

WELCOME Beyond Barriers

Leadership Development Programme

Day 3 - 2nd December 2025

Welcome to the Day 3 of Beyond Barriers – Leadership Development Programme

Programme Timeline



In person, Crowne Plaza Hotel East Midlands



Online, via Microsoft Teams

[illegible]



Agenda

9.00am

Registration & Refreshments

9.45- 10.00am

Welcome

10.00- 11.00am

Guest keynote- *Claire Bale*

11.00- 11.15am

Break

11.15-12.15pm

Developing Resilience in Leadership
Saj Zafar

12.15–1.15pm

Lunch

1.15- 2.45pm

Group Project work- *Pete Chilvers*

2.45- 3.00pm

Break

3.00- 4.00pm

Influence without authority-
Redefining Imposter Syndrome - *Laurence Jones*

4.00- 4.15pm

Close

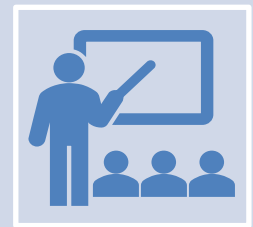
The Journey so far



- **A reminder to return the completed mentoring agreement to Jodie before mentoring starts
(mentor and mentee to sign)**



- **Dates set in diaries with mentors**
- **The mentoring agenda is mentee led – you decide what you would like to be mentored on**
- **4 – 6 suggested mentoring sessions, between September 2025 – March 2026**



- **Group Projects**
- **Continue collaborating as project groups to refine and develop your project ideas- more time is allocated today**
- **Consider how you will share your project outcomes more widely, including the final-day (March 17th 2026) Regional Diversity Conference & potentially East Midlands DCS Group session**

Support along the way



Support

Any further queries/ concerns, please contact your local authority – Nominated Lead. You can also contact Jodie and Khalid for issues relating to the programme delivery



Further information is in your Beyond barriers information pack



Feedback

We will be seeking your feedback on how the programme and mentoring is going at the end of each F2F event– this will be used to support the development of the programme moving forwards.

This insight would be used to help further shape the region's practices and work.

Thank you for your continued commitment on behalf of the region.

QR code / Link will be shared with all in our follow up communications



Claire Bale

Director for Education
Nottingham City Council

Guest Keynote Speaker



Refreshment Break

11.00- 11.15am

Developing Resilience in Leadership

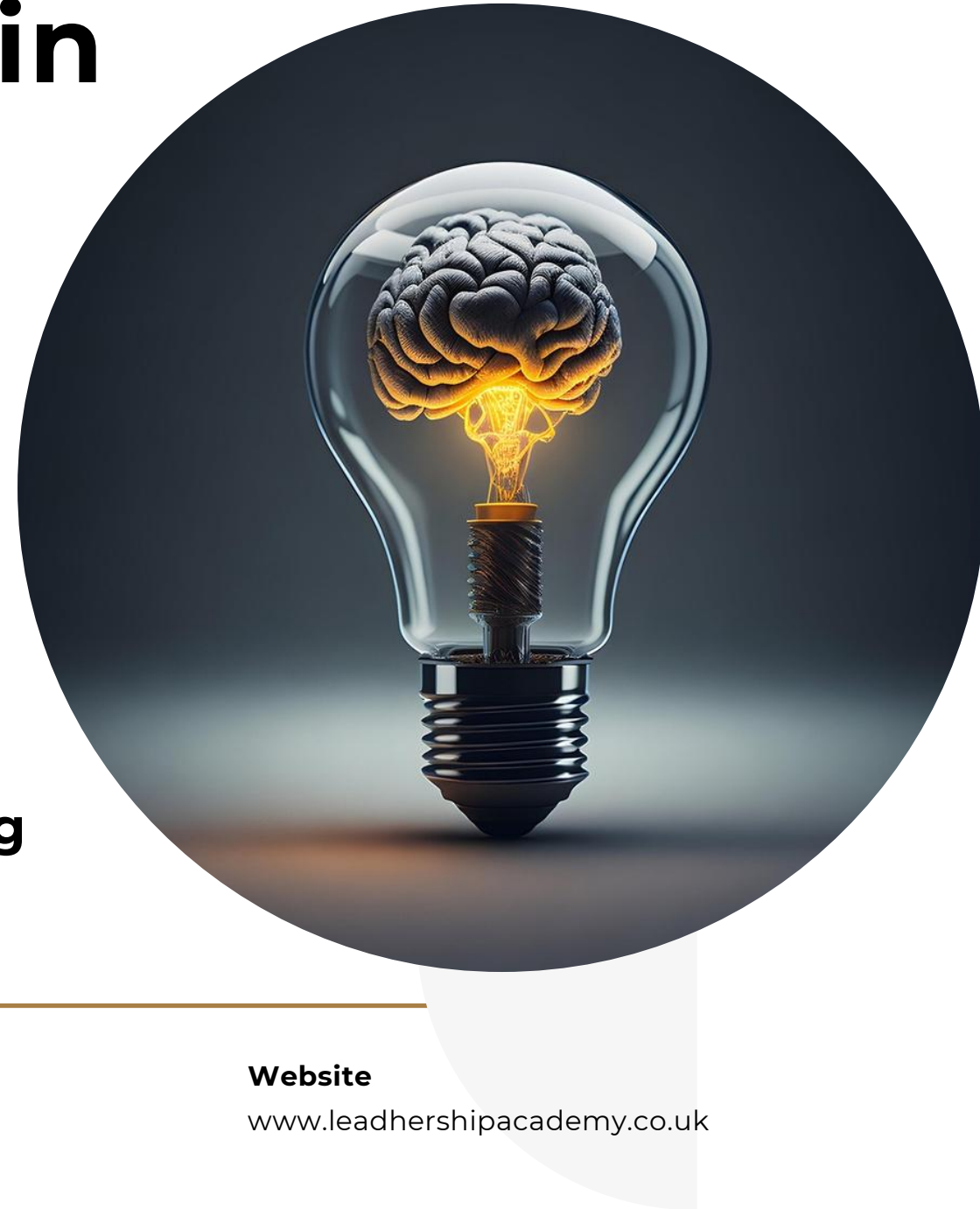
Saj Zafar

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Meet Saj



**Born in Kashmir
Raised in Yorkshire
Made in Prisons**



Modern Definition of Resilience

Not endurance.

Not silence.

Not being “strong all the time.”

**Resilience = Regulation +
Boundaries + Identity-Aligned
Support**



Global Majority Reality

Global Majority staff often navigate:

- High visibility and low representation
- Heavy workload with credibility pressure
- Organisational and political turbulence
- Unseen emotional and cultural labour

The system may not shift quickly — but your neural wiring, boundaries, and internal leadership can.

Global Majority Reality



1. The Higher You Rise, the More Invisible You Become.

(Seen for delivery, unseen for judgement.)

2. Elevation Requires Access You're Not Automatically Given.

(Upward influence depends on rooms, relationships, and sponsorship.)

3. Your Greatest Strengths Become Your Biggest Stoppers.

(Perfection, detail, delivery keep you in contribution — not elevation.)

4. You Shoulder the Hidden Emotional Labour of Leadership.

(Bias, conflict, people management — without equal authority.)

5. Your Insight Is Powerful, But Often Unheard.

(Louder voices overshadow intelligent strategy.)

6. You're Expected to Navigate Power Without Being Taught It.

(Sponsorship, politics, authority cues — invisible rules that determine progression.)

The Neuroscience of Survival

When the brain detects threat — the amygdala takes over and overrides clear, strategic thinking.

For Global Majority leaders, that sense of threat can be constant and layered — performance pressure, visibility, stereotype management, credibility questioning, microaggressions, and cultural code-switching.

Over time, chronic stress can reshape the brain for hyper-vigilance and survival, rather than innovation, confidence, influence, and executive-level decision-making.



The Body Keeps Score

The body remembers what the mind tries to minimise.

- The nervous system logs emotions, tone, and threat, not just events
- When something feels familiar, the body reacts before the mind interprets

This is protection, not weakness





**“Resilience isn’t coping.
It’s rewiring your brain.**

**Your responses are
survival — not who you
are, just what your
nervous system
learned.”**

Truth Is

- Downwards: Your team sees you.
- Sideways: Your peers see you.
- Upwards: Often, no one sees you.

Elevation requires upward influence, not just downward excellence.

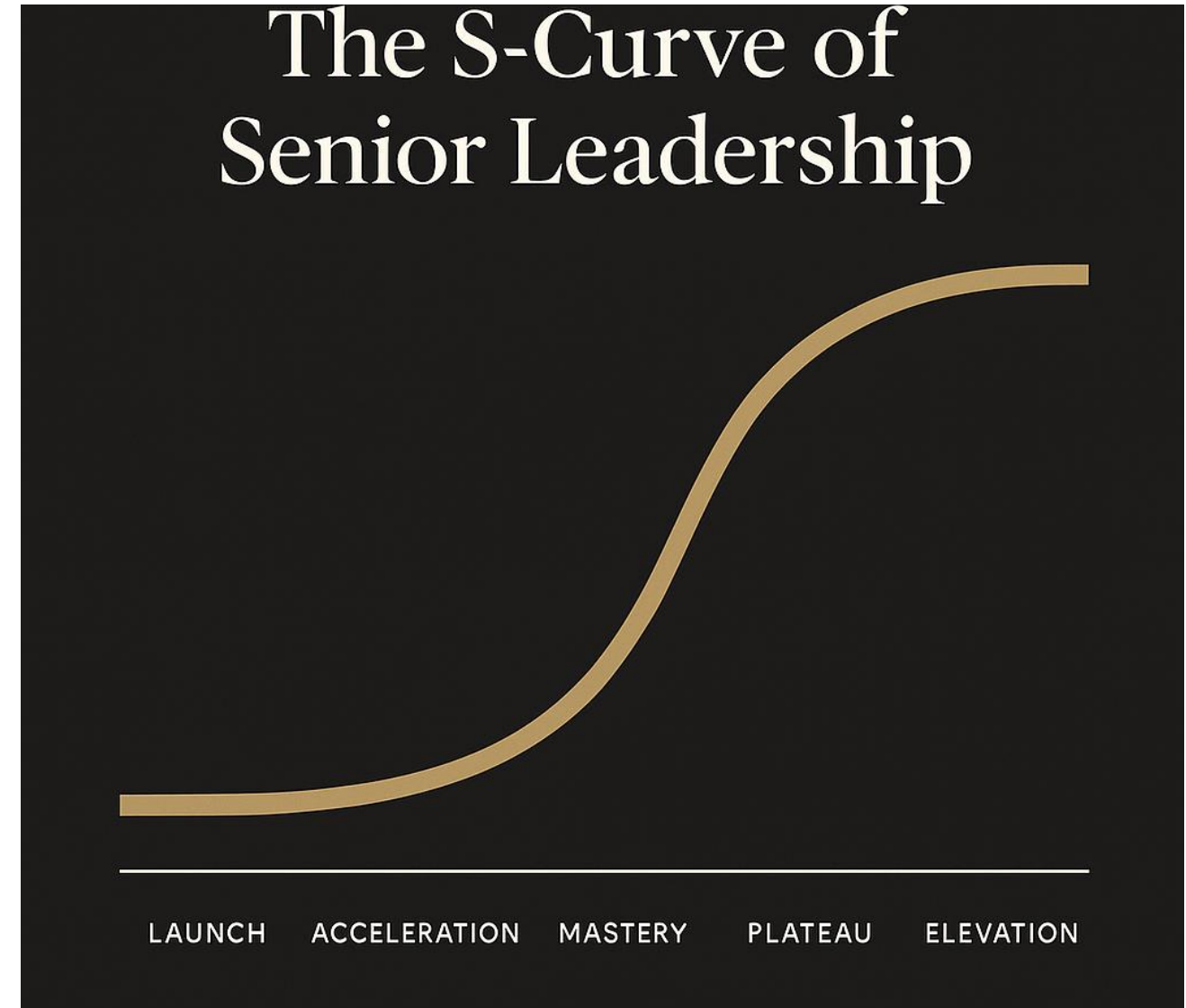
The S-Curve & The Leadership Plateau

All leaders move through 5 stages:

1. Launch
2. Acceleration
3. Mastery
4. Plateau
5. Elevation (new curve)

At plateau, the brain becomes efficient → dopamine drops → motivation dips → identity feels “stuck”.

This is the optimal moment for elevation.



The Elevation Shift



- Delivering → Shaping direction
- Managing tasks → Mobilising influence
- Providing answers → Providing judgement
- Being known for what you do → being recognised for how you think

Elevation: the shift from contribution to strategic influence.

How Do You Land in Powerful Rooms ?



The 3 Anchors of Resilience

Anchor 1: RESET — Calm the Nervous System

Goal: Shift from reactive to responsive.

2-Minute Reset:

- Slow deep breath
- Drop shoulders
- Grounding statement:

“I am safe. I am capable. I choose my response.”

Reflection:

- When did you last react instead of respond?
- What would a reset have changed in that moment?

The 3 Anchors of Resilience



Anchor 2: REFRAME — Shift the Meaning

Interrupt the negative loop → create a new pathway.

Change the story, change the filter.

Reframe prompt:

“The story I’ve been telling myself is _____.
A more empowering story could be _____.”

Impact: Instant reappraisal → lower cortisol → greater cognitive flexibility.

The 3 Anchors of Resilience



Anchor 3: RESPOND — Lead with Intention
Goal: Convert emotional energy into aligned action.

The prefrontal cortex engages when we slow down — enabling clarity, choice, and intentional behaviour.

Reflection prompt:

“What high-pressure situation is coming up?

How will I respond, not react?”

Strategic Voice & Authority Signals

- Speak early — authority rises with timing.
- Lead with insight — not explanation.
- Frame the conversation — don't just contribute.
- Slow your pace — speed signals uncertainty.
- Hold the pause — silence is a power move.
- Use decisive language (“My view is...” “We need to consider...”).

Authority comes from the way you land, not the volume you speak.



**Leadership Presence Starts in the
Brain.**

**When your nervous system is
calm —
your presence commands the
room.**

**Calm is contagious.
So is chaos.**



Key Learning Takeaways

1. Elevation is an identity shift, not a performance shift.

What got you here won't get you there — your next curve requires a new internal operating system.

2. Upward influence is the missing link in your progression.

Strategic presence, authority signals, and visibility to senior stakeholders matter more than delivery.

3. Strategic behaviour is how you get seen, backed, and selected.

Insight over information. Direction over detail. Judgement over justification.

4. Real leadership growth happens in real scenarios.

How you think, speak, frame, and act in high-stakes moments signals your readiness for the next level.

Thank you

A stylized, handwritten signature in gold ink that reads "Saj".

Saj Zafar
Leadership Psychologist | Executive Coach | Speaker

 www.leadershipacademy.co.uk



Lunch

12.15- 13.15pm

Group Task Project

with Pete Chilvers



Group Tasks

Designing a diversity recruitment strategy

Objective

Identify barriers and design strategies to attract and retain under-represented talent

Participants

Idah Marange
Tinashe Zirereza
Natasha Mann
Sam Merry
Phillipa Michael

Improving community engagement

Objective

Identify Opportunities for sustained engagement that supports diverse communities and builds long-term trust

Participants

Shareen Bashir
Sameer Patel
Mo Bham
Nikki Taylor
Sabina Talib

Promoting inclusive leadership practices

Objective

Investigate leadership behaviours that create psychologically -safe teams where all voices contribute

Participants

Shaheen Parekh
Sam Singh
Rochelle Wallace
Aneeta Hulait
Oladuti Akinyose

Creating a mentoring or sponsorship programme

Objective

Designing a structure to nurture diverse talent into leadership roles

Participants

Sonia Burton
Liz White
Temitope Peter
Sandra Kamchira
Candice Montague York

Measuring EDI impact

Objective

Investigate EDI metrics to evaluate and report progress effectively

Participants

Jacquie Thomas
Roxanne Njopa-Kaba
Jeena Chauhan
Ella Mackie
Tendai Holloway

Advocacy for EDI in leadership

Objective

Explore techniques for creating champions of equity and inclusion

Participants

Jasraj Sanghera
Priscilla Gono
Yateen Makwana
Paulette Wright
Leena Warden

2nd December 2025 - Finalising your project

1

Sharing with the group

- Present an update of your project to the rest of the cohort
- Give suggestions and feedback to others

2

Adjustments

- Reflect on the feedback and suggestions provided
- Possibly adjust your group project, as you choose
- Plan towards the final presentation

Questions from some of the groups

Is there an ethnicity pay gap?

% Global Majority in Children's Social Care

43 LAs (SCWRES)	% GM in workforce	Salary <£40k	Salary £40k - £80k	Salary >£80k
	19%	16%	20%	16%

EM LA	% GM in workforce	Salary <£40k	Salary £40k - £80k	Salary >£80k
	24%	29%	23%	22%

EM LA	% GM in workforce	Salary <£40k	Salary £40k - £80k	Salary >£80k
	10%	9%	12%	17%

EM LA	% GM in workforce	Salary <£40k	Salary £40k - £80k	Salary >£80k
	8%	4%	14%	0%

Salary Averages White : Global Majority

EM LA	Mean % difference	Median % difference
	2.9%	0%

EM LA	Mean % difference	Median % difference
	14%	15%

EM LA	Mean % difference	Median % difference
	8.0%	2.8%

Questions from some of the groups

What about representation in senior roles?

43 LAs (SCWRES)	% GM in workforce	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	19%	12%

EM LA	% GM in population	% GM Group/ Team Manager	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	57%	35%	6%

EM LA	% GM in population	% GM in workforce	% GM Group/ Team Manager	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	4%	3.4%	3.5%	1%

EM LA	% GM in population	% GM in workforce	% GM Group/ Team Manager	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	3.7%	3.2%	0%	0%

EM LA	% GM in population	% GM in workforce	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	5.2%	8%	0%

EM LA	% GM in population	% GM in workforce	% GM DCS, AD, HoS
	7%	10%	13%

Questions from some of the groups

What about participation in CPD?

None of our LAs are able to analyse participation and completion of training by ethnic background

Questions from some of the groups

What about HR formal processes?

43 LAs (SCWRES)	Subject to disciplinary	Subject to capability
	GM 67% more likely	GM 114% more likely

EM LA	% disciplinary from GM	% capability from GM
	8.5% more GM than WB	8% more GM than WB

EM LA	% GM in workforce	% disciplinary from GM	% capability from GM
	10%	20%	0%

EM LA	% GM in workforce	% disciplinary from GM	% capability from GM
	3.5%	15%	0%

EM LA	% disciplinary from GM	% capability from GM
	0%	0%

EM LA	% disciplinary from GM	% capability from GM
	50%	100%

By the end of the programme (March)

At the final event on March 17th there will be a short presentation by each group and a 'marketplace' session for participants and invited guests to see what all of the projects have achieved.

Are there specific people you would like to invite to this marketplace session? Mentors? Colleagues?

17th March 2026- Final in-person event



We plan to invite significant / relevant senior colleagues to the final event



Project Market place

- Each group will have the microphone for 5-10 mins each to summarise their project outcomes and learning
- Each group will have a display-point at the marketplace and all participants and visitors will circulate for 45 mins



- All of the final products and artefacts from each project will be collected and produced into a 'keepsake' from the programme. All participants will receive all projects

Extra Option 1:

At the Regional EDI Conference on March 26th 2026 (last year attended by 60+ colleagues including most DCSs and many ADs and HoS) we are discussing a possible display and presentation of projects with the organisers.

Would you want your group project to be included in this opportunity?

Extra Option 2:

The regional group of DCSs have a regular in-person meeting on Friday 8th May at Leicestershire County Hall. They would be open to the idea of a presentation of projects and a chance to discuss things (probably just before and during lunchtime).

Would you want your group project to be included in this opportunity?



Refreshment Break

14.45- 15.00pm



Laurence Jones

Strategic Director, Social Care & Education
Leicester City Council

Workshop Lead- ***Influence without Authority- Redefining Imposter Syndrome***



Questions & Answers



Feedback

Please scan QR Code



This will also be circulated in our follow up communication



Close

**Thank you
and
safe onward Journey**