

# Community events series

Courageous Conversations:

Unlocking the leadership potential in ourselves and others

26 January 2022

# Community event series

Throughout the [Project Lift Community Engagement Events 2020/21](#) we explored the ‘what’ of leadership - together establishing the 12 indicators of good leadership. In the latest [Community Events Series 2021/22](#), we aim to collectively explore the ‘how’ of good leadership - how we practically live these indicators in our everyday.

During this series, we aim to build on the 12 indicators and collectively explore what these look like in practice. We will be opening up some key leadership conversations of the moment to inspire, connect, learn and grow together as a community of leaders in health, social care, and social work.

On 26 January 2022, we invited Project Lift community members and sector leaders to come together to explore ‘**Unlocking the leadership potential in ourselves and others**’ and what opportunities can emerge within our own teams and organisations by doing so.

For this event, we were delighted to welcome a small group of leaders from different parts of Health and Social Care in Scotland. They have a wide range of backgrounds and skills, and all met and connected as part of **cohort 3 of Project Lift’s leadership cubed development offering**.

## 12 indicators of good leadership



This pack provides an overview of the discussions.

# Courageous conversations: Unlocking the leadership potential in ourselves and others

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

1. Support the collective understanding of how to implement the key indicators of good leadership across healthcare and social services in Scotland.
2. Explore what it takes to unlock the leadership potential in ourselves and others.
3. Provide participants with a chance to build connections, feel energised and inspired, and a safe space for learning and reflection.

## 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?



Project Lift 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 Project Lift's reach and connect to more of the system, and so these events were open to all.

We were joined by **88 colleagues** from across health, social care, and social work in Scotland.

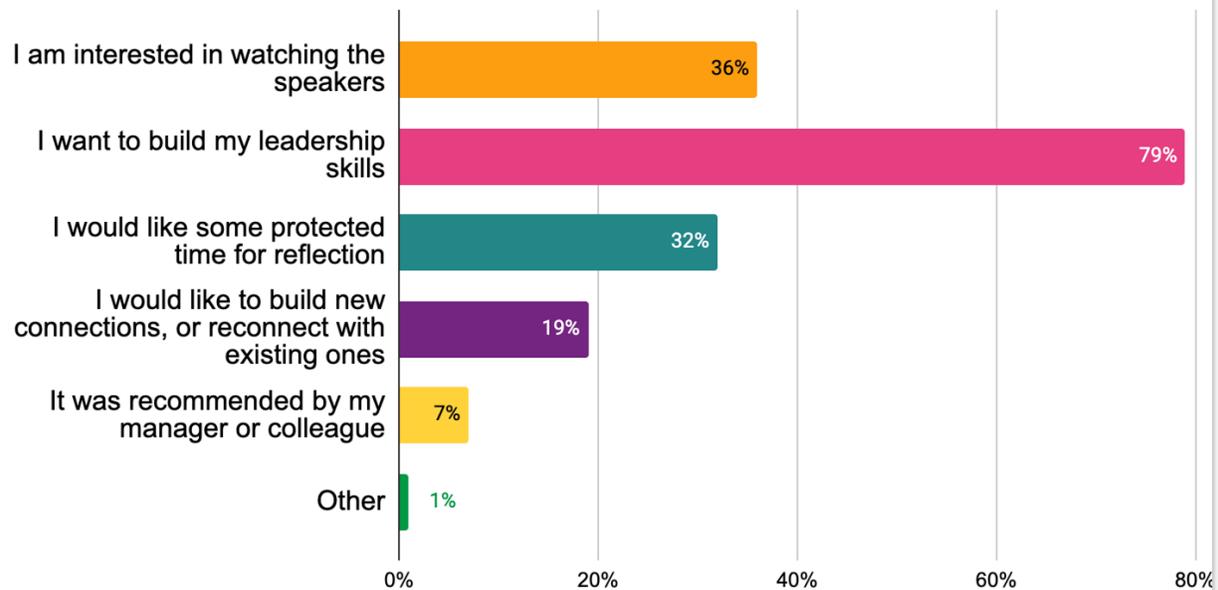
Participants joined us from across the system, including those working in occupational therapy, pharmacy, equality and diversity, management social work and more.

This included a range of organisations across Scotland, including Scottish Borders and Highland Council, Public Health Scotland, Alzheimer Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service and NHS organisations in: Lothian, Tayside, Lanarkshire and more.

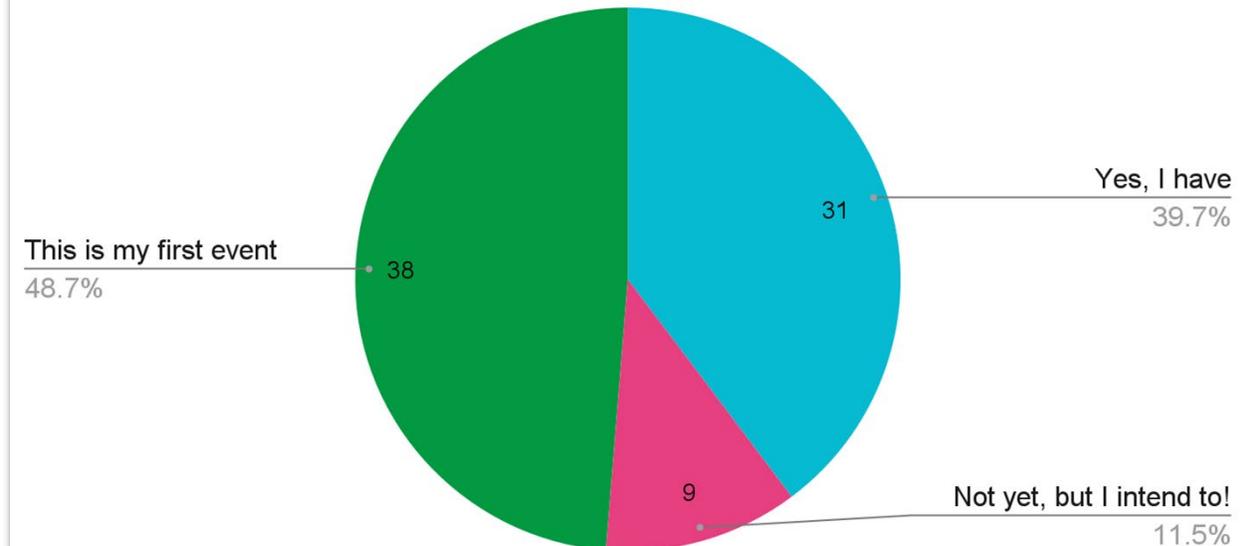
# Section 1: Welcome and introductions

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 **‘If you’ve attended a Project Lift event before, have you applied any of the learning from it’** during the session.

### Why are you signing up for this event?



### If you’ve attended a Project Lift event before, have you applied any of the learning from it yet?



78 participants responded to the poll. Just under half of respondents were attending their first Project Lift event. Over a third of respondents have applied their learnings from a previous event. The majority of participants were primarily looking to build their leadership skills, watch the speakers and have protected time for reflection.

# Section 2: Opening perspectives (1/3)

We then opened up the discussion by hearing from our speakers, who shared their own experiences on why it really means to be a great leader in an integrated health and social care system. We asked them to reflect on the following:

**“When has someone recognised potential in you, and how did it make you feel? When have you recognised potential in someone else?”**



**Scott Heald**

Director of Data Driven Innovation,  
Public Health Scotland



**Helena Jackson**

Territorial Board Sponsorship and Ministerial Support,  
Directorate for Performance and Delivery,  
Health and Social Care,  
Scottish Government



**Jenny Wilson**

Interim Nurse Director,  
NHS Ayrshire and Arran

# Section 2: Opening perspectives (2/3)

“When has someone recognised potential in you, and how did it make you feel?”

**Scott Heald** hosted the conversation with Helena and Jenny, who reflected on their leadership journey to date. **They spoke about key moments throughout their career when they felt their leadership potential had been recognised, and the impact it had.**

**Jenny Wilson** reflected that **understanding your values** as a leader can help you to understand, and build confidence in, **what others see in you**. For example, Jenny bases a lot of her leadership on relationships and trust. She believes she first recognised her own potential because she knew building strong relationships was so important to her. By developing this understanding, she was then able to showcase her skills more and others started to recognise she had leadership potential.

**Helena Jackson** recalled significant moments in her career where colleagues have asked her to **step into roles because they recognised her potential**. However, she reflected that this is a fairly traditional view on leadership and **sometimes the appraisal systems can lack real meaning and purpose**. Helena reflected on the time when her line manager (from her secondment) went out of their way to make sure her substantive employer knew just how much of an impact Helena had on the team. Helena recalls being taken back by this gesture as no one had ever done this for her before. It made her feel valued, engaged and more confident in her abilities.

Scott also recalled a moment where a colleague encouraged him to apply for a position that he hadn't considered. He noted that despite not being successful in getting the position, it **exposed him to an opportunity he otherwise wouldn't have thought about**.

Jenny highlighted that **we all have the opportunity to recognise the potential in others, it can happen across all levels of an organisation**. Many of us may suffer from 'imposter syndrome' and if we can recognise the potential in others, it could prompt us to reflect on our own potential. Jenny also reflected that it is our **responsibility as leaders to give our colleagues the space and autonomy they need to fulfil their leadership potential**. It's about **knowing when to step in and when to take a step back and give others the space to flourish**.

# Section 2: Reflections from participants (3/3)

Our speakers' opening perspectives inspired a lot of discussion from participants, who shared their reflections...

## ...on supporting others

"You never do forget how someone's actions make you feel - what a lovely gift to get, and give."

"It makes you remember people are individuals and all have key factors."

"Nothing gives me greater or deeper joy to see someone owning their potential and embracing their skills and talents - it tops me up too!"

"Enabling and empowering people to flourish has a real ripple effect of joy for leaders and teams as a whole."

"It doesn't take much to take the time to do this with others, in a genuine and meaningful way."

## ...on the role of leadership

"Recognising that leadership happens at all levels, which means development is key."

"You are human beings first, leader second."

"Balancing when to step in and step back in supporting and empowering others to realise their potential is a great point."

## ...on personal barriers

"I'd love to mentor someone, but impostor syndrome is a barrier."

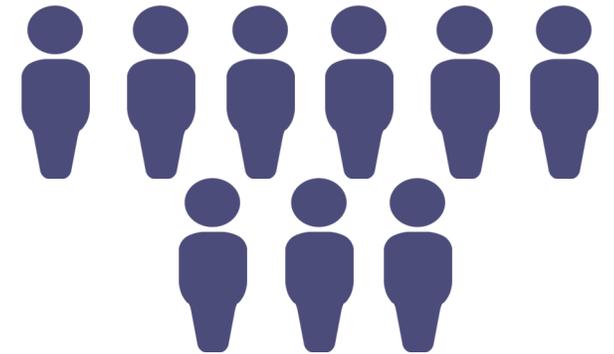
# Breakout discussions

# Section 3: Breakout discussions (1/4)

We then went into breakout rooms to discuss what we had heard and explore our own experiences.

Reflecting on what you have heard and your own experiences, discuss:

- **When did someone recognise your potential?** What impact did it have on you, how did you feel and what was the outcome?
- How can we better **support ourselves and others** to recognise and realise their leadership potential?



# Section 3: Breakout discussions (2/4)

Participants first shared their opening reflections and their responses to the prompt **“When did someone recognise your potential? What impact did it have on you, how did you feel and what was the outcome?”** Key themes from the discussions included:

## Colleagues reflected on when someone recognised their potential:

- “Two years ago, my line manager approached me and suggested I should take on a degree. I thought that time had passed for me - but the fact she saw the potential in me meant a lot to me. I applied for the course and finished it last year and that has opened doors for me. If that hadn't happened I wouldn't have done it.”
- “Someone encouraged me to apply for a secondment where I am now. I didn't think I had the skills needed. Being given that encouragement spurred me on.”
- “One of the managers I had in my early career was massively encouraging. She always wanted to empower people - it was an open door policy which actually was true... She encouraged me to take a year out of service and held the job for me. I'd gone into it straight from school and she allowed me to have that break.”

## The impact someone recognising your potential can have:

- It feels good to know someone else believes in you, perhaps more than you believe in yourself.
- It can increase your confidence in your capabilities.
- When others recognize potential in you, it makes you more willing to be bold and actively recognise the potential of others.
- You realise the impact it can have on someone's self esteem so you want to support more people.
- It reveals our blind spots and areas of growth in a constructive way.
- It builds stronger, more personal relationships with your colleagues/ teams.

# Section 3: Breakout discussions (3/4)

We then explored the question “**How can we better support ourselves and others to recognise and realise their leadership potential?**”. Key themes from the discussions included:

- **Imposter Syndrome** - lots of participants shared their experiences of imposter syndrome as a key factor holding people back from realising their own potential. If we can even just recognise when we're doubting ourselves, it can help you to take back control of our growth and development.
- **People before job titles** - behind every job title is a person with unique interests, talents, desires and skills. Getting to know ourselves better, and others, can help us to discover what gives us energy and sparks joy.
- **Role modelling** - it's important to be for others what you would like for yourself. If other people see you actively support others, they will be more likely to mirror that behaviour and create a positive, supportive environment.
- **Make time for reflection little and often** - if you struggle to think about yourself, put dates in your diary every few months to do a stock take on where you're at.
- **Create spaces for your team to reflect** - whether it's during 1:1's or creating meetings with 'no agenda', have spaces for your team to get to know each other.
- **Embrace vulnerability** - don't be afraid to be vulnerable and be open that you have things to learn, it helps others do the same.

# Section 3: Breakout discussions (4/4)

Several colleagues shared their personal **tips and tricks** on overcoming some of the challenges to realising our own potential and the potential of others:

## Combatting Imposter Syndrome:

- **Patience and self compassion** - most people have experienced imposter syndrome in some way before. Be kind to yourself like you would be to others.
- **Encourage use of plain English** - we've all struggled to keep up in a meeting because of the level of jargon and acronyms used. If leaders encourage the use of plain English more, it could increase confidence in certain spaces.
- **Create space for honest, constructive feedback** - the more we get used to receiving feedback (in a format that we are comfortable with), we will be more aware of our blind spots. This can help us feel more empowered about our development rather than worrying about what we could be doing wrong.
- **Mentoring/ coaching** - can be a valuable way to work through challenges and gain a better understanding yourself. It takes confidence to approach someone to be a mentor, but it has the potential to reap many benefits.

## Building stronger relationships:

- **Meetings with 'no purpose'** - have open times in the diary where there is no agenda to rush through, the main aim is for colleagues to get to know each other better. This creates space to learn more about the person behind the job title, and their ambitions.
- **Keep a record of achievements, big and small** - encourage your team to create a personal folder to record of all the positive things they accomplish. Whether it's positive feedback they receive or a piece of work they're proud of. Make time to look in the folder to reflect on your achievements.

# Section 3: Whole group sharing (5/5)

As we heard the key themes that came out of discussion groups, participants shared their individual reflections and what was important to them, answering the question **“What is your one key reflection from your discussions?”**

“The power of an authentic thank you.”

“Compliment yourself as well as others.”

“Stay true to your values and accept those of others, be interested / positive and KIND.”

“Recognising our own gifts and pushing forward regardless.”

“A gesture doesn't need to be big to be meaningful.”

“Taking time to reflect on self and your attributes and strengths.”

“Recognising we all have unique contributions and to celebrate them.”

“We are all people before being either leaders or workers - acting with that foremost.”

“Knowing what are our personal limits that sometimes need to flex.”

“If we see potential in others, find the best way to show them what you see.”

“Make the time to get to know the type of feedback individual staff might most benefit from.”

“Be open to be vulnerable to others, it's not a sign of weakness but of strength to show your vulnerability.”

“I think that openness, humility, and curiosity is actually a strength.”

“Small and authentic has more impact than big and impersonal.”

“Lean into imposter syndrome - its a wicked chimp that is holding you back!”

“Focus a bit more on the relationship and understanding how people work as opposed to constantly giving specific ideas/instructions.”

# Final reflections

# Section 4: 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?”**

“Intentionally build more meaningful relationships with self, team and others in organisations.”

“I’m going to explore more around leaning in to imposter syndrome.”

“It doesn't have to be big to be meaningful and the importance of thanking others and taking time to reflect on and support releasing others potential, particularly when there is so much potential out there.”

“I plan to take a leaf out of Helena’s book and take time on a Friday to review and identify and thank individual staff members for good work/ stand out practice, kindness shown etc.”

“Celebrating all contributions, big and small...seeing the person behind the job title.”

“Improving connecting with others, as new in post, seek out colleagues that I can support, for the benefit of sustaining the good reputation of the organisation's culture.”

“I will seek a mentor to build more confidence in myself.”

“Value the fact that I'm interested in getting to know people and understanding their motivations and interests as an asset for leadership. And stop feeling bad about spending time just chatting!”

“Making sure that I give positive feedback regularly - little and often and also seeking it out.”

“Recognise efforts and give positive feedback when possible. Also support staff in allowing them to think for themselves and giving reassurance where I can.”

“Get a good balance between being kind and being constructive in my criticism of myself, others and the wider team.”

“Learn to use the MS Team's reward system.”

“I will compliment myself more.”

“Journaling for myself and I will discuss this session with my team.”

# 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. 19 participants responded to our feedback survey.

Their reflections included:

94

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

95

% of respondents agreed this session enhanced their leadership skills

What participants said about the event:

- “There was a real effort to signal and to invite the involvement of the participants and to maintain a sense of enthusiasm by being upbeat about it.”
- “I feel much more informed on leadership tools.”
- “It felt collaborative and people sharing their experiences and non judgemental.”
- “These sessions have helped me engage with others across H&SC, reinforced some of my feelings and learning that has taken place (mainly during the pandemic) and enables you take time out to reflect and grow as an individual.”

# 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 [hello@kscopehealth.org.uk](mailto:hello@kscopehealth.org.uk).