

# TRUSTEE Q&A

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THE ELDERLY

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## **Why did you choose to take on a voluntary trusteeship?**

I am currently on the Board of Friends of the Elderly, based on Bolton St in Dublin 1 but with outreach services in wider Dublin and beyond. We provide companionship, friendship and opportunities for socialising and meeting other older people for those that are isolated, lonely and in need of support.

I became a trustee mainly because I very much believed in what the organisation does. My Dad is on his own since my Mother passed away in 2015 and loneliness is a huge issue for him since her passing. I am also surrounded by older people on my street as we live in an older, more established part of Dublin and it is alarming the amount of time that older people can spend alone, often the entire day or days on end without any interaction. This could be any of us in years to come – Friends of the Elderly is an incredible organisation that focuses only on this hidden issue. This is a cause close to my heart and when Boardmatch approached me it felt right to become a member of their Board.

## **How would you describe time management with respects to your day-job and voluntary board position?**

I tend to want to get stuck in and get my teeth into a project, I’m not much of a passenger, so yes it can be challenging balancing work and a voluntary role as you want to do the best you can for the organisation concerned. I am good at time management and can usually manage both successfully, but you do have to watch your own work deadlines.

### **How did you approach conflict resolution on your board?**

To date I have been fortunate and there has been little if any conflict. If it ever presents itself, I would plan to listen to all sides of the debate and perhaps speak to the individuals concerned outside of the Board meeting to come to a resolution – but so far it has been a very cooperative and positive group! Mainly because it was led by the amazing Jim O'Brien, who has recently retired as Chair of the Board and I'm sure Christopher Carroll our new Chair will be just as a strong and harmonious a leader!

### **How important was teamwork and collaboration in relation to board effectiveness?**

A Board can only be effective if it works as team and doesn't have competing interests.

For Friends of the Elderly our focus at the moment is on increasing our services in the Winter months as the weather worsens and Christmas approaches, often the toughest time of year for those who are elderly and alone. We will host three Christmas parties to encourage older people to get out of the house and to socialise in their community, as well as delivering hundreds of food hampers to those who need it most.

Our Board and staff will be responsible together in ensuring the funds are there to cover transport, food costs, entertainment and all other overheads for our members, and the only way this can happen is if we work together as a team and without competing demands.

### **How has your board experience affected you personally?**

It has been nothing but positive so far and has really opened my eyes to the extent of the issue of loneliness and isolation in the older community – an issue that can impact on anyone regardless of background, race or creed.

### **What advice would you give to someone considering joining a charity board?**

I am actually about to join my second charity Board as I am joining Boardmatch shortly so obviously my advice would be all positive! I would whole heartedly advise anyone who has the time to give to consider joining a Charity Board, it makes you a more attentive listener, a better team player and more compassionate individual in every way.