Leadership Qualities Framework

Self-assessment tool for operational manager or leader/operational commissioning

Care Workforce Pathway role category:
Supervisor or leader, practice leader, deputy manager, personal assistants

Name:

Job title:

Organisation:

skills**for**care

Creating the vision · Setting direction · Managing services · Improving services · Delivering the strategy

Management and Leadership Code

Self assessment of confidence and ability key

Use this self-assessment tool to spot areas for growth and set your own development goals.

Rate yourself against the principles using this key:

Good

I do this on a regular basis and feel confident in my ability. No further development or training needed.

Adequate

I do this on a less frequent basis and feel less confident in my ability. Refresher training and additional development and practice would be beneficial.

Needs refreshing

I previously felt confident in this but it is not something I have done recently or regularly. Further development and refresher needed.

New to me

I have never considered or been required to cover this area. Training and development required.

Creating the vision

How would you rate yourself against these principles?	Good	Adequate	Needs refreshing	New to me
Design, plan and enable a co-produced vision and culture for my service				
Listen to people with lived experience, teams and communities to gather ideas and insights				
Assess internal and external factors to shape priorities and the long-term direction				
Communicate the vision clearly, consistently and accessibly across all audiences				
Ensure everyone understands and works towards shared values and goals				
Share plans for implementing the vision and values, while managing risks				
Build strong partnerships with social care providers to deliver joined up care and exchange best practices				
Develop and embed an inclusive values-led culture that upholds human rights and community wellbeing through daily work, team structures and policies				
Support and coach teams to model the vision through everyday behaviours				
Establish systems to regularly review culture, address issues and drive improvement				

A clear vision for quality, safety, and outcomes gives social care services purpose and direction. As an operational manager, you play a key role in bringing people together to create a shared vision rooted in values. By involving staff, people who draw on care, and other stakeholders, you help ensure the service is person-centred, inclusive, and guided by what matters most.

Here are some development areas and resources to help you build your skills in this area:

1. Co-production of vision and strategy

Develop skills and approaches to co-production with your team and those who draw on care and support and their families.

Take a look at:

- [TLAP co-production](#)
- [Treating people as individuals](#)

Work with your leaders to reflect together and consider how your teams makes a difference and how their services and roles contribute to the organisation's vision.

2. Values-based, distributed, collaborative leadership

Research models of distributed, collaborative, values-based leadership, and show these values in how you lead and empower your team to create a shared organisational vision. Use collaboration and empowerment to broaden ideas, build skills and capacity, and strengthen problem-solving.

Take a look at:

- [Manager Induction Standards](#)
- [Lead to Succeed programme](#)

3. Growing leadership capacity, capability and talent

Research and develop skills and knowledge around:

- Workforce strategy development
- Nurture today for tomorrows future
- Talent management
- [Values-based recruitment](#)
- Mentoring managers

4. Reflect on your leadership style and approach to involving people with lived experience, teams and communities in creating the vision

- How have you ensured that you actively support everyone to help shape the vision?
- Have you developed inclusive ways for stakeholders to collaborate on its development, ensuring diverse voices are heard?
- Do you enable people to align the values of the organisation with their own?
- How do you role model and support the sharing of the vision and values to wider audiences?

5. Try the 'Positive culture toolkit for adult social care' activities for creating the vision

- SAY Activity 1 - Our culture in three words and Activity 3 - Define our values
- SEE Activity 1 and 2 - Our articulated workplace culture walk and Activity 3 - Communicating values case study

[Explore the toolkit](#)

Setting direction

How would you rate yourself against these principles?	Good	Adequate	Needs refreshing	New to me
Analyse and interrogate internal and external data and evidence bases to identify change drivers and set clear priorities aligned to the vision and values				
Share data and information appropriately, securely and confidentially to support informed, evidence-based decisions				
Collaborate with partners, commissioners and stakeholders				
Engage families, carers and people drawing on care and support to co-design solutions and the vision for the future				
Establish clear governance and decision-making frameworks with defined roles				
Communicate inclusively and use person-centred approaches to clarify changes				
Foster a safe, open environment where ideas are welcomed and challenges discussed constructively				
Model honest feedback practices, hold difficult conversations with integrity and encourage regular, fearless dialogue				
Utilise digital frameworks, quality frameworks, standards and best practices across services				
Monitor and evaluate the vision, adjusting actions to improve outcomes and sustainability				
Anticipate and manage risks and opportunities in political, legal, financial and regulatory areas				

Setting direction means turning goals into clear service objectives, choosing priorities so teams know what matters most, and balancing delivery pressures with quality and wellbeing. As an operational manager, you set this direction by defining purpose, turning strategy into action, modelling values, using insight to guide decisions, and creating the conditions for safe, high-quality, person-centred care.

Here are some development areas and resources to help you build your skills in this area:

1. Using data to inform decisions and share with partners

- Ask your networks or teams for ideas on how you can use service data, audits, and performance information to inform your direction.
- Understand data analytics and identify areas where data doesn't correlate.
- Understand the frameworks and standards available to enhance your skills.
- Use data to focus on what will make the biggest difference to your community.

2. Facilitation, involvement and building psychological safety

- Develop facilitation skills to level the playing field of all involved so that lived experience and learnt experience is equal.
- Develop expertise and skills in psychological safety in teams to build constructive conversations with groups and individuals.

Take a look at:

- [TLAP co-production](#)
- [Treating people as individuals](#)
- [Allyship resources](#)

3. Move from risk management to strategic foresight

Take a look at:

- [Good and Outstanding care inspection toolkit - Involving people to manage risk](#)
- [Manager Induction Standards - standard 10 learning and innovation](#)

4. Reflect on your behaviour when fostering a safe and open environment where constructive conversations are held with integrity

Reflect on a time when you brought a group of people together to have a challenging conversation.

- What was the situation?
- What did you do or say that created a safe and open environment?
- How did you build psychological safety?
- What did not work as well?
- What was the outcome and what have your learnt from this experience?

5. Try the 'Positive culture toolkit for adult social care' activities for setting direction

- SAY Activity 2 - Our vision for the future
- FEEL Activity 1 - Planning to listen

[Explore the toolkit](#)

Managing services

How would you rate yourself against these principles?	Good	Adequate	Needs refreshing	New to me
Align services and resources with the organisation's strategy, values and vision				
Apply structured planning with clear roles, responsibilities and accountability				
Ensure timely, appropriate access to resources and information that meet service needs				
Provide teams with training, supervision and development to maintain quality and team wellbeing				
Identify and manage risks while ensuring quality, legal and regulatory compliance				
Establish systems to monitor quality, performance and continuous improvement				
Manage budgets, technology, staffing and contracts for efficiency and sustainability				
Embed evaluation processes to measure impact and guide improvements				
Promote net-zero, low-carbon and resource-efficient care delivery				
Foster effective, purposeful communication and teamwork across all services				
Build partnerships and networks based on trust with clearly defined responsibilities to support seamless services				
Champion equity by removing barriers, preventing discrimination and promoting fairness				

The tone of your service is shaped as much by behaviour as by plans. As an operational manager, the way you model professionalism, curiosity, openness, and respect sets expectations for how people treat those who use the service and each other. This helps staff feel safe to raise concerns and share ideas. People take their cues from what a manager says, does, and allows.

Here are some development areas and resources to help you build your skills in this area:

1. Quality assurance and compliance - Implement, monitor and evaluate

Review your quality assurance, evaluation, monitoring and compliance systems.

- Do they ensure the service is able to continuously improve and meet the needs of the people they serve?
- Do they comply with regulatory and inspection requirements?
- [Take a look at the Good and Outstanding care guide.](#)

2. Community - Asset and strength-based approaches

Research best practice in asset and strengths based approached to community inclusion and allyship and ensure leaders and teams are role modelling these approaches consistently.

Regularly consult with the community to get feedback.

- If we're doing things well in 6–12 months, what would we see, hear, and feel?
- How do our current approaches to inclusive and engagement support you to feel valued and your strengths recognised and built on?

Take a look at:

- [Community - Asset and strength based approaches](#)
- [Allyship](#)

3. Governance

- Undertake Regulation 17 training.
- Use your governance structure to discuss, challenge and find creative ways to achieve sustainability.

4. Reflect on your behaviour when you are effectively leading and managing the team and the service

- Think of examples of times when you role model professional standards, curiosity, openness, and respect.
- Which of the eight statements linked to managing services do you feel you model the most consistently? Which could you do more of or develop further?
- What does 'good' look like when managing and leading your service and how do you set that expectation of your leaders?

5. Try the 'Positive culture toolkit for adult social care' activities for managing services

- EXPECT Activity 2 - Policy and procedure review and Activity 3 - Including staff in setting workplace expectations
- DECIDE Activity 1 - Challenge or accept and Activity 3 - Challenging behaviour

[Explore the toolkit](#)

Improving services

How would you rate yourself against these principles?	Good	Adequate	Needs refreshing	New to me
Lead learning and development across all areas of responsibility to foster continuous growth				
Use data and evidence to drive ongoing improvement and inform strategic decisions				
Support and develop improvement leads, practice champions and digital innovators				
Apply the Digital Leadership Framework to guide ethical, inclusive technology adoption				
Plan and implement new technologies with clear rationale, tools, and training				
Regularly share clear updates on best practices to meet strategic and regulatory goals				
Champion co-production involving those most affected by service design				
Build strong partnerships and networks to share learning and embed good practice across services				
Promote a culture of safety through clear policies, risk reduction and open dialogue				
Encourage innovation by creating a safe, transparent environment for testing and learning				

Good management has a direct impact on staff engagement, performance, and retention. Services with strong, positive cultures are also more resilient in challenging times. As an operational manager, asking questions rather than jumping to answers shows that thinking and curiosity are valued. This helps people feel safe to share ideas, innovate, and try new ways to improve services.

Here are some development areas and resources to help you build your skills in this area:

1. Sharing best practice and engagement in co-production across networks

- Develop training, development activities and mentoring approaches to support improvement leads, practice champions and digital innovators to foster continuous improvement through co-production.
- Provide structures and opportunities that foster sharing of lessons, best practice and updates across teams and the wider community and system.
- Attend and participate in best practice networks.

2. Improvement through innovation, including digital innovation

- Research methods to promote and encourage innovation in services, including building capability, confidence and competence in digital innovation.

Take a look at:

- [Digital Skills Framework](#)

3. Risk reduction in social care

- Review the culture across teams and services. Does it promote safety, risk reduction and open dialogue without taking away from person centred, strengths based approaches to providing services?
- Explore the Level 4 Health and Safety qualifications from IOSH/NEBOSH.

4. Reflect on your behaviour when you are developing curiosity and an improvement mindset in your services

- Where do we already show curiosity? (For example, through good questions, learning from others, or exploring new ideas and data)
- What gets in the way of curiosity in our services and across the system we operate in? (For example, time pressure, assumptions, fear of looking uninformed, 'we've always done it this way')
- Do we regularly seek alternative views before making service level decisions? (For example, asking: who sees this differently? What assumptions are we making?)
- When was the last time curiosity improved an outcome for us?
- What's one small habit we could adopt to be more curious day-to-day and how can I promote this as an operational leader? (For example asking: what else? Pausing before solutions, inviting different views?)

5. Try the 'Positive culture toolkit for adult social care' activities for improving services

- ANALYSE Activity 3 - Influences on workplace culture
- EXPECT Activity 1 - Sharing success
- DO Activity 1 - Our lived culture walk and Activity 3 - Managing and inspiring positive behaviour
- FEEL Activity 3 - Self assess

[Explore the toolkit](#)

Delivering the strategy

How would you rate yourself against these principles?	Good	Adequate	Needs refreshing	New to me
Co-create practical strategic plans that match the vision and values for the short, medium and long term				
Apply organisational theory to assess readiness and shape effective strategies				
Use data and feedback to measure, monitor, evaluate and improve services				
Adapt strategic plans to changing circumstances while maintaining impact				
Identify and resolve strategic issues related to staffing, resources or processes				
Communicate the strategy and progress consistently across and beyond the organisation				
Celebrate achievements and address challenges with integrity and transparency				
Navigate political sensitivities and lead difficult conversations with compassion				
Collaborate with other service providers to deliver joined-up, personalised care				
Empower those most impacted to co-produce solutions, valuing lived experience				
Establish clear accountabilities and ensure delivery across all strategy elements				
Foster a compassionate, high-performing culture through support, mentoring and trust				

Implementing your organisation's strategy will bring changes that affect different people and services in different ways. As an operational manager, it's important to base direction on good evidence, not assumptions, so you can focus efforts, avoid conflicting demands, and make the best use of people's time.

Here are some development areas and resources to help you build your skills in this area:

1. Data management

- Review how you manage and use data to support the vision and strategy of your service and organisation.
- Check your Adult Social Care Workforce Data Set (ASC-WDS) account and see how your data compares. Ask: what needs to change for you?

2. Managing change and working together to build positive outcomes

When leading change, make sure your teams and those affected understand what is changing, why, when, and how it will impact staff and the people in your service.

- Reflect on how you led the change and how effectively you communicated and managed its impact.
- How effectively have you handled challenging situations and conversations to ensure people feel heard, but are also clear on the need for change?
- Read the blog: The truth about why people naturally resist change: hint - they don't

3. Developing the workforce

Research best practice in workforce development and develop a workforce strategy that reflects your service needs.

See the 'Developing your workforce' section of Skills for Care's website

4. Reflect on your behaviour when you're managing and communicating changes to people and delivering services

Think of a time when you found it challenging to manage or communicate changes to services to others.

- What was the situation/change?
- What did you find challenging in the situation or what did you avoid?
- What did you do well and how did you ensure others understood the impact of the changes on them?
- What did you learn and what could you have done differently to be more effective at managing and communicating the changes?

5. Try the 'Positive culture toolkit for adult social care' activities for delivering the strategy

- DO Activity 2 - You are making a difference
- FEEL Activity 4 - Listening to feedback to create positive change

Explore the toolkit