

Initial evaluation of an executive leadership development programme for aspirant or new directors of infection prevention and control (DIPC) in England.



Improvement

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History of DIPC role and programme rationale

First introduced in England in 2003 (DH 2003) in *Winning ways: working together to reduce healthcare associated infection in England*¹, the Director of Infection Prevention and Control (DIPC) is the individual with overall responsibility for infection control and accountable to the registered provider in NHS trusts.

The DIPC role is specified in The Health and Social Care Act 2008², which applies to CQC-registered providers of all healthcare and adult social care in England. The role requires an understanding of infection prevention and control and the postholder should be able to influence at executive level in an organisation. Although the DIPC should report directly to the Chief Executive and Board and should also have expertise and experience in infection control, in practice DIPCs are often microbiologists or directors of nursing and as such may require support and personal development to be, and remain, competent in both the leadership and technical aspects of the role.

Other organisations and networks offer support and development for current or aspiring DIPCs, but these are formal networks or are courses aimed at developing the technical aspects of the role, rather than in executive leadership development.

Changes in health and social care provision and accountability have made the DIPC role increasingly challenging and complex, and in some organisations this has made the role harder to appoint into.

An executive development programme (EDP) was co-designed with NHS Improvement and Cross Sector Leadership Exchange, funded by NHS Improvement and awarded under NHS procurement rules.

Given the renewed national profile for infection prevention and control, the aim of this bespoke course is to provide a platform for the sustainability of the next generation of DIPCs; both those aspiring to progress into a DIPC role, as well as support people newly in post in the role.

This poster provides early evaluation on the first two modules of an initial May 2018 cohort.

Course structure and learning outcomes

The Executive Development Programme (EDP) is a mix of taught and self-directed leadership activities and aims to facilitate Board engagement and IPC assurance through developing influencing, coaching and facilitation.

The EDP consists of three modules, each delivered over two days, with additional supported action learning sets and a final celebratory event.

During the programme delegates are expected to undertake a 'boundary spanning' programme with another organisation, ideally in one that would cover an identified system gap in knowledge and understanding.

Delegates are strongly advised to develop and share a reflective journal throughout the programme to support their leadership development.

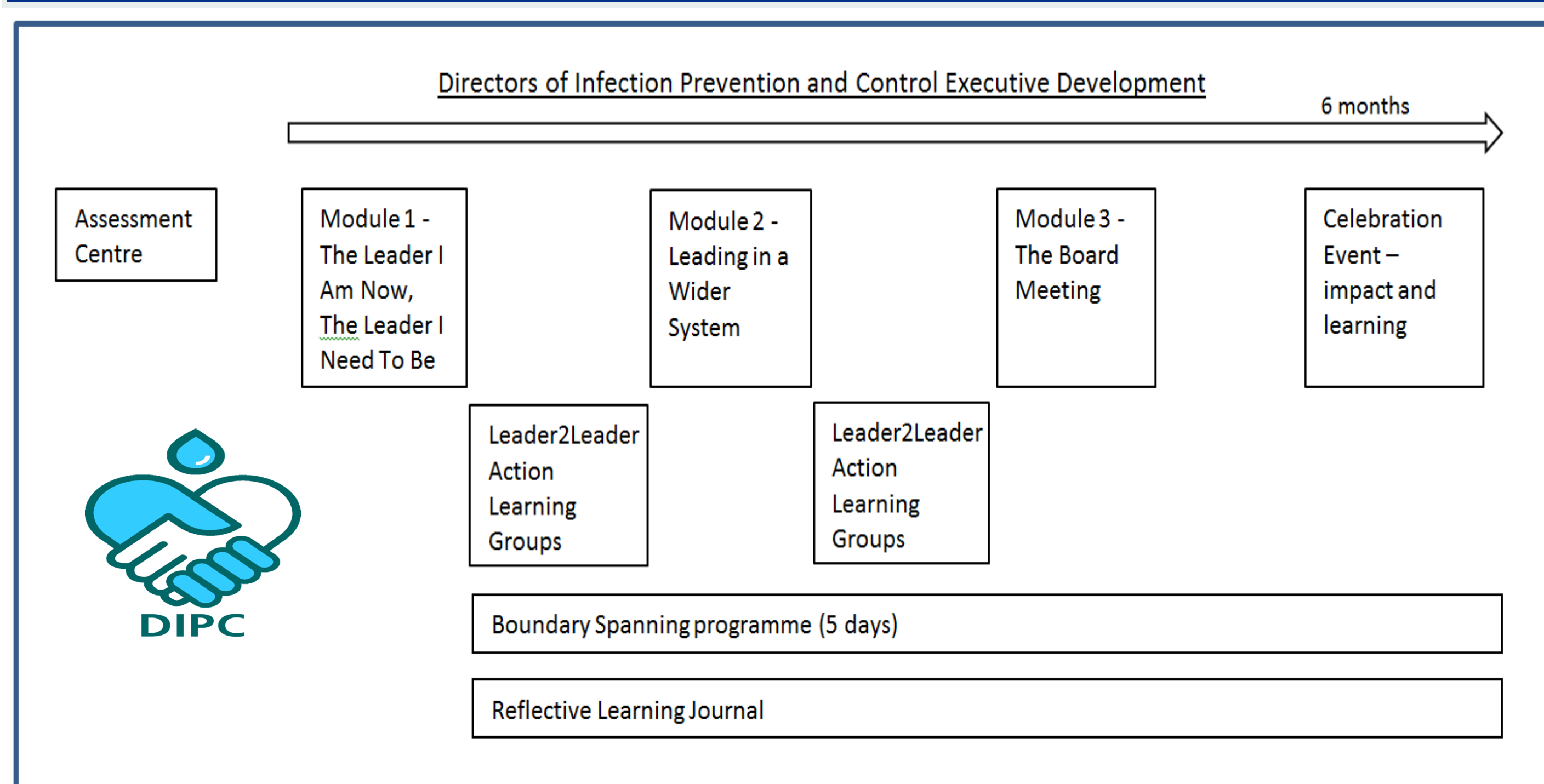
30 delegates were selected for the first cohort from applicants from provider trusts via self- or organisation nomination and successful completion of an assessment centre.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion participants will be able to demonstrate:

- An understanding of leadership styles and their effectiveness, the application of systems leadership to influence direction, enable effective delivery of improvement programmes and encourage continual improvement across the health and social care system.
- Their ability to connect and engage effectively with key stakeholders across the health and care system and beyond in order to build strong and willing coalitions committed to jointly drive and sustain reductions in health care associated infections and reduce patient harm.
- Readiness to operate effectively as a Director of Infection Prevention and Control.

Evaluation to date



Evaluation of each residential module is carried out by using a delegate feedback questionnaire.

Module 1

Participants were asked to grade themselves pre- and post-module on 5 areas:

- Develop a greater awareness of own leadership style and impact
- Take stock of own leadership journey to date and learn from it
- Learn how to better seek out learning opportunities from a wide range of sources and people
- Recognise that effective leadership relies on working successfully with the wider team and system
- Gain feedback from others about own leadership style

Module 2

Participants were asked to grade themselves pre- and post-module on 6 areas:

- Awareness of the role of DIPC and Executive Director in the wider system
- Assess your leadership against the DIPC and Executive Director Role Profile
- Consider how to think and act strategically as a leader within the Health System
- Recognise importance of an 'outside-in' approach
- Experienced frameworks to help you work more effectively
- Developed a shared perspective of systems leadership

Areas for development

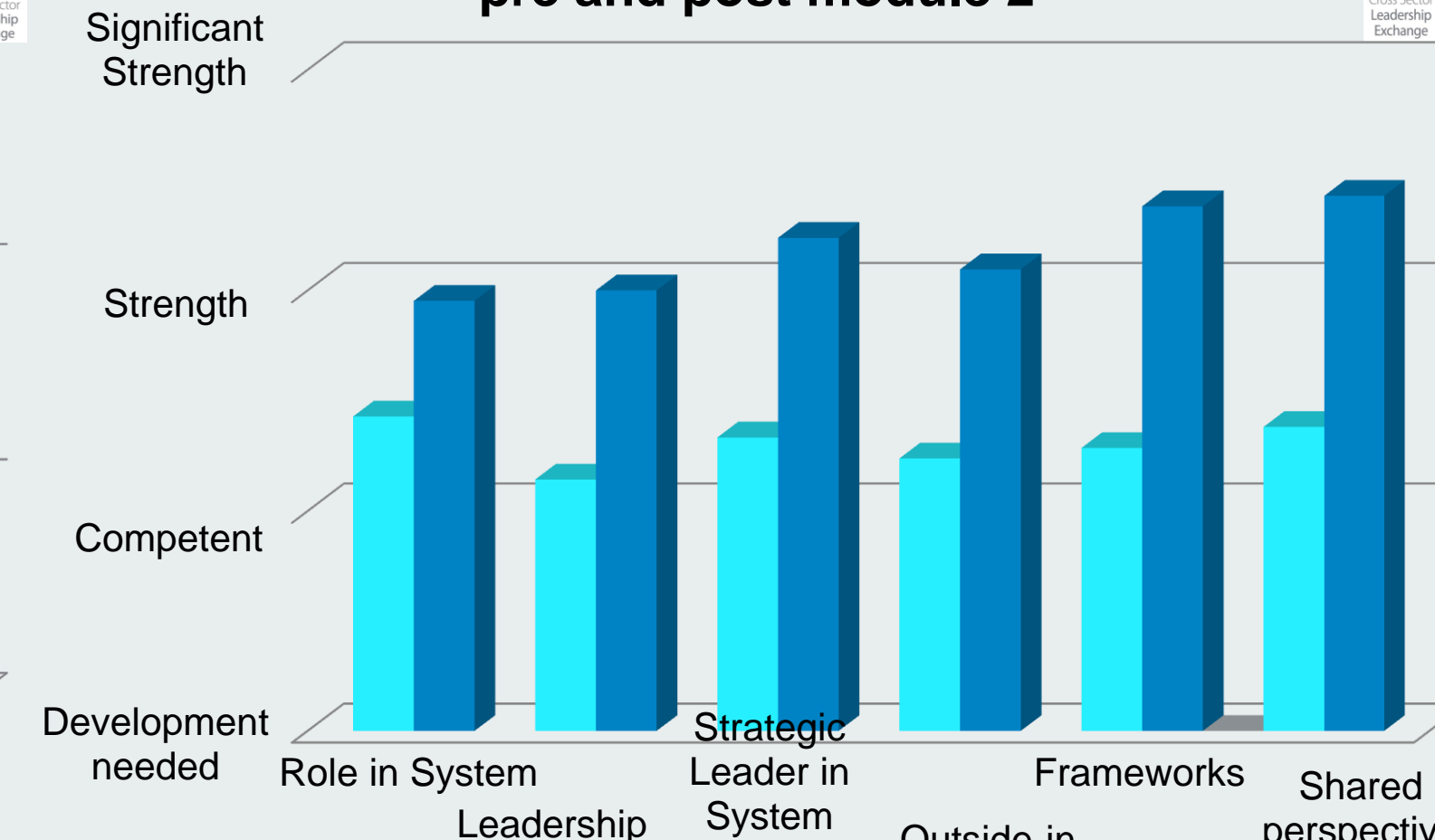
Whilst feedback from modules 1 and 2 was mainly positive, delegates also identified areas for development:

- 'Need to hear from other DIPCs – not about their knowledge but about what to expect, how to survive, how to evolve your leadership style etc.'
- More clarity on the national vision for the DIPC role
- Insights from someone in a DIPC role who has overcome a challenge / CQC 'Well led' inspection
- Greater focus on skills specific to DIPC role as these are different to other leadership roles
- More specific examples in infection prevention and control

Average self-reflective development scores: pre and post module 1



Average self-reflective development scores: pre and post module 2



Quotes from course delegates

- 'The development programme has enabled me to network with colleagues, share experience and learning and particularly made me reflect on my role as DIPC and how I manage situations at board level'
- 'The programme stretched our thinking on the role and contributions of the DIPC to the executive governance of an organisation'
- 'Thought provoking and challenging, useful to have spare time to think in depth about leadership. A worth while endeavour'
- 'Gave me the headspace that I really needed and made me realise that I have the same anxieties as everyone else re the executive role'
- 'Empowered me to be braver at work, understand the power and influence I hold and to think about what I really want for my future career'
- 'Allowed the opportunity to stretch and challenge my ways of thinking and develop techniques to be more influential'
- 'I hope this course will take me to beautiful places, inspiring and motivating'



Delegates on the DIPC Executive Development Programme

Discussion

Delegates self-identified improvements in their leadership skills, knowledge and style from modules 1 and 2. As the first cohort of this course, delegate feedback has moulded the content for module 3 and amendments to subsequent courses. These reflected the complexity of the DIPC role as requiring both executive leaderships skills and being able to apply technical infection prevention and control knowledge.

The DIPC Executive Development Programme is contributing to an enhanced systemwide profile for infection prevention and control, supporting safe delivery of care and improving patient outcomes and a sustainable future leadership workforce. It is a unique and bespoke programme in developing executive leaders in the DIPC role and will compliment support and networking events open to current or aspiring DIPCs delivered by other organisations.

Further evaluation is needed, particularly in the long-term benefits to individual participants and in improvements in patient outcomes in delegates' organisations.

Following initial course evaluation, a second course has been commissioned to start in late September 2018. This cohort will include aspirant DIPCs from outside of provider trusts, including in commissioning organisations, and reflects the increasing recognition that effective infection prevention control requires system leadership across health and social care boundaries.

References

1. Department of Health (2003) *Winning Ways: Working together to reduce Healthcare Associated Infection in England. Report from the Chief Medical Officer.*
2. Department of Health (2015) *The Health and Social Care Act 2008 - Code of Practice on the Prevention and Control of Infections and Related Guidance.*