

Health and Care Leaders Scheme

2025 Leaders

Frequently Asked Questions





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Who can apply for this programme?

The aim of the 2025 Leaders programme is to identify and develop the next generation of Chief Executives and Executive Directors to lead the health and care system at a national level through the 14 national Arms' Length Bodies (ALBs) or a Director General in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

We advise not to attach too much importance to current hierarchy within your organisation, but to think about your potential to be an effective Chief Executive in one of the ALBs or a Director General (in DHSC only, ie. health-specific and not across Whitehall) in the next three years or to take up an Executive Director post in one of the larger ALBs in the same time period.

Participants ideally will have significant experience of operating at strategic level in a Director level (or equivalent) role. The programme is open to those who work in the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the 14 national Arms' Length Bodies as well as those from the NHS and the wider health and care sector who have an aspiration to work in DHSC or one of the 14 national health and care ALBs.

Applications are welcomed from exceptional candidates from different backgrounds who can demonstrate that they will be credible candidates in organisations with significant responsibility for health and social care collaborating in the shaping of services across a system.

Who are the 14 national Arms' Length Bodies?

NHS Improvement

NHS England

Health Education England

Care Quality Commission

Public Health England

NHS Blood and Transplant



NICE – The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

NHS Digital

NHS Resolution

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Human Tissue Authority

Health Research Authority

NHS Business Services Authority

Do I have to be in a national organisation or in the NHS already to apply?

Ideally, but not necessarily. If you have experience of leading the provision of health and social care that would make you a credible candidate, we would invite you to apply.

The programme is likely to appeal to and be made up of existing ALB, DHSC or NHS Directors together with exceptional candidates from broader health and care backgrounds.

I want to be a Chief Executive or an Executive Director, but not for a few years yet - can I still apply?

No. This programme is for individuals who aspire to lead within the next three years and who are likely to be able to demonstrate their readiness for such a role *by the end* of the programme.

Why the focus on national organisations? Isn't that quite siloed mentality?

No. The programme places a strong emphasis on leading within and across health and care systems at a national level. Although our wider health and care system is evolving, the programme recognises the challenges of leading in organisations which directly influence health and care at a national level, hence its focus.



What support will I receive in finding a new role?

This programme does not guarantee you a new position. However, you will be offered talent management support through the Health and Care Leaders Scheme (HCLS) programme office.

Will I secure a more senior position at the end this programme?

Whilst it's true to say that the aim of this programme is to ready aspiring Chief Executives, Director Generals and Executive Directors at a national level for the role and to assess their readiness for it - there's no guarantee of an appointment at the end of the programme.

What are the design principles, structure and programme content?


2025 Leaders is designed in accordance with best practice principles for self-directed experiential learning:

- Participants co-design the content with the delivery team to ensure that the core subject matter is of deep interest to each unique cohort
- Each participant identifies and works with a personal 'system leadership challenge' - an issue of 'real work' that gives them a testing ground to try out new ideas and experiment with suggested approaches, throughout the lifetime of the programme
- Based on the principles of 'peer-to-peer' learning, the approach mixes large group teaching, small group action learning and individual support, allowing participants to learn from each other as well as from the expert input available
- There is a constant focus on 'real work' – bringing live issues from people's own roles and working in the room in a way that reinforces the learning outside.

What's the learning style of the programme?

The learning format includes:

- Preparation via a briefing call where the participant reviews their psychometric profiling tools, identifies their broad 'system leadership challenge' and personal developmental edge

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- An initial design event where the group gets a chance to get together to share their current issues and challenges of their day in order to work with the faculty to shape the learning content for the rest of the programme
 - Following the design event, a further 24 hour residential to explore theories of change, to continue to refine your leadership challenges and to prepare for the study visit
 - A week-long study visit to Denmark to observe and experience a different health system first hand
 - A four-day residential shaped to include time to reflect on the Denmark study visit and to equip participants with a range of new ideas and experience of practical tools and techniques as well as providing them with the space for reflection on their own context and the opportunity to further co-consult small groups on their 'leadership challenges
 - Between residential events, opportunities for peer-to-peer consultation and/or placement experiences – chances to visit each other's systems and practice some of the new capabilities live by supporting a colleague in their own day-to-day work
 - A 24 hour, over 2 days consolidation event
 - If required, the chance to engage in one-to-one coaching with one of our cadre of experienced 'system aware' coaches.

Where do I come together with other participants?

You will work closely with your cohort at residential workshops.

What's the time commitment on the programme?

- For residential elements the time commitment is 12 days
- For peer to peer consultation, participants will arrange mutually convenient sessions at appropriate intervals. This is something that can be agreed with participants at the design day
- 100% attendance at all elements is a condition of accepting a place on the programme.



What are the recruitment dates?

Recruitment and selection dates:

- Applications open 3 June 2019
- Applications close 5 July 2019
- Application sifting (by HCLS Steering Group) 22 July 2019
- Final selection decision (by HCLS Senior Talent Board) 31 July 2019

What are the programme dates? Please note, all applications will be conditional upon full attendance of all the workshops

- Readiness interviews: 1 August to 31 August 2019
- Co-design event (24 hours): Monday 16 (10.00am) to Tuesday 17 (10.00am) September 2019
- Module 1 (24 hours): Monday 14 (4.00pm) to Tuesday 15 (4.00pm) October 2019
- Module 2 Denmark visit (5 days): 11 to 15 November 2019
- Module 3 (4 days): Sunday 9 (5.00pm) 2020 to Thursday 14 (1.30pm) February 2020
- Module 4 (24 hours): Monday 23 (4.00pm) to Tuesday 24 (4.00pm) March 2020
- Graduation – Summer 2020

What do I need to do before I apply?

An integral element of the talent management process is the discussion that takes place between you and your line manager about your potential, career aspirations and the key development actions that will help you progress.

Therefore, before submitting an application you must set aside some time with your CEO (or in the absence of a Chief Executive, the Chair or Accountable Officer of the employing organisation) or Executive-level line manager to discuss your aspirations and how the development programme might fit with these, the challenges you are currently facing and the outcomes, both personally, organisationally, and what you would wish to derive from your participation in the programme.



To help you get the most from this conversation:

- Please refer to the [HCLS 2025 Talent Grid](#). As part of your application your CEO/line manager will need to fill in a [supporting form](#) which states where you are on this talent grid. You must be considered either “excellent” (top middle box), “high potential” (top left box), “strong” (middle right box) or “good” (middle box) to qualify
- Applications will need to demonstrate evidence to support your 9-box grid rating with specific reference to the indicators of potential – aspiration, engagement, ability. Please refer to the full outline of the [indicators of potential](#) to see how this fits in with the talent grid and please ask your CEO to fill in the supporting form during or after your conversation
- Your full application will be sifted against the indicators of potential using the [summary indicators of potential criteria](#).

How to use the 9 Box Grid - making an assessment

Start with the bottom row.

This is where an individual is best suited to their current grade or pay band. How far to the right is determined by how well they are performing in their current role (refer to their performance appraisal).

The top row is for individuals who show a high level of potential to progress to the next level up.

The middle row is for people who wish to progress but who are not currently demonstrating the necessary ability, aspiration or engagement to be in the top row, but who wish to and show the ability to progress beyond their current grade.

Specialists who have clarified their preference to progress through their area of specialism should be assessed according to this career path and highlighted as such on the grid.

What are Indicators of Potential?

Talent management is not about simply recognising high performers today. It is about proactively identifying, nurturing and developing the future leaders of tomorrow irrespective of personal background.



Therefore, differentiating high potential from high performance is key - this is what we use the indicators of potential for.

An integral element of the talent management process is the discussion that takes place between an individual and their line manager about their potential, their career aspirations and the key development actions that will help them progress.

Aspiration - considers the level of desire to progress (accepting this varies at different stages of people's lives) and the motivation to learn and develop.


- How far does the individual's ambition currently extend (in leadership or other roles)?
- To what extent does the individual own and proactively seek out opportunities for learning, development and progression?
- What is the individual's historical track record of fulfilling their career ambitions?
- What are the individual's long-term ambitions and what are the external factors that affect these?

Engagement - explores how committed the individual is at an emotional and rational level.

- To what extent does the individual apply discretionary effort without prompting (eg. does the employee mentor co-workers outside their direct span of control and do they help other employees when they have a heavy workload) and what drives this?
- To what extent (and how) does the individual demonstrate an emotional engagement with the organisation?
- To what extent is the individual's rational engagement needs being fulfilled (eg. sufficient reward package)?

Ability - explores how far an individual shows the 'stretch' to do and ability to learn in a role with increased complexity and ambiguity, greater use of sound judgement and wider role span.

- To what extent does the individual demonstrate the behaviours we need and expect of our senior leaders (refer to the relevant competency framework, healthcare leadership model and the indicators of potential)?
- To what extent does the individual meet the range of technical or functional skills needed (eg. policy competence or clinical leadership)?
- To what extent does the individual exhibit the attitudes and responses required for success at the next level (eg. drive and energy to get things



done, desire to improve performance, resilience, calm under pressure, self-aware and with a healthy regard for self and others)?

How do I apply for the programme?

All the application information can be found on our [website](#) when applications open on Monday 3 June 2019

For any queries relating to the programme design and delivery please contact the Leadership Centre: mark.dalton@leadershipcentre.org.uk and if you want to chat to someone about whether the programme is right for you please contact Joe Simpson, Director of The Leadership Centre who delivers the programme joe.simpson@leadershipcentre.org.uk

For queries relating to the nomination/application process please contact the Health and Care Leaders Scheme Programme Manager john.joyce@leadershipacademy.nhs.uk

What are the selection criteria?

The selection criteria are based on the [Indicators of Potential](#) demonstrating your aspiration, engagement and ability against them.

What is the selection process?

1. Application (CV, supporting statement and CEO support form)
2. Initial sift by the Health and Care Leaders Programme Office and HRD/Talent representatives from across DHSC and the national ALBs on 22 July
3. All applicants will then be discussed at the Health and Care Leaders Senior Talent Board on 31 July 2019. If you work for the NHS, your Chief Executive or senior representative from your organisation will be invited to the board to support your application
4. Cohort make up – balance and diversity in the cohort will be important – a cohort of up to 20 participants will be selected.