

A return from the brink of collapse

A total overhaul of its governance model transformed the fortunes of Trust in Children

The challenge

In 2003, Colin Murray stood down as director of Trust in Children, the charity he had founded in 1963 to help children from the poorest sectors of society. What remained of the charity was then handed to an acquaintance of Murray's, Leonora Borg. With minimal remaining assets, a dwindling donor base and no trustees, the charity needed a dramatic restructuring if it was to survive.

The process

Borg set about building up a new board of trustees. She approached graduates in their twenties with a wide variety of experience in international development and the charity sector, asking them to help her rebuild the charity. In 2004, the newly assembled board began to develop ideas for the future of the trust.

With no funds to pay for any members of staff, it was decided that the charity would continue to be run by the trustees and that it would be rebuilt gradually over the course of several years.

"Rather than trying to breathe life into what remained, we decided to reorientate the charity entirely," says Borg.



Borg (left): with a Peruvian family that has benefited from Trust in Children support

The trustees tried to identify needs that no other charity was meeting and formed partnerships with several small foreign charities with similar aims. The trust gradually developed projects in London and Peru, and lent support to Ripple, an international development charity that runs projects in Malawi.

The board also wanted to get more people involved in the running of the charity while keeping costs low and interest high. To do this, it launched Pick Up a Piece, an initiative that enables members to tell trustees about

projects they feel the charity ought to support.

The outcome

Trust in Children was officially relaunched last month after having secured a long-term partnership with organic food retailer Fresh & Wild and a number of celebrity supporters, including the actress Helena Bonham Carter. The board hopes to have amassed £10,000 in donations by the end of the financial year.

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