

NHS Leadership and Management Framework: Further Information

How the framework was developed

The NHS Leadership and Management Framework has been co-developed by NHS England, the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), the Florence Nightingale Foundation and the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management. It reflects extensive engagement with leaders, managers and staff across health and care, including social care partners, professional bodies, education providers and NHS organisations.

The framework is based on evidence, practical experience and learning from leadership and management frameworks across health, social care and wider public services. It has been tested and refined with over 150 NHS organisations.

Who is the framework for?

The framework applies to anyone with formal leadership or management responsibilities in an NHS-funded service, whether in a clinical or non-clinical role. This includes operational, professional and clinical leaders and managers across all sectors of the NHS.

The framework is based on leadership and management responsibilities rather than profession, pay band or job title. Individuals should apply the standards at the level that best reflects the responsibilities they hold.

What is expected of organisations?

Organisations are expected to begin embedding the framework during 2026/27 through existing appraisal, development, recruitment, talent and leadership processes. The framework provides a common set of national standards, whilst allowing organisations to continue using successful local approaches where these are aligned to the standards.

Implementation will be phased to allow organisations time to integrate the framework into existing systems and processes. Where required, implementation can extend into April 2027 to align with local arrangements.

Self-assessment, appraisal and evidence

Leaders and managers are expected to complete a self-assessment against the relevant standards and use the results as part of ongoing appraisal and development conversations. Assessments should normally be revisited annually.

The framework is intended primarily as a development tool rather than a performance management tool. Individuals will be encouraged to gather evidence of how they demonstrate the standards through their work, development activities, projects and achievements. A new national appraisal framework is also being developed to support consistent appraisal conversations across the NHS.

Learning and development

A national curriculum aligned to the standards will be available later in 2026 and will underpin all NHS-funded leadership and management development. Free online modular learning will be available to support each competency area.

Organisations may continue to design and deliver their own learning and development programmes, but these should align with the national standards and curriculum over time. The NHS College of Leadership and Management will develop arrangements to quality assure leadership and management development against the curriculum. Existing NHS Leadership Academy programmes and offers and the NHS Graduate Management Training Scheme will be refreshed to align with the new standards.

Recruitment, talent and careers

Over time, the framework is intended to support the entire employee lifecycle, including recruitment, appraisal, development, talent management and career progression. NHS England will work with partners to explore how the standards can be reflected within job descriptions, person specifications and talent processes.

The framework also supports career conversations by helping individuals identify strengths, development needs and pathways for progression.

Assessment and feedback tools

A new self-assessment tool is available to support the framework. A new national 360° feedback tool is planned for winter 2026/27 and will replace the existing Healthcare Leadership Model 360° tool. Existing HLM 360 credits may continue to be used during the transition period.

The new 360° tool will be free at the point of use and available to leaders and managers at all levels.

Data, reporting and assurance

Data from the self-assessment and future 360° tool and modular development will be collected centrally and shared with organisations in anonymised and aggregated form. Organisations will not be required to submit separate returns.

Initially, reporting will focus on participation rates, with additional organisational reporting planned over time to support workforce planning and learning needs analysis. No personally identifiable information will be shared.

If your organisation would like to receive a monthly data report, please contact England.talentsights@nhs.net. We request that you identify one person within the organisation to receive this data, which can then be disseminated as required.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion are fundamental principles of the framework and are embedded throughout the code, standards and competencies. Inclusive leadership, compassionate management, open dialogue and people-centred approaches are expected at every level. This commitment includes anti-racist practice and promoting equitable opportunities for all staff.

Quality assurance and professional alignment

The framework has been developed in partnership with CMI and aligns closely with recognised management and leadership standards. Individuals who already hold qualifications such as Chartered Manager or Chartered Fellow are likely to find significant overlap with the NHS standards.

The framework is also being aligned with relevant clinical, professional and regulatory leadership requirements wherever possible.

Working across health and care

The framework supports leaders and managers working across organisational boundaries and emphasises collaboration with partners, communities and wider system stakeholders. It has been developed with input from health and social care partners and aligns with leadership approaches across the wider public sector.

Implementation

All NHS organisations should begin embedding the framework into local processes during 2026/27. The NHS College of Leadership and Management will continue to support implementation through tools, guidance, communities of practice, learning resources and ongoing quality assurance arrangements.

The NHS Staff Standard on line management sets the expectation that employers will implement the framework and will be measured in the NHS Oversight Framework, which is why organisations should adopt it before the end of 2026/27. We recognise that some organisations may need additional time to integrate the framework and self-assessment into existing processes and systems and therefore, where needed, implementation can be extended until the end of April 2027 to align with local arrangements.

The framework will become the common national foundation for leadership and management development across the NHS, helping to support consistent standards, better leadership and management practice and improved outcomes for staff, patients and communities.