



The Inspire Improvement Fellowship: Our Journey

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Proudly supported by the Burdett Trust for Nursing Partnership Programme

The Fellows' Journey

Creating Caring Cultures is a journey, not a destination. The work is on-going, each step has challenges, and is worthy of celebration. Here's how one group of fellows described their journey:

'Volcanoes can be active, dormant or extinct. We can all relate to this metaphor and probably recognise which type of volcano we were at the beginning of this programme.'

Some of us have inherited our roles with associated previous leadership styles. We came to the role with varying life and work experiences. Some of us have tried to come to life in the role but have bubbled back down, cooled by environmental forces.

FoNS have given us the means and the confidence to venture up out of the mountain and resilience to flow over bringing energy to our teams.

Volcanoes hold hot liquids, called magma. It glows bright orange and is held in a chamber throughout our FoNS journey, like mixing molten lava or magma. Our motivation, creativity, leadership styles, and shared knowledge have intertwined, held in our metaphorical chamber, our magma of shared learning is now erupting through our practice.



After the magma has left the volcano, it turns to lava. Once the lava has cooled, it turns into solid rock. This is much like us forming ideas into meaningful actions. Building on the foundations that we have learned about and making a lasting impact on our workplace culture.

Every time a volcano erupts, it changes in shape and size. This relates to how we've all come together to share all of our golden moments and our new ways of working and that they are different and varied. The effect on ourselves and our teams will take individual shapes like the volcano as our journey continues to flow, and we have the confidence to ask why, and to look at things differently so that our ideas never become dormant.'

July 2023



I am delighted to present this review. You can read and follow the journey of the fellows through their highs and lows, collaboratively exploring with their teams the "ways things are done round here", the patterns, habits and routines of practice. We have described the impact for fellows and their teams, as the new ways of working, new methods and new approaches

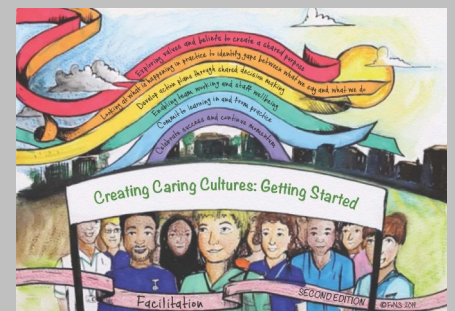
which have been introduced have led to a feeling of increased confidence and self-belief, enabling the fellows to make a real difference in practice.

In the current national context of very high workloads and problems recruiting and retaining staff, the importance of how workplace culture is created and how teams function should not be underestimated. A caring culture makes things better for everyone. Patients, service users, residents and their families and carers experience good care. Staff feel valued and supported which helps them to provide the care patients want with compassion and confidence.

Jo Odell, October 2023

Background

The Inspire Improvement Fellowship and programme of support, which started in January 2018, aims to enable clinical leaders to develop knowledge, skills and expertise in facilitating culture change and improvement at the front line of practice. The programme is underpinned by the FoNS Creating Caring Cultures model.



Year 5: September 2022-July 2023

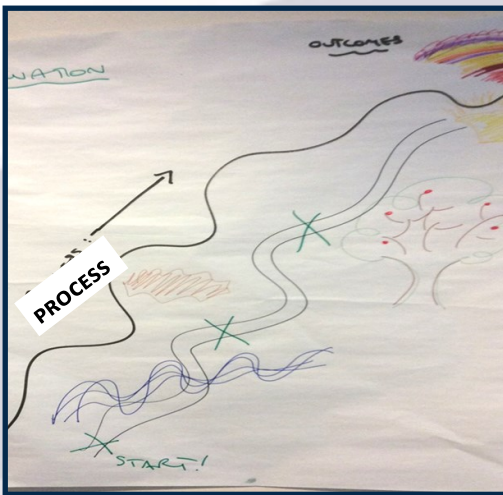
Following an extensive application and interview process, 13 fellows were offered a place.

The programme comprised two learning blocks, each of 7 weekly, three-hour sessions, facilitated virtually using the Zoom platform. The learning blocks were held in **Sept - Oct 2022** and **Feb - March 2023**. The programme completed with two face-to-face residential workshops at a central location in **July 2023**. Each fellow also had 1:1 support over a 12-month period and a small bursary.

The programme was facilitated by Jo Odell accompanied by two new co-facilitators, Sheeba Jefferson and Isobel McDowell, who were recruited from Year 3 of the fellowship programme.

This review draws on a variety of evidence gathered throughout the programme.

The Journey from Start to Finish



At FoNS, our work is underpinned by a number of principles which relate to this review specifically, that is:

- Working in collaborative, inclusive and participatory ways
- Undertaking evaluation that covers both the process of the programme as well as the outcomes

To achieve this, each of the three Inspire Improvement Fellowship blocks culminates in an opportunity for the fellows to participate in the evaluation of the programme and reflect on their learning. Fellows reflect individually, then in two groups, they share their reflections and, working together, theme them and create something that reflects those themes.

The year 5 fellows



From comparing the hopes and expectations at the beginning of the programme and the participatory evaluation at the end there is clear evidence of personal development for the fellows in terms of new skills, methods, approaches and increased confidence. There is also clear evidence of fellows taking their learning and putting this into practice in collaboration with their teams.

The Fellows' Hopes and Expectations at the Beginning of the Journey

1) For Self

Develop the skills to really understand the team's perspective on how they feel working in my teams

To learn new methods of change

That I will be able to **facilitate not fix**

I will be able to increase my confidence and leadership abilities to inspire my team to grow and develop new ideas and ways of working

Head space and support from FoNS, fellows and colleagues will allow and support me to develop and to think and approach things differently

2) For team and patients/ families/ carers

Learn how to **get the best from staff without adding pressure** whilst facilitating the best working environment possible

To see **a reduction in complaints** as engagement, inspiration and development ideas within the team grow

Improve patient care, team satisfaction, productivity and patient experience

And at the end of the programme, July 2023

Inspired by FoNS, that's what we came here to do.

Applications were many, shortlisted few.

As we gathered today, the few that were selected. The coursework and learning and leadership perfected.

The craft box delivered from the postie with a song. Created with glitter, what could possibly go wrong!

So on Zoom at 1400 hours to meet the rest of the fellows. As I wait for the start, it may well have been the gallows.

Each week that we met and our learning grew.

Sharing experience, feelings and values were quite similar. Who knew?

With our brains rewired and our motivation, we set off to Solihull, some by road by train or by jet.

No more screens when we meet face-to-face.

Coming together through our participation, our learning gathering apace.

And so to our last session, celebrating our golden moments, achievements, however big or small, our shared reflections.

We popped these into a balloon and shared the following:



**Golden moments * Values * New beginnings * Shared vision
Emotional Touchpoints * Questioning * Celebration
Confidence * Observation * Being braver
Inspiring * Collaboration * Enquiring * Out of comfort zone**

This isn't the end. We'll see you all soon.

How did they get there?

Block 1: September to October 2022

Session 1

Bringing together 13 nurse leaders with three co-facilitators from different areas of the country and practice who had not met each other before. It was important to create a virtual space where people could get to know each other and feel safe.

'appreciated the different approaches used during the session, ... our ways of working and making a clear summary made me realise we all want the same fun, inclusive and honest environment.'

'Dividing the big group into small ones for us to discuss our shield was a nice touch, because it made me feel more confident and allowed me to get to know my team better and at a deeper level'

'The most useful content from today in my opinion was the discussion of values, beliefs and behaviours. It was an amazing opportunity to discuss and discover different ways to approach these and the impact that those have in the care that we provide.'

'Understanding that we see behaviour- read behaviour – make assumptions. By asking individuals about their values and beliefs, behaviour may be explained and understood more.'

Session 2

Explored values and beliefs drawing on stories of good care to unearth what underlies good care. The connections between values, beliefs, behaviours and assumptions were also explored.

Session 4

Active learning vs passive learning

Session 3

thinking about the evidence we gather on a regular basis and whether we are doing this to “prove or improve” care.

identifying key stakeholders and working with them collaboratively to create shared action plans.

'Identifying all stakeholder with colleagues on programme. Helped give clarity to move forward with inclusivity.'

'Do we audit and evaluate to prove or improve? Are all stakeholders involved where possible?'

'interesting to discuss different forms of learning, including active and passive learning. To also discover the difference between teaching and enabling.'

'Quite fascinated by the visualisation experience, really tapped into my subconscious in relation to what is happening in our workplace and what type of culture has developed within the existing framework.'

'The visualisation walk through highlighted a more positive culture that I imagined I would have'

Session 5

Understanding workplace culture

'I feel that this will influence the way that our team learns together in future, hopefully employing active learning approach rather than passive learning.'

Session 6

Collaboration, Inclusion and participation

'Enjoyed sharing details of working collaboratively and how it looked, felt, and sounded.'

'Really enjoyed the session, producing poster to show a time when team worked collaboratively with a positive outcome. Poster was helpful to show that the whole team played important parts in the process with each using their own individual form of intelligence.'

'Today I really tried to reflect using multiple intelligences. I think I am doing this and delving into senses gives a real wrap around reflection. It's immersive.'

Session 7

A participatory evaluation: process and outcomes

'Reflecting and summarising themes from the previous weeks helped consolidate highlights I hadn't remembered.'

'For me the most useful content from today's session was the teamwork surrounded by the creation of something as a group that would define our experience so far.'

How did they get there?

Block 2 February to March 2023

At the end of block 1 the fellows had a break of three months and with 1:1 sessions, were supported to put their ideas into practice. At the beginning of learning block 2 (in February 2023), when we came back together, we shared and celebrated their actions in practice; their *golden moments*.

Regular get-togethers with the team

Encouraging well-being within teams

Learning more about our teams

Collaborative working and sharing ideas rather than information giving/ disseminating

Using creativity with teams: Evoke cards, visualisations and values and beliefs exercises

Delegation and changing responsibility has been positively received

Working together, not a single person's work

Seeking feedback on leadership style

Moving on: Sessions 8-14, February and March 2023



What was most useful and why? A flavour:

Session 8: Sharing success/golden moments from practice

'For me the most useful content was the opportunity to share my experience and what I had accomplish with my team since the beginning of the "break" from the programme.'

'Their courage has encouraged me to persevere and to recognise how grateful I am to be on the programme. How little steps can make huge changes, that it's good to work together and to reap joint rewards.'

Session 9: Values and beliefs - revisited

'The sharing of ideas in relation to introducing shared values, inspiring to hear how other fellows have achieved this goal. Connection between staff feeling valued and clients feeling valued. Looking at person-centred values and linking them to organisational and team values.'

Session 10: Experience vs satisfaction

'The power of accessing emotions and how they are able to open up so much about personal experiences in a way that satisfaction surveys fail to capture.'

'I will certainly be using these tools to identify any gaps in our care provision.'

Session 11: Active learning

'There were so many that it is difficult to decide, certainly today has made me think about how I can support our team to work together to improve wellbeing, for themselves and on a group level. Being happy in your work is so important, feeling valued, feeling harmonious with shared visions, communicating well and working in a caring workplace.'

Session 12: The power of observation

'The notion of looking through a different lens, this was extremely powerful. It made me realise that everybody has a slightly different or majorly different focus on events, this depends on so many variables, including how they are feeling that day.'

Session 13: Active learning

'Actively learning through active listening is an incredible tool to utilise and the way to connect with others in a non-judgemental way that allows for strong themes to emerge, coming from emotions and thoughts held deep within our subconscious.'

Session 14: Our second participatory evaluation

'Realising that we all shared the same learning opportunities and I continue to be amazed by the impact that those conversations have on my understanding and growth.'



One of the groups described their learning during Block 2 in the form of a **CARING CULTURES CAKE**

Ingredients

Beans - Barbara
Kiwi - Kit
Juniper - Jill
Spice - Sara
Sugar - Sophie



Method

Observation of care
Shared purpose
Emotional touch points
Critical questions
Light bulb moments
Active listening
Golden moments
Values and beliefs

The results

For best results, combine well and bake on your dodgy IT equipment over 6 weeks for 2.5 hours each week. You will require kindness, understanding and support, be encouraging and fun. No questions relating to this bake are silly. Celebrate your success and remember only your learning can leave the kitchen!



How did they get there?

Coming together in person: July 2023

Sharing golden moments since we were last together

Facilitation

Acceptable to share the load. I do not need to have all the answers. That facilitative and collaborative working actually works!

The team now see and come forward with noted areas for improvement

Band 5 away day

Well-being meetings instead of staff meetings = meaningful use of everyone's time

Check ins- everyone has a voice and feels empowered

Impact of asking "what it's like to work here?"

Team away day - creating feeling on belonging and shared purpose

Staff very engaged in creating shared vision and values

Team engagement - feels like the team are starting to get on board the "change train"

Improvements in practice

We now have a staff wellbeing room

Migrating appraisals from being simply competency reviews to asking what matters to you most at work?

Launching a "what matters to you" movement at work. Capturing both patients, families and staff priorities

New Methods and

Approaches

Introduction of emotional touchpoints to appraisals

Audits are seen and accepted more now to improve not prove Emotional touchpoints

Personal development

Blog creation

Influencing practice

Recognising that change can be positive

More confidence to celebrate success

Challenges remain:

The expectations of others, our own expectations, and time pressures and competing priorities:

Low expectations from disempowered team

That I am still sought to "fix" or offer solutions/improve outcomes. It remains the expectation

My preconceived ideas

My own perceptions and assumptions

Emotional touchpoints don't feel natural to me ... yet!

Time continues to be precious and a top-down approach from seniors results in having less focus on caring

Staff sickness and workload

Staff shortages, resignations, sickness- the challenges of staffing and therefore having to prioritise clinical work

Organisational red tape which can stifle innovation

Organisational priorities



The Inspire Improvement Fellowship: Why does it work?

Jo Odell, FoNS Practice Development Facilitator and Inspire Improvement Lead

Joining the first Inspire Improvement Fellowship workshop is not the start of the journey; it actually starts about four months earlier with the preparation and the application process. This involves gaining the direct support from both line managers and organisations, as well as being open to the idea of embarking on a creative discovery as a fellow. Most fellows have clarity about wanting to do something different but not the "how".

When the 13 fellows and co-facilitators come together on the first learning block, we start by co-creating the ways of working. This enables relationships to be built quickly and people to feel safe, especially in the virtual space. Fellows are surprised by how quickly sixteen people who are spread geographically can find connection with a group of likeminded people. We use an active learning approach which involves a deep creative reflective space to help the fellows see themselves and practice through a gentle critical lens, questioning and exploring the ways "things are done", to start to be more conscious about how they want to work in the future. In between the learning blocks fellows are encouraged to put their learning into practice. The last learning block is a celebration event as well as an opportunity to really think about maintaining the different ways of working they and their teams have achieved.

Each fellow's self-discovery journey is personal and different, but fellows often tell me that once they have completed the initial twelve months of the fellowship, they cannot go back to their previous ways of being and working. They describe crossing a line. Some describe the journey as transformational and certainly as the lead facilitator it is a pleasure to see people grow and flourish. I have witnessed people who are now able to live their values, have grown in confidence, put new methods and approaches into practice and seen the impact on this for both themselves and their teams and ultimately for the people they care for.

The Impact of the Programme: What the fellows say

The fellows have all become more confident and self-aware:

'I am more confident as a nurse and as a person. This has had a massive impact on my performance as a manager for my team. I feel more empowered to tackle more complex situations and I now have the tools to make it easier and more efficient.'

'I am much more aware of myself as an influence. I'm now more willing to step outside of my comfort zone.'

And have new tools and skills:

'I feel very empowered and have the tools and skills to do this role.'

'Being more creative to gain engagement and involvement of others within the team.'

'Certainly new ways to motivate staff, to support staff with new things, to support staff when they are challenged.'

As a consequence, they are more willing to 'have a go' at new things:

'Increased confidence to try new approaches and "give it a go", reminding self "what's the worse that can happen!"'

'Now I feel confident to try new approaches, encouraged and supported by other fellows.'

'Confidence to try new approaches, avoid making assumptions of how things may go.'

And this includes feeling able to challenge the way things are done:

'I have a new confidence to question why we do certain things in a certain way. It's impacted on what data I look for and what language I use.'

'I feel my confidence has blossomed in challenging the organisational focus on "management" towards one of collaboration/ team wellbeing/ inclusivity.'

Fellows have changed their mind-sets, being more collaborative and working with their values:

'Engaging with the team to co-ordinate shared visions and action plans. Thinking differently about leadership.'

'To be braver - have more courage to try new things. Has broadened my perspective of leadership. To be more inclusive rather than focusing on being managerial. I am generally more aware of the team and how individual members are coping/ feeling/ managing.'

'The importance of collaboration, getting better and more aware of active listening. Having supervision styles and accessing innovative ways to get the best from people. Insight into myself as a leader and influencer.'

'I think more about the team and how we work together, we focus on collaboration and discuss ideas as a team. Members of the team are starting to come on board with the process even though they don't fully understand it, I feel they are willing to trust me.'

And are able to be more facilitative rather than feeling the need to fix everything:

'I feel that I am now much more of a facilitator. I feel I can have difficult conversations in a way that enables the staff member to feel supported in a safe environment.'

'The fellowship has shown me that I can't be always the one trying to fix or resolve all the issues/ problems from my team, that delegation has to happen.'

'Being part of the fellowship has changed my whole approach to leading a team. I had some strengths but these were not being harnessed. I was compassionate but not strong enough to speak with full honesty to staff, this resulted in mixed messages. My leadership style has taken on a new form, I no longer feel weighed down with ownership of the total responsibility of the unit. I really appreciate the importance of collaborative working.'

Fellows were able to articulate the importance of the psychologically safe learning space and the opportunity to learn with and from others:

'Initially concerned about how using an online platform would affect learning, but small groups, establishing ways of working etc made it feel like a safe and comfortable space. I felt nervous about the creativity, but I've now realised creative doesn't equal being good at drawing.'

'The learning space - even through Zoom, the learning space created was open, fair and inviting to all of us sharing our experiences. Great opportunities to share experiences, feeling welcomed and in a safe space.'

'Learning from others has been an incredible experience, each and everyone of the fellows has inspired me and encouraged. They have a wealth of information that I had the privilege of learning. The active learning has helped develop my critical thinking and not just taking a one-word answer.'

'The co-facilitators have brought a lot of reassurance and positivity, knowing they have completed the programme and how it's benefitted them. They are also very warm and positive people to be with.'

One Person's Journey to Self-discovery

Sessions 1-6 & 8-13

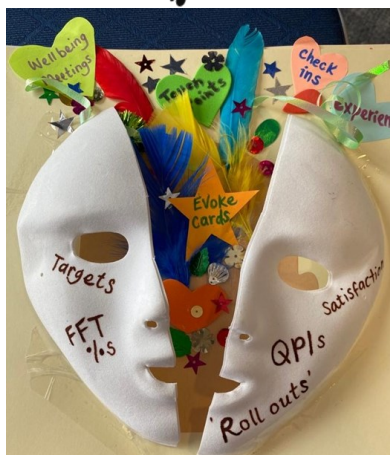
S1. I feel like I am at the beginning of something really worth completing. Apprehensive, excited and determined. I need to make changes in the way I lead our team and I feel that finally it is possible to begin to move forwards together. Not a lone runner this time but as a strong united team that will overcome obstacles in a thought-out collaborative way, rather than me feeling like I am pushing a boulder up a mountain on my own. The boulder keeps rolling back down taking us back to the starting point.



S11. Every week I gain new knowledge and learn more that I know will benefit our team, I am recognising our team strengths and identifying where we can develop and improve so many aspects of our working.

S12. I am learning something new every week, the programme is helping me to consolidate my existing knowledge and to look at it from a different perspective.

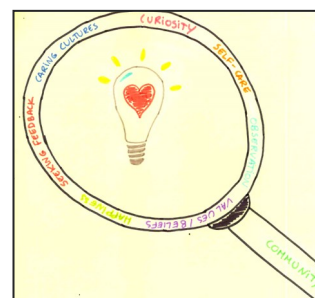
S13. Every week I am introduced to new approaches that really fill me with motivation and spark ideas that I know will improve my ability to facilitate a collaborative and person-centred workplace. **It is incredible!**



S10. Well! I am advancing on my own personal journey, every week, something lights touch paper during the programme and I am thinking how can we use this to improve the culture and ways of working, I am full of curiosity to move forward with these ideas.



S9. I feel that I really get this programme, I feel so much more confident to go forward, I know that this can work for our unit. I am learning and energised by the sessions.

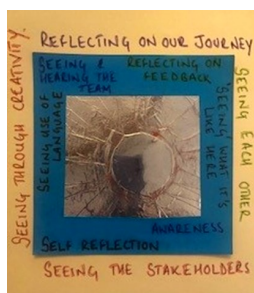


S8. I am learning to trust my team, not to be so pressured into making all the decisions on my own, to value their different viewpoints and to be grateful for having this fantastic opportunity to start again in a new way of working.

S6. Hiku that we produced together
Each spoke plays its part.
For the wheel to continue round.
Moving on Together.



S3. I need to reflect on the way that I approach our team and to enable them to feel included, I am able to work this way with clients but seem to want to control my team and indoctrinate my views to come in line with my own values and beliefs. The health board also is encouraging an approach where we come in line with their shared values, this might not be concordant with the values of the work force.



S4. I feel that I am progressing with the support of the Active Learning approach, I am understanding myself more and beginning to recognise that I can develop and grow as a facilitative leader and am beginning to feel more optimistic in my role and more importantly more hopeful for the unit in its own



S5.
Get out of my head; let me find direction.
Let me look at my reflection without tears and a flood of emotions and blood.
Let me learn how to stop fighting the river and start enjoying its course.
Let me clean my new leaf with the water flow and watch my roots slowly grow.

Our Companions on the Journey

We would like to thank and celebrate our two companions on this journey.

The Inspire Improvement Fellowship not only supports the development of current fellows, but with two co-facilitators, from previous cohorts, brings a further development opportunity. In 2022-2023, Sheeba Jefferson and Isobel McDowell, co-facilitated along with FoNS Practice Development Facilitator, Jo Odell.

Sheeba Jefferson,



'On the first day, I can still remember I was really nervous, because the other thing that really attracted me was the creativity used within the programme, but getting out of my comfort zone made me anxious at first. But I can say that now I'm not afraid of it anymore.'

'The learning and the connections were so unique. As fellows we were from all four different countries with different jobs and experiences. It was so amazing to see how we all connected by the end of that first day. And I've never done check ins in my life before. I remember back, I reflect back so fondly of that first session and I still can't believe how we formed that network so fast. We were online and hadn't met each other before in person but we felt a sense of belonging was there from the first session.'

'It's given me immense self-confidence in working with the "unknown". Whether that be a new team or a new innovation/situation. I have learnt to be authentic and that it's OK to say you don't know something. I now focus on the process and the experience for both staff and patients, not on the outcomes whereas most of our life in the hospital is problem solving.'

'As a co-facilitator, I experienced the whole programme with another different lens. When I was a participant on the fellowship, I picked up key things but didn't remember everything that we did in the programme. It gave me the opportunity to reflect back on how my experience was, but I was also, open for the new ideas. With the new fellows, again the connection was very strong and that helped me too. It was a wonderful experience to work with Isobel who had also been on my first fellowship but also to sit back and see others grow using the creativity and to share our experiences as fellows. We were all different but what we wanted was to come together in that safe space and make things better, not just for ourselves but for the team so that we can take back and translate it for the teams and for the patients.'

Isobel McDowell



'The personal impact for me has been creating more belief in myself, in the sense, I can potentially have an impact by sharing or engaging and connecting with people. I would have previously tried to "fix" things as a leader, but now I try and engage, connect and get people to share and work things out for themselves by using a facilitative approach and that has really helped me.'

'The impact for the people I work with has been organic as well. At the start, I felt apprehensive about how the team would react if I started doing something different or trying something new. Using the culture tools with the staff, the shared vision about what matters to you, the well-being tree, opening wider conversations about the way we work and "what's it like around here", has been enlightening.'

'The impact of being a co-facilitator on the fellowship 2022-23 has been for me personally once again stepping out of my comfort zone and reaching another level with another challenge. I embraced this because I knew the value of the fellowship from having experienced it before and I anticipated the learning would be as unique as my previous journey. It allowed me to consolidate a lot of the learning that I previously had, but seeing it from a different perspective, through a different lens and also learning from the fellows.'

'So, there was that uniqueness in engaging with a diverse cohort of professionals. I would never, ever have been able to engage with this range of nurses normally as they were from different areas of practice as well as geographically. It was just a wonderful experience and bringing that back to the team and saying, look, this goes on elsewhere and it's not just us that feel like this, it is felt elsewhere.'

The idea of having co-facilitators on the fellowship programme came about when we moved to the virtual platform in 2020 and has proved to be a further development opportunity for the fellows who have completed the initial 12 month programme, as you will have read above.

I would like to thank all the co-facilitators for their hard work and dedication, which has enabled the growth and development of future Inspire Improvement Fellows. Their knowledge and expertise, as well as experience of putting ideas into practice, has been an enabling force in helping current fellows to hear and see that it is possible to facilitate culture change, one step at a time using the methods and approaches from the Creating Caring Cultures resources.

Jo Odell, October 2023