

NHS Leadership Qualities Framework



Technical Research Paper – Summary

Introduction

The NHS Leadership Centre commissioned the Hay Group to work with the service and key stakeholders to identify those characteristics which will distinguish highly effective leaders across the service in the future. Specifically, the Hay Group was asked to develop an overarching framework of leadership qualities for the service.

This document gives a brief overview of the breadth of information gathering and detailed research which went into developing the framework. A very intensive research programme was used to identify the core set of leadership qualities associated with success at Chief Executive and Director levels in the service. Testing and consultation with a large number of leaders throughout the service was then used to refine the framework to produce an overarching model which captures the qualities required by all leaders in the NHS.

The information gathering phase included extensive desk-top research of 23 leadership competency models, strategic and research interviews and focus groups. Over 200 people from the Department of Health, Regional Offices, Health Authorities, Acute, Combined, Mental Health, Ambulance and Primary Care Trusts were involved.

This is the preferred framework of the NHS Institute and will be used as the recognised national benchmark to assess leadership skills – for individuals and across organisations. It will also be used and embedded in leadership work within the NHS Institute.

Researching the Leadership Qualities Model

A great deal of detailed information gathering and research went into the development of the Leadership Qualities Framework. We outline below how information was collated from a range of sources and detailed research to create the overarching framework of leadership qualities. This work is discussed in more detail within the full Technical Research Paper available on www.nhsleadershipqualities.nhs.uk

Gathering information

Information was gathered from a wide range of sources over the course of several months in 2000–2001 to build an overarching qualities framework for all levels of leadership in the service. The sources included: focused interviews with key stakeholders; expert panels (focus groups run with Chief Executives and Directors); focus group work with authors of existing NHS competency models; and comprehensive desk-based research into the characteristics of outstanding leaders in similar environments. This included analysis of the qualities which define effective leaders across the private and public sectors.

Looking to the future

Participants were asked about the future challenges facing the service in order to build a framework which included the qualities required for leadership in the future (not just replicating the leadership patterns of the past).

Researching effective leadership

A detailed research study was conducted into the qualities demonstrated by a number of highly successful Chief Executives from the service. Fifty in-depth structured interviews were carried out, comprising forty-six Chief Executives and four Directors, to collect rich data about what leaders actually said, did, thought and felt on specific occasions that led to successful outcomes. The transcripts from the interviews were analysed both thematically and statistically. This enabled the development of the leadership model and the pinpointing of what differentiated *outstanding* performance. This analysis added significant value to the prior research. It led to a more in-depth understanding of which qualities truly *differentiate* performance and a clearer picture of how particular qualities *combine* to predict success.

Focusing on patients

A wide range of published and unpublished material about the views and needs of patients and carers was consulted. Research included discussion with patients' groups and leaders within the service about what leaders at all levels actually *do* to make a real difference to the patient experience. A key finding is that the very best leaders create a compelling vision for change which is about delivering improvements for patients. They also make the link between what they are doing as leaders to the improvement of services and to health gain.

Valuing diversity

At its core this work taps into real diversity within the service. The research and development of the leadership model involved working with leaders from all levels and from as wide a range of backgrounds, and experiences, as possible. It was critical to ensure that the leadership model could be as inclusive as possible, recognising the range of very different experiences and styles across the service. The Leadership Centre, therefore, worked hard to ensure that the interviews and focus groups were balanced in gender and ethnicity across the service. Where there were few representatives (such as ethnically diverse Chief Executives), the research involved all available candidates. An external Diversity Reference Group also checked inputs to, progress on and outputs of the work at every stage.

Underpinning values

The model is directly aligned with, and reflects, the core values and principles of the kind of leadership which is required to put the NHS Plan into action. Namely it supports the following themes:

- Focusing on patients
- Creating a culture of inclusion and involvement – of patients and the wider community
- Empowerment – of patients and staff
- Collaborative working – with patients, advocacy/voluntary groups and partners
- Being supportive of taking calculated risks, i.e. not risk averse
- Recognising that making mistakes or misjudgements is an essential part of learning.

Code of Conduct

The model is also aligned with the work carried out recently on establishing a Code of Conduct for NHS managers.

Specifically, it supports the principles that NHS managers will:

- Make the care and safety of patients their first concern and act quickly to protect patients from risk
- Respect the public, patients, relatives, carers, NHS staff and partners in other agencies
- Be honest and act with integrity
- Accept accountability for their own work, the performance of those they manage and of their own organisations
- Demonstrate their commitment to team working by collaborating with all their colleagues in the NHS and in the wider community

To access the full Technical Research Paper visit website www.NHSLeadershipQualities.nhs.uk

