



NFCC Executive Leadership Programme

The Executive Leadership Programme (ELP) is a programme of personal development delivered through Warwick Business School and the National Fire Chiefs Council. The programme is composed of five modules, each creating an experience focusing on the future direction of the Service. Designed to create a 'laboratory' of learning that is highly experiential, over five residential modules you will be given a variety of opportunities to explore your leadership thinking, and the behaviours required to lead the Fire and Rescue Service in the 21st century. Successful completion of the programme and assignments will result in the awarding of a Post Graduate Certificate in Strategic Leadership from the University of Warwick.

The ELP is designed to enhance your leadership capabilities, allowing you to address key strategic issues confronting the Fire and Rescue Service. The programme is designed so that your learning from the classroom will provide sustained benefit to your future challenges.

You will be given a variety of opportunities through which to develop your leadership thinking, your leadership behaviours, and your leadership practice. The programme will challenge you to redefine the scope, breadth, and potential of your role. This agenda will be met through a variety of approaches and methods designed to integrate ideas and perspectives on leadership, with conceptual material on the changing nature of public sector leadership, and the essential behavioural pre-requisites designed to facilitate that integration.

Embedded within the programme are three "golden threads":

1. Diversity
2. Political acuity
3. Self-awareness.

These will drive the content and approach of the modules and they will be continually referenced across all elements of the programme. A key aspect of the programme is the formation of a learning contract that will enable you to derive the maximum benefit from your on-programme experiences.

Part of that learning contract will be the exploration of issues such as:

- The distinction between training and development
- The problematic and disputed nature of leadership as a concept
- The importance of learning as making sense out of experience
- The possibility of the need to unlearn
- Looking at what we do not know
- The notion of 'inverse learning' in which followers teach leaders how to lead
- The value of collaborative and collective learning
- The importance of challenge and the need for support



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- The links between personal change and personal learning
- The importance of the emotional dimension to learning and change
- The assumption that you will want to engage in critical reflection about yourselves, your practice, your organisation, and your sector.

Access to the ELP requires support from your CFO and successful attendance at a gateway designed to ensure you are ready for the learning environment. The gateway is not a strategic assessment centre but designed to expose you to similar situations to the learning environment on the ELP.



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Module 1: Exploring the Golden Threads (4 days residential)

The focus of this first module is to enhance your understanding of the 3 “golden threads” of the ELP, (diversity, political acuity, and self-awareness), and develop opportunities for them to be embedded into your leadership practice.

We will explore the value of embracing **diversity** and valuing difference across a range of organizational contexts and challenges including decision making, teamwork, and organizational learning.

Political acuity will be examined at a micro level as well as the macro level: influencing, speaking truth to power, networking and your own political awareness and behaviour will be explored as well as the “big picture” issues of power, agendas and mistakes, that provide a rich picture of the political terrain.

Finally, we look at **self-awareness** as a pre-requisite for effective leadership and an important output from leadership development. We want you to examine your identities, your values, and your sense of self within the context of your leadership practice.

The intention is to ensure that these three threads can be revisited with ease across the rest of the ELP and further insights gained by threading this learning into what follows.

Objectives

1. To develop expectations for learning
2. To recognize the value of learning about both self and leadership
3. To assess your own style of leadership through an analysis of the congruency between your values and actions
4. To establish the importance of growing diversity for organizational effectiveness
5. To provide a broad portfolio of contexts for the development of political acuity
6. To ensure a rigorous examination of self-awareness in relation to enhanced leadership practice

Indicative Content

- Activity: discovering self
- The political and emotional dimensions to decision making and inclusivity
- The ethical nature of leadership and speaking truth to power
- Political behaviour questionnaire
- Looking at individual values
- Learning to learn



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Module 2: Thinking about Leadership (3 days residential)

This module builds on the issues raised for FRS leaders in Module 1, and, through incorporation of the “golden threads” builds them into a richer and multi-dimensional picture of the challenges and possibilities facing leaders and leadership.

There will be further work on teams, networks, and decision making, and participants will be introduced to the paradoxes that an environment of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (V.U.C.A.) present for practitioners.

In addition, we will begin to explore cultural change and the emotional dimensions to learning and learning organizations.

Objectives

1. To explore interest and curiosity on the nature of leadership
2. To identify how leaders can inhibit cultural change
3. To explore examples of effective cultural change
4. To reflect on the psychological and emotional dimensions to take action
5. To experiment with approaches designed to enhance change capability

Indicative Content

- Looking at leadership as opposed to leaders
- Images of leadership: value and use?
- Leading teams: the importance of followers and trust
- Exploring VUCA: an activity
- Mindfulness and High Reliability Organizations
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Dialogue



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Module 3: Leadership in the UK Public Sector (4 days residential)

This module will grapple with some hard-practical questions about how leaders in the FRS can lead real change and improvement in the quality of service offered to the public. Ideas associated with public leadership will be explored at some length, with the writing of Ron Heifetz and his notion of Adaptive Leadership featuring significantly. These ideas and approaches will be applied to FRS problems and issues and they will be extensively illustrated with case studies from outside the FRS.

Objectives

1. To understand the current challenges underpinning public sector leadership
2. To examine approaches to public sector leadership
3. To develop an awareness of the links between leadership effectiveness and improvement and innovation within public services
4. To apply Adaptive Leadership across a range of public sector contexts.

Indicative Content

- Tame, Wicked & Critical problems
- Management, Leadership & Command
- Adaptive Leadership
- Followership
- Operating in a V.U.C.A. context
- Case Studies



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Module 4: Leading Strategic Change (4 days residential)

In this module we shall be pulling together the themes of the entire programme through a lens of delivering strategic change within a context of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, (V.U.C.A.). This will involve an examination of the political nature of change, the development of strategic thinking and scenario building, and an appreciation of the limitations of change capability. Emphasis will also be placed on the personal dimension of change for change agents such as yourselves: are you able to “read” how powerful/powerless you may be in specific situations?; what interpretations are you placing on the agendas of others?; what personal challenges face you in exercising influencing and persuasion skills?; how can you identify readiness for change in your own organizations; what further development do you need to ensure that you are engaged proactively in wrestling with the challenges that the FRS environment and context is presenting?

We will be examining the importance of thinking creatively, being comfortable with ambiguity and establishing the courage to deal with uncertainty and the challenges of developing effective change capability. All of this will be dealt with at both individual and corporate level to surface intellectual and emotional responses to these phenomena. There will also be opportunities to examine the data derived from the Action Learning Sets, Learning Journals, Personal Strategies Diaries, reading, assignments and the progress on topics identified in Assignment 1.

Objectives

1. To understand the essential components of building successful change architecture.
2. To develop an understanding of the nature of leading strategically.
3. To explore complexity and ambiguity in the political environment.
4. To construct personal strategies to increase influence and improve relationships across the political spectrum.
5. To build on learning derived from earlier modules to construct a strategic view of change capability.
6. To appreciate the value of strategic thinking within a climate of networks and adaptive leadership.
7. To develop the capacity to work more effectively through the national context.
8. To enhance individual and organisational decision-making capability.

Indicative Content

- Leadership, management, and organizational structure for the 21st century
- Immunity to Change
- Organizational Change Capability
- Learning Organizations
- Coaching sessions on learning: trying to pull it all together



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Module 5: Leading in the 21st century Fire Service (4 days residential)

This module will explore the challenges of ensuring the delivery of strategies through the involvement and co-operation of others. This may take the form of collaboration, influencing, empathy, scenario building, alliances, rhetoric, authenticity and, above all, political awareness. The emphasis will be specifically on the “golden thread” of political acuity throughout.

A range of activities will be used to raise key issues and enhance learning.

Objectives

1. Examine the landscape of collaboration and partnership working.
2. Develop the ability to establish and sustain effective collaboration, where appropriate.
3. Identify strategies to identify common ground and find common solutions.
4. Develop strategic thinking capability.
5. Examine how to develop strategic responses to turbulence and uncertainty.

Indicative Content

- Activity: Exploring strategic thinking and action
- Activity: Confronting a key political issue in the Fire Service
- Expert witnesses: guest visitors as resources for learning
- Industrial Relations in the FRS: where are we now?