

Vishnee Sauntoo – Trustee



Why I became a trustee

By Vishnee Sauntoo, Chair of Board of Trustees

I joined Every Parent and Child (EPC) (at the time known as Enfield Parents and Children) three years ago after seeing an ad on a Facebook third sector group. I'd been thinking about becoming a trustee for a charity for a while and didn't know which charity to approach or how.

As soon as I saw this ad I knew it was the one for me because of two things: it was based in Enfield – where I grew up, and they were looking for Marketing and Communications experience – which has been my career for the last 17 years. As soon as I could, I contacted the trustee who had put the ad up, we had chat and then before you know it I was invited to meet the Chair and attended a meeting as an observer.

Since then, I became a trustee then the Chair of the Board of Trustees, this means that I'm responsible for leading meetings and ensuring that the thoughts of every trustee has been considered in Board meetings but also ensure that meetings are running on time, not disruptive and stay focused. I also do my best to support the Chief Executive and provide guidance as and when necessary.

What do I get out of it?

So far, what I've described probably doesn't sound very interesting right? Meetings and more meetings! But actually, it is the decisions that we are making at the meetings that really count. We are discussing how the charity operates, budgets required, recruitment and the long-term strategy about where the charity will be in 5 years' time – this is the bit that really excites me. The most enjoyable bit of the

board meeting is when one of the staff come in and talk to us about a programme that they run. This is where the charity comes to life for me and we can see how the decisions we make affect the children and parents we support.

Bringing knowledge and expertise

As I've already mentioned, EPC were looking for a trustee with marketing and communications experience, so I sit on the Marketing and Communications sub-group and this in turn feeds into Board meetings (there are various other sub-groups too).

Mainly I provide advice on how to use social media effectively, thinking about our audience, building our profile and messaging. It is important to us, that we understand what young people and parents want and need from us and also how they can input on our decision-making. I'm very pleased to say that we will be welcoming our very first young person as a trustee in the next month and they will be representing the young people and children who use our services.

Being a sustainable organisation is one of our priorities so we can continue with our great services and develop more programmes that support young people in our community. We are also looking at how we can work in neighbouring boroughs. This means that we have to take our fundraising to the next level and look to donors who are aligned to our goals. This is where I believe I can add value. Demonstrating the impact that we make as an organisation and to show how effective we are and why we are good value for money.

Can I do more? Yes, I would love to do more and help out with sessions. With a full-time job this is not always possible, but I will try to attend events and visit the staff in the office as much as possible. I love attending our Annual General Meeting, because it gives me the opportunity to recognise the great work that the volunteers do – particularly those who go in day to day and I also get to meeting the staff and some of our stakeholders who work with us.

The commitment

Being a volunteer doesn't take too much time, we meet for board meetings and strategic days about six times a year and correspond by email. I also have calls or meetings with the Chief Executive face-to-face for our monthly one-to-ones. But what I get out is vast and I do feel that I give back something that I have learnt over the years. The fact that this charity started in the community where I used to live is an added bonus. I'm always talking about EPC and always encourage people to donate to them if they can. Most of my family now have EPC as their charity of choice on Amazon! As they say 'every little helps'

If you are looking to volunteer, I would definitely say do so, everyone has something to give and you will feel so good once you have done it – just go for it!

To all the volunteers out there – thank you for giving your time!

[ends]