

**Leading to Change Community Event:**  
**Feedback: Empowering compassionate  
conversations & relationships**

2 February 2023

# Community event series

Throughout the **Project Lift Community Engagement Events 2020/21** we explored the ‘what’ of leadership, collaborating as a community to establish the 12 indicators of good leadership.

In the **Project Lift Community Events Series 2021/22**, we then explored the ‘how’ of good leadership. We considered how we can practically live out these indicators in our everyday. As a result of this, we co created [10 practices that embed good leadership collectively](#), in recognition that the small things matter.

In the current **Community Event Series 2022/23**, and under the new branding of [Leading to Change](#), we will explore the leadership capability of self-leadership via various topics.

During this series, we aim to build on all of the previous work we have undertaken as a community and collectively explore what good leadership looks like in practice.

## 12 indicators of good leadership



This pack provides an overview of the discussions.

# Feedback: Empowering compassionate conversations & relationships

On 2 February 2023, we invited Leading to Change community members to come together to explore the topic '**Feedback: empowering compassionate conversations & relationships**' and reflect on what opportunities can emerge within our own teams and organisations by doing so.

## **Our objectives for the session were to:**

1. Explore how we can enable empowering and compassionate conversations and relationships
2. Share tips and best practice with each other
3. Find out how to bring your best contribution as only you can and how it's okay for us all to be different

## **Flow of the session:**

1. Welcome
2. Opening perspectives
3. Breakout discussions
4. Whole group sharing
5. Closing reflections and next steps

# Who joined us?



**Leading to Change** exists to support leadership **at all levels and at all stages, in all roles across health, social care, and social work in Scotland.** A core aim of the community events series is to broaden the communities reach and connect to more of the system, and so this event were open to all.

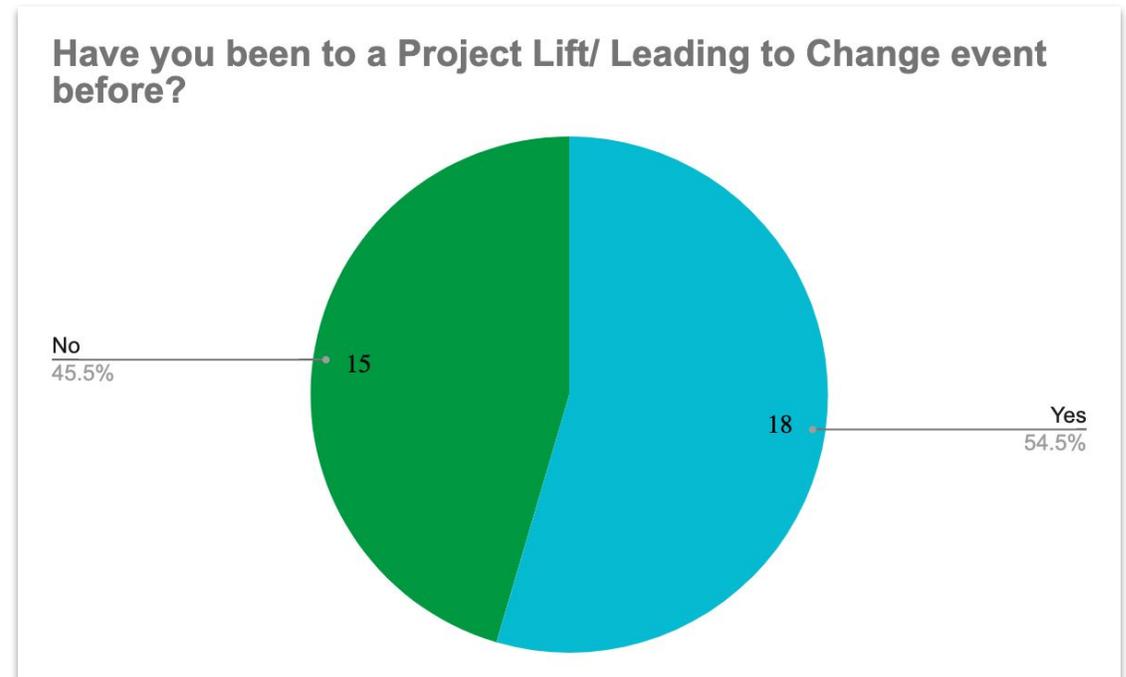
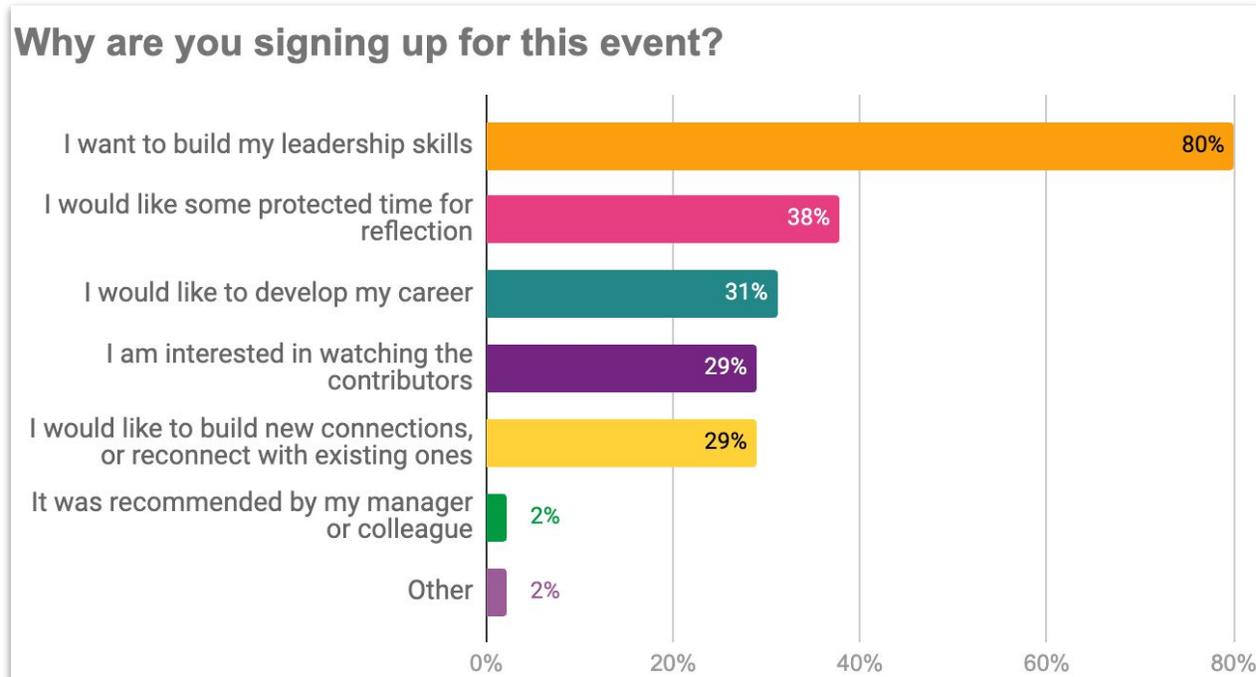
We were joined by **40** colleagues from across health, social care, and social work in Scotland.

Participants joined us from across the system, including those working in nursing, research, organisation development, education, physiotherapy and public health.

This included a range of organisations across Scotland, including NHS Education for Scotland, local NHS organisations in Lothian; Tayside; Borders; Lanarkshire, Neighbourhood Networks, NHS Scotland, Public Health Scotland, Scottish Ambulance service, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and more.

# Welcome and introductions

To understand who was in the room and why they joined, we ask participants: **‘Why are you signing up for this event?’** in the registration form and asked the poll question **‘Have you attended a Project Lift/ Leading to Change event before?’** during the session.



**33 participants** responded to the poll. **Over half of participants had attend** a previous Project Lift/ Leading to Change community event before. The majority of participants were primarily looking to **build their leadership skills, have time for reflection, and develop their career.**

# Contributors for the session

We then opened up the discussion by hearing from our contributors, who shared their own experiences on how to have challenging conversations with respect.

Our speakers:



**Trudi Marshall**  
Nurse Director,  
Lanarkshire HSCP



**Amy Landsbert**  
Coach,  
Know You More



**Tracy McLeod**  
Population Health Project Manager,  
Midlothian HSCP

# Welcome from Leading to Change



**Sara Dewar**

Principal Lead & Digital,  
Communications & Engagement Lead,  
Leading to Change Delivery Team

“Leading to Change **supports leadership development** happening at local levels and elsewhere, but it also focuses on **bringing together leaders** from across health, social work and social care across public and independent sectors.

Everyone is welcome and **everyone’s voice is encouraged** in this growing community.

These events are not masterclasses but about **hearing from real people about real experiences**. Across this event series we will be focussing on the theme of **self leadership** and what that means to each of us individually.”

# Opening perspectives - Trudi Marshall



**Trudi Marshall**  
Nurse Director,  
Lanarkshire HSCP

“As a leader, I have found that **it’s important to create an environment that is psychologically safe** for my team and to actively seek solutions to promote a positive working environment. I have found that compassionate leadership is the best approach to take - rather than approaching something as a challenge or a negative. Instead of focusing on the harm that could be caused, **we should focus on the good that be achieved and systems that can be created as a result**. As compassionate leaders, we must find ways to better understand where people in our team are at on the individual level.

As leaders, it’s important to remember that we are not finished products and there are still many opportunities for us all to grow on our leadership journey. Part of that growth should be considering what aspects of our leadership style we may want to improve on by reflecting on our experiences. Two books I would recommend are “**Compassionate leadership**” by **Michael A. West** and “**Compassionomics**” by **Anthony Mazzarelli and Stephen Trzeciak**. From these I’ve learnt we must be true and authentic to ourselves and take the time to recognise where our strengths are to be the best leaders we can.

My practical tips for enacting compassionate leadership come from [The Four Behaviors of Compassionate Leadership](#) by **Atkins & Parker (2012)**. These behaviours include: Attending, Empathising, Understanding and Helping. At the heart of compassionate leadership are our relationships so we need to invest time into building them. We can invest in the relationships we have as professionals and within our teams by ensuring people feel valued and cared for, whilst being honest and kind, and applying a shared approach to seeking solutions to problems together.”



# Trudi Marshall - Practical tips for compassionate leadership

## Attending

Notice suffering at work (your own and others)

Ask people about suffering, difficulties, challenges

Be present and focusing on others

## Empathising

Be aware of continually changing conditions in yourself and others

Develop empathic listening and tune in to feelings of concern/understand

## Helping

Direct your efforts towards what is most helpful in alleviating others' suffering

Create flexible time to enable others to cope with suffering

Where you can, take action

## Understanding

Be curious

Withhold blame

Focus on 'What's the learning here?'

Take time to properly explore and understand people's challenges

# Opening perspectives - Amy Landsbert



**Amy Landsbert**  
Coach,  
Know You More

“My personal experience of feedback has shown me that **taking on feedback from others is an absolutely essential aspect of building strong relationships**. If others feel safe enough to provide honest feedback to me, it builds the foundation of trust which is needed when talking about challenging topics.

The most important skill I've learnt is holding space for myself and I do this in a number of ways. First, **I focus on creating a safe space to feel and explore any uncomfortable feelings about feedback I receive**. I use **grounding techniques** to work through any feelings of discomfort that arise. Finally, I give myself permission to feel nervous or uncomfortable, treating these feelings with kindness and compassion.

Doing so has allowed me to lower my guard to fully receive feedback without becoming defensive. If I am able to feel calm and safe about giving feedback to others, **this will enable them to feel that same safety in receiving and giving feedback too**.

Having high quality conversations with other people begins with enabling psychological safety and also recognising that **we all have our own personal ways of establishing this sense of safety**. A few examples I have found helpful are **grounding techniques, steady breathing, and shifting our body language to be calm and open**. By developing these skills, we are not just improving the quality of our conversations, but we are also improving the quality of our relationships and lives in the process.”



# Opening perspectives - Tracy McLeod



**Tracy McLeod**

Population Health  
Project Manager,

NHSL Public Health Midlothian

“For too long we have separated the two elements of being authentic and working with our colleagues from each other. **How we work with service users, our patients and people, has become distinct and separate from how we work with each other.** When we remember that we are all human beings, we can begin to look at authenticity and working together as one.

My vision is to bring together the leadership and conversations we have about our patients, and move that same focus towards the way we work together as a whole system.

**Having a clearer understanding of self is key.** It’s no surprise to us that many healthcare professionals may also come from backgrounds of their own trauma. We all have our own labels that we may have assigned ourselves (e.g. labeling ourselves as “not good enough”). And on my own journey of recovery I have found that if we want to support our workforce to be the best they want to be within their own teams, we must **facilitate that space as leaders to be vulnerable, strong and authentic.**

The key to building strong relationships across the system is understanding how we work with each other. **One of the things that often happens when we seek to give constructive feedback, is that we don’t often prepare others for that conversation.** By preparing ourselves and others for a difficult conversation, we enable them to decide what matters to them, and identify improvements that can be made to build strength, coping and resilience.”



# Reflections from participants

Our contributors opening perspectives inspired discussion from participants, who shared their reflections...

“I have reflected more on the energy required to keep being compassionate and kind while still being an effective leader.”

'My job is not to fix the boat, but to be the safe harbour for people to make their own repairs'

“Seeing role modelling as a form of leadership that applies to most professionals and practitioners.”

“I have identified role modelling as a form of leadership.”

“Having difficult conversations requires work to build a trusting relationship.”

“Compassion is not soft. it takes effort, energy and time to listen.”

# Breakout discussions

# Breakout discussions

We then went into breakout groups so participants could share reflections on what we heard from the contributors and reflect on how the topic resonates with them. Key themes and tips from the discussions included:

## Building a culture of empowerment

- Culture is fundamental & behaviour catches - we all learn from example
- Seek more opportunities to give praise within our teams - encouragement builds us up!
- Compassionate leadership is at the heart of building an empowered team
- Embedding feedback in our culture requires a process, time and commitment to ensure authenticity

## Positive role modelling

- Good role modelling can have a big impact across the system
- Role model asking and giving feedback - this requires a certain amount of vulnerability to share internal workings
- Top tip for having a transparent conversation - ask "For me, this doesn't feel great....how do you feel?"

## Building relationships

- Be empathetic & intentional about seeing things from the other's perspective
- Learn to sit alongside others. Our job is not to "*fix the boat, but be a safe harbour for people to come and make their own repairs*"
- Relationships are the bedrock! - invest the time and effort to make empowerment effortless

## Using feedback to empower others

- Ask questions like "*What have we done well today?*" to offer space for positive reflection
- There's power in saying "You've done well!" & "Thank you!" - these simple words go a long way
- Establish regular conversations so people expect feedback on an ongoing basis

# Final reflections

# Closing reflections

Finally, we closed the session by reflecting on all of the conversations so far, and thinking about our next steps. We asked participants: **“What is one practical step you will take to apply the learning from today to either yourself, your team or your organisation?”**

“Don't be afraid to use the leader title if it helps others to share the learning and support within the team.”

“Keep building the relationships and taking time to raise the problems with compassion rather than avoid them.”

“Feedback should never come as a surprise - I will find ways to be proactive with giving and receiving feedback regularly.”

“Identify when my team members have shown compassionate leadership and feeding back to the organisation as a positive which includes the kind and compassion words.”

“Apply the invaluable tools of courage, safety and a coaching approach when having difficult conversations.”

“I will remind myself and others that Compassionate leadership is not about being soft - can be compassionate and clear and build teams.”

“Embedding compassion into the way I lead others within my team.”

“To remain authentic especially as a leader.”

# Having this conversation in your own team

**Thank you so much for joining us. Did you value the conversation, and would you like to take your learnings into your own community? Why not host your own conversation on how to embed indicators of 'good leadership' in our everyday practice?** There are lots of ways you could do this, but here are our steps to hosting your own community conversation.

## **DIY: 1-hour community conversation**

- **5 mins - Introductions:** Welcome participants and encourage everyone to grab a tea, coffee or lunch. Kick off introductions in the chat box, asking everyone to share who they are, where they're joining from and why.
- **5 mins - Opening perspective:** Introduction from the host sharing what you learnt from this event, and why you wanted to bring this conversation to your own team. Focus on storytelling, ask questions, and don't be afraid of the tricky issues!
- **30 mins - Breakout discussions:** As soon as the introduction is over, go into smaller breakout rooms. Discuss reflections from the introduction, own experiences, and what can we do, individually and as a team community, to foster cultures that place real value on relationships.
- **15 mins - Whole group discussion:** Ask for a volunteer from small groups to share the top themes that came out of their discussion, then open up the floor for reflections.
- **5 mins - Closing reflections:** Spend 30 seconds in strictest silence individually reflecting on the discussion, and share a closing reflection in chat. Use a prompt to get people thinking about practical next steps: "One practical step I will take away from the discussions is...". As you close, remember to ask participants to share their feedback on the discussion.



# Evaluation

We asked participants for their reflections on the session. **10 participants** responded to our feedback survey.

Their reflections included:

**100**

% of respondents would recommend an event like this to a colleague.

**100**

% of respondents agreed this event provided them with time for reflection on their leadership practice.

**100**

% of respondents agreed this event felt like a psychologically safe space.

## What participants said about this event

- “It was a great time to reflect and think about things that I don't often get a chance or time to, and hearing from others.”
- “It provided quite a lot of insight into current challenges in the sector and practical ideas of how these can potentially be addressed.”
- “Lots for me to digest and reflect on and also opportunities to gain further knowledge with the links that were shared!”
- “There was a great spread of participants with a wide range of experiences shared.”

# Thank you

If you have any questions about anything in this pack or any of the events in the series, feel free to contact us at [esther@kscopehealth.org.uk](mailto:esther@kscopehealth.org.uk).