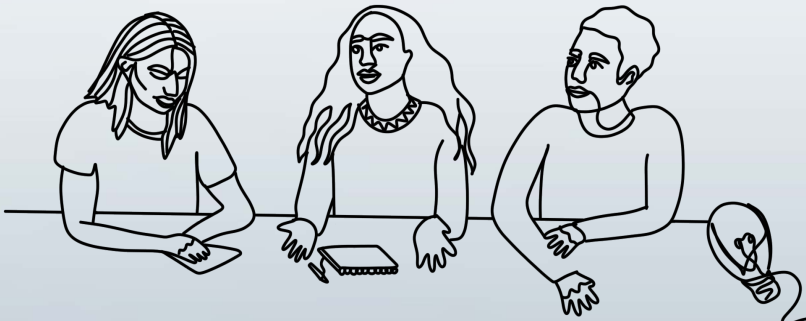
sync LEADERSHIP

zine





Leadership thinking and conversations



between 33 Deaf & disabled leaders

In the UK and Canada, Spring 2021





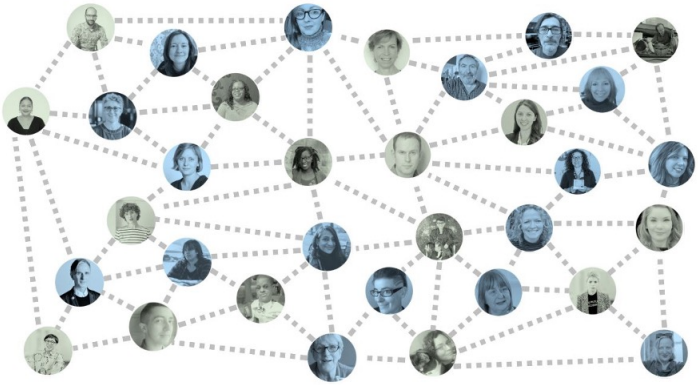
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sync LEADERSHIP



Sync Leadership is a disabled–led leadership programme working with Deaf and disabled leaders. We have worked in the UK, Australia, Singapore, South Korea and now Canada.
In 2020, Sync Leadership made a decision to roll out its programmes in Canada online. Whilst we really missed being together in person, we found a new virtual way of working together that was impactful, important and joyful.

'Sync's shift to online meant the ways a program was accessible suddenly shifted, and they admirably modified the program in a way that allowed our cohort to come together meaningfully in a time when isolation was the norm.'
Sean Lee, Tangled Art + Disability, Sync Canada



On the back of this success, and with support from British Council and Canada Council for the Arts, we decided to bring together participants from our UK Sync programme with those who had recently trained with Sync in Canada. In our Sync Meet Ups we spent time together talking about things that matter in our respective lives and leadership.

This has been one of the most challenging times for Deaf and disabled people in recent history. Coming together and facilitating conversation has been hugely valuable, and an important reminder of how key our lived experiences are to informing our leadership moving forward.

This Zine is a record of the questions that we were left with following our conversations together.

Sarah Pickthall – Co–founder Sync Leadership

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Sync Meet Ups
Disability Leadership: Coaching

Coaching sits at the heart of Sync Leadership and many of our alumni go on to work as coaches or build coaching practices into their leadership styles and delivery. A conversation about coaching at this time felt pressing and welcome: the importance for us as leaders to take time to reflect, to question ourselves and those around us and most importantly what's happening around us.



'If we harness coaching in different ways, it can inform the way we work but also how others might work in the arts and culture sector, helping us all to be the best versions of ourselves'

Sarah Pickthall

How might we—



co—curate the spaces we work in, putting us in the frame and strengthening our collaboration?

contract in a way that helps us to be honest about what we need and foster honesty in others?



counter our desire to please?

be equitable as coaches, whilst ensuring the focus is with our coachees so they feel at the centre?

acknowledge and challenge ourselves when we do have power and privilege?



encourage ourselves and each other to speak up when we feel disquiet or disturbance and to forgive ourselves when we don't feel able to do so?



With thanks to Paul B. Tshuma (CA) Renée Yoxon (CA) Bobby Baker (UK) Çaglar Kimoncyu (UK) Jo Paul (UK) Rachel Bagshaw (UK) and Alex Bulmer (CA)

Sync Meet Ups

Disability Leadership: Coaching

'Listening is about being changed by the other person.'
Alan Alda



"Coaching allows us to notice and identify when the space is imbalanced.'
Alex Bulmer

Paul B. Tschuma — Learning to Listen
Sean Lee — Coaching Curation

Sync Meet Ups
Disability Leadership: Environment

'We are so often viewed as in need of fixing or in need of something, when the truth is that it is the environments we find ourselves in that are in need of fixes and upgrades'
Ingrid Palmer



There were so many connecting themes that came up when thinking about the environment and our experiences as Deaf and disabled leaders. We discussed a variety of these including internal and external landscapes and the Darwinian idea of survivalism which is very much part of an ableist perspective.

We recognised there were very few connections between environmentalism and queer and trans–bodies and disabled bodies and how normative environmental research tends to be.

How might we



reconceptualise our relationship with nature, plants and other species whilst challenging a survivalist frame?

challenge the idea of survivalism through our embodied experience of leadership?

ensure leadership builds in consideration of capacity, fatigue and accommodation?



make clearer connections between environmentalism and queer, trans and disabled bodies?

promote environments where we can and do flourish?

think carefully about how we frame environmental impact on incidence of impairment and avoid being seen as powerless in the debate?





consider how measures to nurture environment e.g. to stop flying may restrict how disabled folk can take part?

provide equitable solutions for environmental responses and change?

With thanks to Bobby Baker (UK), Alex Bulmer (CA), Çaglar Kimonycu (UK), Rita Marcalo (UK), Ingrid Palmer (CA), Sarah Pickthall (UK), Seeley Quest (CA), Jenelle Rouse (CA), Deepa Shastri, (UK) Faye Stewart (UK), Caroline Ward (UK), Kate Welsh (CA)

Sync Meet Ups

Disability Leadership: Environment(s)



'To talk about where we have and don't have agency in and around environments felt the most important of conversations. Survivalism completely disregards our lived experiences, so exploring how we might weave our lives into conversations about the environment and climate action felt critical.'

Sarah Pickthall

"When you go out into the woods, and you look at trees, you see all these different trees. And some of them are bent, and some of them are straight, and some of them are evergreens, and some of them are whatever. And you look at the tree and you allow it. You see why it is the way it is.
You sort of understand that it didn't get enough light, and so it turned that way. And you don't get all emotional about it. You just allow it. You appreciate the tree. The minute you get near humans, you lose all that. And you are constantly saying 'You are too this, or I'm too this.' That judgment mind comes in. And so I practice turning people into trees. Which means appreciating them just the way they are"

Ram Dass

Sync Meet Ups

Disability Leadership, and Vulnerability

"We are not vulnerable people, we live in vulnerable situations"
Baroness Jane Campbell



Vulnerability is a label that has been extensively used to describe the lives of Deaf and disabled people, long before the pandemic took hold. A conversation about vulnerability was inspired by Kristina McMullen (CA) and gave rise to a dedicated meet up in which we shared our different and similar experiences of being and feeling in the spaces we occupy.

People constantly make assumptions about us. They assume what might be going on for us because of our particular impairments or our intersectional lived experiences. The session was an opportunity to share different degrees of vulnerability that we feel and those imposed upon us in different situations, and from our discussion we came up with key questions for consideration.

How might we —

break through our vulnerabilities in critical moments that matter?



be each other's accomplices to help re—think and shape our vulnerability?



build on our vulnerability as a strength without apology?

make our vulnerability — whether it is around fear, uncertainty, or lack of access' something that we conciously plan for?



What does it take for us to be more **honest, authentic** in our vulnerability as a leadership quality when we meet but also when we make art?

work on strategies together through ongoing conversation, workshops and training?

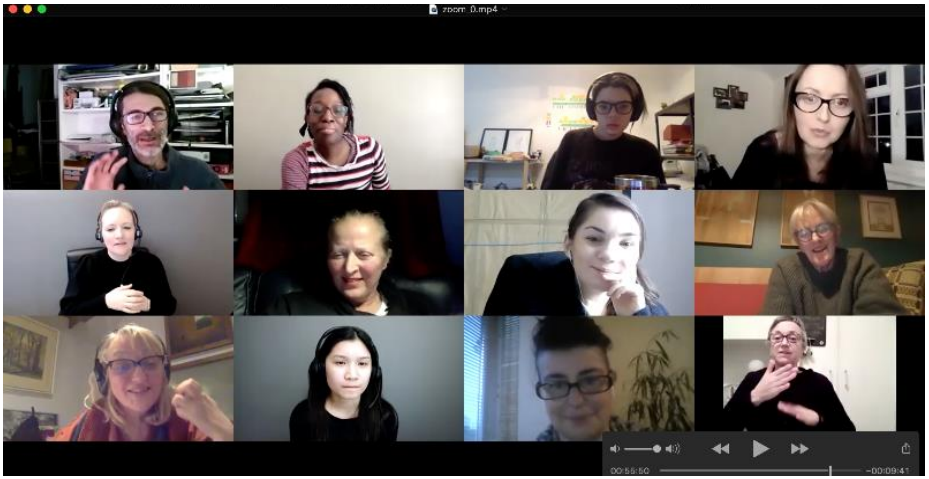
share the labour of vulnerability that comes when having to constantly speak up and advocate for art, access and representation, rights and our rightful place?



With thanks to Rita Marcalo (UK) Bobby Baker (UK) Caroline Cardus (UK) Jenelle Rouse (CA) Kristina McMullen (CA) Çaglar Kimonycu (UK) Jenny Sealey (UK) Maxime D. —Pomerleau (CA) and our support team

Sync Meet Ups

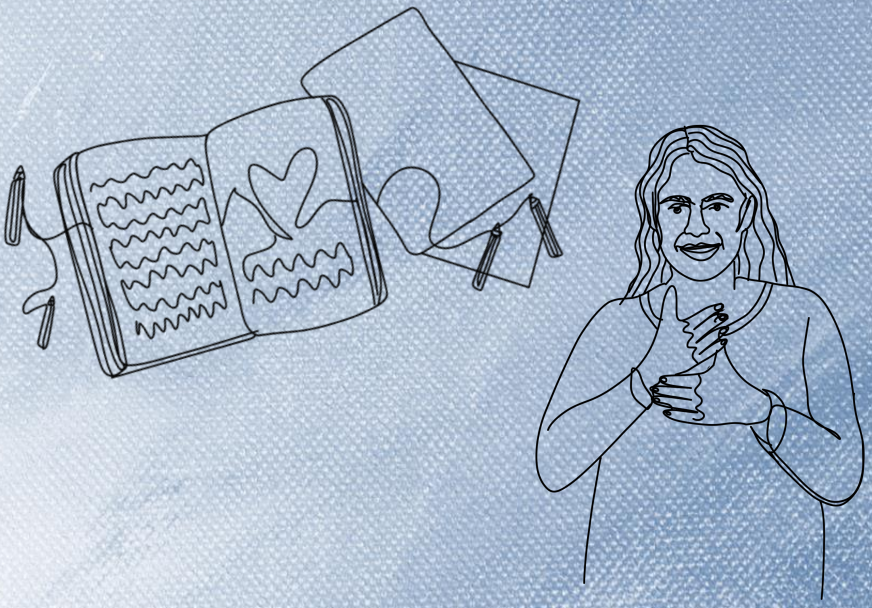
Disability Leadership: Vulnerability



Together we shared the different degrees of vulnerability felt and imposed upon us in different situations and the ways that we might make vulnerability something we more consciously plan for, learn from, model, manage and live well with, moving forward.

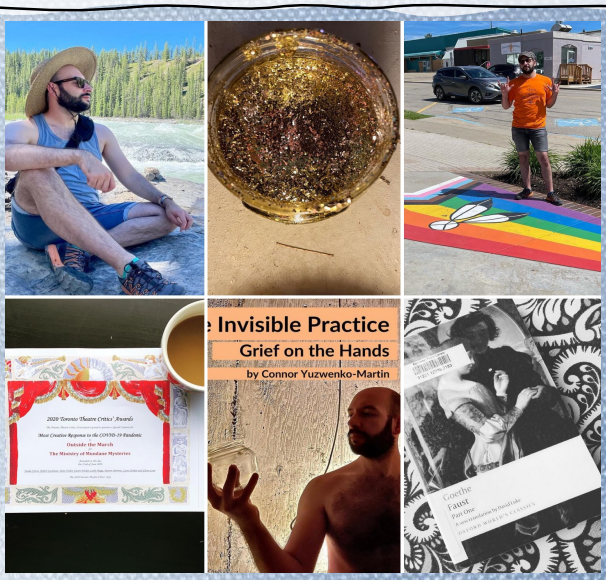
Sync Meet Ups
Deaf Leadership: Consultancy

"The people I have met through Sync have confirmed and reinforced once and for all that I am not alone — never will be alone. Whenever I can't quite reach that last rung, I only need to ask and someone will come to give me a boost."
Connor Yuzwenko–Martin



Deepa Shastri (UK) and Connor Yuzwenko–Martin (CA) met to explore Deaf Consultancy. Deepa has developed a well respected career in theatre, television consultancy and production. She has learned so much through taking on a variety of roles across theatre and television to understand her preferences for working.

Connor is quite new to the field so there was much to explore together. They acknowledged the additional support for Deaf and disabled professionals that Deepa has benefitted from through Access to Work in the UK and how this has been a vital part of building a professional life. Without a similar support programme in Canada, Connor has remained undeterred. He has been forging ahead with a summer job as Communications Coordinator at Edmonton Fringe and developing his art practice through social media and cross–Canada partnerships.

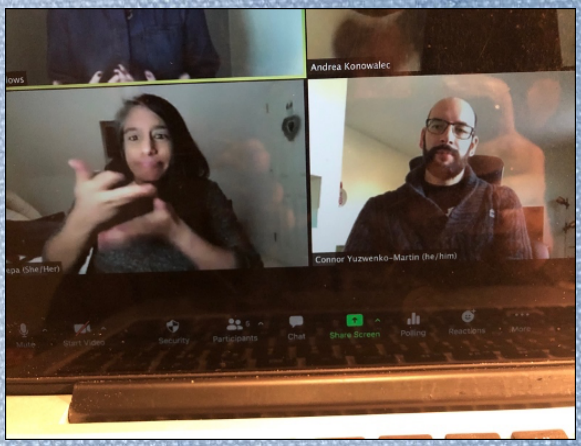


Deepa referenced recent freelancer bursaries as an invaluable development opportunity.

Connor shared his New Conversations commission 'Captioning Creative Design' with Hot Coals Theatre Company (UK) to develop and deploy creative captions across theatre and performance.

How can we...

keep true to our cultural and artistic values and how and when do we compromise?



manage the tendency to overwork, building in breaks and focusing on health and wellbeing?



say 'yes' to opportunities when building our consultancy to inform our future choices?

With thanks to Deepa Shastri (UK) and Connor Yuzwenko–Martin (CA) and the support team

Sync Meet Ups

Deaf Leadership: Directorship



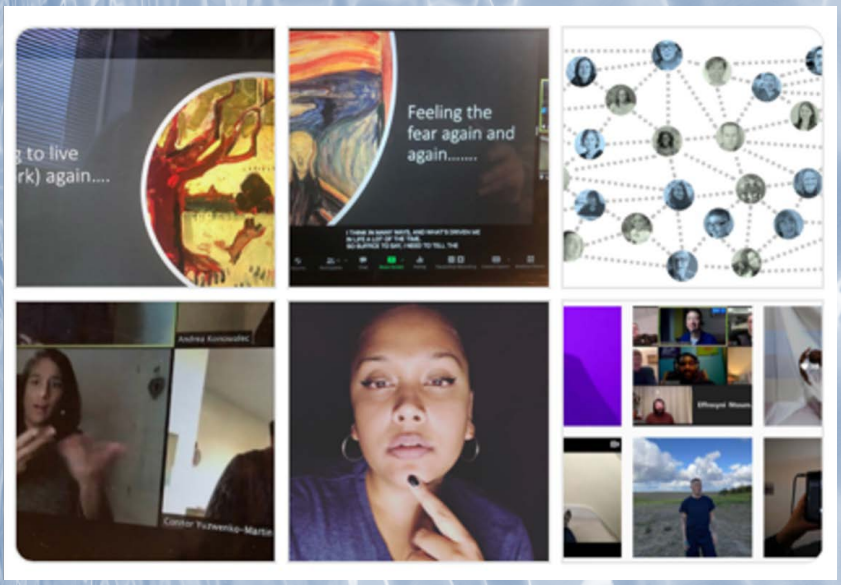


Paula Garfield (UK) and Gaitrie Persaud–Dhunmoon (CA) are Deaf role models. By setting up deaf–led projects and companies they have led and are leading the way. Their meeting together shared their journeys so far.

Gaitrie shared the reasons behind her founding her new company Phoenix the Fire to develop opportunites for Deaf BIPOC artists in Canada.

Paula shared the importance for her and Deafinitely Theatre of developing opportunities for Black Deaf actors, writers and directors.

Paula shared the history of developing Deafinitely Theatre at a time when no deaf led theatre companies existed for Deaf theatre creatives. She talked about moving from project to project and then establishing a company with regular funding from Arts Council England.



How do we...



build a team with different strengths to one's own to help with strategy and funding?

bring up a family and manage a career?

better manage our energy and time?



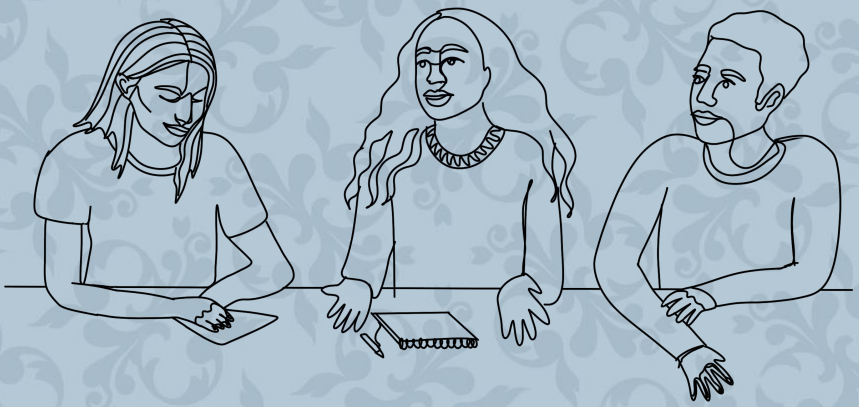
maintain one's own creativity and run a business at the same time?

With thanks to Paula Garfield and
Gaitrie Persaud–Dhunmoon and the support team

Sync Meet Ups

Disability, Leadership Representation & Museums

"The gift of disability is the friction we bring."
Sean Lee



Our meeting was an opportunity to share the different positions and perspectives that we occupy. For some of us, making and creating contemporary archives and collections outside organisations was giving us new energy informed by our natural rhythms, our natural intuition and ways of being.

For others, staying within systems required persistently reframing our representation. We discussed that it still felt vitally important to use our artistic perspectives and activism to challenge and move museums away from outdated medical frames and throw new light on collections.

How might we —

create friction 'because that is the gift that disability brings'?

curate a raft of curve balls to infiltrate and move us from being passive innovators towards being anarchists and artists?



work alongside non—disabled museum colleagues allowing them to share the labour, allowing them to 'find the new' and 'be the first'?



build on the "disabled avant garde being the last avant garde." (Yinka Shonibare) to become and to encourage artists, agitators, makers and curators from the strength of this assertion.



use our edges and lived experiences to position ourselves in museums and collections?

build on our own museum projects to hone more inclusive anti—disableist policies?



move a mass of disabled workers and workforce and inclusive curatorial ingenuity into more dynamic and proactive play in our organisations?

With thanks to Jon Pratty (UK) Charlotte Jacob—Maguire (CA) Esther Appleyard—Fox (UK) Sean Lee (CA) Sally Booth (UK) Kelsie Acton (CA) Dolly Sen (UK) and the support team

Sync Meet Ups

Disability, Leadership, Representation and Museums



'I'm just trying to dismantle things in some small way by kind of barging in really, and refusing to leave until something has shifted. So that's how I work, I barge in.'

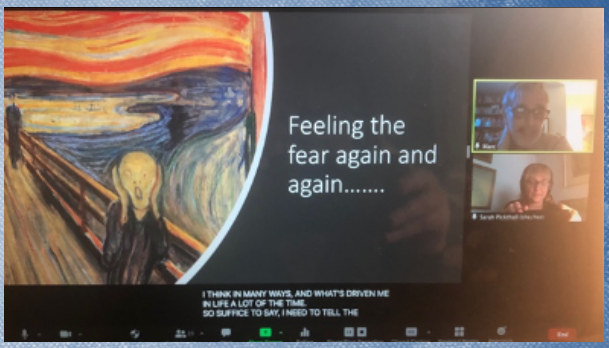
Dolly Sen (UK)

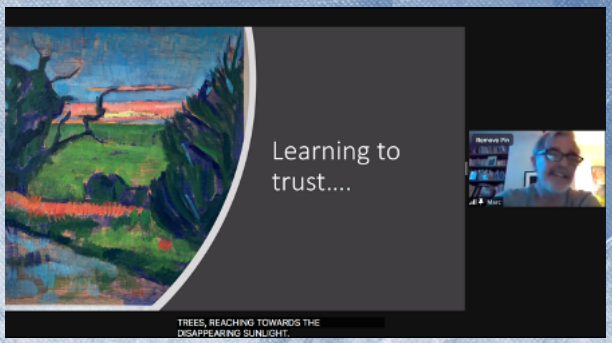
Sync Meet Ups
Disability, Leadership & Adaptation

'At Outside In, I am lucky to have been able to recruit people who not only have the skills but had a shared value base and understanding of the work we're doing and whilst I was away they have taken, grown and run with that and have evolved their own development of that core.'

Marc Steene

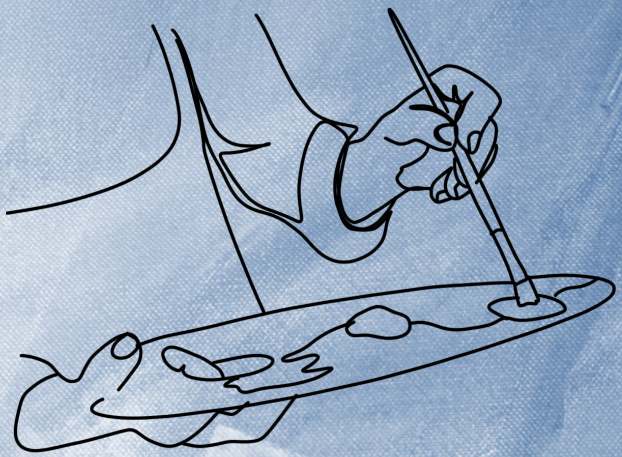
In a February meet up, Marc Steene (UK), Director of Outside In, shared with our Sync Canada cohorts from Quebec and Ontario his own personal journey of adaptation through cancer and recovery during the Covid–19 period. .





He talked about how he learned to feel the fear and push forward, developing a depth of trust in his brilliant team and in doing so allow a deeper collaboration with them to emerge.

As a part of pulling back from his paid work, he returned to his painting practice to resource him for his part—time return. Painting helped him to create more balance to sustain himself and his team and the organisation more effectively.



As disabled people we are skilled at adapting to the blocks and barriers we face in a pervadingly ableist society. It seems increasingly clear that current adaptive leadership models chime with the skills that we already need to employ to thrive and survive in our leadership.

How might we—



be more transparent and honest, and see that as a strength in our leadership?

trust in our teams to hold the spaces whilst we step back and rest?



feel the fear and forge on through?

do less to achieve more, asking others what this might look like in practice?



bring creativity into play, focusing on our art practices to restore and refresh a sense of who we are in the world?

challenge ourselves to share openly where we can, so that we can see and understand ourselves better?



and how do we encourage others to do the same?

With thanks to all of the Sync Quebec and Sync Ontario cohorts, and to Marc Steene (UK)

Sync Leadership Programme 20/21



Alex Bulmer
Charles Matthews
Charlotte Jacob Maguire
Chris Dodd
Connor Yuzwenko–Martin
Gaitrie Persaud
Ingrid Palmer
Jenelle Rouse
Kate Welsh
Kelsie Acton
Kristina McMullen
Maxime D. –Pomerleau
Paul B. Tshuma
Renée Yoxon
Sean Lee
Seeley Quest











Sync Leadership Programme 20/21





Bobby Baker
Çaglar Kimyonchu
Caroline Cardus
Caroline Ward
Deepa Shastri
Dolly Sen
Esther Appleyard
Faye Stewart
Jo Paul
Jon Pratty
Jo Verrent
Marc Steene
Paula Garfield
Rachel Bagshaw
Rita Marcalo
Sally Booth
Sarah Pickthall
Steph Fuller











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sync LEADERSHIP

For more information about Sync Leadership visit: SyncLeadership.com



This zine was made by Rose Sergent