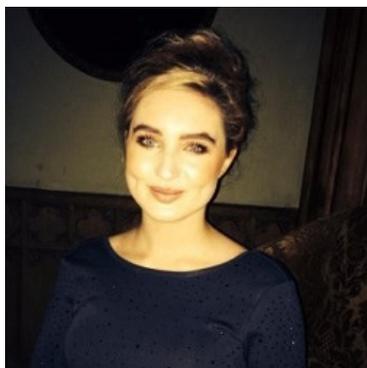


TRUSTEE Q&A

NIAMH MELIA

TRUSTEE OF THE LIVING
COMMUNITIES
(NA COMHLUADAIR BHEO)



Why did you decide to join a charity board?

I was 21 when I decided to join a board. I wanted to put my degree to good use and knew that after graduating I would use it for something charitable. I joined the board of The Living Communities through the Boardmatch website. It's definitely a fantastic way to use any qualification/knowledge you have for good. My experience of being on a board was hugely positive. The collaborative approach, the understanding of a common goal – it was all fantastic. I think it was one of the best decisions I could've made at that time. I brought something new to the board and they brought something new to me – we both benefitted from the relationship.

I must admit, I faced no age-related difficulties during my time on the board. I was eager to take on the challenge and I did so with genuine enthusiasm. However, I do believe there is a stigma attached to youth diversity on boards. In every professional aspect, youth is often assumed to be a negative attribute. There is often the assumption that younger professionals are less capable professionals. I really disagree with this and find that often, as they have more to prove, a younger board trustee can be a great addition to the board.

Younger people can bring lots of expertise to boards, and not just in terms of their education / knowledge. They bring a fresh insight and often are naturally innovative. As a generation, we seek to find new ways to improve our lives. The outlook younger people have can be really beneficial to an organisation. Not to mention our innate ability to navigate the internet and promote companies, causes and items in brand new ways.

If you're doubting whether you should join a board, stop debating it and DO IT! It is great exposure, great experience and such an excellent way to grow your knowledge and commercial understanding. I couldn't recommend it enough.