



## LJMU Research Online

**Stirk, SK, Aiello, M and Box, M**

**The Leadership and Development Foundation Associate Role at LJMU: a case study**

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/9704/>

### Article

**Citation** (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

**Stirk, SK, Aiello, M and Box, M (2019) The Leadership and Development Foundation Associate Role at LJMU: a case study. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Advance HE.**

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact [researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk)

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/>

# The Leadership and Development Foundation Associate Role at LJMU: a case study

The role of Leadership and Development Foundation Associates in institutional leadership at Liverpool John Moores University.

—

Sarah Stirk, Michael Aiello and Meriel Box

# Contents

Executive summary	2
Aims and objectives of this case study	3
Part 1: the Leadership Development Foundation Associate role	3
Part 2: review and evaluation of role	4
Part 3: the LDFA as a change agent	7
Part 4: sector feedback on the LDFA role	10
Conclusions	11
References	11
Author biographies	12

---

## Executive summary

The institutional context for this project is Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU), a UK higher education institution. LJMU's action plans and operational strategies recognise the need for staff to lead effectively if the university is to achieve its aim of being "recognised as a modern civic university achieving solutions to the challenges of the 21st century" (LJMU strategic plan 2017-2022). The Leadership Development Foundation Associate (LDFA) role discussed in this report is part of the institution's response to the leadership challenge.

### LDFAs at LJMU

LDFAs at LJMU are associate deans with a leadership development brief for each faculty and operational division. The aim of the role is to embed "leading" as a process for all staff, to develop distributed approaches to leadership and ultimately to challenge stereotypes, silos and existing custom and practice.

The initial review of the LDFA role after the first year has shown that it has the potential to act as a conduit for operational leadership strategy and to provide a focus for change. The role may be instrumental in developing a more distributed approach to leadership and leading that encourages collective collaboration (Gentle and Forman, 2014). In this report, we focus on the role LDFAs played in achieving compliance with Customer Services Excellence Award (CSE) standards across various LJMU faculties and departments. CSE is a government-sponsored standard that assesses in depth those areas of service identified as being a priority to customers.

The outcomes of the process evidence the potential for the role in providing forums and teams where practice can be challenged safely and legitimately, and new leadership dispersed. However, our research also suggests that the contributions of LDFAs to achieving departmental and faculty objectives, such as the achievement of the CSE standard, was frequently overlooked, misunderstood and misinterpreted by those university staff not immediately involved in the various CSE projects. Such findings underscore the need for further work to ensure that the function of the role is understood by all colleagues across the institution. It is important to continue to review, redirect and energise the role through initiatives such as the change model provided by the CSE project, outlined in part three of this report.

LJMU's Leadership and Development Foundation was recognised in the 2018 UHR Awards for Excellence in the category of Business Effectiveness and Organisational Performance for impact on organisational development through attainment of the AUA Mark of Excellence, the CSE Standard and the creation of the LDFA role.

After outlining the aims and objectives of this case study, it is divided into four parts. Part one provides a rationale for and describes the role of the LDFA. Part two reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of the LDFA role after one year's operation. Part three discusses the potential for the LDFA as a change agent. Part four outlines initial sector feedback on the dissemination of this case study.

## Aims and objectives of this case study

This case study aims to evaluate the LDFA role and its ability to act as a change agent after its first year in operation. The methodology is principally a review of how LDFAs contributed to the award of CSE to various LJMU departments and faculties, as well as a critical discussion of LJMU staff feedback on the LDFA role. The case study also introduces and evaluates the introduction, visibility and effectiveness of the LDFA role in developing leadership and challenging established cultures and practices across a higher education institution.

Leadership is a key issue in organisational research and practice. Defining leadership and constructing models of effective leadership have explicitly been on the research agenda for over a hundred years (Judge et al, 2002). One of the key implicit roles for the LDFA, described in this report, is to generate effective intergroup leadership and to act as a catalyst for leadership and leading through the development of a culture of leading and learning for all “one-university” staff. In the UK higher education sector there is a well-established process of employing so-called “associate deans”. Such associate deans fulfil a variety of roles and functions. However, “[w]hile the number of associate deans leading cross-curricular and inter-disciplinary initiatives appears to be on the increase, there has been very little research focusing on the exact nature of the role and its importance or otherwise in the leadership and management of universities” (Floyd and Preston, 2018, p925).

This report is a response to this gap and in particular the specific gap of the explicit use of the associate dean role for leadership development. The findings shared in this report provide an overview of the rationale for the LDFA role, a review of the potential for leading change and an evaluation of the impact of the role within its start-up stage. The start-up experience has produced a number of lessons and insights that should be of interest to the higher education (HE) leadership and human resource development (HRD) community.

### Part 1: the Leadership Development Foundation Associate role

The Leadership Development Foundation Associate (LDFA) role outlined in this report is relatively underdeveloped in higher education. In 2016, Liverpool John Moores University made the decision to appoint an associate dean with a leadership development brief for each faculty and operational division. The role is therefore still in its infancy.

The aim of the LDFA role is to embed “leading” as a process for all staff, to develop distributed approaches to leadership and ultimately to challenge stereotypes, silos and existing custom and practice. The associate leadership role follows the traditional pattern set for associate deans across the university. Associates are appointed on three-year fixed-term contracts. The Associate post enjoys a 0.4 remission from normal duties as well as an additional salary payment for the duration of the appointment. It was envisaged originally that the LDFA posts would send a powerful signal to university staff that the Vice Chancellor, senior management team and the university were serious about connecting the agenda concerning people and organisational development. Indicatively, the language used to introduce and describe the role is significant. The LDFA is required to be an inspirational role model, enabling all staff to perform to the highest professional standards. Applicants had to demonstrate how they would work both in their department or faculty and institutionally at a strategic and operational level. The LDFA role was designed to embed the people and organisational development strategy and leadership and development foundation initiatives as the sponsor for their faculty or division supporting recognition of the CSE standard. LDFAs had to demonstrate how they were respected by colleagues at all levels of the university, and provide evidence of working collegially to support all staff within their areas.

Eight LDFAs were appointed during 2016-17. A deliberate decision was made to appoint staff from a diverse mix of academic and professional services backgrounds, and from a wide range of roles and grades. Significantly, the decision was taken to not use the title, “Associate Dean - Leadership” for the post. It was regarded as imperative that the role must be open to all members of staff, not simply those in academic positions. The appropriateness of the title is considered within this case study review. The LDFAs became members of their local faculty/divisional management team, and the university’s strategic delivery forum and

---

meet on a regular basis with the head of the then-Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (now Advance HE) to review and report on progress in their respective areas.

## Part 2: review and evaluation of role

### Research methods

The approach taken in this case study was qualitative. It evaluates the success of the LDFA role at LJMU during its first year of operation. The primary sources of evaluation are: (i) internally published material; (ii) a bespoke university-wide survey on the LDFA role; and (iii) the results of bespoke focus groups consisting of volunteers in each department / faculty on the LDFA role. Through an evaluation of these sources, the report offers insights into perceptions of the LDFA role and the respective achievements and challenges that have arisen during the first year. A critical account of the CSE process led by the LDFA is then provided. It considers whether cross-role projects are potentially effective programmatic change models in HE. The evaluation process adopts a well-established qualitative case study approach. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2004; Smith and Osborn, 2008) was used to analyse the focus group and survey data. The approach was used to gain a better understanding of staff participants' perspectives of the LDFA role and the processes involved in making subjective sense of their experiences (Brocki and Wearden, 2006; Smith and Osborn, 2000).

The justification for this approach is threefold. First, it is important that first-hand feedback from LDFAs was obtained, which outlined their reflections on their first year in post, including identification of their perceived achievements and challenges. This provides contextual evidence to assess whether common themes emerged across faculties and departments in relation to the LDFA role, or whether the experience varied depending on which faculty or department the LDFA was assigned. Second, it was important that feedback on the role of the LDFA was obtained from the entire university staff body, including from both professional services and academic staff. This might reveal any disparities in perceptions of the understanding and effectiveness of the LDFA role between different groups of staff. Third, once key achievements and challenges had been identified, it was important to research these further with focus groups in each department and/or faculty to enable a sufficiently detailed picture to be painted and recommendations for the use of the role across the HE sector to be made. The outcomes of the evaluation were also presented at the Higher Education Leadership Forum at the University of Sheffield in September 2018. The panel presentation elicited a range of responses, which formed part of the evaluation.

### Emerging themes

There are four key themes applicable to the LDFA, which emerged from the evaluation process. These are outlined and discussed below.

#### 1. Lack of communication about the LDFA role

An overview of the data, collected from the survey as well as individual focus groups, clearly identifies that communication about the role and its purpose and remit seems to have hindered the role in its first year. The principal role of the LDFAs was to be communication conduits in their respective departments and faculties and to work with the respective departmental or faculty managers and other internal stakeholders. A secondary function was to help to improve the vertical communication channels between staff. As noted earlier, the LDFA role is held by staff in both professional services and academic roles, and the LDFA role is conducted slightly differently in each department/faculty. However, that is a perceived strength because of the inherent differences between the different departments and faculties in the university.

In analysing this data in more depth, we can see that staff across all the focus groups reported:

*“Communication and lines of communication need work and need to have more relevance to Professional Services.”*

Member of Focus Group 1

This quotation nicely summarises the concerns staff raised about the communication surrounding the purpose as well as the remit of role. The first year of any role is a learning process for all involved. The challenge for the second year of the role will be to improve the communication surrounding the role and its purpose. What has become clear from a communication perspective is that the individual LDFA's primary job has a significant impact on how they perform the LDFA role and its perceived success.

*“...the challenge is separating individuals' LDFA-specific duties from their current staff role. This may not have been communicated well.”*

Member of Focus Group 4

*“Intellectual fear, the presumption that academics are “super clever people”, can inhibit staff willingness to approach them no matter how approachable as a person that person may be.”*

Member of Focus Group 3

Staff appear to find it hard to disaggregate the LDFA role from individuals' underlying professional services or academic role and decipher what is within the remit of the LDFA role, especially if the 0.6 role is a management-based role. This underlying tension between the two roles performed by the LDFA is something that will need further exploration over the second year of the role to ascertain whether these are early teething problems with the role or a more fundamental issue that needs resolution. A possible solution presented by a respondent was:

*“To have a clear LDFA role description online/on the JMU website which outlined more about what they do.”*

Member Focus group 1

The issues discussed here in relation to communication are intrinsically linked to the discussion below on the clarity of the remit of this role.

## 2. The impact of the title of the role

The focus groups and staff survey provided evidence that the LDFA role has been perceived differently to other, similar roles at LJMU.

*“...the role has the largest scope but the least “power” which has inhibited the role's perceived place and effectiveness.”*

Member Focus Group 3

There was a deliberate decision made in respect of the LDFA role for them not to report to a specific committee yet staff have highlighted this difference and questioned why the same structure has not been adopted for this role:

*“Internal Champions within programmes that sit on committees could be useful, for example with the up and coming Teaching Excellence Framework and where we sit. If Champions are working well in other committees across the university then it could be a good idea to replicate the same model for the LDF/LDFAs.”*

Member Focus Group 2

Some further work will need to be conducted to discover why staff put emphasis on these committee structures and why they see these as adding to the authority of a role as this was beyond the remit of this initial review.

## 3. The remit of the LDFA role

As stated above, a key theme that emerged from this initial case study was the breadth and confusion concerning the remit of the LDFA role as initially proposed in the job description. The breadth of this role description has arguably limited the effectiveness of the role in its first year and contributed to a lack of

---

understanding about what fell within the role's remit. LDFAs were initially envisaged to work closely with the business partner for the department/faculty as well as the Leadership Foundation adviser. Two key issues have emerged from the data in respect of the remit of the role: first, confusion as to how the LDFA, internal stakeholder and Leadership Foundation advisor roles were to function together to avoid duplication of work; and second, that the varying substantive roles performed by the LDFAs contributed to the confusion over which responsibilities were to be discharged under the LDFA role, and which were performed as part of their 0.6 role.

Respondents reported the following:

*"I do not know what the whole role of an LDFA is; maybe a clear description of responsibilities and a plan of objectives could be shared with teams so we all have a better understanding of what they do?"*

Member Group 3

*"I don't have an understanding of the LDFA role."*

Member Focus Group 4

*"I was not aware of just how far their remit spans."*

Member Focus Group 5

This lack of understanding about the nature and remit of the LDFA role is a significant threat to the success of the role; for example, how may staff make informed judgements about the relative success of the LDFA role if they lack basic understanding of what it entails, or the contributions made by LDFAs to university objectives? Equally, the lack of clarity over the nature of the original LDFA job description also presents a significant barrier to the LDFAs themselves, who have reported that the breadth and fluidity of the said description was such that it was difficult to judge themselves on whether they were performing the role in the way it was envisaged when they were appointed.

#### 4. The impact of the LDFAs' 0.6 role

The impact of the LDFAs' 0.6 role was something that came out strongly from the feedback. There was division among respondents as to whether this was a job for both professional service staff or academics or whether one or the other was better suited to performing the role. Furthermore, the role the LDFA performed in their 0.6 role was seen by respondents to have a significant impact on how well they could achieve the LDFA role:

*"The challenge is when separating individuals' LDFA-specific duties from their current staff role."*

Member Focus Group 5

*"LDFA has a lot on in their day job."*

Member Focus group 3

*"LDFA remit was tagged onto existing role. As a line manager I have lost the LDFA for greater time than expected."*

Member Focus Group 4

*"Communication is key and having someone [who] is identified as the lead on communication can help staff know who to speak to in times of change."*

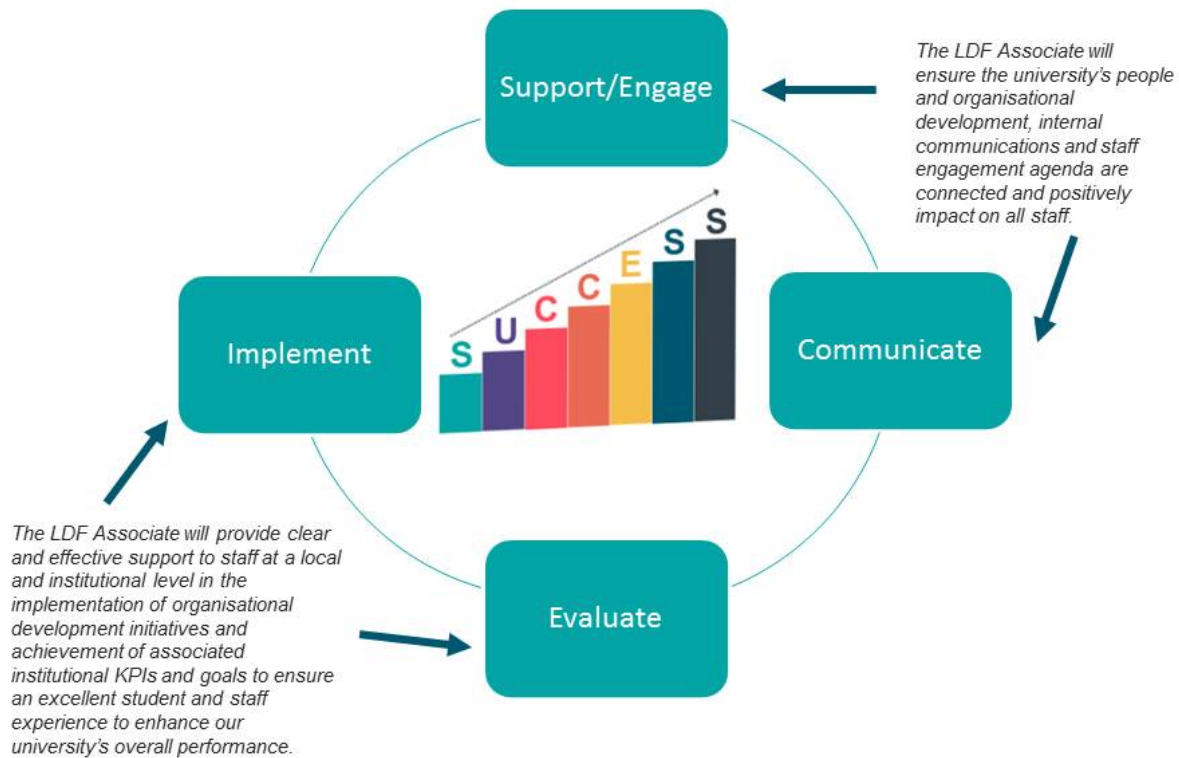
Member Focus Group 1

Focus groups suggested that a clear description of the responsibilities of the role and planned objectives would aid the LDFAs' ability to contribute to change management. Following all feedback received on the LDFA role at the end of the first year a decision was made to adapt the LDFA job role to maximise its effectiveness in achieving organisational development objectives. Figure 1 was used during the review to explain how the roles would work together to achieve organisational objectives moving forward. In terms of the perceived tension between the individual's two roles, further investigation in the second and third year of the role will need to be conducted as forming a clear judgment after just twelve months would seem premature and could lead to a misleading or incorrect conclusion.

---



# Implement



## Part 3: the LDFA as a change agent

### The LDFA role and CSE

Briefly, in 2017, alongside the development of the LJMU Strategic Plan, a decision was made that all areas of the institution - five academic faculties and three professional services divisions - would start the process to achieve the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award.

“Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a trade mark of the UK Cabinet Office. The CSE standard was developed by the government to offer services and organisations a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation. The foundation of this tool is a process that tests, in great depth, those areas which research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular emphasis on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also an emphasis placed on developing customer insight, insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.” ([www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/about-the-standard/customer-service-excellence-standard](http://www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/about-the-standard/customer-service-excellence-standard))

What may be particularly important for this consideration of the CSE award as a programmatic change model are the principles and processes upon which the standards are based.

CSE is designed to work on three distinct levels:

1. As a driver of continuous improvement. By allowing organisations to self-assess their capability, in relation to customer-focused delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement.

2. As a skills development tool. By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services.
3. As an independent validation of achievement. By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence Standard, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.

([www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/about-the-standard/customer-service-excellence-standard](http://www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/about-the-standard/customer-service-excellence-standard))

CSE is not new to higher education institutions. A quick internet search reveals the healthy number and range of higher education institutions achieving the CSE award. However, what may be unusual and noteworthy in the LJMU case is the speed and comprehensive nature of the institutional achievement of the CSE standard. All faculties and professional directorates achieved the award in less than the institutional target of 12 months.

### The LDFA as a change agent

The LDFA job description does not explicitly identify change agency as a formal aspect of the role. However, as the following discussion of the CSE and its place within the new organisational strategic plan suggests, the LDFA role is potentially pivotal in effecting operational and cultural change. Comparatively little has been written about the leadership aspect under review in this section – that is, the process of leading, and particularly leading across organisational and operational boundaries, to develop a culture of learning and change. Such an approach is often referred to as intergroup leadership and leading (Pittisky, 2008).

As indicated throughout this report, the context for the development of the LDFA role is crucial. The role was created as part of the strategic plan review in 2017. The LDFA role demonstrates in practice the organisation responding to the rhetoric of change and investment in staff that permeates the 2017-2022 statement of values and strategic direction. The need to build on existing good practice through change and the ambition to be different resonates throughout the strategic plan and is captured in the organisation's new stated vision to be recognised as a "modern, civic university delivering solutions to the challenges of the 21st century." The following selection of strategic comments helps to set the context for an understanding of the LDFA role and its potential within an organisational change context:

*"We are an ambitious and forward thinking institution that challenges convention and believes passionately in the concept of 'one university', a community working together to achieve common student-centred objectives within a clear strategy."*

*"We are innovative and progressive within an entrepreneurial spirit, we think about new ways to do things."*

*"We believe that by working together in partnership we can achieve strong and lasting results."*

*"We believe in leading the way, challenging convention and breaking new ground."*

*"We believe in the power of expertise, and of people coming together with a common purpose."*

At the institutional level, the strategic discourse is clearly that of change, response and investment. At the operational level a similar discourse operates. The LDFA role is located in the Organisational Enhancement Division. Here, change is explicitly placed within an evolutionary model. Evolution is seen as the key to effective development through the maintenance and development of good practice. A key element of this evolutionary process is:

*"Investment and commitment to investing in our greatest asset, our expert, talented staff."*

Deputy Chief Executive, Organisational Enhancement

The institution has notable strengths and, as indicated above, a clear wish to change, to improve, to work as one institution, to enrich the lives of staff and to do this by challenging convention and breaking new ground. However, one significant challenge to achieving such aims may be a residual culture where leadership is seen

---

as a management role for the selected few and not necessarily as a positive, developmental process for all staff.

The LDFA-led CSE process was not solely about achieving the award. It was also about using this process to embed an effective additional approach to leadership development programmes where learning, change and development results from participants acting on “wicked” organisational problems (Grint, 2010) and learning by leading. By doing so there is the potential to improve the efficiency of the organisation’s operating systems and to boost leadership capacity at all levels. The ambitious long-term process being that leadership capacity could be distributed (Gentle and Forman, 2014) and grow as staff at all levels join together in the complex task of transforming the culture of the organisation, the “big wicked” problem. The proposal made in this report is that having the LDFA role leading programmatic change models such as the CSA offers an appropriate alternative and adds a significant element to conventional leadership development approaches normally found in higher education institutions. Learning and leading by doing is part of an established leadership development approach with its roots in action learning and problem-based learning. It can provide a significant additional – and possibly alternative – approach to concepts of management and leadership.

*“Conventional approaches to leadership development are often grounded in a formula or recipe and assume the qualities of a successful leader can be defined, copied and then taught. But leadership develops when groups and individuals take on real and consequential challenges in their environment.”*

Jenner et al, 2012

The real operational problems and challenges addressed by the CSE award were to:

- + Address customer service practice.
- + To embed a culture where customer service is at the heart of operations across all parts of the organisation.
- + Evidence and demonstrate good practice and consequently achieve the CSE award.

The above would require not only seeing their situation with “new eyes” but also seeing connections and actions across what could be legitimately described as internal and professional silos. To achieve the “one university” aim outlined earlier in the discussion of the strategic plan, silo practice also must be addressed. To break down barriers and to really work as one institution may demand more than simple knowledge sharing and shopping for good practice across the institution. It is more likely to require a culture where colleagues feel confident and able to think, act and learn together to make a difference. Whether the CSE award process led by the LDFA is an effective catalyst for this significant change is addressed briefly here and will be developed more fully with future research. The CSE process provides an invitation to colleagues to compare, contrast context, challenge presuppositions and generate new ideas and ways of working. Whether colleagues accepted the invitation and whether leadership change is “afoot”, is now considered.

LDFAs led the CSE process through a project team approach. This included regular core team meetings with agendas of:

- + Reviewing working practices.
- + Responding to gaps in the service.
- + Finding evidence of good practice.
- + Completing the formal evidence presentation process for the award.

However, what rapidly emerged across the departments/faculties was a range of leading processes. A further piece of research will examine these outcomes in detail. However, they can be indicated and captured by the following observations:

- + There was an increase in collective responses.

- + There was more risk taking with a reduction in anxiety and blame culture behaviour.
- + Colleagues took ownership of problems and actions outside their formal role.
- + The development of novel ways of working such as the use of interns and cross-professional practices.
- + Colleagues adapting more quickly to action.
- + Staff becoming more comfortable in expressing their feelings and opinions.
- + Confidence and expressed pride in the quality of work with their customers.
- + An explicit and profound commitment to the values of quality and customer service.
- + The beginnings of a view that leadership does have to be positional and simply concentrated in formal senior roles.
- + The development of the belief that leading and leadership can be distributed.
- + The perception that leadership can change from being something which is done to colleagues rather than being done by colleagues was evident through the team processes and discourse.

As indicated earlier these observations need to be further researched and interrogated. Members of the LDFA team will conduct this research.

The next phase is to build on the outcomes of the CSE award process, possibly with the LDFA team leading processes including looking outward for alternative approaches and looking inward through coaching and action learning approaches. Again, this process would be operational in developing excellence in service and developmental by building on the established teams and their nascent leading approaches. The aim is to build on the belief highlighted in the CSE process that leading is a positive, developmental process for all staff and not simply a management function. It will also further encourage teams to take more responsibility and demonstrate more independent decision-making and action. If the institution wants to change as indicated in its strategic plan then offering staff an opportunity to think critically about their own work context, to flirt with openness and to take action may be a key element in the cultural change process.

### Part 4: sector feedback on the LDFA role

This case study and the initial results were presented at the LJMU Professional Services Conference in July 2018 and disseminated at the Higher Education Leadership Forum (HELFF) Conference in Sheffield in September 2018. The response from the panel presentation at the HELFF conference was positive. Colleagues from the sector recognised the novelty (if not uniqueness) of the approach. Conference participants offered a range of insights and advice to the LDFA team. These were generally:

- + the significance of a team approach; and
- + the strength that this can provide for leadership and change.

The presentation modelled the LDFA process as four members of the LDFA team presented. Observations included the obvious collaboration and working across all parts of an institution as one university evidenced by the team. The importance of building on the success of the CSE award project was reinforced. It was suggested that we could be at a tipping point where the lessons and experiences of colleagues in a new leading role could be lost if we do not build on this quickly and effectively. Several participants asked for further insights through meetings and networks. The LJMU LDFA team are happy to do so and to review and evaluate the role through reports such as this and through the research processes indicated throughout this report.

## Conclusions

It is important to remember that this case study is focused on the first year of a new role. As with new roles in any institution, time needs to be afforded to allow the role to evolve. Specific outcomes from the survey and focus groups suggest that the role description needs to be amended to establish clear parameters and specific objectives for the role.

It would be naïve at best to think that the appointment of a team of LDFAs and achieving the CSE award across all areas of the institution in less than one year could change the culture of an organisation the size of a university, especially one as large and diverse as LJMU. However, our experience suggests that when a leadership development programme linked to a programmatic model such as that outlined by the LDFA and CSE award operates effectively, then organisational - and, ultimately, cultural - change may be possible. When change agents, in our case LDFAs, invite and support participants to be confident, critical and to lead through critically examining their everyday experiences they can challenge the contradictions in practice and start the process of doing things differently or, as we would like to call it, learning a new culture. However, the CSE experience has demonstrated how effective the role can be in achieving organisational goals in a short timeframe.

This case study therefore demonstrates that the LDFA role could be an effective resource for higher education Institutions looking to develop distributed leadership and leading practices for its staff. In an HE sector that is constantly changing and developing and facing a period of considerable uncertainty, the LDFA role could become a key developmental tool in helping to develop an agile workforce that can adapt and increase the organisational change capability of an institution.

## References

- Brocki, J., and Wearden, A. (2006) A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health*, 21(1): 97-108.
- Floyd, A. and Preston, D. (2018) The role of the associate dean in UK universities: distributed leadership in action. *Higher Education*, 79: 925-943.
- Gentle, P., and Forman, D. (2014) *The challenge of inspiring collective commitment in universities*. London: Routledge.
- Grint, K. (2010) Wicked problems and clumsy solutions: the role of leadership. In Brookes, S. and Grint, K. (Eds) *The New Public Leadership Challenge*. Houndsmills: Basingstoke.
- Jenner, M., Barnes, J., James, S. (2013) Learning by leading: Using organisation transformation to develop capacity in East Thames Group. *The International Journal of Leadership in Public Services*, 9 (3/4): 116-124.
- Judge, T.A., Ilies, R., Bono, J.E. and Gerhardt, M.W. (2002) Personality and Leadership: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4): 765–780.
- Smith, J and Osborn, M. (2008) Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research method*, Smith, J. (Ed.): 53-80. London: Sage publications.
- Smith, J. (2004) Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological development and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1: 39-54.

## Author biographies

### Sarah Stirk

Sarah Stirk is an Auroran and a Leadership Development Foundation Associate as well as Programme Leader for the ML law programme and Senior Lecturer in Law at LJMU. She has been in academia since 2010 and previously received a grant from the Higher Education Academy to address employability in HE, resulting in a conference to disseminate this information in 2012.

### Dr Mike Aiello

Dr Mike Aiello is academic staff lead and Leadership Development Foundation Associate at the Liverpool Business School, LJMU and was previously head of staff professional development programmes for the School of Education. In these and similar previous roles, he has led impact case studies on the effect of leadership initiatives for UK organisations such as OFSTED, Further Education Funding Council and the Department of Health and Social Security, as was. In a European context, he has led a range of leadership development initiatives for tourism, hospitality managers and educational leaders. A range of impact case studies have been provided for a number of organisations in France, Spain and Greece. In particular, he led impact case studies for a range of public-private sector organisations such as the Hellenic Chamber of Commerce, Greece and the Ministry of Education, Greece, examining the impact of international collaborative approaches to leadership development.

### Meriel Box

Meriel Box is Head of LJMU Leadership and Development Foundation, AHE Aurora Champion, AUA Mark of Excellence assessment panel member and SDF North West HE Regional Coordinator. Meriel has extensive experience in leadership and organisational development. In 2018 she also co-authored a stimulus paper, Exploring the Impact of Coaching in Higher Education, and an account of practice on North West Cross Institutional Action Learning Developing Women's Leadership for the special issue of the Action Learning Research and Practice Journal on Scholarly Practice: re-connecting the I, p and q.



## Contact us

+44 (0) 3300 416 201  
enquiries@advance-he.ac.uk  
www.advance-he.ac.uk  
🐦 **in f** @AdvanceHE

© 2018 Advance HE. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and not necessarily those of Advance HE. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any storage and retrieval system without the written permission of the copyright owner. Such permission will normally be granted for non-commercial, educational purposes provided that due acknowledgement is given.

To request copies of this report in large print or in a different format, please contact the Marketing and Communications Team at Advance HE:  
+44 (0) 3300 416201 or publications@advance-he.ac.uk

Advance HE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales no. 04931031. Registered as a charity in England and Wales no. 1101607. Registered as a charity in Scotland no. SC043946. Advance HE words and logo should not be used without our permission. VAT registered no. GB 152 1219 50.