

The Code

Introduction

This code sets out the core principles and behaviours expected of every leader and manager within our health and care system.

The code equips colleagues with the non-negotiable principles that underpin good leadership and management. It gives specific examples of what effective and ineffective practice looks like. It is relevant to all clinical, non-clinical and social care roles.

Who does the code apply to?

It's for anyone with leadership or management responsibilities in health and social care.

You might be:

- directly managing people or teams
- indirectly responsible for achieving outcomes through others
- leading on key organisational priorities
- accountable for delivery or support services
- operating as part of your organisation's senior leadership

Leadership and management are slightly different things. Leadership is about inspiring and guiding people: setting direction, building trust, and empowering others to achieve shared goals. Management is about organising and overseeing daily work: planning, managing resources, and ensuring tasks are completed. This code brings them together, recognising that doing both well is essential for delivering better care and lasting improvements.

Why do we need the code?

The code was developed in response to [the Messenger review](#), which highlighted the need for improved support for leadership and management across health and social care and called for clear and consistent standards. The code is designed to help fill that gap and sets out, for the first time, the principles and characteristics that all leaders and managers are expected to meet in the sector. It aligns with key elements of policy and guidance, including [the NHS Constitution for England](#), [Our people promise](#), [Our leadership way](#), the Committee on Standards in Public Life's [7 principles of public life](#), and [A healthier Wales: our plan for health and social care](#).

The core principles

As a leader or manager in health and social care, you must:

Be accountable

Take responsibility for your actions and decisions. Hold yourself and others to account for doing the job well, work together fairly and effectively and always looking for ways to improve.

Be collaborative

Build productive relationships based on respect and trust. Bring in different views and work across teams and organisations. Make sure everyone is included, heard and supported – especially when things are changing.

Be compassionate

Lead with thought and consideration. Show care and understanding for others – and for yourself. Support people so they feel at home in teams and can thrive.

Be curious

Stay open and questioning. Use evidence, listen to diverse views, challenge old assumptions – and find better ways of doing things.

Be inclusive

Confront discrimination, bullying, harassment and inequality. Ask who is missing, who isn't being heard, and why – and then act to address biases and unfairness.

Show Integrity

Stay true to your values, even under pressure. Be honest and open. Stick to the highest professional and ethical standards.

