



Promise Foundation

Website: thepromisefoundation.org.uk

Registered Charity number: 1158695

Chair's Report 2023 (Mike Hulme - Chair of the Trustees Group)

The performance of the charity continues to improve as we develop our remit and strive to expand our impact upon the young people we target and serve. Demand for our service remains high and the number of young people who will benefit from our services is increasing. It has become clear that the majority of the affected groups we work with, due to the nature of their social background, will experience low self-esteem, some mental health issues, and elements of rejection and societal cultural bias. Increasingly, this divide means that they are not fairly represented, resulting in stifled performance across a whole range of life chances and pathway choices often experiencing discriminatory attitudes and general suppressive control.

Promise Foundation continues to deliver a public benefit service through our unique mentoring relationships and serves to facilitate our key remit which states - "we are committed to social mobility and our belief that this should be a collective responsibility". Trustees understand that, because of demand, expanding this work remains a primary goal. This has been another year in which Promise Foundation has added another centre where a further school has been recruited and it is hugely positive that we now operate within five centres.

Management and Leadership:

Since our remodelling of the central management team, Simon Marks (Programme Director) has been supported by Victoria O'Connor as a much-needed administrative assistant. Simon continues to provide excellent management leadership and stability to our work and has proved to be fundamental to our current success. Through the administrative support of Victoria, Simon has been able to focus upon strategic development matters now being released from some organisational tasks and therefore focussing upon the charities core direction.

The challenge of recruiting suitable mentors from the community remains probably the most significant management task and Simon has continued to relentlessly strive to meet demand. Mentors are often a 'fluid' entity with numbers regularly moving as some are limited in their ability to continue at the end of an academic year or, due to their professional pressures, commitment then wavers. In working with our school-based centres Simon continues to meet demand via a focussed mentor recruitment process, however, this element of our work will continue to be the biggest challenge.

New mentors are trained upon starting and existing volunteers will also receive necessary updates including the most important elements of safeguarding and operating within our agreed code of conduct. Simon is ably supported with this work by Josephine Campbell (Trustee member) and I would like to thank her once again for her continued efforts and most valuable input.

We have also continued to experience management frustration within some centres where the Link Co-ordinator has changed. This is often due to personnel fluctuation at the schools and results in further training to establish the role expectations. It has also been clear that such changes have often resulted in more positive working relationships and an improvement in co-ordination. Certainly, Simon's management

role continues to be challenged in this area. This enables discussion with our centres to re-establish the core elements of our remit and to emphasise expectation where direction may have wavered.

We are to increase the Promise Foundation network by one further centre during this academic year and the Trustees and our management team continue to explore our next school and community connection. Careful consideration of demographic and potential need remains a key factor in this decision and suitable centres will be approached during this term.

Fund Raising:

There continues to be a substantial challenge for any small charity to secure significant funding to maintain services. Attracting extra funding to allow further expansion whilst maintaining funds for central running costs can be difficult to achieve. Promise Foundation is no exception to this rule. Through Simon's continual strength of working practice, Promise Foundation continues to be in a favourable financial position.

Grant application remains a key task and there has been success within this element of fund raising. It is also evident that securing individual donation pledges forming a continual and reliable income source is also an important methodology. Whilst grant donations can secure significant one-off financial support, these are often time and focus limited with some elements of charitable grant often not fully meeting our remit or the criteria of the funding agency. Individual donations, of which Simon has now secured considerable numbers, are less specialist in focus and provide far better funding flexibility and continuity over an extended period. A sustainable balance of each has resulted in current secure funding and a healthy cash balance.

At the time of writing, a further grant application to BBC Children in Need has been submitted. This will be our third round of funding and, if successful, will secure core subsidy for another three-year period until 2026. This support will include expansion into a further three centres and contribute toward central management funding over this period.

Fund management – reserves/debtors/income/expenditure.

The Trustees remain fully informed of the financial status of the charity via detailed reports from the Trustee with an overview of finance, Will Leaning. The Trustees remain thoroughly grateful to Will for this service and fully appreciate his work in supporting us in understanding with all aspects of our financial standing presented at each Trustee group meeting.

Our annual accounts have once more been audited by our chosen firm for the financial year to 2023 and will be submitted to Companies House in accordance with legislative procedure. Trustees continue to maintain full cognisance of our audited accounts during the AGM and the document remains available for public scrutiny and viewing by any future funding bodies during application procedures. I must thank Trustee Promise Knight for her work in securing this annual service.

Operation and Organisation:

Strategic Planning - The Trustees have assessed and evaluated the five-year strategic plan in recognition that most of the agreed targets have been met. The charity remains optimistic and aspirational for our future and planning continues to be reviewed as circumstances change. These are often subject to elements which are beyond our control. However, a strong ambition exists in the knowledge that demand for our services continues to remain high and the scope for expansion continues.

The Roles of the Trustees - We have a committed and experienced group of Trustees dedicated to driving our philosophy through a strategic process, ensuring a clarity of vision which has ambitious goals. Trustees also fully grasp the pragmatics of successfully running a charity on a day-to-day basis. They are hands-on in

approach and are fully involved in mentor training, safeguarding and child protection matters, and financial accounting regulation for the efficient spending of public funds. They have a regular programme of meetings throughout the year.

The Trustees group represents an experienced number of individuals who have been associated with Promise Foundation for several years. Each demonstrates full support for our core values and wholly understand their responsibilities in the principles of - strategic function, responsibility, commitment, maintaining relationships, and confidentiality.

Safeguarding – The legal obligation to understand and implement all aspects of child protection and safeguarding remains a core element of the charity’s work. As the services undertaken are always conducted within the host schools which we serve, our procedure must remain fully linked to each institution’s safeguarding and child protection policy. All mentor volunteers are fully DBS checked in compliance with each school’s requirement and they are included on the single centre register for each centre to ensure full conformity with any external inspection processes and legal requirement.

Therefore, our training includes how to address any concerns or disclosures that may occur or be made during mentor/mentee discussion with a clear protocol for individuals to seek advice and to comply with expectations of the DLS (Designated Safeguarding Lead). Training for all volunteers includes a mentor’s code of conduct and how the Promise Foundation Befriending Policy is to be implemented. Further training information includes updates on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE – as updated September 2023)

Looking Forward:

The Trustees continue to embrace their duties and fully understand the responsibilities required in their duty of public responsibility in managing the charity. The expansion of our remit to another centre, whilst encompassing the duties associated with the liability of governing existing centres, has, yet again, demonstrated the experience and professional scope of the Trustee group in the reporting period 2022/23.

Simon continues to excel in his management work on behalf of the Trustees proving to be hugely effective when addressing the challenges to be embraced when working across a number of the school centre platforms. Trustees can remain confident that their reworking of the charity’s central management provision has and will continue to serve the work we do well. I must personally applaud Simon’s efforts this year in the face of many further challenges, particularly the difficult task of securing new mentors from our community and in securing funding to support our continued financial viability.

The charity can move to 2023/24 with huge confidence and with a continued desire to expand our impact upon even more young people through further expansion into another school centre. It is abundantly clear that the need to support our target group of young people remains high and demand is increasing due to inequalities faced by societal groups. A measured performance gap for those within this category has opened once more and Promise Foundation will continue to support those experiencing unequal representation, suppressed performance through no fault of their own, and discriminatory attitudes.

Change is inevitable, and I find myself addressing the need to step down from my association and work with Promise Foundation after some ten years. Personal circumstances have resulted in this decision and, from the beginnings of the charity in 2013 where we were piloting the concept, to the strong position that Promise Foundation now finds itself, my involvement has been one of huge privilege. From merely offering support to the founding Trustees through hosting and piloting the initial fund-raising events and trial concepts for addressing the charity remit, to becoming Chair of Trustees in 2016, I remain dedicated to the philosophy and remit of the group.

The charity has grown, impact has been clear, and it has established itself as a fundamental support for hundreds of young people in addressing the immense difficulties experienced in tackling social mobility and reaching their goals. Promise Foundation is now recognised as a determining factor in the lives of young people in the community of Northwest London and works across several centres. Over this ten-year period to date it has supported hundreds of young people in realising ambition and the remit remains as strong and as necessary ever.

I am delighted to hand over the chair to Andrew Moss who will be an immensely experienced addition to the Trustees Group. I thank him wholeheartedly for his willingness to continue the Promise Foundation journey. I know that Andrew will bring his immense experience, a widely ranging group of contacts, and a new drive and energy to further expanding our charity during his tenure.

Our core principle remains even stronger than ever, and our goals and philosophy are those that cannot be challenged as a moral imperative. The real 'change' that must hold true, no matter how the charity develops and continues to make its mark, is that Promise Foundation must commit to continuing to make a difference. I fully believe that this will be the case and I must wish all involved my very best wishes for future success.

I will remain associated with Promise Foundation and the exceptional work of the charity.....

"We are committed to social mobility and our belief that this should be a collective responsibility".

Mike Hulme

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Hulme', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chair of the Trustees (Promise Foundation)