Taking on a leadership role [1]    the first time is tough. There is always pressure [2]    you to do the right things, and to be seen to be doing them. But, unless there's something that needs sorting [3]    urgently, your first few months [4]   the role will be better spent [5]   understanding the people and the situation. One easy mistake to make is to think that you, as leader, the top person[6]    the top salary, have the sole responsibility and the know-how to solve every single problem yourself. And you can be sure that others will encourage you to think that way, since it takes the pressure [7]    them, and it satisfies their natural urge to leave the solving [8]    problems[9]   others. Instead try using existing resources to identify the current position and the ways to change it [10]   the better.

Start [11]   consulting widely, beginning [12]    the people who now report [13]  you direct, as these are most likely to be the people [14]    the expertise and experience to tackle some [15]  the problems that are identified. A series [16]  one-to-one meetings, though time-consuming, will be worthwhile, especially if they are structured to provide you [17]    the information you need to make decisions later [18]  . Two useful questions are: 'What do you see as the biggest problem facing the department now?' and 'What one change would make the most difference[19]   our success?' [20] their answers you can build [21]  a picture [22] your people, as well as of the issues. Some will consider the needs [23]  the department as a whole, while others may just concentrate[24]   their own particular concerns. You will also have had personal contact [25]    each person and can judge who you will work well [26]    [27]   the future.