

The L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit

For leaders and organisations involved in managing
professional standards concerns



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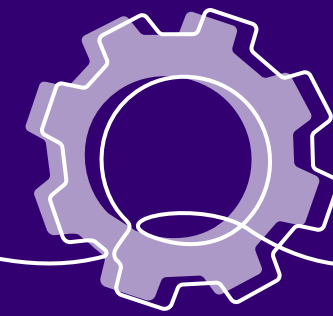
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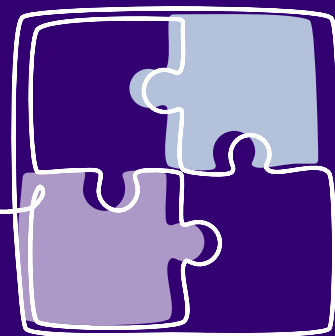
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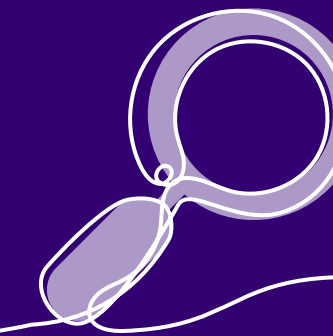
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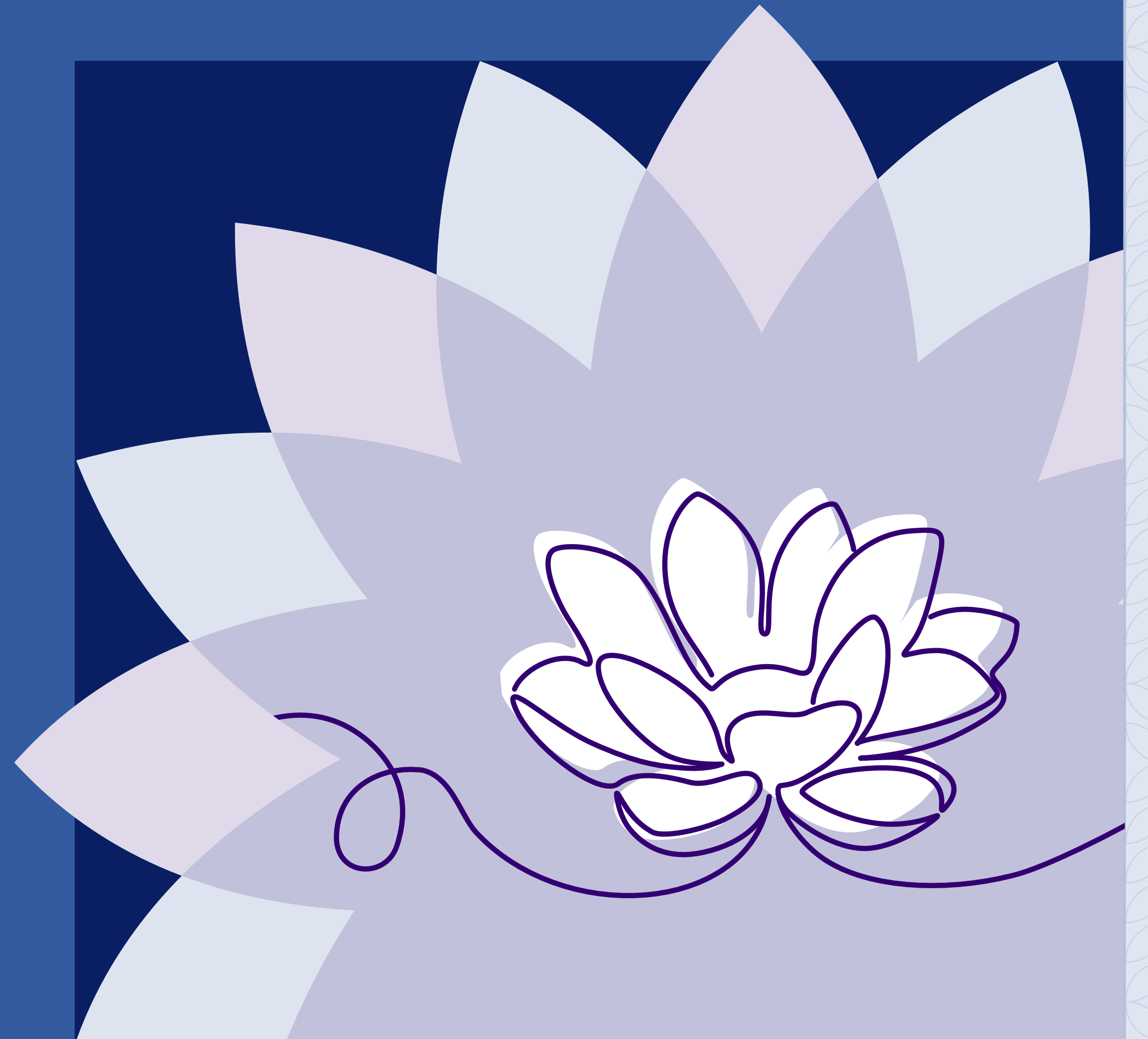
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Welcome and introduction

It's time to unleash the power of compassionate leadership

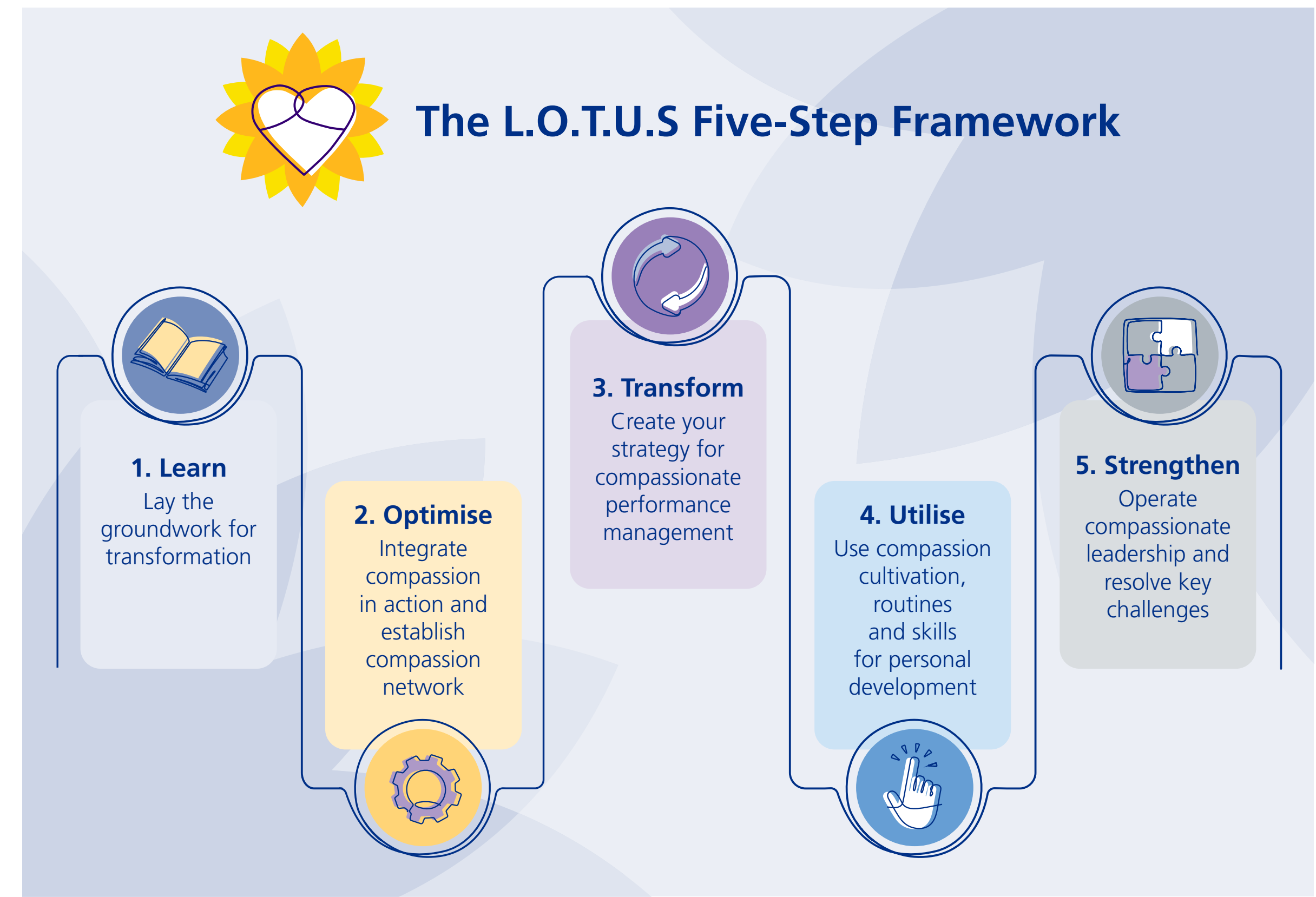
Welcome to the 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit'. The toolkit is your companion guide to 'Upholding professional standards with compassion for self and others while enabling system improvements'.

The Toolkit is also part of a series of broader initiatives on 'Growing Compassion' led by the NHS England System Improvement and Professional Standards (SIPS) Team in the North West region of England.

The team introduces the reader to the innovative 'L.O.T.U.S. Framework for Compassionate Leadership'. Resources within the toolkit will enable you, your teams and your organisations to translate the principles of compassionate approaches in the L.O.T.U.S. Framework into a reality. These principles are positively reinforced through application and practice with practical exercises.

[Read more »](#)

Figure 1.1 Compassionate Leadership: The L.O.T.U.S. five step framework



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Welcome and introduction (continued)



Gareth Wallis
Tier 1 Responsible Officer and Medical Director, NHS England - North West
 System Improvement and Professional Standards
 North West Region

“Compassionate leadership is the most powerful way in which we can nurture the health and wellbeing of our staff while upholding professional standards.

“The ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ will serve as a valuable companion guide and helpful resource in our Compassionate Leadership journey.

“The responsibility to nurture and grow compassion and compassionate culture in the workplace and turn this framework into a reality rests collectively with each one of us as leaders.”



Michael Gregory
Higher Level Responsible Officer and Medical Director, NHS England - North West
 North West Region

“The ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ complements the NHS England Policy on Managing Performer’s List and guidance from professional regulatory bodies.

“While the policies and guidelines focus on the regulatory and governance aspects, this framework, together with the toolkit, focuses on holistic, compassionate, human approaches.

“Adopting compassionate principles helps address the contributory system factors behind human behaviour and performance impacting patient safety and helps enhance staff health and wellbeing while upholding professional standards and system improvements.”

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Uma Krishnamoorthy

Deputy Medical Director, NHS England - North West

System Improvement and Professional Standards North West Region

Lead Author of this Compassionate Framework and Toolkit
Regional Lead for the Growing Compassion Initiative series

“The greatest challenge for most leaders is doing hard things in a human way. Compassionate leadership paves the way for leading effectively and working together compassionately and inclusively.

“The original and innovative ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ we developed would help leaders faced with challenging circumstances to do hard things in a human way yet effectively. To have the courage to walk alongside someone as they navigate a difficult time, a complex situation, or a persistent problem yet enables fairness and a requisite level of accountability.

“As leaders demonstrate compassion toward themselves and others, they expand their entire team’s capacity to handle future challenges. Magic and transformation happen when like-minded, value-based leaders come together with an aligned vision.”



Julie-Ann Bowden

Head of Professional Standards, NHS England - North West

System Improvement and Professional Standards North West Region

“NHS England North West team would like to thank all the Regional Responsible officers (RO) and delegates from the General Medical Council (GMC), NHS England - Workforce Training and Education Directorate and NHS Resolution teams who contributed through their participation at the engagement event held by NHS England North West in September 2021 and subsequent focus groups on the Regional RO networks in Spring 2022.

“NHS England North West would also like to thank the acute trusts who volunteered to be Compassionate Champions and agreed to take part in the NHS England pilot project series on ‘Growing Compassion’ and the ‘Compassionate Conversations Workshops’ by NHS Resolution.

“It is great to see all leaders aligned with this vision of creating a compassionate social movement within and beyond professional standards, and this innovative L.O.T.U.S. Framework and Toolkit serves this purpose.”

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A social movement of compassion

This innovative framework approach to Compassionate Leadership is called the ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’. It has one simple aim: to create a social movement of compassion.

What does this mean? It means we hope to:

- Shape how we work together in the coming days and years
- Strengthen our compassionate, inclusive, and collaborative ways of operating across the system and
- Focus on upholding professional standards and enhancing system improvements.

Thank you

This crucial project has required considerable team effort. We’d like to acknowledge a few people and groups who have helped, inspired and empowered us.

Thank you to all who contributed to the enriching discussions at the engagement event in September 2021, the subsequent Responsible Officer Networks in Spring 2022, and the numerous informal discussions. It has been a privilege to work with so many inspiring colleagues. Every discussion and conversation during the formal and informal meetings has taught us all something more.

We sincerely thank all NHS England SIPS team colleagues who helped shape and mould this framework and toolkit. Thanks to your help, it is now ready to be translated into action by any leader and organisation committed to growing a compassionate and inclusive culture.

We are especially grateful to our NHS England SIPS team colleagues who facilitated the focus group discussions at the two consecutive Responsible Officer network meetings in Spring 2022. Your hard work helped collate valuable views and suggestions towards steering the content of this toolkit.

Thank you to the General Medical Council (GMC), NHS England - Workforce Training and Education Directorate, and NHS Resolution colleagues.

Your valuable input at engagement events and RO networks, not to mention productive conversations and ongoing collaboration, continues to inspire us with this initiative.

The publications on Compassionate Leadership by Professor Michael West and the work from ‘The Potential Project’ research outcome by Rasmus Hougaard have significantly and positively influenced our work on this initiative. Their work and contributions through their book and papers are acknowledged and referenced with gratitude throughout this resource.

Let’s work together to transcend boundaries

We are excited to work with all of you on the next stage of our journey to enable this ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ to be brought to life across the North West. Better still? Spread the ripple wider across the Nation!

As you read, try the reflective exercises included throughout this toolkit. The exercises will call you to action and spark your thoughts individually as leaders and, ultimately, facilitate team-based discussions in your workplaces.

We trust that leaders across the North West and the wider NHS and systems beyond collectively have the commitment, the will and the ability to apply, harness and realise the power of compassion.

Together, we can use the power of compassion to benefit patients and staff alike. The power goes beyond professional standards and system improvement. Through working with each other, Compassionate Leadership can transcend boundaries.

Thank you, and best wishes,

System Improvement and Professional Standards Team

NHS England, North West Region

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Foreword by Professor Michael West

This toolkit for NHS leaders aims to equip them with the skills to lead with compassion and wisdom and to nurture compassionate cultures. The toolkit is not a soft cushion, scented candles approach to leadership, however.

It makes it clear that compassion involves leaning towards pain and difficulty – dealing with difficult behaviours, poor performance, conflicts, and formal referrals. By giving leaders the tools to lean into these difficult situations and behaviours in a compassionate and wise way, it empowers them in a context that can sometimes feel disempowering.

It is a beautifully constructed document with a wealth of practical support to enable leaders to lead compassionately, develop wisdom in leadership and practise self-compassion. Those compiling it have brilliantly and powerfully answered the compassion question – ‘How can we help?’ – by producing a resource that any leader will want to keep close at hand as they navigate the white waters of today’s NHS.

Warmest wishes,
Michael



Professor Michael West CBE
 Professor of Organisational Psychology
 Lancaster University Management School Senior Visiting Fellow
 The King’s Fund Emeritus Professor
 Aston University



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Background and context

“The greatest challenge for most leaders is doing hard things in a human way. Leaders must make decisions that impact others’ lives. All leaders need to do things that negatively impact other people at times. and that is hard. It is hard because we, as humans, are good.”¹

Rasmus Hougaard

By nature, we want to do good and don’t like hurting others. This raises an important question: As a leader how do you do the hard things that come with taking on the responsibility of leadership while remaining a good human being and bringing out the best in other humans?

In other words, how do you do hard things in a human way?¹ Leaders within the NHS are all too familiar with this challenge, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Compassion is a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it.² Compassionate leadership is how we ensure inclusive leadership. In practice, this means everyone feels included, provided with the support they need, and is listened to and respected.³

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare professionals and the inequities it unveiled indicated the need for compassionate, inclusive, collective, and distributed leadership at all levels.^{4,5}

Nurturing compassionate and inclusive leadership

‘Growing Compassion’, a wider initiative to generate a social movement of compassion, originated in Northwest England in response to the impact on healthcare professionals by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A series of regional initiatives on ‘Growing Compassion’ were launched to nurture compassionate and inclusive leadership and culture through the NHS England North West, System Improvement and Professional Standards (SIPS) team, further to a multi-disciplinary stakeholder engagement event held in September 2021. Several focus group discussions followed, held at consecutive Responsible Officer networks in April and May 2022.

The vision is to enable and grow a compassionate and inclusive collective leadership and culture in managing professional standards concerns regarding healthcare professionals while ensuring appropriate governance and reducing inequities.

Strategic action

The ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ was created as a part of the ‘Growing Compassion’ initiative in the North West. It was developed in response to the mounting pressures that healthcare professionals face, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The framework also acknowledges the impact that investigations for performance concerns can have on healthcare professionals.

This action was part of a strategy implemented by the regional NHS England SIPS team in response to a request from regional leaders during the Spring 2022 RO network events. The request acknowledged that while most leaders understood the importance of being compassionate and inclusive, the challenge was knowing what to do in practice and how to do it.

This ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ serves as a companion guide to all leaders for ‘upholding professional standards with compassion for self and others while enabling system improvements.

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Why was the lotus flower chosen?

You may wonder why we chose the lotus flower for the Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit identity.

The lotus flower is a symbol of purity and resilience. Despite growing in muddy waters, it emerges untainted and beautiful, bringing joy to the world. It can survive for over a century, and its seeds can thrive even longer.

This can be compared to the challenges faced in healthcare and the world at large. Compassion and peaceful resolution of problems can bring about holistic healing and wellbeing, alleviating pain, suffering, and distress.

The lotus flower is known for its powerful healing properties and remarkable resilience in the face of harsh conditions. It has been a symbol of wellness, enlightenment, peace, and joy for centuries, much like the concept of compassion.

The interconnectedness of compassion

In some cultures, the lotus represents the womb of the entire universe, reflecting the vast diversity that exists within it. In other cultures, such as Buddhism, the lotus symbolises compassion and enlightenment, representing the interconnectedness of compassion and inclusion in our world.

This is the inspiration behind the 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit', which emphasises the importance of compassion and inclusion in effective leadership.

We hope the metaphor of compassion as the resilient lotus rising and shining out of the muddy pool, despite all adversities, will resonate with you.



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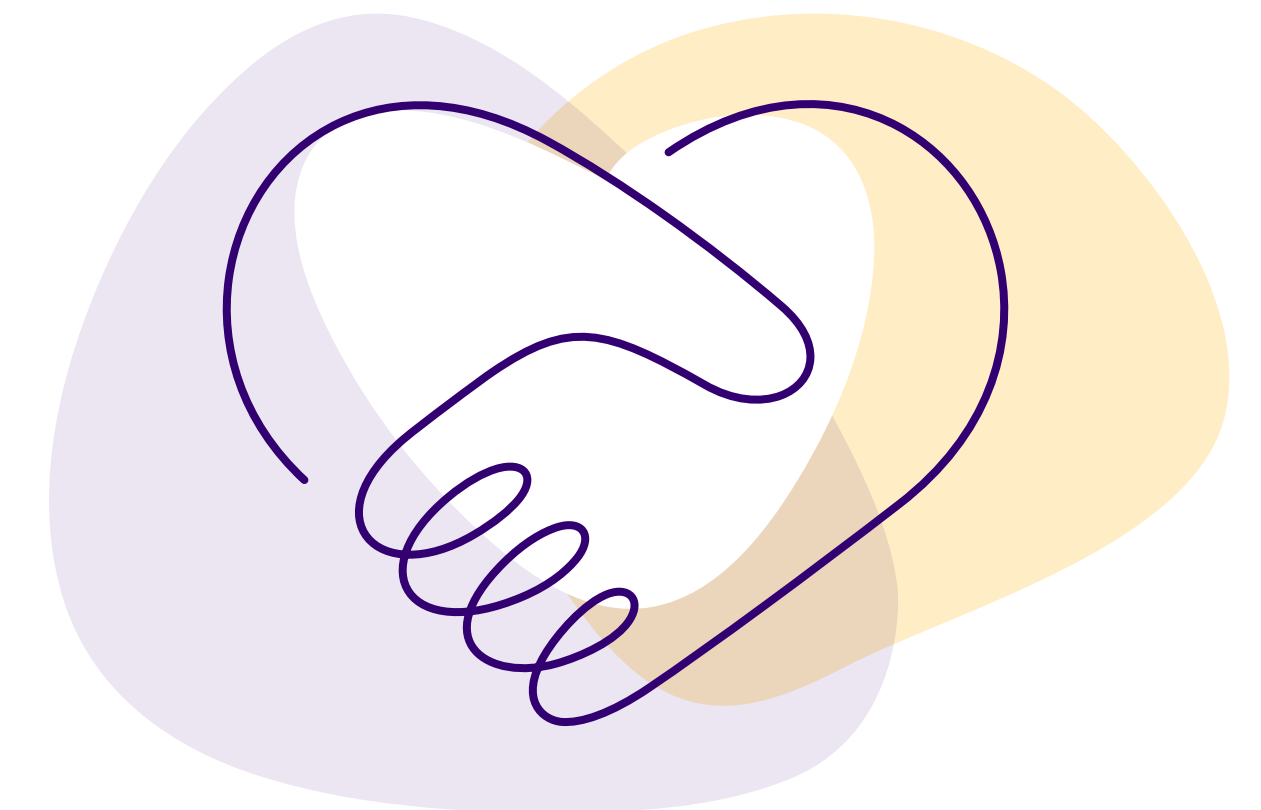
When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, it drastically altered the way we work. The once predictable management and leadership landscape in the workplace became one that is now filled with ambiguity and shifting expectations.

As a result, there is an increasing need for a human dimension to leadership that is both urgent and necessary. This is required to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff by developing compassionate approaches.

The compassionate principles and approaches within this 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit' primarily focus on managing performance concerns. However, they can be extrapolated and applied across all aspects of management and leadership within and beyond the healthcare sector. This is because compassionate values are all-inclusive and transcend cross-sector, cross-organisational and cross-system boundaries.

Leaders in the following areas will have the most to gain from this framework:

- 1 Healthcare leaders in NHS organisations across primary care**
- 2 Leaders in secondary/tertiary care settings who investigate and manage professional concerns**
- 3 Leaders in secondary/tertiary care settings who uphold professional standards and system improvement, including:**
 - a. Healthcare leaders within the various professional standards committees and subcommittees
 - b. Human Resources.
- 4 Learning and organisational development teams involved across:**
 - a. Medical, dental, and optometry allied specialities in primary care
 - b. Acute sector organisations
 - c. Social care and public health.
- 5 Leaders in independent and private sector healthcare organisations:**
 - a. The General Medical Council
 - b. Nursing and Midwifery Council
 - c. NHS Resolution
 - d. Other regulators and allied organisations dealing with professional standards concerns.





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The Growing Compassion initiative seeks to establish a social movement that fosters and enhances compassion throughout the NHS, especially in matters related to professional standards and system improvements.

The aim is to create a culture of compassionate and inclusive leadership to manage concerns regarding healthcare professionals' professional standards while ensuring proper governance and reducing inequities.

The vision is to enable and cultivate a compassionate culture that values collective leadership, inclusivity and professionalism.

"The 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit' is a comprehensive and innovative resource that provides a structured framework and supportive toolkit aimed at fulfilling the strategic objectives of growing compassion and Compassionate Leadership.

These objectives were developed based on inputs from healthcare leaders who participated in a stakeholder engagement event in September 2021, as well as focus groups held at Responsible Officer Network events in April and May 2022."

The objectives of this 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit' are as follows to enable leaders to:

Figure 1.1.1: Objectives of the L.O.T.U.S. Five Step Compassionate Leadership framework and toolkit



L.O.T.U.S. Step 1: Learn

About compassion to lay the groundwork for transformation

1.1 What is the L.O.T.U.S. Framework to Grow Compassion?

1.2 What is compassion, and how does it differ from pity, sympathy, and empathy?

1.3 What are the four elements of compassionate leadership?

1.4 What are the four pillars of compassionate leadership?



- 1.1 What is the L.O.T.U.S. Framework to Grow Compassion?

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1.1. What is the L.O.T.U.S. Framework to Grow Compassion?

The L.O.T.U.S Framework for Compassionate Leadership is an original and innovative concept developed to provide an

- easy to use
- structured
- streamlined

approach towards nurturing and growing compassion in a predominantly process-driven field of professional standards management within healthcare.

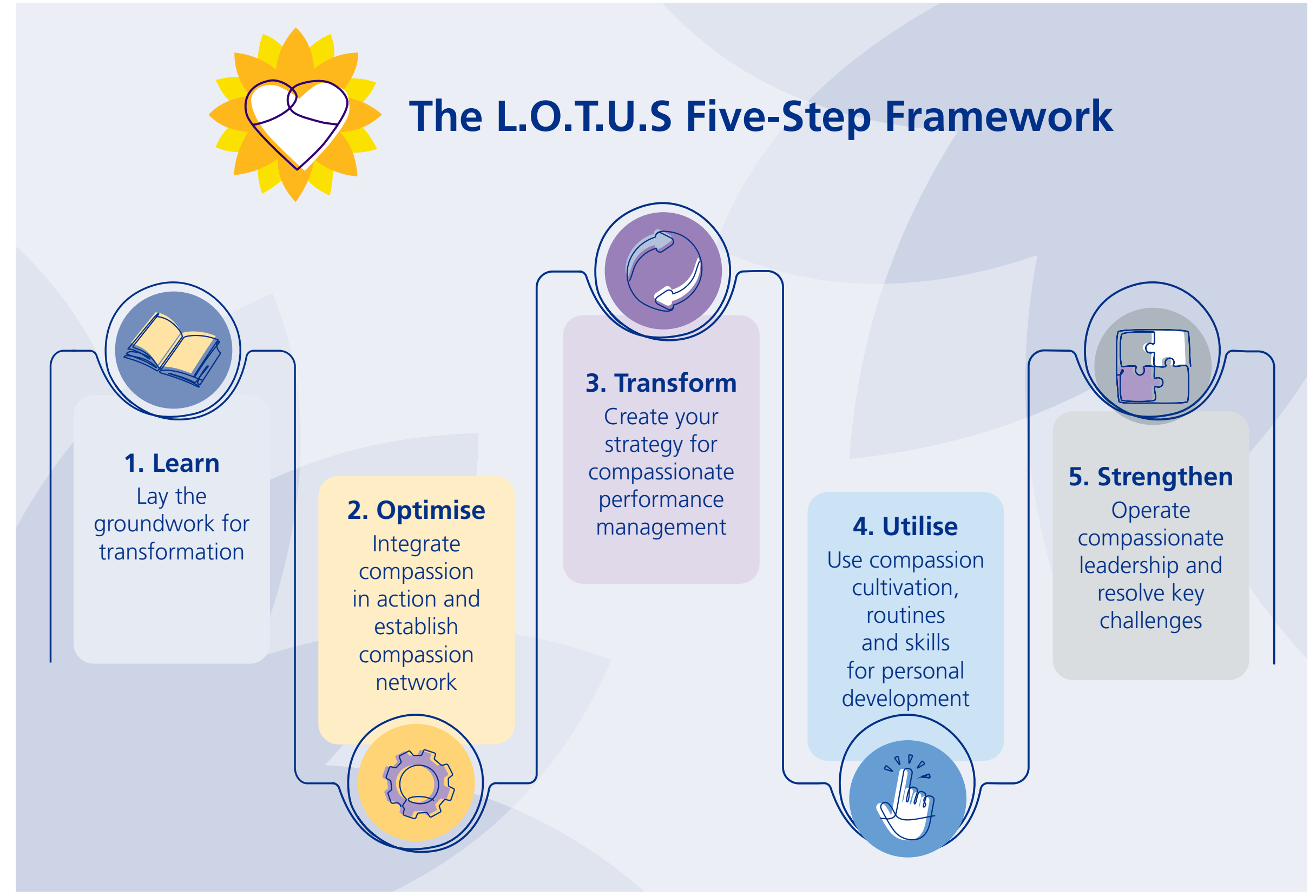
The L.O.T.U.S Framework enables our leaders and, through them, their teams within organisations and wider systems to adopt compassionate principles alongside the toolkit resources in the work setting.

It helps support our leaders and their teams in responding to the call for action exercises embedded throughout this document. These exercises will drive the growing compassion initiative within this challenging space of managing performance concerns.

As mentioned before in the [introductory section](#), the compassionate principles and approaches within this 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit' primarily focus on managing performance concerns.

However, they can be extrapolated and applied across all aspects of management and leadership within and beyond the healthcare sector. This is because compassionate values are all-inclusive and transcend cross-sector, cross-organisational and cross-system boundaries.

Figure 1.1 Compassionate Leadership: The L.O.T.U.S. five step framework



1.1 [What is the L.O.T.U.S. Framework to Grow Compassion?](#)

1.2 What is compassion, and how does it differ from pity, sympathy, and empathy?

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1.2 What is compassion, and how does it differ from pity, sympathy, and empathy?

Compassion is a sensitivity to the suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it. Compassion is the most powerful intervention that can be offered in healthcare.³ Compassion is woven into anything, and everything we do in the NHS, and that includes the hard things that are done in a human way.

Compassion is one of the NHS core values, and the NHS constitution defines it as:

*“Compassion is how care is given through relationships based on empathy, respect, and dignity. It can also be described as intelligent kindness and is central to how people perceive their care”.*⁶

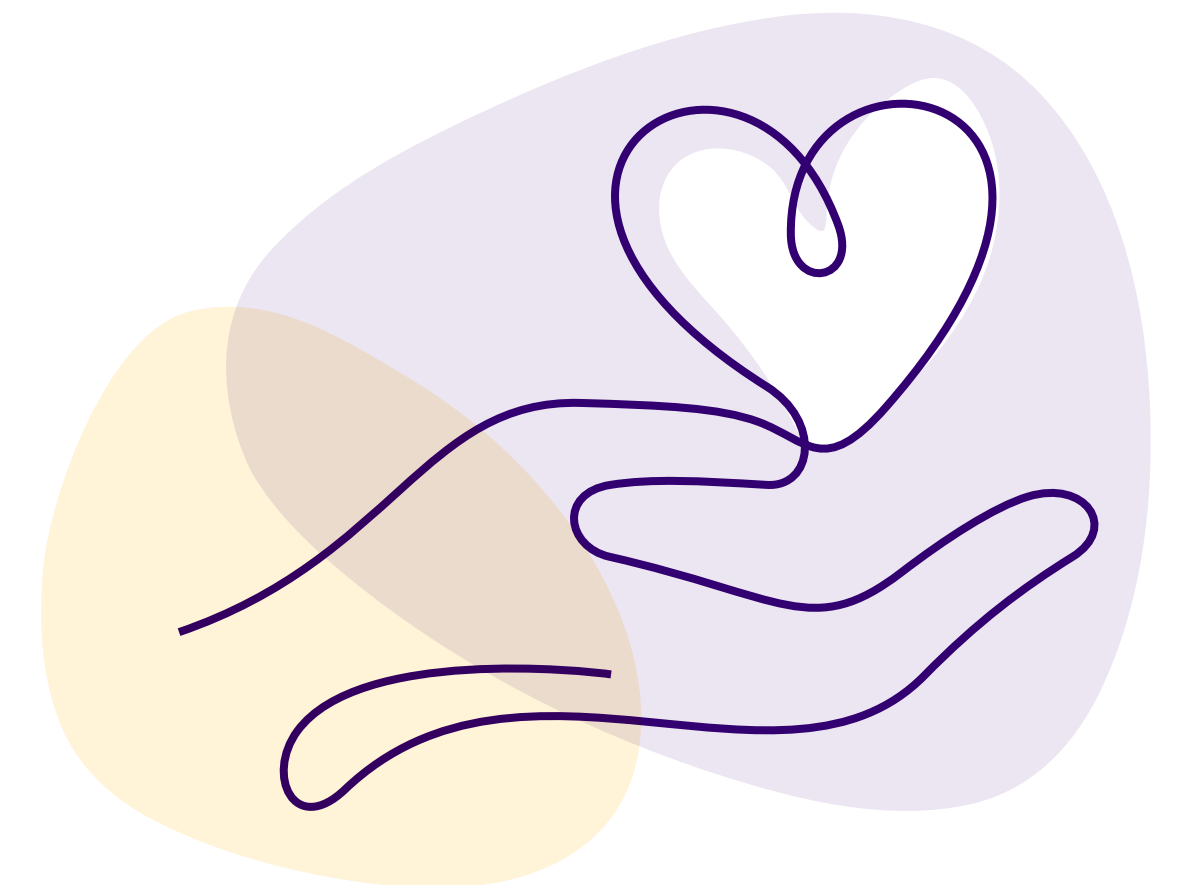
The words ‘empathy’, ‘compassion’, and ‘sympathy’ are sometimes used interchangeably. They all represent positive, altruistic traits, but they don’t refer to the exact same experience. It is helpful to consider the two distinct qualities of compassion: understanding what another is feeling and the willingness to act to alleviate suffering for another.

[Figure 1.2](#) will help you understand the differences and visually distinguish compassion from similar experiences of empathy, sympathy, and pity.⁷

- Pity:** When we experience pity, we have little willingness to act and little understanding of another’s experience. We simply feel sorry for them, which is just at an emotional level, while considering the person as ‘other’
- Sympathy:** With sympathy, there is a small increase in our willingness to help and our understanding of the other. We feel for the other person, and yet the emotion focuses on the individual being ‘other’ and ‘otherness’
- Empathy:** Moving up one more level, with empathy, we have a close, visceral understanding of the other person’s experience where we feel with the person and literally take on the emotions of the other person and make those feelings our own. Though a noble thing to do, empathy does not necessarily help the other person, except for possibly making them feel less lonely in their experience⁷
- Compassion:** With compassion, we have a good understanding of what the other person is experiencing and a willingness to act to alleviate their distress. Compassion enables the inclusion of the ‘other’ as a connected being with self and as part of the solution. Respect and appreciation of the uniqueness of every individual are key to being inclusive in compassionate approaches, as true compassion is always inclusive.

Our understanding of the other person’s experience is greater than with empathy because we pull on our emotional awareness as well as rational understanding. Compassion occurs when we step away from empathy and ask ourselves what we can do to support the person who is suffering. In this way, compassion is an intention versus an emotion.⁷

[Read more »](#)



- 1.1 [What is the L.O.T.U.S. Framework to Grow Compassion?](#)

- 1.2 **[What is compassion, and how does it differ from pity, sympathy, and empathy?](#)**

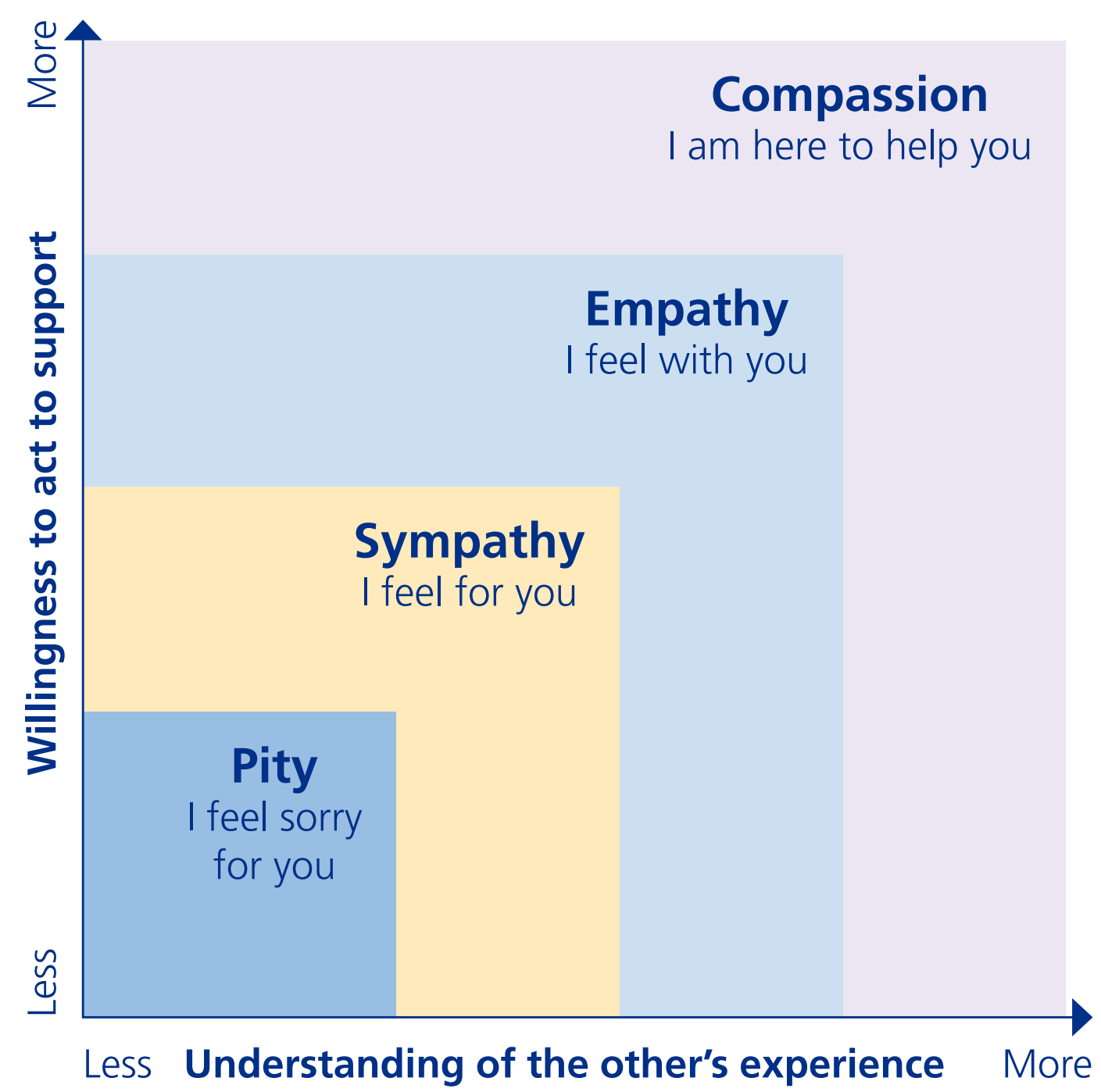
- 1.3 [What are the four elements of compassionate leadership?](#)

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1.2 What is compassion, and how does it differ from pity, sympathy, and empathy? (continued)

Figure 1.2: Compassion Continuum. Harvard Business Review

Compassion goes beyond sympathy and empathy.



TRY THIS: Reflection for individuals

Exercise 1.2.i: Now that you have a better understanding of the above compassion continuum, please reflect on your own emotional responses to a situation where for example: you were managing a performance concern using this continuum.

How can you be more mindful? Write down your personal action plan. Move beyond pity, sympathy, and empathy towards true compassion. By that, we mean moving beyond emotion to purposeful intentionality and commitment to action.



TRY THIS: Reflection for teams in organisations

Exercise 1.2.t: Using the same example of managing a performance concern, please reflect on your emotional responses to varied situations with an understanding of the above compassion continuum as a multi-professional/multi-disciplinary team. How did you respond to work in which consensus decisions are made? For example, a professional standards committee or group and similar.

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- 1.3. What are the four elements of compassionate leadership?**

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1.3 What are the four elements of compassionate leadership?

One question came up again and again throughout the focus groups. It was: “How do you embody being compassionate?”. Focus group discussions revealed the values that were embraced by regional leaders and the traits that they related to being compassionate.

Compassionate leadership embodies both a sensitivity to the challenges that colleagues face and a commitment to help them respond effectively to those challenges and thrive in the process of their work.

This can be done by modelling the four elements of compassion³ made widely popular by Michael West based on Atkins et al.’s original work, namely attending, understanding, empathising, and helping, as outlined in Figure 1.3.⁸

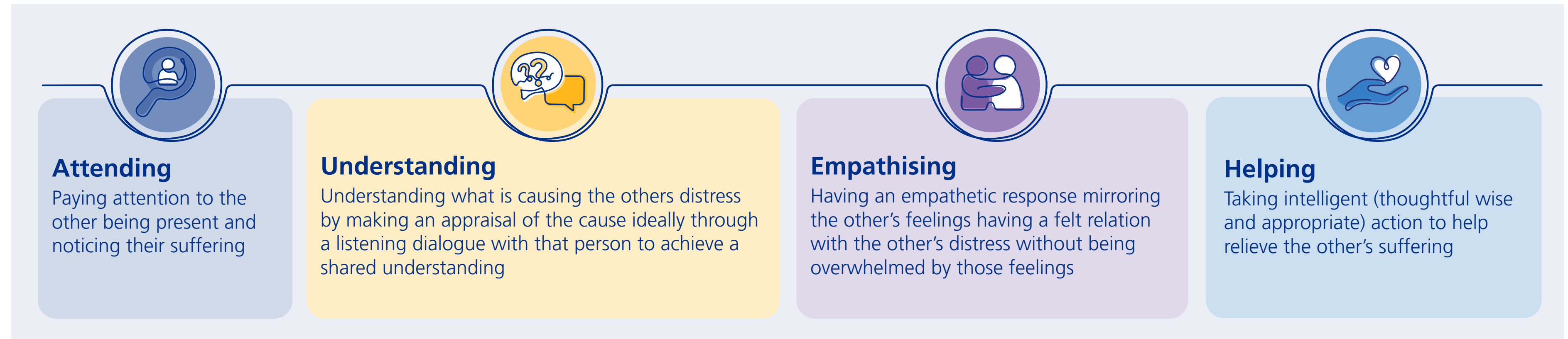
The four core elements of compassion, as above, help create clarity of shared purpose, vision, and goals. These elements, in turn, lead to trust and create direction, alignment, and commitment needed for effective leadership.

In addition to the above, a commitment to inclusion and diversity helps foster inclusive leadership. When everyone takes responsibility and consistently demonstrates interdependent leadership styles, collective leadership within the organisation is created.

Alongside all of the above, mutual support and altruism across boundaries thrive through shared vision, shared long-term goals, and objectives with a constructive and ethical focus on conflict management. The result is an emergent systems leadership that flourishes and thrives.

[Read more »](#)

Figure 1.3: Four Elements of Compassion: Atkins PWB and Parker SK 2018




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 **Video resources:**

You may wish to watch these videos before your individual and team-based exercises (below); further to reflections:


Video 1.3.1: [Michael West: Compassionate and collective leadership for high-quality culture](#)

Video 1.3.2: [Michael West: Developing cultures of high-quality care](#)

NHS England Reading resource 1.3: You may also wish to read and check out these NHS England resources (below) before the exercises.


[Inspiration: sharing the “whys” and the “hows” of compassionate and inclusive leadership](#), which includes a featured case study.

[What does Compassionate and Inclusive Leadership mean to us?](#)

 **TRY THIS: Reflection for individuals**

Exercise 1.3.i: Reflect on your own strengths and weaknesses regarding the four core elements of compassion.

- What trait among the four is your key strength?
- How can you reinforce this positively in your practice further?
- Which of the four core elements is an area you identify with scope for strengthening further?
- What actionable steps would you take to enhance this aspect?

 **TRY THIS: Reflection for teams in organisations**

Exercise 1.3.t: Please repeat the above exercise after individual reflections as a team, preferably with the multi-professional/multi-disciplinary team that you work in where consensus decisions are made, for example, the Professional Standards Committee or Group and similar.

And explore the strengths and weaknesses related to the four core elements of compassion as a team.

- What do you think are the team’s strengths when it comes to the four elements?
- How can you positively reinforce this further?
- Which of the four core elements is an area you identify with scope for strengthening further within your team?
- What actionable steps could you and would you take to enhance this aspect as a team?

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1.4 What are the four pillars of compassionate leadership?

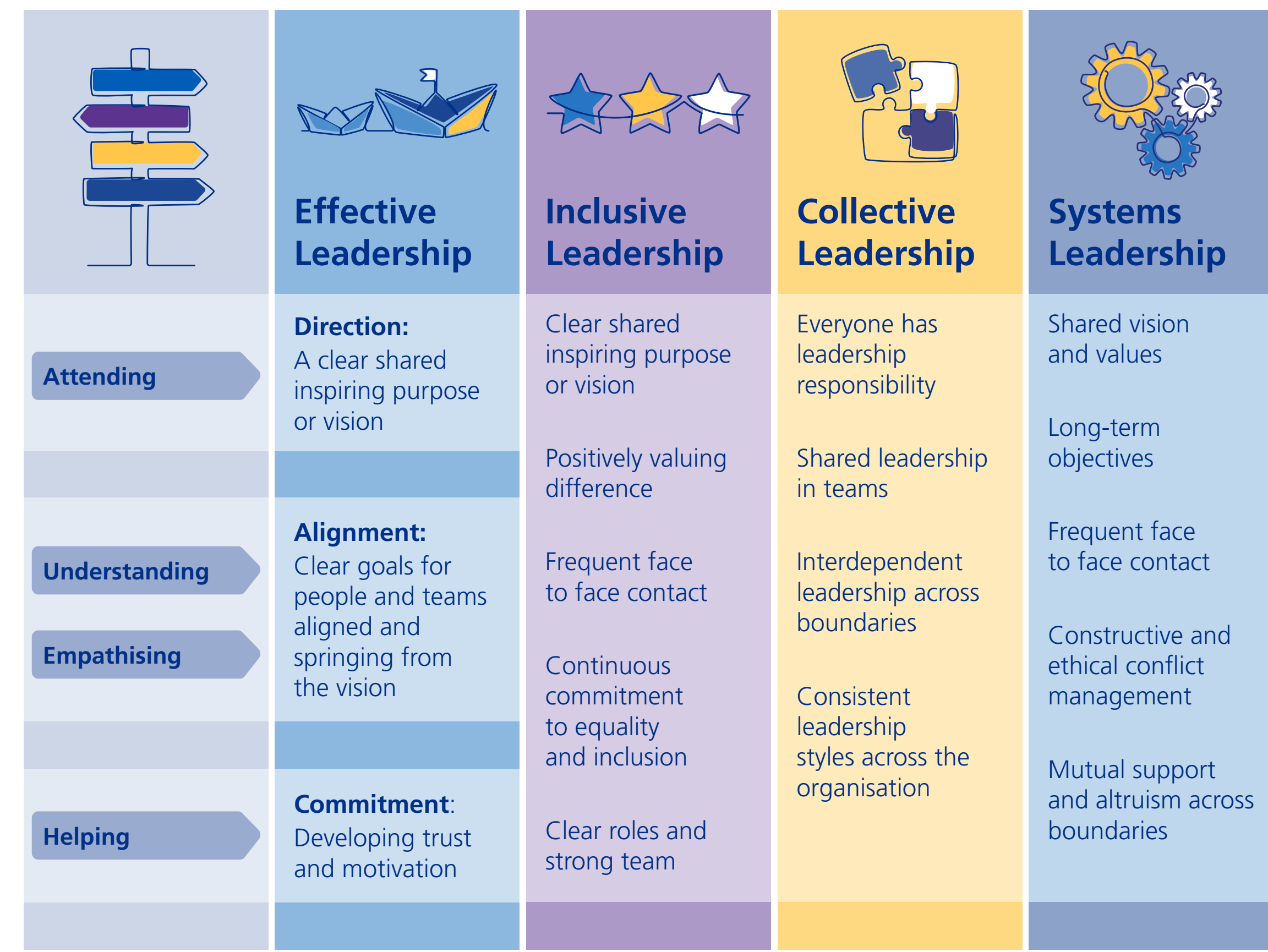
The four pillars of the Compassionate Leadership Framework as an approach to leadership development in Figure 1.4 emerge from the four elements of compassion.

The four core elements of compassion, when applied in practice, pave the way for the components of Effective Leadership, Inclusive Leadership, Collective Leadership, and Systems Leadership, respectively, as illustrated in Figure 1.4.

The framework demonstrates how Compassionate Leadership encompasses the other leadership styles and, therefore, is an all-inclusive form of leadership. The Welsh Health Education and Improvement Board adopted Professor Michael West's Compassionate Leadership Framework, shown in Figure 1.4, for their work in 2021.

The Compassionate Leadership Principles point the way to leading and working compassionately together, which is the most powerful way we can nurture and promote the health and happiness of the staff.³

Figure 1.4: Compassionate Leadership Framework- Michael West et al.



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1.4 What are the four pillars of compassionate leadership? (continued)

 **Video resources:**

Please find (below) two videos, one by Professor Michael West and the other by Rasmus Hougaard. These videos discuss the leadership required in the 21st century for the NHS. Watching these videos will provide valuable insights and enable you to reflect on the leadership styles you adopt and their impact on those around you.


[Video 1.4.1: Prof Michael West, Leadership in Today's NHS](#)

[Video 1.4.2: Rasmus Hougaard: Leaders of the 21st Century | Rasmus Hougaard](#)

 **TRY THIS: Reflection for individuals**

Exercise 1.4.i: Reflect on your own individual leadership style and behaviours associated with it, using the above Compassionate Leadership Framework by Michael West et al.

- How can you individually adopt the above compassionate framework for leadership development that leads to strengthening your compassionate approaches as a leader and paves the way for a compassionate and inclusive culture in the workplace?

 **TRY THIS: Reflection for teams in organisations**

Exercise 1.4.t: Please repeat the previous exercise after individual reflections as a team in groups exploring the reflections (below):

- Your organisation's top leadership/board's behaviours:
 - Which leadership style/s do they demonstrate predominantly?
 - How does it impact the others and the organisation?
- The leadership behaviours you observe among leaders/members within the multi-disciplinary/ multi-professional team/s you work in where the team makes consensus decisions. Example: Professional standards committee or group and similar.
- How can you individually and collectively adopt the compassionate framework ([Figure 1.4](#)) for board/team leadership development that leads to a compassionate and inclusive culture in the workplace?

L.O.T.U.S. Step 2: Optimise

Integrating compassion in action, establish compassion network

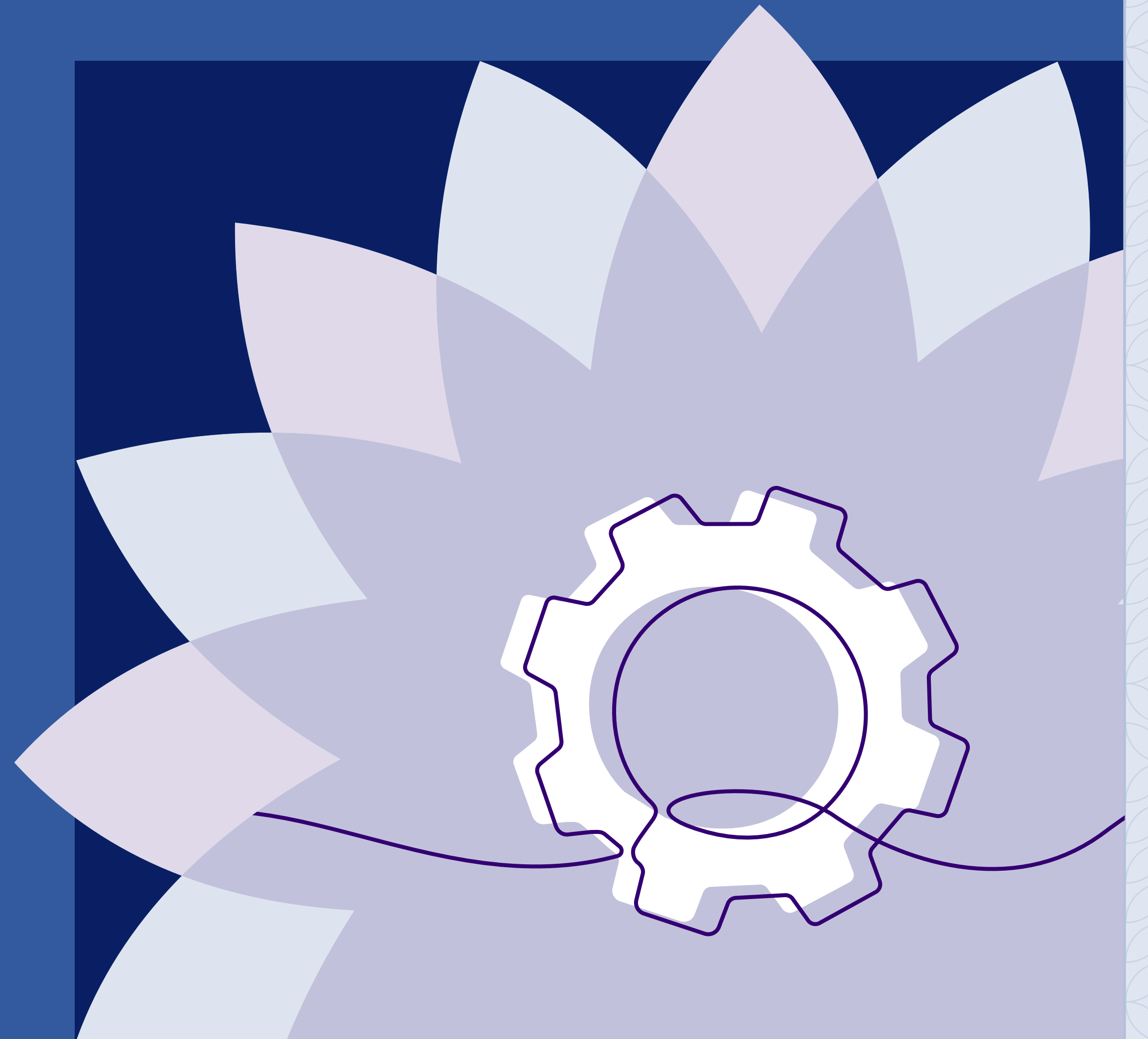
[2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

[2.2 What is the impact of performance investigations on health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

[2.3 What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?](#)

[2.4 What did our leaders say on growing compassion?](#)

[2.5 What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)



- 2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?

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- 2.5 What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?

2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?

Compassion has been a core NHS value since its inception in 1948 and is reiterated in the NHS constitution. Authentic leadership is when compassion from the heart (thoughts) works effectively alongside real work through hands (actions) and curiosity of our brains (creative imagination).

These values are at the core of the 'NHS People Promise', which promises a positive, compassionate, and inclusive culture for the NHS staff and people and emphasises that we all have our part to play and stay committed to this. See Figure 2.1.1 and [Figure 2.1.2](#).^{9,10}

 **TRY THIS:**
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 2.1.1: Reflect on how your day-to-day actions demonstrate your commitment to the People Promise. Reflect on areas that might present potential opportunities for growth as an individual and as a team/organisation in which you work.

[Read more »](#)

Figure 2.1.1: NHS People Promise



2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?

2.2 What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?

2.3 What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?

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2.5 What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?

2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise? (continued)

Figure 2.1.2: Our Leadership Way – NHS Leadership Academy

Heart

We are Compassionate

We are inclusive, promote equality and diversity and challenge discrimination.

We are kind and treat people with compassion, courtesy and respect.

Hands

We are Collaborative

We collaborate, forming effective partnerships to achieve our common goals.

We celebrate success and support our people to be the best they can be.



Head

We are Curious

We aim for the highest standards and seek to continually improve harnessing our ingenuity.

We can be trusted to do what we promise.

Every day, our NHS people do amazing things in difficult circumstances. “Our Leadership Way”, illustrated in Figure 2.1.2, was co-created with thousands of our NHS people. It sets out the compassionate and inclusive behaviours expected of our leaders at every level to show towards staff and colleagues.

It introduces how leaders at every level across the NHS can help raise the standards of leadership by committing to compassionate and inclusive leadership supported by a culture of lifelong learning and development.¹⁰

It describes how we can operate at our best through our hearts, heads and hands and is a self-reflective tool for leaders to use to consider how your behaviour impacts the cultures you create.


Our leadership way framework emphasises compassionate and inclusive behaviours led by the heart – alongside collaborative and effective leadership behaviours – that garner trust and connect people.¹⁰

[Read more »](#)

2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?

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2.1 How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise? (continued)



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 2.1.2: Reflect on how you and your organisation work towards enhancing equity and reducing discrimination in general and particularly in your work related to the management of professional standard concerns.

- What strategies do you have in place to reduce subjectivity, prejudice, and bias, both conscious and unconscious, in determining the threshold for formal investigation and referrals to the regulator objectively?
- How do you enable the practitioner’s voice and views to feed into the collaborative decision-making and support them to be the best they can be?



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams in organisations

Exercise 2.1.3: Reflect on how you and your organisation work towards enhancing equity and reducing discrimination in general and particularly in your work related to the management of professional standard concerns.

- What strategies do you have in place to reduce subjectivity, prejudice, and bias, both conscious and unconscious, in determining the threshold for formal investigation and referrals to regulators objectively?
- How do you enable the practitioner’s voice and views to feed into the collaborative decision-making and support them to be the best they can be?



- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

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- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)

2.2 What is the impact of performance Investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?

Healthcare professionals are human, and the theme of the person behind the professional being lost in the system while investigating and managing professional concerns is well acknowledged.¹¹ Workplace investigation can be a challenging and distressing experience for those who are subject to it or participating in it and may well impact an individual's mental health and wellbeing.

These risks are perhaps even more pronounced now, with the new ways of working since the COVID-19 global pandemic, besides dealing with the other uncertainties during and in the aftermath of the pandemic, including financial pressures. Employees are likely to miss day-to-day contact with colleagues and support networks. This, in turn, may lead to a sense of isolation or a dip in confidence. Workplace investigations on their conduct or performance can make the impact even worse.

Insights on the mental state of doctors

Literature on the impact of performance investigations on medical professionals has gained more visibility and attention, especially over the last decade.¹² Bourne et al. conducted a large study of doctors in the UK that revealed the adverse impact that complaints and/or referrals to the regulator have on doctors' mental state.¹²

Doctors who had recently received a complaint of any kind were 77% more likely to suffer from moderate to severe depression than those who had never had a complaint. They also had an increased incidence of

- suicidal thoughts
- sleep difficulties
- relationship problems
- a host of physical health problems

compared with people who had not been through a complaints process.



- Over nine years, **21** doctors in the care of the [NHS Practitioner Health Programme \(PHP\)](#) died.
- Among living PHP patients, the GMC was noted as involved in around **10%** of cases, compared with **52%** (11 out of 21) of patients who have died, and **56%** (nine out of 16) of the patients who died from accidents, suicide, or overdoses.¹³
- Between 2005 and 2013, **28** doctors died through suicide or suspected suicide while undergoing GMC investigation.¹⁴

[Read more »](#)

- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 **What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?**

- 2.3 [What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?](#)

- 2.4 [What did our leaders say on growing compassion?](#)

- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)

2.2 What is the impact of performance Investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals? (continued)

While it is recognised that correlation does not mean causation, being under regulatory or disciplinary processes nevertheless increases the risk of mental illness among doctors, and a complaint or referral to the GMC must be considered a red-flag risk factor for both depression and suicide.

The GMC has since implemented a series of changes in its processes to limit and hopefully reduce the mental health impact of a referral to them.¹³

Doctors have always had higher suicide rates compared to the general population and with other professional groups. Female doctors have higher rates – 2.5-4.0 times the rate by some estimates.¹⁵

430 health professionals died by suicide in England between 2011 and 2015. That's almost **two** healthcare professionals a week.¹⁷

There is also a rise in mental health issues: one-third of doctors in training are estimated to be dealing with and have symptoms of mental health problems.^{16,17,18}

The reasons for suicide among doctors, as in the general population, are often related to untreated or under-treated depression, bipolar disorder, or substance misuse and work-related factors that go beyond mental illness, and the impact of complaints and referral to the regulator can also have a major impact on doctors' mental health.^{13,19,20}

Doctors have stated that when a letter from the GMC lands on their doormat, they feel anxious about its contents.²¹ The impact is likely to be similar for any formal investigation, whether by the GMC or local organisation.¹³

[Table 3.2](#) under section 3.2 summarises actions involved in a compassionate approach towards managing performance concerns.²⁹ A list of helpful, supportive resources are included in [Appendix 1](#).



TRY THIS: Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 2.2: Pause and think of your own organisational data on the health and wellbeing of your staff in general and particularly those undergoing and who have undergone performance concern investigations.

- What does this data tell you?
- How many of those undergoing performance investigations had mental health problems before, during or after the investigation as a result?
- If you respond that you do not have this data, what can you do as a compassionate leader to enable the availability of this data for your organisation going forward?
- Also, think of what quality improvement initiatives with interventions can be enabled once you have the data.

- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 [What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

- 2.3 What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?**

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- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)

2.3 What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?

Compassion is practised in our being and doing through actions in all the simple and small everyday things we do as much as in the big, challenging or complex endeavours as a leader.³

A compassionate approach recognises that:

- 1** The primary responsibility of leaders managing performance concerns is to **safeguard patients and the public.**
- 2** It is important to investigate any fitness to practice concerns **fairly and equitably**
- 3** Doctors under investigation receive the **necessary support** throughout the process.

Being under investigation can be extremely stressful for doctors and their families. This is highlighted under [section 2.1](#) how we communicate with doctors during this time is critical to their experience of an investigation. Communication also impacts how fairly doctors believe they are treated.

Providing clarity and understanding throughout the investigation process is an essential component of this compassionate approach. In 2015, the GMC made changes to the language and tone of the letters they send to doctors to strike a balance between:

- **clarity** about what’s happening and why
- **sensitivity** to the stress the doctor will be under.²¹

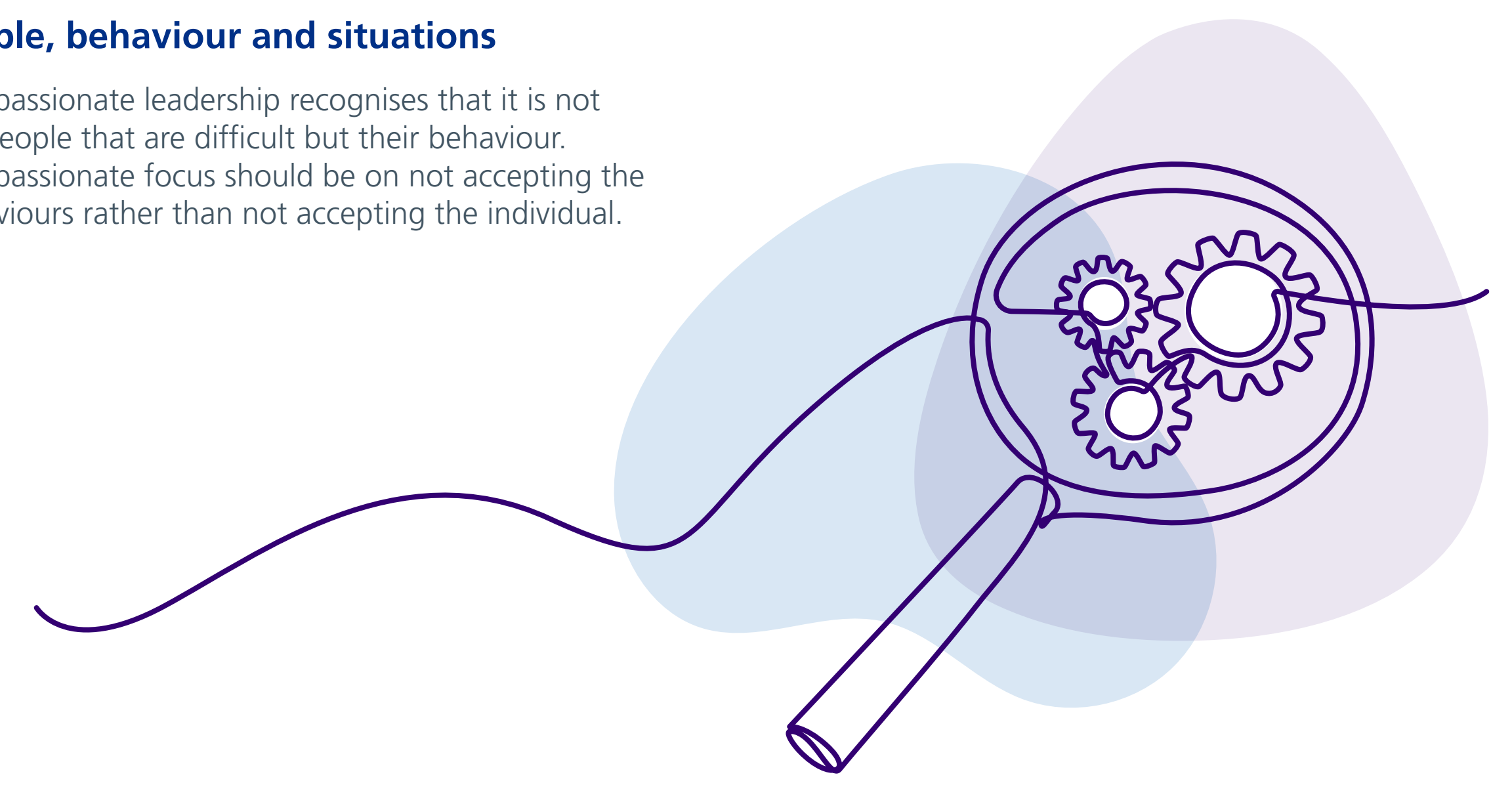
This approach can be adopted by all.

People, behaviour and situations

Compassionate leadership recognises that it is not the people that are difficult but their behaviour. Compassionate focus should be on not accepting the behaviours rather than not accepting the individual.

Compassionate leadership requires us to take an evidence-based approach to dealing with difficulties. An evidence-based approach means enriching our understanding of human behaviour and needs at work. The aim is for you to be more supportive and effective.

Please refer to [section 3.1](#) for compassionate approaches to managing performance concerns. Please refer to [Table 3.2](#) for tips on how to compassionately support individuals who are the subject of performance concerns.



- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 [What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

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2.4 What did our leaders say on growing compassion?

In April and May 2022, focus group discussions took place at the Responsible Officer Network meetings. The focus groups followed an educational presentation on Compassionate Leadership.

The presentation offered valuable context to:

- help align leaders with the vision
- inspire reflections and inputs on the onward growing compassion journey.

In the groups, there was consensus on compassionate principles amongst the regional and national leaders who participated. In particular, there was unanimous agreement from the leaders that **compassionate approaches are fundamental** while dealing with concerns about professional standards and, at the same time, need to be effective in holding appropriate levels of accountability.

There was an aligned agreement among the Medical Directors/Responsible Officers and other leaders in the focus groups that a compassionate approach to supporting the person behind the professional is integral while investigating concerns regarding professional standards.

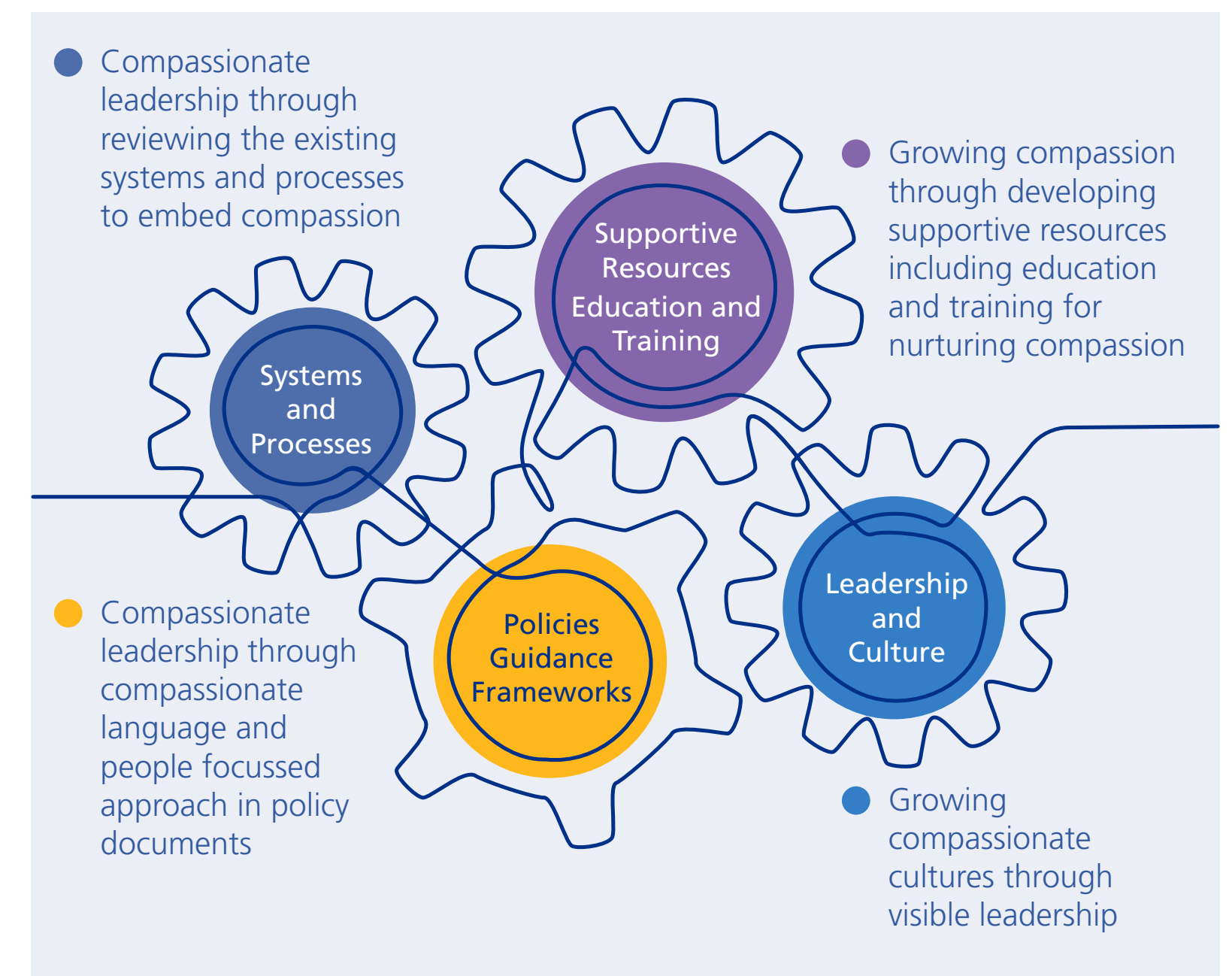
The challenge highlighted by the leaders during the discussions remained as to the ‘what and how’ of compassionate practice in real life and how to be compassionate and do hard things in a human way.

The ‘L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit’ and the future

The leaders at the focus groups suggested that a compassionate framework and toolkit would be helpful in delivering compassionate approaches while managing performance concerns, which resulted in further work to deliver this L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Framework and Toolkit.

The suggestions from leaders at focus groups were collated under four key themes of compassionate approaches in the practical work setting of professional standards, as in Figures 2.4.1 and 2.4.2.

Figure 2.4.1: Key themes from focus groups at RO networks - Spring 2022



[Read more »](#)

- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 [What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

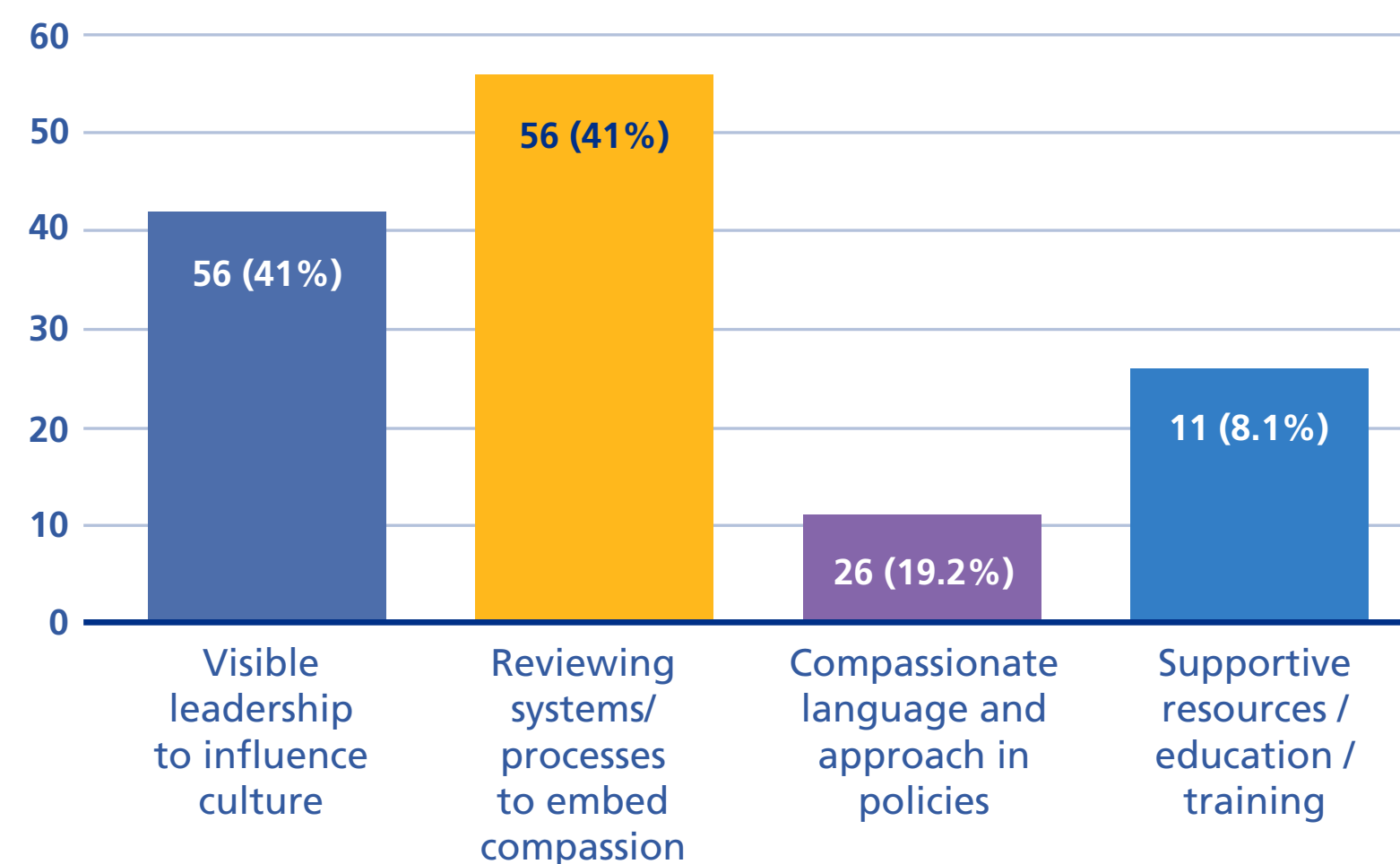
- 2.3 [What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?](#)

- 2.4 What did our leaders say on growing compassion?**

- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)

2.4 What did our leaders say on growing compassion? (continued)

Figure 2.4.2: Key themes required for Compassionate Leadership based on the proportion of responses from Medical Directors/ Responsible Officers – Spring 2022



This work was presented as a poster at the International Health Care Leadership Conference 2022, organised by the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM), where the focus was on Future Thinking, Practice and Innovation, with an abstract published in BMJ Leaders' Journal Summer 2023.

The 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit' is, therefore, the result of the input and suggestions from all our Responsible officers/Medical Directors and other multi-disciplinary healthcare leaders who participated, and this serves as a co-created resource for all leaders.

Further benefits of compassionate leadership

The Responsible Officer Network discussions at focus groups demonstrated through their inputs that as compassionate leaders, they acknowledge that their colleagues are more than the sum of any specific trauma they've endured or challenge they may be facing. In other words, they recognise that someone may be dealing with a particular hardship but also that they have unique strengths.

All agreed that compassionate leaders should be able to:

- See and acknowledge the whole person in context
- Seek to grow that person
- Not just solve their problems.

There was recognition that they could uncover hidden talents and find new ways to leverage the skills and contributions of others through compassionate approaches, as is well acknowledged.²²

Simple tools and supportive resources are included within this 'L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit', which can be adopted by other organisations across all sectors as the compassionate principles are generic and all-inclusive.

NHS England SIPS team also played a key role through conversations and inputs into the NHS Resolution team's initiative and launch of 'Compassionate Conversations Training Workshops'.

Further discussions ensued between the NHS England SIPS North West team and the NHS England - Workforce Training and Education Directorate team regarding compassionate approaches to support the diverse needs of diverse cohorts of trainees, specifically vulnerable groups such as International Medical Graduates, who were highlighted as needing additional support in the GMC Fair to refer publication with ingroup and outgroup dynamics.²³

The compassionate values stated as important and voiced by our leaders during the focus groups formed the basis of the value-based, aligned North West Compassion and Kindness Promise in [Figure 2.5](#), section 2.5.

- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 [What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

- 2.3 [What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?](#)

- 2.4 [What did our leaders say on growing compassion?](#)

- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)**

2.5 What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?

The leaders who participated in the stakeholder engagement event and focus groups were unanimously committed to the 'Growing Compassion' initiative. Five NHS Trusts came forward to become pilot sites for the Compassionate Initiative project series as 'Compassion Champions', embracing the kindness and compassion promise commitment and implementing the toolkit.

These Trusts also agreed to participate in the pilot workshops enabled by NHS resolution colleagues on 'Compassionate Conversations' subsequently in 2023.

There was consensus and alignment among regional leaders in the values that they believed comprised compassionate principles, and this formed the basis of the North West Kindness and Compassion Promise as in Figure 2.5, which acts as the value-based guiding principles of this Compassionate Framework and Toolkit with commitment from all leaders across the region.

Leaders could share this widely within their own organisations and teams for personal and team-based collective reflections to align all with the value focus of compassionate approaches highlighted here.

Figure 2.5: Compassion and Kindness Promise

We will strive to create the conditions for kindness and compassion in our organisations and for the people we serve by:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Treating all people with mindful kindness and compassion. 2 Appreciating all people's uniqueness through conscious inclusion. 3 Making our staff wellbeing and positive workplace experience a priority. 4 Trusting our staff to make meaningful connections with people. 5 Protecting time and creating spaces for people to come together. 6 Listening to people's needs and finding system solutions beyond human factors. 7 Creating opportunities to appreciate people and pay gratitude. 8 Creating opportunities to recognise and celebrate kindness and compassion. 9 Creating a culture where people are more important than processes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 Empowering people with psychological safety and belonging and to be their best selves. 11 Enabling unkindness to be called out in a kind and compassionate manner. 12 Ensuring our performance management aligns with our values. 13 Committing to ask our staff and those we serve if they experience kindness. 14 Promoting civility and challenge disruptive behaviours in workplace. 15 Being always kind and compassionate to self as self-care is best care. |
|--|--|



Use your voice for kindness your ears for compassion your hands for charity your mind for truth and your heart for love.

[Read more »](#)

- 2.1 [How is compassion at the core of NHS People Plan and Promise?](#)

- 2.2 [What is the impact of performance investigations on the health and wellbeing of professionals?](#)

- 2.3 [What is the role of compassion in performance concerns?](#)

- 2.4 [What did our leaders say on growing compassion?](#)

- 2.5 [What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like?](#)**

2.5 What does the co-created kindness and compassion promise look like? (continued)



Video Resources:

Compassionate video series by Alex Lyons. All four videos in the series:

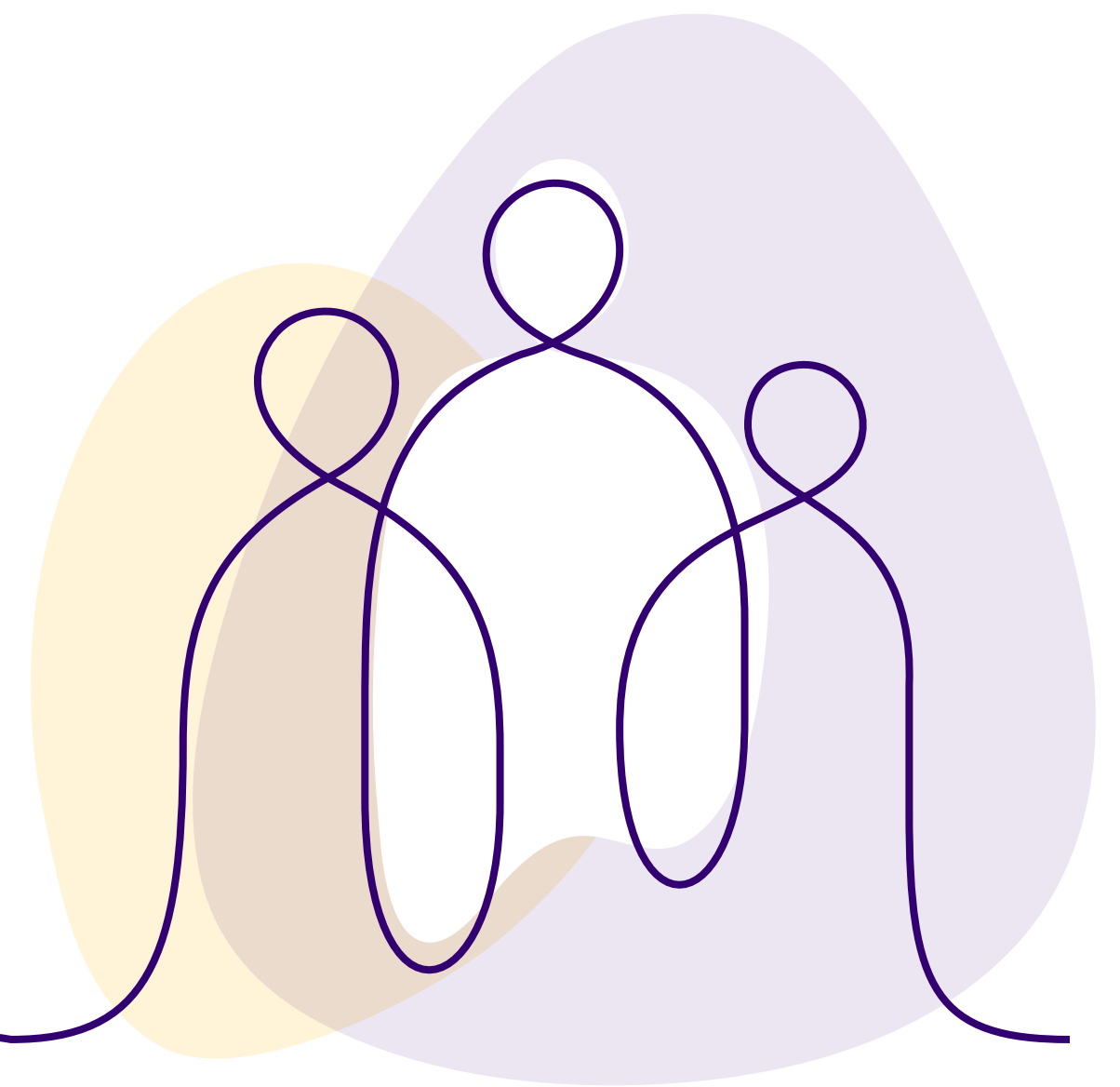
- [Video 2.5.1: What is compassion?](#)
- [Video 2.5.2: Compassionate Leadership](#)
- [Video 2.5.3: Compassionate Communication](#)
- [Video 2.5.4: Compassion in the Workplace](#)



TRY THIS: Reflection for Teams and Individuals

Exercise 2.5:

- How can you live the values of compassion in the kindness and compassion promise in your work life?
- State three key actions you might wish to take to practice this compassion promise.
- How can you help inspire a shared vision to align your team and organisation with compassionate values made in this promise as a wider commitment?



L.O.T.U.S. Step 3: Transform

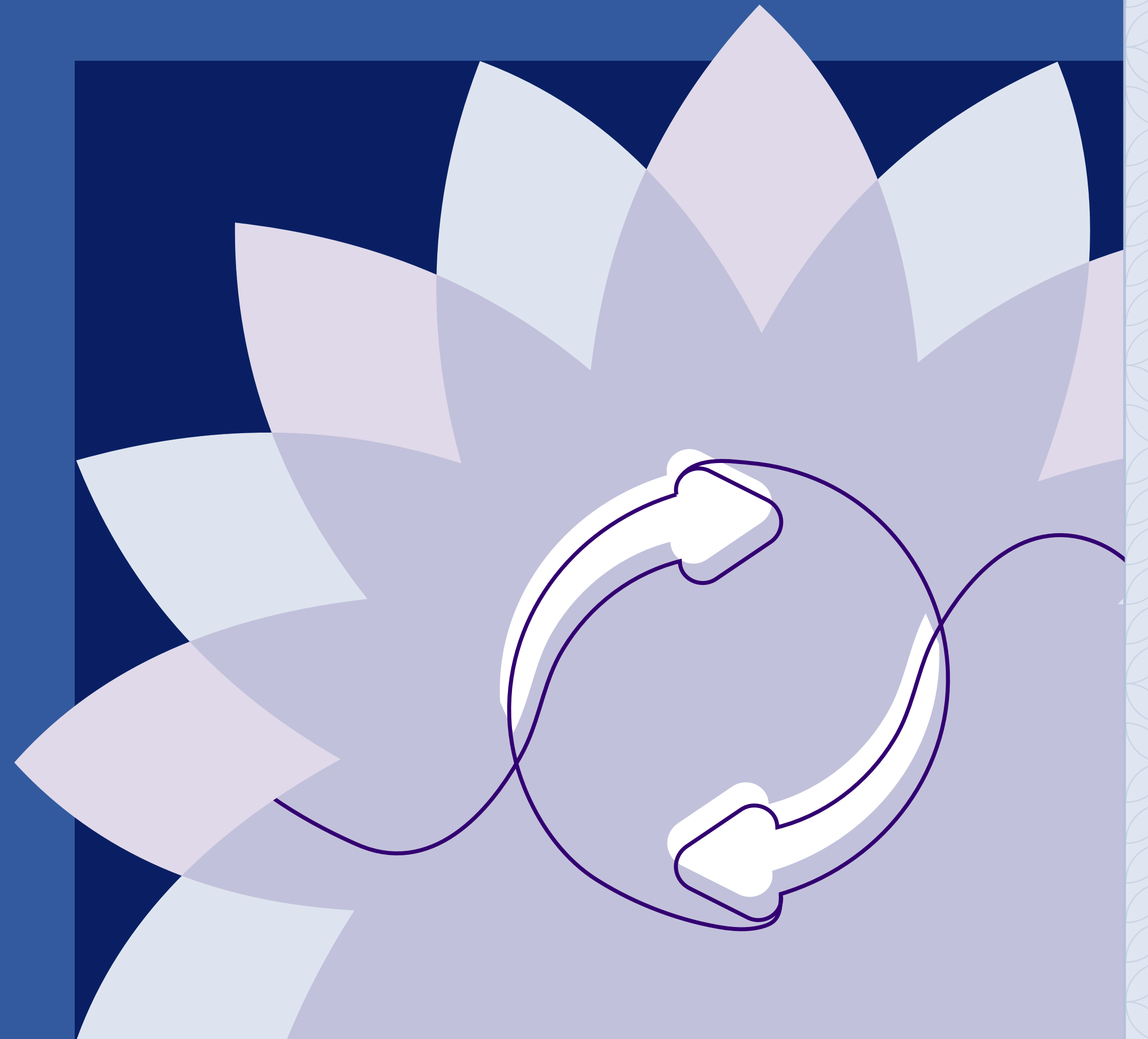
Through strategies for compassionate performance management

3.1 What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?

3.2 What are some key tips to support mental health while managing concerns?

3.3 How to incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?

3.4 How to practice compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?



- 3.1 What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?

- 3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns

- 3.3 How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?

- 3.4 How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?

3.1 What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?

The leaders who participated in focus groups agreed that the four elements of compassion (described under [section 1.3](#)) were key to enabling compassionate approaches while managing performance concerns.

There was consensus from all the focus groups that the compassionate step-wise approach to managing these concerns in the practical workplace setting must include:

- 1 **Listening to the practitioner** and their side of the experience and perspectives. This should be in a non-judgemental manner with empathy
- 2 **Involving the practitioner** in the decision-making and remedial solutions with acknowledgement of agreed exemptions.

The network leaders' views were clearly seen to be aligned with the well-acknowledged five-step compassionate approach to managing performance concerns published by Michael West ³, as in [Figure 3.1](#).

The skills of compassionate leadership

The skills of Compassionate Leadership are central to success in managing performance problems.

- A compassionate approach recognises that:**
- 1 **Attending:** Listening deeply to discover the underlying problems;
 - 2 **Understanding:** Exploring and discussing to fully understand those problems;
 - 3 **Empathising:** Having an empathic connecting response; and then
 - 4 **Helping:** Finding ways to support the other person to perform effectively.

There are five useful steps in this compassionate approach to performance management.³ These are useful in the context of professional standards while managing performance concerns, as in [Figure 3.1](#).

Ultimately, Compassionate Leadership means having the courage to focus on difficulties and to have honest, open, and necessarily difficult conversations in a compassionate way (attending, understanding, empathising, and helping) to identify and explore the problem to understand and then agree on remedial solutions and ongoing monitoring.

[Read more »](#)



3.1 What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?

3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns

3.3 How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?

3.4 How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?

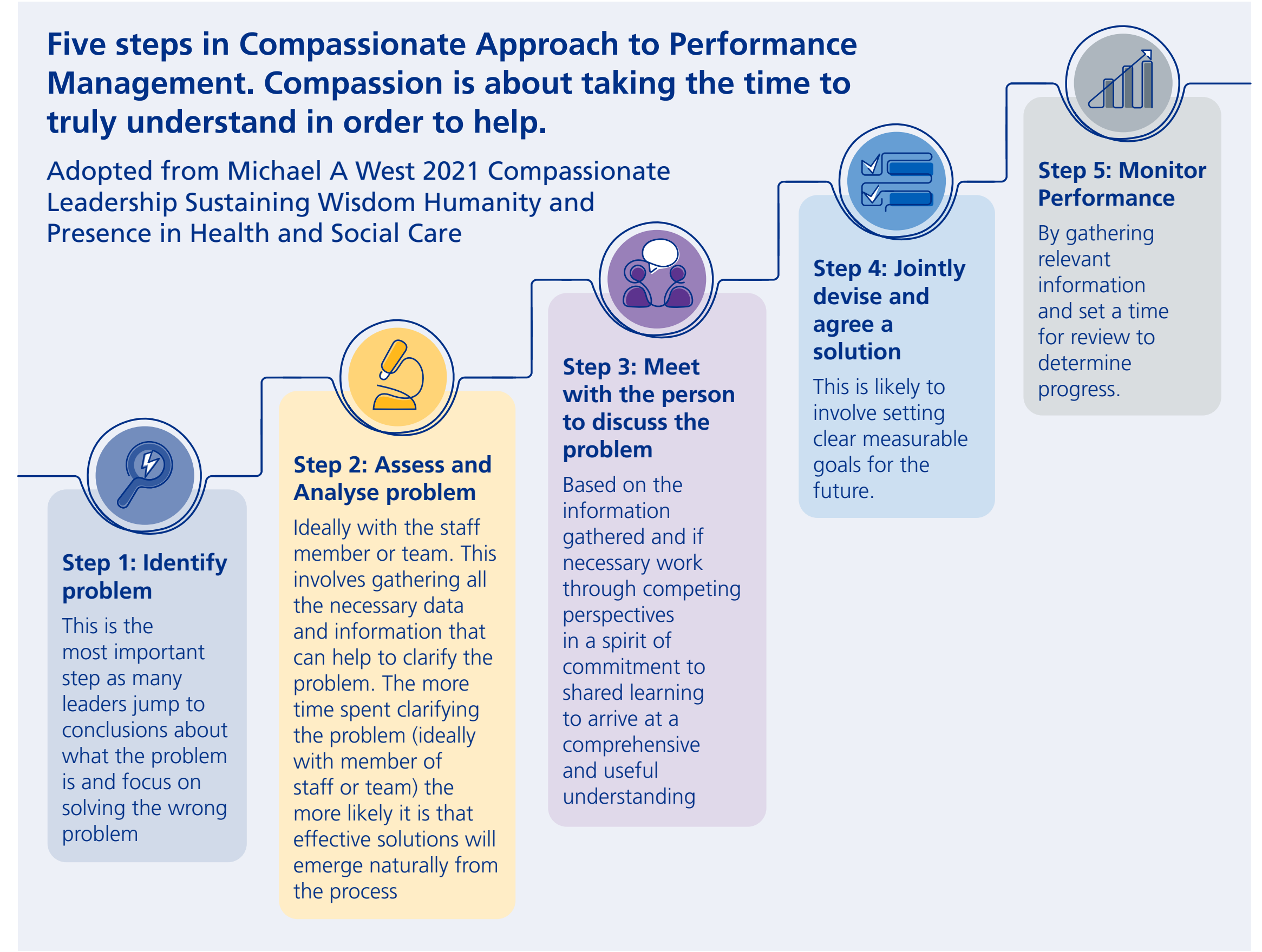
3.1 What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management? (continued)

Problems and their contributory factors

Compassionate leadership looks at what contributory factors might be causing a performance problem. Contributory factors can be diverse but may include:

- People have not agreed on **clear goals or objectives** for their work, or
- People have **too much work** or too many competing goals or may not have clear feedback about their job performance
- People are working in **poorly functioning teams**, with a lack of clarity
- **Obstacles** get in the way (such as interpersonal conflicts, lack of collaboration and cooperation between departments), or
- People don't have the relevant **knowledge, skills, training, or experience** to do the work.³

Figure 3.1: Five Steps in Compassionate Approach to Performance Management



- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 **[What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns](#)**

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)

3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns

A key principle of compassion is that behaviour is much more likely to be due to people’s situation rather than personality.³

Table 3.2 summarises actions involved in a compassionate approach towards managing performance concerns.²⁹ Links to a list of helpful, supportive resources published by the NHS support services, Society of Occupational Medicine and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), besides a few others, are included under [Appendix 1](#).

Table 3.2: Tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns

You should think about these things to help support the mental health and wellbeing of the employees involved.

Matters to consider	Reasons for your consideration
1. Have you explained the support available?	<p>Acknowledge that it may be difficult for the employee at the very outset of an investigation. You should make it clear that they should speak up if they have any concerns about their wellbeing.</p> <p>Employees can speak up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directly to HR • to someone else at the organisation • externally. <p>You should sign-post employees to suitable support available. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Employee Assistance Programme • mental health first aiders • other counselling or support services (internal or external). <p>Reminding employees that these resources are available throughout the process is helpful.</p>

Matters to consider	Reasons for your consideration
2. Have you assigned a contact point?	<p>It is common for employees to be assigned a specific pastoral contact point without connection to the investigation. This contact point is someone with whom they can discuss concerns and needs.</p> <p>You might ask that person to check in with the employee from time to time during the process. If practical, you could see whether the employee prefers who that should (or should not) be and how they prefer to be contacted.</p>
3. Do you need expert advice?	<p>You are not expected to be a mental health expert. However, you are expected to seek relevant professional advice and support where it is reasonable to do so.</p> <p>Suppose you have concerns about an employee’s mental health and the impact an investigation may have. In that case, it is advisable to seek advice from Occupational Health (with the employee’s consent).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the employee be able to participate in the process? • What adjustments might be needed to facilitate their participation? <p>You should consider any recommendations made in consultation with the employee. You can seek additional advice from a relevant specialist medical practitioner for more complex conditions. Read more »</p>

3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns

3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)

3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)

3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns (continued)

Table 3.2: Tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns (continued)

Matters to consider	Reasons for your consideration
4. Are you keeping in touch and answering questions?	Keep participants informed about the next steps and what they will involve. Be transparent about timetables (and delays) and share information (where possible). Transparent communication will help reduce uncertainty and anxiety connected to the process.
5. Have you considered reasonable adjustments and kept them under review?	<p>Discuss reasonable adjustments with the individual. Reasonable adjustments could include, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allowing breaks during interviews providing questions beforehand allowing written responses permitting a partner or spouse to attend a meeting. <p>An employee's needs may change during the process, so you should keep any adjustments under review.</p>
6. Are you mindful of the impact on the outcome?	It is important to consider what impact scrutiny in the investigation may have had on the individual's mental health and how it might influence the next steps. For example, recommendations or disciplinary steps. This can be a delicate assessment, and it is advisable to be informed by professional medical advice where possible.

Matters to consider	Reasons for your consideration
7. Are you using the resources?	<p>There is a wealth of guidance on dealing with mental health in the workplace.</p> <p>The ACAS guidance on 'supporting Mental Health in the Workplace' is a good starting point. It includes practical tips on managing someone with signs of a mental health issue. You can transfer this advice to the context of the investigation. Please refer to Appendix 1 for the links to appropriate resources</p>
8. Is the investigator receiving support?	If an employee is carrying out the investigation, it is important to consider their mental health, too. It is an important and demanding role which may involve distressing facts, and they may need their own support. This is particularly important when the investigation is being carried out remotely.

Each case is individual and unique. There are many issues to consider, and you should respond to the specific needs of the investigation and those involved and seek advice when needed as appropriate.

[Read more »](#)

- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 **[What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns](#)**

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)

3.2 What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns (continued)

Protecting fairness while managing performance concerns

When managing performance issues, compassionate approaches, as outlined in [Table 3.2](#), can help ensure that practitioners are supported while also protecting staff from discrimination.

This includes being mindful of the practitioner’s mental health, which could amount to disability, and taking reasonable steps to accommodate identified needs and mitigate against any adverse impact from the investigation.

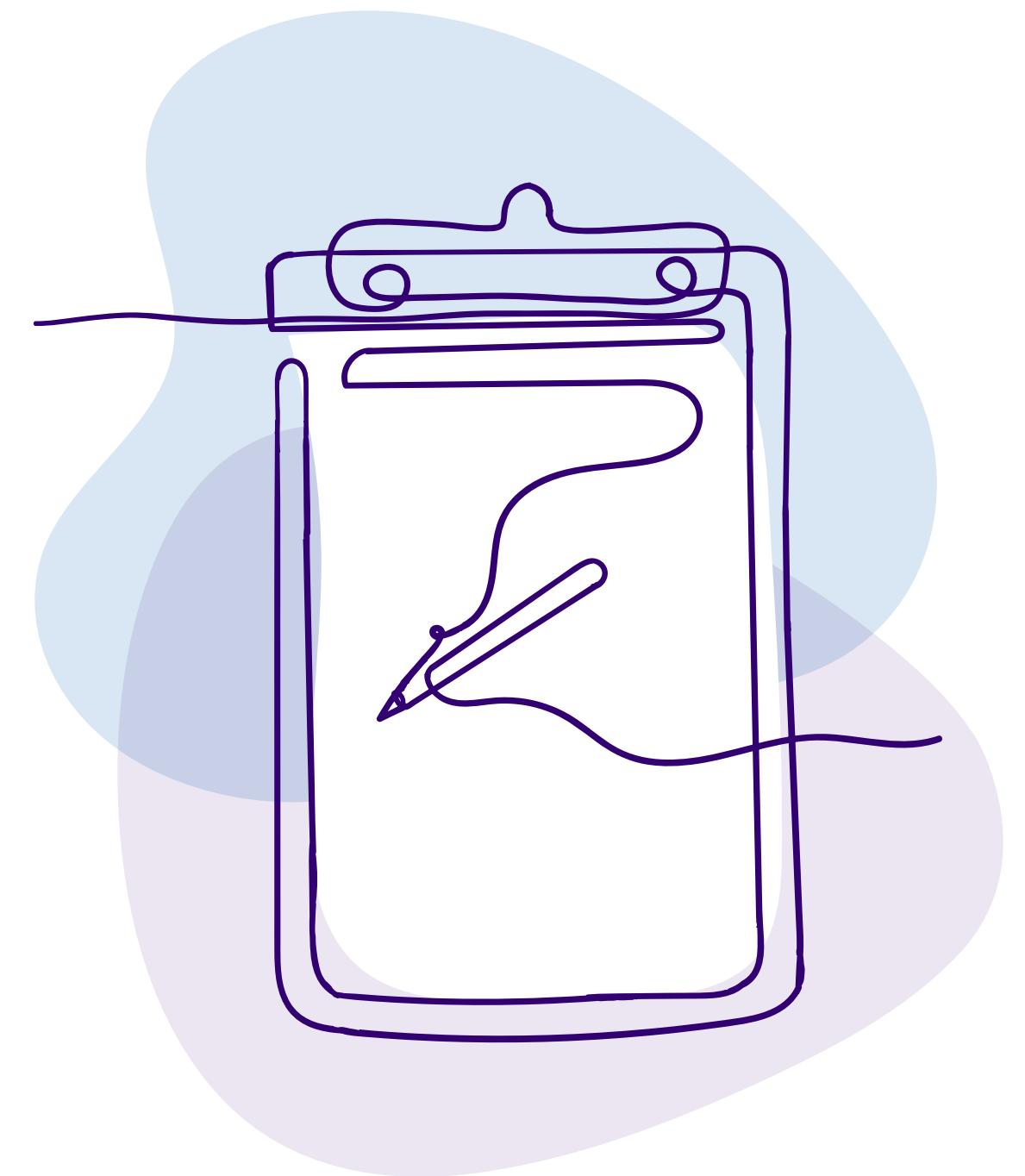
This should be done without impacting the fairness of the investigation, which is key to ensuring a safe and supportive environment for everyone. Fairness and due diligence with processes must not be compromised or bypassed to avoid difficult conversations or circumstances.



TRY THIS: Reflection for Teams in Organisations

Exercise 3.2: Reflect on your own organisational processes for supporting the mental health of practitioners subject to performance investigations.

- Evaluate organisational support processes in place against those included in [Table 3.2](#).
- Identify areas that work well in your organisation. Reflect on areas that present scope to strengthen further and identify three actions you may take to address.
- Review the letter sent to practitioners informing them of concerns that may be investigated formally or informally and the supportive information shared with them in that letter.
 - What aspects offer scope for improvement, if any?
 - What actions can be taken?



- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 [What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns](#)

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)**

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)

3.3 How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?

The compassionate approach in performance management recognises that human factors, including biases, can affect the consistency of case reviews at the initial triage. Different professionals might have varying interpretations, leading to differences in stratification based on frequency, severity, and consequences. This variation is influenced by the individuals conducting the initial triage and review, as acknowledged in the field.

To ensure transparency and consistency in the process, the NHSE SIPS team utilises a straightforward 'Review and Triage Template.' This template is accompanied by a risk scoring guide, as detailed in [Appendices 2](#) and [3](#). These resources serve as illustrations of best practices, shared upon the request of leaders at network gatherings.

The documentation with triage, initial risk assessment, and recommended actions can be transparently shared with the performer so they understand the rationale for the risk scoring, recommended actions, and the step-wise approach adopted.

The use of such tools enables the adoption of a language that is objective and, therefore, direct and straightforward and helps practitioners understand the rationale for the decision/s made. While this is a routine process for initial review and triage within the NHSE SIPS team, it came to light at the network events and subsequent discussions that there may not be a consistent approach for this initial triage documentation shared with practitioners across organisations.

This template is completed for all cases by the professional advisor and presented at the Professional Advisory Group (PAG), which is called the Professional Standards Group (PSG) in some of the acute care organisations. This enables us to practice all four components of the compassionate flywheel: caring presence, courage, candour, and transparency. The same principles need to be adopted across all aspects of case investigation and management.

Knowing where we stand

When we are transparent, people know where they stand and what comes next, as in the case of the Triage and risk scoring template of the incident, shared with the performer. In some organisations where some form of triage tool is used, it may not be shared with the practitioner or at the PAG/PSG with members transparently as discussions revealed.

Likewise, the compassionate approach entails the performer being kept informed of the outcome after every PAG/PSG where their case was discussed so that they know what has been discussed, what the outcome is and what comes next. This recognises that caring candour is being open, and direct is compassionate. Not sharing this information with them soon after discussions at formal professional standard groups without delay means not enabling caring transparency as a compassionate leader.

[Read more »](#)

- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 [What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns?](#)

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)**

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)

3.3 How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns? (continued)

An example of the template used by NHS England SIPS teams to keep practitioners informed after PAG is included in [Appendix 4](#).

To ensure effective and robust governance, both the above measures are implemented. This approach will withstand scrutiny if any challenges arise regarding the investigation's progress. The rationale for the decision will be clearly documented in the triage template, along with recommended actions. Discussions at PAG/PSG and the outcome will be communicated to practitioners through an example template letter.

This approach, guided by principles of caring candour and caring transparency, aims to alleviate additional anxiety for practitioners by keeping them informed of the outcome.

This will also enhance caring presence and courage during face-to-face conversations on the concerns as clarity is enabled for both through this, as much to the leader as to the practitioner which strengthens caring presence and courage as well.



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 3.3: Reflect on the contents within [section 3.3](#) and review [Appendices 2-5](#). Take a few minutes to reflect on your own organisational processes within professional standards with regard to these aspects.

- What approaches do you have in place to enable caring presence, caring courage, caring candour, and caring transparency in your professional standards approaches?
- What aspects of practice/processes within professional standards do you think have scope for further strengthening or development within your organisation when you review [Appendices 2, 3, 4, 5](#)?
- Write down key actionable steps you could take within your organisation to address any areas with scope to enhance compassionate flywheel skills-based approaches.
- How will you go about implementing this?
- Who will you collaborate with?
- How can you help inspire a shared vision to align your team and organisation with compassionate values made in this promise as a wider commitment?

- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 [What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns](#)

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)**

3.4 How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?

A key principle of compassion is acknowledging that behaviour is much more likely to be due to the situation people are in rather than to personality. Compassionate leadership looks at the contributory factors that might be causing a performance problem.³

‘Lessons learnt’ represent the organisation’s commitment to excellence through learning from the actual experience of others or its experience of managing an event, such as managing performance concerns. When lessons are not learnt at an organisational level, they remain missed opportunities for risk reduction and system improvement.

Lessons learnt are the documented information that reflects both the positive and negative learning from managing a performance concern or event/initiative.²⁵

What is root cause analysis?

The term ‘root cause analysis’, as an approach to incident review while widespread, is misleading in several respects. To begin with, it implies that there is a single root cause or at least a small number. Typically, however, the picture that emerges is much more fluid, and the notion of a root cause is an oversimplification.

Usually, there is a chain of events and a wide variety of contributory factors leading up to the eventual incident/performance concern. If the purpose is to achieve a safer healthcare system through compassionate approaches, then it is necessary to go further and reflect on what the incident reveals about the gaps and inadequacies in the healthcare system in which it occurred.

The incident, therefore, acts as a “window” on the system – hence termed systems analysis, which is not a retrospective search for root causes but an attempt to look to the future, as the incident/concern in question is now in the past but the weaknesses of the system revealed are still present and could lead to the next incident.²⁶

Some organisations do not have a Lessons learnt process in place, while some have a process in place to capture lessons learnt but may not do anything with them. Some may capture lessons learnt and review them with actions but may not generate metrics addressing the frequency of key themes and trends identified.

Sharing lessons learnt

Sharing lessons learnt helps identify and reinforce the positive best practice lessons learnt while addressing the gaps identified to prevent the same mistake from recurring. Trend analysis enables sharing lessons learnt on the scale for system-wide learning and improvement.

Most organisations do not seem to have a Lessons learnt documentation template. Some stated that lessons learnt may be incorporated into Case Investigation reports and/or Case Management reports. Others stated that it was not included within the report at all but may be discussed separately for actions.

[Read more »](#)

- 3.1 [What are the five steps in a compassionate approach to performance management?](#)

- 3.2 [What are some key tips on how to support mental health while managing concerns](#)

- 3.3 [How do you incorporate a compassionate approach to initial triage and review of concerns?](#)

- 3.4 [How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons?](#)**

3.4 How do you practise compassionate identification of contributory factors for learning lessons? (continued)

An example of the ‘Lessons Learnt and System Improvement Review’ documentation template developed and recently updated by the NHS England SIPS team is included in [Appendix 5](#). This example of good practice enables the compassionate approaches to explore the contributory factors within the well-recognised framework of the London Protocol for systemic analysis of incidents.²⁵

An evaluation of events leading to the concern can, therefore, enable the identification of potential opportunities for system improvement, especially when collective trends and themes are analysed. When appropriate action is taken to remedy the identified contributory factors, this enables system solutions that could override human factors in most cases.

Sharing contributory factors

The contributory factors identified through windows review into the healthcare system need to be shared with responsible and accountable individuals/teams, and assurance sought for action progression and completion to progress system improvement long term at an organisational and system-wide level.

This presents an opportunity within the emerging governance framework of the Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to progress remedial actions based on thematic system factors that are identified on analysis of lessons learnt, which could help enhance system improvements in the long term with appropriate resources to support.

ICBs also have the opportunity in the evolving governance approaches to develop an accountability framework through seeking assurance from provider organisations to present annual reports on Lessons learnt and actions to address contributory factors and thus ensure that organisations and leaders are accountable for delivering on addressing systemic contributory factors when identified.

The focus of professional standards in managing concerns will shift from individual accountability to addressing the contributing system factors. This shift will create an environment conducive to continuous quality improvement, which is what clinical governance is all about.



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 3.4: Reflect on your organisation’s approaches to learning lessons from the incidents raising individual performance concerns that progressed to case investigations with case management.

- What are your processes for collating lessons learnt from professional standards concerns investigated?
- How do you document them?
- Where do you discuss them and how?
- How are the lessons learnt shared subsequently?
- What actions will you take from this section reading and reflections as above?

L.O.T.U.S. Step 4: Utilise

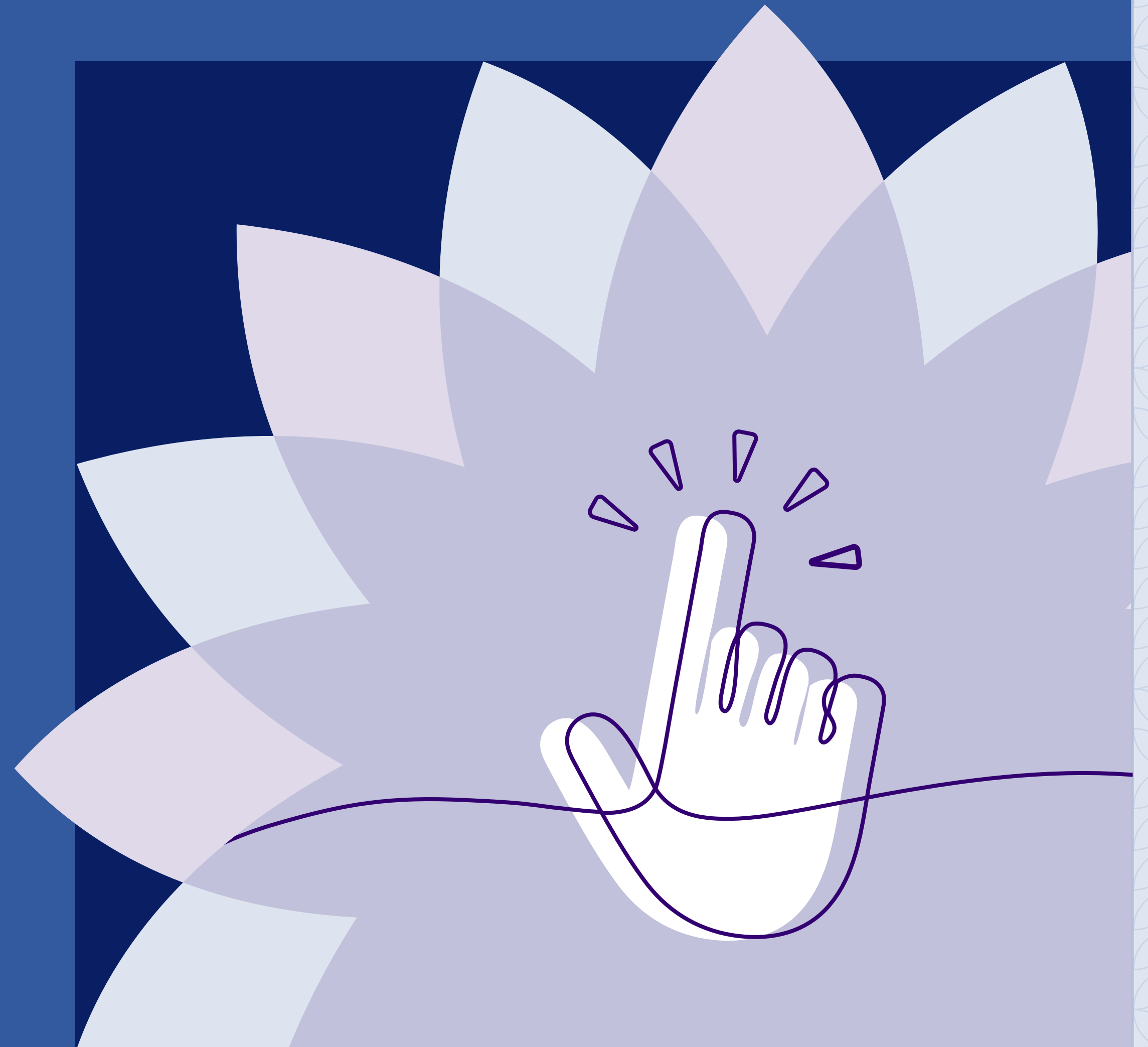
Compassion cultivation routines/skills for personal development

4.1 What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do leadership styles based on this look?

4.2 Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on Compassion and Wisdom

4.3 How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?



- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 [Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)

4.1 What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do leadership styles based on this look?

One of the queries posed by leaders at the Responsible Officer Network events and focus group events in spring 2022 was how one could be compassionate yet be effective as a leader in the current world of challenges, especially with increasing service-related organisational pressures since the global COVID-19 pandemic.

During discussions, there were expressions that compassion can, at times, be viewed as soft and woolly and not as effective and robust by some. Sometimes, compassion may be misunderstood or may not have the intended positive impact.

The views of leaders from the Responsible Officer Networks were that it is important for leaders to understand their own leadership style in the context of compassionate approaches aligned with wisdom to be able to deliver this in the workplace and influence culture.

In other words, the key challenge voiced by most leaders was how can one be compassionate yet effective?

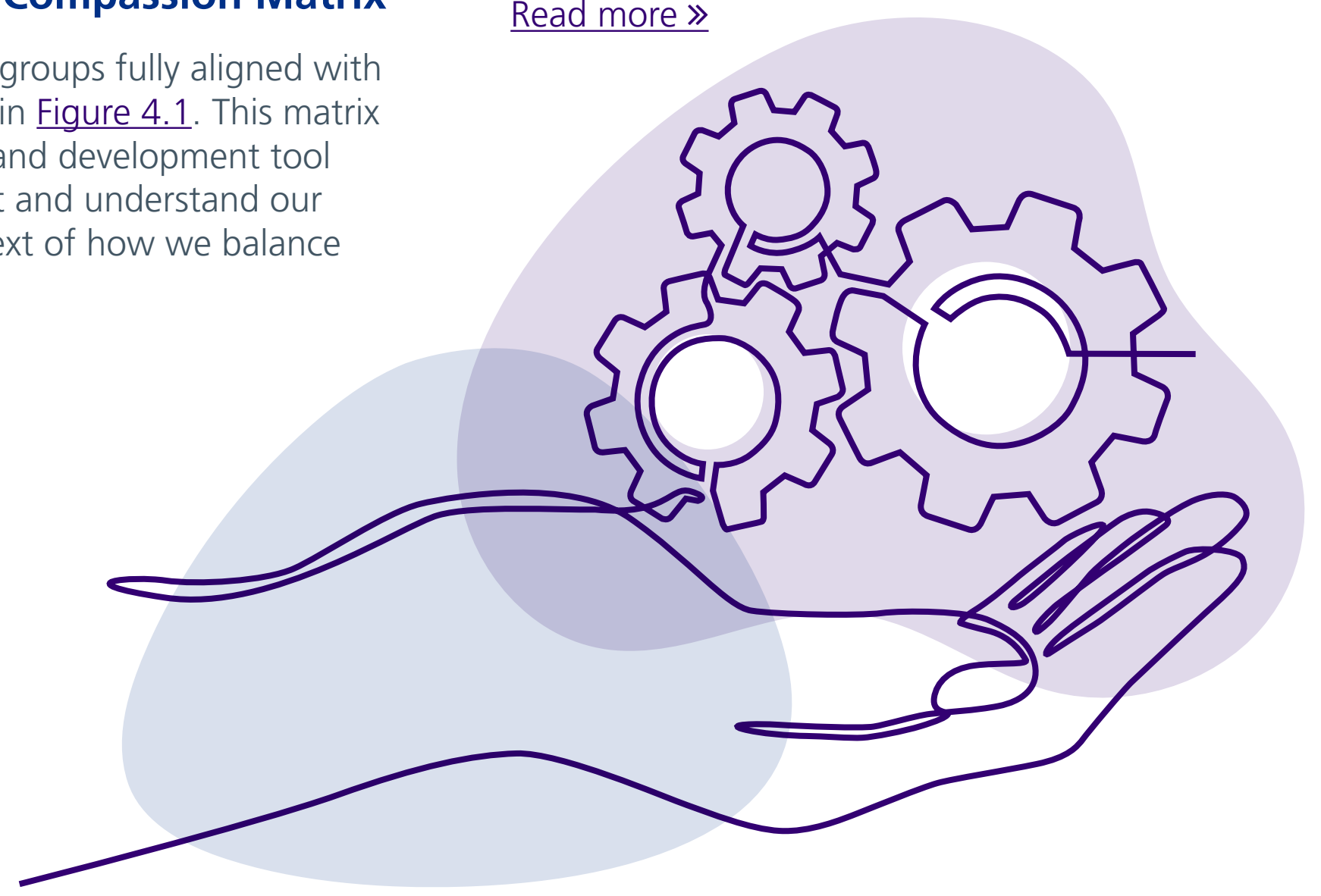
Most people think we need to make a binary choice between being a good human being and being a tough, effective leader. But this is a false dichotomy. Being human and doing what needs to be done are not mutually exclusive. In truth, doing hard things and making difficult decisions is often the most compassionate thing to do.

Aligning with the Wise Compassion Matrix

The leaders' views from focus groups fully aligned with the 'Wise compassion Matrix' in [Figure 4.1](#). This matrix serves as a reflective learning and development tool for leaders and helps us reflect and understand our style of leadership in the context of how we balance compassion and wisdom.^{1,24}

This matrix best captures the right balance of wisdom and compassion illustrated in [Figure 4.1](#). Four quadrants represent four distinct leadership styles. In the 'Wise Compassion' quadrant, leaders deliver the best results, balancing concern for people with the courage and condor to get hard things done. When tough action is needed, these leaders get it done with genuine care for people's feelings and wellbeing.¹

[Read more »](#)



- 4.1 What is the **Wise Compassion Matrix** and how do Leadership styles based on this look?

- 4.2 Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion

- 4.3 How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?

- 4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?

4.1 What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do leadership styles based on this look? (continued)

These styles or modes of leadership, as in Figure 4.1, do not necessarily indicate permanent, hardwired characteristics of a leader, but more often are indicative of a particular mood, mindset or context in which a leader is operating.

This matrix would serve as a helpful tool for leaders to reflect on their own style of leadership based on their compassion and wisdom. Wisdom is the courage to be transparent with others and to do what needs to be done, even when it is uncomfortable. Compassion is to feel care and empathy for another person, combined with the intention to support and help.^{1,24}

Figure 4.1: Wise Compassion Matrix^{1,24}



In quadrant 1 at the top left, leaders care for people – which is great – but they tend to avoid the tough parts of leadership, like giving hard feedback. They may let empathy be a barrier to action as it is well-recognised that empathy can sometimes be overwhelming and may also induce bias.

In quadrant 3, bottom left, leaders are ineffective and indifferent, operating in a mode that is the opposite of mindful. Lacking both compassion and wisdom, these leaders appear to their followers as uncaring and unprofessional.

In quadrant 4, at the bottom right, leaders are effectively executing on their business objectives but have little compassion. They often put results before people's wellbeing.

Finally, **in quadrant 2**, at the top right – wise compassion – leaders deliver the best results. Leaders operating in this mode are balancing concern for their people with the need to move their organisations forward in an efficient, productive manner.

When tough action is needed, 'Wise Compassionate Leaders' get it done with genuine caring for people's feelings and wellbeing.²⁴



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 4.1: Further to reading [Section 4.1](#), pause and reflect on what you feel is your dominant leadership style based on the 'Wise Compassion Matrix'.

- Check the matrix to see which quadrant it falls on and what it means based on the content in this section.
- Reflect on what factors may pose a barrier to you being compassionate and how you can address them.
- What actions can you take to get to and stay in the Wise Compassion Matrix box 2 on the top right quadrant?
- Now proceed to [Figures 4.3.1](#) and [4.3.2](#) for greater insights on this aspect.
- Now repeat the entire exercise as a Team. Example: Professional Standards team.

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 **[Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)**

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)

4.2 Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion

One of the challenges that most leaders face, as voiced by many at the Responsible Officer network events and focus groups in Spring 2022, was:

"How can a leader understand how compassionate yet effective they are for developing self-awareness and enable reflections for own personal and professional development."

Attendees suggested a solution for this self-assessment would be a good inclusion within the toolkit developed to nurture and grow compassion and Compassionate Leadership. Reflecting on your own traits and behaviours through the [self-assessment report](#) could be a valuable reflective tool for leaders to take action to grow compassion.


To better understand 'Wise Compassionate Leadership', Rasmus Hougaard's team conducted a multi-year study, gathered data from 15,000 leaders in more than 5,000 companies spanning nearly 100 countries, and developed a quick self-assessment tool for leaders as an outcome of this original research project entitled "The Potential Project". The self-assessment helps leaders to understand themselves better and to develop strategies to enhance compassion and wisdom.

You can [take this free and quick anonymous assessment to gauge your own compassion as a leader](#).

Once you have completed your self-assessment, a system-generated report will appear. This will enable further self-reflection and action points that facilitate enhanced self-awareness as a wise and compassionate leader and help spread the positive ripple across your sphere of influence.²⁴

Rasmus Hougaard and team based on the results of the 'The Potential Project' distilled human leadership into two key leadership attributes: 1. wisdom, the courage to do what needs to be done, even when it is uncomfortable or difficult; and 2. compassion, the care and empathy shown towards others, combined to support and help.

Both traits are important, but when they are combined, there was evidence of an exponentially higher impact on important metrics such as job satisfaction (86% higher) and Burnout (decreased by 64%) for an employee who works for a wise and compassionate leader than an employee who does not.^{1,24}



TRY THIS:

Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 4.2: Take a few minutes to complete the self-assessment on your own Wise Compassionate Leadership at present using the link above.

- Review the report with details of your wise, compassionate traits and reflect on your strengths and areas with scope for further learning and development.
- Write down three actions you could take to enhance your compassion as well as wisdom to be a leader with a balanced approach towards wisdom and compassion.

Repeat after reading [Section 4.3](#) and the actionable tips under [Figures 4.3.1](#) and [4.3.2](#).

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 [Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)**

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)

4.3 How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?

Leaders at focus groups identified:

- empathy overwhelm and/or
- risk of compassion fatigue


as major challenges. They asked how they could develop their own compassion when facing these challenges. Leaders observed that your inner reserve needs to be positively full to enable the flow of compassion to others.

One of the most important revelations of the Potential Project was that having a regular mindfulness routine leads to increased wise compassion.²⁵ This effect on leadership style likely results from the fact that mindfulness practice makes people more self-aware and more aware of the behaviours and emotions of others.

With greater awareness and presence, leaders are more intentional in bringing wisdom and compassion to an issue.

There will be many challenges leaders face day to day while dealing with performance concerns. A mindset of wise compassion is the most effective, and humane, way to support people through difficult and challenging times as leaders managing and striving to uphold professional standards.


Figure 4.3.1: Actionable tips to develop wise compassion if your wisdom is strong but you still needed to develop more compassion



Have more self-compassion:

Having genuine compassion for others starts with having compassion for yourself. If you're overloaded and out of balance, it's impossible to help others find their balance. Self-compassion includes getting quality sleep and taking breaks during the day.

For many leaders, self-compassion means letting go of obsessive self-criticism. Stop criticizing yourself for what you could have done differently or better. You probably wouldn't talk to a good friend or colleague who needed help the same way you address yourself. Instead, cultivate self-talk that is positive. Then reframe setbacks as a learning experience. What will you do differently in the future?

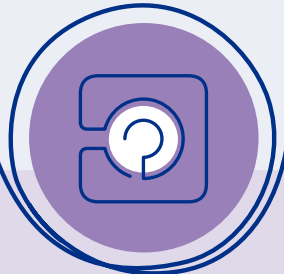


Check your intention:

Make a habit of checking your intention before you meet others.

Put yourself in their shoes.

With their reality in mind, ask yourself: how can I best be of benefit to this person or these people?



Adopt a daily compassion practice:

Compassion is a trainable skill. Our brains have an incredible level of neuroplasticity, which means that the mental states you develop can get stronger and more prominent.

Rasmus Hougaard's team have developed an app that can support you in increasing your compassion.

[Read more »](#)

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 [Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)**


- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)

4.3 How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion? (continued)

As we collectively face the challenges, as professional standards teams, we will need to make tough decisions, often outside our comfort zones. Leaders could strive to do these hard things in a human way through a greater understanding of the compassionate flywheel approaches described and applying wise compassionate principles for enhanced self-awareness and reflection further to self-assessment.

This part of the toolkit with actionable tips to develop wise compassion as in [Figures 4.3.1](#) and [4.3.2](#) was developed to fulfil the challenges highlighted by the regional leaders in understanding self and own leadership style and how to become more compassionate.


Figure 4.3.2: Actionable tips to develop wise compassion if your compassion is strong and you needed more wisdom



Practice candid transparency:
As leaders, it is our responsibility to provide the guidance people need, even if it is difficult for them to hear.


When a team member is under-performing, be candid and tell her or him what to work on. If you conceal your concerns in an attempt to be kind, people will neither understand expectations nor benefit from your wisdom.

Because of this, concealing tough criticism is not kind – it is misleading. Instead, being clear is kind.




One daily direct interaction:
If your natural inclination is more oriented towards compassion, being kind is your comfort zone.

To improve your wisdom, try to adopt a habit of having at least one daily direct and assertive interaction with a person. It will help you to move out of your comfort zone and better develop your leadership wisdom.



Adopt a daily mindfulness training:
Research shows that when we practice mindfulness, we gain greater wisdom and leadership competence. There are several mindfulness tools available in NHS organisations and you could adopt one that suits you most.

Most organisations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have mindfulness practitioners as part of their wellbeing teams who can be contacted for support for those wishing to pursue this further.



TRY THIS:
Reflection for individuals

Exercise 4.3: Repeat the reflections as per reflection Exercise 4.2 and now

- Write your action plans again having read the contents under [Section 4.3](#) and [Figures 4.3.1](#) and [4.3.2](#).
- Discuss your actionable steps with a peer, coach, or mentor to take them further in your journey as a compassionate leader.

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 [Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?

At the Responsible Officers Network events and focus groups in Spring 2022, it was clear that leaders were ready to be more compassionate in their work. But they wanted to know the specific skills they needed to be fair, effective leaders while still being compassionate.

All leaders acknowledged that the four core elements of compassion, as outlined by Michael West (namely attending, listening, empathising, and acting), are key to all compassionate human interactions; whether professional or personal. This recognised that the skills to:

- be fully present
- actively listen
- be empathetic without overwhelm
- take intelligent action

...were key skills for compassion.

Rasmus Hougaard's team explored the above skills from a different perspective. Their 'The Potential Project' uncovered what wise compassion looks like in action and the skills leaders need to make it a reality.

Four key skills were identified:

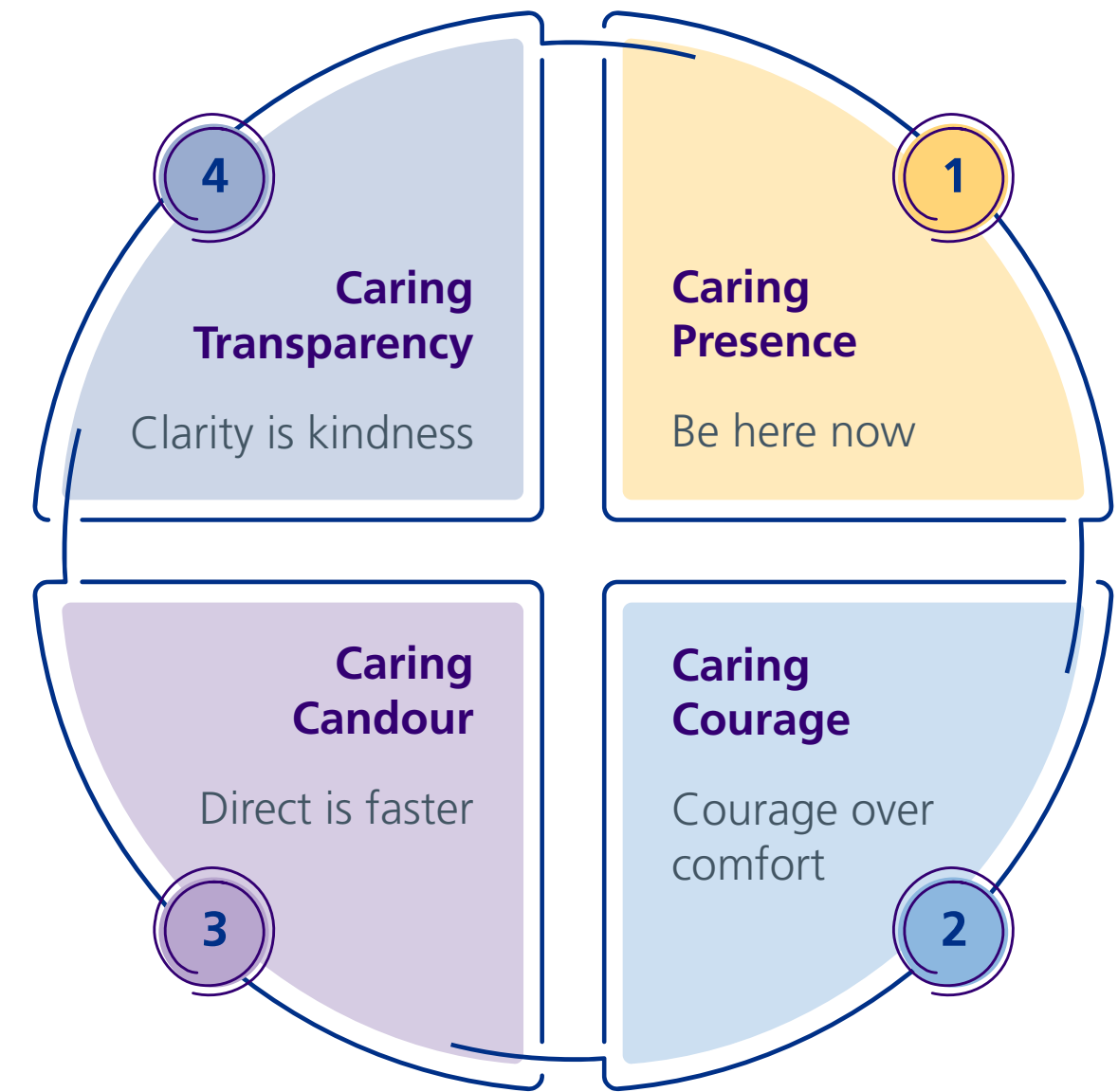
- 1 Caring Presence
- 2 Caring Courage
- 3 Caring Candour
- 4 Caring Transparency.

When practised together – and in that order – they create a virtuous cycle called the 'Wise Compassion Flywheel' as in Figure 4.4.^{1,24}

When we master the four elements of the 'Wise Compassion Flywheel', we also enable others to show up with presence, courage, candour, and transparency. Over time, this becomes our shared culture. We unleash the best in each other and cultivate happier, healthier, and more productive teams and organisations.

There are actionable tips and mindfulness strategies one can adopt and learn to enhance these four skills, as outlined in [Tables 4.4.1-4.4.4](#).

Figure 4.4: Wise Compassion Flywheel



[Read more »](#)

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

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- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)**

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion flywheel? (continued)

1 Caring Presence – Be Here Now

When dealing with difficult situations with others, it's really important to be fully present from the start. If we stay focused and engaged, we can communicate more meaningfully. Whether we're providing feedback, having discussions during appraisals, or handling performance issues, starting with a compassionate and mindful approach can make all the difference.

Leadership is about connection, and we cannot connect if we are not present. When we are present, we are in the moment, giving the people around us our full attention. Unfortunately, that is not our default state. We are wired to be distracted and prone to act on autopilot with ingrained behaviours. During working hours, we are distracted ~37% of the time.

Mindfulness is a useful way to counter this tendency, helping us become more aware of what is happening now. It also helps us to be present with ourselves, to recognise any traps that lie in our way, and to tune into what others are expressing but may not be saying.

Being present is the foundation that enables us to incorporate compassion into our interactions and helps us remember that the person in front of us deserves our respect, attention, care, and curiosity.²⁴

2 Caring Courage – Courage over comfort

Courage is different from fearlessness. We still experience fear but find the inner strength to overcome fear, move out of our comfort zones, and engage in a difficult situation. Compassion, which drives the desire to help by taking action to relieve distress in others, drives this courage beyond our comfort zones.

As human beings, we're hardwired to embrace certainty and safety and to avoid danger and discomfort. In fact, sometimes, we'll do nearly everything we can to stay in our comfort zone. Overcoming our comfort-seeking orientation requires courage: the inner strength to overcome our fears or dreads about a situation to take the required action or engage in a necessary confrontation.

Our daily job as leaders is to make and execute hard decisions that may trigger hurt, disagreement, or confrontation. With caring courage, we might still experience fear about an uncomfortable interaction or the delivery of negative news. However, we find the inner strength to overcome the fear and still engage in the difficult situation in front of us.

And the chance for human connection blossoms when we open ourselves up to difficult emotions – our own and those of others – rather than running away from them.²⁴

3 Caring Candour – Direct is Faster

Being candid is about being direct and straightforward. As leaders, we need to find the middle ground between candour and care to create a culture that is both kind and straight-talking.

Being direct and straightforward is always the fastest and most efficient way to engage in a conversation. However, candour on its own can easily come across as brutal honesty, the simple statement of our unfiltered opinions. With caring candour, you deliver your message in the most kind and direct way, allowing the other person to receive it quickly and enabling the real conversation to begin.

It is not a free pass to speak your mind. Rather, it means being direct and decisive while also being authentically open to other people's perspectives.

Caring candour is like having a hard back and soft front. The hard back is our strength, confidence, decisiveness, and conviction. The soft front is our openness to caring for people's emotions and wellbeing.²⁴

[Read more »](#)

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

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- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel](#)**

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion flywheel? (continued)

4 Caring Transparency – Clarity is Kindness

Caring transparency means getting ideas and thoughts out in the open – making the invisible visible. It means being open and honest about where you stand and what awaits the organisation. Transparency is distinct from candour in that you can be candid and conceal information.

When you are transparent, people know what is on your mind. You strip away the power that often comes with knowledge and level the playing field. And when you add caring to transparency, people also know what is in your heart.²⁴

Please see [sections 3.3, 4.4](#) and [Appendix 2, 3, 4](#), and [5](#) for examples of simple tools used by NHS England NW SIPS team for a consistent approach to enable caring presence, courage, candour, and transparency in professional standards practices while managing performance concerns.

Organisations are welcome to adopt this in their professional standards teams as appropriate.

Tables 4.4.1-4.4.4: Actionable tips to practice the skills of Wise Compassion: Caring Presence, Courage, Candour and Transparency.²⁴

Table 4.4.1: Actionable tips to practice Caring Presence: Be here now

Mindfulness practice helps with strengthening all compassionate practices.

Actionable tips for Caring Presence	How to practice Caring Presence mindfully and why?
Be curious and don't make assumptions	Too often, we think we know how someone feels when, in fact, we are blind to what they are experiencing. This makes the other person feel unheard, unseen or simply misunderstood. We need to set aside our biases, our assumptions, and our fears and bring genuine curiosity to our conversations. Try to see the situation – the other person – with fresh eyes instead of assuming that you know what they will say or how they will feel.
Let go of expectations	Letting go of expectations means that when we are in the moment, we let go of what we planned for and what we hoped would happen. Instead, we are present with what is really happening. Letting go of expectations also means letting go of hopes that the other person will see us in a certain way. Remember, it is not about you.
Use the power of the pause	The power of the pause is simple. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. First step: be aware of your emotional 'hot buttons' – situations in which you tend to react instead of responding b. Second step: simply stop and take a moment to collect your thoughts. Take a breath. Notice the urge to react and take a few more breaths c. The third step: Choose how you want to respond, ideally with both wisdom and compassion.

[Read more »](#)

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

- 4.2 [Self-assessment to understand one's own leadership style based on compassion](#)

- 4.3 [How might you develop actionable routines for cultivating wise compassion?](#)

- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel](#)**

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion flywheel? (continued)

Table 4.4.2: Actionable tips to practice Caring Courage: Courage over comfort

Actionable tips for Caring Courage	How to practice Caring Courage mindfully and why?
Have at least one courageous confrontation every day	Make it a habit to engage in at least one courageous situation every day. It can be as small as giving a kind piece of feedback; the key is that it requires a little bit of courage from you. You will know that it does if it feels slightly uncomfortable.
Deal with things – never let them fester	If you know something must be changed, do it. Don't leave people in suspense. They know something is not right, even if it hasn't been discussed – and nothing is as toxic as unacknowledged conflict. So, lead. Make decisions. Act. Move forward.
Trust your intuition	If you feel something is wrong, it's likely that something is wrong. Trust yourself. Push beyond the fearful part of yourself that says everything will be okay if you pretend things are okay. Acknowledge the problem and move forward. It will only get worse the longer you wait.

Table 4.4.3: Actionable tips to practice Caring Candour: Direct is faster

Actionable tips for Caring Candour	How to practice Caring Candour mindfully and why?
Bottom line it first	<p>'Bottom lining it first' means starting with the conclusion – the key message that needs to be shared. You then provide the context rather than doing things the other way around. For example, if</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the person is going to be let go • the project is going to be cancelled • you need to give someone tough feedback <p>...lead with that. This approach ensures that you don't spend time wrapping a hand grenade. Trying to ease into a difficult message generally only serves to make things easier for you, not the other person.</p>
Avoid the popularity game	Do not expect that by bringing more compassion into your leadership, you will be liked. Compassion is not a way of being popular. This is difficult because a part of us all wants to please others and be seen in a positive light. Find the inner strength to be confident that you have done the right thing and do not need the approval of others, even when you are trying to care for them.
Have zero tolerance for value-breakers	Directness is important in all aspects of leadership. The most important area concerns a breach of values or cultural norms. If you want people to have confidence in your values, you need to be direct in dealing with people who operate against those values. When you have zero tolerance for value-breakers, it makes it easier for all to act in ways that are aligned with those values.

[Read more »](#)

- 4.1 [What is the Wise Compassion Matrix and how do Leadership styles based on this look?](#)

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- 4.4 [How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion Flywheel?](#)**

4.4 How can you develop key skills of wise compassion based on Wise Compassion flywheel? (continued)

Table 4.4.4: Actionable tips to practice Caring Transparency: Clarity is kindness

Actionable tips for Caring Transparency	How to practice Caring Transparency mindfully and why?
Make time for connection	A sense of caring transparency is greatly enhanced when we intentionally make time just to connect. In this way, people see us as a whole person and feel more comfortable in our presence. We are social beings; we work better and enjoy work more when we feel connected. In our increasingly virtual workplace, we need to create moments for real and transparent human connection.
Make time for connection	Most leaders say they want people to share concerns, raise objections and point out issues. However, they rarely follow up by engaging with the dissenting views or celebrating the person who spoke up. Both are important to reinforce the message that dissent is truly welcomed. The next time you are in a meeting and are about to ask, "Does everyone agree?", why not try asking instead: "Who would like to share why this is a bad idea?"
Show your true self	When delivering tough messages, we tend to put up a shield to protect ourselves from potential backlash from the recipient. Although this protective barrier is natural, it gets in the way of having a heart-to-heart, human-to-human conversation. To develop caring transparency, you need to lower this barrier and allow people to see you as a human being – not as a boss or a leader, but as someone who cares.



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 4.4: Take a few minutes to reflect on your own Compassionate Leadership skills against the four key skills that make up the compassionate flywheel.

- What are your dominant compassionate skill strengths? How can you anchor this into your daily practice?
- What aspect do you think has scope for further strengthening or development?
- Write down the actionable steps you would be taking based on reading Table 4.4.1-4.4.4 to address the skill set you feel can be developed and strengthened further.

L.O.T.U.S. Step 5: Strengthen

Compassion cultivation routines/skills for personal development

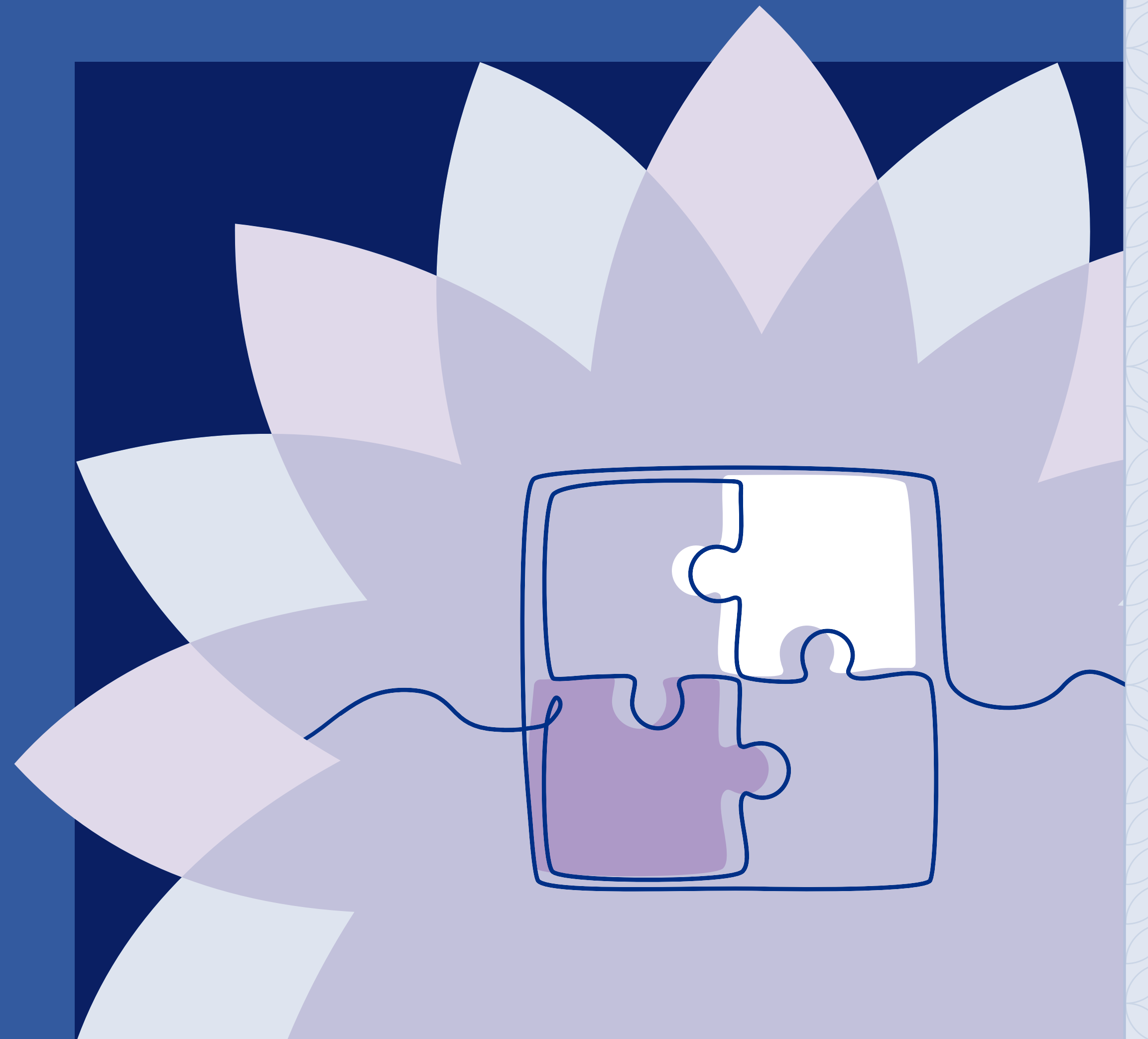
[5.1 How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

[5.2 How to avoid compassion fatigue, burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

[5.3 What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

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5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

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5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.1 How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?

A leader without empathy is like an engine without a spark plug – it simply won't engage. Empathy is essential for connection, and then we can leverage the spark to lead with compassion.⁷

Leaders must cultivate self-awareness of the empathy trap and transcend empathy towards compassionate actions. While empathy is vital for connection and a fundamental aspect of compassion, it can cloud judgment, foster bias, and hinder effective decision-making. Nevertheless, empathy should not be completely avoided, as it is crucial for fostering meaningful connections.

Table 5.1: Five key strategies for using empathy as a catalyst for leading with more compassion and avoiding the empathy trap

Strategic actions to consider	How to enact the strategic action mindfully and why?
Take a mental and emotional step away	To avoid getting caught in an empathetic hijack when you are with someone who is suffering, try to take a mental and emotional step away. Step out of the emotional space to get a clearer perspective of the situation and the person. Only with this perspective will you be able to help. By creating this emotional distance, you may feel like you are being unkind. But remember, you are not stepping away from the person. Instead, you are stepping away from the problem so you can help solve it.
Ask what they need	When you ask the simple question, "what do you need?" you have initiated a solution to the issue by giving the person an opportunity to reflect on what may be needed. This will better inform you about how you can help. And for the suffering person, the first step toward being helped is to feel heard and seen.
Remember the power of non-action	Leaders are generally good at getting stuff done. But when it comes to people having challenges, it is important to remember that, in many instances, people do not need your solutions; they need your ear and your caring presence. Many problems just need to be heard and acknowledged. In this way, taking "non-action" can often be the most powerful means of helping.
Coach the person so they can find their own solution	Leadership is not about solving problems for people. It is about growing and developing people, so they are empowered to solve their own problems. Avoid taking this life-learning opportunity away from people by straight-up solving their issues. Instead, coach them and mentor them. Show them a pathway to finding their own answers.
Practice self-care	Show self-compassion by practicing authentic self-care. There is a cost to managing one's own feelings to better manage others. Often called emotional labour, the task of absorbing, reflecting, and redirecting the feelings of other people can be overwhelming. Because of this, we as leaders must practice self-care: take breaks, sleep, eat well, cultivate meaningful relationships, and practice mindfulness. We need to find ways of staying resilient, grounded, and in tune with ourselves. When we show up in the workplace with these qualities, people can lean on us and find solace and comfort in our wellbeing.

[Read more »](#)

5.1 How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?

5.2 How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?

5.3 What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?

5.4 Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?

5.5 How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?

5.1 How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion? (continued)

Overcoming an empathy trap or empathetic hijack is a critical skill for any leader. In mastering this skill, you must remember that shifting away from empathy does not make you less human or less kind. Rather, it makes you better able to support people during difficult times.

The challenge for a leader when trapped by empathy is an inability to move beyond being stuck in empathy towards compassionate actions.^{1,7,24} Key strategies for using empathy as a catalyst for leading with more compassion are detailed in [Table 5.1](#). See [Appendix 6](#) for support resources.



Video Resource:

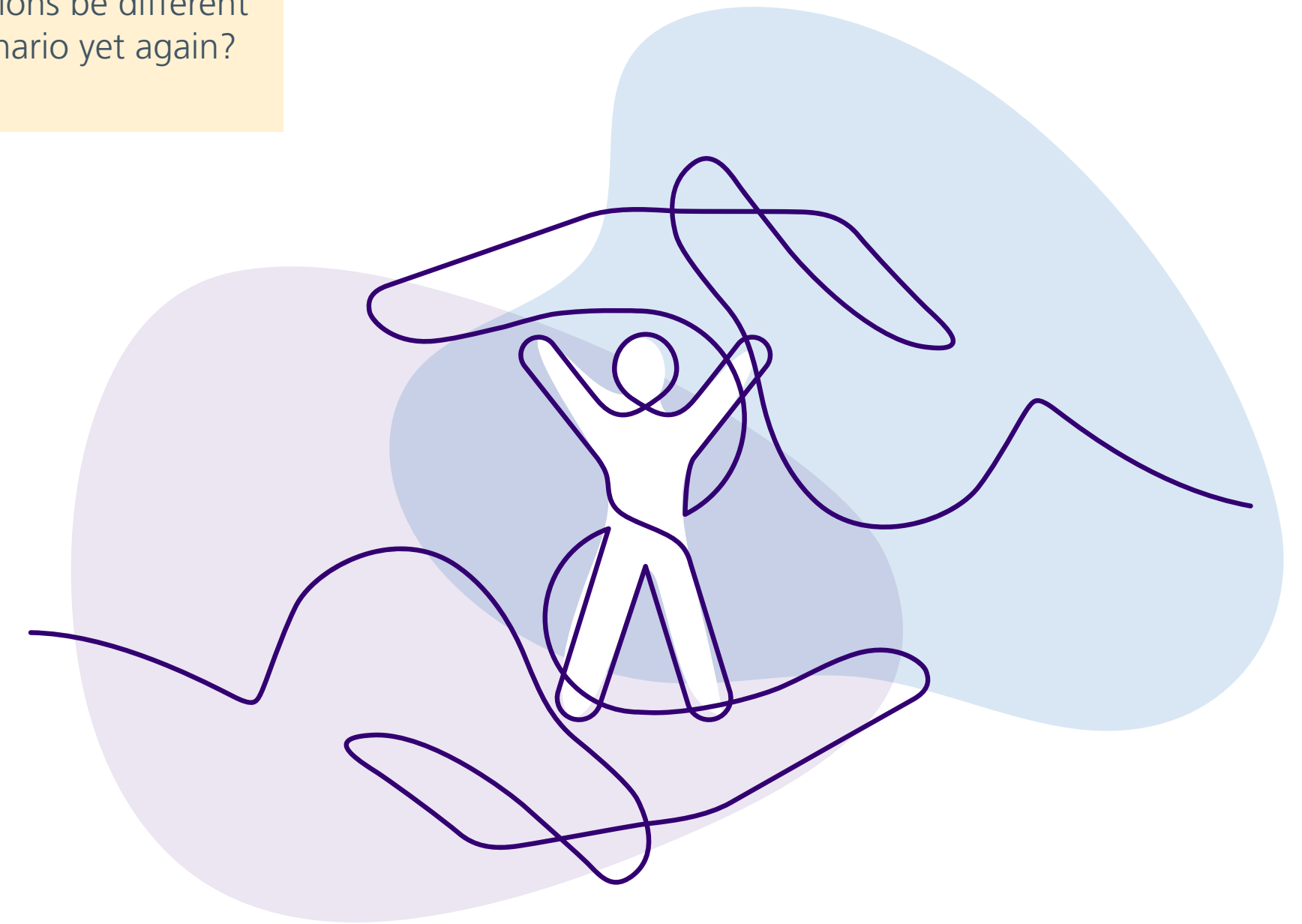
[Compassion Fatigue/Drowning in Empathy – the cost of vicarious trauma. Amy Cunningham](#)



TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 5.1: Reflect on a situation where you experienced empathy overwhelm.

- How did you cope with that then?
- Having read this section and strategies outlined in [Table 5.1](#), how might your actions be different if you come across the same scenario yet again?



- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 **[How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)**

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

- 5.4 [Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.2 How to avoid compassion fatigue, burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?

The most used definition of compassion fatigue was developed by Figley and describes the concept as:

“a state of exhaustion and dysfunction biologically, psychologically, and socially because of prolonged exposure to compassion stress and all it invokes.”³⁰

Professionals regularly exposed to the traumatic experiences of the people they service, such as healthcare, emergency, and community service workers, are particularly susceptible to developing compassion fatigue.

This can impact standards of patient care and relationships with colleagues or lead to more serious mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety or depression.³¹ Put simply, it’s the ‘cost of caring’ for others in emotional pain.³⁰

Understanding compassion fatigue can help you be more mindful of yourself and support your wellbeing more effectively than others. Working with people who need care is very demanding and can lead to compassion fatigue, which can affect how you deal with a patient or respond to a situation. See [Figure 5.2](#) for signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue.³³

What is burnout?

Burnout is also a state of physical and emotional exhaustion. It can often occur when you experience long-term stress at work. It can also occur if you have worked in a physically or emotionally draining role for a long time.

Burnout is different to compassion fatigue as it is often:

- predictable
- cumulative
- associated with work-related pressures and the stresses and hassles of work.

Common signs of Burnout include feeling:

- feeling tired or drained most of the time
- feeling helpless, trapped and/or defeated
- feeling detached/alone in the world
- having a cynical/negative outlook
- self-doubt
- procrastinating and taking longer to get things done
- feeling overwhelmed etc.³²

[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 **[How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)**

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

- 5.4 [Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.2 How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion? (continued)

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) officially acknowledged “Burnout” as an occupational phenomenon. Although the WHO’s definition of Burnout emphasised its connection to the workplace, not all contributing factors were explicitly work-related.

This highlights the potential impact of work-related pressures on individual Wellbeing, compounded by additional challenges stemming from the pandemic. In the United Kingdom, data from Mental Health UK indicates that 1 in 5 workers felt overwhelmed by the pressure and stress levels they encountered at work.³²

Systematic review by F. Cocker et al. revealed that interventions to build self-compassion, such as facilitated or guided meditation sessions, yoga, a combination of both, music therapy, resiliency-building programmes can significantly benefit Compassion Fatigue.³¹

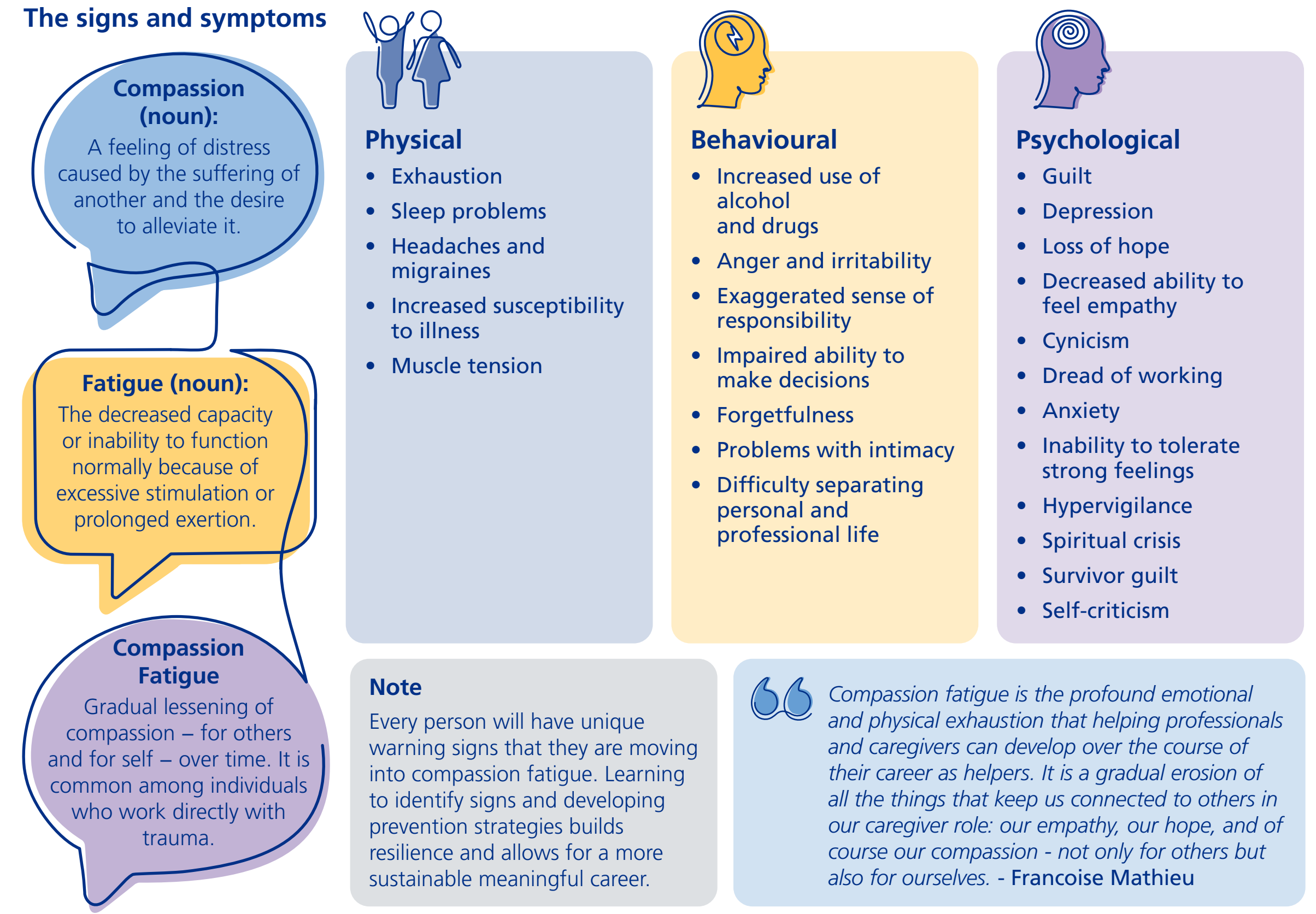
Please see the links in [Appendix 1](#) for helpful resources that can be helpful for mental health and wellbeing.

“Self-love (and the care for that self) is the core prerequisite for all other relationships.”

It is not merely a nice-to-have but an essential practice to ensure clarity and fullness in helping others. Without nurturing growth as a helper, you are unlikely to achieve your potential in helping others with their mental wellbeing.

Practising self-care may be one of the most selfless activities in which we engage. Not only is self-care critical for the wellbeing of the practitioner, but it also impacts patient outcomes.

Figure 5.2: Signs and Symptoms of Compassion Fatigue³³
Understanding compassion fatigue Rebecca Bundy M.A. NCC LPCC



[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 **[How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)**

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5.2 How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion? (continued)


Micro and macro self-care

Self-care can mean different things to different people.

Macro self-care is:
“the important traditional category of self-care that includes the big stuff,” such as eating well, getting enough exercise, taking a vacation, and forming positive relationships, which often require time, energy, and money.

On the other hand, micro self-care refers to:
“practices that are simple enough to fit into your existing schedule, your current energy level, and your budget.”


Implementing such small changes to your life can nudge your brain toward being more aware and serene and cause positive changes to your thinking.³⁴ Please see [Appendix 6](#) for resources.

 **Video Resources:**

[Video 5.2.1: Compassion Fatigue – What is it and do you have it? Juliet Watt](#)

[Video 5.2.2: How to manage Compassion Fatigue in Caregiving: Patricia Smith](#)

You may also wish to read this [NHS England Resource on Health and Wellbeing: Looking after your team’s health and wellbeing guide: Ensuring you have a safe working environment](#) (March 2023) before the next exercise.

 **TRY THIS: Reflection for teams and individuals**

Exercise 5.2

Individual: Reflect on your own levels of awareness regarding signs and symptoms of Compassion Fatigue and Burnout.

- How do you recognise them in yourself?
- How do you practice self-care routinely?
- What can you do to improve this further?

Team: What resources are available for staff in your organisation to enhance wellbeing?

- How do you access it?
- How do you make it easily accessible for your teams?

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)**

- 5.4 [Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.3 What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?

Radical Candour is a compassionate communication model that emphasises both caring personally and challenging directly to build solid and effective relationships with your team.

A culture of candour

A culture of candour is essential for fostering open and honest communication, improved performance and productivity, personal growth and development and preventing toxic work cultures. Radical Candour is the ability to care personally while challenging directly at the same time, which is a compassionate approach towards navigating difficult conversations and providing feedback.

The Radical Candour model is designed to guide your professional interactions and conversations in all settings through being self-aware and being able to self-regulate emotions and actions through emotional intelligence. Radical Candour means giving direct and honest feedback whilst maintaining empathy for the colleague at the receiving end.

Radical Candour enables you to say it straight while respecting the emotions and complexity of the person before you.⁴⁴

Opportunities to use Radical Candour

Opportunities to use Radical Candour include regular check-ins with team members, providing feedback on completed tasks or projects, performance reviews, and fostering an environment where team members feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback. Poorly delivered feedback can be harmful to psychological safety as it leaves colleagues feeling vulnerable, defensive or offended.

Practising Radical Candour

Practising Radical Candour, on the other hand, can support psychological safety at work by demonstrating to colleagues that mistakes are opportunities to learn and ensuring feedback is led by empathy.

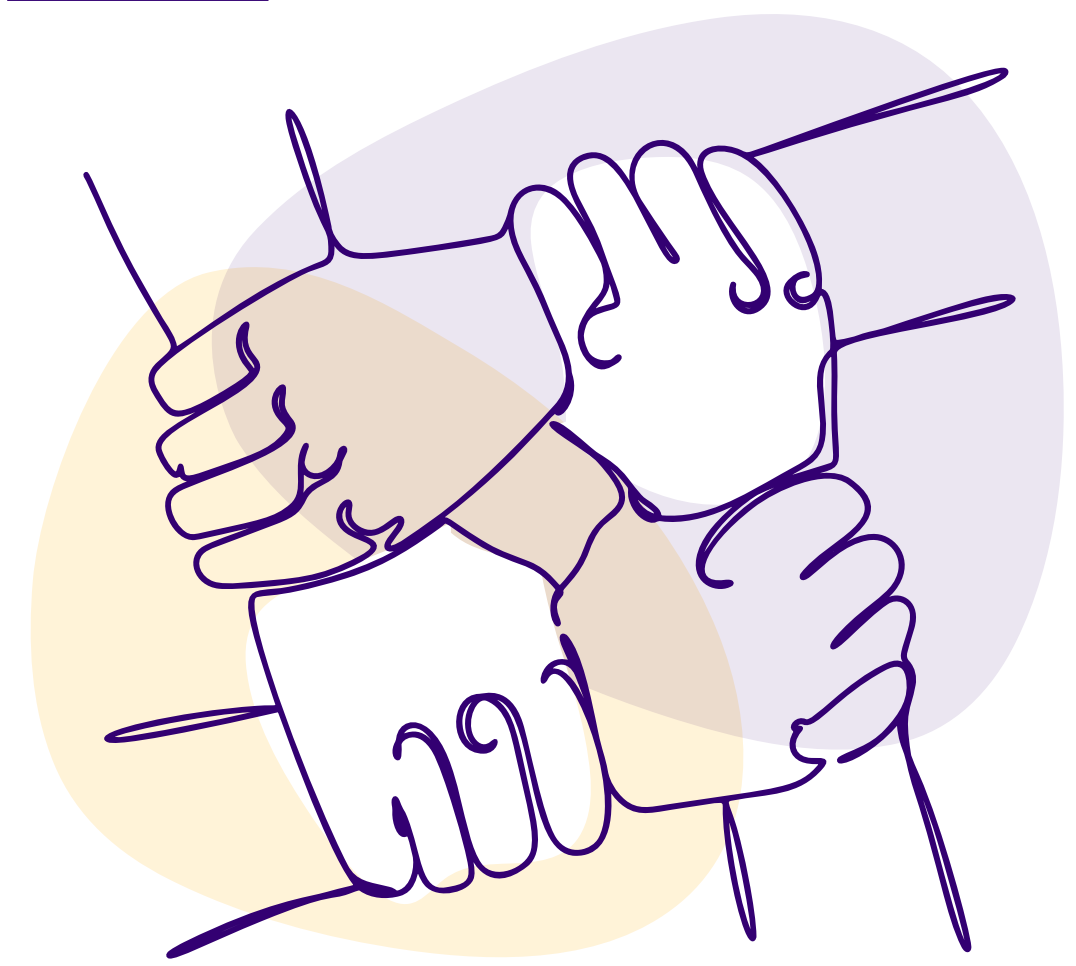
For feedback at work to be effective, it must balance kindness and empathy with the ability to challenge behaviours or actions directly, and Radical Candour can help with this.

Being ‘too nice’ when giving feedback leads to ‘Ruinous Empathy’. Ruinous Empathy means being overly nice to spare another’s feelings. Creating a culture of kindness and trust is vital for psychological safety at work. Yet ‘Ruinous Empathy’ takes this too far by diluting valuable feedback to come across nicely.⁴⁴

Radical Candour, on the other hand, is a balance between caring personally and challenging directly, which is key to effective feedback to enable growth and development and to nurture a compassionate approach in complex conversations.

Caring personally means using empathy in your communication. Understand the person you are speaking to and how to convey your message to them without negatively impacting their emotions. Challenging directly means speaking directly to the issue at hand.

[Read more »](#)



- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)**

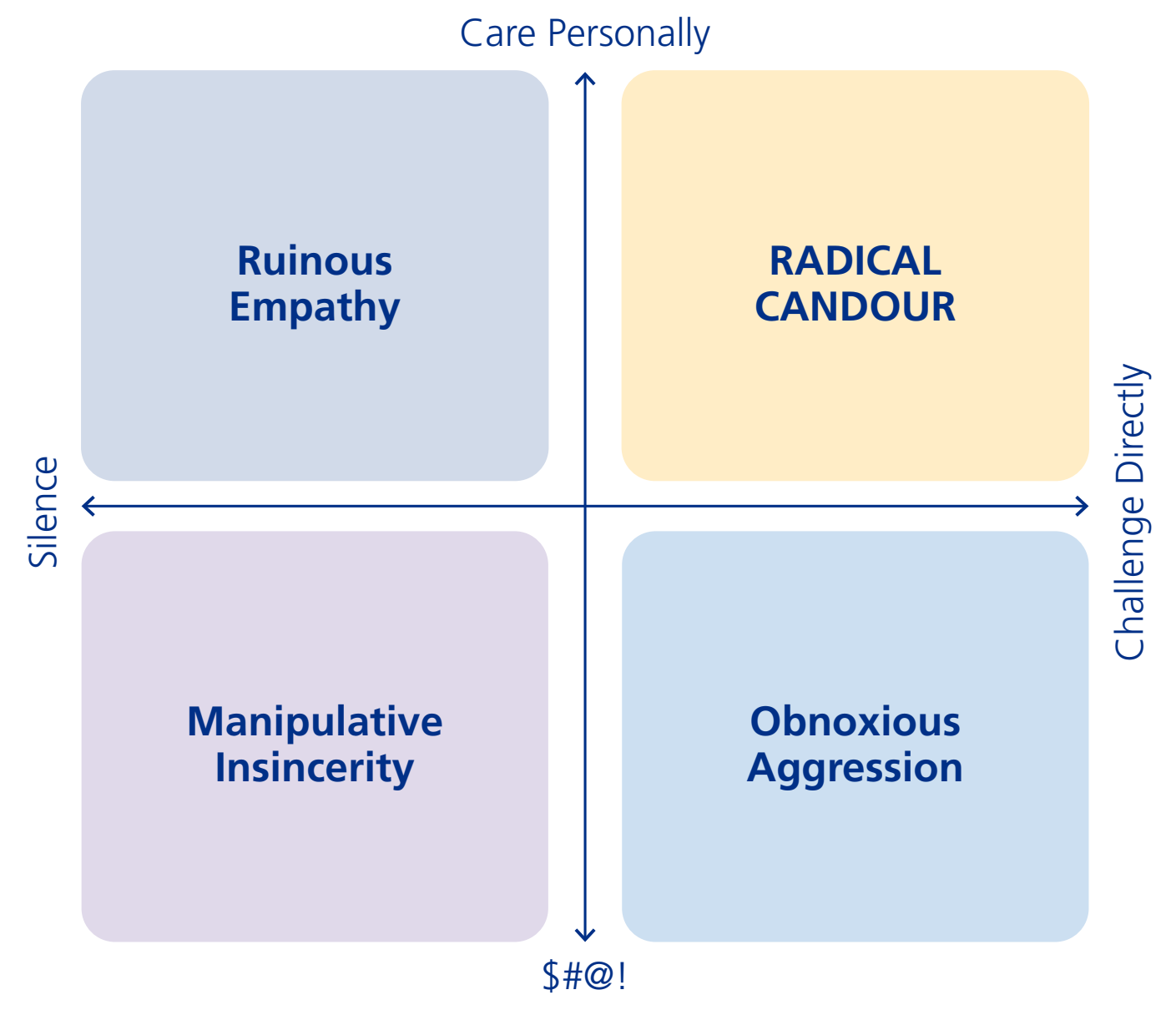
- 5.4 [Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.3 What is Radical Candour and how to practice this? (continued)

Be as clear, concise and direct as possible when conveying your point. When you plot these two foundations on a 2x2 grid, you get the following as seen in the Radical Candour framework in Figure 5.3 by Kim Scott et al.⁴⁴

Figure 5.3: Radical Candour framework by Kim Scott et al.⁴⁴



- **Obnoxious Aggression:** This occurs when you disregard someone else’s state of mind and focus entirely on the issue being discussed. You are challenging but not caring. The negative experience that person goes through usually ends up negating the message you were trying to convey. When you leave the room, they will call you an a-hole, and your working relationship will take a knock. This leads to toxic work cultures.
- **Manipulative Insincerity:** This is the opposite of Radical Candour; you’re neither caring nor direct. This is typically the outcome of totally toxic workplaces where staff no longer care about each other or the organisation. This is culture bankruptcy.
- **Ruinous Empathy:** Ironically, most of our behaviour lands in this category because we’ve been taught from a young age, “if you can’t say anything nice, then don’t say anything at all.” This leads us to withhold valuable feedback or opinions for fear of hurting someone’s feelings. This leads to cultures where nothing gets done, and critical information needed for organisational progress is lost because people don’t speak up.
- **Radical Candour:** If you manage to walk the tightrope of providing challenging and direct feedback with empathy, you’ve arrived at Radical Candour.

[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)**

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- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.3 What is Radical Candour and how to practice this? (continued)

How do you practice Radical Candour in your team?


Here are some tips to help put Radical Candour into practice in your teams:

- 1. Ask people to be radically candid with you** (and be thankful when they are!) This will give you the experience of receiving feedback and, most importantly, will build a foundation of trust in your team.
- 2. Pair feedback with coaching.** People Insight’s employee surveys indicate that, as a trend, employees desire more guidance and coaching from their managers for support. When providing critical feedback, be sure to offer your support. For example, share an instance where you experienced the same issue and share how you overcame it. Or include suggestions on how they could approach a similar situation next time.
- 3. Remind yourself, ‘It’s not mean. It’s clear.’** Instead of overthinking your feedback, lead with empathy and just say it. If you’re overthinking how to feedback, you probably won’t get the message across.
- 4. Give feedback in person and keep it informal.** Giving feedback doesn’t have to prompt a long discussion, and it certainly doesn’t need to wait for the next one to one or performance review. If possible, try to give feedback in person around hybrid or flexible working. Otherwise, arrange a video call. Avoid sending feedback via email.

- 5. Praise in public, criticise in private.** Example: ‘If your colleague walked out of the restroom with their fly down, what do you say?’ Ruinous empathy means you do not say anything (and let them face further embarrassment), being obnoxiously aggressive (high in direct challenge and low in personal care) means you shout it out for others to hear while being radically candid simply means you whisper it to the person.
- 6. Be specific with feedback and avoid personalisation.** Don’t be abstract when giving feedback. Instead, explain when the behaviour or incident happened, what happened and the consequence. Separate the action from the person by critiquing the behaviour or the piece of work instead of their personality.
- 7. Demonstrate your confidence in the person.** Being specific with feedback means you’re not leaving any room for interpretation. ‘Do it in a way that does not call into question your confidence in their abilities.’

 **Video Resources:**

[Video 5.3: Radical Candour by Kim Scott in 6 minutes](#)

 **TRY THIS:**
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 5.3

Individual: Reflect on a difficult conversation or giving or receiving feedback you experienced that had a deep impact on you.

- Was it a positive or negative impact?
- Explore using the Radical Candour Framework as to why this experience was positive or negative and what needs reinforcing positively or improving based on that experience evaluated against the Radical Candour framework.

Team: Identify a speciality or specific team in your organisation where toxic culture is known to thrive or where psychological safety is poor.

- Discuss as a team and explore how you can raise awareness within this team on the Radical Candour Framework.
- Help them improve their candour in their day-to-day conversations while caring personally for each other. This can help foster trust and psychological safety within the team.

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

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- 5.4 [Why is Inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)**

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.4 Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?

If leadership is not inclusive in an organisation, it is not compassionate. Compassion involves attending to every individual, understanding each person’s challenges, empathising with every individual, and being motivated to act to help each person we lead. Compassion means being present for all and helping all those we lead. Inclusive leadership means all leaders focus on ensuring equity, promoting the value of diversity, and ensuring they include all they lead.³

Diversity recognises that we are all different as individuals and acknowledges our differences in all aspects and the diverse perspectives we bring to work. Inclusion enables and empowers people to be authentic, bring their whole selves to work, and have their voices heard. Inclusion creates a sense of belonging and feeling valued and respected with supportive energy and commitment from those who are inclusive, which enables you to do your best at work and in life.³

When an individual is excluded or discriminated against consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally, they feel distressed. The effect is opposite to what compassion serves to alleviate.

Therefore, all leaders wishing to be in the Compassionate Leadership space must also practise mindful and conscious inclusion. This type of inclusion will overcome unconscious biases through conscious, inclusive thoughts, acts and behaviours.

Inclusive leadership enables leaders to tailor their approaches depending on unique individual needs for equitable outcomes. Generally, there is a tendency for most to default to race and ethnicity-related factors when thinking of diversity and inclusion and while this is an important aspect of inclusion work, an inclusive leader’s mindset needs to open beyond this aspect to embrace and include all aspects of diversity example: neurodiversity, learning styles, personalities, skills, competencies etc. True compassion is always inclusive and never exclusive.

The NHS belongs to us all. The NHS was established on the principles of social justice and equity. In many ways, it is the nation’s social conscience, but the treatment of our colleagues from minority groups falls short far too often. Not addressing this limits our collective potential. It prevents the NHS from achieving excellence in healthcare, identifying and using our best talent, closing the gap on health inequalities, and achieving the service improvements needed to improve population health.²⁷

The NHS People Plan emphasises that:

- all of us in the NHS must welcome all, with a culture of belonging and trust
- we must understand, encourage, and celebrate diversity in all its forms
- discrimination, violence, and bullying have no place in the NHS.
- we must role model a compassionate and inclusive culture; otherwise, how can our patients expect to be treated equitably and as individuals?
- we must continue our efforts to make the culture of the NHS universally understanding, kind and inclusive through the testing times that lie ahead.²⁷

The Workforce Race Equality Standards – WRES introduced by the NHS Equality and Diversity Council (EDC) for all NHS trusts in 2015 highlights the “disciplinary gap”, which is the relative likelihood of ethnic minority staff entering the formal disciplinary process compared with white staff (WRES metric three).

[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

- 5.4 [Why is Inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)**

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.4 Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach? (continued)

The WRES data in 2022 revealed that half of trusts were still 1.25 times more likely to see ethnic minority staff enter a formal disciplinary process compared to white staff, and this persistent disciplinary gap between 2015-2022 underlines an ongoing lack of racial equity that should be a concern for all NHS leaders.³⁸

Professional regulators have also acknowledged a disciplinary gap in fitness to practice referrals. The General Medical Council (GMC) has recognised the existence of inequalities in fitness to practice referrals for ethnic minority doctors and has set a target to close the disparity by 2026. The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) has identified a similar disparity, with ethnic minority nurses and midwives being more likely to be referred by their employers than their white counterparts.³⁸

The disciplinary gap has significant implications for both the NHS and its staff’s wellbeing, impacting patient care, the risk of losing talented staff, reputational risks, and legal implications.³⁸

The study by the working party for sexual misconduct in surgery under the Royal College of Surgeons revealed the significantly disparate experiences of women staff in the workplace with regards to experiencing and witnessing sexual misconduct and made a range of recommendations to be fulfilled across all NHS organisations.³⁹

The Sexual Safety in Health Care Organisational Charter published by NHS England⁴⁰ in response to this and the GMC Good Medical Practice 2024 publication,⁴¹ highlights how important inclusion and inclusive approaches are for equitable approaches in growing compassion and for all compassionate leaders.

Compassionate leadership creates the conditions where the collective good, the needs of patients and communities and staff wellbeing and development are prioritised over individual agendas (regardless of status), aggression or undermining. Compassionate Leadership offers a means by which inclusive leadership can be achieved, including the compassionate management of conflict and developing strategies to ensure all individuals, teams, and leaders take responsibility for sustaining inclusive cultures.³

The recently published report, ‘Too Hot to Handle: An Investigation Into Racism In the NHS’, shines a light on the problem and the failure of healthcare organisations to provide a safe and effective means for listening to and dealing with concerns raised by minoritised staff. The study found there was a culture of avoidance, defensiveness, or minimisation of the issue from their employer if they did so.⁴³

The NHS improvement plan sets out targeted actions to address the prejudice and discrimination – direct and indirect – that exists through behaviour, policies, practices and cultures against certain groups and individuals across the NHS workforce through compassionate and inclusive approaches.

Ensuring our staff work in an environment where they feel they belong, can safely raise concerns, ask questions, and admit mistakes is essential for staff morale – which, in turn, leads to improved patient care and outcomes. This can only be done by treating people equitably and without discrimination. Delivering that kind of inclusive and compassionate culture in an organisation of any size takes deliberate focus, listening and action from its leaders.⁴²

An inclusive leader is a leader who takes a collaborative and facilitative approach as opposed to one characterised by command and control. A leader who operates transparently rather than behind closed doors. A leader who is culturally agile, not tied to their own worldview. A leader who can fully embrace and leverage the vast diversity of today’s workforce.

[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

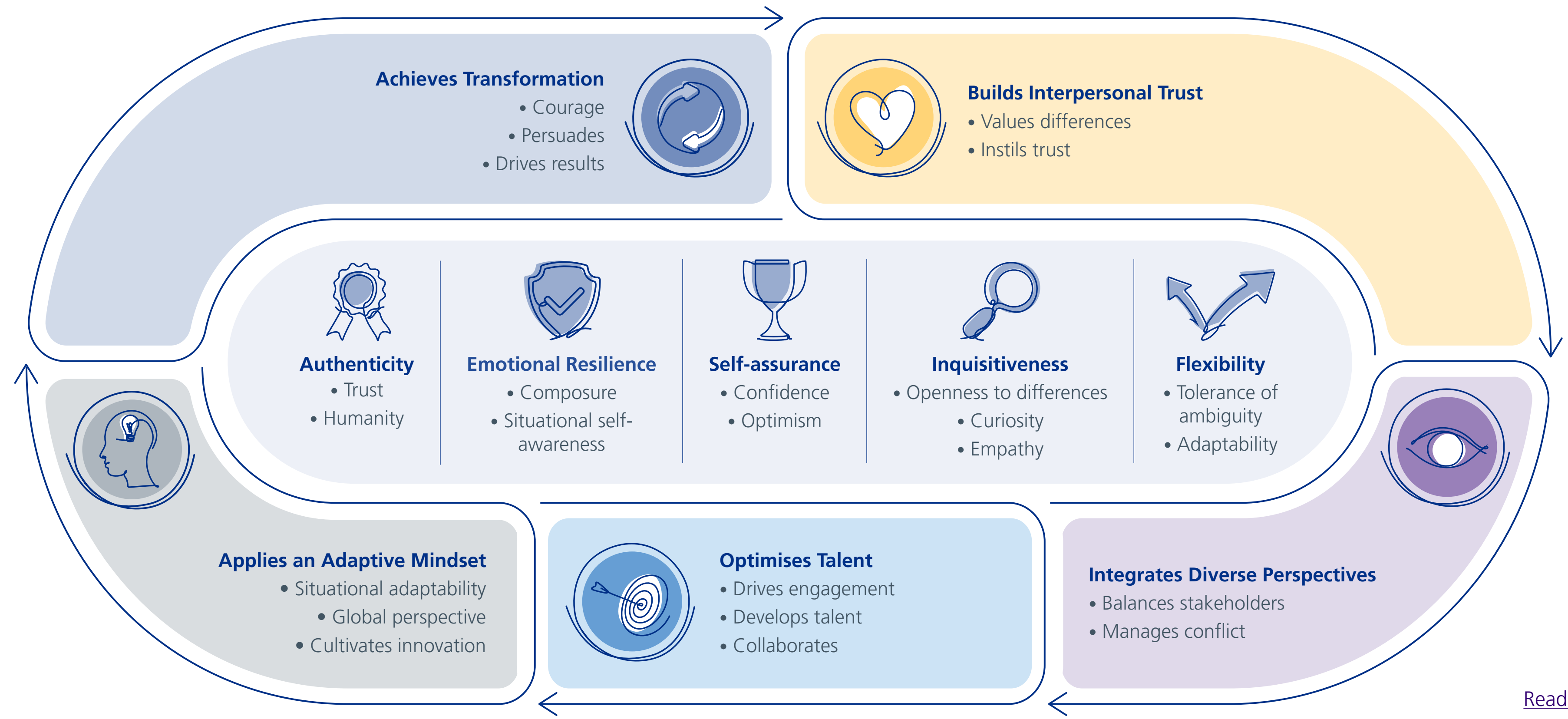
- 5.4 Why is Inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?**

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.4 Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach? (continued)

A leader who can create a safe space, regardless of what is happening externally, where people feel accepted and empowered to give the best of their talents. The traits and competencies of an inclusive leader, as in Figure 5.4.1, are, in effect, those of compassionate and effective leadership as well and totally value based.²⁸

Figure 5.4.1: Traits and Competencies of an Inclusive leader²⁸



[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

- 5.4 Why is Inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?**

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)

5.4 Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach? (continued)

Inclusion is the key to being an inclusive leader. This is fundamental to appreciating everyone’s diversity and uniqueness. The inclusion scale in Figure 5.4.2³⁵ helps with self-reflection on how your inclusive approaches are with diverse groups and individuals.

By taking focused actions, you can progress up the inclusion scale. This will enable you to move away from non-inclusive attitudes and acts prompted by emotions at the bottom of the scale. Instead, you can cultivate sincere appreciation toward others beyond mere tolerance and acceptance.

This provides an opportunity to explore and examine your own biases, positive and negative, and discuss further with a coach or mentor if you recognise that inclusion is a challenge for you based on this reflection. Conscious Inclusion helps us to understand our own biases and their impact on those around us to do or not do their best work.

Reflections facilitated through the use of the Inclusion Scale focus on how to create an environment where curiosity about differences is encouraged and where inclusion is the mutual responsibility of all.

The recently-published report on why concerns on racism are not heard or acted on by Roger Kline et al. in February 2024 compassionately explores the contributory factors for systemic and institutional racism and how they can be addressed through a systemic approach and what organisations can do about it.⁴³

Figure 5.4.2: Inclusion Scale



Video Resources:

[Video 5.4.1: Compassionate and Inclusive Leadership: Prof Michael West](#)

[Video 5.4.2: Let’s Talk Leadership -on Compassionate Leadership: Prof Michael West](#)



TRY THIS: Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 5.4

Individuals: Using the inclusion scale in Figure 5.4.2, think of your own feelings towards diverse groups of people or diverse individuals you come across in your professional standards work.

- Which part of the scale are you for each? What does this inform you about your biases?
- Have you ever been in an unfamiliar environment? How did you experience inclusion from others based on the Inclusion Scale?
- Based on both above, what can you do to develop a true appreciation of everyone’s uniqueness?
- What areas of strengths, as well as areas for development, do you identify when you reflect on the inclusive leadership traits in [Figure 5.4.1](#)?
- Write down three actions you could take to enhance your inclusive leadership, which is, in fact, compassionate leadership.

Teams/Organisations: Using the [‘Too Hot to Handle’ report by Roger Kline](#) as the basis for discussion, explore what your organisation can do further to visibly hear and act on concerns regarding racism to enhance inclusion and, thereby, compassion.

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

- 5.3 [What is Radical Candour and how to practice this?](#)

- 5.4 [Why is inclusive leadership important for a compassionate approach?](#)

- 5.5 [How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?](#)**

5.5 How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion?

Psychological safety is a condition in which you feel:

- 1 **Included**
- 2 **Safe to learn**
- 3 **Safe to contribute; and**
- 4 **Safe to challenge the status quo** – all without fear of being embarrassed, marginalised, or punished in some way.³⁶

All human beings have the same innate need: we long to belong. This was also highlighted in work by Prof. Michael West that GMC had commissioned titled as 'Caring for Doctors, Caring for Patients.' This stated that to ensure wellbeing and motivation at work and to minimise workplace stress, people have three core needs ABC, and all three must be met.³⁷

A Autonomy/control

The need to have control over our work lives and to act consistently with our work and life values.

B Belonging

The need to be connected to, cared for, and caring of others around us in the workplace and to feel valued, respected and supported.

C Competence

The need to experience effectiveness and deliver valued outcomes, such as high-quality care.

Please see [Figure 5.5](#), which illustrates the four stages of psychological safety. This is a framework that can be used as a diagnostic tool to assess the state of psychological safety in any organisation or team and is a key enabler of the above ABC for any individual.

[Read more »](#)



- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

- 5.2 [How to avoid Compassion Fatigue, Burnout and how to nurture self-compassion?](#)

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5.5 How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion? (continued)

Stage 1 – Inclusion Safety:

The first stage of psychological safety is inclusion into the group/team/organisation, and the inclusion grants you a shared identity.³⁷ This brings you from an outsider to an insider fold. Inclusion safety is not just about tolerance and is provided by genuinely inviting others into your circle or fold as another unique human being that transcends all other differences.

The starting point of psychological safety is, therefore, inclusion and inclusion safety, which is compassion. The implications of the ‘in groups’ and ‘outgroups’ were highlighted in the GMC ‘Fair to refer’ publication.²³

Stage 2 – Learner Safety:

The second stage of psychological safety is where you feel safe to engage in the discovery process of learning, ask questions, experiment, and even make mistakes. The presence of fear in an organisation is the first sign of weak leadership. Banishing fear and creating a nurturing environment allows people to be vulnerable as they learn and grow, and they will perform beyond your expectations and theirs.

When an environment belittles, demeans, or harshly corrects people in the learning process, learner safety is destroyed. An environment that grants safe passage to learning open potential, cultivating confidence, resilience, and independence. When learner safety is present, the leader and team, through compassion, may supply some of the confidence that the individual may lack.³⁷

Stage 3 – Contributor Safety:

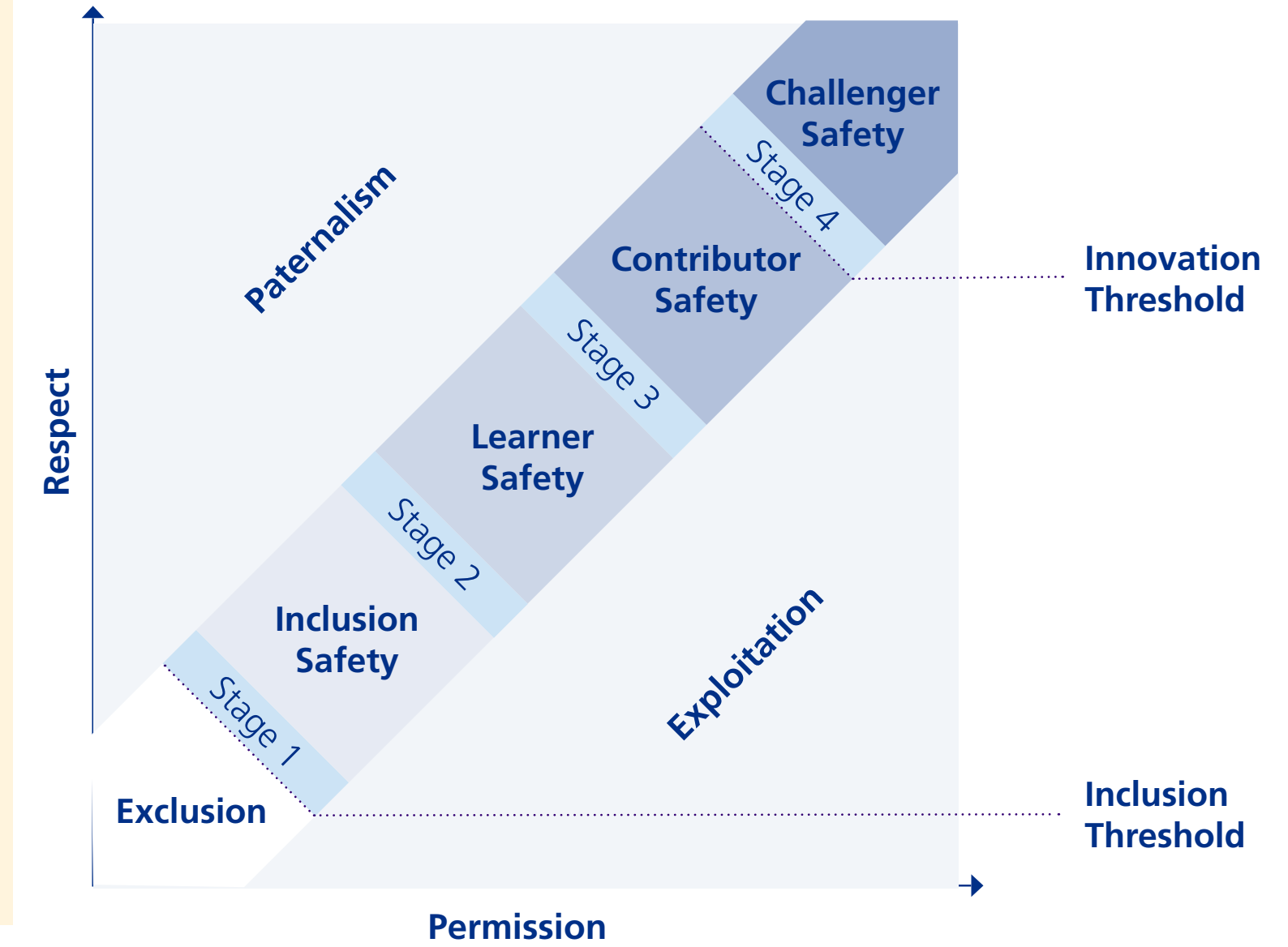
As individual performance climbs higher in a nurturing environment that offers respect and permission, we enter the stage of contributor safety, which invites the individual to participate and contribute as a full-fledged member of the team. Contributor safety is an invitation and expectation to perform competently in your role.

Despite an ability to perform, an individual may be denied contributor safety in cases of weak leadership, for example, arrogance or insecurity of the leader, personal bias, prejudice or discrimination, prevailing norms that reinforce insensitivity, a lack of empathy, or aloofness.³⁷ Contributor safety emerges when the individual performs well, and the leaders and team ensure compassionate appreciation and, encouragement and an appropriate level of autonomy.

Stage 4 – Challenger Safety:

This is the fourth and final stage of psychological safety that enables you to challenge the status quo without retribution, reprisal, or the risk of damaging your personal standing or reputation. It gives confidence for one to speak truth to power when something needs to change and it is time to say so. Challenger safety enables individuals to be creative and innovative, as individuals apply this only when they feel free and where their autonomy is respected.

Figure 5.5: the four stages of psychological safety



[Read more »](#)

- 5.1 [How to avoid the empathy trap and lead with compassion?](#)

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5.5 How can you promote psychological safety in the workplace through compassion? (continued)

When there is no tolerance for candour, there is no constructive dissent. Where there is no constructive dissent, there is no innovation. Challenger safety is, therefore, a license to innovate, and the starting point is stage 1 of Inclusion and compassion flowing from leaders and teams at every stage.³⁷

Healthcare leaders at the stakeholder event and focus groups asserted that a compassionate and inclusive leader always strives to bring people together and to understand each other's perspective through creating a psychologically safe space and through collaboration. There was consensus at network events that creating a psychologically safe space for all, which enables learning from each other and freedom in challenging each other, was important, and this was an area where NHS could develop further and stronger based on recurrent NHS staff survey results.

All agreed that compassionate approaches were key to fostering psychological safety and fulfilling the core needs of ABC, which enables working through disagreements or conflicts with as much candour and transparency as possible to agree on the best way forward.



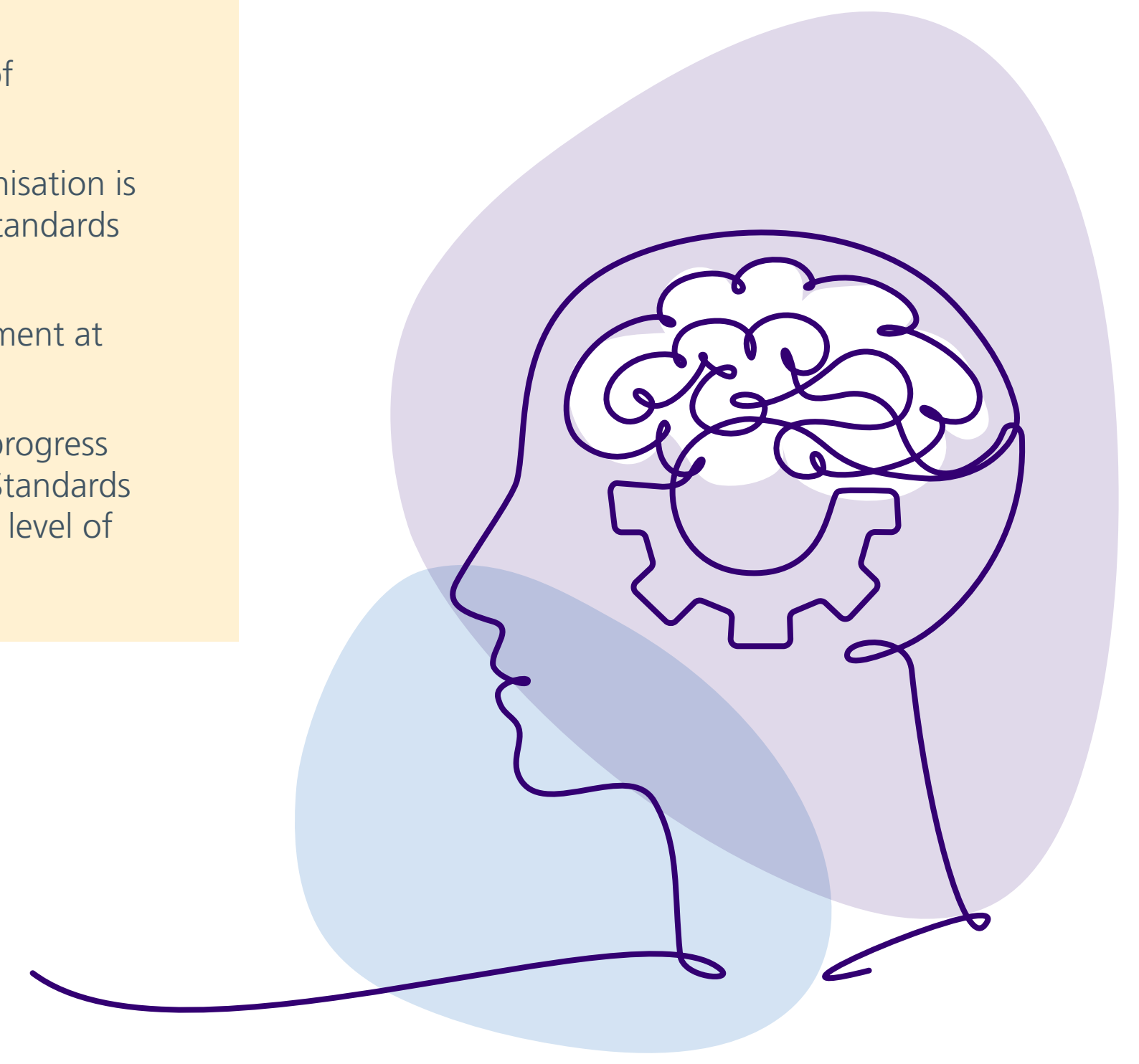
TRY THIS:
Reflection for teams and individuals

Exercise 5.5

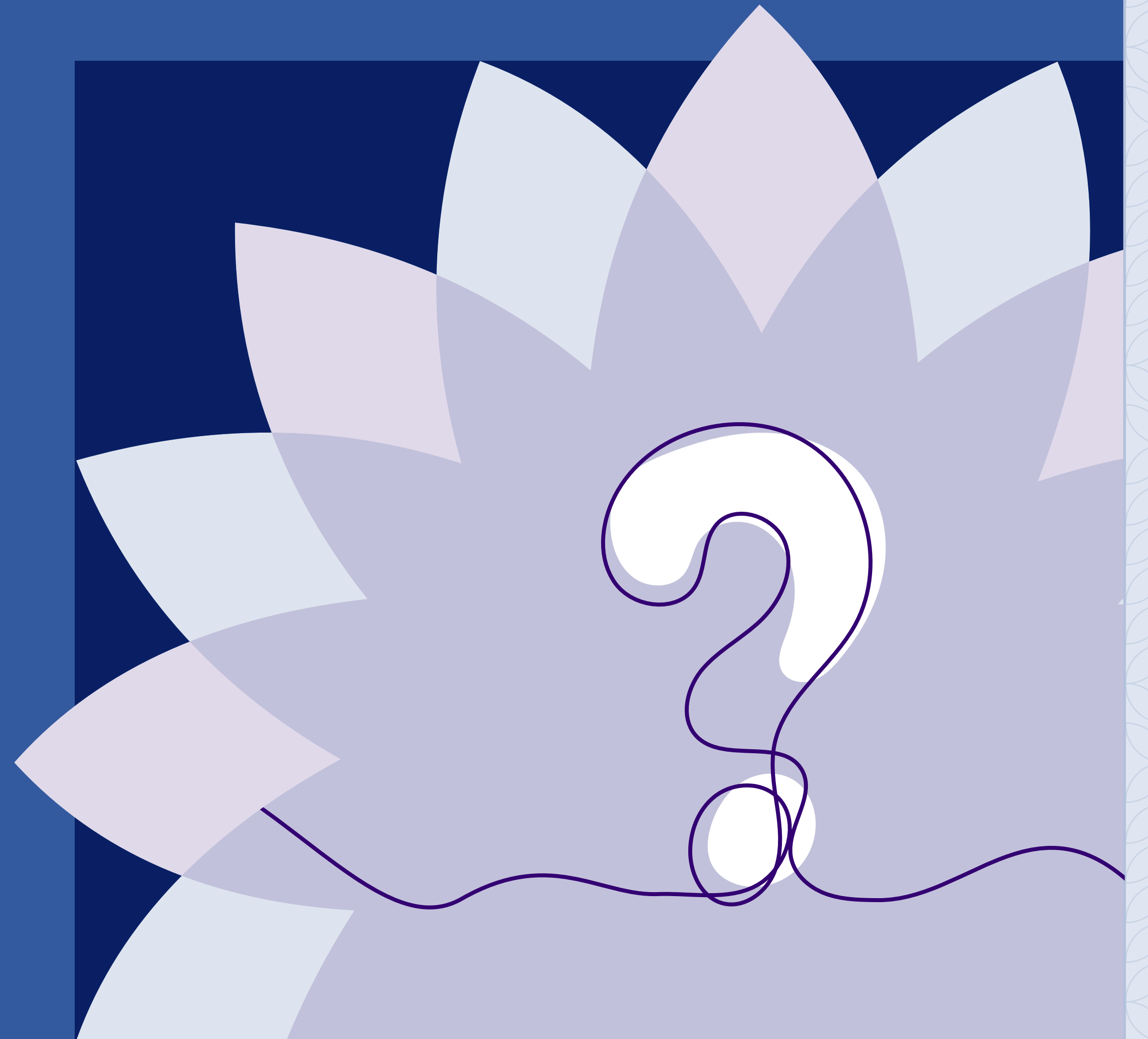
Individual: Reflecting on the stages of psychological safety.

- What level do you think your organisation is at when it comes to Professional Standards and systems improvement?
- What is the reason for your assessment at this level?

Team: What actions can you take to progress your team (for example, Professional Standards Team) and organisation to the highest level of psychological safety?



Conclusion



Conclusion

Compassionate leadership is a choice, and it is all about moving beyond emotion to intention to act and intelligent actions. Compassion is an awareness of a person’s condition, coupled with genuine concern for that person and a willingness to take action to help. It’s about having the courage to walk alongside someone as they navigate a difficult time, a complex situation, or a persistent problem.²²

Compassion is a critical component of successful leadership. By going beyond empathetic concern to taking meaningful actions, leaders can support their team members as they navigate difficult times, work through challenges, and emerge as stronger problem-solvers.³

It is a myth that performance cannot be managed with compassion- that compassionate leadership is just about being nice to followers. In fact, Compassionate performance management is more effective than command and control or punitive approaches to performance management and holding people and leaders to account.

Compassionate leadership acknowledges that behaviours are more often a consequence of the situation people find themselves in rather than personality.

We must ensure we fully understand the situation others find themselves in when their behaviour is problematic. Compassionate leadership requires attending to people and listening to their accounts to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of their work situation.³

“The ever-changing context of today’s workplace is challenging. Both internal and external forces are constantly shifting in our teams, in our organisations and even in our personal lives. All these forces can come into play, which is why you must have compassion, both for yourself and for your team. As leaders demonstrate compassion toward themselves and others, they expand their entire team’s capacity to handle future challenges.”²²

“Compassion is one of the most powerful acts of leadership available to us, and it often shows up in the smallest of ways. We see it in those moment-by-moment acknowledgements of what’s hard, what hurts, what is joyous, exciting, or disappointing.”³

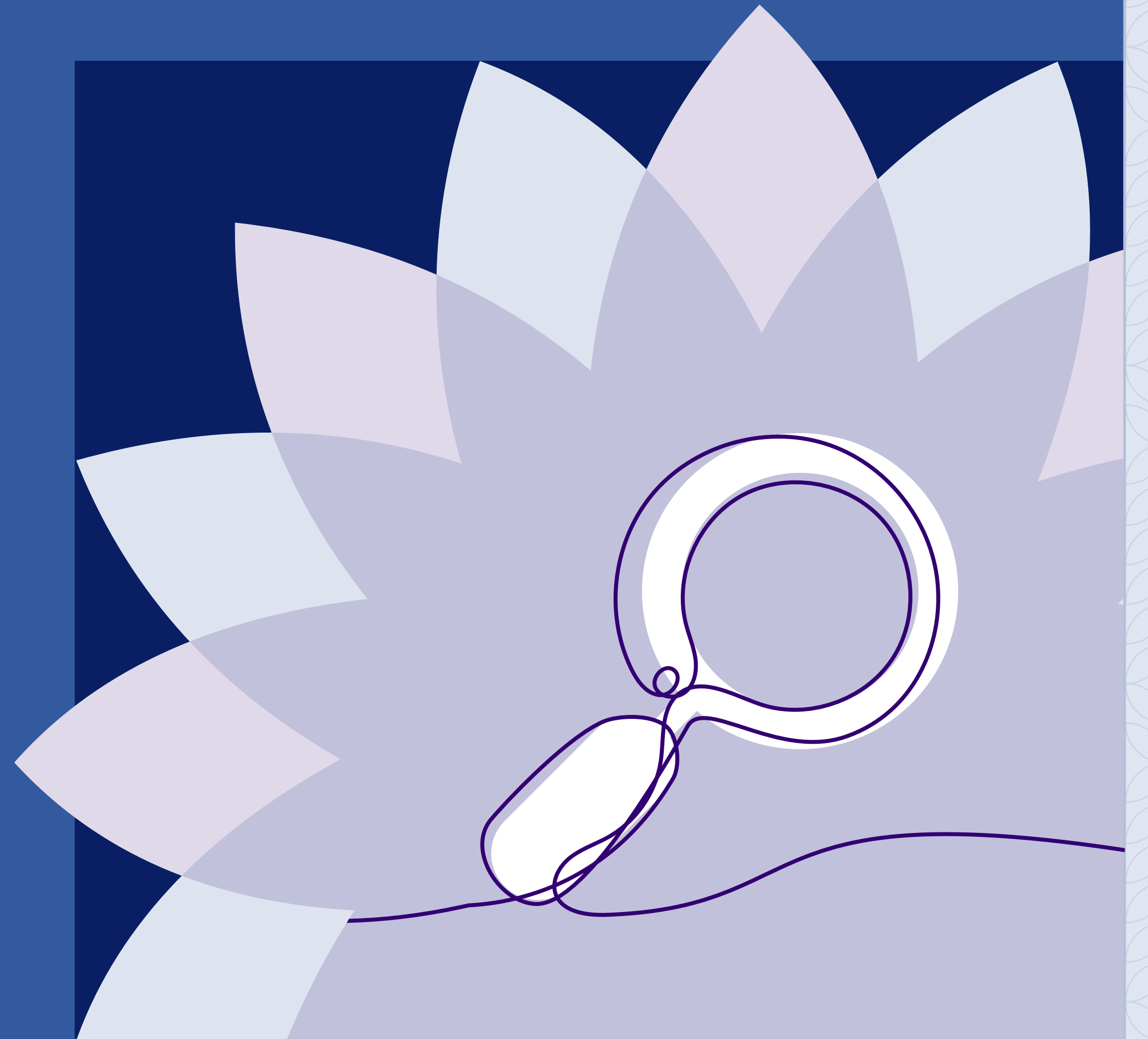
Compassionate leaders are more effective leaders because they can strengthen trust in their teams and increase organisational collaboration while decreasing turnover rates.²

We hope the call for action through reflections enabled through this L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Framework and Toolkit provided you with enhanced awareness and insights on how you, as a leader, can contribute to growing compassion within yourself and in your teams and organisations.

Growing compassion also nurtures inclusion, as highlighted under [sections 1.2](#) and [5.4](#), and helps foster and grow a compassionate and inclusive culture.

The NHS England SIPS teams in the North West have planned educational workshops and e-learning digital resources to accompany this toolkit. These resources are aligned with the toolkit’s content and aim to foster collaboration and collective leadership among leaders and organisations. This approach, rooted in compassion and inclusion, will not only benefit professional standards and system improvements but also positively impact the entire healthcare system, including staff and the wider population.³

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Appendices

[Appendix 1: List of mental health support services](#)

[Appendix 2: Initial triage and review template for risk stratification used by NHSE SIPS team when performance concerns are raised](#)

[Appendix 3: Guide to likelihood/severity score for triage assessment](#)

[Appendix 4: Lessons learnt and system improvement review template](#)

[Appendix 5: Template used to keep the practitioner updated regarding outcome of PAG/PSG formal discussions](#)

[Appendix 6: Growing compassion supportive resources](#)

[Appendix 7: Video resources on compassionate leadership](#)

[Appendix 8: NHS England resources on compassionate leadership](#)



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Appendix 1: List of mental health support services

- [Every Mind Matters – NHS](#)
- [Home – Mental Health at Work](#)
- [Supporting your employees' mental health at work: Supporting mental health at work – ACAS](#)
- [Managing your employees' mental health at work: Supporting mental health at work – ACAS](#)
- [Wellness Action Plan Sign Up – Mind](#)
- [Understanding mental health and the law: Supporting mental health at work – ACAS](#)
- [What could make a difference to the mental health of UK doctors – the Louise Tebboth Foundation /Society of Occupational Medicine](#)
- [Looking after your mental health: Supporting mental health at work – ACAS](#)
- [Mental health support and training: Supporting mental health at work – ACAS](#)
- [Support with employee health and disability – GOV.UK](#)

- [Appendix 1](#)

- [Appendix 2](#)**

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Appendix 2: Initial triage and review template for risk stratification used by NHSE SIPS team when performance concerns are raised

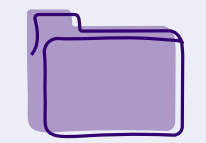
Initial triage and review template for risk stratification used by NHSE SIPS team when performance concerns are raised

Clinical Review

Discipline	Practitioner Name	Registration Number	Practice Details <i>(if available/applicable)</i>

To be completed by the professional advisor as appointed by NHS England Northwest:

Name of Reviewer							
Date of Review	XX/XX/XXXX						
Declaration for Conflict of Interest	Yes/No e.g. I declare that I know of no conflict(s) of interest regarding this practitioner or matters arising regarding the concerns raised.						
Summary of Concern(s)	Please give a brief overview of the case background and the concerns raised.						
Documents Reviewed	1. 2. 3.						
Safeguarding Concern(s)	Yes/No (If yes, please give further details on any identified concerns)						
Are there any potential health concerns regarding this practitioner?	Yes/No (If yes, please give further details on any identified concerns)						
Risk Rating (with score)	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #28a745; color: white;">Green</td> <td style="background-color: #ffc107; color: white;">Amber</td> <td style="background-color: #dc3545; color: white;">Red</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3" style="text-align: center;">x =</td> </tr> </table>	Green	Amber	Red	x =		
Green	Amber	Red					
x =							
Rationale	e.g. Potential breach of GMC, GMP and dishonesty						
Case Recommendation	e.g. Ask PAG to consider interviewing the practitioner and undertake a record review of....						
Any Additional Recommendations	e.g. Ask for the performers reflections and include for PAG.						



Download template

[Initial triage and review template for risk stratification used by NHSE SIPS team when performance concerns are raised](#)

- [Appendix 1](#)
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Appendix 3: Guide to likelihood/severity score for triage assessment

Table 1 – Guide to objectively evaluating the potential for Likelihood/Frequency of risk recurrence

Likelihood	Description rating
Almost certain	Will undoubtedly happen/recur, possibly frequent. Probability >50%
Likely	Will probably happen/recur, but it's not a persistent problem. Probability 10-50%
Possible	Might happen or recur occasionally. Probability 1-10%
Unlikely	Do not expect this event to happen/recur but it is possible that it might do so. Probability 0.1-1%
Rare	This will probably never happen/recur, or not expected to occur for years. Probability <0.1%

Table 2 – Contributory factors for consideration when objectively evaluating the potential likelihood/frequency of risk recurrence

Contributory factors for likelihood	Explanation
Level of insight	Does the practitioner understand and accept the deficiencies in performance? Is there evidence that the practitioner appreciates the impact of the issue/incident or potential for harm if not addressed?
Health	Is there evidence of ill health or potential indicators of ill health?
Behaviours	Is there evidence of concerning behaviour, outside the standards outlined by regulatory body guidance or behaviours expected of the profession?
Level of support	Is the practitioner engaged with support agencies – defence union/local representative committee/support groups. Is the practitioner supported by friends/family/peers/mentor/supervisor or could they be isolated?
Context of work	Are they a locum/Partner/salaried? Are they working in a supportive and/or positive environment i.e., a training practice. Is the practice involved in any CQC action?
Level of engagement	Has the practitioner engaged with NHS England or other relevant agencies? Have they engaged with support agencies? Have they engaged with requests for information?

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Appendix 3: Guide to likelihood/severity score for triage assessment (continued)

Table 3 – Guide to objectively evaluate severity/consequence

Consequence level	Consequence	Description rating
Catastrophic	Patient/public safety (physical/psychological harm)	Incident leading to death. Multiple permanent injuries or irreversible health effects. An event which impacts on a large number of patients or a one-off isolated incident.
	Statutory duties/inspections	Practitioner specific root cause of severely critical report – prosecution – multiple breaches in statutory duty.
	Financial	Evidence of significant financial mismanagement of NHS funds, NHS fraud investigations/findings.
	Management	Significant and immediate infringement of process/systems which results in loss of critical service and/or risk to service users.
	Professionalism/conduct/reputation	May result in urgent action by regulator. Major criminal investigation/charges. Catastrophic impact on maintaining trust – evidence of system wide dishonesty by professionals. Catastrophic breach of professional ethics (measured through disrespect for profession, others, and patients). National media coverage inevitable. Total loss of public confidence.

Consequence level	Consequence	Description rating
Major	Patient/public safety (physical/psychological harm)	Mismanagement of patient care with long-term effects. Major injury leading to long-term incapacity/disability. Significant risk to patient safety if unresolved. Required urgent acute admission. Will require clinical supervision.
	Statutory duties/inspections	Multiple breach in statutory duties – Improvement notices. Practitioner not acting on/engaging with regulatory body actions/recommendations.
	Financial	Evidence of financial mismanagement of NHS funds, NHS fraud investigations/findings.
	Management	Multiple/similar complaints and will require external review. Significant infringement of process/systems.
	Professionalism/conduct/reputation	Major impact on maintaining trust; evidence of professional dishonesty. Major breach of Professional ethics (measured through respect for profession, others, and patients). National media involvement likely. Risk to corporate reputation if not acted upon. Significant and long-term loss of public confidence.

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Appendix 3: Guide to likelihood/severity score for triage assessment (continued)

Table 3 – Guide to objectively evaluate severity/consequence

Consequence level	Consequence	Description rating
Moderate	Patient/public safety (physical/psychological harm)	Moderate injury requiring professional intervention but with no residual disability/harm. May affect a small group of patients. Results in regulator complaint. May result in a structured improvement action plan for performer. May require clinical supervision.
	Statutory duties/inspections	Single breach in statutory duties. Practitioner challenging external recommendations/improvement notice.
	Financial	Limited evidence of financial mismanagement of NHS funds.
	Management	Complaint(s) investigation may result in referral to Practitioner Performance Team and may require external review. Moderate infringement of process/systems. May be isolated complaint.
	Professionalism/conduct/reputation	Major impact on maintaining trust; evidence of dishonesty: Major breach of professional ethics (measured through respect for profession, others, and patients). Local media coverage – loss public confidence (short – medium term).

Consequence level	Consequence	Description rating
Minor	Patient/public safety (physical/psychological harm)	Minor injury or illness, first aid treatment may be needed. Minor implications for patient safety if unresolved. No residual harm or disability. Overall treatment.
	Statutory duties/inspections	Limited evidence of breach in statutory legislation.
	Financial	Small loss or minor risk of claim.
	Management	Single failure to meet internal standards. Low level complaint, resolved by commissioning organisation or provider.
	Professionalism/conduct/reputation	Minor impact on maintaining trust; isolated evidence of dishonesty. Minor breach of Professional ethics (measured through respect for profession, others, and patients). Media involvement unlikely. Local media coverage – short-term reduction in public confidence Elements of public expectation not being met

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Appendix 3: Guide to likelihood/severity score for triage assessment (continued)

Table 3 – Guide to objectively evaluate severity/consequence

Consequence level	Consequence	Description rating
Negligible	Patient/public safety (physical/psychological harm)	Minimal injury requiring no/minimal intervention or treatment and no time off work (patient safety).
	Statutory duties/inspections	No or minimal impact or breach of guidance.
	Financial	Insignificant evidence of financial loss and risk of claim remote.
	Management	Minor infringement of process/systems with no enduring consequence.
	Professionalism/conduct/reputation	No risk of media coverage, minimal/negligible impact on maintaining trust and reputation.

Instructions for use:

1. Define the risk(s) explicitly in terms of adverse consequence(s) that might arise from the risk.
2. Use [Table 2](#) to determine the consequence score(s) for the potential adverse outcome(s) relevant to the risk being evaluated.
3. Use [Table 1](#) to determine the likelihood score(s) (L) for those adverse outcomes. It is noted that the immediacy of the risk will play a part here, i.e., if the likelihood of recurrence is very likely within a short timescale, and this carries a possibly significant adverse outcome, the overall risk score will reflect this.

Likelihood	Severity				
	1 – Negligible	2 – Minor	3 – Moderate	4 – Major	5 – Catastrophic
1 – Rare	1	2	3	4	5
2 – Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
3 – Possible	3	6	9	12	15
4 – Likely	4	8	12	16	20
5 – Almost certain	5	10	15	20	25

4. If possible, score the likelihood by assigning a predicted frequency of occurrence of the adverse outcome. If this is not possible, assign a probability to the adverse outcome occurring within a given time frame, such as the lifetime of a project or a patient care episode. If it is not possible to determine a numerical probability, then use the probability descriptions to determine the most appropriate score.
5. Calculate the risk score by multiplying the consequence by the likelihood: C (consequence) x L (likelihood) = R (risk score).
6. Identify the level at which the risk will be managed in the organisation, assign priorities for remedial action and determine whether risks are to be accepted on the basis.

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Appendix 4: Lessons learnt and system improvement review template

Lessons Learnt and System Improvement Review Template

To be completed for professional concern cases presented at PAG.

Case ID:

Professional Advisory Group-PAG date:

Step 1: Reflection- See **Table 1** and **Table 2** for individual/team reflections and discussions.

Step 2: Background and summary of case. Please Refer to Case XXX PAG document summary (helps avoid duplication). Additional information if any can be captured here.

Step 3: Documentation - Please document your response under 1-3 below:


1. What is the learning from this/ key lessons learnt?
2. What contributory factors were noted and how did they contribute? (See Table 2)
3. What actions for learning and improvement/system solutions can be enabled to mitigate?

Table 1: Reflection points

Reflection points		Outcome
What was supposed to happen?	What happened?	Agreed facts ↓
Why was there a difference?	What can we learn from this?	Shared Opinions ↓
What factors were noted as contributory? <small>See Appendix 1 The L.O.T.U.S. Compassionate Leadership Framework and Toolkit</small>	What actions/solutions can help mitigate?	Shared Opinions ↓
Who could we share the learning and system solutions/improvement opportunities with?		

Table 2: Framework of Contributory Factors, The London Protocol
Sally Taylor Adams & Charles Vincent, *System Analysis of Clinical Incidents*

Factor Types	Contributory Influencing Factor
Patient Factors	Condition (complexity & seriousness) Language and communication Personality and social factors
Task and Technology Factors	Task design and clarity of structure Availability and use of protocols Availability and accuracy of test results Decision-making aids
Individual (staff) Factors	Knowledge and skills Competence Physical and mental health
Team Factors	Verbal communication Written communication Supervision and seeking help Team structure (congruence, consistency, leadership, etc)
Work Environmental Factors	Staffing levels and skills mix Workload and shift patterns Design, availability and maintenance of equipment Administrative and managerial support Environment Physical
Organisational & Management Factors	Financial resources & constraints Organisational structure Policy, standards and goals Safety culture and priorities
Institutional Context Factors	Economic and regulatory context National health service executive Links with external organisations


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[Lessons learnt and system improvement review template](#)

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Appendix 5: Template used to keep practitioner updated regarding outcome of PAG/PSG formal discussions

Template used to keep practitioner updated regarding outcome of PAG/PSG formal discussions



Enquiries to: [Insert name]
Contact no: [Insert contact number]
Email: [Insert email]
Our Ref: [Insert LARC number]
Date: Insert date

Private and Confidential

Dear Dr [insert name]

Re: Performance Advisory Group (PAG) outcome

Further to NHS England letter dated xxxxx, we are now writing to confirm that PAG has reviewed your case.

The Group considered xxxxx and instructed [insert decision, rationale, and actions here].

I will write to you shortly with further details of your investigator and the Terms of Reference.

PAG have requested an occupational health report to fully understand if there are any health concerns that may impact your ability to work. If you consent to the contents of the report being shared with NHS England it will be shared with the PAG members, clinical advisor, and case manager only and will be managed with the strictest confidence.

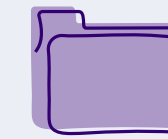
We appreciate that occupational health assessments are personal in nature, but we encourage all practitioners to share information with us as it often helps provide further context to the cases and what action is most appropriate. Should you not provide consent then PAG members will have to decide without full knowledge of any health implications on our clinical practice.

We understand that this must be a stressful time for you and encourage you to contact your defence organisation and LMC/LDCL/OC for support. Contact details are available in the support information provided in our first letter to you.

Please do not send any correspondence to the office address as the offices are not manned currently. Please contact the case manager directly if you require any assistance.

Yours sincerely

NAME
[Insert job title], Medical Directorate
NHS England



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[Template used to keep practitioner updated regarding outcome of PAG/PSG formal discussions](#)



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Appendix 6: Growing compassion supportive resources

6.1. Mindfulness Practice resources to grow self-compassion

- [What is Mindfulness Meditation? \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-mindfulness-meditation-2786171)
- [How to Start a Meditation Practice \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-start-a-meditation-practice-2786171)
- [Why and how to Do a Mental Body Scan for Stress Relief \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/why-and-how-to-do-a-mental-body-scan-for-stress-relief-2786171)
- [How to Reduce Stress with Breathing Exercises \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-reduce-stress-with-breathing-exercises-2786171)
- [Quick 5-Minute Meditation for Effective Stress Relief \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/quick-5-minute-meditation-for-effective-stress-relief-2786171)
- [How to Relieve Stress with Bathtub Meditation \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-relieve-stress-with-bathtub-meditation-2786171)
- [8 Meditation Techniques to Try \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/8-meditation-techniques-to-try-2786171)
- [How to Reduce Tension with Progressive Muscle Relaxation \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-reduce-tension-with-progressive-muscle-relaxation-2786171)
- [How to Use Visualization to Reduce Anxiety Symptoms \(verywellmind.com\)](https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-use-visualization-to-reduce-anxiety-symptoms-2786171)

6.2. Health and Wellbeing support

If you need support...

- [Free access to a range of mental health and wellbeing apps](#) including Headspace and Unmind.
- [Access to a dedicated, staff mental health and wellbeing hub](#) which can provide rapid access to assessment and local evidence-based mental health services and support where needed.
- Training for line managers to support you in having safe and effective wellbeing conversations with your colleagues:
 - [Having safe and effective health and wellbeing conversations](#)
 - [Wellbeing conversations](#)
- [Access to a dedicated development programme](#) that Health and Wellbeing Champions across the NHS can access for free.
- [NHS Mental Health Issues Support.](#)
- [Mental Wellbeing Audio Guides.](#)
- You can also contact the National Health and Wellbeing team on email via: ournhspeople.hwb@nhs.net or follow them on Twitter/X [@people_nhs](#).

6.3. Support to access to further training

If you would like to consider further training opportunities that will help you look after the health and wellbeing of yourself and your colleagues, click on the direct links below for more information:

- [Cultural competence](#): A free e-Learning module developed by NHS England - Workforce Training and Education Directorate to help healthcare professional understand the issues around culture and health and how this might influence healthcare outcomes.
- [Management and leadership skills](#): A free e-learning module designed to develop your knowledge and understanding of a range of management and leadership topics.
- [Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training in Learning Disability and Autism](#)
- [Understanding different types of mental illness](#): the charity Mind have pulled together some helpful information pages that talk you through a range of mental health diagnoses and what this means.
- [Zero Suicide Alliance training](#): ZSA offer a range of free online learning sessions that provide you with a better understanding of the signs to look out for and the skills required to approach someone who is struggling, whether that be through social isolation or suicidal thoughts.



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Appendix 7: Video resources on compassionate leadership

- [Leaders of the 21st Century | Rasmus Hougaard – Bing video](#)
- [Good for introduction. Prof Michael West: Leadership in Today's NHS](#)
- [Developing cultures of high-quality care Prof Michael West](#)
- [Compassionate and collective leadership for high-quality culture Prof Michael West](#)
- Compassionate video series by Alex Lyons:
 - [What is compassion](#)
 - [Compassionate Leadership](#)
 - [Compassionate Communication](#)
 - [Compassion in the Workplace](#)
- [Understanding the art of compassion: Barry Kerzi – Chief Physician to His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#)
- [The science of compassion: Dr James Doty Neurosurgeon, Harvard](#)
- [Reimagining Compassion as Power: Tim Dawes](#)
- [How forty seconds of compassion could save lives: Dr Stephen Trzeciak](#)
- [Compassion Fatigue – What is it and do you have it? Juliet Watt](#)
- [How to manage Compassion Fatigue in care giving: Patricia Smith](#)
- [Compassionate and Inclusive Leadership: Prof Michael West](#)
- [Let's Talk Leadership – on Compassionate Leadership: Prof Michael West](#)
- [Leadership and Compassion- Empathy and Compassion in Society](#)
- [Compassionate management-using compassion as a business tool- Rena DeLevie](#)
- [Why compassion matters: Dr Julian Abel](#)
- [Compassion fatigue/Drowning in Empathy – the cost of vicarious trauma. Amy Cunningham](#)
- [Workplace compassion as a business model: Cherry Dale](#)
- [Radical Candor in six minutes by Kim Scott](#)

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Appendix 8: NHS England resources on compassionate leadership

- [Looking after your teams health and wellbeing guide. March 2023.](#)
- [NHS England resource pack to support workplace compassion: March 2020 Publications Gateway Ref No. 000872.](#)
- [Compassionate conversations: a guide to holding compassionate conversations with colleagues. May 2023.](#)
- [NHS England shared ambition for compassionate and inclusive leadership.](#)
- [Culture and values for workplace compassion.](#)
- [Actions and activities to support workplace compassion.](#)
- [What does compassionate and inclusive leadership mean to us?](#)
- [Inspiration: sharing the “whys” and the “hows” of compassionate and inclusive leadership.](#)
- [The Culture and Leadership Programme in NHS.](#)
- [Compassionate and inclusive leadership.](#)