

Best talent management strategy **Winner** *British Heart Foundation and Macmillan Cancer Support*

British Heart Foundation (BHF) and Macmillan Cancer Support are two of the UK's largest charities. They encounter similar people problems, particularly when it comes to competing for talent from a relatively small pool. They both agree that developing talent pipelines and becoming an employment sector of choice are vital strategic concerns.

The charity sector isn't always the first choice for graduates, often because of a lack of knowledge about career progression opportunities, pay and reward, and the sector in general. Back in 2016 neither organisation had a formal graduate scheme, further complicating talent attraction. So that year they collaborated to create GradUnique, a jointly funded talent development programme.

The unique partnership makes the best use of combined resources, gives graduates experience in two organisations, and nurtures the careers of talented and ambitious candidates. The graduates are at the heart of the programme and are involved in strategic organisation-wide projects from the beginning. They spend a year in each charity, undertaking two placements in each from a broad range of areas including frontline health services, fundraising, policy, strategy, customer insight, brand and marketing, and engagement. As of 2018/19, retail and HR have also been introduced.

Upon starting, the grads have a week-long induction programme involving senior leadership. They are able to



participate in key organisational and charity sector events, and receive one-to-one mentoring support with structured career conversations. Learning and development is strengths-based and is structured around eight key competencies. Feedback is vital to the evolution of the programme, and every six months the graduate cohort meets with the directors of people from both charities to share experiences and suggest areas for improvement – either for themselves or future intakes. Participants also present to the trustees about their experiences of GradUnique, and are invited to attend senior leadership conferences, annual summits, AGMs and medical conferences.

GradUnique is now well embedded. According to a Bright Network report the charity sector has jumped from eighth to third in popularity for graduates. There have been year-on-year increases in the numbers applying, from 521 in January 2016 to 999 in January 2019. The first cohort (class of 2016) were successful in securing permanent full-time roles in either BHF or Macmillan Cancer Support, or have gone on to take up roles in public health.

One graduate said: "This scheme allowed me to pursue a career in the charity sector – something I would never have previously considered. Over the course of my first year, through two incredible placements with varied projects allowing for real autonomy, I have personally developed so much and can now confidently say that I have a very strong foundation for an excellent career in the sector."

Going forwards both charities want to address the diversity of their intake, as according to Bright Network 41% of female graduates would consider the third sector but only 25% of male grads would. They will continue to build links across communities to strengthen the reputation of the sector as an inclusive and innovative place to work. The September 2019 admissions process is well under way and a key improvement to the filtering process this year is to seek less obvious examples of 'what great looks like'.

Judges described this as a "great collaboration" that "goes after a particular challenge". They praised the autonomy and development available to graduates and said it was both "innovative" and "excellent".

Shortlisted

Johnsons Workwear

Lancaster University

Royal Bank of Scotland

United Utilities