

Executive Leader Performance Management

The principles

Our flexible service helps you to shift to a continuous, strategy-led approach to executive leader performance management that focuses on growing your leader to meet the demands of their role. Key principles on which this approach is based are:

- A school or trust is only as strong as its executive leadership.
- Investing in your leader's development and wellbeing is vital for them to be successful in their role.
- It is time for executive leader performance management to evolve from a yearly appraisal to an ongoing, growth-focused process.
- The executive's performance management should be aligned with the organisation's strategy
- Performance management should be focused on professional growth of the executive

Our new performance management support service is designed to support boards to help your CEO or headteacher to develop their leadership skills to meet the needs and vision of their school or trust.

How it works

Our consultant works with the board to help them evolve their current executive performance management approach to one which is more aligned with the strategic cycle for the organisation and reflects the expectations of the executive's role, thus focusing more on supporting the professional growth of the executive.

It is based on our LEAD framework, which recognises the key elements of effective executive performance management.



Support options

We provide a flexible range of options to meet the needs of the board.

1. Baselining your current approach

The start of any improvement journey is baselining where you are today. Our consultant works with the board to explore how performance management of your executive is currently delivered and the effectiveness of the elements that support the executive LEAD framework.



The NGA consultant works with the board to develop the right eco-system to grow and support their executive leader by reviewing the effectiveness of components of culture, relationships and policies and practices that exist today and develop a bespoke action plan for the board to better support the executive leader.

2. Implementing NGA's LEAD framework

During the first year, we coach the board throughout the annual performance management cycle to implement the executive LEAD framework. This ensures that all components of the eco-system are in place by the end of the year. This involves moving to termly performance management meetings, with the first meeting taking place as soon as the strategy for the year is agreed, ideally in late summer or early autumn.



Meeting	Description
LEAD Meeting 1: End-of-year review (appraisal meeting)	The NGA consultant guides the board on reviewing the executive's performance for the previous year, also reviewing the executive's workload and wellbeing. The consultant introduces the LEAD framework. They support the setting of foci for the executive for the coming year following the LEAD framework. This includes: i. Initial preparation/briefing meeting (online) (30 mins) This takes place ahead of the appraisal meeting to agree the schedule for the end-of-year appraisal. In the LEAD framework, the autumn term activities can be conducted face-to-face on one day, or virtually over the course of a week (typically). ii. Meeting with the executive leader (1 hour) The consultant meets with the executive to gather their view on their performance for the previous year. They will explore their thoughts on the foci for the coming year, referencing the executive's job description, the organisation's strategic plan and the LEAD framework. iii. Meeting with the executive performance management committee (1 hour) The consultant meets with the committee alone to gather their input on a holistic view of the executive's performance in the previous year, including progress against targets set. The consultant then guides them on how to apply the LEAD framework to identify foci for the executive for the coming year. iv. A joint meeting between the executive and the committee (45 minutes) Facilitated by the consultant, this meeting will provide the executive with the committee's appraisal feedback and agree the executive's foci for the coming year. The foci will follow the LEAD framework, reflecting the context of the organisation, its strategy and the development foci for the executive. Written evidence of the appraisal and the agreed foci for the coming year is captured in our executive performance management record. This document will be used throughout the year to capture the termly LEAD meetings. v. If the termly performance management cycle is adopted, the consultant will provide written confirmation of the LEAD performance management process for the rest of the year, foci for the LEAD meetings, and set the dates for the termly LEAD meetings.

LEAD Meeting 2: In-year review	The consultant will support the board to review progress based on the evidence to date. They will review the executive's performance against pre-agreed aspects of their job with a focus on development. If you have selected a 360-degree review for the executive, the focus for this will be agreed at this meeting and the respondents selected.
LEAD Meeting 3: In-year review	Our consultant supports the board to review progress to date and explore other aspects of the executive's performance against different aspects of their role, again focusing on supporting further development of their skills. If 360-degree feedback has been requested this will be reviewed at this meeting.

In subsequent years our consultant support can be reduced to supporting the end of year meeting. This should ideally take place in the late summer or early autumn term, once the organisation strategy is set.

3. 360-degree review

This service provides feedback for the executive from other members of the organisation. In a MAT, feedback might be requested from headteachers, central team leaders, the trust board and others who will have a view on the performance of the executive. This gives the executive a safe space to reflect on how they are perceived in the organisation and identify any potential blind spots, providing a wider picture of leadership effectiveness.

Benefits

- A psychologically safe environment for the executive leader
- An improved reflective learning culture
- Greater transparency of the executive's effectiveness and impact
- Evidence-based justification for the executive's pay

Impact of 360-degree review for executives		
For the executive	For the board	For school staff
A safe space to reflect	Evidence of executive leader effectiveness	Improved learning culture across the organisation
Reduced emotional load	Wider perspectives	Increased staff morale
Targeted professional development	Greater transparency	Improved stakeholder trust

This is another option in our flexible service, which can be added to the executive's performance management cycle (see LEAD Meetings 2 and 3 above), or as an add-on to a traditional performance management cycle.

Our consultant works with the board and the executive to develop foci for the 360-degree review and the respondent group. Foci for the review are typically based on the executive's role, leadership style, the organisational culture and relationships. The 360-degree review is tailored to meet the needs of the board and the executive.

The consultant develops and co-ordinates the review, expertly summarising the feedback into professional strengths and professional development themes for the executive. A follow-up meeting is facilitated with the board and executive to agree development objectives.

If a 360-degree review is added to the LEAD framework, it is established in Meeting 2 and reviewed in Meeting 3. (See above)

4. Executive salary benchmarking

The DfE has strengthened its guidance on how trust boards set executive pay.

[Academy Trust Handbook 2026](#) requirements:

Para 2.31: The board of trustees **must** ensure its decisions about levels of executive pay (including salary and any other benefits) follow a robust, evidence-based process and are a reasonable and defensible reflection of the individual's role and responsibilities. No individual can be involved in deciding their remuneration. Decisions about executive pay may be challenged by DfE.

Para 2.32: The board **must** discharge its responsibilities effectively, ensuring its approach to, and levels of, pay and benefits is transparent, proportionate and defensible. This **must** be documented in an agreed pay policy, which sets out the process for determining executive pay and includes:

- independent scrutiny by the board
- robust decision-making that demonstrates justifiable pay
- proportionality – that pay and benefits represent good value for money and are defensible relative to the public sector market
- documented decision-making with rationale and approval by the board

Para 2.33: Executive remuneration **must** not increase at a faster rate than that of the academy trust's teachers, unless there is a clear justification for it to do so. Where the academy trust considers there is a justification, it **must** seek approval in advance from DfE.

A robust performance management process and robust pay policy covering executive pay are part of the requirements, but salary benchmarking is also recommended. This ensures the

pay and benefits for the executive are good value for money and are defensible in relation to the public sector market.

NGA can support you to benchmark your executive's salary through our trusted partner, [Pay In Education](#). NGA members receive a discount on this service.

Other support

Our sector-wide influence means we can signpost your board to other services to further support your executive leader.

We can direct you to support with executive coaching, and wellbeing from our trusted partners.

- [Education Support](#)
- [Forum Strategy](#)
- [HeadsUp4HTs](#)

Fees

Element	Members fee	Non-members fee
1. Baselining your current approach to executive performance management	£500	£530
2. Implementing the new approach (without 360-degree review)	£1,350	£1,500
3. 360-degree review	£500	£530
4. Complete package (1,2&3)	£2,200	£2,400
5. Annual appraisal meeting only	£899	£1,045
6. Mid-year review	£500	£530
7. Salary benchmarking (with NGA's strategic partner Pay in Education)	Discounted rate	

Next steps

Please contact us at consultancy@nga.org.uk to discuss how we can help you enhance the support and impact of your executive's performance management.