

Transcript

Elspeth Boxall

So hello and welcome to the next in our series of NES Pharmacy podcasts, where we're going to be talking about the Scottish Pharmacy Clinical Leadership Fellowship, which we will refer to SPCLF 'cause otherwise it's a bit of a mouthful. Um, so today we're joined by Cara McKenzie and Niamh Morrison, who have both completed the fellowship programme and can give us some insight into what the programme entails and how it has shaped their leadership journeys. So, welcome, Cara and Niamh. Thank you so much for joining us today. I'm really personally delighted to have you both being able to talk to us about SPCLF, as I have to say that your journeys certainly were part of what inspired me to, to apply for the programme, so really looking forward to discussing it in a bit more detail with you and, and offering those insights to our listeners. Um, so I'll get you to just introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about, um, who you are. So, um, we'll start with you Niamh.

Niamh Morrison

Hi, Elspeth and thanks very much for inviting me along. I'm delighted to be here today. Um, so yeah, I am currently working in NHS Fife, um, I am in week seven of a new role. Um, I'm now the head of Pharmacy for Population Health and Wellbeing portfolio there.

Elspeth Boxall

Thank you Niamh and Cara.

Cara McKenzie

Um, yeah, similarly, really glad to be here today and thank you so much for having us along. So, I am currently the Deputy Director of Pharmacy Medicines, NHS Fife, It's a temporary post for me, so I've been doing it for a few months. Still all fresh. Um, but yeah, really looking forward to what I can achieve for the rest of, the remainder of the duration.

Elspeth Boxall

That's brilliant. Well, very exciting time for both of you in your careers and, um, I, I guess we're, we're here to talk about SPCLF. So I'm gonna start with you Niamh. Can you tell me what motivated you to apply for SPCLF?

Niamh Morrison

Um, yeah, sure. So I think for me, actually, I applied for SPCLF out of frustration, which sounds, um, a bit odd. Um, but really for me, um, I sort of felt I was quite frustrated. I had, you know, I wanted to progress personally.

Um, I wanted to have an impact on the healthcare system. Um, but I just felt there was so much that I didn't understand. Um, and I suppose I was just looking around for roots. Um, you know, I had received feedback from different areas, um, around, you know, lacking strategic awareness, um, lacking understanding of the system and how things worked.

Um, and I was really keen to kind of get an understanding of that, get an understanding of how Scottish Government worked and how that impacted the NHS, um, and just I, I suppose just frustration from so many gaps.

Um, so that's how I ended up applying for SPCLF. Um, I, I seen it advertised. Um, I had a look, um, I spoke to, um, previous fellows, um, and I was really inspired, you know, by what they, they said they had learnt and I thought, you know what? That's all gaps for me. Um, so yeah, that, that, that's why I, I decided to apply.

Elspeth Boxall

Yeah, that's really interesting and Cara, was that, was that similar to your thoughts around the SPCLF programme?

Cara McKenzie

Yeah, really similar actually. Um, so like Niamh I probably did come at it from a point of frustration that I, I, I knew I didn't understand the system. I, I knew things that needed to change. I knew what we needed to make better, but I didn't have the knowledge to work out how to navigate and influence those changes.

Um, I'd also come on the back of a bit of a difficult year in my post that I was in at that time and I just, I just knew that I needed something different to try and... suppose get a bit of my motivation and yeah, yeah, a bit of a motivation back and really re inspire me and try to give me a bit more direction. Um, and actually suppose when some of those thoughts were going around my mind, um, Niamh and I's paths actually crossed, and this was towards the end of her fellowship.

Um, and our paths crossed that I thought, whatever she's been doing, that's what I wanna be doing. So, um, yeah, I suppose, you know, just like Niamh you know, we had a conversation, she encouraged me to speak to other people that had done the fellowship and had a bit of chat with programme leads and thought, you know what, this does feel like a really good fit. So yeah, that's encouraged me to apply for it.

Elspeth Boxall

That's really interesting and it's great to hear. What, what drew you to the programme and I guess building on that, be interesting to explore what the experience was actually like, once you got onto the programme and there are obviously a lot of different elements, um, to, to the fellowship, um, including working with DOP Mentor and your project and working with a coach and just wonder how, what, how do you think those different elements brought different skills to your development, do you think? I'll start with you, Niamh.

Niamh Morrison

Um, yeah, sure. So I suppose the only one way I could describe SPCLF, um, is it was absolutely life changing for me. Um, Elspeth, um, I learned so much more than I bargained for in terms of what I had applied for. Um, I learned so much about myself. Um, I learnt,

you know, so much about the theory of leadership and management and then being able to learn that theory, but also as you described, working with a DOP Mentor, a Project Mentor and a Coach, um, being able to go and observe around, you know, senior meetings to see how colleagues thought, um, to see how they chaired meetings, to see how DOPs and Coaches asked me questions, um, to get me thinking instead of just bringing the, the answers there.

Um, it's something that I suppose all together is, um, what I try to pull into my role now. Um, it's, it helped me, you know, that bit about my understanding myself. Um, it, it, I think it's made me a much better leader. Um, it's made me much more, you know, understanding the impact that we have on others as leaders. Um, and I think being able to tap into that coaching and that mentorship, um, sort of consolidated some of the learning, uh, the theory learning that we learned.

Um, and I think on top of that as well, it was, you know, Cara, you touched on that. It was about navigating the system. Um, so it's made me understand the system, um, the system that we work in. Um, and I suppose just when you did ask specifically around the DOP Mentor, I remember, you know, having one of my monthly sessions and we were, we were chatting about, uh, uh, a project that I was delivering and just the question, you know, one question he asked me and it was like, so what's your role in this? Um, but what's your actual role?

Um, and that's always stood with me in terms of, I suppose what I'm describing as systems leadership, isn't it? So, um, bringing it back to what system am I working in, Um, and SPCLF helped me understand that. But then the mentorship and the coaching to be able to ask questions like that around, okay, what's your role in that? Um, so, um, to be really clear, to stay in my lane and, you know, to deliver in that way.

So, so it's, it's, it's, it's been life changing for me. Um, and I would also add, you know, not just at work, um, and professionally, um, but in, in terms of my personal life as well, just that greater understanding of myself, what motivates me, um, you know, what makes me tick.

Elspeth Boxall

Um, that, it's been really, really helpful. Um, so yeah, um, uh, I think it, I think the whole combination of the, that probably, you know, just testifies to the combination of the programme itself and everything that's in it, um, it, you know, you can't take one bit in isolation, put all the bits together and how they support, um, that sort of improvement, um, in you as a person and the impact that you can have, um, in your role. That's hugely impactful, absolutely and I think probably everybody gets something slightly different from each part of it, And yeah. I don't know, Cara, you maybe, do you feel your, your experience was similar or did you take something different away from it?

Cara McKenzie

Yeah, no, I think there's definitely lots of similarities there. I think when you've got your, your DOP Mentor, your Project Mentor and your Coach, you've got three different people

coming at different things from different angles, and it's just so beneficial to have extra people to help you think for that year. And something that actually, I probably took a wee of adjustment, um, coming back to normal life after SPCLF as well and yeah, do you... I think the coaching for me, it was never something that I had done previously.

Um, but had a couple of sessions, um, just on one particular thing, but actually it wasn't something that I'd really gone and done and explored for myself. So I suppose there's a bit of that unknown and that start going, what are we gonna talk about for all of these sessions and do you know, how do I know how to prioritise that?

But actually there's so, so much useful conversation came out of those discussions and, you know, you, you get matched with your coach and you, you absolutely can say whether or not you, you want to have that working relationship with them, but do you know, it's not like you have to go out and seek that individual for yourself to, to help and support and mentor you and guide you on your journey over that year.

Um, but so, so beneficial, just being, she was probably quite a, quite a different person to me, thought in a very different way and that, that was just really, really helpful to me and really challenged me to explore how others may come at a situation and to develop myself. Um, and I suppose, um, I was really fortunate to have a Project Mentor and do a project out with the NHS.

Um, so opening up just my understanding of world out with the NHS too was really, really beneficial. Um, and, you know, there are definitely things that we can bring back into the NHS and you know, there's absolutely things that just are not gonna work when we, when we try and bring them back and that's absolutely fine.

But even hearing what your DOP Mentor and your Project Mentor have had as their career trajectory and just learning from them and getting to know them, the context that they have and yeah, building your support network. 'cause I think that's really, really valuable as we, as we go through leadership within the NHS. Yeah.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's fantastic. It does sound like each, you know, each mentor played a really meaningful role for both of you. And, um, thinking about the experience, I guess a bit more broadly, um, I'd be interested to hear about parts of the, the programme that maybe were more challenging or pushed out of your comfort zone. Um, so Cara, um, can you think of any examples in, in the program that were a bit more challenging?

Cara McKenzie

Um, so loads of it was challenging, like being really, really honest and that is what you're signing yourself up for, for the year, and I think you've really got to be in the head space of putting yourself out there into unknown situations and yeah, figuring that out, navigating it.

But you, you've got your peers, which are, yeah, you, you've got them there with you. But I think for me, one of the project areas that I did, it was UK wide. So I had a little bit of a network going on within Scotland, um, and I knew roughly who I could go to who would maybe put me in touch with someone else.

But over that year I did work with people in England and across Wales, and I don't know many pharmacists or pharmacy technicians, pharmacy professionals at all down there. Um, so that was probably one thing for me that, you know, I went and I, I had a name and I made contact and then introduced myself and I hoped for the best that they were going to respond to my emails and want to entertain having, having a conversation with me.

Um, but I suppose like, now knowing that I've got an introverted preference, that was really challenging for me. But actually I now know that I can do it. So it, it feels like a really small thing in the grand scheme of everything that I learned and stretched myself with over that year. But that's really been something that I've now been able to rely upon, um, in the, in the time that's followed myself here. Yeah, it's just something that's really, um, highlighted for, for something for you that you would maybe not have discovered about yourself otherwise.

Elsbeth Boxall

That's really interesting. And Niamh, did you have anything particular that was quite stretching during the year?

Niamh Morrison

Um, yeah, so I think Cara exactly what she said at the start, you know, um, there, there's a lot of challenges. Um, you know, you know, SPCLF is very much so, uh, high challenge, high support sort of environment.

Um, and you know, as Cara said, you're really encouraged to take on different things. So, um, with, with the support there to sort of navigate it, uh, um, so for me, um, you know, I rolled out the, um, a national, I rolled out a national contract for community pharmacy, um, in, in my SPCLF year.

And if you had to say to me at the start of the year, you know, you're going to get different organisations to come together, you're going to do innovative things around one organisation supporting another, um, you are, you're going to, you're going to lead and manage and hold that space well, you know, colleagues that much are much more senior in terms of that negotiation table, etc.

Um, I probably would've done a nervous laugh and said absolutely not. Um, hopefully when I was in it, um, felt similar. Um, but yeah, I think, you know, rolling out, um, uh, a national project, there obviously was, you know, challenges and, and bumps along the way.

Um, but you know, to be able to, um, look at what I've learned about myself, to bring in maybe some of the theory that we had learned, um, to be able to go, you know, as I

described that sort of DOP mentor, my project, um, mentor in particular in that one, um, I think for me at the end of it, it was about actually the confidence that I can do that.

Um, I can, you know, hold those spaces, I can get different organisations together that are within the NHS, uh, out with the NHS. Um, and yeah, for me it was, it, it just gave me, you know, that confidence to give it a try. Um, you know, what's your biggest fear? Give it a try because that's how we overcome it. Um, and then actually the confidence that I got from that at the end, um, to bring in, um, you know, to, to my, my career, um, to date. Um, yeah, I suppose what I'm trying to say is, um, you know, being able to overcome, um, that challenge, um, to, to stretch myself, um, has been really beneficial.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah. And I think, you know, you've already you've touched on what I was gonna move on to next as to, you know, what, what skills did you develop that you maybe didn't expect to? And I, I, I think you've probably already sort of started to move into that area Niamh, um, you know, I mean, is there anything else you want to I add to that? I mean, you've already mentioned that you kind of developed personal skills that you didn't expect to, and then obviously these overcoming challenges... is there, you know, is there anything else?

Niamh Morrison

Um, maybe let Cara go first on that one.

Elsbeth Boxall

[Yeah] and have a wee think [Give you a rest]. Just have a wee think yeah. That's fine Cara, yeah, come in.

Cara McKenzie

I think there's something for me about the difference in me as a person and now understanding myself. So like, I, I didn't, didn't go and do the SPCLF year because we were gonna be able to do an MB, an MBTI, um, and, you know, work out our preferences that, actually now knowing my preferences, I know how to work with them and I also know what traps I'm potentially likely to fall into.

So I think if you, if you met me at a conference five years ago, you, you probably wouldn't have met me at a conference five years ago. 'cause I would've just mulled around in my own little group and I wouldn't have really spoken to anyone else. Whereas reflecting on a couple of conferences that I went to the end of last year where probably was on my own for a good chunk of the day and I spoke to loads of different people, um, and just really came outta my comfort zone and yeah, feeling more comfortable within that space.

And that certainly wasn't a skill that I was looking to, to get out of the SPCLF year. Um, but it's been a really, really, really beneficial thing that's just come along on the side, which I'm really happy with.

Elsbeth Boxall

Um, yeah. Yeah. No, I, I would totally agree that was, that was part of the, the programme that I've really enjoyed as well and it really makes you more aware of why other people are functioning in a way that, that you maybe wouldn't expect. It's, it is really fascinating and, um, yeah, I don't know Niamh did you want to add to that or do you feel we've covered what you've...?

Niamh Morrison

Um, yeah, so, so first of all, just to say I think, Cara, it's really interesting because I didn't know you before SPCLF and actually what, um, you're describing, um, you know, it's, is, it's, it's really interesting 'cause that's not the person that I would describe now currently, Um so yeah, that, that's, that's really quite interesting. Um, but yeah, no, I, I think in terms of everything, how I've covered, um, but also maybe going a bit back to that sort of, um, frustration bit and impact on others.

Um, and I think again, that just comes from the sort of, um, self-awareness, um, and you know, what, what you do learn about yourself, um, and your values, um, as part of SPCLF. So yeah, probably just that as well.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, no, absolutely. And I think it's, um, it's really interesting then to think, you know, you've described so much development, um, in this year and how has that influenced where you've gone next? How, how has SPCLF changed, do you think, the trajectory of your career? Will we go to you first, Cara or Niamh... who wants to go first this time?

Cara McKenzie

Um, I suppose for me, I don't know that I had a career trajectory before doing this, and that was another one of the reasons that I did want to do it. Um, and actually I remember Niamh, you saying to me, you know, in the round to interview, they're gonna want to know where you see yourself in five years time and I was like, I have no idea where I see myself in five years time. I don't know how I'm gonna answer that question if they ask me.

Um, but I suppose then, so what I'll maybe do is come to my DOP Mentor and I suppose having that contact with the Director of Pharmacy throughout the year, I maybe thought that's something that's completely unachievable.

Like, you know, only a select few are ever gonna make it to that level and I suppose she made me feel that it is achievable. Like, you know, there, there's the processes in place to get you, and I suppose a lot of that is learning to have confidence in a team around you as well.

So I'm absolutely not sitting here saying that I want to be a Director of Pharmacy, but I don't think that I would be sitting here as Deputy Director of Pharmacy if that hadn't been a huge part of that year for me. Just understanding that it's, you know, it's a big, and it's an important job with a huge amount of responsibility, but it's maybe not as scary as I

thought it was a few years ago. Um, so yeah, there's a part where it's, it's given me a career trajectory. I still don't know where I'm gonna be in five years time. Um, but I think what it did was it opened out, you know, all the different options that are available to you. And I suppose just coming back to that system navigation a bit more of how to build your networks and your connections and utilise them to understand what you might need to do to get some of your roles that are maybe in your, in your eye line for future.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, that's absolutely brilliant. Yeah. Um, and yeah, Niamh, do you feel that your career has, um, changed because of SPCLF as well, do you think?

Niamh Morrison

Um, absolutely. I mean, I think going back to, um, you know, what I learned around, like the system, navigating the system, um, I think before I went into SPCLF, I probably thought you needed to be a subject matter expert to kind of progress.

Um, if we were looking at it purely, you know, in terms of progressive bonds or, um, but I think what SPCLF taught me that it can absolutely be a climbing frame. Um, you know, you can, it, it, you know, being able to understand myself and reflect on the skills I learned, you know what, I went in and I led a team where I wasn't the subject matter expert.

Probably the... - what influenced that most was, um, we had a systems leadership session. So that was a senior leader, um, within NHS Scotland came to give, you know, during SPCLF, um, um, their own insight into their professional development and I suppose they described, you know, the, the TBAR model in terms of, um, you know, the more junior you are, the, the, um, the more depth you have as a subject matter expert, but as you progress, um, suddenly the depth becomes smaller and, you know, you go broader in terms of, um, you know, that width of experience.

So I think for me, it gives me, you know, understanding that along with understanding, you know, this, the skills that I had learned, um, it's probably given me the confidence that you can go in across any area. Um, and you know, it's about bringing those skills on, you know, if I compare my last role to this role, it's about, you know, on a bigger platform, bigger impact, but still bring in the, the same skills. Um, and that's probably helped me navigate, you know, from yeah, community pharmacy into sort of acute clinical and you know, now into a sort of primary and preventative. Um, so yeah, no, absolutely. And um, that along with the fact, you know, I was always very conscious that, um, rightly or wrongly, SPCLF is such a big investment on us as individuals.

Um, so for me it was about, you know, um, bringing some of that investment back and that drove, you know, it did give me that push and that drive to, um, you know, apply for things that I could have that bigger impact and I, you know, could push these skills that I've learned more. Um, so yeah, no, absolutely. It's changed my, my, um, I guess my outlook and and trajectory as a result. Yeah, no, that, that's, that's fascinating. And I think, and, and I think for a lot of, a lot of people it does, but maybe for others it maybe doesn't

particularly lead to a different job, but maybe leads changes to how, how they do the job that they're in, in a different way. And I guess what I'm trying to come round to is obviously you are in very senior leadership roles, both of you, but even if you weren't, how has, has SPCLF influenced how you would lead any team? Um, do you think?

So I think for me, if I was to describe the one big thing in terms how, how it's influenced how I lead is, it's reduced my frustrations in terms of understanding the system and being able to support others in that way. Um, the other thing is, um, you know, we always, you know, we strive to be the best leaders that we can be. Um, and that's about understanding yourself and understanding your impact on others. Um, uh, for, for me anyway, um, so SPCLF give me those skills. Um, I'm still learning, um, all the time. But, um, yeah, that, but being able to go back to the SPCLF theory, being able to reflect, um, you know, on those skills, um, I think that's probably the biggest or the two biggest, um, uh, changes for me.

Elspeth Boxall

That's, that's really interesting and Cara, Cara, have you got anything different to add, do you think?

Cara McKenzie

Yeah, so one of the sessions that we had during the year, um, I always remember there was a line in it, and it's not our job as leaders to deliver the result. It's our job to deliver the teams to deliver the result and that's something that I really try and live by every single day, but actually I'm trying to get my team to also live by it as well.

And I think that that really touches on maybe a lot of things that we've, we've already chatted about, but it's the impact on others that, that has. And actually, you know, you talking about subject matter experts and you know, that ability to move into different roles that actually you come down to a lot of the principles of these things are the same.

Um, and yeah, you're able to apply your knowledge to different areas and you know, it's a lot about, you know, how you delegate and how you empower other staff and how you get the best out of everyone within your teams and you know, how ultimately we manage to, to make things better for our patients and our service users as well. So yeah. Yeah, that is, that's the end game, isn't it?

Elspeth Boxall

Absolutely. And um, you know, it's, it's really fascinating to hear just how much you've, you've, you're carrying forward into your roles from that, that SPCLF year. And I guess with that perspective in mind, it would be great to finish off with some advice to those who are thinking about SPCLF as an option for them.

So if there's sort of one bit of advice or maybe two that you could give to someone who's considering applying for SPCLF, what would it be? I'll like, start with you Cara.

Cara McKenzie

So think you're gonna go for it, you know, it's gonna be a whirlwind of a year, and, um, it's gonna go so, so quickly. You need to be prepared to get the most out of it. Um, so it, it will be a really full on year.

Um, there'll be a lot of challenges you'll need to say yes to pretty much everything that's coming your way to get the most out of it. Um, and yeah, it'll, it'll be amazing if you do it, but you've gotta be in the right place to be able to do it.

So have a really good think and if you think that you're at the time where you're ready to make some changes, um, ready to try totally different things, go into different areas that you've never worked with-in before then yeah and do you know what, re reach out to us, like I'm sure Niamh as well, you'd be more than happy to speak to anyone else who's thinking about applying, but definitely reach out to people that have done it before, um, and just be ready to soak it all up because it ends way too quickly. Absolutely agree with that. Flies in.

Elsbeth Boxall

Yeah, and Niamh would you like to add anything to that?

Niamh Morrison

Um, so yeah, no, I think, um, Cara, that's really good advice. Um, and I would, I would echo that, um, I'd probably add two questions. Um, um, well for me personally, I would be like, go for it.

But, um, I think as Cara, you know, it, it ha- it's, it's very, it's very, you know, personal. Um, so for me the first question would be to really have a think about, um, why do I want to do this? And then the second question: what do I want to get out of this? Like, what do I want to do with this at the other end?

Um, and then if that's aligned, um, with your understanding of the SPCLF year by, you know, how, however you gain that understanding. Um, and as Cara says, I would encourage, um, anyone considering to reach out to a previous SPCLF. Um, but yeah, that, that's probably the two questions I, I would add. And that probably sets you up for exactly what, what Cara I described in terms of, you know, what, what the year is, um, and, and the commitment of the year as well. It's incredibly sounded advice and um, I think that's been absolutely incredible.

Elsbeth Boxall

Both of you have really given us a massively, um, good insight into what the, the SPCLF is actually about, um, practically and what you have to be prepared to take on, uh, to get the most out of it.

So I thank you so much both of you for, for your time and your, your candidness. That's been really, really useful and I hope that'll be really helpful for anybody thinking of applying for SPCLF in the next cohort and beyond.

So, um, we will link this SPCLF website pages to the podcast notes if people want to get a bit more information. Um, and as always, we would encourage people to give us some feedback on the feedback forms, which are also attached to the podcast notes and just let us know what we can, we can do to improve the podcast going forward.

But most importantly, thank you Niamh and Cara for your time. That's just been really, really helpful. It's been a really lovely speaking to both of you about one of my favourite subjects. So thank you both.

Niamh Morrison

Thank you.

Cara McKenzie

Thanks very much.