



Lived Experience Leadership

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*Rebooting the DNA of
Leadership*

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Disclaimer

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About Clore Social Leadership

Clore Social Leadership is a leading organisation in the United Kingdom that develops leaders with a social purpose so that they can transform their communities, organisations and the world around them. CLS helps make social change happen by supporting and investing in people and enabling them to become leaders with the resilience, self-awareness and capabilities to tackle the social challenges of the 21st century.

About the Knowledge Equity Initiative, Tsai Center for Innovative Thinking at Yale

The Knowledge Equity Initiative (KEI), is a ground-breaking research, education, and practice initiative established by Tsai CITY's Innovator in Residence, Baljeet Sandhu, to explore how we can meaningfully and equitably value the knowledge gathered through lived, and learned, experience to lead social change, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Tsai CITY aims to inspire and support students from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to seek innovative ways to address real-world problems. Launched in 2017, CITY serves students from across Yale University through programs, funding, and mentorship.

This report is based on research by Baljeet Sandhu. Edited by Emma Janaskie

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“We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

LEx-ICON

Shaped by the insights, perspectives and views of 30 social leaders using their lived experiences to lead positive change in society, this report explores and develops the growing concept of Lived Experience Leadership.

Leaders, change-makers and innovators working across the social sector in the United Kingdom (including, charity, voluntary and not-for-profit; philanthropy, government, social enterprise, and business), kindly shared their personal and professional leadership journeys, successes and challenges as Lived Experience Leaders (LEx Leaders) and explored the current landscape of leadership learning, development and support for LEx leaders currently operating across the social sector and communities in the UK.

ABBREVIATIONS

LEx	<i>Lived Experience</i>
LEx Leaders	<i>Lived Experience Leaders</i>
LEx Leadership	<i>Lived Experience Leadership</i>
PWLEx	<i>People With Lived Experience</i>
Non-LEx Leader	<i>Leader without Lived Experience</i>

DEFINITIONS

Community/ Communities

Used interchangeably. A group of individuals who share a common attribute, be it the part of the social sector they inhabit (for example, funders, social entrepreneurs, mental health), their membership of a particular social group or groups, or their shared experience of situations or issues.

Lived Experience

Direct, first-hand experience, past or present, of a social issue(s) and/or injustice(s)

Lived Expertise

Knowledge, perspectives, insights, and understanding gathered through lived experience.

Lived Experience Leader

Change-makers, innovators and leaders who have activated their lived expertise to inform, shape and lead their social purpose work (often in combination with their learned and practice experience) to directly benefit the communities they share those experiences with.

Service-User

An individual who uses the services of a social purpose organisation. In the global context ‘consumer’ may also be used.

Social Purpose Work

Individuals, communities or social purpose organisations working for the wider good of civic society e.g. tackle social inequality, social and/or environmental injustices; or providing services / solutions to address local and/or wider social needs.

Social Sector and Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs)

Social purpose organisations inhabit the social sector. The social sector is a broad term used to describe a set of values and structures and includes organisations working for the wider good of civic society. The social sector includes individuals, funders, donors, investors, charities, not-for-profits, organisations, social enterprises, the voluntary or third sector, those parts of the public sector that have a primarily social purpose, and enterprises or businesses that trade like any other business but do so for the public good.

“We’re in a time where it’s a world of division; building walls and barriers and the continued oppression and marginalisation of people and their views. As a sector focusing on social good isn’t it our role, our obligation – regardless of what government is in power – to unite and bring together all members of society to create opportunities that sustain and strengthen us all.”

— Interviewee¹

We’re living in a divided world. Divided by backgrounds, experiences, cultures, behaviours and world views. Rising inequalities threaten our society and a sense of hopelessness pervades social sector discussions about the future. At the same time, optimism for the future is flourishing across communities directly impacted by social inequities and a call for connected wisdom and visions of shared leadership is emerging.

Every day across the UK and beyond, people with direct, first-hand experience of social issues—or “lived experience”—are taking up change-making and leadership roles to address the unique needs, challenges and injustices their communities face. These leaders are affirming and building upon the remarkable work of many community and grassroots leaders and activists who came before them.

Today, in recognition and respect of the varying and complex journeys, trajectories and models of leadership that have emerged in these evolving communities, the notion of Lived Experience Leadership is developed and explored in this report. This report shines a light through the prism of this new leadership framework by drawing on findings from 30 in-depth interviews and surveys completed by Lived Experience Leaders (LEx leaders). It maps, identifies, and explores the complex landscape, reach and presence of Lived Experience Leadership flourishing across UK society.

However, this report also illuminates significant structural, systemic and cultural barriers that hinder, block or inadequately support LEx leaders capacity to thrive. Although, the work of the social sector has

achieved significant victories in giving agency to people with lived experience (PWLEx) in society, recognition, celebration and investment in LEx leaders has been long neglected. LEx leaders have limited visibility and little access to opportunity, resource and support to shape or lead population and systems-level change. Instead, technical expertise and learned knowledge continue to dominate social sector thinking, behaviour and activities. Many LEx leaders feel isolated and disenfranchised, forced to operate outside of existing support structures designed by this dominant culture – feeling side-lined, even rejected, as modern-day social leaders in the social sector.

This report is a call for action. There is a growing need for social purpose organisations to ‘nourish’, repair, reintegrate, and reboot the leadership DNA of the social sector. To invest in targeted, sophisticated and bespoke leadership and development support to help this community of leaders grow, ‘feel welcome’, and reconnect with wider social sector operations.

Diversity and inclusion; social mobility; and addressing power and privilege in our offices have long been topics of discussion in the social sector. But it’s no longer simply a moral imperative for the social sector to listen and act – this report highlights the economic and social imperatives to do so. Supporting the leadership development of LEx leaders will not only build wider community cohesion and strengthen our social good ‘ecosystem’, it will ultimately transform the work of the social sector by generating new social interventions to benefit civil society in a divided, fast-paced, ever-evolving world.

¹ Quotes that appear at the top of each section are from LEx leaders interviewed for this report.

“The human spirit of giving, hope and love is alive and kicking across the UK.... We don't need to develop new ways of doing this – we need to identify, celebrate and learn from leadership flourishing within our communities.”

— Interviewee

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

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Following the publication of the 2017 report ‘**The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change**’¹ there has been growing interest in developing the leadership of PWLEx. Unpacking the concept of ‘**lived experience**’; its value to all social purpose work; and identifying the significant barriers and challenges PWLEx faced in accessing change-making opportunities, the report illuminated the need for leadership and organisational development in the social sector to help PWLEx thrive as social leaders.

Committed to developing social leaders in the UK, Clore Social Leadership (CSL) commissioned this report to understand the developing notion of ‘**Lived Experience Leadership**’, the profiles of LEx leaders currently operating in the social sector and help determine, if any, gaps in leadership learning and development (L&D).

¹ *The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change: The Need for Leadership and Organisational development in the Social Sector*, Baljeet Sandhu 2017, available at www.thelivedexperience.org

Research Methodology

The report is based on two main sources:

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The bulk of the findings are based on lessons derived from in-depth interviews with fifteen social sector leaders who self-identify as LEx leaders. All but two of the interviews were conducted in-person or by phone. Two interviewees submitted their responses by writing (email). A full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 1.

SURVEY RESPONSES

The second main source of data is derived from data collected from surveys completed by fifteen participants of the year-long 'leaders with lived experience' project led by UnLtd, a leading provider of support to social entrepreneurs in and around the UK, between 2017 and 2018². All fifteen participants completed the surveys following conclusion of the project. A full list of respondent questions can be found in Appendix 2.

Interviewee and respondent profiles

Interviewees and respondents represent a diverse array of lived experiences and learned perspectives from sub-sectors such as criminal and youth justice; prison reform; youth education and empowerment; multiple and complex needs; disability; mental health; women's rights; refugee and migrants; housing and infrastructure services, care leavers, LGBTQ rights and gender identity.

Breakdown of social issue/justice area(s) the interviewees and respondents cover in their work:

- » Mental health (including eating disorders, self-harm, suicide)
- » Disability / learning difficulties
- » Long term health condition / illness
- » Criminal justice system and prison reform
- » Migrant and refugee rights
- » Care system / care leavers
- » Homelessness / social and/or assisted housing
- » Substance misuse, addiction and rehabilitation
- » Unemployment / debt / poverty
- » Gang affiliation
- » Career
- » Domestic violence and abuse
- » Multiple and complex needs
- » Sexual violence, FGM
- » Forced / child marriage
- » War and trauma

² A cohort based project in partnership with The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP), based in Birmingham and Bristol with 15 participants in each cohort.

- » Race equality
- » Class equality
- » Gender equality
- » LGBTQ rights / gender identity
- » Reproductive justice

On average, each participant identified with at least 3 social issue/justice areas with which they have direct, first-hand experience.

Key Findings

Drawing lessons from the wealth of insights, perspectives and views from interviewees and respondents, the following key findings emerged:

Definitions matter

This is a complex field. PWLEx and LEx leaders populate the entire social sector in different forms and modalities. Without appreciating and embracing the breadth, depth, and historical nature of this field, the sector will continue to pursue ineffective initiatives to meet the distinct leadership and development needs of early stage, aspiring, emerging, experienced and senior LEx leaders. At present, the sector is confused and initiatives are not adequately meeting the needs of all Lex leaders, especially emerging and experienced LEx leaders. A clear framework that centers LEx leadership is needed to support sector-wide L&D initiatives and interventions, and is explored further in this report.

Unique leadership strengths and challenges

Some elements of the sector continue to pay lip-service to the value of LEx leadership, evidenced by the growth of initiatives seeking to 'give voice' to LEx leaders, without fully understanding the unique leadership strengths, competencies and skills that LEx leaders bring to the social sector. The lack of research, data and evidence in this field contributes to ongoing systemic, structural and cultural barriers that LEx leaders face in the sector. The report begins to explore the value and benefit of LEx leadership to wider sector operations, communities those operations purport to serve, and civil society. Failure to recognise these benefits, hinders progression of LEx leaders in the sector, and stifles collaboration and innovation necessary to create population- and systems-level change needed to address pressing and emerging social problems in modern society.

Social Sector systems change is necessary

Developing L&D initiatives and interventions alone will not address the systemic, structural and cultural barriers LEx leaders currently face in the social sector. Current operating conditions in the sector are 'unhealthy', 'harmful' and creating a 'damaging disconnect' between social leaders with and without LEx, the communities they serve, and civil society. There is a pressing need to address the fitness of the social sector system to meet the needs of LEx leaders and address the leadership inequity and social and economic injustices many currently face. By addressing these barriers, progressive interventions, collaborations and innovations can be deployed to help LEx leaders thrive so that they can effectively address evolving social issues and injustices their communities face.

Multi-layered approaches to L&D provision

These are needed to address the L&D needs of LEx leaders at different levels of their leadership trajectory. LEx leaders have L&D needs like any other social leader, but also require tailored approaches to support their development due to their unique backgrounds as LEx leaders and the personal and professional challenges they may have faced. All LEx leaders will benefit greatly from L&D provision that center both lived and learned experiences in design; take a networked approach; address wellbeing and help support communication and systems thinking and practice. Sector leads and funders must involve social leaders with the lived and learned expertise to meet the unique needs that these approaches necessitate.



Early stage and aspiring LEx leaders require a hands-on approach to their development through bespoke L&D interventions and experiential learning, support and/or mentorship opportunities.

Emerging and experienced LEx leaders require targeted and collective L&D opportunities such as fellowships and residencies that combine skills development; coaching; mentoring and action-based approaches to development.

Senior LEx leaders are keen to ‘give back’ and support the development of emerging and experienced LEx leaders, while benefitting from mentorship from senior leaders with technical expertise across the sector (including the private sector and government).

..... **END PREVIEW**