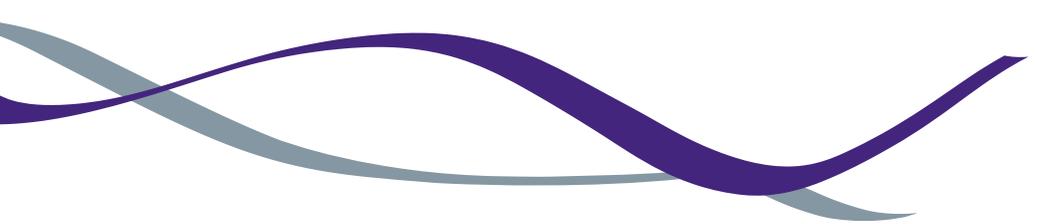


# Developing Systems Leadership

Interventions, Options  
and Opportunities





Created in partnership by the NHS Leadership Academy  
and the Local Leadership Academies

East Midlands

East of England

Kent, Surrey and Sussex

London

North East

North West

South West

Thames Valley and Wessex

West Midlands

Yorkshire and the Humber

The research and development of this framework was carried out by the [East Midlands Leadership Academy](#) in 2015 and funded by Health Education England working across the East Midlands. The framework and approach has now been adapted and adopted by all of the Local Leadership Academies working across the country.

Supporting Systems Leadership development across England: Interventions, Options and Opportunities provided by the Local Leadership Academies of the NHS Leadership Academy

## Introduction

This document describes a way of understanding 'Systems Leadership'. It aims to be the starting point of a conversation between those charged with bringing the Five Year Forward View (FYFV) into reality via the implementation of the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs), and the Local Leadership Academies (LLAs) of the NHS Leadership Academy who can support developing the capacity and capability of leaders needing to work across organisational boundaries in a complex and ever changing environment.



# Context

Traditional solutions to the complex issues facing our health and social care organisations have focused on delivering interventions, often in isolation from other parts of the system. For some time, clinicians, managers, patients and policy makers have seen the limitations of focussing on single organisational performance and regulation and have begun to build and experiment with ideas, plans and mechanisms to build joined-up integrated health and social care systems. This work has been further supported by the vision described in the Five Year Forward View (2014), The Care Act (2014), and the GP Forward View (2016). This groundswell of opinion and policy direction demands that organisations and individuals work together across patient pathways and within new models and frameworks of care that are no longer linear and boundaried. Furthermore, they demand a more inclusive approach and full engagement with patients, communities, citizens and staff to truly create a far more equal relationship between those who need services and those who provide them.

It should not be underestimated how huge the challenge of integrated health and social care is, nor the opportunities that it brings. Through the development and implementation of Sustainability and Transformation Plans, local systems will be driven towards more collaborative, diverse, inclusive, outcome-focused approaches, whilst maintaining quality, compassion, financial balance and effective individual performance. Such is the nature of the transformation ahead of us; it is naïve to believe that any one organisation will achieve it without the help and support of others and achieving such ambitions will demand a different kind of leadership than that established and required to run single organisations.

## Systems Leadership – A Definition

One way of understanding Systems Leadership is that of working beyond organisational boundaries on issues of mutual concern that cannot be solved by any one person or institution.

A useful definition is:

*“Leadership across organisational and geopolitical boundaries, beyond individual professional disciplines, within a range of organisational and stakeholder cultures, often without direct managerial control.”*

## A Multi-Agency Approach

Whilst this approach has been developed primarily within the NHS, focused on NHS structures and organisations, it is essential that other agencies, including other public, private and third sector bodies, are included in this approach. This is of particular importance when considering the wider determinants of health and when working in communities. There are issues of access and funding to work through but this approach must have the aim of being inclusive of all stakeholders rather than being adopted as an NHS only approach.

## A Different Kind of Leadership

Systems Leadership emphasises particular leadership qualities required to effectively work across boundaries with diverse groups of people, patients, citizens and staff. It involves working in a system and, at the same time, acts as a change agent within that system to improve its overall performance, focused on improving the health of the population and providing treatment and care to all who need it.

## Systems Leadership Development Framework

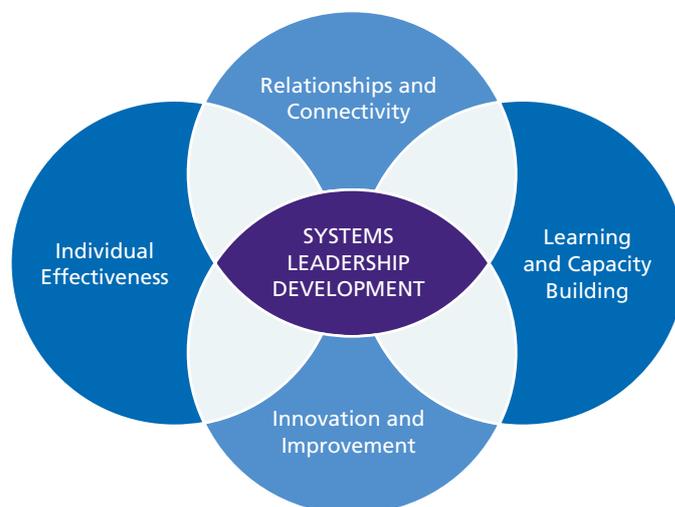
The ideas and practice that have led to the development of this framework have come from some original research carried out by the East Midlands Leadership Academy into this area. A series of interviews with those working in the field of Systems Leadership, desk-top research of work published by the Kings Fund, New Horizons and the Leadership Centre all fed into this work.

The framework and descriptors below identify emergent and contemporary practice in this field.

## A Framework to Understand Systems Leadership Development

This framework of Systems Leadership Development has four domains. These interconnect and, when aligned, create the conditions for good Systems Leadership development and collaborative working across organisational boundaries.

Each dimension has a number of leadership roles that are necessary to build Systems Leadership. Underpinning these roles are behavioural descriptors which need to be demonstrated in order to create the leadership climate and culture that lays the foundations for transformation across networks of organisations and health and social care systems.



## Behavioural Descriptors for Systems Leadership Development

The four domains are:

- **Individual Effectiveness**  
focuses on the effectiveness and resilience of the individual and their role in the organisation and the system. Aims to develop new behaviours and ways of working that promote a collaborative approach.
- **Relationships and Connectivity**  
Creating the right kind of relationships with communities and partners; people coming together for a purpose; place based, system/service or pathway led and aiming to develop consistency of approach or to tackle complex issues collectively.
- **Innovation and Improvement**  
creating new ways of thinking, experimentation and discovery and the application of improvement methodologies, testing and learning, spreading and adopting better ways of doing things.
- **Learning and Capacity Building**  
Creating a learning system and a culture of transparency and sharing, enabling the awareness of best practice and development of common understanding. Being inclusive and seeking contributions from all stakeholders including citizens and communities. Building diverse teams and inclusive cultures to enable greater understanding.



## Behavioural Descriptors for Systems Leadership Development

The following tables describe in more detail the kinds of behaviours needed to be effective in working across systems and the leadership roles they support.

Individual Effectiveness	
LEADERSHIP ROLE	BEHAVIOURS DEMONSTRATED
Setting up multi-agency, multi-disciplinary teams while developing inclusive environments and systems	Capability to manage organisational and professional boundaries across the system while maintaining an inclusive approach
Focusing on patient, quality, safety performance and finance simultaneously	Understanding principles of Organisational Development and how to apply them
Enabler role, holding people to account for the work	Patience, persistence and resilience
Managing diverse multi-disciplinary teams	Ability to operate comfortably and skilfully in complex/uncertain environment
Ability to empower teams with devolved decision making (this includes inter and intra virtual teams)	Aware of own visionary and participative styles and being able to lead beyond / without authority
Champions inclusivity and diversity of thinking	Persuasion and influence, promotion of diversity as a key advantage
Entrepreneurialism and working collaboratively	Has a spirit of volunteering and collegiate approach to work

Relationships and Connectivity	
LEADERSHIP ROLE	BEHAVIOURS DEMONSTRATED
Create shared vision	Leading without and beyond authority
Develop diverse relationships	Concede organisational goals for benefit of the system
Align organisations and systems	Developing strong / honest relationships
Create the environment for inclusive collaboration	Managing diversity, conflict and uncertainty
Developing shared outcomes	Communicating to a wider population
Managing risk and compromise	Ability to sustain inter and intra-organisational and interpersonal networks- virtual and face-to-face
Energising the social networks/capital –connect people to the change	Bringing people together to create new cultures, agree values and behaviours, understanding and valuing others, working with ambiguity, empowering others, adopting a coaching style
Community engagement	Promoting diversity and inclusive cultures
Using citizen insight to drive innovation	Horizon scanning for new ideas and ways of working
Educating and empowering patients, carers, service users, citizens	Working with diverse groups of citizens and communities

Innovation and Improvement	
LEADERSHIP ROLE	BEHAVIOURS DEMONSTRATED
Drive for efficiency, effectiveness and impact	Efficiency in design and solutions Process mapping Lean thinking
Quality Improvement	Understanding of human factors and improvement cycles
Generation of ideas from a diverse base	Understanding and implementing improvement and innovation science
Evaluation and review	Focus on process of continual improvement
Encouraging creativity and diversity of thought.	Role modelling innovative ways of “thinking and being”
Adapting and adopting	Insatiable curiosity
Generating innovative ideas from diverse sources and experimenting with new approaches	Applying ‘thinking differently’ approaches and embracing new ideas/ways of working

Learning and Capacity Building	
LEADERSHIP ROLE	BEHAVIOURS DEMONSTRATED
Share, disseminate and champion learning and insights across wider system	Able to transfer ‘good practice’ – scale and adapt
Investment in discovery, learning and sharing	Understanding different environments, cultures, politics and drivers
Building inclusive leadership capability at organisation and system level	Courageous unlearning
Exploring tacit knowledge/learning in action	Understand what Systems Leadership is and the tools and techniques available
Self-awareness, discovery and development	Developing emotional intelligence and humility
Developing talent at all levels	Adopting inclusive talent management approaches

## Supporting Systems Leadership Development across England

The Local Leadership Academies (LLAs) of the NHS Leadership Academy will adopt a consultancy approach, using the framework to work with identified geographical areas within their patch – this will be aligned to the footprints of the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) areas and may equally apply to smaller groups of organisations within the STP area, including Vanguard and Pioneer sites, as well as with new care models or across more than one STP area where this is required.

This consultancy approach will enable the LLAs to work collaboratively with identified groups within the STPs, to identify their needs and priorities and then craft a variety of interventions to best meet the leadership and system development needs identified. The specifics therefore of exactly what will be provided in each area will vary slightly, depending on need and priorities.

## Working in Partnership – Nationally Enabled, Locally Delivered; Best use of Existing Resources at Scale

The LLAs are in a unique position to work with STPs as ‘honest brokers’ – there is no profit motive driving intentions and some of the interventions will be funded or part-funded by the LLAs. LLAs will either provide directly, commission, signpost or broker with others (e.g. Academic Health Science Networks, Health Education England local offices, other agencies) the interventions that can best meet and be responsive to the clients’ needs.

LLAs are able to utilise a huge network of facilitators, coaches, trainers, agencies, knowledge, expertise and highly regarded speakers to enhance programmes, events and interventions, thereby offering unique and transformative approaches.

## Models, Frameworks and Other Resources

In addition to the framework described, we have access to a complementary suite of tools and frameworks, such as the Health Care Leadership Model, Talent Management Toolkit, Evaluation Framework and others which can be used in a variety of circumstances.

With this knowledge and the Systems Leadership framework in mind, there are a number of suggested interventions under each of the four dimensions available across the country. These not only enhance the individual's performance in these key areas, but they also ensure that progress is made on real work issues and objectives.

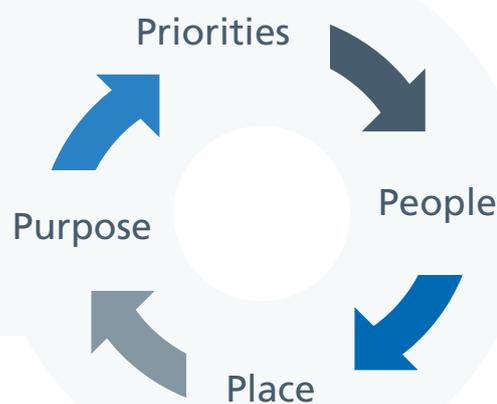
## Menu of Interventions

The menu below describes a number of interventions potentially useful to groups of people within an STP area requiring development of Systems Leadership approaches. These types of interventions have been agreed by the national LLA network as being available across the country. The LLA will work with those within an STP area to identify their priorities, using the framework below, to hone-in on exactly what is required and co-design the right intervention at that time. The LLA will then source the best way of providing that intervention as described above in the Working in Partnership section.

INDIVIDUAL EFFECTIVENESS	RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIVITY	INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT	LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING
Leadership Development Programmes	Facilitated Group Conversations	Leading Complex Change	Talent Development Approaches and Interventions
Coaching and Mentoring	Action Learning Sets	Designing and Leading Agile and Lean Services	Developing Diverse Community Engagement/ Social Movements
Developing Inclusive Mindsets and Behaviours	Team and Group Coaching	Quality Improvement Skills	Systems Thinking and Collective Leadership
Skills Development Workshops	Holding Courageous Conversations	Innovation through Thinking Differently	Effective Knowledge Sharing
Shadowing, Buddying, Exposure to Different Roles and Environments	Conferences and Masterclasses		
Individual Diagnostics	Supporting Network Development		
	Team and Group Diagnostics		

### Using the Framework

The LLA will work with 'the client' (i.e. STP representative or group) to identify who are the right people, what is the priority to work on, in what place and for what purpose, bringing clarity to the planned intervention. The adjacent 'Start Anywhere' diagram illustrates this approach.



## Useful Criteria

The LLA will work with the client to check that the intervention meets the following criteria:

- The intervention is likely to bring the Five Year Forward View steps nearer (and is not too focused just on 'enabling' or preparatory work)
- The initiative is aligned to the STP workforce strategy
- The audience is multi-organisational (at a minimum) or multi-agency
- That this intervention is focused on the development of leadership, organisations or systems
- That the intervention is affordable/funded

## Evaluation

Each of the interventions in the table will have its own measures of success and expected impacts described when agreed with the recipients. The NHS Leadership Development Evaluation Framework can be used to more comprehensively evaluate any given intervention.

Feedback from these interventions will continue to be used to continually improve these approaches and provide further evidence of impact and success, as well as areas of learning and insight being shared across the country via the LLA Network and other channels.

## More information

For more information on Systems Leadership in your area please contact your Local Leadership Academies (LLAs).

### East Midlands

Tel: 0115 748 4277

Email: [eastmidlands.leadershipacademy@nottshc.nhs.uk](mailto:eastmidlands.leadershipacademy@nottshc.nhs.uk)

[www.leadershipeastmidlands.nhs.uk](http://www.leadershipeastmidlands.nhs.uk)

### East of England

Tel: 01223 597 562

Email: [leadership.eoe@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:leadership.eoe@hee.nhs.uk)

<https://eoeleadership.hee.nhs.uk>

### Kent, Surrey and Sussex

Tel: 01293 227 139

Email: [leadership.kss@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:leadership.kss@hee.nhs.uk)

[www.kssleadership.nhs.uk](http://www.kssleadership.nhs.uk)

### London

Tel: 020 7866 3114

Email: [londonleadershipacademy@ncel.hee.nhs.uk](mailto:londonleadershipacademy@ncel.hee.nhs.uk)

[www.londonleadershipacademy.nhs.uk](http://www.londonleadershipacademy.nhs.uk)

### North East

Tel: 0191 372 8615

Email: [cdda-tr.nelacademy@nhs.net](mailto:cdda-tr.nelacademy@nhs.net)

[www.nelacademy.nhs.uk](http://www.nelacademy.nhs.uk)

### North West

Tel: 0161 625 7348

Email: [nwla.info@nhs.net](mailto:nwla.info@nhs.net)

[www.nwacademy.nhs.uk](http://www.nwacademy.nhs.uk)

### South West

Tel: 01823 361 126 / 01823 361 128

Email: [leadership.sw@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:leadership.sw@hee.nhs.uk)

[www.southwestleadership.nhs.uk](http://www.southwestleadership.nhs.uk)

### Thames Valley and Wessex

Tel: 01865 785 585

Email: [leadershipacademy.twvla@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:leadershipacademy.twvla@hee.nhs.uk)

[www.twvleadershipacademy.nhs.uk](http://www.twvleadershipacademy.nhs.uk)

### West Midlands

Tel: 0121 695 2219 / 0121 695 2368

Email: [leadership@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:leadership@hee.nhs.uk)

[www.hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/west-midlands](http://www.hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/west-midlands)

### Yorkshire and the Humber

Tel: 0113 887 1688

Email: [contactus.yh@hee.nhs.uk](mailto:contactus.yh@hee.nhs.uk)

[www.hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/yorkshire-humber](http://www.hee.nhs.uk/hee-your-area/yorkshire-humber)

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