

Harnessing the skills of emergent leaders to foster Equity Diversity and Inclusion– A case study

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Background

Harnessing intergenerational diversity in the workplace is said to increase the success of an organisation (Salahuddin 2010). Whilst there is limited research on differences across generations, it has been found that approach to leadership is likely to change over the lifespan of an individual (Rudolph et al; 2018) and this is influenced by the environmental, community and social context that the leaders experience or find themselves.

The Future Leader's Programme (FLP) is a one-year fellowship offered within NHS England Workforce Training & Education (Yorkshire & Humber) to health professionals who wish to develop their leadership skills. By virtue of the criteria required to be eligible for the programme, fellows of the Future Leaders programme are early career leaders.

Conscious Decision Making (CDM) workshop is an Equality/Equity, Diversity and Inclusion workshop developed for NHS England WT&E (Yorkshire & Humber). The workshop was developed with the intent that participants will eventually take on co-facilitator roles in future workshops in order to cascade learning across the region. The fellows in the future leaders' programme were approached to participate in this project.

Outcomes

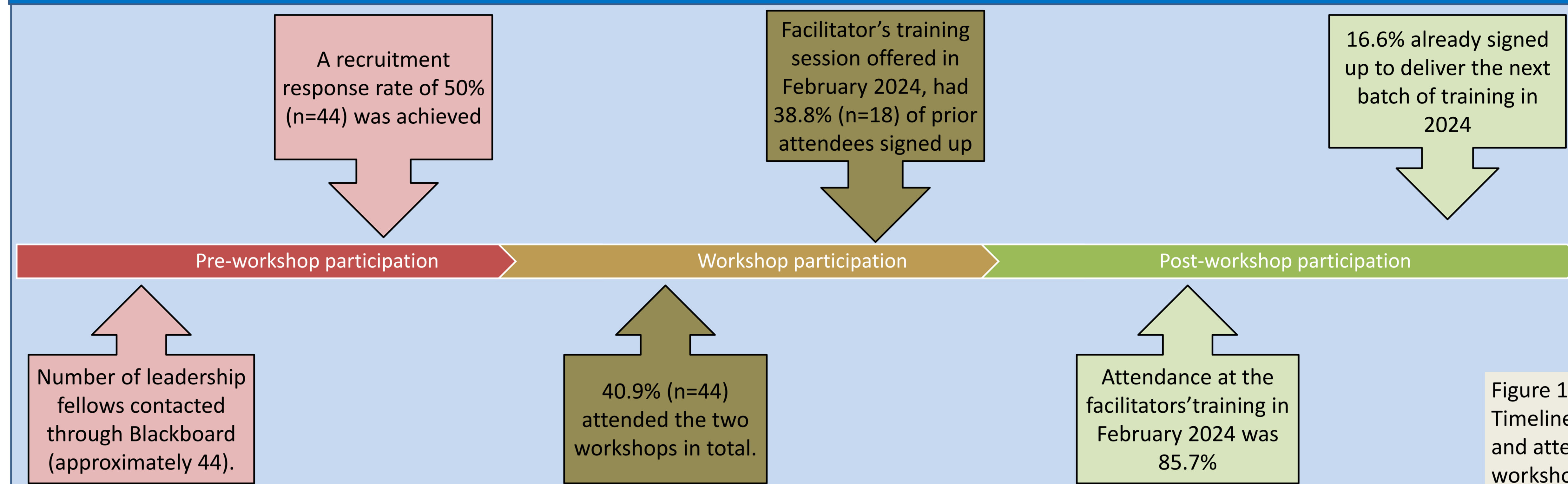


Figure 1: Timeline showing the recruitment and attendance at each of the workshops and training sessions

Methods

- ❖ The Conscious Decision Making workshop was advertised in October 2023 to the current cohort of future leader's fellow (2023/2024 cohort). This was done via the weekly newsletter on a common platform (Blackboard).
- ❖ Two dates were provided for the workshop (one month apart) to accommodate for participants' timetable, provide flexibility and ensure an appropriately sized cohort for each workshop. The fellows indicated their interest to attend via a short survey.
- ❖ Participants who signed up for the course were required to complete an online learning followed by an interactive CDM workshop delivered virtually.
- ❖ The workshop was delivered by 2 facilitators with concurrent supervision provided by Goss consultancy –an EDI consultancy and the developers of the course
- ❖ Feedback was obtained after the course and certificates provided to all participants.
- ❖ A facilitators course, was thereafter offered to all the participants.

Discussion

Generational cohorts are bound by shared experience of early life. For example, the Millennial generation witnessing international terrorism or the Generation Z witnessing American's First Black president. Such events are thought to attune the generation to emergent issues such as the environment or equality and diversity (Sessa & Kabacoff; 2007).

This future leader' cohort has shown a high interest in the CDM workshop training.

According to the NHS employment data (NHS Employer; 2019), majority of staff (over 50%) in the NHS are within the age bracket of 35 years to 54 years. It has been suggested that novel problem solving and reasoning decrease with age while experiential knowledge increases with age (Zacher et al; 2015). Both characteristics predict leadership effectiveness in various ways. Awareness of the influence of age on leadership is important in harnessing skills and resources in a targeted manner.

Finally, the leadership fellows in this project have dedicated a year to explore their leadership journey, thus increasing access to organisational resources is worthwhile.

Conclusion

Emerging leaders within NHS England as exemplified by the future leaders' fellows, have a role in tackling and solving current workforce challenges within the NHS. This case study suggests that this cohort of early career leaders are motivated to address EDI challenges. With strategic planning, novel interventions such as the CDM workshops can be sustained, nurtured and disseminated widely through the efforts of these leadership cohorts.

With multigenerational leaders across the NHS, it is important to actively harness the diverse leadership resource as an inclusive effort by itself as well as to generate the needed solutions to current issues such as equity, diversity and inclusivity.

Although the grouping of individuals into generational cohorts according to age is simplistic (Zhengguang Liu, et al., 2018), taking cognisance of human maturation as exemplified by the lifespan theory of leadership, allows for more innovative and strategic approach to problem solving.

References & Acknowledgments

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