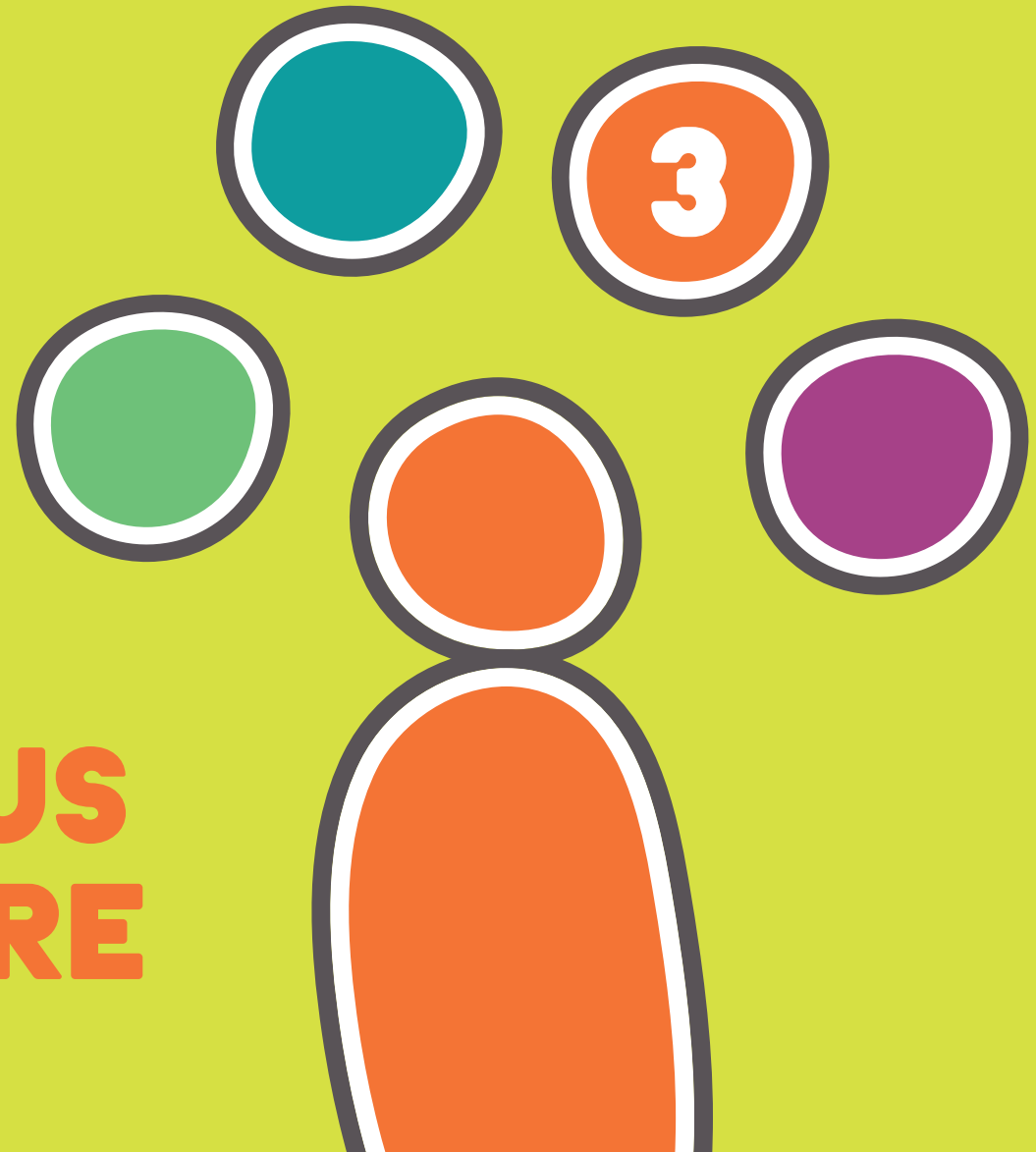


LASTING LEADERSHIP

GUIDE TO...

SUSTAINING
ENERGY, FOCUS
AND SELF-CARE



Sustainable leadership in
non-profit organisations

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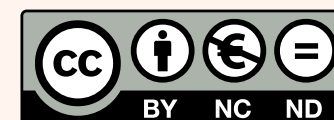
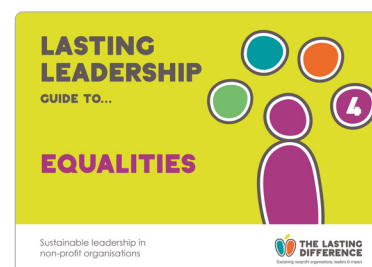
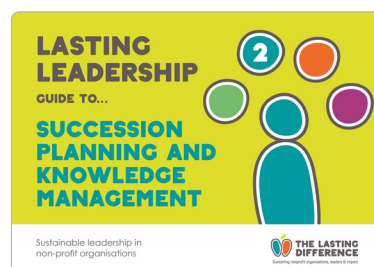
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OTHER GUIDES IN THIS SERIES:

There are four key capabilities of sustainable leadership. Each has its own Lasting Leadership guide.



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Email: jen@thelastingdifference.com

THE SUN



**THE SUN IS OUR SOURCE OF
ENERGY, PASSION, INSPIRATION**



**IT FUELS GROWTH AND
LIGHTS OUR WORLD**



BUT IT BURNS US TOO

THE MOON



**AS THE SUN SETS, COOL
DARKNESS REVEALS THE MOON**



**IT'S ALWAYS THERE, BUT DIMMED
IN THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE SUN**



**THE MOON BRINGS REST
AND REPLENISHMENT**

THE STARS



**THE DARKER THE NIGHT,
THE CLEARER THE STARS**



**SLOW AND CONSTANT,
STARS HELP US NAVIGATE**



**LARGE BUT DISTANT, THEIR LIGHT
TAKES TIME TO REACH US**

ACTIVITY

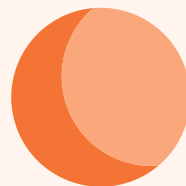


THE SUN

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?

**WHERE DOES YOUR ENERGY
COME FROM?**

**HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOURSELF
FROM BURNING OUT?**



THE MOON

HOW DO YOU RECHARGE?

**WHO OR WHAT IS IN
YOUR ORBIT?**



THE STARS

WHAT STARS DO YOU NAVIGATE BY?

**ARE THEY CLEAR AND BRIGHT
ENOUGH TO GUIDE YOU?**

**DO THEY STILL SHINE, OR ARE
THEY JUST A MEMORY?**

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FIVE WORD STRESSECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Sustainable leadership prioritises self-care.

50 WORD EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Organisations that care for people, society and the environment don't always care for themselves. Be a role model for self-care, showing that it's essential, not a luxury. Arrange, protect and invest time in planning, development and learning. Create opportunities to focus on your vision and purpose.

FOREWORD

There is no organisational sustainability without sustainable leadership.

During 2019 we undertook research to better understand sustainable leadership. This included a global literature review; focus groups with over 70 non-profit leaders; learning sets; workshops; and conference inputs.

We launched the Lasting Leadership guide in 2020. This new, updated suite of guides builds on recent learning to help organisational leaders explore, assess and prioritise sustainable leadership. We hope this guide contributes to further conversations about this vital but little-understood topic.



**LEADERSHIP
SUSTAINABILITY IS
THE NUMBER ONE
CHALLENGE FACING
NON-PROFIT
ORGANISATIONS
AND THE SECTOR**



Jen Curran, Director of Leadership,
The Lasting Difference

THANK YOU

To everyone who has commissioned or contributed to our focus groups, workshops, e-learning courses and action learning programmes since 2019.

PART ONE:

BACKGROUND AND CHALLENGES

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If you have already read one of the other Lasting Leadership guides, **skip to page 12.**



BACKGROUND

There is a wealth of information on leadership styles, models and approaches – but far less exists on the topic of leadership *sustainability*.

Sustainable leadership, like organisational sustainability, is challenging and complex. It requires organisations and their leaders to respond to the technical and adaptive¹ challenges of complex, evolving environments. Complexity requires leaders to be comfortable with uncertainty, open to challenging the status quo and facilitating leadership across their organisations. These ideas are easy to grasp but at an organisational level they are harder to translate. And at an individual level, they are extremely challenging. They contradict the ways we have been brought up to think about organisation, control and influence – assumptions that run very deep in our society and organisational systems. This can be anxiety-provoking for everyone involved: it takes trust to promote ownership, participation, agency and self-direction.

Our approach to sustainable leadership is therefore rooted in systems thinking. It is informed by complexity theory, design thinking and sustainability principles from *The Lasting Difference* toolkit, which defines sustainability as *the capacity to make a lasting difference*.²

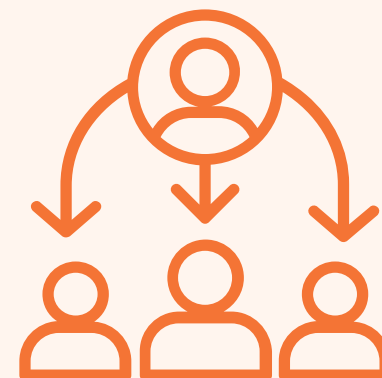
Sustainable leadership requires:

- **PROVIDING COORDINATION, NOT CONTROL**
- **GIVING INFORMATION, NOT INSTRUCTION**
- **OFFERING CHALLENGES, NOT CERTAINTY**
- **SEEKING COMMITMENT, NOT CONFORMITY**

DEFINITION:

We define sustainable leadership as:

**DEVELOPING CAPACITY
TO ENABLE LEADERS
TO EMERGE, EVOLVE
AND EXCEL**



¹ The Practice of Adaptive Leadership, Ronald Heifetz

² The Lasting Difference: tools for organisational sustainability, www.thelastingdifference.com

CHALLENGES AND PARADOXES

Our *Lasting Difference* research and consultancy with hundreds of organisations since 2013 reveals common sustainable leadership challenges, paradoxes and principles.

THE TIME CHALLENGE

Time is our most precious resource, but we don't protect or use it well

THE LEADERSHIP MYTH

The exhilarating side of leadership gets fetishised – the exhausting reality gets ignored

THE CARE PARADOX

Organisations that care for people, society and the environment don't always care for themselves

THE CONTROL PARADOX

The more that managers try to control, the more resistance they encounter

THE TRUST PARADOX

Delegation requires trust, but without delegation, trust won't exist

THE EQUALITY PARADOX

Organisations that promote social justice and equality don't always embody those values in their approach to leadership

Our Lasting Leadership elearning course is an excellent way to explore these ideas in more detail. 93% of previous participants said it changed their leadership practice.

Visit TheLastingDifference.com for more details.

PRINCIPLES

Sustainable leadership:

1. Requires time and space for development, planning, sharing knowledge and learning.
2. Connects with vision and purpose: focusing on why, not what or how.
3. Prioritises self-care as an essential part of the job – not a perk or a luxury.
4. Devolves authority and shares power. Sustainable leaders trust themselves to let go.
5. Builds capacity. Sustainable teams trust that leaders support their efforts and decisions.
6. Requires equality and diversity, committing to inclusion. It reflects our society and challenges stereotypes of what a good leader looks like.

IN THIS GUIDE:

SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP:

REQUIRES TIME



**CONNECTS WITH
VISION AND PURPOSE**



**PRIORITISES
SELF-CARE**



**DEVOLVES AUTHORITY
AND SHARES POWER**



BUILDS CAPACITY



**REQUIRES EQUALITY
AND DIVERSITY**



INTRODUCTION

There's a prevailing narrative that the non-profit sector is well-meaning, underpaid and overworked. Of course, balancing demand and resources is the key survival challenge for every organisation. But this is only part of the story.

The sector is a uniquely innovative, professional and rewarding place to work, full of great employers, and the most highly qualified staff of any sector.³ To sustain it into the future, we need to attract a new and more diverse generation of leaders. That means changing the narrative and attracting people who are inspired by the possibilities of making a difference. At the same time, if we want to sustain the leaders we have, we need to look after ourselves and our organisations better than we do now.

The purpose of this guide is to legitimise self-care as a core part of leadership and organisational sustainability. It is not a luxury. It is not an optional extra. It is the foundation of safe, quality practice. This guide aims to increase support for and investment in individual and organisational wellbeing.

There is no one-size-fits-all. Self-care will mean different things to different people. The real life quotes throughout this guide show what it means to some. The guide aims to help you work out what works best for you and your team and keep individual and organisational needs in balance.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE IS TO LEGITIMISE SELF-CARE AS A CORE PART OF LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY



³ <https://publications.ncvo.org.uk/planning-for-tomorrows-workforce/voluntary-sector-highly-qualified-and-experienced/>

THE CHALLENGE

Unrealistic funding and management practices put unsustainable pressures on leaders and organisations. Too many funders treat management support, training, appraisal and development like undesirable overheads, not core activities. Too many people put unsustainable pressure on themselves to deliver, working unpaid overtime, not taking holidays, neglecting personal and organisational development.

Chief Executives regularly work 10 unpaid hours each week (three months' unpaid work per year).⁴ They are not the only ones. Most people who work in the sector are driven by a passion to make a difference. They live and breathe their work. This drives them to do the best they can, which they often think means doing the *most* they can. This might make them seem heroic for a time, but in the long run it leads to exhaustion and affects wellbeing. The pandemic has intensified the problem.⁵ Working in crisis management mode has led to burnout. 44% of leaders are considering walking away as a result of these increased pressures.⁶ Key people and knowledge are leaving the sector, while at the same time it is getting harder to recruit new staff and volunteers.

Self-care, thinking space and professional development are key to sustaining leadership capacity. Sustainable leaders look after themselves and the people around them. Put simply, if people don't take care of themselves – and encourage their teams to do the same – they cannot do their best work for the people, communities and issues they serve.

People already know and can probably create the conditions for doing their best work. But first they must break the cycle and rules they create for themselves. They have to manage their organisations and their own focus. This guide addresses each in turn.

**UNREALISTIC
FUNDING AND
MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES
PUT UNSUSTAINABLE
PRESSURES ON LEADERS
AND ORGANISATIONS**



⁴ <https://www.charitytimes.com/ct/charity-ceos-overworked-acevo-survey-finds.php>

⁵ <https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/charity-sector-facing-leadership-exodus/management/article/1723119>

⁶ <https://www.ecclesiastical.com/media-centre/charity-leaders-consider-quitting/>

PART TWO:

ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

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3. LET YOUR YES BE YES AND YOUR NO BE NO	18
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INTRODUCTION

“I can’t keep doing this, working at this pace.
It’s like a sprint – but all the time.”

The pandemic led to many positive changes in the way organisations worked. Charities reviewed their purpose and missions and proved their ability to make large scale changes overnight. New working patterns were introduced and more time was spent on team communication. Colleagues recognised each other as whole people, with lives, families, pets, interests and commitments outside work. New leaders emerged, making decisions and taking responsibility for doing what needed to be done.

At the same time, the crisis created many new challenges. New ways of working created new expectations of what (and how much) was possible. Working from home became living at work. Some boards stepped in to lend a hand (and will need to step back again longer term); some stepped up, giving their teams the space and trust they needed; others stepped away, overwhelmed by the challenge or unsure of how to help.

Just like people, organisations can adopt short-term emergency responses to traumatic situations. Long-term resilience can come from these responses. But they can also become exhausting, counterproductive long-term behaviours. Transitioning out of crisis responses, requires an organisational approach to energy, focus and self-care. Self-care should not be seen solely as an individual responsibility.

This section of the guide encourages you to:

1. **SUPPORT GOOD GOVERNANCE**
2. **MANAGE CAPACITY**
3. **LET YOUR YES BE YES AND YOUR NO BE NO**
4. **VALUE LEADERSHIP**



PROVOCATIONS:

- **BUSYNESS IS NOT PROGRESS.**
- **MAYBE YOUR ORGANISATION IS DOING GOOD, BUT IS IT DOING WELL?**
- **WHERE DO PEOPLE STOP AND WHERE DOES THE ORGANISATION BEGIN?**
- **HOW LONG CAN EXTRA EFFORT BE SUSTAINED BEFORE THINGS BREAK DOWN?**

1. SUPPORT GOOD GOVERNANCE

A trustee's role is to act in the organisation's best interest and safeguard its future. This means attending to capacity, the quality of its work and the wellbeing of its people. Looking after a charity well is an underrated skill. Governing a charity with people you don't know well, and who might even irritate you, is harder still!

Board members need to invest time in getting to know one another and how best to function together. Likewise, trustees must remember they are part of a team with the charity's managers, working towards shared goals. They have a scrutiny role to perform (looking in, down and back at the shadow cast by the sun), but this must be balanced with their strategy role (looking up, out and ahead at the stars). Relationships break down when the focus is imbalanced – or when trustees move from what they should be doing (governing) to what they shouldn't (managing).

Under-resourced leaders are propping up organisations across the sector. Looking after them is a critical governance responsibility and a requirement of fair working principles.⁷ Managers don't commonly want to show vulnerabilities to, or ask for support from, the people they report to, so boards must be proactive in supporting care and self-care.

⁷ 'Fair work is work that offers all individuals an effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect.'
<https://www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework/>

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Agreeing and monitoring the balance of time given to strategy and scrutiny respectively.
- Connecting with the organisation's purpose by sharing case studies and hearing from staff or beneficiaries in board meetings.
- Celebrating success.

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Away days: taking time out, alone or with managers, to build relationships, strategise, and review organisational and governance effectiveness.
- Allocating board-only time in meetings, to agree a collective approach to issues.
- Giving clear, consistent reinforcement of clear, consistent messages about protecting capacity and wellbeing.

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

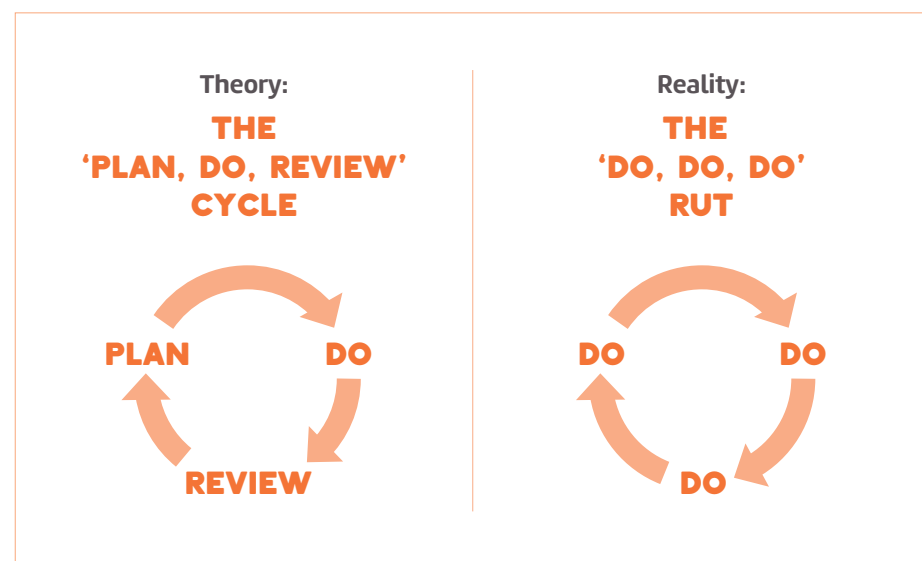
- Ensuring there is clarity of purpose and a well-defined strategy that aligns the organisation's resources towards its mission.
- Defining reach. Your organisation cannot fulfil all of the unmet need out there – agree how much is enough.
- Trustees asking what the charity and its managers need from them.

2. MANAGE CAPACITY

“I’m running to stay still.”

Managing energy requires honesty with yourself and your managers, colleagues, trustees, funders and beneficiaries about workload and capacity. To do this, you need to be able to evidence the true costs of your work, and the impacts of the capacity issue. This cannot be done if organisations are used to masking the problem (e.g. by agreeing funding that doesn’t cover full costs; using waiting lists; regularly working beyond contracted hours).

If managers want to encourage healthy working patterns, they must be role models for working healthily. Words are not enough. People’s commitment leads them to work longer or harder, and to feel guilty about anything that’s not action focused. The ‘plan, do, review’ cycle becomes ‘do, do, do’, as planning, evaluation, development and wellbeing get pushed to the side. Rather than learning, the same things are done over again. People burn out and organisations lose relevance because they can’t keep up with their changing environments.



SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Agreeing and managing the balance between delivery and development.
- Harnessing motivation by agreeing individual or team development goals and protecting time to achieve them.
- Identifying the capacity available to the organisation, relative to what it is trying to achieve. You don’t know how much is enough until you know what you need it for. (The **Lasting Difference Guide to Capacity** will help).

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Raising the profile of self-care, legitimising it as part of Fair Work principles and practising what you preach.
- Supporting reflective practice and evaluation as enjoyable, energising ways to improve effectiveness, not distractions from ‘the real work’.
- Promoting and embedding healthy working practices e.g. via
 - flexible working; opportunities for physical activity (walking meetings, gym memberships, active travel, healthy working schemes etc.)
 - supporting mental wellbeing (mental health awareness training, employee assistance programmes etc.)

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Revisiting your organisational purpose: remembering the ‘why’ helps to re-energise the ‘what’.
- Taking time for regular planning and review. Stepping back from delivery to reflect, learn and refocus.
- Reviewing and rationalising your organisational priorities. Identifying the main things you need to focus on to stop people being overwhelmed.

3. LET YOUR YES BE YES AND YOUR NO BE NO

“We need to be able to say no – as organisations and for ourselves. We have a responsibility not to just keep sucking it up.”

In a sector that exists to help, saying ‘no’ seems taboo. So, without knowing it, people say ‘yes’ to being available 24 hours a day, to stress, resenting work, and being impacted by other people’s decisions. In fact, organisations experience sustainability problems *because* they say ‘yes’ too much, not in spite of it.

Every organisation would love to be able to distinguish between the ideas, funding, partnerships, referrals and opportunities that are worth pursuing, and the ones that should be left alone. It’s not easy, but you already have good instincts about which approaches will work, what kinds of partners are more valuable than others, and so on. Acting on these instincts is critical to organisational survival – and to team wellbeing. Think of it in terms of opportunity costs: by saying yes to something (like funding or referrals), what are you saying no to (like manageable workloads)? Frame it positively by realising it’s about saying yes to organisational purpose, focus, capacity, quality, wellbeing, effectiveness and reputation. Who would say no to that?

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Supporting people to talk about capacity; practising saying ‘no’ and benefiting from the power of saying ‘yes’ to the right things.
- Managing workloads (and cognitive load) by agreeing how internal requests within your organisation are handled.
- Providing separate equipment for work (phone, laptop etc.), not expecting or allowing personal equipment – or personal time – to be used.

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Supporting people to manage their energy, not their time. If this means unusual or flexible working patterns, fine. Remember equalities and care for the whole team – ensure part time and sessional staff don’t miss out on communications and development opportunities.
- Developing organisational self-care opportunities: structured breaks, team building, etc.
- Looking out for, then responding to, early signs of people being anxious, stressed or overwhelmed.

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Using strategic priorities to assess new ideas, opportunities and requests. Using an idea screening process to help make decisions with your head, not just your heart.
- Creating chances for people to lift their heads from the everyday and get energised about the future.
- Making room for renewal by letting things go when they have served their purpose.

4. VALUE LEADERSHIP

Values and purpose stand the test of time, providing an anchor in times of uncertainty. When used well, they define success, set standards to follow and identify the behaviours that are welcomed in the organisation – and those that are not.

It is important that statements on a page are reflected in everyday reality. Your organisation demonstrates what it values and the kinds of behaviour it rewards in the actions it takes, not in the words it uses (rewards in this case are things like time, attention and resources).

Managers who want staff to take more responsibility often perpetuate disempowerment by, for example, being open to every request; answering questions rather than encouraging solutions; monitoring every detail; and questioning decisions. No-one enjoys or benefits from the vicious circle of micro-management that this creates. Managers have a particular responsibility to break the cycle by following through on messages like 'I trust you', 'You don't need to ask me this' and 'It's better to ask forgiveness than permission'.

There are radiators and drains in every organisation. Sometimes people generate energy, sometimes they sap it. Even one negative person can impact a whole team's effectiveness, because bad behaviour is more contagious than good. Similarly, as humans we tend to remember more of the insults we receive than the compliments. They don't have equal currency. Think about how much praise and encouragement is therefore needed in your organisation: what is the exchange rate between positive and negative feedback?

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Promoting lateral leadership in your organisation (taking responsibility regardless of position or authority); preparing answers to your 'frequently asked questions'; seeing people at a time of your choosing; always asking for solutions.
- Facilitating play and creativity, encouraging people to seek fresh ideas to organisational challenges, not more of the same.
- Increasing the flow of warmth to and from the radiators. Clearing the drains.

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Providing space for informal meet ups for people share their challenges, courage and care.
- Supporting networking and learning opportunities, where people can share openly without conforming to expectations and having their professional face on.
- Considering what gets rewarded in your organisation and how (consciously or unconsciously). Remember the currency and exchange rate of positive and negative feedback.

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

Involve people in:

- Reviewing values and collectively defining what these 'look like' in practice to shape the behaviours you want to encourage. Embedding your values in organisational conversations and processes e.g. using them to guide team development or in one-to-one appraisals and reviews.
- Re-connecting with the people and topics your organisation supports.

Download our other **Lasting Leadership guides** for more ideas.



SELF-ASSESSMENT: ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE

This section encourages you to reflect on the themes above and start planning to do something about them.

You can assign a score to each indicator, using this suggested scoring guide:

2 = We have good consistent evidence | 1 = Our evidence is mixed or patchy | 0 = We cannot evidence this

There is also space for you to make notes and comments, which can help you discuss things with colleagues or review progress over time. These notes will usually be more meaningful than just a score.

	SELF-CARE: ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICE	SCORE	YOUR NOTES
1	We have clarity of purpose. We identify our capacity, reach and resources and align these to our mission.		
2	Self-care is treated as a priority. Everyone in the organisation is actively supported to have a healthy work-life balance.		
3	Development needs are identified. Opportunities for learning are prioritised, protected and available equally to all.		
4	We take time for regular planning and review, balancing delivery with development and scrutiny with strategy.		
5	Our values and the behaviours they require are well defined and regularly reviewed.		
6	We are confident in what to say 'yes' and 'no' to, using strategic priorities to assess new ideas, opportunities and requests.		



SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP ACTION PLAN: ORGANISATIONAL

PRIORITY Or areas of development:	ORGANISATIONAL ACTION What does the organisation need to do?	INDIVIDUAL ACTION What do I need to do?	TIMESCALES When will it be done?	REVIEW When and how will progress be reviewed?

PART THREE:

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”

– Audre Lorde

Self-care looks different for different people. Individual approaches are needed alongside organisational ones. The first step is acceptance:

- **Of your right to be cared for** – individual wellbeing is a shared responsibility. Organisations have a duty of care.
- **Of your responsibilities for caring for yourself** – there are things that only you can do.
- **Of the things you need in order to do so** – learning and using what works for you.

Sensitivity is a strength. Other people don't always sense or understand how you feel, so it takes bravery to be open, particularly if you have particular leadership responsibilities. Frustratingly, the first signs of stress include withdrawal and finding fault in others, so gaps often open between people and make it harder to communicate just when it's most needed. Being kind to yourself and others can help to narrow the gap.

This section of the guide encourages you to:

1. **PRIORITISE SELF-CARE**
2. **INVEST TIME, DON'T SPEND IT**
3. **BE AUTHENTIC, FIND CONGRUENCE**
4. **KNOW YOURSELF**



PROVOCATIONS:

- **HOW DO YOU FOLLOW YOUR PASSION WITHOUT BURNING OUT?**
- **HOW WELL DO YOU REFLECT THE VALUES YOU WANT TO SEE IN YOUR ORGANISATION?**
- **WHAT DO YOU VALUE? WHAT IS YOUR OWN VALUE?**
- **HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE?**

1. PRIORITISE SELF-CARE

“Less time at work makes me more productive!”

The emotional connection to your work gives you energy, but it can also burn you out. For senior leaders, a lot is invested in their personal brand, as the public face of their organisations and its values. It's hard to project an image while protecting yourself too.

It's possible to have emotionally and intellectually demanding work without being run into the ground. The environment and systems you are part of influence your wellbeing and your capacity for self-care. But individual responsibility is also important, for example to spot the need for change before things reach crisis point.

Self-care is an altruistic necessity not a selfish act. Giving yourself permission to care for yourself helps others too. Seeking work-life congruence and balance gives colleagues a model for doing the same. Ceasing to internalise the pressure to do ever more work stops the busyness virus spreading.

If you are not ok, you can't live or work at your best. In the context of the work the sector does to protect people and the planet, self-care is a radical, political act.

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Taking time to celebrate your achievements and success. Choose to be present before jumping on to the next thing that needs to be done.
- Including the things that give you energy into your working day, not just the routine, energy-sapping tasks.
- Taking action on something that matters to you e.g. by caring for others, volunteering, protesting, blogging, creating.

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Working smarter not harder. Could working your contracted hours, compressed hours, flexible patterns or job sharing boost your effectiveness?
- Developing more interests outside of work. Apart from being healthy, there is good evidence that this increases creativity and productivity.
- Planning and taking the time off you're entitled to – it's too late when you're burnt out. When you are off, really be off (e.g. use acting-in-absence arrangements so you can switch off without worrying about work or checking emails).

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Starting each day by thinking about how you want to feel by the end of it, not what you want to have done.
- Connecting with trusted peers. You are not alone in the challenges you are facing. Join formal or informal networks for connecting with others for support and sharing ideas.
- Rationalising and focusing on your priorities. Not getting pulled in too many directions – or by too many people.

2. INVEST TIME, DON'T SPEND IT

“I want my time spent to be effective. It’s so frustrating when it doesn’t feel like progress is being made. I’m spending too much time thinking about things I don’t really need to think about.”

Time is your most precious resource, so be careful about how you use it. The variety and complexity of your work mean that no two days are the same. This keeps things interesting but ultimately dilutes focus, efforts and energy. When competing demands land on your desk, it’s easy to lose focus. The volume of work makes it hard to think clearly, until everything seems like a priority.

Respecting your time as a finite, valuable resource, helps you notice when you are wasting it or spending it. Choosing to invest it changes everything. Things come into perspective and priorities guide every decision. You get a return on the investment, with increased clarity, capacity, effectiveness and wellbeing.

⁸ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrum_\(software_development\)#Sprint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scrum_(software_development)#Sprint)

⁹ <https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Connecting and creativity, whatever they look like for you.
- Investing in your own development.
- Focusing on one individual task or project at a time. This might be a large investment, like a week-long sprint,⁸ or a short burst of just a few minutes, like the pomodoro technique.⁹

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Protecting time every day for yourself.
- Making conscious transitions between work and non-work roles.
- Incorporating wellbeing within everyday routines, like active travel, mindful activity, going for a walk when on the phone etc.

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Having clear individual goals for your day, week, month or year ahead.
- Giving priority in your calendars to the things that really are priorities. Blocking out time to focus on the work you want to do.
- Allocating a slot in your day for when you want to talk to others, respond to emails etc. so they aren’t constant interruptions.

3. BE AUTHENTIC, FIND CONGRUENCE

“I need to be me, not a shell.”

In a sector founded on passion and commitment, work-life congruence, where the work you do is consistent with your personal values and purpose, is more common than work-life balance. However, mission-driven people often expect to give more of themselves and suppress or sacrifice their own needs, thinking they are superheroes or saviours. Work-life congruence requires being clear on who you are as a professional and as a person.

Congruence means practising what you preach – think of the messages and techniques you use with other people and apply them to yourself. None of these things are easy to do alone, so seek support.

Whatever you do or achieve, there might come a point when you realise it's time to move on. You might have taken your organisation or role as far as you can, or you might not be the right person to take things on the next stage of their journey. You are no longer congruent. When this happens, plan and manage your exit, using succession planning to build the knowledge and capacity of the teams, systems and people around you. The **Lasting Leadership Succession planning guide** can help.

SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Finding your passion. Expressing yourself.
- Making decisions with your head and heart in balance.
- Shifting focus from what hasn't been done, to all the things that you have achieved.

MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Treating yourself the way you treat others.
- Sharing your knowledge and skills, helping others, helping out.
- Knowing when and how to switch off or recharge batteries in ways that work for you.

STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Setting realistic goals and making plans, allowing flexibility and be open to opportunities.
- Setting your own standards, not other people's, or feeling the pressure to have things solved by a certain age or time.
- Knowing when it's time to move on towards new horizons.

4. KNOW YOURSELF

“I don’t even know what normal looks like for me
– I don’t know how productive I am.”

Being authentic means being true to yourself, which rules out being all things to all people. It means having the self-awareness to balance the needs placed upon you with your personal needs and goals. Reflecting on what you truly want from life and work helps you find new ways of doing things. For instance, many people re-evaluated their priorities during the pandemic, maybe changing focus, managing time differently or doing away with inefficient routines and unnecessary travel.

Understanding your own motivations, assumptions and sources of influence helps bring others along with you. Becoming aware of your internal dialogue helps spot whether the expectations you place on yourself are helping or hindering your effectiveness. Knowing yourself means understanding where your energy comes from and how to use it to best effect. It means understanding how to apply your skills, knowledge, expertise and values to different situations. It means accepting your limits and addressing your limitations. Everyone has them. They define where you stop and other things begin.

- Where do you stop and where does your work begin?
- Where does your expertise stop and someone else’s begin?

The challenges leaders face are usually complex and rarely easily defined. There are no right answers just waiting to be found. You don’t need to know everything. You can’t have all the answers. Sometimes you even make mistakes. Starting off with the right questions is more valuable than having solutions to the wrong problems.



SUN ACTIVITIES: ENERGY

- Knowing your strengths and using them well.
- Knowing your limits – what you will and won’t accept, what you can or can’t do.
- Understanding that asking for help when you need it is a sign of strength and self-awareness.



MOON ACTIVITIES: REPLENISHMENT

- Attending to your health and wellbeing.
- Noticing how you talk to yourself. What are you saying?
- Listening to your body. What is it telling you?



STAR ACTIVITIES: NAVIGATION

- Setting goals and intentions, knowing what you want and where you’d like to be.
- Going outside your comfort zone, trying new things.
- Seeking inspiration, doing what’s good for your spirit or soul.



SELF-ASSESSMENT: INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE

This section encourages you to reflect on the themes above and start planning what you want to do about them. You can assign a score to each indicator, using this suggested scoring guide:

2 = I have good consistent evidence | 1 = My evidence is mixed or patchy | 0 = I cannot evidence this

There is also space for you to make notes and comments, which can help you discuss things with colleagues or review progress over time. These notes will usually be more meaningful than just a score.

	SELF-CARE: INDIVIDUAL PRACTICE	SCORE	YOUR NOTES
1	I set goals and invest in development to achieve them.		
2	I know my strengths, and where and when I need to get help from others.		
3	I give myself and others permission to take time for self-care. I recognise when I am overloaded and do something about it.		
4	I give the right level of priority to the right things.		
5	I practice what I preach, treating myself the way I treat others and making decisions with my head and heart in balance.		
6	I celebrate success and remember what has been achieved before going onto the next challenge.		



SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP ACTION PLAN: INDIVIDUAL

PRIORITY Or areas of development:	INDIVIDUAL ACTION What do you need to do?	ORGANISATIONAL ACTION What do you need from your organisation?	TIMESCALES When will it be done?	REVIEW When and how will progress be reviewed?

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Self-care...the key to sustainable leadership?

As individuals and employers, could we start thinking about self-care as an essential part of our jobs, rather than a fad, or a perk? Can we follow our own advice?

Reflecting on your own practice can feel challenging – and may initially result in a wobble. But if you don't step out of your comfort zones, you don't learn and grow.

The ideas and challenges in this guide were all developed with people and organisations who report finding them beneficial. They can result in powerful changes in thinking and practice.

Self-care is critical to individual and organisational survival. We can't do our best work if we don't feel well. Feeling guilty for looking after ourselves depletes our energy. Looking after ourselves and the people in our orbit feels good, if we let it.

**LOOKING AFTER
OURSELVES AND
THE PEOPLE IN OUR
ORBIT FEELS GOOD,
IF WE LET IT**



RECOMMENDATIONS

- **THE BEST TIME TO START IS NOW**

Planning for sustainable leadership is best done before a crisis happens.

- **PRIORITISE ACTION**

The self-assessment will help identify where things are going well and where action is required.

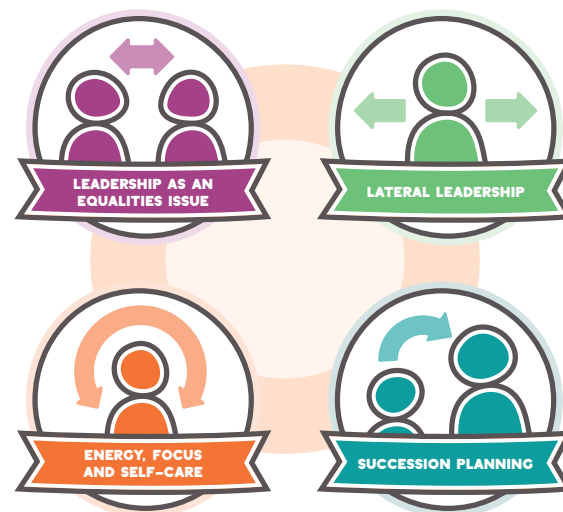
- **SHARE THE IDEAS ACROSS YOUR TEAM**

The approaches and actions required to improve leadership sustainability are adaptive – they need discussion, sharing ideas and exploring challenges and solutions together. We strongly encourage you to share the ideas in this guide across your team to develop collective responses and build ownership of the process.

- **TAKE A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

The four Lasting Leadership guides support the development of sustainable leadership. Action in one area will undoubtedly have an impact on the others. Taking a holistic approach will bring benefits across each of the capabilities:

- **LEADERSHIP AS AN EQUALITIES ISSUE**
- **LATERAL LEADERSHIP**
- **SUCCESSION PLANNING**
- **ENERGY, FOCUS AND SELF-CARE**



**START
NOW**

**PRIORITISE
ACTION**

**SHARE
IDEAS**

**TAKE A
HOLISTIC
APPROACH**

SELECTED REFERENCES AND READING

PUBLICATIONS

The Lasting Difference: tools for organisational sustainability

(5th Edn), Wren & Greyhound, 2020

Other free guides to sustainable leadership, capacity and impact from: www.thelastingdifference.com/resources

RECOMMENDED READING

As suggested by participants in our Lasting Leadership programmes:

Emotional Intelligence, Goleman, D.

Hell Yeah Self Care, a trauma-informed workbook, Barker, M-J and Iantaffi, A

The Introverted Leader, Kahnweiler, J.

Tame Your Inner Critic, Bowditch, C.

USEFUL WEBSITES

Ian Findlay Active Leaders

www.acosvo.org.uk/benefits-and-services/networks

The Fair Work Convention: a Vision and Framework for world-leading working lives

www.fairworkconvention.scot/the-fair-work-framework

Governance codes:

England and Wales: www.charitygovernancecode.org/en

Scotland: www.goodgovernance.scot/governance-code/

Healthy Working Lives

www.healthyworkinglives.scot

Walk At Work Award

www.walkatwork.scot

The National Wellbeing Hub – advice, apps and other resources on looking after ourselves and others

www.wellbeinghub.scot

Workplace Travel Challenge

www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/projects/2019/uk-wide/workplace-travel-challenge

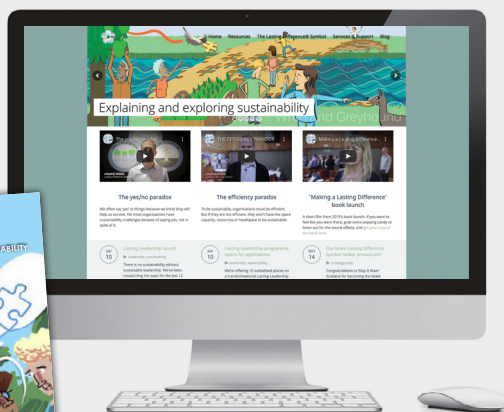
ABOUT THE LASTING DIFFERENCE

We are the creative management consultancy behind the popular suite of Lasting Difference and Lasting Leadership resources. We provide a range of services to charities and other non-profit organisations, including:

The Lasting Difference

Workshops, elearning, conferences and consultancy, sustaining organisations with effective strategies for:

- Involvement
- Income generation
- Impact measurement
- Innovation and improvement.



The Lasting Difference Toolkit® is available as a free download from TheLastingDifference.com



Advance Retreats®

Calm, engaging facilitation and away days for boards, leaders and teams.



The Lasting Difference Symbol

Awarded to organisations working towards Lasting Difference principles.



Making a Lasting Difference book

We wrote the book on charity sustainability.



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Jen has first-hand experience of the issues addressed here, as a deputy, then interim charity CEO and from her 20+ years' experience of non-profit leadership.

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