

Building Leadership for Inclusion

Narrative 2019



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Building Leadership for Inclusion

Inclusion is core to the NHS Constitution, yet it remains one of the biggest challenges that health systems face globally, nationally and systemically.

In the face of a growing body of evidence, which demonstrates the critical role that inclusive leadership plays in ensuring that health and care systems operate most effectively for patients and public, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that leaders at all levels are equipped and capable of leading inclusively and effectively.

Building Leadership for Inclusion (BLFI) is a new and ambitious programme of work that will inform a future ten-year strategy, led by the NHS Leadership Academy, which is aimed at health and care staff. Its purpose is to update and inform leadership thinking, practice and, crucially, to make progress on the work of inclusive leadership development for individuals, organisations and the systems working within and across NHS-funded health and care. The work is a key part of a [nationally agreed framework](#) with the express aim of changing cultures to ensure all staff are listened to, understood and supported - and that leaders at every level of the health and care system truly reflect the talents and diversity of people working in it and the communities they serve.

The NHS Leadership Academy has three strategic aims for inclusion across health and care, against which all leadership development interventions and strategies are measured. These are to:

1. Raise the level of ambition on inclusion
2. Quicken the pace of change towards inclusion
3. Ensure that leadership is equipped to achieve and leave an ever increasing and sustainable legacy of inclusion

Through its workstreams and at pace, BLFI will deliver new knowledge to inform collective learning about how to create inclusive systemic and cultural transformation through leadership and leadership development. This single-minded vision requires different and new ways of understanding and tackling the challenges that inclusion brings, through a leadership development lens. A standpoint which requires deeper, more meaningful and creative approaches to leadership development than what has gone before.



Placing lived experience at the heart of strategies for inclusive change

In the past, those for whom equality matters the most have too often been left out of the conversations that really matter to them in the workplace. They consistently report that their experiences of discrimination are overlooked or denied by leaders, rather than being accepted, explored and adequately addressed. The health and care system's inability to hear and understand the experiences of those whose voices have been historically marginalised, has been and remains a missed opportunity. People with lived experience of systemic discrimination, for example women, BAME, disabled and LGBT+ staff, are able to contribute much needed insight into what needs to change and how, in three key areas.

1. Identifying what needs to be focused on, learned, noticed and spoken about by leaders to effectively address discrimination and, most importantly, to prevent discrimination from happening in the first place.
2. Describing and determining how leadership mindsets, knowledge, strategies and actions can support, secure and sustain progress on inclusion.
3. Identifying the ways leadership development can play a key role in building the necessary leadership capabilities for creating inclusive cultures through leadership development.

Core to BLFI is the need to place the voices of those with lived experience at the centre of all strategies for inclusive change. It is this emphasis, combined with a series of pioneering initiatives, that will update and refresh approaches to inclusive leadership development. The aim is to deliver sustainable, inclusive and compassionate culture change that unlocks the potential of all staff across health and care.

Leadership behaviours are driven by leadership mindsets. The work of BLFI seeks to shift leadership mindsets in ways that radically alter leadership expectations, plans, ideas, and behaviours towards inclusion. This is essential work if those currently at the sharp end of discrimination are to experience a fundamental and positive change in their day to day experiences and relationships in the workplace, and an opening up of fair and equal opportunities for all.

The time has now come to focus leadership efforts on the development of compassionate and inclusive cultures that truly value the diverse health and care workforce. This will enable leaders to create effective strategies for change and embody inclusive leadership in all of their interactions with the whole workforce. Thus delivering, and continually improving, the highest quality of services to our increasingly diverse communities.



How BLFI will lead to inclusive leadership practice

There are six separate but interrelated BLFI workstreams that are driving forward the work of BLFI throughout 2018/19:

1. The production of an **academic literature review** in 2019 that will summarise the results of an extensive body of work looking into relevant literature, interviews with academic experts and research, to evidence how the work of BLFI should progress.
2. Bringing together of **stakeholder groups of staff** with protected characteristics (BAME, disabled, LGBT+ and women). These groups are sharing their lived experience to support and inform what needs to change and how.
3. **Pilot sites** – our expert facilitators are working with six pilot sites as part of an action research project to support our understanding of what works. The Pilot Sites are:
 - Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
 - South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
 - County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
 - Bristol City Council and STPs
 - Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership
 - NHS Leadership Academy
4. Updating approaches to **leadership development and leadership practice** – we are considering key areas of practice in this space, bringing new approaches and thought leadership to the work of leadership and leadership development.
5. **Evaluation** – our academic partners at the University of the West of England will work closely with all elements of the above workstreams to produce new knowledge about how to move the inclusion agenda forward through leadership and leadership development.
6. **Sharing our Learning** – we are working on sharing our learning throughout 2019.

Action learning underpins **continuous improvement** – informed by our learning in year one, we will courageously continue to strategise, plan, deliver and learn from our interventions through cycles of action research into the coming second, third and fourth years of BLFI, and beyond. This is emergent



work with each part building on the learning that has gone before. So, over the next decade, and with an increasing number of co-collaborators, we will set ambitious year on year goals to reach more diverse representation at senior levels and a measurable shift towards more inclusive cultures. The NHS Leadership Academy mission is to transform the ways in which leadership and leadership development is understood and enacted, so that the leadership qualities that contribute towards inclusive cultures become the standard that is sought after and the plumb line against which 'good leadership' is measured. This vision can only come about through the conscious and purposeful work of inclusive leadership at all levels.

We believe that inclusive change is possible through leadership, and that those who are reading this text right now, can play a key role in bringing this vision to life.

If you would like to learn more and join us in our work to Build Leadership for Inclusion, please email blfi.nla@hee.nhs.uk