

TRANSCRIPT

Leadership series – Ivan McConnell



Paul Parsons - This is Not a Consultation.

Caroline Latta - Welcome to Not A Consultation, our podcast and all things patient and public involvement and NHS service change. In this series, we're talking to different service change leaders about the projects they've been involved with, what they've learned about leadership and their top tips for aspiring service change leaders.

Paul Parsons - Today we're talking to Ivan McConnell, who is joint Director of Strategy for Northern Lincolnshire and Goole and Hull University Teaching Hospital Trusts. He's the Programme Director for the Humber Acute Services Review Transformation Programme. Ivan's got loads of experience in leading and delivering service transformation from NHS and private sector viewpoints. We're looking forward to finding out more. Hello, Ivan, welcome to Not A Consultation and thanks for joining us today.

Ivan McConnell - Lovely to talk to you.

Caroline Latta - I wonder if we can start by asking you what brought you to the NHS, in particular, into service transformation?

Ivan McConnell - Yeah, no problem at all. I started my life in accountancy and worked my way through the Big Four and some Tier One consulting firms working on housing and health. And one of the things that struck me in running and working on a large number of service change and transformation programmes was it was lovely to be able to guide and to steer, but I actually wanted to be part of the decision and actually steering that decision making and actually owning it all the way through. So I think whilst I learned

loads in the consultancy environment, actually being an executive director, owning, working with colleagues to actually drive and deliver and implement that change was really, really what brought me to it within the service.

Paul Parsons - Interesting to say you wanted to make that step change from guiding and steering into decision making. What kind of projects have you been involved in? Both roles, on both sides of the fence?

Ivan McConnell - Yeah, I think on both I've probably had a very fortunate career and been really lucky to work on some innovative and major programmes. From a service change in reconfiguration programme I had the fortunate position of being the Programme Director for Picture of Health in South East London, which was one of the fast, biggest reconfigurations. I think at the time we'd also had the biggest IRP review ever done and the largest number of recommendations for change on something really complicated. That then led into working through a strategic health authority and being an advisor on a number, across London, major service change programmes. And then I worked on some large mergers, acquisitions within the NHS, as well as also being the National Director for Planned Care Turnaround in Ireland, which spanned 53 hospitals, which was a fantastic opportunity to actually improve waiting times and work in very different ways, but also understand different cultural differences in different countries and different ways of working was a great opportunity.

Paul Parsons - So you had a really wide range of experience in some very big projects. What did those projects teach you about leading service change?

Ivan McConnell - I think from a leadership point of view, it was about making sure that you built the capability of people to deliver. It was about working with those local teams and I think in leading it, and this is something that maybe is a bit alien in a public sector environment in some respects, but was also allowing people to try and to make mistakes and to fail and to regroup. Because I think the biggest thing about any service change or any programme for me, when you're looking at transformation and changes, not

everything works. And very often we just chase an end point and an end target. And I think for me really, really important to build the capability of teams, not outsource for the sake of outsourcing. Where appropriate, absolutely. And we have done on my current programme, where appropriate, but build that capability, build that strength locally, because you're going to have to do more for the future, but actually let people fail. And I think the other thing is also about this might sound a bit trite, but engagement is key, but engagement where you listen and you reflect, you don't have to do everything everybody says, but actually listening, reflecting, building that into a process, feeding it back and having a dialogue, really, really important.

Caroline Latta - Can you tell us a little bit more about the programme and what you're trying to achieve with it?

Ivan McConnell - Yeah, sure. We've got a very, very challenged system sitting across both Hull and Northern Lincolnshire. We've got five providers, we serve a very, very highly deprived population. We struggle with recruitment, we struggle with retention, and that cuts across all disciplines. That's not just about clinical staff, that equally applies across some of our more technical skills, or catering staff, or portering staff, house keeping staff, all of whom we rely on to provide services. Our performance, our efficiency and our productivity is not great as a result. So the programme is looking across urgent emergency care, maternity and paediatrics and neonatal, and looking at how can we best provide those services to meet the needs of the population. How can we do that in a way where we maximise the skills of the staff we've got? How do we build new skills? And I think that's been a big challenge for us to think about those new skills, where we can't recruit doctors or advanced nurse practitioners, what else can we do? And equally thinking about how do we support the development of our local communities? So the one thing I've been really, really keen on, this as a programme, is that we don't just see this as an NHS reconfiguration programme, this is about system engagement, it is about thinking about local employment, it's about thinking about local people.

So one of the big things that's come out on the current programme is, when we look at workforce from some of the changes we might have proposed, just as an NHS provider, we would impact most on our band one to five staff, most of whom might be catering

assistants, porters, etc. And actually, most of those live in highly deprived communities, most of those are on low incomes and actually thinking of a different way about working rotational posts, changing the services in different ways has been actually fundamental to this as a programme, so complex, massive potential impact. We're just at the stage where we've gone through a pre-consultation business case development process. We've gone from 126 to two options in two years. We've engaged with over 12,000 people in that period, which is recognised as exemplary good practice. We've done a workforce analysis for all of the system and we've looked at those new skills. So a fantastic opportunity and we just need to get across the line to go to consultation now.

Paul Parsons - The real system transformation and seeing the NHS in that as a leader amongst public organisations and not just thinking about itself, that's really interesting. You mentioned there are five different organisations that the programme encompasses and we saw at the top of the pod there that you work for two of them as the Joint Director, what are the challenges that you've experienced in bringing all of those different organisations together and what have you done to overcome them?

Ivan McConnell - I think the challenge is about regulation and I think it's important to respect the fact. And working with local authority colleagues, for example, the NHS can run a deficit, local authorities can't. They need to increase their council tax if we want to fund something. They've got constraints in that. Flip side of that is the NHS has a whole range of regulation services. We're also working with some community interest companies. That brings with it some challenges as well about their regulatory environment, whether that be through a charity commission, through their funding sources and what we can do with people who work with them. And I think the other thing is, I'd say looking at our place partnerships, and we've got some really good emerging and evolving place partnerships within the Integrated Care Board, but actually, again, they're working without delegated budgets, they're working without delegated powers, so everybody's seeking to achieve the same thing. But we're all very different in terms of how we operate, how we're regulated. We're all very different, actually, even from as an NHS Foundation Trust, I've got governors in one of my organisations who are very, very different to my other organisation that's an NHS Trust where I don't. And that doesn't

mean you don't engage, it doesn't mean you don't discuss. But at the same time, in our local authority partners, you've got democratic legitimacy to hold and I think really, really important to respect that in the discussions and the engagement you have on a programme. Traditionally, I suspect, if I look back, if I'm critical of some of the bigger programmes I've run in the past, we did very much have a focus about we are a big, acute provider, we're trying to solve an acute problem which we were. We might have engaged, we might have listened, but did we do it as effectively as we could? Probably not as well as we could, and I think that's been a big change for me.

Paul Parsons - Let's talk about you and your leadership style for a moment, if we can. Do you have any particular principles or approaches that you like to hold yourself to and recommend to others?

Ivan McConnell - For me, I think it's about being open and being transparent and engaging. I think as a first principle, I would hope that I live to that with people. I don't like hidden messages, I don't like nuances and that applies to people I work with and also partners in delivering things. So I think that is something I hold. Another principle that I do have is about letting people learn. And I think really, really important that not everybody's been through a big reconfiguration programme. Let's accept they are complicated, they are multiple in their forms, but actually let people learn, guide and support. I don't think you should micromanage in that sense. I think create a macro environment. And absolutely sometimes there are times, as any leader has to, where you do have to micro, but I think build the environment that you can make mistakes and people feel safe in raising issues and making mistakes and learn from it. Nothing goes perfectly. And I think very often in the NHS we seek perfection in people and quite often people can default to blame and actually that's wrong. So I think really, really important as a leader to create that environment for everybody and then everybody excels and I think be grateful to the teams you work with, people work hard, and I think important to publicly acknowledge that as well.

Caroline Latta - They're really good, nice and clear. Thinking back across your career, who are the leaders that you've looked up to and have learned from both in and out of

NHS transformation environment and more widely in the public sector? Thinking about those transformation leaders, those change leaders who are out there, is there anyone that you look up to at the moment?

Ivan McConnell - An interesting question, actually, because I think there are probably multiple and many. I have had the luxury of working centrally with some fantastic ministers in my career and I think you learn a lot about politics, you learn a lot about government by working in a centre and I think I've learned loads from them. I think, in fairness, I probably learned most from the chief executive I worked for who was a PCT Chief Exec and a system chief exec when I did a Picture of Health in South East London. And he was fantastic, not micromanaging, but actually creating an environment within which you could flourish. He was fantastic at challenge in a really, really nice way. You didn't feel you were being challenged, but you left the room going "blimey, that was a good discussion" and I think actually he had grown up, he started his career as a porter and became a chief exec. And actually I learned a lot from him about just that respect for people and to listen, I think, absolutely fantastic opportunity. But I think I've had the luxury of working with lots and lots of people I wouldn't want to single any of them out, who are fantastically bright, fantastically enabled and work in very different ways, actually.

Paul Parsons - So what would be your advice for it might be somebody in your team, it might be somebody out there in another team who is listening to this episode of Not a Consultation. What would be your advice to anyone in service transformation who is aspiring to lead service change and do what you did and say, actually, I don't want to be doing the advice, I don't want to be doing the "do" anymore, I want to aspire to be part of the decision making and the system leadership team.

Ivan McConnell - I think it's about be yourself. I think. Don't just look and say, what is somebody else done? The system you work in, the people you work with will be different. So there are absolutely things you can learn from other people and I think that's really important that we do that, but actually be yourself. Bring your own mark, bring your own stamp to something. I think in any service changing transformation piece as well, be bold

and be brave. Stand by things you say, build your evidence base, build that effectively, use that evidence to support your decision making and use the data to support a dialogue. Don't go into it just with I've got a set of assumptions and I've got a set of beliefs. I think that in service change will certainly make you fail. That's my personal view and I think going back to your earlier question, recognise the constraints that you work within. There will be constraints in the environment you're in. So I think be bold, be brave, be yourself. The biggest bit of it is accept the challenge you get from the people you work with. Accept the challenge from the people you're engaging with. People raise concerns because they're concerned about it, they have a view, really, really work hard to understand, to listen. And I'd say personally recognise you can't do everything, there will be constraints. So be open, be honest and be transparent about what those are. The thing about leadership is everybody's got a different approach, haven't they? Everybody's got their own style. I think there is something about being adaptable in that style as well. To be fair, that is a really big thing for me. You have to adapt. Everywhere I've been and everyone I've worked with has been different and they behave differently and I can think of my time working at the centre with ministers and secretaries of state. They're very differently driven. Your reaction to what they do and how you work with them is very, very different to working on some areas of things I've done in the past with homeless people. You've got to adapt, you've got to work in very different ways. Be yourself. Going back to what I said.

Caroline Latta - Coming directly into NHS leadership from a consulting background gives a really interesting perspective. It was great to hear that Ivan was inspired from his previous experience to get involved in NHS service delivery and taking responsibility directly for delivering a service change.

Paul Parsons - Yeah, the variety and scale of work that Ivan's done in the past helps him understand how different cultures and communities work differently.

Caroline Latta - And I think what really stuck out for me, was how Ivan's experience of being led himself taught him the value of allowing people to try different things and letting people make mistakes and learn from them.

Paul Parsons - Absolutely. As Ivan said, not everything works. So in a service change, we have to be open to trying different things, otherwise we might not get the best outcomes for our patients.

Caroline Latta - And that's really similar to the points Rebecca Malin made when we talked to her.

Paul Parsons - Yes. Giving people the space to try and fail, then try again. Give that episode a listen if you haven't already. It's really good.

Caroline Latta - That's it for this episode. A huge thanks to Ivan McConnell for joining us to talk about his experiences of leadership.

Paul Parsons - We'd love to hear about your experience of leadership, especially if you've got some tips to share. Join the conversation by following us on Twitter @notconsultation or emailing us at listen@notaconsultation.com

Caroline Latta - Don't forget there's loads more learning in our other episodes, all available on our website, notaconsultation.com.

Paul Parsons - You can find us as Not A Consultation wherever you get your podcast and hit subscribe to be the first to get all our new episodes.

Caroline Latta - Thanks for listening and remember, this is not a consultation,

Ivan McConnell - it's a podcast.

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