

# NHS Wales Success Profile

for current and aspiring executive  
directors



GIG  
CYMRU  
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WALES

Addysg a Gwella Iechyd  
Cymru (AaGIC)  
Health Education and  
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**Silvermaple**

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# 1. Purpose and background

Welcome to the Executive Success Profile. In addition to the Profile itself, this document outlines its different functions and provides guidance as to when and how it can be applied. For anyone requiring further information, contact details have been provided at the end of the document.

## What is the purpose of the Success Profile?

- To provide a holistic and inclusive framework which describes the breadth of qualities, motivations and experiences needed from executive directors in the NHS in Wales both now and in the future.
- To underpin a One Wales approach for supporting and enabling aspiring and existing executive directors throughout their career.

## Who was it designed for?

- Those who are considering an executive director role in the future - to increase awareness in relation to readiness, to guide development, and support their transition into a director post.
- Individuals currently operating within executive roles - to support their continued learning, development and growth throughout their executive career.

## How was it developed?

- The Success Profile was developed through wide engagement with leaders at all levels including:
  - the CEO of NHS Wales
  - Chairs and CEO's from all of Wales's NHS organisations and national bodies
  - executive director role models across all professional disciplines
  - a broad variety of leaders and middle managers across all disciplines.
- These different groups provided information about the current and future requirements of the Welsh Health and Social Care System at local and national levels. They also provided valuable insight into the challenges and reality faced by executive directors and the broad variety of qualities needed to operate effectively at this level.
- A comprehensive review of key national strategies and white papers was also conducted to ensure alignment of the Profile with the long-term ambitions and cultural aspirations of NHS Wales. This also ensures the Success Profile is underpinned by the values and principles that we need to define healthcare within Wales over the years ahead.



## 2. Using the Success Profile

The Success Profile can be used to support individuals at different points in their executive career and is also intended to underpin a national approach to attracting, developing and appointing a diverse range of leaders into executive roles.

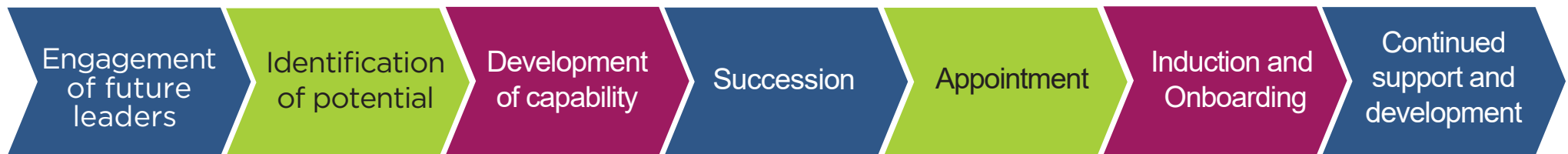
### How can the Success Profile help me as an individual?

- If you are considering an executive director post in the future – the Success Profile can help you to measure your current capability and experience against that needed to operate at executive level. The Profile can also support you in understanding how different aspects of your temperament and preferences may help or hinder your effectiveness as an executive director, and where you might choose to focus your development.
- If you are operating as an executive director – the Success Profile can help you to review your current effectiveness and support you to take a more targeted approach to growing your capability within the role. It can also provide insights into areas of potential strength that remain untapped together with risk factors that you may need to manage differently.

### How does the Success Profile underpin a national approach?

The Success Profile has been designed to be applied to a range of different contexts and to provide a foundation for processes that support the development of a national pipeline of future executive directors.

With this in mind the Profile is intended to support and align the different components summarised in figure 1. From providing greater clarity for those considering an executive role to giving existing directors a comprehensive framework to focus their development, the Success Profile is intended to support people at each stage of their executive career.



**Figure 1: Elements of an effective talent pipeline**

### 3. Success Profile components

The Success Profile is based upon three components, these are:

**Competencies** – which measure current capability and readiness to move into an executive position and which can support existing directors to review their effectiveness within role.

**Personality, values and motivation** – which provide insight into an individual’s potential to operate as a director and can provide focus for the continued development of existing directors.

**Transition requirements** – which describe the experiences and learning required for individuals to transition into (and continue developing within) an executive role.

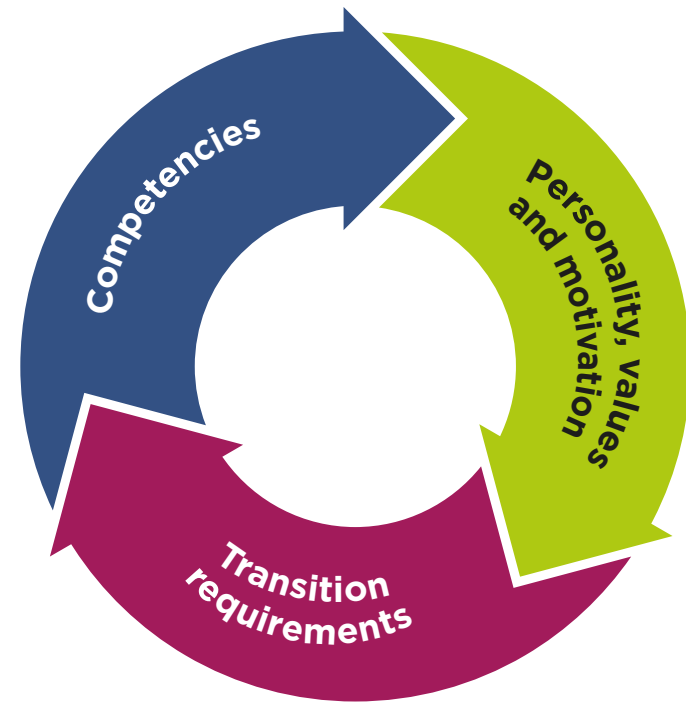


Figure 2: The three components of the Success Profile

The components are each structured around three overarching themes that run throughout the profile. These themes were identified as core attributes needed from future executive directors within Wales. The themes are:

**Shaping the Future**  
through shared vision,  
collective ambition,  
and a passion for  
improvement.

**Embedding the Culture**  
through growing  
capability, nurturing  
kindness and inclusion,  
and modelling  
self-leadership.

**Empowering the System**  
through understanding  
partners needs and  
building trust and  
collaboration.

## 3.1 Competencies

### Purpose

- To describe the combination of behaviours and skills needed by executive directors in NHS Wales now and in the future.

### Application

- Within a development centre or as part of a career conversation to support aspiring directors to measure their current capability and readiness to move into an executive role.
- For providing robust and comprehensive criteria against which assessment activities can fairly measure the suitability of different candidates for executive roles.
- Supporting those currently in executive roles to measure their current capability and effectiveness through 360° feedback and self-reflection tools.

### Key considerations

1. The competencies are comprised of 45 individual indicators, each of which is clustered under a different heading to assist the user in identifying trends and themes.
2. It is unrealistic and unachievable for any individual to be exemplar across all areas. However, everyone has the opportunity to build upon their areas of strength, address less developed capabilities, and improve their overall effectiveness.
3. Natural overlap and synergy exist between competencies; however, each behavioural indicator is unique, and all are of equal relevance.
4. Whilst the framework aims to be comprehensive it is not feasible to cover every desired characteristic. The aim is rather to provide focus and emphasis on the areas that most significantly differentiate success at this level.



## Competencies - Shaping the Future

### **Evolving the vision - this is about engaging others in the development and continuing evolution of a compelling, ambitious and holistic strategy that aligns both local and national aspirations.**

1. Adopts a holistic view considering the relationship between key variables such as population health, accessibility of care, and the need for long-term value.
2. Develops and evolves strategies through conversations and by listening to people, ensuring stakeholders play an important role in shaping future ambitions.
3. Creates congruence and synergy between local strategies and national goals, ensuring they complement rather than compete with each other.
4. Draws ideas and inspiration from other sectors, keeping abreast of the latest global developments, and refreshing existing strategies to ensure they remain progressive and engaging.
5. Collaborates with their counterparts across Wales to influence and shape a national strategy that remains ambitious and connected to the evolving needs of citizens.

### **Harnessing collective ambition - this is about translating strategic aspirations into an engaging, agile and joined up roadmap that aligns team activities, motivates individuals and injects energy and purpose.**

6. Articulates a compelling view of the future that provides people with a sense of purpose and identity and which they connect with at a personal level.
7. Involves others in the creation of an integrated plan which aligns team activities and connects the organisational strategy to the day-to-day work of individuals.
8. Agrees clear and realistic goals, ensuring progress is reviewed and that colleagues, partners and their own teams follow through on their commitments and responsibilities.
9. Removes barriers to progress, reducing bureaucracy, simplifying processes, and enabling teams to work with pace, agility and flexibility.
10. Regularly reviews their own functions to ensure they provide value for money whilst remaining up to date and responsive to the needs of the organisation / system.

### **Sustaining improvement - this is about remaining alert to and embracing new ideas whilst creating the conditions for teams to work both creatively and with sufficient discipline to enable transformation and continuous improvement.**

11. Shares fresh and novel ideas that constructively disrupt established beliefs and encourage others to look at things differently.
12. Actively promotes and supports learning, ensuring insights are shared within and between directorates and localities.
13. Ensures the design of services is shaped by user experience, with frontline teams and the people they support central to the development and implementation of improvements.
14. Focuses on improvements that provide long term value for money, sustainable outcomes, and which renew rather than duplicate existing processes or activities.
15. Embeds innovative practices into everyday working, ensuring they are underpinned by the discipline of planning, measurement, review and evidence-based decision making.



## Competencies - Embedding the Culture

**Nurturing kindness and inclusion - this is about taking personal responsibility for embedding an inclusive and compassionate culture where staff, partners and citizens are valued for their uniqueness and the differences between individuals are celebrated.**

16. Models genuine compassion through listening attentively, taking time to understand, and empathising with the experiences of others.
17. Balances empathy and high levels of support with the need for challenge, promoting an environment where healthy conflict and robust debate are encouraged and valued.
18. Champions and models the benefits of inclusion and diversity for all aspects of team effectiveness and draws attention to their wider impact on the quality of care.
19. Finds time for real conversations at a human level and takes an interest in the lives and aspirations that extend beyond those relating to people's day-to-day work.
20. Builds psychological safety, demonstrating forgiveness and transparency and creating the conditions where team members feel able to express vulnerability.

**Growing capability - this is about developing capability, commitment and potential at every level of the organisation to minimise reliance or dependence upon executive directors for operational performance.**

21. Builds a cohesive, diverse and self-sufficient leadership team who display the confidence to make decisions and take collective accountability.
22. Proactive in appointing and developing effective leadership throughout their management structure.
23. Alert to individual and team successes, provides regular feedback and finds genuine and impactful ways to appreciate achievements and nurture potential.
24. Actively encourages questioning, challenge and constructive dissent to minimise the risk of groupthink and enhance the quality of decision making.
25. Addresses unhelpful behaviours and resolves performance issues, providing honest, candid and non-judgmental feedback without hesitation.

**Modelling self-leadership - this is about understanding, respecting and being true to oneself, developing resilience through self-care and self-awareness, and remaining observant and responsive to people and situations.**

26. Remains calm and centered despite distractions and interruptions, maintaining focus on the task at hand and attentive to those around them.
27. Observant of the emotions of others, aware of their impact upon the people around them and able to adapt their behaviour to suit the needs of different individuals and situations.
28. Focused on and committed to their own personal and professional development, seeking and responding to feedback and committing time to learning activities.
29. Resilient to setbacks and criticism, displaying the ability to reflect upon, make sense of and overcome disappointments and negative experiences.
30. Models self-care by respecting their own physical and emotional needs, looking after themselves in difficult situations and ensuring their health and wellbeing is maintained.

## Competencies - Empowering the System

**Understanding the system - this is about understanding the complexity and ever-changing dynamics within national and local systems; and displaying genuine insight and empathy into the needs and perspectives of diverse and multiple stakeholders.**

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 31. | Grasps the complexity and understands the multiple components, dynamics, and influences that have and continue to shape their system.                                    |
| 32. | Gathers insights and perspectives from multiple stakeholders to ensure different experiences and viewpoints enable a collective understanding of the system as a whole.  |
| 33. | Takes a broad and systemic view when making decisions, giving consideration to the wider impact of their actions and potential consequences for different stakeholders.  |
| 34. | Visible and connected to their local community, understands the socio-economic dynamics impacting upon people's lives and considers how needs will change in the future. |
| 35. | Encourages open conversations about sources of influence and power within the system and honesty about who benefits or is disadvantaged by these.                        |

**Building trust and collaboration - this is about bringing people together and finding ways to unite a diverse range of stakeholders around the common and explicit goal of long-term system transformation.**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 36. | Collaborates with different partners to identify areas of agreement and develops a unifying vision that describes how the system can be improved for the benefit of all stakeholders. |
| 37. | Overcomes historic patterns of distrust and competition by involving a diverse range of partners, including those reluctant to engage or whose influence has been marginalised.       |
| 38. | Assertive and fair, ensuring the needs of all parties are held in equal regard, and that contributions, risks and benefits are shared.  |
| 39. | Prepared to make sacrifices within their organisation or teams for the wider benefit of the system, remaining focused on the long-term gains for all partners.                        |
| 40. | Establishes adult, mutually respectful relationships with prominent national figures and a willingness to challenge them, offer solutions, and debate national issues.                |

**Enabling system outcomes - this is about empowering and sustaining improvement and transformation within systems, ensuring resources flow to where they are needed through clear leadership and co-ordination.**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 41. | Works alongside system partners to build a culture where individuals and teams are empowered to take action and hold each other to account in a decentralised manner.               |
| 42. | Identifies those best placed to lead, co-ordinate and facilitate change within the system, ensuring they are representative of, and able to work collaboratively with stakeholders. |
| 43. | Collaborates with executive colleagues from other organisations to ensure the resources, information, skills, and experience, flow to where they are needed.                        |
| 44. | Ensures sufficient planning and co-ordination is in place to enable partnerships to work efficiently, productively and with energy and focus.                                       |
| 45. | Generous and willing to share expertise, resources and learning, whilst remaining appreciative (and not too proud) to adopt solutions developed elsewhere.                          |

## 3.2 Personality, values and motivation

### Purpose

- To describe the personality constructs, values and motivations relevant to operating successfully within an executive role.
- To highlight the dilemma's facing executive leaders and support individuals to understand the balance to be achieved within their own leadership style.

### Application

When used in conjunction with psychometric questionnaires this component of the success profile can support within the following contexts.

- Within a career coaching context to allow aspiring directors to reflect upon their motivations and potential to operate within in an executive role.
- As part of an assessment process to establish the suitability of candidates to operate at executive level.
- To enable those already in executive roles to better understand their needs, preferences and potential derailers.

### Key considerations

1. The purpose of this part of the success profile is not to focus upon a certain type of person, nor offer a specific formula, but rather to understand the array of different characteristics that are relevant to executive level roles and how they can combine to shape the way people are likely to lead.
2. The individual characteristics considered here can be summarised as:
  - Personality – our habitual patterns of behaviour, thought and emotion.
  - Values and motivation – our broad preferences and needs concerning appropriate courses of action or outcome.
  - Cognitive abilities – the way we learn, problem solve, make decisions, reason and analyse information.
3. The table on the following page summarises the key combinations of personality constructs, values and motivations that are relevant to executive roles and how they need to be balanced. It also emphasises that rather than 'fitting' a certain type of profile, executive directors need to be able to adapt their style and preferences to meet the needs of different situations.
4. Measuring these characteristics requires the use of psychometric instruments. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensure the correct choice of instruments is made and that these in turn are used by appropriately trained and qualified practitioners.



# Personality, values and motivation

## Shaping the Future

Strategic thinking, optimism about the future, and focus on complex concepts

balanced with

practical, realistic, structured approaches to planning and achieving outcomes

Innovative, creative, open to new ideas and challenging existing ways of working

balanced with

critical evaluation, rigor, pragmatism and a disciplined systematic approach

## Embedding the Culture

Supportive, empathetic, considerate, displaying tolerance and forgiveness

balanced with

directness, robust challenge and confidence to make difficult decisions

Curiosity, reflection, learning, listening, understanding and flexibility

balanced with

focus, decisiveness, clarity, self-belief, influence and action

## Empowering the System

Networks, connections, collaboration, and involvement (focused on other's needs)

balanced with

independent thought, personal growth, self-direction (focused on own needs)

Dispersed leadership, empowerment, compromise and trust

balanced with

directing, holding to account, confidence to take responsibility

## 3.3 Key areas of transition

### Purpose

- To highlight the core areas of transition required when moving into an executive role.
- To summarise the core requirements the Welsh healthcare system has from executive directors.

### Application

- Supporting aspiring directors to consider the experiences and exposure required to increase their readiness to step into an executive role.
- To underpin the design of assessment and development activities and ensure they simulate the reality faced by executive directors operating in Wales.
- To support those currently in executive roles to reflect upon the extent to which they are meeting requirements and to help newly appointed directors to continue to adjust to their new role.

### Key considerations

1. Each of the nine shifts or transitions requires a corresponding change in relation to focus, breadth and accountability.
  - **Focus** – changes from medium-term (6 – 18 months) operational delivery; to long-term (1 – 5 years) strategic delivery.
  - **Accountability** – changes from being accountable for achieving core operational deliverables or change; to delivering multiple, long-term, organisation-wide or system outcomes.
  - **Breadth** – changes from leading multiple managers within a function/locality/group/directorate; to leading multiple functions/directorates across an organisation/system.
2. We know from research and literature that the transition into an executive level role is the biggest in most people's careers. It entails widespread visibility and exposure, the capacity to understand and manage significant complexity, and a shift from valuing your own teams to valuing the whole organisation equally. For this reason, individuals will need varying degrees of support and time to prepare for, and adjust to, such a significant change.
3. The left hand 'From' column describes the typical requirements for those operating at the level below an executive director in a large and complex organisation. Example roles include Heads of Service and Assistant or Associate Directors. For this reason, the language may not relate perfectly to everyone, particularly those who have come from a different industry sector or smaller organisation. However, translation to their context should still be relatively straightforward and individuals should feel free to substitute certain terms such as 'division' for directorate, locality, unit or group if more appropriate.

# Key areas of transition

From these requirements



To these requirements

## Shaping the Future

Provides medium-term focus and clear goals for their team/s whilst ensuring alignment with directorate and wider organisational strategies.



Provides long-term strategic focus for the whole organisation which aligns to local and national system priorities.

Takes accountability for the creation and delivery of plans within their directorate and engagement of their team/s in the achievement of high-quality outcomes.



Accountable for the development and delivery of strategic plans which in turn integrate activities between teams and across directorates.

Leads and delivers medium or long-term change interventions within their directorate or in collaboration with teams from other directorates.



Oversees the delivery of multiple, interconnected and organisation-wide change interventions within a variety of strategic contexts.

## Embedding the Culture

Takes responsibility for modelling and reinforcing the organisation's values and cultural principles amongst their own team/s and in dealings with others.



Provides direct leadership (alongside executive colleagues) for developing and sustaining the optimum culture throughout the organisation.

Accountable for delivering operational goals and performance through developing the confidence and capability of their team/s.



Builds directorate capability and accountability by enabling their leadership team to take responsibility for delivering operational goals and performance.

Respects and reconciles the different needs and expectations placed upon them by frontline teams and executive stakeholders.



Respects and balances competing demands from local and national stakeholders whilst under close personal scrutiny and within a highly visible national role.

## Empowering the System

Understands the aspirations of the system and interdependencies that exist between their team / function and the local system.



Influences policy within local and national systems, understanding and balancing the complex political, cultural, financial, health and people priorities.

Builds and enhances the quality of working relationships between their teams and others within and external to the organisation.



Builds networks, forging national alliances, and engaging external partners in the long-term and mutual benefits of system transformation.

Provides clarity of purpose, structure and support for integrated frontline teams to operate flexibly towards the delivery of system outcomes.



Delivers system outcomes by enabling cross-organisational teamwork and ensuring accountability, resources, and influence are shared between partners.

## 4. Contacting us

We hope you have found this document helpful.

If you have any questions or require further information, please feel free to contact us at [HEIW.Leadership.Programme@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:HEIW.Leadership.Programme@wales.nhs.uk) or visit our website <https://nswalesleadershipportal.heiw.wales>.



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