

May 2019

Health & Care Women Leaders Network - Strategic overview for 2019/20



Introduction

The network exists to ensure the contribution of women in the NHS and across the health and care sector is celebrated, that gender diversity is embraced by employers, and that women are empowered to progress to board level positions in the NHS. This strategy will set out how the network will deliver this aim.

The Health & Care Women Leaders Network is a free network for women working across the health and care sector delivered by NHS Confederation and NHS Employers. Formerly known as the HSJ Women Leaders Network, the network was established in 2015 and has grown to include around nine hundred and fifty senior and aspiring women leaders. Our members connect through events, masterclasses and tweet chats, and share learning through podcasts, blogs, videos and key reports.

Our aim is for the network to be a strong, united and influential voice for women, embracing the multiple and intersectional identities that the word 'woman' speaks to, engaging with senior male and female leaders across health and social care, raising the profile of the network and growing its membership, encouraging the growth of regional and local networks and providing advice, support and networking opportunities and events.

In delivering this business strategy we underpin commitments in the NHS Confederation Group corporate strategy to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, with an emphasis on leadership and a focus on race and gender equality by:

- continuing to develop the Health & Care Women Leaders Network
- focusing on the under representation of women and black and minority ethnic people in senior NHS leadership positions
- developing our partnership with the NHS Confederation BAME network, sharing learning and best practice to generate synergy.

The work of the network supports the ambition of all those working in the NHS and across the health and care sector, to create the best outcomes for patients and to ensure that the workforce that delivers care to patients is representative of the community it serves. We know that diversity improves the quality of decision making, delivers higher quality outcomes and encourages a climate where people work more productively which in turn improves staff recruitment and retention.

Our members

Member demographics¹

Our membership currently stands at just over 950, with the split between senior and aspiring leaders approximately 50:50. Most of our members are professional middle management, with members from London making up a quarter and Yorkshire and Humber and the North West the next highest. Approximately half of our members work for NHS trusts.

1. The data is pre GDPR except for membership numbers.

Member survey

In September 2018 we surveyed our network members and from their responses established our priorities for the next three years. These are:

- mentoring and coaching
- talent management
- flexible working
- gender pay
- women on boards – 50:50 by 2020.

In terms of our member offer and activities for the network to focus on in the future, there was very strong interest in a network-run or enabled mentoring, coaching or leadership development scheme. This mirrored the value put on these activities by those who had experienced them, who told us that leadership development had been important in supporting their careers to date.

The most popular reasons for joining the network were to find inspiration and support, to network, personal development and to influence change.

The membership was split on whether men should be able to join the network, with strong views for and against. The main argument against was that there was a need for a 'safe' woman-only space. However, amongst those who did not feel that men should belong, there was a recognition that it was important to engage with male leaders and influencers to achieve culture change.

To achieve our aim and deliver our priorities the network needs men as allies, working with us and supporting and influencing on our behalf. Engaging with our senior male leaders and reaching out to male colleagues across health and care via the network's **Men as allies report** will be a point of focus throughout our 2019 work programme.

Achieving our aim and delivering our priorities

Success for the network will be measured by the achievement of our aim and delivery of our priorities.

Achieving our aim

- Building our influence on behalf of our members and women working across the health and care sector.
- Raising the profile of the network and its priorities.
- Growing our membership and provide a high-quality offering for our members.
- Connecting with other organisations and networks.
- Supporting organisations across the health and care sector to set up their own local women's networks.

Influencing

- Putting our priorities and the work of the network on agendas across the wider health and care sector.
- Lobbying for change via interactions with senior male and female leaders and at internal and external events including International Women's Day and our annual conference.
- Raising the profile of the network by becoming a more active voice in the media, speaking up on behalf women in health and care on leadership issues and ensuring their views are represented.

Representing

- Engaging regularly with senior male and female leaders from across the health and care sector via our events, targeted meetings and encouraging senior and aspiring leaders in health and social care to connect through events and resources such as webinars, tweet chats and podcasts.
- Nurturing our existing relationships and partnerships including those with colleagues in the NHS Confederation group and the BME leadership network, NHS England including their Women's Development Network, Kings Fund, Nuffield Trust, NHS Providers, NHS Improvement, Care Quality Commission, Leadership Academy, London Leadership Academy, London Women's Leadership Network, NHS Improvement, 50:50 Parliament, Medical Women's Federation, NHS Digital, National Guardian for the NHS, NHS Trusts and Dods.
- Creating new relationships with other key players such as Stonewall, Fawcett Society, Young Women's Trust, Rosa, Purple Infusion, National Alliance of Women's Organisations and UN Women UK.

Supporting

- Commissioning analysis and research that tracks progress towards achieving gender equality in the NHS and spreading best practice from health and care organisations and other sectors.
- Creating a communications network comprising communications experts from across the sector who will support and help promote the network.
- Working closely with the NHS Confed regional team and the NHS Employers engagement team, utilising their networks to share messaging and grow membership.
- Improving our understanding of how the network fits within the context of other equality networks and organisations - setting a plan to work as one voice – a network of networks.

Progressing our priorities

Mentoring and coaching – We will:

- Work with Leadership Academy to improve the coaching and mentoring offer for women with a specific focus on BAME women.
- Encourage our senior and aspiring leaders to network at our events.

Talent management – We will:

- Share and provide tools and tips aimed at, and from senior women and men in healthcare and other sectors, via our digital, social media and other channels and within the network to help inspire and guide our members.
- Hold tweet chats and events at which members will be able to network and takeaway tangible tools and tips.
- Actively promote the 50:50 by 2020 report and follow up work through Leadership Academy regional talent boards.

Flexible working – We will:

- Work with @FlexNHS and others to promote and enable flexible working across the health and care sector.
- Promote NHS Employers tools and resources including our Improving staff retention: Flexible working guide.

Gender pay gap – We will:

- Include gender pay gap as a topic for discussion at our events and through our resources and engage subject experts to speak on the issue and update our membership.
- Promote Government Equalities Office good practice on effective actions for tackling the gender pay gap and share the benefits of promoting gender diversity as an employer.
- Support our chair in her network role to speak on this issue.

Women on boards – 50:50 by 2020 – We will:

- Continue to push for equal gender representation across senior positions in the NHS by seeking to progress the work outlined in the **NHS Women on Boards: 50:50 by 2020 report**.
- Commission a piece of work from NHS Confederation/NHS Employers to identify effective actions for progressing 50:50 by 2020 from Dr Ruth Sealy.

Next steps to support implementation of the strategy

- Explore funding routes to ensure we can deliver our aim and priorities, and to look for commercial and sponsorship opportunities offered through our annual events programme and other activities.
- Develop a work programme including events for 2019 to progress delivery of the aim and priorities in this strategy.
- Develop a communications strategy and delivery plan including how the wider communications community and communications professionals can be mobilised to support the network to progress delivery of its aims and objectives.
- Develop within the communications strategy, details of how we will seek to increase our membership.

The Health & Care Women Leaders Network was established in 2015 and brings together senior and aspiring women leaders working across the NHS and care sectors.

The aims of the network include supporting women in their careers and professional development and raising awareness of barriers facing women in the workplace.

Join the network: www.nhsemployers.org/womenleaders

Follow us on Twitter: @hcwomenleaders



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