

Developing an integrated 360 degree tool for boards preparing for FT status

Introduction

This short paper sets out a proposed approach to develop 360 degree tools for NHS boards, particularly those preparing for Foundation Trust status application.

This has been stimulated by a board in East of England, Suffolk Mental Health Partnership who have been looking for an approach that would meet their needs, but this need has been echoed by many aspirant FTs seeking support in the development of their governance arrangements. This paper is a result of a meeting between Caroline Stanger, head of leadership and organisational development at East of England SHA and Adrienne Fresko, Director Foresight Partnership.

There are already a number of 360 degree tools available for board of NHS Trusts, but to our knowledge, none which provide a coherent, evidence based, integrated 360 degree tool or set of tools which would provide the board with:

- A view of how the board as a whole is currently performing, against a set of best practice indicators
- A view of how each board member is performing against a consistent set of best practice indicators and competencies, which are also tailored to the specific roles of chair, chief executive, executive directors and non-executive director
- The opportunity for one on one and whole board feedback and development planning informed by this self-assessment

Building on Good Practice

The proposed approach will aim to build on existing good practice and the evidence base to tailor this integrated 360 degree tool. In developing the approach, the following 360 degree tools will provide an important spring-board for the work:

- The NHS Chair and Board Performance review tool which uses five domains: Focus on core business; trust and support; contribution and execution; engagement with stakeholders and leadership of the board. This tool is currently offered to boards by NIII, and is also used as the basis for the FT diagnostic process.
- The Leadership Qualities Framework (LQF) which has recently been updated, and is used extensively for senior executive development. LQF is also offered by NIII.

- The Board Assessment Framework (BAF) self-assessment web-based questionnaire, developed expressly for Foundation Trust boards by Foresight Partnership in conjunction with Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. This tool draws on the Good Governance Standard for Public Services and incorporates a wide range of best practice in public and private sector governance, including Monitor's Code of Governance.
- Chair and non-executive director 360 degree web-based questionnaires developed by Foresight Partnership. The chair 360 degree tool has already been used across Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk and the NED tool has been piloted in a Foundation Trust.
- Board self-assessment tool currently being piloted by the Audit Commission also based on the Good Governance Standard for Public Services

The proposed approach

A clear conceptual framework

It is important that the proposed integrated 360 degree tool uses a clear conceptual framework of good governance, within which best practice from a range of fields can be incorporated. One option would be to use the framework already developed for the NHS Chair and Board performance tool.

Another option is to use the Good Governance Standard for Public Services¹ as this conceptual framework, adapted for NHS Foundation Trusts. (see below)

This standard is now being extensively used in other public service contexts, including as the basis for the new CIPFA/Solace governance guidance for Local Government. The Audit Commission have also developed a self-assessment tool based on the standard, encouraged by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Foresight Partnership have used the standard extensively in its governance effectiveness review work across public services, including in Health. OPM and CIPFA will be undertaking a review of the uptake and influence of the standard in the summer.

Whichever model is used, it would be helpful to incorporate competencies from the LQF.

¹ The Good Governance Standard for Public Services, published by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services January 2005.
http://www.cipfa.org.uk/pt/download/governance_standard.pdf

The individual 360 degree tools

The proposed approach for developing integrated 360 degree tools is to develop one tool, which has four variations. The core part of the tool would be the same for all board members, and would draw on the conceptual model used, including the core LQF competencies relevant to all board members.

There would then be four, (and possibly five variations):

- Additional questions relating to the role of the chair
- Additional questions relating to the role of chief executive
- Additional questions relating to non-executive director role
- Additional questions relating to executive director role

The fifth variation may be to incorporate some specific questions relating to medical director role.

Questions would use a likert 5 point effectiveness scale, and for each main theme, there would be the opportunity (but not a requirement) for respondents to add specific comments to illustrate their ratings. Our experience is that these comments add significantly to the richness of the information.

The 360 degree tools would be web based. Individual urls would be established for each board member, and respondents would be invited to respond online.

A balance will need to be struck between comprehensiveness on the one hand and manageable length on the other. This will be particularly important as, in this situation, several respondents may be asked to contribute to more than one questionnaire.

Self-assessment questionnaire on overall board effectiveness

The next element would be a self-assessment questionnaire on overall board effectiveness. This would also reflect the conceptual framework, and would draw on the other tools already available.

The questionnaire would be completed by all board members.

For Suffolk Mental Health Partnership, we suggest using the BAF tool which already has a version for aspirant mental health partnerships. However if this is to be developed for wider useage, the development should take account of all the good practice and experience already in use.

There is a further option to consider in relation to overall board effectiveness, which would be a much shorter version of the self-assessment questionnaire which could be sent to external stakeholders who might have important perspectives on some aspects of board effectiveness

Reports and development planning

Reporting would be prepared showing:

- Overall board effectiveness, against benchmarks as they develop from the self-assessment questionnaire on board effectiveness.
- Individual 360 degree reports for all board members. These would be made available to the individuals concerned, and would be followed by a feedback session to aid interpretation. It would be for individual board members to decide whether to share the findings, although they would be encouraged to do so with the chair for NEDs or the CE for EDs.
- An integrated report which reviews overall board effectiveness, and highlights overall areas of strength and areas for development for executive and non-executive members of the board, without disclosing individual information

Development planning could include:

- One on one feedback sessions for board members to aid interpretation of the 360 degree results
- A facilitated board development workshop, to review and interpret the findings and to agree areas for future development focus.

A cautionary note

It is important to recognise that self-assessment, although a valuable and powerful first step in reviewing board effectiveness, may not be sufficient. The board may need to validate their assessment through seeking other stakeholder and independent perspectives.