

# Our Leadership Way



The **Heart**, **Head** and **Hands** of Leadership  
Compassionate, Curious, Collaborative

**Every day our NHS people do amazing things in difficult circumstances. Our best leaders promote the health and wellbeing of those around them and inspire all of us to do the best we can for our patients and service users. We should all experience and demonstrate consistently healthy leadership behaviours.**

As the NHS faces the repeated challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout, all of us must maintain and extend the respectful and inclusive leadership cultures that have helped achieve so much in our response to the pandemic so far.

Complementing our NHS People Promise, Our Leadership Way formalises the approach our NHS leaders should take to develop this even further. It requires every leader, at whatever level across the NHS, to recognise, reflect and bring to life every day, six core principles.

One way to conceive of this is to think about the Heart, Head and Hands of leadership; the things we must consciously think about, the things we and others feel and the things we should do. In short, we should lead with compassion, curiosity and collaboration.

# What is Our Leadership Way?

The NHS should be a great place to work for everyone – both now and in the future. To do that, we must all commit to compassionate and inclusive leadership, supported by a culture of lifelong learning and development. We must all commit to promoting social justice and closing gaps in health inequalities, ensuring these principles always guide our decision-making.

With renewed emphasis on the role of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) as vehicles for change to tackle health inequalities, enhance productivity and help the NHS support broader social and economic development, the behaviours and ways of working described in Our Leadership Way are more important than ever.

Co-created with thousands of our NHS people, Our Leadership Way sets out the compassionate and inclusive behaviour we want all our leaders to show towards us as individuals and our colleagues.



Heart

## We are Compassionate

We are inclusive, promote equality and diversity and challenge discrimination.

We are kind and treat people with compassion, courtesy and respect.



Hands

## We are Collaborative

We collaborate, forming effective partnerships to achieve our common goals.

We celebrate success and support our people to be the best they can be.

Head

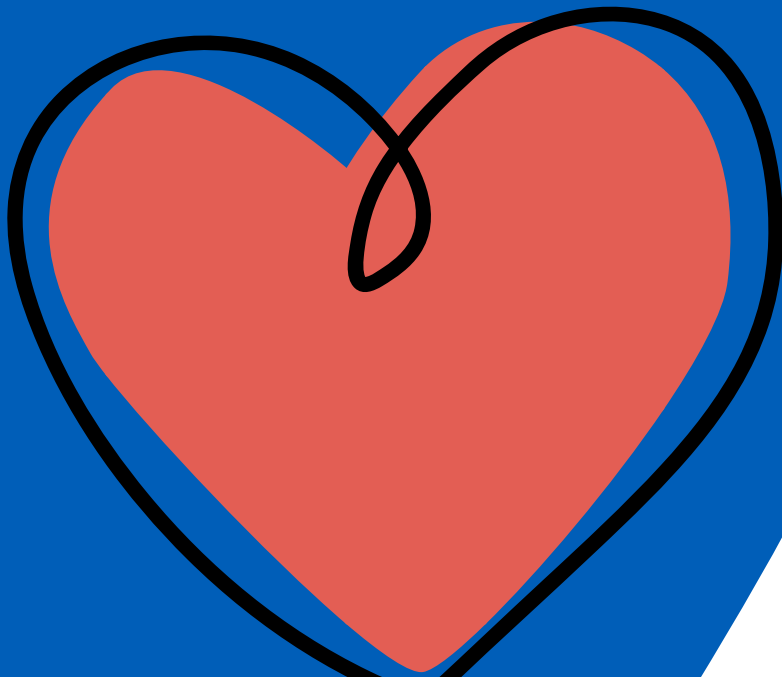
## We are Curious

We aim for the highest standards and seek to continually improve harnessing our ingenuity.

We can be trusted to do what we promise.

Heart

# We are Compassionate



## **We are inclusive, promote equality and diversity and challenge discrimination**

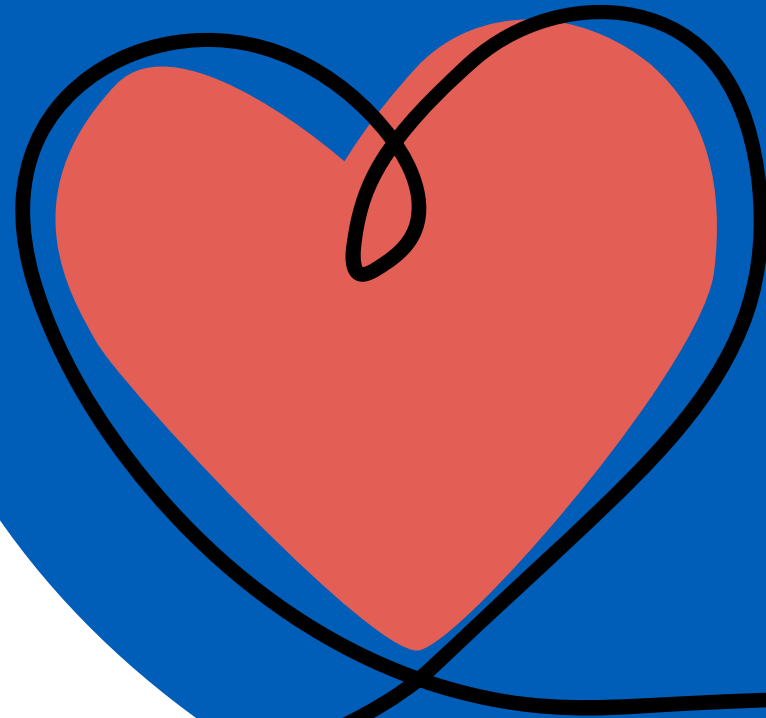
- We learn from the lived experience of the people around us and work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion so everyone feels they belong in the NHS.
- We celebrate diversity and respect everyone's experience.
- We lead by example, enabling the voices of those affected by discrimination to be heard.
- We speak up when we see behaviours that aren't inclusive or don't promote diversity and equality.
- We support our staff when they courageously speak up about poor behaviour they have witnessed or experienced.
- We actively seek feedback to inform how to improve things and move forward.
- We seek diverse views when making decisions because we understand how important they are for securing the best possible outcomes for patients, service users and staff.

## **We are kind and treat people with compassion, courtesy and respect**

- We treat everyone as they would wish to be treated, whoever they are and whatever they do.
- We never underestimate the physical and emotional impact that work in the NHS can have and offer support to those who need it.
- We don't forget the little things like saying 'please' and 'thank you'.
- We create psychologically safe environments that enable open, honest and fearless conversations.
- We are easy to talk to because we listen and act.
- We work to ensure our patients, service users and staff do not experience intimidation, abuse or bullying.
- We accept responsibility for our behaviours and strive to take steps to improve.
- We take actions to improve the health and wellbeing of our teams.

Heart

# **We are Compassionate**

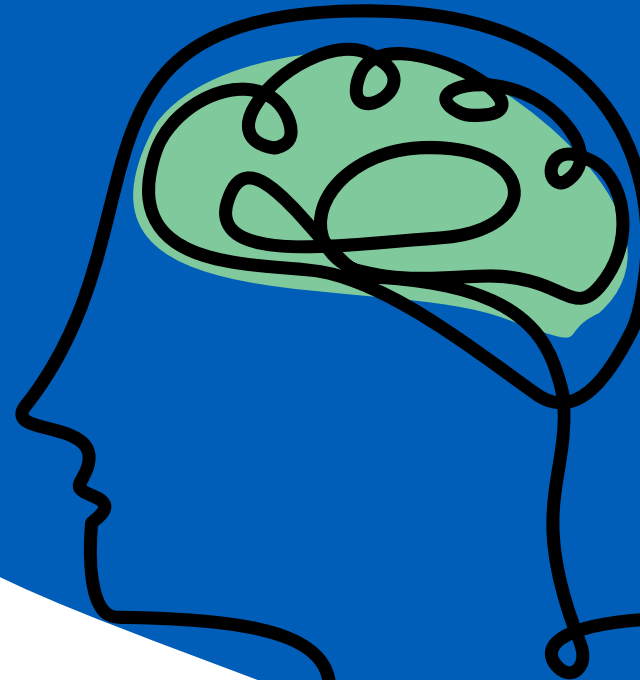


**We aim for the highest standards and seek to continually improve harnessing our ingenuity**

- We constantly aim to deliver high-quality care and experiences to patients, service users and staff.
- We are not afraid to try new things. We encourage creative thinking and champion the innovation that leads to continuous improvement and new solutions.
- We empower our staff to make improvements to the way care is delivered and the way services are run.

Head

We are  
Curious



Head

# We are Curious



## We can be trusted to do what we promise

- We aim always to deliver what we promise. We acknowledge when we cannot and communicate what we will do in a clear, engaging and transparent way.
- We are visible as leaders. We engage with staff and listen to each other, our patients and service users.
- We communicate clearly to prevent misunderstanding, taking time to check that people know what is being asked of them, as well as appreciating what they ask of us.
- We acknowledge when things have gone wrong and act in a way that creates a fair and just culture.



## We collaborate, forming effective partnerships to achieve our common goals

- We all act and behave in ways that promote collaboration.
- We foster strong teamwork and take care to understand what matters to patients, service users and staff.
- We are clear on our responsibilities and contributions and make the best use of the expertise we and our partners bring.
- We are optimistic and ambitious and are not afraid to step out of our comfort zone when working with others.
- We value open, respectful, thoughtful debate with our partners. When our partners' priorities differ from ours, we negotiate in a respectful way, focusing on our shared goal of providing high quality care that improves population health.
- We are consistent in the way we communicate our views, being respectful and honest to all who we are talking to.

Hands

# We are Collaborative



Hands

# We are Collaborative



## **We celebrate success and support our people to be the best they can be**

- We take time to celebrate successes and achievements.
- We acknowledge the effort and contribution of the people we work with.
- We support people to develop their skills and progress in their careers so they can help the NHS deliver high quality care.
- We help people to achieve their goals and work with them to identify opportunities for development where it is needed.
- We proactively address identified disparities in recruitment and progression.

# Why have Our Leadership Way?

## Good leadership in the NHS:

- enables individuals and teams to perform at their best
- makes people feel valued and
- provides better, safer more effective patient care

Anyone who leads helps set the tone and create the culture of an organisation. Many of us are leaders, whether in a senior role running a large healthcare organisation, managing a department or team, or leading on a shift or particular project.

There are more than 1.3 million of us working in the NHS. How we each feel about coming to work, whether we choose to stay or decide to leave our employment is largely down to the leadership we experience. Our People Plan asks us to be better at how we do this. Our focus on system working asks us to lead across new boundaries and partnerships.

Increasingly we are working remotely. It is essential that we still practice these behaviours in our on-line interactions with our colleagues, with teams we may not know or with people we have never met in person.

The NHS Staff Survey (2020) shows some small improvements in morale, health and wellbeing and the safety of our people. Whilst this is positive, we still have a way to go. Unfortunately, there are still colleagues who experience bullying and discrimination and who don't have a good quality experience from their immediate line manager.

Our Leadership Way is about promoting the right behaviours and signalling that leadership success is not just about what we deliver but how we deliver it. This is a tool for leaders to use to consider how their behaviour impacts on Our NHS People Promise and the culture they aspire to create.

Individuals, organisations and systems all need to act to realise the ambitions of Our Leadership Way.

We know that every leader is a role model with positive or negative impact. This sets out expectations and enables everyone to have a better conversation about staying on a positive track.

It is vital that the change we need to see comes from all our leaders, particularly our most senior leaders who we need to role model these behaviours. We need our national, regional and local senior leaders – whether regulators, trust chairs and executives, primary care network leads, system leaders or executives across NHS arms length bodies – to embrace Our Leadership Way's principles. It will make us a stronger NHS wide leadership team.

# Putting Our Leadership Way into practice

## 10 ways in which Our Leadership Way can be used:

1. Publicise these principles to encourage the right leadership behaviours in your organisation or system.
2. Review any existing 'leadership standards' documents in use in your organisation or ICS against Our Leadership Way.
3. Where organisations don't have a framework in place, develop a local Leadership Way document, using this document as a guide.
4. Re-engage with staff at all levels to understand what Our Leadership Way means for them.
5. Consider using the six core principles as headings in job descriptions and assessing/shortlisting candidates to judge how well their experience and commitment match these areas.
6. When interviewing for senior leader roles, consider basing questions on these principles and behaviours.
7. Build these principles and behaviours into appraisal conversations to understand how well leaders are doing in these areas and how they can do better.
8. Organise your leadership development activities and interventions around these principles and behaviours, to help leaders learn more about what these model behaviour entails.
9. Use these principles to review how meetings have gone. Ask yourself whether all participants demonstrated the desired behaviours.
10. 'Call it out' – when leaders behave in ways that are inconsistent with these principles, bring this to their attention. This can be difficult, but we are all on a journey to improve the leadership behaviours and culture in the NHS.



# How will Our Leadership Way be implemented and measured?

Our Leadership Way does not add layers of regulation or oversight, but NHS England and NHS Improvement, acting on behalf of the wider system will look at existing information collection methods such as the NHS Staff Survey, Well-Led Reviews, Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) and Workforce Disability Equality Standard (WDES) data to assess how well leaders are adopting the behaviours we all need to see.

From the point at which Our Leadership Way becomes more widely shared and owned, we will engage again with the leadership community about how to spread best practice, how to embed the principles in everyday work and how best to measure leadership behaviours and the cultures they create against the principles espoused in Our Leadership Way.

We will work with organisations and systems who fully embrace Our Leadership Way and create case studies to share best practice.

