Applying for the Mary Seacole programme: guidance for line managers
The Mary Seacole programme

This is an opportunity for the NHS to improve the quality of compassionate care for patients/service users. Following a number of high profile criticisms about the way healthcare is led in England, the NHS is investing in its current and potential leaders so that they can drive the improvement needed for patients/service users today, tomorrow and in the future.

The NHS Leadership Academy’s Mary Seacole programme is aimed at people, from any part of the health care sector, who have the potential to lead others in their teams. These could be people who may not have had any formal leadership development previously though have the potential to help others create a better working environment; an environment where there is more compassion for patients/service users, more trust in the people around them, and more pride and enjoyment in their day-to-day work with their teams.

What is the Mary Seacole programme?

The Mary Seacole programme – leading care I is a 12-month leadership development programme, resulting in an accredited postgraduate certificate in Healthcare Leadership and a NHS Leadership Academy Award in Healthcare Leadership.

The programme is suitable for your team members who seem to get the best from others. They could be your shining stars who have the potential and aspiration to progress in a leadership role. It doesn’t matter if they work on the frontline, finance, HR, commissioning or any other part of the NHS, so long as they contribute to delivering healthcare services. They should either be thinking of stepping into their first leadership role or have recently done so.

Your team member would typically spend 10-12 hours per week studying and learning about how to become a great leader. They will meet other people from different parts of the service to build networks and gain new perspectives on how to improve healthcare services. They will complete four assignments and a final assessment challenging them to apply their learning. They will be supported personally by a tutor who will help them to understand how they can behave in a way that motivates other people to do their best for patients/service users. A significant amount of the content is provided online, and this is supported by interactive sessions with tutors and other participants. This includes six days meeting face-to-face (three are held on Saturdays). Participants must attend all six of the face to face sessions.

For those working in the NHS, organisations funded by the NHS or providers of NHS care, it is fully-funded by the NHS as part of its commitment to investing in future leaders.

To find out more about the Mary Seacole programme visit the NHS Leadership Academy website [www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/seacole](http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/seacole)

Further information about the content of the programme can be found in the [prospectus](http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/seacole) however below is a brief overview:
The programme will provide you with practical skills for leadership along with the knowledge of relevant theories, concepts, debates and controversies in healthcare. The programme will also help support you in becoming a better, more reasoned and self-aware leader. The programme is delivered in nine programme units, each being 4-5 weeks long.

Unit 1 Explores what leadership and quality of care mean for you and the service you work in, taking different perspectives about the nature of leadership.

Unit 2 Identifies different ways of gathering information about the kinds of experiences patients have and how to use different kinds of evidence to make robust decisions.

Unit 3 Looks at how organisations work, and considers how processes can be more effective.

Unit 4 Builds an understanding of how to manage various stakeholder relationships that your team or service is accountable to; this includes clarifying what requirements and standards must be met, and how to manage and improve performance in healthcare, including effective use of feedback and staff appraisals.

Unit 5 Looks at the social and emotional aspects of providing healthcare and use this understanding to consider how you lead and how you can improve your own team’s performance.

Unit 6 Investigates how to bring about change in your context by defining a manageable improvement or innovation in the quality of care, drawing on your insights and concepts from the programme.

Unit 7 Enhances your understanding of leading and working with change in a complex stakeholder environment.

Unit 8 Reviews tools and methods for evaluating improvement and innovation projects including reflecting on your own efforts to enhance care quality.

Unit 9 Crystallizes your learning about improving your service and your role as a leader.

Why should you support someone in your team to go on the programme?

If a member of your team has recently taken on management responsibility for the first time, or if you believe they have the ability and talent to do so in the future, then this programme could be suitable as a way to reward and develop them. This will help you, as their line manager, to invest in your team and the future of the NHS. If you have been having 1-2-1 meetings, appraisals or development reviews with members of your team and you believe that they have leadership potential, then, this is an easy way to support their development.

For the right person, this is an opportunity that you can provide them which will incentivise them to become better healthcare professionals and better team members.

At the same time, you will receive payback as they will grow and develop, feel more motivated, and help you to improve the performance of your own team. During the programme they will undertake a practical project which will help to improve the service being provided locally.
Who should I be encouraging to apply?

The process should form part of a talent conversation and prospective applicants and line managers should inform your HR or OD departments of an intention to apply.

You should be nominating team members who have the ability, now or in the future, to motivate others to provide the best level of compassionate care in health or in the commissioning of services to support this. No matter what their current role is, they should have the appetite and potential to help teams deliver high performance. You know your team members best and have probably talked with them about their development aspirations and abilities. They should embed the NHS values into the NHS Constitution.

They may have a professional qualification already, or they may not. But they must be capable, with support, of undertaking postgraduate study. This means that they should have the ability to reflect on, review and evaluate their own learning and development during the programme, alongside a willingness to learn from others. Typically your team member must commit to studying outside of working hours (10-12 hours per week).

The process should form part of a talent conversation and prospective applicants and line managers should inform your HR or OD departments of an intention to apply.

What is the commitment from me as a line manager and from them?

The first commitment is now – ask yourself who are those team members who would benefit most from this? Who are the talented team members you have who can help the NHS even more? By identifying them and encouraging them to apply will result in the NHS supporting the talent that it already has available.

Once on the programme, the commitment from you is to be a supportive manager, recognising that your team member may wish to talk to you about their learning and development experience and you should check in with them about how they are getting on. In your discussions with your team member, you should be asking them about their progress, what support they may need from you, and give any advice or experience that you can provide as a leader yourself.

The team member you support must be motivated to learn on the programme. They will be encouraged, and probably delighted, if you encourage them to apply. They will think that you have faith in their ability to become a great leader in the NHS. However, there will be times when they are feeling challenged by the work involved and it is then when you will have to coach and support them to succeed.

Your team member will require some days away from work, spread across the 12-month period. Participants are required to attend six sessions, with three of these held on a Saturday and three on weekdays. This is to attend a group meeting with other participants undertaking the programme. These are held in your local region. Your team member will also be studying outside of work on a regular basis, so the more support you can provide then the more likely it is that they will be successful. Many of the current participants on the programme have discussed with their manager any additional support that might be required, whether provided by their manager, HR or elsewhere.
Your team member will also be required to undertake a project, called a ‘Leadership Initiative’. The Leadership Initiative is typically a project to lead some sort of improvement activity on the service that they or your team provide. They will be required to agree with you what the objectives are for the Leadership Initiative and the work they will do to achieve them. You should expect them to improve something that is of concern to you as a line manager, and you should work with them to try to achieve the objectives. It is important to spend time with your team member at the end of the Leadership Initiative reflecting on what has been learnt - it may not have been successful, though it is vital that your team member has the support to reflect on what their impact was as a leader.

You should commit to celebrating their success. This will be a big challenge for them and when they succeed they will be very proud to be part of a major change in the NHS. You will undoubtedly be very proud of them too!

You and your team member will be expected to sign a set of terms and conditions on accepting a place on the programme. These can be found on the NHS Leadership Academy website: [http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/grow/professional-leadership-programmes/mary-seacole-programme/terms-and-conditions/](http://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/grow/professional-leadership-programmes/mary-seacole-programme/terms-and-conditions/)

**What other support is available for me and my team member?**

There is a programme helpline available that you or your team member can use to discuss the programme and answer any questions that you have, call 01865 736 032.

During the programme, your team member will have a personal tutor whose role it is to support their success on the programme, and can answer any queries you may have. The NHS Leadership Academy also has a dedicated team to help if necessary. The programme has been designed to maximise the chances of success for participants; it is very supportive and engaging at a personal level. Furthermore, lots of extra support is available for those who haven’t studied for a while, those who find it difficult, or for those who have a disability that may make it more challenging to study.

**Do I need to pay for the programme?**

The programme is fully-funded by the NHS Leadership Academy as part of the NHS commitment to professionalising leadership. However, once on the programme, should the team member withdraw from the programme because they are no longer interested in completing it, then the NHS Leadership Academy will discuss this with your employer and potentially seek a repayment of the cost (£5,000). Unavoidable reasons for withdrawing may be accepted and no repayment will be required.

**How does my team member apply?**

To apply for the programme, visit [https://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/join/](https://www.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/join/)
What development can I have?

There are a range of development programmes provided by the NHS Leadership Academy for leaders at all levels. If you have the ambition to progress and have a greater impact on compassionate care then you may want to consider the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson programme – Leading Care II or the Nye Bevan programme – Leading Care III.