



Eye on Giving

GIVING BACK... IT'S MORE THAN A MISSION

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Name, Company, Position

My name is Ian Huddleston and I am a partner in the law firm Pinsent Masons LLP. I specialise in advising clients on real estate, trusts and charity law.

I also sit as a director and trustee on a number of NI based charities - including [Giving Northern Ireland](#).

What are your thoughts, in general, on charitable giving?

In my view there has always been a need for social philanthropy in Northern Ireland. The motto which Belfast itself adopted some 150 years ago was "Pro tanto quid retribuamus" which means - in summary - "For so much what shall we give back". That motto was adopted when Belfast was at the height of its powers but it is even more true today than it was then given the cuts in public spending. That has created a gap which individuals and companies should try to fill - not just in monetary terms but also in offering their time and experience.

Is your giving personal or corporate or a combination of both?

For most people - myself included - it is normally a combination of both. Most firms nowadays have corporate responsibility programmes. At Pinsent Masons in Belfast that programme is called "Starfish" and allows everyone to get involved in projects as diverse as teaching, fundraising and physically working on active community projects and, unsurprisingly for lawyers, providing pro bono legal advice.

How do you give to charity: monetarily, your own time as a volunteer or your specialist skills?

Again it is probably a combination of all of those. As a lawyer in private practice I am particularly privileged to work with a lot of companies and individuals who have philanthropy very high up on their agenda. It is partly for that reason

that I first became involved in Giving NI. In my own case being a lawyer allows me to help either through using my specific skills or through making connections to help get things done.

The whole ethos of Giving NI is to champion philanthropy throughout Northern Ireland by empowering people and corporates to give of their time and resources in a strategic way which in turn allows charities to leverage those contributions.

What types of causes do you favour and why?

I sit as trustee or board member on a number of charities some of which involve grant giving and am able to see the excellent work that local charities do regardless of size. I can't say, therefore, I favour a particular cause but the charities which I think deserve greatest recognition are those which target specific areas of need and are clever at leveraging both influence and funding in a way which is sustainable and ultimately operates for the greater good.

Are there specific charities or causes that you give to regularly? How do you choose which to support?

I have a wide number of interests ranging from things as diverse as the Built Heritage through to some arts based charities to specific healthcare charities in which I am involved and would seek to support those in any way that most closely reflects their needs. To use a practical example, last year I and a number of my colleagues helped the Northern Ireland Cancer Fund for Children (our chosen charity for the year) - in its development of a respite facility for children suffering from cancer and their families in the Shimna Valley, Newcastle, County Down.

As a firm we pitched in with a number of fund raising events but



also at a legal level we worked with the Board in helping to document the funding and construction arrangements. Involvement with such projects have their own energy and that involvement becomes addictive not just individually but across the team.

Do you believe that companies and individuals have a duty to help others? If yes, why?

I absolutely believe that those that are more fortunate do have an obligation to give back. Northern Ireland is a small place and if there were more collective endeavours with a focus on developing social enterprise generally then I think it would help resolve some of the social and political problems which we face as a community.

What is your message to business people who may be thinking about becoming more involved in strategic philanthropy?

I acted for the late Dr Sir Allen McClay who was the founder of the Almac Pharmaceutical Group. Sir Allen was an inspirational business leader but he was also someone who had a vision for philanthropy and was so passionate about delivering on that vision that he set up a charitable foundation which carries on that legacy. His goal was simple - he wanted to benefit the people of Northern Ireland whom he

felt had supported his business life. I now sit as an independent board member of the charitable foundation which he founded and is actively helping communities in Northern Ireland and across the world. My message to the professional and business community is that everyone can get involved in philanthropy - at any level - whether it is through the donation of money, skills or time but that whatever contribution that you make it does make a difference and where you see that difference it will encourage you to do more.

Giving Northern Ireland was set up last year to champion Philanthropy. Why do you think it is important that there is an organisation that helps businesses and individuals think more strategically about giving?

I do think that where people are interested in helping charities they should do it strategically. A collective, co-ordinated approach is always going to be more powerful and in the economic climate that charities currently face they do need to be more strategic if they are going to deliver upon their objectives. The mission statement of Giving NI is to champion strategic giving, to educate people about how to go about it and to make sure that it achieves greatest benefit for the people of Northern Ireland - that should be a goal for all of us.