

Transcript

Elspeth Boxall

Hello, and welcome to the next in our series of NES Pharmacy podcasts, where we are discussing Scottish Pharmacy Clinical Leadership Fellowship, also known as SPCLF. Today, I am joined by my fellow SPCLFs from this year's cohort to discuss our experience so far on the SPCLF programme, and hopefully give everybody a good insight into how the programme works in practice. So I'll let everyone introduce themselves. I'm Elspeth Boxall. I'm an HIV pharmacist in NHS Lothian, and on SPCLF, I'm hosted by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. So, Lisa, over to you.

Lisa Dunn

Hi there. My name's Lisa Dunn. I am a Primary Care Pharmacy Technician team manager for NHS Lothian, and my SPCLF year has been hosted by the West of Scotland Directors of Pharmacy, to look at regional collaboration for medicines governance opportunities.

Elspeth Boxall

Thanks, Lisa and Niketa.

Niketa Platt

I'm Niketa Platt. I am the Viral Hepatitis pharmacist in NHS Lothian. I am hosted this year in SPCLF by the General Pharmaceutical Council, and I'm working with them to look at um.. reasons for differential attainment in the MPharm degree.

Elspeth Boxall

And Rocio.

Rocio Toribio

Hi. I'm Rocio Toribio. As of last month, I'm the Primary Care lead pharmacist for East Lothian and NHS Lothian. My host organisation is the West of Scotland Directors of Pharmacy, and I am looking at clinical supervision in advanced practice.

Elspeth Boxall

Great. Thanks, everyone. So yeah, a big variety in what we're doing, so it'll be interesting just to talk a bit more about that. Um ..but first of all, I think it was really important to let people know a bit about why...why did we apply for SPCLF. So starting with you, Lisa, what motivated you to apply for SPCLF?

Lisa Dunn

Probably more so the leadership opportunities or to learn more at a national level or with other multidisciplinary teams. Um, I've worked in pharmacy in NHS Lothian for 20 years and progressed my career from working in hospital to primary care and then leading primary care teams.

So wanted that opportunity just to expand my horizons I, I knew that the SPCLF programme, you worked with the medics and dentists and other pharmacists and pharmacy technicians as well, so really liked, um, the sound of the setup, thought that would be really good. And also the networking opportunities, so getting a chance to learn from people from other health boards, um make contacts and connections.

Those were all things that really, really interested me, plus hearing so many positive things about the leadership programme itself and the learning that you would do alongside your project and any other development opportunities that came along.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's great, Lisa. That's an excellent summary. Um.. Niketa, would you like to add to that?

Niketa Platt

um, yeah I suppose I just wanted to kind of develop my own leadership skills and, and maybe understand a little bit of the theory of that, but I also wanted to understand, like, the wider systems that I work in and kind of what my place is in those systems. And also, like how my system links into other systems and beyond the NHS. So that's.. SPCLF has offered that opportunity.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah. It's quite unique in that, isn't it? um, and Rocio, have you got anything that you would like to add?

Rocio Toribio

Very, very similar experience to my colleagues. I think I had, um reached the stage in my career where I was quite comfortable, and I am naturally somebody curious that likes to develop, and I think I was, at that point an effective operational leader, but I was looking into developing more strategic leadership and really have that understanding of the wider system.

So that's probably the most appealing part of the fellowship. um....but it was also the opportunity to have a personal coach to sort of like discuss this career journey and the impasse that I had reached, so I thought that was a really, really good opportunity as well.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's excellent. Yeah, I think you've all reflected really well there, all the different, um, parts that make up SPCLF and there really is something for everybody in it, and whether it is systems leadership or coaching or, or networking, there is so much going on. So I guess the next question is, has it... has it met your expectations so far? Is there something that you found particularly valuable? Let me start with you, Niketa, this time.

Niketa Platt

Thanks. um, yeah. It has met my expectations in terms of I wanted to learn about theory aspects of leadership and, but it's given me time to reflect on that and how I apply that to my, um own style and my own leadership style.

Um, I think having access to, as Rocio had said, having access to a DOP mentor and a coach has been really valuable. um having their experience to lean on and to guide you has been really great. And I would say one of the most valuable things for me has been my other pharmacy SPCLF colleagues.

You know it's such a unique experience, I think, and really quite challenging at times, and so having someone who's going through that with you, um, to ask for support or to discuss things with, I think that's been really invaluable for me. Yeah, that's, really nice to hear. So yeah, that is important. Yeah, you do create your own network within it, don't you?

Rocio Toribio

So, um and we'll go to you next, Rocio. What have you found particularly valuable? I think Niketa's right. You obviously build those relationships with, um the actual cohort, which is you've got medics, you've got dentists, and that, that's great.

I think, in terms of that, gaining that wider understanding of how systems interlink and how they work, and building those connections, um has been great. But, in a selfish way, being able to do that as well, just with the pharmacy colleagues has been great. You guys have been amazing.

Um, I think, again, for me, one of the most valuable, or one of the most valuable elements is the actual project. I've been quite lucky that my project is really aligned with my own, um, career aspirations in terms of like workforce development and capability. So that's something that, you know, unless I had done SPCLF, I don't think I would've been able to.. to achieve quite so early maybe in my career.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah. That's... that's interesting. Yeah, we'll touch on that a bit more probably as we go on. And what about you, Lisa, is there anything that's particularly stood out for you?

Lisa Dunn

Very similar to what Rocio and Nikki have already said. um the networking opportunities have been really good. Absolutely has met my expectations. Um.. Rocio and I were asked that at one of the last West of Scotland DOPS meetings, um, where they were discussing future cohorts and um, whether we found it valuable, and it was a resounding yes from both of us.

Um, the ... Yeah. The the theory, the learning programme on Wednesdays, that's been a mixture of virtual and face-to-face, and I've really found the face-to-face ones really good to, to build those connections, even with the facilitators. But they create a really, really

supportive environment for lots of different discussions. um, the guys all know that when I first came along to the sessions, I was really quite lacking in confidence, um, and lacking in confidence in my own ability and my place there, and, um, yeah.

So the supportive conversations have been really, really good in helping me know that the 20 years, um, that I have been in the NHS, um, I'm able to share that with not only my colleagues within pharmacy, um and promote the pharmacy technician role, but also, um speaking to the medics and the dentists as well, and they're really interested to hear everybody's, um... everybody's journey and everybody's opinions and insights into everything that we've been talking about.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, I would say I've noticed that as well, Lisa, that everybody's got a part to play and it's a really supportive environment, isn't it? So, um that's a definite positive, and I guess, well, Niketa touched on it a little bit already, that there are challenges too within the programme. So I think it, it's useful to discuss that, and I'll start with you, Rocio. Is there anything that's really challenged you in the programme, or pushed you out of your comfort zone, would you say?

Rocio Toribio

Absolutely, absolutely, in so many ways. I, I think I would probably best describe it as two different challenges. On a personal level, I think the programme, um, really, um, allows you to become much more reflective, um, in your own practice, and that pushed me out of my comfort zone because it really highlighted, um, areas or tendencies in the way I work or even in who I am, really, and it's just, um, facing those and the impact that it can have on others.

I found that quite challenging initially, because it also plays into your own insecurities. um, and the way the facilitators run the sessions is actually really supportive. So what you learn to do is, is, rather than become paralysed with those insecurities, is how do you overcome that, and how do you use it to your advantage?

Um, so I suppose that was challenging on a personal level. And then on a professional level, if you like, I think the project that I've been assigned, um, and particularly the mentor, um that, that is working with me, has really, really pushed me. He's pushed my thinking. He's constantly pushing me out of my comfort zone, um and that was uncomfortable. It continues to be, but I'm really grateful that that is the case, because I can see how it's really changing the way I think, the way I articulate, the way I, um link in with very senior leaders, and it's, it's given me confidence. It's scary, but it's good.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah. Absolutely. Those challenges are there to develop us, aren't they? And- Mm-hmm ... yeah. Thank you, Rocio. Going to you next, Lisa, is there anything that particularly has challenged you, do you think?

Lisa Dunn

Yes, absolutely. Probably, um, it's quite similar to Rocio in the reflection part of it. I am a very process-driven, right and wrong answer, like to get things, um, done the right way, or that there needs to be a positive way to do something.

So then to do the kind of getting in touch with your own feelings and your, your own, um, personality traits and how that influences how you, how you do things or what your leadership style was, was a real challenge for me, because I'm not used to speaking about me and delving really, like, quite as deep.

And also having the, the chance to speak to a, a mentor and a coach and have them say, "Right, well, this time is about you. What do you want to speak about? What do you want to develop?" Um, being on the flip side and being quite an experienced member of the team, I was used to doing that with everybody else and hadn't really given myself much time to do that for me.

So that definitely did challenge me to think, right, well, um this is a really golden opportunity, what do I want to get out of it for the next 12 months? So yeah, and like, again, similar to Rocio, that was good because you were made to do these things, and I feel as if a lots of positive stuff came out the other side of it.

Elsbeth Boxall

Thanks, Lisa. That's really honest. Thank you for sharing that. um, and Niketa, what about yourself? Yeah.

Niketa Platt

It's probably very similar. eum, professionally, I think working for the GPhC has really pushed me outside of my comfort zone because it's not an area that I've worked for before, in regulation, and, and also with the differential attainment, it's not an area that I have much expertise in.

So it's really challenged me to, um, to work outside of my comfort zone. But that's where the growth is, isn't it? So, that's been a good challenge. um, similar to what Lisa was saying, it's felt really uncomfortable at times, really focusing on myself and kind of, um, trying to understand myself. I don't think we take enough time to do that and SPCLF has allowed me, I feel, the time to really pause and reflect, um, on myself and my own kind of leadership and style and where I want to go.

Um, I think one thing I found really challenging was the MBTI preferences thing because it revealed so much about myself that I didn't know. um, and actually, or some of it was probably the opposite of what I thought I knew about myself, so that really did challenge me. And so I'm still working on that. I'm still working my way through that to understand how I use that to, to work better and to communicate better with other people as well. My own preferences, but also kind of considering other people's preferences as well.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that's really interesting. Yeah, that was something very different and a great opportunity to do that, I think and, um, maybe it leads us on to the next question quite nicely, actually, because about all of what you've talked about, actually all of you, but how.. we're thinking about how the fellowship has influenced how you see your leadership style and your own role now.

And I think that is linked to, you know, what we've had to do to reflect on ourselves. And so I'll start with you, Lisa. Is there anything you feel that, um, has come out of this and has influenced your leadership style already?

Lisa Dunn

Yes. I... I think it probably confirmed quite a lot of the leadership, or parts of my leadership style that I knew about. I do like.. I am quite a compassionate, empathetic leader, um and when I'm speaking to anybody within my team, um I want people to know that I'm genuinely interested, um and authentic, and I just want to do my best for anybody that I work with.

And, and those kind of traits did absolutely come through when we were learning about our MBTI profiles. Um and I think that's the thing that I learned most about, or, or that's the thing that, um, I've kind of taken away so far, is that leadership is about the people that you're dealing with, all people.

So that it's about your connections and the relationship you have with all the... everybody that you meet. so, and that's how I see my role within pharmacy developing and changing. It is about making connections. It is about building relationships and trust. um, no matter whether you're doing that within your own team or whether you're working with anybody externally. And my own project has seen me talking to the four or five health boards within the West of Scotland regions, never speaking to these people before in my life, but having to build up that relationship really, really quickly. And I had kind of thought I was quite a reserved, um and liked, um like to kind of listen and, and take things in first of all, but that's pushed me to ask questions and be curious and.. and yeah. So that's what I would take from it.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's brilliant, Lisa. Yeah. Thank you very much. um and going to you, Niketa. Was that similar for you or anything different at all?

Niketa Platt

um, yeah. I think a big shift that came from me was when I entered SPCLF or when I applied for SPCLF, I thought it was about developing me as a leader, but I've come kind of come to realise that actually good leaders develop others.

Um, so, so, that was a big shift for me. So I suppose going forwards, I would how will I create safe environments for people to be able to do their best thinking, to be able to do their best work? um and that's what I hope I will be able to create going back into work.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah. That's a brilliant reflection, actually. I think you, you've summarised that really, really well, and I think that's such an important point to make. So, um... But I'll let you come in, Rocio, if you...

Rocio Toribio

There's, there's not a lot to add. I think Lisa and Niketa have summarised it brilliantly. For me, um it was also that level of reassurance that the type of leader that I suppose that naturally I am, you know, very focused on compassion and, and really bringing and creating psychological safety for a team, um, that allows a condition where they can develop and grow clinically and, and professionally.

The reassurance that that is okay and, and that is really, really important. It has given me that confidence to continue pursuing that leadership style, and I think, um, the way all of the stuff that we've learned about leadership and all the exercises that we've done so far, its, it's just made me show up as a leader, I think, in a more reflective and intentional way. um, and then same as Lisa, when you're linking in with senior leaders, um, it's allowed me to become more confident, and to ask the daft question.

Um, I think the brilliant thing about the SPCLF is that, that you can pull that card and always say, "I know this is a daft question, but, you know, how about this?" And, I think that's something that I'm going to take with me, um always asking the question, because why not? And, and, I don't think I would have ever done that before, if it wasn't for the SPCLF and, and the importance of that. Like everybody bringing something to the conversation, including yourself.

So as a leader, um, you know, I think I now encourage people much more to, to bring their own ideas, to listen to those, um, rather than me stepping into action with my own ideas. That's absolutely excellent.

Elsbeth Boxall

And actually, you know, you're so good, you've already answered the next question I had, which was around, um... how you feel that it's changed your leadership style, um, and how you work with teams already. um, so I think we probably have covered that, and, and I completely agree with you.

I think all of you have summarised that so well, and I think we are just you're just much more self-aware of not only how you lead, but how your leadership style affects those around you, and I think, I think that is so, so important. So I think we can probably move on to the last question, which I think is probably for a lot of people, the one they really want to know.

What advice would you give to someone who's thinking of applying for SPCLF? So we are just about to come into the period of time when, um, the SPCLF applications- will be, will be SPCLF posts will be about to be advertised again. So I think there'll be a lot of people

interested in this advice. So, um, Rocio, I'll go to you first. What advice would you give to someone applying for SPCLF?

Rocio Toribio

Um, I would say, if somebody's already looking at this programme, it's because they're probably at the right stage in their career. They're asking the right questions about their own development journey or their leadership journey. So I would say go for it. It's a really, really good programme. It's amazing. It genuinely is a once in a lifetime opportunity.

You don't often get a year out of your career, um, to reflect, to develop and to grow. But I would say if you do, um, apply and you go for it, be ready to bring your best self, to come in with the right mindset, um, to embrace every challenge and every opportunity that comes your way. That's probably my biggest learning. I've just put myself out there as much as I could, and I've signed up for things, um, that I never thought I would.

Bring curiosity, bring openness and a willingness to be vulnerable. I think most of what we've said today is that sort of like self-discovery, if you like, and you're only able to do that when you...when you can show yourself as really vulnerable in front of others.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's absolutely brilliant, Rocio. I totally agree. Um, Lisa, would you like to add anything to that?

Lisa Dunn

I don't know how I top that, to be honest. I think Rocio has articulated that really well. Probably just, if, if you are thinking about it, go for it. It's, it's a really good opportunity you're not going to get anywhere else. Ask lots of questions, um and, um, if you get the chance, contribute to all the discussions that are happening.

When I was doing my prep, um before... for my application and, um, before my SPCLF interview, I spoke to previous SPCLFs, so I would do the same. I would go out and find people who have done it before and get their take. But one of the huge things that came from about, I think I spoke to about three or four previous SPCLFs, and life-changing was the words that they used, and I thought, "How can it possibly be life-changing?"

That's like a big, a big, um, title to put on something, but it absolutely is. It changes your whole outlook and how you see things and how you move forward, and how you professionally and personally, like the guys have said. So yeah, my advice would be to go for it.

You need to do it. I think a few of the sessions I've come out of, the leadership sessions, thinking everybody has to have access to this. Everybody needs to be able to, to learn these things and participate in some of these discussions. So yeah, it would be just to do it.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's amazing. Yeah, absolutely. That's a great phrase. Just do it. Um. And Niketa, have you got anything that you would like to add to that?

Niketa Platt

No, I'm sorry. I, I, I don't think I can add anything, but I, I echo everything that has been said. Um, I would just say go for it. Yeah, I think it has been life-changing for me, you know, professionally and personally. I've learnt lots, um, that I'll be carrying forward in the rest of my life. But yeah, and I think as Rocio said, just be prepared to be all in, you know, so, so, what you put in is what you'll get out. So 100% in, 100% out, is what I'd say.

Elsbeth Boxall

Well, I think that's an absolutely brilliant... brilliant phrase to leave it on, and it's absolutely true. It's an amazing year, but you've got to put in the work, and there are challenges along the way, but that's what will stretch you. So, um, yeah, massive thank you guys for coming along and sharing your experiences of SPCLF and being so open and honest about it. ,

I think that'll give everybody who's got interest in the programme a really great insight into what it all is and what benefits you can gain from it. So massive thank you for taking the time to join me today. And also massive thank you for being my fellow SPCLFs for this cohort. Um, As, um, we alluded to, it is a great, a great network and um, really supportive. So, um we will get this podcast up, and there'll be links to SPCLF resources in the podcast notes as always, and also a link to some feedback if people are willing to give that. That is always really useful. So thank you all and thank you all for listening.

Lisa Dunn, Niketa Platt and Rocio Toribio

Thank you.

Elsbeth Boxall

Thanks, guys.