

LEARNING ABOUT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



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LEARNING ABOUT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Over the last 10 years, SHS Trust has been working to increase social inclusion in Scotland. During the last 5 years, we have been developing a number of leadership development programmes, primarily for individuals who use services and the people who care about them - parents, family members and supporters.

This short report summarises some of our learning about leadership development to date.

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INVEST IN THE MOST POWERFUL PEOPLE

In Scotland 2003 we have:

- A Scottish Parliament with 129 MSPs and a constitutional structure which is open to consultation and greater democratic accountability
- A hierarchical NHS organised through 16 Health Boards and 28 NHS Trusts
- 32 local authorities

One in 10 of the population comprise people with some form of disability or impairment. We have 20,000 adults with learning difficulties, 1,500 of who are still in long stay hospitals and 1,500 of who are in large residential group homes. We have 10,000 children with learning difficulties, 8,300 of whom are in segregated education. (39,000 children have SEN [special educational needs] - 5% of the school population, 16,000 have RON [record of needs])

25% of the population of 5 million are over 65 years of age. 25% of the population experience some form of mental ill health.

Within this system, the people who use the services remain the same. They have the greatest stake in things changing for the better - therefore investing time and energy into developing their analytical abilities and change competency generates the highest long-term change. They have direct access to all the MSPs, MPs, Councillors and Officials within the system. They are dispersed geographically across the country and they are in this work for the long haul.

Our decision to invest in training the people who we think have the greatest stake in the change process is strategic. Whilst training all the professionals and politicians is also important, they need to be being influenced by the real people who have power over them -their constituents and customers.

We view leadership as an attribute of the person, not the role. Our focus in developing community based leadership mirrors our commitment to and belief in the capacity of ordinary people to make an extraordinary difference.

DECLARE YOUR PURPOSE

Although many of the people we have spoken to view the word leader as controversial, we believe it to be the correct term. We would argue that the benefits of reclaiming and redefining the perception of the word outweigh the disadvantages of calling it something else. We believe that the connection of the term with action and making a difference triggers the right kind of interest in the programme.

We also don't have evidence that using the term leadership development has put anyone off. Nearly 400 people applied for the Partners in Policymaking courses, some 300 applied for Allies in Change and 60 applied for a geographically localised course, Inspiring Action, in Dumfries and Galloway.

RECRUIT AND SELECT

People have to obtain and complete application forms. They know they are going to be short-listed. They have to give the process conscious thought and decide to apply. They have to commit on paper to attending all sessions and work out what support they need to be there. They have to describe why they want to come on the course and what they want to change. They have to include references.

All of these questions make the application process conscious and thoughtful. It is the first step of the process. People are then selected on the basis of their commitment to learn and take action. They are not discriminated against on the grounds of support or travel costs.

We see this work as recruitment to a movement for life, not just attendance on a course. We are recruiting people to a wide agenda of potential involvement, not a restricted menu of activities - such as learning to be a useful member of the consultative steering group.

We select each participant as a person worth investing in. This, in turn, increases our commitment to them and our aspirations for them. Every person we lose during a course is experienced as a loss. Everyone counts, a lot.

GATHER PEOPLE TOGETHER

Developing leadership is a social, not a solitary, activity. People need to be with other people to do it. You can't do it on-line, and you can't do it on your own. Leaders need to practise leading and they also need to have followers.

Gathering people together to give them some sense of shared purpose is crucial.

Giving people an identity/ membership/ place/ task is very important -they must feel part of something bigger than themselves. The power comes from the dynamic interaction between people who have common cause. The interaction is often volatile, often emotional, but completely authentic. People are not playing at this. They are dealing with the real issues which impact on their daily lives. It matters.

VALUE AND WELCOME EVERY SINGLE PERSON, IN PERSON

Hospitality, welcome and treating people well are a key part of the process. The quality of the venue, the food, the room, the course materials, the quality of the packs, booklets, handouts - all these details mirror the amount we value people.

The layout of the room (accessible and open), the streamers, the sweets, the music, the personal welcome - all are crucial to both letting people know that we value them and that they are not on an ordinary training course. We organise note taking. We provide materials in accessible formats. We make sure they meet everyone else in the room and know who everyone is. We are clear why everyone has been invited.

Reimbursing expenses at the proper rate (not at a lower rate than paid staff would be reimbursed) is non-negotiable. Being flexible and trusting when you deal with expense claims is important. Give people money to organise their own support and trust them with it.

We give people name badges that include their names, not their labels. Everyone has to learn to introduce themselves to one another without labels and operate outside the ranking system of disability or impairment.

Another crucial part of the process is talking to everyone individually on the phone prior to a course. Not only does this ensure that every person's individual requirements are met, but it is the key to ensuring that people come to the first session at all. It lets people know that they are wanted. We do whatever it takes to get people there, and they know that. This is personal work.

EXPECT THE BEST

The content must be of the highest calibre. We never over simplify ideas and content. We always aim to teach to the best of our potential, in the most accessible and creative way possible. We give people more data than they would receive elsewhere. We have to be up to date.

We make everything accessible as far as we can. We do not make judgements about what kinds of information or materials different participants might use. We give everyone the same. We give books to people who can't read, tapes to people who can't hear, packs to people who may never look at them. We get the materials out there and invest in people as if they were mobile resource libraries.

We present people with theoretical frameworks. We try to present complex ideas in accessible and memorable ways. We keep working on the materials and adapting them. We have never been disappointed in people's ability to "get it". We distinguish between different kinds of change and the different types of strategies required to make change happen.

We believe in people and their ability. We also know that they will become distressed at points and we anticipate this and are ready for it. We never say, "This is easy".

GET INVOLVED

We answer the phone. We spend hours talking with people on the phone. We recognise that the work between sessions, listening, supporting, coaching, mentoring and just plain crying and ranting with people is as important as the work during the training session. We try to undertake advocacy with people. We get involved, going to meetings, advocating alongside people. We are part of the struggle, as well as guides on the journey.

BE AMBITIOUS

We teach people to aim for the best that is possible, not the best that is available. The focus is on what would work, what would be best, not what is already. We consciously and explicitly raise expectations and confront and challenge low expectations.

We ask, "When is better good enough?" We normalise the expectations. We also don't apologise for our beliefs - we are clear and transparent about our agenda. If you want people to believe in a cause, you have to believe in it. We model our beliefs. We believe they can change the world, because they can.

BE ROLE AND FUNCTION EXPLICIT

We are explicit about our role and who we are in people's lives. We declare what we expect from them and what they can expect from them. We explain why we do things the way we do and why we have designed things the way we have.

We help people develop their own support networks and we don't colonise them. We metaphorically tie people together and ask them to hang onto one another, but we don't make them mascots for SHS Trust. They do not belong to us. The courses we run are courses, not organisations. They join the movement out there, not the organisation.

We try to be transparent in the way we work with people and be clear about what the deal is. We don't work with hidden agendas.

BUILD THE NEW

We encourage people to tell their stories, take themselves seriously, set up new organisations and create new opportunities. We give them references for employment. We advertise the organisations and groups they establish. We refer other people to them and we provide free development support for new organisations to grow.

We want people to join existing organisations and change them. We want them to focus on creating the alternative, rather than attacking the established.

UNDERSTAND COPY GOOD, BUT IMAGINE BETTER

We try to give people the tools to imagine new solutions, to work from a values base upwards, not from a resources analysis inwards. We give people the confidence to imagine themselves as creative solution makers, not passive, unhappy recipients and claimants.

To do this, we design and engineer creative learning environments. We want to help people be creative contributors, not people who have been trained to behave well in meetings but actually have nothing to say. Good participation works when you have something to contribute.

LACK DEFERENCE, BUT HAVE RESPECT

We expose and challenge the stupidity and pomposity of the system. We challenge sacred cows; expose Emperor's new clothes and honour ideas more than status, rank and position. We keep coming back to the quality of the ideas.

We try to get people to show respect but not deference, to credit quality and challenge poor standards and thinking. We strive to get beyond the "but I know a nice speech and language therapist" level of analysis and debate. We think that content is as important as good manners. It is important to behave well. Moral behaviour is important over the long haul.

MOVE FROM I TO US

Everyone comes into this work for their own reasons - some by chance, some by design. Part of the conscious work of the programmes is to help people see the whole picture, to see where their part of the jigsaw fits with the other parts. They may need to work on their own issue, but our job is to help them build common cause, work across agendas, form new alliances and ensure that any benefits they accrue for themselves are replicable for others. We tell them this is thankless work in the short term, but essential in the long term.

THINK GENERIC

We try to move people from single issues to generic issues. We do this by trying to expose people to the whole picture. Inclusive education makes no sense if you don't know about employment; supported living only makes sense if you know about person centred planning. We try and ensure that people have enough information to make sense of the part of the journey they are on.

We constantly challenge the notion of special - we always work towards "ordinary and adapted". We would always challenge segregated options and ask people to apply the principles in a generic, mainstream environment.

THINK CAPACITY, NOT DEFICIENCY

Person centredness is a core value and we teach all participants to conceptualise supports for individuals they know, not categories of people they carry misperceptions about.

We mirror this process in the way we work with individuals - we work to their capacities and try to help them find their own areas of comfort, challenge and expertise. We try to help people realise where they are most confident to make their specific contribution, the level of change they are gifted at working with and we validate all efforts - at whatever level.

RECOGNISE THAT PEOPLE ARE VULNERABLE

Many of the people who come on the courses are fighting causes with high personal resonance for them. We help them recognise the additional vulnerability this creates for them and help them to create strategies to protect themselves.

We help them design presentations and tell stories in a way which teaches others and doesn't expose them. We also recognise that they may be undertaking leadership reluctantly and provide supports to this process. We give them time for reflection.

BELIEVE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

We share stories, put change in context, talk about change theory, get them to try out ideas and resist cynicism and despondency. We assume that they will be active and publicise when they are. We also support people through hard times and ask others to gather round them.

We remind people of how much has changed and we try to give them a sense of their place in history, their contribution to the story. We keep a record of the history.

NETWORK PEOPLE

We try to ensure that people find out about the other good people both near them and in their field. We give the contacts for other participants, other families and individuals, speakers, presenters. We share intelligence about who the people are and try and encourage people to go to the right sources for information - like the leading presenter in the world, not their assistant!

We also try and network them to other organisations and groups - we don't keep people or behave as if we own them. They are not 'ours' to trot out for free advertising or validation. We also want to increase capacity on the ground and build networks that exist when we are no longer involved.

We try to keep in touch with people, send them Christmas cards, invite them to things, make sure they are on the mailing for things that might be of interest and invent reasons for them to meet.