

## **Opening Address**

**Rt. Hon Mark Drakeford AM, First Minister of Wales at the All Wales Public Service Leaders' Summit 2019 on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2019 at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea.**

I am going to begin in Welsh for a short while for those of you who would prefer a translation.

Rwy'n falch iawn o fod yma heddiw – gydag arweinwyr o bob rhan o'r gwasanaeth cyhoeddus yng Nghymru. Gydag arweinwyr sy'n chwarae rhan mor bwysig yn y gwaith o gynllunio a darparu gwasanaethau cyhoeddus o'r radd flaenaf.

Roeddwn i am ddechrau heddiw drwy gyflwyno'r cefndir ac amlinellu'r ffyrdd y credaf y gall Llywodraeth Cymru gydweithio â chi, fel arweinwyr, i baratoi ar gyfer yr heriau i ddod ac i wneud y sefydliadau rydych chi'n eu harwain yn addas ar gyfer cenedlaethau'r dyfodol.

Mae arwain ein Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus ar unrhyw adeg yn her, ond ar ôl degawd o gyni Llywodraeth y DU a chydag ansicrwydd Brexit yn cynyddu bob dydd, rwy'n cydnabod bod yr heriau rydych chi'n eu hwynebu efallai'n fwy nag erioed o'r blaen.

Felly mae sut rydyn ni fel Llywodraeth Cymru'n cydweithio â chi fel gweithwyr proffesiynol yn ystod yr amseroedd anodd hyn sydd o'n blaenau yn bwysicach nag erioed.

I am genuinely delighted be here today – with so many fantastic leaders from across our public service in Wales. With leaders who play such an important part in the design and delivery of our public services.

I wanted to begin today by offering some of my own thoughts about how I think the Welsh Government can work together with you - as leaders - to prepare for the challenges that we know are to come. To make the organisations you lead genuinely fit for future generations.

Leadership of our Public Services at any time is a challenge, but after a decade of punishing UK Government austerity and with the uncertainties

of Brexit growing by the day, I recognise the challenges you face are perhaps greater than ever before.

So how we as a Welsh Government work together with you as professionals during these difficult moments ahead is perhaps more important than ever.

And those challenges are ones that you will have already touched upon this already this morning. They are obvious in every part of our Public Services here in Wales.

The challenge of a decade of austerity unparalleled in our lifetimes, but for longer than that and with no real sign that austerity is genuinely at an end. The most pressing problems of Brexit and especially the continued danger of a no deal exit from the EU with a catastrophic effect that that would have here in Wales and the issues of climate change... probably the single most urgent long term challenge that faces us all. These would be enormous challenges singly in any era, but the combination the three of them together at a single time means that the task of

leadership in our Public Services is even more challenging today, than that in any time in the brief history of devolution.

What I want to do is to suggest to you some key characteristics of the sort of leadership, which I believe would stand us in the best stead in facing those real difficulties. Taken together they amount to a form of leadership which I believe, takes advantage of the fact that in a small country we are able. As I heard somebody say as I came in the back of the room, we have that fantastic advantage of knowing each other, of being able to get in the same room with one other, to spend two days together facing those common challenges.

The sort of Leadership that I am about to describe, I think, would allow us to take maximum advantage from those natural advantages from which we begin. So I've got three characteristics that I want to focus on this morning - and the first is my belief that in the circumstances we face, then distributed leadership should be our first key ambition. Now everyone in this room, to differing degrees, will belong to a hierarchical organisation, it's the nature of the British model, it's the 1945 model that we have all inherited in which organisations have that pyramid form, in which people in this room sit there at the top of that structure.

Hierarchical forms of organisations, suck responsibility up the chain of command. And it's not a ladder, it's an escalator because there is an inherent push within hierarchical organisation always to move decisions and responsibilities up the chain so they arrive on the desks of those who sit at the top of that pyramid. And you have to make an absolute conscious effort to push back against that dynamic to create the conditions in which authority and responsibility are dispersed across an organisation.

I believe in distributed leadership because I think it has the best opportunity to draw on the talents, the abilities and the commitments of the maximum number of people who work in our Public Services here in Wales. And when I said that a distributed leadership Model distributes authority and responsibility then I think both those words are important. A dispersed leadership model is liberating to the people who work in organisations, it says to people who work in them that the contribution that they make is important at every level. And that everybody that works in a public service has a contribution to make. And a leadership contribution to make from whatever point in that organisation they work,

and it gives them as a result, a liberating authority to make that contribution.

But alongside the authority has to go a sense of responsibility, and we have sometimes to persuade people who work in our public services, that they have to exercise the responsibility that goes with leadership as well. And that when anybody who works in one of our public services comes across an issue, which they think might be solved better or where they think there is a challenge that needs to be faced, that the first question anyone of us should ask, is not whose desk can I move this challenge on to, who do I refer this problem on to for a solution... the first question any one of us should ask ourselves is - what contribution can I make, in the job that I do, in the place that I occupy in this public service - what contribution can I make to addressing this issue to solving this problem to making a difference in the challenge that I see.

And then to understand that the small difference that any one person can make, has to be added to the contributions that other people will make, so that together we are best able to make the most significant difference.

Distributed leadership, while it is liberating in saying people working in our organisations, that the leadership that they exercise is important, carries that responsibility as well, not to regard a problem as somebody else's job to solve. Not to think that by passing it up the chain of command by referring it to somebody else, that you have discharged your responsibility. Distributed leadership means that everybody has a different level of responsibility to make the contribution that they can. And not only do I think that a distributed leadership model offers the strength of the contributions that everyone can make, but I think that they allow public service organisations in Wales to make a real difference in the field of equality as well, because a distributed leadership model values people in organisations for what they do, rather than simply for what they are.

Organisations that value people for what they are tend, as we know, to replicate into positions of leadership, people who look like the people we are already, because we tend to value people who look like ourselves, who to think like ourselves and we replicate that in the leadership decisions that we make. And that means that so often that we fail to promote the talents and the abilities of that wider group of people who

are there in the workforce. So distributed leadership, I think, means that it is more likely that we will recognise the contributions and the talents and commitments of people who represent the wider variety of the society in which we live, and allows us to capture the strength that diversity of views and an ability to see the issues that we face from different perspectives that a genuinely equality driven organisation would bring.

Now, alongside that sense of recognising the contribution that individuals make, and the responsibilities they carry, a distributed leadership model, has to be underpinned by a series of institutional actions. It cannot simply be left to individuals.

Organisations need to ask themselves whether, in the decision making structures that we have, we organise them in a way that allows that distributed sense of leadership and contribution to be captured in the DNA of the organisation. How do public services in Wales make sure that in those decision making structures, that the contribution of people who work for those organisations, is embodied? How do Trade Unions, for example, get a place at the Board, at the table, when those critical decisions are being made so the organised voice of people who work in



our public services is not an afterthought, it is not something you consult on after the thinking has been done, but you allow this distributed sense of expertise to be at the table when the thinking begins.

So alongside my sense of a distributed leadership model as one that captures the individual contributions of people better, it needs to be backed up by a series of institutional arrangements that allow that collective sense of contribution to be in the structure of the organisation - not as an afterthought, not something that's done late on, but is built into the way that leadership in our public services is created and exercised from the beginning. So that's the first of my three qualities of leadership for this morning.

My second one is Permeable Leadership. I'm afraid I carry the scars, as they say, of this idea for a very long time because I sat alongside my old friend and mentor, Rhodri Morgan in so many meetings when he talked about the need for a single public service for Wales. That sense that in a small country of the sort that we are, we have to think of those people who work in our public services and those who lead them as belonging, not to single strands where the primary loyalty is to the organisation to which you happen to belong at any moment in time, but a sense that

those strands in public services, and those strands in Public Service Leadership, belong to a single idea of public service here in Wales, and where the primary loyalty belongs to that wider sense of what we in this room are all about in trying to provide public services in the different places in which we operate - and the need therefore to create systems that allow a permeable sense of leadership, in which it is as easy as we can make it for people to spend time in different parts of the public service here in Wales. In which it is thought of as an asset for somebody to have spent sometime in the Welsh Government; to have spent some time in a delivery organisation; to have spent some time in one of our academic institutions, where that sense of the walls between the organisations that we belong to are as open and permeable as they can be, because people who work across boundaries, and people who are able to see the world from more than one perspective, bring a different sort of leadership strength to that sense of a single Welsh Public Service.

I was here in Swansea not that many months ago, and I met somebody who is now in a senior position in a delivery body in this part of Wales – and its somebody who I've worked with in the Welsh Government for a period of at least 15 years, and this person was a senior person inside

the Welsh Government before she did the job that she does today, and she said to me six or nine months into her new job "I wish that I had known in the years that I was in the Welsh Government, what I now know working as I do on the receiving end of the things that the Welsh Government does." And, what I want to see is a permeable leadership in which that experience is the norm and not that striking exception, in that any one of us doing the jobs that we do, are able to see the world through the eyes of some of those partners with whom our ability to do our jobs, depend.

I absolutely want people who work in our Local Authorities and our Health Boards and our partner organisations to have people in them who have worked in the Welsh Government, and I absolutely want to see in the Welsh Government, people who know what it is to have to deliver on the ground, services that the Welsh Government funds and spend our time helping to design. Because in that permeable sense, in that sense that we can move within those boundaries and see the world through those different perspectives, we will make better decisions.

We will deliver public services in a different sort of way - and yet the barriers for doing that are real, and the creation of a sense of a single

public service for Wales is an ambition that remains very much on the runway, rather than taking off and up there in the air. I could spend the rest of the time I have with you listing all the difficulties that stand in the path of this idea of a single Welsh Public Service - all the practical things to do with pensions, terms and conditions of service and all the things that get in the way of doing it, but what I want to see is a Welsh Public Service that is determined to push beyond those barriers. That is determined to do the things that can be done, rather than regarding the barriers as an insuperable obstacle to doing anything.

There are so many ways we can begin to make the walls between us break down in ways in which we spend small amounts of time in each other's organisations to begin with. In which we use secondments and others forms of making sure that the people who exercise leadership in our public services know each other, not by getting in the room for two days, but by working alongside one another in our different organisations and then return to where we have started with the richness that those new perspectives will bring.

We do it already at the front line in many different ways. We've had Youth Justice teams in Wales for almost the whole of the period of

Devolution, and when I worked as I did in those days in Youth Justice I remember people telling me then, in the teams that Alun Michael set up, that they couldn't be made to work because everybody around the table would be employed by a different organisation, everybody would have different annual leave days and that these things would be so corrosive of working together, that it could never happen - and here we are 20 years later and they work, they work very well and people have got past the barriers to do a common task. If we can do it at the front line, then we can do it at the leadership level as well, but it needs determination and a real commitment to regarding ourselves as part of that single Welsh Public Service.

So here's my third, and final one and this a sense of Shared Leadership in which we share leadership not simply with people who work in the service to which we belong, and not simply shared with other strands of the Welsh public service, but where we share leadership with the people who use our services as well. And this maybe, I think, the biggest cultural challenge in the sort of leadership that I think we need to create in Wales to be resilient against - the deprivations of Austerity, Brexit and Climate Change, but that is a partnership with people who we serve in which we do not regard people who use our public services as problems

to be solved, where the first question that we ask someone who comes through the door is never "What is wrong with you today?" But we start so many conversations in the Welsh public service from that deficit model, where we think of the person who comes through the door as people who have difficulties we are there to solve. Where the power between the person who uses the service and the person who provides the service is so astonishingly unequal that the person on the other side of the desk has nothing to offer, and our job is to make good for all the difficulties and deficits that they face.

That is a model we have inherited from the 1945 Welfare State Model, when the man in Whitehall really did know best, but of all the things that we need to make different in our own time, we need to make that relationship different. We need to start from the point of view that the person who comes through the door has often lived a long and successful life, has managed in their own circumstances any number of challenges and difficulties, and they come through the door as someone with enormous strengths and assets - and our job in a Shared Leadership model is to find a way of making sure that the business of solving problems is a joint responsibility in which the problem lies in the middle of the table, not on one side of the table and where our task is to

find a way of drawing the strengths, drawing the assets that the individual or the community has onto the table alongside the assets the strengths, the abilities, the commitments the public services will bring as well.

Now those contributions will be different, they won't be the same but they should be equally valuable, we ought to start from the point of view that this is a shared enterprise. That the job of problem solving at the individual and at the community level is one in which the public service has a contribution to make, but it is matched by the contribution that we draw out of those individuals and communities. Now that can be hard to begin with because the person coming through the door will not be expecting us to act in that way.

They will have learned over many, many years that these will be encounters in which they are expected to be the passive objects of our benign concern, and if we carry on like that, we will never have the resilience we need. We have to persuade the person and persuade communities that we are genuine when we say that we regard them as equal partners with strengths to exercise and capacities to contribute to the shared business of making something better. But the good news is, is that when we do that and when we do convince people that this is a

genuine effort that we are embarked upon, then people turn out to be so full of energy, interest, ideas, enthusiasm, possibilities, that suddenly the challenge of addressing the problems that we face, becomes one we can face together in an entirely different way.

There is a journey to go on in order to liberate that contribution by organisations that have done it are enormously strengthened both by the process and particularly by the result.

So this is the message of co-production that you will have heard many times. It starts as I say, never from the question "What is the matter with you today?" The question ought to be, I believe, always is "What matters to you today?" So that we start understanding the problem from the perspective of the people we are working with and when we know what matters to that person or that place, then we start to design and deliver solutions that address the things that people we work with tell us matter and would make the biggest difference to them.

So this idea of Shared Leadership is an idea that sits alongside the ideas of Distributed and Permeable Leadership because all three ideas are based on a shared set of strengths, a focus on assets in



organisations and on a sense of collective action. How do we act together with the people who work within our organisations, with other organisations within the Welsh Public Service, with the people that those public services are there to assist.

It is the opposite of Heroic Leadership, it's the opposite of a reliance on authority through hierarchy, and it is challenging for people who sit in those positions. But when we do it and when we institutionalise it in the way that we go about the jobs that we do, then I believe that the rewards for us all will be significant.

In the Welsh Government, as you know, we are committed to playing our part in this in one way through putting social partnership arrangements in Wales on a statutory basis. And Julie will lead a bill through the National Assembly which will take the arrangements we have with you today, with Public Services in Wales, with Private Sector employers and with our Trade Union partners alongside the Welsh Government, and put those arrangements on a basis that gives us all the confidence of knowing, that we are committed to being around the table together, in that distributed leadership way that I have described, and that when we do the hard work of sharing the responsibility for addressing the issues we face, then the force of the law will lie behind the agreements that we

come to in that social partnership forum. That is one example of what I said in the beginning about institutionalising this idea of a Shared Distributed Permeable Leadership that we need here in Wales.

There will be many others, and it will rely very heavily on the commitment, the dedication of people in this room and the services that you lead.

I look forward to hearing at the end of what looks like a remarkably interesting two days, of where these discussions have got to and in that spirit of shared and distributed leadership, to continue on this journey together here in Wales.

Diolch y fawr.

Thank you.

