

# New models of care: a new type of leadership?

## Discussion document

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“The environment in which public service leaders operate has been – and is still – changing rapidly, presenting extraordinary and unprecedented challenges and opportunities for leaders.”

NHS Leadership Academy<sup>1</sup>

The publication of the Five Year Forward View, which signalled a shift in NHS policy away from competition towards collaboration as a means of driving improvements in quality and efficiency, has altered the environment in which NHS leaders operate and consequently the behaviours and skills which enable them to be effective.

In particular, it is now well understood that the challenges the NHS faces over the next decade including increasing funding pressures, workforce transformation, and public health and wellbeing challenges, cannot be met successfully by organisations working in isolation.

Leaders who were used to operating in an environment of competition and organisational silos, are now required to work collectively with competitors and to put the needs of the patient, population and system first. As a consequence, we are seeing Boards of NHS organisations increasingly having to consider the implications of their decision-making and performance beyond the boundaries of their organisation. For many this has been a significant and challenging step-change.

### What does system leadership look like?

“A critical skill for the future is the ability to work across services and organisations to meet the needs of the growing number of people with complex medical conditions and those who rely on care and support from different agencies.”

Chris Ham, The King's Fund<sup>2</sup>

The recently published *Developing People - Improving Care*, which seeks to establish a framework for leadership development in NHS-funded services, makes clear that one of the critical capabilities that the NHS urgently needs to nurture is system leadership skills “to build trusting relationships, agree shared system goals and collaborate across organisational and professional boundaries.”<sup>3</sup>

1. NHS Leadership Academy, Systems leadership  
2. Timmins, N., The practice of system leadership  
3. NHS Improvement et al., Developing people - improving care  
4. NHS Leadership Academy, Systems leadership  
5. Timmins, N., The practice of system leadership

System leadership, which “seeks to affect change for the social good across multiple interacting and intersecting systems”, is distinct from the ‘command and control’ style leadership or transactional leadership approaches which have more commonly been adopted in the NHS to this point.<sup>4</sup> This is a point reiterated in other studies.<sup>5</sup>

In particular, *Developing People - Improving Care* emphasises the following as key elements of system leadership:

- o Stakeholder engagement to support alignment behind one vision
- o Access to, and interpretation of whole system information to inform decision-making
- o The implementation and support of forums for the sharing of learning and best practice, both from within the NHS and more broadly<sup>6</sup>

Whilst additional studies have also highlighted the importance of:

- o Recognising that results will take time to be realised, and therefore being able to think strategically longer-term
- o Maintaining a consistent core leadership teams across all organisations involved in redesign
- o Actively involving patients and carers in planning
- o Leadership resilience<sup>7</sup>

### Next steps

“Primary care is the essence of our work and is the place where we look after most people. We cannot drive this change nationally from institutions - it has to be driven by those who are accountable to their local population.”

Charlotte Williams, New Care Models Team<sup>8</sup>

Clinical leadership, and in particular general practice, has been placed at the heart of the new models of care. Therefore, in much the same way as with the introduction of clinical commissioning groups, it will be important that sufficient developmental support is provided to help ensure that all those involved shape and understand the governance of new models of care and are competent operating within an evolving and complex environment.

### Key questions for organisations to consider

- o Do we have a shared understanding about what system leadership is?
- o What are the barriers to system change and system leadership?
- o Do we need a new language to create system leadership models and behaviours?
- o What are the implications for regulators of new models of integrated care and a system approach to delivery?

6. NHS Improvement et al., *Developing people - improving care*

7. Timmins, N., *The practice of system leadership*

8. Primary Care Commissioning, *Commissioning Excellence*