

# Supporting Collaborative Leadership

## Action Learning Sets for Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

### Overview

#### Action learning sets (ALS)

Often used to inspire organisational change, groups work together across several sessions to address real issues.

Bringing together professionals from different disciplines creates opportunities to share skills and build relationships.



#### The project

Four groups, from PCNs within Sussex and Surrey, participated in **six** ALS sessions from July 2019 to Feb 2020.

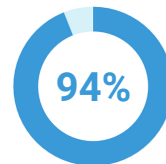
Sessions were facilitated by The King's Fund and two local GP trainers, who received training to support future independent facilitation.



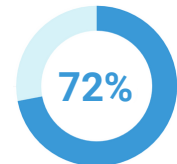
felt ALS enabled **open** and **honest** conversations



felt ALS helped the group to **reflect** upon, and **resolve**, emerging issues



felt the project had helped establish a **stronger network**



felt the project helped develop their general **leadership skills**

### Key findings

#### Group objective

Initial ambitions and objectives set by the groups became **more focused** across sessions through concerted effort.

One group developed a new process, resulting in:

*"approval for funding in excess of £700k to pilot a new way of working"*



#### Group members

Participants changed as objectives evolved, or due to lack of funded development time.

*"Involve the right key people from outset"*



#### Overall reception

*"It was a wonderful way of bringing about **positive change**"*

*"One of the most **enjoyable experiences** of my career to date"*

**100%** of respondents would **recommend ALS** to colleagues

#### Facilitation

The King's Fund noted the GP trainers' improved facilitation skills, and suggested further development and supervision to support independent facilitation.

## Primary Care Networks (PCNs)

A key part of the NHS Long Term Plan, PCNs have formed from groups of neighbouring GP practices and local providers.

To support delivery of seven national service specifications, additional funding is available to employ other health and care professionals.

Such multidisciplinary team (MDT) working may facilitate the transition to greater collaboration across primary and social care, improving services.

## Collaborative leadership

Working within and across complex hierarchical structures, MDTs enable different teams and organisations to work together and drive change.

Individuals in MDTs require organisational support and delegated authority to make decisions, develop their ownership of services, and foster collaborative leadership with other individuals and organisations across the wider network.



## The project

Each of the four groups worked towards their shared objective across the six **action learning set** (ALS) sessions, between July 2019 to February 2020.

The project explored the impact of ALS on:



Collaborative leadership skill development

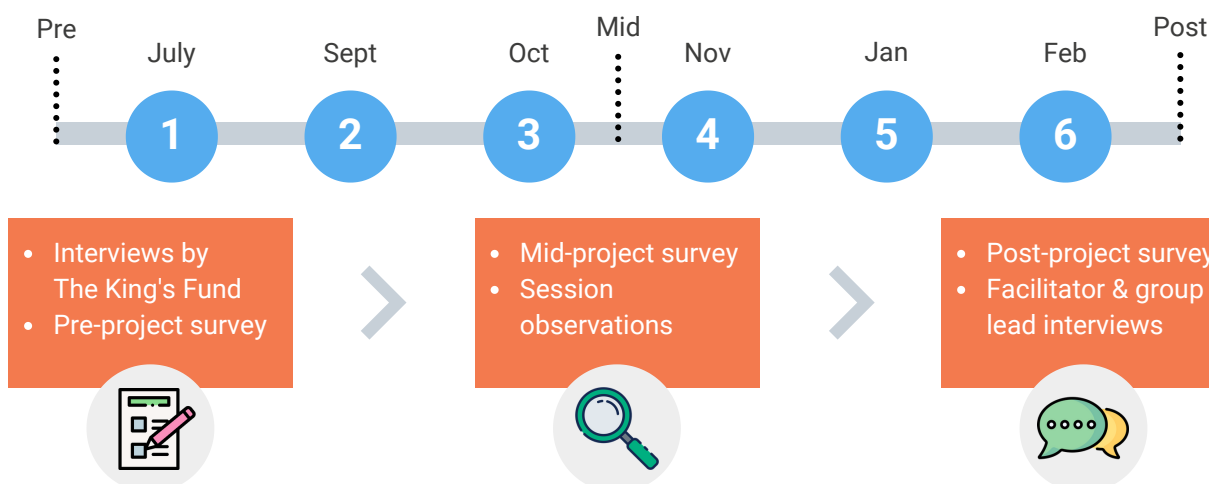
Service and inter-organisational change



Multidisciplinary team working

## Project timeline

Multiple methods were used to collect data across the project. Facilitator feedback was sought across the project's duration.



## The groups

- Two groups were formed of GP practice staff, whilst the other two had wider system organisational involvement
- Three groups were led by the PCN's Clinical Director, the fourth was led by a GP Partner
- Some members were chosen for their role in the project, others their enthusiasm
- Group membership changed across the project, often as objectives focused, or due to lack of funded development time
- Participants were keen for relevant members to be included from the start in future programmes, and for:



*"Full attendance by all in the learning set"*

## Group objective

- **89%** took action between sessions to drive progress towards the objective
- **22%** felt that the group had **surpassed** their expectations

All groups made achievements against their objectives. Some groups planned further ALS sessions to continue to work towards their objective.

One group achieved substantial funding for a new way of working. The group lead felt the ALS programme had a strong influence on the success of the project.



## Overall reception

Participant feedback was positive; **all** respondents would **recommend ALS** to colleagues.

Participants felt the ALS sessions enabled all members of the group to be heard.



*"great opportunity to get together colleagues early on in the PCN development"*

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*"there should be more of these"*

## Facilitation



Facilitators were praised for staying **neutral** and ensuring members had **equal opportunities** to contribute.

The King's Fund praised the development of the GP trainers, suggesting **further development** opportunities to continue improving skills.

## The King's Fund: future recommendations

- Provide **sufficient time** for selecting participants and a project
- Group leads should have **relevance** to the project and hold some **authority**
- Participants should have a **professional interest** in the project
- The **scale** of the project should be proportional to the ALS time frame
- Participants should be keen to **develop** collaborative leadership **skills**
- A neutral, **comfortable environment** can help people feel valued

## Leading collaboratively

- Participants valued the opportunity to **build inter- and intra-organisational relationships** during the programme
- **All** participants felt ALS enabled the group to have **open** and **honest** conversations 
- Facilitation supported all group members to be **heard equally**, regardless of role or seniority
- One group lead spoke of "**useful conflict**" within the sessions, which helped to drive conversations and the project forward
- One group lead enjoyed seeing other members of the group **thrive**, particularly those who did not previously identify as leaders 

## Multidisciplinary working

- **100%** felt their organisation was valued and respected within the PCN
- **78%** had a better understanding of the challenges faced by others within their PCN
- Leadership became more distributed in one group, with nurses pushing to be **heard** and **respected** by GPs

## Redesigning or improving systems

- **All** participants felt the **needs of patients** were consistently taken into account when making decisions
- A Clinical Director hoped the funding achieved for their project would **improve services** and be a **long-term legacy** for the population

\*% calculated from 18 responses

## What did participants value most?



### Developing relationships

"meeting others from the network" and building "lasting relationships"



### MDT working

"learning from their experience and achievements" and "insight into challenges faced"



### Protected time

"protected time to meet and plan a project" and "time to reflect together"

## What would participants change?

- Participants were keen for the right people to be involved from the start of the programme
- Where possible, ensure group members are enthusiastic and fully committed to working towards the objective and attending sessions
- Secure backfill resource to support involvement in the programme



Encourage PCN-wide representation in future programmes



Secure backfill resource and support for participating organisations



Select participants carefully at the start of the project



Support GP trainers to gain additional skills to facilitate with confidence