The Florence Nightingale Foundation offers a unique and world renowned programme of leadership, travel and research scholarships each carefully and deliberately designed to promote excellence in practice. On completion of their scholarships Florence Nightingale Foundation Scholars join an illustrious alumni of nurse leaders with global reach and impact.

The Florence Nightingale Foundation Leadership Scholarships are extremely prestigious. They are designed for very senior nurse and midwifery leaders who either already hold a Director of Nursing/Chief Nurse position or are identified as having the potential to take up a board level position. The aims of the Leadership Scholarship programme are threefold:

- To develop the scholars’ personal leadership capability
- To assist scholars in developing their roles and career objectives; and
- To ensure scholars deliver an improvement project in their clinical area.

The Leadership Scholarship is unique in that it is a bespoke development programme which each scholar shapes to meet their own personal leadership development needs with support from a carefully chosen mentor and the staff of the Foundation. The bespoke programme is supported by carefully selected, tried and tested core elements known to increase the effectiveness of nursing and midwifery leaders.

Scholarships are awarded following a highly competitive and rigorous selection process. The scholarship starts with an in-depth individual assessment of each scholar’s development needs carried out by an experienced leadership development facilitator. This is fundamental to planning the bespoke element of the scholarship.

The core elements include exposure to a range of developmental interventions known to make a difference in increasing the effectiveness of nurse and midwife leaders. They also provide an unparalleled opportunity to network with other senior leaders in healthcare. This offers a web of support for scholars during the scholarship and builds valuable connections for the future.

The developmental interventions are experiential in nature and include attention to personal presentation and impact; and introduction to tools, techniques and information to help scholars to develop their leadership effectiveness and increase their span of influence in their own organisations, their professions and across the health and care system more generally.

To support delivery of their patient care improvement project Scholars are expected to plan and undertake study visits to services overseas. Scholars’ have access to the staff and networks of the Foundation to assist them in this.

For example one scholar developed Skype clinics:

“The project was to implement the use of ‘digital’ technologies to improve patient care and experience. I established a multi professional steering group. The group has supported and
developed Skype clinics for head and neck cancer patients, video conferencing for renal patients, successful bids for over a million pounds from nurse tech funds one and two has led to the development of the open source e-observations product. A further successful bid for transformation funds of over £100,000 to support teenage and young adults with diabetes with an app and youth support worker. Shortlisted for two national programmes for digital technologies: test beds, health foundation.”

Another, focused on patient-reported experience measures (PREMS), this has resulted in a new set of PREMS, and a mechanism for reporting them.

“My project is related to the expansion of the Trust’s Clinical Strategy, with increased focus on patient experience outcome measures (PREMS). This includes exploring the concepts of ‘relieving suffering and promoting peace of mind’. I, in partnership with the Medical Director, have overseen the refresh of the Trust’s Clinical Strategy in the light of the NHS Five Year Review. This was signed off at Trust Board in May 2015, after involvement of our senior leadership team. It has a set of objectives for 15/16, one of which is the focus for my scholarship patient care improvement project. A set of PREMS have been agreed with the Trust’s Clinical Outcomes Group, I have worked with our IT Department to develop an electronic data capture APP that can be used on computers and mobile devices such as iPads and smartphones. This has been presented to the group and we are the process of agreeing some pilot site for testing in Q3 of this year.”

Networks are vital to professional success. Expanding networks within and outside nursing and healthcare is an expectation and outcome of the leadership scholarships and further cemented in membership of the Alumni.

Successive independent evaluations of the Leadership Scholarships have demonstrated the impact on individual scholars:

“It has been one of the greatest experiences of my life. Professionally it has been the greatest.”

“It was simply life, and career changing. It has influenced and changed the way I think and practice.”

And the system. Colleagues in the organisations that the scholars came from highlighted their “important and long lasting contributions to the organisation” and how they “see their personal development as an opportunity to develop other around them.”