

Fairer Health for All Leadership - Summary System Insights



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Introduction

Before you read on, there are several points to bear in mind to get the most out of this section:

1. The current insights do not include voices from the community. We are embarking on community conversations in Autumn 2023 and as such the insights will continue to evolve.
2. The current insights emerged from conversations with individuals in roles across the Greater Manchester (GM) system. We have spoken to individuals who hold a role that contributes to leadership, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), sustainability, development, systems change or reducing health inequality across GM between March – September 2023.
3. The ‘system insights’ have been sense-checked with individuals, built on collectively ([see recording](#)) and then categorised for inclusion in this report.
4. This report is written for those working in the roles identified above and related fields. We acknowledge there is a degree of assumed knowledge reflective of the breadth and depth of conversations held. Due to this, there is a way to go in modelling the inclusive language we are advocating below. This is a live tension. For the purpose and audience of this report, the offset for this is the ability to reflect the subtle and nuanced insights and opportunities for FHFA leadership within the GM system.
5. This report intends to reflect an asset-based view of leadership activity in GM. It is also important to recognise the duality of experience. Whereby an asset-based intentionality sits alongside the expression of existing disconnects. The two can co-exist and be used to offer key insights into opportunities for FHFA and GM system-wide leadership approaches.
6. Finally, the authors would like to acknowledge that the insights, although rooted in system experience, have been categorised and collated through ‘our lens’. We recognise there are limitations to what is visible to us and see the insights as a starting point for collective exploration. Points are included to provoke thinking and conversation around FHFA leadership opportunity. To this aim, each section includes a point of insight (what we heard from you) and space for you to note opportunity (for future leadership activity) and curiosity (furthering our thinking).

As you are reading the following sections, you might like to pay attention to:

- **How does this insight land/sit with you?**
- **What emotion is it bringing up?**
- **What is your reaction telling you?**
- **What are you curious about?**
- **What will you do differently?**

The emergence of leadership activity is reflective of a system archetype

The emergence of leadership activity across GM is reflective of a complex adaptive/evolving system archetype. The ambition of many approaches is to model system aligned working. What are the 'simple rules' guiding behaviour when it comes to leadership in GM?

Balancing human experience in system working

When considering alignment of leadership activity at a defined system level (e.g., pan-GM, locality), we observed a balance of drivers relating to human experience (e.g., seeking comfort, order, understanding, control) with approaches reflective of healthy systems (e.g., emergence, self-organisation, requisite variety). How can we alleviate the human impacts of system working?

Existing disconnects

The knowledge of what needs to change versus the prevalence of known issues

- The tension between here and now priorities (finance, recovery) versus longer term priorities (strengthening communities, supporting all people to stay well)
- The time, capacity, readiness and competing priorities versus the depth of learning and space required to work differently (experienced at all levels including Boards)
- The gap between leadership ideals versus fall-back leadership practiced
- The ambitions of learners' post development versus the cultures they return to

- The transactional approaches applied in complex contexts versus the transformational approaches required
- The backlash for path breaking versus belonging within the status quo
- The shifts in values, behaviours and culture required to work with system principles versus legacy decision making, governance and funding structures
- The tension of unifying approaches versus enabling freedom at different system levels

Words can build bridges

Words can act as a bridge to recognise current realities, reframe challenge, describe desired futures, share power and create openings for new possibilities. What we understand by the words used varies based on our identity and lived experience. Understanding also reflects contemporary modes of thought based on prevailing structures and systems in society and often offer shortcuts to ideas and ideologies. Therefore, the words we choose have the potential to create, reinforce or break with existing structures and systems of oppression. The meaning of the word leadership in different cultures may also mean differing starting points for the journey to engaging with FHFA leadership for different cultural groups. 'Leadership' is currently being used as a shortcut. Is this the right word?

Inclusive language is the keystone of leadership

Equipping people with the understanding to speak out about inequalities (language, duty, belief, evidence, narrative), has the potential to open different types of conversation, aligned action and leadership. This understanding as a key enabler to FHFA leadership.



If not now, when?

The system will never be fully ready. To ignore the collaboration/decisions/investment/action necessary to address health inequalities over the near to long term in favour of here and now priorities is an expression of privilege.

Re framing the context of challenge

The pressure and realities of the current context are unprecedented. The demands on people need to be recognised, the experiences of working in a system in these circumstances validated and wellbeing approaches centred. Yet, it is how we work with and within the challenge that offers a high potential for growing new insight for how to develop systems and FHFA leadership for the future – particularly in preparation for the challenge of future contexts where pressures will compound over time with temperature increases, and the additional accompanying environmental, economic and social consequences disproportionately felt by vulnerable communities.

Learning from the edge

The interface between formal and informal infrastructures is a space to explore leadership approaches centred on reducing health inequalities from the perspective of lived experience or community activism. It is from the vantage point of lived experience or community wisdom that solutions to prevailing challenges are visible that might not be visible from the system view. There is a need to reduce 'gatekeeper mentality' (avoid blocking and trickle-down ideology) and invert traditional power.



Leadership from lived experience of inequality

Learn about leadership from the perspective of lived experience of a specific inequality (in a fair exchange). Explore with individuals and communities with lived experience of inequality and/or the most marginalised in society to understand how does lived experience of inequality come through in leadership. What does the future of FHFA leadership look like from the perspective of lived experience of inequality?

Deepening development

To enable FHFA in ways that we have not seen or mainstreamed before, leadership activity and development will have to go to new depths and will be required to explore the intersections within and across the following layers - 'Intra-human' (within humans – e.g., thinking, imagining, feeling), 'Inter-human' (between humans – e.g., connecting, relating, dynamics) and 'human – environment' (between human/s and the environment/society - e.g., intersectionality, power, perspective, action).

'System shifting' leadership

There is a growing conversation of the experience of system blockers across initiatives in GM and the development of 'system shifting' leadership approaches to tackle them. There has been feedback that leadership approaches need to be real, relevant and embedded within the system challenge.

'Self-Shifting' leadership

It is important to make visible the deep 'self-shifting' work in system shifting activity. The whole self (person) is part of the system and mindfully shifting systems requires parallel focus on the intersectionality between self and system - power, privilege and discrimination. From this view, system blockers have the potential to look different for everyone based on identity, lived experience and perspective. There is the potential for inner shifts in self (e.g., perspective) to reduce the experience of a 'barrier' as the interface shapes thinking, perspectives, interpretation, interactions, relationships and action (i.e., the ways in which we are upholding modernity).



Intra-human

The opportunities for internal shifts in awareness, understanding, and intention within an individual

Let's not ignore we are human

Prioritise leadership approaches that work with the human system and human-centric approaches (holistic, wellbeing centred, trauma informed, working with grief to support letting go of existing practices) and structures (reduced bureaucracy).

Unlearning

We should not assume an existing level of awareness, understanding or knowledge of key topics relating to E,D&I, sustainability, leadership – or any other complex issue. There might be a need to take steps back to ensure foundations for learning are in place. Extending this notion of stepping back, a journey of 'unlearning' has the potential to maximise the impact of shifting systems to align with FHFA principle adoption. Unlearning approaches aim to give visibility to, question, challenge, increase perspectives and choice on the often implicit and unconscious ways we continue to perpetuate existing patterns of thought, behaviour and uphold systems and structures that do not equitably serve.

Rebuilding

Rebuilding awareness and understanding needs to be with (rather than for) communities from the perspective of diversity and lived experience.

Awareness

We have observed many initiatives raising foundational awareness of complex issues. For valid reasons (clarity, funding, remit), the scope of which can lead to a focus on one main issue. In developing the leadership required to enable FHFA, there is need to create a space to raise awareness of intersecting and interacting issues (e.g., economic and political system legacies, inclusion, climate reality) with the potential impact of action/inaction at differing system levels (e.g., individual, local, GM population, national/global) and over differing

terms of time (today, strategy terms, lifespan terms, generational terms).

Rewiring thought patterns

Changing the way we think can both change our experience of the system and the system itself (with aligned action). We heard the importance of mindset (asset based over deficit), intentionality (inclusive, sustainable, system first, anchor) and imagining (bold, radical and creative transformation) as well as thinking across lifespan and generational terms.

Decision points are turning points

Decision points are opportunities to create approaches that step towards or away from FHFA. Those who are most affected by a decision should be given the opportunity to be involved in decision making. Consistent, incremental, micro, everyday decision making is important alongside shifting the larger scale structural approaches to strategic and operational participatory decision making (e.g., Barcelona en comu citizenry approaches).

Space

Space is required to think differently, work differently and reflect on the ways of working (leadership) that are contributing to change. Protecting space in a context of pressure and pace is difficult. Discomfort can be experienced in 'holding on' to space longer than the pressure of the current would normally allow. However, there is a legitimacy to sitting in the discomfort to give or expand space to think, debate, challenge, test and learn. Space is not just time. It is freedom to operate differently within that time.



Inter-human

The opportunity in shifts in dynamics between individuals.

Be in relationship

Go to communities and meet people where they are (not where we are). Do not outsource the conversation (although there is value in the emergence of bridge roles like 'community connectors'). Building trust and relationships via consistent conversation and a focus on connection is the work. Acknowledging and redressing existing power imbalances to consciously build an equal power base from which to grow relationship is an important ongoing consideration.

Grow and give power to

There is a need to be aware of where power sits (who has access to it and who does not) and actively makes choices to redress the balance. For example, the power differences in community led or small cross-sectoral initiatives compared to larger infrastructure organisations. Give power and authority to communities and build approaches that create the conditions to grow power. In contexts with a reliance of traditional power values or structures (e.g., currency – held by a few), giving power to is an active process. For some, giving power may involve letting go and a sense of loss. A focus on purpose, justice and working with old power in new power ways has the potential to enable power sharing.

Path breaking can be breaking - Lived experience of culture changers

The work is on hearts and minds, influencing without authority and is often outlier activity without funding. It can feel like a 'grind', be frustrating and lead to burn out. If you are trying to do things differently, it feels tiring to push doors and find resources, this work needs to be embedded, integrated and sustained. On a personal level, persistence, resilience and a focus on wellbeing is key. On an interpersonal level, finding allies (with shared fundamental vision and values), safe spaces and support networks is important.



Human – System

The opportunity for shifts in the intersection between individual(s) and the system as it relates to structures, processes, culture and broader political, economic, sociological, technological and environmental influences.

Culture

FHFA leadership is an enabler of the wider culture and ways of working identified in the GM ICP strategy. From the experience of working in culture change for innovation, we heard how culture was particularly important in a) supporting a 'fail, test learn approach' (with culture shaping the extent of sharing based on the perceived risk to reputation involved) and b) supporting the transition of learners with new awareness, understanding, knowledge and skills back into existing working cultures. What do people do when they feel stuck? Give up, move on, find a work around or carry on regardless and break the rules.

Fairer governance

Transforming the leadership ask also requires the parallel transformation of governance to enable new ways of working. There will be a need to mitigate risk and increase the system tolerance to aligned methods of governance.

Fairer commissioning/funding

Ideas for leadership development are out there without identified funding source. It is acknowledged that funding needs to be prioritised for those with the greatest need yet there are barriers to this in practice (e.g., ethics, access). The FHFA principles could be used when making funding decisions. For example, representation (how do we ensure those with lived experience of inequality are involved in decision making about where funding goes?) or health creating places (how is funding retained within the GM system to benefit the local economy?)

Data and intelligence

Data is required to understand to make decisions and understand the impact of action on health inequalities. Co-creation with those with lived experience of a specific inequality are needed at question generation stage as the questions we ask shape the data we collect, the decisions made and so on. Data is not just numbers. It is stories, intelligence, wisdom that might be so emergent it is not yet backed by existing databases. The right data needs to meet the right audience in ways that support community activism to be in the public interest/good as opposed to being based on misinformation and myth.



Considerations for co-designing FHFA leadership activity

Not another programme

Programmes have a place. We have lots already and need to avoid duplication. How can we develop leadership differently?

Use existing spaces

Due to time, capacity and competing priorities there is a need to share ideas and develop informally through existing spaces. We heard calls to make visible and bring together a 'network of networks' to explore where missions connect.

Real and relevant

Approaches are needed that embed leadership ideas into practice as well as enable/wrap around leadership that emerges from practice (learning from practice to shape what we know about leadership). Either way we heard the importance of development being embedded into real work whether that happens within the formal system or informally in the community.

Co-design with community

The community voice, in particular those with lived experience of inequality, should be central to co-designing leadership activity. Ideas emerge from diverse voices around the table. New approaches to complex issues are not possible from one lens alone.

A fair exchange

Learning from lived experience and different communities should never be for free – what is a fair exchange?

Simple rules of design in GM

There is value in collectively exploring fundamental design principles for use across GM that encompass, but are not necessarily branded

as, FHFA principles. Rather, the decision on branding is best taken collectively and with the view of best supporting the uptake of the design principles. Prompts could include - how do we design for inclusion? How do we design to support our net zero target? How do we design centring lived experience? How do we design with anchor intentionality?

Build steps into development

There will not be one single 'easy entry' approach into development that works for all.

Focus on the 'how' of transformation

Focus on the 'how' not the 'what' of leadership experiences to generate innovative insights and practice.

FHFA co-design principles

- Work with system principles in co-design
- Connect and build relationships
- Build on (not duplicate) existing learning, interventions and spaces
- Focus on inclusion and working with marginalised groups / those experiencing inequalities.
- Build in anti-racism approach (GM Strategy)
- Build in Equality Impact Assessment into scoping and co-design (GM template)
- Align to GM Equality Objectives
- Act with anchor intentionality and prioritise GM organisations in commissioning



Get in touch

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