

Leading through Values

Karen McDowell

Nigel Harkness



From Newcastle. For the world.

In 2020 we launched our in-house 'Leading Through Values' programme which focused on creating an organisational culture that is aligned to the purpose, values, guiding principles and goals of the university.

Why did we do it?

To create the space for our leaders and people managers to reflect on the key role they play in creating a shared and aligned culture - how they lead with values, role model effective behaviours and make decisions.

Our 2 overarching beliefs:

1. That having a positive culture, aligned to our values and guiding principles is fundamental to our long-term effectiveness and success
2. That leaders shape culture by the way they behave, the things that they pay attention to and the environment they create.

Exploring culture and enablers of engagement

- Understanding our organisational gaps
- The impact leadership has on culture – it starts with me
- Realising my own values: how my own values impact leadership practice

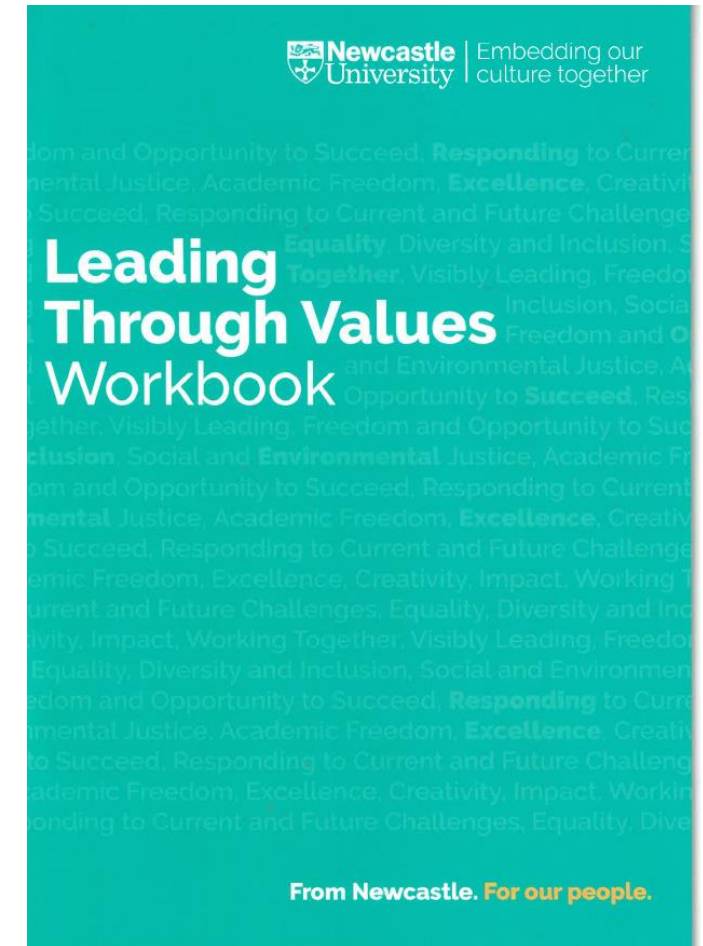
Values-based inclusive and emotionally intelligent leadership

- Psychological safety and inclusive environments
- Broadening emotional language
- Values in practice
 - dilemma case studies
 - having values led conversations
 - leadership story telling

Putting a focus on action - Strengthening leadership practices

Participants were supported in identifying changes they could make to strengthen their existing leadership practices.

‘Participants will understand the importance of culture and values, aligning institutional and individual values and what being a ‘values-driven leader’ looks like in practice. They will understand their organisation through a values lens, learn approaches and skills to put values-based leadership into practice and how values can be embedded in behaviours and processes’



How the programme evolved



Built a 'brand' and put a focus on values-based leadership
Role modelled more reflective learning practices – led by individuals



High resourcing requirements impacted long-term sustainability
Different requirements in terms of stretch and challenge
Time poor leaders made attending all the programme challenging

Where we are today



We have incorporated the concepts of values-based leadership and psychologically safe environments into all of our leadership programmes



Introduced space for reflection about leadership practices into our learning provision – focusing on how you show up as a leader as well as the skills you deploy



Strengthened our leadership development offer to explore the relational aspects of people management and how we contribute to a values-led culture through our day-to-day interactions with colleagues.

Our impact



We started with the senior teams and then adapted the programme for senior, middle and junior levels of leadership.

“The opportunity to spend 2 days away from my normal role to look to the future and discuss the bigger picture. I look forward to my colleagues completing this programme so that we can then **work together to make our teams aware of the university values.**”

“Prior to attending the programme my inner cynic was worried that it would be similar to workshops I've attended in the past where there was a lot of talk but no action. I am pleased to say that I actually believe that **the university is committed to this** and it wasn't a pointless exercise.”

“The time to think about leadership - this can sometimes be something where you rely on your innate style and instincts, so **the session has definitely got me thinking more.**”

*“Opportunity to have **time to reflect on what leadership and values means.** Plus learning new ways of thinking and some new concepts, such as psychological safety.”*

Reflections on participating in the programme



- Value of 'stepping out' for 3 days: reflection, connection, challenge
- Shifting focus from the 'why' and the 'what' to 'how' we do things
 - 'Starting change with me'
 - 'To Don't list': build new habits to create new culture
 - Don't keep staring at the box
 - Accept challenge, listen actively, co-create solutions
 - Leadership team as powerful 'thinking partners'
- Where we are now: refreshing our values to align with our Next Generation Newcastle change programme
- Common purpose for Leadership Team as we face into financial challenges and ongoing change
- University Leadership Group working as 'One University'