

John Ellerman Foundation

**John Ellerman Foundation – Board Shadowing
Scheme 2024 Learning Review**

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About John Ellerman Foundation

John Ellerman Foundation is an independent endowed grantmaking charity, set up in 1971. The Foundation is currently run by a team of seven full time staff and eight Trustees. Our strategy for 2022-25 calls on us to deliver our organisational aim to advance the wellbeing of people, society and the natural world with 100% of our assets – namely our grantmaking, our investing, our values and our organisational competencies, capabilities and assets. Our two main activities as an organisation comprise:

1. Awarding grants of circa £5.5m to charities for work which has national significance in the arts, environment and social action, and
2. Investing and managing our funds in such a way that balances the desire to maintain grantmaking capacity, operating in the long-term and addressing the risk that our investments are poorly aligned to our aim and values.

Our five organisational values reflect how we work. We seek to be a **responsive** funder, listening and responding to what applicants and our wider stakeholder network judge is important. We have well-developed and regularly reviewed funding guidelines, enabling us to be **discerning** in our decisions about whom and what to support. This value also extends to the way in which we approach collaborative funding opportunities and make investment decisions relating to our endowment. We value all our stakeholder relationships, including with organisations we fund and those applying to us, and seek to have a **personal touch**. We prefer to be **connected** and are in regular contact with relevant colleagues and partners. Finally, we are willing to be **flexible** and may venture outside our funding criteria or our usual ways of working, if we believe a different approach would be more effective.

Acknowledgements

We are incredibly grateful to John Ellerman Foundation's inaugural Board Shadowing Trustees (Nell Hardy, Hirra Khan Adeogun and Charlotte Leask) for committing to the Scheme so enthusiastically and for sharing their expertise and insights throughout, including in the development of this report.

John Ellerman Foundation's Board Shadowing Scheme and the approach we have taken has been inspired by The Smallwood Trust, who have run three rounds of their own Board Shadowing Scheme. We are grateful to The Smallwood Trust, especially Dr Ambreen Shah (Trustee) and Paul Carbury (CEO), for the support they have provided us with during the set up of our own Board Shadowing Scheme.

Foreword

Charities risk a major disconnect with the communities they seek to serve if they lack Trustees with a range of skills, knowledge and perspectives. A diverse board can significantly improve how charities respond to opportunities and challenges, their agility in the face of changes in the external environment, and their legitimacy and impact.

And yet Charity Commission data shows that 92% of Trustees are white, two-thirds are male and the average age is between 55 to 64. This issue is exacerbated not by a lack of interest from diverse groups, but by often woefully narrow recruitment processes. Meanwhile, according to NCVO, 79% of charities find it difficult to fill board vacancies, often with delays of over six months. With more than half of UK charities reporting multiple board vacancies, it's clear that recruitment and diversity are significant ongoing challenges.

Addressing these gaps is crucial to building resilient, forward-thinking charities and was a key driver for John Ellerman Foundation's Board Shadowing Scheme. We wanted to provide people from diverse backgrounds with meaningful, first-hand experience of being a Trustee and the opportunity to decide if charity boards are a place for them.

Drawing on the pioneering work of Paul Carbury and Ambreen Shah at The Smallwood Trust, we launched our Board Shadowing Scheme in 2024 and were joined by three remarkable women: Charlotte Leask, Hirra Adeogun Khan and Nell Hardy. While we were keen to open up opportunities for our Shadowing Trustees, they quickly opened up a new window on the world for our Board, bringing fresh perspectives, helping us to think differently and prompting richer discussions.

This report details our approach to the Board Shadowing Scheme, what we have learnt, and improvements that would make the Board Shadowing Scheme even more impactful for everyone involved.

There is always a risk that organisations invest in one-off diversity initiatives that are tokenistic visibility exercises. It has been encouraging to hear how much Charlotte, Hirra and Nell have drawn from the Board Shadowing Scheme, and I can truly say that our Shadowing Trustees have made a lasting impact on John Ellerman Foundation's Board. We look forward to staying in touch with them - our first cohort - and to running the Board shadowing Scheme again.

Annika Small OBE
Trustee, John Ellerman Foundation
February 2025

Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the effectiveness and learning from the Board Shadowing Scheme which John Ellerman Foundation launched in February 2024. The first Board Shadowing Trustees (Shadowing Trustees) joined the organisation in May 2024 for six months.

This report provides an overview of the aims of the Board Shadowing Scheme, how it was set up, and what it offers. The biographies of the three Shadowing Trustees are also shared, alongside the activities that they each participated in.

The report offers an analysis of the learning and key findings from the Board Shadowing Scheme, including recommendations for how it may be developed further within John Ellerman Foundation. This is a publicly available report, and it is hoped that it will be of interest and use to other charities, including charitable grantmakers, that may be considering this kind of approach.

Our Board Shadowing Scheme

John Ellerman Foundation's current strategy for 2022-25 focuses our efforts as an organisation on the following four strategic pillars:

1. **our funding offer**, ensuring that we embrace and deliver best and promising practice
2. **our investment policy**, ensuring that we invest in ways that are aligned to our aim, values and funding categories
3. **our work with others**, ensuring that we understand our stakeholders and can work with them to deliver our work together more effectively
4. **our commitment to accountability**, ensuring that we make further progress on diversity, equity and inclusion, transparency and impact and learning.

As part of our commitment to accountability, Trustees unanimously agreed the development of a Board Shadowing Scheme, which is aimed at individuals from diverse backgrounds with lived experience of poverty to participate in our governance processes for a six-month period. The Board Shadowing Scheme aims to:

- Provide new perspectives and a positive learning experience for our Board, especially since we have limited levels of change at a Trustee level, with Trustees committing to two terms of five years, and our next known Board retirement happening in 2025.
- Support the diversification of Trustee boards within charities, especially the trust and foundations sector – with statistical data from the Association of Charitable Foundations, Reach Volunteering, Getting On Board, Young Trustees Movement and Action for Trustee Racial Diversity showing a lack of diversity on charity Boards.
- Offer Board experience to individuals who may not ordinarily consider Trustee roles.

Our Board Shadowing Scheme is outlined in more detail in this report, but briefly comprised an induction plan and process, optional attendance as observers at Board and Committee meetings and other Trustee-related meetings, the opportunity to be involved in application assessment, regular support from Annika Small OBE, Trustee and the Foundation's Director, Sufina Ahmad MBE, and a training budget of up to £500 each.

Our Board Shadowing Trustees

The recruitment process

John Ellerman Foundation launched its inaugural Board Shadowing Scheme in February 2024, with an open recruitment exercise lasting four weeks. The opportunity was advertised on our website and our social media accounts (LinkedIn and X). Our LinkedIn posts from

John Ellerman Foundation's page and the Director's own LinkedIn profile received circa 25,000 impressions and an array of comments and responses. We also gained press coverage of our announcement in [Civil Society Media](#) and [Third Sector](#) – although neither article was prompted by us, with the Third Sector article also asking for and receiving a quote.

The recruitment pack comprised the following sections:

- Job Advert
- Welcome note from Sufina Ahmad, Director and Annika Small, Trustee
- About John Ellerman Foundation
- Role description and requirements
- How to apply
- Recruitment Timeline.

Applicants to the Board Shadowing Scheme were invited to submit a written statement of up to one side of A4 outlining their interest in the role. The recruitment pack outlined that applications would be scored on the following criteria loosely:

- Having a diverse background and lived experience of poverty, recognising that this description can be applied in many ways, which is by design to try to avoid making this too restrictive an opportunity and in recognition of how experiences evolve
- Reason/s for wanting to pursue such an opportunity for personal development
- Evidence that participating in this Board Shadowing Scheme will be used to support applications to other Board/governance related opportunities
- Any connection/s to the Foundation's grant-holders or stakeholders
- Availability to participate in the governance related activities outlined
- Overall fit with opportunity, as assessed through the interview and application process.

A total of 19 applications were received – of which three were invited for a chat with Annika Small OBE, Trustee and Sufina Ahmad MBE, Director. The chats were not interviews, but rather an opportunity to discuss with each candidate their interest in the role and to explore further how we could ensure the Board Shadowing Scheme would be a success for them and the organisation (which included applicants asking us any questions they had).

The remaining 16 applicants were all contacted to let them know they had not been successful on this occasion. We also offered the following general reflections on the applications received, in the hope that this will support with future applications:

- The strongest applications that garnered most discussions were those that were clearly set out, succinct and within the one side of A4 limit, and demonstrated a strong fit with all elements of the role description and responsibilities.
- We particularly valued applications that made it clear why they wanted to be part of John Ellerman Foundation's Board in a shadowing capacity now and how it would help with near and longer term plans they had for the future.
- Applicants that demonstrated that they had read supporting material on our website and how they had connected with this material in their applications were generally higher quality.
- Some of the applications missed out, or were less strong, on one of the key aspects of this role.
- Some applications did not reference the work we support through our grantmaking in the Arts, Social Action and Environment, and whether these areas of work resonated with candidates.

- In some cases candidates spoke extensively about one aspect of our work, and with little discussion about other work we do.
- Some candidates spoke of using the experience to support a future career goal in ways that we didn't feel we could helpfully contribute to, e.g. fundraising activities or international work.
- Some candidates already showed a good level of Board experience compared to others.
- We were keen to support a mix of applicants at different stages in their career and at different transition points in their career.
- Some candidates already had charitable grantmaking experience, and we felt it was important to try and offer this opportunity to those with less or no experience of charitable grantmaking organisations.

The unsuccessful applicants were also given the offer of further feedback if needed.

The successful candidates

In May 2024, the following three individuals were issued with a contract (based on a contract provided by The Smallwood Trust) that set out clearly their legal status and responsibilities on the Board before then joining our Board Shadowing Scheme as Shadowing Trustees.

Nell Hardy

Nell is an actor, writer, theatre maker, producer and director, multi-arts facilitator, and trauma-conscious coach. She is the founder of Response Ability Theatre (RAT): a theatre and participation arts charity that seeks to represent and support people who experience or are at risk of experiencing trauma. She has delivered her bespoke workshop methodologies for trauma survivors and for people in positions of care for trauma survivors for Council-based social care teams, NHS psychology teams, grassroots and independent support organisations, and faith-based safeguarding teams, as well as publicly in connection with RAT's own productions. She is an artistic associate with Arts and Homelessness International, CRIptic Arts, and the Museum of Homelessness. She has guest lectured at Queen Mary University of London, University College London, and the University of Warwick. This year, she is a Fellow for the British Council at the Venice Biennale.

Hirra Khan Adeogun

Hirra Khan Adeogun is co-director of climate change charity Possible, and formerly headed up their Car Free Cities programme where she was a key campaigner for London's ULEZ (Ultra Low Emission Zone) expansion. She is passionate about designing anti-oppressive and sustainable futures, and regularly shares her expertise with the public including in The Guardian and gal-dem. She has previous experience of being a Trustee of Wen (the Women's Environmental Network) between 2019 and 2022. She has also worked for Amnesty International UK and used evidence and insight around the experiences of underrepresented people to drive positive change, as well as extensively exploring British Muslim identities.

Charlotte Leask

Charlotte is born of a line of strong women who have worked in the charitable sector, thus shaping her early life and the development of a strong social conscience. Whilst her early adult life was focussed on looking after her three children, she also made time to work in the sector – starting as a volunteer for Headway Nottingham, a small local charity offering empowering support to adults living with disability following brain injury, before then becoming a member of staff. She has been managing the charity for the last seven years, reporting directly to the Board of Trustees as the most senior member of staff. Her role involves all elements of management, and she has seen the charity through some difficult times but is now concentrated on developing a five-year strategy that will build the charity's sustainability and provide a good foundation for future growth.

Activities attended by Board Shadowing Trustees

Between May and November 2024, Shadowing Trustees were involved in Board and Committee meetings that saw the sign off of our Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24 and various policies including Safeguarding and Trustee Code of Conduct. They also participated in discussions and reporting on a range of matters like the DEI (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) Accountability Plan, the Funder Commitment on Climate Change, and our Impact Framework. In this time period, we also used Board meetings to explore the development of our strategy for 2025 onwards, as well as taking a decision on the process for appointing John Ellerman Foundation's next Chair.

A summary of the activities the Shadowing Trustees participated in is shared below. We had a very high level of engagement from the Shadowing Trustees throughout the six-month period, despite all the activities outlined below being optional as they were appointed as volunteers.

- Board meetings in May, July, September and November 2024.
- Risk and Audit Committee meeting in June 2024.
- Finance and Investment Committee meetings in September and November 2024.
- Charity Governance Training by NCVO in September 2024.
- Application assessment meetings for stage one applications.

Support from John Ellerman Foundation

The Director was the main point of contact for the Shadowing Trustees. The support available to Shadowing Trustees to aid with their participation in the activities listed above is summarised below:

- Group meetings between the Shadowing Trustees, Annika and Sufina before each Board meeting to discuss the papers, questions arising etc.
- Group meetings between the Shadowing Trustees and Sufina before each Committee meeting to discuss the papers, questions arising etc.
- Monthly one-to-one meetings between Shadowing Trustees and Sufina to discuss their ambitions for the role, and how they are finding the experience, including reflecting on previous meetings and reviewing what is working well and what is not within the Board Shadowing Scheme, and the spending of the £500 training budget etc.
- Pre-meetings between the Grants Team and the Shadowing Trustees to support them with their preparation for application assessment meetings, as well as providing a more general overview of our grantmaking process.
- Meeting between Annika, Sufina and Trustees to discuss any queries they had about the Board Shadowing Scheme, as well as being available over email to discuss any ideas or concerns they had about the process.

Methodology

To complete a review of the inaugural Board Shadowing Scheme, we have looked at the following materials:

- The Board Shadowing Scheme recruitment pack, proposals and updates to the Board included in the Director's Report, and the Board Shadowing Scheme Induction document.

- The write ups by the Director of the one-to-one meetings held between Shadowing Trustees and the Director, which included the standing items for discussion of: Checking in, Reflections on the process so far, Outcomes, and Next steps/meetings.
- Written feedback from the Shadowing Trustees, Sufina and Annika that sought feedback in October 2024 on how the Board Shadowing Scheme was structured, the time taken, the outcomes pursued, whether these outcomes were met, use of the £500 training budget, and recommendations for future rounds of the Board Shadowing Scheme (including whether it should be continued).
- Request for general reflections from Trustees on what they think worked well or didn't work well in relation to the Board Shadowing Scheme – which was offered as an optional activity for Trustees.

We received written feedback from all three Shadowing Trustees, Annika, Sufina and three other Trustees from John Ellerman Foundation. This means there were a total of eight written responses included in this analysis set out in the next two sections of this report.

Key findings and reflections

The analysis has resulted in findings relating to:

- How well outcomes for the Shadowing Trustees and the Foundation have been met.
- The structure of the Board Shadowing Scheme.
- The £500 training budget.
- Further ideas and considerations for future Board Shadowing Schemes.

How well outcomes for the Board Shadowing Trustees and the Foundation have been met.
John Ellerman Foundation hoped that the Board Shadowing Scheme would:

- Provide new perspectives and a positive learning experience for our Board, especially since we have limited levels of change at a Trustee level, with Trustees committing to two terms of five years, and our next known Board retirement scheduled for 2025.
- Support the diversification of Trustee boards within charities, especially the trust and foundations sector – with statistical data from the Association of Charitable Foundations, Reach Volunteering, Getting on Board, Young Trustees Movement and Action for Trustee Racial Diversity showing a lack of diversity on charity Boards.
- Offer Board experience to individuals who may not ordinarily consider Trustee roles.

There was overall consensus that these objectives were met, especially in relation to offering Board experience to individuals that may not consider Trustee roles with their being clear feedback that our Shadowing Trustees experienced John Ellerman Foundation's Board as it really is – albeit with additional layers of support to enable engagement with our processes. It was also felt that John Ellerman Foundation Trustees benefitted from having insights from the Shadowing Trustees to support with their work between May and November 2024.

The Board worked hard to embody from the beginning that whilst Shadowing Trustees were not decision makers, they were valued for the expertise and experience they were able to offer. It was however clear in some of the feedback that the Board did not necessarily have a full understanding that the Shadowing Trustees offer both their perspectives as individuals with lived experience of poverty, as well as their experience as practitioners with a diverse set of professional experiences.

The second objective of the diversification of Trustee boards within charities and the trust and foundations sector is harder to state with certainty as being met. However, the feedback showed that John Ellerman Foundation as an organisation has been able to experience first-

hand the value of having the diverse perspectives of our Shadowing Trustees on the Board and that the level of interest and engagement from the sector, as shown through the engagement on LinkedIn and sector media with our recruitment advert and our invitation to share a Philea opinion piece, was an indicator that there is interest in such initiatives and this kind of work.

Our Shadowing Trustees hoped to achieve one or more of the following through the Board Shadowing Scheme:

- To gain experience that will support them to learn more about what it means to be a Trustee and use this to seek out Trustee roles elsewhere.
- To understand further if the time commitment required to be a Trustee can be balanced effectively with their other professional and personal commitments and responsibilities.
- To acquire the confidence to apply for Trustee roles and manage things like imposter syndrome associated with considering these kinds of roles.
- To determine more fully the skills and qualities they have that would make them suitable for Trustee roles.
- To learn more about grantmaking practices and decision making processes.
- To learn more about charity governance processes and the operations of a charity like John Ellerman Foundation, including for example how we manage our finances, how we develop our organisational strategy etc.
- To consider more how their lived experiences impacts their professional experience.

*“I have made fantastic progress on my goals during this process. I wanted to understand whether I had enough transferable skills to be able to offer significant help on a Board, I wanted to know if I could juggle the time commitment, and I wanted to finish feeling confident enough to put myself forward to join a board in the future. I have achieved all of these and before the process has even ended have joined a Board in my area. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity John Ellerman Foundation has given me.” – **Charlotte Leask, Board Shadowing Trustee***

The feedback received demonstrated that at an individual and cohort level the Shadowing Trustees gained clear benefits from their involvement in the Board Shadowing Scheme, and they felt ably supported in their duties through things like:

- The induction process and paperwork, which included introductions to and time with members of the team.
- Board and Committee pre-meetings that make clear what the meeting is for and how to process the paperwork received.
- The person-centred and supportive one to one meetings with the Director.
- The adaptive approach taken to the design and delivery of the Board Shadowing Scheme, which included responding to feedback as it was received and trying to retain a live discussion on matters like the power dynamics that exist within a Board made up of Trustees with decision making powers and Shadowing Trustees that do not have decision making powers but are being asked for their insights and feedback.

They were unanimous in their view that they learned more about what it means to be a Trustee generally and specifically in the context of John Ellerman Foundation, with one comment that the Board Shadowing Scheme provided a level of understanding and experience that would not have been possible through a standard training on charity governance. They particularly valued learning more about the time required for such roles, including how this altered throughout the six month period depending on when there were both Board and Committee meetings, as well as the ways in which they were able to process papers more quickly with more experience. There was greater confidence amongst the

cohort that they could take on Trustee roles, with Charlotte Leask successfully being appointed a Trustee of the Nottinghamshire Care Association in September 2024.

*“The value of the networking opportunities that arose from the scheme: I reached out to Charlotte for help with a project I am putting together in Nottingham, and it’s wonderful to connect people who might not have otherwise crossed paths. Building relationships and expanding my professional network was an unexpected but truly rewarding benefit! It’s also been fascinating to witness part of the Foundation’s EDI (equity, diversity and inclusion) journey and some of the behind-the-scenes conversations. This scheme is itself a reflection of the foundation’s commitment to EDI, and I would simply urge the board to continuously challenge themselves and build on this momentum, ensuring that EDI remains at the forefront of their work and decision-making.” – **Hirra Khan Adeogun, Board Shadowing Trustee***

The Shadowing Trustees clearly appreciated being able to learn more about the Foundation’s grantmaking process and noted that this will benefit them all in their professional roles. They have all shared that they have applied different aspects of work covered in Board and Committee meetings at John Ellerman Foundation in their own organisations, including for example applying the Foundation’s governance and risk management processes, and applying aspects of our strategy design and development processes. They also commented positively on the networking opportunities that the Board Shadowing Scheme afforded them.

The monthly one to one meetings between the Shadowing Trustees and the Director, alongside their participation in the governance related activities set out in the Board Shadowing Scheme enabled the cohort to determine the skills and qualities they can offer charity Boards as professionals and as people with lived experience of poverty. Two of the Shadowing Trustees used their £500 training budget for coaching and/or mentoring that enabled deeper exploration and articulation of their skills and qualities. It was also notable that whilst each Board Shadowing Trustee has a clear professional background within different sub-sectors, they were able to recognise that their experience could be applied meaningfully at a charitable funder like John Ellerman Foundation which has a broad base of priority areas relating to its grantmaking, investing and wider operations.

The structure of the Board Shadowing Scheme

*“It was a privilege to be trusted with an un-sanitised view of everything and to have been welcomed without palpable hesitation or othering by the Trustees and staff. ...I will miss the community feeling, professional development and sense of making a difference slightly outside of my usual remit that came from being a Shadow Trustee, and feel I know what I value I could bring to a Board now. So when the time is right, I definitely want to be a Trustee somewhere.” – **Nell Hardy, Board Shadowing Trustee***

In terms of how the Board Shadowing Scheme was structured and run there was a good level of positive feedback, with Shadowing Trustees appreciating the simple, trust-based application process, the availability of engagement opportunities and support for the Shadowing Trustees, the one to one meetings with the Director, the clarity of what was on offer and when throughout the six month period, and the flexibility of being able to attend meetings online and in person. There was a clear view that they experienced the John Ellerman Foundation governance role as it really is. However, the feedback also demonstrated the need for improvements in relation to:

- Making it clearer that all meetings were optional to attend, e.g. we felt that the Board meetings would be the most useful meetings for them to attend and that the Committee meetings were also available to attend if they would find them of interest or use.

- Ensuring that the timings of the pre-meetings for the Board/Committee meetings and the one to one meetings with the Director did not result in there being duplication in the meetings, e.g. the one to one meetings being used to discuss upcoming Board/Committee meetings.
- Considering the timing of the Board/Committee pre-meetings in order to ensure that the papers had been read by the cohort, in order to aid the discussions and preparations.
- Being clearer on the time commitment in terms of time required for reading Board or Committee packs and that the Board and Committee meetings, as well as the pre-meetings and one to one meetings all take place in daytime working hours, and that certain weeks (e.g. the week before a Board meeting) in the six month period are busier than others. On average the time committed was circa 1.5 days per month, including attendance at meetings.
- Creating more opportunities for the Shadowing Trustees to network and bond with each other and the Board both during the Board Shadowing Scheme and afterwards.

The £500 training budget

“On the training budget - In terms of flexibility, it was ideal, allowing me to pursue an opportunity that aligned with my interests and professional development. Super helpful and generous and tangibly demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting the professional development of participants.” – Hirra Khan Adeogun, Board Shadowing Trustee

Each Board Shadowing Trustee was offered a training budget of £500 to use to support their personal development during the six month period. This was something that each Board Shadowing Trustee considered the use of carefully, and it formed a key part of the monthly one to one meetings with the Director. The openness to the funding being used flexibly was very positively received with each Board Shadowing Trustee using the funding differently. Nell Hardy used the funds for some training and professional mentoring relating to her professional role at Response Ability Theatre. Charlotte Leask undertook four coaching sessions. Hirra Khan Adeogun used the funding to attend the 2024 Labour Party Conference. There was a lot of support for the training budget and that it was able to be used effectively for a cohort that were at different stages in their professional and personal lives.

There were two pieces of feedback as to whether the budget could be increased beyond £500 and if the term ‘training budget’ was accurate, and if it should be described as a ‘personal development budget’ instead.

Further ideas and considerations for future Board Shadowing Schemes

In addition to the analysis provided above, there was clear support for continuing the following:

- The induction process and paperwork, which included introductions to and time with members of the team.
- Board and Committee pre-meetings that make clear what the meeting is for and how to process the paperwork received.
- The opportunity to see all aspects of the Foundation’s application assessment processes.
- The person-centred and supportive one to one meetings with the Director.
- The adaptive approach taken to the design and delivery of the Board Shadowing Scheme, which included responding to feedback as it was received and trying to retain a live discussion on matters like the power dynamics that exist within a Board made up of Trustees with decision making powers and Shadowing Trustees that do not have decision making powers but are being asked for their insights and feedback.

Conclusion and next steps – What would we do differently in the future

The feedback received was clear in its support for John Ellerman Foundation running the Board Shadowing Scheme, and the following two quotes express well the depth of this support:

“I think that this process, and the possible impact on those taking part should not be underestimated. The personal growth I have experienced as a result has been huge and could positively impact on my life for some time to come both professionally and personally.”
– **Charlotte Leask, Board Shadowing Trustee**

“Absolutely you should continue the Board Shadowing Scheme. Especially as you go into your new strategy I think it would be really valuable for you to keep forming relationships with professionals with lived experience of poverty, who bring perspectives on money, how it is used and by whom it is held that will be really valued by your board who have repeatedly shown interest in what we have to say. I also think you’re in potentially quite a unique position as such a transparent funder with strong values and an excellent balance of being open to criticism and malleability, and being clear about the limits of your power and capacity. I suspect other grant-making charities might feel they have something to hide with shadow Trustees, or might succumb to virtue signalling or over-promising when answering questions or responding to feedback. That said, I hope you can inspire other charities to offer something similar, and I’m glad you’ll be the ones modelling it.” – **Nell Hardy, Board Shadowing Trustee**

However, the following areas have been identified as requiring further consideration in future Board Shadowing Schemes, in order to make improvements

- *Bringing the Board Shadowing Scheme to a close for each cohort:* As this is John Ellerman Foundation’s inaugural Board Shadowing Scheme the process for bringing the Board Shadowing Scheme to an end is being designed flexibly. The inaugural cohort of Shadowing Trustees have no further meetings to attend after November 2024. However, we are actively considering ways to stay in touch, which includes offering references as requested, encouraging Shadowing Trustees’ networks to reach out to staff and Trustees as needed, and a potential reconvening in May 2025 to see how things are going for the Shadowing Trustees. If further Board Shadowing Schemes are delivered, then consideration will be given to the idea of an alumni network and how this would be designed and managed.
- *Trustees leading the work:* The design and delivery of the Board Shadowing Scheme has been a joint initiative between Annika Small OBE, Trustee and Sufina Ahmad MBE, Director. The approach taken was very much inspired by information shared with us by The Smallwood Trust that has run its own Board Shadowing Scheme for several years with multiple cohorts. Full Board approval was required in order to implement the Board Shadowing Scheme. Future versions of the Board Shadowing Scheme may wish to consider replacing the one to ones between the Shadowing Trustees and the Director with one to ones with the Trustee lead. The Director estimates that the Board Shadowing Scheme required circa 0.5 to 0.75 days of her time per month for the six-month period and this was mainly made up of the meetings and associated write ups, as well as responding to emails, adapting the Board Shadowing Scheme based on feedback received, and supporting with the implementation of different matters raised in meetings.
- *Building equitable connections:* More attention needs to be given to how we can ensure the cohort of Shadowing Trustees connect more as a group and how they connect with the organisation’s Trustees more equitably. On the latter, it was noted that Shadowing

Trustees disclosed their lived experience of poverty, but that any equivalent lived experience was not disclosed or shared by Trustees. There was also consideration of whether more could be done to involve Shadowing Trustees in discussions, although it is worth noting that Trustees felt that this was a weakness in a way that Shadowing Trustees did not. Shadowing Trustees felt that they were engaged in discussions and able to participate. Alongside this, there would be benefits to preparing Trustees for what to expect with the arrival of Shadowing Trustees. Whilst the Board approved the Board Shadowing Scheme unanimously and were kept updated on the recruitment process and had a meeting to discuss the implementation of the Scheme before Shadowing Trustees joined in May, there could have been more done to consider how Trustees engaged with Shadowing Trustees more fully, including more dialogue with each other both in and outside of Board meetings.

- *Access and inclusion:* Shadowing Trustees were able to connect with and process our Board and Committee papers very effectively, with positive feedback on the quality of the information received. However, it was noted that the approach is oriented to the written word and the papers are lengthy. Consequently, from an access and inclusion perspective, John Ellerman Foundation may need to consider different formats and ways of conveying information that enable Shadowing Trustees that have less familiarity with large written packs of material to engage with John Ellerman Foundation's governance processes. The timings of the meetings all taking place in daytime working hours could also act as a barrier to some individuals being able to fulfil the Shadowing Trustee role.
- *Terminology and numbers:* One Trustee raised whether having three Shadowing Trustees in one cohort was too many and whether Shadowing Trustee was the right term. John Ellerman Foundation designed the Board Shadowing Scheme to have up to three individuals join the Board, and for future rounds the numbers recruited to will need to be considered in terms of resource availability for the six month period and whether it is felt that having fewer Shadowing Trustees may support with some of the issues identified above (namely in terms of 'Trustees leading the work' and 'Building equitable connections'.) As to the term Shadowing Trustee, this has been adopted from The Smallwood Trust who use the same term and no alternative has been proffered in the feedback received. Future rounds of the Board Shadowing Scheme may wish to consider this point in more detail. However, it is worth noting that as part of our desire to use the Board Shadowing Scheme to support with the following outcome: *'Support the diversification of Trustee boards within charities, especially the trust and foundations sector – with statistical data from the Association of Charitable Foundations, Reach Volunteering, Getting On Board, Young Trustees Movement and Action for Trustee Racial Diversity showing a lack of diversity on charity Boards'*, then John Ellerman Foundation may wish to reach out to the organisations listed for their advice on an alternative name. However, John Ellerman Foundation may wish to retain the name in order to stay aligned with terminology already in use and to consider the wider cohort of Shadowing Trustees that is building across the sector.

This report and its findings are hoped to be of use both to John Ellerman Foundation and other charities considering their own Board Shadowing Schemes. It is noteworthy that during this six month period NCVO (National Council of Voluntary Organisations) ran a training on governance for Trustees, Shadowing Trustees and staff, after which it provided the following comment on the Board Shadowing Scheme:

"Common risks associated with shadow Trustee schemes is that they can be tokenistic and result in shadow Trustees assuming Trustee responsibilities by default. Based on our engagement, we do not see evidence of these issues, and John Ellerman Foundation should be commended for the thought it has put into developing the scheme, treating shadowing

Trustees with respect and recruiting engaged individuals. Still, these risks should be kept in mind and regularly assessed to avoid the scheme developing in unintended ways.”

There is much to be heartened by in this report, but there is still much to do in order to build governance structures at John Ellerman Foundation (and the wider sector) that are as transparent, effective and accountable as they can be.