

Source: City AM

Date: 19 December 2019

## OFFICE POLITICS

### 'Tis the season to be giving generously

Demand for charities' services are higher than ever, so how can your business help?

**Keith  
Breslauer**



**A**FTER a Christmas election where all the main parties claimed that they would boost social spending, the season of giving this year has become unusually politically charged.

Yet with an estimated 14m people living in poverty in Britain, regardless of which party is currently in power, there will remain a significant role for private philanthropy in 2020 and beyond.

The last time there was a December General Election was 1923. Britain was still recovering from the First World War. There were high levels of social deprivation, and two million people were left permanently disabled. Many were suffering from shellshock, which we now recognise as post-traumatic stress disorder.

Although on a much smaller scale, these issues still affect the UK today.

Last month, we launched the Women In Safe Homes fund, collaborating with Resonance to create a social impact fund aiming to provide affordable, safe, and secure homes for women who are experiencing homelessness, are ex-offenders, survivors of domestic abuse, or have other complex needs. And in order to support the invaluable work of the Royal Marines Charity in rebuilding the lives of today's generation of injured veterans, we were also the main sponsor of its annual London dinner, raising close to £1m.

But charity is not just about raising funds. Businesses are in a unique position to help those less fortunate in other ways.

For instance, work placements inject new talent into the workforce, while assisting those who might otherwise struggle to find work or move into a new field. We work with several charities that help people of all ages to get into or back into the workplace.

This month, we began a partnership with Career Ready, which provides career-related workshops, work experience, and mentors to school-age children from disadvantaged backgrounds. We also work with Young Enterprise, which promotes entrepreneurship among young people. And last month, we organised an event with Work Avenue to provide guidance to support older people getting back into the workplace.

Also, many businesses have access to assets that can be used by charities, with property being particularly invaluable. Providing meeting rooms or areas for events can put otherwise empty office space to good use.

People and their expertise can also help. On a direct level, mentoring can support people trying to rebuild their lives after adversity. We can also offer administrative expertise to charities, such as IT, organisational support, and accountancy. Then there is our book of contacts — our business networks can provide a vast range of services and advice to assist charities in their important work.

But why do any of this? It is important to remember the benefits of giving in the workplace. Everyone feels a boost through helping others, and it is great for bringing people together and improving morale. Our work with the Royal Marines Charity has seen

me undertake a sponsored kayak across the English Channel, scale the vertical "Nose" route of Yosemite National Park's El Capitan mountain, and recreate the Cockleshell Endeavour alongside eight Royal Marines.

But supporting charities can take the form of much smaller scale activities. From taking part in Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day to collecting food and clothing for charities supporting the homeless, the holiday season provides ample opportunity for charitable endeavours.

So don't let politics steal the holiday spirit. Demand for charities' services are higher than almost ever before, so now is the time to get involved and ensure that the business world continues to give charitable organisations the support they need.

Keith Breslauer is managing director of Patron Capital.