



NHS Sustainable Boards Leadership Programme

SUMMARY REPORT

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This programme is ideal for leaders and for those who develop board leadership in the NHS.

It will provide a board with a clear understanding of why incorporating sustainability into its decision making criteria will not only save money, but will create a better quality healthcare service with productivity and efficiency at its heart.

This programme has evolved from the findings of a 10 month Board Development Programme pilot across two Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) and has resulted in a resource pack which is available for free to all NHS organisations.

It has been funded by NHS East of England and the NHS Sustainable Development Unit.

This document gives an overview of the Sustainable Boards Leadership Programme and how your Directors and senior leaders will also benefit by taking part. There is a more in depth version of the report available on the SDU website (www.sdu.nhs.uk) but here is a distilled version for quick reading.



The conclusions and resources from the pilot programme should provide a strong evidence base for successfully integrating sustainability into your board development activities.

Pilot Leadership Programme Summary

Seven boards from the East of England and the North West SHAs took part in the initial programme.

Each session lasted three hours and included workshops, discussion and use of scenarios to explore how boards would benefit their organisations by making decisions with sustainability in mind.

The programme helped boards understand where they were on the sustainability journey and to explore the long term impacts if action is taken now compared to no action being taken at all.

The end result is a resource pack which can be used by those who are charged with leadership development. It will help managers support all staff within organisations to understand the major challenge of shifting to a more sustainable approach to the delivery of health services.

Aims of this Programme

- To share the learning established over the 10 month trial to enhance leadership capacity and capability within the NHS.
- To introduce sustainability into leadership programmes and to illustrate why it is integral to improving the quality, efficiency and productivity of the NHS.

Background

We use the words 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' throughout this document, but we don't mean recycling paper and cutting energy use. Instead we mean it is part of a global idea to find ways to improve human health and wellbeing without degrading the earth's resources. We will have achieved 'sustainability' when we successfully balance this global equation. 'Sustainable development' (SD) is the journey to get there.

If NHS boards were to view their world through an SD lens then it would logically make the NHS resilient to the world around it and fit for the future. This lens offers practical and conceptual opportunities to help mitigate and adapt to any future risks (see later). This is largely due to the fact that acting sustainably means that efficiency and quality are always paramount in any decision makers mind.

The NHS has also pledged to become a leading and low carbon sustainable organisation. It is imperative that boards understand how this affects them. This pledge was made by Sir David Nicholson in the NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy.

Benefits of the Programme

It will help SHA directors, leads or senior practitioners involved in trust board development to:

- Meet the challenges all organisations face in ensuring the delivery of sustainable healthcare
- Meet the challenges of today without harming the health service of tomorrow
- Develop boards' capabilities to lead their health economy on a 'more for less' - as opposed to a 'less for less' - basis.

Clearly all boards will be at different places on their journey towards sustainable healthcare delivery. They will need to analyse where they are and where they want to be. It is also clear that leadership development varies in each organisation. Therefore we have highlighted opportunities to tailor the programme to best suit your organisation's needs.



The Sustainable Development Lens

Any system which helps boards tackle important leadership challenges is key to keeping the NHS healthy.

An SD lens can provide that key. It can help show the benefits of implementing SD into the business processes of a board and ensure healthcare delivery has a sustainable future.

Boards can focus resources on five intersecting challenges. These can improve leadership for sustainability and drive leadership on the 'more for less' efficiency agenda and vice versa. The five challenges are:

1. **Applying future thinking** as part of strategy, planning and innovation development. This will steer health economies in ways that are fit for the future in an NHS operating context
2. **Decision making as a whole system.** This will manage all the impacts on both patients' and their communities through commissioning and procurement. It will also shape investment and indicate ways to move to more preventative models for care
3. **Cross-boundary systems thinking.** This will look strategically and operationally at the health economy map for communities and patients, so individual and multiple pathways are considered. This captures the benefits of system collaboration to support collaborative working
4. **NHS values become a driver for positive change.** Delivering a sustainable health system provides a positive vision for engaging with staff, organisations and the public to deliver transformational change
5. **Redefine waste.** Streamline money-saving, environmental wastes like energy and water into the business case to help boards make sound decisions in a new operating context.

What will you gain from this Programme?

In essence by introducing a Sustainable Development Leadership Programme you will be helping boards achieve 'more for less' as opposed to 'less for less'. Board leadership development will achieve greatest value if it takes place now. Enabling, promoting and supporting innovation will be a key challenge for all boards if the delivery of quality driven and effective health care is to be sustainable.

The programme highlights the opportunities, benefits and savings that can be created if organisations use SD as a hook to develop really strong partnerships across health economies.

Importantly this programme highlights that taking an SD approach to business planning does not create new work. Instead, it supports what organisations are already aiming to achieve.

How Sustainability can improve leadership - Four challenges

The programme established there are four intersecting challenges for boards, where improved leadership for sustainability can drive leadership on the 'more for less' NHS efficiency agenda.

1. Leadership challenge - balancing future cost and benefits

Trusts need to take long term actions that benefit communities and patients and which fit with short-term performance targets, otherwise the shift to preventative care will not happen.

Boards need to understand new frames of reference so they can manage the inevitable trade-offs confidently and in patients' best interests. They also need better ways of dealing with future uncertainties amidst changeable political agendas.

Trusts want help to manage risk and also to spot and capitalise on the upsides of doing things differently - e.g. through World Class Commissioning and QIPP.

2. Favouring health systems

Working across the health economy, as well as across local areas, is critically important for the 'more for less' agenda. Boards are sceptical about how territorial attitudes within the NHS can be overcome to collaborate across the system to

improve patient pathways and allow a shift in the model of care from secondary care to primary care.

3. Talking to the public

Boards are reluctant to make the case for disinvestment in acute settings due to political and public fall out. Encouraging a joint planning health economy approach with all sectors creates better communication and means everybody is informed of the wider picture.

Stronger partnerships with communities are needed so the public can experience better healthcare and be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

4. Tackling carbon and other environmental overheads

The programme discovered that boards are unfamiliar with the idea of carbon as an overhead cost and have little access to expertise to find out more.

It will be a steep learning curve for boards over the next few years as they try to cut their carbon emissions and enable patients and visitors to reduce the carbon cost of healthcare. This programme will help boards achieve those carbon emissions and will help them become more sustainable and take a systems approach to 'waste'.

Summary of Leadership for Sustainability Resources

1. This Board Leadership Programme Summary Report document identifies why and how boards can embed the principles of sustainability into the business planning processes.
2. A Resource Pack is available from the SDU (www.sdu.nhs.uk) that consists of a Facilitators' Guide for running a board sustainability workshop and Presentation Slides to support individuals to facilitate board development sessions.
3. An in-depth version of this Summary Report is available from the SDU (www.sdu.nhs.uk). It outlines in greater detail the findings of the pilot programme and makes recommendations on how sustainability can and should be integrated into board development programmes at a regional level. This is most relevant to SHA Leadership teams.
4. Scenario Planning Facilitation Pack designed to help NHS leaders think how they can build sustainability into their long term strategic plans. It allows them to consider the robustness of those plans in a 2030 setting and contains a facilitator's handbook with sessions for various purposes, laminates that summarise the scenarios and a DVD which contains a dramatisation of the scenarios.

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The NHS Sustainable Development Unit develops organisations, people, tools, policy, and research to help the NHS in England fulfil its potential as a leading sustainable and low carbon organisation.

Published May 2010

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