

Bold Leadership

Nursing in 2023 is a challenge. Amid a cost of living crisis, unprecedented strike action and a health and care system under enormous pressure it is often easy to overlook the resilience of the Nursing profession and the work they have done over the past few years.

The pandemic afforded me an opportunity to lead a Health Foundation funded project “Community Hospitals: Embedding Covid-19 positive impact changes through shared learning”. Alongside our day jobs, a small group of us interviewed Community Hospital Teams about the work they had done during the pandemic and the innovation and creativity they had generated.

It was fascinating and humbling to hear about their work but also the impact of surviving and thriving on them as people and professionals. There was inevitably a cost but also learning that has informed others and continues to drive practice forward today.

We interviewed a range of professionals as part of the project but the majority were Nurses.

The project identified several key findings including that bold leadership, clinically and operationally, contributed to resilience.

Bold leadership as a concept is one I find intriguing. Bold could be viewed as brave but also as naughty. It can be unflinching, confident, self-assured, cheeky or nervy, forthright or brash. Reading the Case Studies we generated from the project, it is probably all of these and more.

Nurses are the backbone of clinical services as part of a wider multidisciplinary team. They are often the 24 hour presence and have the most contact with patients and families.

Leadership is part of what Nurses do whether that is as a Matron leading a service redesign, a Ward Manager implementing a piece of evidence based practice, an experienced Senior Staff Nurse supporting a Newly Qualified Nurse into practice, a Staff Nurse being the clinical decision maker about a deteriorating patient at 3am on a Sunday morning, a Nursing Associate challenging practice in a new role, a Health Care Assistant recognising the needs of a dying patients family member or an Advanced Clinical Practitioner helping induct junior doctors.

The pandemic created an environment in which Nurse leadership demonstrated its value. That value was evident to individual patient’s and team members, families, local communities and the wider health and care system. It should not be underestimated.

Community Hospitals as a discreet and unique area of practice are often overlooked and underrated. The learning from the project allowed us to shine a spotlight on them and showcase what is achievable even when innovation feels impossible.

The same can often be said of Nursing. The bold leadership demonstrated by Nurses during the pandemic will not be forgotten by those who delivered or witnessed it. It is

the same bold leadership that has embraced new initiatives such as Professional Nurse Advocates and digital transformation, has enabled Nurses to express themselves through strike action but also ensure emergency and urgent cover is maintained.

As a Queen's Nurse we often talk about finding our voice and using it. Bold leadership is about exactly that, making sure that the conditions required to enable Nursing to happen at it's best are articulated, understood and in place.

A wise Nurse and spoken word artist, Molly Case once spoke about "hear us roar" in a piece of work called [Nursing the Nation](#).

2023 is going to be a year where Nurses and Nursing are challenged to deliver the art and science of what they do in difficult circumstances but the difference will be continued bold leadership that "roars" to support patient safety, professional development and innovation. It's shaping up to be an interesting year!

If you want to find out more about the project you can find all the information, reports and case studies here: <http://www.communityhospitals.org.uk/quality-improvement/q-exchange-project.html>