



# Exploring the Rainbow: Growing as Leaders, Navigating Complexity, Moving to Action

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The Inspire Improvement Fellowship Year 4 programme was the first year we moved to a blended approach. The first two learning blocks were online and then we met face-to-face for the last learning block which comprised of a two-day residential workshop.



We all arrived the night before the workshop to meet for drinks and supper. What a joyful reunion it was because although we had only connected virtually before we found ourselves trying to recognise people in the flesh, people who we were now seeing in 3D. Conversations went something like “Oh hello, is that you Jo?”

We spent a wonderful two days together and I have never laughed so much as I did those two days. We all shared stories of where we came from, stories of practice and planned for our future connections together. The fellows also undertook a final participatory evaluation and took their creativity to the next level as you will see from the videos and hear from the laughter.

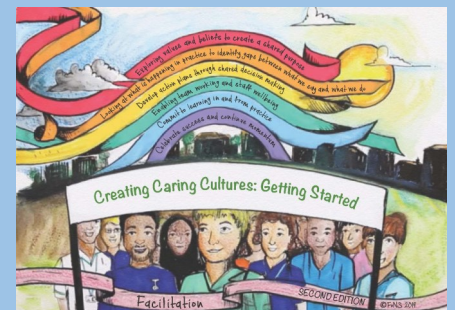
It was wonderful to witness how much the fellows have developed and grown from when I first met them and how they are truly free to be themselves. I witnessed human flourishing in each of them. This has since translated into promotion and new roles for some and for others reaching difficult decisions to change their nursing journey to improve their work life balance.

It has been an honour and pleasure to accompany them on this journey. And I am looking forward to connecting with all the fellows from cohorts 1-4 through the Inspire Improvement Fellowship Alumni.

Jo Odell, FoNS Inspire Improvement Fellowship Lead

## Background

The Inspire Improvement Fellowship and programme of support, which started in January 2018, aims to enable clinical leaders to develop knowledge, skills and expertise in facilitating culture change and improvement at the front line of practice. The programme is underpinned by the [FoNS Creating Caring Cultures model](#).



## Year 4: September 2021-July 2022

Following an extensive application and interview process, 13 fellows were offered a place.

The programme comprised two learning blocks, each of 7 weekly, three-hour sessions, facilitated virtually using the Zoom platform. The learning blocks were held in **September 2021** and **March 2022**. The programme completed with two face-to-face residential workshops at a central location in **July 2022**. Each fellow also had 1:1 support over a 12-month period and a small bursary.

The programme was facilitated by Jo Odell, the FoNS Practice Development Facilitator accompanied by two new co-facilitators, Karen Davies and Pam Galloway, who were recruited from Year 2 of the fellowship programme.

*I have greater confidence to lead and facilitate. I am more likely to challenge practice and culture that is unhelpful. This has impacted on my communication with senior leadership and my relationships on the units*

**FoNS Fellow**

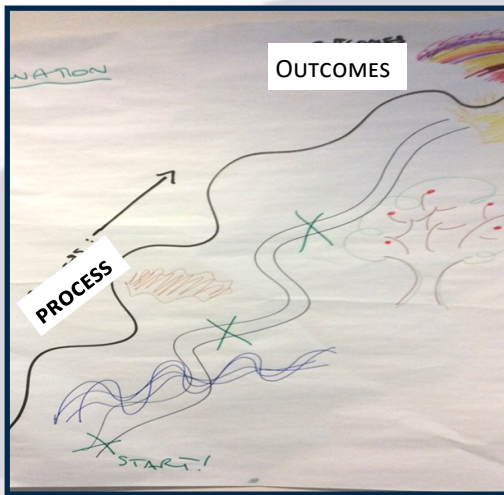
*I will continue to put my learnings into practice with my team. I'm more confident in myself and looking forward to the next phase of this journey*

**FoNS Fellow**

*I found the session very helpful because I learnt that I have gone from being worried about the unknown and lack of control I may have to embracing and not fretting about the outcomes*

**FoNS Fellow**

## Being Participatory



At FoNS, our work is underpinned by a number of principles which relate to this review specifically that is:

- Working in collaborative, inclusive and participatory ways
- Undertaking evaluation that covers both the process of the programme as well as the outcomes

To achieve this, the Inspire Improvement Fellowship programme contains three opportunities, or checkpoints, for fellows to participate in the evaluation of the programme and their learning. During the last session of the first two blocks, the fellows work on their own to reflect on the seven sessions of the learning block. Then in two groups, the fellows share their reflections and, working together, theme them and create a joint reflection using those themes.

### Check point 1: Growing as Leaders

#### Aim of learning block 1 (Sept - Oct 2021)

The first learning block covers the following topics:

- Getting to know each other and developing ways of working collectively and creatively
- Connecting to our values and beliefs of being a person-centred leader
- Exploring participatory evaluation and how we can use this in our workplace
- How do I develop my skills as a facilitative leader
- Understanding our workplace culture
- How can I work in collaboration, inclusive and participatory ways with my team?



### What did the fellows say at the end of the learning block?

At the end of the block, the fellows worked individually to reflect on the seven sessions of the learning block. These are a few of their individual reflections from block 1.

Key themes relate to personal discovery and growth. The Fellows recognised that the safe space created by the facilitators enabled them to reflect more deeply. Sharing reflections and experiences led to new insights and learning for themselves.

*I learnt that I have gone from being worried about the unknown and lack of control I may have, to embracing and not fretting about the outcomes.*

*Being pushed to be honest with myself. The blinkers are off and I accept that I am better than I give myself credit for. I will stop trying to fix things and instead help others to find solutions to problems. There will be less negativity and we will stop expecting too much from ourselves and the organisation.*

*Reflection in the group was very emotional, seeing my journey from the start of the programme with the goal to develop myself as a leader, hone my skills and grow, doing this within the group in a safe environment was really good and helped me identify some key themes that resonated with me: Safe space, development, self awareness, team work. Collaboration, shared vision facilitation,*

*gradual process, step by step, circle of control and no quick fixes.*

*I found today's session useful to reflect on 'my journey so far' in comparison to the other fellows, it was good to be able to have some time out to really think about what I have learnt and taken from the Inspire Improvement Fellowship so far, but also hearing other people's thoughts and ideas made me realise I was in agreement with them and I hadn't actually realised how I can already see that I have changed my approach as a manager ... I have given a lot of time to thinking about what is not just important to me but what is important to the staff that I manage and the patients within our care.*

*I recognise that my confidence and input to the group has significantly improved over the past 7 weeks and I am really going to miss the weekly discussions and support from the other fellows, however we have set up a group and we are going to organise to meet between now and February, which is a great support and something I really welcome. ... I now recognise that everyone has similar challenges and I feel less alone, I recognise the importance of everyone within the team that I manage and how important they are in facilitating change.*

### Quotes from Fellows' feedback, November 2021



## How did they present their feedback?



This Padlet was created by one of the groups of fellows to represent their end of learning block 1 participatory evaluation. The pictures are their individual reflections, uploaded to the Padlet. The themes were generated through the sharing and discussion.

The second group created a poem based on their shared reflections

### Using active learning: it's not learning unless you're doing something with it!

The emphasis of this first block is using an active learning approach (Dewing, 2021) to provide a creative and safe space to enable fellows to raise their consciousness on how they are working as a leader, through listening and shared story telling. At the end of the block there is an expectation that fellows will start to take their learning and put this into practice with 1:1 support from FoNS and co-facilitators. How they do this is entirely up to them but is structured around:

- Getting some feedback on their leadership style from their team
- Undertaking some values and beliefs work with their team
- Undertaking some conversations around the culture of the workplace with the team



After just seven weeks, the fellows were already planning how they would use their learning in practice:

*I look forward to looking at shared values in my workplace and doing a culture assessment.*

FoNS Fellow

*I am starting to put this into practice and will continue to do so during the time out that we have from the programme now until the beginning of next year. It was also useful to hear ideas from the other fellows about ways they are going to do this, which has helped me think how I can also put things into practice - starting with exploring staff views about what it is like to work round here.*

FoNS Fellow

*I will continue to put my learnings into practice with my team. I'm more confident in myself and looking forward to the next phase of this journey.*

FoNS Fellow

## Check point 2: Navigating Complexity

### Aim of learning block 2 (March - April 2022)

The second learning block covers the following topics:

- Reconnecting as a group and sharing their 'Golden Moments'; how they have put their learning and ideas into practice
- Revisiting values and beliefs to create a shared purpose as a team of fellows
- Exploring gaps in practice between what we say and what we do; using Emotional Touchpoints and observation of care
- Working with perceived behaviours of resistance
- Improving team working and morale

The emphasis on this block is very similar to block 1 by using an active learning approach (Dewing, 2021) to provide a creative and safe space. However, for this block the focus is on 'the gaps in practice between what we say and what we do', through listening and shared story telling.

At the end of the block, they reflected on their experience, then shared, themed and presented.

#### What did the fellows say at the end of the block?

At the end of the block, the fellows worked individually to reflect on the seven sessions of the learning block. These are a few of their individual reflections from block 2.

The key themes from their reflections are their growing confidence and the value of the group's support, as well as a recognition of the challenges in practice. The fellows realised they needed to be patient and that meaningful change doesn't happen quickly. Their comments clearly reflect the focus of the learning block, namely the interaction between personal learning and the experience of the practice setting

*I can look back and recognise growth in myself, within the team I manage and within us as a group of people on this course who started as strangers but are now friends.*

*I certainly recognised that this course isn't a race, it's not a competition. It's not about quantity, it's about quality. We are a diverse group of nurses but we all have similar pressures and challenges.*

*I recognise that I am starting to facilitate more within the team I manage & I am communicating better, I am starting to feel much more confident with the tools and ideas I have learnt from this course and putting them into action within the team I manage. Ultimately I can see the changes and the gaps and I want to be the person that facilitates change for the better within the clinical area that I lead.*

*Reflecting on this block was important, as it's a reminder of the lessons learned, especially that growth is a journey, which encourages me to keep embracing the challenges that may come and continue to grow into my best possible self as a leader.*

*One of the main points I will take away from this is we can all read the research and know what it means but to truly UNDERSTAND you have to go back to basics. I have completed leadership courses before and have sat in a classroom and been taught a lot of what we covered here, however I needed a course with a difference and this has delivered.*

*But to start you must reflect and this course last block started at self reflection moving on to the team this block. This block however has given us tools to look at how we can build on and work with these reflections.*

*Need to look at embedding participatory evaluation within the workplace, rather than just doing the evaluation sheets – so much more meaning doing evaluation this way, it engages people and creates enthusiasm and ownership*

#### Quotes from fellows' feedback, April 2022



Fellows themed their own feedback and presented it to the whole group: in this case with a poem written at the end of Block 2



The picture of the roller coaster is a creative representation of the combined themes from one group of fellows during the participatory evaluation at end of learning block 2



## Using active learning: Putting Learning into Practice

Again, at the end of the block there was an expectation that fellows would start to take their learning and put this into practice with 1:1 support from FoNS and co-facilitators. How they do this is entirely up to them but this time is structured around:

- Work with their team (and their values and beliefs) to create a shared purpose
- Looking at the gaps in practice - undertake a patient /staff story and undertake an observation of practice

## Learning Block 3

The fellows had the opportunity to talk about what they had done in practice (since block 2) when they met in person in July 2022, sharing their 'golden moments' and challenges.

### Golden moments were plentiful:

#### Changed leadership style

*I have made real change to my management style*

*Using a more facilitative style in more areas of work, meetings appraisals etc*

*Feeling empowered and more in control of my role*

*De-escalating situations that I would have once tried to avoid*

*Becoming more facilitative and not a fixer*

*Asked for 360° feedback*

*Facilitating a reflective peer group supervision for our students on the unit. Really good feedback about how this helped their wellbeing*

#### Working with culture and values

*Ways of working, identified gaps together. Came up with solutions together*

*Team days planned to develop values and culture*

*Facilitating creating a shared vision for how we would use safe wards and positive behaviour support to reduce restrictive practice. Instead of telling people what to do we decided together and problem solved along the way*

*Involving the ward team – culture review*

*Culture day- protected time, increased collaboration, increased reflection, increased positivity, increased communication. Start of our journey*

*Team would like to participate in creating a shared vision*

#### Better teamworking and communication

*Despite challenges team feel valued - Ensure people are thanked for going the extra mile*

*Increased engagement from MDT*

*Increased collaboration between MDT to plan for patients each day*

*Organisation change not stressful due to effective communication*

*Band 6 development days on the rota every 2 months*

*Staff reflecting differently following training*

#### Impact on patients/people receiving care

*Emotional Touchpoints- having a patient forum with 5 patients talking about their experience and feedback of the service they have received and our team*

*Emotional Touchpoints used with a patient complaint with a positive outcome*

*Touchpoints- patient experience, identified good practice and identified safety issues*

*Increased patient engagement with therapy*

*Increased positivity between staff and patients*

### Challenges remain:

Time pressure, staff morale, resistance to change and trust directives

*Trust directives*

*No time' for this, staffing levels*

*Time, staffing, morale, acuity, COVID, management cancelling non-essential training*

*Resistance to change*

*New team with lack of leadership and low morale*

*Dealing with a difficult member of staff in a calm way*

*Resistance from one team member*

*Clinical pressures, lack of staff*

*Lack of resources/ barriers to making improvements for patient pathways*

### Check Point 3: Moving to Action

#### Aim of Learning Block 3 (July 2022)

The third learning block is the time that fellows and facilitators meet face-to-face for a two-day workshop, which covers the following topics:

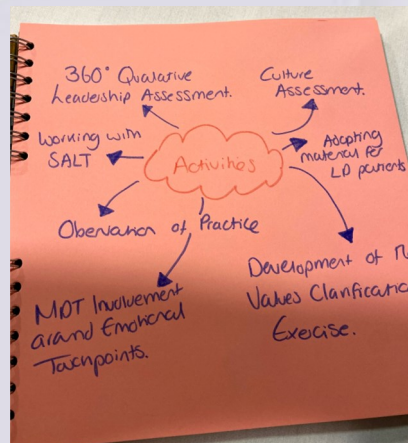
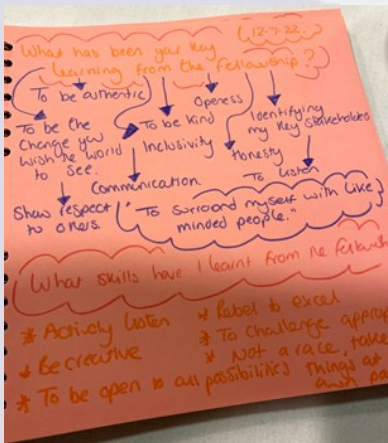
- Reconnecting as a group and sharing 'Golden Moments'; how they have put their learning and ideas into practice (see page 5)
- Exploring learning in and from practice
- Celebrating success and maintaining momentum beyond the end of the programme

The emphasis on this final block is deepening the fellows' connections as people by working together face-to-face to celebrate and recognise what they have achieved so far in relation to leaning and activities in practice. It is also the time to plan for the future beyond the end of the formal programme.

One of the main activities of the workshop was the participatory evaluation of the whole programme.

Step 1 was answering evaluation questions individually (see right).

One participant's answers below.



- Evaluation Questions**
1. What has been your key learning from the fellowship?
  2. What new skills have you learnt from the fellowship?
  3. How has your confidence changed and what has this impacted on?
  4. What activities have you initiated with your team as a direct result of the fellowship?
  5. What has changed in your leadership style as a direct result of the fellowship?
  6. What aspects of the programme did you find most useful and why?
  7. What aspects of the programme should have been done differently and why?
  8. What recommendations do you have for the future programmes?

Then, in two groups, the fellows shared their individual reflections around the evaluation questions before working together to devise a creative way to represent the themes they identified. The groups were encouraged to challenge themselves to be more creative each time they worked together. During our face-to-face time together, both groups took their creativity to the next level.



#### Group 1

This group of fellows chose to represent their evaluation using a pirate ship theme. They created 'HMS FoNS' (a representation of the pirate ship) using the furniture in the room (pictured left) and then invited the other group of fellows to join the ship. Using the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film music the group then shared their collective feedback as pirates, to each of the evaluation questions. It was wonderful to see so much energy and laughter in the room and showed that evaluations can be fun and represented in many different ways. Watch [the HMS FoNS video](#).

#### Group 2

This group chose to represent their evaluation as a bouquet of flowers (pictured right) as they felt it 'showed their growth and bloom, as they felt they had all bloomed and grown'. Each flower represented a question and then each member of the group shared their collective themes vocally, one by one. Watch [the Growing and Blooming video](#).



## Developing Confidence to Change our Ways of Working in Practice

During learning block 3, we asked: *How has your confidence changed and what has this impacted on?*

The fellows said:

*"Increased confidence, increased resilience, which has impacted on me and surrounding teams. Staff feel valued and appreciated, increased their contribution, initiated new projects, evaluating current and new practice."*

*"My confidence has grown and improved for the better, I feel like a leader who is equipped with tools that I can use to facilitate change in caring cultures. I would not have ever felt the confidence to do so without taking part in the Inspire Improvement Fellowship programme. It has impacted on me as a leader, the trust and organisation, the staff I work with and the patients in our care. Culture is more caring and improvement is already visible. It has taught me to personally consider what is important to my life and make positive change."*

*"Huge increase in confidence, in my abilities as a facilitator, asking questions, looking at ward culture, thinking outside the box, using practice development with staff that haven't come across it before. Collaboration – include everyone."*

*"I have greater confidence to lead and facilitate. I am more likely to challenge practice and culture that is unhelpful. This has impacted on my communication with senior leadership and my relationships on the units."*

*"Not scared of the unknown, ready to take on challenges. This has impacted 'my' delivery to my team and I'm able to try things learnt with the team without backing out because of the fear of the unknown."*

*"More confident around workplace culture and how workplace culture can be challenged in an appropriate way. Becoming more solution focused rather than problem focussed. Enabled my relationships with others to become more embedded, developing trust. Ability to have honest conversations. To be curious not judgemental. To network and develop my own networks in the trust."*

*"More confident in group setting, facilitation much easier ."*

*"My confidence has changed so much. I feel more empowered to be curious with my team, but provide compassion and strength to them. This has given me hope and I am more positive. I am becoming the leader I wanted to be; a guide but the team are more proactive and self-directed. It has impacted on everything, my personal life and professional life, my values and what I want to believe."*

*"My confidence has flourished and this has impacted my personal life as well as my professional life. I have courage to question and voice my opinions without fear of rejection or ridicule. I am learning to challenge where necessary in a calm and productive way."*

*"Huge!*

- *team value increased,*
- *to empower improved practice for patients,*
- *improved MDT working,*
- *improved leadership (facilitation, grown),*
- *Inspired,*
- *hope,*
- *being curious to challenge,*
- *acceptance that we are all on a journey."*

*"That's I have a lot of ideas to share with others."*

*"My confidence has grown in enabling others to realise their own potential at their own pace. Not having a plan and dragging the team along, but facilitating them to produce their ideas for development themselves. To enable staff to understand and enable them to understand and take accountability and ownership. To lead productive conversations with ideas such as touch points, rather than a chat that resolves nothing. I feel a more confident leader to allow others to envisage their future."*



## Working with creativity and evaluation

Throughout the whole of the Inspire Improvement Fellowship I encourage people to be as creative as they can in expressing themselves. Whether it be reflecting on experiences, their skills or when working collectively to imagine and plan change.

Using our individual creativity enables each of us to tap into our multiple intelligences (Gardener, 1983: Watch [\*What kind of smart are you: A summary of Gardener\*](#)) and to unearth knowledge that we have taken for granted. Working creatively within a participatory evaluation allows us to present evidence to different stakeholders in different ways, thus I believe making the evidence more accessible.

Often evaluation in a health and social care setting is seen as something we do at the end of a programme or intervention, to see if it worked, and it can be very dull and dry. Experiencing and taking part in a participatory evaluation is a valuable learning opportunity and means evidence is seen and lived, generating knowledge for all. Using creativity within a participatory evaluation enables participants to focus their energies and have fun as well as generate knowledge of the experience, process and outcomes.

**Jo Odell, Inspire Improvement Lead**



One group chose to represent their evaluation as a bouquet of flowers as they felt it 'showed their growth and bloom, as they felt they had all bloomed and grown'



This group of fellows chose to represent their evaluation using a pirate ship theme. They created 'HMS FoNS', where we are 'all in one boat to ride the waves together', suggesting the importance of connection to self, other fellows and their staff members and patients