

Talent pool information pack

NHS

**Aspire
Together.**

The South East
Regional Talent Board

Applications:
Open until 15 Jan 2020

Assessment centres:
March 2020

This pack is for:

- Aspiring chief operating officers
- Aspiring HR or people directors
 - Nominating leaders
 - Assessors
 - Inclusion advisers

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Introduction

Foreword

Everyone has unique talents. As a partnership across the region, the South East Regional Talent Board seeks to nurture those diverse talents to create a positive culture of compassion and inclusion that improves the wellbeing of our staff and the people we serve.

The challenges and opportunities we face make this an exciting time to lead improvements in health and care services. Ours is a dynamic environment and we are ambitious about making the South East a great place to work and live.

Improving services for our population is at the heart of our mission. We will do this by proactively identifying new, upcoming and existing talent in a way that is fair, robust and transparent as well as making leadership opportunities more visible to all.

This information pack represents the launch of the Aspire Together South East Regional Talent Pools to help us identify the leaders of today and tomorrow with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes to create a healthy environment for staff, patients and citizens.

We are very keen to support everyone to do their next role better and to create the very best leaders across our region, from a range of backgrounds. We are particularly seeking people from groups that are under-represented in top leadership positions. We know that boards and governing bodies make better decisions when they are more diverse and inclusive. We are seeking people with disabilities, women and those from BAME and LGBT+ communities who aspire to the top positions, including those whose circumstances mean they do not wish to work full-time. While all aspiring directors are welcomed, of course, we are taking positive action to ensure there is additional support for those who have habitually faced cultural barriers to progression.

We ask you to join us in collectively nurturing and sharing our talent. It is vitally important, especially in times of challenge, that we make the space to recognise and celebrate the people who embody the values of our service and will lead its development now and for the future.



Anne Eden



Michael Wilson

Anne Eden

South East Regional Director,
NHS Improvement and NHS England

Co-chair, South East Regional Talent Board

Michael Wilson CBE

Chief Executive, Surrey and Sussex
Healthcare NHS Trust

Co-chair, South East Regional Talent Board

What are talent pools?

It is critical for all organisations to develop, manage and retain talented people at all levels. Our talent pools are made up of people who aspire to develop into board level roles and display the attitudes, behaviours, skills and knowledge that will help create healthy environments for everyone.

The talent pools are not an in-or-out process, but about setting people on the right path to achieve their aspirations. They ensure that senior level talent is more visible, helping us to recruit and retain leaders, reduce vacancies, cut the cost of recruitment and support succession planning.

They will help us work across the system to identify, develop and retain talent at a range of levels. Our future leaders need to have experience and understanding from multiple perspectives to help join up health and care. These cross-system talent pools will enable us to manage our talent in a more strategic and effective way with employers as partners across organisational boundaries.

By establishing a fair, robust, inclusive process and proactively seeking aspiring directors from under-represented groups, our talent pools will also help to create a more diverse leadership that can make better business decisions and better represent the staff and communities we serve.

Why join our talent pools?


Being a part of the Aspire Together South East Regional Talent Pools means you will benefit from:

- A higher profile and increased visibility of opportunities for progression across the system.
- Support from outside your organisation to help you prepare for the next steps in your career.
- Opportunities to network with peers and develop your skills and experience.

Talent pools differ from development programmes

You may already be part of an aspiring director development programme. The talent pools differ from development programmes because the primary aim is to assess and denote readiness and motivation to progress to an executive director post.

Our talent pools include people who are assessed as 'ready now' for an executive director role and also people who recognise they require further development before being ready. You can choose which pool to aim for; some require a greater investment of time than others.



**Increased
visibility and
opportunities
for progression**

About the South East Regional Talent Board

Our regional talent board's role is to establish a collective culture of talent management across the South East.

“Our vision is to create a culture of diverse, inclusive and compassionate leadership where people thrive and grow to make the South East a great place to work.”

One of the ways we will do this is by proactively identifying new, upcoming and existing talent in a way that is fair, robust and transparent and provides visibility of leadership opportunities. That is the purpose of our talent pools. We are also supporting organisations across the South East to encourage and nurture diverse talent.

Our talent board is made up of NHS chief executives, chairs, accountable officers, those with board responsibility for people, and diversity and inclusion leads. In time, this will also include local authorities and third sector organisations.

Find out more about our talent board, our vision and our members on our [website](#).



The South East Regional Talent Pools

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Our approach

In our first phase we are establishing talent pools for those aspiring to **chief operating officer** and **people or human resources director** positions. We will introduce talent pools for other professions in later phases. Having a focus on professions enables better deployment and progression after the pools are formed.

Our approach is driven by two objectives:

1. Helping to fill current board vacancies across the region



We want to create a pool of people ready to fill the board vacancies we currently have across the region to improve the performance and care of our organisations. The assessment centres will identify candidates who are 'ready now'. To ensure that we are focusing our efforts where they are most needed, in this our first application process, we are seeking candidates for chief operating officer and HR and people director roles.

2. Increasing the diversity of our boards



We know that as roles become more senior, there is currently less diversity among our leadership. If we only seek applications to our talent pools from people currently one level below the board, we will not address this. That is why we are proactively seeking applications from people from under-represented groups to a 'future' pool so we can support and encourage their development.

Establishing a culture of inclusion and diversity

Under-represented groups

People with disabilities, women and those from BAME and LGBT+ communities are currently under-represented on our boards.

Evidence shows that bias and discrimination within our culture creates barriers to progression for some staff. These barriers occur at all levels, so we know that if we only identify aspiring directors who are currently one level below the board, we will not address these issues. That is why we are also seeking applications to our 'future' pool from people who know they require further development.

In addition, we are taking a range of steps to help develop a culture of inclusion and ensure diversity in our talent pools:

- Requiring nominating directors to first undertake a short online module on conscious decision-making.
- Proactively seeking nominations from under-represented groups, including those who require further development before being ready for a board-level role.
- Developing a sponsorship programme to specifically support aspiring directors from under-represented groups.
- Training inclusion advisers to support the assessment panels to be inclusive and to raise awareness and help address unintended bias.

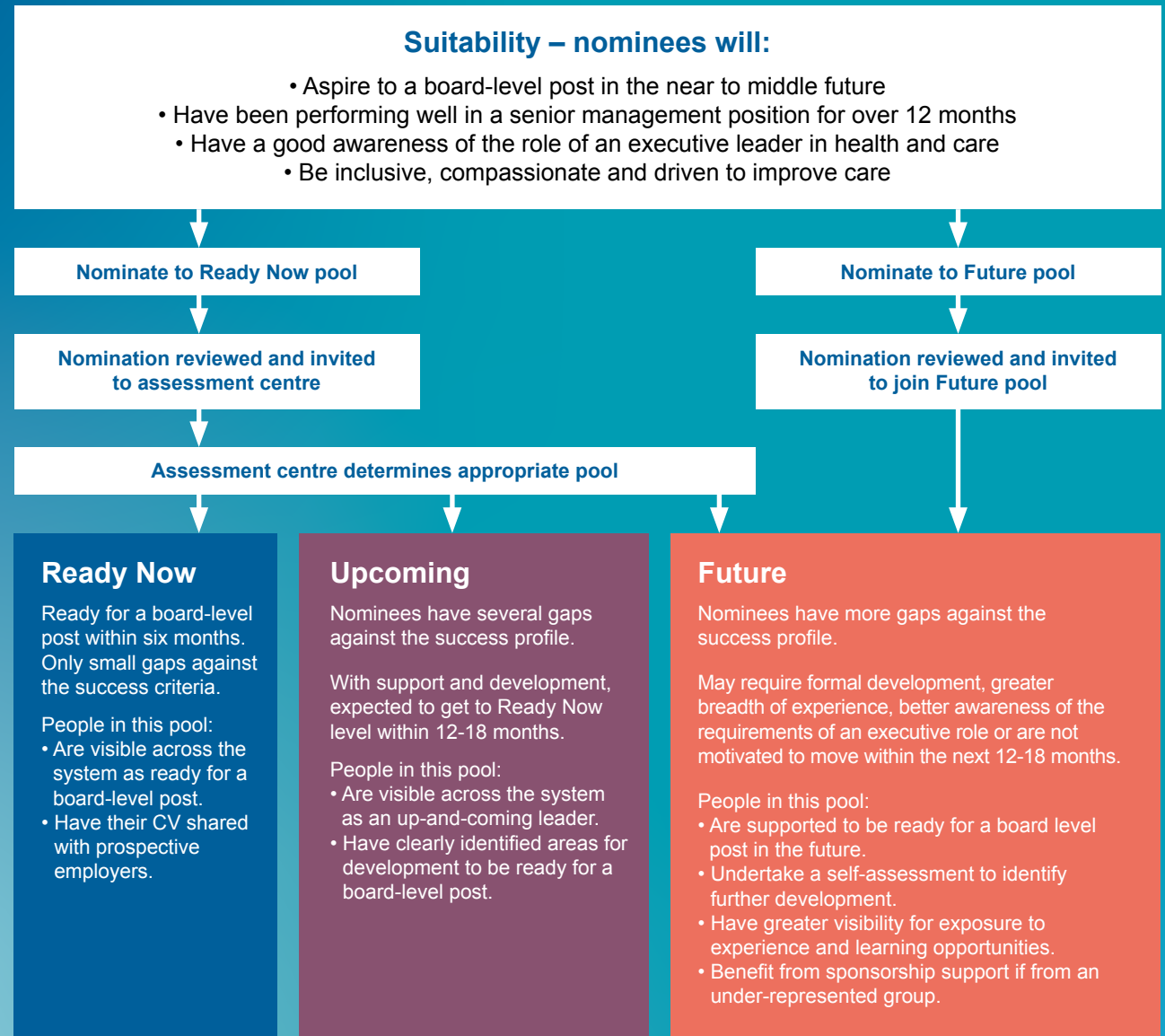


Which talent pool?

Aspiring directors who are ready for their first board-level role will be identified through a rigorous, fair and transparent assessment centre process. Those assessed as Ready Now will have their CVs shared with prospective employers. The assessment process identifies an individual's readiness for a board-level role rather than for a specific post. Individuals in the talent pool will still need to apply for job vacancies in the usual way.

As the assessment centre process is demanding and time intensive, we strongly encourage that only aspiring directors who genuinely believe they meet the success criteria for this pool apply to it.

Aspiring directors who have identified that they require further development before being ready for a board-level role should apply to the Future pool. They will complete the same initial light-touch nomination form but will not go through to the assessment centres. If accepted into the talent pool, they will be invited to complete a simple self-assessment to identify their current gaps against the success profile and describe their development plans. We will use this information to develop a career guide for aspiring directors to manage their development and to inform our sponsorship programme for aspiring directors from under-represented groups.



Nominations and assessment

Nominees will either be nominated by an executive director in their organisation, following a career conversation, or will self-nominate. Applicants for both the Ready Now and Future pools will complete the same initial online assessment, indicating which pool they are applying for.

Appropriate nominations to the Ready Now pool will be invited to an assessment centre. A robust, rigorous, evidence-based methodology has been designed in partnership between the Midlands and East Regional Talent Board and highly regarded talent experts Korn Ferry. The process has already been used in other regions with good feedback from both nominees and assessors and uses a standardised approach to identify which individuals meet a success profile co-designed by NHS leaders and talent experts. The **success profile** was designed to identify leaders with the attitudes, behaviours and skills to be successful executive directors in NHS trusts and clinical commissioning organisations. The NHS across England is using the same process to identify aspiring directors who are now ready to take a board-level role.

The majority of assessors at the assessment centres are board and governing body members from across the region. This ensures that assessments are carried out by those with the most relevant experience and that candidates are connected with senior leaders from across our services. It also further develops competency-based interviewing techniques among board members across the region.

In addition, trained inclusion advisers will support assessors to ensure the process is fully inclusive and to identify and address any unconscious bias.



Support for aspiring directors in the talent pools

The talent pool formation is a process of identifying talent and is not a development exercise itself. Once identified, aspiring directors will be supported to manage their own career development and access help to navigate their onward journey.

We work in a dynamic environment and cannot guarantee what will happen to individuals in the talent pools. While specific details may change, we expect that all talent pool members will receive the following support, depending on their individual needs:

- **Work-based learning** - formal secondments, informal 'stretch assignments', self-led projects and the development of a portfolio based on competency gaps.
- **Reflective conversations** - coaching, mentoring and action learning.
- **Formal learning** - signposting to existing national and local programmes and the development of masterclasses based on assessment of need.
- **Support and networking** - access to online and face-to-face groups for professional networking, a 'safe space' to learn and for sharing best-practice and information.

The South East Regional Talent Board will not deliver its own development programmes. There are many national initiatives that individuals may benefit from, including the Aspiring Directors programmes, Ready Now and Stepping Up, Bevan or High Potential Schemes. For details of these, please visit the [**NHS Leadership Academy website**](#). In addition, there may be relevant development opportunities within aspiring directors' own organisations and local systems.

We are developing a Sponsorship for Leadership programme for people in the talent pools from under-represented groups. Individuals will have formal mentoring with the addition of project-focused learning and exposure to board-level operations and learning experiences.

In addition, being part of one of our talent pools means you'll be made aware of more career development opportunities and initiatives outside of your own organisation. In the Ready Now pool, this will predominantly focus on your steps into a board-level role. For Upcoming and Future pools, this will include increasing your strategic awareness, understanding of board operations and system challenges and addressing your competency gaps.

What do I need to do?

Timeline »

I am a nominating leader »

I am a nominee »

I want to be an assessor »

I want to be an inclusion adviser »



Timeline

| | Ready Now talent pool | Future talent pool |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Now – 15 January 2020 | Nomination window 1 day for nominees 1-2 hours for nominating leaders | Nomination window 1 day for nominees 1-2 hours for nominating leaders |
| February 2020 | Assessment centre pre-work 1 day for nominees 1-2 hours for nominating leaders | Self assessment 2-3 hours for nominees <1 hour for nominating leaders |
| Late March 2020 | Assessment centre 0.5 days for nominees | Sponsorship for Leadership programme |
| April 2020 | Feedback on assessment 0.5 days for nominees | |

I am a nominating leader

Nomination process

Before 15 Jan 2020

Nominating leaders need to have oversight of all the applications from their organisation but it is expected that nominees will submit their own form.

1

Take the conscious decision-making module

The online module should take no more than one hour and can be taken at your convenience. It will help us ensure that, collectively, we are not allowing unconscious bias to influence our approach to talent.



2

Identify potential nominees

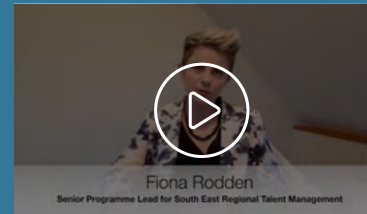
Consider individuals in your organisation who may be suitable for nomination.



3

Watch our video

Find out more about the process.



4

Have a career conversation with your nominee

Discuss their aspirations, motivation, potential and performance against the success profile. We recommend you use this career conversation toolkit.



5

Agree which pool to apply for

Based on the nominee's motivation and suitability against the success profile, agree whether to apply for the Ready Now or Future pool.



6

Complete the endorsement form

Send the signed endorsement form to the nominee.

What happens next?

Nominations will be reviewed. If your nominee is invited to the Ready Now assessment centre, you will be asked to support their pre-work during February, including an assessment of their capabilities against the success profile. This should take 1-2 hours for each nominee.

The assessment centres will be held in late March and you will be informed of your nominee's outcome in April. We will encourage individuals placed in the Upcoming and Future pools to share their assessment reports with their nominating leaders.

Nominating leaders of nominees who applied to the Future pool, or are placed in the Upcoming or Future pools following assessment, will support their nominee's self-assessment process and the formation of their development plans.

» [Nominate now](#)

I am a nominee

Nomination process

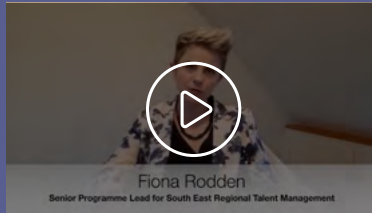
Before 15 Jan 2020

Nominees may be put forward by a nominating leader or self-nominated. We strongly encourage nominees to have the support of a nominating leader but, where this is not possible, self-nominations are welcomed.

1

Watch our video

Find out more about the process.



2

Self-assess

First, check your [suitability](#) and assess your skills and abilities against the success profile. Seek support from your chief executive or accountable officer. If this is not forthcoming, talk to your HR director or contact us at aspiretogether.southeast@nhs.net

3

Have a career conversation with your nominating leader

Discuss your aspirations, motivation, potential and performance against the success profile. We recommend you use this [career conversation toolkit](#).

4

Decide which pool to apply for

Based on your readiness and suitability against the success profile, and following discussion with your nominating leader if you have one, decide whether to apply for the Ready Now or Future pool.

5

Receive the endorsement form from your nominating leader

Endorsement is not mandatory, but a helpful part of the process.

6

Complete the nomination form

Complete and submit the [nomination form](#) before 15 January 2020.

What you need to complete the nomination form

- Your contact details and the details of your nominating leader if applicable.
- Details of your current relevant employed and voluntary roles including organisation details and your banding.
- Last 10 years' career history including outline accountabilities and achievements.
- Which career conversation tool you used, if applicable.

The form includes questions to assess your readiness. There is an opportunity to give further information to support your application if you have any gaps in your answers.

» [Apply now](#)

What happens next?

Ready Now pool

Assessment centres for Ready Now nominees will be held on 25 and 26 March 2020. If you apply to this pool, you must be able to attend in London on these dates

Nominations will be reviewed and, subject to meeting the suitability criteria, Ready Now nominees will receive their invitation to the assessment centre by early February. We will provide details of the pre-work that needs to be completed and returned within two weeks, including a self-assessment and psychometric test. This work should take 6-8 hours to complete.

We will also provide guidance on preparing for the assessment centre. This will involve a two-hour panel interview consisting of a competency-based interview and a situational-judgement interview.

Following the assessment centre, you will receive a short phone call in April from your assessor to tell you which pool you have been assigned to. Your employing organisation will also be informed. This will be followed by an individual assessment report, psychometric test report and a one-hour phone call from the technical assessor to talk through your developmental feedback.

Future pool

Nominees applying to the Future pool will be contacted in February with further information on the next steps, the self-assessment and the Sponsorship for Leadership programme, where applicable.



I want to be an assessor

We are seeking high calibre assessors from across your region to support the assessment centre process. It is an excellent opportunity to join our work in collectively nurturing and sharing our talent.

The role of an assessor is mentally stretching and highly rewarding. It will help to improve your own practice in identifying talent and assessing the suitability of candidates for top leadership roles. You will gain insights into the collective strengths, as well as the development gaps, of high-potential leaders across your region.

All assessors will receive high-quality training and the opportunity to work collaboratively with like-minded colleagues.

Please see the next page for the requirements and commitments of each role.

Assessor roles

We are seeking assessors for all three roles on the assessment centre panels:

- **Leader assessor** – likely to be a chief executive or accountable officer - leads the situational judgement interview.
- **Support assessor** – likely to be a chair or non-executive director – does not usually ask questions but helps to assess evidence against the success profile.
- **Technical assessor** – an experienced interviewer or assessor, likely to be an HR or talent management professional or an equality and diversity lead – chairs the panel and leads the competency-based interview.

All three assessors will play a role in tailoring interview questions as part of the panel preparation call. Assessors will be supported on the panel by an **inclusion adviser** whose role is to support the process to be inclusive and free from unconscious bias.

How to become an assessor: Please send an email expressing your interest to aspiretogether.southeast@nhs.net

Am I suitable and what's involved?

To be an assessor you will need to be:

- A chief executive, accountable officer, chair, non-executive director or HR professional with significant experience of interviewing and assessment.
- Committed to the South East Regional Talent Board's vision of a collaborative and inclusive culture of nurturing and sharing diverse talent.
- Prepared to act as a role model and advocate for best practice in talent management both at the assessment centres and more widely in your own organisation and across the system.
- Keen to further enhance your skills in talent identification and management.

Specific training will be provided to assessors appropriate to their role on the panel. All assessors need to undertake a one-hour online module on conscious decision-making to help us ensure that, collectively, we are not allowing unconscious bias to influence our approach to talent. All assessors are required to commit to maintaining their skills by participating in at least two assessment centres each year.

» [Express your interest now](#)

The specific requirements and commitments of each role are set out below.

| | Leader assessor | Support assessor | Technical assessor |
|--|--|------------------|---|
| Requirement | | | |
| You're likely to be a... | CEO or AO | Chair or NED | HR director or senior HR professional |
| Experience working and recruiting at board-level | Essential | Essential | Desirable |
| Extensive experience of competency-based interviewing | Desirable | Desirable | Essential |
| Skill in providing developmental feedback | Essential | Not applicable | Essential |
| Role on the panel | | | |
| Lead interview section | Situational judgement | Not applicable | Competency interview |
| Feedback | Brief outcome call with nominee | Not applicable | Prepare feedback report (2.5 hours) and feedback call with nominee (1 hour) |
| Commitment | | | |
| Training | 1.5 hours webinar | | 3 days (non-consecutive) including 1 day psychometric tool training and 1 hour webinar |
| Conscious decision-making | 1 hour online module | | |
| Preparation | Review nominee information and panel call to prepare questions (total 2 hours approx.) | | Chair preparation call and review test results to propose areas of focus (approx. 1 hour per candidate) |
| Assessment centre | Assess nominees, evaluate evidence, panel deliberation and calibration (2 days) | | |

I want to be an inclusion adviser

We want to ensure that all our talent pool assessment processes are as inclusive and free from bias as possible. We also want to upskill people from within our system to help raise awareness and challenge unintended bias within our culture. We are seeking inclusion advisers to support the assessment centres in the first instance and will look to them to support other aspects of the regional talent board's work as it develops.

As an inclusion adviser, you will be actively working to help to ensure we have a more diverse talent pool. It will increase your experience and visibility as an expert in equality, diversity and inclusion and develop your capability and confidence in challenging inclusion and diversity issues with senior stakeholders.

Training provided

Inclusion advisers will attend a one-day workshop run by inclusion and talent management experts to help you:

- Develop knowledge and understanding of legislation and evidence around bias in talent management.
- Recognise bias in processes, attitudes and micro-behaviours.
- Confidently and effectively address bias with senior leaders.

How to become an inclusion adviser

Please send an email expressing your interest to aspiretogether.southeast@nhs.net

» [Express your interest now](#)

Am I suitable?

We are seeking people who:

- Work within health and social care.
- Have a good level of awareness of the Equality Act, WRES, WDES and the wider field of inclusion and diversity.
- Have experience of recruitment either through HR or in a line management capacity.

You may work as an equality and diversity lead or specialist within a trust, commissioning organisation or arm's length body or you may lead inclusion networks as part of your contracted role. We encourage applications from women, BAME, LGBT+ and people with disabilities but this is not a requirement.

Further information

Frequently asked questions



NHS executive director success profile



Contact us



Frequently asked questions

If your query is not answered here, please contact us at aspiretogether.southeast@nhs.net

Can I start the nomination form and return to it later?

Yes. If you save it, you will be emailed a link to use to access your form again. We recommend you copy this link when you exit the form, in case your organisation's email security blocks the automated email from our system.

Why can't open the nomination form?

If you are having trouble accessing the form, try using a different internet browser (Google Chrome, Microsoft Explorer). If you still have issues please [email us](#)

I'm interested in jobs in two regions. Should I apply to both regions' talent pools?

Details of individuals in the Ready Now pool can be shared across regions, so if you're aiming for that pool, there's no need to apply in more than one region. For the Future pool, the support we're offering is unique to the South East. If you're in the Future pool, your details wouldn't be shared across regions and the support you are offered may vary slightly from region to region.

I'm really not sure what pool to apply for, can you help?

To decide which pool would be the most appropriate to aim for, look at the [success profile](#) and talk to your manager.

If you're still unsure you can [email us](#) to arrange a phone call.

I've already done various development programmes. Do I need to go through another assessment centre?

The talent pools are very different from a development programme. They are a robust and consistent national process to identify people who are ready to take their first board-level role. Individuals assessed as Ready Now will have their details shared with potential employees.

How does this fit with Future Focused Finance?

The Future Focused Finance assessment centres use the same criteria and broadly the same processes as the Aspire Together assessment centres. Currently the application process is managed nationally and the assessment centre will take place on 17-18 March 2019. You can find out more about Future Focused Finance at <https://www.futurefocusedfinance.nhs.uk/senior-talent-management/talent-pool>

Why are you only looking for COOs and HRDs?

In this, our first nomination window, we are seeking aspiring chief operating officers and people or HR directors because we want to focus our efforts where local organisations currently have the greatest need. However, we will be seeking aspiring directors for other roles through future assessment centres in due course.

You can register for updates on future assessment centres and our wider work on our [website](#).

NHS executive director success profile

What is the success profile?

It defines the optimal characteristics that drive success in an executive director level role in the NHS.

How was the success profile defined?

Data contributing to this success profile includes:

- Review of existing documents and models describing the competencies and capabilities critical for success as an executive director, as well as research into drivers of success in similar roles facing similar challenges, in other sectors.
- Interviews with NHS leaders, regulators and professional leads on the future of the NHS and the capabilities required to succeed, as well as current success drivers.
- Behavioural interviews with executive director role models in the NHS, to understand the strengths and experiences that have contributed to their success.
- Interviews with middle managers in the NHS to understand how they see leadership roles evolving and what they will need in future from executive directors to perform at their best.

What is it used for?

The success profile is used to inform decisions about whether candidates in your region are 'ready now' for your executive director talent pool. The success profile will also be used to support broader talent management conversations.

What is it not intended for?

The success profile should not be used to make specific appointment decisions to any particular role or organisation. To make specific appointment decisions, hiring managers will look in more detail at the specific role requirements and candidate fit to that role.

What are the benefits of the success profile?

When you are looking for candidates for executive director roles, you will be able to trust the quality of the talent pool because the individuals in it will have been assessed as having the characteristics required for success in these roles. It also supports career development conversations with aspiring directors, helping individuals to understand the requirements for success and discuss their interest in a board-level role as well as the development they will need to enter the talent pool.

The 'step up' into executive director roles

- **Accountability for the whole organisation's performance.** From contributing as a functional lead, to acting as a corporate leader by contributing to setting direction and executing strategy with an organisation-wide lens.
- **Increased accountability for external stakeholder relationships.** From a focus on managing stakeholder relationships within the CCG or Trust, to increasingly managing external relationships with regulators, patients/service users and public sector partners, etc.
- **Longer term strategic focus.** From a focus on how to deliver clearly defined functional objectives within (typically) a 1 year time frame, to a focus on shaping objectives in light of external forces and changes (e.g., an aging population) coming up in a 3 – 5 year time frame.
- **Increased focus on enabling the organisation.** From a focus on delivering high quality work through their team, to setting up the governance, structures, policies and cultural environment to get to root causes, manage risk, and set the people and organisation up for success.
- **Role modelling and visibility.** The seniority of the role and its position on the board means executive directors are role models and must therefore be conscious of the impact of their actions and words, acting as visible leaders across the organisation.

Executive director success profile – high level overview

| Competencies | | Experiences | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>The high performing executive directors of today are supported by the following competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drives for better outcomes • Takes people with them • Speaks up • Brings compassion and humility • Brings a learning mindset | <p>The high performing executive directors of tomorrow will be supported by the following competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts from a system's mindset • Finds new solutions • Develops people • Creates a culture of inclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving change and delivering tangible results • Engaging external stakeholders • Breadth of experience • Managed budgets • Managing poor performance • Leading leaders and engaging the workforce • Building a more inclusive and compassionate culture | |
| Traits | | Drivers | |
| <p>The high performing executive directors of today are supported by the following traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisive and action orientated • Influence • Flexible | <p>The high performing executive directors of tomorrow will be supported by the following traits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive and consultative • Creative problem solvers • Resilient | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an understanding of what the role entails in terms of responsibility, risk and impact • Expresses a desire to learn, grow, do interesting work, and stretch oneself • Sense of purpose beyond self | |

Whilst this represents what 'good' looks like for executive directors, it is not expected that any individual will have a strength on every aspect of the success profile. We understand that we need different styles and types of leadership.

Understanding the interrelationships

Competencies

- Demonstrated behaviours
- Relatively easy to test in an interview or observe on the job, with training to ensure objectivity
- Have the most direct impact on performance

Experiences

- Demonstrated experiences from CV
- Very easy to test in an interview
- Impacts performance insofar as they help individuals to develop competencies and technical know-how

Traits

- Personality preferences, not behaviours
- Difficult to test in an interview; easier to test using a validated psychometric (online personality test)
- Impacts performance by making it 'come naturally' to a person to practice a competency and therefore hone their skills

Drivers

- Motivation or underlying driver of behaviour
- Difficult to test in an interview
- Impacts performance by determining in which roles the person will be able to fulfil their personal needs

Understanding the interrelationships – interpreting data

- In general, competencies and experiences are the best determinant of an individual's ability to deliver in a role tomorrow.
- Traits and drivers tell you more about their potential to quickly learn and grow into a role.
- There are relationships between specific experiences, competencies, traits and drivers and understanding these will help you understand an individual's ability to step up into new roles.
- In general, if a candidate is low on a competency or experience but high on the related traits, this means they have more potential to quickly learn the new competencies than if they are low on the related traits.
- Conversely, if they are high on the traits related to a competency but low on the competency itself, it suggests more exposure to a role where that competency is critical would help them develop quickly.
- Key relationships to be aware of are:

| The competencies: | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Takes people with them and Develops people | are related to the trait | Influence |
| Brings compassion and humility and Develops people | are related to the trait | Supportive and consultative |
| Finds new solutions | is related to the trait | Creative problem solver |
| Acts from a system's mindset | is supported by the experience | Cross boundary working |

How to read the competencies

Competency: Find new solutions

Most executive directors will show evidence of resolving issues and solving problems by applying solutions they've seen working before.

But not all will show that they **find new solutions**, which is fundamentally about bringing new insights and thinking to the table. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person...

- **Brings diverse perspectives to challenge the status quo – and their own assumptions.** For example, do they ask 'What are we trying to achieve here? Is the way we've always done it really the best way to do it now? Is there an easier and faster way to support patient care?' Do they invite diverse perspectives and external benchmarking to challenge conventional thinking and prevailing norms?
- **Makes connections that aren't obvious but that lead to new solutions.** For example, do they see connections between different data points, such as data on changing patient/service user behaviour, and new policies?
- **Makes complex issues simple by getting to the heart of the issue** so that new solutions can be found. For example, when sharing their thinking behind key decisions, do they use key principles to simplify the issue such as 'When I'm looking at how to drive efficiency in the structure. I start from thinking through the structure we need to support patient/service user care, rather than starting from what we have at the moment.'
- **Stretch behaviour: Fundamentally re-thinks how to deliver services** in ways that enables the NHS to improve outcomes with limited resources. For example, rather than trying to treat a long term condition with a health service they look to prevent it by improving housing conditions.

Title of competency

Initial statement:

This clarifies behaviours relevant to the competency. It is the minimum standard expected, and is intended to provide guidance that the level is not set too low. If anyone is not showing more sophistication than this, development is needed. We will not call it 'minimum standard' to avoid a 'judgemental tone'

Second statement:

This is the core of the competency and expresses exactly what this is trying to measure

Bullet points:

Behavioural indicators of the competency

Competency: Drives for better outcomes

Most executive directors will show evidence of being motivated to deliver great results.

But not all will show that they *drive for better outcomes*, which is fundamentally about **identifying opportunities** and **taking action to improve** the organisation's ability to deliver in a sustainable way. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Identifies and acts on new ways to improve results and raise the bar on quality in the short and longer term**, whatever those may be in their context. For example, do they initiate action to improve efficiency across their area of responsibility, quality of support provided to other departments, collaboration across the system, patient/service user outcomes, etc? Do they consider how digital solutions can drive improvement?
- **Pro-actively identifies goals to improve outcomes and implements concrete plans to deliver them in a sustainable way**, based on an in-depth understanding of the factors impacting performance. For example, do they use internal and external benchmarking to identify opportunities? Do they dig deep and do root cause analysis to ensure they've really understood the problem?
- **Ensures they stay focused on results and improvements in outcomes over the long term, balancing multiple factors to ensure they deliver real improvement**, without becoming distracted by activities for the sake of activity. For example, when plans are developed to achieve stretch goals, do they ensure clear metrics are created and frequently measured and adjust their approach to ensure they deliver the right outcome in the end? Do they stay focused on overall outcomes for patients/service users, balancing that against short term targets or issues?
- **Stretch behaviour: Takes risks, by taking action and implementing solutions that haven't been tried and tested, to deliver a step change in what can be delivered.** For example, do they try out new organisational structures, processes, or systems, that haven't been used in the same context before, to improve the performance/services for patients and service users?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Takes people with them

Most executive directors will show evidence of trying to influence others, often through logical arguments for their own position.

But not all will show that they **take people with them**, which is fundamentally about shaping the arguments and rationales that will appeal to the audience, given their concerns, agendas and needs. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Adjusts the style and content of their message to appeal to the people they're trying to engage.** For example, considering 'This GP is particularly concerned about the bureaucracy involved with certain contracts' and therefore emphasising how plans will reduce bureaucracy over time.
- **Considers who may be influential with the audience, and enlists their support.** For example, do they bring in a well-respected clinician to advocate for a new policy with doctors, knowing that they are most likely to listen to a clinician and to have their needs and interests reflected by a clinical colleague? Or engage with community leaders to help them explain complex system changes.
- **Paints a compelling picture of the future they're trying to create**, one in which everyone can see themselves, which explains not just *what* needs to happen, but *why*, and what's in it for patients/service users, employees from all backgrounds, and the audience. For example, when working at a system level, do they build a narrative that focuses on the positive future that service changes will bring, such as greater investment in preventative care and more time with the patients/service users who need it most?
- **Stretch behaviour: Navigates organisational politics and culture, key stakeholders and personalities, to build support and engagement.** For example, uses all of the above approaches alongside a nuanced understanding of how decisions are really made in the organisation, to build support over the long term.

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
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Competency: Speaks up

Most executive directors will show evidence of dealing with conflict when they are faced with it, and taking responsibility for issues.

But not all will show that they **speaks up**, which is fundamentally about having the conviction and sense of purpose to speak up when it might be easier to refrain. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Speaks up when it would be easier to stay silent.** For example, have they pushed colleagues to be more open about the cons as well as the pros of a proposal in board papers? Have they challenged colleagues when they've observed them to be dismissive of views that differ from their own?
- **Sensitively raises the 'elephant in the room'.** For example, have they raised concerns about inadequate systems, processes, or financial assumptions internally with colleagues, partners or regulators?
- **Voices the concerns of people who aren't in the room, such as patients/service users, front line staff or under represented groups.** For example, do they regularly bring the discussion back to the impact on patients/service users and front line staff, when debating difficult decisions with colleagues or partners?
- **Stretch behaviour: Decides not to do what has been asked, because its better in the long term for patients/service users and other outcomes.** For example, have they stated that they won't hit a key target because doing so would put quality of care at risk?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
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| | |

Competency: Brings compassion and humility

Most executive directors will show evidence of basic respect for others and will see themselves as inclusive.

But not all will show that they **bring compassion and humility**, which is fundamentally about empathising with others and seeing one's role as being to support others and ensure they feel heard and valued, whether they be patients, service users, employees, peers or external stakeholders. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Listens to others and values diverse perspectives and differing opinions.** For example, do they share examples of having been surprised by another person's point of view, and persuaded by their perspective? Do they invite others' opinion, especially those from different backgrounds or seldom heard voices?
- **Explores others' concerns and empathises.** For example, do they share their hypotheses about what is driving others' behaviour even when they haven't explicitly stated their motivation? Do they express empathy and understanding for those concerns? Do they notice how others are feeling? Do they ask others to share their concerns?
- **Assumes others are coming from a good place, even in disagreement.** For example, when they describe the views of others who they disagree with, do they frame them in terms of positive and reasonable concerns? Or do they tend to believe that others are acting out of selfish concerns?
- **Stretch behaviour: Puts others' needs and perspectives at the heart of decision making.** For example, do they co-create pathways and solutions with patients and service users or employees? Are their agendas and plans driven by the underlying needs of service users (internal or external) and employees?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Brings a learning mindset

Most executive directors will show evidence of learning from experience.

But not all will show that they **bring a learning mindset**, which is fundamentally about a belief that people can learn, grow and improve, and therefore setbacks are opportunities to learn, and not threats to one's own self image as a competent professional. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Seeks feedback, even when they know it may be uncomfortable to hear.** For example, have they actively sought feedback from others, including individuals different to them, and taken it seriously, trying to find the truth in it?
- **Reflects honestly and openly on their own contribution to outcomes and applies the lessons.** For example, when reflecting on learnings from past mistakes, do they consider personal development areas, as opposed to blaming external factors beyond their control?
- **Helps others learn from experience by bringing a 'no blame' mindset.** For example, are they careful to listen to others and ask for their perspective on what happened and why, rather than jumping into telling them what they did wrong? Do they encourage others to reflect and learn from their experiences on an ongoing basis?
- **Stretch behaviour: Creates a safe environment where people can feel comfortable not knowing all the answers.** For example, do they share mistakes and lessons learnt publicly and positively and admit when they do not have the answers, so others can feel safe to adopt a learning mindset?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Acts from a system's mindset

Most executive directors will show awareness of the broader healthcare system and how those bodies each contribute to patient and service user care.

But not all will show that they **act from a system's mindset**, which is fundamentally about recognising the complexity of the system, and using that understanding to successfully navigate through the system and use the strengths of the whole system to provide the best possible service to patients/service users and the broader population. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Understands the inter-relationship between their area and the rest of the system and how each element contributes to patient/service user care.** For example, when pursuing goals, do they take into account how they might impact other parts of the healthcare system, and their ability to best meet patient/service user needs?
- **Understands how the culture and politics in different parts of the system work.** For example, when building support for an idea, do they show an understanding of the 'unwritten rules' of how decisions are made in different organisations? Are they aware of perspectives and voices which have been marginalised in the past, and how that might impact people's views and biases today?
- **Considers the different perspectives of all in the system and uses that insight to best meet service user needs.** For example, when shaping plans on what to do and how to engage others, do they consider the differing purpose, role, agenda and needs of groups such as patients, services users, carers, GPs, trusts, local authorities, voluntary organisations to help align them towards patient needs?
- **Stretch behaviour: Balances the needs of different stakeholder groups, and takes the decisions which are best for the patient/service user/population of a place as a whole, even if it is not what is in the interest of their own area.** For example, do they give up budget or control over a particular area to support delivery of a service in another area that better meets patient/service user/population needs?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Finds new solutions

Most executive directors will show evidence of resolving issues and solving problems by applying solutions they've seen work before.

But not all will show that they **find new solutions**, which is fundamentally about bringing new insights and thinking to the table. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Brings diverse perspectives to challenge the status quo – and their own assumptions.** For example, do they ask 'What are we trying to achieve here? Is the way we've always done it really the best way to do it now? Is there an easier and faster way to support patient care?' Do they invite diverse perspectives and external benchmarking to challenge conventional thinking and prevailing norms?
- **Makes connections that aren't obvious but that lead to new solutions.** For example, do they see connections between different data points, such as data on changing patient/service user behaviour, and new policies?
- **Makes complex issues simple by getting to the heart of the issue** so that new solutions can be found. For example, when sharing their thinking behind key decisions, do they use key principles to simplify the issue such as 'When I'm looking at how to drive efficiency in the structure, I start from thinking through the structure we need to support patient/service user care, rather than starting from what we have at the moment.'
- **Stretch behaviour: Fundamentally re-thinks how to deliver services** in ways that enables the NHS to improve outcomes with limited resources. For example, rather than trying to treat a long term condition with a health service they look to prevent it by improving housing conditions.

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Develops people

Most executive directors will show evidence of providing feedback when outcomes from team members are not up to the standard required.

But not all will show that they **develop people**, which is fundamentally about spotting potential – regardless of background – and nurturing it. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Understands and seeks to develop the strengths and development needs of a diverse range of individuals in their team.** For example, do they provide regular feedback on both strengths and development areas, regarding both performance and behaviours? Do they invest in the development of others based on potential, regardless of whether they have similar backgrounds or mindsets?
- **Spots potential, explores the career aspirations and shapes development activities to support people to achieve their goals.** For example, do they know who in their team wants to progress, and in what direction? Do they provide feedback and developmental experiences to help them prepare for the next move? Have they seen someone with potential who others overlooked, perhaps because they didn't 'fit the mould' of a typical person in that role in the NHS, and champion that person's career?
- **Identifies capability gaps in the team/function and seeks to close the gap.** For example, do they look ahead to predict what work the team/function will need to deliver in future, and identify key skills which will need to be built? Do they ensure the skills within the team complement each other to deliver results?
- **Stretch behaviour: Challenges themselves and others to ensure diverse talent is being managed at all levels of the organisation.** For example, do they look beyond their own team, to how talent is being managed across the organisation, and invest in actively supporting and setting up talent management systems which ensure diverse talent at all levels is recognised and nurtured?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Competency: Creates a culture of inclusion

Most executive directors will show evidence of understanding, intellectually, why inclusion is important to patients and user outcomes.

But not all will show that they **create a culture of inclusion**, which is fundamentally about not just role-modelling inclusion, but also creating a climate in which all participants feel valued and a sense of belongingness, in which diverse perspectives are appreciated by all, and in which ultimately all are able to contribute to their fullest potential. To determine whether the person you're assessing demonstrates this competency, consider your evidence of whether this person:

- **Has a deep seated conviction that they can't achieve their personal goals without creating an inclusive culture.** For example, if their personal mission is to ensure the best possible patient care, they may have a conviction that patient care starts with really listening to patients, and that only happens when there is a culture of listening and respect across the entire organisation.
- **Gives feedback in a non-judgmental way to people who are not demonstrating inclusive behaviour.** For example, have they spoken with a clinician who they've seen be dismissive of another's views, and helped them realise that the impact of their behaviour is that those around them are less likely to really listen to patients?
- **Creates an enabling environment in which it is easier for people to behave in an inclusive way.** For example, do they ensure that diverse voices are at the table for key decisions, and that sufficient time is given in the agenda for a robust debate, and for exploration of different viewpoints?
- **Stretch behaviour: Initiates, enacts and champions creating a culture of inclusion across the system, outside of their own area.** For example, do they work to persuade colleagues across the system that system goals can only be met in an inclusive environment? Do they work to create an enabling environment across the system?

Your notes

| Experience | Development areas |
|------------|-------------------|
| | |

Experiences

Each of the experiences below has been shown to be important for developing the skills and capabilities required to excel in an executive director role.

More than one item from the list below may be covered in a single role or career experience. For example, experience of 'driving change and delivering tangible results' may also involve 'managing poor performance' and 'leading leaders and engaging the workforce'.

- **Experience of delivering end-to-end change in a service or function with scale and complexity:** Experience of having led fundamental transformation or organisational development with evidence of tangible results. For example, leading the set-up of a new function, leading changes to an end-to-end process to improve results.
- **Engaging external stakeholders:** Experience of delivering on a programme or other activity which required the individual to report to a board, national bodies, and/or regulators.
- **Breadth of experience:** Experience of working in multiple functions or across commissioner/provider organisations, having worked for different organisations or significant system level working.
- **Managed budgets:** Experience of managing a budget, carrying the weight of the responsibility and the ability to ensure the whole adds up.
- **Leading multiple teams/individuals that manage complex service areas:** This may be through the direct management of multiple teams or through providing leadership (if not direct management) and engaging the workforce across a multiple groups/teams.
- **Experience of delivering performance improvement in a service or function:** Experience of having turned around an underperforming service or function to deliver improvement of patient/service user outcomes.
- **Building a more inclusive and compassionate culture:** Experience of having led or collaborated in work to improve diversity and create an inclusive, compassionate culture which is also focussed on learning not blame.

Traits

The key traits to look for are outlined below. These are the traits which will enable individuals in the talent pool to more easily develop the capabilities required for great performance in executive director roles, based on the competency requirements.

The high performing executive directors of today are supported by the following traits:

- **Decisive and action orientated.** High stamina, likes getting things done, makes quick decisions even when information is short, is willing to take calculated risks and enjoys a fast pace of work.
- **Influence.** Has a clear point of view and likes selling their idea to others, likes having responsibility for others, prefers leading to following.
- **Flexible.** Changes behaviour and approach to match new circumstances, thrives on variety and frequently changing environments.

The high performing executive directors of tomorrow will be supported by the following traits:

- **Supportive and consultative.** Enjoys helping and meeting other people's needs, good listener, interested in others' perspectives.
- **Creative problem solver.** Makes connections, sees the big picture and contributes to the development of strategy, always seeking and generating new ideas, embraces radical ideas and approaches.
- **Resilient.** Optimistic, calm and able to cope, composed in charged situations, able to accept criticism without becoming overly self-critical.

Drivers

Drivers in this context are the motivations and needs that underpin the individual's day-to-day behaviours, as well as their desire to take on an executive director level role.

- Demonstrates an understanding of what the role entails in terms of responsibility, risk and impact. This includes an awareness of what it means to operate as a board.
- Expresses a desire to learn, grow, do interesting work, and stretch oneself.
- Sense of purpose beyond self. Articulates a clear vision for why they wish to take on an executive director role:
 - What they wish to achieve
 - The impact they wish to have
 - How an executive director role will enable them to have that impact
- This vision will put something other than the personal success of the individual at its heart, for example, patient/service user care, the well being of clinical staff, or the success of the NHS as a whole.
- When evaluating the individual's response, focus on whether you find evidence that the individual is driven by something other than their own progression.

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