

Follow Anne Frank's example and help change lives

20 January 2012

What beckons for the property world in 2012? In a nutshell and notwithstanding London, plenty of pain and opportunity, resulting in a rebasing of values.

On that topic, I want to talk about a very different set of values: how we see ourselves, how we see and treat others, our attitude to life and our fellow human beings — the core values by which we, our families and our friends, all lead our lives.

The Anne Frank Trust is a charity that exists to challenge all forms of mindless behaviour, prejudice and discrimination, and to promote positive attitudes, respect for others and responsibility.

You only need look at the news over the last few weeks to know how important the issues we address are: Louis Suarez, Diane Abbott's tweet, Anuj Bidve — the student shot in Salford — and Stephen Lawrence, whose story has had its own panel in one of our travelling exhibitions.

The trust works throughout the UK and Ireland, and the issues we tackle are relevant to everyone, regardless of race, gender, religion, wealth or age.

In 2011 we worked with more than 70,000 young people and our activities are focused in areas of social deprivation and communal divisions. We work with schools, colleges and communities, and throughout the criminal justice sector.

We change attitudes by raising awareness among young people of prejudice, its dangers and how to challenge it; provide volunteering opportunities, which increases self-esteem and develops young people's social, communication and confidence skills; promote social action by encouraging young people to be more active within their communities and instil hope in the face of adversity.

So why the Anne Frank Trust, and not just the Anti-Prejudice Trust or Self-Development Trust?

Anne Frank is one of the most recognised names in the world. Her diary has been translated into more than 70 languages and is understood to be the most-read non-religious book in the world. In 2009 Daily Mirror readers voted her the most influential and inspirational woman of the past 100 years. Mandela, Clinton and JFK are among those who have quoted Anne Frank as being an influence on their lives.

Furthermore, Anne Frank's name and insights on humanity in the face of adversity are inspirational, emotive, timeless and agenda-less. She also speaks to the young at an age when they are most open to having their beliefs and opinions explored and questioned. In the brand and celebrity culture in which we — and particularly our youth — now live, Anne Frank has huge potential as a catalyst to bring about meaningful long-term shifts in attitude.

Harnessing hopes and dreams

The concerns, hopes, values and dreams the Anne Frank Trust addresses we all hold close to our

hearts in some way, shape or form. The trust is uniquely positioned to garner, harness and unite the energy that exists for change in society, and convert it into results. The more people that pin their flag to the trust, the greater the impact we can have.

We are already delivering the results, but what we actually do in Anne Frank's name is still relatively unknown. The more synonymous the name becomes with our aims, the greater funding we will achieve, allowing us to replicate and evolve further projects. By bringing these issues into people's consciousness and then choosing to take action, things will improve.

The more action more people take, the quicker we will get there. It really is as simple as that.

So I would like to thank these property people for whose significant support we are truly grateful: the William Pears Group, Vincent Tchenguiz, Consensus Business Group, Kevin McGrath, the McGrath Charitable Trust, Bim Sandhu, the Santon Group, Sandhu Charitable Foundation and Steven Norris.

And if our work resonates with you in some way, how can you do your bit, however large or small, to make a difference?

On a corporate level when working in particular communities or locations, align your values with the trust's and sponsor one of our projects within that community — mitigate the possibility of being seen solely as a profit-driven company. Be a catalyst for social, as well as physical, change.

Take a table at our lunch, mentioned below. We can also address CSR (corporate social responsibility) objectives.

And as individuals, let me know if you want to see our work in schools or a prison. Join our database or a committee for future events. Read the diary of Anne Frank or get your children to and discuss the feelings it brings up with them — there can be no better investment of your time. Make a donation or buy a ticket to our annual lunch, which takes place this Thursday 26 January at the Park Lane Hilton.

If you are interested in attending the lunch, engaging with our work or have any bright ideas you would like to share, please contact me on my email address below. Thank you and I wish you all a very happy and value-filled 2012.

For more information, visit annefrank.org.uk

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