

**FLORENCE
NIGHTINGALE
FOUNDATION**

**IENM online programme:
research and evaluation report**

October 2024

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	4
1. PROGRAMME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT	7
Governance.....	7
Developmental research.....	7
Key findings.....	9
Recommendations.....	13
2. CONTENT, REACH AND LESSONS LEARNT	15
Timeline and number of places.....	15
Key lessons learnt.....	16
3. PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE, ENGAGEMENT, AND SATISFACTION	18
Motivations.....	18
Programme experience.....	20
Course content.....	22
Expectations.....	26
Overall experience.....	29
4. IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ABILITIES	30
Results.....	30
Intention to stay.....	31
5. IMPACT OF PROGRAMME ON DAILY PRACTICE	32
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	37
APPENDIX	39
REFERENCES	40

Executive Summary

Background

The NHS is currently grappling with the critical challenge of recruiting and retaining an adequate health and care workforce. To address this challenge, in 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) pledged to support the recruitment of 50,000 additional nurses by 2024/25, with 38,000 being recruited internationally. As part of this, NHS England aimed to develop an ethical recruitment model to ensure that internationally educated nurses receive high-quality induction and pastoral support.

In December 2021, the Burdett Trust for Nursing awarded a grant to the Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) to design, deliver, and evaluate an online blended leadership programme for 2,000 internationally educated nurses and midwives (IENMs) working in the UK over a two-year period. The programme aimed to equip IENMs with the leadership skills necessary to thrive in their roles. It focused on enhancing their confidence, communication abilities, and leadership competencies, while also addressing their unique challenges.

The IENM online programme began development in April 2022, with the first cohort of 1,000 running from September 2022-March 2023 and the second cohort of 1,000 running from October 2023-February 2024. With the permission of the Burdett Trust for Nursing, FNF also ran an additional cohort funded by NHSE of 618 participants from May 2023-August 2023.

Aims

This study used a mixed-methods approach to explore four key areas:

1. Factors supporting a positive transition experience for IENMs and how those factors can be effectively incorporated into an online learning curriculum.
2. Participants' perceptions and overall experiences of the leadership programme.
3. Changes in participants' self-reported leadership abilities following the programme.
4. The programme's influence on participants' daily roles and the perceived relevance and impact of the training to their work and patient care.

Key Findings

Enhancing IENM transition through leadership development

- IENMs face **substantial obstacles to career progression** in the UK, including discrimination, communication difficulties, a lack of senior support, and cultural differences.
- Standard leadership programmes **often lack the tailored approach necessary** to address unique challenges facing IENMs and empower their advancement.

Programme reach and experience

- Participants across all cohorts comprised over **30 different nationalities**, with 27% from India, 21% from the Philippines, 16% from Nigeria, and 5% from Ghana. These countries represent 4 out of the top 5 countries the UK now primarily recruits from.

- Feedback was **overwhelmingly positive**, with high levels of engagement. 99% of surveyed participants were satisfied with the programme, rating it as good, very good, or excellent.
- 99% of surveyed participants would recommend this programme to others.
- The Quality Improvement module, coaching and problem-solving sessions, Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) recordings, and the personal vignettes were particularly valued.

Impact

- Surveyed participants reported **improved leadership self-efficacy** across all areas, indicating enhanced confidence in their leadership abilities as a result of the programme.
- 98% of participants stated they were **motivated to create change** in their workplace because of the programme.
- Five case studies illustrate the programme's **tangible impact on participants' day-to-day work**, showing increased confidence, practical skills application, enhanced communication, improved problem-solving, career planning, and the opening of new opportunities.

Recommendations

Leadership development for the IENM workforce should include:

- A comprehensive cultural integration programme, including workshops on UK workplace norms, mentoring partnerships, and resources on adapting leadership styles
- Targeted communication skills training programme, focusing on workplace communication and presentation skills tailored to IENM needs
- A focus on targeted leadership competencies, designing learning modules aligned with valued leadership skills including negotiation strategies and self-awareness

To improve the FNF IENM online programme, participants recommended:

- Additional content on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), research skills, and personal skill development.
- More group projects, guest speakers, and personal reflection time, with a summarisation session at the end
- Continued access to course materials

Conclusion

This programme has had a significant positive impact on participants' professional growth and self-efficacy. The evaluation findings will not only guide future iterations of the programme but also contribute to broader policy discussions on how to better support and develop this vital group of our health and care workforce. The recommendations provide a strong foundation for ongoing improvements to ensure the programme continues to meet participants' needs and aligns with NHS strategic priorities.

Introduction

Context

The NHS is currently grappling with a workforce crisis. This issue has become the most pressing concern for the NHS, with significant nursing shortages at the forefront.¹ This shortage is not unique to the UK. The World Health Organization's State of the World's Nursing Report (2020) highlighted a global scarcity of nursing professionals.² Alarmingly, the report projects a worldwide shortage of 6 million nurses by 2030, underscoring the urgency of addressing this issue on both national and international levels.

In response to this crisis, in 2019 the Department of Health and Social Care set an ambitious goal: to increase the NHS nursing workforce by 50,000 by 2024/25.³ A significant portion of this target—38,000 nurses—was expected to be met through international recruitment. This strategy reflects the growing reliance on globally mobile healthcare professionals to meet domestic healthcare needs.

NHS England is spearheading efforts to position the UK as a "destination of choice" for internationally trained nurses. It wants to develop a sustainable and ethical international nurse recruitment model, emphasising high-quality induction programmes and comprehensive pastoral support for these healthcare professionals.

The private healthcare sector in the UK is not immune to these shortages and also actively recruits nurses from overseas. This adds another layer of complexity to the national strategy, as both public and private sectors compete for a limited pool of qualified professionals.

Five years on from the UK Government's "50k nurses programme" we can report the following:

- The target of recruiting an additional 50,000 nurses to the NHS in England was achieved by November 2023 (six months ahead of schedule).⁴
- 93% of these newly recruited nurses were internationally educated, representing an unprecedented surge in the numbers of international recruits. For the first time ever, in 2022, half of the professionals who joined the NMC register were trained outside of the UK.⁵
- The NMC now reports worrying trends when it comes to the retention of these professionals, with internationally educated colleagues spending less time on the register compared to those educated in the UK. NMC research has found that the transition experience for IENMs can influence their rates of attrition.⁶

It's clear that if the NHS wants to retain and develop this international talent, it must provide transition support aimed at addressing the unique needs of these new registrants.

Aims of this evaluation report

In December 2021, the Burdett Trust for Nursing awarded a grant to the Florence Nightingale Foundation (FNF) to develop, provide, and evaluate an online blended leadership programme to support 2,000 internationally educated nurses and midwives (IENMs) working in the UK over a

two-year period. Subsequent funding was then also secured from NHS England and NHS provider organisations for an additional cohort (610 places).

The programme aimed to equip IENMs with the leadership skills necessary to thrive in their roles within the NHS. It focused on enhancing their confidence, communication abilities, and leadership competencies, while also addressing the unique challenges faced by internationally recruited staff. Its ultimate aim was to provide support for this workforce in their critical transition period into the UK health and care system to enable the NHS to better retain and grow this talent.

Now that all three cohorts have concluded their programme, this evaluation aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key factors that contribute to a positive transition experience for IENMs and how can these elements be effectively incorporated into an online leadership curriculum?
2. What are participants' experiences of the leadership programme?
3. How has participation in the programme impacted participants' self-reported leadership skills and competencies?
4. How do participants perceive the relevance and applicability of the leadership programme to their everyday work?

Insights from this paper will inform future FNF curricula designed to support IENMs. These findings can also guide NHS organisations in enhancing support for this expanding segment of the NMC register.

Methodology

This study adopted a comprehensive mixed-methods design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to gather insights. The research process consisted of two main phases: initial programme development research and post-programme evaluation.

Phase 1: Programme development research

1. **Literature Review:** A rapid literature review was conducted to examine the employment experiences of IENMs in the UK. The review focused on identifying factors affecting IENMs' wellbeing, professional development, and leadership opportunities.
2. **Survey:** A survey was distributed to IENMs across the UK through FNF networks and channels. It received 244 responses over three weeks, with 190 IENMs completing it entirely. The survey explored participants' experiences, leadership development needs, and online learning preferences. Data were analysed using Excel, focusing on three key areas: leadership experience, leadership development needs, and online learning preferences.

Data from Phase 1 informed the design and development of the programme.

Phase 2: Evaluation

Following delivery for three cohorts (comprising 2,610 participants) we evaluated programme implementation and impact by:

1. Collecting and analysing evaluation surveys from over 1,000 participants.
2. Conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five participants via Microsoft Teams, each lasting up to 60 minutes. Interviews were transcribed and underwent abductive content analysis, focusing on motivations, experiences, and learning/impact.
3. Collecting and analysing pre and post-programme impact questionnaires for 75 participants to assess changes in their self-reported leadership skills and competencies before and after completion of the programme. These employed a four-point scale across ten key aspects of leadership competency.
4. Analysing data from online padlets used during four webinars to assess participant interaction and feedback.

Structure of this report

This report is structured as follows:

Section 1	Focuses on the design and the development of the programme, including governance. It includes insights from a literature review and survey about the transition experiences of IENMs into the UK's health and care system, what IENMs most need and want from leadership learning, and the ways in which to make the make programme accessible and engaging for this audience.
Section 2	Focuses on the content and reach of the programme and delivery timeline. It also delves into lessons learnt from the first cohort, which were then subsequently implemented for the latter two cohorts.
Section 3	Focuses on participants' experiences on the programme, analysing their motivations for joining, their satisfaction levels, and their overall engagement with the content.
Section 4	Focuses on how the programme impacted participants' self-reported leadership skills and competencies.
Section 5	Focuses on how the programme impacted participants' daily work, exploring how the knowledge and skills gained on the programme are being put to use in practice.

1. Programme design and development

Governance

The project design commenced in April 2022. FNF began by establishing an expert Steering Group to guide the design, development, and quality assurance of the programme. Steering Group members met quarterly throughout 2022/2023 and comprised nursing and midwifery leaders with expertise in and or lived experience of international recruitment. A full list of Steering Group members is provided in the Appendix.

Developmental research

The development of the programme was informed by a rigorous two-phase research approach, conducted between April 2022 and August 2022. This methodical process was designed to ensure that the programme would effectively address the unique challenges and needs of IENMs transitioning into practice within the NHS.

Phase 1: Literature review

A rapid literature review examined the employment experiences of IENMs in the UK. Its primary aim was to identify key factors affecting their wellbeing, professional development, and leadership opportunities. To conduct the review, various platforms were utilised, including Google Scholar, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) Library, and X, to find relevant articles on nursing and midwifery. Key search terms included "international nurses," "UK," "NHS," "discrimination," "racism," "BAME," "career progression," "biases," and "leadership." A total of 21 articles were selected based on their relevance to the research focus, with contributions from colleagues at FNF.

Key findings

The thematic analysis revealed three key themes: (1) **Inequities in transition experience**, (2) **Career development**, and (3) **Leadership development opportunities**.

Inequities in transition experience

- **Challenges faced by IENMs:** IENMs frequently encounter issues related to communication, language proficiency, and cultural differences, which often lead to feelings of isolation and discrimination. A significant finding was that IENMs' face discrimination and unequal opportunities within the NHS, which can result in fear of dismissal and emotional distress.
- **Impact of discrimination:** The review highlighted how workplace discrimination affects both personal wellbeing and professional life, creating barriers to integration within the healthcare system.
- **Need for support:** The findings emphasised the importance of support systems such as induction and orientation programmes that include cultural sensitivity training to help IENMs navigate the complexities of the UK healthcare environment.

Career development

- **Barriers to progression:** IENMs often face obstacles in career progression due to deskilling, limited promotional opportunities, and biased practices. Despite their qualifications and experience, cultural differences and communication challenges prevent many from advancing, leading to underemployment and dissatisfaction with their roles.
- **Need for career development initiatives:** There is a clear need for targeted career development opportunities that enable IENMs to fully utilise their skills and experience within the UK healthcare system.

Leadership development opportunities

- **Importance of leadership programmes:** The review highlighted the crucial role leadership development programmes play in fostering professional growth and confidence among IENMs. Programmes that focus on inclusive leadership not only promote a sense of belonging but also improve patient care outcomes.
- **Positive outcomes from existing programmes:** Initiatives such as the NHS Ethnic Minority Groups COVID-19 Leadership Programme have been successful in enhancing the career progression and leadership skills of ethnic minority nurses and midwives. However, while there may be some overlap between IENMs and ethnic minority staff, these groups are not mutually exclusive.

The literature review underscored the significant barriers that IENMs face, including discrimination and limited career advancement. Leadership development programmes tailored to the needs of IENMs are critical in overcoming these barriers and empowering them to thrive within the NHS. However, the review found that further research is needed to explore leadership development more deeply for IENMs as they are a distinct group.

Phase 2: Survey

Phase two of the study involved a survey to explore the experiences of IENMs transitioning to work in the UK. The survey aimed to capture their transition experiences, examine leadership development needs, and identify online learning preferences. The survey was distributed to IENMs across the UK through FNF networks and channels. It received 244 responses over three weeks, with 190 IENMs completing it entirely. Table 1 outlines the demographics of participants who participated in the FNF survey. The data from these responses were analysed using Excel. The results are presented in the following sections:

1. Leadership experience
2. Leadership development needs
3. Online learning preferences

Table 1: Survey respondent demographics (n=190)

Question	Results
UK nation	Most respondents (98.42%) reported working in England, with a few in Wales (1.05%) and Scotland (0.53%).

Sex	The majority were female (83.16%), with the remaining as male (16.84%).
Age	Half of the participants were between 31 - 40 years old, with varying ages represented across other groups.
Nationality	Respondents hailed from 27 countries, with a significant portion from India (33.68%), followed by Nigeria (25.26%) and the Philippines (14.21%).
Qualifications	Most respondents held nursing qualifications (70%), with some having dual qualifications in different fields (16.84%). A few (11.58%) did not specify their field of qualification.
Level of qualification	Degrees were the most common (35.94%), followed by diplomas (26.56%).
Year of qualification	Respondents' years of registration overseas ranged from 1981 to 2020, with 2012 being the highest (8.42%).
Duration	A large proportion (38.42%) had worked 0 - 3 years in their home country before moving to the UK.
Other qualifications	About 41.05% of respondents held other relevant qualifications.

Key findings:

Leadership development experience

Participants were asked about their leadership development experience, including their previous experience overseas and in the UK, the perceived benefits of leadership development training, the challenges they faced, and the cultural differences in leadership they encountered.

Prior leadership experience from overseas: The vast majority (78%) reported not receiving leadership development training or professional support overseas. The remaining respondents received various types of leadership training or support, including charge nurse development, clinical support, management studies, and preceptorship programmes.

Prior leadership experience in the UK: Two-thirds reported not receiving leadership development training or professional support in the UK. Among the remaining third who received prior leadership training in the UK, various programmes were cited, including mentorship courses, leadership courses within trusts, and specialised leadership programmes like Edward Jenner and Mary Seacole Leadership and Management.

Benefits to leadership development training: Of those who had received some form of formal leadership training, a slight majority (55%) found practicing leadership skills beneficial, followed by 53% who identified developing self-awareness as valuable. Additionally, 50% reported benefitting from exploring their leadership style. Some respondents also mentioned gaining abilities like coaching and managing others. A full list of perceived benefits is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Perceived benefits of leadership training (n=190)



Challenges to leading: Just over half of all respondents (52%) highlighted cultural differences impacting perceptions of leadership, while 48% mentioned the lack of support from senior staff. Concerns included stereotypes affecting confidence, fear of failure due to non-NHS training, and language barriers. Other challenges cited were financial constraints, staffing shortages, absence of role models, and feelings of worthlessness.

Cultural differences in leading: Most (84%) indicated that there were cultural differences in UK leadership styles. Key themes included communication challenges, the need to prove worth, less hierarchical structures, increased support, and democratic leadership. Impact-wise, some felt empowered by the challenges, while others felt demoralised, dismissed, or isolated. Some reported no significant impact.

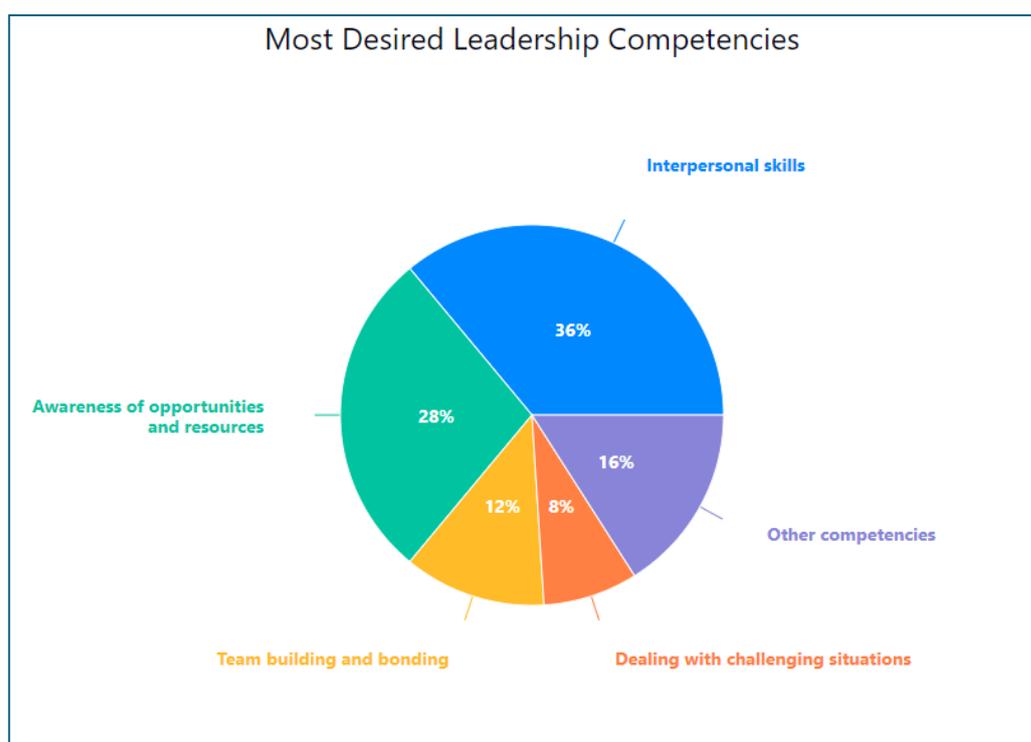
Leadership development needs

Participants were asked about the competencies they would most like to see in a leadership programme. The top responses were as follows (and outlined in Figure 2):

- Interpersonal skills
- Awareness of opportunities and resources
- Team building and bonding
- Dealing with challenging situations

Other suggestions by a small number of participants included: overcoming imposter syndrome, clinical supervision, understanding different cultures, and how to access funding opportunities.

Figure 2: Most desired leadership competencies (n=190)



Confidence

Regarding confidence, 21% (n=157) agreed that they were more confident working in the UK compared to their home country, 38% remained neutral, and 41% were less confident. Respondents were then asked to expand on their answer. Out of 157 participants, 103 chose to do so. Their responses were categorised into themes of confidence, under confidence, and uncertainty as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Description of confidence levels working in the UK

Confidence level	Description
Confident	Many felt more confident due to greater opportunities for growth and development in the UK, citing a supportive environment, networking opportunities, and good equipment.
	Some mentioned feeling safer in the UK, attributing their confidence to evidence-based delivery and a secure working environment.
Under confident	Several respondents expressed a lack of confidence due to perceived incompetence among IENMs by colleagues, as well as difficulties in adapting to cultural differences and language barriers.
	Some felt overwhelmed by the complexity of UK policies and procedures, while others struggled with the fluid role of nurses in the UK healthcare system.
Unsure	Some respondents, particularly those new to the UK, were unsure about their level of confidence, while others weighed the pros and cons of working in different countries or roles.

Online learning preferences

Respondents were asked about their online learning preferences, including their experience with online work and the learning methods they found most valuable in this format. The majority (53%) rated their experience of online learning as “good,” indicating an openness to learn in this way. When asked about the approaches they most valued with regards to online learning, most said they valued videos, small lectures, opportunities for interactive participation. The full list of preferred approaches is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Participant online learning preferences (n=190)

Learning approach	Percentage
Videos	79%
Mini lectures	64%
Interactive learning	63%
Case studies	56%
Multiple choice questions	54%
Discussion forums	51%
Reflective learning prompts	49%
Access to resources	40%

Summary

The survey, encompassing responses from up to 190 IENMs offers crucial insights into their career trajectories, leadership development experiences, and online learning preferences. Respondents are predominantly female, aged 31-40, and based in England, with India being the most common country of origin. Most work exclusively in nursing.

A significant leadership training gap emerged, with 78% lacking leadership training from their home countries and 67% without such training in the UK, aligning with FNF's literature review findings and underscoring an unmet need for IENM leadership development. The survey highlighted several challenges faced by IENMs in the UK, including cultural differences affecting leadership perceptions and communication, insufficient support from senior staff, pressure to prove professional capabilities, and a lack of representation coupled with peer and management mistrust, all of which impact confidence and self-worth.

Respondents reported varied levels of confidence and job satisfaction compared to their home countries, influenced by colleagues' attitudes and growth opportunities. Regarding leadership programme preferences, participants emphasised the importance of developing self-awareness, coaching skills, and receiving feedback, while expressing a preference for verbal demonstrations, mini-lectures, and interactive learning in online platforms. These comprehensive findings guided FNF in designing a tailored leadership development programme that addresses the unique needs and challenges faced by IENMs in the UK health and care system.

Recommendations

Based on the survey findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ensure a fair and straightforward application process, considering the lack of support from senior staff identified as a major challenge for IENMs.
2. Implement a thorough recruitment drive across all UK nations to ensure equal opportunities.
3. Practice cultural and linguistic sensitivity throughout the programme development and promotion to accommodate the diverse participant base.
4. Design modules aligned with identified leadership competencies valued by participants to cater to their specific needs.
5. Offer opportunities for self-awareness exploration, coaching skills development, feedback acquisition, mentorship, and shadowing experiences.
6. Emphasise the programme's importance without conferring a formal qualification, while highlighting the significance of being an FNF alumni.
7. Incorporate cultural preparedness training and negotiation strategies into the programme content.
8. Facilitate networking opportunities to foster strong connections among participants.
9. Tailor the e-learning approach to reflect participant preferences, including video demonstrations, mini lectures, interactive discussions, and text-based information with relevant case studies and additional resources.
10. Ensure representative sample sizes in evaluation research, considering diversity factors such as country of origin, gender, age, and occupation.

Impact on programme design

The content and delivery of the IENM leadership programme, as detailed more extensively in the next section, was greatly shaped by insights from both phase one and two of the research, ensuring that the programme addressed the unique challenges and needs of IENMs'. Table 4 provides a clear view of how both literature and survey findings were combined to inform the comprehensive design of the IENM leadership programme.

Table 4: Impact of research on programme design

#	Key element	Literature insight	Survey finding	How it informed programme design
1	Tailored support for IENMs' unique challenges	IENMs face discrimination, communication barriers, and cultural differences		Included modules on cultural competence and managing bias to create a more inclusive work environment
2	Emphasis on career progression	IENMs experience underemployment and barriers to career advancement		Incorporated coaching and skills-building sessions to support career advancement and showcase qualifications
3	Leadership development focus	Inclusive leadership practices boost professional growth and confidence		Provided leadership training to prepare IENMs for leadership roles, highlighting the value of diversity in leadership
4	Fair and simple application process		Lack of support from senior staff complicates the application process	Simplified the application process to ensure independent access for all participant without needing senior staff
5	Inclusive recruitment		Equal access to opportunities is needed across UK regions	Launched an inclusive recruitment campaign across all UK nations
6	Cultural and linguistic sensitivity	IENMs face challenges with language and cultural differences		Embedded cultural and linguistic sensitivity into programme design and promotion to support diverse participants
7	Leadership competency-aligned modules		Participants value specific leadership competencies	Tailored leadership modules to match the competencies most valued by participants
8	Opportunities for self-awareness and growth	Self-awareness vital for leadership development		Offered opportunities for self-awareness, mentorship, and coaching to support personal and professional growth
9	Programme value without formal qualification		Leadership development is highly valued, even without a formal qualification	Emphasised leadership development and FNF prestige, despite no formal qualification being offered
10	Cultural preparedness and negotiation training	Cultural preparedness and negotiation skills are essential		Included training on cultural preparedness and negotiation strategies to help participants navigate workplace challenges
11	Networking opportunities		Participants benefit from peer connections and support	Integrated networking opportunities, using chat functions and interactive sessions to foster collaboration
12	Tailored E-Learning approach		Participants have varied preferences for learning formats	Designed E-learning content with video demonstrations, interactive discussions, speakers, and case studies

2. Content, reach, and lessons learnt

The IENM online leadership development programme consists of 5 online modules, delivered and supported by expert FNF and guest facilitators. Like all FNF leadership development opportunities, the main aim of this programme was to develop the leadership capacity and capability of the participants. With this programme, however, there was also an additional focus on examining the unique challenges of working as an IENM within the UK with the aim of creating a community of like-minded individuals whose professional relationships and peer support could extend beyond the programme's timeframe.

We worked with world-renowned organisations, including Myers Briggs and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) Learning, and FNF's community of subject matter experts, to create thirty hours of engaging online learning content. The programme modules consist of the following:

- Module 1: Personality Preferences and Performance in Teams
- Module 2: Fundamentals of Quality Improvement
- Module 3: Presentation of Self – Presence and Impact
- Module 4: Using your authority and influencing change
- Module 5: Co-consulting and live action learning sets

In addition to the online modules, we commissioned digital storytelling experts Patient Voices to create inspiring short films documenting the real-life stories of five internationally educated nurses now working in the UK. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the learning from these stories and to post questions and thoughts on the learning management system (LMS) in advance of attending participatory webinars that followed the modules.

Timeline and number of places

The first cohort of 1,000 participants ran from September 2022 to March 2023. Due to the successful reception of this programme, and with prior agreement from the Burdett Trust for Nursing, we then delivered a second, additional cohort to NHS organisations (618 places, funded by NHSE) from May 2023 to August 2023. The third cohort (1,000 Burdett funded places) commenced in October 2023 and will be completed by February 2024. In total, 2,618 places have been offered and successfully recruited to.



Participants across all cohorts comprised over thirty different nationalities, demonstrating the wide reach of the programme. 716 participants (27%) were from India, 566 (21%) were from Nigeria, 416 (16%) were from the Philippines, and 143 (5%) were from Ghana. These countries represent 4 out of the top 5 countries the UK now primarily recruits from, showing that programme participants are broadly representative of the IENM population on the NMC register.

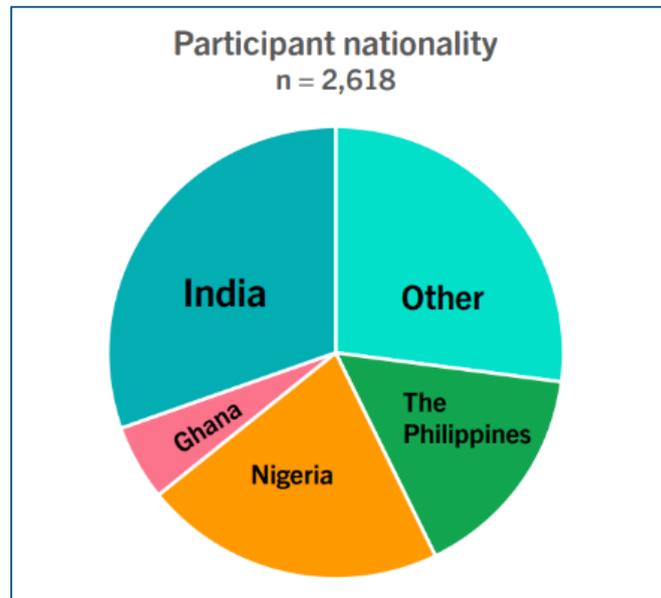


Figure 3: Participant nationality

Key lessons learnt which shaped content and delivery

Originally, the programme entailed around a 35-hour time commitment from participants over a 6-month period. Cohort 1 participant feedback led the team to make some programme changes for the subsequent cohorts. While the content has remained the same, the programme length has been shortened to 4 months, modules 1 and 2 have been combined, and there is a greater use of interactive padlets and chat functions embedded into delivery.

As part of this evaluation, FNF conducted a reflective consultation with the IENM FNF staff-delivery team about the lessons learnt from the first cohort. This reflection offered valuable insights into the effectiveness of the programme and highlighted areas for improvement. Here's a summary of the key takeaways from the point of view of the staff team:

Successes and strengths

1. **Effective large cohort management:** The team successfully managed a large cohort, offering a credible course led by tech leaders and impactful facilitators like RADA. Online facilitation was particularly successful, with participants sharing powerful emotional stories that connected to real patient experiences. This created a strong sense of purpose among the participants.
2. **Significant engagement:** The programme empowered participants, with 1,000 advocates for change in practice. High levels of engagement, especially in webinars, showed that the content resonated deeply with participants.

3. **Representation and Influence:** Leading the IENM programme, though initially overwhelming, highlighted the importance of representation. It also built confidence in webinar facilitation and team collaboration, allowing the team to continuously deliver high-quality sessions.
4. **Continuous improvement in e-learning:** The course content evolved, becoming more relevant and engaging over time. Tools like Mentimeter proved effective, and feedback consistently praised the impactful guest speakers.
5. **Team growth and skill development:** Team members experienced personal growth, improving technical skills in areas like video editing and web management. This contributed to the success of the programme, exceeding initial expectations.

Challenges and areas for improvement

1. **Logistics and planning:** Managing webinars and speaker coordination was challenging. The team learned the importance of early bookings, clear communication with speakers, and having contingency plans in place to avoid disruptions. This challenge has largely been mitigated by the recruitment of internal FNF facilitators who manage the coordination of guest webinar speakers.
2. **Technical issues:** The new system presented technical challenges, but improvements were made for future cohorts. Streamlining processes, like the application system, was highlighted as an area that needed attention to avoid confusion and ensure data accuracy.
3. **Participant feedback and needs:** While online facilitation was successful, participants expressed a desire for clearer initial information, more face-to-face interaction, and additional post-course materials to continue their learning journey.

Key learnings for future cohorts

1. **Systems and application process:** The application form should be simplified to minimise confusion, only asking for essential information. Improvements in systems like Salesforce for bulk emails and communication with participants are crucial.
2. **Interactive and engaging content:** Incorporating more interactive content in live sessions was highlighted as a way to enhance participant engagement. Continuous refinement of webinar content to meet the evolving needs of participants was also suggested.
3. **Contingency planning:** Having backup plans for webinars and addressing logistical issues early in the process were key takeaways to ensure smooth programme delivery in the future.

By reflecting on these insights, the programme team was able to refine, modify, and improve their approach, ensuring the next cohorts benefit from a well-structured, impactful learning experience

3. Participant experience, engagement, and satisfaction

To gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences with the IENM leadership programme, data was collected and analysed from evaluation forms (n=1,135) and five in-depth semi-structured interviews. These sources allowed the exploration of a range of participant perspectives, providing qualitative insights into the experience of the programme.

The analysis focused on three key themes:

1. **Motivations:** Understanding why participants chose to join the IENM programme. This included exploring their personal and professional reasons for seeking leadership development, as well as their goals and expectations at the outset.
2. **Programme experience:** Exploring how participants engaged with the content, structure, and delivery of the programme. This theme delved into their day-to-day experiences, including what they found most valuable, challenging, or impactful in the programme.
3. **Expectations:** Investigating whether participants' initial expectations of the IENM programme were met, exceeded, or unmet. This helped to assess how the programme aligned with their leadership development goals and what, if any, gaps they perceived.

Motivations

The evaluation uncovered a range of participant motivations and goals for undertaking the IENM leadership development programme. The key themes included (1) career progression, (2) building leadership skills, (3) resonance, (4) reputation, and (5) free to access. A summary of motivations is presented in Table 6.

Career progression

Several participants emphasised that their involvement in the programme was a key step toward advancing their professional careers. For some, the programme presented a critical opportunity to overcome the barrier of limited leadership experience, which had previously hindered their ability to progress. They saw the programme as a valuable asset to enhance their qualifications and strengthen their job applications for roles demanding strong leadership skills.

“Because my career is now progressing into the mid-senior level... I have a bit of fear in verbal communication using English as a second language... the leadership programme seemed like a great, sort of, solution or catalyser of my issues...” [P1].

One participant identified how the leadership course could be instrumental not only in advancing their career but also in fostering personal growth through self-evaluation and development.

“I wanted to do a course for my career progression, I wanted to develop myself.” [P5].

Develop leadership skills

All participants interviewed said that the desire to build leadership skills was a major driving force behind their decision to apply for the program. They recognised the importance of refining both personal and professional abilities and were keenly aware of how these enhancements could directly influence their career trajectories.

“I've always looked towards developing myself and progressing to a better role... I think there was some skills I had to work on myself, and the key one was presence and impact... Also, this would help me to chair the meetings properly, to line manage people and I think as you progress onto the career ladder, it becomes evident how important these personal skills are.”
[P4].

For many, the programme offered a vital opportunity to not only develop these skills but also to observe their tangible impact on their readiness for more advanced roles. The participants expressed a deep motivation to leverage the programme to sharpen their leadership capabilities, which they saw as essential for unlocking future career opportunities and achieving long-term professional growth.

“I know that I need for me to progress, I need leadership courses... it was a big opportunity for me to, to, be able to join and I was so happy that when I applied, I was given the opportunity to do that because it is a plus for me... and will boost my application if I need to apply for any leadership role in my place of work and all that... that is why I decided to do the course.” [P3].

Resonance

Several participants expressed that the programme's resonance with their personal and professional circumstances was a significant motivating factor in their decision to join. They felt a deep connection with the programme, recognising it as uniquely tailored to their experiences and challenges. One participant eloquently captured this sentiment, noting that:

“I was checking the website regularly and then one day there was a programme here that was about me, like for people from abroad.” [P1].

This sense of being seen and understood by the programme was highly motivating, as it provided participants with an opportunity to engage in a learning experience that genuinely reflected their situation and aspirations. This alignment between the programme's content and their individual circumstances was not only affirming but also fuelled their commitment to fully engage and benefit from the opportunities it presented.

Reputation

The programme's strong reputation emerged as a powerful driving force for many applicants. The glowing testimonials from past participants, who spoke highly of their experiences and the tangible benefits they gained, played a pivotal role in influencing the decision to apply. Word-of-mouth endorsements highlighted not just the programme's effectiveness, but also the credibility and esteem of the organisation behind it, known widely for its excellence in leadership training.

“I had to apply for Florence Nightingale and, being that it's reputable, everyone has been talking about it. I wanted to know more.” [P2].

This widespread recognition and the positive buzz surrounding the programme reassured potential applicants of its value, instilling confidence that their investment of time and effort would yield significant returns in their professional development.

Free to access

The programme being fully funded served as a significant motivating factor for two participants interviewed, who cited it as a decisive element in their decision to apply. For these individuals, securing financial support for professional development had often been a considerable obstacle, with many other programmes requiring not only a financial commitment but also managerial approval, which added layers of complexity and uncertainty to the process, as noted by one participant:

“I’m grateful for FNF because, especially with some of the funded programmes... because you have organisations that don’t support you with study leave... many of the FNF applications seek manager’s support... they have to sign and not many of them will... this particular programme did not ask for manager details... I think that’s why people can... instead of begging their managers... they can just request annual leave and take the day off ... it gives them freedom to look at their development without begging.” [P4].

Table 5: Participant motivations for applying to the IENM online leadership programme

Motivation for applying		
No	Motivation	Supporting explanation
1	Career progression	Participants saw the programme as crucial for overcoming career progression barriers
2	Develop leadership skills	Linked to career progression, participants desired to learn leadership skills specifically as it was regarded as essential for advancing into senior roles and for high quality practice
3	Resonance	The programme resonated with participants by aligning with their experiences, making them feel understood and supported in their career journeys
4	Reputation	The programme’s strong reputation, supported by positive reviews and FNF’s credibility, reassured participants of its value and effectiveness
5	Free to access	The programme’s fully funded nature was a major draw, removing financial and managerial barriers, making it more accessible to participants without having to seek managerial approval

Programme experience

Participants’ feedback on the programme experience was overwhelmingly positive, with high levels of satisfaction reported across various aspects of the course.

Engagement and interaction

The programme clearly resonated with participants, and its pacing and design encouraged high levels of engagement. This is evident in the quantitative data from the evaluation forms (n=1,135):

- 99% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the language and explanations used in the programme were clear and accessible.
- 97.7% agreed or strongly agreed the programme was visually interesting.
- 97.8% agreed or strongly agreed that the programme pitch was at the right level.
- 95.7% of participants rated the programme as engaging.

"I think it was all perfect and...went smoothly... I'm not really sure how it can be better, especially when we are nurses working across the country... I think it... was interactive enough during the webinar, and then we were given the chance to interact with other participants as well." [P1]

A noteworthy aspect of the programme was the high levels of engagement with the interactive elements of the course, particularly the use of the online padlets where participants were able to share their comments, feedback, and questions as they progressed through each module. Data collected during the four webinars: Susie's story, Opeyemi's story, Victor's story, and Ariel's story, supports this. Table 6 presents a summary of padlet data from all four webinars.

Table 6: Summary of padlet data

Padlet data						
Total padlet comments*	Referring to speaker story	Reflections on a story	Feedback on a module	Questions	Other comments	Total likes
460	403	156	38	37	28	257

*For data analysis, some individual padlet responses were split to support with coding. For example, if the padlet contained feedback on both the story and contained a question this was split into story and question from one participant.

Most padlets were in direct response to the stories. These contained overwhelmingly positive feedback. Largely, participants expressed their gratitude to the speaker for sharing their story and used words such as 'inspirational' or 'inspiring' (n=243), motivational (n=84), and 'relatable' (n=70) in response. Notably, there were a high number of padlets that referred to both the story and contained participants own personal reflections (n=156).

These reflective responses were distinctive due to their rich, lengthy, and detailed content. These included participants sharing their own personal experiences/journey/story, or describing how the story had impacted them, and/or what they had taken away or learnt after hearing the story. The high levels of interaction and engagement is also evidenced by the number of comments (n=28) and likes (n=257) posted on participants padlets during or after the webinars. Below is a small sample of padlet comments relating to the IENM stories.

"Truly motivational and Inspiring story. Make things possible by climbing the ladder and achieve goals you thought would be never possible. Hard work, Passion, listening to inspirational speakers in your profession and prove one day you will be there, live in your dreams. Thanks for sharing." [P12]

"Made me feel like I am not alone and there are so many nurses out there that are from abroad. LOVE THIS STORY" [P23].

"It's a story that moved me. It's just a proof that if we really want it, we will find a way on how to achieve it despite the challenges on our way" [P90].

"Very Inspiring, Ariel! My parents were also not able to continue their education due to poverty and I always remember my father encourage me to do well in my studies because they did not have the same opportunity that I have now. This is why I am always grateful for the opportunity to have access to resources available for continuous education" [P17].

"Such a captivating story, Ariel - thank you for sharing courageously your personal struggles! Your life story has truly inspired me! As a first-time overseas recruit, I must admit that I did not expect that the emotional struggle an internationally educated professional faced would test my breaking point. I was certainly not expecting a bed of roses, but all these stories of racism and discrimination experienced by the early foreign-schooled nurses continue to remain true to the present day. A huge THANK YOU to all the organisers and lecturers for recognising our struggles and finding ways to support and help us" [P20].

"Your story is quite similar to mine, the most important thing now brother is we conquered obstacles to be here right now, we are putting smile to faces of our patients and relatives. "When you hit rock bottom, the only way to go is UP, God bless!" [P58]

Course content

Most surveyed and interviewed participants expressed that the course content exceeded their expectations. Many were impressed by the depth, richness, and versatility of the material, noting that it was relevant not only to their professional roles but also to their personal lives. As one participant remarked, *"you can apply it even to your personal life as well, not just to your place of work"* [P3]. Participants highlighted several key components of the course, including (1) webinar stories, (2) informative modules, (3) interactive quizzes, and (4) compelling videos. Together, these elements created a well-rounded and impactful learning experience that catered to different learning styles and needs.

Webinar Stories

Participants emphasised that the webinar stories were not only profoundly inspiring but also deeply relatable (as above). These stories resonated on a personal level, offering both hope and tangible examples of success.

"A huge impact because being that we are internationally trained, we come... to a new setting. We have this feeling that I don't know... I had this feeling that I can't actually proceed to the next role as fast as I would have done in my home country. But hearing their stories showed me that you can..." [P2]

The authenticity of these journeys sparked introspection among the participants, prompting them to reflect on their own paths and consider how they, too, could overcome obstacles and achieve their goals, as noted by two participants:

"I like the honesty of the speakers, they did not hesitate to say the things that they said, like being honest with their journeys rather than sugarcoat. I like that... they were inspiring stories... it helped me think of what would I want to leave my legacy of... for me it is all about... how am I contributing for me? The fulfilment was always the main thing in all my roles... I change the roles sometimes just because I was not getting fulfilment and then hearing their stories... because opportunities are different for us. So, it was about navigating... being persistent and... it was inspiring for me." [P4].

The motivation talks from them, their life story... I was like, telling myself if he can do it, then I can. I can do it as well... those stories of those people, it was... it's very, very touching. And at the same time, I learnt a lot from them, and I'm sure it was a great experience like I've been telling my friends, those that have not done the course they need to go on it [P3].

Modules

The modules were highly rated by participants, with satisfaction levels consistently above 96% across all five modules (n=1,135):

1. Personality Preferences and Performance in Teams: 98.3%
2. Fundamentals of Quality Improvement: 98.3%
3. Presentation of Self – Presence and Impact: 97.8%
4. Using your authority and influencing change: 98%
5. Co-consulting and live action learning sets: 96.5%

Participants appreciated the diverse topics covered and found the content more than sufficient for the programme's goals.

"I think all the modules, to be honest... were helpful. I can't say there's one that was ever every of them was like as important as all that, to me." [P3]

Quizzes and Videos

The quizzes were seen to be a helpful and enjoyable aspect of the learning experience. Many participants appreciated how the quizzes added an element of "gamifying" the content, making the learning process more interactive and fun. One participant mentioned, *"I pretty much enjoyed that part—it was fun"* [P4]. Beyond being enjoyable, the quizzes also played a key role in reinforcing the material. Participants found them beneficial, particularly at the end of each session, as they provided a way to test their understanding immediately. One participant shared their approach:

"I would scroll through, do the quiz first, and if I didn't do well, I'd go back and review the material. The quizzes helped me understand the content better." [P2].

This approach transformed the quizzes into an effective tool for active learning, enabling participants to engage more deeply with the material and strengthen their retention of key concepts. The quizzes acted as immediate feedback mechanisms, encouraging learners to revisit and reinforce areas where they needed more clarity. Similarly, the videos served as a valuable

complement to the quizzes. They offered an engaging way to refresh knowledge, with one participant noting:

“I got to catch up with the quizzes at the end of each session, which helped me and then the YouTube videos which were shared on the page regularly. I go back to just watch a bit of it and refresh my knowledge on them. They were actually interesting.” [P2].

Most beneficial course component

When asked which aspects of the programme they found most beneficial, participants highlighted the following: (1) Quality improvement (QI) module, (2) coaching, (3) problem solving, and (4) RADA recordings. These are summarised in Table 7.

Quality Improvement module

Participants highlighted the Quality Improvement (QI) module as one of the most enjoyable aspects of the programme. They noted that it provided them with a fresh perspective on their work, allowing them to see things in a new light.

“The most interesting subject for me was the quality improvement... you start seeing things in different eyes, like you start saying... is there anything to improve in my department like and then you know you're having another pair of eyes that see things differently.” [P1].

. This newfound perspective appeared to empower them to take a more proactive role in fostering positive changes within their team and organisation as highlighted by one participant:

“So initially I couldn't really connect the dots like how I can get QI is part of leadership, on the other hand, that gave me the idea how to do, how to do the methodology, how to do the QI and then which gave me the courage to do it... And then that sort of, gave me the chance to test my leadership, you know, like I show my initiative in my team... It gave me a really good motivation to try and test my leadership within my role.” [P4].

Coaching

For one participant, the coaching session was their favourite aspect of the programme. In particular the focus on communication and problem-solving techniques. They highlighted how the session taught them effective strategies for speaking with people, including how to ask the right questions to better understand the root of a problem. This skill, they noted, was invaluable in professional settings, enabling them to engage in more meaningful and productive conversations:

“When I use it was in classes, when I'm teaching people, I tend to like, would I say, study them, studied their behaviour, their body language and then when I feel they're not actually getting what I'm doing, I go to meet them and explain to them more, we'll book a date and we'll explain more then, the coaching session also helped me that when I'm talking to someone, I try to not give them direct questions but make them like tell me what the problem is without stating it to them so.” [P2].

Problem solving

One participant identified the development of problem-solving skills as the most beneficial part of the programme. The problem-solving skills helped them break down issues systematically, teaching them to identify the root causes of problems, evaluate potential solutions, and implement effective strategies. The participant noted that this enhanced problem-solving ability will be invaluable in various aspects of their career, including interviewing and leadership roles:

“One thing that I hold more valuable is that will help me as I go forward is the problem-solving skills and because...if I'm applying for a higher band... if I want to apply for a senior band like Band 6...they will ask me you know maybe in the process of interview... say how will you if there's a problem, how are you going to solve it? and you know, maybe that's a problem with, you know, in the ward or as a leader?...how are you going to solve the same problem and things like that? So, I think that content...on problem solving is more valuable to me because it's gonna help me, you know, going forward.” [P3].

Overall, the problem-solving techniques learned in the programme were seen as crucial for ongoing professional development and future career success.

Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) recordings

The RADA recordings were reported as being especially beneficial and a key factor in participants' decision to apply for the programme. For some, they had never encountered such focused communication training and techniques before, and the unique approach of the recordings immediately attracted them. One participant spoke about their experience practicing these techniques which enabled them to build confidence in their ability to convey messages more effectively:

“For me, it was those recordings by RADA... I have a lot of knowledge I just don't know how to put it in words sometimes and I struggle. So, some of those exercises were helpful and for me I had to go back and look at them...I had to work on it. I'm not fully efficient or fully confident with that, but I think that was a key area for me, but that interested me the most, it was about how do you stand?... What exercises do you do to vocalize better?... it's the posture...the use of hands. It wasn't like anything I have seen... Ted talks has so many things. But it was nothing like that. It was very specific around being a leader.” [P4].

The participant went on to explain that this newfound confidence in communication skills has not only improved their professional interactions but also provided valuable tools for personal development and leadership.

Table 7: Most beneficial aspects of the course

Most beneficial course component		
#	Course component	Reason for being beneficial

1	Quality Improvement (QI) module	Many found this module particularly relevant and applicable to their work, offering practical tools for driving improvements in their professional settings
2	Coaching	The coaching sessions provided personalized guidance, helping participants apply what they learned in real-world scenarios
3	Problem Solving	This aspect of the course was praised for enhancing critical thinking and decision-making skills
4	RADA Recordings	These recordings were noted for their engaging content, helping participants reflect on and apply the learning material more effectively

Expectations

Participants were also asked to reflect on their expectations before starting the course and after completing it. Participants identified multiple ways the course had greatly exceeded their initial expectations. These included (1) depth of the content, (2) opportunities for self-assessment, (3) increased career motivation, (4) enhanced learning, (5) shift in perspective, and (6) new insights into leadership. A summary of expectations from before and after completing the programme are summarised in Table 8.

Content depth and richness

Many participants were impressed by the depth and breadth of the course content, especially given that it was delivered online—far exceeding their initial expectations. They anticipated a more basic experience, but instead found the material to be comprehensive, engaging, and highly relevant. One participant remarked on how unexpectedly well-rounded the content was, offering a rich learning experience that rivalled in-person programmes:

“I got more than what I expected... the modules were interesting, the videos, the written content, everything was good. The sessions I think it was, it was a monthly session that we had... the resource persons who came in and especially the international people like the well-known figures who came and sharing their experience, sharing their challenge. It was very motivating... I would say that I got more than what I expected... I could say that this programme was really inspiring, motivating as well as enlightening as well...” [P5].

Self-evaluation and personal growth

The programme surpassed participants' expectations by offering a powerful platform for self-evaluation. It not only helped them identify areas for improvement and growth but also prompted profound shifts in their mindset, as shared by one participant:

“It helped me to self-evaluate; it helped me to improve myself. It helped me to push my boundaries and see that I can do more and if they can, then why I can't... it was inspiring and motivating and help me in my communication, help me in building up on the knowledge... It was very good.” [P5].

Many came into the course expecting standard self-assessment tools, but were instead met with deeper, more transformative insights, as another participant noted:

“As a person of colour and as an internationally trained nurse, you feel there are some roles you can't attain. That was what I thought before. But when I came to this programme and I saw, you know, all the speakers and the roles that they attained, they were at the highest level which anybody can attain, ... joining this course, doing it, changed that mentality in me and you know. has given me... the motivation to be able to pursue my dream and... attain whichever role I want to.” [P3].

Career motivation

Many participants were surprised to find that the course sparked a renewed and much stronger motivation and confidence to advance in their careers than they had initially expected, as noted by one participant:

“For you to guide me in my leadership roles like giving me the courage, the confidence to apply for a bigger role, and then teaching me the steps involved.” [P2].

While the programme met these expectations it also went beyond them by offering unique opportunities to connect with accomplished leaders and support their applications for further learning and employment:

“I think for me it exceeded my expectations... I was pleased with the content, pleased with flexibility... I can see the benefit of it for so many people. And because it is non-NHS and because it is nursing specific as well, I find it in a unique position there.” [P4].

The content and interaction opportunities to connect with leaders provided valuable insights and inspiration, encouraging participants to pursue their career goals with greater ambition and clarity. This level of motivation and access to leadership far exceeded what they had imagined when joining the course.

“The speakers were happy to share their content and their social media handle... which is great like, you have people over there that you can, if you're in doubt or at the at the stage of your leadership...they can be of help.” [P3].

Enhanced learning

Nearly all participants interviewed were pleasantly surprised by how the course went beyond their initial expectations in facilitating their learning process. They anticipated a standard educational experience, but instead found that the programme provided a much deeper level of engagement. The course offered a well-structured blend of theory and practical application, making complex ideas more approachable and meaningful:

“In truth I didn't really have any set expectations. I just wanted to gain knowledge, know what leadership is about so, it's kind of, fed my intuition or I don't how to put it, my inquisitiveness here... and also, when we started the course, I was also doing another academic course... this course also helped me to do my essays with ease.” [P2].

Shift in perspective

All participants interviewed highlighted how hearing others' stories created an unexpected sense of shared experience, far beyond what they had anticipated from the programme. This newfound connection made them feel less isolated and was incredibly motivating:

“You know when you hear people's story and you, you know it gives you like OK you're not alone in this... you can do it and look at them where they are in their nursing. Especially the lady from the Philippines. You see, she has attained the height of the nursing rule and... she didn't let her background or circumstances limit her... I used to think, OK, you can't get to this, but with their stories, it changed my mindset.” [P3].

The realisation that others faced similar challenges not only provided comfort but also shifted their perspective in a profound way. They gained a deeper understanding of their own situation and felt empowered to tackle obstacles with greater confidence and resilience—an outcome they hadn't imagined when they first joined the programme:

“Giving you that role models, sharing their personal stories... It's different reading in a book and seeing it get fulfilled in somebody's life, right.... If somebody has gone through that and established themselves. So that was really inspiring and that's what I felt that it gives me more than what I expected to see, the role models... That had an impact on the way I think I could grow further in my career.” [P5].

New understandings of leadership

Several participants shared that they wanted to learn more about leadership including learning about leadership as a concept:

“I wasn't really sure what leadership is or what it entails, like what the skills of leadership are. I was just thinking of leading the team or motivating the team or...how to line manage someone or it's like a coaching or mentoring someone like. So just the concept itself was quite abstract, so I just wanted to explore that in general, what leadership is in the healthcare context.” [P1]

Table 8: Summary of expectations

Initial expectation	Actual experience	Reflections on experience
Provide more information about leadership roles	Participants were impressed by the extensive and well-rounded material, which provided a richer learning experience than expected.	The programme offered a deeper, more comprehensive exploration of leadership than anticipated.
Give participants courage and confidence to apply for other roles	The course ignited a stronger drive to advance in their careers, surpassing initial expectations and inspiring participants to pursue their goals with renewed vigour	The programme exceeded expectations by not only boosting confidence but also significantly increasing career motivation
Learn about leadership as a concept	The programme provided unexpected and fresh perspectives on leadership, enriching participants' understanding and approach far beyond their initial expectations	Participants gained much more than just conceptual knowledge; they received transformative insights into leadership especially after listening to speaker's stories

Acquire leadership knowledge and skills	The combination of practical exercises, interactive discussions, and real-world applications significantly boosted participants' learning beyond what they had anticipated	The programme delivered a richer, more practical learning experience than expected, enhancing both leadership knowledge and skills
Carry out self-evaluation of own strengths and weaknesses	The programme offered more than just basic self-evaluation tools, enabling participants to gain profound insights into their strengths and areas for improvement	The course provided a deeper level of self-assessment than anticipated, leading to significant personal insights and growth

Overall experience

Overall, participants felt that the programme delivered invaluable experiences and insights that far exceeded their initial expectations. It significantly contributed to their personal and professional growth, enhancing their capabilities in various ways. The programme not only enriched their professional skills but also offered practical tools and insights that could be applied to their personal lives, making it a well-rounded and impactful learning experience. This is highlighted in the learning outcomes of participants' evaluation form data (n=1,135):

- **99 %** of participants were **satisfied with the programme** rating is as good, very good, or excellent.
- **98.6%** of participants said that their **understanding of the topic had increased** through participating in the programme.
- **98%** of participants said the programme **contributed to their professional development**.
- **97.8%** of participants stated they were **motivated to create change** in their workplace because of the programme.
- A key indicator of the programme's success is that **99% of participants would recommend** this programme to others.

Summary

By exploring participants' motivations, programme experiences, and expectations, the first part of this evaluation has provided a nuanced and detailed view of how participants experienced the IENM programme and what factors contributed to their overall satisfaction and learning experience. This analysis is critical to understanding the broader impact of the programme and identifying areas for future improvement.

4. Impact of programme on leadership skills and competencies

FNF programmes aim to empower nurses and midwives by developing their personal confidence and authority as health and care leaders. The programmes employ a variety of experiential leadership development activities tailored to participants' experiences or areas of practice. Central to FNF programmes is the concept of **self-efficacy** – defined by Bandura as an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments.⁷

In leadership contexts, particularly in healthcare, self-efficacy is crucial as it influences how leaders think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. Leaders with high self-efficacy are more likely to view difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided, leading to greater resilience and perseverance in their roles.⁸

To assess the impact of this IENM online programme on participants' self-efficacy, we employed a pre-post survey design, asking participants to rate their abilities on ten key aspects of leadership competency before and after the programme. These aspects included solving difficult problems, achieving desired outcomes, dealing with unexpected events, and remaining calm under pressure, among others. Participants rated their abilities on a four-point scale: "Not at all true", "Hardly true", "Moderately true", and "Exactly true".

Results

The results of this assessment of 75 participants **demonstrated improvements across all measured aspects of leadership self-efficacy**. Table 9 below illustrates the percentage increase in "Exactly true" responses for each competency:

Table 9: Improvements across measured aspects of leadership self-efficacy (n=75)

Leadership competency	Pre-programme "exactly true" response	Post-programme "exactly true" response	Percentage increase
I can deal with unexpected events	43%	59%	16%
I can think of a solution	44%	58%	14%
I can handle what comes my way	45%	59%	14%
I solve difficult problems	49%	62%	13%
I can remain calm	58%	71%	13%
I can find several solutions	42%	54%	12%
I handle unforeseen situations	44%	53%	9%
I can solve most problems	62%	71%	9%
I get what I want	17%	24%	7%
It's easy to stick to my aims	51%	54%	3%

Participant feedback from the evaluation form provides more detail into this positive trend:

“I went into the programme with dropped shoulders but returned with raised shoulders, now more confident than ever!” [P94]

“The programme in all was exceptional. It was thought provoking, and inspiring. I went into the programme with zero confidence and came out ready for whatever challenges.” [P431]

“This programme has helped me to prepare for what lies ahead. It has given me a renewed sense of understanding and ownership of my own abilities and that of others, and how to exploit those abilities for a positive outcome.” [P119]

These improvements suggest that the FNF programmes have been effective in enhancing participants' beliefs in their leadership capabilities. The most significant gains were observed in areas related to adaptability, problem-solving, and emotional regulation, with improvements ranging from 12% to 16% in these key areas.

Intention to stay

Importantly, the impact of the FNF programmes extends beyond just improving self-efficacy. The survey also assessed participants' intention to remain in the profession after completing the programme. **91% indicated their intention to stay in the profession.** While this data is limited and lacks pre-programme comparison, it suggests a positive correlation between improved leadership self-efficacy and professional commitment.

Summary

This programme appears to be effectively enhancing participants' leadership self-efficacy across a range of crucial competencies. The comprehensive approach, focusing on introspection, evidence-based practice, and practical leadership skills, seems to be fostering more confident and capable healthcare leaders. The high retention intention among participants further suggests that these programmes may be contributing to increased professional commitment in the nursing and midwifery fields.

However, it's important to note some limitations of this assessment. The self-reported nature of the data may introduce some bias, and the lack of a control group makes it challenging to isolate the specific effects of the programme from other factors. Additionally, the assessment doesn't capture long-term retention of improved self-efficacy or its translation into actual leadership performance. Moving forward, incorporating long-term follow-up assessments and objective performance measures could provide even more robust evidence of the programmes' impact, ensuring that FNF continues to play a vital role in developing future healthcare leaders.

5. Impact of programme on daily practice

During the case-study interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the impact of the programme on their daily work, with the following questions:

- What parts of the learning and knowledge you gained were particularly useful?
- How has this learning transformed your practice?
- Can you provide specific examples?

From these responses, and the feedback in the evaluation forms, several key themes have emerged, demonstrating how the programme has influenced participants' roles and personal growth.

Key Themes and Impact

1. **Increased confidence to take on new projects:** Participants reported feeling more confident in their abilities to manage and lead new projects within their organisations. This newfound confidence allowed them to step outside of their usual responsibilities, take on leadership roles in new initiatives, and contribute to larger organisational goals.
2. **Application of skills in the workplace:** Many participants mentioned that they applied Quality Improvement (QI) methodologies and coaching skills along with other skills during the programme, in their day-to-day work. By integrating QI principles, coaching, problem solving techniques, they have improved processes, increased efficiency, and fostered a culture of improvement within their roles and teams.
3. **Enhanced communication skills in clinical practice:** Improved communication was another key outcome mentioned by many participants. They noted that the recordings in particular helped their ability to communicate effectively with both colleagues and patients had improved significantly, leading to better teamwork, collaboration, and patient outcomes in clinical settings.
4. **Greater self-understanding and confidence:** The programme helped participants gain a deeper understanding of their own leadership styles, strengths, and areas for development. This self-awareness was instrumental in fostering personal growth, helping them to lead with confidence, authenticity, and purpose.
5. **Problem identification and resolution:** A critical skill developed during the programme was the ability to identify problems more effectively. Participants stated that they are now more adept at diagnosing underlying issues within their teams or systems and applying structured approaches to resolve them.
6. **Career mapping and new job opportunities:** The knowledge gained from the programme helped them to identify opportunities for advancement, planned the necessary steps to achieve their career goals, and successfully secured new positions. The programme boosted their confidence in applying for these roles, effectively fulfilling the leadership requirements of their applications.

Case studies to illustrate impact

The following section presents case studies that illustrate the real-world relevance, applicability, and impact of the IENM leadership programme on participants' day-to-day clinical roles. These examples highlight how participants have effectively applied the skills and knowledge gained from the programme to lead improvements in their work environments, tackle challenges, and drive meaningful change within their teams and departments. Each case study underscores the programme's transformative effect, empowering participants to take initiative and apply leadership in practical ways.

Case study 1: Increased confidence to take on new projects

In this case study, a participant explained how the leadership programme introduced them to QI methodologies, which sparked their interest in pursuing further QI training and take up other opportunities.

Confidence to lead QI initiatives

This participant used the QI skills gained during the IENM online programme to lead a sustainability initiative in her workplace, aligned with the NHS's broader net zero ambitions.

“After the course I got really interested in QI, which led me to do a clinical audit. We have many bins across the floor mostly, but I noticed that our recycling practice across the floor isn't really optimal. Now having that QI eye, I was able to put a proposal together, contact our Sustainability team, and correct [the situation.]”

“I showed the initiative to make something better, not clinical, but quite relevant to the NHS's net carbon goals. It was all about having that QI hat as well as the courage I got from the programme, to make me take action rather than just sit on my own.”

“So my experience within the programme wasn't limited to the time I was on the course, or when I had the seminars. But it really widened my network...my workplace became my new opportunities.” [P1]

Case study 2: Enhanced communication skills in clinical practice

In this case study, a participant shared how accessing recorded sessions from the leadership programme significantly improved their communication skills, especially in interactions with their patients.

Improved communication with patients

This participant uses the communication skills gained during the RADA sessions on IENM online programme to improve how she counsels her cancer patients, better understanding UK communicative norms and the importance of body language and active listening.

“I do a lot of patient counseling as I work in oncology metastatic pathway where we break a lot of bad news to the patients. One training from the programme which has helped me was the advanced communication training. It really helped me as a beginner know how to break bad news, the importance of giving the time, giving the patients opportunity to vent. I learned how to take pauses, speak a bit more slowly, take the time to allow them to understand and process what I am saying.”

“I think this has really helped me. I would say that it takes more time for me to complete my conversations for sure, but I think it has had an impact on my consultations – especially when people just need the time and for somebody to not react to them or respond to them, just listen and understand their concerns and then give that support to them.”

“It helped me as I am from India and English is not my first language, so it does not come naturally to me. Here in the UK, the expressions are different, sometimes what we speak or what we intend is not what is perceived by the listener. Here there is body language, there are styles of communication. By taking pauses, speaking more slowly, looking at their body language, I can see how they are perceiving my communication.”

Case study 3: Problem identification and resolution

In this case study, a participant shared how the leadership programme helped them identify and address problems on their ward.

Empowered to solve ward challenges

This participant described how the programme empowered her to be more proactive in identifying and addressing challenges, fostering a mindset of continuous improvement and leadership.

“One of the modules focused on problem-solving techniques for ward challenges. As nurses, we encounter numerous issues daily, but we often don't take action beyond identifying them. This course has given me the innovation and motivation to not only recognise problems but also allocate time to find solutions. It's empowered me to look at ward issues more critically and proactively.”

“After the course, I started applying what I learned to my ward. For example, we examined drug administration errors on the programme, exploring the reasons and factors that lead to such mistakes. So I went back to my ward, and starting looking at what could be done.”

“This new approach has changed my perspective on change itself. While I used to think people couldn't change, I now understand that change is possible, even if it's slow and requires hard work and management support. The course has enabled me to look beyond my ward, considering challenges in other departments like medical, and take the lead in problem-solving efforts.”

Case study 4: Career mapping and advancement

In this case study, a participant describes how participation in the IENM programme provided a leadership framework they could reference in a job application, which ultimately enabled her to be short-listed for a new role.

Career advancement

This participant describes how the programme enabled her to be short-listed for a new, more senior and specialist role.

“When I joined the programme, I was a Band 6 CNS, but it was only a secondment role for two years. So, I was very much aware that at the end of two years I would need to apply for a permanent role. To go into a permanent role, I needed to prove myself and one of the things I had to demonstrate was leadership. Having been on this course was a very good opportunity for me to demonstrate that, and I think it really helped me to be short-listed for the role, which is a permanent clinical nurse specialist.”

Case study 5: Self-awareness and confidence

In this case study, the participant reflects on how the programme helped them develop the courage and confidence needed to become a leader, particularly in working with different personalities.

Building confidence

This participant describes how the programme built her confidence to navigate different personalities, positively impacting her teaching role and allowing her to better support and coach her students.

“The leadership course helped improve my communication skills and boost my confidence. It encouraged me to develop the qualities needed for a leadership role, though I recognize I'm still developing. The session on different personalities was particularly useful, providing insights into how to interact with diverse team members more effectively. I now try to adapt my communication style to suit each individual, rather than using a uniform approach.”

“This knowledge has positively impacted my teaching methods. I've become more observant of my students' behaviours and body language to better understand their comprehension. When I notice someone struggling, I offer additional explanations or arrange follow-up sessions. The course also introduced me to indirect questioning techniques, which help me identify issues without putting people in an uncomfortable position. These small adjustments to my communication approach have noticeably improved my effectiveness as a leader and educator.”

Summary

The third part of this evaluation features case studies that illustrate the leadership programme's impact on participants' daily work. These case studies offer valuable insights into how the programme's lessons were applied in practice, highlighting real-world outcomes. This information is crucial for understanding how the programme translated into practical results and will help inform future iterations.

Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation of the IENM leadership programme reveals its significant impact on participants' professional growth, self-efficacy, and practical leadership skills. The programme's success is evident in the improved confidence reported by participants, their enhanced ability to take on new projects, and the application of learned skills in their daily work. Particularly noteworthy is the programme's effectiveness in addressing the unique challenges faced by IENMs, such as cultural integration and communication barriers, which are often overlooked in standard leadership training.

However, the evaluation also highlights areas for improvement, both within the programme and in the broader context of supporting IENMs in the NHS. Participants expressed a desire for more content on specific topics like Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and research methodologies, indicating a need for a more comprehensive approach to leadership development. Additionally, the high engagement levels and positive feedback suggest that there is a substantial demand for tailored leadership training among IENMs, pointing to a potential gap in current NHS professional development offerings.

The findings underscore the importance of creating supportive environments that recognise and nurture the potential of international talent within the NHS. The success of this programme demonstrates that when provided with appropriate support and development opportunities, IENMs can significantly enhance their leadership capabilities, contributing to improved healthcare delivery and potentially addressing some of the staffing challenges faced by the NHS.

Recommendations

Leadership development for the IENM workforce should:

1. **Enhance cultural integration support:** Develop comprehensive, ongoing cultural integration programmes that address the unique challenges faced by IENMs in adapting to UK healthcare culture and practices, including understanding leadership expectations and workplace norms.
2. **Improve communication skills development:** Invest in specialised language and communication training programmes tailored to healthcare settings, focusing on helping IENMs enhance their ability to communicate effectively with colleagues and patients in the UK context.
3. **Create networking and peer support structures:** Establish formal networking opportunities and peer support groups specifically for IENMs across NHS trusts to combat feelings of isolation and provide mutual support.
4. **Develop targeted quality improvement and leadership initiatives:** Design programmes that combine quality improvement methodologies with leadership development, tailored to the IENM experience, empowering them to identify and lead positive changes in their work environments.
5. **Implement confidence-building interventions:** Develop targeted interventions to address confidence issues often faced by IENMs, particularly in taking on leadership roles, including workshops on overcoming imposter syndrome and assertiveness training.

6. Focus on targeted leadership competencies: Design learning modules aligned with valued leadership skills, including negotiation strategies and self-awareness exploration.

Improvements to the FNF programme:

Content Expansion:

1. **Enhance Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) content:** Participants expressed a need for more comprehensive coverage of EDI topics, including discussions, case studies, and actionable strategies.
2. **Include research methodologies:** While Quality Improvement was emphasized, participants suggested including research components to complement this focus and contribute to their professional development.
3. **Expand on specific skills:** There was a desire for additional content on skills such as coaching and problem-solving to enhance mentoring abilities and handling of complex workplace scenarios.
4. **Add a programme summarisation:** Participants recommended a final session to reflect on key learning points and recap core objectives, helping to solidify understanding and improve long-term retention.

Programme Enhancements:

1. **Introduce collaborative projects:** Implement group work components where participants can collaborate on projects, applying learned concepts in a practical setting.
2. **Provide post-programme access to materials:** Offer ongoing access to programme content after completion to support continued learning and application of principles.
3. **Create personal reflection spaces:** Develop areas within the programme for private documentation of learning and thoughts, supporting deeper introspection and professional development.
4. **Extend guest speaker sessions:** Allocate more time for guest lectures or offer smaller, interactive sessions to ensure meaningful engagement with speakers and content.
5. **Increase programme visibility:** Enhance awareness of the IENM programme among organisational leaders and recruiters to boost credibility and create more career advancement opportunities for participants.
6. **Improve chat moderation:** Address concerns about off-topic discussions by more effectively moderating chat discussions to keep interactions relevant and aligned with learning objectives.

Appendix

IENM online leadership programme Steering Group members

Linda Jones	Lead Nurse for Education, Development, and Regulation for Aneurin Bevan Health Board
Karen Bryant Davies	Senior Nurse, Nursing Education, Cwm Taff Health Board
Stephen Wordsworth	Deputy Dean, University of Derby
Patricia Spruce	Associate Director of UK and International Recruitment, NHS England
Prof Deborah Sturdy	Chief Nursing Officer for Adult Social Care, DHSC
Annie Topping	NHS Northumberland CCG
Sara Stride	Midwifery Practice Educator, Professional Midwifery Advocate
Antonio Sierra	Midwifery International Recruitment Advisor
Jacynth Ivey	CEO, Inspiring Hope
Bev Summerhayes	Chief Nurse, East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

REFERENCES

- ¹ Shembavneker, N. and Kelly, E. (2023) *Retaining NHS nurses: what do trends in staff turnover tell us?* The Health Foundation. <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/charts-and-infographics/retaining-nhs-nurses-what-do-trends-in-staff-turnover-tell-us>
- ² World Health Organization (2020). *State of the world's nursing 2020: investing in education, jobs and leadership*. WHO. [9789240003279-eng.pdf \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/state-of-the-worlds-nursing-2020).
- ³ Department of Health and Social Care (Last updated 7 March 2022). *50,000 Nurses Programme: delivery update*. DHSC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/50000-nurses-programme-delivery-update/50000-nurses-programme-delivery-update>
- ⁴ Department of Health and Social Care (30 November 2023). *Press release: Over 50,000 extra nurses in NHS – hitting government target early*. DHSC. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/over-50000-extra-nurses-in-nhs-hitting-government-target-early#:~:text=The%2050%2C000%20nurses%20target%20includes,care%20providers%20and%20social%20enterprises.>
- ⁵ Nursing & Midwifery Council (2023) *Mid-year data report September 2022*. NMC. <https://www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-accounts/registration-statistics/>.
- ⁶ Nursing & Midwifery Council (2023) *Spotlight on Nursing and Midwifery*. NMC. [spotlight-on-nursing-and-midwifery-report-2023.pdf](https://www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-accounts/spotlight-on-nursing-and-midwifery-report-2023.pdf)
- ⁷ Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioural change. *Psychological Review*, 84 (2), 191-215. [Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioural change.](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.84.2.191)
- ⁸ Bond, C., Stacey, G., Westwood, G. and Long, L. (2024), "Evaluation of the impact of leadership development on nurses and midwives underpinned by transformational learning theory: a corpus-informed analysis", *Leadership in Health Services*, Vol. 37 No. 5, pp.1-12. [Evaluation of the impact of leadership development on nurses and midwives underpinned by transformational learning theory: a corpus-informed analysis | Emerald Insight](https://doi.org/10.1108/17479782410838888)

**FLORENCE
NIGHTINGALE
FOUNDATION**

Florence Nightingale Foundation
10 - 18 Union Street
London SE1 1SZ

020 7730 3030

admin@florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk
florence-nightingale-foundation.org.uk

Florence Nightingale Foundation - Registered in England and Wales with Charity Reg No. 229229
and in Scotland with Charity Reg No. SC044341
A company Limited by Guarantee Registration No. 00518623