

## My Leadership Exchange Experience

*What would it feel like to walk in the shoes of another? The Charity Leadership Scotland Leadership Exchange Programme pairs leaders from across sectors, allowing participants to gain an insight into the different cultures, constraints and opportunities their counterparts work with. It offers a unique opportunity to expand your network, gain a fresh perspective, and share your plans, challenges and strategy with another leader.*



*Stephanie Brown - Head of Business and Product Analysis, Registers of Scotland - joined the October 2022 cohort and has written this blog about her experience on the programme.*

My name is Stephanie Brown and I lead the product, business analysis and agile teams at [Registers of Scotland \(RoS\)](#), a non-Ministerial office of the Scottish Government. RoS has responsibility for over 20 registers, receiving over 630,000 applications in FY22/23. Our work provides certainty to people buying a home - one of the largest financial decisions they'll make, to businesses and those looking to invest in Scotland; as well as being the trusted source of the data you might have seen when looking online at [Scottish property prices](#).

My teams work across the organisation, from our operational areas to our digital teams. Within government, there's lots of opportunity to connect with others working in similar roles via communities of practice or meetings around items of common interest. However, when I saw the advert for the Charity Leadership Scotland Leadership Exchange Programme I was drawn to its focus on leadership and the opportunity to work with someone in a different sector and different profession.

After a thorough matching process I was quickly matched with a participant from the voluntary sector whose role was Head of Communications and Engagement. We decided to have an in-person chemistry meet which I think was a really key part of working together - to maximise the benefit of the programme I think you need to be open, and a chemistry meet is a good way to check that your approaches and expectations match.

Next, we agreed our ways of working so we knew what to expect of each other, including confidentiality, and to help us plan out our programme. We agreed that we would meet in-person and we specifically chose to meet away from our offices, meaning we had the break of a quick walk along the road or bus ride to separate the day to day from our time on the programme. In that first meeting we also decided

that when describing a situation, we were open to receiving challenge, which we defined to be probing questions/playing devil's advocate. I'd often find that later that evening or the next day I'd revisit one of those questions and would bring some of them into my 1:1s or team calls.

Our sessions typically took the structure of setting out a situation – sometimes these presented as challenges and sometimes opportunities – and how we approached that with our colleagues or stakeholders. One of the benefits of meeting over the course of the year was the knowledge we developed of each other's leadership style. It was also a useful reflective exercise to consider that the issues that might have been occupying considerable thinking time in month one were quickly covered in a later meeting's check-in.

One theme that emerged early on was managing ambiguity, with my match sharing materials and research she had found valuable in her leadership practice. This has been something I've returned to with my teams and peers within my own organisation. I was interested in this because my teams are working to identify new opportunities or improvements, and working through ambiguity is a key part of their toolkit and one that relates to setting direction and resilience. Given it is a critical part of what we do it should be something we review and check how well existing approaches serve us.

I would definitely recommend the Charity Leadership Scotland Leadership Exchange Programme - when I took part in the programme I had been working in my role for three years and it's easy to fall into patterns of repeating what has previously worked well. This focused time, combined with an external perspective, helped refresh both my approach to work and my personal development, and that of my teams.