

TRUSTEE TESTIMONIAL Q&A

**Helen Kelly, Trustee of Barnardos Ireland
Country Manager and Head of Corporate Banking, Barclays**



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WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO TAKE ON A VOLUNTARY TRUSTEESHIP?

Firstly, because I completed my Chartered Director exams at the Institute of Directors in 2014 and I wanted to put my leaning into practice. Secondly because I wanted to give something back to the Community – I am not very good at painting or gardening and I wanted to use my professional skills. Thirdly, because I was encouraged and supported by my employer Barclays to do so and that was also very important.

HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE DIFFERED FROM WHAT YOU EXPECTED?

It is much more fulfilling than I originally expected, and Board discussions can be really interesting. Governance matters are an important agenda item but there are also many strategic decisions to be made that impact on our employees and on the services that we can provide to children and their families. What is particularly striking is when we visit projects or hear case studies about the impact of Barnardos on children’s lives. This helps put my day job into perspective.

HAS YOUR PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY HELPED YOU IN THIS POSITION?

Absolutely. In Barnardos we are lucky to have a very diverse Board comprising of childcare professionals, academia and business leaders with expertise in areas such as finance, HR, PR and marketing, but I like to think my commercial and financial skills from banking add real value also.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT BY BEING ON THE BOARD?

I am surrounded by very experienced, sage Directors from both public and private sector backgrounds, all of whom have different perspectives on particular points. The experience of listening to and working closely with others who think quite differently from me is what I am learning most.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID YOU ENCOUNTER WHILST BEING ON A BOARD?

Initially the biggest challenge was understanding the services we provide, how Barnardos interacts with service provision from the State and basic sector terminology so there is a definite learning curve for about a year before you start to have the confidence to contribute yourself. I also joined the Audit Committee and that has also been very useful place to learn what the key risks are and how to mitigate these.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE TIME MANAGEMENT WITH RESPECTS TO YOUR DAY-JOB AND VOLUNTARY BOARD POSITION?

Board papers are always read at weekends, but Board meetings take place during my working day. Fortunately, Barclays are very supportive of this but there has been the odd occasion when I have had to put work first which Barnardos understand also. I think it is important when joining a Board that you understand at the outset what the time commitment is and that you can commit to that.