iSort

Organisational Workbook

Mission and Vision

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1 Mission and Vision

A resilient organisation knows the direction it's travelling in. Its mission and vision are clearly defined and communicated to the workforce, engendering a sense of collective ownership and belonging. A mission defines an organisation's aims and objectives and how it approaches them, while a vision sets out the organisation's desired future. Co-producing and communicating a clear mission and vision is the fourth Key Foundational Principle; this is where:

- Leaders are committed to a clear mission and vision and use their communication skills to consult with and motivate others.
- Leaders are optimistic but realistic and focus on continuous improvement, inspiring practitioners to identify what 'good' looks like and how this can be achieved.
- Change is managed constructively, especially during times of uncertainty.
- There is a sense of purpose and values are translated into action

Leaders of health and social care organisations should be able to articulate what their organisation hopes to achieve and why. The mission may seem obvious, but everyday 'busyness' means a sense of purpose can easily become lost or overlooked. A clear mission helps practitioners understand how their individual contributions fit into the organisation's objectives; a clear vision articulates the long-term goals and aspirations. A well-defined mission and vision will inspire and motivate practitioners and enable leaders to feel confident that their planned strategies and actions align with the organisation's goals. A resilient organisation should also be able to articulate its aspirations for the future in terms of the people's lives that it touches: for example, its hopes for young people in care, how it plans to support older people, or how it aims to engage communities around enhancing health and well-being.
Mission and vision statements must be constructed carefully, with input from stakeholders. Avoid statements that are generic and vague and those that aim to achieve 'excellence' or be 'the best'.

Moreover, if mission and vision are expressed in lofty and idealistic terms, practitioners will typically respond with cynicism and distrust, whereas identifying an aspirational but achievable goal can inspire people to work together to meet it. Working with teams to co-produce an organisation's vision and communicating this clearly and consistently alongside emotionally literate change management, is a critical foundation for resilient organisations.

Managing change effectively

The only thing that is constant is change. (Heraclitis, 500 BC)
Having experienced extensive change over the last few years – in response to political, economic, social and environmental imperatives – health and social care practitioners will recognise the truth in this statement. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the pace of change in health and social care organisations and increased the challenges experienced by the sector. Although some degree of change is essential to avoid stagnation and ensure improvement, people also need predictability and order. The Labour Force Survey (Health and Safety Executive, 2023) highlights change as a major source of work-related stress. People often react to change with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and fear, and their motivation and engagement can be reduced (Khaw et al., 2023). Managing and communicating proposals for change effectively is therefore integral to a resilient organisation.
Leaders may be familiar with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (see Fig. 4.1 below), which sets out key principles for the effective management of change; more information on its use can be found here. However, Kotter's approach may not fully capture the complexities of managing change in health and social care organisations, where several change processes may be occurring simultaneously.

Fig. 4.1: The 8-Step Change Model

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As outlined in Quick Win 4.1, for any change initiative to succeed it is crucial to manage the whole organisational system. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides guidance to help organisations manage and communicate change, which is summarised below:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and sufficient opportunities for employees to influence proposals.
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their job. If necessary, they are given training to support this.
- Employees are aware of timetables for change.
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

See here for more information.

The HSE's approach to managing work-related stress recognises the importance of assessing practitioners' perceptions of the effectiveness of change management and having conversations about the impact. They also provide guidance on the competencies that leaders need to manage change successfully (see KFP5 Wellbeing for more information).

Although the HSE guidance can help leaders implement organisational change effectively, it is important to consider the specific needs of different types of organisations. Leaders of health and social care organisations may find the tips in Quick Win 4.1 (adapted from a resource provided by the Scottish Social Services Council, 2016) particularly useful when planning change initiatives.

Quick Win 4.1: Achieving effective change

- Develop a communication strategy to support practitioners to understand why the change is necessary and how this will benefit teams and services.
- Communicate clearly and transparently the motivation for change and inspire commitment to the reasons and potential benefits of the change.
- Identify how others may receive the change; carefully consider the impact of feelings of loss, uncertainty and anxiety, and manage this in an emotionally sensitive but constructive way.

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- Focus on sustaining personal resilience in the face of anxiety, conflict or hostility from others.
- Be self-reflective when reacting to the concerns of others, tolerating uncertainty while supporting innovative and creative thinking.
- Ensure that the organisation retains a clear focus on meeting the needs of people accessing services, while adapting to the change agenda.
- Build communication channels that enable people to provide feedback on the change and its impact.
- Identify potential risks posed by the change and mitigate any that are likely to have a negative impact on people who access services.

For more information see here.

The pace of change in health and social care can seem relentless, particularly in the aftermath of a pandemic. When managed well, change can have enormous benefits, but leaders should be aware of the risk of change fatigue (see below) and how to manage the fallout from poor change initiatives. Change can be managed effectively by applying the principles set out above, but the following tips may also be useful.

- Recognise your own biases and assumptions. Is the change important for the service or just for yourself? Be aware that practitioners will be able to spot a vanity project.
- Make sure that the change project is adequately resourced.
- Take time out to consider the consequences of the change and how it will disrupt the service. Being able to evaluate the potential risks and ensure that the impact of the change will be beneficial will encourage you and your practitioners to persevere during times of difficulty or when you are faced with resistance.
- Communicate the difference. People can feel overwhelmed with the change agenda and fail to see how it will benefit them or the work that they do. Filter the information you provide; make it specific to each area of the organisation.

The need for leaders to consider the whole environment when planning organisational change is considered in Quick Win 4.2.

Quick Win 4.2: Seeing the wider picture: pay attention to the fish tank, not just the fish

Tate (2013) argues that it is important to consider an organisation's health as a whole system rather than look only at its constituent parts (i.e. practitioners and leaders from different areas). An organisation is an integrated system, so we need to understand the 'glue' that binds people together and makes them want to work there. Any plans for change must, therefore, consider the whole environment and not focus on a single action or event.

Using the metaphor of a fish tank, Tate observes that many organisations just focus on putting a new leader (or fish) into an environment that is toxic. They may then look after the health of individuals (or fish) without paying attention to the system (or fish tank) in which they live. This means nobody can thrive.

It is crucial to understand the organisation (the fish tank) as an ecological system and cleaning the tank should be prioritised. Systemic leaders can recognise negative working practices (or toxins) in the environment (or tank) and provide appropriate nutrients to enable people to thrive. Having a clear mission and vision helps people understand what is expected of them. But without systemic leadership and an organisational culture that is open, reflective and committed to the whole system, success cannot be achieved.
More information on managing leadership systemically can be found here.

Change fatigue

The ability to adapt and implement change is likely to be a key driver of recovery and success in the post-COVID economy. Nonetheless, organisations should be aware of the risks of change fatigue, which typically presents as a general sense of apathy, or passive resignation towards organisational changes. The pandemic has already caused major disruptions to people's lives and many face uncertainties about the economy, their job security, and a deterioration (either temporary or long-term) in their health. Responding to fluctuating risks and government guidelines also required regular adjustments and readjustments to behaviour. When too many changes occur simultaneously, employees may find it difficult to accommodate the change and can experience a strong sense of powerlessness (Kinman, 2017). They may then resist, reject or even sabotage the process to regain a sense of control and stability.

There are several reasons why change fatigue can disrupt attempts to build a resilient organisational culture. It can impair the wellbeing of practitioners by increasing the risk of stress and burnout, reducing job satisfaction, and encouraging absenteeism and thoughts of leaving (McMillan & Perron, 2013). Change fatigue can also reduce motivation and engagement and compromise performance by depleting energy levels and feelings of self-efficacy. The cynicism that is synonymous with change fatigue is also likely to foster a general atmosphere of negativity within an organisation.

Managing the organisational change process collaboratively and compassionately will reduce the risk of change fatigue. In turn, this will increase practitioners' acceptance of change and will support wellbeing and effectiveness during the change process. See Box 4.1 for guidance on how to spot and manage change fatigue.

Box 4.1: How to prevent or respond to change fatigue in your organisation

- Ensure that change management policies include supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Communicate the reasons for change and provide regular updates on progress.
- Formulate and communicate long-term strategic plans, not short-term reactive solutions.
- Raise awareness of previous change initiatives that have led to improvements.
- Consider the unintended consequences of any changes that may be introduced.
- Accept that a drop in performance may be inevitable in the short term, as change is disruptive.
- Involve practitioners in planning change, as their opinions may be more realistic and acceptable.
- Listen to practitioners' concerns and take them seriously.
- Train line managers on how to support people through the process of change.
- Remember that it may take a while for change to be accepted, or to reap any benefits.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of any change by consulting practitioners at all levels.

Adapted from Kinman (2017)

Co-producing and communicating organisational direction

This workbook does not offer a step-by-step guide on how to generate a clear mission and vision, but it does set out some key principles to help leaders ensure that any strategy is co-created.

It is recognised that co-production with people who access services and their carers will help to improve health and social care services. It can also be used to bring stakeholders together to decide future direction or improve performance. Co-production involves drawing on the knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences of people at all levels in the organisation. A fundamental principle is having respect for all opinions and the equality of ideas. If people can contribute ideas through a process of genuine collaboration, they will feel more invested in the resulting mission, vision and strategy. If not, they may feel policies have been imposed by leaders and see them as tokenistic or lacking in integrity.

Appreciative Inquiry is highlighted in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation as an effective approach to co-produce change initiatives and other interventions. The use of focus groups in generating knowledge from teams to inform change is discussed in KFP5 Wellbeing. World Café is another way to generate creative ideas to address problem areas and inform change (see Box 4.2). It is a technique that can be used in any area where co-produced solutions would be helpful.

Box 4.2: The World Café approach

This approach is based on the premise that people have good ideas that can be used to generate options for change and help deliver strategic goals. The World Café approach encourages diverse perspectives enabling the generation and exploration of ideas that may not have been considered previously.

The World Café format is flexible and can be adapted to different contexts. Set up a room with café-style tables and paper tablecloths that can be written on (or use Post-it notes) to capture ideas. Coloured pens should also be provided. A facilitator (or host) is needed for each table to guide the process and record the findings. Participants spend a specified amount of time (say 15-20 minutes) at each table having a conversation about a key issue (this is known as a 'round') before moving on to the next table.

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The following steps will help you create a productive World Café:

- The environment should feel conducive to learning, and the facilitators must be committed to using the ideas and information generated.
- There should be no more than four or five chairs at each table.
- Make sure that people understand why they have been brought together and the aim of the exercise.
- Articulate the context clearly and identify the broad themes that you want people to address.
- For each table, create a list of questions that capture real-life concerns facing the organisation.
- Table hosts should welcome each group, guide the first round and then summarise the contributions from previous rounds to each new group.
- Ensure everyone has a chance to articulate their views either in writing or verbally.

Make sure you have a way of capturing the ideas and themes emerging from the rounds. Schedule time at the end of your World Café to synthesise ideas and feed back to the group about how they will be used in any service improvement or change process.
See Clements et al. (2021) for an example of a research study that used a World Café approach to identify wellbeing challenges and solutions in an organisational setting. More information on the World Café approach can be found here. World Cafés can be conducted online as well as face-to-face; see here for guidance.

The circle of control, influence and concern

This is an effective tool that you can use with individuals on a one-to-one basis and teams to consider the challenges they are facing and how they can respond to them.

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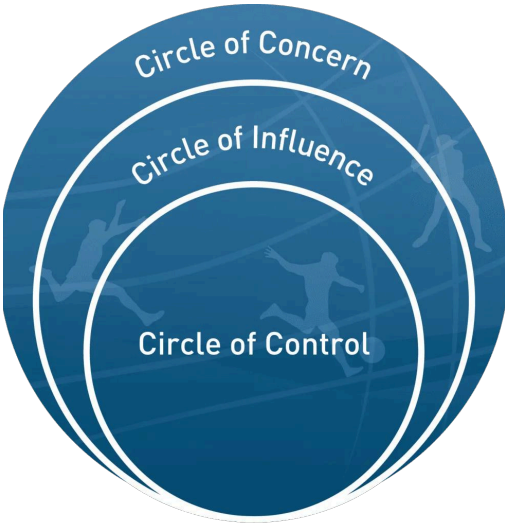
Fig. 4.2: Circle of control



- The circle of control (see Fig. 4.2 above) helps teams and individuals identify the elements of challenge that they can control. Start by identifying the issues or aspects of the situation that people feel they can control and make a list of ways to do this. The list can then form an action plan that can be discussed with line managers.
- The circle of influence helps teams and individuals identify the elements of challenge that they cannot control but can influence. Make another list of these aspects of the situation. Remember that even when we cannot control our circumstances, we still may be able to influence them by being able to access help or advice.
- The circle of concern helps teams and individuals identify the aspects of challenge they can neither control nor influence, but that they are concerned about and need to adapt to. Discuss how aspects of the challenge that cannot be controlled can be accepted or accommodated. We may not be able to change the situation, but we still have the power to change our response to it.

(Covey, 1989).

The importance of clear communication

Effective communication should avoid buzzwords and 'management speak'. People working in health and social care are likely to be sceptical of terms borrowed from the corporate world and will want to see care-driven values and ethics at the forefront of any change process.

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So, talk of swim lanes, bandwidth, drilling down, getting our ducks in a row, deliverables, or mission critical are more likely to meet with suspicion or cynicism than respect and approval. It is also crucial that leaders commit to regular updates; often, leaders involve people in the change process and keep them informed about progress early on, but communication falters over time.
As emphasised above, helping practitioners and teams to see how they can contribute to the change process will increase their commitment to the organisation's mission and vision and ensure that goals are met. The 'Tell Me' exercise in Quick Win 4.3 can help teams identify their common values and skills and consider how they could be used more effectively.

Quick Win 4.3: 'Tell Me' exercise

The goal of this exercise is to use guided conversation to define a common set of values and aims for a team or an organisation. 'Tell Me' can help develop working agreements, resolve hidden conflicts, or be used as a team-building activity to enhance mutual understanding. The exercise is suitable for groups of between 8 and 16 people. Some initial planning is needed, as you need to divide the group into pairs.

Each pair spends three minutes talking about their skills in turn (as teller and listener) and what they feel the team or organisation could improve upon. It is important that listeners realise this is not a conversation but an opportunity to pay attention to what tellers are saying.

A diligent timekeeper is needed to ensure that people swap to the next pairing at the end of each six-minute period (i.e. after each pair has had a turn at being teller and listener).

Listeners' questions should be simple and specific. Listeners do not need to say anything else other than 'thank you' after the teller's response. For example:

- 'Tell me a skill you have that you think the team can benefit from?'
- 'Tell me one core thing we need to improve on to develop excellent practice?'
- 'Tell me how you think we could be working together more effectively to achieve the goal?'

At the end of all the rounds, feedback on themes and skills should be shared with the whole group.

1 Succession planning

Improving the retention of high-quality practitioners helps organisations achieve their mission and vision. As discussed earlier in this workbook, in health and social care retention is currently a problem that may deteriorate further over time. Low turnover is a feature of a resilient organisation, and resilient organisations in turn encourage loyalty among the workforce. Both practitioners and leaders are likely to flourish in a stable community where learning is developed and sustained through interaction and peer support. People who access services also suffer when practitioner turnover is high, as high turnover thwarts continuity of care and support and impairs relationship-based practice (Buckley et al., 2008). There are many good reasons, therefore, to retain experienced practitioners and build talent from within.

An organisation that offers clear career development pathways is more likely to retain experienced practitioners (Burns, 2010; Freund et al., 2022) and enable succession planning. Having only one tier of competent, skilled leaders is a risky strategy for any organisation; they may leave, or you may be reluctant to promote them because of the adverse impact on the rest of the organisation. Developing a talent pipeline requires a shift from reactive recruiting to proactively future proofing your organisation. So leaders should be spotting talent and implementing specific, targeted support to nurture and develop people throughout their professional journey.

Succession planning has many benefits: it saves on recruitment costs, shows that the organisation is committed to professional development, and indicates that it is worth staying as there are opportunities for promotion. Moreover, people who are promoted internally are already clear about the organisation's mission and vision and can quickly start implementing plans for successful strategic delivery of its priorities. If people are to be successful in their career aspirations, however, they must be supported and trained appropriately, and there should be adequate opportunities for mentoring and shadowing existing practitioners.

Box 4.3 provides some tips to help you develop an effective succession plan.

Box 4.3: Effective succession planning

- Know your organisation: Where are the key risks? Are there people who would create a hole in the organisational fabric if they left? How could you future-proof this part of the service?

- Look for talent: With careful planning, supervision and appraisal you can identify people with skills and potential who can be nurtured and developed. Performance reviews can also feed into this process.
- Create a development plan: Investing in your workforce is an important component of organisational resilience. Looking at your overall strategic direction, what key skills are missing in the workforce and how could these gaps be filled?
- Review: Make sure you are sensitive to potential changes in the organisation and think about how talent can be grown at all levels. Manage the fears of others who may be concerned you are developing people to 'take over' their roles.

More information on succession planning is available from the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) here.

Culturally competent leadership

Equality is being invited into the room, diversity is getting a seat at the table, inclusion is sharing your views and being heard. Inclusive leadership enables all of this to happen. (Sweeney & Bothwick, 2016)
Establishing culturally sensitive leadership is one of the 'golden threads' of organisational resilience. Encouraging different voices and perspectives is crucial, not only to ensure equity but also for organisational learning. According to Kohli and colleagues:

Cultural competence engages the development of abilities and skills to respect differences and effectively interact with individuals from different backgrounds. This involves awareness of one's biases or prejudices and is rooted in respect, validation, and openness toward differences among people. Cultural competence begins with an awareness of one's own cultural beliefs and practices, and the recognition that others believe in different truths/realities than one's own. It also implies that there is more than one way of doing the same thing in a right manner. (Kohli et al., 2010, p. 257)
As leaders, we must recognise unconscious bias in our practice, and reflect on our approach to recruitment, appraisal, promotion and discipline to ensure we deal fairly and considerately with people from different backgrounds. People working in social care and health can experience racism, discrimination, exclusion, homophobia and stereotyping (in their practice and their team) and such experiences will compound the stress of the job itself and compromise their resilience.

(Cultural sensitivity is a key element of organisational justice, which is explored later in KFP4.)

The pandemic also had a disproportional impact on marginalised groups with implications for their wellbeing and effectiveness (Kinman, 2021). Research findings suggest bullying is all too common in health and social care (Kinman & Teoh, 2018; Kinman et al., 2020b). Bullying is common when job demands are high, resources are low and work is insecure (van den Broeck et al., 2011). All employers should have policies in place to tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination, and a zero-tolerance approach is essential. Health and social care practitioners from minority backgrounds are also more likely to report bullying and discrimination (Kinman et al., 2020b; Turner, 2020). See guidelines for tackling racial harassment and bullying. When devising and implementing policies to tackle discrimination, leaders should enable practitioners who have experienced discrimination to have a voice. Emotionally literate leadership also requires leaders to recognise that practitioners may express distress, and signal their need for support, in different ways.

Box 4.4: Tips for becoming a culturally competent leader

- Spend time getting to know your workforce and colleagues. Do not rush meetings. Consider how you can engage people who are different from you more effectively.
- Check your biases. Acknowledge institutional and structural inequalities and bias (conscious and unconscious) and how it impacts on behaviour and decision-making. Become comfortable with conversations about inequality: nearly six out of ten employees feel that their employers are uncomfortable talking about race (Gov UK, 2017). Guidance is available to help them do this more effectively.
- Listen to people. Remember that they are experts in their own lives and experience, so be ready to listen and learn.
- Practise self-awareness: remember your own values and beliefs may not be shared with others. Check that you are not 'norm referencing' your own cultural experiences or background.
- Do not make assumptions about people who come from a similar background to you.
- Take an inclusive approach to celebrations, holidays, and festivals.
- Think about the power you hold and the language you use. Language can empower people or leave them feeling hurt; this may not be intentional, but it can have a damaging effect.

- Review your HR processes and policies for bias or favouritism, as this is often at the heart of inequality in organisations.

More information on the role of cultural competence in promoting leadership and organisational change can be found here. Guidance on managing diversity at work is available here.

The Health and Safety Executive Indicator Tool (see KFP5 Wellbeing) includes questions on bullying and harassment. Other organisations provide guidance to help employers and leaders tackle discrimination in the workplace (for more information see here), including on tackling bullying and harassment. Some tips for leaders are set out in Box 4.4.

Pay attention to your shadow side

Unfortunately, there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less [aware of it he is], the blacker and denser it is. (Carl Jung)

In The Leadership Shadow, de Haan and Kasozi (2014) observe that 21st-century leaders are often expected to be single-minded in their pursuit of improvement and driving a vision. This may encourage some leaders to be always open to new ideas, but a narrow focus can also lead to stubbornness, inflexibility and an inability to communicate effectively. We may read that description and think: 'That doesn't describe me, but it does describe someone I worked with in the past.' The reality is that most of us will go to considerable effort to protect our self-image from anything unflattering or that puts us in a bad light. We are often reluctant to acknowledge aspects of ourselves we are not proud of or that we have thoughts we do not want others to know about and feelings we try to hide.

Leaders of social and care organisations aim to give their very best. They want to use their strengths and skills in a positive way and to ensure people accessing services feel respected and cared for. Nonetheless, we all have a 'shadow side': a darker aspect of our personality that we do not want to admit to. This shadow side primarily consists of instinctual and negative emotions (like selfishness, greed and envy) but also contains anything about us that we deny or disown because we think it unacceptable, inferior or unpleasant. Unfortunately, this means we often repress, or cut ourselves off entirely from, many of our good qualities and they become part of the shadow self.

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Discovering our shadow self can be challenging, but it can also lead to greater authenticity, energy and creativity. Try the simple exercise below in Box 4.5 to discover your shadow self.

Box 4.5: Discover your shadow side

Write down the leadership strengths that you hope your colleagues see you as having (i.e. the good and positive stuff). Then consider how others could perceive those same characteristics less favourably (the less good and negative stuff) – in other words, your shadow (how you might be seen by others).

The Shadow I Cast/How I am Seen/My Impression?(the good/positive stuff)	The Shadow I Cast/How I am Seen/My Impression?(the less good/negative stuff)
1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....	1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....
What impact might this have on others around me, and what might I want to change about this?	

Here is a completed example:

The Shadow I Cast/How I am Seen/My Impression? (the good/positive stuff)	The Shadow I Cast/How I am Seen/My Impression? (the less good/negative stuff)
• **Totally committed to improving outcomes for people who access services. Conscientious and hardworking.**	• **Works late; impatient for improvement; does not always delegate or trust others.**

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What impact might this have on people around me, and what might I want to change about this?

Always stays late and preaches about work-life balance, but then does not go home on time, or have lunch breaks. Others might think that I am encouraging a culture that expects people to overwork, and that I think I am the only person who will do things properly

What I need to change

- Be more patient and allow change to occur.
- Delegate more, so people can see I trust them.
- Practise better work-life balance: do not just tell everyone around me to go home on time, do so myself.
- Take a lunch break and use this as an opportunity to get to know my workforce.

More information on discovering and managing your shadow side can be found here.

If we remain unaware of our shadow side, it will not only impact on ourselves but those around us. So, we need to be able to reflect on why we behave as we do and how other people may perceive our actions. A helpful technique is to consider the last time you became defensive: what led to this? Was it your attempt to keep your shadow side at bay? de Haan and Kasozi (2014) provide guidance on different personal leadership profiles and the shadow side that can derail them. They also offer the following advice to avoid your shadow side being what other people see most of the time.

- Be open to upwards feedback, however painful this may be.
- Be open to feedback from your own shadow side, although this will sometimes be painful.
- Nurture positive, honest relationships.
- Do not just lead in the abstract or indirectly, but in the here and now.
- Engage in active and honest (self-) reflection.

1 360 Degree Feedback

Even the most reflective person needs honest feedback from others to boost their self-understanding and understand their blind spots. Your Personal Board of Directors (see KFP3 Learning Organisation) can provide a candid assessment of your personal traits and behaviours, which will help you become aware of your shadow side. Another useful technique is 360 Degree Feedback, where people receive anonymous observations about their behaviour from those who interact with them regularly (e.g. line manager, co-workers and direct reports). This can increase self-awareness, enhance skill development and foster a collaborative organisational culture (Richardson, 2010). It can be particularly helpful in providing insight into how individuals are fulfilling their organisation's mission and vision and living its values.

The 360-degree tool can be integrated into a wider performance management system and help to identify priorities for personal development. It is crucial, however, to ensure that the process is carefully aligned with the strategic aims of the organisation and the competencies required. Training is also needed to help people understand their feedback and develop action plans for improvement. The CIPD has published an evidence review on performance feedback that includes 360-degree methods, see here.

Ensuring a sense of fairness, justice and equity.

Organisational justice refers to the extent to which people consider that their organisation allocates resources, makes decisions, and distributes rewards and punishments fairly (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Adamovic, 2023). Its roots are in equity theory, whereby employees expect a fair balance between what they believe they contribute (the input) and what they get in return (the output). Inputs include hard work, skills and motivation, while outputs encompass respect and recognition as well as more tangible rewards such as salary and promotion opportunities. Making sure that practitioners perceive their workplace as fair will help to build a strong, collective sense of mission and vision.

Box 4.6: Practitioners' perceptions of organisational justice

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Employees' perceptions of justice generally fall into one of three categories:

- Distributive justice: where outcomes are in proportion to inputs. For example, salary, promotion and career opportunities should be relative to people's training, experience and effort and not awarded through favouritism.
- Procedural justice: where processes that lead to outcomes are transparent. For example, practitioners have opportunities to contribute to decision-making. Activities outlined in this workbook (e.g. open-door policies, 'walking the floor' and Appreciative Inquiry) can all help to ensure that practitioners feel they have a voice. Another important aspect of procedural justice is that decisions and resource allocations are made consistently, neutrally, accurately and ethically.
- Interactional justice: where interpersonal interactions and treatment are perceived to be equitable. For example, the degree to which people in an organisation are treated with respect when procedures are implemented. Leaders should ensure information is presented:
  - truthfully (realistically, accurately and openly)
  - respectfully (practitioners are treated with dignity and courtesy), and
  - with propriety (without prejudice such as racism or sexism).

Involving practitioners in shaping communications and gaining feedback before distributing more widely will help increase a sense of interactional justice in an organisation.

People who feel a stronger sense of organisational justice and fairness will be more satisfied, committed and trusting, and those who see their organisation as equitable also tend to be more physically and mentally healthy and have a better work-life balance (Robbins et al., 2012; Cachon-Alonso & Elovainio, 2022). Research has found strong links between perceptions of organisational justice and employees' mental health; a sense of workplace equity was found to help practitioners manage anxiety and reduce the negative effect of long-term role stress (Ndjaboue et al., 2012). Conversely, injustice is a major source of work-related stress and burnout. A sense of unfairness can also be highly contagious, with serious implications for wellbeing and performance throughout the organisation. Feelings of injustice can also encourage 'retaliation' against the organisation such as gossip, bullying, reduced effort and minor theft (Robbins et al., 2012).

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Although fairness and equity are central to health and social care work, there has been little research on organisational justice in this context. Studies in other countries suggest feelings of injustice can reduce practitioners' job satisfaction, quality of working life and organisational commitment and encourage thoughts of leaving (Kim et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2005; Zulkarnain et al., 2024). Based on interviews with social workers in two Scottish local authorities, Engstrom (2013) identified some ways to promote a sense of organisational justice: these include better recognition of roles and responsibilities, and more appreciation of the skills required and the high risk of stress and burnout. She also emphasised the importance of practitioners feeling respected and valued, having an input into decisions relevant to their role and, more generally, having an open and transparent organisational culture. Positive relationships with peers, the availability of emotional support (formal and informal) and feeling trusted by leaders were commonly seen as features of a 'just' organisation.

Employee voice

It is clearly important for leaders to be vigilant for signs of injustice in their organisation and encourage people to report any violations. Policies and procedures should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are equitable and do not disadvantage any groups or individuals. If a perceived injustice has occurred, providing justification (an explanation or apology) at an early stage can reduce or eliminate any anger or frustration generated. Providing practitioners with an accessible, responsive and non-adversarial way to gain support and resolution is also crucial. The importance of employee 'voice' is highlighted throughout KFP2 Sense of Appreciation (and throughout this workbook), so making sure people have opportunities to suggest ways to promote organisational justice will be particularly beneficial. This might involve incorporating their views into performance appraisal systems, disciplinary procedures, conflict resolution processes, and selection and promotion criteria, as well any plans for organisational change. KFP5 Wellbeing also considers ways to work with groups of practitioners to identify sources of reward that can offset the demands they can experience.

For helpful guidance from the CIPD on the benefits of 'employee voice' and influence can bring to an organisation, see here.

Staying on track: maintaining a sense of purposeful goal direction

As a leader, you will probably have a never-ending 'to do' list – it goes with the territory. This can be demoralising and may make you feel you are making no progress towards achieving your goals. So, it is crucial to stay on track and avoid task paralysis.

1 Staying on track: maintaining a sense of purposeful goal direction

As a leader, you will probably have a never-ending 'to do' list – it goes with the territory. This can be demoralising and may make you feel you are making no progress towards achieving your goals. So, it is crucial to stay on track and avoid task paralysis. Although 'to do' lists help set priorities and ensure important tasks are not forgotten, people rarely achieve their overly optimistic ambitions; new tasks are also usually added throughout the day. An 'I did' list, on the other hand, highlights your achievements. This not only encourages a more positive outlook, but also enhances feelings of self-efficacy. Greer (2016) suggests a process and structure for maintaining an 'I did' list (Quick Win 4.4).

Quick Win 4.4: Keep an 'I did' list

At the end of the working day, put aside some time to focus on your key achievements and answer the following questions:

- What did I do?
- What was this action in response to?
- Was this action planned or unplanned?
- What did the action achieve today?
- How has the action contributed to more substantial or longer-term goals?
- How do I feel about achieving this goal?

A table, such as the one shown below, could help

What I did	What did the action achieve?	How has this contributed to the overall strategic goal I am working towards?

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The 'I did' technique can help you identify what you have been doing and whether those tasks are the best use of your time and energy. It can also help you see how much you are able to anticipate and control your work. To what extent were your actions planned or unplanned? Focusing on the unplanned entries can help you pre-empt tasks in the future and manage your time more effectively. Moreover, after a challenging day in which you may believe you have not accomplished anything worthwhile, keeping a record of what you have completed, and the steps you are taking towards achieving a larger task, will help you feel more productive.

Avoiding procrastination

Another common reason why people fail to make progress with key tasks is because they procrastinate. This often involves ignoring an unpleasant (usually important) task in favour of one that is low priority but more enjoyable. Procrastination may also mean delaying a decision that needs to be made. Typical procrastination behaviours are leaving items on to-do lists for a long time, starting high-priority tasks and then moving on to other things, or waiting until you feel in the 'right mood' to do something. Checking emails is a common procrastination technique; this can give the illusion of productivity while swallowing up hours of your time each day. Procrastination is damaging as people not only fail to meet their goals, but feel unproductive, guilty and ashamed.

The first step in avoiding procrastination is to recognise that you are doing it and find out why. One of the most common reasons is that the task seems daunting, or we fear we will fail. People also use procrastination unconsciously as a form of rebellion or a way of 'getting back' at others. To overcome procrastination, it is important to set simple and achievable goals (rather than vague plans) and, wherever possible, to eliminate distractions. Quick Win 4.5 shows how the Japanese technique of Kanban can help you do this.

Quick Win 4.5: Using Kanban

Kanban, a Japanese term meaning billboard or signboard, is a production management system that aims to minimise waste and maximise efficiency. Benson and DeMaria Barry (2011) have translated Kanban into a personal scheduling system that restricts work-in-progress to enhance productivity and avoid burnout.

Put simply, Kanban involves limiting (say, to three or four) the number of tasks you are working on at any one time. When you have completed one task, you can introduce another – and so on.

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Use Post-it notes and a whiteboard with three columns – 'To do', 'Doing', 'Done' – and move each task along as it progresses. You can also add a 'Waiting' column for future tasks (or, if urgent, allocate them to other people). Larger tasks can be broken down into manageable chunks. Ideally, finishing one task before completing another will become a habit.

For more information, see here. Kanban boards can also be set up online, see here

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