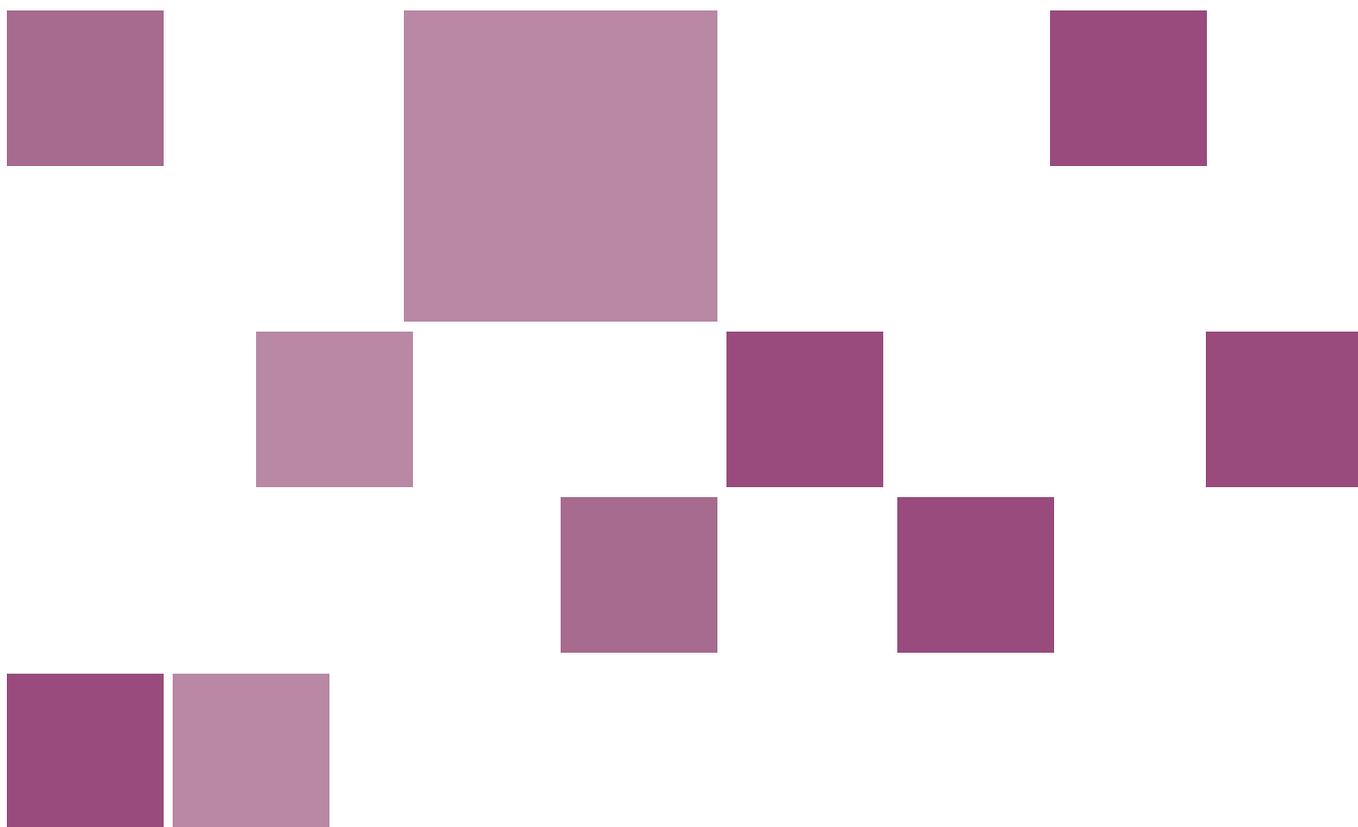


Enabling leadership

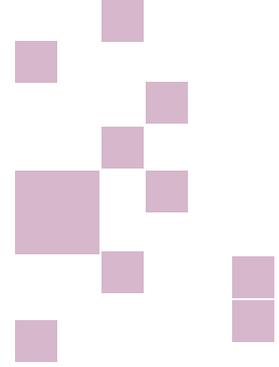
Research to identify what
good leadership looks like
in Scotland's social services



Produced on behalf of the Scottish Social Services Council by
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1. Introduction

‘Significant work has been carried out over the past five years to strengthen the quality of leadership in Scotland’s social services.’

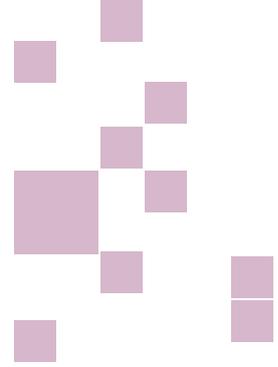
The aim of this research project was to investigate what good leadership in Scotland’s social services looks like and whether it is making a difference to outcomes for people using services and the social service workforce. The project builds upon significant work undertaken across the sector to enhance leadership at all levels. The Changing Lives report¹ recommended a focus on ‘enabling leadership’ alongside ‘effective management’ and ‘a leadership style that gives staff, users and managers the power to develop creative solutions’. In 2010 Leading Together² highlighted a range of challenges involved in supporting leadership development in social services. These included inherent tensions between holding on to control and letting go; delegating authority yet still being accountable; supporting innovation while managing risk. Also, it was clear that leaders needed to work effectively across agency and professional boundaries, finding common ground and balancing their own organisation’s priorities with an overarching focus on better outcomes for people.

Significant work has been carried out over the past five years to strengthen the quality of leadership in Scotland’s social services. The leadership capabilities³ have been developed to support and encourage people to think about how they exercise leadership in everyday roles as well as formal management positions. These

six capabilities underpin the Step into Leadership⁴ website, offering a wealth of resources which can be used by individuals or teams and organisations. In early 2014 a strategy for building leadership capacity⁵ was launched and there has been ongoing developmental activity across the sector to raise awareness and build people’s confidence in their own leadership potential, whether they be citizen leaders, frontline staff or managers.

Carried out at a time of reviewing progress and looking ahead to a leadership strategy for the next four years, this research project was commissioned by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to help evaluate impact and reflect on what difference the investment of time, energy and resources has made to the quality of leadership in social services, to the workforce and to people who use services.

The research brief was challenging with the consultation, fieldwork and report writing completed between September 2015 and February 2016. Within the constraints of this timescale we have attempted to do justice to the complexity and the importance both of defining good leadership within social services and of assessing its impact. Our work has focused on a small sample of organisations representing the statutory, independent and voluntary sectors. Their contribution has been invaluable and has provided strong affirmation of the difference good

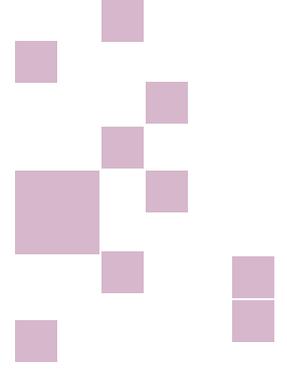


leadership can make. We do not claim that our findings can be generalised across the broad diversity of Scotland's social services but we hope the insights offered by the individuals and organisations we have worked with will resonate and have relevance in other social service settings.

Within this report we provide:

- a brief overview of leadership theory and its relevance to contemporary social services
- a discussion of good leadership and how it might be defined within a social service context
- an outline of how contribution analysis was used as the core methodology for our research
- a diagram showing the logic model which was developed from our consultation with key stakeholders
- theory of change which tells the fuller story of what emerged from our fieldwork with a small sample of organisations spanning the statutory, voluntary and independent sectors
- concluding reflections.

- ¹ Scottish Executive (2006) Changing Lives Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive
- ² SSSC/University of Stirling (2010) Leading Together: An analysis of leadership activity and development needs across Scotland's Social Services, Dundee, SSSC
- ³ SSSC (2012) Leadership Capabilities, Step into Leadership, www.stepintoleadership.info
- ⁴ SSSC, Step into Leadership, www.stepintoleadership.info
- ⁵ SSSC (2014) Strategy for building leadership capacity in Scotland's social services 2013-2015



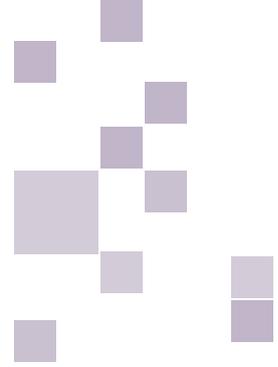
2. Leadership theory: balancing the simple and the complex

Leadership has engaged and intrigued people for a long time. There has been extensive study of what makes for effective leadership in different settings and numerous attempts to pin down the elements which constitute good leadership. In public services the focus of leadership has increasingly been on effective use of resources to maximise the public good and in the context of health and social care, a particular emphasis on improving outcomes for people who use services.

Theories of leadership have fallen in and out of favour. There are debates about whether you are born to be a leader or whether you can develop into a leadership role; whether there is one best model of leadership or whether an effective leader adapts their approach in different contexts. Some would see decisive authority as the mark of good leadership while others suggest that leaders ask good questions⁶, recognising that there is no right answer in many situations. There is the issue of leaders and leadership. Are we searching for a hero or heroine who will inspire us all and achieve great things? Or do we believe that leadership belongs to the collective⁷ and we own shared responsibility both for what goes well and when things go wrong? In reality we often hold contradictory views at the same time. We have expectations of those who hold positions of power and authority. We may set them up on a pedestal⁸ when their vision of the future matches our own but they tumble from

grace when murky compromises have to be made and our hopes are disappointed. The ethical base of leadership poses its own challenges. Can someone do evil things and still be a good or an effective leader? Is it possible to hold power without causing harm to others? Some would assert that the quality of humility⁹ or the commitment to serve¹⁰ others is a prerequisite for good leadership and this idea of stewardship strikes a chord in public services. The concept of new public leadership¹¹ has developed as an alternative to the managerialism which has stamped its mark so forcefully over recent decades; viewing social services more as a business¹² than a professional activity.

Leadership is in vogue and that means we need to think critically about it. Ferguson¹³ talks of the 'warmly persuasive' language of personalisation and a similar rose-tinted perspective can be applied to leadership. But it is important not to be complacent; not allow ourselves to sit back and believe leadership is simple. The work people are involved in across all sectors of Scotland's social services is complex, challenging, rewarding, unpredictable and more. Leadership which is distributed¹⁴ is more demanding of us not less. Leadership at all levels opens up new possibilities but it also raises many diverse perspectives, collective accountability, risk and uncertainty. In his book on Selfless Leadership¹⁵, Brookes explores the challenges of a values-based, collective approach to leadership

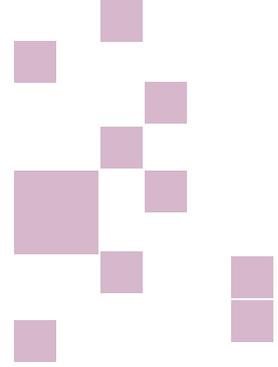


which puts 'we' before 'I'. Other writers have highlighted the role of 'invisible leadership'¹⁶; those small but significant acts of leadership which take place every day but go unnoticed. These are the people who work behind the scenes making things happen and enabling others to realise their potential without looking for personal reward or recognition. Increasingly there is acknowledgment of the importance of interdependent relationships¹⁷ rather than hierarchical structures: 'leadership in a system' as opposed to 'system leaders'.¹⁸

Leadership in social services has much in common with leadership in other contexts but there are some features which stand out as particularly important. Participatory¹⁹ leadership is vital in a social service context not only because it maximises the contribution of the whole workforce but also because it sets a standard for good practice and reflects the values of inclusiveness and respect for others. It models a way of working with people which is collaborative and enabling rather than overly directive. Engaging leadership²⁰ recognises that the ability to build meaningful relationships is fundamental to effecting change whether that is at organisational level or in frontline practice. Courageous leadership is needed because social services have a role in promoting social justice and challenging inequalities.

The Changing Lives Service User and Carer Panel²¹ identified the qualities of effective leadership as being:

- **dedication** – this is not just a job but an important job that can make a real difference, positive or negative, to people's lives
- **values** – of fairness, equity and inclusion, providing person-centred services and never forgetting why they are there
- **integrity** – the ability to keep to their values even under challenge
- **charisma** – the ability to motivate others to treat people as they would like to be treated themselves
- **bravery** – being prepared to challenge bad practice wherever it may be
- **motivation** – the ability to encourage others to do the right thing and not just accept the inadequate
- **credibility** – with a firm base of knowledge and experience.

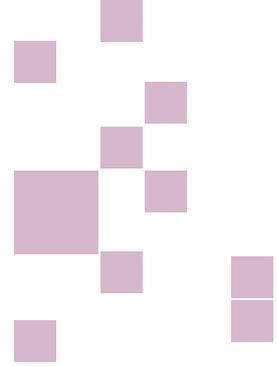


Ten years on these qualities still hold good. Thompson²² describes 'trust, respect and credibility' as key elements in authentic leadership. They are gifts which are earned not bestowed and are essential if one is to lead, motivate and inspire other people.

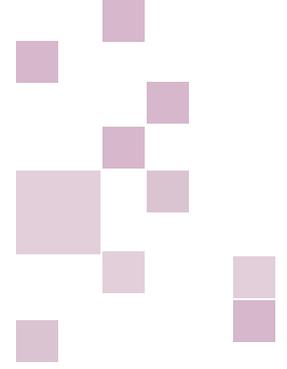
But you cannot view leadership in public services in isolation from the social, political and economic context. Leslie and Canwell²³ found that leading effectively in times of austerity was 'not about an individual in a senior role' but required 'many people across an organisation involved in leadership activities'. They identified four key capabilities for senior public sector leaders:

- developing the insights necessary for successful change within complex systems
- building the cognitive skills to manage effectively in demanding environments
- demonstrating the emotional intelligence to motivate their people building leadership at all levels of the organisation, by developing capability and ensuring that overly complex structures do not impede the ability of individuals across the organisation to exercise leadership
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Skills of resourceful leadership²⁴ have been explored as the pressure to do more for less has impacted ever more critically on public services but even resilient leadership²⁵ will not thrive when systems are stretched beyond lean to breaking point. When we outline the theory of change which developed as we explored good leadership with a sample of social service organisations, it will be clear that context is significant and we need to understand the risks which can undermine effective leadership as well as the factors that can enable it.



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- ⁶ Grint, K (2008) Wicked Problems and Clumsy Solutions: The Role of Leadership, *Clinical Leader*, 1(2), 54-68
 - ⁷ Raelin, J A (2003) *Creating Leaderful Organisations*, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler
 - ⁸ Grint, K (2005) *Leadership, Limits and Possibilities*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan
 - ⁹ Collins, J (2001) Level 5 Leadership: The Triumph of Humility and Fierce Resolve, *Harvard Business Review*, January, 1-112
 - ¹⁰ Greenleaf, R (1998) *The power of servant-leadership: essays*, San Francisco, CA, Berrett-Koehler Publishers
 - ¹¹ Brookes, S (2008) *The Public Leadership Challenge*, ESRC Research Summary, Swindon, Economic and Social Research Council
 - ¹² Harris, J (2003) *The Social Work Business*, Abingdon, Routledge
 - ¹³ Williams, R cited in Ferguson, I (2007:387) Increasing user choice or privatizing risk? The antinomies of personalization, *British Journal of Social Work*, 37 (3), 387-403
 - ¹⁴ Gronn, P (2002) Distributed Leadership as a Unit of Analysis, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13, 423-451
 - ¹⁵ Brookes, S (2016) *The Selfless Leader*, London, Palgrave Macmillan
 - ¹⁶ Fletcher, J K and Kaufer, K (2003) Shared leadership: paradox and possibility, in C L Pearce and J A Conger, *Shared Leadership*, California, Sage
 - ¹⁷ Attwood, M, Pedler, M, Pritchard, S and Wilkinson, D (2003) *Leading Change: A Guide to Whole Systems Working*, Bristol, Policy Press
 - ¹⁸ Vize, R (2014) The revolution will be improvised, *Leadership for Change*, leadershipforchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Revolution-will-be-improvised-publication-v31.pdf
 - ¹⁹ Pine, B (2007) *New Leadership for the Human Services: Involving and Empowering Staff through Participatory Management* in J. Aldgate, L. Healy, B. Malcolm, B. Pine, W. Rose and J. Seden (eds.) *Enhancing social work management: theory and best practice from the UK and USA*, London, Jessica Kingsley
 - ²⁰ Alban-Metcalfe, J and Alimo-Metcalfe, B (2009) Engaging Leadership part one, *International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*, 5 (1), 10-18
 - ²¹ Scottish Executive (2006) *Changing Lives*
 - ²² Thompson, N (2016:11) *The Authentic Leader*, London, Palgrave Macmillan
 - ²³ Leslie, K and Canwell, A (2010:301) Leadership at all levels: leading public sector organisations in an age of austerity, *European Management Journal*, 24 (8) 297-305
 - ²⁴ Deloitte (2011) *Resourceful Leadership: leading for outcomes in a time of shock*, National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services
 - ²⁵ Harrow, J (2009) *Leadership and resilience – local communities and services in a time of fragmentation*, ESRC Public Policy seminar, University of Edinburgh Business School



3. Defining good leadership

The leadership capabilities²⁶ identify six key areas applicable to leaders at all levels. The diagram below shows how these six leadership capabilities are supported by and enhance the personal and organisational capabilities outlined in the Continuous Learning Framework²⁷. The emotional intelligence which underpins the personal capabilities serves as a foundation for the

skills and abilities needed to exercise sound leadership whether this is at the frontline of social services or in a senior management role. A positive organisational environment will support the development of leadership capabilities within the workforce and this in turn will contribute to a work culture which is reflective and open to new learning.

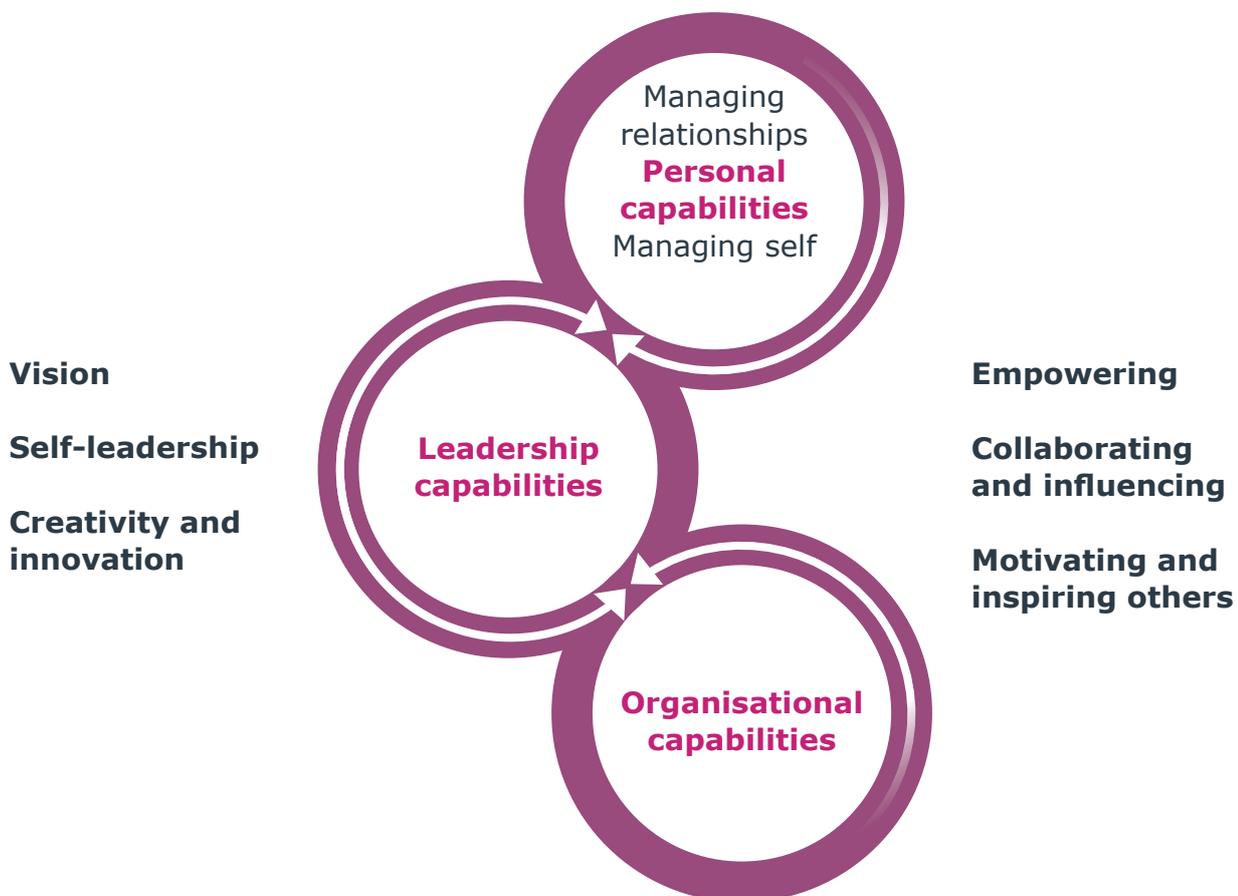


Figure 1: The interrelationship of leadership capabilities with personal and organisational capabilities within the Continuous Learning Framework (Patterson, 2013).

‘Good leaders in social services care passionately about improving the lives and opportunities of people who face disadvantage and inequality.’

What else defines good leadership and how do we recognise where it exists and where it is missing? In conversations during our research there was a sense that people know when they experience good leadership. It is present when people are committed to their work and feel valued for their contribution. It shows itself when people using services feel respected and have their voices heard even if resources are limited or decisions are made they do not agree with. Good leadership seems easier to define when it stands out in marked contrast to poor leadership, for example, a care home which has turned itself around or a team where staff morale is high after being very low. These are the places where you can appreciate the difference effective leadership can make.

Good leaders in social services care passionately about improving the lives and opportunities of people who face disadvantage and inequality. They hold true to values of respect, compassion and fairness even when they have to take difficult decisions. They strive to work in open and honest partnership with people even when there is conflict and disagreement. They are able to be vulnerable as well as powerful. They are ready to challenge and be challenged. Good leaders in social services have faith in what people can achieve in their lives and they inspire others to give of their best and reach for that potential.

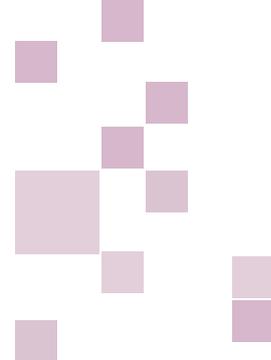
‘Leadership is not about being a shining star, a beacon of individual excellence, but rather someone who has the skills and aptitude to help others to become stars or at least to achieve their best.’²⁸

²⁶ SSSC (2012) Leadership Capabilities, Step into Leadership, www.stepintoleadership.info

²⁷ SSSC/IRISS (2008) Continuous Learning Framework, www.continuouslearningframework.com

²⁸ Thompson, N (2016:11) The Authentic Leader, London, Palgrave Macmillan

4. Methodology and method



The project brief specified the research needed to make connections between the inputs to good leadership and its impact and that it must explore the use of logic modelling and contribution analysis to do this.

Contribution analysis was originally developed by Mayne²⁹ to provide insights into complex situations where the testing of cause and effect relationships using traditional research methods would be difficult or impossible. Contribution analysis can be particularly useful, for example, where new policies have been implemented and where there is a need to assess their positive and negative impacts. Contribution analysis does not prove links between inputs, contexts, outputs and outcomes but rather, it uses logic modelling to propose a theory of change that explains the contribution of various factors³⁰.

Contribution analysis typically goes through a number of stages. It starts with a theoretical logic model which is simply a model based on what we might expect to happen. This captures the links between inputs, activities and outputs/outcomes. This logic model is then populated with evidence and further tested. The theory of change is developed to take account of evidence provided as well as contextual factors that may impact on the change.

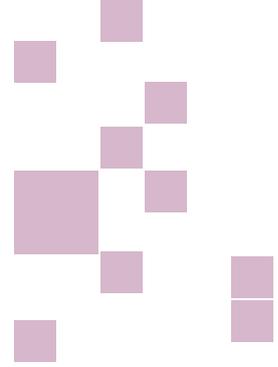
For this project we needed to develop a theory of change around good

leadership. We wanted the work to be as representative as possible of the different sectors across social services and, for practical reasons, we needed to start work with a small group who would be familiar with the current issues facing social services in Scotland and could act as representatives of their sectors.

In the first meeting with a group of eight participants we developed a logic model and draft theory of change that was subsequently sent to participants for review and amendment. We discussed our proposals for the next stages of consultation with the group and highlighted areas where we thought further exploration was needed.

Logic modelling is often an iterative process. In our project, we designed the research process to allow for additional evidence and insight to be included from case study areas and our knowledge of the literature on leadership theory as well as evidence about the practical application of leadership models.

After receiving comments on the first draft of the logic model and theory of change, we arranged a total of four follow up visits to organisations representing different parts of the sector. The original group proposed these organisations on the basis that good leadership would be recognisable and could be discussed in ways that would challenge and develop the initial logic model.



The organisations included an independent care home for older people, a care at home service, a local authority and a voluntary organisation working with young people.

During the visits we asked questions relating to people's understanding of what good leadership looked and felt like, what good leaders need, what they bring, what they do, how they engage others, how people respond to good leadership and what outputs and outcomes result from good leadership. We also asked for examples of how good leadership is, or could be, evidenced.

It was evident from all the conversations that good leadership was clearly recognisable, sometimes in stark contrast to experiences of poor leadership. Our participants articulated the impact of good leadership on people who are supported by services, on partners, colleagues and on themselves. They provided several examples of data that was, or could be, collected to evidence impact.

Notes from the visits were coded and analysed and the data was used to refine and redraft the initial theory of change.

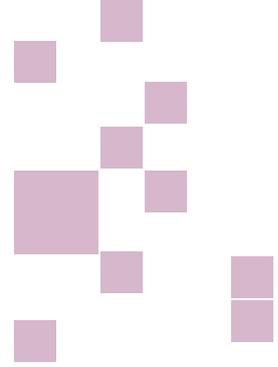
We held a second meeting of the original group to discuss findings and methods of evidencing impact. During these discussions it was acknowledged that leadership could not be accurately defined in a few sentences.

The final theory of change includes descriptions of what good leadership looks like, the barriers and enablers of good leadership and the impacts that were recognised to be the result of good leadership. There is no simple definition but we suggest that a conceptual overview of what contributes to good leadership helps us understand more clearly how risks can be minimised and enablers harnessed to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes being achieved.

The logic model on page 12 shows how good leadership contributes to positive outcomes. The description in the following section describes the theory of change illustrated by the model in more detail. The outcomes of good leadership are dependent on a host of factors. The skill and behaviour of good leaders themselves is of significant impact although context also has a critical role to play.

Section 6.6 discusses the outcomes and impact of the various inputs, activities and responses involved in the theory of change. Further detail on participants' responses to 'How can we evaluate the impact of good leadership?' is included as an appendix to the main report.

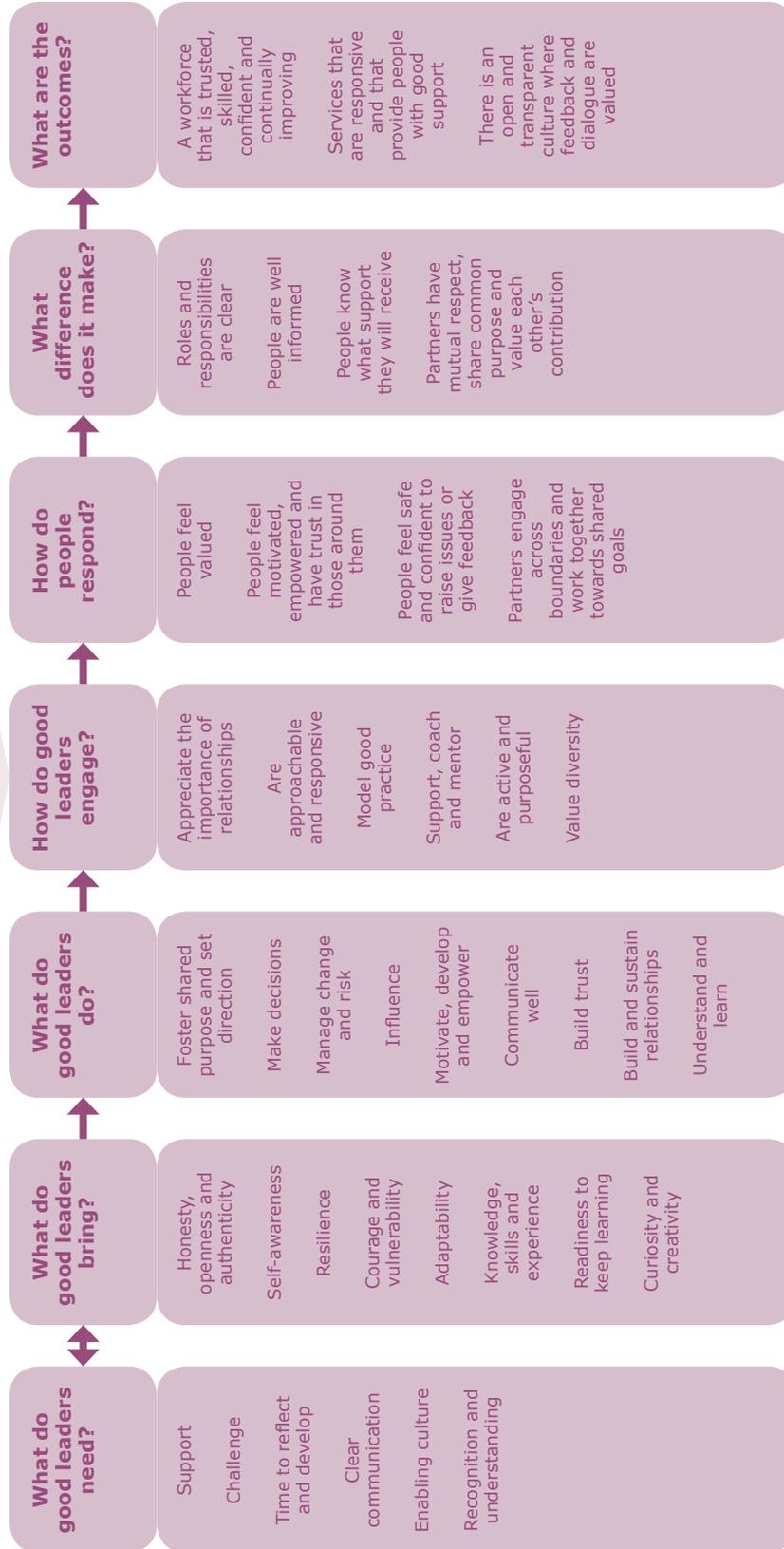
Section 6.7 discusses some of the contextual factors that impact on the quality of leadership in different contexts and on the theory of change.



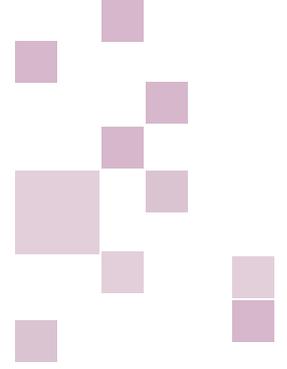
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- ²⁹ Mayne, J (2001) Assessing Attribution Through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly, *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, 16(1), old.evaluationcanada.ca/site.cgi?s=4&ss=21&lang=en&article=16-1-001
- ³⁰ Morton, S (2015) Progressing research impact assessment: A 'contributions' approach, *Research Evaluation*, 24 (4), 405-419, rev.oxfordjournals.org/content/24/4/405
- Stocks-Rankin, C-R (2014) Reflective Literature Review of Contribution Analysis, IRISS, blogs.iriss.org.uk/contribution/files/2015/06/Reflective-Literature-Review-of-Contribution-Analysis-Stocks-Rankin-2014.pdf

5. Logic model

Enablers of good leadership: strategic vision and expectations are clear and communicated well; people feel supported, valued and respected; atmosphere of openness, trust and good relationships; work and achievements are acknowledged; levels of pay are sufficient to recruit and retain good staff; people have a voice and are treated fairly; responsibility is shared; people are self-aware and there is a culture of reflection, learning and development.



Risks or barriers to good leadership: lack of time for reflection and development; lack of parity and fair terms and conditions; excessive workloads; change fatigue; poor communication; negative or 'blame' cultures; micro management; poor systems and processes; social care devalued in society; lack of vision and direction.



6. A theory of change: using contribution analysis to explore what makes for good leadership

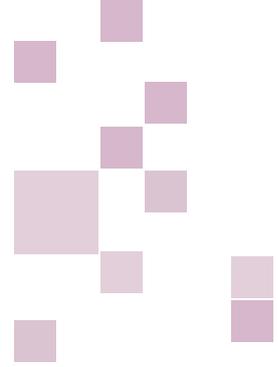
'And I think in our society the idea of leadership is the heroic individual who takes charge, who makes hard decisions but what I've learned from presencing actually is that the role of the leader and of leaders is to attend to the frozen ground – to feel the seeds growing and to figure out how to cultivate that field. Capturing social reality creation in flight – that sounds very technical but this idea that how you pay attention in any given context can actually shift what is happening in the room. It is knowing that the roots are growing.'³¹

In an interview filmed for the U Lab online course early in 2015, Dayna Cunningham describes leadership as a sensing process and a nurturing of potential. There is a need to cultivate the soil and have faith in green shoots that will emerge even when nothing is yet visible above the surface. The Scottish Government supported the U Lab course when it was delivered again in autumn 2015; valuing its focus on active citizen and community engagement with the challenges facing contemporary society. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this initiative across Scotland but it is an interesting example of the kind of letting go which belongs to leadership at all levels. There has to be trust in the process; a faith in the future that is emerging rather than trying to impose order and control from above.

That image of cultivating hidden seeds offers a perspective on good leadership in Scotland's social services. It recognises the skill, experience, depth of awareness and commitment which is needed as well as the ability to nurture leadership potential in others.

Using a contribution analysis approach we looked at these questions.

- What is needed as a foundation for good leadership?
- What values, skills, qualities and knowledge do good leaders bring?
- What do good leaders actually do?
- How do they engage with people?
- How do those people respond?
- What are the outcomes of good leadership – what difference does it make?



6.1 What do good leaders need?

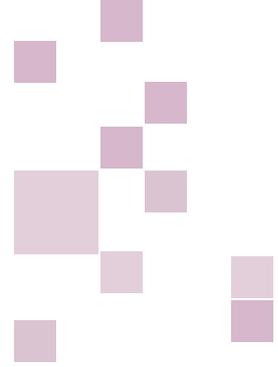
If we imagine leadership both in terms of the seeds which are growing and in the art of tending the seed bed, we know the quality of the soil is important for plants to grow strong. They need sunlight, water and careful nurturing until their roots have taken hold. The people we talked to during the research project described how good leaders need **support** from others, those who are above them and below as well as those who are their peers. They need to 'be supported to learn, develop and update skills and knowledge' and there was recognition that 'the higher up you go, the less support is there'. Leaders need strong relationships and networked connections both within and across organisations. But just as plants can grow stronger when they have survived adverse weather conditions, so too can good leadership be strengthened in a work climate where people are ready both to **challenge** and **be challenged**. This needs to be constructive and open, based on a shared commitment to improving standards and not an overly demanding approach which can undermine morale: 'good leaders are there to support you rather than punish you. They make it possible to challenge upwards'.

Our research participants talked about the importance of **clear communication** and the flow of information up and down in an organisation. For example, people needed 'information about why change

is happening as this provides confidence that change has been thought through'. It helps them to feel valued and respected as well as giving opportunity to engage in dialogue when proposed changes may have a negative impact. Good leaders need **feedback** from other people as well as being able to offer feedback: 'to hear what's being said – upwards and downwards' and knowing 'how to give feedback so that people who use the services get what they need'.

Good leaders need a sense of **direction** from those above them so they in turn can provide clear direction for others. One respondent talked about how vision 'comes from the top but each manager has their vision – that wee branch is mine'. There is a sense of good leaders benefiting from good leaders in a virtuous circle where accountability is shared and 'leaders help people to be aware of their responsibilities'. Without clear direction, even effective leaders can feel distanced from organisational goals, caught in the middle where they want to encourage good leadership in others but are unable to help them see the big picture.

Research participants thought good leaders need the 'support of managers above'. One person spoke of the importance of 'supporting frontline managers who are custodians of the (organisation's) reputation and are committed to providing a good service but have needs themselves'.



Others described how important it can be to draw on the collective experience held within an organisation when facing new and difficult leadership challenges; in large organisations it is easy for such opportunities to be lost.

Good leaders need **recognition and understanding**. They need to value their own leadership potential but also to be valued by others: 'in a good organisation they promote leadership in everyone'. Importantly, people said that good leadership needs a **positive and enabling organisational culture**. This is the rich soil in which leadership can grow and develop. A positive 'no blame' culture gives space for reflection and creativity and 'allows staff to learn from mistakes in an open and supportive way... any mistakes that are made are used as a learning experience'. Thompson describes the 'sense of security that comes from feeling part of an enterprise where you feel that you belong, where you will be valued and validated, affirmed and appreciated'.³² Good leaders help to shape the culture of their workplace and leadership at all levels flourishes when the worth of each person's contribution is recognised.

But even a hardy plant in a fertile soil will wither and fade if it does not have enough **resources** to nurture its growth. Good leadership is not sustainable if services are consistently under resourced and overstretched. So, when we look at the question of what good leaders need, we

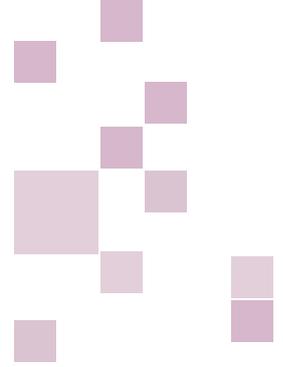
have to attend to the ground where the seeds of leadership are growing. If the soil is continually depleted, or deprived of the light and warmth which are necessary for healthy growth, then even the most resilient of leaders and organisations will eventually be undermined. Tending the seed bed of good leadership needs **time** and space. People said that you need 'time for your own development – everyone needs this but it's hard to get protected time to do it'. '**Self-knowledge** and **self-awareness**' and '**space to think** and be creative' were considered vital for sound leadership to be developed and sustained.

6.2 What do good leaders bring?

In conversations about good leadership in social services research participants spoke of the importance of **authenticity**:

'people have a sense of the person when they are a good leader – there is authenticity, ownership and a connection with someone who is leading well – they need to do something to demonstrate that it matters to them...'

Thompson³³ describes how authentic leaders appreciate the human dimensions of the work they are involved in and seek to get 'the best out of their followers and not the most'. Good leaders bring an openness to those around them and they understand 'the significance of the workplace as a distinctively human social space'. One respondent described how



good leaders showed '**openness** and **vulnerability** – the ability to admit that they make mistakes and work together, making it a shared journey'. Research participants highlighted the importance of a leader's integrity and value base. Good leaders hold to their principles and adhere to values of honesty, transparency and mutual respect. They 'lead by example' and 'treat people with respect'; they are '**trustworthy**' and '**honest** with self'. They 'have a willingness to listen' and they 'ask, don't tell'. These descriptions reflect the way in which good leadership mirrors good practice,³⁴ and the same was evident when people told us that 'good leaders are reliable'.

A seed carries within itself what it has inherited and stored from the past and, as the plant grows, it can adapt to a variety of unpredictable weather conditions. Good leaders bring **knowledge** and **experience** which they can apply in a multitude of different situations. They understand the contexts and the people they work with and they draw on their own knowledge and skills, as well as those around them, to respond appropriately in an ever changing environment. People talked of the need to 'understand the context – external and internal' and 'to understand your team and your context: knowing what's going on and what's happening'. Others thought that 'good leaders have strategic knowledge...they don't need the nitty gritty'.

Good leaders are aware of the gaps in what they know as well as the need to adapt to new situations. Participants in the research emphasised the importance of 'being open about what you know and what you don't know', 'acknowledging your limitations' and 'letting the team know when you're not so sure'. They also identified the need to '**adapt** to different staff's needs; being **flexible** and matching one's response to the situation and the staff member'. The importance of cultural competence was highlighted; how good leaders had to be able to appreciate the diversity of the workforce and respond to different skills and motivation while maintaining consistent standards.

A seed planted in the earth holds new possibility for the future. People spoke about the kind of **creativity, curiosity, resourcefulness and resilience** which good leaders bring to their work: 'you don't necessarily have resources, but it's about making the best of what you do have'. Good leadership is grounded in **realism** and one participant felt that it was important to 'accept facts...don't hold onto a wish list'. Nevertheless, good leaders will try to 'see what can be done' within limited resources: 'leaders recognise what is relevant and achievable within budgets but they are not constrained by what is'. There is a **courage** and readiness to try out **new ideas** and people spoke of the 'ability to end old ways of being or doing, in favour

‘Vision is very important but it’s not enough to have a grand vision – you need understanding of the organisation and the processes – you need to know how the vision is able to be implemented to make it work.’

of new ways’. A young seedling will face risks and uncertainty but with an inner striving towards future potential.

6.3 What do good leaders do?

Good leaders bring a sense of **purpose** and **direction**, an energy and **drive** towards future goals: they ‘keep momentum driving forwards, rather than letting it start and then letting it sit’. Participants in the research felt that:

‘good leaders know how to make sure that their **vision** connects with people.... You can have all the vision you want, but if it doesn’t connect with the workers and the staff out there...’

People spoke of the importance of involving frontline staff in setting the vision and importantly they recognised how good leaders ‘are aware of service users’ vision for themselves’.

Good leaders communicate well and ‘get people to engage with the vision and own it’. They understand the importance of motivating and inspiring staff rather than merely cascading information down through the organisation. Lundin *et al*³⁵ recognise the significance of personal vision within a larger vision and describes vision moments as being those situations when someone knows they are enacting the organisation’s vision in a meaningful, integrated way within their own working practice. It is necessary that good leaders ‘enable others to grasp the vision and internalise it’.

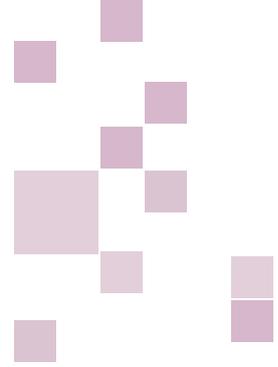
Vision needs to be grounded and leaders have to ‘understand what has to happen to realise the vision’.

‘Vision is very important but it’s not enough to have a grand vision – you need understanding of the organisation and the processes – you need to know how the vision is able to be implemented to make it work.’

One participant linked the translation of vision into action to the relationship between leadership and management when they commented that ‘leaders take people with them, create vision and managers implement it; leadership is more abstract than management, it operates at all levels’. Another person thought that ‘management is about operating within a framework, whereas leadership sets that framework’.

Good leadership ensures everyone feels involved and knows they have a valued contribution to make. It sustains **motivation** even when the going gets rough and people are on their knees. When harsh weather buffets, good leaders find a way to support and encourage those who are struggling and lift their spirits.

The people we talked to identified the **passion** that good leaders show for their work; how they ‘demonstrate that they care’ and their determination to make a difference. ‘Good leaders are not top down – they have passion and desire to take others along with them’.



Leaders are generous in their recognition of others and 'show appreciation of hard work'. They value staff and 'say thanks, recognising everyone's contribution no matter what their role'. Good leaders were seen to 'respect what others bring to the table' and be willing to let go of control and distribute power. In sharing their power they are not fearful of being diminished but have a firm belief in the abundance of power:

'And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.'³⁶

Good leaders build **trust** by 'holding to their word, being open to things they don't want to hear'. They are able to acknowledge when they make mistakes and are prepared to accept criticism as well as give honest feedback to others. They have the **courage** to speak truth to power even when it may not serve their own best interests. Participants described how leaders challenge 'the people above them if unrealistic expectations mean that service quality will be undermined, for instance when staff are overloaded...and the staff they manage if they are underperforming – for example you may need to make difficult decisions such as terminating their employment in a case where nothing else has worked'. In a care home setting one respondent said that 'the role of leaders is to challenge things that are not in the best interests of the residents'. Good leaders maintain a consistent focus on improving

outcomes for those who are marginalised and disadvantaged, not on their own prestige or status.

There is a sense of tough caring in what good leaders actually do. They offer support to others but do not shy away from **difficult decisions** or let a desire to be liked undermine their own integrity. Leaders 'make sound decisions including tough ones and communicate them' as well as making sure 'they can justify them'. To the best of their ability they choose the right course of action rather than the easiest. Good leaders are **accountable**; taking responsibility for their own actions and decisions and 'making others aware of their accountability'. Research participants highlighted the need for leaders to **manage relationships**, 'getting alongside staff and removing hierarchical barriers'.

Good leaders 'create a sense of shared responsibility' by encouraging people to set aside narrow territorial interests in favour of common ground and shared endeavour. Writing about the challenges of collaboration, Huxham³⁷ describes how leaders must be able to move skilfully between a nurturing approach: 'the gentle care of fragile plants' and tougher, more decisive tactics akin to the radical pruning needed in an overgrown garden. She calls this latter skill the art of 'collaborative thuggery' giving recognition to the 'political' astuteness needed to be effective

‘The **courage to lead** can be seen to encompass the courage to fail – that is, the willingness to risk failure. This means moving away from the common problem of being risk averse, of being unwilling to address the risk involved in all aspects of human existence.’

as a leader. Good intent is not sufficient to bring about **change** and research participants identified leaders’ ability to **influence** other people: ‘persuade and influence decisions in places where you have no objective authority’. They need to exercise astute judgement and know how to respond in different situations in order to achieve positive outcomes.

‘The leader’s role is to hear the problems and obstacles and work out the next step – problem solving – while still delivering a good service.’

Leaders need to understand the **impact of change** and be able to steer a course between continual turbulence which undermines people’s ability to function and the kind of apathy which inhibits creative progress. Participants noted that good leaders ‘need to recognise how different people respond to change and manage each individual differently when that’s needed’. Adept leadership requires the insight to recognise ‘what needs to change and what needs to stay the same’.³⁸

Change always involves an element of risk and uncertainty. There is a balance to be struck between the courage to support **managed risk-taking** and the wise exercise of caution.

‘The **courage to lead** can be seen to encompass the courage to fail – that is,

the willingness to risk failure. This means moving away from the common problem of being risk averse, of being unwilling to address the risk involved in all aspects of human existence.’³⁹

Good leaders will take their share of responsibility and not look for someone else to take the blame whenever a carefully considered risk regrettably leads to an undesired outcome. Time and again people who participated in our research affirmed the importance of a **no blame** culture:

‘any mistakes that are made are used as a learning experience. Leaders sit with the person and discuss why the mistake happened and what the learning needs are.’

Good leadership did not, however, mean a laissez faire attitude to quality. Participants recognised that ‘good leaders aspire to good standards’. They offer ‘balanced criticism and positive feedback’ and while supporting and developing staff to provide good quality care, they will also recognise and respond to the small number of cases where people repeatedly fail to meet required standards and need to move on: ‘You can’t sustain someone who isn’t doing their job properly. You have to be enabling and manage performance’.

The people involved in our research said good leaders value **reflection** as well as action. They are committed to ‘active

‘If managers around you are not good, you can’t function at your best. A good day would be when everything runs smoothly in a shift, there are good relationships and everyone is happy and interacting with each other – residents and other managers.’

reflection on their own performance’ and are ready to acknowledge ‘‘I did that wrong’’ and then improve’. They value the importance of their own personal and professional development as well as supporting others to learn and develop.

6.4 How do good leaders engage with others?

Good leaders recognise that **relationships** are of key importance and they know that without the ability to make meaningful connections to others they cannot be effective.

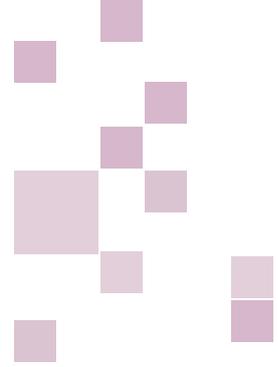
‘If managers around you are not good, you can’t function at your best. A good day would be when everything runs smoothly in a shift, there are good relationships and everyone is happy and interacting with each other – residents and other managers.’

Leaders are part of a wider system and are reliant on interdependent relationships comparable to the ecosystem surrounding a plant. In a hostile environment, the plant may struggle to make progress. Or it may thrive and grow tall but in an isolated position. Leaders can achieve things on their own but for lasting impact they need to work together with a wide range of partners both within and outside their own organisation.

The people involved in our research thought good leadership requires the ability to **engage**; to be clear about one’s own role, responsibilities and professional identity: ‘problems arise when there is a loss of clarity, people end up overlapping or gaps in services appear’. However, it was also important to be **responsive** and able to adapt. ‘They display different leadership in good and bad news situations – they are flexible and they match their response to the situation’ and they are good at ‘making judgements that meet the needs of each situation’. This does not mean compromising standards or expectations but involves a readiness to **listen** to different perspectives and to find ways of bridging and **valuing diversity**. Research participants thought that good leaders ‘focused on commonalities not differences’.

Good leaders **model good practice**; their actions are true to their words and they show others how to do things well by hands-on involvement not by issuing directives.

‘Good leaders need to be practical and willing to do what they are asking others to do. To get respect, you need to role model what you expect from others. Show that you understand how hard the job is because of your own experience in the job: they see that I’m doing it and I’m willing to roll my sleeves up and get stuck in.’



In a study of the impact of organisational culture on care home residents' experience the researchers found that 'managers and leaders...need to be engaged with ongoing problem solving in practice'.⁴⁰ It is important they reflect person-centred practice in their actions and behaviours, supporting staff to 'find solutions that explicitly fit with the espoused values of the organisation'. This was echoed in one participant's account of how good leadership in a residential context demonstrates good practice, supports development and provides feedback.

"You show me what you do and I'll show you how I do it with the next person then we can chat about the pros and cons of our different approaches"...we give lots of feedback continually but very gently.'

People described good leaders in social services as being **approachable** and **accessible**, not distanced from frontline practice: they are 'visible, not just remote greyness'. They spoke of how 'good leaders enable others and empower them so they don't feel helpless'. Leaders are clear about the standards required but not rigid in determining how people approach their work, allowing space for creativity and new ideas. Good leaders are seen as **purposeful**; able to set parameters and hold boundaries so that 'people know where they are and what is happening'. They support people to stay focused on core values and vision rather than losing sight of the overarching direction.

6.5 How do people respond to good leadership?

When good leadership is present others can discover their strengths and find their own way to contribute. People have the space to exercise autonomy but there is sufficient structure and clarity to ensure that things stay on track.

'If there is no leadership, everyone is doing things differently – there are no guidelines. There can be erratic and negligent behaviour.'

People understand what is expected of them and there is a consistency in leaders' behaviour which provides both challenge and reassurance. Participants in our research talked about how good leaders make frontline staff feel **affirmed** and keen to give of their best: 'staff feel **supported, enabled** and **heard**'; 'staff are praised and feel acknowledged'.

There are **good relationships** between staff, people who are being supported and managers: 'good relationships are built – it goes back to being honest and setting expectations and always doing what you say you will'. People described how there is 'higher engagement and more commitment to the service and shared goals'. One participant spoke of the benefits which ensue when staff feel safe and receive supervision which is 'open and non-threatening':

‘understanding the job being done so that workloads are realistic.... Previously, staff had no opportunity to develop so residents didn’t get enough care as a result of the focus on to do lists rather than the residents.’

‘There is an open door policy now – people can ask anything. People are more honest and fewer mistakes happen because people are not on edge. We do one-to-one observations but people don’t dread it.’

With good leadership everyone knows that outcomes for people who use services are the most significant thing to focus on and will strive to respond to each person as an individual, putting their needs and wishes to the fore even when resources are tight: ‘it’s important to focus on making residents’ life good’. One respondent described the impact of managers:

‘understanding the job being done so that workloads are realistic.... Previously, staff had no opportunity to develop so residents didn’t get enough care as a result of the focus on to do lists rather than the residents.’

In a climate of good leadership people are afforded time to reflect on ways to improve practice: ‘staff are supported to recognise their own skills gaps and they know they will be supported to develop and improve’.

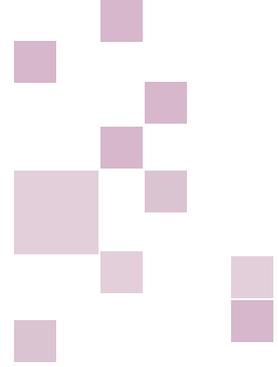
Research participants thought good leadership meant that ‘people who use services and their carers have clear expectations of the care they’ll get’. People were kept **well informed** about any changes which would impact on their support. Those who use services might not always be in accord with decisions made which affect their lives but they would have

confidence that professional staff are being honest, open and respectful towards them and that they can have a dialogue.

‘For involuntary clients, there is relatively swift resolution – you need to be open and honest and be able to justify your actions.’

People feel they are **listened to** and their experience is **valued** even if it is difficult to reach shared agreement about a way forward. When good leadership is present you can see ‘evidence that there is a shared vision – staff impart (the) organisation’s vision and it is understood consistently across staff, families, partners too’.

Partners in other organisations and professions respond to good leadership with a sense of **shared purpose** and overarching goals. Participants in the research described how, ‘if your goals are well communicated to your partners, about what your expectations are and your role is, then you can achieve clarity about what’s happening’. People recognised that, at times, ‘you need to overcome resistance and suspicion’ but they felt that, with good leadership, ‘partners have a clear understanding of what you do as an organisation and your vision’ and ‘other services have confidence in you’. One respondent saw it as an achievement if ‘your work with partners changes the partner’s culture for the better’ and another identified how ‘young people engage better with partner services now – and the partners understand the young people’s families and situations better’.



Research participants highlighted the range of partners that are involved:

'there are internal and external partners. There are also partners of choice and others – for example, a children's hearing can contribute to someone's life but can also cut across what others are aiming to achieve.... We serve the courts but they are autonomous. But we serve the same people.'

Leaders in collaboration will be able and willing to share power and they will value the **contributions** of diverse partners:

'You need to let go of your own power in the interests of shared goals. It's about mutual respect, not feeling you have to do it all.'

6.6 What are the outcomes which good leadership helps to achieve: how do we know if it is making a difference?

In 2010 the Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA)⁴¹ made strong assertions about the link between good leadership and improved outcomes for people who use services:

'Leadership was critically important. It impacted on outcomes for people who use services, as well as staff morale.'

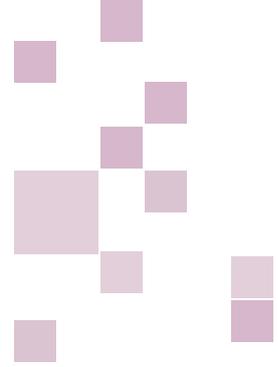
On a common sense level the statement rings true but behind it lies the complexity of what is meant by good leadership and how to track a thread which leads from the actions and behaviours of leaders to specific improvements in the lives of people who use services?

'Outcomes are hard to measure over time, for example prisons...attribution is very hard as you're measuring not just reconviction rates but the quality of people's lives.'

From our research it was evident that people recognise good leadership when they are on the receiving end of it. They feel **motivated** and **empowered** and 'staff feel they can trust those above them'.

'People can articulate how they are involved in good communication – they feel enabled and listened to; leaders have been honest, shown integrity etc.'

Participants told us that it feels safe to speak **openly** about concerns: 'with good leadership, people are more inclined to be honest'. They described how staff absence levels tend to be lower and 'workers turn up on time'. Staff turnover is reduced and 'there is good succession planning (and) opportunities for promotion within the organisation'. But people also highlighted how some indicators can be misleading:



'Absence is sometimes used as an indicator of the leadership in a home. This may be indicative but you can have good or bad years that are nothing to do with how the home is run – sometimes it's just that someone else is offering more money or there just aren't the same number of people looking for this kind of work.'

Respondents described how, in situations where they perceived leadership to be good, staff 'training needs are identified, recorded and carried forward into action'; they spoke of the 'willingness (of staff) to learn from mistakes and take on additional training/development'. The quality of staff supervision is high and staff are involved in 'performance review upwards', giving feedback on their own managers as well as having regular appraisals themselves. People understand what is expected of them and they know what decisions they can influence and how.

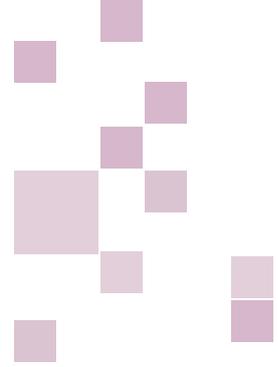
One participant spoke of '**happy, skilled, confident and competent** staff'. These are workforce attributes which in turn are valued by people who use services and carers. Good leadership is reflected in people knowing what kind of care or support they will receive: 'you get the service you expect' and 'you get notified of any changes'. People have access to accurate, up-to-date information and they are able to **raise issues or give feedback**. Good leadership is demonstrated in services which are **responsive** and ready to listen

to concerns, offering opportunities for informal **dialogue** as well as a formal complaints process: 'if anyone has an issue they talk it through with the home manager'. Another respondent spoke of the importance of exit reports for young people who received support. These were analysed for both qualitative and quantitative information including unplanned outcomes. Perhaps most significantly, people talked about the impact of good leadership when 'service users feel valued – they smile'.

Inspection reports and Care Inspectorate grades offer another perspective on the quality of leadership within a particular service. The Care Inspectorate is changing its approach to inspection and how it supports improvement and this includes working with providers to streamline the process. As part of this work, the Care Inspectorate is mapping the inspection process from a provider's perspective in order to minimise the amount of preparation and administration required. Doing this will ensure that the focus of inspection remains on ensuring good quality, and well-led, person-centred care.

Respondents stressed the importance of this leadership approach focusing on:

'skills development and improved care rather than having a target culture where people do things because it's being measured rather than because of commitment to good care.'



6.7 What are the key risks and enabling factors for good leadership?

As indicated in our methodology section, contribution analysis does not prove links between inputs, contexts, outputs and outcomes but uses logic modelling to propose a theory of change that explains the contribution of various factors. Crucially, the theory needs to give consideration to contextual factors that may impact on the change, whether these be hindering factors (risks) which will impede the process or supportive factors (enablers). Contribution analysis also seeks to bring out any underlying assumptions which may affect the theory of change.

Fundamental to our analysis is an understanding of the factors which can either support or undermine good leadership in Scotland's social services. In addition we identify some implicit assumptions which may influence current perspectives on leadership across the social service workforce. We are not in a position to say whether or not these apply but they warrant consideration when trying to bring critical rigour to the question of 'what does good leadership look like?'

When asked about the barriers and enablers of good leadership research participants were clear about the factors which contributed to each of these.

6.7.1 Barriers or risks to good leadership

In relation to risks, people recognised that good leaders were resourceful, and that motivating and inspiring the workforce was key. They voiced strong feelings, however, about the need for **adequate funding** levels to sustain high quality services and retain committed staff. It was clear from discussions that sound leadership had to reflect **fairness** with regard to terms and conditions across public services. In particular, commissioning of services from the third and independent sectors needed to take account of the true costs of providing care and support and engage in **genuine partnership working** based on openness, transparency and a level playing field. **Lack of parity** in pay and terms and conditions across sectors can mean that good staff are not retained and this in turn impacts on the quality and consistency of support for people who use services.

Excessive workloads were seen to be potential inhibitors of good leadership, preventing managers from focusing on strategic aims and pulling them back into **reactive, crisis-driven** activity. This view also resonated with discussions about the need to be reflective and take time to consider appropriate responses. Some leaders (generally those with management responsibility in our sample) talked about the difficulties of prioritising their own development and making time for reflection whilst also being available and having an open door policy.

‘It’s hard to find time to reflect and plan and we can get stagnant otherwise. There needs to be a message that it’s OK for managers to prioritise time for themselves – their own development – and to get support.’

‘It’s hard to find **time to reflect** and plan and we can get stagnant otherwise. There needs to be a message that it’s OK for managers to prioritise time for themselves – their own development – and to get support.’

Some respondents felt leaders needed to be better at saying no but they also recognised external pressures, for example, elected members’ priorities, which could not be ignored:

‘outside forces...working on a constrained time frame which then puts pressure on leaders in the sector and pushing a vision that must be constrained by the timelines of others with overarching power.’

Many participants identified change fatigue as a barrier to good leadership. In particular, this related to poor communication and a ‘lack of understanding when changes begin to negatively impact services’. People needed to understand the purpose and vision which underpinned changes. ‘It’s important in periods of so much change to communicate downwards so that people understand it.’ Otherwise it could feel like arbitrary decisions are being made without any clear sense of direction.

Other risks to good leadership included negative organisational cultures which did not allow people to challenge upwards or focused on blame rather than learning. In these settings, conflict was not managed

effectively and it did not feel safe to raise concerns or express disagreement.

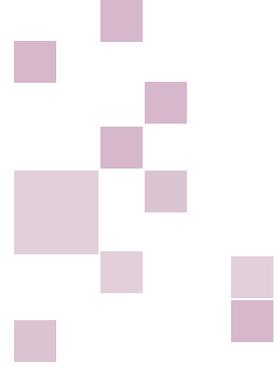
Leadership at all levels was undermined when there was a culture of micro management and staff did not have the autonomy to make decisions appropriate to their level of control. Research participants identified a lack of involvement in decision making as an impediment to good leadership.

‘Perceived disconnect between decision makers and the leaders from the people in the main workforce, a sense of us and them’ where leaders become remote and inaccessible – which then damages trust and makes the workforce feel unsure.’

Poor systems and processes also posed a risk to good leadership. This included target driven performance measures which did not reflect meaningful improvement:

‘Improvement language has grown but this isn’t always delivering a better process – the target culture doesn’t always encourage a joint sense of problem solving and vision. It can be just tick box exercises which are inappropriate to the lives of individuals.’

Respondents identified other risks within organisational systems, for example, where there was poor support for workforce learning and development or a lack of effective public relations which actively promoted the **value of care** within society.



And, while it seems like stating the obvious, it was clear from our discussions that poor leadership could itself pose a barrier. If those who carried responsibility for leading an organisation were unaware of the seeds of good leadership hidden below ground, then they would fail to nurture that potential and neglect to cultivate the soil (organisational culture) in which those seeds might grow and thrive.

6.7.2 Enablers of good leadership

Turning to the enabling factors highlighted in the research, these were in many instances the opposite of the risks. For example, good leadership flourished when people received 'acknowledgment of the work you've done' and **levels of pay** were good enough to retain staff. Workloads were **realistic** and staff have 'time to **reflect** and develop **best practice**'.

Participants identified **clarity of expectation** and **effective communication** as important factors: 'you can see what senior managers want. They communicate that'. Good leadership was supported when the **vision** and **direction** for the service was **reflected** in people's actions and behaviours: 'all leaders role model good behaviour'. There was 'a culture and structure where you can ask for help and support when you need it'.

Good relationships contributed to good leadership. Staff felt able to approach their manager to discuss issues including challenging decisions which they disagreed with. The people involved in our research described an atmosphere where they felt 'totally **supported, valued** and **respected** by (their) line manager. They are confident in your practice'. Others spoke of the importance of 'well placed, constructive feedback, how rather than what you say. Recognition that no-one is perfect. Not personal and evidence not opinion; trust that people will give you that feedback'.

Respondents welcomed the kind of challenge which helped to stretch their capacity: 'someone to head-butt with'. Similarly, they felt good leadership was supported when staff were actively encouraged to raise issues or make suggestions that would improve standards of care.

Good leadership was evident when workers felt **trusted** to do a good job and when they trusted their managers: 'leaders need to stick to their word'. Staff felt 'part of something you can **influence**. You have a **voice**'. People felt that they were **treated fairly** and they belonged to a team where everyone **shared responsibility**. Research participants highlighted how important it was to 'recruit the right people, train the right people and retain

‘Self-awareness is also a massive thing – your effect on people at all levels – you need to adjust yourself to people and situations, identify issues and make changes happen.’

staff’. They recognised that **effective management** as well as leadership was necessary to achieve this. Having **good systems** and **processes** was important and some people felt that ‘flatter structures helps to break down hierarchical barriers’.

Self-awareness was identified as a critical enabling factor:

‘Self-awareness is also a massive thing – your effect on people at all levels – you need to adjust yourself to people and situations, identify issues and make changes happen.’

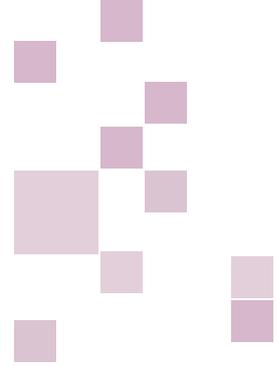
6.7.3 Assumptions

There are a number of points which we need to highlight regarding the theory of change which has developed during this project. Firstly, the research brief asked us to explore what good leadership looked like at all levels within Scotland’s social services. The benefit of this approach is an affirmation that the seeds of leadership can be found and cultivated in every corner. Leadership is evident among people who use services, in frontline practice and across all tiers of management. It is present in small local projects as well as large national organisations; in third and independent sector agencies as well as the public sector; in services ranging from early years to end of life care. The downside of this inclusive approach is a lack of nuance and a risk of generalisation.

Good leadership does look different at different levels. There is undoubtedly common ground but the emphasis will vary depending on a leader’s role and span of responsibility. We do not expect the same of a citizen leader as a senior manager and this needs to be recognised when reflecting on the model we have outlined.

Secondly, there has been little discussion of how management and leadership interrelate. Some participants in the research made reference to this when they said things like ‘management is about operating within a framework, whereas leadership sets that framework’ and ‘leaders take people with them, create vision and managers implement it; leadership is more abstract than management, it operates at all levels. Management is about processes, systems and established ways of working’.

It is not in our remit in this project to debate more fully the distinction between management and leadership. It is worth acknowledging, however, a common tendency to elevate leadership to the detriment of management. In part this may happen because of a conflation of management with managerialism. The important contribution which sound management can make to effective social services may be overlooked if it is tarred with the brush of target-driven cultures which ‘are inappropriate to the lives of individuals’. In thinking about what good



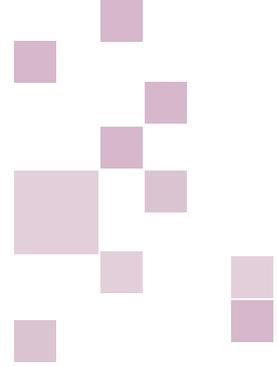
leadership looks like in social services it is important not to forget the role of good management.

A third point which warrants consideration is the relationship between good practice and good leadership. In seeking to promote leadership at all levels, is there a risk that some values, qualities, behaviours and activities are extolled as evidence of good leadership when, in fact, they are simply what we should expect of a competent, capable worker in social services? There may be no clear answer to this but, at the very least, it is important that we do not lower the bar on good professional practice in order to raise leadership awareness across the workforce.

In highlighting assumptions or bias which may impact on the theory of change, it is important to note that this was a small scale research project and therefore we make no assertion that the findings can be generalised. In particular, we recognise that our fieldwork focused on workplaces where people were already committed to developing good leadership and were considered to be positive exemplars. Their level of awareness of what good leadership looks like and the examples they were able to offer may not be typical of the wider context. It was encouraging and affirming to experience the strong commitment of individuals and organisations to cultivating leadership at all levels and to improving

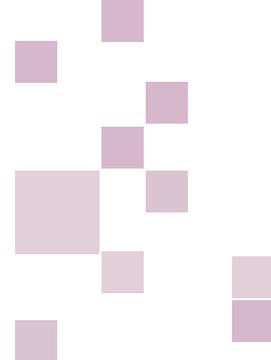
the experience of the workforce and people who are supported by services. However, we should not assume this picture is replicated across the whole of Scotland's social services.

Perhaps most importantly, we recognise this study does not represent the voices of people who use services and their perspective on what good leadership looks and feels like. This is a significant gap and one which would benefit from further research to identify whether their views agree with, or differ from, the feedback received from representatives of the social service workforce.



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- ³¹ Cunningham, D (2015) U Lab 1.0 video interview, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- ³² Thompson, N (2016:xxii) *The Authentic Leader*, London, Palgrave Macmillan
- ³³ Thompson, N (2016: xxx and xxxii) *ibid*
- ³⁴ Munro, E (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report*, London, Department for Education
- ³⁵ Lundin, S C, Christensen, J and Paul H (2003) *Fish Sticks*, London, Hodder and Stoughton
- ³⁶ Williamson, M (1992) from *A Return to Love*, often attributed to Nelson Mandela (Our Deepest Fear) in his inaugural speech in 1994
- ³⁷ Huxham, C and Vangen, S (2005) *Managing to Collaborate: The Theory and Practice of Collaborative Advantage*, London, Routledge
- ³⁸ Smale, G (1998) *Managing Change through Innovation*, National Institute of Social Work, London, The Stationery Office
- ³⁹ Thompson, N (2016:xxix) *The Authentic Leader*, London, Palgrave Macmillan
- ⁴⁰ Killeth, A, Burns, D, Kelly, F, Brooker, D, Bowes, A, La Fontaine, J; Latham, I, Wilson, M and O'Neill, N (2016:185) Digging deep: how organisational culture affects care home residents' experiences, *Ageing and Society*, 36 (1), 160 - 188
- ⁴¹ SWIA (2010:6) *Improving Social Work Services in Scotland*, www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/307597/0096724.pdf

7. Conclusion



The research project set out to identify what good leadership looks like in Scotland's social services and to use contribution analysis as a means of understanding better how leadership impacts on outcomes for people. There were significant challenges within the research brief, for example, what is meant by good leadership and does it look the same across different levels, roles, sectors and work settings?

Our findings strongly endorsed the view that good leadership in social services is about valuing people and enabling them to achieve their potential. It is about appreciating fragility as well as strength; nurturing the seeds of leadership in others as well as developing and exercising personal leadership. Thompson suggests that the courage to lead is inextricably bound up with 'the courage to be human and vulnerable'.⁴² This was echoed when one research participant spoke of having 'a sense of the person when they are a good leader – they need to do something to demonstrate that it matters to them. But there is also a sense of vulnerability – they are a person on a shared journey'.

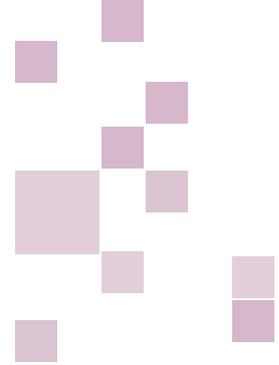
Within the constraints of a small scale study, we have found people in the social service workforce have a strong sense of good leadership and they know clearly what it looks and feels like when they experience it. Based on the discussions we had, there is evidence to suggest the

attention given to leadership development over recent years has made a difference; it is harder to be sure of the breadth of impact. A worthwhile aspiration would be to see similar examples of good leadership practice across the diversity of Scotland's social services, including workplaces which have, so far, engaged less actively in building leadership capacity.

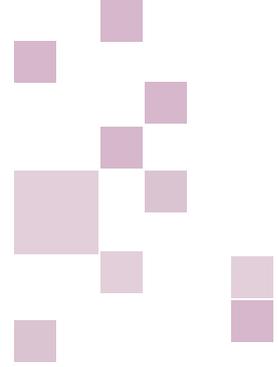
It would be useful to explore how closely the findings of this research project match, or diverge from, the Care Inspectorate's evaluation of the quality of leadership and management in social service organisations. Although our methodology was different, there should still be common ground in what good leadership looks like. Importantly, we recognise this study focused primarily on the social service workforce. While our findings offer encouraging evidence that good leadership in Scotland's social services makes a difference, there is scope for further exploration of whether this is reflected in the lived experience of people using services.

⁴² Thompson, N (2016) *The Authentic Leader*, London, Palgrave Macmillan

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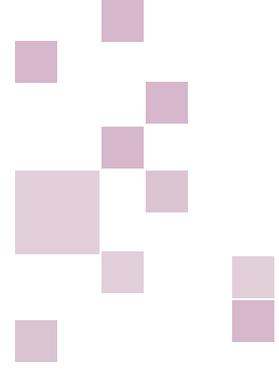
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Appendix

Evidence of impact of good leadership

Section 6.6 of the report (What are the outcomes which good leadership helps to achieve: how do we know if it is making a difference?) is the section where we address the issue of how we can measure the impact of good leadership within the sector. This question was raised in all of the fieldwork visits and formed an integral part of the contribution analysis methodology.

We thematically coded and analysed responses according to their source ie statutory, voluntary or independent sectors. In the latter category distinction was made between care home and care at home responses. Due to the small scale of this project it was not appropriate to explicitly attribute responses either to sector or work context as this would compromise the anonymity of respondents.

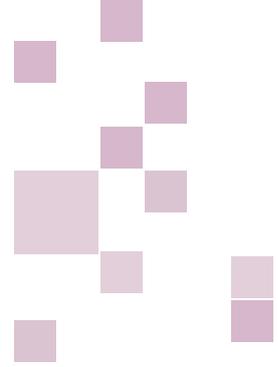
The coded themes under the heading of 'How can we evaluate the impact of good leadership' were as follows:

- absence/sickness rates/attendance
- availability/access to information
- coherence of strategy at all levels ('golden thread')
- communication/dialogue/feedback
- complaints and issues raised
- culture
- evidence of change
- exit interviews/reports

- external recognition
- feedback on standards of care
- formal review
- general comments
- inspection reports
- level of awareness (staff and/or people using services)
- monitoring/observation/staff supervision
- reduced number of investigations
- self-evaluation/self-assessment
- staff development
- staff reaction/responses
- staff turnover/retention/promotion opportunities and succession planning
- surveys
- uptake of services
- use of Continuous Learning Framework.

These can be further grouped into secondary themes.

- **Communication and feedback** (to include availability/access to information; communication/dialogue/feedback; complaints and issues raised; feedback on standards of care; surveys).
- **Formal assessment and inspection** (to include evidence of change; exit interviews/reports; external recognition; formal review; inspection reports; monitoring/observation/staff supervision; reduced number of investigations; self-evaluation/self-assessment).



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- **Impact on staff and staff responses** (to include absence/sickness rates/ attendance; staff development; staff reaction/responses; staff turnover/ retention/promotion opportunities and succession planning).
 - **Organisational issues** (to include culture; coherence of strategy at all levels ('golden thread'); level of awareness; use of Continuous Learning Framework).
 - **Other** (general comments; uptake of services).

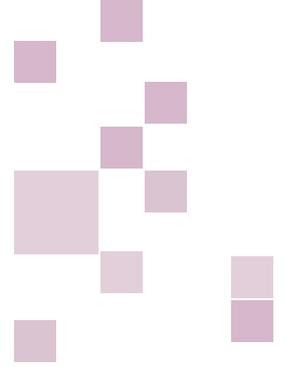
As indicated in our original bid the research was limited to a small number of organisations. While we selected these to represent the different sectors of social services, we recognised the limitations of sample size at the outset and we do not know whether responses were typical and would be replicated in other settings. Notwithstanding that, it was encouraging to see research participants had clear ideas about how the impact of good leadership could be evaluated.

Under **communication and feedback** they highlighted a sense of being enabled and listened to; open door policy and having easy access to managers; staff and people using services having clear expectations; a variety of forums and communication channels being available eg you said, we did; welcome packs for new residents; prompt communication of any

changes; timely responses to complaints and concerns – dealing with these at as low a level as possible; anonymised surveys of employees, people using services and partner agencies.

Under **formal assessment and inspection** respondents identified Care Inspectorate reports as being a measure of good leadership. They noted lower numbers of investigations as a positive indicator; systematic overview of standards and performance; managers observing direct practice eg how staff interact with residents; evidence of positive changes introduced including a clear narrative which outlines changes made and why; consistent analysis of exit reports using both qualitative and quantitative information; quality and regularity of supervision; regular supervision reviews; performance review which includes upward review as well as managers reviewing frontline staff performance.

In relation to **impact on staff and staff responses** participants highlighted a wide range of issues. These included low absence levels and good timekeeping; good levels of staff retention (although concern was voiced about recruitment and retention issues due to erosion of terms and conditions and negative public perceptions of social care); positive developmental opportunities for staff with



training needs identified and responded to; staff willing and engaged in learning and development activities; staff feeling valued and acknowledged for their contribution; staff feeling supported, enabled and listened to; staff feeling motivated and empowered and staff having trust in those above them. There were comments about both staff and people using services being happy, smiling, having open conversations; people using services having confidence in staff being skilled, competent and caring about the work they do.

Organisational issues included a culture of openness and honesty; staff understanding their role in decision making processes and changes and evidence of clear links between strategic priorities and operational practice.

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