

## Rania Hamad: criminal justice social worker

I'm Rania Hamad I've worked in criminal justice social work in Edinburgh for the past ten years and I was a main grade social worker until eighteen-months ago when I moved into a research and development role to develop criminal justice response to hate crime which are offences involving race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity.

Initially when you think about leadership to me it's something like for managers and so on but actually it's just absolutely not for me it's always been as a practitioner doing main grade stuff, developing your ability to kinda reflect on your skills and have that self-awareness but also be able to seek feedback from other people and other perspectives and take that on in your practice and do that for other people.



So for me it's being a main grade criminal justice social worker is absolutely excellent but for me that leadership part of it has then been not being afraid to try new things and develop my own kind of confidence and abilities and knowledge. So for example for me over the past ten years that's involved going on to do different secondments, which has been really nice because I've had the safety of my substantive post as a criminal justice social worker and being able to go off and do amazing things involving group work services, the Willow Service for female offenders at Edinburgh prison. So I could then for me that developed my personal and professional sort of skills and knowledge but then also trying to be able to share that with others back in my teams and with my colleagues and to yeah I wouldn't say hopefully to become a leader with that but yeah, being able to kind of feed into that feedback loop of gaining confidence from each other. It's increased my ability to be able to feel that I am someone that has got something to offer so for example when this post came up, the research and development post I thought well, I have went and done other things, so developing my leadership skills you know as I say led onto different secondments then it led on to this promoted post in which I was able to use that knowledge and skills and confidence. Emm, and through that it has then led to this really if I may say so myself, some really great service development, Edinburgh's the only local authority whose kind of leading at the moment within criminal justice social work on hate crime and restorative justice which has been another aspect of the role. So kind of that role needed to, had to be, there was a remit at the start and then it was to be you kind of created the role there was a cutting a kind of path of kind of leadership through that role and in a way be able to go well, autonomy was a huge part of it, I've had a manager and he's been great in allowing me a lot of autonomy so I'm really kind of developing that within myself, setting my own goals, developing my own knowledge and confidence and then taking things back to the service and saying "Here's something that will hopefully improve our service." "EEK, is this OK?" and it was quite scary at the time because presenting to different levels of management right up to the highest management in criminal justice and saying "Here's something I've found out, do you think this would be something we could use in the service?" and then for that to be "Yes, we could" was amazing actually. So yeah, it's

yeah really led on to kind of personal and professional kind of service developments for me and for the service as a whole.

When you do put yourself out there into something slightly different to your main grade roles and tasks and you can have I quite like that term "imposter syndrome" where you can feel like "OH! Eek can I do this?", em, you know, what makes me different from my other colleagues and I'm not, you know, they're, they're absolutely everybody has got the kind of skills and capacity to do it but it's just about saying "I'm gonna try this."

If you could give tips to other criminal justice social workers about how to develop their leadership skills, what would those be?

Be open to new perspectives, be open to trying different things, I mean, when, when opportunities come up trying to sort of grab opportunities and learn from them.