

Leading by Example: The HEE/CILIP Leadership Development Programme – Session 3

Sam Burgess

Library Service Manager

Hampshire Healthcare Library Service

sam.burgess@southernhealth.nhs.uk

Heather Steele

Library and Knowledge Lead

Leeds and York Partnership NHS Trust

h.steele@nhs.net

In January we met in Bristol for the latest face-to-face workshop where the theme was communication as led by Claire Bradshaw. It was held in a venue not too far from the city centre and included a nice brisk walk from the hotel, across some of the waterways and past some really interesting shops and sights.

After tea and coffee we all briefly said what our intentions were for the day and what we hoped to learn or develop. The overwhelmingly popular answer was confidence in communication. Other answers were:

- Communicating upwards
- Communicating with stakeholders
- Networking
- Communicating effectively in meetings
- Checking comprehension
- Communication style and channel in difficult situations

In groups we discussed what good communication looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Heather's table discussed what good communication sounds like, and they came up with things such as making agreement noises (yes, um, etc.), paraphrasing, matching speed and tone of speech, verbal cues, and animated voices.

We did an exercise where we each had to think about the word "camping" and what it meant to us. A few people fed back and each had a slightly (or even drastically!) different answer. Some people said things like "freedom" "outdoors" "campfires" "nature" and others (including Heather) said things like "cold" "muddy" "dark" "tired" and "hungry!" (Sam can't remember what she said but probably covered the lack of power to recharge her cochlear implant batteries!) This demonstrated that the words we use can have different meanings for each of us as we all have a different frame of reference and how we see the world. This can positively or negatively affect our communication with others making communication very difficult if our starting points are diametrically opposing!

We also looked at the link between body and mind. Amy Cuddy (see TED talks - https://www.ted.com/speakers/amy_cuddy) has done research into how the body can affect the mind and vice versa. Standing in a "power pose" for two minutes (making yourself as big as possible – arms wide!) has been shown to increase confidence and aid communication. This was so interesting and Heather tried this before doing a presentation – it seemed to work!

Next we worked with a partner to turn limiting beliefs into empowering beliefs. We each wrote down five limiting beliefs about ourselves and

turning them around to be positive and empowering. For example Heather's were:

Limiting Beliefs	Empowering Beliefs
1. I'm rubbish	1. I want to do well
2. I'm not assertive enough	2. I give others space to speak
3. I don't know what I'm doing	3. I'm doing what I need to do
4. Why am I here	4. I want to help
5. I can't offer anything	5. I want to offer services to help others

After lunch we discussed the curse of knowledge and how knowing what we mean ourselves can alter how we explain information, and can cause frustration. We practiced this by tapping out a song to a partner for them to guess the song. The tappers were frustrated by the difficulty of the listeners to correctly guess the song – we knew what it was so it was obvious to us! How could the listeners not understand?! We learnt that when information isn't understood, just repeating the same thing will not usually get the same answer. For effective communication, sometimes different methods are needed for comprehension.

Sam was particularly intrigued by the perceptual positioning tool whereby we are encouraged to take a position to revisit a particular conversation (or to plan an upcoming one). The tool works by taking yourself back in time to be yourself again and repeating the conversation in your head. You then physically move yourself to where the other person was sitting and attempt to repeat (again in your own mind) what they said in a means to feel what they might be feeling during that conversation. Finally, you take yourself out of the conversation and repeat the whole thing as an onlooker – assessing the conversation from a neutral position and gauging feelings, thoughts, and responses

before offering yourself (as you were at that point in time) some advice or feedback as to what went well or what you should have done. A truly powerful tool for exploring difficult conversations and reflecting on what the other person involved in that conversation may have been thinking or the position from which they were coming from.

We also did a listening exercise – Claire read a story and asked questions at the end to see how well we listened. Quite a few of us were caught out and misinterpreted what was said to mean something else! For instance, as this was a fairy-tale type story, some of us assumed that the witch was old even though age was not mentioned; or that the princess was beautiful when she wasn't described as such. This led onto a discussion about "weasel words" which can be used innocently and interpreted negatively – words like: but, hopefully, don't, can't, try, and difficult. Most of the time these can be harmlessly replaced (e.g. try using and instead of but) or avoid them (e.g. instead of "don't run" say "walk").

In February our project group met in Manchester for an Action Learning Set. We both presented for the first time and we found it so helpful to be able to explore our thoughts in a safe space whilst being challenged by our peers to think about issues in a way in which we may not have done so previously. We seemed to find it easier this time, things moved quite smoothly, and by the end of the day everyone who hadn't presented before had done so. If you would like to read more about Action Learning Sets then do read Jo Walley's article "using action learning sets to support professional development" in the May 2017 edition of CILIP's Update.

This course also has an online element to it so outside of our [face to face](#) meetings we are also exploring such things as leadership theories and networking skills, not forgetting to mention that we also have a year-long project to complete. We are both involved in the statistics group along with Holly Case Wyatt, Dawn Grundy, [Kal Dhanda](#), and Catherine McLaren. The project group are currently out and about carrying out focus groups and a survey will shortly be released to find out what LKS staff think about the statistics they collect. Do keep an eye out as there will be opportunities for those interested to become statistics champions and support the work of this group by offering feedback on the potential toolkit all this information will feed in to. The statistics team are providing an update on the project at the June HLG conference at [Keele University](#). This may include any results we've had from various focus groups and surveys as well as possibly a first glance at the potential toolkit, while the [UKMedLibs Twitter chat on 17 April 2018](#) will cover the work done.