Gofal Cymdeithasol **Cymru**
Social Care **Wales**

# Compassionate leadership for managers

Resources to help define compassionate leadership and support leaders and managers to embrace the core principle in their practice.

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A Healthier Wales and the Health and Social Care Workforce Strategy share a vision that by 2030 leaders in health and social care will demonstrate collective and compassionate leadership. These resources aim to help to define what we mean by compassionate leadership and to support leaders and managers to embrace it in their practice.

## What is compassionate leadership in social care?

Compassionate leaders model core behaviours of attending, understanding, empathising and helping to create inclusive, effective and collective cultures within their teams.

The Kings Fund describe this in the context of:

> 'Compassionate leaders look after themselves and model this self-care to others. They realise it is ok to be human, to make mistakes and learn from them – and they give themselves and others permission to do this. In a high-pressure environment with constantly competing priorities compassion can sometimes be forgotten, but these leaders have to have the courage to work against the norms and challenge the wider culture that pervades a publicly scrutinised and regulated system'

This can be challenging and sometimes feel counter-intuitive in pressurised leadership roles. The short film below describes what compassionate leadership looks like in practice.

View transcript

1

00:00:00,720 --> 00:00:02,200

Hello, I'm Michael West

2

00:00:02,400 --> 00:00:05,520

I'm Senior Visiting Fellow

in The King's Fund in London...

3

00:00:05,720 --> 00:00:09,680

...and Professor of Organisational

Psychology at Lancaster University.

4

00:00:09,960 --> 00:00:12,360

I want to describe what we mean by...

5

00:00:12,560 --> 00:00:17,640

..compassionate leadership

in social care across Wales.

6

00:00:18,200 --> 00:00:21,800

It means four behaviours -

attending to those we lead...

7

00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:24,720

..understanding

the challenges they face...

8

00:00:24,920 --> 00:00:27,880

..empathising with them

and then helping them.

9

00:00:28,080 --> 00:00:31,960

Attending means paying attention

to those we lead.

10

00:00:32,160 --> 00:00:34,840

Being present with them.

11

00:00:35,040 --> 00:00:37,160

Listening to them with fascination.

12

00:00:37,360 --> 00:00:40,880

And given the pressure

that social care staff are under...

13

00:00:41,080 --> 00:00:44,720

..then seeking to understand

the challenges they face.

14

00:00:44,920 --> 00:00:50,320

Not by imposing our understanding

from a hierarchical position afar.

15

00:00:50,520 --> 00:00:54,000

But through a dialogue, to arrive

at a shared understanding...

16

00:00:54,200 --> 00:00:56,560

..of the challenges

they face in their work.

17

00:00:56,760 --> 00:01:02,040

Third, it's having an empathic,

feeling, caring response.

18

00:01:02,240 --> 00:01:05,920

Feeling the pressure they're under,

feeling the anxieties.

19

00:01:06,120 --> 00:01:10,960

Feeling sometimes the sense

of inadequacy that staff may have.

20

00:01:11,160 --> 00:01:15,360

That gives us the motivation for

the fourth element of compassion...

21

00:01:15,560 --> 00:01:18,320

..which is helping,

or serving those we lead.

22

00:01:18,520 --> 00:01:21,960

That's achieved by helping

to remove the obstacles...

23

00:01:22,160 --> 00:01:25,680

..that get in the way of them

doing their work effectively...

24

00:01:25,880 --> 00:01:29,840

..and helping to find

the resources they need.

25

00:01:30,120 --> 00:01:32,960

The right numbers of staff

with the right skills...

26

00:01:33,160 --> 00:01:36,200

..the right equipment

and technologies, computing...

27

00:01:36,400 --> 00:01:38,760

..and the right training

and development...

28

00:01:38,960 --> 00:01:42,440

..to give them the skills they need

to do their jobs effectively.

29

00:01:42,640 --> 00:01:46,640

Those behaviours that constitute

compassionate leadership...

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00:01:46,840 --> 00:01:49,160

Those behaviours that constitute

compassionate leadership...

31

00:01:49,360 --> 00:01:51,800

..are key to effective leadership...

32

00:01:52,000 --> 00:01:55,080

..and to team

and organisational effectiveness.

33

00:01:57,520 --> 00:02:01,400

This is not some soft-cushion

scented candles approach...

34

00:02:01,600 --> 00:02:03,000

..to leadership.

35

00:02:03,200 --> 00:02:05,840

On the contrary,

compassionate leadership...

36

00:02:06,040 --> 00:02:09,200

..requires a great deal

more courage and authenticity...

37

00:02:09,400 --> 00:02:13,000

..than the rather easy opt-out

of command and control leadership.

38

00:02:13,200 --> 00:02:15,880

Because our compassion

ultimately as leaders...

39

00:02:16,080 --> 00:02:18,400

..is for the people of Wales

that we serve.

40

00:02:18,600 --> 00:02:20,280

The communities we serve.

41

00:02:20,480 --> 00:02:23,760

That entails a very strong focus

on performance...

42

00:02:23,960 --> 00:02:27,360

..and performance management

in a compassionate way.

43

00:02:27,960 --> 00:02:31,480

Also, it's not some

easy consensus way forward.

44

00:02:31,680 --> 00:02:34,320

It's ensuring that

we are doing what's best...

45

00:02:34,520 --> 00:02:36,160

..in our social care settings...

46

00:02:36,360 --> 00:02:40,360

..to enable us to provide

high-quality care and support...

47

00:02:40,560 --> 00:02:43,320

..for the people and communities

we serve.

48

00:02:43,520 --> 00:02:47,440

So it's about ensuring

that leadership is effective...

49

00:02:47,640 --> 00:02:51,640

..by creating an inspiring

sense of vision or direction.

50

00:02:51,840 --> 00:02:55,840

That's a daily beacon

that guides our decision-making...

51

00:02:56,040 --> 00:02:58,440

..hour by hour and moment by moment.

52

00:02:58,640 --> 00:03:01,600

It ensures alignment

of people's efforts...

53

00:03:01,800 --> 00:03:04,440

..within our teams

and organisations...

54

00:03:04,640 --> 00:03:07,160

..by making sure

there are clear goals...

55

00:03:07,360 --> 00:03:10,880

..and that people are coordinating

their work effectively.

56

00:03:11,080 --> 00:03:13,800

And by creating a sense of

trust and commitment...

57

00:03:14,000 --> 00:03:16,160

..across our teams

and organisations.

58

00:03:16,360 --> 00:03:19,440

It's also about ensuring

inclusive leadership.

59

00:03:19,640 --> 00:03:23,560

If leadership is not inclusive,

it's not compassionate.

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00:03:23,760 --> 00:03:28,880

So ensuring that everybody feels

included by our leadership...

61

00:03:29,080 --> 00:03:33,080

..regardless of their

professional background...

62

00:03:33,280 --> 00:03:36,800

..or gender or ethnicity

or nationality.

63

00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:40,520

Because inclusion and compassion...

64

00:03:40,720 --> 00:03:44,360

..are in a sense

two sides to the same coin.

65

00:03:44,560 --> 00:03:48,160

They are about blurring the

boundaries between self and other...

66

00:03:48,360 --> 00:03:51,720

..and creating a sense of connection

and safety and support.

67

00:03:52,240 --> 00:03:55,760

Compassionate leadership

is also about being collective...

68

00:03:55,960 --> 00:03:58,600

..and sharing power

and enabling all to feel...

69

00:03:58,800 --> 00:04:01,400

..they have leadership rights

and responsibilities.

70

00:04:02,960 --> 00:04:06,800

That means encouraging

shared leadership in teams.

71

00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:09,400

So we may have

a hierarchical team leader...

72

00:04:09,600 --> 00:04:12,720

..but their role is to bring

everybody's contribution...

73

00:04:12,920 --> 00:04:16,320

..and knowledge to bear

on delivering high-quality care...

74

00:04:16,520 --> 00:04:19,000

..for the people and the communities

we serve.

75

00:04:19,200 --> 00:04:20,840

Compassionate leadership...

76

00:04:21,040 --> 00:04:24,120

..is also about working

compassionately and helpfully...

77

00:04:24,320 --> 00:04:27,440

..across boundaries with

other teams and organisations...

78

00:04:27,640 --> 00:04:30,480

..and sectors we work with,

prioritising overall...

79

00:04:30,680 --> 00:04:34,000

..the delivery of high-quality care

for the communities we serve.

80

00:04:34,200 --> 00:04:38,120

And always asking the question of

other teams and organisations...

81

00:04:38,320 --> 00:04:39,920

.."How can we help you?"

82

00:04:40,120 --> 00:04:45,280

So compassionate leadership is core

to creating the cultures we need...

83

00:04:45,480 --> 00:04:49,560

..in transforming health

and social care across Wales...

> 84
>
> 00:04:49,760 --> 00:04:51,520
>
> ..for the coming years...
>
> 85
>
> 00:04:51,720 --> 00:04:56,160
>
> ..for the benefit of the people and
>
> communities all across the country.

## Principles of compassionate leadership for health and social care in Wales

Social Care Wales and Health Education and Improvement Wales launched the Compassionate Leadership Principles for Health and Social Care in Wales on Wednesday 12 May 2021. The principles aim to provide a shared understanding of what compassionate leadership is and what it looks like in practice.

In these short launch films Sue Evans, Chief Executive Officer Social Care Wales, Alex Howells, Chief Executive Officer Health Education and Improvement Wales, Andrew Goodall, Director General for Health and Social Services and Michael West, Senior visiting fellow at The King's Fund and professor of organisational psychology at Lancaster University describe the shared vision of these principles and what this means for social care and health in Wales.

Watch the endorsements films from our leaders and experts.

## Compassionate leadership during Covid-19

We have curated resources to help leaders to protect their own wellbeing and to support their teams.

Professor Michael West, Senior visiting fellow at The King's Fund and professor of organisational psychology at Lancaster University provides some reflections of how compassionate leadership can be used in times of crises in this short film.

View transcript

00:00:00,720 --> 00:00:02,320

Hello, I'm Michael West.

2

00:00:02,400 --> 00:00:05,520

I'm Senior Visiting Fellow

at The King's Fund in London...

3

00:00:05,720 --> 00:00:10,680

..and Professor of Organisational

Psychology at Lancaster University.

4

00:00:11,360 --> 00:00:13,640

I want to share with you

some thoughts...

5

00:00:13,840 --> 00:00:17,640

..about why compassionate leadership

is so important in a crisis.

6

00:00:17,840 --> 00:00:21,440

We've learned a lot

from the last months...

7

00:00:21,440 --> 00:00:27,200

..when we've been coping with a

terrible pandemic around the world.

8

00:00:28,600 --> 00:00:30,320

It's been really important...

9

00:00:30,520 --> 00:00:33,400

.that at times of fear,

uncertainty and anxiety..

10

00:00:33,600 --> 00:00:35,720

..people have the sense of safety...

11

00:00:35,920 --> 00:00:39,680

..that's provided when leaders

behave compassionately.

12

00:00:39,880 --> 00:00:41,840

They do this by attending to them...

13

00:00:42,040 --> 00:00:45,000

..seeking to understand

the challenges they face...

14

00:00:45,200 --> 00:00:47,880

..by empathising with them

and by helping them.

15

00:00:48,320 --> 00:00:52,160

Removing obstacles that get in the

way of them doing their jobs...

16

00:00:52,360 --> 00:00:55,400

..or ensuring they've got

the resources they need.

17

00:00:58,000 --> 00:00:58,560

We know that at times of difficulty

and major change...

18

00:00:58,760 --> 00:01:02,160

..the role of leaders

is to focus even more...

19

00:01:02,360 --> 00:01:04,840

..on providing support for staff.

20

00:01:05,040 --> 00:01:07,360

That's what enables them to cope...

21

00:01:07,560 --> 00:01:10,760

..and manage change and uncertainty

effectively.

22

00:01:11,640 --> 00:01:16,760

It's very easy for leaders

to almost forget the importance...

23

00:01:16,960 --> 00:01:22,120

..of increasing support during

those times for those they lead.

24

00:01:22,320 --> 00:01:25,360

I think the third

really important reason...

25

00:01:26,080 --> 00:01:29,960

..is that in times of

great uncertainty and crisis...

26

00:01:30,160 --> 00:01:34,720

..we need all the creativity

and adaptability and innovation...

27

00:01:34,920 --> 00:01:37,240

..we can muster from the staff...

28

00:01:37,440 --> 00:01:41,120

..who make up our social care teams

and organisations.

29

00:01:41,320 --> 00:01:45,800

They are, after all, amongst the

most skilled and motivated people...

30

00:01:46,000 --> 00:01:48,320

..anywhere in the workforce

in Wales.

31

00:01:48,520 --> 00:01:50,800

So, by managing them

compassionately...

32

00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:54,800

..through listening, understanding,

empathising and helping...

33

00:01:55,000 --> 00:01:58,720

..we release that innovation

and creativity.

34

00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:03,360

This enables us to adapt

to times of crisis and change.

35

00:02:04,120 --> 00:02:07,800

It's also about compassionately

focusing on the core needs...

36

00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:12,640

..of those we lead at work,

especially during times of crisis.

37

00:02:13,280 --> 00:02:18,120

The three core needs we have of

the need for autonomy and control...

38

00:02:18,320 --> 00:02:21,200

..the need for a sense of

belonging.

39

00:02:21,400 --> 00:02:24,880

We feel that we are cared for,

valued and respected...

40

00:02:25,080 --> 00:02:27,760

..by our leaders,

our teams, our organisations.

41

00:02:27,960 --> 00:02:30,480

And the need for

a sense of competence...

42

00:02:30,680 --> 00:02:34,120

..that we're making a positive

difference through our work.

43

00:02:34,320 --> 00:02:37,840

So when compassionate leaders,

during times of crisis...

44

00:02:38,040 --> 00:02:41,600

..focus on the need people have

for autonomy and control...

45

00:02:41,800 --> 00:02:45,080

..so that they're not just victims

of command and control.

46

00:02:45,280 --> 00:02:47,160

We release their innovation.

47

00:02:47,360 --> 00:02:50,080

There's an understandable

tendency...

48

00:02:50,280 --> 00:02:54,520

..for leaders in crisis to revert

to a command and control style...

49

00:02:54,880 --> 00:02:57,560

..that inhibits innovation

and adaptability.

50

00:02:57,760 --> 00:03:02,960

And second, it's ensuring that we're

promoting that sense of belonging...

51

00:03:03,160 --> 00:03:05,400

..through reinforcing

teamworking..

52

00:03:05,600 --> 00:03:08,880

..ensuring that everyone is working

in a supportive team...

53

00:03:09,080 --> 00:03:12,680

..that has clear goals and meets

regularly to review performance.

54

00:03:12,880 --> 00:03:16,160

Because that's what is protective

of staff well-being...

55

00:03:16,360 --> 00:03:20,000

..and also associated with

innovation and adaptability.

56

00:03:20,200 --> 00:03:22,880

And third, it's about making sure...

57

00:03:23,080 --> 00:03:27,520

..that we're promoting that sense

of competence for people...

58

00:03:27,720 --> 00:03:30,400

..by ensuring

they're not overwhelmed...

59

00:03:30,600 --> 00:03:32,720

..by chronic excessive workloads.

60

00:03:33,320 --> 00:03:37,560

Good compassionate leadership

in times of crisis...

61

00:03:37,760 --> 00:03:42,320

..is about continually focusing

on work and work overload...

62

00:03:42,520 --> 00:03:47,040

..to ensure that we are caring for

and supporting those we lead.

63

00:03:47,240 --> 00:03:50,960

It's about having the courage to

take time out on a regular basis...

64

00:03:51,160 --> 00:03:55,080

..as teams, as leaders, to reflect

on how we're coping and adapting...

65

00:03:55,280 --> 00:03:58,480

..what we're trying to achieve,

how we're going about it...

66

00:03:58,680 --> 00:04:00,280

..and what we need to change.

67

00:04:00,480 --> 00:04:04,240

Because all of the research evidence

we have tells us...

68

00:04:04,440 --> 00:04:06,560

..that in social care settings...

69

00:04:06,760 --> 00:04:10,680

..times for reflection and review

as individuals with managers...

70

00:04:10,880 --> 00:04:15,160

..having supervision as teams,

taking time to reflect and review...

71

00:04:15,360 --> 00:04:17,040

..and as organisations...

72

00:04:17,240 --> 00:04:20,400

..to reflect and review

when dealing with crisis...

73

00:04:20,600 --> 00:04:24,240

..is critical to effectiveness,

innovation, productivity.

74

00:04:24,440 --> 00:04:28,000

That's how in times of crisis we can

most effectively deliver...

75

00:04:28,200 --> 00:04:31,320

..for the people and the communities

we serve across Wales.

76

00:04:31,520 --> 00:04:32,720

Diolch yn fawr.

## Useful articles and resources

Here are links to articles and resources.

- Gwella Leadership Portal
- The Kings Fund
- James A. 2019. Compassionate Leadership in Clouston et al., Becoming a caring & compassionate practitioner
- Dr Halford-Letchfield, 2019. Research in Practice.

## Contact us

If you have a question or if you can't find what you are looking for get in touch with us.