

The Pro Bono Committee Report 2012

The Committee has built on our previous client and 'channel' relationships although we have contributed a marginally lower number of volunteer days than in the previous year. Over recent years we have consolidated our focus on charities introduced to us through third parties, in particular Impetus Trust and other similar philanthropic enterprises that nurture a limited number of organisations which have been through a due diligence process and have been selected for their growth potential, supported by investment, pro-bono support and direct management support. We have therefore supported fewer charities, but are volunteering more days to each. This also reflects the changing economy of the Third Sector where organisations are battling to survive – fewer clients need more continuous support to create a sustainable business strategy and generate income rather than relying simply on public sector funding. Our consulting services have therefore centred on strategic planning, sustainable income generation and cost management, and in parallel our mentoring programme has provided support to many chief executives and SMT directors helping them build their capacity to deal with the issues of running charities in the current economic climate.

We continue to provide considerable support to the Prince's Charities, in particular Youth Business International, where we have provided independent accreditation assessments of the governance of all their operations around the world – ranging from Argentina to Uruguay and Barbados to England – six continents in total over the year. We have also helped them in other areas, including supporting their mentoring manager and joining their judging panel for their Entrepreneur of the Year competition. We have also been working with a range of organisations, from Training for Life (the charity behind the well known restaurant – The Hoxton Apprentice) to St Mungo's, from Brightside to the Foodchain UK, and from the MEMO Project to the Archway Project.

We have welcomed two new members to the Committee, Alan Buchan and John Corneille, but sadly both Alan Harpham and John Kay have stepped down as their 'day jobs' have become more intense. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking them both for their considerable support and help. They will be missed. Two of us have also been diverting some of our time to other Company projects as we have been closely involved in the implementation of our new website and membership systems, on which we rely for managing our pro bono client service. We should shortly be adding more examples of our past work to the new website – everyone is asked to contribute please.

Looking forward, we have been building a new relationship with Credit Suisse, who have themselves been building their support to the Sector. We hope that this will bring an exciting addition to our client mix – already they have introduced three quite different clients and more are in the pipeline. We are also starting to develop a significant relationship with The Social Investment Business and they are looking to introduce some six clients to us in the next month. These two new 'channels' should therefore help enhance the demand side of our pro bono programme.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all of our members who have volunteered their time. Our Pro Bono work is now widely seen as a significant contribution to the Third Sector. However, keeping our pipeline alive and refreshed in order to offer a range of opportunities to our members is a challenge. Sometimes supply and demand get noticeably out of step, which I know proves frustrating to those waiting to volunteer, let alone to the Committee members. The future certainly is looking more lively and demanding.

Patrick Chapman
Fourth Warden and Pro Bono Committee Chairman