Future Leaders Programme for Surgeons (FLP)
5th Cohort Report 2026

A) Summary

Our 5th cohort of 20 – 19 surgeons and a dentist from a wide range of specialties – has created a tightly knit group which we hope will endure over the coming decades. They supported one another through significant life events and career changes and exchanged creative ideas about managing challenges in day-to-day work. The cohort included a consultant working in Saudi Arabia and several doctors outside formal training posts, whose perspectives enriched the group.

Faculty and module content were tailored to the leadership needs of everyone, as determined through an 11-hour pre-module assessment. Every participant designed and led an educational or service-improvement project (section C). Nine participants took up consultant posts during the programme year, and Sunreet Randhawa drew on her own project to teach a session on surgery and AI for the whole group at Module 4. Two members of this year's faculty are FLP alumni, showing the programme's graduates returning to develop the next generation.

The 6th cohort of 16, including three dentists and two participants based overseas (Pakistan and Saudi Arabia/Egypt), began the programme in August 2026 with funding from specialist societies, MDDUS, the Integra Foundation, The Urology Foundation and AOUK&I.

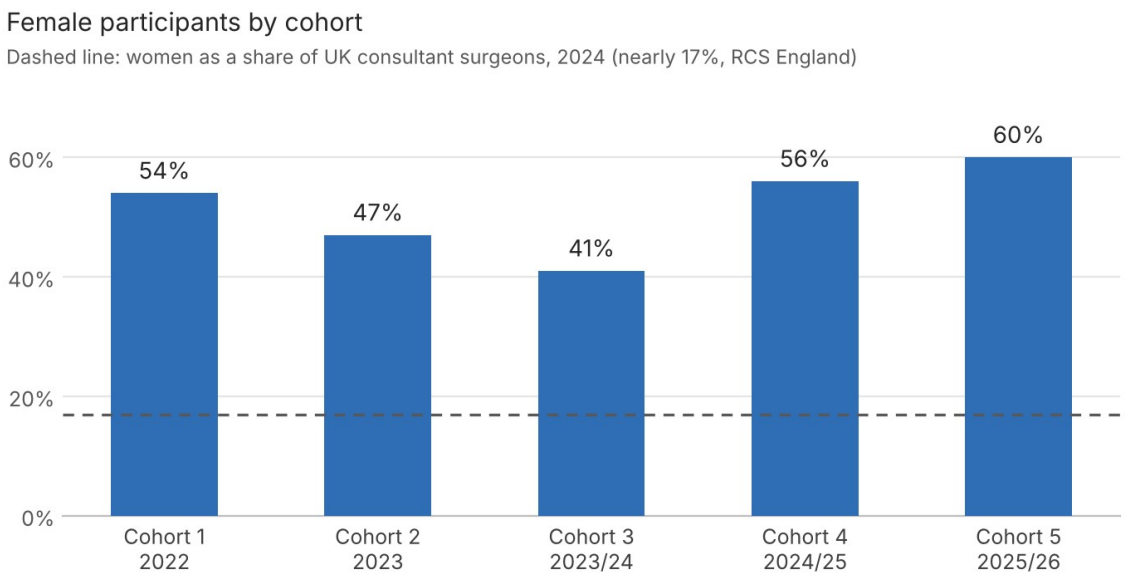


The 5th cohort and faculty at Module 4, RCSEd Birmingham, September 2026, with colleagues joining remotely

B) Participants

Name	Specialty	Grade	Place	Funder
Ahmed Abdelrahman	OMFS	consultant	Coventry & Warwick	BAOMS
Ammara Salam	Colorectal	LED	Manchester	Self fund
Ankur Mukherjee	Urology	consultant	Worcester	Urology Foundation
Anna Harris	Paediatric surgery	locum consultant	London	RCSEd
Antonia Malli	Neurosurgery	senior clinical fellow	King's College Hospital, London	Self fund
Christina Lipede	Hand surgery	consultant	Birmingham	BSSH
Heather Wilkes	Dentistry	senior dental officer	Edinburgh	MDDUS
Ibi Ibrahim	Urology	consultant	Glasgow	Urology Foundation
Juan Diego Tinajero	Urology (gender-affirming)	locum consultant	Chelsea & Westminster	MDDUS
Lynette Spalding	Orthopaedic hand	consultant	Bury St Edmunds	AOUK&I
Manal Dhaiban	Paediatric surgery	fellow	Cambridge	Self fund
Osama Gaarour	T&O – sports	consultant	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Self fund
Rebecca Roberts	Paediatric colorectal	consultant	Sheffield	BAPS
Ross Bannon	ENT	consultant	Fife	ENT UK
Shaneel Patel	Vascular	consultant	Liverpool	Vascular Society
Shumaila Hasan	Neurosurgery	consultant	Royal London	SBNS
Sunreet Randhawa	Breast	ST8	Barts, London	Integra
Suzanne Thomson	Plastics – hand	consultant	Glasgow	Trust
Tarek Elmoslemany	Neurosurgery	consultant	Sheffield	Self fund
Venetia Giannakaki	Neurosurgery	consultant	Newcastle	Integra

The application process was anonymised, so successful applicants were selected on merit and the quality of their application. Twelve of the 20 participants (60%) were women – the highest proportion of any FLP cohort to date, and more than three times the proportion of women among UK consultant surgeons (nearly 17% in 2024).



Source for consultant figure: Royal College of Surgeons of England, Women in Surgery statistics

C) Educational Projects

Each participant's project provided the vehicle for learning and applying leadership skills. Projects were pitched for feedback in Module 2 and developed with faculty support across the year.

Name	Project
Ahmed Abdelrahman	A curriculum-aligned educational programme for OMFS registrars
Ammara Salam	A mock MRCS Part B examination to improve candidates' confidence and readiness
Ankur Mukherjee	An AI-powered platform delivering personalised patient education
Anna Harris	A multidisciplinary simulation programme for the paediatric surgery ward to improve non-technical skills and interprofessional working
Antonia Malli	A neurosurgery learning programme building confidence and FRCS-ready competence from ST1
Christina Lipede	A children's hand teaching programme with spiral learning from basic to expert level, catalogued in a learning library
Heather Wilkes	Reducing dental anxiety waiting times by transitioning care to the Unscheduled Care and Family Access Team (screencast)
Ibi Ibrahim	SmashUrology: a platform for mastering urology from entry to FRCS and FEBU exams
Juan Diego Tinajero	A digital teach-back approach to consent for gender-affirming surgery, demonstrating patient understanding before surgery
Lynette Spalding	A toolkit to support a positive community culture and psychological safety in AOUK&I
Manal Dhaiban	A drive-through pathway for neonatal bilious vomiting: service improvement
Osama Gaarour	An educational programme for registrars working in private hospitals in Jeddah

Name	Project
Rebecca Roberts	An MDT clinic to improve outcomes for paediatric colorectal patients
Ross Bannon	A network to implement ENT sustainability guidelines across the UK
Shaneel Patel	Reducing waiting times for day-case varicose vein surgery
Shumaila Hasan	Coaching and mentoring for trust-grade SHOs to support career progression (screencast)
Sunreet Randhawa	Increasing awareness of AI devices available to frontline surgeons
Suzanne Thomson	Peripheral nerve repair of the upper limb: an interdisciplinary, evidence-based approach
Tarek Elmoslemany	Empowering non-NTN neurosurgical doctors to enhance equality, diversity and inclusion in UK neurosurgery
Venetia Giannakaki	A sustainable, free deanery-wide FRCS (SN) viva preparation course



Sunreet Randhawa presenting on surgery and AI, Module 4, Birmingham

D) Funding

The 5th cohort started in August 2025 and was accredited by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. Places were funded by the Integra Foundation, MDDUS, The Urology Foundation, the British Association of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons, the British Society for Surgery of the Hand, AOUK&I, the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons, ENT UK, the Vascular Society, the Society of British Neurological Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh and an NHS trust. Five participants (25%) funded themselves.

The 6th cohort is funded by the Integra Foundation, MDDUS, The Urology Foundation, the British Association of Paediatric Surgeons, the Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland, ENT UK, the Society of British Neurological Surgeons, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, AOUK&I and an FLP bursary, with two participants self-funding. We plan to approach other specialist societies again over the coming months.

E) Content

Participants completed an educational project providing the vehicle for learning and developing leadership skills. The programme comprised four 2-day modules over 12 months – two live virtual and two face-to-face – with action learning sets between. The final 2-day module took place at the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Birmingham. The programme is structured around four core domains:

1. **Personal Leadership**

   To develop greater self-awareness of participants as individuals, their impact on others within their organisation, in their role as leaders in learning and as high-performing surgeons.

2. **Technical Leadership**

   To understand the science of learning: when and what methodologies are best applied in the leadership context.

3. **Relational Leadership**

   To forge effective professional relationships at an individual, team, organisation or system-wide level.

4. **Contextual Leadership**

   To develop an awareness of their own organisational culture and how education can influence local or national healthcare strategy.



Engaging stakeholders in your project – Module 2, RCSEd Edinburgh, January 2026

F) Learning Methods

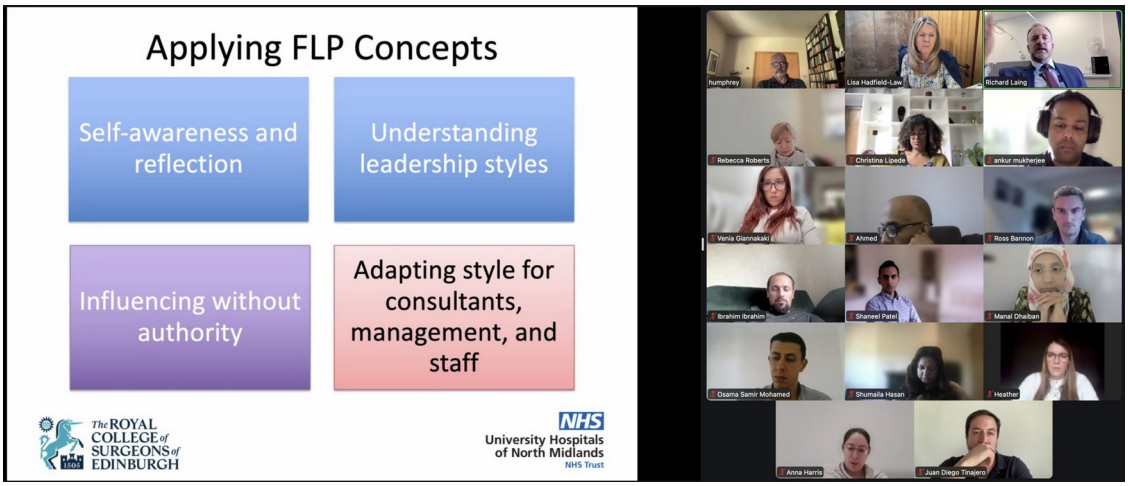
1) Strategically grouped participants based on interest, each group with a faculty mentor
2) Chat and learning logs managed virtually before the first module
3) Four 2-day modules:
   a. Module 1 – 6 & 7 October 2025 – virtual (Zoom)
   b. Module 2 – 15 & 16 January 2026 – face to face, RCSEd Edinburgh
   c. Module 3 – 27 & 28 May 2026 – virtual (Zoom)
   d. Module 4 – 10 & 11 September 2026 – face to face, RCSEd Birmingham
4) Live virtual learning and networking on Zoom, with small-group breakouts and 1:1 sessions for support
5) Remote participation in face-to-face modules for those unable to travel
6) Progress and monitoring via learning logs
   a. Embedded videos and screencasts
   b. Assessed activities, including personality, drivers and conflict-style self-assessments
   c. Reflective writing
7) Action learning sets
   a. As a technique to drive learning

b. Participants trained to run action learning sets
c. Scheduled by faculty for each mentor group between modules

8) Project pitch with peer and faculty feedback (Module 2)
9) Zoom coaching individually and in small groups
10) Evidence of programme achievements demonstrated through participants' screencasts, available on the [RCSEd Future Leaders Programme page]



Small-group work, Module 2, Edinburgh



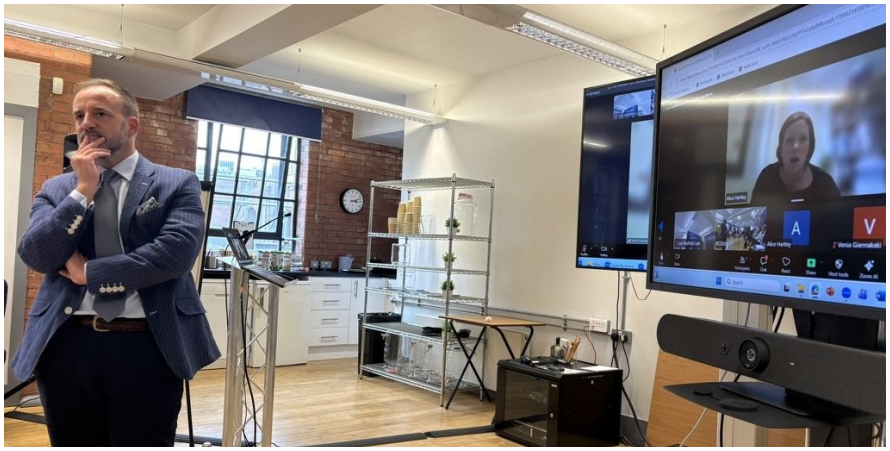
Rich Laing on applying FLP concepts, virtual module

G) Faculty

- Humphrey Scott – Colorectal Surgeon – Chertsey
- Lisa Hadfield-Law – Surgical Educationalist
- Alice Hartley – Urological Surgeon – Northumbria; FLP alumna (Cohort 2)
- Rich Laing – HPB Surgeon – University Hospital of North Staffordshire; FLP alumnus (Cohort 1)

Guest speakers – Module 4

- Lord Nigel Crisp – Independent crossbench member of the House of Lords; Chief Executive of the NHS in England and Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health 2000–2006
- Jon Lund – Colorectal Surgeon; Director of Education, RCSEd



Rich Laing (Cohort 1 alumnus) in Birmingham, with Alice Hartley (Cohort 2 alumna) joining remotely

H) Quality Assurance (QA)

Participants:

- Submitted a semi-structured portfolio/learning log, including reflections on their development as a leader and educator
- Created a personal development plan (PDP) to cover the year after the programme
- Designed and led an educational or service-improvement project
- Pitched their project and received peer and faculty feedback
- Created a screencast demonstrating learning from the programme
- Developed a LinkedIn page
- Assumed a mentorship role for the next cohort



Module 2, RCSEd Edinburgh, January 2026

Programme evaluation: 14 of 20 participants (70%) completed the end-of-programme evaluation between September and October 2026.

I) Testimonials

1. The Future Leaders Programme changed how I see my role as a surgeon. I arrived thinking leadership was about expertise and resilience. I left understanding that it is about self-awareness, honest conversations and creating the conditions for others to learn. The combination of practical tools, a real educational project and personal feedback from the faculty meant I was applying what I learned in my own department within weeks. I would recommend it to any surgeon who wants to lead and teach with purpose.
2. I really gained a tremendous amount from this one-year programme, led brilliantly by Lisa and Humphrey. They brought genuine energy to every session and proved to be deeply

thought-provoking and inspiring convenors. Crucially, the course taught me just as much about myself as an internal leader as it did about the external aspects of leadership that impact others. I honestly wasn't expecting that level of personal discovery and actually found the introspective element to be the most valuable part of the experience. The course strikes a fantastic balance between robust theoretical frameworks and practical, real-world leadership tools that I will undoubtedly draw upon throughout my career. I would thoroughly recommend this programme to any surgeon looking to develop both personally and professionally.

3. The FLP programme has been one of the most valuable learning experiences of my medical career. It gave me something that traditional medical training rarely teaches us: the opportunity to understand what kind of leader I want to be, and the practical skills to navigate difficult conversations, personalities, conflict and negotiation. The combination of exceptional mentors, inspiring guest speakers, open dialogue and genuine self-reflection made the experience both professionally and personally invaluable.

4. The Future Leaders Programme has helped me become a more thoughtful and confident leader. It gave me space to reflect on my strengths, recognise where I needed to develop, and understand how my approach affects those around me. One of the most rewarding aspects was putting that learning into practice through a mentoring project supporting trust-grade junior doctors – a group whose challenges I understand from my own journey. It showed me that leadership can start with a small, purposeful action that makes a difference to someone else. I would recommend FLP to anyone who wants to develop as a leader while staying connected to what matters most to them.

5. A year ago, I signed in for this course looking for a leadership certification from an internationally accredited organisation to help me in my career progression. What I didn't foresee at that time is that I was one step from a life-changing event. … Thank you all for the psychologically safe environment that allowed me to do this and to confess, to avoid feeling shame, to grow and improve myself. Really, thank you all for the life-changing course.

6. What I valued most was the safe space the programme created to be vulnerable. It showed me that vulnerability is not a weakness, but an important part of learning and becoming a better leader. Being able to reflect honestly, share challenges, and learn alongside others has been one of the most valuable parts of this experience.

7. Everything was useful! Particularly the learning about teaching, presentation skills, leadership, negotiation, and project management. The support and coaching from the faculty and peers on the programme was invaluable.

8. FLP wasn't any standard leadership programme; there was a lot more to gain from it and apply to day-to-day practice. Very much recommended.



Guest speaker session, Module 4, RCSEd Birmingham

J) Feedback Themes

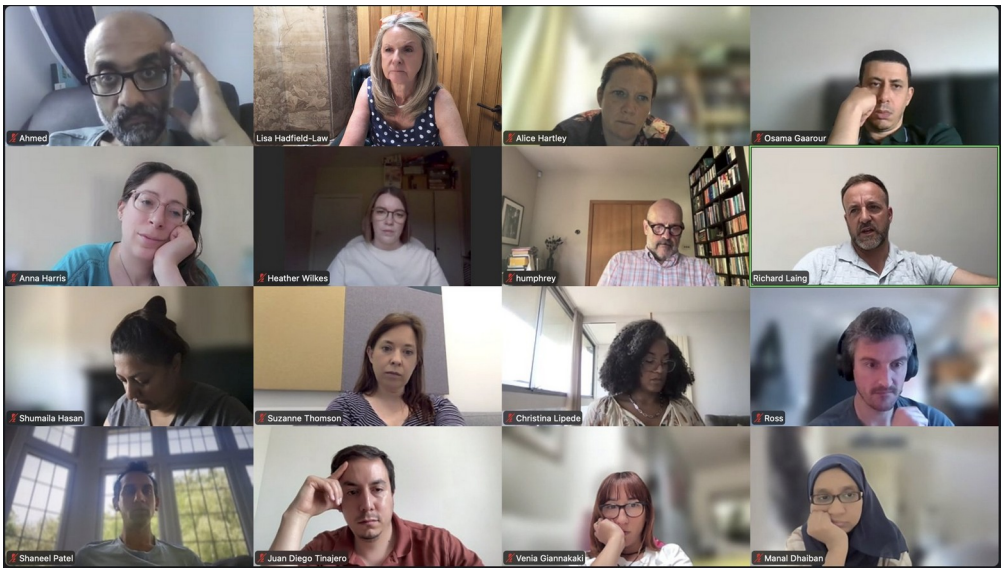
Fourteen participants responded to three open questions. Feedback was strongly positive: no respondent criticised the programme overall and three said they would change nothing. Figures show how many of the 14 responses raised each theme.

Most Helpful Aspects

- **Peer discussion and networking across specialties (7)** – realising that colleagues at the same career stage faced similar challenges around confidence, conflict and leading change.
- **Practical skills (7)** – conflict, negotiation, influence and presenting; the negotiation module was singled out as especially valuable for new consultants.
- **Self-awareness (6)** – the drivers, conflict-style and personality assessments helped participants understand how they respond under pressure and how that affects others.
- **Faculty, mentoring and coaching (5)** – including 1:1 meetings with mentors.
- **Project work and the project pitch (4)** – receiving feedback on both the project and the pitch itself.
- **A psychologically safe, respectful atmosphere (3)** – "vulnerability is not a weakness".
- **Guest speakers and alumni (3)**, face-to-face modules (2) and learning about teaching and facilitation (2).

Suggestions for the Future

- **More rigour and challenge (4)** – more structure in action learning sets, with a focus set in advance; more critical feedback ("sometimes felt very soft"); protected time for planned topics and speakers when discussion runs on; and not shying away from difficult topics.
- **A clearer map from the start (2)** – an outline curriculum and the full video list available at induction.
- **More video and multimedia (2)** in place of reading, and an online platform for submitting work rather than emailed Word documents.
- **Format** – one participant would prefer all modules face to face, while others valued the mix of online and in-person delivery and the flexibility to join remotely.
- **Single suggestions** – 1:1 coaching for all participants, greater diversity in the speaker panel, discussing learning logs in group tutorials, and a programme longer than a year.



Virtual module on Zoom

K) Action Plan

Progress from 2025/6

1) Start advertising earlier to maintain numbers of participants – We started advertising in October, but funding sources are squeezed for all programmes at the moment.
2) Focus on accessing UK&I participants – We are still failing to raise appropriate awareness and will carry this forward to next year.
3) Include more faculty from outside healthcare – Invitations were issued and accepted and then faculty pulled out at the last minute.
4) Increase the component of the course on negotiation and bring in an outside expert – We overhauled this section this year and although we had an outside speaker scheduled, they withdrew at the last minute. We will keep this session within faculty for the moment and polish for the next cohort. Participants rated the negotiation module highly.
5) Integrate with the RCSEd mentoring scheme – We had all participants select a mentor from the College scheme, with mixed success. We will raise awareness with this cohort, but not require them to sign up.
6) Supporting glossary on Padlet – Done but this was still not adequate for catching absent participants up. We have arranged a much more in-depth strategy this year for module 1 and will evaluate.

Action Plan for 2026/7

- Give action learning sets more structure: circulate a focus before each set and agree a common coaching approach across mentor groups, keeping their supportive tone
- Build explicit challenge and critical feedback into the project pitch and project reviews
- Protect time for planned content and invited speakers within highly interactive sessions
- Issue a programme map at induction, with the full list of videos and screencasts available from the start
- Make the 1:1 mentor offer consistent across all groups, and include learning logs in group tutorials
- Broaden the diversity of the speaker panel
- Introduce a Module 1 session in which participants use AI in small groups to co-create and critique a surgical leadership model
- Approach selected alumni as future faculty, building on the contribution of Alice Hartley and Rich Laing
- Add rating scales and a question on impact in participants' leadership roles to the end-of-programme evaluation



The 6th cohort at Module 1, October 2026

Humphrey Scott, Lisa Hadfield-Law, Alice Hartley & Rich Laing October 2026