

**Regional Talent Board:
Nomination and Gateway Assessment Quality Assurance
Procedure**

Version 1.0

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1. Introduction

- a. The NHS Leadership Academy (the Academy) and Regional Talent Board (RTB) is committed to equality of opportunity for all candidates applying to the Executive Director Talent Pool. Whilst this process does not determine recruitment to a particular post the process has been created to ensure that no candidate or potential candidate receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, religion or belief, age, trade union membership, disability, offending background, domestic circumstances, social and employment status, HIV status, gender reassignment, political affiliation or any other personal characteristic. Diversity will be viewed positively and, in recognising that everyone is different, the unique contribution that everyone's experience, knowledge and skills can make is valued equally.
- b. This document sets out the nomination process up to the point a candidate has been assessed and provided with a readiness decision on their suitability to join the Aspire Together Talent Pool – Aspirant Directors.
- c. The work of the RTB is to identify, assess and create Talent Pools of individuals ready for their first Director level role in the NHS.

2. Scope of the Guidelines

- a. These guidelines are intended for candidates submitting a nomination to be assessed to join the Aspire Together Talent Pool – Aspirant Directors. They set out the scope of the process and rules around processing of the nomination and Gateway Assessment Process. These guidelines will not go into detail as to the scoring or competency framework of the Gateway Assessment Process.

3. The Application Process

- a. The nomination details are shared with all organisations within the operating region of the RTB. Once open for applications an email will be shared to all CEO/AO/HRD contacts attaching the relevant documentation and deadlines. The information will also be cascaded through various networks and communication channels, alongside the webpage and social media.
- b. Organisations are encouraged to hold talent conversations with their possible candidates to ensure this is a jointly agreed decision to nominate. It should be recognised that this process is similar to making a job application.
- c. All candidates must complete a Nomination Form together with signature from their Chief Executive Officer (CEO of Provider organisation), Accountable Officer (AO of Clinical Commissioning Group) or Regional Director (Arm's length Body). These nomination forms can either be submitted by the candidate's organisation or by the candidate themselves. The nomination form is submitted to each local Aspire Together team.
- d. Where a candidate is self-nominating or does not have CEO/AO sign off on their nomination form, the Aspire Together team will confirm with the organisation that the selection criteria has been met.

- e. Once the closing date has been reached, all nomination forms are collated and sorted by the Aspire Together Team.
- f. A percentage of applications will be checked for completeness by the NHS Executive Search team in order to ensure the selection criteria has been sufficiently met. If in doubt, the NHS Executive Search team will contact the candidate or organisation to check further details. These calls will be set up through the Aspire Together team where possible.
- g. Candidates will receive an email inviting them to attend an assessment shortly following the closing date.
- h. Candidates are expected to have read and understood the Nomination Pack and Success Profile.
- i. Candidates are asked to complete an Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form on submission of their Nomination Form. This form provides data which will help the RTB in monitoring its objectives of creating diverse and inclusive talent pools.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- a. Regional Talent Boards have bold ambitions for embracing diversity in order to promote inclusion and equality across all protected characteristics within the regional Board level Director populations
- b. An 'Equality Impact Assessment' is in place for the Nomination and Gateway Assessment process for Regional Talent Pools and is available upon request.

5. Candidates with Specific Requirements

The Individuals Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the candidate to notify the Aspire Together (AT) Team if they have a disability at the point of being invited for assessment. Reasonable adjustments may then be made to enable the candidate to participate in each stage of the selection and assessment process. Types of disability include:

- **Long-term illness or health condition** such as diabetes, cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
- **Physical impairment**, such as difficulty using your arms or mobility issues which mean using a wheelchair, crutches or other mobility aid
- **Sensory impairment**, such as having a serious visual or hearing impairment
- **Mental health condition**, such as depression or schizophrenia
- **Learning disability/difficulty**, such as dyslexia or Down's syndrome, or cognitive impairment (such as autistic spectrum disorder)

The Regional Talent Board (Aspire Together Team) Responsibilities

The Regional Talent Board has a legal responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities are not subject to discrimination during the nomination and Gateway Assessment process.

To consider what reasonable adjustments are required to ensure that a disabled candidate can participate equally in the nomination and Gateway Assessment. This can be achieved by asking the candidates if they require any reasonable adjustments or special requirements at each stage of the process. Do not make assumptions that the adjustments for one part of the recruitment process will be suitable for the next stage.

The Aspire Together team will confirm in writing with the candidate what reasonable adjustments have been put in place prior to the assessment centre.

The same objective scoring/assessment system should be used for disabled and non-disabled candidates, with scores based solely on the answers given on competencies relating to the skills necessary for entry to the Talent Pool.

6. Confidentiality

- a. All disclosures relating to personal information and protected characteristics will be treated sensitively and will be held confidentially as far as possible.
- b. All information relating to the application will be stored securely by the Aspire Together Team.
- c. All data is held according to General Data Protection Regulations.
- d. Candidates will be updated with relevant training/development or stretch opportunities where possible via email communication ahead or following assessment. Candidates will have the opportunity to opt in to this type of communication at the point of submitting a nomination form. Candidates can subsequently unsubscribe if they wish to do so via email to their local Aspire Together Team.

7. Information available to the assessment panel

- a. Any personal information including disability, ethnicity, sexuality, and age will not be disclosed to the panel. Regarding disability, they will not be informed of the nature of the disability unless it is appropriate to do so, for example, for a candidate with a hearing impairment who has identified that they require the panel to be 'face on', speaking slowly and distinctly', having a copy of the questions in written format, or the need to have an interpreter present.
- b. Panels will not be advised of candidates' identities until the day of the assessment itself.

8. Conflicts of Interest

- a. In order to resolve any conflicts of interest, candidates will be advised of panel details at the point of invitation (or shortly after).
- b. Conflicts of interest should be notified in writing via email to your local Aspire Together team as soon as possible.
- c. All notices will be taken in confidence and changes made to panel configuration where possible. In some cases, due to short notice or a possible cancellation from an assessor resulting in a last-minute change it may not be possible to reconfigure the panel; however, every effort will be made to do so and to keep the candidate informed. Candidates will have the opportunity to move their attendance to the next suitable assessment date.

9. Panel Configuration

- a. Panels will be comprised of three assessors
 - A Leader Assessor (Typically a Chief Executive Officer, Accountable Officer)
 - A Technical Assessor (A trained assessor in the Gateway Assessment Process)
 - A Support Assessor (Typically a Chair or Non-Executive Director)
- b. In some cases, a Calibrator may be present during the assessment to observe. Their role is to observe the process and panel and not to form part of the candidate assessment. Each candidate will be notified on the day as to whether they have an observer present. Each panel will ask permission from the candidate for an observer to be present before proceeding with the assessment. A candidate can raise any concerns at any time regarding the presence of an observer.

10. Preparation for the assessment

- a. Prior to the assessment, candidates will be requested to complete a series of pre-work. Candidates will be advised of the composition of pre-work at the time of submitting a nomination and again on invitation to attend. It is suggested that candidates set aside 1 day to complete this.
- b. The candidates “Nominated Senior Leader” will also be required to complete pre-work in the form of an assessment of the candidate’s competencies against the NHS Executive Director Success Profile.

11. Assessment Centre Overview

- a. The final stage of the assessment process is the requirement for candidates to attend a 2-hour assessment at an assessment day.
- b. The assessment comprises of competency-based questioning, Situational Judgement questioning, and a review of the pre-work submitted by the candidate and their Senior Nominated leader.

- c. A final calibration session will take place at the end of the assessment centre, where all assessors come together to check scoring of candidates. All candidate information is kept confidential and no specific naming of candidates will be made during this time. Each calibration session is led by a technical expert to ensure a robust process is followed. The intention of the calibration is to ensure scoring and evidences are clear for all candidates being assessed.
- d. Each candidate Gateway Assessment Report is written by the Technical Assessor following the assessment and subsequent calibration. Each report is uploaded to a secure Share Point site hosted by the Aspire Together team. The report will be Quality Assured by a technical expert.

12. Assessment Outcomes

- a. Each candidate will be scored according to the readiness criteria as set out in the scoring guide for assessors. This scoring will rate each competency and the evidence demonstrated during assessment. This scoring will set out three levels of readiness of candidates:
 - Ready for Executive Director level in the short-term
 - Ready for Executive Director level in 12 – 18 months
 - Not ready (18 months +)
- b. The candidates will receive a telephone call from their Leader Assessor approximately 1 week after assessment. This call will confirm the decision of the panel and the final readiness scoring of the candidate.
- c. Candidates will receive a second telephone feedback call from their Technical Assessor approximately 1 week after the first call (roughly 2 weeks after assessment). This will provide further developmental feedback for the candidate.
- d. Candidates will receive a copy of their Gateway Assessment Report and psychometric report 1-2 days ahead of the call with their Technical Assessor. This will be shared via email from their local Aspire Together team.
- e. Candidates assessed as 'ready in the short term' will move into the Talent Pool and be signposted to the NHS Executive Search team for further support. The RTB team will share contact details and Gateway Assessment Documentation with NHS Executive Search so that they are able to provide support in the Talent Pool.
- f. Candidates assessed as either 'Not ready' or 'Ready for Executive Director level in 12 – 18 months' will be signposted to their Local Leadership Academy as well as encouraged to engage with their organisation and local healthcare system for further support if required.
- g. Nominating organisations will be advised of the Gateway Assessment outcome via email following the final feedback call with the candidate.

- h. If a candidate does not wish us to share the outcome decision with their organisation they must advise their local Aspire Together team within 24 hours of receiving their final feedback call.
- i. If a concern or appeal is to be made, the resolution process should be followed and as set out in this document.

13. Quality Assurance

- a. All Assessors will be competent and fully trained in the assessment tools, techniques and process to fulfill their role within the panel.
- b. All Technical Assessors will undergo supervision routinely as part of becoming and staying accredited within the process.
- c. When a late change of Assessor is needed for a panel (e.g. due to sickness/absence) every attempt will be made to substitute the panel member with an identical Assessor, however on occasions a suitable alternative may be used at the discretion of the Senior Programme Lead.
- d. Every Assessment Centre will include a Calibrator whose primary role is to ensure consistency in the application of the assessment process between different panels.
- e. The Calibrator will observe a sample of assessments and provide feedback to the Technical Assessor and panel.
- f. The Calibrator will also lead a calibration meeting at the end of every assessment centre with the purpose of checking and challenging the consistency in the application of the assessment process between different panels.

14. Resolution Process

- a. We would encourage all issues and concerns to be resolved where possible on the day in an informal and supportive manner, where feedback is given in a way in which ensures any issues are heard and feedback is used to inform continuous improvement by the Aspire Together team. It is recognised that a more formal process may at times be needed due to the nature of a concern, in this instance a set process will be followed to further investigate and provide a formal response. The starting point for arranging an informal conversation is through contacting your local Aspire Together team. If you wish to put your concerns in writing, please also include what you wish to achieve to resolve your concern.
- b. Concerns may be raised for several reasons, for example:
 - 1. Due process had not been followed
 - 2. Discriminatory feedback or unfair/discriminatory treatment received
 - 3. Disagreement with the Assessment outcome

- c. Concerns will not be managed through this process relating to:
 - 1. Action or lack of action by the nominee, the nominating organisation or the representative of the nominating organisation.
- d. Any decision made during the Gateway Assessment process will not stop a candidate from applying for a new role independently of this process or from reapplying in the future.

What to expect when you raise a concern in writing:

- 1. Any concern should be raised as soon as possible in writing (email) and no later than 10 working days from receiving the last feedback call.
- 2. Initial concerns (if made in writing) should be made via email for the attention of the Senior Programme Lead.
- 3. Concerns should include full detail of the nature of the complaint.
- 4. On receipt of the concern, the Senior Programme Lead will send a written acknowledgment to the complainant within 7 working days, together with details of who will handle the matter.
- 5. Concerns will typically be investigated by an RTB Programme Lead or an experienced Technical Assessor who was not involved in the initial assessment of the Candidate.
- 6. If the concern can be resolved informally this will be dealt with as soon as reasonably possible. However, if the concern needs to be investigated formally it may be necessary to carry out further investigation which may delay response times.
- 7. An investigation should be conducted and completed within 10 working days.
- 8. If the investigation is not concluded within 10 working days, the person raising the concern will be notified in writing setting out a reasonable timescale and reason for extension.
- 9. The investigation may include interviewing relevant people including the assessment panel and also reviewing the documentation.
- 10. The person conducting the investigation will be given access to all documents used in the nomination and Gateway Assessment process.
- 11. The person raising the concern will receive a written report detailing the outcome of the investigation.
- 12. Any learnings discovered during the investigation will be logged by the Aspire Together Team in order to inform future work and improvements or recommendations that may be shared with the RTB or its Stakeholders.

15. Records Management

- a. Panels may take handwritten notes during the assessment process. These are notes for their personal use as an assessor and to assist in scoring of the candidate. These notes may contain scoring details and evidence noted during the assessment process.
- b. All notes taken during the assessment will be collated and held by the Technical Assessor and may be used for the completion of the candidates Gateway Assessment Report.
- c. All handwritten notes will be destroyed by the assessors 10 working days after the final report is written and shared with the candidate.
- d. All documents pertaining to the candidate information will be stored in line with recommended records management policies set out by NHS Improvement.

16. GLOSSARY

Aspire Together Team: The operational team managing the assessment process (nomination through to assessment outcome).

Aspire Together Talent Pool – Aspirant Directors

NHS Executive Director Success Profile: The competencies set out to assess candidates against. This document is typically found in the Nomination pack.

Gateway Assessment Process: The end-to-end process designed to assess aspirant directors.

Gateway Assessment Report: The final feedback report provided to candidates at the end of the process.

Nominated Senior Leader: A designated senior leader, as specified in the Nomination Form.

Pre-work: The self-assessment carried out by candidates and/or their nominated senior leader.

Talent Q: The online psychometric test candidates complete as part of their pre-work self-assessment.

Readiness Criteria: The scoring criteria used by the assessing panel for rating candidates' evidence against the competencies as set out in the Success profile.

RTB: The Regional Talent Board.

Success profile: This is an abbreviation of name for the NHS Executive Director Success Profile.