FIRST LINE

DEVELOPING OUTSTANDING SOCIAL WORKERS

What makes great first line leadership?

Appendices

FRONTLINE

Contents

Appendix 1: Authors of the report

This appendix covers who Hay Group are, including their research base and methodologies. The research was undertaken by Kate Wilson, David Barnard, Tom Davies and Andrea Poore.

Hay Group

Hay Group is a global management consultancy specialising in helping organisations to work with their people most effectively. It was founded in 1943 by Edward N. Hay who pioneered many of today's fundamental management practices in organising and getting the best from people at work. They have worked with hundreds of organisations helping them to motivate their people, organise work, and manage their resources in new and transformative ways. This has included experience in producing national, researched competency frameworks and leadership programmes for the NHS and education sector. Their expertise is backed by high quality, evidence-based research and authoritative databases of organisational management information. For example, Daniel Goleman's pioneering work on emotional intelligence was based on research using their competency databases.

They have worked with over 200 local authorities and therefore have a deep understanding of the local government context. They have drawn on this insight in particular in exploring what helps and hinders first line leadership in the local authority context and developing the Praxis tool.

Methodologies

Hay Group's behavioural event interview method

Hay Group is often credited with being the founder of the competency movement. An important source of Hay Group's behavioural data is the behavioural event interview (BEI) technique, which we used in our research with first line leaders in children's social work.

The BEI is an adaptation of the critical-incident interview originally developed by Flanagan (1954). Interviews are coded against a set of generic competencies, based on the Hay Group's fully researched model. The interview is the most rigorous method of uncovering differences in the way people deliver value at work. Participants describe what they actually said, thought, felt, and did at the time when they were either highly successful or frustrated in their work.

The analysis of data collected in this way identifies those competencies that distinguish between those considered outstanding and those not. Examples, themes and behaviours are grouped into competencies on the basis of trying to capture a single characteristic of a person. This key characteristic may be expressed through a variety of specific behaviours, and may appear with varying intensity, completeness, and sophistication. However, the behaviours within a competency all express the same underlying characteristic. This is the basis of the predictive nature of the BEI.[1]

[1] McClelland, David, "Identifying Competencies with Behavioural-Event Interviews", *Psychological Science*, 9, 5 (September 1998), 331-2.

Hay Group's understanding of jobs

Hay Group's insight into work and jobs is reflected in their job analysis approach, extensively used job evaluation methodology and, expertise in structural design. This means they have an excellent understanding of what a job involves (its accountabilities) and what this means in terms of capabilities.

Hay Group's job evaluation methodology allows them to measure job differences and enables them to compare dissimilar jobs in terms of size, shape and complexity of thinking required. Due to our extensive catalogue of jobs they are able to compare one role to another, irrespective of who the job holder is and make robust comparisons, grounded in decades of job analysis. They have drawn on these areas of expertise in our analysis of the first line leader role in this research.

Appendix 2: Research base

This appendix covers what we did and who was involved in Hay Group's research.

What is already known?

Document review

We reviewed a range of documents recommended by Frontline and professional stakeholders. See Appendix 7 for the full document review and reference list.

Stakeholder interviews

The stakeholders that Hay Group interviewed are listed below. They were recommended by Frontline as representative national leaders in the profession and senior leaders in local authorities.

Table 1. Stakeholder interviewees

Stakeholder	Role	Interview date
Amanda Amesbury	Head of Service, Child in Need, Child Protection and Early Intervention, Children's Services, Salford City Council	26 February 2015
Annie Hudson	CEO, The College of Social Work	16 March 2015
Clare Chamberlain	Director of Family Services, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	16 February 2015
Donald Forrester	Professor of Social Work Research at the University of Bedfordshire and Director of the Tilda Goldberg Centre for Social Work and Social Care. Lead professor at The Frontline Academy	17 March 2015
Isabelle Trowler	Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Department for Education	27 February 2015
Lucie Heyes	Head of Professional Standards and Quality Assurance, London Borough of Bexley	27 February 2015
Mandy Nightingale	Principal Social Worker, Essex County Council	2 March 2015
Nick Crichton	Retired family law judge, founder of Family Drug and Alcohol Court	19 February 2015
Richard Williams	Director of Special Projects and Innovation (formerly Director of Children's Services, Torbay Council)	4 March 2015

Stakeholder	Role	Interview date
Rory Patterson	Director of Children's Social Care, Southwark Council	18 February 2015
Steve Goodman	Director, Morning Lane Associates	18 February 2015
Sue White	Professor of Social Work, University of Birmingham	16 February 2015

See Appendix 8 for a summary of the stakeholder interviews.

Assistant director interviews

Hay Group met and interviewed six Assistant Directors from the following local authorities:

- Tower Hamlets Council
- Southwark Council
- Croydon Council
- Harrow Council
- London Borough of Bexley
- Wigan Council

What do the best first line managers really do in practice?

First line manager interviews

Hay Group interviewed 20 first line managers working across seven local authorities. The participants were either social work team managers, consultant social workers or unit managers who had all been recommended by their local authority or Frontline as high performers in first line management roles.

Table 2. Number of first line managers per local authority

Local authority	Number of first line managers
Tower Hamlets Council	3
Southwark Council	3
Croydon Council	3
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	3

Local authority	Number of first line managers
Buckinghamshire County Council	1
London Borough of Bexley	3
Wigan Council	4

Table 3. Sample of first line managers, split by outstanding and good

	Outstanding	Good
Sample number	9	11
Sex	8 Female, 1 Male	11 Female
Authorities represented	7	6
Organisational model	Conventional 3 Systemic 4 Hybrid 2	Conventional 7 Systemic 3 Hybrid 1
Time in post	> One Year 6 < One Year (unknown)	> One Year 8 < One Year 3
Size of team	> 4	> 4
Average climate percentile	82%	58%

See Appendix 5 for capability findings.

Climate surveys

Climate surveys were completed by 16 of our first line managers and 64 of their social workers. This data showed us the climate the first line leader experiences from their own manager and the climate the first line leader creates for their social workers. We were unable to collect data from all of the first line managers and their teams for a variety of reasons. In one case the data did not include the first line manager's climate, and in another the data did not include upward feedback from the team. Two of our first line managers had no direct reports at the time of the research. They were interviewed on the basis of former experience.

See Appendix 4 for Hay Group's findings into climate.

Testing our findings

Team manager and social workers focus groups

We conducted three focus groups which were attended by both social workers and social work team leaders. Two of the focus groups were held in London, and one was held in Leeds. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain input from both social workers and team leaders about their experience of great leadership, and to explore their views about what enables first line managers to succeed.

Table 4. Focus group information

Location	Number of attendees	Date
London, Hay Group offices, Social Work Team managers	15	9 April 2015
London, Hay Group offices, Social Workers	13	9 April 2015
The Queens Hotel, City Square, Leeds	11	9 April 2015

Social workers and team leaders were invited and made aware of the focus groups via a flyer distributed by Frontline to local authorities, and via LinkedIn and Twitter. Individuals then expressed an interest in attending by contacting Frontline directly.

Technical advisory group

We attended technical advisory group meetings with Frontline's key stakeholders in order to test and explore some of the thinking, as well as to share the initial research that had been conducted.

Table 5. Technical advisory group attendees

Attendee	Role
Josh MacAlister	CEO, Frontline
Mary Jackson	Director, Firstline
Philip Goldman	Partner, Alexander Partnership
Katie Martin	Managing Director, ideas42
Elaine Petch	Head of Social Work and Principal Social Worker, Cambridgeshire County Council

Attendee	Role
Nick Pendry	Head of Clinical Practice, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
Kate Wilson	Project Director, Hay Group

Meeting with interested parties and key stakeholders

We attended a meeting with interested parties and key stakeholders, as recommended by Frontline, in order to gain their insights from a review of the emerging findings from the research and the interim report. First line managers helped to shape how the final report was developed and refined.

Table 6. Attendees of the meeting with interested parties and key stakeholders

Name	Organisation
Andrew Christie	Director of Children's Services, Tri Borough
Rose Collinson	Associate, Virtual Staff College
Lisa Holmes	Director, Centre for Child and Family Research
Ruth Kennedy	Consultant, Spring Consortium
Bridget Robb	Chief Executive, British Association of Social Workers

Scope: research limitations

The stakeholders we interviewed all agreed that "the leader needs a strong base of knowledge, skills, values and principles so that they know what high standards look like in order to develop and challenge their team and others".[2]

Our research showed that flexible use of analytical and conceptual thinking was important in using knowledge and expertise effectively. We did not, administer cognitive assessments to the participating managers. Follow-up work could be undertaken to determine whether verbal and numerical reasoning tests would be an efficient and relevant sift for future first line managers on the Firstline programme.

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[2] Annie Hudson, Chief Executive, The College of Social Work (interviewed 16 March 2015).

The sample of 20 first line managers is a good basis for a quantitative thematic analysis of the capabilities demonstrated by our sample. We did not carry out statistical tests of difference either when considering capabilities or climate analysis. Nor did we consider distinctions in types and geography of authorities.

Appendix 3: Comparing the role with other first line management roles

This appendix compares the children's social care first line leader role with other first line leader roles. The table is offered for comparative purposes only to demonstrate the basis for our conclusions regarding the sophistication of the first line leader role in children's social care. Specific roles within each of the examples will vary in practice.

Table 7. Comparison with other professional first line management roles

Example role	Decision impact (risk)	Decision complexity	Emotional demands	Independence of decisions
Ward manager	High impact e.g. drug errors Focus on elimination of risk Managed by accuracy of decisions and alignment with standards	Medium: Application of agreed practice standards Right / wrong answers which require the application of judgement	High: Management of short term relationships with patients (except in certain specific roles)	Within clear organisational protocols
Engineering team leader – car manufacturing	High impact e.g. potentially fatal faults in cars Managed by accuracy and alignment with known professional knowledge	High: Application of deep technical knowledge Right / wrong answers which require the application of judgement	Low	Within broad professional standards and clear organisation sign off protocols
Children's social care first line leader	High impact e.g. harm to children Multi-faceted Focus on the management of risk, rather than its elimination	High: Application of professional knowledge to a multi-faceted context without full information Emergent answers	High: Management of long term relationship	Within regulatory standards and organisational protocols Likely to be variable currently, depending on organisational approach

There is a general trend in the health and social care sector for increasingly accountable first line management roles as services require more integration at the front line.

Appendix 4: Climate

This appendix details Hay Group's climate survey; what it measures, how it works and what it tells us.

Measuring the climate experienced and created by social work first line leaders

Hay Group's climate survey assesses six conditions experienced in a group. It is based on seminal studies of organisational climate by Litwin and Stringer (1968). Their work demonstrated a link between motivation theory and how people behave at work, mediated by the climate they experience.

Academics demonstrated long ago that environmental and situational factors were important in arousing motivation.[3] The term organisational climate refers to a set of measurable properties of the work environment, perceived directly or indirectly by the people who live and work in this environment, and thought to influence their motivation and behaviour. It refers to the "perceived, subjective effects of the formal system, the informal 'style' of managers, and other important environmental factors on the attitudes, beliefs, values, and motivation of people who work in a particular organisation."[4] The concept of climate provides a way of describing the effects of organisations and organisational life on the motivation of the individuals who work in these organisations.

By focusing on these kinds of direct determinants, managers can greatly enhance their effectiveness in influencing employee performance.

When we talk about climate we mean how people feel about aspects in their work environment which directly impact their productivity. It's what people say when asked "What's it like to work here?" Hay Group has found that when people feel clear, challenged and supported at work, they are prepared to devote more energy to their work. In fact, our research shows that differences in climate predict up to 30% of the variance in performance outcomes.[5]

Climate affects organisational performance by influencing employee motivation. In most jobs, especially complex ones, there is a gulf between what employees need do to 'get by' and what they can do if they perform at their full potential. A positive climate will encourage this discretionary effort and commitment.

[3] Atkinson (1964), Lewin (1938), McClelland (1961).
[4] Litwin and Stringer (1968: 5).
[5] For example: Barnard, D and Lees, A *Highly effective headteachers: An analysis of a sample of diagnostic data from the leadership program for serving headteachers.* (1999).

How it works

Once Hay Group's climate survey is completed online by managers and their teams, feedback is compiled into a report with two profiles:

- the climate the first line leader experiences within their own leadership team
- the climate the first line leader creates for their social workers.

Each person describes the climate as it now exists (the 'actual' climate), and then what the climate *should be* (the 'ideal' climate).

'Actual' climate has been shown to reliably differentiate high- and low- performing organisations from one another, and on an individual level it has also been found to predict success or failure in work.[6] The discrepancy between what the climate actually is and what the climate should be (the climate 'gap') is interpreted as a diagnostic index to identify areas within an organisation that can be developed or improved. Climate gap has also been found to distinguish outstanding from good performers.

The Hay Group's climate instrument has been revised several times since its original conception in 1967. It has been tested by factor analysis and has shown high levels of internal consistency. It has also been tested in numerous organisations from different industries all over the world to demonstrate its validity. The overall norm sample includes c.60,000 participants, located all over the world, covering a wide range of industries, cultures and job types.

Climate dimensions

When there is a healthy climate in a team, the members of the team experience the following six conditions. These conditions are also made up of sub dimensions which are measured and then inform the overall position for that condition.

Flexibility

Flexibility is a measure of the perceived constraints in the workplace and the amount of red tape, particularly unnecessary red tape, in the organisation. To what extent are employees unnecessarily constrained by rules, policies, and procedures that interfere with getting the job done? And as a component of that, to what extent is the organisation open to new ways of looking at things? To new ideas? To new ways of proceeding? Ideally, flexibility will be high in an organisation. And in an entrepreneurial organisation, it will be very high.

Sub dimensions:
- **Bureaucracy Minimised** – there are few unnecessary procedures and formalities
- **Innovation** – team members are encouraged to develop new ideas and approaches.

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[6] Litwin and Stringer (1968), Sevy (2000).

Responsibility

Employees are given authority to accomplish tasks without constantly checking for approval. Responsibility is the feeling that employees have a lot of authority delegated to them; the degree to which they can run their jobs without having to check everything with their manager, and feel fully accountable for the outcome. In organisations with high responsibility, employees feel encouraged to use their best judgment and to do what they think is right, rather than just trying to keep out of trouble.

Sub dimensions:
- **Autonomy** – team members feel that they can decide how to do their job
- **Risk Taking** – team members feel encouraged to take calculated risks.

Standards

The Standards dimension is a measure of the emphasis that the organisation places on doing one's best. It is typically reflected in the establishment of goals that are both challenging and attainable. High standards represent a good match between the expectations and the capability of both the individual and the organisation.

Sub dimensions:
- **Improvement** – continuous improvement is encouraged
- **Excellence** – high standards and goals are set.

Rewards

Employees are recognised and rewarded for good performance. The Rewards dimension is a measure of degree to which team members feel that they are being recognised and rewarded for good work and that such recognition is directly and differentially relates to levels of performance. It reflects the extent to which employees know specifically what it is that the organisation values in their contribution and what management would like to see more of or less of from them. When this dimension is high, the feedback is relatively immediate, specific, and directly related to performance.

Sub dimensions:
- **Performance** – rewards allocated on basis of performance
- **Recognition** – recognition and praise outweighs threats and criticism.

Clarity

Everyone within the organisation knows what is expected of them. Clarity is probably the most important of all the climate dimensions. It's the most important because it consistently shows the strongest relationship to employee productivity.

Clarity is the feeling that everyone knows what is expected of them, and understands how those expectations relate to the larger goals and objectives of the organisation. It is the answer to the question: *"Where are we going and how do I fit into that?"*

Sub dimensions:
- **Mission and Direction** – clear vision for the organisation
- **Organisation and Expectation** – structure and job expectations.

Team Commitment

Team Commitment is a measure of the extent to which people are proud to belong to the organisation and can trust that others are working toward some common objective. The pride in belonging is most directly related to the level of performance of the organisation (people are proud to belong to an organisation that performs well) and to values (people are proud to belong to an organisation whose values they share or respect). The second part of Team Commitment is trusting that everyone is working toward a common objective. High Team Commitment is most evident when individual members are applauding each other's successes.
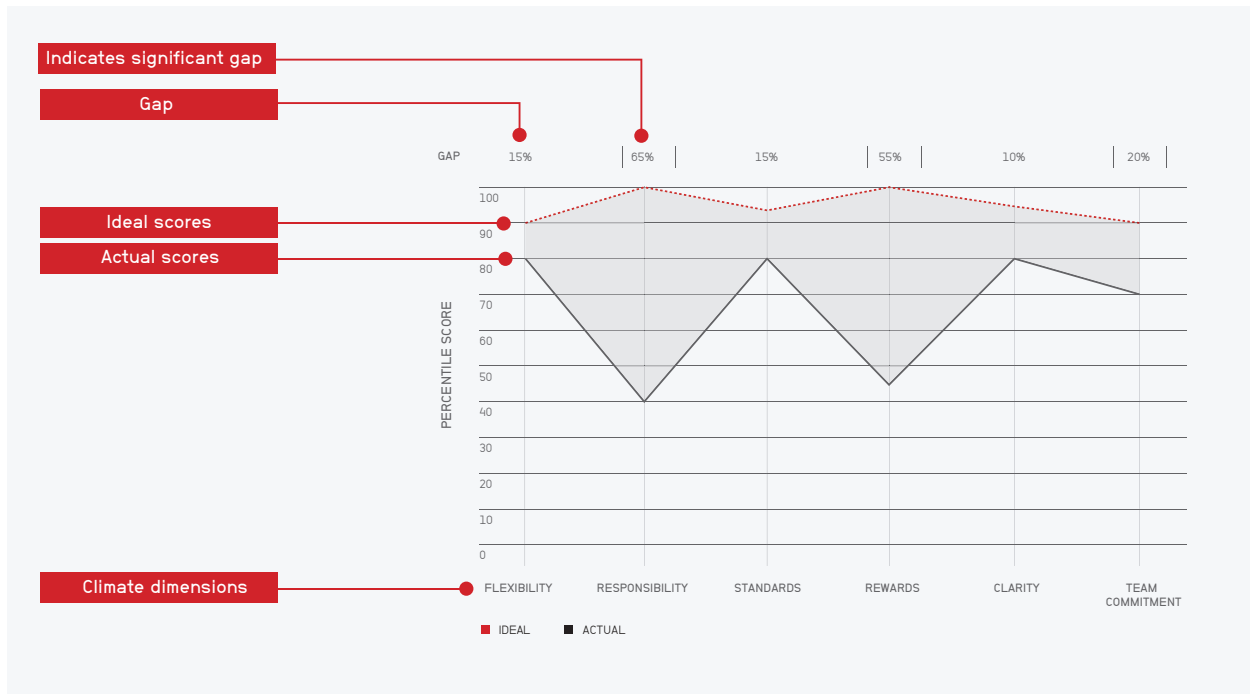
Sub dimensions:
- **Dedication** – people give extra effort
- **Pride** – they feel that the team unit has pride in what they do
- **Cooperation** – team members help each other
- **Congeniality** – feel that co-workers like and trust each other.

How are the climates measured and presented?

Each participant is given two profiles: *The Climate You Experience* and *The Climate Your Raters Experience*. The Climate You Experience profile summarises the climate the participant experiences as a member of the team or work unit to which he or she belongs. This is primarily affected by the way the participant is being led or managed. These results are normed against the results of surveys taken by other participant managers.

The Climate Your Raters Experience profile summarises the climate raters experience as members of the team or work unit the participant leads. This is primarily affected by the way the participant is leading the team. These results are normed against the results of surveys taken by raters. Each profile (see example below) indicates two scores on the six key climate dimensions. The dotted line (the Ideal) represents the rater's expectations of how the climate should be, according to his or her perceptions. The solid line (the Actual) represents the rater's perception of how the climate actually is. The gap between Actual and Ideal is presented as the shaded area.

Fig 1. Example climate data report

Indicates significant gap

Gap

GAP | 15% | 65% | 15% | 55% | 10% | 20%

Ideal scores

Actual scores

PERCENTILE SCORE

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

Climate dimensions

FLEXIBILITY | RESPONSIBILITY | STANDARDS | REWARDS | CLARITY | TEAM COMMITMENT

■ IDEAL   ■ ACTUAL

Significant Gaps

The rule of thumb used when interpreting climate data is that where the gap between actual and ideal for any climate dimension exceeds 20 percentile points, there is likely to be a loss of discretionary (motivated) effort on the part of the team members.

Significant gaps may indicate low or negative climate.

Low Scores

Dimensions for which there is a significant gap and the actual climate score is at or below the 35th percentile indicate potential issues. While a single low score may indicate relatively little need for that particular aspect of climate, more than one low climate dimension is usually a sign of poor overall climate.

Low climate coupled with a significant gap indicates an area that needs prompt attention.

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Climate created by first line leaders in children's social work

The essential characteristic of the first line leader role is that it is focused on enabling front line social workers to deliver excellent children's social work. However, the context creates great pressures on first line leaders and their teams because of the complexity of family and community situations, the volume of work and the risks that social workers have to weigh up.

Though context can feel draining for front line social workers, **we found that first line leaders can create a motivating climate for their teams and, improve performance, even when the conditions are not ideal.**

We evidenced this by using Hay Group's climate survey, which measures the conditions that a leader creates within their team. It is the atmosphere of the team, and it relates very closely to the success of a team. The research demonstrates that up to 30% of the variation in team performance can be accounted for by the climate a leader creates,[7] therefore the climate survey is a very good proxy for output measures in all leadership roles, but particularly where individual leaders' added value is hard to measure.

Stakeholders agreed that the quality of leadership could be seen in the impact first line leaders had on operational work quality through the conditions they created. In other words, views about team managers tend to be shaped by how they relate to their team, the effects of which are measured by climate.

Our research sample

All of the first line leaders in our in-depth research were nominated as high performers by their local authorities. We analysed their interview data to make an initial judgement about which first line leaders were good and which outstanding, based on the capabilities highlighted in the research literature and by professional leaders.[8] We then tested the difference between our two groups by measuring the impact they had on the climate their social workers experienced.

We were unable to collect climate data from all of the first line leaders and their teams for a variety of reasons, but we had data from 16 of the 20. In one case the data did not include the climate the first line leader experienced, and in another the data did not include the climate the first line leader created. So we had data on the climate *created* from 15 of our sample.

We classified seven of the first line leaders as outstanding. All but one of them created a high performance or energising climate. This is a high correlation and was strong evidence that the established views of social work leaders and academics in this field are confirmed by Hay Group's research for Frontline.

We classified eight of the first line leaders as good. Three of these eight also created high performance or energising climates, but in each case there was a specific aspect of their practice

[7] See page 11 above.
[8] See Appendix 6 for more detail of this process and the capability findings.

that undermined the positive impact they had on their team (for example, a tendency to 'rescue' situations rather than build capability in the team).

Most of the first line leaders in both groups improved on the climate they experienced from their own managers, but the outstanding group were able more thoroughly to shield their teams from negative contextual pressures than their good colleagues.

Table 8. Climate gaps and low actual scores – experience and created

First line leader code	Gaps experienced	Actuals experienced below 35th percentile	Gaps created	Actuals created below 35th percentile
Outstanding				
A	0	2	1	0
D	0	1	0	0
F	4	3	2	0
O	0	0	0	0
J	3	3	0	0
H	5	2	0	0
Q	N / D	N / D	0	1
Good				
B	5	6	4	2
P	0	6	3	1
R	1	1	3	1
K	5	6	2	2
S	5	5	2	1
C	5	0	6	2
E	3	1	3	1

| First line leader code	Gaps experienced	Actuals experienced below 35th percentile	Gaps created	Actuals created below 35th percentile
G	5	2	0	1
L	3	2	N / D	N / D

Fig 2. Analysis of first line leader's climate data: the relationship between climate gaps experienced and climate gaps created
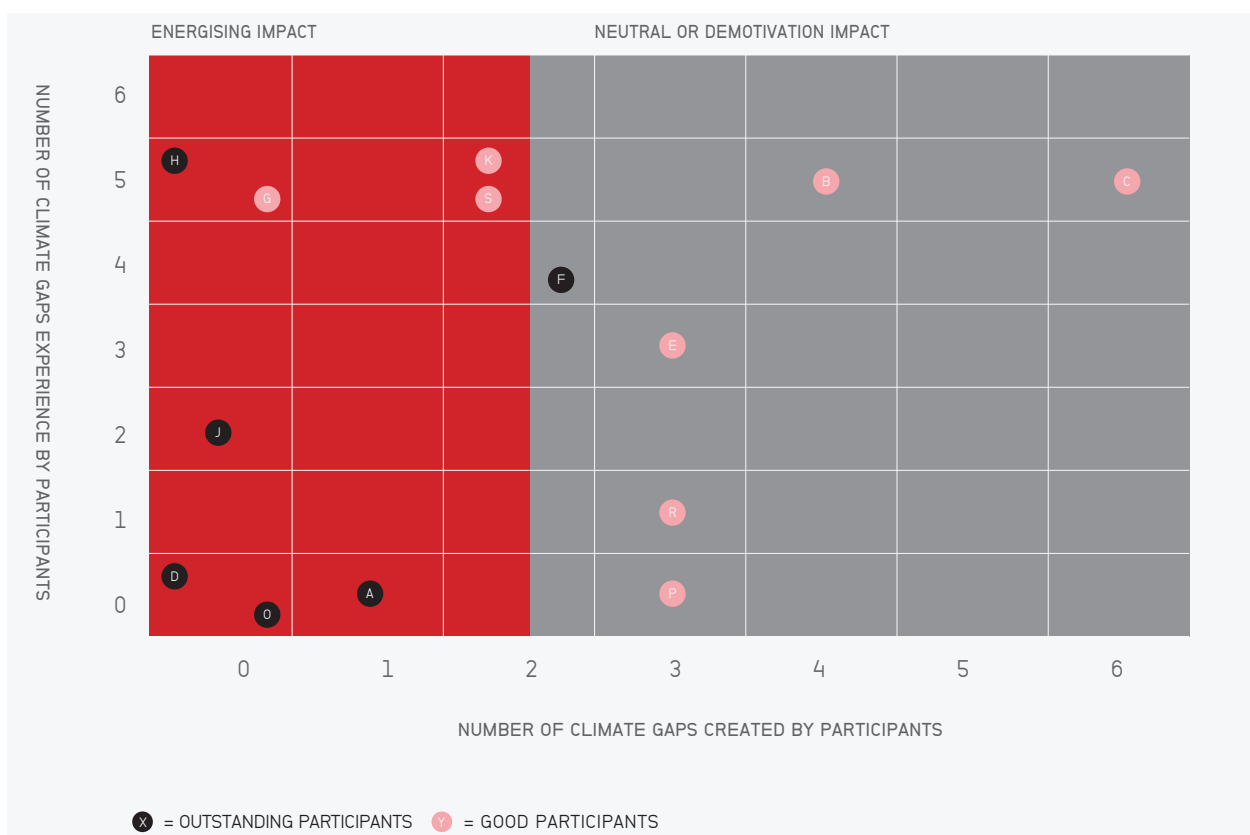
The scattergram above shows the relationship between climate gaps experienced and climate gaps created by the first line leaders. One of the seven outstanding first line leaders for whom we have data did not provide their own climate experience, so cannot be charted; one of the nine good first line leaders for whom we have their own climate data did not have upward data from their team, so they too cannot be included in the scattergram.

A scattergram of the number of low actuals experienced and created also illustrates the superior added value of the outstanding group.

Fig 3. Analysis of first line leaders climate data: number of low actual climate scores experienced and created
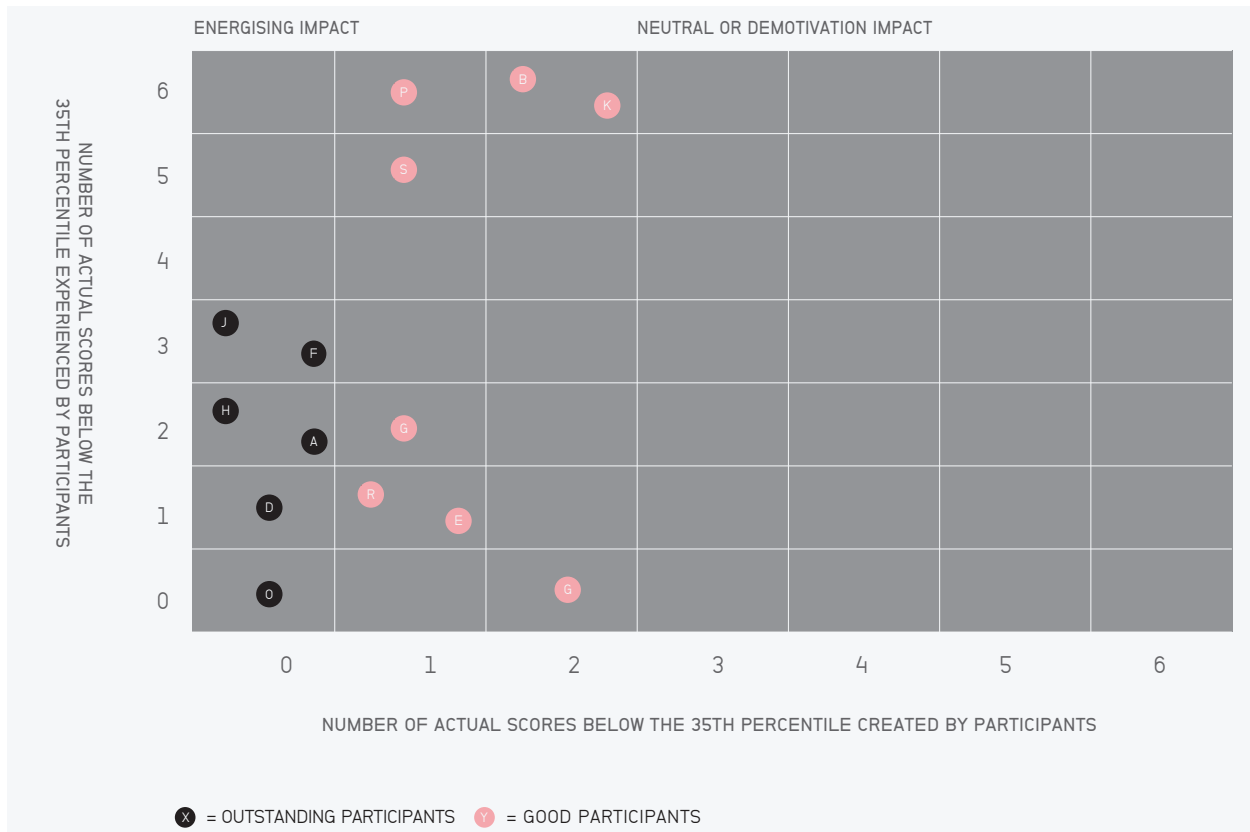
While outstanding first line leaders were better able to shield their teams from poor environmental conditions, it is easier to do so if their managers also create a motivating climate, as the charts below show. A number of the outstanding first line leaders were well led by their manager's, whilst the majority of good first line leaders experienced demotivating climate themselves.

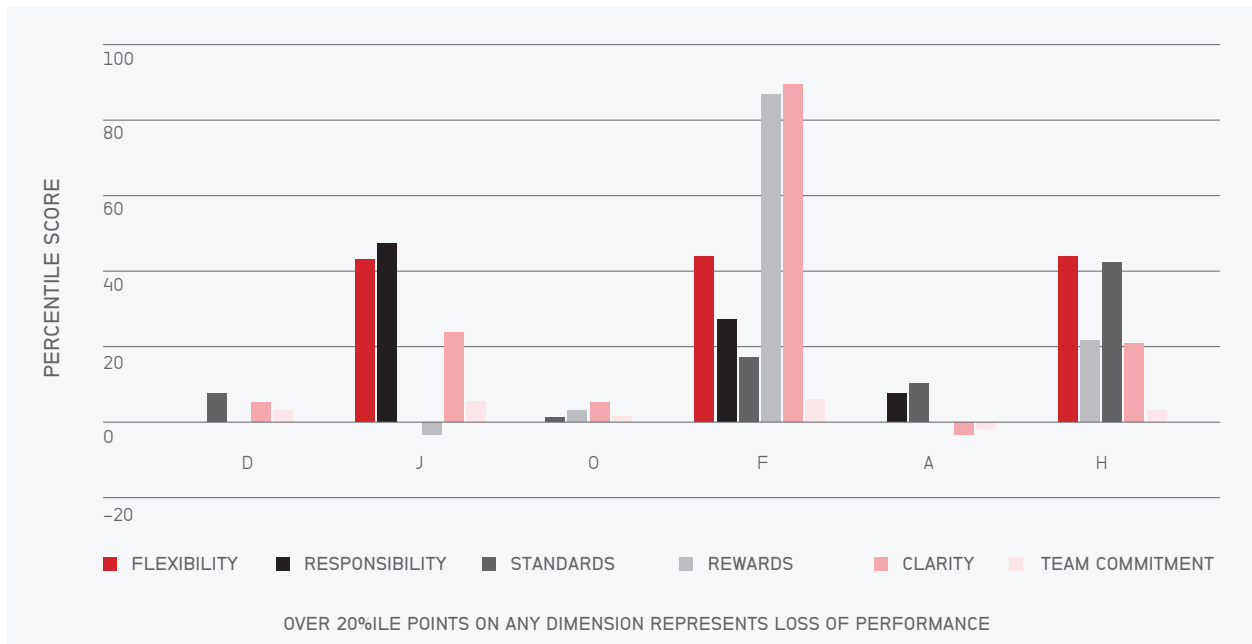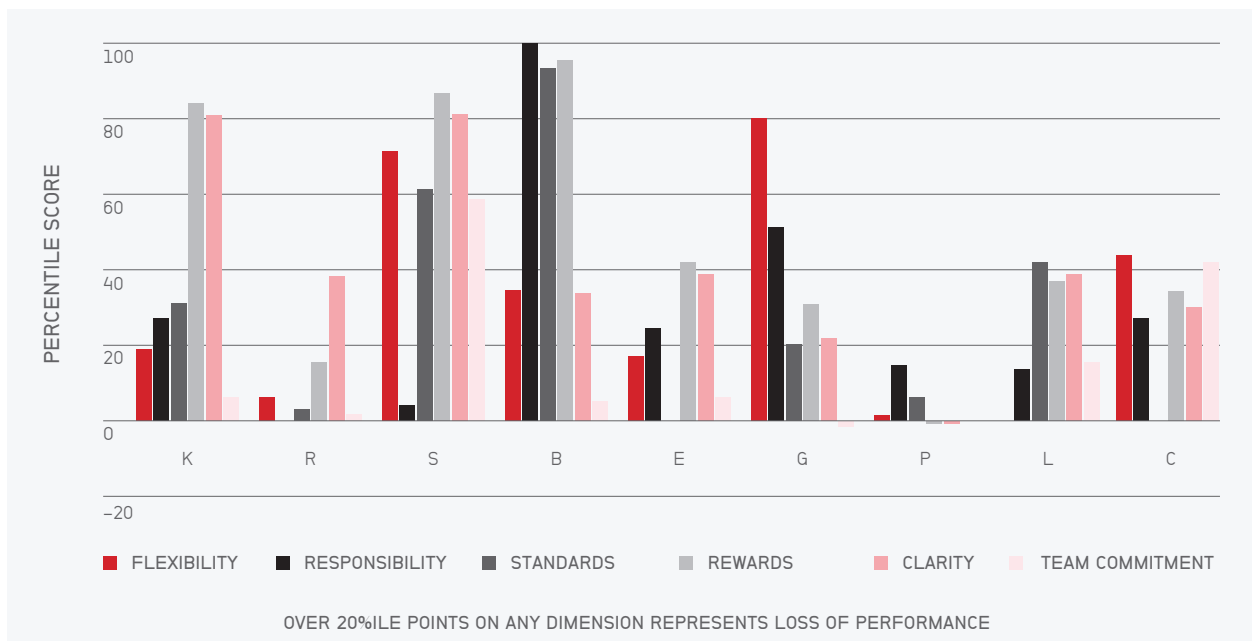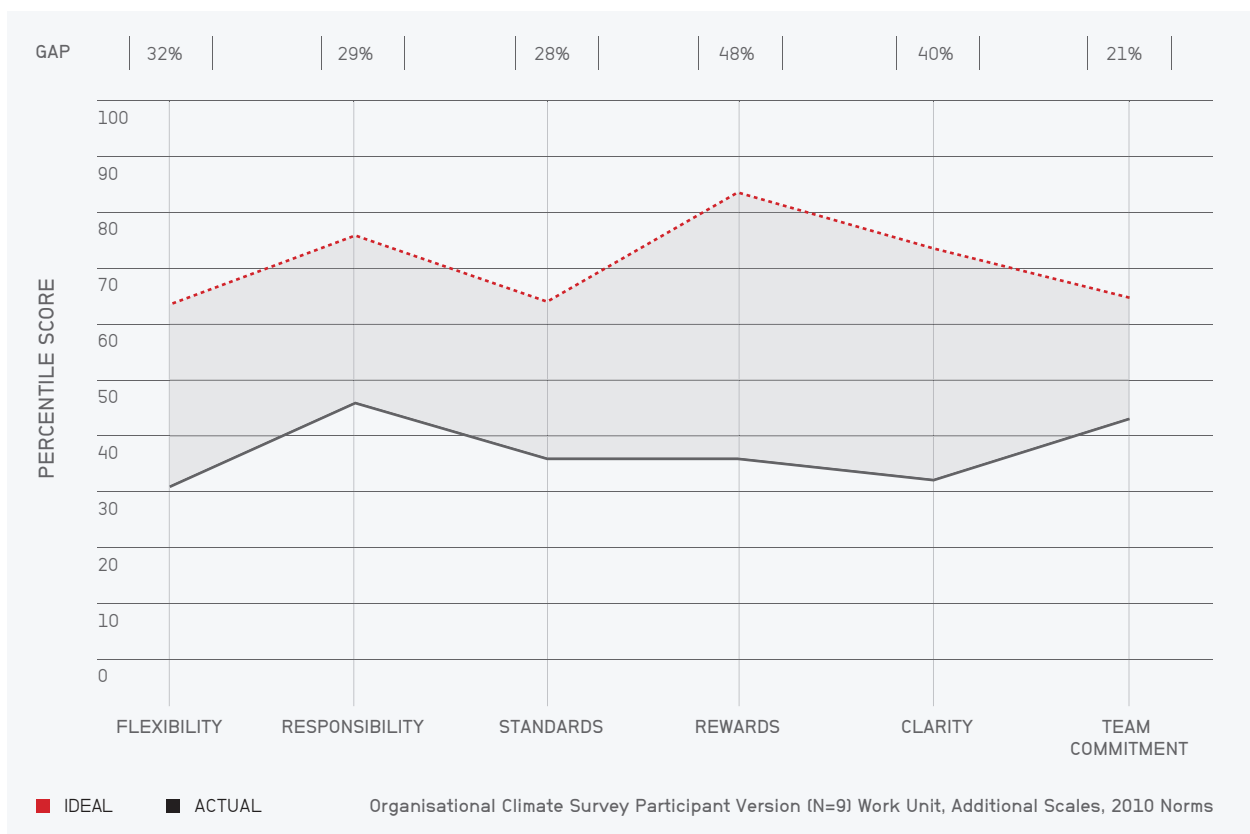## Fig 4. Climate gaps experienced by outstanding first line leaders (n=6)

OVER 20%ILE POINTS ON ANY DIMENSION REPRESENTS LOSS OF PERFORMANCE

■ FLEXIBILITY ■ RESPONSIBILITY ■ STANDARDS ■ REWARDS ■ CLARITY ■ TEAM COMMITMENT

Fig 5. Climate gaps experienced by good first line leaders (n=9)

OVER 20%ILE POINTS ON ANY DIMENSION REPRESENTS LOSS OF PERFORMANCE

■ FLEXIBILITY ■ RESPONSIBILITY ■ STANDARDS ■ REWARDS ■ CLARITY ■ TEAM COMMITMENT

Good first line leaders' composite data

The more detailed charts for the good first line leaders highlight a number of aspects of their leadership experience and practice that may provide useful areas for development in the Firstline prototype.

Fig 6. Composite analysis of good first line leaders' climate surveys (climate they experience)[9]

GAP: FLEXIBILITY 32% | RESPONSIBILITY 29% | STANDARDS 28% | REWARDS 48% | CLARITY 40% | TEAM COMMITMENT 21%

IDEAL ACTUAL   Organisational Climate Survey Participant Version (N=9) Work Unit, Additional Scales, 2010 Norms
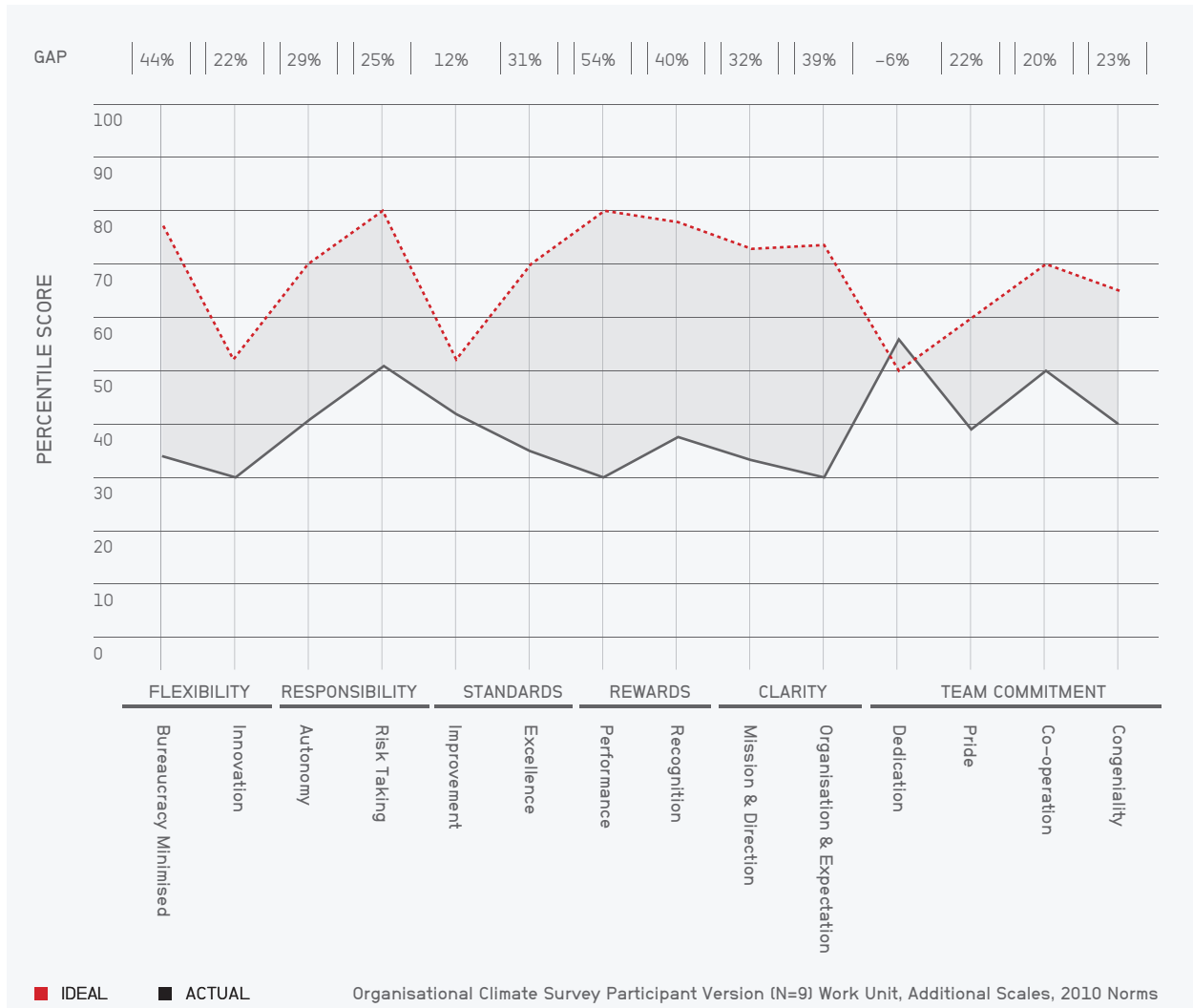
This chart shows the climate experienced by the good first line leaders.

- All of the dimensions of climate are sub-optimal on average for this group
- There are gaps on all dimensions
- All the actual scores are in the lower part of the norm group, and two are below the 35th percentile
- The overall picture is one of lower energy and aspiration.

[9] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 7. Composite analysis of good first line leaders' climate survey sub-dimensions (climate they experience)[10]

GAP | 44% | 22% | 29% | 25% | 12% | 31% | 54% | 40% | 32% | 39% | −6% | 22% | 20% | 23%

IDEAL   ACTUAL   Organisational Climate Survey Participant Version (N=9) Work Unit, Additional Scales, 2010 Norms

This chart shows the same data at a more detailed level.

- There is an emphasis on improvement
- First line leaders do not experience differentiating performance feedback
- First line leaders feel that their dedication is relied on too much.

[10] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 8. Composite analysis of good first line leaders' climate surveys (climate they create)[11]

GAP 28% 18% 19% 19% 31% 13%

IDEAL ACTUAL Organisational Climate Survey Direct Reports Version (N=32) Work Unit, Additional Scales, 2010 Norms
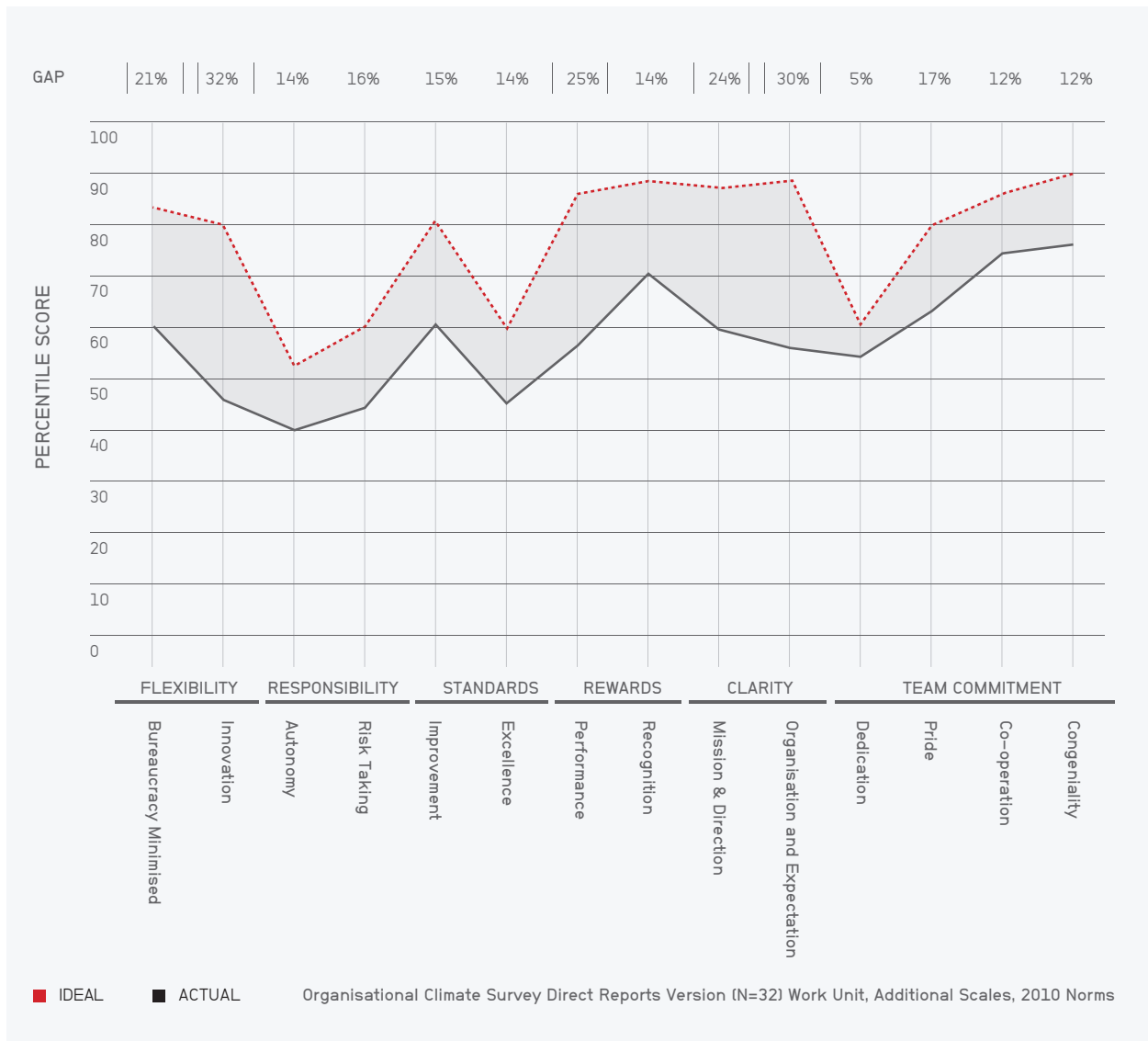
This chart shows the climate that good first line leaders create for their teams.

- On average they add value by improving the climate for social workers
- There are still two gaps, one of which is clarity – the most important condition for high performance
- The general levels of actual and ideal are better, but still not expressive of the highest aspiration
- Social workers are least comfortable about taking on high levels of responsibility.

[11] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 9. Composite analysis of good first line leaders' climate survey sub-dimensions (climate they create)[12]

GAP: 21% | 32% | 14% | 16% | 15% | 14% | 25% | 14% | 24% | 30% | 5% | 17% | 12% | 12%

PERCENTILE SCORE

FLEXIBILITY — Bureaucracy Minimised, Innovation
RESPONSIBILITY — Autonomy, Risk Taking
STANDARDS — Improvement, Excellence
REWARDS — Performance, Recognition
CLARITY — Mission & Direction, Organisation and Expectation
TEAM COMMITMENT — Dedication, Pride, Co-operation, Congeniality

■ IDEAL   ■ ACTUAL   Organisational Climate Survey Direct Reports Version (N=32) Work Unit, Additional Scales, 2010 Norms

This chart shows the same data at a more detailed level.

- Social workers want a greater emphasis on innovation, role clarity (organisation and expectation), and mission and direction
- They are less aspirational about stretching for excellence than in other areas
- Both autonomy and risk taking are areas where social workers in this group are less keen to step up.

[12] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Outstanding first line leaders composite data

The more detailed charts for the outstanding first line leaders show the considerably better climate they experience and are able to create for their social workers.

Fig 10. Composite analysis of outstanding first line leaders' climate surveys (climate they experience)[13]
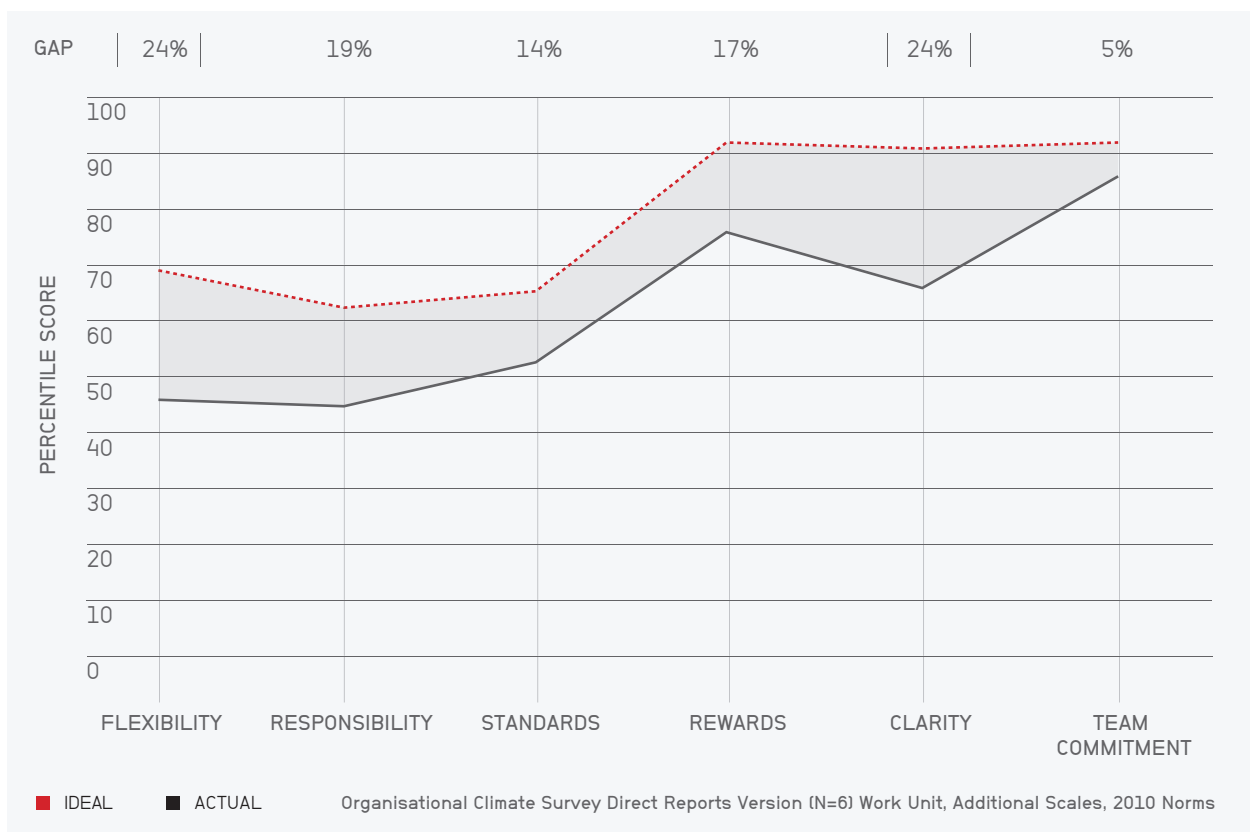
This chart shows the climate experienced by the outstanding first line leaders.

- They lack clarity, which is an important issue even for the best in our sample, and experience too many obstacles to effective work (flexibility)
- They experience great team support
- There are few gaps and no low actuals.

[13] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 11. Composite analysis of outstanding first line leaders' climate survey sub-dimensions (climate they experience)[14]

| GAP | 13% | 22% | 7% | 25% | 20% | 1% | 17% | 16% | 19% | 26% | −18% | 17% | 9% | 5% |

IDEAL ACTUAL   Organisational Climate Survey Participant Version (N=6) Work Unit, Additional Scales, 2010 Norms

This chart shows the same data at a more detailed level.

- There is a significant dip in the experience or desire for autonomy, emphasised by a concern about risk taking
- First line leaders need to have a stronger picture of what success looks like in their role (organisation and expectation)
- They are dedicated, but feel that the demands are greater than would be ideal.

[14] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 12. Composite analysis of outstanding first line leaders' climate surveys (climate they create)[15]
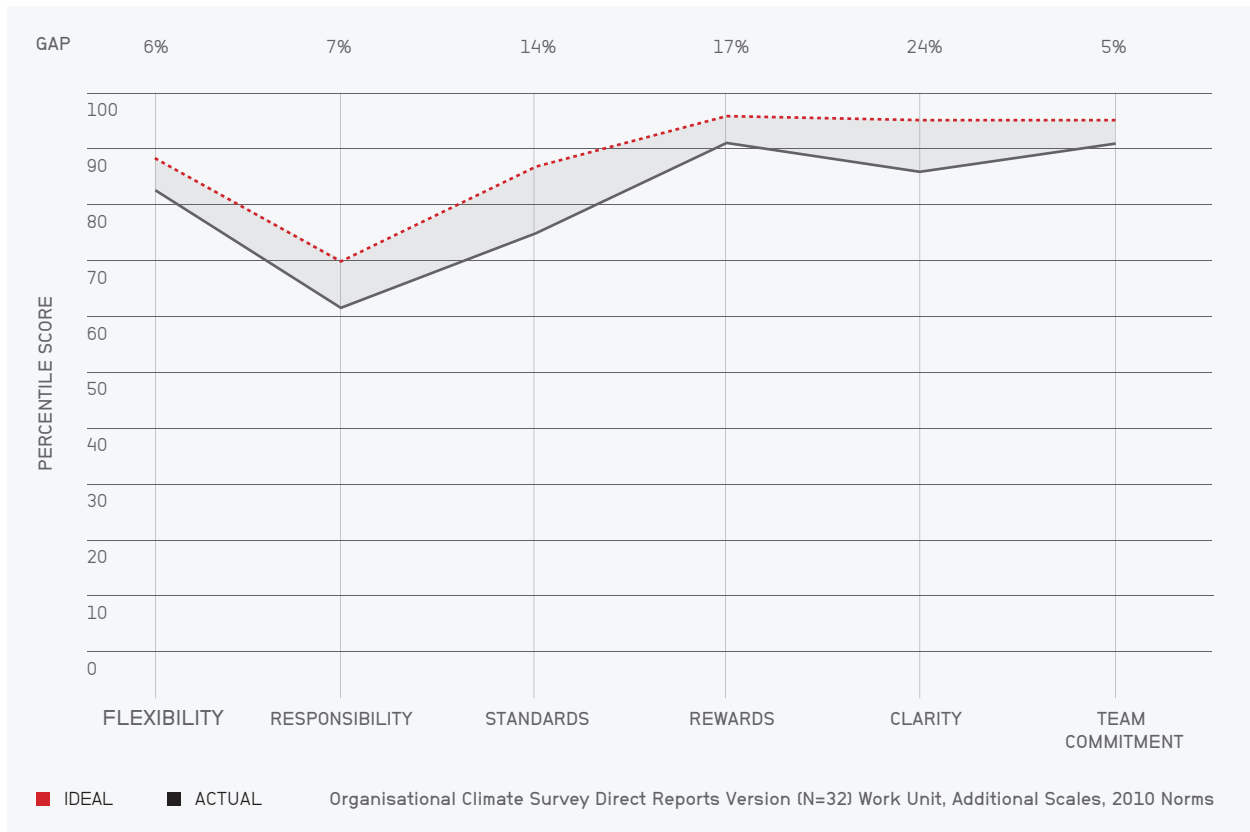

This chart shows the climate created by the outstanding first line leaders.

- There are no gaps
- There are no actuals below the 35th percentile
- There is still a dip in experience and aspiration on the responsibility dimension.

[15] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Fig 13. Composite analysis of outstanding first line leaders' climate survey sub-dimensions (climate they create)[16]
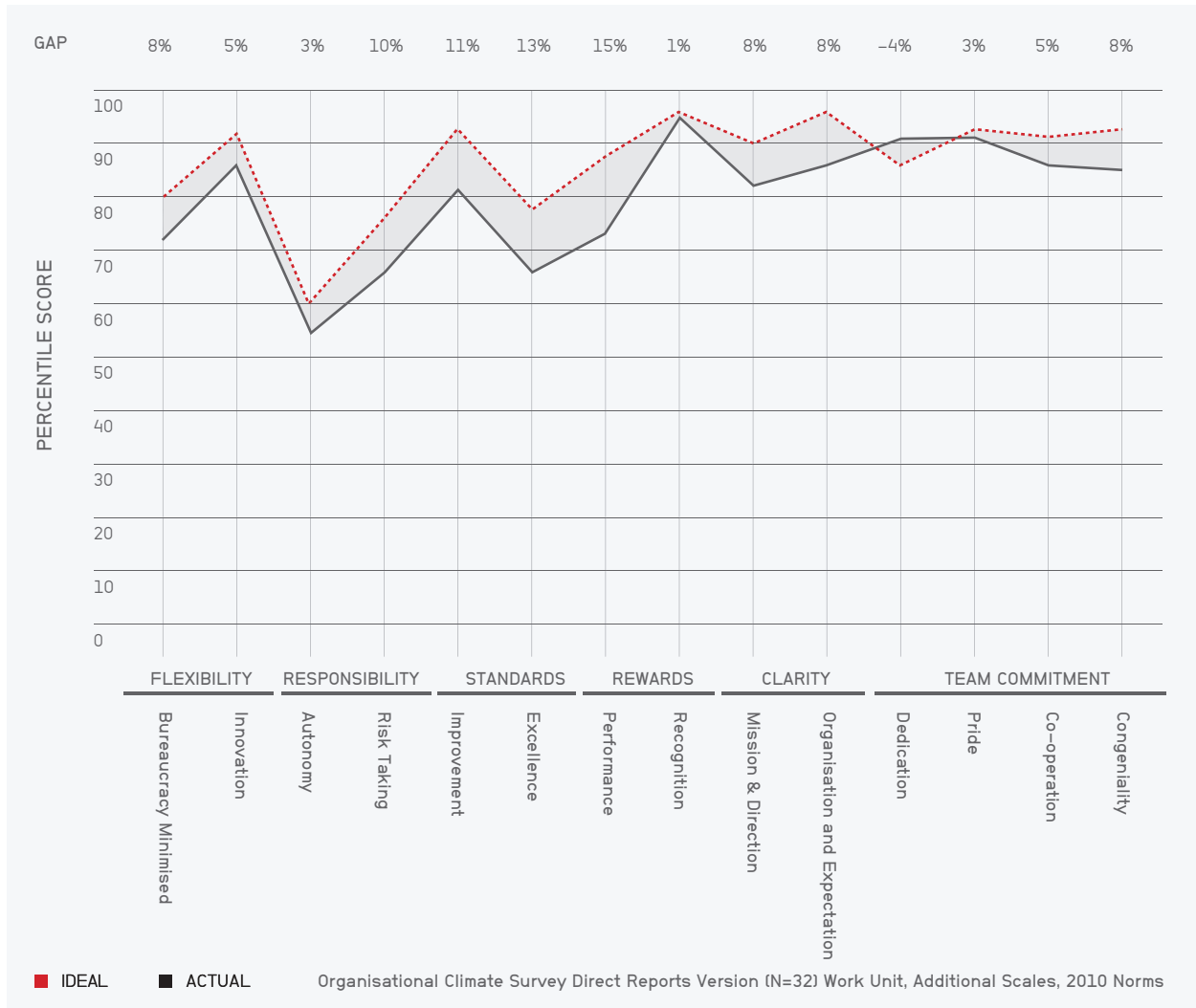
This chart shows the same data at a more detailed level.

- Social workers are content to allow their first line leaders to exercise more control over their work (autonomy)
- There is a small feeling that no more dedication should be required
- All other dimensions show that the outstanding first line leaders are, on average, leading in a way that gets the best from their social workers.

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[16] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.

Appendix 5: Capabilities

This appendix summarises our detailed findings on the capabilities required by first line leaders and what differentiates good and outstanding first line leaders.

What we already know

The literature about leadership in children's social work, and the professional leaders that we interviewed hold generally consistent views about the qualities required to do the first line leadership role well.

They described a person who is professionally authoritative, yet with the humility to encounter every situation in a spirit of open and disciplined inquiry. A person who is able to contain emotion both for themselves and others in a context of personal, social, professional and organisational risk.

They do this in two important ways: by high-quality reflective learning with their team, and by influencing the various professionals who constitute the team around the child, as well as senior leaders in the system. Underpinning these abilities are good intellect and emotional intelligence, as well as strongly held values about respect and empowerment, which infuse all their work and create a strong team purpose.

If these are the unique qualities of first line leaders in children's social work, they also need to have the normal diligent organisational abilities relating to the management of work flow, allocation of resources, maintenance of standards, and the setting and monitoring of goals.

When we analysed what we had read and heard, we identified ten broad capabilities that ranged from professional knowledge of social theory, systemic family therapy and the law, to deep-seated personal characteristics that enable team managers to exercise decisive leadership influence in challenging circumstances.[17] Some of these capabilities are acquired or established through training, work experience or by the clear agreement of what success looks like in the first line manager role. Enduring characteristics require support and focused development to learn and put into practice.

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[17] See Table 9 below.

Table 9. Main capabilities identified in the literature and by stakeholders divided by the depth of learning required

Ease of learning	Capability identified in literature and by stakeholders
Cognitive or experience-based	▪ Professional knowledge and experience ▪ Intelligent analysis, diagnosis, prioritisation and organisation ▪ Communicating with impact
Perceptions of what is important in the role	▪ Purposeful team leadership ▪ Individual and team development
Habitual feelings of self-efficacy	▪ Holding the team and individuals to account ▪ Ownership, responsibility for risk, containment and care for the team ▪ Facilitating and leading partnership groups, relationship building, networking and organisational awareness
Deep-seated drivers and enduring characteristics	▪ Emotional intelligence, empathy and self-awareness ▪ Obsession with the family, confidence in family-centred practice

Primary research – great first line leadership in practice

In-depth interviews

The purpose of the interview was to gain a vivid picture of what an outstanding first line leader looks like in practice. The interviews allowed us to explore what the first line leaders actually did, said, thought and felt when they were working at their best. Our purpose was not to conduct a detailed statistical analysis. With so many variables, not least jobs that were disparate in character and challenge, a much larger sample size would have been needed to present statistically valid conclusions.[18] Instead, we wanted to understand from a thematic analysis of the interview evidence:

- the unique interactions of these generic competencies as exhibited by the people actually doing the first line leadership job in children's social work
- examples of what differentiated outstanding from good leadership in this context.

Combinations of the following list of generic competencies proved to be unusually important in a role of this size and scope, whilst others were clearly less important in creating a high performance environment for the teams.

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[18] A problem that does not affect Hay Group's climate survey because it has been shown to be valid in all situations of team leadership, including matrix management, in over 30 years of research, development and practical use.

Table 10. Generic competency list[19]

Cluster	Generic competency
Emotional intelligence	▪ Emotional self-awareness ▪ Emotional self-control ▪ Dealing with failure ▪ Flexibility
Drivers	▪ Achievement orientation ▪ Initiative ▪ Positive outlook ▪ Self-confidence
Cognition	▪ Analytical thinking ▪ Conceptual thinking ▪ Information seeking ▪ Innovation ▪ Expertise
Empathy	▪ Customer service orientation (this was coded for focus on children and families) ▪ Interpersonal understanding ▪ Listening and responding ▪ Organisational awareness
Relationship management	▪ Relationship building ▪ Impact and influence ▪ Team working ▪ Conflict management
Leadership	▪ Team leadership ▪ Directiveness ▪ Developing others ▪ Concern for order and quality ▪ Organisational commitment

The Hay Group team considered not just what first line leaders did, but how they focused their attention, and what their intentions were. The stories they told in their interviews, which illuminated their practice when they were working at their best, involved the following themes.[20]

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[19] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015.
[20] A theme is an essential strand in an interviewee's narrative that shows a clear, conscious intention.

Table 11. Initial thematic analysis of the key theme elements from first line leaders interviews

Initial thematic analysis		
Theme elements	**Outstanding first line leaders (n=9)** Number of times theme elements occur	**Good first line leaders (n=11)** Number of times theme elements occur
Child- and family-centred **Values driven** **Moral purpose**	Consistent themes across both groups	
Team leadership ▪ achievement focus ▪ clear expectations ▪ setting standards ▪ challenge poor performance ▪ confident role model	28	19
Intellect, knowledge and experience ▪ conceptual thinking ▪ use of evidence ▪ knowledge about current research	19	9
Emotional intelligence ▪ empathy ▪ contain emotion ▪ optimism	17	7
Understanding the dynamics of power ▪ use in motivation ▪ empowerment ▪ humility	17	1
Reflective development ▪ brings team together to learn ▪ feedback ▪ enabling confident risk-taking ▪ mutual support	16	9

Family-centred values and moral purpose did not differentiate between the groups, but the table shows that outstanding first line leaders are active across a wider range of these themes. By contrast, the good first line leaders tend to focus their team leadership on the tasks their social workers are involved in, rather than first considering the social workers themselves.
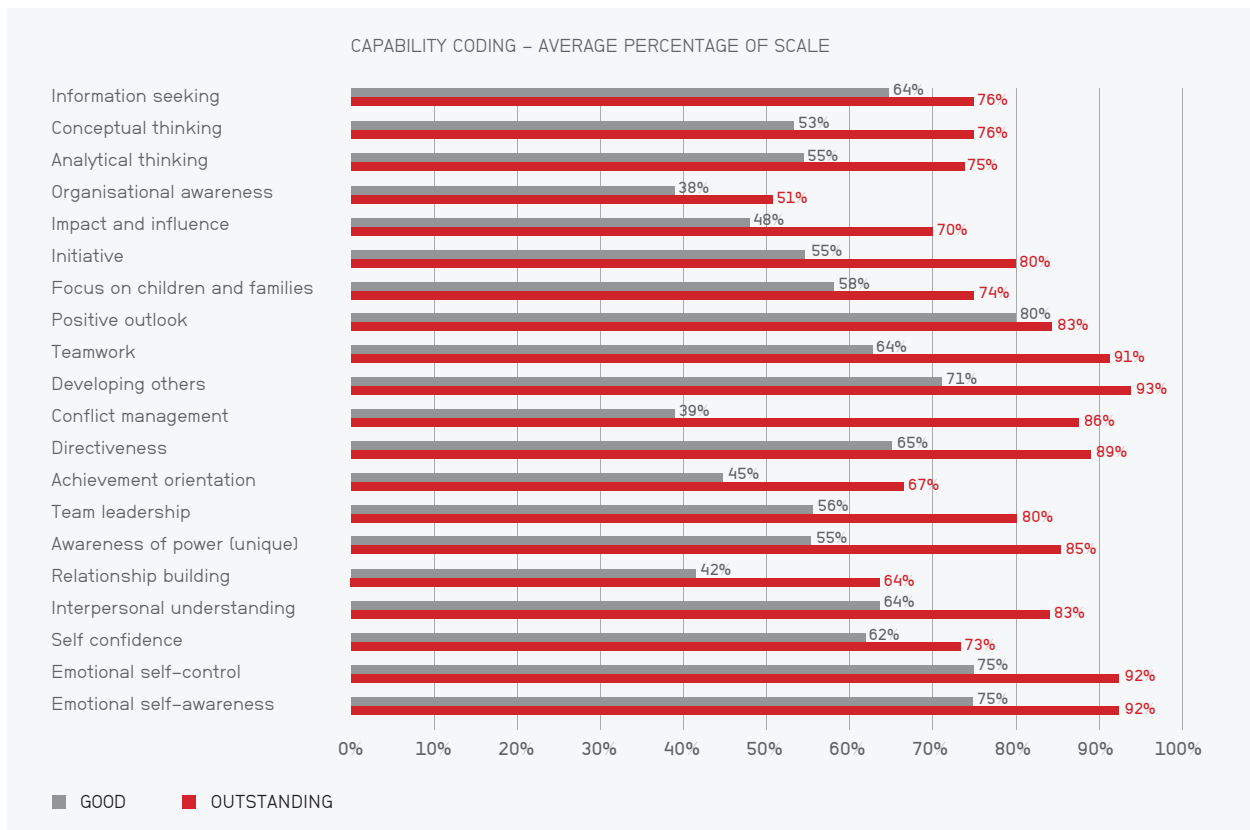
Table 12. Capability themes for outstanding leaders of front line social workers

Capability themes
Embracing leadership Outstanding first line leaders wholeheartedly embrace their leadership role. They have a clear vision of what excellent practice looks like and what impact social work can have and embed this in all that they do with the team. They set direction, create clarity about how each individual contributes to the work of the team, encourage everyone to learn and do their best and give feedback when they do not. They prioritise work, build trust, inspire learning, provide stretch, probe evidence and celebrate progress.
Empowering and influencing Outstanding first line leaders display an acute awareness of the power dynamics in unequal relationships and use this carefully to manage their impact. They pay particular attention to ensuring others feel safe, respected and in control, as the best basis for them learning and changing. They model this in their interactions with others both to help their social workers feel strong without rescuing them, and to model for them the dynamics of the relationship they expect them to create with the children and families they work with. They are able to influence upward and outward, in their local authority and in partner organisations, with personal and professional authority.[21]
Creating longer-term perspective Outstanding first line leaders are able to stand back from the specifics of a child in a family. They bring a wider perspective, and focus their attention on the social worker. They hold a safe, but appropriately challenging space in which the social worker is empowered to support the family to make progress. They focus on the longer-term outcomes for the child and family and development for the individual, not just the issue at hand.
Combining intellect and emotional intelligence to base decisions on best practice Outstanding first line leaders combine emotional intelligence capabilities (like empathy, relationship building and confidence) with advanced professional knowledge, and the intellect to use theoretical and practical knowledge flexibly and sensitively. They contain emotion safely and project a sense of calm professionalism and personal poise that helps others feel in control. These capabilities are used to lead and get the best from the social workers by focusing their efforts on real progress for children and families.

In addition to the thematic analysis, the competency codes were analysed to discover whether they supported our discrimination between outstanding and good first line leaders. Averages from the competency coding were converted into percentages of the available scale so that the competencies could be compared easily. This is because some of the competency scales have only three levels (for example, the unique awareness of Power scale), and some six levels (e.g. Impact and influence).

[21] The outstanding group did not consistently focus on influencing upwards and outwards. Stakeholders believed that influencing was an essential capability.

Fig 14. Comparison of capabilities between good and outstanding first line leaders[22]

CAPABILITY CODING – AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF SCALE

Capability	Good	Outstanding
Information seeking	64%	76%
Conceptual thinking	53%	76%
Analytical thinking	55%	75%
Organisational awareness	38%	51%
Impact and influence	48%	70%
Initiative	55%	80%
Focus on children and families	58%	74%
Positive outlook	80%	83%
Teamwork	64%	91%
Developing others	71%	93%
Conflict management	39%	86%
Directiveness	65%	89%
Achievement orientation	45%	67%
Team leadership	56%	80%
Awareness of power (unique)	55%	85%
Relationship building	42%	64%
Interpersonal understanding	64%	83%
Self confidence	62%	73%
Emotional self–control	75%	92%
Emotional self–awareness	75%	92%

■ GOOD   ■ OUTSTANDING

There was a stand-out difference in Conflict management, which combines with Directiveness (setting clear standards, tackling poor performance) and Achievement orientation (focus on improvement) to help outstanding first line leaders focus on getting the job done thoroughly and well. Many of the first line leaders found conflict and performance management challenging. But outstanding participants were able to bring conflict to resolution more often and in more situations despite their feelings of discomfort.

Awareness of power[23] strongly differentiated between outstanding and good participants. It combines with Impact and influence and Initiative to allow them to have a positive impact on others by recognising, respecting and encouraging others' sense of power and responsibility and using this awareness to influence and enable change.

Power and empowerment also proved to differentiate levels of performance. It is the combination of Interpersonal understanding (empathy) with Developing others and Teamwork that creates the conditions in a team meeting or an individual discussion for anxiety to be contained and positive outcomes like learning to be achieved. The outstanding team leaders empower rather than rescue.

[22] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015
[23] Power in this context means the awareness of your impact on others and careful use of this awareness to have a desired impact.

Finally, the distinctive thing about the outstanding participants was the combination of both emotional intelligence (Emotional self-awareness, Emotional self-control, Self-confidence) and strong cognitive ability (Analytical thinking and Conceptual thinking). This underpinned both rigorous and disciplined thinking under pressure, and enabled first line leaders to create a sense of calm in taxing situations.

In summary, the interview analysis shows that the outstanding leaders were using their capabilities at a more sophisticated level than their good counterparts, and the thematic analysis shows a greater consistency in focusing their attention on supporting social workers in delivering great professional practice.

Other evidence from the first line leaders interviews

Our first line leaders also shared insights about the challenges they experienced in their jobs and the areas where they would like development support. The following table summarises the priority development needs for first line leaders in this research. It includes the answers given by first line leaders during the interview process, and the Hay Group analysis of their development needs after the interview. Outstanding first line leaders' development needs are more focused on fewer high-impact areas, whereas good first line leaders have on average twice as many pressing development needs as their outstanding colleagues. All the first line leaders were eager to learn and would benefit from development, even where the need was less pressing.

Table 13. Developmental needs indicated by first line leaders

Development need	Outstanding first line leaders (n=9)	Good first line leaders (n=11)
Influencing in the wider context and personally	6	11
Dealing with underperformance to raise standards	6	5
Prioritisation and dealing with low level tasks	2	8
Managing conflict or complaints	3	4
Setting a clear and inspiring vision		7
Emotional self-awareness	2	2
Avoiding jumping in to rescue	1	4
Self-belief and confidence	2	2

Development need	Outstanding first line leaders (n=9)	Good first line leaders (n=11)
Organisational and contextual awareness		4
Relationship building		4
Developing others' capability		4
Broadening range of leadership styles	1	2
Developing own current professional practice		3
Challenging upward		3
Learning from research and other authorities	2	
Negotiating resources	1	
Partnership working		1
Empathy		1

Because we knew that this sample of 20 first line leaders would probably not exhibit all of the most important capabilities at an outstanding level, and they may not recognise the full range of their own development needs, we compared our interview findings with other research and professional views on what is required, as well as Hay Group's database of behavioural competencies.[24]

Having done this, we identified where first line leaders were not consistently displaying significant strengths when compared to the demands of their role or the capabilities shown in other complex first line leadership roles (for example, healthcare or manufacturing).[25] After this check on the capability data captured so far we developed the following set of nine capabilities required for outstanding first line leadership in children's social work.

[24] Hay Group has the largest database of behavioural competencies in the world at the McClelland Research Center in Boston – it is used by researchers and academics, including Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*.
[25] See Appendix 3 for a comparison of first line leadership roles.

The capabilities required for success

Capabilities examples

The table below contains a description of the nine capabilities required by outstanding first line leaders. It is organised in three domains of Self, Leading and Enabling with three capabilities in each. The section for each capability includes a title, a short definition, the intentions behind the capability, what it enables a person to do and behavioural indicators at good and outstanding levels to help in identifying and assessing progress towards outstanding practice.

Table 14. First line children's social work leader capabilities – including indicators for discriminating good from outstanding capability

Cluster and capability	Descriptor
Self	This cluster of three capabilities describes the personal qualities that represent a more mature expression of qualities required in all social work. They enable a first line leader to act as a role model for their colleagues by displaying towards them those behaviours that promote positive outcomes for children and families. They describe the warmth, humanity, confidence, humility, empathy and care that enable the first line leader to understand emotion and contain anxiety in themselves and others.
Confidence *This is who I am* I know what triggers different emotional responses in me. I recognise when it is happening and I am able to manage my feelings in challenging or ambiguous situations. I believe in my own ability and feel confident about what I decide and what I do.	**This capability enables a person to maintain their own poise and have a positive impact on others by actively raising their self-awareness** **Good** ▪ Consistently self-aware ▪ Manages own strong emotions ▪ Confident under pressure ▪ Positive when it is tough **Outstanding** ▪ Strongly aware of emotional meaning ▪ Anticipates and plans to get the best from emotions ▪ Confidently decisive in complex or ambiguous situations ▪ Brings strong belief to overcome long-term issues
Empathy *This is how I understand others* I want to understand other people. I listen to them with full attention and show them that I value and respect what they say, feel and mean. I consider underlying reasons for their emotions, thoughts and actions.	**This capability enables the person to see, hear, and make meaning of what others experience, thus helping them to manage their own emotions** **Good** ▪ Alert to others' underlying concerns ▪ Recognises implications of group interactions ▪ Acknowledges and reflects back understanding of others' feelings ▪ Respects others perspectives and understand how this affects their thinking **Outstanding** ▪ Helps others explore their feelings without rescuing ▪ Anticipates and plans to get the best from emotions ▪ Brings out group concerns productively

Cluster and capability	Descriptor
	▪ Helps others gain perspective on their emotions ▪ Predicts others' emotional reactions and helps them manage them
Warm authority *This is how I empower others* I project warmth and positive energy to establish and maintain trusting relationships. I am alert to feelings of power and powerlessness. I offer my own strength and confidence to help others to feel stronger and more capable. I challenge respectfully.	**This capability enables a person to build relationships rapidly and inspire others to feel strong and effective in a wide variety of situations** **Good** ▪ Stays open to others to foster mutual confidence ▪ Has high expectations that others can decide for themselves ▪ Takes personal risks to stand up for what is right ▪ Gives up power to boost others' confidence **Outstanding** ▪ Inspires trust by exhibiting own vulnerability ▪ Offers empowering support ▪ Helps others take responsibility in difficult situations ▪ Acts as a role model for powerful collaboration
Leading	This cluster of three capabilities describes the personal qualities that are displayed by the first line leader who consciously acts to set direction and grow capability. They combine to set the tasks associated with good front line social work in a context of organisational goals as well as personal learning and development. They include challenge and support, because a determination to deliver for children and families infuses the leader's focus on high standards.
Powerful team ethos *This is what we stand for* I create a strong commitment to strive for a clear and important social work team goal. I establish the way we will work together and behave towards each other. I get to know each individual, celebrate outstanding professionalism, and encourage mutual support whenever someone needs help. I protect social workers and obtain the resources they need.	**This capability enables a person to inspire their social workers to commit themselves to deliver a shared goal that they have created together** **Good** ▪ Builds social workers' energy and commitment to focus on vulnerable children and families ▪ Involves social workers in planning for the future ▪ Praises great behaviour and acts promptly to prevent poor behaviour ▪ Ensures social workers have what they need to succeed and creates moments of relaxation **Outstanding** ▪ Inspires confidence in the service and commitment to children and families in a crisis ▪ Generates social workers' accountability for reviewing and delivering planned outcomes ▪ Inspires pride in social workers' professionalism ▪ Removes obstacles to success and encourages mutual support and care
Determined team progress *This is what we will achieve* I keep social workers focused on setting and achieving clear aims for real progress with children and families. I am organised in the way I allocate responsibilities in the team, and ensure time is used efficiently. I give prompt feedback on how they are doing, and	**This capability helps the person to focus social workers on working efficiently and keeping children and families at the forefront of all actions and discussions** **Good** ▪ Demands high performance and systematically checks progress against deadlines ▪ Ensures social workers focus on priorities ▪ Gives clear formative feedback and insists on effective preparation for meetings ▪ Helps social workers regain poise after conflict

Cluster and capability	Descriptor
uphold professional standards by reviewing the quality and effectiveness of work.	**Outstanding** ▪ Changes systems and processes to raise quality of outcomes ▪ Relentlessly pursues excellence and rigorous time and quality standards from social workers ▪ Acts promptly to raise low practice standards and follows through with consequences for persistent underperformance by social workers ▪ Deals with deep-seated disagreements by refocusing on achieving the best for children and families
Reflective learning *This is what we are learning* I create a safe space for group discussion, disciplined inquiry and improved professional practice. I nurture individual ambition, development and learning. I encourage fearless exploration of things that have gone wrong to improve decision-making. I forbid blame in order to inspire creative thinking and learning. I model learning myself.	**This capability focuses the person on a relentless pursuit of improved professional practice in the team and enables them to unlock the potential of every social worker** **Good** ▪ Allocates work to stretch social workers in line with their aspirations ▪ Coaches social workers to make their own decisions and reflect on their practice ▪ Promotes innovation, diverse thinking and mutual challenge ▪ Forbids blame and insists on learning from bad situations **Outstanding** ▪ Offers appropriate support so that social workers can take on big challenges to learn in a safe way ▪ Coaches and challenges social workers to explore their judgement under stress and recognise what triggers their actions and decisions ▪ Encourages searching, supportive discussions in difficult situations so social workers constantly look for better ways of delivering for children and families ▪ Takes responsibility as a protective act when the team is blamed
Enabling	This cluster of three capabilities describes the ability to see, understand, make meaning of, and influence the system within which their social workers operate. They depend on strong intellectual capacity, with the ability to take on different perspectives, whether from allied professionals, or different conceptual frameworks, and bring rigorous analysis to shape decisions. Thoughtful engagement with senior managers, partners and opinion-formers enables the person to share a long-term vision for children and families and raise the reputation and influence of social work teams in the local system.
Shared purpose *This is our purpose in the community* I help other professionals to put children and families at the centre of their thinking. I bring a long-term, holistic view of how their needs can be met in the community. I encourage thoughtful risk-taking in order to achieve the right long-term result for children and families by collaborating to address causes rather than symptoms.	**This capability enables the person to start with a long-term goal for children and families in mind and generate wider energy and commitment to achieve it** **Good** ▪ Promotes child-centred problem solving rather than risk avoidance with partners ▪ Helps multi-agency groups to explore symptoms and causes, achieve consensus, and take concerted action ▪ Connects principles of children's social work to local authority or other agencies priorities ▪ Makes connections between different agencies' work in the interests of children and families **Outstanding** ▪ Sustains positive energy and reduces stress in high risk situations by taking a long-term view

Cluster and capability	Descriptor
	▪ Challenges negativity or conflict between agencies to inspire collaboration in reducing causes of risk for children ▪ Champions principled joint responsibility for stable family life in multi-agency groups ▪ Brings an holistic view of aligned children's services in the local community
Community of partners *This is how we have wider impact* I develop relationships with individuals and organisations that contribute to effective collaborative work with children and families. I understand their concerns and how their organisations work. I bring my holistic view to interdisciplinary teams and influence upward and outward to improve life chances for children and families.	**This capability enables the person to develop influential partnerships with other groups and agencies, and build personal relationships that contribute to effective collaborative work with children and families** **Good** ▪ Networks upward and across the service to understand how things get done, how decisions are made, and who makes them in different groups and organisations ▪ Gains support by understanding the preferences and concerns of others and tailoring communications accordingly ▪ Uses engaging and memorable stories, images or analogies to have a wider impact on partners ▪ Balances cultural sensitivity with the demands of high quality children's social care **Outstanding** ▪ Builds networks of influence between social workers and other teams in the authority or partners ▪ Confidently addresses the concerns of senior managers or partners in order to increase influence ▪ Celebrates collaborative success to maintain active local participation in improving family life for children ▪ Challenges in contentious situations or when cultural attitudes violate core principles of children's social care
Rooted decisions *This is how we make professional judgements* I am up to date with my professional skills and knowledge, and use these in a flexible yet rigorous way to inform decisions. I insist on diligent inquiry and analysis. I help colleagues to see situations from multiple perspectives using good evidence and effective theories or conceptual frameworks.	**This capability enables the person to use their knowledge, skills and experience in a flexible, yet rigorous way to inform the decisions made by colleagues and courts with wise advice and developmental team or individual coaching** **Good** ▪ Takes multiple perspectives into account, and uses practice experience to assimilate and rapidly assess information ▪ Considers missing data to test thinking and make balanced decisions ▪ Applies different conceptual frameworks flexibly to improve analysis, embed high quality social work practice, and overcome bias in judgements ▪ Analyses information from multiple sources to build a bigger picture **Outstanding** ▪ Uses agile, open and flexible thinking to make authoritative decisions in complex, ambiguous or evolving situations ▪ Challenges others to adapt their thinking and approach by using appropriate frameworks or perspective as situations evolve ▪ Improves practical, child-centred decision making quality and capacity in the system by prudent delegation ▪ Compares local data to national trends in order to challenge complacency

Appendix 6: Enablers and barriers

This appendix describes the approach and data used to define the local authority enablers and barriers for effective first line leadership.

Six sources of data

The research process drew evidence from existing literature, stakeholders, assistant directors, first line interviewees, first line focus group participants and social workers on what helps and hinders successful first line leadership. Their views were captured in a variety of ways. We did not explore factors involving larger system change, law or regulation, which are beyond a local authority's power to control.

We began by summarising the data from each individual primary data set. The following tables show this summary data from the assistant directors, first line interviewees, first line focus group participants and social workers. Appendices 7 and 8 cover the summary findings from the existing literature and stakeholder interviews.

Table 15. Summary of first line interviewees' comments

Enablers	Blockers / challenges
- Intrinsic value and interest of the work and the power to change people's lives - Respect, trust, autonomy and recognition - Opportunity to develop enthusiastic colleagues - Decisive and supportive senior management - Working and socialising with a positive, humorous and dedicated team - Support from other professionals and agencies - Professional colleagues who are good practitioners - Regular high quality supervision with manager - Tools to do the job – e.g. working IT - A positive vision for social work, clear end goals, and specific targets - Stable, capable staff - Caring for myself – exercise, family etc. - Being organised - Ability to work from home and think - Constructive feedback - Systemic approach to social work - Opportunity to develop the role and career progression - Dealing with complaints and criticism	- Allocating manageable caseloads - Maintaining management oversight to deliver timely work and meet court deadlines - Time - Managing poor performance and poor practice - Lack of resources - Bureaucracy and poor IT support - Time to develop staff - Demanding and unsupportive senior managers - Time and opportunity to learn from others - Recruiting high performance staff, workforce stability, and too many agency staff - Lack of success measures or feedback for working with children, reflective practice, staff development etc. - Alleviating other professionals' anxieties - Lack of trust and empowerment from senior managers - Role demands stifle professional and innovative practice - Time to develop partnerships and relationships - Dealing with complaints and criticism

Table 16. Focus groups summary of priority enablers

| Social workers	First line leaders
▪ Openness, trust and reflection from management ▪ Receptive to change ▪ An understanding of what the purpose of the service is – values and vision and a clear set of policies and procedures to follow ▪ Focus on children and families ▪ Less of a focus on bureaucracy and tick box exercises ▪ Good training and development opportunities ▪ Being recognised, acknowledged and rewarded for good work ▪ Administrative support and good resources / IT systems ▪ Good and supportive work colleagues – team spirit – being able to ask questions whenever, supporting each other ▪ Work / life balance – with your manager setting an example e.g. taking a lunch break ▪ Health and emotional well-being – recognition of emotional impact ▪ Sharing knowledge and skills ▪ Flexibility – giving people the space to focus on work, spreading work load	▪ Good management – role modelling from the top down – strong, clear decisive, open to challenge, good supervision ▪ High standards and expectations ▪ Clear ideas about good practice – training to help teach these ▪ Transparency and unity in communications ▪ Clear understanding about outcomes for children ▪ Everyone is on the same page, pulling in the same direction ▪ Work / life balance ▪ Manageable caseloads ▪ Flexibility in the way of doing things ▪ Clear vision for the service, and communicating this ▪ Culture of reflection and time to reflect ▪ Clear policies and procedures ▪ Supportive environment / management – culture and resources ▪ Trust at all levels – transparency in communication ▪ Observations, audits, feedback – to give constructive criticism ▪ Influencing and partnership working – days together with other agencies, someone embedded, relationship building, flexibility, peer relationships ▪ Having the time for supervision ▪ Right tools in place

Table 17. Assistant Director Summary

Enablers	Blockers
- Sustainable workload which they can think properly about and reflect - Decision making autonomy - Coaching, celebrating success, taking reasonable risks, creating a strong team and climate - Greater recognition of the role of first line leaders to that they are viewed positively - A stable workforce - Good supervision / management needs to be in place - a level of trust. Helps with decision-making - Effective communication – keeping abreast of changes / key issues e.g. policies, reports. - Supported in own learning and development. - Modern ways of working – simple systems, giving people the right environment to work in – right tools need to be place e.g. working computer etc. - Training and development - Managers who are capable of looking outside their own areas to the broader social work movement. Bigger picture, vision – looking ahead - Stable senior management team and clear leadership from the top. - An environment where people are encouraged to continually look forward, find ways of providing a better service - Salary and support structure that supports people to progress to leadership roles - Great staff – more staff early on in system rather than retrospective recruitment / temps - Teams and the organisation need to stick together and be more robust to external criticism	- Workload – too many cases which can't get the attention they deserve - Too risk adverse so that new ways of thinking are blocked - Culture that inhibits conversations about what went wrong and what could be done differently i.e. fear of repercussions so reflection does not happen - Not managing performance effectively - Poor communication – not telling people what is going on and why - Level of scrutiny gets in the way - There is a tendency for managers to step down and interfere in their team's work (Service Managers too involved in Team Manager Decisions and Team Managers too involved in day to day work with families) - Too much reliance on email, people copied in, too long. People need to have discussions and 'own' things personally - Funding. It is like taking an operating theatre away in a hospital and expecting them to manage the same number of patients with fewer facilities and staff. It impacts safety via increased caseloads

Analysing the data

Our starting point for analysing the data was Hay Group's model of organisational effectiveness, adapted from the work of Warner Burke and George Litwin. Burke and Litwin's research made a powerful link between the external context, the organisational culture, the leadership climate, motivation and performance. Helpfully, this conception of organisational effectiveness specifically integrates climate as a predictor of motivation and performance.

"Transformational change occurs as a response to the external environment and directly affects organisational mission and strategy, the organisation's leadership, and culture. In turn, the transactional factors are affected – structure, systems, management practices, and climate. These transformational and transactional factors together affect motivation which, in turn, affects performance." [26]

Fig 15. Hay Group's model of organisational effectiveness[27]
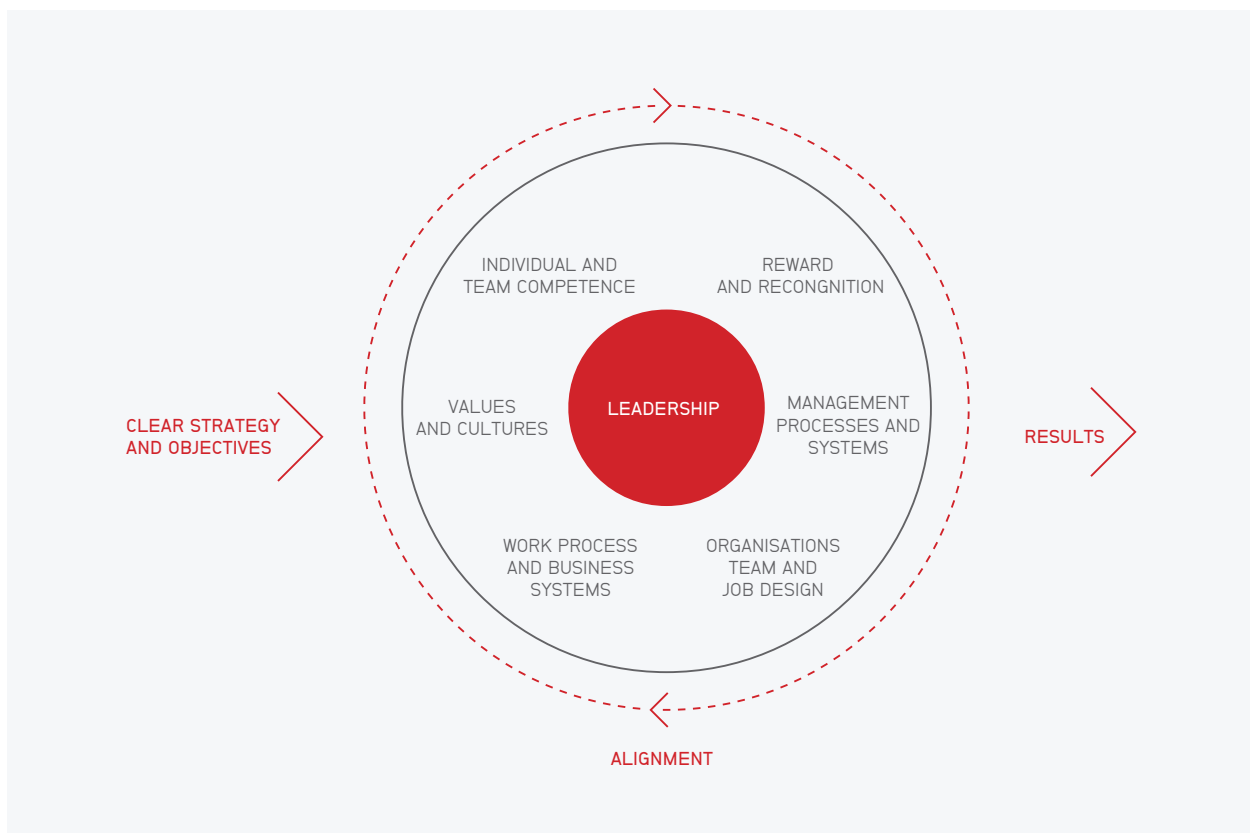
We used this model to structure our thematic analysis across the data sets and identify common themes. We also used it, alongside our Climate model (and broader body of knowledge on change, development and employee engagement) to help us to recommend priority actions for local authorities. In particular, these models highlight clarity (of direction and role) and stretching standards as priority areas for focus in creating high-performing environments and identify leadership as a key lever for broader change.[28]

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[26] Burke, W Warner and George H Litwin, "A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change", *Journal of Management*, Vol 18, No 3 (1992), 523.
[27] ©Hay Group Holdings, Inc. 2015
[28] See footnote 15.

Table 18. Key enablers themed against Hay Group's organisational effectiveness model factors

Lever	Key themes	Doc review	Key Stakeholders	Assistant Directors	Interviewees	First line leaders (FG)	Social workers (FG)
Leadership	Positive vision for social work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Available managers	✓	✕	✓	✕	✕	✓
	High quality supervision	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Constructive challenge and feedback	✓	✓	✕	✓	✓	✕
	Encouraging partnership working	✓	✓	✕	✓	✓	✕
	Clarity of practice – high standards and expectations role modelled	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Values and Culture	Common understanding of vision and values for social work	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Focus on outcomes for children and families	✓	✓	✕	✓	✓	✓
	Friendly and courteous senior management	✓	✕	✕	✕	✕	✓
	Support for health and well being	✓	✕	✕	✕	✓	✕
	Positive and supportive colleagues	✓	✕	✓	✓	✓	✓

Individual and team competence	Training and development	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
	Time to reflect and learn	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗
	Capable colleagues	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Reward and recognition	Praise	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
	Trust and respect	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Support and recognition	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Management processes and systems	Good processes to manage performance	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
	Observations and audits	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
	Clear policies and procedures	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
	Good recruitment and retention strategies	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Organisation, team and job design	Delegated authority and clear roles and accountabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
	Administrative support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work processes and business systems	Good working environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	The right resources and equipment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Effective bureaucracy and management information	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Workflow managed well	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

We identified which enablers were commonly mentioned and where there were differences in focus or opinion across data sets.

Table 19. Enablers for first line leadership in children's social work

Factor	Enablers (those mentioned by most contributors in bold)	Comments
Leadership	**Positive vision for social work and how to deliver it (sense of purpose)** **High quality supervision** **Constructive challenge and feedback** **Encouraging partnership working** **Clarity of practice – high standards and expectations role modelled** - Available managers	A positive and 'can do' attitude from leaders linked to high standards and expectations was valued by all. Supervision and feedback goes to the heart of professional excellence and is seen as important by all. Our first line leaders highlighted strongly that sense of purpose was a strong motivator. Social workers particularly valued the availability of their managers.
Values and culture	**Common understanding of the vision and values for social work (moral purpose)** **Focus on outcomes for children and families** **Positive and supportive colleagues and leaders** - Support for health and wellbeing - Friendly and courteous senior management	Again our first line leaders highlighted strongly that sense of purpose was a strong motivator. The importance of positive working relationships was a consistent theme for first line leaders in particular.
Individual and team competence	**Training and development** **Capable colleagues** **Time to reflect and learn**	All agreed that well trained, capable colleagues were important. First line leaders and social workers also focused strongly on training.
Reward and recognition	**Trust and respect** **Support and recognition** - Praise	Although the external context often focuses on blame, contributors all highlighted the value of recognition and respect to maintain motivation. Trust from senior leaders which gave them autonomy to act and resulted in transparent communication was important for first line leaders.
Management processes and systems	**Clear policies and procedures** - Good processes to manage performance - Observations and audits - Good recruitment and retention strategies	Clear policies and procedures was a broad concept linked to clarity about 'what good looks like' and the ability to justify decisions. First line leaders interviewed in particular highlighted managing poor performance as a challenge. Processes and strategies to tackle broader issues such as recruitment and retention were highlighted more strongly by academics and leading professionals.

Factor	Enablers (those mentioned by most contributors in bold)	Comments
Organisation, team and job design	▪ **Delegated authority and clear roles and accountabilities** ▪ **Administrative support**	Well-designed jobs with clear accountabilities and effective support were seen as essential by all for allowing the frontline to apply professional judgment.
Work processes and business systems	▪ **Workflow managed well** ▪ **The right resources and equipment** ▪ **Effective bureaucracy and management information** ▪ **Good working environment**	Orderly, efficient, systematic, well planned work systems and reliable information were seen to promote effective prioritisation, timely action and confident decision-making. This was seen by all contributors as an important factor in enabling good work.

Research interviewees and focus group participants identified key enablers that were more focused on the aspects of relationships with the team, managers, and other professionals. Whereas the key documents review and stakeholders were more likely to identify enablers affecting work processes, business systems (e.g. workforce development) and partnership working. **All groups, however, identified that having the right resources and capable teams in place, a shared moral purpose and positive vision for social work linked to a clear model for excellence and high quality supervision were essential for successful first line leadership.**

To help us prioritise enablers we also considered the conditions required by the nature of the work (for example, the nature of decision making required[29]) and role challenges. We paid attention to those challenges identified by first line leaders themselves (interviewees and focus groups).

Table 20. Challenges or disablers identified by first line leaders in the research

Challenges	Description
Time and focus	Level of work and lack of time was identified as keys issue in general. More specifically first line leaders identified lack of time to oversee all cases sufficiently, develop staff, build partnerships and relationships, reflect and learn from others. The lack of time to focus on these areas was also linked to the relative lack of performance measures (and therefore focus) associated with time spent on these activities or on outcomes for children and families.
Capability and stability of the workforce and lack of resources	There were comments regarding a general lack of resource. This also included more specific issues such as lack of support in managing poor performance and poor practice, the challenges in recruiting high performance staff and managing high agency numbers or high turnover and lack of training for first line leaders.[30] This impacts on time and focus.

[29] See Appendix 7
[30] Referenced in focused groups rather than by research participants.

Challenges	Description
Unsupportive leadership	Demanding, unsupportive or untrusting senior managers resulting in micro-management and risk aversion, lack of consistency or clarity or blame when things go wrong were an important theme. Note in our interview group this was highlighted largely by the good participants rather than the outstanding participants and can be seen in the relative differences in the climate data between these two groups.
Processes that do not support a focus on practice	Bureaucratic processes that did not support first line leaders to do the right thing for children and families but were target driven and risk adverse were highlighted. There was a general focus on administration, unsupportive IT systems and corporate processes that did not support social work practice or wasted time.[31]

Definition of enabling conditions

Drawing all this analysis together we created:

- A model which describes the organisational conditions which create a high performing environment for first line leaders
- Some priority recommendations which focus on addressing fundamental blockers for first line leaders and the biggest levers for changes.

Table 21. Organisational conditions that create a high performing environment for first line leaders

Enablers	Organisational conditions
Meaningful vision	- A clear sense of purpose focused on outcomes for children and families that is aligned with social workers' sense of what they are here to do (moral purpose) - A positive and 'can do' attitude from leaders linked to high standards and expectations
Coherent model of practice	- A clear vision and model for excellent practice - A shared understanding of risk tolerance and management - Clear policies, procedures, work flow and information systems which support effective prioritisation, timely action and confident decision making
Stable, well-designed and capable teams[32]	- A sufficiently stable workforce with permanence in key positions (underpinned by a coordinated and effective workforce development strategy) - A sufficient number of capable social workers to manage the caseload (underpinned by recruitment, retention and performance management policies)

[31] Whilst noted here issues such as IT or corporate systems were not focused on strongly in our research as they were seen as requiring significant investment and broader organisational system change.

[32] Whilst creating good teams could be seen as a core accountability of the role there is a level of instability or insufficient resources that means the first line leaders will be stretched too thin. This also gets in the way of first line leaders ability to focus on influencing and engaging with the broader partnership context.

Enablers	Organisational conditions
	▪ The right resources, including effective administrative support
Autonomy to make decisions	▪ Clear structure, roles and delegated authority that allow first line leaders to apply professional judgement and make best use of time and resources at a local level ▪ Protection from blame by their leaders and focus on learning when things go wrong
High performance culture	▪ Clear standards and ongoing constructive challenge ▪ Prompt and supported action on poor performance ▪ Recognition of great work and improvements
Learning culture	▪ Ongoing supervision that allows first line leaders to reflect, step back, challenge their thinking and maintain their resilience[33] ▪ Training, development and information sharing opportunities ▪ Supportive colleague relationships within and across teams ▪ Encouragement for partnership working and positive external relationships

[33] Supervision was mentioned as a key enabler by all participants. We have positioned it within a learning culture but it runs throughout the enablers.

Appendix 7: Document review

This appendix includes the full document review.

Context summary

Children's social work practices have come under increased scrutiny in recent years following a number of high profile cases. There has been growing awareness that the current bureaucratic processes are cumbersome and therefore not fit for purpose – this was comprehensively reported in the Munro review (2011).[34] Work has been conducted to identify where a more effective approach to organisational structures and reporting could be implemented (Department for Education, 2014), as well as to establish the core competencies required for delivering excellent adult services at the front line (Department of Health, 2014).

Considering the published canon to date, it is timely to focus upon the role of strong leadership in delivering children's services. However, as the topic of good first line practice leadership in children's services has rarely been explicitly stated, much of the evidence needs to be inferred from the literature: indeed, this review only encountered one document which specifically considered first line managers. The importance of the role of first line manager should not be underestimated, as the working environment which they help to create directly affects the delivery of service to children and their families.

The questions

This short review of critical documents (identified by key stakeholders) was requested to gain an understanding of what good leadership in first line managers of children's social work services looks like, and to establish the environmental enablers and disablers for this group. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following two questions:

- What does great first-line practice leadership look like? (in terms of skills and behaviours)
- How can the local authority environment enable or hinder great first-line management? (factors could include, but are not limited to, organisational culture, reporting requirements, working arrangements).

Where possible, this review attempts to draw out the specific proficiencies required for efficient leadership at the front line of delivering children's social work services.

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[34] It is worth noting that similar findings were reported for the NHS following the events at Mid-Staffordshire, thus the problem appears to be systemic across care services, rather than confined to social work (National advisory group on the safety of patients in England, 2013).

Key findings from the existing research:

- First line managers are crucial in creating team culture, which can significantly affect staff performance
- Decision-making and risk taking are key skills for first line managers
- Assessment teams are overwhelmed by the volume of referrals, which has various negative consequences
- First line leaders need strong working relationships with external agencies to be successful, so need to be skilled networkers
- First line leaders should encourage reflective practice in their team and employ evidence-based research in their decision making.

What is great first line practice leadership? (in terms of skills and behaviours)

The literature reveals that first line managers require a wide variety of skills and experience to ensure that their team are able to provide good services to children and their families; chief amongst these are:

- Decision-making
- Critical thinking
- Effective prioritisation
- Assertiveness when challenging others (particularly in relation to referrals)
- Excellent understanding of legal parameters and responsibilities for social work practice
- Clear articulation of an organisational vision
- Conflict resolution
- Providing high quality, reflective supervisions
- Resource allocation
- Emotional intelligence
- Resilience
- Communication skills
- Risk assessment / investigative skills
- Analyse and present complex data.

Practice Leadership

Forrester et al (2013) identified that first line managers are crucial in creating a team culture, the importance of which cannot be overstated. The evidence supports the belief that management is the most influential factor on how workers feel about their job (particularly regarding clear direction and regular supervision), and the detrimental effect that stressed managers, who do not provide clear leadership, have upon the performance of their staff (Carpenter et al, 2012). However, there is disagreement about the impact of culture on client delivery, with Munro asserting that the quality of

work delivered by social workers is directly related to the attention they receive from supervision and their managers (Ferguson, quoted by Munro 2011) and Forrester et al claiming that an organisation's culture has less of an impact on client delivery than the individual worker who is assigned the case (2013). What is clear is that organisational cultures which were genuinely child-centred, prioritised delivering work to service users (such as 'later life letters') over meeting targets, an attitude which permeated throughout the organisation (Forrester et al, 2013).

One of the most challenging aspects faced by front line managers in assessment teams is the sheer volume of referrals which are received. Teams are legally bound to respond to referrals within a given timeframe, with no flexibility allowed regarding, for example, staff sickness levels, or a high staff turnover; even with these constrictions of time and resource, managers are under pressure to deliver 'performance targets' (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Carpenter et al, 2012; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; Wastell et al, 2010).

One consequence of this volume of referrals has been that some managers are 'looking to close cases not open them' (Broadhurst et al, 2009). This shift in emphasis (of refusing referrals, rather than investigating potential child safety issues) is a step away from the central tenant of children's social work, that of protecting vulnerable children. The attitude of managers in this regard percolates to frontline staff and the way in which they approach cases. This negative impact can be mitigated by leaders who communicate a strong and well-articulated vision of how services should be delivered, and who identify the outcomes that the social worker is responsible for delivering – the evidence shows that this promotes a more engaged and energised workforce (Department for Education, 2014; Wright and Pandey, 2009).

A further negative outcome of the volume of responding to referrals within a specified time frame is the necessity of working at pace. This can result in 'speed-practices' being employed, even habitualised, which can have negative implications for conducting good practice, especially as social workers have significant discretion for carrying out their daily tasks and should be encouraged to take decisive action for themselves, rather than "just assessing and monitoring" – therefore, there is a suggestion for first line managers to ensure standards of good practice are being met through the observation of direct work (Carpenter et al, 2012; Department for Education, 2014; Forrester et al, 2013; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; Wastell et al, 2010). Front line managers need to be mindful of this tendency to adopt 'speed-practices', particularly in newer staff, and be confident in challenging their staff on their decision-making and in encouraging good practice, such as cross-referencing initial assessments with referrals to identify patterns of concern (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Broadhurst et al, 2010; Department for Education, 2014; Forrester et al, 2013). Disagreements can arise between workers and managers about the importance of timelines versus the quality of assessments, with some experienced practitioners feeling less engaged with practice as they are under increasing pressures to meet performance targets, thus first line managers also need to be skilled at conflict resolution (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Munro, 2011; Wastell et al, 2010; White et al, 2010). However, managers report that they receive little or no training in how to effectively supervise (Carpenter et al, 2012).

The importance of an 'open culture' which promotes a supportive, learning environment is seen as a key component to effective practice leadership. This can be implemented using a variety of tools, such as through supervisions which focus on continued development and high quality reflective

practices (rather than target setting / creating a to-do list) or by managers seeking feedback from both service users and colleagues to inform the continued improvement of services (Department for Education, 2014; Department of Health, 2014; Featherstone et al, 2012; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; The Family Rights Group, quoted by Munro, 2011).

The literature recognises the steep learning trajectory of newly qualified social workers, and that not all qualified social workers complete a degree course with the necessary knowledge, skills and expertise to be proficient at their job: it has, therefore, been suggested that additional practice management resources are available during the first year of employment, as this period has been identified as being crucial in setting expectations, ability and motivation to develop expertise (Department of Health, 2014; Munro, 2011). In particular, the Department of Health suggests that at the end of this first year that social workers should be assessed against standard criteria, which would require additional skills from their managers to critically examine two written pieces of work against agreed marking standards (Department of Health, 2014; Munro, 2011).

In addition to the demands of the job regarding referrals and client work, social workers are also under pressure when cases go to court. It has been reported that judges increasingly do not trust assessments by local authorities, often because of the poor presentation of data, which results in social workers losing confidence (Munro, 2011). Therefore, preparing documents for court is another critical skill which needs to be mastered, and supported by first line managers.

All of the above underlines the importance of front line leaders in managing stress and anxiety in their workforce. The uncertain nature of the social worker role with regards to decision-making and risk taking adds immensely to stress levels, without even considering the added pressures of the volume of referrals and the targeted timeframes, or negative media coverage (Munro, 2011; Forrester et al, 2013). The ability of a front line manager to protect their staff from external stress factors, and to manage the anxiety incurred by the nature of the work undertaken, is vital in reducing absence due to sick leave and maintaining an engaged workforce.

Decision-making and analysis

Risk taking is an integral component of social work, and decisions often have to be made in uncertain conditions, or where a full picture of the situation is not available: therefore good leadership includes identifying and celebrating successful risk taking, as well as adopting a flexible approach and acknowledging that a social worker has to be able to match the type of intervention to the nature of the individual family's needs (Forrester et al, 2013; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; Munro, 2011; Wastell et al, 2010; Wright and Pandey, 2009). Health care in general (as opposed to a criticism specifically aimed at social work) has been condemned as being behind other high risk or safety critical industries, such as civil aviation, in reducing incidents of avoidable harm to patients from errors or mistakes (Munro, 2011). To minimise risk, social workers need to be supported by *"strong leadership making decisions underpinned by full and unambiguous rationale"* (Munro, 2011), although the literature underlines a distinction between identifying risk and 'managing risk' / 'risk enablement' which acknowledges that risk is inherent in this work and thus cannot be entirely eliminated (Finlayson, 2015; Forrester et al, 2013).

First line managers also have a responsibility to encourage analysis and good decision-making practices in their staff to help minimise personal bias, articulate their reasoning (which is a necessary skill during court proceedings) and to manage their emotions (to reduce the risk of distorted reasoning); managers should draw upon personal experience and on research evidence to underpin their analysis (Munro, 2011). Critical challenge is required to help social workers to correct intuitive biases, and supervision is an ideal environment for this (Gilovich et al, 2008, quoted by Munro, 2011; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014). It should, however, be noted that the more defensive and punitive the culture, the more difficult it is for an individual to accept flaws in their reasoning. The Munro Review emphasises the need to allow practitioners time to develop both intuitive and analytic reasoning skills, which are developed by experience and training respectively (Munro, 2011). Good managers encourage debate and actively lead decision making, even though they are ultimately responsible for making the final decision (Forrester et al, 2013): it should be noted that a predicament of first line managers being decision-makers is that service users often initially ask to speak to a manager rather than their assigned social worker, as they are aware that this is where the decision-making power lies.

A fundamental component of a front line manager's role is analysing which referrals are to be accepted, and which would be better served by other agencies (such as housing, mental health, substance abuse), although it is acknowledged that this is a greater pressure for first line managers in assessments, rather than those in longer-term services, such as Looked After Children or Leaving Care (Forrester et al, 2013). Good practice leadership includes the ability to effectively resource the caseload, and to incorporate into this decision-making process the importance of consistency for the end user:

"the key qualities that children and young people...said they wanted in the professionals who entered their lives...emphasise the importance of reliability, honesty and continuity." (Munro, 2011).

Therefore, allocating cases accordingly to the competencies / experience of the social worker is as important as considerations of workload capacity. Rapid decision-making is a crucial skill for Assessment first line managers, as they also need to be confident about which cases can be closed, and which passed on to long-term teams, despite the fact that their personal familiarity with the individual family may be very limited (Forrester et al, 2013): therefore, managers need to ensure that their staff are competent in accurately assessing risk (which requires strong investigative skills and the assertiveness to explore concerns), and at communicating risk both within their organisation and in relating their concerns to a family.

First line managers also have to make financial decisions, particularly regarding immediate financial assistance being given to service users. As a clear distinction is encouraged in communicating to service users that occasional, critical payments can be made, rather than social workers being a regular financial resource, control of this budget is often held solely by first line managers. There are inherent impediments in this model, which could be largely resolved by devolving responsibility of a discretionary budget to social workers (Forrester et al, 2013).

The essential skill of first line managers to be effective decision makers is succinctly summarised by the following statement:

"managers were pragmatic masters of the possible. They would manage cases by balancing the needs and risks for the child, the attributes of the parents but particularly their perceived level of cooperation and the organisational resources for responding." (Forrester et al, 2013).

Managing relationships

Effective first line managers require exceptional relationship building skills with two broad groups – social workers who are their direct reports and other agencies. As previously discussed, a social worker's relationship with their manager is fundamental to their enjoyment of work, and subsequently the quality of their performance. Good first line managers also require an excellent knowledge of other agencies with whom they and their team need to interact, and to establish good working relationships with key stakeholders such as, legal teams, local housing schemes, mental health services, school teachers, substance abuse support groups, GPs: it is encouraging that the Munro Review recognised that the *"English child protection system has made enormous strikes…in embedding the framework for multi-agency working"* (Department for Education, 2014; Featherstone et al, 2012; Forrester, 2013; Munro, 2011). Therefore, the passage of information across agencies should not be one directional, and social workers should be encouraged by their managers to provide accurate and relevant information to other agencies.

First line managers thus have a responsibility to ensure that their staff are confident in accessing the services of other agencies and of working collaboratively with key stakeholders (Munro, 2011). Furthermore, managers also need to reinforce the importance of effective communication of their staff with service users, as the Munro Review identified that some social workers felt inadequately trained to communicate with either children or with men (specifically, fathers or maternal partners) – the latter has implications for how men are being assessed with regards to their impact on their children.

Effectively managing relationships with direct reports should produce both a permissive culture that encourages creativity from staff, and one which supports social workers to debrief (particularly after traumatic experiences) as this should reduce the risk of staff burnout (Department for Education, 2014; Munro, 2011). It is also beneficial if managers enable an open, permissive culture by encouraging social workers to challenge the decisions that they, the managers, make (Kirkman and Melrose, 2014).

Drawing on the evidence

Historically, the social work profession seems to have been poor at implementing research evidence into frontline practice, although the benefits of doing so are palpable (Kirkman and Melrose, 2014). However, the responsibility for implementing a learning culture should not lie solely with first line managers, as inspections (e.g. Ofsted) have a key influence on organisational priorities and are, therefore, ideally placed to support change from a compliance to a learning culture (Munro, 2011).

Lessons can be learnt from past errors, such as re-evaluating the time allowed for preparation and presentation in court, as well as committing to listen to children and families to improve constructive relationships (Department for Education, 2014; Forrester, 2013; Munro, 2011). Yet the most

effective means of ensuring that evidence-based research is incorporated into service delivery is to embed this into the organisation's culture. For example, exemplary first line managers create space within team meetings to allow for the dissemination of research. A forum is thus established where case discussion encourages critical thinking and problem-solving, which also provides an opportunity for developing multiple hypotheses of how to proceed (Department for Education, 2014).

How can the local authority environment enable or hinder great first-line management? (factors could include, but are not limited to, organisational culture, reporting requirements, working arrangements).

There is a general consensus that the biggest environmental challenge faced by first line leaders is the administrative process. The implementation of the Integrated Children's System (ICS) (which had been completed by 2009) has proven to create numerous difficulties for the end users, both in terms of inputting data into the system, and accessing information from it. It should be noted that the introduction of an IT system per se was not resisted, but that many specific elements of the ICS have presented enormous challenges. These difficulties were expressed by the Social Work Task Force, who identified that the ICS was not supporting social workers with their daily work.

Specifically:

- that managers and practitioners struggle to locate children in their individual context, as the family file has been discarded and the 'narrative' lost as the 'audience' of the records has altered (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Hall et al, 2010)
- professional discretion has been eroded as the focus of the system is on a bureaucratic process designed for auditing purposes, thus increasing risk as safe professional practice is undermined (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Hall et al, 2010; Wastell et al, 2010; White et al, 2010).

Another environmental difficulty experienced is that of a blame culture, which has been exacerbated by negative media coverage of high profile, tragic cases that have tended to blame an individual, rather than investigating the *"dysfunctional practices of the organisation"* (Broadhurst et al, 2009). Blame culture is not helped by external judgements of 'good practice' by inspectors being aligned to a compliance with timescales, rather than questioning / analysing the validity of the decision made (Broadhurst et al, 2009). Examples of endemic internal blame culture include, senior managers printing weekly graphs of individual attainment level for meeting targets; a requirement for social workers to be present at their desk to receive incoming calls – each unanswered call results in a 'red light' with individuals being called to account after three red lights (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Kirkman and Melrose, 2014; Wastell et al, 2010). Such practises have a very negative effect on the motivational levels of staff, and can lead to increased staff turnover.

Pace-setting by either first line managers or from higher up has inherent problems attached to good practice. One report recorded that individuals resorted to subversive tactics to manage workloads, namely the 'strategic deferment' of referrals (sending a referral back to the originator requesting further information) (Broadhurst et al, 2009). Working around standard procedures could also result in a social worker asking a health visitor about the condition of a baby to save time, rather than conducting their own assessment, and the restriction of the seven day target for completing an initial assessment means that an incomplete picture can easily be drawn of a child, for example during

school holidays when teachers cannot be contacted (Broadhurst et al, 2009). It has also been observed that the speed required to record notes on the ICS often leads to errors – material is 'locked' into the system after 24 hours, requiring a manager's permission to make any amendments, which is burdensome for the practitioner and adds an additional layer to managerial tasks (Broadhurst et al, 2009; Wastell et al, 2010).

In order to ensure the wellbeing of children and their families, social workers are devising means to work around the procedural standardisations, which often hinder good practice. Services have become so standardised that they do not provide the required range of responses to the variety of need that is presented: this could be improved by adopting a programme similar to that employed by the Metropolitan Police, for example, who have developed a multi-agency programme called Multi-Agency Critical Incident Experience (MACIE) that contains the key elements of a systems approach to case reviews (Munro, 2011).

The organisational structure can also fail social workers, by failing to provide a career structure that encourages and rewards growing expertise (Munro, 2011). The Munro Review acknowledges that an individual social worker cannot achieve expertise without the correct institutional structures and support.

Organisations have their own idiosyncrasies which can create undue difficulties for staff:

- One team had a central Contact Centre – even if clients arrived on site, reception staff could not directly call a social worker in another part of the building without going through this Contact Centre (Wastell et al, 2010)
- Social workers kept having to top up parking meters as there was no parking available (Forrester et al, 2013)
- Reduction in the administrative support available meant that social workers were answering or redirecting numerous phone calls which was very time consuming (Forrester et al, 2013)
- Reduction in office cleaners meant that practitioners had to empty their own rubbish bins
- Equipment (such as photocopiers) not repaired for months (Forrester et al, 2013)
- Rooms in the reception area are not secure, and there were no security staff meaning that staff felt physically vulnerable (Forrester et al, 2013)
- The unwieldy process of obtaining emergency funds for clients (for example £20 for food) could take a practitioner up to an hour to action (Forrester et al, 2013).

This last point is supported by a report by the Department for Education which recognised the practical need for first line managers to have an appropriate degree of budget / resource control, with the inference that this could be devolved to social workers, as appropriate (2014). It has been found that hierarchical decision making, in general, adversely affects transformational leadership in the public sector (Wright and Pandey, 2009).

On a more positive note, the literature identifies that a positive environment can be created by embedding a learning culture, where workers are encouraged to exercise professional judgements (Department for Education, 2014). Overwhelmingly, the literature supports the implementation of systemic therapy, where cases are assigned to a 'unit' rather than an individual as in the Hackney model, as case studies show that where this is used there is a *"fall in the numbers of children who*

need to be taken into care, thanks to the more decisive and effective work with families" (Department for Education, 2014), although such a comprehensive structural overall would likely be beyond the remit of a first line manager. Fortunately for the improvement of service delivery by first line managers, the Munro Review has identified that:

"most bureaucracy which limits practitioners' capacity and ability to practise effectively, is generated and maintained at a local level. This includes financial and personnel arrangements, procedural requirements, poor functioning or under resourced ICT arrangements" (Munro, 2011).

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Appendix 8: Main themes from the stakeholder interviews

This appendix covers the key capabilities, barriers and enablers identified from the stakeholder interviews.

There was a high degree of consistency in stakeholders' views about what makes an outstanding first line leader in children's social care. They described capabilities that ranged from professional knowledge of social theory, systemic family therapy and the law, to deep-seated personal characteristics that enable them to exercise decisive leadership influence in challenging circumstances.

Some of the capabilities of outstanding first line leaders; the skills, knowledge and experience, can be seen, tested or evidenced quite easily. They are the things that can be relatively easy to acquire through formal or on-the-job training and education. However, there are more stable aspects of a person's character that might be harder to change or acquire, but that tend to be associated with the capabilities that truly differentiate outstanding leaders from good leaders. These characteristics have to do with a person's sense of purpose in society, their feelings of positive worth, their deep-seated habits, and the drives that give them the energy to do great work.

The capabilities

Professional knowledge and experience

There was a lot of comment about the range of knowledge required. The effect of this is that the leader is seen to be 'in command of their brief'. There was frequent reference to:

- Systems thinking
- Social maps
- Whole child and family picture – physical, mental, neurological, educational, relational, etc.
- Drugs and alcohol
- Domestic violence
- Mental health
- Extremism
- Guns and gangs
- Law and process
- Multi-agency thinking.

> **Stakeholders described first line leaders as needing to have emotional intelligence, empathy and self-awareness, as well as:**
>
> - To be in command of professional knowledge and current theory
> - To use this knowledge flexibly and intelligently
> - To see themselves as purposeful leaders
> - To hold their team and others to account
> - To care for the team and contain anxiety about risk
> - To facilitate individual and team development
> - To build relationships across the system
> - And, above all, to be confident in leading family-centred practice.

Clearly this is not a complete list, and reference was also made to government and professional documents laying out the professional knowledge and skills required for frontline social work. Leaders need to be advanced practitioners in all of these. Reference was made for frontline managers to have a strong grasp of the values and principles required for the role their social workers have so that they can challenge and develop others to attain a high standard. An eclectic use of models and frameworks enable a leader to recognise different perspectives, which provides a stronger evidence base for the decisions made.

There was strong agreement that significant experience of frontline work was essential to be able to lead frontline social workers well: the minimum time mentioned was three years, but one stakeholder suggested 15 years as a helpful benchmark. Another felt that individuals who had had more life experience in other professions could lead frontline social workers after three years, but that younger individuals straight out of training would need five years' experience at the front line before taking on a leadership role.

The reasons they gave for this included:

- the need for maturity
- the avoidance of 'formulaic' responses
- the ability to understand a wide variety of family contexts
- the ability to think and act quickly and decisively based on their wide experience.

Intelligent analysis, diagnosis, prioritisation and organisation

Stakeholders were insistent that whilst experience was essential, it could lead to 'labelling' problems too quickly under pressure, unless leaders rigorously drilled down to understand why their social workers were recommending a course of action. Leaders use deep and broad knowledge in combination with experience and intellect to test the robustness of case work. This brings real diagnostic strength to the decisions made by their social workers to ensure the best outcome for children and families.

Leaders also use their analytical skills to prioritise, to challenge the desire to 'rescue', and to drive towards an outcome with a clear plan for proceeding. They take a step back to ensure all factors are taken into account (e.g. resources, other agencies' involvement). They are prepared to think innovatively about a family situation and to be flexible when new information becomes available. When making plans with their colleagues they consider individual capability. They are able quickly to grasp a situation and the risk posed to a child and family, even when faced with considerable ambiguity. They act decisively once a decision has been made.

Communicating with impact

One important outcome from an intelligent approach to families' situations is the ability to communicate clearly, analytically and succinctly with a wide range of stakeholders. Outstanding leaders are proactive about considering the needs of different groups, including more senior people in local authorities, and shape a positive dialogue with a clear intention to get the best outcome for children and families. Such leaders create meaning and confidence, and can be assertive in claiming attention when they need to.

Purposeful team leadership

Communication can inspire a group of individuals to work collaboratively towards a clear vision of the future, and sustain them in high risk, high-pressure situations.

This ability to see the big picture, and express it in a principled way, creates the clarity of purpose that makes an effective team. It promotes focus and energy, and it demands of the leader that they also see their social role as a leader, and not just as an expert or a manager of resource. They can step out of the day-to-day to see strategic opportunity where others see only too much work.

Common words associated with stakeholders' comments in this area were:

- principles
- family-orientated
- ethos
- purpose
- values
- problem-solving.

Purposeful team leadership avoids the problem of individual social workers drifting through the administration of their role without addressing the essence of problems.

Framework

An explicit framework is needed that spells out what is good and what is not acceptable by reference to the statutory framework, as well as systemic models. This framework provides coherence and clarity about excellent delivery, and provides the unit with a common vision and language for articulating the framework.

Holding the team and individuals to account

If leaders create high-level visionary clarity via a framework, they also need to help social workers to understand how to regulate what is good and what is unacceptable. In practice, this means that they need to audit work so that they can "grade the practice of social workers fairly and meaningfully".

In well-functioning teams they measure success not only by traditional audit of cases and professional capability portfolios, but by building relationships of trust in the team, "nipping in to meetings", feeling the culture of the team, and asking lots of questions.

In the end, there is a determination to root out sloppy, unsafe or unprofessional work. The best leaders are able to manage those social workers "who are not very good". Only by dealing fairly with performance and sharing good practice can they set the standards and foster a team with pride in delivering high quality children and family social work.

Ownership, responsibility for risk, containment, care for the team

Social workers sometimes deal with terrible and emotionally draining situations. The outstanding leader "owns" the risk as a "protective act", which allows social workers to do their best without fear of personal blame.

When things go wrong, the outstanding leader steps in to contain the damage for children and families and for their social workers. The discourse becomes one of learning, not blame. In the best teams, the risk becomes shared through an ethos of supportive challenge and mutual care. Over time, this creates a feeling of confidence without complacency. All feel more in control of the flow of work and the risks involved.

Individual and team development

This was the capability that stakeholders talked about more than any other. Learning lies at the heart of the ethos of an outstanding team leader. It is both an input to high-quality work and a consequence of all work experience. The word that was used more than any other was "conversation". This purposeful way of making sense of difficult and complex family situations, in an atmosphere of mutual respect focused around the child and family, completely differentiates what the stakeholders were describing for an outstanding leader from the more managerial responsibilities of training and auditing standards.

When supervision and leadership is done well, the social worker experiences for themselves from their manager the kind of interpersonal skills that they need to adopt and use with children, families, partners and other stakeholders.

Development was described as a process of interaction, rather than a curriculum of learning. Anything on a social worker's agenda could form the basis for stretching their professional, intellectual, or relationship skills. Thinking and planning is tested by questioning and challenge, sometimes one-on-one and sometimes in team discussions.

Clearly many of the cognitive skills outlined under "Intelligent analysis, etc.", above, are necessary for this development capability, but where the focus in that capability is task accomplishment, the focus here is on helping people and teams to flourish.

In basic terms, the team leader has to be capable in dealing with technical management of individuals:

- HR
- Money
- Prioritising
- Time management
- Holding the team to account for standards – clarity about expectations
- Professional development review systems.

The importance of reflective supervision was underlined, as a means of supporting continuous learning after qualification, although stakeholders also stressed the role that peer supervision plays.

Facilitating / leading partnership groups, relationship building, networking and organisational awareness

Nearly as important in the stakeholders' minds was the ability of team leaders to enable effective multi-agency working. They are "uniquely placed" to draw out the different knowledge and perspectives of various professionals, partly because of their statutory role, and partly because of their awareness of decision-making in complex systems.

The social work leader is the back-stop for the cases that schools, GPs, police or health workers have become anxious about. They are often under pressure to do something because of incomplete information or the half-formed anxieties of other professionals. They need to tease out as much information as possible with the aim of achieving consensus around a plan of action that serves the best interests of the child and family.

In the final analysis, where consensus may not be achieved, the team leader may have to have the decisive voice. To do this well, without damaging future co-operation, they need to have good networks built on trusting relationships. They also need to understand partner agencies: their purpose, the way they are organised, how decisions get made, and the pressures they are under.

Emotional intelligence, empathy and self-awareness

Outstanding team leaders can only deal with the volume, intensity and emotional content of much of children and family social work if they have an awareness of themselves and their own limits. This grounded sense of self enables them to care for themselves and their social workers, as well as to challenge others with respectful empathy. They model reflective practice, and bring calmness and poise, or puncture tension with the appropriate use of humour.

They bring their full humanity to the job, and never forget that it is only by engaging positive emotion and positive energy that they can enable families to care for their children, rather than breaking families up.

Focus on the family, confidence in family-centred practice

"The best first-line leaders are obsessed with the family." This orients them and helps them to orient their social workers when things get tough. They have the courage to stand up to other powerful people because they are determined to do their best for families, but without 'rescuing' them. They know that it is essential that families feel listened to.

Their energy comes from a need to influence things for the better, to enable others to live fulfilling lives and to protect the vulnerable.

Barriers and enablers

The stakeholders also described a number of important barriers and enablers, which were analysed to inform the change readiness tool.

Barriers

- Too much demand and too little time or capacity
- Ofsted and the restrictive regulatory framework
- Bureaucracy, a focus on process, and the poor design of the ICS
- Hierarchical micro-management, and the consequent lack of autonomy betraying a lack of trust
- Capability, experience and maturity of social workers
- Reputation of the profession
- Unstable workforce
- Funding settlements are too short term and budget controls prevent good spending
- Lack of reflective discussion
- Lack of investment in professional development.

Enablers

- Courageous and visionary CEO who takes risks for the community
- Public support from elected members to feel valued
- Challenging senior leaders (but not threatening), who are consistent in what they say and do – modelling a family-centred approach to children and family social care, and a sophisticated understanding of managing risk
- A clear corporate vision for what children's social work will achieve – transparency and openness about the direction of the service
- Delegated authority – the team around the child
- Enough social workers with manageable case loads
- Fit-for-purpose systems designed around the job providing useful data

- Ongoing training for managers on skills and best practice to promote innovation
- Professional networks with neighbouring authorities to challenge and test ideas
- Regular team 'touchdowns' with the whole social work team from top to bottom
- Good working environment – safe and supportive
- The right equipment – phones, laptops, etc.
- High quality and intelligent administrative support
- A strong and effective recruitment and retention strategy
- Help from HR with management of poor performance and the removal of incompetent social workers – this helps the rest of the organisation to feel proud and motivated.