

# The Role

As chief executive of the leadership centre you have four major challenges to address. All four challenges are important, and need to be kept in sync with each other.

## 1. Keeping the organisation viable

The Centre aims to work in the space of “next practice” rather than merely best practice. As such most of its work is bespoke. So, in contrast to many traditional consultancies, we are not involved in repeating the same programme or offer every year or in every place. As a consequence we have not attempted to keep growing in size. Rather we have aimed to have a turnover of c £1.3-1.5 million each year, and have built our staffing infrastructure around that target. The Centre has maintained working reserves to underpin the operation. We are on track for that level of activity for 2021/22, but an incoming chief executive will have to maintain the momentum year by year.

A further early decision will be that of location. For a long time the Leadership Centre was co-housed with the LGA. The LGA still provides back office services (finance, personnel etc) but the Centre moved its base to near City Road in London. Like most organisations during Covid the Centre has been operating a virtual operation. An incoming chief executive needs to resolve how the Centre might best operate going forward.

## 2. Keeping the organisation impactful

The Centre has had a track record of having a meaningful impact both for individuals and for public policy. We run a series of programmes for specific participants. Our Future Vision programme, for instance, is for senior leaders across public service (chief executives, chief constables and chief fire officers, senior civil servants etc). We also do a large amount of place and project based work. The Centre spearheaded the Total Place programme, work understanding alienated communities and bringing systems leadership language into the lexicon (particularly in health). We need to continue to be impactful. Put simply the first challenge (financial viability) requires us to sustain our level of turnover. This second challenge is a reminder that must not be at the expense of being innovative (or as some have described us as being a “challenge brand”).

## 3. Attracting and maintaining our enabler team, and engaging our alumni

The Centre operates a loose/tight model. It has a very small core team of staff, and a wider group of enablers who work with the Centre, but are not directly employed by the Centre. The Centre’s approach has been to invest significantly in the development of shared practices within the enabler group, but also recognising that as the work challenges vary year on year, different members of the enabler group will be more or less involved at different times. The model is more of partnering than contracting, so we need to sustain that level of maturity with existing enablers, whilst also engaging new members of that group who will reflect the diverse communities and groups with whom we work.

In addition we have a substantial number of alumni from our programmes, who are in very senior roles, many of whom continue to engage with the Centre, with whom we need to continue to engage.

## 4. Thought Leadership

Post the crisis of the pandemic public service is facing an unprecedented scale of challenge. These include:

1. What we might call socio-economic “long covid”
2. A speed of digitalisation not previously seen (with impacts across all sectors from high streets to services).
3. Massive economic scarring (GDP predicted to be down by over 8% compared to pre pandemic estimates. Moreover we know that this will have very different impacts on different groups of people.
4. An inevitable impact on public finances, at a time when pressure on public service is at its greatest.

Taken individually each is a massive challenge, but not only are they all having a major impact, each of those challenges affects and is affected by each of the other challenges. Through our projects and programmes we need to continue to help leaders address those. Our task is to make a major contribution through thought leadership to help public service leaders navigate ways forward.

Put simply the job of the new chief executive is to help public service leaders address these (and other challenges that will emerge), but keep the Centre financially and organisationally viable so that it can make that contribution.

## Terms and conditions

The Leadership Centre is a registered charity but follows pretty standard public sector terms and conditions regarding working hours, holiday entitlement etc. Second class rail travel is the norm. We use the LGA to provide our back office services. The Leadership Centre does not operate its own pension scheme, but offers staff a private pension scheme, to which it contributes the employer contribution. Though we have a base off City Road in London, we expect the new chief executive to review whether we should continue with those offices. Moreover even where we to continue with that base the work we do is in places and organisations. Those offices are for staff who help in the delivery of work elsewhere.