


## Talent and Talent Management Insights

Insight 7. Talent Spotter. Talent Manager. Talent Developer;  
The Role of Line Manager.

NHS Leadership Academy  
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## Introduction

In 2014 and 2015 the NHS Leadership Academy published a series of '*Insights*' to support HR, OD and Talent professionals in their business unit talent management activities. These insights covered a wide range of areas from talent strategy through to employee engagement, succession management and employee retention. The objective was to provide information about best practice and to spread knowledge about talent management activities within the NHS.

This resource, *Insight 7* in the series, builds on previous materials and discusses the role of the line manager in talent management. It has long been acknowledged that line managers are critical to all people management activity and talent management is one such area. But what does this involve?

The insight will outline findings about the relationship between the role of the line manager and talent management and will offer examples of best practice in the area.

Further information can be obtained from [www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/talent](http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/talent)

**Michelle Fitzgerald**  
**NHS Leadership Academy**

# Talent Spotter. Talent Manager. Talent Developer; the role of the Line Manager- Executive Summary

- Effective talent management is a critical component of NHS Strategy. The organisation will depend on having talented people in leadership, management, technical and operational positions if it is to achieve its objectives.
- However, the success of the talent strategy will be directly related to the success of line managers engaging with and implementing the tools and processes of talent management.
- In this respect the line manager has a distinctive role by acting as ***talent spotter, talent manager*** and ***talent developer***.
- Talent is defined as those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating high levels of potential.
- Talent Management is the attraction, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an organisation.
- Talent spotting involves the identification and selection of talented people for a variety of roles within the line manager's own department or elsewhere
- The role of the line manager as talent manager is one of not only ensuring that members of the team deliver objectives (line management) but that they also develop to their optimum level and capability (talent management). This is important because developing the capacity and capability of staff ultimately links to the patient experience.
- The practical wisdom of NHS line managers is an invaluable complement to talent development. This is because of the growing value of learning in the place of work. Talent development is no longer just about sending employees on training programmes. It is instead about supporting people at the place of work to achieve both their own and the organisation's goals by delivering their full potential.
- A good working relationship between HR, OD or talent professionals and line managers is important if the benefits of talent management are to be maximised. Collaboration will facilitate the effective implementation of talent management and practices. This has a knock on effect on employees and will lead to a positive environment.
- It is through 'effective partnership' that people management practitioners and line managers are able to deliver the maximum amount of benefit from talent management initiatives.

# Talent Management in the NHS

## *Why talent management is important to the NHS*

Effective talent management is a critical component of NHS Strategy since the organisation will depend on having talented people in a wide range of leadership, management, technical and operational positions to achieve its objectives; a point reinforced in the 'Smith,' 'Rose' and 'Willis' reports in 2015. The challenge is to deliver organisational objectives against a backdrop of a tough economic environment and significant change. Demographic factors such as an increasingly diverse and multi-generational workforce add to the complexity.

Talent management is one of the ways in which such complexity can be negotiated. It does so by building an understanding of the workforce through identifying the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to take the organisation forward; and then using a range of tools and processes to attract, develop, and manage people with these qualities. Ultimately, talent management is about 'aligning the right people to the right roles with the right values' and the right skills. It is argued that such a process

***The success of the talent strategy is dependent on and directly related to the success of line managers implementing the tools and processes of talent management***

will lead to improved quality of healthcare services and outcomes.

There has been plenty of research on how to ensure that talent management is delivered

effectively. Academic studies referenced in previous *Insights* published by the NHS Leadership Academy (for example Powell et al 2102, 2013) and inputs from NHS HR, OD and Talent professionals have provided rich sources of information about achieving the conceptual acceptance of talent management and excellence in practical implementation.

## **Definitions of talent and talent management**

In order to provide clarity of approach, a starting point is to identify what is meant by 'talent' and 'talent management.' In *Insight 1* the conclusion was reached that a working definition of talent had to be flexible enough to allow for the different history and experience of NHS organisations. In respect of this, a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development viewpoint was put forward whereby talent consists of:

***'...those individuals who can make a difference to organisational performance either through their immediate contribution or, in the longer-term, by demonstrating the highest levels of potential.'***

What this definition emphasises is that talent exists at all levels. On the one hand, talent will be concerned with those in leadership positions, successors and 'high potentials,' but on the other there is a much larger pool of those who are performing their roles effectively and have the potential to develop i.e. the majority of the workforce. Effective talent management will take account of both.

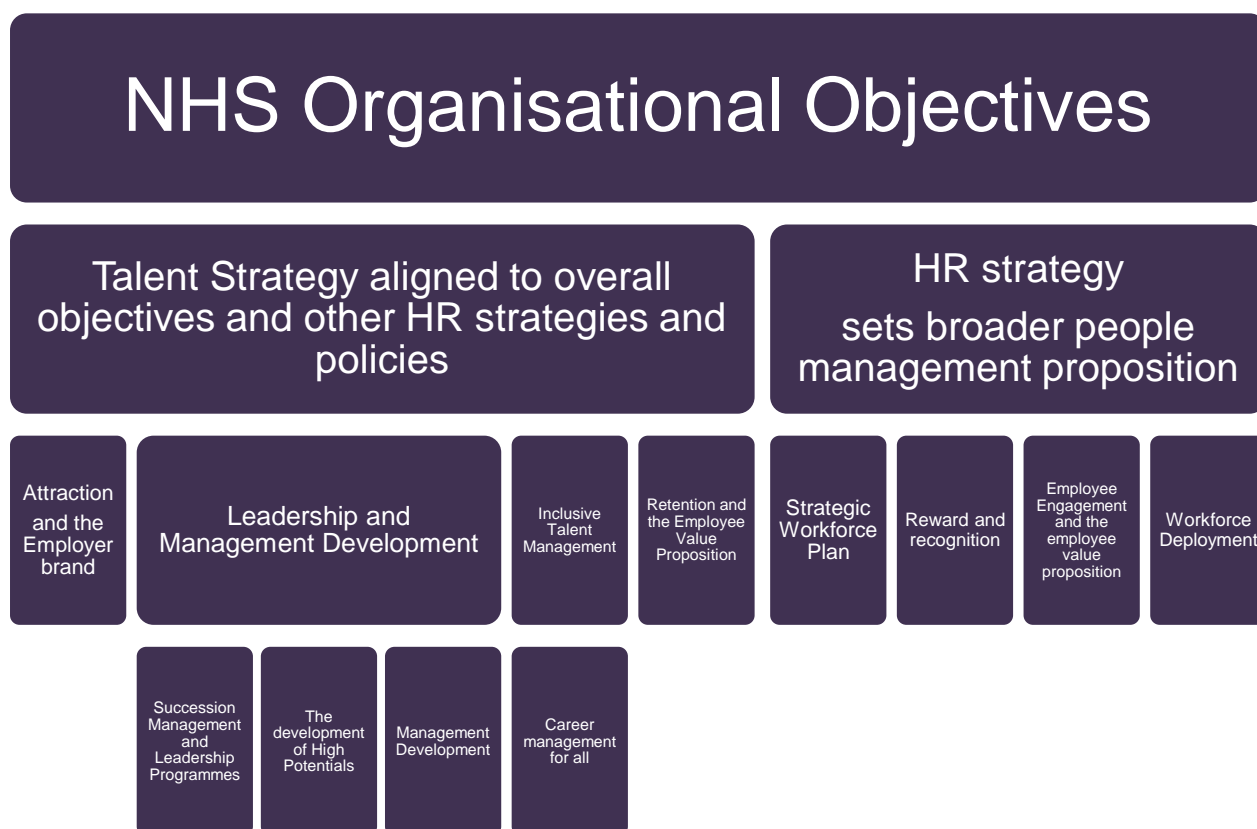
To support the delivery of talent strategy, a talent management infrastructure is necessary and this has been described as '...the systematic attraction, identification, development, engagement/retention and deployment of those individuals with high potential who are of particular value to an organisation.' (Tansley et al 2007).

It will also require that line managers are fully engaged with these processes and that they have the knowledge, skills attitudes and behaviours necessary for their delivery.

## The NHS strategic framework for talent

Much of the dialogue about how to deliver talent management effectively has centred on HR, OD and Talent professionals who will be instrumental in providing processes against which talent strategy can be developed. The NHS Leadership Academy's '**strategic framework for talent**' (see figure 1) summarised research and practice to provide a context for talent management. The framework was made available to NHS organisations via workshops and the NHS Leadership Academy website.

Figure 1  
A strategic framework for talent



The emphasis was to ensure that talent strategy was aligned with the broader NHS strategy and that talent goals would be complementary to organisational goals. To deliver this, 'talent' activity would necessarily be directed towards those who were able to move up the organization into senior leadership or managerial positions (often described as an 'exclusive' approach); **AND** at the same time the 'whole workforce' to maximise potential at all levels (what is sometimes referred to as an 'inclusive' approach to talent management.) Whilst the framework was intended to provide an overview of talent strategy, it was recognised that the specific context and experience of each part of the NHS would have different interpretations of how to implement such a strategy.

However, there was consistency in agreement about the need to gain the buy in and expertise of line managers if the strategy was to be successful.

# What is the role of the line manager in the NHS?

## ***Operational, people and talent management responsibilities***

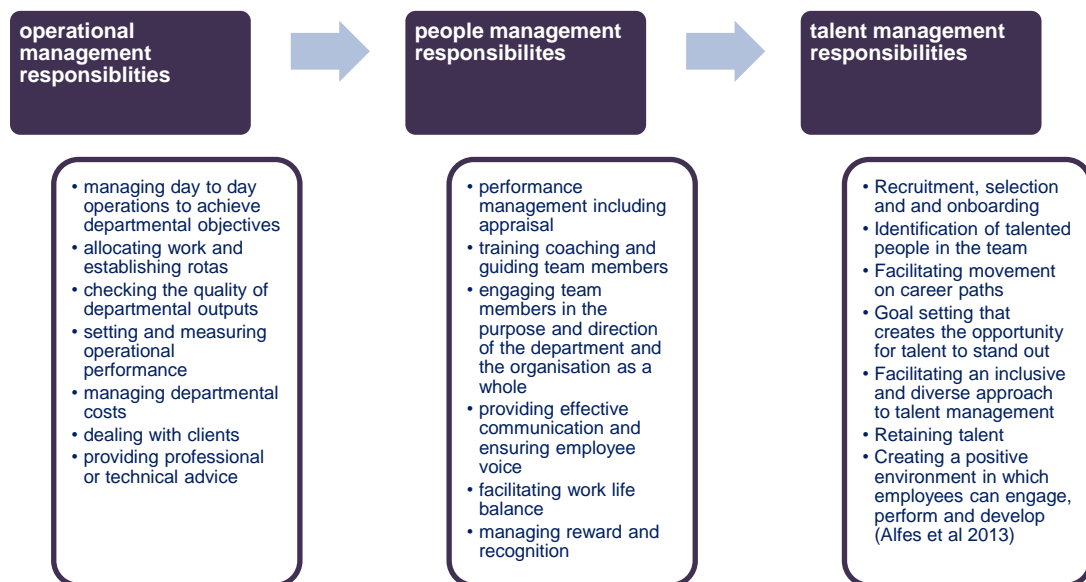
The success of the talent strategy is dependent on and directly related to the success of line managers implementing the tools and processes of talent management. But this aspect of the role has to fit in with day to day pressures caused by rising patient and public expectations, financial stringency and resourcing. (NIHR 2013) These factors mean that managing in the NHS ‘an immensely challenging task.’ (King’s Fund, 2011).

Around 5% of the workforce in the NHS may be classified as managers with 78 categories, including clinical management, human resources management, IT and financial management. (King’s Fund 2010) But the figure doesn’t represent the totality since there are many others without the ‘official’ designation of line manager who undertake some form of management activity. So in addition to formal line managers there are the ‘senior professionals who have first-line management in addition to their professional responsibilities.’ (NIHR 2013)

The diversity of those who undertake line management activities in the NHS will inevitably lead to a diverse range of management tasks. These can be seen as generic sets of responsibilities and are included in figure 2 below. They may be summarised under the headings of ‘operational,’ ‘people’ and ‘talent’ (sources include CIPD 2015).

**Figure 2**

### **The operational, people and talent management responsibilities of line managers**



Nevertheless the role of the NHS line manager is mostly about supervision and people management. (Hales 2005) The focus on talent as part of these responsibilities will have to show significant added value if it is to be fully integrated into the line manager’s role.

## Providing clarity to different line manager roles

There is some overlap between the three sets of responsibilities of the line manager outlined above and it is important to understand these if clarity is to be achieved in the talent management part of the role. An example of this is in performance management which will be operational in nature but will require the line manager to take account of a variety of 'people' factors in order to achieve a most effective outcome. Amongst these factors will be an appraisal of the potential of the person for whom objectives are being set and where these fit in with that person's career aspirations. And yet 'potential' and 'career' can be included also in talent management responsibilities. So, there is the potential for confusion about what constitutes the talent management role of the line manager.

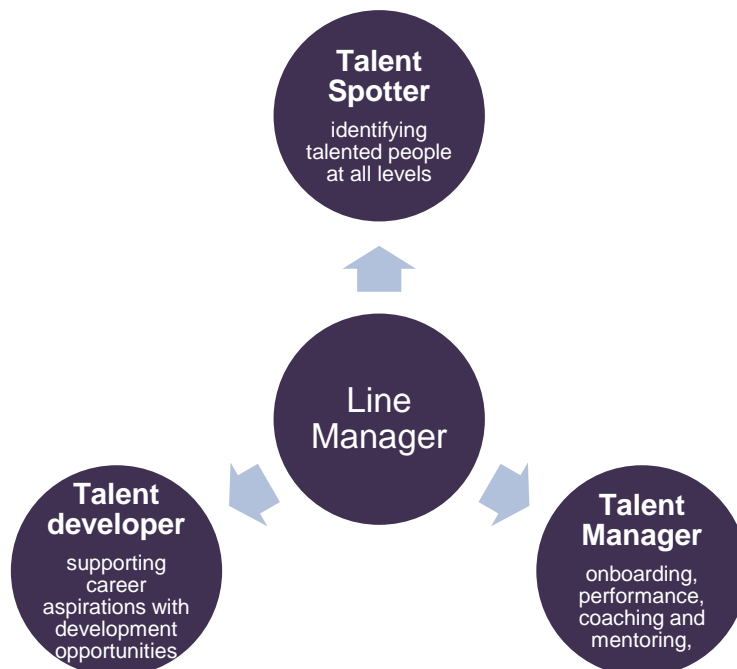
One way to address this is to use the diagram in figure 2 as a guideline. In this respect, during the performance management process, the line manager acts as:

- **Operational manager** through the setting of performance objectives
- **People manager** by providing an environment of engagement and motivation within which these objectives can be achieved
- And **talent manager** by seeking out potential and providing career opportunities.

There are possible other areas of overlap in line manager, people and talent management responsibilities, including recruitment (for performance or potential?), employee engagement (where career opportunities might be a factor in building an effective psychological contract) and reward (and how to take account of potential).

Figure 3

### The key areas of the Line Manager's role in Talent Management



What is necessary is for there to be enough distinctiveness about the talent management aspects of the line manager's job to justify a specific focus. This has added importance because of the shift in the responsibility for the implementation of talent management from HR professionals to line

managers; the reason being that many aspects of talent management are best handled by 'day-to-day' managers. (Capelli 2013)

### ***The distinctive talent management roles of the line manager***

Figure 3 identifies important distinctive areas in which talent management activities form part of the line manager's role. These are ***talent spotter, talent manager*** and ***talent developer***.

These three areas can be mapped across the employee life cycle which means that for the line manager, talent management is an ongoing activity. It does not take place just at the point of the annual appraisal but throughout the period of employment.

- The early stages of employment (new starters, first year employees) will involve integrating talent management initiatives and awareness into recruitment, selection, induction and onboarding processes. The identification of talented people, both in the team and new to the team will require that the line manager acts as talent spotter. At this early stage and throughout, the line manager can implement goal setting that creates the opportunity for talent to stand out. And there is an opportunity to facilitate an inclusive and diverse approach to talent management.
- As the employee moves through his or her career with the NHS, the line manager will have an important part to play in managing (through coaching, mentoring and career guidance) and developing (through the provision or creation of resource to take full advantage of learning opportunities).
- And for successful members of the team who show both performance and potential there will be the need to ensure that they are retained either within the unit or within the NHS as a whole.

Against this latter point, it is important to note that members of the workforce who believe that opportunities for career and skills development are in place and accessible are likely to be engaged in what the organisation is trying to achieve. Gaining buy in of the workforce will therefore have a knock on effect that is beneficial both to the individual and the organisation.

The opportunities created by the development of a talent strategy will therefore constitute part of an overall employee value proposition or 'the entire employee experience from their rewards and benefits, to the opportunity for career development and also the more intrinsic elements of management style, work environment and culture.'

Line managers will have an important part to play in all three areas since they are the front line of implementation. Understanding the development goals of team members, goal setting that creates the opportunity for talent to stand out, facilitating an inclusive and diverse approach to talent management and 'creating a positive environment in which employees can engage, perform and develop,' (Alfes et al 2013) are important facets of the talent management role.



# The Line Manager as Talent Spotter

## ***The identification and selection of talented people***

The first of the distinctive roles of the line manager in the talent arena will be to act as ‘talent spotter’ (Hirsh 2015). This will involve the identification and selection of talented people for a variety of roles within the line manager’s own department or elsewhere. Figure 4 highlights the key responsibilities of the line manager in this aspect of his or her role.

Identification of talent can be at two levels; those people who have the talent to move upwards in the organisation into leadership or management positions; and those can maximise their potential within existing roles. For leadership or management potential, identification will normally be supported by competences developed at either national level or within a specific part of the NHS organisation (such as the *Nine Leadership Dimensions* published by the NHS Leadership Academy). Amongst these might be the ability to set direction, an ability to persuade ‘followers’, managing resources and the ability to make decisions. (NHS Leadership Academy 2011). These are complemented by personal qualities such as drive and integrity.

But talent is an inclusive term and identification will also take place of those people who show other types of potential not necessarily to move into leadership positions. Potential in this respect can be defined as those with (Fernandez- Araoz 2014):

- ***‘The right motivation: ‘a fierce commitment to excel, and achieve unselfish, collective goals.***
- ***Curiosity: a desire to seek out new experiences and candid feedback, and an openness to learning and change.***
- ***Insight: the ability to gather and make sense of information that suggests new possibilities.***
- ***Determination: the penchant to fight for difficult goals and to bounce back from adversity.’***

The second aspect of the talent spotter role is to ensure a selection process that is based on the ability to do the job, and how the person can contribute to the NHS as a whole, but also potential for development. A fair process of selection that maximises diversity is an important objective.

The benefit to the line manager through the identification, selection and integration of talented people will lead to developing a high performing team and hence the achievement of departmental or unit objectives.

## ***Talent spotting during recruitment***

When recruitment takes place, talent spotting on the part of the line manager means identifying which prospective new members of the team have the best fit, will enhance the performance of the team and add value through their contribution. These are some of the ‘people’ criteria which form one of the three generic attributes of the line manager. But in addition, there is a distinct talent management role and that is to identify which of the recruits will be able to progress upwards in the classical definition of talent management or develop into new areas either in the existing team or into other parts of the organisation. This is based on identifying potential. Line managers are in an excellent position to do this.

However, the line manager will need to address the question ‘potential to do what?’ since this will be based on the unique context of that team.

There are three levels of potential that may emerge within an existing team and these have been summarised by the *Institute for Employment Studies*.

In the traditional definition of talent, there are those in the workforce who are able to reach senior management levels. This is leadership potential, which can be seen as ‘a mixture of both individual characteristics or traits, and specific capabilities, knowledge, and skills that each contribute in some way individually and collectively’ to the success of the organisation.’ (Church 2014) The line manager will identify these through their combination of high performance and high potential.

In the second instance, there are those with the potential and career aspiration to progress up the organisation into management or supervisory posts. Once again, the line manager’s role in this case is to ‘spot’ those with such potential.

But the third is of equal importance and applies to those members of the workforce (the majority) who have potential and are looking to contribute to their maximum level within their current job. The role of the line manager will be to develop their potential within the role they have at that point.

**Figure 4**

**The roles and responsibilities of the line manager as Talent Spotter- Identification and selection**

identification	selection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• translates performance goals into the knowledge, skills and stitudes needed to achieve them</li> <li>• BUT is aware of future needs and keeps an open mind for different types of talent</li> <li>• line manager acts as talent spotter both internally and externally</li> <li>• identifies not only those with best current fit into the team or department but those with future fit or potential</li> <li>• identifies leadership potential in line with NHS competences</li> <li>• Identifies potential to expand from existing role</li> <li>• builds knowledge of the workforce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• understands the nature of the team needed to deliver short term objectives and selects accordingly</li> <li>• BUT ensures that selection includes potential for the future</li> <li>• selects to build a team with a diverse range of talents</li> <li>• implements a fair and transparent recruitment process to ensure a diversity of talent-ensures inclusion and diversity in the selection process</li> <li>• seeks opinion of others in making appointments or promotions</li> <li>• selects on the basis of current and future potential</li> </ul>

The line manager can do five things to ensure that these objectives can be achieved and the ‘right people, in the right place at the right time’ are ensured:

- Be clear about what is required to deliver objectives in the immediate term (performance)
- BUT also have an understanding of what might be needed in the medium to long term and whether the employee has demonstrated enough to suggest that they may be able to deliver in these areas (potential)
- Ensure that recruitment takes account of potential as well as past performance.

- Have in place an open, fair and transparent selection process which fosters the culture of diversity and inclusion
- Give the opportunity for the prospective employee to share aspirations as well as performance to improve the chances of best fit

But talent identification is not just a feature of recruitment. It is an ongoing process that takes account of potential within an existing team.

### ***Talent spotting in existing teams***

In addition to the structured process that allows the line manager to be talent spotter at the recruitment or onboarding stage of the employee life cycle, there is an ongoing role which will take place during day to day operational management. This will require the line manager to act as talent spotter for those members of his or her team who show not only excellence in performance but demonstrate that they have the potential to do more.

The key criteria for talent spotting in existing teams include:

- Understanding the characteristics of talent as required in the context of NHS organisations. These can be demonstrating leadership behaviours (for defined leadership roles) but also other valuable traits such as creativity, innovation or expertise in the role. Hence the line manager is not just concerned with identifying future leaders (an important aspect) but seeing potential for a broad range of roles.
- Identifying potential which is 'the most common denominator' found in definitions of talent (Tansley et al 2007)
- Identifying whether the individual is sufficiently motivated and willing to take ownership of their own career and progress. The line manager's role in this is to create a culture of openness in which individuals feel comfortable about talking about careers and change. (Turner and Kalman 2014)

One of the ways in which the line manager can gain a better understanding of potential talent is through having 'maximising potential' conversations.

***'Having a Maximising Potential Conversation (MPC) is very much like an appraisal and often many organisations will amalgamate talent and employee potential discussions with their appraisal process. This is because it helps to explore what/ how you're achieving in your current role to maximise your potential within it, and then naturally move onto what you are able to achieve in the future to maximise your longer term potential.'* (NHS Leadership Academy)**

Such conversations can be integrated in the normal day to day role of the line manager so that they don't always appear to be 'events' that take place in special circumstances such as during performance appraisals.

The line manager as talent spotter is a role that is multi- dimensional. It involves spotting talented people who are able to move into leadership positions on the one hand, but also a much broader remit to ensure that ***talented people maximise their potential at whatever level they or the organisation choose.***

It will be clear that the talent spotting role of the line manager also has implications for the day to day management role.

# The Line Manager as Talent Manager

## ***Talent Management during Day to Day Operations***

As part of his or her role, the NHS line manager processes and assimilates information; links people and resources, networks with other managers, represents the needs of the department and ‘transmits and buffers against the many and varied demands that are likely to occur in the day to day operation’ in pursuit of the department or business unit objectives. To fulfil this role effectively, the line manager will require a range of competences including self- management, interpersonal competences concerned with relationships with team members, peers and leadership, processing information and mobilising resource. (Mintzberg 2011)

In addition, the line manager will increasingly act as talent manager as responsibilities are devolved from more centralised functions. In this respect the role of the line manager as talent manager would include:

- Ensuring that the team or department is seen as a ‘great place to work;’ and a great place to have a career by gaining a reputation as someone who recruits good quality people and integrates them into teams.
- Ensuring that job design, where possible, provides opportunities for team members to apply their knowledge and skills to their fullest extent.
- ‘creating a working environment in which work processes and facilities enable rewarding jobs and roles to be designed and developed and developing a positive psychological contract’ (Armstrong 2003)
- Ensuring that talented people stay with the organisation.

The role of the line manager as talent manager is one of not only ensuring that members of the team deliver objectives (line management) but that they also develop to their optimum level and capability (talent management). This is important because ‘developing the capacity and capability of staff...ultimately links to the patient experience.’ (Hutchinson and Purcell 2008)

**Figure 5**

### **The 4 line management/operational ‘interventions’ for talent management**



Figure 5 highlights the parts of the operational role of the line manager that will include an element of talent management. As in previous areas, these take place throughout the employment life cycle from the early stages of induction or onboarding through to the maturity of the employee as a high performing team member.

Once again, managing talent is closely linked and often overlaps with operational and people management. The additional requirement for the talent management role is a specific intent on identifying how and where talented people can develop, move, progress and deliver their full potential.

## ***Induction and Onboarding***

The first interaction is the process known as onboarding which ensures that employees adjust to their new jobs and working environment in the most effective way. This can also be seen as an opportunity to 'set the scene' for talent management by creating an understanding of the working environment and how this can contribute to an individual's development.

During the onboarding process the line manager will seek to maximise the potential of the new employee by:

- Establishing the needs and aspirations of new team members; clarifying areas where these can be met within the existing role and managing expectations where they can't.
- Explaining the possible development opportunities open to the new employee and how to secure access to those opportunities through good performance;
- Outlining career paths and the ways to achieve them
- Making sure that the new team member becomes part of and contributes to a culture where talented people can flourish
- Providing early coaching to ensure maximum contribution

Onboarding starts before an individual joins the organisation and continues for a period of time that can vary from a week to a year depending on the part of the organisation in question. It continues until there is an understanding of the culture, the organisation's way of working and acquisition of the skills necessary to do the job. Effective induction or onboarding is important because it is perceived as having a substantial impact on retention: as a way of keeping staff, as a major tool for engagement and continuing organisational loyalty (CIPD 2014) In addition to the traditional components of the process such as information about the organisation, mission and vision, culture and values, onboarding allows the line manager to clarify organisational objectives, refine these to individual objectives, refine these into wider expectations of culture and put them in the context of talent management.

The dialogue between the line manager and new employee at this stage is an opportunity for a two way flow of information about career expectations and direction and the talent management opportunities that are available to support these.

***Having 'conversations that count' is a recognised part of the line manager's role in talent management and one of the key elements to a successful approach in maximising an individual's potential***

way flow of information about career expectations and direction and the talent management opportunities that are available to support these.

## ***Performance Management including Reward and Recognition***

Performance management is the process by which the line manager will ensure that the department or unit's objectives are met by each member of the team having goals and targets to achieve within an agreed time period. This is also an opportunity for the line manager to deploy talent management skills.

The starting point of performance management is the formal setting of objectives which will normally be agreed between the line manager and employee. Once the time period for performance is over, the appraisal process then identifies how an employee has fared in respect of goal attainment. The traditional performance management process is normally undertaken by both formal (the annual performance review) and informal (regular dialogue on where the employee is against individual objectives) interventions and relationships.

The challenge facing the line manager during performance management is to ensure a balance between short and long term objectives which in turn can be translated into short and long term talent requirements.

This can be overcome by supplementing the 'one off' approach epitomised by the annual formal review with dialogue about continuous improvement and how the individual can develop to achieve higher levels of performance. Medium to long term objectives can be effectively delivered in the formal process and short term objectives addressed by informal, regular discussions. In this way the line manager can move from an approach of 'retrospective tracking... to immediate and constructive feedback against current projects' or objectives.

Further, new approaches to talent management (Neal and Sonsino 2015) that can be incorporated into the performance management process have suggested that line managers also 're-imagine career planning' in which the employee plays a more proactive role than in previous times.

In this respect performance management offers the chance to establish a culture in which individuals take responsibility for the continuous improvement, not only of business processes but also of their

***Career management is a partnership, in which the employee is expected to take the lead. But employees recognize the particular importance of their line manager's support in doing so.***

own skills and development. The process is an opportunity for line managers 'to clarify what they expect individuals and teams to do and to engage them with the business strategy; likewise,

individuals and teams can communicate their expectations of how they should be managed' (CIPD 2015)

The performance management process also gives the line manager the opportunity to offer development activities that may include membership of cross departmental projects; the development of self- managed teams and the developmental scope that these can offer and the creation of stretch goals as a way of offering personal development. These often have the advantage of being low cost methods.

### ***Providing effective communication and ensuring employee voice***

Having 'conversations that count' is a recognised part of the line manager's role in talent management and one of the key elements to a successful approach in maximising an individual's potential 'is when managers and staff are able to have open and constructive conversations around their potential; where they are now, where they want to be, and how to be supported to get there.' (NHS Leadership Academy). The line manager can make such dialogue an integral part of the process of operational management which can move beyond task management.

Indeed it is recognised that 'effective and honest communication is at the heart of the talent conversation.' It is a process where the manager and member of staff can establish where they are on the managing potential conversations model (MPC) discussed earlier, by a constructive dialogue:

***This two-way conversation is about supporting an individual to reflect and consider the talent potential they already have within their current role, identifying and discussing any future aspirations they may have and may be likened to a coaching conversation in many respects. The MPC -T model helps to identify where the individual sits in relation to their potential role, and then to assist with identifying next supportive developmental steps for them. (NHS Leadership Academy)***

The line manager will normally integrate 'managing potential conversations' into the formal process of appraisal and performance review. However, there is an opportunity to have a more regular dialogue.

The ongoing approach has three benefits. Firstly it will contribute to positive communication within the team; secondly it will ensure that the employee has a voice about his or her career and progress; but thirdly it will also help in the process whereby the employee takes ownership of career and career development. Talent management is no longer about addressing an audience, but about building a community of interest. (Turner and Kalman 2014) Two way conversations will be part of this approach.

### ***Coaching and Mentoring***

Coaching and mentoring are further ways in which line managers can enhance the talent management of their own units. Whilst it is acknowledged that coaching is essentially a non-directive form of development, the line manager, through his or her knowledge and insight of the organisation can provide the context for development and career management. As well as being intended to improve performance, coaching can also be used to develop individual skills as part of the talent management role. By providing feedback on an individual's strengths and potential (as well as weaknesses) coaching can be a powerful talent management tool. (CIPD 2015)

Mentoring uses the same skills (questioning, listening and clarifying) as coaching but is often delivered in a different context. In essence it is used in a situation whereby a more experienced member of the workforce uses his or her 'knowledge and understanding of the work or workplace to support the development of a more junior or inexperienced member of staff.' (CIPD 2015) The fundamental essence of mentorship in healthcare is concerned with supporting learning to improve patient care. (Norman and Roche 2015)

Figure 6 shows some of the ways in which coaching and mentoring can be used to enhance the role of the line manager in talent management.

### **Figure 6**

#### **The line manager's coaching and mentoring role in talent management**

### coaching

- The line manager can support the new employee in the early stages of his or her employment by providing advice and guidance about expectations in the department or the role
- The line manager can also coach team members about the specific content of the job. this is less about immediate performance, which is critical, but about the relationship with other roles as part of career progress.
- In addition, the line manager can provide valuable guidance about the organisational culture in terms of career advancement
- The line manager can seek to understand the wishes and aspirations of the employee in terms of career or development.
- By matching career aspirations with current performance or knowledge, the line manager will be able to support the employee in the preparation of a career or development plan.

### mentoring

- The line manager acts as career role model
- He or she provides knowledge of the development opportunities available within the NHS to guide the employee
- The line manager uses his or her experience of the unit/department/organisation to support the career aspirations and development plans of the employee
- The line manager can provide advice on specific points in respect of career or development (such as additional skills or changes in behaviour)
- The line manager encourages the employee to take ownership for his or her own development and provide advice on how to do so based on experience and knowledge

The line manager can therefore act as talent manager in a variety of ways, at different points in the management process (ongoing dialogue as well as annual appraisal) and at different points in the employee life cycle. A key part of this will be the development opportunities that might be available.

## The Line Manager as Talent Developer

### *The practical wisdom of line managers*

The practical wisdom of NHS line managers is an invaluable complement to the process of talent development. This is because of the growing value of learning in the place of work. Talent development is no longer just about sending employees on training programmes. It is instead also about supporting people to achieve both their own and the organisation's goals by doing their current job better or by supporting them to do even more than they are doing at present. Line managers are increasingly becoming an important partner in helping employees to take up those developmental opportunities at the place of work. (Crawshaw and Game 2015)

There is operational value to line managers spending time on the development of their team members since almost all types of development activity- development programmes, secondments, projects- have a positive effect on motivation, employee commitment and contribution. (Claussen et al 2014) It is in the interest of the line manager therefore to deliver effective talent management as part of his or her management role. Performance is likely to be enhanced as a result.

Effective development can be achieved in a variety of ways. Amongst these are:

- Providing learning, training and development opportunities which will lead to a stronger, more proficient workforce whilst at the same time enabling employees to achieve their personal and career goals; with the knock on effect on employee engagement (CIPD 2015)
- Providing on the job opportunities to acquire new skills or to 'stretch' into new areas.
- Providing development opportunities by involving team members in decision-making and by delegating certain aspects of the job



- Empowering employees to take more responsibilities as part of their personal development

In the first instance, ‘the job of development is perhaps best seen as managers helping people to develop themselves.’ (Mintzberg 2011); in the second it is based on understanding the resources and opportunities available and directing team members to them. In both areas it will be necessary for the line manager to have a clear understanding of training needs, from which training and development opportunities can be provided. (NIHR 2014)

### ***Supporting Employees in Career Management***

Increasingly, career management is seen as ‘a tripartite partnership between the HR function, line managers and employees within organizations... much of the individual employee career planning, management and decision-making is increasingly played out between the employee and his or her line manager.’ (Crawshaw and Game 2015) And whilst traditional ideas about career progression are changing, there will be a significant and growing role for the line manager in this aspect of talent management. A follow through from this would be to ensure that all employees have the opportunity to develop their careers. A desirable outcome is to facilitate the process allowing individuals to take charge and identify their own development needs.

The NHS has put in place well- defined and structured career management processes and opportunities for most of its employees and in this respect there is some onus on individuals to access these opportunities. Nevertheless research has found that ‘employees also recognized the particular importance of their line manager’s support in this process. That is, career-management was perceived as a partnership, in which the employee was expected to play a full part. In short many employees expect line manager support in developing their career options and this is one of the critical ‘talent’ functions of the line manager.

There are a number of ways in which this can happen:

- Gathering information about career expectations through regular dialogue and career conversations
- Making employees aware of the tools available for planning and monitoring their own development (such as personal development plans)
- Facilitating talent management opportunities into the performance management process
- Having career conversations on a regular basis ‘so that the employee has a voice and the organisation has recognition of development needs’
- Making employees aware of career paths for all roles
- Supporting employees in their commitment to self- development

In order to fulfil this the line manager will have a regular dialogue with all members of the team to establish career expectations. This is important because these expectations will vary depending from employee to employee and where they are in their own careers. One size of career management does not fit all.

Following up career expectations is important and it is to be expected that learning, training and development are often priorities. In the early stages of a career, ‘whether this expectation is met or not can have an impact on organisational commitment’ (CIPD 2011)

## ***Creating development opportunities***

One of the roles of the line manager as talent developer is to ensure that members of the team are aware of development opportunities and as importantly are given space to take advantage of them. There are a variety of ways in which the line manager can do this:

- In the first place it is important that the line manager understands the career aspirations (and manages expectations) of team members so that opportunities can be matched as and when they occur. This will come about during the performance process but also in the managing potential conversations that were discussed earlier.
- Hence, good practice is to review objectives on a regular basis so that development needs can be identified and plans put in place to satisfy those needs. This is not a remedial exercise intended to improve performance but a development exercise intended to maximise potential.
- Access to information about any development opportunities outside of the line manager's area of responsibility will enable the manager to act as a link between the employee and HR, OD and talent professionals to ensure that all parties are aware of needs and aspirations.

Development opportunities will include the broad range of programmes on offer within the NHS but do not always need to be formal or incur a cost. Based on the 70; 20; 10 principle where the ratios are job related learning; learning from managers or colleagues and learning from courses; there is evidence that on the job training is one of the most effective methods of development. The line manager can create opportunities within the area of responsibility by:

- Including team members in special projects such as process reviews or change management
- Setting up ad hoc development opportunities such as presentations to the team on specific subjects
- Including team members in decision making
- Acting as coach or mentor

The role of the line manager as talent developer will be enhanced by a close working relationship with HR, OD and talent professionals.

## ***Working with HR, OD and Talent Professionals***

Collaboration between line managers and HR, OD and talent professionals will facilitate the effective implementation of talent management practices. This has a knock on effect on employees and will lead to a positive environment. Since through effective partnership people management practitioners and line managers will be able to 'elicit positive responses from their workforce... data show that employee perceptions of HRM practices play an important role in determining individual performance and, in conjunction with perceived line manager behaviour, are associated with higher levels of employee engagement.' (Alfes et al 2013)

If line managers are able to deliver talent management effectively as part of a wider process of delivering HR practices therefore, they will enhance employee commitment. This is also dependent upon high service quality by HR and talent professionals, a point that will also have a positive effect on employee outlook. (Gilbert et al 2011)

# The talent management competences of the line manager

## *Maximising opportunity through learning and development*

There are range of competences that the line manager will seek to deploy in the talent management process. Figure 7 shows three of these, namely managing others to maximise their own talents, helping others learn and develop and developing high performing teams through talent management.

The first is concerned with an awareness on the part of the line manager that there will be performance benefits to supporting others as they develop their own talents. On the one hand, the employee will be better at the job in hand and importantly will feel greater commitment in an environment of encouragement to develop and opportunities to do so. To be successful in this aspect of the role, the line manager will act as coach and mentor on the one hand but will also have a 'directing' role by guiding members of the team to development opportunities; or in some cases crafting opportunities such as by project work or delegating management tasks as part of the development process.

Figure 7

The Talent Management Competences of the Line Manager

Managing others to maximise their own talents	Helping others learn and develop	Developing high performing teams through talent management
Is clear about what needs to be achieved for team/departmental success and communicates this to team members	Encourages others to learn to provide excellence in performance in line with team/departmental objectives	Builds teams with the knowledge and skills necessary to deliver objectives
Empowers team members to demonstrate capability and achieve goals	Understands the career aspirations of team members	Encourages diversity within the team and builds teams with diverse skills
Retains an openness to new ideas put forward by talented members of the team	Creates a team culture that values learning	Ensures participation in teams
Is proactive during induction and onboarding processes	Understands and provides developmental opportunities	Ensures opportunities are transparent and open to all team members
Applies coaching and mentoring skills to team members	Supports employees in the development of learning plans	Ensures that both performance and potential are used in selecting team members
Supports talented team members to move to new teams or departments when opportunities arise	Provides career coaching to team members	
Ensures talent management is integrated into other people management activities to create a 'joined up approach'	Acts as role model for self -development	
	Works closely with HR,OD and talent professionals to create and deliver development opportunities	
	Is accessible to provide advice and guidance to others in respect of their learning and development needs	
	Is innovative in providing development opportunities	

The second concerns the support given by the line manager in the actual process of learning and development. This will involve understanding the learning preferences of team members, the areas in which they want to develop and the methods they can do so. A close working relationship with HR, OD and talent professionals will provide information about training and development or secondment opportunities. The line manager will of course seek an alignment between the development of the team member and the achievement of the unit or department objectives. Where this is not the case, the open mind approach will allow the line manager to offer advice and support about where such opportunities are available elsewhere. Working with individuals in the preparation of development plans will also be important at this stage.

The final area of competence concerns the benefits to the line manager of developing team members to maximise their potential through being in a high performing team. A recent study of high performing hospitals highlighted seven themes that were associated with high performance. These included such things as a positive organisational culture and senior management support but also proficiency in the workforce and expertise in practice, (Taylor et al 2015) both of which could be related to the talent management role of the line manager.

## Conclusion

This *Insight* has emphasised the importance of line managers in the achievement of the NHS' organisational objectives. Their roles and responsibilities tend to be variable and broad but can be categorised into three areas, namely operational, people and talent management.

Whilst each of these is important, and good performance is necessary in all three, the *Insight* focussed on the particular and distinctive function of talent management.

In order to perform this aspect of the role effectively, the line manager would need to act in several capacities. In the first he or she will be a talent spotter, identifying and selecting individuals who have not only a performance track record but who are able to offer potential to move either upwards through the organisation or to add extra value to their existing roles. To achieve this the line manager will need to build an understanding not only of the demand side (what knowledge and skills are required for today's and tomorrow's objectives) but also of the supply side, where do these skills exist? Is it within the team at present; in other areas of the business unit or department; or outside of the organisation?

In the second, the line manager will act as talent manager by ensuring that management activities such as performance management take account of the potential of the individual employee; it is not just about delivering short term objectives although these remain a priority.

In the third, the line manager as talent developer, her or she will have an understanding of the career aspirations of his or her team members and have knowledge of the available development resources or opportunities. This goes beyond the traditional training and development programme. There are opportunities for team members to develop their potential by the use of projects, stretch goals or secondments. The line manager who has an open mind to these possibilities

Throughout each of these activities, a close working relationship with HR, OD or talent professionals will provide the necessary infrastructure to support the line manager in his or her talent management initiatives.

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