

## Designing the future of non-profits



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In the UK, the non-profit sector has been profoundly impacted by the recent drive to transform the public sector to reduce public spending and promote user choice. Design may be one way that non-profits can ensure users are at the heart of change.

### Laura Warwick

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**Description:**

Service Design and Social Innovation Lecturer at [Northumbria University](https://www.northumbria.ac.uk) and Service Designer at [Mind](https://www.mind.com) (UK).

**Vertical photo:**



Square photo:



Twitter: [@lauraewarwick](https://twitter.com/lauraewarwick)



Horizontal photo:

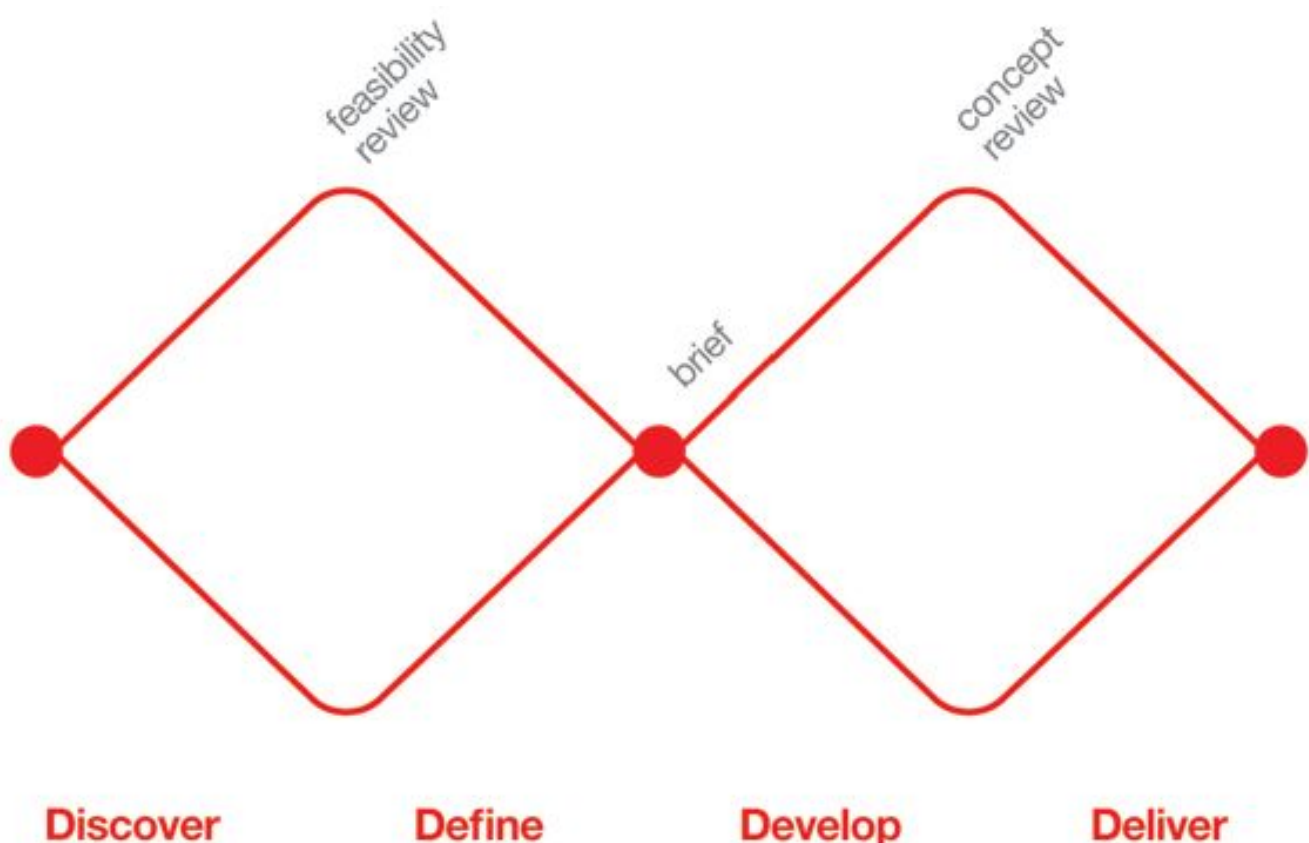
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In the UK, the non-profit sector has been profoundly impacted by the recent drive to transform the public sector to reduce public spending and promote user choice. Shrinking budgets and a move to diversify providers has meant that non-profits have to be **increasingly competitive** to continue delivering public services. However, the economic downturn has meant that charities often have a smaller workforce, yet higher demand on their services. They frequently lack the capacity to consider how to transform their services and delivery mechanisms, in order to ensure their long-term stability.

**Service Design** is an approach that has been recently adopted by some non-profits to help them to approach this internal transformation. The discipline evolved in the 1990s and has been used successfully in the private and public sector to make services more effective, more desirable and more sustainable. Just as a product designer can create a toy to delight a child, Service Designers use design to craft service experiences that create positive change for their intended users.

Design is a participatory approach that **involves end users** (including service beneficiaries, staff, managers and funders) in constructing the understanding of the problem and the solution itself. It provides a range of visual tools and methods that bring services to life, to enable stakeholders to understand, experience and feedback at every stage.

The UK Design Council's **Double Diamond** is a helpful visual to describe the Design process that stakeholders go through. It shows the four stages as two diamonds; two stages which encourage stakeholders to 'open up' to all possibilities, and two stages that help them to 'close down' and make decisions.



In the **Discover** stage, stakeholders first begin with the experience of people that will use the service, exploring their needs and aspirations and how they could be met differently. In the **Define** stage, they then analyse their findings to extract insights that will shape the opportunity they should meet. In the **Develop** stage, the team look broadly for inspiration for solutions, thinking creatively about ways to deliver value. They use rapid, practical tests, to learn quickly about their ideas at low cost and in more detail. The final **Deliver** stage focuses on testing and roll-

out, but for charities, the priority is often to package up ideas and evidence into a compelling narrative for commissioners or grant funders.

The results of going through this iterative, creative process are numerous, including:

- Seeing your **problem** in a different way
- Desirable, effective and efficient **solutions** that have been developed with users at every stage
- New **connections** with your customers, partners and funders
- More open and **collaborative** working cultures
- **Influencing** contract-holders and policy-makers

Because of this, Service Design is gaining in popularity with non-profits in the UK; sector-leading charities such as [Mind](#), [Macmillan Cancer Research](#) and [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) have all invested in creating design-led teams within their organisations.

Non-profits in the UK are facing an increasingly up-hill battle following the result of the EU referendum and increasing pressure on state budgets, but Design may be one way that they can ensure **users are at the heart of change**.

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