Reflecting On Leadership

Reflection involves thinking about our experiences. Day to day experiences of leadership, in our personal and our working lives, offer opportunities for reflection and therefore learning. Development of each of the Leadership Capabilities involves an ability to explore, question, and evaluate one's own performance and development. That reflection might be about:

- **Self-leadership** eg What supports, or holds you back, from leading?
- **Motivating and inspiring** eg What have you done that has encouraged others to be the best they can be? How have you achieved this?
- **Collaborating and influencing** eg What is the impact of your leadership on others - and how can you develop your abilities to take others with you?
- **Creativity and innovation** eg What has helped you (or perhaps stopped you) 'thinking out of the box' - and supporting others to do the same?
- **Empowering** eg What part do you play in promoting an empowering culture? What could you do differently - or better - to empower others?
- **Vision** eg What experiences have you had that have informed your vision for the future - and what does this tell you about how you can put your ambitions into practice?

The purpose of reflection on leadership is to gain a better understanding of ourselves (our values, knowledge and skills), so we can learn from our experiences, and adapt and respond to new leadership challenges.

The reflective process involves:

- **Acting** on our learning about ourselves and our capabilities eg putting new insights and ideas into action, seeing new opportunities for leadership.
- **Experiencing** what you and others did, or didn’t do, the context in which the experience happened.
- **Learning** from reflection eg gaining a deeper understanding of how we feel about taking on a leadership role.
- **Reflecting** on the experience (replaying and re-evaluating the experience, paying close attention to our actions and feelings and using our knowledge of eg past experiences of leadership, theories about leadership)
Finding out more about reflection

Have a look at Reflective Practice, a learning object that introduces you to the principles and processes involved in being a reflective practitioner.

Different models and tools for reflection suit different people, so you may also want to explore some different ways of understanding reflection, for example Kolb or Honey and Mumford Learning styles.

Writing about reflection

A lot of reflection happens in our heads, but it can also be very helpful to record reflection on experience. This can strengthen the learning process, and also provide evidence to others of learning and development. Reflective writing involves recording your experience (which may be an event or a period of time) and your responses, feelings and learning about what happened, as well as what the outcome of the learning was.

Jenny Moon’s Resources for Reflective Writing provides lots of examples and exercises to develop your skills. Reflective writing may be something you want to do occasionally, or you may be interested in keeping a Learning Journal on a more regular basis.

How can you use your reflective writing to evidence your learning?

Reflection is a key aspect of identifying and evaluating your personal capabilities in the Continuous Learning Framework for the Social Services.

Reflection on experience underpins many learning activities and qualifications, including SQA vocational qualifications in care, and in Leadership and Management. The Framework for Social Work Education in Scotland requires students to use reflection on experience and reflective writing as tools for learning.

If you are in employment in the social services, reflection and reflective writing will support your achievement of National Occupational Standards and meeting Post-Registration Training and Learning (PRTL) requirements.

Keep a Learning Log

As you explore Step into Leadership, use the Learning Log to reflect on your learning and keep a record of what you have learned and how you are putting this into practice.