
Leading Together Programme: NHS England South's Regional Medical Director Explains its Importance



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The NHS is constantly working to deliver health services which are safe, effective and provide a good experience of care.

At some stage in our lives almost all of us will have cause to see a doctor – in our local general practice or in a hospital setting – and want to be sure that our doctors meet the high standards we expect. Every year doctors undergo an appraisal process, which allows them to demonstrate they are up to date and providing care for patients that is of high quality.

Our ambition, in line with the [NHS Constitution](#) and the [NHS Five Year Forward View](#), is for patients and the public to be at the heart of everything we do. That is why we are asking patients, carers and the public to bring their valuable experience, insight and a fresh perspective to doctors' appraisal process. In doing so, it helps us to understand and respond to what patients need and see things through their eyes.

Ultimately, it helps us improve care and innovate, and gives people the opportunity to contribute to and influence healthcare in their local area.

We recognise that this might seem daunting, but the [Leading Together programme](#) has recently been launched in the South of England to help patients or members of the public become involved in improving health services, ensuring they are truly accessible to all and meet the needs of the people that use them.

The programme links a patient leader, or an aspiring patient leader, with a healthcare leader: this could be a doctor, nurse, researcher or manager. You do not need to be an existing lay member either. All we are asking is you have an interest in healthcare and some previous leadership experience; maybe you have led on work for a local charity, or perhaps you're in college and have set up a society or newsletter.

Training and support is provided before each pair works together to put the learning into action with a project that benefits their local healthcare organisation or community, but it's not the kind of programme where you will sit back listening to people telling you what to do.

We will be inviting everyone on the programme to think and talk about the concepts, try out some skills and reflect on your experience. Perhaps the most important part of the programme though is the togetherness: exploring how patient leaders and healthcare leaders can collaborate, understanding of one another's needs and developing partnerships for the future so pairs continue to work and lead together once they have been through the workshops and project. In fact this togetherness cuts across all aspects of the programme: it has been co-designed with lay people involved in healthcare.

We strongly believe that through the Leading Together programme the involvement of patients and members of the public, working together with healthcare leaders, will help to improve our health services, and the quality of care provided by our doctors.

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