

THE MANAGEMENT MISSION:

How better leaders improve
public services

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FOREWORD

Since the new Government was elected in July 2024, there has been much talk of “inheritance” and missions. In each of the three public services or provider sectors analysed in this compendium - health, education and local government, the inheritance that the new Government faces is characterised by chronic stress.

Increasingly patients are likely to pay for their own healthcare, with every indication that this is significantly driven by stretched NHS capacity. Local Government spending is increasingly occupied by statutory responsibilities such as social care provision. And in the education sector, persistent absence rates rose during the pandemic with a range of other learning deficits appearing amongst pupils, especially those with additional educational needs.

Of course, the fiscal context as described by Rachel Reeves MP, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, is one of inherited weakness with upward emergency pressures on current spending, commitments to protect key taxes from any rises, and a strong desire to protect public investment wherever possible.

The chronic challenges faced above are not solvable by singular interventions. Some demand greater resources but given the fiscal context and competition for public money in no instance is it going to be possible to meet public expectations and needs through funding alone. Others look to an array of exciting new technologies to fast-track productivity improvements. The first resort for some policy-makers of structural reorganisation seems to be temporarily out of vogue - certainly “big bang” reorganisation, instead favouring more evolutionary change.

Ultimately, resources, technology and reform will all be essential components of leaning into the chronic challenges our public services face. Any mission to improve health, local economies and quality of life, and better educational opportunities for all will have to convert these pre-conditions for improvement into real outcomes. And that is why the highest quality management we can develop and deploy is so critical. Management capability is the mobilising force of change, one critical means by which we take inputs and translate them into better experiences for patients, residents or students - and better experiences for the public servants who serve them.

This compendium of research conducted last year by the Social Market Foundation in collaboration with the Chartered Management Institute aims to bring together the collective findings of three reports into the impact of leadership and management in the delivery of public services. In doing so, we hope this serves as a resource for those looking to better understand the significant difference that skilled managers can make in achieving services that are more productive, better run and, in turn, better equipped to meet the expectations of those they serve.

By posing the question about the added value to be found in applying skilled management practice, we were able to arrive at both a clearer diagnosis of the problems faced across all three public services, and to devise a set of recommendations for improvement.

Management skills are not - and cannot be - the sole salvation of the UK's struggling, and underfunded public services. But they are a relatively low-cost, high-return investment in better navigating challenges that range from organisational disconnect, to slow innovation and technology adoption, to disparate workplace cultures, low morale, recruitment problems, and the management of poor performance.

Systematically investing in managers both current and future, will ensure they have the basic set of skills required to navigate the immediate choppy waters of budgets stretched to breaking point, but also the tools needed to manage the change that is coming via new technologies, changing demographics and evolving demands of the workforce. Throughout this compendium there are examples of public service leaders investing in management capability and doing just that.

Whichever blend of resources, innovation and reform that Government missions weave into public services, they will all flow through the hands of the UK's public service managers. We owe it to all those who work in and those who depend on these essential services to ensure that all of those managers have the skills to secure the improvements needed for lasting change. Managers ultimately sit at the heart of missions.

Anthony Painter

Director of Policy & External Affairs
Chartered Management Institute

INTRODUCTION

The NHS long term workforce plan was released last summer just before the first in SMF's series of reports conducted in partnership with CMI. [A picture of health? Examining the state of leadership and management in healthcare.](#)

The NHS plan plots a considered, generational horizon of 10-15 years to equip the service with the staff it needs to deliver for a growing, and ageing population. But given the pressures facing services, it is worth noting that the CMI/SMF research identified the difference that improving management capabilities can achieve in a much shorter time frame.

NHS trusts that made a leadership decision to prioritise good management were able to markedly improve performance within as little as three years.

This is just one example of many that came to light throughout this research project. In each of the three service areas studied, the difference that a commitment to developing competent managers and leaders can make was demonstrable, yet so often overlooked.

In healthcare, the research highlighted how two trusts have improved outcomes through this approach. At the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust, one of the largest acute hospital trusts in the UK, a new CEO moved the trust from the bottom 20% of NHS employers to the top 20% in just three years. Similarly, at the Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust, a new leader reformed middle management to achieve a "good" rating across safety, effectiveness, responsiveness, and care, up from critical levels seven years earlier.

The report also challenged the popular myth that compared to the wider economy, the NHS has too many managers. The research highlights that the NHS appears to be under-managed, with analysis revealing that the number of managers in the UK workforce, as a whole, is 6.5 percentage points higher than in the English NHS workforce.

With data from the Care Quality Commission indicating that around a quarter of hospital trusts need considerable improvement, the study found a demonstrable, positive link between high quality management practices and the quality of healthcare.

Indeed, NHS England Chief Executive Amanda Pritchard used her keynote speech at the recent NHS Expo to highlight the work that CMI is doing with the NHS to develop a new code of practice for all managers and leaders in the health service to ensure they are 'well-trained' and 'well-supported'.


"That's what makes well performing teams," she said, adding that they are "fundamental to fostering the kind of culture in which staff and patients can speak up and be listened to, and fundamental to every other challenge or priority the NHS faces."

"If we want a well-run NHS we must support those who run it. If we want leaders to be accountable, which we do, then we must give them the tools they need to do their jobs well."

This report sets out new recommendations for politicians, policymakers and the NHS to deliver better for patients. These include broadening Care Quality Commission inspections to include a detailed review of an organisation's management practices, training, and leadership pipelines. Including these metrics in inspections is key to understanding where improvements are needed. The report also recommends establishing a set of benchmarks for judging good leadership and management and mandating in-work leadership and management training across the NHS and primary care for managers and leaders.


In education, our research identified leadership as the primary ingredient to addressing a worsening retention crisis and improving morale among educators. The report also found success stories in further education colleges and universities, again where efforts were made to prioritise quality leadership. Several months on from publication, and the financial pressures on further and higher education have intensified considerably, yet despite the evidence of the better outcomes for students that stem from investing in good leadership, the policy focus has been on curriculum changes rather than leadership.

The report calls for quality leadership and management across the sector to be prioritised - at all levels from primary school, to FE colleges and universities. It calls for the current Teacher Recruitment and Retention strategy to develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the numerous barriers to maximising the contribution of leadership and management to organisational success of schools and colleges.



“ If we want a well-run NHS we must support those who run it. If we want leaders to be accountable, which we do, then we must give them the tools they need to do their jobs well. ”

*Amanda Pritchard,
Chief Executive, NHS England*



It also recommends a revamp of leadership NPQs that mandate them for all those aspiring to be or already in leadership and management roles in state funded education, and develops them for other parts of the (e.g. higher) education sector.

The successes - and failings - of local government are felt across every corner of the UK as they represent the daily brush of the citizenry with their public services in everything from rubbish collection to the growing need for social care provision. The past year has seen a growing list of local councils effectively declaring bankruptcy, or teetering on the edge of insolvency.

Having the skills to manage and navigate the increasingly choppy waters of uncertain funding, demoralised staff and an acute recruitment problem requires a concerted commitment to raising the capacities of those in positions of leadership.

The report recommends establishing benchmarks for good quality leadership and management in local government and ensuring that the Office for Local Government (Oflog) includes systematic assessments of leadership and management quality in its work. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) should bring forward, in conjunction with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders, a comprehensive 10-year workforce strategy for local government. It needs to be accompanied by an increase in funding to councils to help improve the recruitment and retention of staff at all levels and MHCLG should establish a local government leadership academy, similar to the ones that have been set up for the NHS and the Civil Service.

The case study snapshots in this report tease out the art of the possible and deliver a different narrative to the one that has become commonplace when considering public services in the UK. They are not happy accidents, in each case they stem from a conscious decision to improve management and leadership capabilities in order to better deliver for the public they serve. In each case, they achieved better results with minimal costs, which is not to say minimal investment. At its crux, just as with physical plants, MRI scanners, new buildings and deploying leading edge technology, management skills represent an investment in delivering something better for the public.

HEALTHCARE SECTOR

According to [research conducted by the Social Market Foundation, in partnership with CMI](#), over one in four NHS managers and leaders (27%) said senior leadership in their healthcare organisations was “ineffective” at ensuring their organisation was successful. Most of the NHS staff surveyed also reported that management-related issues are blocking them from doing their job effectively, including staff recruitment and retention, poor organisational culture, and ineffective internal processes.

Data from Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections of NHS acute care service providers shows that in 2022 a quarter of inspected organisations ranked as “require improvement” or “inadequate” and very few ranked as “outstanding.” Good and outstanding managers in the NHS make a critical difference to our health. Examples below including the Teaching Hospitals Trust in Leeds and Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust in Greater Manchester, demonstrate how investing in good management translated into better care for patients.

The NHS will need to focus on improving the quality of management if it is to meet the acute demands and deep stresses it is facing. The key recommendations set out in the report include:

- **Broaden the CQC’s “well-led” category for inspections**

Include a fuller range in the CQC analysis of whether an organisation is “well-led”. Attention should also be paid to the amount and quality of management and leadership training and CQC should actively support institutions to help them improve their quality of care.

- **Mandate minimum in-work training requirements**

Accredited management training should be compulsory for newly appointed managers at each stage. The training would not have to be in the form of academic qualifications, however, to ensure quality and consistent standards across the board, a new excellence framework should be developed and implemented.

- **Mandate NHS England to establish a compulsory national excellence framework**

This framework should be developed in partnership and should focus on setting out the minimum competence requirements at each level and, in order to ensure quality and consistency, training providers should be accredited themselves by NHS England.

- **Encourage the piloting of NHS workplace democracy in underperforming trusts**

Staff motivation and morale are important parts of a successful healthcare organisation. Having an overall strategy or a vision for the organisation can go some way to motivating staff, but the vision has to be something that staff can believe in and get behind.

Testimonials:

“ Our health service is facing a myriad of challenges. As well as having to tackle lengthy waiting lists, improve its creaking infrastructure and strengthen staff morale, it has to boost productivity, and build the capability needed to make effective use of new technology. These are complex challenges that require sophisticated, multi-layered solutions that are hard to identify and implement. And what is clear is that without mature leadership and management capacity, the health service will struggle to make a significant dent on any of them. Well-trained and supported leaders and managers, who have autonomy to act and the right infrastructure behind them, are critical to care providers’ ability to improve their services.

What leaders and managers need and deserve now is vocal and consistent support from every individual and organisation with a stake in healthcare. Any suggestion that the health service could somehow make do with fewer managers and still operate effectively, let alone deliver the improvements it needs, is wide of the mark. There is now overwhelming [evidence](#) highlighting the association between good management, which relies on there being sufficient managers in post, and improved quality and financial outcomes.

Two new Health Foundation commissions will further strengthen the leadership and management evidence base. Our [NHS management capacity research commission](#) will help us understand how best to support and develop healthcare leaders and managers. Meanwhile, our [commission for healthier working lives](#) will generate important insights on the role of leadership and management in the wider economy in enabling good health. “

**Bryan Jones, Senior Improvement Fellow,
The Health Foundation**

“ In our constant struggle to figure out sensible, evidence-based solutions to the country’s most complex problems, the SMF is a reliable source of mental inspiration, intellectual networking and policy dynamite. “

**The Lord Bethell, former Health minister
and member of the House of Lords**

TAMESIDE AND GLOSSOP INTEGRATED CARE TRUST



Karen James



Kath Gaskell Do Carmo

Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care Trust serves a population of 250,000 in Greater Manchester and north-west Derbyshire. The trust employed around 2,300 staff in 2021-22.

When Karen James took over as chief executive in 2014, the Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care Trust was in a bad way. Known locally as “Shame-side”, performance and patient care were “appalling” (James’ words). The Care Quality Commission (CQC) verdict was only a bit kinder: “inadequate”, it ruled.

Almost a decade later, the trust still faces many challenges, but the official metrics are transformed. Heading into the Covid-19 pandemic, it was rated good by the CQC; in its latest staff survey in 2022, Tameside and Glossop showed higher than average scores across a range of areas relevant to good leadership and management practices.

So how has high-calibre leadership made a difference? While it’s been a long, multifaceted journey, some specific pieces of active management do stand out.

Set priorities and report on improvements

To kick-start the turnaround, James moved quickly to put priorities in place. Her aim was to stabilise the situation, demonstrate that an improvement process was beginning, and show that it would ultimately make a difference. “You have to be clear about your assessment of the organisation,” she says, and to be clear with everybody about what needs to be done. It was crucial to communicate confidence to the regulators.

Build trust

To get everyone behind the transformation, the leadership team had to earn the trust of the staff at Tameside. This involved showing that James understood the problems and was taking the time to build relationships. Clinical teams in particular can view management as “people that pass through the organisation.” James made a point of going out and talking to all the clinical teams. Teams were given the autonomy to make changes. It’s also important to be clear about the values and behaviours you expect for the organisation, James says, and make sure you’re demonstrating those values and behaviours as well.

Be visible

James made herself personally visible. She walked the corridors having conversations. “You have to be out there being visible, talking to staff, be understanding of their operating model, their contexts, the challenges.” It was also important to celebrate teams and individuals doing a great job, acknowledging that and involving them in decisions.

Set clear goals and get middle management buy-in

James set a handful of high-level goals. These became “a golden thread throughout the organisation.” Everyone knew them and how they could contribute to delivering them.

Middle managers were recognised as important conduits. Working with these people, Tameside was able to stabilise, bank some easy wins, and show that improvements were underway.

James also built close relationships with local authorities and key external parties.

Find and develop the right people

Recruiting effective people would be central to the transformation. This was a particular challenge at lower and middle management levels because of the “*accidental manager*” phenomenon – “*all of a sudden, because you’re great at what you do, you’re promoted to a management role or a clinical director role,*” James observes. But such people may not have developed the different skill sets required.

James herself was a key talent-spotter, looking for people who have the academic credentials and ability to progress but who also, critically, have got “*the ability to engage individuals.*”

They also had to lay off a number of middle managers. There were some difficult conversations, but they knew it was vital to have the right people in that middle tier who could drive the organisation forward.

Managers need to be properly trained to deliver an improvement programme on this scale. Training and mentoring were developed to build and maintain a pipeline of able people. Divisional director of nursing Kathryn Gaskell do Carmo was a key individual in introducing a pro-training culture.



LEEDS TEACHING HOSPITALS TRUST



Clare Smith



Phil Wood

Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust (LTHT) is one of the largest acute hospital trusts in the UK, providing services across the city of Leeds, the Yorkshire and Humber region and further afield. The trust is made up of seven hospitals across five sites. It employs more than 21,000 staff and, in 2022, treated more than 1.7 million patients.

The mid-2010s were a period of change for Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust (LTHT). In a 2014 CQC inspection the trust received an overall grade of “requires improvement.” While some of the care was outstanding, there were areas of concern. Two years later, in its next full inspection, the trust was upgraded to “good” with “requires improvement” in some areas. LTHT maintained its “good” status in 2018.

The Leeds Way

A new chief executive, Julian Hartley, began the process of improvement with a new vision for LTHT known as “The Leeds Way” – “*who we are and what we believe. It defines how we work to deliver the best possible care and outcomes for our patients. The Leeds Way is about listening and being inclusive and taking on board the very best ideas out there.*” The Leeds Way came about through initial conversations with staff about the challenges they felt the trust faced. Staff shared views on what the values of the trust should be. Over time this became a codified set of values and behaviours that the organisation works by – from porters to professors of surgery.

In 2022 the trust’s values were updated in line with a new staff consultation. The Leeds Way remains embedded in the trust. At its heart is a commitment to the highest-quality patient treatment and care. This, says the current CEO Professor Philip Wood, is shared by all: “*If you’re the domestic who’s cleaning the wards, you’re*

contributing to the quality of the care we provide for our patients. And your personal contribution to that is as valuable as the person who’s doing that complex operation.”

Visible leadership

The importance of leadership visibility was stressed once more by Wood and COO Clare Smith, who added that previously there had been a “*distrust of management.*”

Flat structure

Rather than a pyramid structure, leadership at the hospital is relatively flat, with 19 units reporting to an executive team. This structure helps to build strong relationships between senior leadership and those who report to them. Inevitably, issues will arise. “*These are hard jobs,*” says Wood. In these circumstances, good interpersonal relationships enable issues to be noticed promptly and dealt with in a respectful way. If teams do need to come together to find joint solutions, then a convener will facilitate and support the conversation – “*not tell people what to do*” Wood adds.

Autonomy

Building on work that LTHT has done with the Virginia Mason Institute, staff at the frontline are empowered to be leaders in their own right. Local leaders have been given “*permission to achieve.*” There is, of course, some structure to this autonomy. Parameters are set. Plans and strategy are scrutinised. Wood says that senior leaders will want to have “*an accountability conversation*” about how commitments are being delivered but, beyond that “*you have the permission to deliver that how you wish.*”

Generally, people at LTHT are encouraged to “*have a go,*” says Smith. “*We’ve had people*

who have worked in operational roles, where clearly that doesn't speak to their individual skill sets. And actually, they're better in a policy or a strategic role. And we will try to facilitate that."

Training for management at every level

Leadership and management training is central to The Leeds Way. It's recognised, for example, that clinicians can't take on responsibility for large departments and teams without specific support. The trust tries to ensure there is good leadership and management at every level. Coaching and mentoring opportunities are made available for senior leaders. When Smith was about to transition onto the main board, she was able to take part in a "shadow board." This helped her get to grips with roles and responsibilities. *"I found that hugely beneficial in terms of understanding."*

A range of experiences

While the previous CEO Julian Hartley wasn't from a clinical background, he was a graduate of the NHS Leadership Academy. The current CEO, Professor Wood, is committed to clinical leadership and developing the leadership capacity of clinicians. In general, the senior leadership team benefits from having a range of experience, says Smith. *"You work collaboratively to make the best for patients."*



THE OAKWOOD SURGERY



Dr Eggitt

The Oakwood Surgery in Doncaster had 5,619 patients on its list in 2019-20. There are two GP partner-owners and two non-partner GPs. The surgery also employs a physician associate, a clinical pharmacist and two nurses. It has a practice manager who runs the practice day-to-day, including managing most of the staff. There is also a secretary and eight reception, administration and allied staff.

Oakwood Surgery is a consistently good performer in CQC inspections. In scores under the NHS's Quality and Outcomes Framework, it scores close to the maximum. Now it has expansion plans and is in the process of merging with a less successful local practice. Good leadership and management underpin the surgery's success. GP partner Eggitt says that they provide "gold-standard care on a faded-bronze budget. I say to my team regularly in the morning, what I ask of you guys is to not worry about capacity. Capacity isn't your problem; your problem is quality. You're brilliant... the patients love you... it's your role to provide quality care when a patient contacts you. Keep doing that."

Open communication and collaborative relationships

Good leadership is "99.99%, about communication and relationships," says Eggitt. These are foundational to a collaborative workplace culture. He believes that leaders need to be able to accept criticism and be willing to adapt in the face of it.

"Part of being a leader is learning how to interpret that information and do something positive with it."

One team

The "single team" ethic is at the core of Eggitt and his partner's vision for the practice and how best to deliver healthcare. "We do not work in anything close to a silo here, we just have a team where we recognise each other's strengths and weaknesses." For example, the front of house team is incredibly flexible, says Eggitt. "They can solve most of the problems before they even get to me, because they understand the rest of the system."

Flat structure

The surgery has put in place a flat structure. Every morning the team meets before opening the doors. "We ask how everyone is. We ask what the theme was from yesterday, if there's anything that we need to be aware of and challenges." People flag up any issues that they think might cause a hiccup, and "we solve it as a team. We talk about how to tackle the challenge for the day." These changes didn't happen overnight. There have been staff changes; new staff members have come in who slot more easily into the surgery's culture. "It's been an evolutionary process," Eggitt admits.

NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE COMBINED HEALTHCARE NHS TRUST

Following on from our work with the Social Market Foundation, CMI separately examined the impact of management and leadership at North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust.

Can better management and leadership nurse the NHS back to health?

It's an everyday story from the NHS playbook. An altercation in a nursing home leaves an elderly man on a trolley in A&E. The home won't have him back, but he isn't sick enough to take up an acute hospital bed.

Deputy chief operating officer Rachael Birks CMgr FCMI gets involved and calls a swift impromptu meeting to find a suitable bed within her orbit at North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust. A ward manager at Harplands Hospital deftly juggles her layouts - and a bed suited to the patient's needs appears like magic and is duly prepared for his admission. Attention then immediately turns to where the patient might go when he's discharged.

Ward manager Lisa Birks (no relation to Rachael) clearly relishes her problem-solving role on the team. *"I always get asked what I think, never told. I could say no - but I would need to back up my decision with evidence"* she observes.

Getting multiple partners to support each other to the hilt within a healthcare system may feel obvious, but nationally it's far from a given. Slow progress in delivering anything from shorter waiting lists to better preventative healthcare - or freeing up blocked beds - cast a shadow over the 75th anniversary of the National Health Service in July 2023.

What's now being recognised is that the NHS's ills don't just stem from staff shortages or budget constraints. As much as anything, this is a management story. According to research with the Social Market Foundation, in partnership

with CMI, one in four senior NHS managers are seen as ineffective. Nationally, management deficiencies are getting in the way of local staff recruitment and retention. Too often, good clinicians are shoved into senior management roles - only for it to emerge later that they don't have the skills to lead others. Culture and processes suffer as a result.

So where better to learn how stronger leadership can make a difference than the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust. It has an *"Outstanding"* rating from the Care Quality Commission and is proud to be the Health Service Journal's *"NHS Trust of the Year."*



Welcome to the Chartered Trust

There's one thing that is notable, possibly unique, about this Trust. No less than half of the senior operational team - seven managers in all - are fully fledged Chartered Managers. And we met with three of them.

The management structure of this combined Trust sets the tone for their mission: delivering outstanding integrated care. With 1,600 staff and a budget approaching £165m, the Trust embraces three (soon to be four) GP practices, a main psychiatric hospital and a string of community-based teams focusing on mental health and autism, learning disabilities, substance abuse, mothers and babies and more.

Chief operating officer Ben Richards CMgr FCMI joined the Trust having worked his way up in other NHS roles - during which time he gained his master's degree in healthcare leadership and also his qualification in Executive Coaching and Mentoring (at CMI Level 7).

Richards' work life is surprisingly nomadic. None of the executive team have their own offices. According to need and his diary, he finds a berth at one of the many clinical services, drops into one of the GP practices - or works from home.

"At first, the teams were a bit like, 'what are you doing here, have you come to spy on us?' Now the feedback is great. They know that they can stick their head round the door and grab me."

Talking to any of the Chartered Managers, you sense this same easy approachability - a respect for others and what they are going through on the patient front line. This concern is appreciated and is reflected in staff surveys.

Leaders who listen, reflect, change

Kim Stanyer CMgr FCMI took the opportunity to progress her NHS leadership career when the GP practice she managed became part of the Trust. A management apprenticeship and Level 7 Master's followed. She's now the associate director of primary care. *"I do think I reflect a lot more and think about how I should approach things before I proceed,"* she says.

"CMI really helps with change management. It's about active listening - helping people understand where their challenges are and how I can help them move forward. For me it was pivotal, the best thing I've ever done."

Part of Stanyer's CMI project work involved creating a template for one-to-one staff-manager conversations within the GP practices - not something most of them were used to. The sessions help improve staff participation, career prospects and highlight training needs, giving surgery workers a greater understanding of the changes taking place.

More recently, the GP practices under Stanyer's wing were challenged to discover the reasons for the poor take-up of childhood immunisations and survival screening. In the past, surgeries would have probably just sent out a circular letter or a text. It turns out a gentle approach or reminder via other existing community contacts is proving more fruitful. It's a good example of how a trained leader is going to be less inclined to accept the status quo and keep responding to events in exactly the same way as before.

Stanyer is also proud of the way she and her team have maximised the number of GPs available to see patients by adapting working practices and responding as flexibly as possible to the doctors' own family needs and availability.



"I was an okay leader"

Rachael Birks CMgr FCMI has no doubt that it was her management apprenticeship (completed with CMI) and subsequent Master's that cemented her career leap from mental health nurse to her current senior management role of deputy chief operating officer.

Rachael Birks thinks she was "an okay leader" on the wards, but it was her CMI studies that helped her develop the professionalism and gravitas she may have lacked. As she puts it, her training enabled her to question the underpinning behind some of her ideas around how to improve performance.

One success that Rachael Birks cites is reducing the typically long waits for autism and ADHD assessments. Having analysed the root cause of the problem locally, the Trust appointed a new senior manager charged with improving the service.

Another major improvement in service delivery is thanks to extensive development work with local authorities and the third sector around "community hubs." These take specialist health support workers out of hospital settings to treat people in convenient and friendly drop-in locations close to where they live. In this way, workers providing child or adolescent mental health, or other services, can better tailor their support to local needs. Even Stoke City and Port Vale Football Clubs are involved in the programme.

Lessons for the wider NHS

This group of Chartered Managers seems to take satisfaction in collaborating with others who are on a similar, professional wavelength. Richards says the team is unafraid to challenge how things are done, but mindful of the impact of any decision before acting. They are ready to tweak ideas as necessary, and don't beat each other up if a plan doesn't work in practice.

While studying, this trio all valued input from peers in different business settings – including, in Stayner's case, a manager working in a sewage works. They believe that the management skills they gained are transferable to other sectors. Richards also values the focus on being simultaneously "brave and ethical" – involving everyone in innovations to better deliver the services that patients need.

Richards has nailed it: if you just keep doing the same old things, you get the same old outcomes. Yet when things need to be done differently you can't just barge in and drop an idea on someone. Medics and health workers often struggle with change. It's professional leadership skills that will give senior health managers the confidence to galvanise others into getting more people better and keeping more people well.

Only one of the CMI trio we spoke to is a former clinician, but all three clearly have a deep understanding of how and why working in today's NHS is tough on staff and their families. Their focus is on listening and treating people with sensitivity – easing the burden or adding bonus payments when it is in their power. When their hands are tied, they are quick to take time with people one-to-one to explain exactly why they cannot help more.

One tangible sign of success in North Staffordshire is that, against a national background of poor staff retention and around 133,000 NHS job vacancies, from November they will be in the enviable position that they have more qualified nurses wanting to work for the Trust than there are jobs available.

Managers get a bad rap in the NHS, but The North Staffordshire experience shows that with talent, training and compassion they really can make a difference.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

[Effective leadership and management significantly impact public sector performance](#), including in local government. [Recent research conducted by the Social Market Foundation, in partnership with CMI](#), delves further into the performance and challenges of leadership and management in local government.

The research reveals that while local government leaders recognise the crucial role of leadership quality in organisational success, only 67% deem their senior

leadership effective. Other key challenges facing leaders and managers the research identified were low morale, limited use of performance management and inadequate recruitment, with only 45% of leaders feeling confident in their organisation's ability to attract talent.

The report proposes actionable recommendations including:

- **Focus on Management and Leadership**

The Office for Local Government (Oflog), the agency charged with gauging and improving the performance of local government and warning as appropriate should a local authority be at risk of serious failure, should prioritise leadership and management quality. Building an accurate picture of the current state and promoting the adoption of best practices can significantly improve leadership standards in local government.

- **10-year workforce strategy**

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly the Department for Levelling-Up Housing and Communities - DLUHC) should collaborate with stakeholders to create a 10-year workforce strategy for local government. The strategy needs to include a funding increase for councils to improve recruitment and retention of staff across all levels.

- **Establish a leadership academy**

To aid the development of leaders and managers, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government should establish a leadership academy, so that all levels of management in local government can have access to consistent high quality leadership and management training.

- **Diversify the workforce**

The workforce strategy should recognise the wealth of experience that can come from outside the local government. Introducing a direct entry system for experienced leaders seeking a career change can bring fresh perspectives from other industries.

Four successful examples of local government organisations benefiting from strong leadership and management practices are explored below.

Testimonials:

“ Local leaders can, should, and in many cases do, fulfil a role that no other type of leaders are capable of. They offer an in-depth understanding of local needs and capabilities that is impossible to replicate from the distance of central government. They have a local democratic mandate that empowers them to make policy decisions over many of the areas of life that matter most to all of us: housing, education, care of the most vulnerable people in our society, and the shape of the places we live. Local leaders, sufficiently empowered, are in a unique position to improve the lives of citizens across the country.

The issue is that they are not sufficiently empowered. The reason I wrote that they only fulfil this role “in many places” and not everywhere, is not because of any fault of the local leaders. It is because I, like the Social Market Foundation’s research has confirmed, have seen [leadership in the sector](#) disempowered by systematic budget cuts that introduce new challenges and risks just as they reduce the capacity local government has to tackle them.

A unitary local authority can easily have a budget of over a billion pounds a year, covering responsibilities from adult social care to potholes. There is no question that the role is difficult, and the Social Market Foundation’s proposals for increasing leadership capacity – particularly by easing the funding pressures, take the challenge seriously. We need to [listen to the current generation](#) of local leaders about what needs to be done to ensure the next generation of leaders are empowered to meet the challenges that await them. We need change. ”

**Dr Jonathan Carr-West, Chief Executive,
Local Government Information Unit (LGIU)**

“This compendium of case studies provides useful insights into the challenges facing leaders in local government today.

Effective leadership and management have always been crucial to the development of strong organisations and delivery of effective public services but it’s often hard to find the time and resources to build and maintain leadership capacity. Leadership theory provides many different models of leadership, ranging from the ‘great man’ theories to the idea of ‘servant leadership’. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution to the leadership challenges faced by both local political leaders and senior officers in local government. How can all those in leadership roles find the right leadership style to enable them to embody the highest public service values, be authentic, tell truth to power and avoid being reduced to rubble by conflicting pressures?

One of the impacts of the relentless financial pressures on local government is a reduction in both the time and resources available for leadership development. It may seem like a luxury when councils may not be able to balance their books but it’s at these times of greatest risk that strong, collaborative leadership and management skills, underpinned by good communication skills, provide essential safeguards against failure. In local government, political leaders and senior officers have to manage the contested spaces where the most difficult decisions are made and implemented. One of the common characteristics of failing councils is the failure of leadership. Leaders operating in these overlapping spheres have not listened to each other, faced up to painful truths or worked together to mitigate the impact of financial and governance failures on the people they serve.

It is only by investing in leadership skills and knowledge and building leadership capacity that local government can weather the current storms. To fail to do so is a false economy. ”

**Caroline Staite, Professor Emeritus of
Public Management, University Of Birmingham**

CALDERDALE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Julie Jenkins



Robin Tuddenham

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council services a population of 206,600. It is the recent recipient of a broadly positive review from a Local Government Association's (LGA) peer review exercise¹ and has been identified as the fourth most productive council in England.²

To help inform this case study, in addition to desk research we spoke with Chief Executive (CEO) Robin Tuddenham, Council Leader Jane Scullion, and Julie Jenkins, Director of Children and Young People's Services.

A clear sense of mission that permeates the whole organisation

Having all staff at Calderdale Council united around a central mission, which all council workers were ultimately serving, was seen by the CEO of Calderdale as central to their organisation's performance. He highlighted that: *"There is a shared...sense of purpose and clarity about what we're trying to achieve... a recognition of...how should we run and how it should work..."*

A high degree of identification with the council's "mission" was achieved through a number of policies. For example, recruitment was heavily weighted towards local people, which, it was felt, helped ensure that a sense of place permeates the council. Other measures taken to ensure alignment between employees and the councils' mission included having a system of employee representatives to embed "staff voice" in decision-making and annual staff awards to reward performance that exemplifies Calderdale council's purpose.

Open relationships and good communication across the council

Key to Calderdale's success has been good

communication at the highest level, i.e. between the council leader and Chief Executive, where there is *"...respect for the very different roles that the politicians and the managers have...a degree of openness...and working through the difficult issues."* Equally vital has been a culture of open communication across the organisation as a whole, where the Chief Executive welcomes challenges from his colleagues and the latter are confident enough to raise difficult questions.

Deploying appropriate leadership styles

Alongside the culture of open communication and a strong mission with widespread buy-in, Calderdale Council primarily utilises a decentralised approach to leadership, tempered with an autocratic style when necessary. The decentralised approach enables teams and individuals to deliver on their objectives in the most effective ways; the example is set at the top and consequently it has a direct bearing on performance at the council, as was observed by the Head of Children's Services Julie Jenkins:

"Leadership style correlates to outcomes...[the leader]...here, respects boundaries and treads a very good line..."



NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL



Tom McCabe

Norfolk County Council serves a population of 916,000 people and is split evenly between urban and rural areas. Notably, in recent years, it has turned around its Children's Services department, which had been failing for many years.

To help inform this case study, as well as drawing on desk research, we spoke with Norfolk County Council CEO, Tom McCabe.

Putting in place stable and effective leadership

McCabe reported that Norfolk County Council had suffered from considerable disruption because of a failure to consistently make good quality permanent appointments to senior roles across the council, for a long time. Bringing stability to the Head of Children's Services role for example, was seen as a vital starting point for the subsequent improvements in performance, as McCabe noted: *"We've gone from where we were...Children's Services spent years in special measures...now, we've maintained a good level of stability...so it is about that, we have been able to think longer term..."*

More broadly, across the council, a concerted effort to improve leadership at all levels was highlighted as being vital for an effective council, noting that Norfolk has made efforts to permeate down all levels an ethos of leadership.

Visible leadership

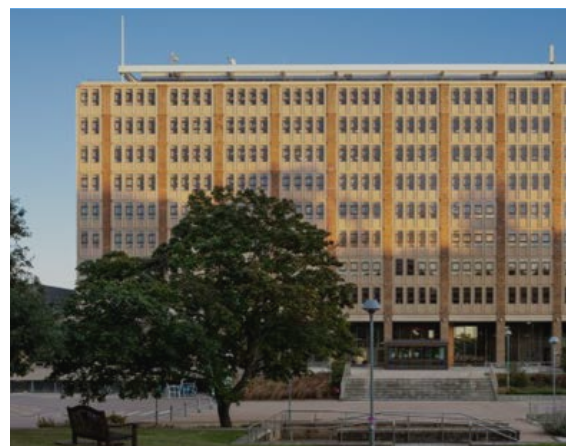
Having all leaders be visible to their teams is also important at Norfolk County Council. Such efforts, combined with clear messaging based upon a widely understood vision, were seen as important to helping boost trust between leaders and staff and motivating workers at the council. To that end, McCabe described the kinds of steps he had taken to increase the levels of

familiarity between himself and his teams:

"Visibility is important, so I do a weekly blog...I'll do various staff events...people have to be aware as to who I am and there needs to be consistency in what I'm saying..."

A single organisational culture

Also important in Norfolk County Council's efforts to enhance their performance has been cultural transformation. McCabe was clear that, for him, the council had lacked a coherent culture. Rather individual departments and teams had developed their own, which held back the council. Stable leadership, a clear vision and consistent messaging about the vision will not achieve their goals if there is not a single culture to underpin them: *"We have very strong departments with a strong departmental focus, but some staff wouldn't even recognise that they work for the same organisation. So there has been an element of refocusing...[a]... movement more towards a single organisation."*



SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL



Damian Roberts



Sally Kipping



Sarah Bainbridge

The council serves more than 90,000 residents.³ In 2023, Surrey Heath received a positive judgement from the LGA, through its peer review process, noting how it has made a good start to changing the organisation for the better after a period of churn and challenge.⁴

To help inform this case study, as well as utilising desk research, in Autumn 2023 we spoke with Damian Roberts (then CEO of Surrey Heath Borough Council), Sally Kipping (Head of HR, Performance and Communications) and Sarah Bainbridge (Organisational Development Manager).

Staff engagement and feedback

Utilising “staff voice” was central to Surrey Heath’s approach to organisational success. Embedding mechanisms for staff engagement have been important to help boost and sustain a motivated workforce with high morale. Mechanisms introduced to help do this have included holding open all-staff meetings where staff could be confident that any question they asked would be responded to, as well as cultivating direct relationships between staff and leaders.

Other factors have included ensuring the employee perspective is reflected upon at the highest levels of the organisation and informs decision-making, as Bainbridge, pointed out:

“We take the employee voice very seriously...for example, staff survey results are discussed at the highest levels and utilised to drive further improvement, workforce empowerment is frequently on the agenda at CMT [Corporate Management Team]

and we have a quarterly action plan for improving things for the staff.”

The improvements in staff morale are reflected in more than nine in ten (96%) of Surrey Heath staff reporting that they were “proud” to work at its council, with 92% of the workforce reporting that they felt “empowered” to do their jobs.

A pathway to advancement and training up leaders in “soft” management skills

Leadership and management training is important at Surrey Heath Council. Leadership development efforts recognise the importance of the more relational aspects of leadership and management. The use of mentors who “model” leadership, is vitally important to enabling leaders and managers to develop such skills, according to Kipping.

Exposing managers to what those above them in the hierarchy do is also an important part of training up the next cohort of leaders at Surrey Heath. In that vein, as Bainbridge observed, much of the wider management team are involved in key senior leadership activities such as finance and budget processes: *“When budget planning is taking place, it’s not just the senior leaders who take the lead...the wider management team work collaboratively. This enables less senior colleagues to gain a much better understanding of...decision making... We see this type of approach as...part of our commitment to learning and development.”*



RUTLAND COUNTY COUNCIL



Mark Andrews

Rutland County Council serves a population of 41,000 people⁵ with more than two-thirds (69%) of its population being rural. In 2019, a study of council productivity suggested that Rutland County Council was the sixth most productive local authority in England, an improvement of three places on the previous year.⁶

To help inform this case study, as well as drawing on desk research, we spoke with CEO of Rutland County Council Mark Andrews.

A distributed approach to leadership

At Rutland, Andrews' policy was to devolve as much responsibility to his staff as possible and therefore, a key part of his role as leader was to ensure that he created the right conditions in which council staff could deliver. Andrews described an example of his model in action: *"Recently, the therapy service set up a programme around falls in care homes, with no central direction...They looked at the data themselves, thought it was going the wrong way, so with their autonomy they set up a project that's been nationally recognised. I think it falls by 50%. I only saw it at the end...and I think that's how it should be."*

A key complement to this was avoiding over-systematised approaches which prescribed what effective performance looked like. He argued that it was likely to be much more useful to his council if ineffective and counterproductive practices were eliminated and then, in the context of a devolved approach, teams and individuals would deliver.

Establishing and nurturing peer-to-peer relationships

For Andrews, external relationships with other CEOs are a vital learning tool. He added that whether they are ad-hoc, one-to-one relationships with peers, or organised training that utilised peer-to-peer learning amongst

senior leaders, they have proven to be important ways for helping him learn how to improve his leadership skills: "I like the one to one relationships...they are better for leadership relationships because you can get the understanding of how people are approaching issues...." Andrews added:

"There's also some training programmes I've been on that bring a number of peers together. Currently I'm...on one of these programmes, and we've built some trust so are honest about the challenges that we're facing. I think that honesty is really important to help us develop."

Flexibility in the face of difficult circumstances

The size of Rutland County Council means that the resources available to the local authority are limited. In that context, Andrews revealed how he had to adapt his council's policies and practices to the fact that they would be at a disadvantage compared to larger councils when competing for talent. Therefore, he has had to develop an approach which recognises this but still ensures that the council's ethos and culture are not too disrupted by this: *"...our strategy has got to be one around how we manage a more fluid workforce yet maintain the culture and approach, we have to focus upon consistency of service [and the] cohesion of teams..."*



EDUCATION SECTOR

Quality education is central to greater prosperity in industrialised societies. However, the public data shows that education quality in the UK, despite some recent improvement in results in the Performance for International Students Assessment (PISA) rankings, continues to lag behind many other comparative countries.

Evidence also shows that leadership and management can play a central role in improving educational quality. In the UK, however, between 2017-2023, an average 30% of schools and colleges have received a rating of “inadequate” or “requires improvement” for leadership and management, indicating that leadership and management has been lacking for some time.

[The research conducted by the Social Market Foundation, in partnership with CMI](#), reveals that while leadership quality is the most important factor for success in educational organisations, one in five managers rate their senior leadership as ineffective (20%). Other areas that educational organisations are struggling with include morale and motivation with almost a third of managers saying their senior leadership team performed poorly at motivating staff (30%). Recruitment and retention are also areas of concern with only 50% and 57% of managers saying their organisation performed well in these areas respectively.

The report lays out a number of recommendations to maximise the contribution of leadership and management to organisational success including:

- **Prioritise leadership and management**

Politicians and policymakers should make leadership and management a priority issue.

- **Build on teacher recruitment and retention strategy**

Build on the current Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy and develop a more comprehensive approach to reducing the numerous barriers to maximising the contribution of leadership and management to organisational success of schools and colleges.

- **Revamp leadership NPQs**

Revamp leadership NPQs (national professional development courses designed for teachers and leaders to develop skills, progress careers and improve school outcomes) and mandate them for all those aspiring to be or already in leadership and management roles in state funded education. Develop leadership NPQs or equivalents for other parts of the (e.g., higher) education sector.

- **Ensure quality and consistency of training**

Ensure that the reformed NPQ framework is underpinned by a robust regime that upholds the quality and consistency of the training and enables those procuring such training to access the right training from the best providers.

Below are three examples of educational organisations who have reaped the benefits of good leadership and management.

Testimonials:

“ In education, the quality of a school can't exceed the quality of its Headteacher. Heads (and their teams) are leaders and managers. They set visions and build systems. They forge relationships – and manage performance. They are front line public servants who need to deliver day in and day out, but also be ready for the changes to come.

In this sense they mirror other pivotal leaders in the public sector – FE Principals, leaders and managers of job centres, hospitals, youth services, employment support. These people are the reformers –able to make a profound difference to people's lives. As this piece of work sets out very effectively, to do this effectively, they need high quality support and training so they can build their skills. This is one way (amongst many) to demonstrate our collective appreciation of their power and importance. In fact, without them public sector reform remains too theoretical, too remote.

So as we approach a changing future – disrupted and hopeful in equal measure – we must always remember the importance of leaders and managers as the one who can make change happen.”

**Oli de Botton, Chief Executive,
The Careers Enterprise Company**

OLDHAM COLLEGE



Alan Benvie

In 2017 Oldham College received an Ofsted rating of “requires improvement”, but just a year later in 2018 it moved to “good.” Alan Benvie, Vice-Principal for Student Experience and Inclusion joined the college in mid-2018, while the college was moving out of their phase of financial recovery, and into an improvement phase, which they continue to work on today.

A strategic plan for improvement

To move on to their improvement journey, the college adopted a Strategic Plan that set out a purpose and vision for the College, complemented with smaller, actionable goals. The strapline was to be “*the best place to learn, and work.*”

Key to designing the Strategic Plan was the involvement of College staff, the outgoing Principal gave staff the opportunity to communicate their vision for the College, which areas they felt needed the most work and should be prioritised.

Focus on staff development

Using the Strategic Plan as the foundation and guide, the College has focused on staff development to help ensure the attributes of good leadership are spread throughout the College. This has included commissioning tailored CPD to meet the specific needs of staff, as well as creating new progression pathways:

“One of the things that we’ve introduced over the last few years is to make sure that where our structures are flat, to create opportunities for people to progress.”

This has helped staff to feel valued and aided in staff retention. Staff turnover at the college has dropped and satisfaction has increased. The College has now received numerous workplace awards including Best Place to Work for a Large Employer, Best Place to Work for Women and Best Place to Work for Wellbeing.

Prioritising student outcomes and feedback

One group that acutely feels the impact of leadership and management practises are students, and to that end the student voices and outcomes are strongly valued. Multiple student feedback mechanisms help the College to learn what is and isn’t working. Such feedback can influence the training that teaching staff then receive. Student satisfaction levels are particularly high.



LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY



Lynn Dobbs

When she arrived at London Met, Professor Lynn Dobbs faced a challenge of turning around a struggling university. In the years since, the university's finances have turned around from a 2.1% deficit of total income to a surplus of 5.9%, student numbers have grown, and satisfaction levels are high. While we spoke to Professor Dobbs in the summer of 2023, she has since retired from London Met.

Making staff central to recovery

Finding that staff at the university were passionate but demoralised, Dobbs recognised that to change the fortunes of London Met, it would be necessary to have staff onboard. Discussions with staff when she arrived helped Dobbs to establish what was important to them and she then used this to establish a five year strategy for the university: *"When I first went around and talked to the staff... it became obvious that there was a culture of fear in the university around job security."*

Establishing a cohesive leadership and management structure

Good relationships within the university helped to embed the new structures.

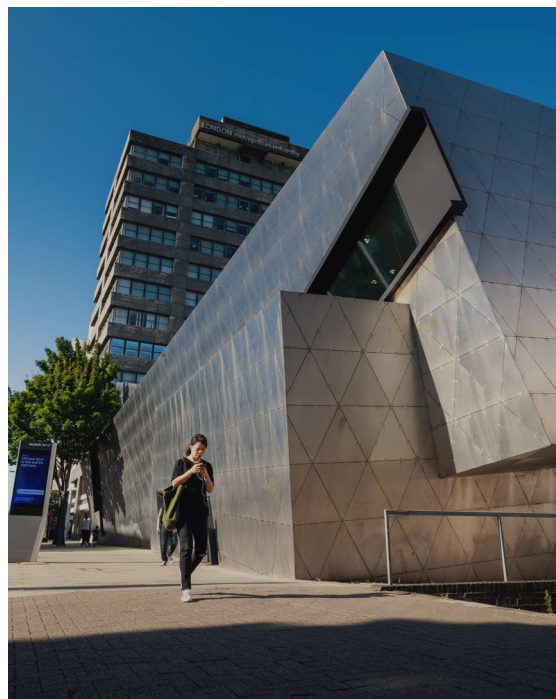
"It's been about developing trust between the different levels in the organisation and respecting and trusting the people that you've put into post to deliver without always interfering."

High trust levels at senior management level cascade down to lower management levels.

This helped to ensure that commitment to the strategy ran through the organisation, with well-trained, well-informed middle managers.

Continuing to prioritise leadership and management

Dobbs emphasised the importance of a good pipeline of well-trained leaders and managers to continue organisational success, noting it is risky to let success rely on an individual. Consequently, Dobbs reported actively working to develop leadership and management skills in people who she sees potential in, and who want a greater managerial role.



EXETER COLLEGE



John Laramy

Exeter College has never had an Ofsted rating below “good”, since its first inspection in 2008. Principal John Laramy has been at Exeter College since 2009 when he was brought in to help the college to reach “*outstanding*”, which it has retained since 2014. But reaching and then maintaining a grade of “*outstanding*” takes work. Some of the methods used to do so include:

Using data to inform decisions

The process of refining leadership and management at the college began with more extensive collection and use of data in the college. It allowed leaders and managers to identify the areas that needed improvement and proved valuable for persuading more resistant staff of the necessity of change.

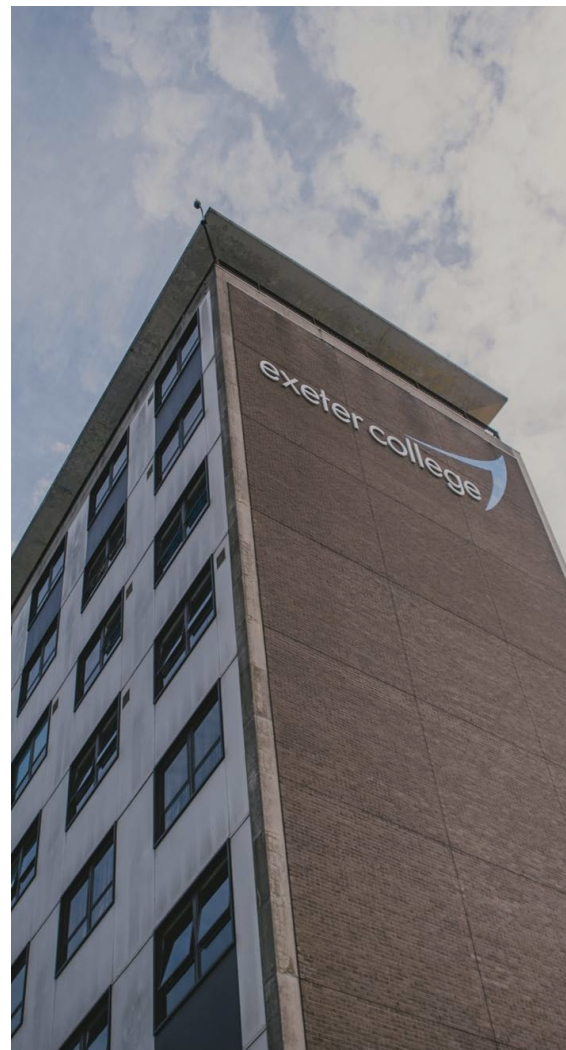
Engaging the wider community

Seeing itself very much as a part of the community, the college was keen to develop relationships externally as well as internally. Working with local employers, for example, enabled the college to make sure that its programmes were appropriate for the local economy. There was also considerable effort made to work closely with local schools in a mutually beneficial way, in order to ensure a pipeline of new students onto appropriate courses.

Emphasising a positive culture that gives staff autonomy and celebrates work well done

Maintaining momentum is made possible by a positive work environment that ensures staff

work in a high morale culture. Part of this is giving staff the autonomy to do their jobs. Laramy described it as “*freedom in a box.*” Each area of the college receives and is responsible for their own budget and can largely spend that budget how they feel it would best benefit them.



CONCLUSION

The aim of this work, first commissioned by the CMI in January 2023, was to prompt meaningful, evidence-based discussion of the value of skilled management and leadership in improving the delivery of public services. The strain on those services, from the NHS, to schools and further education institutions along with local authorities, has arguably grown in the intervening time. Addressing those pressures is a crucial challenge for policymakers, regardless of political fortunes and election cycles. It is the sincere hope of both of the charities who came together to examine the role of leadership in the public realm, that this report will contribute to the necessary, and pressing, work that must lie behind much-needed reforms if the public is to see the ultimate benefits of the services upon which they rely.

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- Caroline Staite, Professor Emeritus of Public Management, University Of Birmingham.
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- Alan Benvie, Vice-Principal Oldham College.

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