Reflect & Connect Pack

The impact of providing space to learn

Leadership Theme - Motivating & Inspiring

Digital Community Event

20th June 2023

How to use this pack

Leading to Change

If you attended this event...

- **Use this pack as 'reflective practice'** to ask yourself some questions to build on your learning from the event:
  - Revisit the **Our Focus** page to:
    - Ask yourself the **questions offered for consideration**
    - Choose one or more **resources offered for consideration** to help you reflect on the questions
  - Revisit the real stories by watching a video on the **Our Contributors** page
  - Read the **Our Collective Learning, Key Discussion Themes** and **Personal Reflections** page to explore the themes, ideas, comments and take away points from the participants who attended the live event
- **Finally ask yourself:**
  - What have I learned from this event, in the moment and now?
  - What one thing will I do differently going forward?

If you are using this for connection...

- **Use this as a resource pack** to use in a team meeting, in person or online event.
  - **Review** the pack in order to understand:
    - The why and how on the **Our Focus** page
    - Who was involved in the collective learning from the **Our Community** page – this offers insight to where our participants came from
    - Watch the real stories from **Our Contributors** page
    - Read the **Our Contributors' Learning, Our Collective Learning** and **Personal Reflections** pages to explore the themes, ideas, comments and take away points from the participants who attended the live event
    - **Revisit** the **Our Focus** page to find resources and provocations
  - **Decide** what kind of event or session you want to run and with whom
  - **Check out** our DIY Guide to hosting a 1 hour conversation and our community resource Creating safe spaces online : 6 practises to build psychological safety
- **Contact us** if you have any questions or would like some support to set up or run a session using this pack. We are very happy to help! Email the team

Our focus

The Impact of Providing Space to Learn as part of our leadership capability theme of Motivating and Inspiring.

We explored how providing space to learn has impact for self and others in your team and discussed what this meant for us.

We were joined by real leaders who do this well. They spoke about their personal experience of providing and receiving the benefits of having space to learn and shared practical ways to create this space for others.

Questions offered for consideration

- In your experience, what has enabled or challenged your opportunity to learn?
- What have you accomplished when you have had space to learn? What difference did it make and how did it feel?
- What does the word 'learning' bring up for you?
- How do you create space for your learning or the learning of others?

Resources offered for consideration

8 mins read – The most important skill to thrive in the future of work by Fearless Culture

2 mins watch - How to motivate the unmotivated by Simon Sinek

22 mins listen - The role of the leader and continuous learning in the reskilling era by McKinsey

30 mins engage - we offer the Leading to Change app and Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) if you want to explore your career and development aspirations - your report is available immediately on completion, is only available to you to share as you want and the final pages offer some questions to help you identify what development you may want to take next. The link above tells you everything you need to know.

Our contributors

With a focus on storytelling and reflections, our contributors shared their experience and insight.

Watch Alan's video

Watch Anna's video

Watch Gary's Video

Alan Wilson
Director of Estates, Facilities and Capital Planning
NHS Highland

Anna Alexander
General Manager – Professional Development
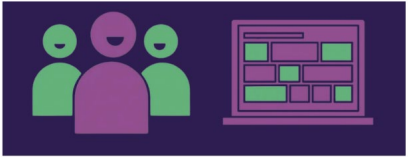Medicine Directorate
NHS Education for Scotland

Gary Paul
Scottish Clinical Leadership Fellow
NHS Education for Scotland

Our contributors' learning

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- 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.
- We invited the community to listen to our contributors, explore what this means for us, and what practical learning we can take away using breakout groups to enable real conversations and connections.

Alan Wilson reflected on his own development opportunities and how this shapes his approach

Some managers gave you that space and gave you that time and they benefited a lot more. Other ones didn't give you anything and you had to go home at night and sit to 2 in the morning and do all your work. And then you could imagine how much you performed when you came in the following day. I was supported right through... and I've managed to come out the other end and make a career within the NHS.

I decided why not follow the steps that I'd been given opportunities and why did we not grow our own talent? So that went right from apprenticeships right through to people doing post grad diplomas and strategic management and leadership. We were able to develop a pathway but the main thing was we then had to allow each of the different stages of people to have the space within their working week to be able to concentrate on their studies

If we don't allow that space, the performance we will get back from our colleagues will only be as good as if we put in that opportunity for them to develop within the workplace to go and do a piece of work and I think that's the bit that's missing. Because the benefits in my experience far outweigh the negativity of not allowing them time.

Anna Alexander shared practical approaches that have been successful for her and her team

Learning from mentors over the years has been really valuable... never necessarily formally but just really good role models... and I guess I've just tried to always pay that forward to my team as I've been growing into different roles.

We try and include everyone in conversations or projects as they're kicking off so that they can really understand the why, why are we doing this?... that really helps with people's learning and seeing the evolution of ideas coming forward... it helps us see a problem and solutions from all those different viewpoints.

... permission to fail... it's giving people space to go away and try something that we've never tried before... giving people permission to see what works, take the learning from it but be prepared to say that didn't work or is there some room here to refine it.

We've been working hard on our ways of working... we're thinking of trialling putting a half hour in your diary at a time that you feel at your most alert or creative, that permission in your day and week to carve out some time to go and read that thing or listen to that podcast.

Gary Paul shared experiences of both his clinical and most recent leadership development

When I did the first part of my anaesthetics training, time was protected for teaching... just knowing that that time was sacred made you feel like your learning was important; it was something the organisation and the teams you worked in cared enough about and that you should prioritise it as well.

Being that bit more aware that time and space for learning means completely different things for different people and if you're not curious about what the people in your team need, then you probably won't find out.

(On being approved for the SCLF programme)... I felt they trusted me to know myself, that I would benefit from it and felt the learning I got from it would be valued and deemed important. It leaves me reflecting on my colleagues, who are maybe thinking nobody really thinks that giving me space or time for learning is important and I think how demoralising that can be.

I think going back into training that I would really endeavour to highlight and focus on the negative and the comments or practices or cultures that are getting in the way of it feeling like learning is a priority.

Our collective learning

Apprenticeships that are not academic or technical are a great idea

The importance of leaders valuing the development of relationships as the basis/foundation of career development discussions with colleagues seems central to how we retain and develop colleagues.

How learning is facilitated is key to engaging and creating a safe learning environment

Having a role model, good manager and mentor that recognise your potential, provide guidance and will inspire and nurture you is the key to our learning and development.

Others' opinions can stop you applying for development – 'if you are only a band X, why are you trying to jump?' Or 'there are others who have been here longer and who should get that opportunity'

Learning styles was a good prompt – do I know my own and do my team know theirs? This is a chance to start a conversation about this in our teams

No wrong path

Being curious

As much as we say everyone has 20% of their time to do CPD or work they like that we don't have space for, it's likely more like 5%, or done in own time. Capacity is tight. We are lucky enough to shut down once or twice a year for a learning week, which is great, but not enough.

There is a retention issue – if newly qualified nurses as part of flying start for example aren't given time to do statutory and mandatory training, never mind wider personal development there is a damaging message for their future career

Hard to grow your own talent in smaller organisations however you are able to do things like take a week out to focus on learning. If not a reactive service then this is really effective way to focus as an organisation and to show the culture values learning.

It's struck me in my short time in the NHS that support to access development opportunities, formal and informal, very much depends on the extent to which line managers value learning and recognise the benefits of both role specific and career development learning.

Learning and development is the first thing to be cancelled or not prioritised when short staffed. This is likely to be linked to what people, teams and organisations are judged on. Should there be a learning metric?

Sometimes the biggest risk is not trying, not changing.

Some people just don't want to learn more and that's ok

There is a significant richness to the learning experience if there are face to face elements. Everything from human connection to additional accountability while understanding that not everything neds to be F2F – there should be some element of this

Supporting the planning details for staff to attend learning can be the thing that means people feel able to commit – i.e. venue, shift cover

Accessing opportunities for development and growth often relates to who you report to. Leaders having a key role in supporting their teams develop and creating safe spaces to experiment and fail.

Recognise individual level of learning ability and style.

I wonder what the impact of the prevailing culture has on learning - a system in crisis, fear of failure is much less likely to prioritise learning for individuals and teams

Is there a legacy suppression of staff? Hierarchy gives our messages of 'wait your turn' – in comparison to military 'tell us what development you need'

Some places still promote on time served rather than skills and /or leadership ability

In my experience, only some managers have supported my development (and still do even after leaving) - I think this has made them the better managers and leaders. A lot of times managers were managers as they were good at the job, not good at managing and leading.

It's not all academic

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Personal reflections

What is your one key reflection from your discussions?

- The importance of increasing flexibility in opportunities for colleagues both to facilitate and access learning. Rigid options don't suit all, but might suit some - creation of multi-option access to learning so that colleagues choose the option that's right for them, in their context.
- Knowing the team well is of high importance. I will combine an appreciative inquiry with the what matters to me template to get to know the team better as I am new in post. This will enable me to facilitate their education more effectively

What is one practical step you will take to apply the learning from today?

- Opening up discussions with team members on how they like to learn and what we can do to set them up for success in general.
- I will be sharing the most alert time of day and ringfence for learning with whole team as I think this is a simple but really effective tip!
- To look at what matters to me template. We are revising our supervision/team meeting templates. Think it might be useful...
- We deliver education for the organisation, so sometimes it's about being realistic about what is achievable on a mass number, but having different aspects within the sessions, such as simulation, practical, videos etc

Feedback insights

- Thank you so much, this has been a really helpful space.
- Very insightful and inclusive conversations. Really enjoyed connecting with colleagues and hearing their perspectives on learning.
- Excellent session, informal, good mix of lived experience and discussion.
- Useful as it encouraged me to think about our system and context.
- It made me think about my leadership practice in an encouraging way

Final reflections

- Culture is critical and the behaviours of leaders underpins all of it. The most senior leaders in the organisation need to follow through with the rhetoric and 'walk the talk' and hold a firm line when it comes to learning.
- Trust is key – I am energised when I am trusted to find development that is right for me and to pursue. I feel valued and I'm then more enthusiastic to find out what I need to help me deliver and also to help develop the team.
- The importance on having a flexible and inclusive approach in how development opportunities are planned and delivered. Very often people want to engage and learn but cannot attend due to scheduling. This creates a misunderstanding that certain groups 'don't want to engage' in learning.

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Moving forward
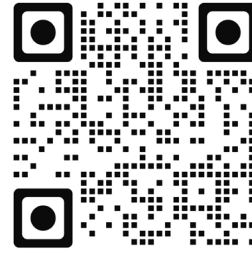
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▶ **Tell us more** hello@leadingtochange.scot

  ▶ We read and reflect on all feedback we receive which shapes our future events. Do you have anything you wish to share?
  ▶ How did you use this Reflect & Connect pack? What was useful or what would you like to see?
  ▶ We would love to hear your ideas for potential topics and contributors
  ▶ Do you have thoughts and learning to share? Would you like to write a blog or know someone who could? Our team can fully support you with this.

▶ **To find out more**, please explore

  ▶ Our community resources – read our latest report or watch a 3 minute key summary, consider our community created assets or watch our short animations
  ▶ Our many leadership, sector and programme resources available to read, watch and engage with from internal and external sources

▶ We hope to see you again soon at one of our next events – scan the QR code above to find out more

Thank You!