

## **The contribution of leadership in small and medium charities: navigating change and transition**

**Supervisors:** [James Rees](#), Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership ([CVSL](#)), [Carol Jacklin-Jarvis](#), [Nik Winchester](#), Department for Public Leadership and Social Enterprise ([PuLSE](#))

Small and medium charities in the UK face major challenges as they move on from an initial growth and development phase to become 'mature', but we know little about the types of leadership required to steer them towards long term sustainability (Hodges and Howieson, 2017). The project aims to extend and deepen our knowledge of the types of leadership that might contribute to the sustainability of small and medium charities as they grow over time and undergo transitions through their organizational life-cycle. It will contribute to the discussion concerning a framework for leadership in the UK voluntary sector that has begun in the academic literature (Terry, Rees and Jacklin-Jarvis, 2018). Ideally taking a collaborative and action based approach it will also make a meaningful contribution to leadership practice in small and medium sized UK charities.

The project will contribute to recent debates in voluntary sector studies as well as in public administration/management about the role of third sector organisations in society, and the role of management and leadership in organisational strategy and development. It will examine the experience of small and medium sized charities through a critical leadership theory lens; exploring the relevance of traditional leadership theories as well as emerging forms of collective leadership theory to this under-researched subset of the UK third sector. It offers an opportunity to work with Open University scholars who have been developing collaborative and collective approaches to understanding leadership in civil society (Carroll and Smolovic-Jones, 2018; Jacklin-Jarvis, 2015).

The project will involve grounded, primarily qualitative, research with small and medium charities in the UK, for instance taking a case study approach and potentially adopting semi-longitudinal methods. Detailed research methods might include semi-structured interviews, observation and narrative testimonies, with a focus on 'strategic moments' in organisational life. It would be advantageous for the candidate to have existing knowledge of the UK voluntary sector and ideally to have developed practice knowledge and existing links with small and medium charities, or umbrella or representative organisations.

### **About the supervisors:**

The successful applicant's research will build on the work of scholars in the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership (CVSL) – particularly on the theme of collective leadership through engaged scholarship – and you will be expected to be an active member of the Centre. James has led numerous projects on public service delivery by the third sector, including a NIHR project on mental health, and an Erasmus+ project on entrepreneurial leadership in the European third sector ([euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/eu3leader/](http://euclidnetwork.eu/portfolio-posts/eu3leader/)). Carol and James were involved in the

recent LBFEW 'value of small' research and numerous projects on collaborative and collective leadership in the voluntary sector. Finally, Nik is an authority on the relationship between ethics and leadership, as well as leadership theory more broadly, and contributed to the CVSL course on collaborative leadership.

### **References and further reading:**

- Carroll, B. and Smolovic-Jones, O. (2018) *Mapping the aesthetics of leadership development through participant processes*, *Management Learning*, 49(2) pp. 187-203
- Hodges and Howieson (2017) *The challenges of leadership in the third sector*, *European Management Journal* 35 (2017) 69-77
- Jacklin-Jarvis, C. (2015) Collaborating across sector boundaries: a story of tensions and dilemmas. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 6 (3) 285-302
- Macmillan, R. and McLaren, V. (2012) *Voluntary sector leadership: the power of narrative*. TSRC Working paper 76, Birmingham: Voluntary sector Research Centre, University of Birmingham.
- Terry V, Rees J and Jacklin Jarvis C (2017) OU Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership, Briefing papers 1,2 and 3- <http://www.open.ac.uk/business-school-research/centre-voluntary-sector-leadership/resources>