

College of Leadership and Management

To: • NHS trust and ICB:
– chairs
– chief executives

NHS England
Wellington House
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cc. • NHS trust and ICB:
– chief people officers
– communications leads

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Dear colleagues

Across the NHS, leaders and managers are being asked to deliver profound change: improving care, shifting services closer to home, embracing new technology and supporting the move from treatment to prevention.

The NHS already benefits from exceptional leadership and management talent. As we collectively deliver the [10 Year Health Plan](#), there is an opportunity to build on that strength by creating a more consistent, ambitious and profession-led approach to developing leaders and managers and helping establish NHS leadership and management as among the best in the world.

NHS College of Leadership and Management

The NHS College of Leadership and Management will be the national home for NHS leadership, management and talent excellence.

Building on the foundations established through the NHS Leadership Academy, professional bodies and existing leadership communities, the college will help strengthen professional identity, support learning and career development, improve talent management, and provide a recognised quality mark for leadership and management excellence. The college exists to support the NHS by helping current and future NHS leaders and managers from all backgrounds to ‘step in, step onwards and step up’ – from aspiring first-time managers to executive leaders, in both clinical and non-clinical roles.

We are also pleased to announce that Steve McManus will join the college as interim chief executive from today. Steve joins the college after a decade as chief executive of Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust and is passionate about supporting and developing strong leadership and management and staff engagement.

The college is being launched with a clear purpose and vision, but its development will be shaped by the service. Over the summer, we will work closely with leaders and managers across trusts, systems, primary care, community services and neighbourhood health – alongside stakeholders and partners – to shape the college's future priorities, development offers and ways of working, with opportunities for organisations and individuals to contribute to its development.

During 2026/27, the college will introduce a range of development opportunities and support, including online learning aligned to the new Leadership and Management Framework, a new 360° feedback tool, a national development curriculum, strengthened talent management arrangements, and refreshed leadership and management programmes. These will be developed in partnership and will be accessible to leaders and managers working across all parts of the health service.

The college will also work with partners to support the development of diverse boards and executive teams, enabling organisations to create the conditions for sustained improvement. A new national attraction campaign, launching this week, will help build a strong and diverse pipeline of NHS non-executive directors, supporting effective governance across the service.

NHS Leadership and Management Framework – for all leaders and managers

The Department of Health and Social Care has just published the new NHS Staff Standards, including the first national [NHS staff standard on line management](#). We are also launching the new [NHS Leadership and Management Framework](#), which sets clear expectations for all NHS leaders and managers, including line managers. This includes a code of practice and leadership and management standards for all NHS leaders and managers.

For the first time, the NHS has a single national framework describing what excellent leadership and management looks like across every setting, profession and level of responsibility. The framework provides a shared language for development, career progression and professional expectations. It will support stronger management capability, competent, compassionate and inclusive leaders, better staff experiences and, ultimately, improved care for patients.

The NHS Staff Standards have been shaped by broad engagement across the service, including with the Social Partnership Forum, trade unions, NHS chief executives, staff networks, professional groups and national partners. Similarly, the Leadership and Management Framework reflects the experiences and insight of thousands of NHS managers, leaders and patient representatives. Its development has been supported by NHS England, the Chartered Management Institute, the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management, and the Florence Nightingale Foundation, among many others. More than 150

organisations have helped refine it through local testing and communities of practice. We are grateful to everyone for their work and invaluable input.

Implementing the framework

The [framework and self-assessment tool](#) are now available for you and your teams to use.

We ask organisations to begin embedding the framework within development, appraisal, recruitment and talent processes, and to support leaders and managers to use the self-assessment as part of their normal appraisal and development conversations during 2026/27.

NHS leaders and managers make a profound difference to patients, staff and communities on a daily basis. The establishment of the NHS College of Leadership and Management recognises the critical role played by leaders and managers at all levels, and the need for continued investment in their support and development. This becomes increasingly important in a more devolved NHS, where more decisions are taken closer to the communities we serve, and where leadership and management capability will be an important factor in determining whether we can deliver better outcomes for patients and the ambitions of the 10 Year Health Plan.

Together, the framework and the college provide an opportunity to build on existing excellence, strengthen leadership and management capability, and create a profession that is recognised as among the best in the world.

This work is central to improving care and supporting staff. We ask you to champion the staff standards and the framework in your organisation, engage with the college as its national offer develops, and help shape the next chapter of leadership and management development across the NHS.

For further information, please contact england.leadershipandmanagement@nhs.net

Yours sincerely,



Daniel Mortimer
Director General – People Group



Ed Smith
Chair
NHS College of Leadership and
Management

Appendix: Further information about the NHS Leadership and Management Framework

Actions for leaders and managers

- During 2026, all NHS leaders and managers should [use the framework](#) as a practical starting point for reflection, development and improvement.
- By the end of quarter 4, every manager and leader should self-assess against the framework stage that is relevant to their level, discuss the outcomes with their line manager, and agree a focused development plan. All senior managers should also use the 360-degree feedback tool to inform that conversation.

Actions for organisations and boards

- We ask organisations and boards to begin implementation by embedding the framework into local people strategies, policies, training, appraisal and recruitment, and by aligning existing leadership and management development offers to the new standards. This should include mapping current provision and identifying gaps.
- The framework will also support delivery of the [NHS Staff Standards](#) which are reflected in the National Oversight Framework, and should therefore form part of local assurance of management quality, staff experience and improvement.
- Organisations should support all leaders and managers to complete the self-assessment and undertake development (including on-the-job learning) aimed at achieving their level's required competencies. Boards should monitor local completion and use the data to understand development needs across their organisation.

The NHS leadership competency framework for board members

The [NHS leadership competency framework for board members](#) remains in place for 2026/27 for the purpose of Fit and Proper Persons Test assessment at board level. It will be updated from 2027/28 onwards, to ensure the 2 competency frameworks align.