

Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland (LLR's) inclusive leadership programmes for aspiring leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

"A place where no one gets left behind, and everyone moves forward."



**Leicester, Leicestershire
and Rutland**
Integrated Care Board

DEVELOPING DIVERSE LEADERS PROGRAMME

Inclusive leadership in the workplace: A partnership programme for aspiring leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds across LLR.

As part of our ongoing commitment to building an inclusive culture and fostering representative leadership across the whole system of health and social care within Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland (LLR), we launched the award-winning Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme in 2022. The programme is now in its third year and continues to demonstrate the tangible impact of investing in the potential of colleagues from diverse ethnic backgrounds, helping to shape the future of leadership across our system.

The programme was developed in response to a persistent and well-recognised challenge: despite the wealth of talent across LLR, our leadership landscape remains unrepresentative of the communities we serve. DDL was created to change this by providing aspirant leaders with the confidence, skills, and tools needed to grow, thrive, and step into more senior and visible roles.

Structured as a six-month blended learning journey, the programme offers a rich combination of development workshops, action learning sets, coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship. It is underpinned by a belief that diversity in all its forms, particularly cognitive and lived experience, is central to delivering better outcomes for staff and patients alike.

What makes DDL distinctive is its dual focus: supporting individual career progression while enabling cultural and systemic change. It helps participants explore their own strengths, build self-belief, and navigate career challenges, while also engaging Sponsor Leaders to actively champion development, create opportunities, and contribute to inclusive leadership from the top down.

These case-studies set out to demonstrate the impact and outcomes of the programme to date, shining a light on examples of personal growth, organisational learning, and the wider ripple effects of this initiative.

The success of DDL is not just about progression into new roles (though we are seeing that too), it's about confidence, visibility, cultural safety, and creating an environment where all colleagues feel seen, supported, and able to lead.

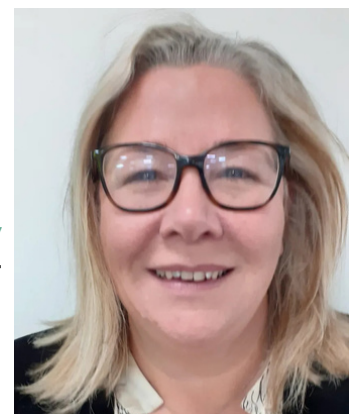
As we continue to build on this work, our ambition remains clear: to grow a future leadership pipeline that truly reflects the diversity of our workforce and the communities we serve.



Alice McGee
Chief People Officer
LLR Integrated Care Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kay Darby'.

Kay Darby
Chief Nursing Officer
LLR Integrated Care Board

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kay Darby'.



Finding my voice, owning my story, and leading with purpose.

Judy Eggett

Before joining the first cohort of Developing Diverse Leaders, I worked as a Senior Care Co-ordinator at Band 6. Although uncertain about taking on new challenges, I was motivated to move beyond my role and explore different opportunities. I'm now proud to say I've stepped into a new role as a Clinical Team Leader at Band 7. Not only have I changed roles, but I feel there has been a transformation in how I see myself and lead others.

When I first heard about the DDL programme, I wasn't actively looking for development opportunities. Quite the opposite in fact, I was deflated and disheartened having experienced an incident at work where I felt racially discriminated against. But I'm so glad that my sponsor leader encouraged me to put myself forward for the programme.

As someone who has faced discrimination, I've always led with inclusivity. My lived experiences have shaped how I support and uplift others. I never want anyone under my leadership to feel excluded or devalued.

The DDL programme gave me the space to reflect on that, to understand how my identity and background are not just part of my story, but powerful tools for leadership.

One of the most impactful moments for me was learning about my personal brand. I began to ask myself: Who am I? What do people associate with my name? What do I stand for? That self-inquiry was eye-opening. I also realised that I had been my own biggest barrier. I had the experience, the skills, the passion, but I hadn't always believed in my own potential. That changed when I mapped out my career journey and saw, clearly, how much I had to offer.

I gained a lot from the Action Learning sets. Working in these groups, I discovered the power of collective problem-solving and shifted my mindset from dwelling on obstacles to focusing on solutions. These sessions created a supportive environment where we could bring our challenges, break them down, and explore ways forward together.



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This not only built my confidence but also helped me develop practical strategies for overcoming barriers, both my own and those faced by my colleagues. The programme created a safe, inclusive space where we all agreed on ground rules that fostered psychological safety. That environment allowed me to be open, to reflect deeply, and to grow.

Since completing the programme, my confidence has soared. I've taken on new leadership roles, including Co-chairing the Race Equality and Cultural Heritage (REACH) staff network, a role that expanded my network and opened doors across the organisation. I've also been honoured with the Queen's Nurse title, lead a Service User Forum, support a BAME staff group, and am currently working on a Zero Tolerance Campaign project. It's a lot, but it's exciting, and I do it all alongside my substantive role.

I've also paid it forward. I supported a colleague in accessing the programme and she has been promoted from a Band 6 role and is now a Band 7. Through REACH, I've contributed to improving equity and inclusion across the organisation, whether it's sitting on stakeholder panels, advising managers on EDI issues, or encouraging colleagues to speak up, I've used my voice and experience to help shape a more inclusive culture.

Something I am particularly proud of is facilitating EDI training sessions in collaboration with our BAME staff group. These sessions have addressed topics such as unconscious bias, neurodiversity, and mental health, grounded in personal experiences. This initiative has enhanced team awareness and mutual support, contributing to improved patient care outcomes.

To anyone considering the DDL programme, I say this: **"Go for it!!! It's a self-discovery programme, one that we all should have had at the very start of our careers."**

A Word from Judy's Sponsor



Deanne Rennie
*(Associate Director of AHPs
and Quality - Leicestershire
Partnership Trust)*

"[It was] Fantastic to meet Judy as part of the LLR Reverse Mentoring Programme. I was inspired by her passion and energy and recognised her leadership potential, hence, I encouraged her to join the Developing Diverse Leadership Programme.

I have loved watching Judy grow in confidence and self belief. I have learned so much from Judy and valued her personal support.

It has been great to use my positional power and authority to break down barriers and introduce Judy to other senior leaders at LPT. Judy and I continue to have a relationship and meet. We have created a safe space and are prepared to continue to have difficult conversations.

It's been amazing to see the change in Judy!"



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From Uncertainty to Opportunity

Mayuri Patel

When I joined the Developing Diverse Leaders programme, I was an Economic Policy Officer at Leicestershire County Council. It was the beginning of a career change for me, and honestly, I was still finding my feet. I didn't feel like I was being used to my full potential, and I wasn't sure what I should be doing or where my next steps would lead. I knew I wanted to grow, but I didn't quite know how.

What really stood out for me during the programme was the focus on understanding what makes good and inclusive leadership. It gave me the space to reflect, not just on how I lead, but on how I think. Exploring unconscious bias was powerful, and hearing about others' experiences, especially around 'hidden privilege', really shifted my perspective. I started to understand how important it is to recognise those unseen barriers, not just in others, but in myself too.

Over time, I began to feel more confident and gained a better understanding of the value I bring.

I also became more aware of the areas where I could develop, and instead of shying away from them, I felt ready to take them on. That mindset gave me the courage to apply for a new role, and within six months of finishing the programme, I was promoted to Economic Growth Officer at Hinckley and Bosworth Council. It felt like a risk at the time, but one I was finally ready to take.

Looking back, the DDL programme created such a safe and inclusive environment. It gave me time to think, to listen, and to feel like what I had to say mattered. Since then, I've been encouraging others to apply – because I know how much this programme can offer. If you're thinking about it, I'd say: "Do it. Go into it with an open mind. It will provide you with a space to think and reflect." Sometimes space is exactly what you need to take your next step forward.

Mayuri was an aspiring leader on the DDL Cohort 2.



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Finding My Voice

Sabina's Story

Integration and Transformation Support
Officer (LLR ICB) and Aspiring Leader
from DDL Cohort 2



Before joining the Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme, I often felt like I wasn't being taken seriously at work. I knew my background and identity played a part in that. Sometimes I'd hold back in meetings or hesitate to put forward ideas—even when I had something valuable to say.

What the DDL programme gave me, more than anything, was a space to stop, reflect, and realise that my voice matters. For the first time in a long while, I felt heard. I wasn't just taking part—I was being listened to, and what I had to say landed with people. That gave me a real boost in confidence.

The action learning sets were a turning point. I used to jump straight into solution mode when someone came to me with a problem. But through the ALS sessions, I learnt to step back, ask better questions, and really listen. It completely changed how I support my colleagues. I realised that giving people space to reflect and find their own answers is often far more powerful than offering a quick fix.

I'm still in the same role, but I've definitely grown. I've taken on more responsibility and stepped up in ways I wouldn't have before. One example I'm really proud of is leading on the day-to-day delivery of the General Practice OPEL reporting process. I've streamlined the workflow and taken on the escalation side of things, which has eased the pressure on my colleagues and made things more efficient for local GP practices.

I've also joined the Reverse Mentoring programme as a mentor—which has been another step in building my confidence and supporting others to grow.

For me, the DDL programme ties in so closely with the NHS People Promise—it's about feeling seen, supported, and safe to speak up. And now that I've found my voice, I'm helping others find theirs too.

If I could change one thing, I'd make this programme mandatory for all senior leaders. Because when inclusive leadership starts at the top, that's when the culture really begins to shift—right through recruitment, decision-making, and how we show up for one another at work.



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Reconnecting With My Own Leadership

Tina Hayden - Infection Prevention Matron, University Hospitals of Leicester and proud Sponsor on the DDL Cohort 2

When I joined the DDL programme as a sponsor, I saw it as an opportunity to support the development of someone else. What I didn't expect was just how much I'd gain from the experience myself.

At the time, I was nearing the end of the RCN Leadership course and going through a bit of a transition myself, both personally and professionally, reflecting a lot on what kind of leader I wanted to be. There were moments where I wrestled with impostor syndrome and questioned whether just "doing my job" was enough.

My leadership approach has been shaped over time by observing a range of different styles. Some left me inspired, while others helped me reflect on the kind of leader I didn't want to become. Rather than letting less positive experiences hold me back, they encouraged me to lead with emotional intelligence, authenticity, and fairness, values I've always held close. The DDL programme gave me the space to explore those values more deeply and reconnect with my sense of purpose as a leader.

One exercise that really stuck with me was the River of Life. It helped me step back and look at the journey I've taken, personally and professionally, and the challenges I've overcome. It was genuinely moving and reminded me how far I've come.

Another standout moment was the session on the Power and Privilege Wheel. It challenged me to think beyond my own perspective and really consider how hidden structures and assumptions can affect how leadership is experienced by others. It shifted something in me. I found the Action Learning Sets effective and very powerful.

Being curious, asking open questions, and really listening created such a supportive space for learning and growth.

Watching my aspiring leader grow in confidence was incredibly rewarding. But I also noticed how much I was changing too. I felt more grounded, more assured, and more connected to the kind of leader I want to be.

These days, those impostor syndrome moments are much quieter. I lead a team of 10 nurses and support two more, and I work hard to make sure everyone's voice is heard. We've built a culture based on compassion and inclusion—championing flexible working, creating quiet spaces for reflection, and making time to check in with staff regularly.

I have taken the lead on a trust-wide project on Aseptic Non-Touch Technique (ANTT), which we delivered in true partnership with the Infection Prevention team. Rather than taking over, I focused on bringing structure and visibility, while empowering the team to lead in their own areas. The whole process, from training to audit, was co-developed.

It was a brilliant example of collaborative leadership.

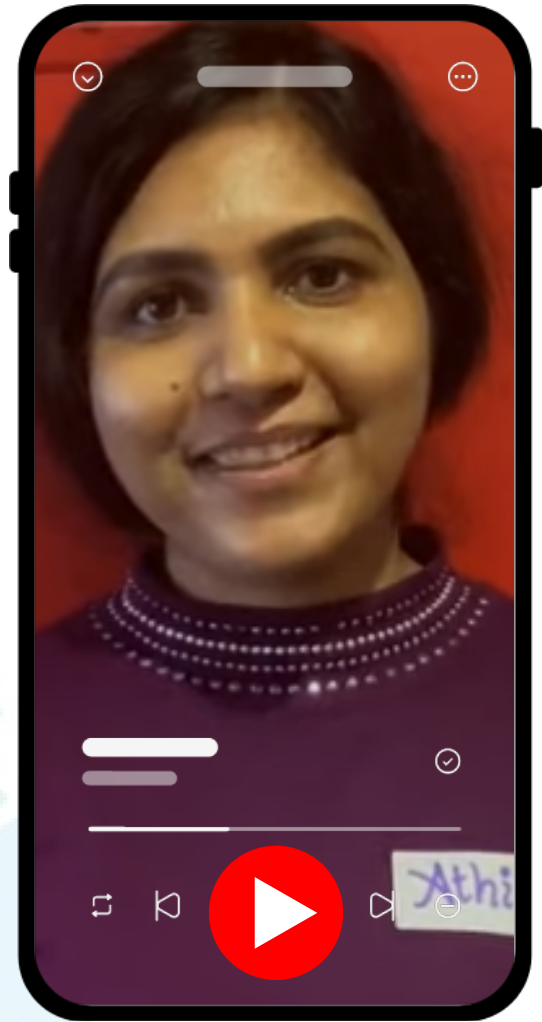
For me, DDL is about more than developing individual leaders—it's about creating a ripple effect. I want to see this programme grow into a thriving network of diverse, authentic leaders—leaders who reflect the workforce we serve and who are committed to building truly inclusive cultures.



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From Aspiring to Achieving: Celebrating Athira's success



Athirarani Vrindavanan, Deputy Sister, UHL
Aspiring Leader - DDL Cohort 1

When Athira joined the first cohort of the Developing Diverse Leaders programme, she was working as a staff nurse in the RRCV unit at University Hospitals of Leicester. She loved her role, but she knew she wanted to progress, not only in her career, but in the way she saw herself and the impact she could have on others.

The DDL was her very first leadership course, and she describes it as “incredibly inspiring.” She saw it as a chance to grow, both as a nurse and personally, by building her confidence and developing her ability to support and influence those around her. Reflecting on her experience, Athira said it helped to “mould me as a nurse and also as a leader.” She took so much from the course, especially learning how to work well with others and address conflict constructively.

Athira found the programme proved to be incredibly helpful in preparing for interviews. Putting her learning into practice, she attended an interview for a Deputy Sister role at Leicester Royal Infirmary, an opportunity that led to her successfully securing the position.

Looking back, Athira describes the inaugural DDL programme as more than just training. For her, it was a turning point, giving her the tools, confidence, and clarity to take that next step. And now, she’s “truly delighted to hear that my short story is being used as promotional material, and I hope it inspires others to get motivated as well.”

If you'd like to watch the video from Athira, click the image, or play button above



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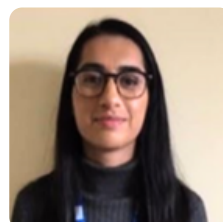
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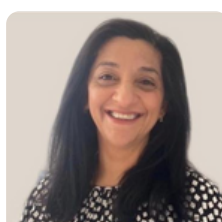
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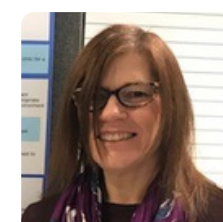
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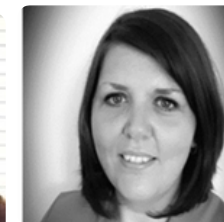
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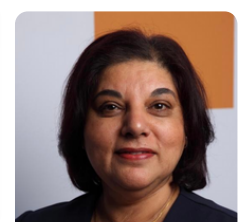
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