

# Better Public Services

Report by the  
Public Services  
Leadership  
Taskforce





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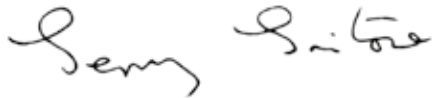
# Foreword

**This report sets out the recommendations of the Public Services Leadership Taskforce.**

The taskforce has held detailed discussions about the potential for the leaders of our public services to transform the productivity and outcomes of the services they lead. As well as reviewing a wide range of research, we commissioned a series of interviews with current and recent top leaders, to find out what they think we should learn from their experience of -the most senior roles in public life.

Our research suggests that the success of our public services depends, at least in part, on effective and collaborative leaders who can form strong partnerships across organisational boundaries. In this report, we set out how the new **Centre for Public Services Leadership** could create a programme and professional network for the emerging top leaders of our public services, to enhance the effectiveness of their collaborative leadership. Our recommendations are high-level because we know that getting the programme right will take time and need thorough user research. But we believe the centre's impact could mean our public services form new and powerful partnerships across the boundaries that define them, so they tackle tomorrow's challenges together.

A community of committed individuals has assisted with this project and I would like to extend the taskforce's collective gratitude for the expertise and passion they have brought to our task. We could not have done our work without them.



Sir Gerry Grimstone

# Executive summary



**Collaborative leadership**  
Management practice  
focused on leadership across  
functions and organisations.

The **Centre for Public Services Leadership** has the potential to transform the productivity and outcomes of our public services by creating a new home for collaborative leadership.

We recommend that the centre:

- creates a new **programme** for emerging top leaders, designed to enhance their collaborative leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours
- establishes a **professional network** for these leaders to support each other, share best practices and learn from the experience of others

## The Public Services Leadership Taskforce

In the 2017 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that government would set up the **Public Services Leadership Taskforce**. This taskforce explores what the new Centre for Public Services Leadership might offer leaders so they can be as effective as possible in the complex and challenging environment in which they operate.

As a Taskforce, we have:

- consulted a range of experts
- taken advice on public, private and third sector perspectives
- commissioned a literature review
- interviewed leaders of public services
- carried out preliminary market research.

This report sets out our recommendations.

In our discussions with leaders about what they find challenging, three primary themes have emerged.

1. The most difficult challenges faced by public services are complex and cross-cutting, so more effective collaboration between them is a source of considerable public value.
2. Some senior leaders feel very exposed by their new responsibilities, and are not sure where to turn for support. The right cross-service programme could give these leaders the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to fulfil their potential.
3. Networks between leaders are underdeveloped and there is demand for a mechanism for public services leaders to support each other, share practice and learn from experience.

## The Centre for Public Services Leadership

We examined different options for what government might do to deliver on these themes and found broad support for the core concept in this report: a new programme and professional network for the emerging top leaders of public services.

The **programme** would be a collaborative leadership offer for emerging top leaders – people within two years of potentially taking on principal executive responsibility in an organisation. The programme would involve context-led experiential training and opportunities to develop their leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours. We recognise that it will take considerable user research to achieve the right programme, but the following themes illustrate the opportunities here:

- understanding how services impact users and their communities (including other services)
- better fluency in the relationships between leadership, innovation, technology and productivity
- cross-services leadership

A digitally-enabled **professional network** would offer delegates access to practice-sharing opportunities, pooled understanding of new technologies and other innovations and the personal support they need to handle tough environments. They could also source mentoring from suitable and experienced senior leaders.

This is an ambitious project and success would mean continuous improvement and a robust approach to testing the case for change. We therefore recommend that the centre is formally evaluated after three years, and establishes a small research capability to monitor its work and deepen our understanding of the causal relationships between leadership and productivity.

The centre would be based in the Cabinet Office, but would develop a distinct identity and recognisable brand, similar to AcademiWales or the Infrastructure Projects Authority. This brand would be crucial to establishing credibility as public-services wide offer. An external oversight board would be appointed by ministers to keep the centre focused on its mission to improve the collaborative leadership of public services, represent the wider public services interests, and ensure that the highest professional standards and governance are maintained.



# Introduction

The Public Services Leadership Taskforce was set up by government under the chairmanship of Sir Gerry Grimstone to explore what the new Centre for Public Services Leadership might offer leaders. It will help leaders be as effective as possible in the complex and challenging environment in which they operate.

The taskforce's membership is set out in appendix A.

As a taskforce, we have drawn on input from a range of leaders and leadership experts from all three sectors. We have commissioned research from the Behavioural Insights Team on the link between leadership and public sector productivity, and Deloitte's point of view on the leadership market. The Behavioural Insights Team executive summary, including key findings, are included as appendix B. The findings from our market research, supported by Deloitte, are included as appendix C. Both are referenced throughout the text and the full Behavioural Insights Team report is published separately.<sup>1</sup>

This report is structured as follows:

- **Part 1: What is the case for change?**
- **Part 2: Who should the centre be designed to support?**
- **Part 3: What should the centre's offer contain?**
- **Part 4: How should the centre's offer be delivered?**



Part 1:

# What is the case for change?



**The taskforce believes** that public services leadership needs to collaborate effectively across organisational boundaries. Effective leaders are important to unlock the efficiencies and innovation required for services to keep pace with the changing demands upon them.

The people who lead our public services are committed to transforming those services and making lives better and our society needs those people to do their work well. Whether dealing with the pressures of a growing and aging population, or preparing for the vague realities of a future where machines do some human tasks, the leaders of these services must prepare for change.

Part 1:

- discusses research into the importance of leadership in helping services keep pace with complex or increasing demands
- introduces the personal barriers they face to achieving these goals
- outlines the case for change

## The value of effective leadership and innovation

The most difficult challenges faced by our public services are complex and cross-cutting. Increasing efficiency alone will not be enough to tackle these challenges, nor for public services to keep pace with the continuing pressures they face to do more with less. In his review of public value, Sir Michael Barber makes this point about the work of central government, but it equally applies to all public services:

*“...continuous improvement – marginal gains, if you prefer – and disruptive innovation should not be optional extras but embedded in the way business gets done.”*<sup>2</sup>

**Sir Michael Barber**

Citizens rightly expect the most senior public servants to lead these developments and this expectation is supported by the Behavioural Insights Team review of academic literature, which finds that effective leadership has an important role to play in driving outcomes, although it is important to recognise other factors matter too:

*“Correlational and causal studies find a positive organisational impact from the presence of effective public service leaders.”*<sup>3</sup>

### **BIT Report**

The review also found that effective public service leadership is associated with improved organisational productivity and employee wellbeing. Effective public service leaders:

- drive performance
- set clear expectations of their team
- establish a shared vision for the organisation
- work collaboratively internally and across the community
- embody integrity and authenticity
- create a culture that sustains productivity and wellbeing

These findings appear in the Executive Summary to the Behavioural Insights Team research, at appendix B.

## What do leaders say?

Our research asked top leaders what we could learn about the challenges of leadership from their experiences. A common response was that the isolation of the top role, particularly not knowing where to go for support, can mean its challenges become insurmountable barriers to achievement. We consider this an important theme and worked with leaders to understand these barriers.

**Isolation:** at the top of the organisation people feel very exposed, for example, dealing with high-profile media contact for the first time. They may also have no-one to ask for advice on their new levels of responsibility.

**Need more expertise:** being accountable for the whole organisation will mean overseeing a range of expert functions. They rely on senior expert teams for advice, but must also supervise these teams responsibly and this brings challenges if they have not had relevant experience in the past.

**Strategic complexity:** the leader and the organisation are trying to achieve strategic outcomes that they can only partly influence. Networks between top leaders across services are under-developed, which means that all too often they are operating in isolation to solve problems they may well share with other organisations. It may be very difficult for new CEOs to achieve goals that have been an important part of their personal drive to reach the top role.

These barriers prevent top leaders from shaping an organisation or working across boundaries to partner with other organisations who share their goals. This limits their effectiveness. They can also mean that leaders spend less time in post, and the perception that leaders find it very hard to achieve their full potential may deter people from applying for the top jobs altogether.<sup>4</sup> Putting the right kind of support in place would help leaders overcome these barriers and achieve more in those roles: increased effectiveness, better tenure and potentially an improved field of applications.

## The case for change

Public services are more complex than ever and face increasing pressures, for example a growing and aging population, and preparing for the uncertain consequences of changing social, cultural, economic and technology contexts. Government, on behalf of citizens, must expect the quality of these services to do more than keep up with these changes and pressures. They must improve.

The taskforce believes that improving the most senior leadership capability could help services meet these challenges. The top leaders can shape organisational cultures to pursue efficiencies and innovate across boundaries. The academic literature supports the theory that leadership has an impact, even if other factors are important too.

But this is a tough job and the right support is not always available. People who take up the challenge might not fulfil their potential, and this diminishes their effectiveness and outputs.

Effective leadership interventions can make a real difference to the value leadership brings to public services. We think the Centre for Public Services Leadership can offer leaders the opportunity to achieve their potential and unlock the future value of public services.



# Part 2: Who should the centre support?



**The taskforce recommend** that the centre design its offer around the unique challenges of transitioning from being part of a senior leadership team to becoming the person with principal executive responsibility for a public service organisation.

We have considered carefully the right group for whom to design this offer. Public services already provide excellent training through their respective academies (the Civil Service Leadership Academy, or the NHS Leadership Academy). Unlike in Wales and Scotland, the UK does not have a mechanism for focusing on collaborative leadership training across public services at the most senior levels.

Part 2 discusses the gap in support for people moving into the top leadership roles within organisations. It then brings out the unique qualities of the transition that the centre should focus on.

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## Leadership in Wales and Scotland

### Wales

For the past decade, AcademiWales have led on building leadership excellence in the Welsh public sector, focusing on leadership behaviour and workplace culture. AcademiWales hold frequent conferences, events and short development programmes to gain outreach and improve leadership in Wales.

### Scotland

The Scottish Leaders Forum creates strong collaboration across public services. Their method of hosting networking opportunities is an effective way to ensure collaboration across public services. They provide a genuine forum of public service leaders from across the public, private and third sectors to engage directly with Scottish ministers. This allows them to agree a shared vision for public service transformation in Scotland and to work together to identify and address common goals and challenges.

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## 6 levels of leadership

To simplify comparing leadership levels across all public services, we use this generic set of 6 levels of leadership.

<b>Level 1</b>	<b>First line managers:</b> People in their first management role
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Mid-level management</b> Overseeing several first-line managers
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Senior managers</b> Responsible for a whole function
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>First level executive</b> Cross-functional responsibility
<b>Level 5</b>	<b>Senior executive</b> Overseeing a set of functions and managing a system
<b>Level 6</b>	<b>Chief executive officer</b> The person with principal executive responsibility within an organisation.

### Why focus on the most senior leadership?

Most public services have academies, colleges or other institutions that offer training in the fundamentals of management for leadership levels 1-3. They may also have expanded offers to support executive development at levels 5 and 6. These organisations are already helping leaders to meet the demands of cross-functional\* leadership and to work with increasing levels of ambiguity, and we are clear that the new centre should not duplicate this excellent work.

\*A cross-function project would involve several different functions within an organisation – i.e. finance, IT and HR working together on a new expenses reporting system.

However, there is no centralised offer focused on enhancing collaborative leadership across services and giving enough context-led opportunities to gain experience in the unique challenges faced by those transitioning into the most senior leadership roles. Appendix C outlines findings from the research we conducted, supported by Deloitte, which explains this gap in more detail.

### What is special about this career transition?

The Behavioural Insights Team asked top public services leaders what they find most challenging about their roles:

*“Leaders emphasised the challenges of increased decision-making power, higher accountability, the risks of media scrutiny, navigating governance issues and the need to make more connections across the community when shifting to a chief executive role.”<sup>5</sup>*

This reflects our wider conversations, which found a gap in leadership support at the point of transition from level 5 (working as part of the senior leadership team) to level 6 (becoming the person with principal executive responsibility within the organisation).





We examined this more closely, and identified five key challenges that define this transition and are closely relatable to the barriers to achievement discussed earlier in Part 1.

- the obligation to work effectively with an overseeing body (board, council etc.)
- the lack of line manager support means you need a high degree of resilience
- the visibility and exposure to all forms of media
- the need to set organisation culture
- the requirement to work across services to achieve success

These five factors together define a unique transition point, so designing an integrated offer would be an effective opportunity to help emerging top leaders achieve their potential in these roles. This recommendation takes us on to the basic framework for a cross-service offer that we think can lead to improved performance and productivity.

Part 3:

# What should the centre's offer contain?



**The taskforce recommends** the programme should be a collaborative leadership offer for emerging top leaders – people within two years of potentially taking on principal executive responsibility within an organisation. The programme would involve context-led experiential training and opportunities to enhance the leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours of delegates.

**The taskforce also recommends** a digitally-enabled network so delegates can meet up remotely, access practice-sharing opportunities, pool exploration of technologies and other innovations and find the personal support they need to handle tough environments. They could also source mentoring from suitable and experienced senior leaders.

For the centre to be successful, its offer must make a material difference to the professional competence of those who participate. It will need to energise and activate those attending, create good course content and help them implement what they have learnt back into their organisations. We have given careful thought to the approach that should be adopted, although detailed content design will be the responsibility of those appointed to carry this work forward if our recommendations are accepted.

Our approach has two main components: context-driven structural learning and the creation of a high-quality network to build and sustain the value of this programme.

## A context-driven approach

The case for change assumes that the centre will help emerging top leaders find new and unconventional ways to expand value across public services. These methods can then shape or re-shape the culture of their organisation to align around these new ways of working. Finding the right offer to build their confidence to do this is challenging, and the Deloitte insight on the distinction between content- and context-driven approaches is worth noting.

### **What is the difference between a content-driven and a context-driven approach?**

A content-driven approach offers participants models and concepts that can improve their leadership, but without offering opportunities to relate them to the specific contexts where they can apply the learning. Such programmes can clearly educate and inform.

We believe, however, that a context-driven approach is more appropriate for developing the experience required for a leader to understand how to drive culture change across public services. For example, by using a place-based approach to organise complex, cross-boundary systems and achieve better integration with other services, or directly influencing the freedom of the front line to innovate and improve productivity and the user experience.



This means:

- putting leaders (individually or as an already formed diverse, cross-service group) into a challenging context that requires them to find a cross-service solution.
- helping these leaders to see the cross-system leadership challenge within this.
- facilitating their behaviour change so that they adopt a new way of working, and hone their leadership skills along the way.

The case studies at appendix C illustrate this approach further.

## Programme content

Our research, supported by Deloitte, also looked at roughly 60 leadership programmes, finding a high degree of variance in the leadership support offered, even within individual public services.

The research also uncovered two significant gaps:

- existing courses do not provide leaders with exposure to the complex and relevant demands that these leaders will face when in post, and
- there is not a strong focus on driving new and unconventional ways of working across diverse contexts.

The taskforce sees an opportunity here to create a new offer for emerging top public service leaders, tailored to the complex demands of their roles and focused on unlocking value by finding new and unconventional ways of working.

We recognise that it will take considerable user research to achieve the right programme, but the following themes illustrate the opportunities we believe could be explored here.

## Theme 1: Understanding service impact through data analysis and user experience

This theme brings together two different approaches to analysing a system, so that leaders can explore a broad range of solutions to the challenges they face.

It uses data tools to understand how a service affects people throughout its delivery system, and matches this with a ‘seeing is believing’ opportunity to understand the diverse range of perspectives offered by staff and users.

## Theme 2: Leadership, Innovation, Technology and Productivity

Solving the shared problems of tomorrow means having the patience to experiment with new approaches, some of which must be allowed to fail. Effective leaders can determine the role they want to play in shaping the culture of their organisation so that it innovates confidently in order to find value.

## Theme 3: Cross-services leadership

The complex challenges that public services face defy the boundaries of existing organisations. As discussed in Part 1, we believe there is much value to be unlocked by working across those boundaries.

This theme would offer learning experiences to help overcome the rigidity of existing structures and to improve outcomes by collaborating across services.

### A programme that sustains its impact in the delegate’s organisation

Beyond the context-led approach, the centre must be confident that its programme will make a sustained difference when its delegates get back to their organisations.

*“Despite evidence they can work, leadership programmes fail when organisations underestimate the importance of leaders’ internal relationships and the organisation’s culture. In particular:*

- *they distance the intervention from the real problems faced by the organisation;*
- *they do not grapple with the difficulty of behaviour change and closed mindsets; and*

- *they do not test and adapt programmes based on evaluating what is working.”*<sup>6</sup>

The taskforce has heard some imaginative expansions to the centre’s work that could help them embed their experience back at their home organisation. Practical examples include:

- inviting members of the senior leadership team to attend some component of the programme (perhaps building on the cross-services leadership theme by inviting relevant leaders from the delegates’ network)

- evaluating the programme success by setting a strategic leadership project, with the delegate expected to report on this project to the governing body of their organisation

## The need for a network

Right from the earliest roundtable discussions and throughout the consultation, we have heard that an active network would be an excellent way to build on and sustain the value of the centre.

Leaders value network elements above other types of support (figure 1). A healthy network can provide practice sharing opportunities, pool understanding about new technologies and other innovations and offer individuals the personal support they need to handle tough environments. Put simply, there is real value in being able to ask ‘am I doing this right?’

Deloitte’s point of view suggests how different forms of networking can be integrated with different types of support on offer.

**Action learning sets:** solving real world problems and then reflecting on the results with a group (the set).

**Alumni networks:** a continued association of graduates from a programme.

**Broader network access:** delegates join established networks which include a wider group of associates than the programme delegates.

**Peer consultation and mentoring:** opportunities to talk to people currently, or significant experienced, in similar roles.

**Place-based networks:** organised at different geographical levels – local, regional, national, international or online.

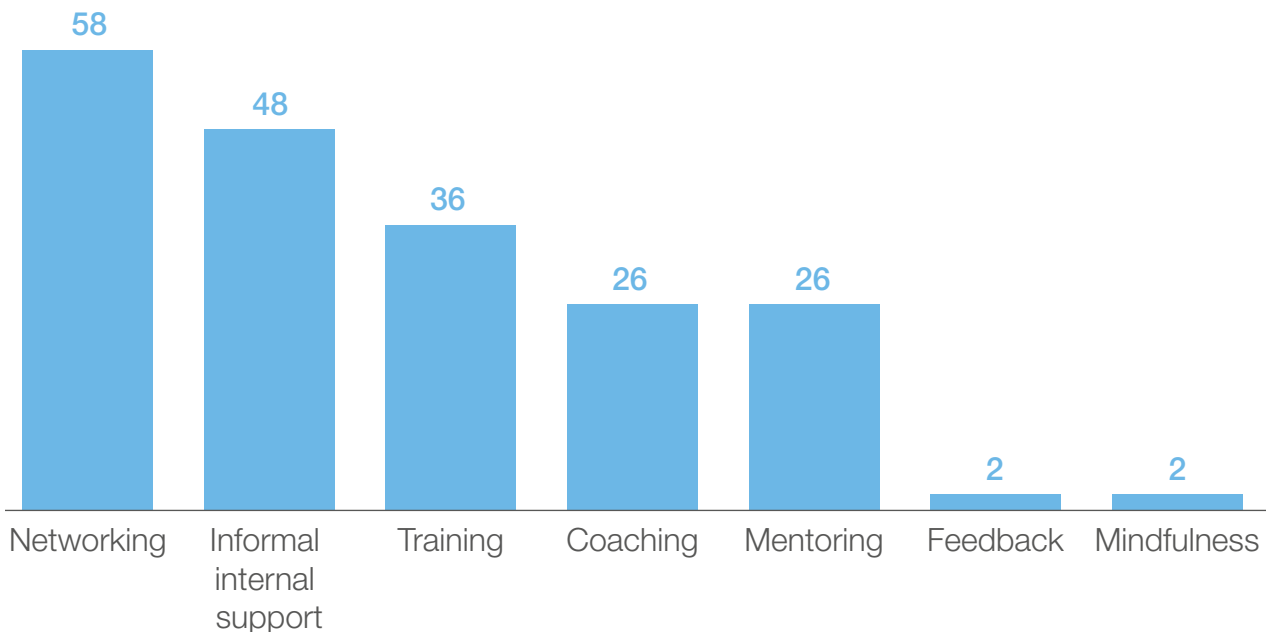


Figure 1: the support leaders reported valuing in interviews (%)<sup>7</sup>



As well as being a powerful contributor in its own right, a well-functioning network will help foster formal and informal mentoring opportunities and we believe this will be a positive development.

Our soundings show clearly that ‘leaders value having someone who is outside of their organisation who they can be open and honest with, who will not [negatively] impact their career.’<sup>8</sup>

We also heard that mentoring programmes can add considerable value if they are properly implemented, for example as part of the network offer. The Behavioural Insights Team research uncovered some of the value individuals place on mentoring

but also noted that the effectiveness of this intervention will need to be monitored carefully, along with all other aspects of the programme.

*“I have a mentor and I find that incredibly helpful. I think with the accountability gap that quite often happens in the public sector, where as I said, non-exec boards and local councillors are not necessarily best placed to hold very experienced leaders in big complex jobs to account. Then mentoring becomes even more important.”<sup>9</sup>*

**Chief Executive of a leading charity**

Part 4:

# How should the centre's offer be delivered?





## The taskforce recommends that

- The centre commissions from the existing market where possible, but uses its expertise to fill gaps where they exist.
- Every programme run by the centre should have a diverse and inclusive composition drawn from right across the range of public services.
- A powerful digital and administrating enabler will be required for the right network to grow around the programme, incorporating a mentoring capability.
- Four cohorts a year each of around 30 people attend the programme. Programmes will run for a year including 3 short residential courses and a major national networking event should be held each year.
- The centre should fund and develop a small research capability to evaluate and improve its programme as well as analyse its impact on public services productivity and effectiveness.
- The centre needs a recognisable brand and independent identity, like the AcademiWales or Major Projects Authority. A supervisory board would be appointed by ministers to keep the centre focused on its mission, represent the wider public services interests and ensure that the highest professional standards and governance are maintained.

## Commissioning approach

The centre would be a commissioning and curating body, which looks to the existing market to provide its course content where possible, but would not hesitate to fill gaps where they exist.

The centre would have strong links to academia, think-tank and business school organisations. Close, effective partnering with the sector academies that already support leadership of public services (such as the NHS Academy or College of Policing) is essential. Because its emphasis will be on cross-service training, the centre will collaborate, and not compete, with those sectoral academies and organisations.

For the initial three year pilot period, we propose that the centre's small administrative structure should be located within the Cabinet Office. Its activities will be hosted at a variety of locations across the UK.

## Diversity and the cross-service promise

Access to the centre's facilities will be by application and approval. Achieving diversity is an important part of the centre's public service ethos. Our programme must have roots in the communities it serves. We recognise that outreach work may be required to bring people onto the programme from a wide range of backgrounds, from local, regional and national organisations and from those delivering public services in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We will also reach out to international course attendees and for expert input to the programme and network.

The primary qualification for attendance will be an expectation that the individual is likely to succeed to a major leadership role within a two-year period. Prospective delegates will be expected to exhibit strong motivation and a desire to access all that the centre has to offer.

The centre should hold a national event at least once each year, which brings together a wide group of influencers, delivery partners, experienced leaders and other associates. We would hope that senior ministers and leaders of public services professions would see value to be gained by attending.

## A digitally-enabled network

The taskforce recommends that the centre sets up a powerful digital and administrating enabler for a strong, coherent network to develop around its programmes.

This network would facilitate communication between delegates and with subject matter experts and provide access to curated content. The network would become a professional hub for public services leadership and bring in a mentoring structure to help emerging top leaders manage their transition.

The centre could also use this network to explore how the UK can drive international knowledge and practice sharing around improving public services leadership.

## Programme structure

The professional programme would be a one year commitment to attend a series of short (three day) residential courses, with around thirty people invited onto each programme. We recommend running three programmes each year. Between courses, delegates would be expected to work on projects, undertake some distant learning, and participate in the programme's network.

The programme is for people who are expected to move to a top job within the next two years. To maximise impact, delegates may also include people who have already started working at the top level but had not had previous access to the benefits the centre will offer.

Delegates would be expected to commit to the full course, with their organisation paying a marginal contribution to its costs. Research has shown this can be an effective way to secure personal commitment.

## The centre's research capability

For the centre to become an enduring part of our public services landscape, it must show it can improve the outcomes and productivity of public services in the UK. We recommend that the centre has a dedicated budget for its three-year pilot period, with a formal evaluation at the end of that time to ensure that it is achieving its objectives and adding value.

It will need to establish a small research capability to monitor and evaluate its work during this period. This capability will provide feedback to enable continuous improvement of the programmes. Critically, this research will also have to investigate the external impact that the centre is having on public services, which will deepen our understanding of the causal mechanisms between leadership and productivity.

## Governance

The centre would be based in the Cabinet Office, with a distinct identity and recognisable brand, similar to AcademiWales or the Major Projects Authority.

The centre's executive would be overseen by a supervisory board, appointed by ministers to represent the wider public services interests and ensure that the highest professional standards and governance are maintained. The board will keep the centre focused on its mission to improve the collaborative leadership of public services, and oversee its strategy and delivery as well as its research agenda and evaluation. The chair of the board will report regularly to ministers on the centre's activities.

# Part 5:

## Conclusion

The taskforce research and discussions have led us to believe that the top leaders of our public services are looking for a new offer: something that positions them to achieve their goals and fulfil their potential in public service life.

Effective leadership makes a real difference by improving the quality of our public services and the value for money that they give. Doing this means finding new ways to solve problems and work across traditional organisational boundaries.

We believe the new Centre for Public Services Leadership can play a crucial role by offering the most aspirational public servants a collaborative leadership programme and network that they can use to shape our services and provide enduring value to the people of this country.

We recommend our conclusions to ministers, with the hope that they give rise to a speedy adoption.



# Appendix A: Taskforce membership



**Chairman: Sir Gerry Grimstone**

Chairman of Standard Life Aberdeen,  
and Chairman of Barclays Bank

**Dame Inga Beale**

Chief Executive Officer Lloyds of London

**Deborah Cadman**

OBE Chief Exec. West Midlands  
Combined Authority

**Peter Cheese**

Chief Executive Officer of the Chartered  
Institute of Personnel and Development

**Tony Danker**

Productivity Leadership Group

**George Freeman MP**

Conservative MP

**Andrew Haldenby**

Co-founder of Reform (2001),  
director since May 2005

**David Halpern**

Behavioural Insights Team

**Sandra Kerr**

Race Equality Director,  
Business in the Community

**Julian McCrae**

Institute for Government

**Steve McGuirk**

Chairman of Warrington and Halton  
Hospitals Foundation Trust

**Charles Mead**

Director at YSC Consulting

**Dame Julie Moore**

Chief Executive University Hospitals  
Birmingham

**Paul Nowak**

Deputy General Secretary TUC

**Richard Nugee**

Chief of Defence People

**Professor Dame Alison Peacock**

Chief Executive at the Chartered College  
of Teaching

**Gillian Stamp**

Bios

**Sara Thornton**

CBE and QPM  
Head of National Police Chiefs' Council

**Sara Weller**

CBE non-executive director at  
Lloyds Banking Group

# Appendix B: Behavioural Insights Team



## Executive summary

Public service leaders are accountable for delivering vital services, adapting organisations to change and achieving organisational outcomes. Their job is not easy. The scale of decisions, changing technology, demands for efficiency, growing demand for better services and the pressures of an aging population place them under considerable stress.

In Autumn 2017, the government announced the creation of a taskforce to advise on the role, remit and responsibilities of a new Centre for Public Services Leadership. The Centre will aim to further develop leadership in UK public services.

The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) was commissioned to conduct a rapid literature review and 50 interviews with public service leaders on effective leadership. The Centre for Public Services Leadership taskforce requested BIT conduct a short research project to:

- understand whether leadership impacts public service performance
- provide a clear definition of effective public service leaders
- understand what we know (and don't know) about effective public service leaders
- provide a view on the support that leads to the development of public service leaders

The literature and interviews led to five conclusions.

### 1. **Effective public service leadership is associated with improved organisational productivity and employee wellbeing.**

Correlational and causal studies find a positive organisational impact from the presence of effective public service leaders.<sup>10</sup> Critiques question the link between leadership and productivity especially after controlling for context.<sup>11</sup> However, we conclude the weight of evidence, including randomised controlled trials focused on improving management and leadership, suggests the presence of effective public service leaders is associated with improved organisational performance and employee wellbeing. For example, a large observational study finds a standard deviation increase in a school's management practice score (which includes leadership aspects) is associated with an increase in examination-based pupil outcomes.<sup>12</sup>

The real questions relate to when leaders are most effective, and how effective developing leaders is compared to other interventions that could improve productivity. We suggest leaders are a core requirement whenever significant change is needed in an organisation. A report on school leadership claims that no documented instances of school turnarounds exist without the catalyst of leadership.<sup>13</sup> In terms of relative effectiveness, leadership matters. One study of a services firm found replacing a poor team leader with a good one increased productivity by 13%<sup>14</sup> while a structured programme of peer learning for leaders in the private sector increased revenue by 8.1%.<sup>15</sup>



Despite evidence on the association between leaders and organisational performance, public services operate in dynamic systems influenced by wider factors such as governance, pay and reward, learning and development and recruiting.<sup>16</sup> We conclude these factors are necessary but, like leadership, insufficient conditions on their own for sustained organisational success. They must be combined with leadership, especially during periods of change, to help public services perform.

## **2. Effective public service leaders drive performance, set clear expectations of their team, establish a shared vision for the organisation, work collaboratively internally and across the community, embody integrity and authenticity and create a culture that sustains productivity and wellbeing.**

A core finding from the literature is that no dominant framework exists for defining effective public service leadership.<sup>17 18</sup> For example, within a sample of 129 articles, more than 20 theories of leadership were identified.<sup>19</sup> Further, the literature relies on the North American context and predominantly male samples.<sup>20</sup>

Despite definitional and sample problems, a broad approach to public service leadership does emerge in the literature. This suggests effective public service leaders drive performance, set clear expectations of their team, establish a shared vision for the organisation, work collaboratively internally and across the community, and embody integrity and authenticity.<sup>21</sup> These styles and behaviours are informed by an overall culture that sustains productivity and wellbeing.<sup>22</sup>

Table 1 shows the leadership styles and behaviours that emerge from the literature. The literature and interviews suggest effective leaders adapt their style and behaviour to suit the context of their organisation. Analysis on UK headteachers, for instance, found heads of high achieving schools demonstrated multiple leadership styles while heads from 'special measures' schools focus on a single transactional approach.<sup>23</sup>

Behaviours that drive performance, ensure clear expectations and create a clear vision are most tested in the literature – to positive effect. Evidence for newly defined leadership behaviours, such as working across systems, is emerging but impressive. In a recent example, a community partnership between the health service, police and local government in Cardiff led to a significant reduction in violent injury in the community.<sup>24</sup>

While table 1 offers a useful framework for developing a broad leadership approach, a general weakness of the public leadership literature is it often leaves practitioners confused about the specific steps for leadership success.<sup>25</sup>

At a more practical level, Professor Robert Wood suggests four ways leaders engage and influence organisations to achieve goals: what they do, what they say, how they establish systems and processes and how they define culture and teamwork.<sup>26</sup> This, as an example, could offer a more practical guide for a leader when combined with table 1. Further, observational evidence suggests there may be specific habits and skills of effective public service leaders. An unpublished analysis of more than 150 headteachers in the US suggests having three individuals who act as 'lifelines' during challenges and taking time to renew (and turn off the phone at the end of a day) are associated with longevity in position.<sup>27</sup>



Leadership style	Example behaviours
 <p><b>Drives performance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on performance and results</li> <li>• Puts in place clear plans for staffing, processes, reporting and budgeting</li> <li>• Creates high expectations for performance</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Ensures clear expectations, rewards performance and monitors mistakes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on team and giving them the tools they need</li> <li>• Ensures structured team processes to manage time constraints and efficiency</li> <li>• Rewards achievement and monitors mistakes</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sets a shared vision and future direction while inspiring the team to achieve change</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets and articulates vision and future direction</li> <li>• Models expected behaviours</li> <li>• Coaches and develops individuals and teams</li> <li>• Helps team find meaning in their work</li> <li>• Seeks new ways of working and thinking</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Works across the community and shares power between and within organisations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides teams with the means to self-manage</li> <li>• Shares power internally and externally</li> <li>• Co-operates with other actors in the community</li> <li>• De-emphasises the role of leader and individuals to focus on the wider network</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Embodies integrity and authenticity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays close attention to the intent of individuals, the proper means for doing good and appropriate ends</li> <li>• Demonstrates integrity showing honesty, trustworthiness, fairness and conscientiousness</li> <li>• Shows vulnerability and takes time to know and manage themselves</li> </ul>

Table 1: Effective public service leadership and associated behaviours

A correlational study of 411 leaders of UK academies finds specific skills and experiences such as economics degrees and time in the private sector are associated with better headteachers.<sup>28</sup> Given this emerging evidence we suggest, while

acknowledging the diversity of the public service, the Centre for Public Services Leadership could experiment with building, and evaluating, a toolkit of the specific habits and skills of effective public service leaders.

**3. Leadership interventions can work but they must account for context, offer practical insights and focus on behaviour change. They should also be evaluated to make sure they work in the context of the UK public service.**

Table 2 summarises interventions with good evidence in the literature, generally including rigorous correlational studies and at least two large randomised controlled trials in a generalisable context.

There is directional evidence on the positive impact of mentoring, coaching, mindfulness training and senior team training, especially on individual outcomes, as shown in table 3. More evidence is required for their impact on leadership and organisational performance while the underlying analysis would benefit from further rigorous correlational studies and randomised

controlled trials. While an attempt is made to delineate interventions, it is likely any programme will combine elements of all areas explored in tables 2 and 3 to maximise success.

Despite evidence they can work, leadership programmes fail when organisations<sup>29</sup>:

- underestimate the importance of the leaders internal relationships and the organisation’s culture;
- distance the intervention from the real problems faced by the organisation;
- do not grapple with the difficulty of behaviour change and closed mindsets; and
- do not test and adapt programmes based on evaluating what is working.

The Centre for Public Services Leadership must have a clear plan in each of these four areas to succeed.

Intervention	Description
<b>Leadership development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership training with an emphasis on overall development, a strong evidence-based curriculum, and implemented well within the context and culture of the organisation is associated with better organisational performance</li> </ul>
<b>Peer learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured peer learning among leaders – where leaders meet one another to actively share lessons and challenges from their experiences in formalised meetings – increases productivity in the private sector</li> <li>• Causal evidence is required to understand specific impact of peer learning in UK public services</li> </ul>
<b>Feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management and feedback is associated with increased presence of leadership in public service</li> <li>• Feedback from beneficiaries enhances the impact of leadership performance</li> <li>• Feedback can backfire if focused on weaknesses – caution is needed</li> <li>• Further evidence is required to understand best methods of feedback to improve leadership in the UK public service</li> </ul>

Table 2: Good observational and causal studies of intervention

**4. Public service leaders want the Centre for Public Services Leadership to act as a central hub for evidence on best-practice leadership and involve peer learning alongside training and development.**

Leaders emphasised the challenges of increased decision making power, higher accountability, the risks of media scrutiny, navigating governance issues and the need to make more connections across the community when shifting to a chief executive role. For support, it was felt specific leadership programmes already exist in each service but they lack co-ordination and do not adequately share best practice. Interviews suggested there could be a central role for cross-service

networking and peer learning (mentioned by 52% of interviewees), training and development (40%) and holding evidence and case studies on best-practice leadership (30%). A small minority also called for ways to demonstrate skills (for example, through a certificate) and better signposting of existing provision.

**5. In summary, our review of the evidence and 50 interviews suggests a gap for a programme of cross-service, evidence-based leadership interventions that are rigorously evaluated in the context of UK public services.**

Intervention	Description
<b>Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring programmes can increase profits in the private sector</li> <li>• Mentoring is likely to work better when targeted at less experienced leaders</li> <li>• Causal evidence is required to understand specific impact of mentoring in public services</li> </ul>
<b>Coaching</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak meta-analysis finds positive association between executive coaching and enhanced leadership</li> <li>• Causal evidence is required to understand specific impact of coaching in UK public services</li> </ul>
<b>Mindfulness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness training is associated with improved individual outcomes such as lower stress and propensity for burn-out</li> <li>• More evidence is required on impact of mindfulness training on leadership and organisational performance</li> </ul>
<b>Senior team development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observational studies show teams are more important than star performers for organisational performance</li> <li>• Possible leader training and development programmes should include team development</li> <li>• Causal evidence is required to understand impact of team development on leadership and organisational performance</li> </ul>

Table 3: State of academic evidence on interventions to develop leaders

# Appendix C: Review of existing leadership development provision



## Findings

The overarching research question that drove this review of existing leadership provision is: 'is there provision that already exists in the marketplace that meets the need of the Centre for Public Services Leadership?' Our finding was that there is **no single offer that directly meets all of the centre's requirements**.

There were four additional core findings that were identified from the market review.

1	There were a number of programmes that offered a broad range of skill development content, which the cohort may need access to, in order to ready themselves for their step-up.
2	Some programmes had built successful networks, and feedback was that the 'power' of these networks added significant value.
3	The majority of programmes were focused on building broad leadership skills, whereas the Centre programme's ambition is to drive new and differentiating ways of working.
4	The majority of programmes tend not to expose leaders to sufficiently complex and relevant demands that the centre's cohort will face when in-post.

### **There is no single offer that directly meets the centre's requirements.**

Taking the four principles that narrowed the scope of the review from 60+ to 26 programmes, we were able to look at the

offerings in terms of their alignment to the centre's cohort and purpose (see appendix for detailed table).

The insights from this analysis that led to this conclusion were as follows.

- There were 26 programmes out of the 60+ that were broadly aligned to the centre's cohort and purpose.
- Overall, the programmes had greater alignment to the centre's cohort than the purpose, but no single offer directly met centre's requirement.
- Nine programmes had notably close alignment to the centre's cohort. Attendees on these programmes were top-level leaders, and a proportion of attendees were from across Public Services (for an explanation of why Public Service representation was important, see the Methodology of this report). Because these nine programmes attracted leaders from across public services, this made their alignment to the centre's cohort greater than public service academies.
- Overall programmes showed lower alignment to the centre's purpose, because they did not a) provide leaders with exposure to sufficiently complex and relevant demands that these leaders will face when in post, and/or b) show strong focus on driving new and unconventional ways of working across diverse contexts. However, their alignment to the centre's purpose is helped by the broad range of skills which the programmes covered. Therefore, there is sufficient provision for specific skills development if this is identified as a requirement by the centre, or individual leaders.

The above insights will now be expanded in the section that follows, which details the four core review findings.

**1. There were a number of programmes that offered a broad range of skill development content, which the cohort may need access to.**

The bottom-up analysis of the 26 senior leadership development programmes that were broadly aligned to the centre’s cohort and purpose, led to a list of nine skills (also commonly referred to as capabilities) which were commonly targeted across these programmes.

Skills	Description
<b>Providing vision and direction</b>	Setting and communicating long-term strategy to shape the service and industry landscape
<b>Inspirational leadership</b>	Growing internal and external reputation as a significant business leader in the sector
<b>Strategically managing resources</b>	Making judgements on what will grow the value of the business
<b>Building talent</b>	Building a strong bench and succession for the executive board and C-suite
<b>Driving change and innovation</b>	Creating a culture which fosters innovation and change
<b>Influencing across systems</b>	Using political skills and networking to gain external support and backing
<b>Collaborating across systems</b>	Establishing business to business (cross-system) partnerships
<b>Fostering inclusion</b>	Putting inclusion into practice throughout the organisation (such that people and groups are treated fairly, uniqueness is valued, and diverse thinking encouraged)
<b>Executing through others</b>	Holding top leaders accountable for delivering strategic goals

## Core leadership skills

Leadership style	Example behaviours
 <p><b>Drives performance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on performance and results</li> <li>• Puts in place clear plans for staffing, processes, reporting and budgeting</li> <li>• Creates high expectations for performance</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Ensures clear expectations, rewards performance and monitors mistakes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on team and gives them the tools they need</li> <li>• Ensures structured team processes to manage time constraints and efficiency</li> <li>• Rewards achievement and monitors mistakes</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sets a shared vision and future direction whilst inspiring the team to achieve change</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets and articulates vision and future direction</li> <li>• Models expected behaviours</li> <li>• Coaches and develops individuals and teams</li> <li>• Helps team find meaning in their work</li> <li>• Seeks new ways of working and thinking</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Works across the community and shares power between and within organisations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides teams with the means to self-manage</li> <li>• Shares power internally and externally</li> <li>• Co-operates with other actors in the community</li> <li>• De-emphasises the role of leader and individuals to focus on the wider network</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Embodies integrity and authenticity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pays close attention to the intent of individuals, the proper means for doing good and appropriate ends</li> <li>• Demonstrates integrity showing honesty, trustworthiness, fairness and conscientiousness</li> <li>• Shows vulnerability and takes time to know and manage themselves</li> </ul>

The organisation		People	
<p><b>Direction</b></p>  <p>Provide vision and direction</p>	<p><b>Business judgement</b></p>  <p>Manage resources</p>	<p><b>Execution</b></p>  <p>Achieve results through others</p>	<p><b>Inspirational leadership</b></p>  <p>Get people to follow you</p>
The future		Relationships	
<p><b>Innovation</b></p>  <p>Drive change and innovation</p>	<p><b>Build talent</b></p>  <p>Build capacity for sustainable development</p>	<p><b>Influence</b></p>  <p>Persuade and influence stakeholders</p>	<p><b>Collaboration</b></p>  <p>Create synergies via partnership</p>



These nine skills broadly align with the findings of the literature review performed by the Behavioural Insights Team where they identified the most commonly researched leadership skills and behaviours.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, the list of skills largely reflected the eight core leadership capabilities that Deloitte's global leadership practice have found to be essential across industries and sectors. The research behind their capability framework consists of over 25 years of in-depth executive assessments with over 24,000 leaders from across the globe.

The alignment between the nine skills and those found in both the Behavioural Insights Team's literature review and in Deloitte's leadership framework, suggest that the existing provision can offer sufficient skill development required for leading in these top roles. Additionally, a number of the 26 programmes offered online learning support and content for these nine core leadership skills.

## **2. Some programmes had built successful networks, and feedback was that the 'power' of these networks added significant value.**

Knowing that the centre's programme is likely to focus heavily on a broad and active network, we looked at how some of the 26 programmes established and maintained networks. Additionally, during interviews with course attendees, we also recorded anecdotal evidence about the impact networks had on their development during the programmes. It is worth noting here that, while the centre is still exploring the role that the network that surrounds their development offering may play, they have offered the following hypotheses:

- to help future-proofing learning content, where subject matter experts within the network are advancing methods and skills to deliver outcomes in ever-changing contexts
- to stimulate idea sharing across public services, as a way of helping to unlock innovation and drive up productivity
- to combat isolationism



## Approaches used to establish and maintain networks:

### Action learning sets

- A number of programmes included action learning sets (ALS) as part of their offerings. In some programmes, such as in the National Health Service's Aspiring Chief Executive programme, ALS are facilitated, whereas other programmes left groups of attendees to self-organise and maintain them.
- The NHS Aspiring Chief Executive programme not only provided a platform for peer learning, but one also for peer assessment, where a member from the NHS Leadership Academy faculty and a serving NHS CEO assess submissions and ultimately readiness to step-up into a CEO role.
- The frequency and number of ALS during a development programme varied with the duration of the programme. They were held on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. Some programmes ran ALS remotely, but others ran them in person. Commonly, ALS would occur during the kick-off session of a development programme where principles for how they would run were explained.

### Alumni networks

- A number of the development programmes seem to have well-maintained alumni networks. NHS Leadership Academy hosts an independent Chief Executive Development Network, which requires annual subscription and comes together five times a year for two-day development sessions.
- Another example is the broad alumni network with over 3,000 members established by Windsor Leadership, which regularly runs breakfast events in London with guest speakers. Additionally, Windsor Leadership runs quarterly facilitated 'working groups', (ALS), on a quarterly basis, where the chair meets with attendees beforehand to enable identification and preparation of issues for group input.
- The Whitehall and Industry Group runs over 100 events per year to stimulate its network. Events are run in different regions of the UK. Its alumni network has roughly 400 LinkedIn members.

## Broader network access

- Some development programmes would advocate for and ensure participation in previously established networks which included a wider group of individuals that attendees and alumni of the respective programmes.
- The Major Projects Leadership Academy invited all programme attendees to join the Civil Service Project Leaders Network, which brings together cohort0+ senior project directors leading the government's major project portfolio.
- The Chartered Management Institute (CMI), which has a network of over 30,000 a year, studying a CMI qualification.
- A number of the development programmes seem to have well-maintained alumni networks. For example, the NHS Leadership Academy hosts an independent Chief Executive Development Network, which requires annual subscription and comes together five times a year for 2-day development sessions.

## Peer consultation and mentorship

- On the NHS Aspiring Chief Executive programme attendees received mentorship from senior members of NHS Improvement or NHS Providers. They were also asked to identify and work closely with a patient partner and a frontline staff mentor throughout the programme year.
- This was with the aim of supporting development by working in a reverse-mentoring role, connecting development to the frontline and patient care. Some development programmes would advocate for and ensure participation in previously established networks which included a wider group of individuals that attendees and alumni of the respective programmes.

## Place-based networks

- Attendees on the Leadership for Change programme apply as part of a group formed on their own accord around a systems-leadership challenge. The challenge is worked on during the programme. In the final residential workshop on the programme, guests are invited to attend from across the teams' Sustainability and Transformational Plan system (at a local, regional and national level). Although Leadership for Change is open to leaders from 2nd tier disciplines, it is geared towards those from Public Health and Children, Young People and Family Services.
- Another example of a programme that established a place-based network is Common Purpose's Commonwealth Study Conference (CSC) Leaders Programme. Because the conference is global, this programme enables participants to establish global networks for knowledge sharing and collaboration across the Commonwealth. The CSC Leaders Programme brings together leaders from across public and private sectors, globally.
- Practical considerations: whilst the Leadership for Change programme is run predominantly in person, the CSC Leadership Programme begins on an online platform inviting leaders from across the Commonwealth to engage in discussion around leadership and the CSC challenge.

### Participant perceptions about the value networks added to their development:

*“For me, the networks formed here will assist me in understanding how different markets operate and understanding a lot more about other people’s cultures, which in turn will inform how I approach my work.”*

– Attendee from Common Purpose’s CSC Leadership Programme

*“I thought the content was good, but the real value came from the people.”*

– Attendee from Whitehall Industry Group

*“I now have a great network of people in place that I can draw on in the future.”*

– Attendee from Ashridge Senior Executive Programme

### 3. The majority of programmes were focused on building broad leadership skills, whereas the Centre’s programme’s ambition is to drive new ways of working.

The majority of development programmes were content-driven and focused on teaching leadership theory, skills, and capabilities required for top-level jobs. They delivered skills content, and provided opportunities for leaders to apply newly acquired theory and knowledge in real work. Conversely, the Centre’s intention is to drive new ways of working across a broad public service network, and creating new solutions. The programme assumes core leadership skills have been developed but will provide opportunities to refine these skills. In other words, the Centre’s programme will be primarily context-focus, and content-focus will be secondary, NOT the other way around. There were only a small number of programmes that we were able to identify in our market analysis, which were designed in this way.

#### What is meant by a content-driven approach?

An example of a content-driven leadership programme, is the Level 8 Strategic Direction and Leadership course offered by the Chartered Management Institution. This is a programme built around individual capability development. The programme focuses on areas such as, Collective strategy development, Strategic

communication, Strategic leadership etc. Learners go through each area learning new concepts, theories and models, and then are assessed on their ability to grasp the concepts, link theory to practice and communicate their arguments clearly. While these models and concepts may be useful for leading across systems, and indeed for leading entire entities, the programme does not provide leaders with a cross-systems context to apply their learning.

#### What does a context-driven approach look like?

1. Put leaders (individually or as an already formed diverse, cross-service group) into a challenging context that required them to find a cross-service solution.
2. Help these leaders to see the cross-system leadership challenge within this.
3. Facilitate their behaviour change so that they adopt to a new way of working, and hone their leadership skills along the way.

It is the above approach that is more aligned to the Centre’s wish to offer, which, as a result, should drive culture change across public services, forcing them to integrate better, helping them to drive up productivity and unlock innovation.

### Case study: NHS, Public Health England, Leadership Centre and The Staff College's Leadership for Change programme

The programme takes small groups of senior leaders from different sectors from across a place who are committed to a shared systems challenge. Participants are introduced to systems leadership approaches and helped to apply them to their complex leadership challenge whilst on the programme. However, its emphasis is practice-heavy and theory-light. As part of the assessment process to get onto the programme, CEO endorsement is required from each attendee, which helps to embed behaviour change during and after the programme.

### Case study: Public Service Transformation Academy, Regional Transformation Academy

The programme takes small groups of directors, heads of service areas and transformation managers from local government and health services from a region. These groups are responsible for driving transformational and cultural changes for services. Participants are immersed in proven practices on leading change across complex systems to realise better outcomes for the people they serve. As part of the assessment process to get onto the programme, CEO endorsement is required from each attendee, which helps to embed behaviour change during and after the programme.

### Case study: NHS's Senior System-Leadership Programme

This programme brings together senior (CEO or equivalent) strategic clinical lead, senior strategic lead from another sector (local authority, wider public sector, third sector), and a strategic managerial lead. They work on a challenge which requires a cross-systems solution within their respective sustainability and transformational plan (STP\*) area.

On the programme, groups of leaders work with facilitators over a six-day residential to break down the problem, while introducing tools for solving complex, systemic issues along the way. Attendees come together in facilitated group sessions and are coached over a 12-month period. In that time, they are observed presenting to boards and governing bodies, as part of action learning sets, and coached to improve their collaboration and influencing skills. They then attend a second residential where they meet with global leaders to build their understanding of strategic health and care policy and system leadership.

The entire emphasis of the programme is shifting behaviour towards working in a collaborative and cross-service manner. To support this change, the Leadership Academy has influenced talent management processes, and collaborated closely with regional NHS leadership academies, Public Health England, The Staff College, and other leadership development bodies, to bring about a wider culture and systemic change.

*\*STP definition – Sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) are a means of NHS organisations coming together with local authorities and other partners to agree the future direction of health and care services in 44 areas of England. (<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/blog/2017/02/what-next-sustainability-and-transformation-plans>)*

**4. Across programmes, there is insufficient exposure to sufficiently complex and relevant demands that this cohort will face when in-post.**

A significant body of research exists to support the notion that there are distinct levels of demands that leaders face in the workplace. The centre’s cohort is aimed at leaders aspiring to be the sole decision makers in public service organisations, transitioning from positions where they are leading a diverse set of functions. With this transition, they will be solely leading in a uniquely demanding context to the one they were leading in previously. This transition can be thought of as going from leading a ‘whole context’, i.e., leading a whole business or major function, to leading in a ‘future context’ where their leadership becomes leading in the unknown and shaping the future direction. The table below defines these further.

With such a step up, the adage ‘what got you here, won’t get you there’ is very fitting, because the level of uncertainty, as well as public, private and internal scrutiny, and prioritisation, all become so very different. What may hold leaders back when operating in a ‘future context’ can often be unknown, too. It is for this reason, that executive assessments, transition labs, and one-to-one coaching, have such a crucial role to play in the executive onboarding process.

What is also important to ‘ready’ leaders for this step-up, particularly as leading in a public service context requires a greater focus on systems leadership, is exposing leaders to this next level of contextual demand before they take-up the post. This way, the leader can learn the subtle nuances in their behaviour or hidden gaps that may hold them back when operating in the face of these new and different demands (in a future context), which may not have been uncovered yet. However, we found that few programmes provided sufficiently relevant, diverse and complex demands for these leaders to practice in a safe developmental context.

Leadership demands	
<b>Future context</b>	Leading for the future in changing markets, political and socio-economic conditions where the people and business demands are beyond what is known and relate to what is wholly new, uncharted, unpredictable, unknowable.
<b>Whole context</b>	Leading a whole business, P & L, service line, market, major function where the people and business demands relate to the integration and alignment of diverse functions and disciplines.

*Deloitte Leadership’s articulation of differing top-level leadership demands*

This finding was particularly true for a number of programmes offered by universities and business schools, so we excluded a number of them from the deep dive. Within these programmes, students applied different analytical and research methods to explore concepts within political science and public policy. This is instead of immersing themselves in highly challenging and demanding situations where they had to deploy a broad host of skills and approaches to overcome diverse, complex and multi-faceted problems.

However, there are some good examples of programmes that run in this way. Already, the report has referenced the Leadership for Change programme and the NHS Senior System Leadership programme, which facilitate systems leadership capability development whilst individuals are engaged in significantly complex problem solving. Both programmes also use self-discovery tools such as 360 surveys and psychometrics to help leaders appreciate what is personally holding them back from operating in a systems-leadership capacity.

### Case study: Major Project Leadership Academy

This programme develops leaders' abilities to run major projects while they are leading them. It aims to elevate leaders so that they position themselves as CEOs of large, temporary organisations (as opposed to a project manager engaged on a large project), and gets them to think about securing transformational outcomes as part of the project, so that they leave a legacy. Operating at this level exposes these leaders to a high level of public, private and internal scrutiny. This tests their resilience and their ability to influence and inspire diverse groups, often without authority. During the duration of the programme leaders are given tools and knowledge to help them lead at this level of leadership.

### Point of view: Leadership Development Expert's Deloitte Leadership

In order to successfully embed learning on development programmes, it is essential that participants can immediately apply their learning in a relevant context. We have seen leadership development programmes fail when they attempt to prepare aspirant senior leaders too early, with skills and capabilities that are pitched at the next level up. What happens is that the learning is forgotten when the individuals eventually are promoted into their new roles.





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