**Leadership as if people were human**

Being asked to facilitate the one of our collective leadership pilots with a local authority felt like a bit of a breakthrough. The hope was that this approach could genuinely transform the way services work together around children and families. This is an important issue to me, and I was excited at first.

As co-facilitators, the two of us arrived at a previously unknown building to host the Senior Management Team including the Chief Executives of the health service and the local council, as part of discussions about who might become involved.

We started with the Key Jar questions. I admit I had some slight trepidation about this, probably because during our own planning session someone had said ‘you can’t ask a CEO what keeps you awake at night or what gets you out of bed in the mornings!’

In the event the session went well, with good levels of engagement. During a break, the NHS Chief Executive sidled up to me to ask where he could get a copy of the Key Jar questions. Even so, as outsiders, we were told in no uncertain terms that they would decide who is in the room, thank you very much!

At the next session, a senior manager from the health service arrived via TV. He was brief and made his excuses quickly. The view seemed to be that they were already excellent at what they did. People might well have been wondering ‘so why were they doing this?’

The next few months brought enjoyment and frustration. At one point we suggested that they were very polite to each other, and someone made a joke that it’s ‘difficult because you can’t be sure who’s family member is lifting your bins’.

When we asked what they hoped to get from this work, we were told “SMART objectives” and a quick result. When, later in the session the same person said that this is a generational intervention, and it would take time and they needed to stick with it, and I said ‘I’m curious about how that fits with SMART objectives’ and a penny seemed to drop.