

CASE STUDY

Working with the Cranfield Trust has enabled Caxton Youth Organisation to plan its future with a management team and board who are more effective, realistic and decisive.



CAXTON YOUTH ORGANISATION

BACKGROUND

Established in 1948, Caxton Youth Organisation is a local charity working to advance the personal development of young people with multiple disabilities living in the City of Westminster. They tackle disadvantages including prejudice, exclusion, lack of employment or workplace skills, poor social skills, and high dependence. Their four main programmes focus on communication, independence, opportunities, and health and personal care. www.caxtonyouth.org



THE NEED

With a change of Chairperson on the horizon, Caxton Youth Organisation decided it was a good time to review Board policy and practice, implement improvement strategies and strengthen their Management Committee.

As a small charity with an income under £150,000, only 3 full-time members of staff and 3 trustees, the Board was keen to draw on the advice and guidance of the Cranfield Trust to improve their governance and sustainability.

HOW WE HELPED

From early conversations with Caxton Youth Organisation's trustee board and CEO, it was agreed that having a Board and Management Committee improvement programme in place was crucial. Volunteer consultant, Stephen Cowburn, was on hand to mentor and guide CEO, Rachel Akehurst, every step of the way.

With a strong background in line-management and developing individuals and teams in the commercial sector, Stephen worked with Rachel to make sure that every aspect of the charity's governance and leadership were explored. Once areas for improvement were identified, a plan of action was put in place, which Rachel, along with her team and trustees were able to put into practice.





One of the things to change as a result of project is the charity's approach to meetings, which benefits service users, as Rachel explains,

"Previously, Young People's Representatives came along to Board meetings, which were referred to as Management Committee meetings prior to this project, where they had to sit through an agenda that wasn't of much interest to them. They now attend operational meetings instead, which didn't exist prior to the project, where every agenda item directly affects them. It's a much more effective way of working, and a far better use of everyone's time."

OUTCOME AND IMPACT

Since completing the project, trustees are clearer about their individual roles, Board meetings are more focused on strategic matters rather than operational issues and the introduction of new systems and procedures has increased confidence when making funding applications. Rachel is really pleased with the outcomes and impact the project has made, saying:

"The project achieved more than it originally set out to, including a rewrite of the organisation's governing document. Stephen supported us to formally recruit two new trustees, review Board meetings and create an agenda that encourages us to think strategically rather than operationally."

Caxton Youth Organisation now feels stronger and more prepared to take advantage of opportunities and deal with the everyday and strategic challenges they may face:

"We now have improved leadership, improved structures and a more strategically-focused Board of Trustees. Caxton Youth Organisation is better prepared for the future as a result of the project with The Cranfield Trust."



Would you like to learn more about our services?

The Cranfield Trust offer a range of free and pro bono business support for the voluntary sector, including:

- Pro bono management consultancy
- Free HR advice and guidance (HRNet)
- Free masterclasses

To find out more, visit www.cranfieldtrust.org or call our friendly team for an informal chat on 01794 830338.