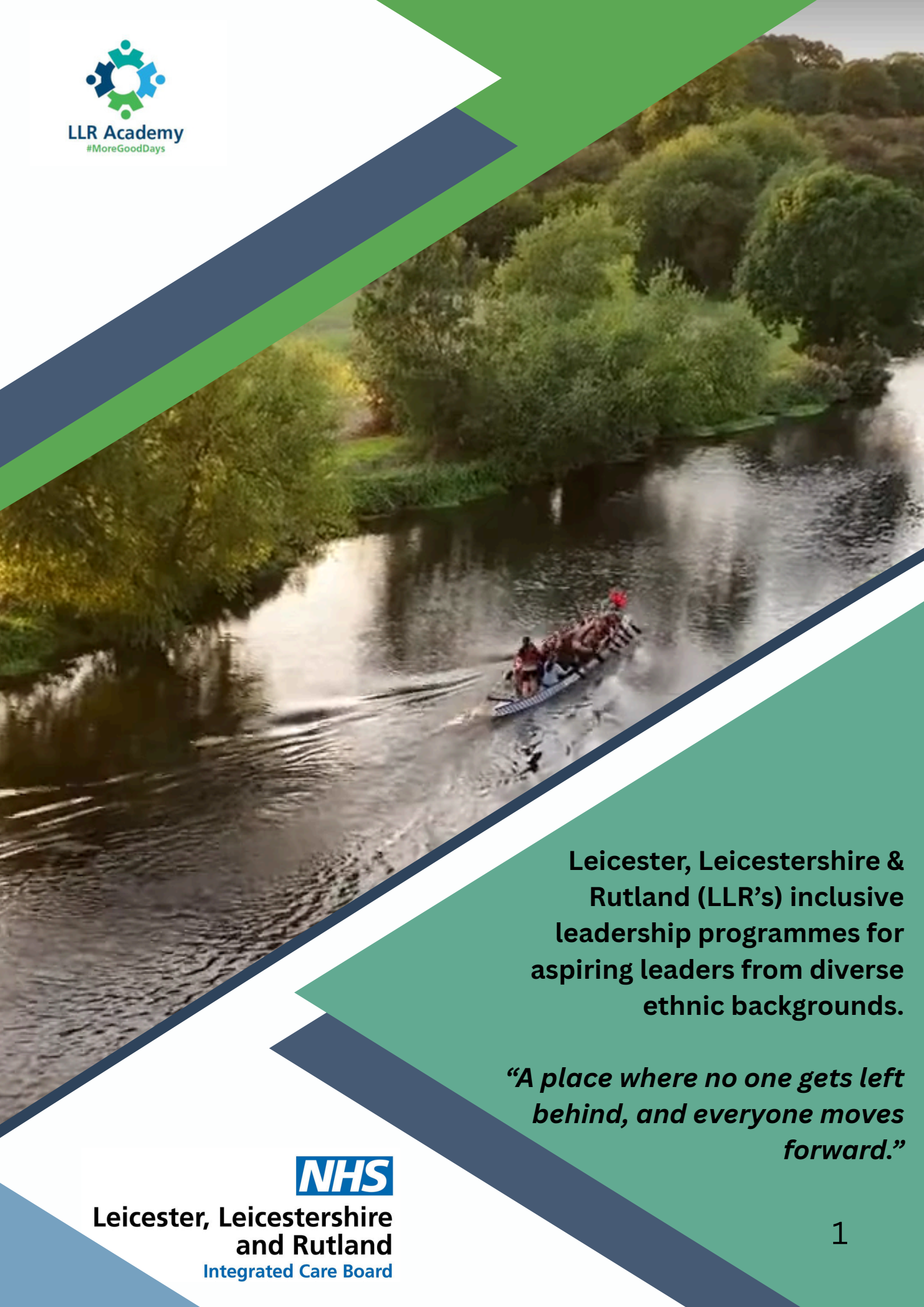




LLR Academy
#MoreGoodDays



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.

The Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme was created as part of a long-standing commitment to building an inclusive culture and enabling representative leadership across the health and social care system in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR). Designed in partnership across organisations, the programme continues to demonstrate the value of investing in colleagues from diverse ethnic backgrounds and the positive impact this has on individuals, teams, and the wider system.

DDL was developed in response to a persistent challenge which recognised that, although LLR is rich in talent, the leadership profile across our organisations has not always reflected the diversity of the communities we serve. The programme set out to address this by equipping aspirant leaders with the confidence, skills, and tools to grow, thrive and step into more senior and visible roles.

Structured as a blended learning journey, The programme brings together development workshops, action learning sets, coaching, mentoring and sponsorship. It is grounded in the belief that diversity of identity, thought and lived experience is central to delivering better outcomes for staff, patients and local communities.

What makes DDL distinctive is its dual focus: supporting individual growth while enabling cultural and systemic change. It strengthens personal leadership capability, encourages self-belief and empowers participants to navigate career transitions. At the same time, it engages Sponsor Leaders in championing development, creating opportunities, and modelling inclusive leadership from the top.

This collection of case studies showcases the breadth of impact that DDL has had—highlighting personal transformations, organisational learning, and the wider ripple effects of an approach that centres inclusion, visibility and opportunity.

The success of DDL is seen not only in career progression, but in increased confidence, strengthened voice, greater psychological safety and a renewed sense of belonging. These stories demonstrate how investing in people uplifts the system as a whole.

As the legacy of the programme continues through its alumni and the cultures they influence, our ambition remains the same: to contribute to a leadership landscape that truly reflects the diversity, talent and lived experience of our workforce and the communities we serve.

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



Judy Eggett

Before joining the first cohort of Developing Diverse Leaders, I was working as a Senior Care Co-ordinator at Band 6. While I felt some uncertainty about taking on new challenges, I was motivated to grow beyond my role and explore new opportunities.

After completing the programme, I was proud to step into a Clinical Team Leader role at Band 7. I have since secured a further promotion and have become Community Matron, marking another significant milestone in my leadership journey. 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.

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!"



A New Country, A New Career, A New Confidence

*Sreelakshmi Satheeshkumar,
Deputy Ward Leader, UHL*

My leadership journey began 2023 when I moved from India to the UK and joined UHL as a Band 5 nurse on a general medicine ward. Leaving behind my home, my family, and everything familiar was a huge step for me and in those early days I often felt quiet, unsure, and hesitant. I was working alongside very experienced colleagues and sometimes doubted whether I was truly ready for leadership.

Over time, my confidence began to grow. Through day-to-day experiences, reflection, and learning from mistakes, I slowly found my voice. I started asking more questions, speaking up when something didn't feel right, and recognising that I didn't just want to do my job well, I wanted to grow as a leader.

When I applied for my first Band 6 role, I didn't get it. At the time, it felt like a failure. But looking back, I can see that moment differently, it was a turning point. Instead of stepping back, I made the decision to invest in myself and my development. That choice led me to the Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme.

The programme has had a significant impact on the way I see myself and the way I approach leadership. One of the tools that made a real difference to me was the Johari Window, which helped me understand how self-awareness and feedback shape the way others experience us. I began actively seeking feedback, reflecting on how I show up, and becoming more intentional in my actions.

Another key learning point focused my attention on the importance of supporting others. I realised how many people, especially those from diverse backgrounds, doubt their abilities even when they are incredibly talented.

I have started using what I gained from the programme to encourage my colleagues by offering feedback, sharing what I've learned, and helping them to believe in their own potential.

The timing of the programme could not have been better. When I started I was on secondment in a Band 6 role, and unsure whether I would secure a permanent role. However, the confidence and resilience I developed through the programme helped me show up to interviews differently. I was able to interview without fear, and instead with clarity and self-belief. I'm proud to say that during the programme, I successfully secured a permanent Band 6 position.

I am so grateful to my sponsor, Jessy Mathew, who supported me and showed me that by having someone who believes in you can make such a difference. For that I am truly grateful.

My persistence and confidence have shown me that leadership development isn't just about learning new skills, it's about discovering your confidence and understanding your own potential. For me, this programme has shaped not only my career, but also who I am as a person and I encourage you to keep showing up and never give up.

Currently, I'm delighted to hold my permanent Deputy Ward Leader post. I'm always open to exploring new roles as opportunities come up, and I now have the courage and confidence to take risks and push myself further.

I am also deeply grateful for the support I have received throughout my journey, especially as a young woman who arrived in the UK with no previous clinical experience, starting from scratch, and progressing to a promoted leadership role in just three years. This journey has shown me what is possible when you believe in yourself, stay committed, and accept the help of those who lift you up.





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.

Tenacity, Self Belief and Finding the Right Fit



Sherraine Harris shares her journey of growth and leadership

When I look back at my career, it's been a journey of persistence, reflection, and discovering confidence in my own abilities. I qualified as a midwife in Leicester and began my career as a rotational midwife, a role that gave me valuable experience across different areas and taught me the importance of adaptability. I have always been eager to learn, flexible in my approach, and committed to giving the best care to patients. That commitment sometimes meant taking on additional responsibilities and managing a heavier workload than others. While I was proud to contribute, over time it left me feeling underappreciated, and despite my efforts, I struggled to secure new roles. After countless applications and interviews, I began to question my own ability.

Feeling despondent, I sought opportunities elsewhere. Inspired by a conversation with a friend, an unexpected opportunity took me to Qatar, where I worked with international colleagues to help open a new hospital. Working alongside senior leaders opened my eyes to what leadership could look like. Most importantly, it made me realise that what they did wasn't beyond my reach, and I had a lot to offer. Personal circumstances brought me back to England but returning wasn't easy. I worked briefly as a vaccination nurse, then as a community midwife. It was during this time that I joined the DDL programme, which spurred me to pursue leadership roles again.

I faced multiple barriers on my journey. Age and race were significant, and unconscious bias played a big part. There were times when I wasn't listened to, when my concerns were dismissed until escalated by someone more senior. That experience taught me how deeply hierarchy influences clinical settings and how challenging it can be for nurses and midwives to be heard. The traditional structures of the NHS, together with a culture that can at times feel focused on blame, add another layer of complexity.

Unconscious bias is something we all have, and the DDL programme addresses this head-on through powerful exercises like "The Witches of Glum", which remind both aspiring leaders and sponsor leaders to acknowledge and take accountability for their biases. Sponsors play a critical role in championing others, and their awareness of bias is essential.

I also wonder whether organisational processes like appraisals could be more effective in supporting development. For many people, the annual appraisal is one of the few opportunities to pause, reflect, and feel heard. When that time isn't used meaningfully, it can feel like a missed opportunity for growth. In my experience, appraisals can feel more like a checklist than a conversation about development, which limits their impact. Working abroad in a private setting showed me the value of structured, purposeful feedback and when that is meaningfully linked to organisational goals it gives a real sense that staff are valued and influential in the success of the service or this is something I believe could make a real difference if applied consistently.

Being part of the DDL programme was pivotal for me. At first, I struggled to engage and felt frustrated seeing others not make the most of the opportunity. Then one session changed everything, conversations centred on “unearthing you” sparked deep reflection and made me realise I held the power to shape my own future. From that point on, I leaned in. I embraced self-reflection, improved how I wrote and communicated, and learned the importance of networking. I stopped negative self-talk because, as I now say, “If you speak negatively about yourself, you start to believe it.” That shift completely changed my mindset.

The programme gave me tools and confidence. I learned to prepare better for applications and interviews, using feedback and persistence to improve. I applied for everything, refined my personal statements, and kept going, even when I felt like giving up. Eventually, success came, not once, but twice. I secured a Band 7 labour ward coordinator role, and most recently, a Band 7 Digital Midwife position that balances work and life and feels right for me. Now, I'm looking ahead to the next level of leadership with aspirations for further growth and development.

I also joined the Shuri Network, which built on the foundation of the DDL programme and, with the addition of coaching, helped me navigate personal challenges. These experiences taught me that growth happens outside your comfort zone. You have to give to get back. You have to contribute to encourage feedback.

My advice to anyone considering the DDL programme?

Do it. Don't think of it as extra work; it's an investment in you, an internal upgrade that will deepen self-awareness, sharpen your knowledge, and expand your network.

Speak up, share, and engage fully. Don't wait for someone else to lead the conversation. Passive participation won't give you the value this programme offers. Instead, take every opportunity to contribute, ask questions, and make your voice heard. The more you put in, the more you'll gain.

The programme isn't just about leadership—it's about unlocking your potential.

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.



The Power of Partnership

Swarsha Bhalla, Programme Manager (Sponsor Leader)
and
Amran Ismail, Business Change Commissioning Manager (Aspiring Leader)

Leicester City Council

For Swarsha Bhalla and Amran Ismail, The Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme was a shared journey built on trust, encouragement, honest reflection and a commitment to growth.

The power of their partnership demonstrate that the DDL offers more than individual development. It helps to establish and solidify partnerships that help both parties to grow in confidence, strengthen their leadership capability and generate impact well beyond the life of the programme itself.

Starting the Journey

When Amran joined the council as a Family Hubs Project Manager, she was still finding her rhythm when her role expanded into the newly combined Children's and Adult Social Care Project Management Office. This shift required her to adapt quickly to a new team, different ways of working, and a broader organisational context.

It was during this period that Swarsha (a previous DDL participant who had since progressed into a senior role) shared her own positive experience of the programme with the team. She spoke openly about the impact DDL had had on her confidence, leadership style and approach to coaching.

Encouraged by Swarsha, and motivated by her own curiosity, Amran explored the programme further. What particularly appealed to her was the reflective nature of the sessions, the focus on coaching, and the opportunity to better understand how background, culture and lived experience shape leadership. As a natural reflector, DDL felt like a meaningful self-investment and a perfect opportunity to think deeply and grow with intention.

Building Confidence and Finding Voice

One of the most significant outcomes of the programme was Amran's growth in confidence. Swarsha noticed this early on; she saw Amran shift from being relatively quiet in established meetings to speaking more freely, asking thoughtful questions and taking on pieces of work she had not previously felt confident tackling. What stood out was not just competence, but a new sense of enthusiasm, curiosity and willingness to try.

Amran describes a shift from “just getting on with the work” to actively questioning how things could be done differently or better. DDL helped her see that asking uncomfortable questions is not only okay but essential, a realisation that surprised her when those conversations were met with openness and grace rather than disruption. This strengthened relationships, trust and her sense of belonging within the team.

Her confidence also began to shape her leadership mindset. She has reflected: “The programme has helped my leadership and mindset to work on areas I could develop in and strengthen what I’m already doing.” She recognised that while her natural optimism is a strength, effective change management often requires clarity about what is and isn’t possible. Being precise about options, communicating them clearly and asking the right questions became central to how she supported colleagues and guided discussions toward appropriate solutions.

As Amran became more visible and vocal, she role-modelled that behaviour for others, helping to reinforce a psychologically safe, team-centred culture. Her growing confidence didn’t exist in isolation, it was contagious and has created a positive ripple effect across the team.

Insight Through the Johari Window

Both Swarsha and Amran described the Johari Window exercise as one of the most impactful tools from the programme.

For Swarsha, it reinforced a key leadership insight: that we rarely see ourselves as others see us. She continues to use the Johari Window with colleagues, recognising its power in helping people identify hidden strengths and challenge self-doubt.

For Amran, the exercise prompted action. It encouraged her to actively seek 360-degree feedback, not as a one-off requirement, but as a regular, voluntary practice. This has become a mechanism for inviting (sometimes) uncomfortable but necessary conversations, helping her understand what she does well and how she can strengthen her impact further. Shaping how Amran engages with colleagues, seeks development opportunities, and shape her own leadership narrative.

From Learning to Practice

A powerful example of applied learning came mid-programme when Amran used the insight and influence from what she had learnt directly into a team-building session.

Drawing on a communication activity from the programme, she designed an interactive exercise where colleagues worked in pairs, one describing an image, the other attempting to recreate it without seeing it. The activity was engaging, inclusive and different from the usual format. It landed well with the team, sparked conversation, and reinforced shared learning in a memorable way.

What mattered was not simply the activity itself, but the confidence behind it: Amran had taken what she'd learned from the DDL and translated it into meaningful practice that benefited others.

A Partnership That Endures

Throughout the programme, they developed the habit of meeting after every DDL session to share learning, reflections and next steps. This consistency strengthened their bond and helped turn insight into action.

Although Amran's line management has since changed, the partnership forged through DDL continues. Swarsha and Amran continue to meet regularly, maintain open dialogue, and use each other as trusted sounding boards. For Amran, it is reassuring to know she can be frank and honest with Swarsha; for Swarsha, the relationship remains energising and reciprocal.

Swarsha referred to the fight, flight or freeze analogy and it is clear to her that Amran is firmly flying. She describes feeling inspired by Amran's growth, particularly when hearing her confidently lead complex meetings or step into unfamiliar spaces with clarity and assurance.

Why This Partnership Matters

Reflecting on the DDL programme as a possible "return on investment", Swarsha is clear that the benefits extend beyond individual development. Increased confidence leads to sharper conversations, clearer decision-making and improved productivity, meetings that once took over an hour now take far less time because expectations are clearer and people are willing to engage openly

For Amran, the programme has reshaped how she sees herself and her future. She now feels confident leaning into challenges, asking questions without fear, and positioning herself for progression. She is motivated to shadow new areas of work, pursue further development, and continue expanding her influence. Looking ahead, she aspires to move into a senior project management role and, in time, give back through coaching and supporting others.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that the power of partnership lies not just in support, but in shared reflection, mutual challenge and belief.

DDL created the conditions for Swarsha and Amran to grow together and the impact of that relationship continues to ripple outward through their team and organisation. Their journey shows what is possible when leaders invest in people, and people invest in themselves.



Ronke Adewuyi

Deputy Ward Sister

Developing Diverse Leaders | Cohort 3

Putting Myself First: From Self-Belief to Leadership

When I joined Leicester Partnership Trust's (LPT) eating disorder ward I was a student nurse studying at De Montfort University. I started in a Band 4 role while waiting for my PIN, then progressed into a Band 5 position once qualified. I've now stepped into my first Band 6 role as Deputy Ward Sister, something that once felt out of reach.

Looking back, this journey hasn't been accidental. It's been about choosing to invest in myself, backing my abilities, and being brave enough to take opportunities when they appear. Before joining the Developing Diverse Leaders (DDL) programme, I had already taken on leadership responsibilities, including working as an RCN steward representative in my own time. While undertaking the DDL programme, I also enrolled on the First Step to Leadership course (an LPT initiative), which I completed shortly after finishing DDL. I've always believed in growth, but being part of DDL reignited something deeper, a confidence and sense of purpose I remember from secondary school, where I led peers, chaired groups, and supported others with empathy and care.

Finding My Voice and Owning My Space

When I first joined my team, there were moments of disunity. I noticed things that didn't sit right, including subtle exclusion of BAME colleagues.

At times, I realised I was even applying unconscious bias myself. That awareness was uncomfortable, but necessary.

The DDL, alongside my involvement in EDI, being an RCN steward representative and the Culture of Care Network, gave me the confidence to step into those uncomfortable spaces and address what mattered. I didn't let banding or hierarchy stop me. I learned to pause, reflect, listen, and then speak with intention.

I'm now the ward Cultural Diversity lead, and I approach leadership with one clear principle: treat people as individuals. I avoid snap judgements. I try, and if needed, I try again. Supporting others is central to who I am.

Leadership in Action

Stepping into my Band 6 role has already shown me the impact of leadership responsibility. In my first week, I was able to review patient's observations, escalate appropriately, and contribute to decisions that felt genuinely life-changing. That moment reminded me why leadership matters.

In my previous role, I had responsibility for shifts and people, but I wasn't always able to make final decisions. Now, I can influence, escalate, and advocate more effectively. With responsibility comes accountability and I'm ready for that.

The Power of Belief (and Support)

I've been incredibly fortunate to have leaders who see me, not just my role.

Holly Warlow, our Matron, has shown me what genuine, compassionate leadership looks like. She is honest, objective and deeply thoughtful. She doesn't take things at face value, she listens, explores, and seeks to understand from every perspective, she has shown me that sometimes you need to access external support. When I struggled to download and share a video that I'd recorded as part of my application for the DDL, I asked for help, and she saw my motivation and my desire to grow. Her support in the big and small moments has been instrumental to me.

She once said to me, that she knew she didn't share the same culture and background as me and so she wanted to know if she could help by introducing me to others from a BAME background. That level of intentional compassion was something I hadn't experienced before. It made me feel important and I knew that my manager was invested in me and believed in me. That commitment drove me forward.

And then there's Judy Eggett, Community Matron. Her presence can't be missed. Her support, her time, her encouragement, it all awoke something in me. Speaking with her reminded me of my values, my passion, and my potential. When your culture tells you family matters, and someone never disappoints when you reach out, you hold onto that.

Taking the Leap

I had never applied for a Band 6 role before. But when the advert came out, I applied within ten minutes. I was keeping a promise I'd made to myself that I would apply for the next opportunity that presented itself, and this was what I'd been waiting for.

That belief didn't come from nowhere. DDL gave me tools, language, confidence and clarity. The River of Life exercise, The Privilege wheel and the wheel of intersectionality, interview preparation, networking, all of it helped me see strengths I already had, and how to articulate them.

Getting the job, after my one and only interview for a Band 6 role left me feeling on top of the world. I still can't quite believe it.

Why This Story Matters

Many people from BAME backgrounds don't apply for opportunities, not because they aren't capable, but because no one has told them they're ready. I want to change that.

I intend to mentor others. I want to be visible. I want to show that managing your life, at home and at work, is a skill, and that anything is possible when you invest in yourself.

I'm authentic, I have a sense of humour, and I hold professional boundaries. I've learned to pause rather than react, to adapt without losing myself, and to say clearly: "I'm here for peace."

My Message to Others

- Try your best to get on the DDL programme.
- When you come, open your heart. You will not leave the same person.
- Reflect on what you want (whether that's promotion, development, a new opportunity) and then go for it.
- Use networks, put yourself in those circles and ask for help.
- Invest in yourself, even if that means doing it in your own time. It will be time well spent, and you will be able to draw on it for life.

DDL was inclusive, person-centred, and welcoming in a way I hadn't experienced before. I didn't have to perform or pretend. By the end, I knew I was ready, even though I hadn't been at the start.

This programme is life-changing and I'm living proof that it works.

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Developing Diverse Sponsors



Haseeb Ahmad

Leicestershire
Partnership Trust



Sandy Zavery

University
Hospitals of
Leicester



Emma Johns

University
Hospitals of
Leicester



Miral Joshi

LLR Integrated
Care Board



Leon Charikar

Leicestershire
County Council



Sarah Taylor

Leicester City
Council

Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Developing Diverse Delivery Team



Bina Kotecha



Mariam Khalifa



Haseeb Ahmad



Jarrard Cooper



**Rachel
Shuttleworth**



Judi Vernau



Jem Thakarshi



**Hellen
Makamure**



Kate Jones



Sarah Taylor



Louise Barnes

With Special Thanks and Acknowledgement to...



**Caroline
Trevithick**



Rebecca Carlin



Nazrin Issa



Wendy Hope



Dawn Cooper



Asha Day



Kay Darby



Alice McGee

Document title: Voices of Progress - Inspiring stories from the Developing Diverse Leaders Programme

Description: A collection of case studies illustrating the impact of the Developing Diverse Leaders programme across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

Original publication date: April 2026

Last updated: April 2026

Version: v1.0

Owner: LLR Academy

Use and sharing:

This document may be shared for learning, development and promotional purposes. Individual stories are shared with permission.

© LLR academy