NHS England

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NHS leadership competency framework for board members

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Leaders in the NHS help deliver better health and care for patients by setting the tone for their organisation, team culture and performance.

We have worked with a wide range of leaders from across the NHS to help describe what we do when we operate at our best. We have engaged with stakeholders including NHS Providers, NHS Employers and NHS Confederation, and built in best practice from other industries. We have used the feedback to design the 6 competency domains in the Leadership Competency Framework (the framework) to support board members to perform at their best.

(https://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/organisational-resources/our-leadership-way/) and the Seven Principles of Public Life
(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2) (Nolan Principles). A high-level summary of the values and concepts from these documents is in Appendix 1.

(https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/leadership-competency-framework.png)

1.2 Background

In 2019, the Tom Kark KC review of the fit and proper person test was published. This included a recommendation for 'the design of a set of specific core elements of competence, which all directors should be able to meet and against which they can be assessed'. This framework responds to that recommendation and forms part of the NHS England Fit and Proper Person Test Framework
(https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-england-fit-and-proper-person-test-framework-for-board-members/) for board members (FPPT).

The framework takes account of other NHS England frameworks and strategies including:

- NHS England Operating Framework
  (https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/operating-framework/)

a unitary board. All six competency domains should be considered for all board members, taking account of any specific role related responsibilities and nuances.

Achievement against the competency domains supports the Fit and Proper Person assessment for individual board members.

2 The six leadership competency domains

2.1 Driving high-quality and sustainable outcomes

The skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to deliver and bring about high quality and safe care and lasting change and improvement – from ensuring all staff are trained and well led, to fostering improvement and innovation which leads to better health and care outcomes.

2.2 Setting strategy and delivering long-term transformation

The skills that need to be employed in strategy development and planning, and ensuring a system wide view, along with using intelligence from quality, performance, finance and workforce measures to feed into strategy development.

2.3 Promoting equality and inclusion, and reducing health and workforce inequalities

The importance of continually reviewing plans and strategies to ensure their delivery leads to improved services and outcomes for all communities, narrows health and workforce inequalities, and promotes inclusion.

2.4 Providing robust governance and assurance

The system of leadership accountability and the behaviours, values and standards that underpin our work as leaders. This domain also covers the principles of evaluation, the significance of evidence and assurance in decision making and ensuring patient safety, and the vital importance of collaboration on the board to drive delivery and improvement.

2.5 Creating a compassionate, just and positive culture

The skills and behaviours needed to develop great team and organisation cultures. This includes ensuring all staff and service users are listened to and heard, being respectful and challenging inappropriate behaviours.

a. seek out and act on performance feedback and review, and continually build my own skills and capability
b. model behaviours that demonstrate my willingness to learn and improve, including undertaking relevant training

2. Setting strategy and delivering long-term transformation

What does good look like?

I am a member of a unitary board leading the development of strategies which deliver against the needs of people using our services, as well as statutory duties and national and local system priorities. We set strategies for long term transformation that benefits the whole system and reflects best practice, including maximising the opportunities offered by digital technology. We use relevant data and take quality, performance, finance, workforce intelligence and proven innovation and improvement processes into account when setting strategy.

Competencies

1. I contribute as a leader to:

a. the development of strategy that meets the needs of patients and communities, as well as statutory duties, national and local system priorities
b. ensure there is a long-term strategic focus while delivering short-term objectives
c. ensure that our strategies are informed by the political, economic, social and technological environment in which the organisation operates
d. ensure effective prioritisation within the resources available when setting strategy and help others to do the same

2. I assess and understand:

a. the importance of continually understanding the impact of the delivery of strategic plans, including through quality and inequalities impact assessments
b. the need to include evaluation and monitoring arrangements for key financial, quality and performance indicators as part of developing

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