



RCSLT webinar: Leadership at all levels FAQ document

Chair:

Mary Heritage (MH)

Panellists:

Irma Donaldson (ID)

Vanessa Hayward (VHay)

Carrie Biddle (CB)

Vicky Harris (VHar)

This webinar took place on Thursday 22nd July 2021.

1. How does secondment to government come about? Is this a position you have to apply to, or are people more commonly approached?

Secondments are offered out by a range of arms length bodies like NHSE/Health Education England, Public Health England and wider like Academic Health Science Networks. They are a great way to step outside of your current role to gain experiential leadership experience and skills from a different seat at the table. As development opportunities they are often offered as fellowships to indicate the learning by doing approach. They are advertised on NHS jobs and there is an application process. (CB).

Welsh Government has offered a few secondment opportunities over the last few years and these are advertised and also shared via our local networks, so they are something you would apply to. (VHay)

2. Who or what do you think was your biggest motivation or inspiration to want to be a leader or take on a management role?

I won't say that it's any one person. I have been influenced by experiencing both poor leadership and good management. So I've learnt how not to be and have thought, "I'll never do that!" as well as, "Actually that's awesome! That person is absolutely amazing!" I've reflected on what they did and how they made me feel and why do I want to be like them. So it's two-fold. My inspiration has been saying, "I can do this in a different way. And I can be me doing it." It has come from learning how not to be, as a result of having some poor experiences, as well as having some amazing leaders working with me. So the good, the bad and the ugly have helped me move forward I think. (ID)

I think very similar to Irma actually I definitely had an inspirational role model and that I would like to sort of aspire to be like her really. So she's been within my mind since actually. When I see examples of not such good leadership or management that's learning for me really how I would not want to do things, but also I think just wanting to make a difference and seeing leadership as an opportunity to make a difference. So that definitely inspired me. (VHay)

3. How would you go about encouraging developing leadership skills in our SLT students? I think we need to be developing and encouraging leadership skills right from the get go and not just when we actually qualify

We are always excited to see when students are involved in campaigns like Giving Voice or if they are engaging in Twitter discussions. I think it is a lot easier these days, as I was saying before, to really get your voice out there, and if you have a passion, you now have a platform. So I encourage students to not think of leadership as something to do with more career level, but what are you passionate about? And then seek out the opportunities where you can lead and influence. (VHar)

You can lead with care on anything that matters and is important to you. This can be quality of care, being a great team player, improvement, innovation, being a professional/NHS Ambassador, shining a light on the work of charities that you may be involved with or support. (CB)

There are also some really innovative leadership placements being trialled. In these students get practice based learning in non-patient facing settings,

and can learn more about influencing change from beyond the clinical team. (MH)

I always encourage students and all SLTs and HCSWs (health care support workers) to consider their transferable skills, both from within and outside of SLT, and how these may be applicable to this leadership opportunity, rather than thinking about the skill only in relation to the original activity you took part in. (VHay)

4. What was your biggest challenge when you first started in a leadership/managerial role? And how did you overcome this?

Biggest challenge: keeping yourself in check that your actions align with your words. I continue to spend time reflecting on my values and ensure they shine through my words and behaviours. Be prepared for people to make judgements and have different views and opinions to you. Being able to listen to understand is an important skill that goes beyond listening long enough to respond. You always have a choice as to whether you value the opinion of others and agree or not with what other people say. Diversity of views, thoughts and perspective is a good thing. (CB)

I think feeling that I wasn't enough/ didn't know enough/ wasn't equipped for leadership - trying to emulate managers who had very different communication styles and value sets from my own. The only way I have found to be an effective leader, is to be my authentic self.

5. The 'women in leadership' courses are very popular at the moment yet incredibly pricey and I haven't found anything equivalent in the NHS training programmes. In your experience being women in leadership positions, what do you find the biggest challenges that you face and is there any advice you would offer to your fellow women in leadership?

If you are a member of the RCSLT you can access our Leadership and Influencing online courses for free here: www.rcsltcpd.org.uk and reach out to a leadership mentor here:

<https://www.rcslt.org/members/lifelong-learning/leadership-mentors/>

Anyone can take a look at our leadership guidance here as it is open-access: <https://www.rcslt.org/learning/leadership-resources/> (VHar)

Identify a woman leader who you respect or admire, (and tell them) and ask them whether they would mentor you. That's a very positive thing to hear from a colleague and most would try to make time to help another woman develop, if they could. (MH)

I have recently been recommended the book: How Women Rise by Goldsmith and Helgerson. (VHay)

6. Have you ever experienced 'imposter syndrome' and if so how did you deal with it? -From a relatively new discipline lead (2 years in role) working alongside some very experienced (20+ years in role) colleagues.

Yes, all the time. I think it's important to be yourself and be honest in your role. It's not healthy to compare yourself to others, however much experience they have. Instead reflect on the fact that you were recruited for the role because of your skills, qualities and experience and what you can bring to the team, then focus your energy there. (VHar)

It's helpful to know that almost everyone experiences imposter syndrome, it's normal and we can push through those insecure perceptions by looking for the evidence of our impact. Try to identify three positive things that you have achieved every day, and not to focus too much on the things that didn't go so well. (MH)

What I have learnt through coaching is that keeping at the forefront of your mind-what is my role here and what is my purpose?, can avoid you feeling like an imposter. You successfully acquired your post and you are in your role for a good reason. (VHay)

7. What would your top tips be in supporting experienced SLTs on their leadership journey?

I have quite a number of people contact me, asking me about where do I get my experience if I'm a more senior operational manager looking to go into strategic management. I think it's, looking at what's happening and what you're involved in, what your interests and what your knowledge and skills

are and strengths in that sense that you can offer to support involvement in pathway work, service and team development work or transformation and improvement programmes. You can do it within your role and seek leadership opportunities that way. I also encourage people to consider leadership development as being a whole person approach. You can go and have great leadership experience by being involved as a trustee and a charity outside of work. I am exploring with someone wanting to develop personal leadership skills, going off to do a sailing course where you work as a team, to find out what it's like to be a distributed leader and work on team leadership in a dynamic environment. They're doing it in an outside space and challenging themselves because they don't feel comfortable being at sea. So that vulnerability is it sea, but can they still function? And can they build their resilience in that leadership? Be creative in your learning opportunities. You don't have to just think about formal courses. There's a whole range of other places that you may look to go as a senior leader, wanting to experience that will enable you to take a side step, come to the issue from a different seat at the table that will open up all sorts of things.. (CB)

8. If you have had a mentor, how did you find them and what is their role, how did they support and encourage you?

The RCSLT has some guidance on mentoring and finding a mentor here: <https://www.rcslt.org/learning/mentoring/> (VHar)

9. What NHS leadership programme did Irma do?

I completed the NHS Leadership Academy Ready Now Programme - a year long leadership programme for NHS workers from a BAME background who were employed in the NHS in roles Band 8 and above. I found it hugely challenging on a personal level to integrate who I was as a black woman within the NHS and even more so as a black SLT. The NHS Leadership Academy run several courses aimed at different stages of career development. (ID)

10. How do you shake off the image you have in your head of what a leader is (if you perhaps haven't had role models who do things in a way you would do it). In practical terms- Do you keep a reflective diary? Talk to people outside of work?

I think this is a really good question. And actually it picks up on the other bits around motivational role models or inspirational people that you see, sometimes you can see people that are wearing leadership shoes that don't quite fit. And in trying to emulate what they do, they lose sight of who they are in that space. And it doesn't come across as that kind of authentic believable leadership stance. Leadership is something that starts with you and it comes from within. And so it's about your values. What's important to you is that your actions match your words. And if your experiences, either you've had a really poor experience, you think wherever I'm going to be as a leader, I'm not going to be like that person, or what I value most when I look for leaders is X, Y and Z. Then it's constantly checking yourself and looking in the mirror. So yes, reflective diaries, do lots of reflection, about what I do well? Where can I do better? What would I not do again? Because you all get those uncomfortable moments where afterwards you have a heartsink and you think, I'm never doing it like that again. So those are as important to learn from as well as when things go well. And I think the other thing is, a good test of how good you are as a leader, is what's it like to be on the receiving end of me. You don't lead in a vacuum, you only lead where other people choose to follow. So constantly asking and speaking to people about how is it for them? How are they being received by you? Not in a, tell me how I am doing, but in that constant, trying to understand, listening to understand from their perspective and engage with them is a good way of holding that mirror up to yourself (CB)

I just want to state that everybody is a leader in life, whether you like it or not, actually. There are people who are watching and following you, regardless of what you do and even at home / outside of work. So think about what you're engaged in and what roles you find yourself in at work and outside work? Are you the person that's organizing and making sure everyone's alright and checking in with everybody? There are things we do that are actually demonstrating leadership skills. I think we sometimes put the label leadership on a title or a set of behaviors when actually we are all

leaders in our spheres of influence around something. So it's really identifying how am I influencing other people? What impact am I having on other people in all spheres of life? (ID)

Yes absolutely, keeping a reflective diary, carrying out 360s on your leadership style/approach, securing a coach are all great ways to do this. And take up any leadership training opportunities that come your way. (VHay)

11. How can you overcome imposter syndrome as a leader?

So imposter syndrome, this is back to people like Irma said, it's that paced about putting yourself up there and people either agreeing with you or disagreeing with you, and it makes you feel vulnerable. Leaders should feel able to say what they say with the strength and conviction and belief that they have. If you don't believe it, don't say it, is my role on that. And actually vulnerability is a human trait and anyone who says they haven't felt imposter syndrome at some point, I'm just not sure that they're necessarily bringing their whole self to their leadership or to that space or at what's going on. So it's a good thing. It doesn't feel good, but that's that challenge zone as well. And for me to be a relevant current leader, you have to keep challenging yourself. Leaders are always learners. It's one of my favorite hashtags, leaders are learners because it's so important that you keep evolving, learning and moving. And imposter syndrome and being in that uncomfortable position and then working through it is all part of ongoing leadership development (CB)

I think it's recognising that you actually have something to bring. So yes, I have very, definitely stepped into spaces and thought, "What am I doing here? They all know so much more", or, "They all are amazing people," and that comparison is not helpful. Actually having that internal understanding of your worth and what you bring, will help you stay in that space, even though you're uncomfortable. You can hold onto the recognition that you still need to grow and learn and that you can learn from everybody else, but also you've got something unique that you can bring, everybody does, and it's understanding what that is. The imposter syndrome, that feeling? I don't think we'll ever get away from it. I think we will always be thinking that we are less than in some way. Well, let me personalise it. I may have that feeling, but

it's also recognizing the balance of that. That actually, I may feel like that, but there is still a valid contribution that I can make. (ID)

Yeah, I totally agree, and I think having a coach can really help you to reflect on yourself and your own skills and what transferable skills you've got and how you influence. And I've certainly learned that with having coaching over the years. And also 360s, I would definitely recommend 360 other perspectives on how you are as a leader and what you potentially continue to develop in and take opportunities to continue developing your skills and your knowledge and your confidence as well, thank you. (VHay)

I totally agree with what everyone said before. When I moved into my role, it was the imposter syndrome, it's like, are you sure? Is it me that should be doing this role? But I've come to an awareness that I have to sort of treat it as though... you're an actor going onto a stage. An actor: they usually say that they feel gut-wrenching nerves. And they might be running to the loo and they might feel a bit sick and nauseous, but it's that that prepares them for doing the best job on the stage. And I like to think this is my sort of version. What I know I bring is passion, and so that's why I should be here. And if it that comes out as nerves, that's just one of those things. But I love my job so I'm going to keep dealing with the imposter syndrome. I appreciate that sometimes it's a necessary thing, but yeah, definitely imposter syndrome. I think we all have it. (VHar)

12. What's your biggest tip for someone starting in their first team leader role in a new service?

Find out about your team members, be curious about what really matters to them, what makes them tick, when they are at their best and what derails them. Find out about what's going on outside work for them and what their origins are. If you understand more about each of them as a whole person you'll be able to work out how to motivate them and play to their unique strengths. Don't be afraid to share something of yourself with them either. (MH)

I read something the other day about Human Leaders-we should: listen carefully, admit mistakes, communicate authentically, take your duty of care to staff, colleagues and stakeholders seriously and be self-aware-what should my role contribute? (VHay)