



ONE DEGREE

A sector in controversy

You might be aware of the recent controversy surrounding some highlighted charities, namely the Kids Company saga, the jailed charity founder, and the Gift Aid fraud. This has led to questions around tighter regulation and increased scepticism about how donations and funding are being spent within the third sector.

A 2015 report also shows that public trust in the voluntary sector has fallen by over 10% in the last 12 months, with only 57% of respondents agreeing that charities are “trustworthy”. This is down from 71% positive responses to the same question in a Charity Commission survey in 2014.

Adding to some of this controversy, the sector is also becoming increasingly competitive. This may come as a surprise. Surely competitiveness goes against the sector fundamentals, right? Well, not exactly...

Of the 165 105 registered charities in the UK (5 248 in London), 19 159 of those are educational charities and 1 374 are working within youth education in London. One Degree is part of a grouping of small and medium size charities comprising 97% of charities in the UK. But the larger charities, (e.g. Cancer Research UK, Save the Children), receive 97% of the available funding due to their power and influence.

The result: The vast number of small and medium charities are forced to compete for the remaining 3%. Each one is trying to stand out and prove that its cause deserves support. So, while there is plenty of funding out there, accessing it is becoming increasingly difficult for the smaller charities.

These stats would be fantastic if charities collaborated, but not all charities are that keen on sharing insights, resources, beneficiaries, etc. The primary fear is that doing so might limit some of their potential future funding.

As a service providing educational charity, One Degree is also finding that the schools we may have once worked with are either now doing their own intervention programmes or they have sourced



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intervention from elsewhere (one of the other 162 youth mentoring services registered). If the students in need are receiving suitable intervention, it is fantastic that schools have more and more options. However, what interests us most is mapping the long-term effect of One Degree. We are not just focused on providing short-term results for our students, but long-term impact and options. This might be why we are so proud of what we do and why we see ourselves as different from most similar mentoring charities. Hopefully we will see these outcomes increasing in the coming years.

Much of the sector is transparent, self-critical about its own spending and increasingly looking at the longer-term impact and bigger picture. It is tough being grouped with those that are not. The sector as a whole - and One Degree in particular - is up against it. Because of this, we are more determined than ever to deliver high quality and an increasing number of interventions.

In the face of all this, the importance of a supportive network cannot be overstated. With you supporting us and looking out for us, we will develop, grow and ultimately, succeed.

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