

FLP Evaluation Survey

2020-21 – Digest



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From August 2020 to August 21, 25 fellows completed the Futures’ Leaders Programme (FLP) in Yorkshire & Humber. Of these, 17 were from a medical background (4 GP trainees). The remaining were healthcare professionals; 2 pharmacists, 2 radiographers, 2 dentists, a physiotherapist, and a paramedic. This is a summary from a survey completed towards the end of their FLP year in July 2021. Twenty-four out of twenty-five of the FLP fellows completed the survey.

“I feel that if every trainee had even a taster of the FLP that they would all be better clinicians as a result of the experience.”

Recruitment to the FLP remains largely by word of mouth, either through contacts with alumni of the scheme or colleagues. Challenges remain in raising the awareness of the FLP amongst allied healthcare professionals.

1. Benefits

The FLP experience was rated as good or excellent by all the fellows, particularly the opportunities for personal development of non-clinical and leadership skills. Educational supervisors play a key role in influencing a fellows' experience of the FLP. The importance of a supervisor's understanding of the programme, and the ability for a fellow to have autonomy in collaborating with other fellows and developing a project were also recognised.

"The FLP has opened doors and allowed me to see what I could do beyond my clinical role".

"I have been able to collaborate with other FLPs on projects and I've been able to pursue interesting projects outside of my main project without feeling any pressure or having any issues."

The benefits of participating in the FLP, as perceived by fellows, fall into four broad themes

- CV and career progression, development of leadership skills and future opportunities (17 comments)
- Personal development and non-clinical skills (14 comments)
- Opportunity for reflection (9 comments)
- Break from previous role (6 comments)

"The FLP has given a great perspective on work, my role and also to remember what is important for myself. A great space to stop and reflect on my own journey"

Beyond this, opportunity for networking, team working, and peer support were greatly valued.

"Learning from other teams outside of my field about their attitude towards training and patient care. I have also been able to build networks to help support me mentally when I return to training, which will help me manage the inevitable challenges I will face in clinical practice."

"Being around like-minded peers - having a safe, non-judgmental space to think through the art of the possible, talk openly, raise ideas, express concerns and most importantly problem solve"

2. Challenges faced

The experience of Fellows during 2020-21 was greatly affected by mandatory home working for

much of the year. This was interpreted as both conducive to collaboration but also inhibitory in the speed of establishing networks between fellows and other colleagues.

"Covid impacted on my ability to progress in the project itself which is a shame. However working from home and having the additional flexibility this year as a result of that has enabled me to collaborate with trainees from other parts of the region and work on other projects that I doubt I would have been able to have been involved in had this not been the case."

As well as adapting to remote work, it also took fellows time to adapt to the more self-directed style of working. Some fellows felt that the induction programme could have been improved to facilitate this transition, particularly addressing perceived practical issues such as booking FLP courses and applying for PG certificates.

Tackling the unique challenges facing some allied health professionals, particularly with regards to future career progression was identified and requires further consideration to ensure the benefits of engaging in such leadership programmes are realised by all health care professionals.

3. Projects & Supervision

Fellows undertook projects covering a wide range of themes

- Quality Improvement
- Education
- Equality, diversity, and inclusivity (EDI)
- Multi-professional working, staff support and junior doctors
- Patient safety
- Health inequalities
- Digital working

Multi-professional working opportunities were seen as the most valuable aspects of working on projects as part of the FLP. Fellows also valued autonomy to work on the project independently and be self-directed as the projects evolved. It was felt by some that this kind of project leadership experience is not available when working clinically within the NHS.

“I think the opportunity to work with stakeholders from across the region and collaborate together to enable improvements at a service level”

“Able to work in a variety of teams and see what elements allow improvement work to flourish, and where improvement work can experience barriers.”

Overall, supervision was rated as good or excellent by most fellows. Supervisors were felt to be supportive, attentive, and accessible. Fellows also felt they benefited from being given autonomy by their supervisors. A small number of fellows highlighted difficulties in contacting their named supervisor and issues around lack of structure in the supervision.

“My supervisor was available when I needed support, but gave me free reign to manage my own time and workload without micromanaging. Enabled me to learn my own leadership style and work in my own way.”

The unique set up for clinical leadership fellows at Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust (LTHT) was recognised for the additional support it offers fellows.

4. Academic Components

All but one fellow undertook a PG Certificate, covering topics of leadership and management or medical education. These were undertaken at a range of institutions and feedback on these, whilst largely positive, was variable depending on the perceived needs and wants of individual fellows. Many of these courses had an element of distance learning and large amounts of self-directed study. For some this was perceived as a benefit as it allowed flexibility in the time spent on the supported academic component of the FLP. One fellow undertook the Emerging Clinical Leaders course run by The King's Fund.

Overall, the most valuable courses provided by HEE specifically for the FLP were felt to be ‘Effective Meetings’, ‘Myers Briggs Step I’ and ‘Imposter Syndrome’. Fellows derived value from the FLP courses in terms of their personal development, opportunities to engage in reflective practice and felt that their learning was likely to lead to a change in practice. ‘Writing for publication’ was another highlight of the catalogue of courses offered through HEE. During 2020-21 all courses

were delivered virtually. Some fellows would have liked the option of face-to-face courses. The ability to offer more courses in the early part of the academic year was suggested as a way of improving the delivery of the programme, this would allow learning to be applied earlier on during the fellowship.

“All of the FLP courses were some of the best that I have ever been on. They were relevant, engaging and the days flew by. They are well organised and of appropriate length. I have been able to use skills from all of the courses within my project and they have helped me to develop. It is useful that many of the courses have similar themes... as each time I felt that I was able to relate to my own experiences and build on my existing understandings.”

5. Final Comments

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the fellows of 2020-2021 have derived great value from the varying aspects of the FLP. Moving forward, work is required to address benchmarking and quality assurance within the FLP to ensure a rewarding experience for all fellows. Opportunities and challenges for leadership development differ across healthcare professions – these differences require further exploration in order that leadership development is available to all. Data is not currently being captured on the experience of supervisors of fellows. Creating a parallel end of year survey will enhance our understanding to development of the FLP from another aspect.

We must continue to document the successes and challenges of the FLP to develop the sustainability and organisational memory of the programme. A range of perspectives, beyond those of completing fellows, are required to inform this process. The FLP steering group will take an active role in reviewing the outputs of the survey and annual report to ensure the workstreams of the Fellows to the FLP align with addressing issues identified and responding to the needs of each cohort.

“Previously I felt like I couldn't progress as I didn't fit with traditional leadership styles whereas now I realise that these attributes are strengths. This will change my willingness to speak out and offer diverse perspective on discussions.”