

**Aspire
Together.**

SUCCESS PROFILE

NHS Executive Director

Introducing NHS Executive Director Success Profiles

What is a 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 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 – e.g., 'Is this person ready for the Director of Strategy Performance and Planning role in this particular CCG'. To make specific appointment decisions, hiring managers will look in more detail at the specific role requirements and candidate fit to that role.

What will use of the Success Profile deliver for you?

- 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 will also support career development conversations with aspiring Executive Directors – you can help individuals understand the requirements for success and discuss their interest in a Director level role as well as the development they will need to enter the talent pool

Executive Director Role Context Cont.

The nature of 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 therefore must be increasingly 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 anyone will have a strength on every aspect of the Success Profile. We understand that we need different styles and types of leadership.

Executive Director Success Profile – Understanding the interrelationships

<p>Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrated behaviours▪ Relatively easy to test in an interview or observe on the job, with training to ensure objectivity<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Have the most direct impact on performance	<p>Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Demonstrated experiences from CV<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Very easy to test in an interview▪ Impacts performance insofar as they help individuals to develop Competencies and technical know-how
<p>Traits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Personality preferences, not behaviours<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 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	<p>Drivers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Motivation or underlying driver of behaviour<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Difficult to test in an interview▪ Impacts performance by determining in which roles the person will be able to fulfil their personal needs

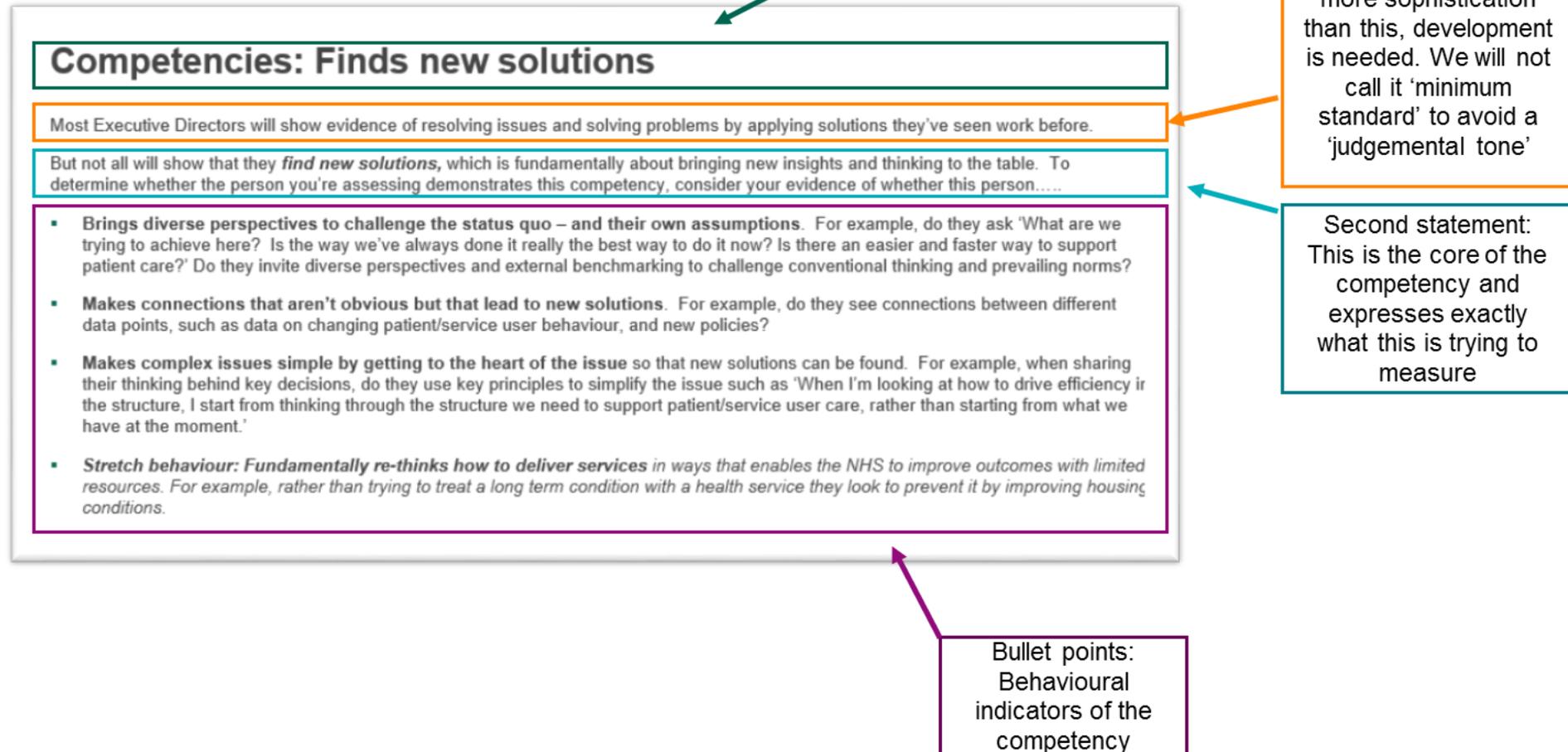
Please refer to the following page ‘Interpreting data’ which will provide further guidance.

Executive Director Success Profile – Understanding the interrelationships cont.

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

How to read the competencies



Competencies: 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 focussed 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?

Competencies: 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.

Competencies: 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 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?

Competencies: 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?

Competencies: 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 ones 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 apply 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?

Competencies: 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/services 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?

Competencies: 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.

Competencies: 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?

Competencies: 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?

Experiences

Each of the below experiences have 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/ leading 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 solvers. 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 which are underpinning the individual's behaviours day to day, 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.