



## THE REGIONAL ORGANISER ROLE

# ELEANOR'S PERSPECTIVE

I TOOK OVER THE ROLE OF RO FOR THE SOUTHERN REGION MORE THAN THREE YEARS AGO, AND, LIKE JUDITH, I DIDN'T QUITE KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT DESPITE SOME CONVERSATIONS WITH MY PREDECESSOR DANIELLE.

All ROs are volunteers, so it's not as though we have a strict job description, just a list of possible ideas to which we can refer. However, one thing seems obvious: we need to look after the needs of BS members in our region. It sounds easy, but the geographical spread can be very large. In fact I am only rarely contacted by members. Most are content to use the magazine and the members' area of the website to keep a check on what is going on.

I was already heavily involved in co-hosting two fairly large support groups when I took over, and I have subsequently added a third. This leaves me less time than I'd like to keep on top of BS business, so I do apologise to my regional members if I seem at all negligent. The plus side, though, is that I can meet up to a hundred trans people, partners and friends each month, some of them members. I feel privileged that so many people have told me their personal stories, and this has helped a great deal when it comes to offering help to people who phone or email me seeking reassurance with their gender variance. What I would suggest to southern region members is that if they have ideas for how I could better support them, then they email me or contact me via

the online system in the BS website. Please remember, though, that I am a volunteer and need to fit everything into an already busy schedule.

**I WAS ALREADY HEAVILY INVOLVED IN CO-HOSTING TWO FAIRLY LARGE SUPPORT GROUPS WHEN I TOOK OVER, AND I HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY ADDED A THIRD.**

Another aspect that I have come to enjoy is the awareness raising that I have been asked to lead on occasions. I've made contact with several charities and support organisations, and I have been involved in several training sessions, including an armed forces welfare charity. I've given talks in several universities in my region, both to students and as part of staff development programmes. It's been a fantastic experience for me to meet and talk to senior staff at universities and hopefully

have some influence on the future course of transgender rights. After all, today's students are the leaders of tomorrow!

What I would like to emphasise is how well the BS is still regarded across the support network. We do a different job to organisations such as Stonewall or GIRES, and our presence is needed for people who may be very lonely and at their wit's end. The BS still seems to have a 'Twinsset and Pearls' image, very unfairly in my view. We do great work on a range of fronts and would leave a gaping hole if we didn't exist. Anyway, I never wear a twinset and I don't own a set of pearls! I wear fashionable, up-to-date clothes, as do most BS members. One of the senior diversity staff members at Reading University tells me that I'm a real role model, but I suspect she's teasing me.

Judith and I would both urge members in regions that currently lack an RO to consider taking the role on. You really won't regret it, and you can adapt the tasks to suit the time that you have available. The position is a very rewarding one, and the support from the other ROs is very good. ■