



Beyond the comfort zone

Laura Mizzi writes on the benefits of developing leadership skills



Leadership development is vital to ensure excellent patient care across the whole health and social care system, and in order to be a supportive colleague. While there tends to be a glass ceiling for senior AHP leadership roles – which NHS England’s Chief AHP office continues to challenge nationally – as SLTs on the ground, we need to be creative about our personal development.

Keen to develop my leadership skills, I was aware of the Future Leaders Programme (FLP) run by Health Education England (HEE), Yorkshire and Humber, but lacked the confidence to apply. When I heard that a vacancy was being advertised within my trust, I plucked up the courage to go for it and to my surprise I was successful.

What’s great about the FLP is that it’s interprofessional: fellows include doctors, dentists, nurses, AHPs, pharmacists and healthcare scientists. Working alongside a diverse range of healthcare



LAURA MIZZI

professionals has enabled me to learn in ways that wouldn’t have otherwise been possible. For example, I’ve learnt how medical and dental trainees’ views of quality improvement can be shaped via what they need to complete for their annual appraisal. This made me


consider how my own training and career pathway has shaped my views. And by being aware of how others train and develop in their professional role, I can better understand colleagues’ behaviour, for example when managing dysphagia risk in the community. Furthermore, since many doctors and dentists are expected to publish articles, the FLP runs a course on writing for publication, which pushed me into writing this!

The FLP focuses on personal development and helps you to achieve this through various means: meeting senior leaders, accessing relevant courses, completing a postgraduate certificate in leadership or medical education, and undertaking leadership projects. As a result, I am much more self-aware, confident and


skilled as a leader. I would never have considered myself a leader prior to the fellowship – I now believe that everyone is a leader at different stages on that journey.


The FLP certainly took me outside my comfort zone, but this was necessary to push me along. In my final year, I gave a workshop on interprofessional leadership at the International Clinical Microsystem Festival in Sweden – something I’ve discovered I’m very passionate about. I also gave the closing speech at our FLP conference, which I would never have volunteered to do in previous years.

I have now returned to speech and language therapy and look forward to using the skills I’ve developed. I have continued my project with HEE looking at leadership development for those in substantive posts and also plan to complete my master’s degree, investigating AHP leadership.

The FLP has taught me to actively seek opportunities to develop as a leader in order to progress my career. As such, I’ve volunteered as a trustee for a local charity. However you choose to develop as a leader, I wish you all the best on your journey. 

LAURA MIZZI, SLT at Health Education England

 laura.mizzi@nhs.net


I am much more self-aware, confident and skilled as a leader