

Building the road as we walk – How the research was conducted

Overview of the research

Our research focused primarily on the lived experience of leaders in the charity sector. We also drew on the experience and insights of colleagues who worked closely with charity leaders. We gathered the input via a series of interviews, round table discussions, and surveys. In each case, we used the same guiding questions about leading in uncertainty:

1. **The person of the leader.** What helps you on an individual level to lead in uncertainty?
2. **Leading the organisation.** What in the recent past has helped you as a leader respond to dilemmas and tackle strategic choices that your organisation faced during disruption, change and uncertainty?
3. **Leading stakeholders.** What helps you help stakeholders to thrive in and through uncertain times?

Who we gathered information from

We gathered information from some 60 leaders in total. We held round table discussions between (N=20) current leaders and consultants with deep expertise and direct experience of leadership in the charity sector. We conducted individual interviews with leaders (N=30), currently in senior leadership position in a variety of UK organisations. We also invited current leaders to respond to an online survey (N=10). We also invited commentary and discussion on LinkedIn about the key topics of the research.

How we built the online resource

We took a qualitative subjectivist (grounded theory) approach to analysing the data we gathered from participants. We integrated the practical insights gleaned from a two-stage thematic analysis, with evidence from the literature, to create an online resource with a menu of ideas, articles, and a variety of practical tools and techniques.

- **Step 1. Mapping.** First, we identified and categorised the living, real life themes associated with leading in uncertainty staying close to the comments and language of participants.
- **Step 2. Summarising.** Second, we developed a more focused thematic interpretation, based on objectivist approaches and empirical studies from the literature to allow for comparison across the data.
- **Step 3. Creating the resource.** The third step was to integrate a summary of the practical insights, and suggestions about leading in uncertainty with several evidence-based thought pieces and practical techniques to create this Building the Road as we Walk resource.

We hope that any future iteration of this knowledge exchange project, might take the form of action research with leaders in the sector, to discover what elements of this online resource they found most useful and to further refine and build on this first iteration.