

Community events series

Courageous Conversations:
The future will be made by us, together

2 March 2022



Community event series - Illuminating Leadership

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 2 March 2022, we invited Project Lift community members and sector leaders to come together to explore the topic **‘The future will be made by us, together’**. We aimed to disentangle management and leadership, the purposes they serve, the skills they require, and who exactly they involve.

12 indicators of good leadership



This event was part of Collective Leadership for Scotland’s festival, [Illuminating Leadership 2022](#). This was a global online festival aiming to shed light on the benefits and opportunities, as well as challenges of collective, systems- and place-based leadership.

Courageous Conversations: The future will be made by us, together

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 might take to enact collaborative leadership in our organisations.
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 **70 colleagues** from across health, social care, and social work in Scotland.

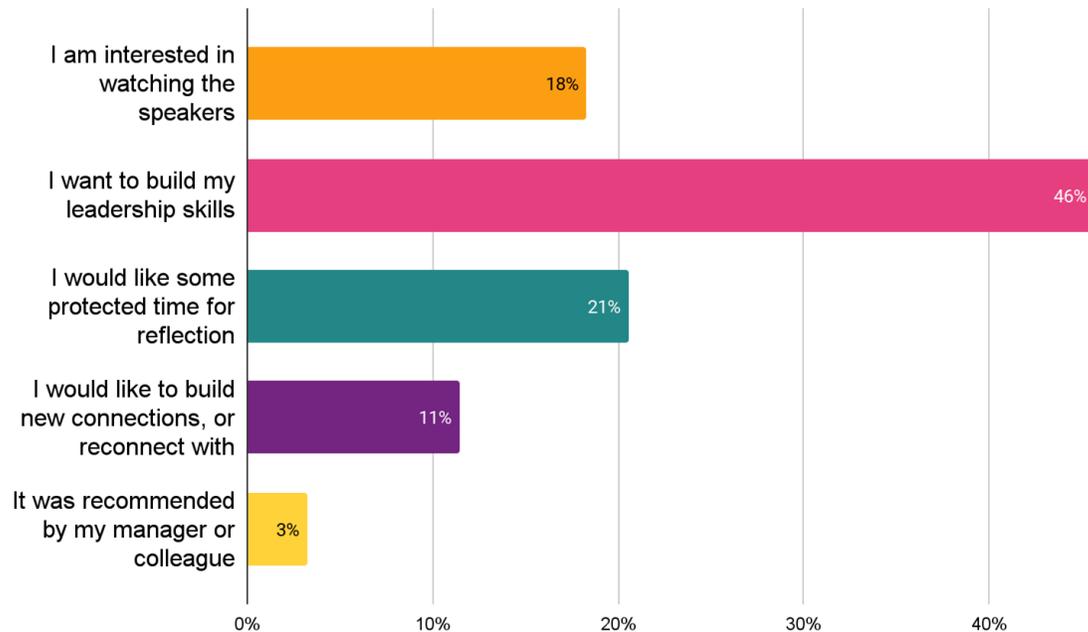
Participants joined us from across the system, including those working in learning and development, nursing, psychology, management and more.

This included a range of organisations across Scotland, including Public Health Scotland, Falkirk Council, NHS Education for Scotland, University of Dundee, NHS organisations in: Fife, Tayside and more.

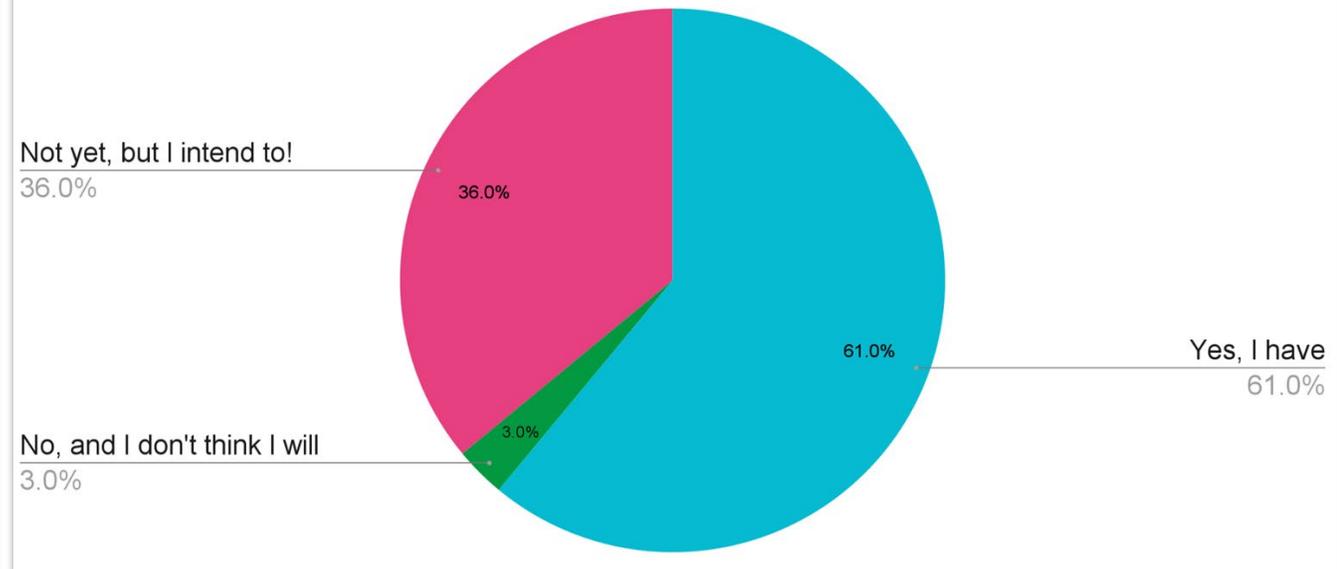
Section 1: Welcome and introductions

To understand more about who was in the room, we ask participants: **‘Why are you signing up to 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 learnings yet?’** during the session.

Why are you signing up for this event?



If you’ve attended a Project Lift event before, have you applied any learnings?



33 participants responded to the poll. **Over half of respondents** have already applied something they learnt at a Project Lift event. The majority of participants joined the event to **build their leadership skills, watch the speakers and have protected time for reflection.**

Section 2: Opening perspectives (1/2)

We then opened up the discussion by hearing from our speaker, **Barbara Simpson**, who shared her own experiences on why it really means to be a great leader in an integrated health and social care system. Barbara reflected on the following question: “**What do we really mean by leadership, management and everything in between - and what does this means for our future?**”



Barbara Simpson

Professor of Leadership and Organisational Dynamics, Strathclyde Business School

Barbara believes that while management and leadership are both necessary, they are **two distinct functions and serve different purposes**, and are sometimes carried out by different people across an organisation.

Barbara shared that management is all about **controlling the means available to accomplish certain tasks or goals**. This is a **convergent** process because it brings all the resources and people together within an organisation in the hope it will achieve a specific goal or target. Barbara also noted that management is identifiable - it is what defines an organisation’s hierarchy and signifies who holds what responsibility within an organisation.

In contrast, Barbara believes that leadership is a **creative process of future making**. It’s a **divergent** process, where, unlike management, **you don’t always know what direction you’re heading in**. Leadership may come from anywhere in the organisation from any desk or from any role across the organisation.

Barbara highlighted three key skills to support our own leadership approach

- **Dialogue** - trying to understand a situation from someone else’s perspective
- **Improvisation** - building something new in a creative way
- **Empathy** - there is a real need to care for one another as we all face so much uncertainty in the environments we are currently working in

Barbara believes these three skills are fundamental to for collaborative future making.

Section 2: Opening perspective - reflections (2/2)

Barbara's opening perspective inspired a lot of discussion from participants, who shared their reflections...

...on supporting colleagues

"People will develop at different rates. It is sometimes seen as linear."

"I think it is hard for some staff to get this. Particularly junior staff don't see themselves as leaders but they are. I like the idea that anyone can lead."

"I think there's a bigger issue with senior staff not encouraging junior staff to act as leaders."

"We need to encourage colleagues, right from the start of their career, to see themselves as leaders."

...on leadership approaches

"The difference between management and leadership = Convergent and Divergent - Leadership for all levels."

"The uncertainty of knowing where you are going is interesting, there is no doubt it is true in many instances from my own perspective but when teams are looking to the 'leader' to have the answers, the confidence etc, it can be a scary place to be."

"It's so important for leaders to listen, so they hear and respond to leadership improvisations from others, including 'juniors' or people not in a named leadership position."

Section 3: Breakout discussions (1/3)

We then went into breakout rooms to discuss what we had heard and explore our own experiences, with the prompt questions:

- **What is your experience of dialogue and improvisation within your organisation?**
- **When do we see new futures come about in our organisations?**
- **What could be different?**

Key themes from the discussions included:

On dialogue...

- Shared dialogue can be helpful, especially if you feel you are not being heard or colleagues don't appear to know what is needed or what could change. However, since the pandemic dialogue has felt more technical, and we need to remember that **human connection is important**.
- We need to each think what part of our work would **benefit from more dialogue and improvisation** and take actions towards embedding this in our working environments.

On improvisation and learning...

- Improvisation is key for leadership and developing new futures, but some discussed how this feels also important to **management, because the goals posts and targets are changing everyday**, everyone, managers and leaders, are constantly having to adapt.
- We need more of a culture of '**no mistakes, only learning**' so that new ideas can be tried without fear of failure restricting potential gains. We should encourage and reward people for improvisation, making change, energising and innovative.

Section 3: Breakout discussions (2/3)

Key themes continued...

On supporting colleagues and remote working...

- There was an overwhelming agreement we should continue to **focus on caring for each other to retain skilled colleagues** across the system.
- Working in a virtual way can mean we lose dialogue with multidisciplinary teams and we **no longer have the 'corridor conversations'**, which are really important in shaping relationships.
- By shifting to remote working, online training and development has become more accessible, particularly to colleagues in remote locations.

On responding to change and 'new futures'

- We need to **invest time and space to bring people with us as leaders** – if we keep pressing on with the next task, we can lose that connection.
- The era where we look to leadership in one place has passed. Looking forward, it's a necessity to have **leadership at every level**, in every task and we have a duty to create the conditions for this to flourish.
- Some colleagues were concerned that we won't see any big changes over the next few years due to such high levels of burnout from the pandemic. Do we still need a focus on **workforce recovery** to lay the foundation for new futures to flourish?

Section 3: Whole group sharing (3/3)

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 **“Reflecting on our discussions so far, what could be different?”**

“Softer skills are really difficult to speak about and develop. Often they are undervalued so great to see the focus shifting.”

“The importance of enabling newer/less confident staff to come forward and lead.”

“Improvisation is constant at present for both leadership and management.”

“Students could have more learning / support for collaborative leadership - so they can know and believe they can be leaders from the off.”

“Covid has meant we have had to work differently. We need to give all staff permission to be creative and have ideas.”

“Building on shift to value leadership & caring skills. Incorporating into every day function”

“We talked about vision and values, and the intersect of dialogue to support the way through 'conflict' of values and practice and personal vs organisational values.

“Get a balance between working face to face and using the tech.”

“Volunteers and charitable organisations could be recognised as partners in the Health and Social Care landscape with better connections and trust in community-lead services rather than top down from planners and commissioners.

“The future can be the blue sky that we dream about, be willing to show your own vulnerabilities - nobody knows everything! We can achieve more as a team. Being creative to make time and space to allow the creativity flow.”

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?”**

“Look at how we share back ideas that have been received have been fully engaged with and what happened/s next (and if nothing, why not).”

“Will make sure that 'dialogue/improvisation/ caring are featured behaviours in our new competency framework.”

“Introduce ‘time to listen’ into a small team meeting next week. Not sure how but will start this conversation.”

“Actively listening coupled with questions to start dialogue.”

“Look at how we actively listen to colleagues and provide them opportunities for true leadership.”

“Discuss with other manages how we create spaces for staff to discuss ideas and leadership opportunities.”

“Increase the number of ‘spaces for listening’ sessions we offer between Health and Social care colleagues.”

“Look to rebuild connections and therefore dialogue with the wider MDT/hospital management team.”

“Be creative to enable space and time for the team to share.”

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:

100

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

100

% of respondents agreed this session provided them time for reflection on their leadership practice

What participants said about the event:

- "Great mix of colleagues from across health and care, third sector."
- "The content is relevant and motivating. I feel like I want to be a better leader."
- "Interesting group conversations and material from [the] primary speaker - liked the idea of convergent and divergent."
- "Excellent conversation and networking event."
- "The topics are really interesting and the chance to delve deeper with colleagues across Scotland is hugely beneficial."
- "Very informative and interesting. I left very motivated to share what I learned and act on teaching."

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.