

## **Collaborative leadership for voluntary organisations**

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### **Project description:**

Small and medium sized voluntary organisations frequently appear dependent on a single leader, an individual, sometimes the founder, with a commitment to the values and cause of the organisation, which extends far beyond the expectations of a regular job. The limitations of this heroic leadership model have long been recognised in the leadership literature, and are highlighted by high profile cases of personal and organisational failure. However, there may be a sense in which the mission, and cause of many voluntary organisations call forth hero figures, even while the values of those same organisations advocate an inclusive and collaborative approach to practice. In addition, the resource base of smaller voluntary organisations may reinforce dependency on key individuals.

In recent years, models of collaborative leadership have emerged in the academic literature – models that highlight the relational element of leadership; the dispersed nature of leadership enactment; and the challenges and dilemmas of leading collaboratively across organisational and team boundaries. These models appear particularly pertinent to voluntary sector values, but also to the challenges of leading in a context of uncertainty and austerity, in which collaboration is perceived as a way of maximising resources to tackle complex social problems. How do small and medium sized voluntary organisations implement more collaborative leadership models within and beyond the organisation, which affirm their value base, achieve their social mission, and achieve greater sustainability for organisations and individuals alike?

The PhD studentship will focus on the application of these collaborative leadership models in voluntary organisations. They will engage with the literature of collaborative leadership and the wider collaboration literature, as well as engaging with the voluntary sector literature. The student will have the opportunity to link with the work of the Centre for Voluntary Sector Leadership to research leadership in the sector and to offer learning resources. The research will adopt qualitative methods: these may include case studies, ethnography, action research, and interviews.

### **Reading:**

- Agranoff, R. (2006) 'Inside collaborative networks: ten lessons for public managers', *Public Administration Review*, vol.Special Issue, 56-65.
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- Crosby, B. C. & Bryson, J. M. (2005) 'A leadership framework for cross-sector collaboration', *Public Management Review*, vol.7, no.2 pp.177-201.
- Huxham, C. & Vangen, S. (2000) 'Leadership in the shaping and implementation of collaboration agendas: how things happen in a (not quite) joined-up world', *Academy of Management Journal*, vol.43, no.6 pp.1159-75.

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- Milbourne, L. (2013) *Voluntary sector in transition: hard times or new opportunities?* Bristol, Policy Press.
- Ospina, S. & Foldy, E. (2010) 'Building bridges from the margins: the work of leadership in social change organizations', *Leadership Quarterly*, vol.21, no.2 pp.292-307.
- Uhl-Bien, M. (2006) 'Relational leadership theory: exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing', *Leadership Quarterly*, vol.17, no.6 pp.654-676.
- Rochester, Colin (2013) *Rediscovering voluntary action: the beat of a different drum*. Basingstoke, Palgrave.
- Vangen, S. & Huxham, C. (2003a) 'Enacting leadership for collaborative advantage: dilemmas of ideology and pragmatism in the activities of partnership managers', *British Journal of Management*, vol.14, S61-S76.