

Transcript

Elsbeth Boxall

Hello, hello and welcome to the next series of our NES Pharmacy podcasts. In this series, we're gonna learn a bit more about the Scottish Pharmacy Clinical Leadership Fellowship, which is a bit of a mouthful, so we'll refer to as SPCLF, going forward. Um, and over this series we're gonna explore a bit about how SPCLF has been created to develop the pharmacy leaders of the future. We'll have a chance to hear from, um, past fellows and also host organisations and how they have both had some mutual benefit from this programme. But to start off the series, today, we're gonna hear from our Pharmacy Programme Lead Leon Zlotos, um, who is gonna tell us a bit more about how the SPCLF programme came about and a bit more detail about how it actually works. So, welcome Leon.

Leon Zlotos

And thanks Elspeth, thanks for having me. So, as introduction, um, I'm one of the Associate Post-Graduate Pharmacy Deans in NES. Um, I have a focus on a number of things, usually Post-Registration related, including the Post-Registration Programme Professional Development, and, uh, sort of Workforce Data, but also, uh, Leadership, which includes the SPCLF and I've been very lucky to be involved in SPCLF for a number of years now, um, and look forward to telling you a bit more about it.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's brilliant. Thanks so much Leon. Um, so for our listeners who maybe haven't heard of it before, can you explain what the Scottish Pharmacy Clinical Leadership Fellowship actually is? [yeah], and yeah, let's call it SPCLF, yeah, it's just a bit easier.

Leon Zlotos

Um, and we take that title from the, the Medical Leadership Fellowship, actually we've put Pharmacy in 'cause there's a few slight differences as you'll hear when we go through. But, um, yeah, no, so SPCLF for Pharmacy, um, it's, it's quite a unique programme. It's very immersive, um, and it's an educational opportunity for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are already in a leadership position, um, and obviously practicing in NHS in Scotland in some way. Um, there's quite a few components worth mentioning. Uh, it's first probably to say that it's a year-long fellowship.

So people take three days a week out of their substantive post, and for most of those people, they'll spend whatever their normal working pattern is, uh, the extra time will be back in substantive post. So quite often we'll have people doing three days SPCLF and one or two days working in their normal role and that goes on for the year.

Um, the, the, the fellowship's a bit different than other programmes. It's funded by what we call host organisations. So, um, while, while NES funds and provides the, the sort of the training leadership component, the, the host organisations really, um, host the, the fellows themselves. Um, and, and, and we, I guess it highlights that they see value in investing in leaders for the future.

Um, and they have a specific project for the SPCLFS to work from. So, so those projects differ year-on-year. The hosts differ year-on-year and, um, that, that makes it a bit, a bit unique. The project component is really good because the, the programme obviously has the taught leadership component, which I'll tell you a bit more about in a minute.

But with a, a project to focus on, our fellows get a chance to sort of apply what they're learning into practice straight away. and also what's a little bit more unique from the pharmacy SPCLFS says that if they're working in their day job as well, a day or two a week, they're also able to apply some of what they learn in their own role, um, which is quite good. So they're not just out for a year and then back to back to reality after a year, um, it's..

The Leadership programme itself is really comprehensive, I think it's very educationally sound because it, um, it follow a lot of adult learning principles. It's very adaptive to the individual SPCLFS. So what one SPCLF gets from the programme, um, will differ from others.

Um, there are some core components that all SPCLFS will experience. Um, there are taught masterclasses, so these are, um, experts within leadership with specific areas of interest who will, will deliver masterclasses to the SPCLFS, um, along with other leadership programmes. Um, each SPCLF gets a couple of mentors. They'll get a host mentor who will, um, really guide them through the project component of the year and a Director of Pharmacy mentor or equivalent, so this is a very senior, um, member of, uh, the pharmacy profession, um, who, who will help them understand how to maybe, um, make their project, the outputs of the project land within in the wider workforce.

Um, they also have access to coaches. So this is someone who helps 'em work through their thinking and, and, and that's really a lot of SPCLFs, really find that of value. Um, there's other things as well in the programme that, that... there's a book club. So the SPCLFs are expected to read, um, two leadership books. They also get a third one I think that they can select themselves as a cohort and they discuss that in a sort of book club and it just helps them, uh, learn and, and, in that way and there's a lot of, um, a lot of sort of small group sessions where they can work together, facilitated, to talk through some of their challenges. So it's really, really, uh, quite a complete year.

Uh, the final thing that I've not mentioned yet is that there are a number of, um, sessions with very senior leaders, Chief Execs for example, who, um, run a sort of closed session for their SPCLFs. Um, so this is all the SPCLFs, Medical, Dental and Pharmacy together where they will tell them a bit about their leadership journey and, and are, are open to questions and that's, that's quite a, a, um, a very honest and open session from that perspective, but it's closed in the fact that it's it exclusive for our, our, our SPCLFs. So it's a really full year, um, and usually quite enjoyable by, by the SPCLFs and they get a lot out of it.

Elspeth Boxall

So it's, um, obviously, um, really comprehensive and just loads and loads of opportunities there, Leon and I think it's really important what you highlighted that everybody's journey will be different and you know, ev - everybody will take something different from it, which I think is really important.

Um, and I think you touched on it there just towards the end of what you were saying about that, you know, you work with the, the medics and the dental SPCLFs as well. Can you explain how, how this came about? How did the Pharmacy programme end up integrating and getting that opportunity to learn together with medics and dentists? How did that happen?

Leon Zlotos

Yeah, it was, it was quite, um, it was quite opportunistic to begin with, I think, really. So the, the first SPCLF, um, the plan for it came from our Chief Pharmaceutical Officer at the time, um, who had, uh, who was working towards the Achieving Excellence in Pharmaceutical Care Strategy and I think was looking for some people to help take forward some of that strategy and also fill the gap and, um, in, in, in developing future leaders.

And there just happened to be the medical SPCLF at the time, which just seemed like the perfect solution because we were looking to develop the same thing, you know, leaders for the future who understood the system in which we worked and tried to influence change. So the two ideas came together and, um, and, and they were funded, um, initially by Scottish Government with that purpose.

Um, and it's taken a wee while for us to integrate fully with the medical and dental SPCLF simply because, um, the, the medical and dental SPCLFs are usually taken in for a year out of their training programme, and they work five days a week as SPCLF, whereas our pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are usually established in their core role and, and, and they take more of a secondment, um, out of their core role.

So they are slightly different and it means that also, um, the funding streams being slightly different means that we, we are usually slightly later to recruit. So we're trying our best to make sure that, um, our fellows all start at the same time and experience everything together. I'm getting it very close now. We're, we're nearly there.

But yeah, it was largely a, um, SPCLF was seen as the perfect solution to, to another problem actually, rather than us seeing what, you know, trying to jump on board on something that existed for the sake of it. So it was, it, it was, it was really opportunistic.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that's really interesting to hear the background to that. and um, I guess the, there is also, was a lot of opportunity. It's quite unique isn't it, for, um, pharmacists to learn in this way with, with medics and, and dentists. What, what do you think are the advantages that have come out of that experience?

Leon Zlotos

I think it's been fantastic for, for everyone. 'cause I think, I mean, one of the core purposes of SPCLF is to help people understand the system in which we work and, and, and I think therefore working alongside different professions, let you see things from different angles, different perspectives, um, and they, they work because, um, all the SPCLFs work quite closely together throughout the year, they get to really know each other and they become a really close cohort usually year-on-year.

Um, and they've formed these lasting relationships that, um, usually if you, if you in future were a SPCLF, you wanted to, to get a perspective from a medic or a dentist, you've got a really close friend there you can contact. So there's, there's lots of advantages through the programme and beyond to doing this in an interprofessional way. It's really good.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, I think you're right. I think it's, it's always really interesting to see things from another perspective, isn't it?

And as you said is if you're learning to be a system leader, then that is particularly important. So, and just thinking about the, obviously there's, there's a lot of development in this programme, both personally and professionally, but how do you think SPCLF has strengthened leadership capacity in Scotland so far?

Leon Zlotos

So we've, we've had a number of cohorts through, I actually forget which cohort we're on now, but we've got a lot of people through and we usually have four or four to six SPCLF each year coming through the programme.

But I suppose you're wondering, um, how do we demonstrate the value of SPCLF and the impact in, in, and the service and I think it's really, really hard to articulate that. So, um, there's two components we could consider evaluating.

So the first is the, the actual Leadership Programme, uh, which is run by colleagues in NES. It's a fantastic programme and they've evaluated the components of that programme year-on-year, and they, um, look for small improvements every year. But I'll be honest, I think it's a fantastic complete programme already. Um, and I think it's so adaptable to the individual, it's, it's, it's really good.

So people will get that structured, um, academic leadership development there. In terms of what the... what, what leaders we are producing by the end of it, so that's a different question and I suppose if we were evaluating a, an educational programme, normally we would have some clear learning outcomes and try and identify what success looked like and then measure our outputs based on that success. But SPCLFs been around for a long time and what we've learned is that what people get from SPCLF differs from person to person.

So we are looking to evaluate, but probably not in, um, in a traditional way that we would, we would undertake, we're trying to understand what works for whom and what circumstances and we're very early stages of that. And the reason why we're sort of taking that approach is we know that, um, for example, the, the, the medics and, and dentists come out of our training programme and the pharmacists come out of their substantive roles and, uh, pharmacy technicians come out their substantive roles and we, we know that, that from, from anecdote, we know that some people, um, develop really good skills that they can take back into their day job and they go back to their day job and maybe do it more effectively or in a more resilient way than they would previously.

Others developed this sense of awareness and confidence they didn't have before, and they then apply for jobs they would never consider applying, and then they're successful and they, they, they sometimes put that down to, to SPCLF being the reason why they applied in the first place, never mind actually getting the role and there's, there's a few people that that could give us examples for that.

And um, and there's other people who really just find that, again, with any leadership development, they find that they understand themselves better and they're actually, it, it's changes within their own personal life that make the difference and that does have an impact on how they become across as leaders within the NHS in Scotland. But, um, it is actually, you know, they themselves identify the benefits. So, so the benefits are quite different.

So I, I think we have anyone coming through the SPCLF, if I'm fairly confident, has, um, they have come out with a much better awareness of themselves and the system and, and, and, and how they can operate as a leader within, within Scotland and NHS. Um, but that will differ from person to person. I suppose... I, I kind of an example of why we think it's working is that we are continued to receive support from our host organisations.

So host organisations are coming forward and seeking to help support SPCLF and make it work year-on-year. So, um, so those, um, those leaders already in the system are still supporting SPCLF because they see the value in it. So it's, it's probably a long-winded way of saying that, um, leadership capacity, I am sure, is increasing, but how we can articulate it is not that easy because it's very individual to the people who are in the programme.

Elspeth Boxall

Yeah, I think that's, that's a brilliant answer. Um, Leon, I think you've covered, probably covered what I was gonna ask you was a little bit about the benefits to the fellows, but I think you've probably already covered, covered that and, um, I think the, the benefits are huge.

Um, and I wonder then if we move on to what challenges do you think there are and what particularly you're, the programme lead, so if anyone's gonna have to face those challenges, it's yourself. So what, what challenges has SPCLF faced along the way?

Leon Zlotos

So there's been a few challenges. Um, I think the ongoing challenge is the, the fact that the funding model requires our host organisations to commit to fund and, and that, that's always a challenge because, um, everyone's under financial strain at the moment.

So, um, I'm very pleased that we, we are continuing to get host organisations coming forward, but that's always a slight worry just to actually get SPCLF off the ground and running and of course, even within, within NES we have our leadership team, we rely on them, um, and the, they year-on-year adapt to the challenges in the system.

So for example, um, with COVID we had to move everything online as everybody else did, and we had to really adapt the programme quite significantly there. So our team in NES

did, did a really good job of that and they've continued to evolve it since. So these are kind of operational challenges, I guess challenges from a self-perspective.

Um, there are quite a few challenges for individual SPCLFs, again, they will vary, they will vary from person to person, but you know, if you, if you're coming out of your, your day job and working three days a week and maybe one or two days in your substantive role, you really have to juggle your time and, um, and, and people do this in different ways, so that can be a challenge. Um, another challenge is that, um, the projects are very variable.

Some projects take two or three months before the SPCLF even knows what they're doing and what the focus is just by the nature of it. Um, others hit the ground running and, and, and therefore the pressure on the individual SPCLFS can vary from year-on-year.

Um, I don't feel a lot of that personally. Um, I hear about it through the SPCLFs, but I know they're really well supported through the host organisation and the Director of Pharmacy mentors, but I do know that some SPCLFs can struggle, but we know that they always, um, there's always a peak of pressure and then it subsides and it's, it's like a, a straight to the finish line towards the end and that that just happens at different times of the year for different people. So these are, these are some of the kind of main challenges I think.

Um, you mentioned benefits previously, and I think something that's, that's maybe worth highlighting as a benefit that's coming to my mind is that people, um, in the system understand what SPCLF is generally, and they're quite supportive.

So something that takes the SPCLFs a bit of time to realise is they can actually use the SPCLF badge to get to places we wouldn't normally get to. So that's unusual but So it's a bit of a challenge. It's a bit of a hurdle for people to get over, over to just feel confident to ask, um, can I have a word with you? Can I speak with you? Can I join this meeting? Can I shadow you and simply using the badge of SPCLF to get in the room. So it's a bit of a, a challenge that people have initially, but once they get over that, it's, it's a huge benefit to them, I think.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, absolutely. The, the SPCLF card, I think is what we call it in the SPCLF circles. Yeah, and, um, absolutely it's, um, an incredible unique opportunity to, to understand system leadership, um, firsthand. So, um, I think, um, you've, you've covered so much Leon already, and I think it'd be really interesting to hear your insights into where you see SPCLF going in the future. Is there any developments in the pipeline?

Leon Zlotos

So, um, I've got nothing hugely interesting to say. I mean, I think if it's not broken, don't try to fix it. I think it's, it's, it is a really good programme, um, a huge advocate of it, and I have been even before I was involved directly with SPCLF, um, as I say, I think it's, it's one of the most educationally sound programmes that we have in NES in my opinion.

Um, we are going to undertake this evaluation to try and work out, you know, maybe who benefits from NES, uh, from SPCLF and in which ways, um, um, so we can maybe tailor things better for individuals or, or maybe whether that would even involve how we

advertise SPCLF, um, might, might change, but I don't personally don't see there being any hugely significant changes.

Um, although, um, you know, Pharmacy is a part of the wider SPCLF, so that will be done within the interests of the Medical, Dental, and Pharmacy colleagues. But whether there's, uh, a broadening for other professions even, I don't know.

But the, the biggest challenge I think will be, uh, maintaining the, the funding and interest from host organisations, which I, I don't see there being a challenge with the conversations I've had recently. So, um, I don't see there being any significant changes, but I guess watch this space and have a look out for this evaluation when, when we get around to completing that.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, absolutely. That's, it's really interesting and, and as you have pointed out throughout this, it is such a unique experience for everyone that it is very different, difficult to, to set up an evaluation and, um, I think it speaks for itself, as you said, and its continued success.

So, um, I think, you know, just to kind of begin to come to a close now, um, Leon probably, I think, you know, you've, you've really given a great overview of the programme and hopefully sparked a bit of interest we, with people who are listening.

So if people did want to, um, become involved in the programme, um, how would you recommend they, they'd start to get involved? Is there any particular qualities or experience you're looking for in potential fellows?

Leon Zlotos

So, yeah, so, uh, first thing is we've, we've got a website. There's, there's some information on there that's worth having a look, a look at.

Um, I also think if you are interested, um, if, if you're interested and unsure really what's involved even after listening to today or the other podcasts, then maybe try and find a former SPCLF and have a word with them. They're usually really keen to, to share their experience and, and encourage people. So that's, that's a good way. Certainly you can come to me directly in NES if you want to know a bit more.

Um, lets see, we're gonna be advertising hopefully, uh, April or May this year, um, for the next cohort. So have a look at the paperwork and, um, what qualities or experience are we looking for?

Well, we're really looking for somebody who's in a bit of a, a leadership position, but aspirations to either make a change or, uh, to progress or move to a different area or something. So somebody who, who maybe feels they're, wee bit stuck in a rut possibly, or maybe just somebody who's usually ambitious and really wants to make the most out of their career.

So it, as I said, we know that different people get different things from it. Um, so it might be worth having a conversation with your Line Manager and trying to identify, be clear with yourself what your, your personal development needs are, um, and then, and then try

and seek agreement from your Line Manager that should you be successful, you'd be supported to take that that year, um, out as a sort of secondment um, we, we accept pharmacist and pharmacy technicians from Community Pharmacy Hospital, Primary Care, really, as long as you are, um, working in a, a pharmacy role and you are supporting NHS Scotland, then, then you, you know, technically you, you could be eligible.

Um, there will be some restrictions on, um, Agenda for Change banding for those roles. Um, that's, and that's obviously from recruitment purposes. So, so all that will be clear when we go out to advert.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's brilliant, Leon, thank you so much. Um, that's been a really useful insight into the whole SPCLF programme and I'm thinking today's conversation's probably sparked a bit of interest and, um, you know, it's good timing 'cause you're coming close to the, the new, uh, uh, set of applicants and, and obviously looking at new host organisations as well.

Um, so, um, I think what I would say is, um, as you've already alluded to, um, we will put the links to the website in the podcast notes and also just a bit of evaluation in there as well. So if people can have a look at the podcast notes and, and get a bit more information.

Um, full disclosure, I am a current SPCLF, so, um, I, as I'm also happy to be contacted if anyone has any further questions and can personally, thoroughly recommend the programme.

So, um, thank you again Leon, that's really been a, a super insight, I really appreciate your time, so thank you very much and thank you for everyone, for listening. Thank you.

Leon Zlotos

Thank you.