustees of more than one organisation, a description is given of the organisation that they chose to give most attention to during the interview.

Ken	A health research and grant-making charity
Dana	An agency running after-school activities for children
Julia	An arts-based organisation working with refugees
Bridget	A faith-based housing charity
Gary	A charity offering advice and welfare information
Frank	A community centre facilitating various community development projects

Research Participants: Senior Staff

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Description of Organisation</u> ²⁹
Gordon	A mental health charity
Christine	A faith-based social care charity
Graham	A welfare organisation focused on the needs of the elderly
Patricia	A charity supporting women experiencing domestic violence
Cindy	An agency providing social care for people with a particular disability
Mark	A community development focused social enterprise and charity
Issac	A faith-based community centre
Jennie	A health research and grant-making charity
Debbie	A welfare charity supporting members of a specific minority group
Barry	An agency providing advice and welfare services to the elderly

²⁹ This description is intended to give an indication of the range of agencies that participants were employed by, without compromising confidentiality.

Research Participants: “Policy Community”

Central Government

Head of Third Sector and Social Enterprise,

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

(DCLG is the Government Department responsible for setting policy on supporting local government; communities and neighbourhoods; regeneration; housing; planning, building and the environment; and fire)

Policy Manager,

Office of the Third Sector (OTS) (subsequently Office for Civil Society)

(The OTS was a division of the Cabinet Office, responsible for leading and coordinating work relating to the sector. It was renamed the Office for Civil Society following the 2010 General Election)

Local Government

Director of Integrated Adult Health and Social Care,

Liverpool City Council and Liverpool Primary Care Trust

(This integrated team is responsible for joint commissioning of healthcare and social care services across the city)

Third Sector (national)

Head of Governance and Leadership,

National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO)

(NCVO is the largest umbrella body for the voluntary and community sector in England)

Director of Strategy,

Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO)

(ACEVO support and represent the third sector's leaders which include Chief Executives, Chairs, Trustees, Directors and Senior Managers.)

Chair, Directory of Social Change / **Deputy Director**, Reform / **Commentator** on third sector policy

(DSC is an independent charity that provides essential information and training to the voluntary sector to enable charities to achieve their mission. Reform is an independent, charitable, non-party think tank whose mission is to set out a better way to deliver public services and economic prosperity.)

Third Sector (local)

Chief Executive,

Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services

(LCVS is an umbrella body that offers organisational support to the local voluntary sector in Liverpool and promotes charitable giving)

Programme Manager,

Merseyside ChangeUp

(ChangeUp is a UK government initiative aimed at improving the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to deliver public services by 2014.)

Other

Director of Charity Information and Corporate Services,

Charity Commission

(The Charity Commission is the independent regulator for charities in England and Wales)

Chief Executive,

Charity Trustee Network (CTN)

(CTN is the national network for trustees, providing advice and offering networking opportunities. It merged with the Small Charities Coalition in March 2011)

Head of Adult and Social Care Commissioning,

Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT)

(Liverpool Primary Care Trust is responsible for commissioning healthcare services across the city)



Participant Information Sheet

Governance and Public Services: Trustees' experiences of the changing role and responsibilities of the third sector

You are invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide whether to participate, please take the time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask me if you would like more information or if there is anything that you do not understand. I would like to stress that you do not have to accept this invitation and should only agree to take part if you want to.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This research aims to explore the experiences of people who volunteer as charity trustees in the Merseyside area. It also seeks the views of charity managers and policy-makers about the roles and responsibilities of trustees. The voluntary / third sector has seen various changes over the past twenty years, such as contracting to deliver public services, funding changes and partnership working. Many researchers have concentrated on the impact such changes have for charities. However, very little is known about the implications for charity trustees and this research seeks to explore the experiences of the individuals who fulfil this role in local charities.

2. Why have I been chosen to take part?

I am inviting trustees from a diverse range of charities in Merseyside to take part in the interviews. These organisations may be small or medium-sized charities with a Liverpool or Merseyside focus to their work. They may be delivering a range of services, perhaps including some public service delivery. I am keen to include newer trustees as well as individuals with a long experience of volunteering as trustees.

I am also inviting paid senior managers from similar organisations to take part. You will probably be a Chief Executive, Director or senior Manager of your charity, and have a close working relationship with your board of trustees.

3. Do I have to take part?

Participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at anytime without giving a reason.

4. What will happen if I take part?

If you agree to take part in the research, I will arrange a mutually-convenient time and place to meet you to conduct a semi-structured interview. This will last roughly an hour. During the interview, I will ask you about your experience of being a trustee (or, for charity managers, about your experience of working with trustees), for example how you got involved and what the role entails. The interview will also cover some specific aspects of the trustee role, such as training and support, challenges and rewards, and so on.

5. Are there any risks in taking part?

I do not envisage any risks in taking part in the research.

6. Are there any benefits in taking part?

The interviews may provide you with an opportunity to reflect upon your own experiences and the lessons that can be learnt for your organisation. The research seeks to fill gaps in what is known about the role and experiences of charity trustees, and may help to inform good practice. A summary of the findings will be produced at the end of the research and be made available to third sector organisations.

7. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to contact me or Professor Barry Goldson (my academic supervisor) via the School of Sociology and Social Policy (0151 794 2995) and we will do our best to help. If you remain unhappy or have a problem or complaint which you feel you cannot come to us with, please contact the Research Governance Officer on 0151 794 8290 (ethics@liv.ac.uk). Please provide them with details of the title of the study, the researchers involved and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

8. Will my participation be kept confidential?

With your permission, I will record and transcribe the interview. Copies of the recording and transcriptions will be kept on a password protected university server and only I will have access to these files. After the research is completed, the research data may be placed into the UK Data Archive (UKDA) – please ask me if you would like more information about this. All interviews will be anonymised – I will change your name and that of the charity you work with.

9. Will my taking part be covered by an insurance scheme?

Participants taking part in a University of Liverpool ethically approved study will have cover.

10. What will happen to the results of the study?

This research will form my thesis for a PhD at the University of Liverpool. A copy of the completed thesis will be placed in the university library. I will produce a separate summary of the key findings which will be made available to you and to interested parties, such as third sector organisations. As the interviews will be anonymised, you will not be identifiable in any publication resulting from the research findings.

11. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?

You may withdraw from the research at any time, without giving a reason. Results up to the period of withdrawal may be used, if you are happy with this. Otherwise you may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them.

12. Who can I contact if I have further questions?

Lindsey Metcalf
PhD Researcher
School of Sociology and Sociology Policy
University of Liverpool
Tel: 0151 794 2978
Email: Lindsey.Metcalf@liverpool.ac.uk



CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project:

**Governance and Public Services:
Trustees' experiences of the changing role
and responsibilities of the third sector**

Researcher(s): Professor Barry Goldson and Ms Lindsey Metcalf

**Please
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated March 2009 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. ☐
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Participant Name

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

The contact details of lead Researcher (Principal Investigator) are:

Professor Barry Goldson

School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Liverpool, Eleanor Rathbone
Building, Bedford Street South, L69 7ZA. Tel: 0151 794 2977. Email:
B.Goldson@liv.ac.uk