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Social Care Fact Sheet: Leadership vs. Management

What's the difference?

What's in this guide?

Leadership and management are often confused as one and the same.

Understanding the difference between the two is essential to improve care quality, organisational efficiency, and clarity around leadership pathways.

Both have important roles in social care and each deliver value. However, these roles and this value are approached, and achieved, in different ways. Ready to find out how?

Let's dive in.

Definitions in Social Care

Leadership

Leadership in social care is about holding a shared vision. A good leader will inspire and guide their team towards achieving this vision.

In social care, this vision could be to always deliver best-in-class, person-centred care, putting the individual at the heart of everything.

Good leaders will encourage and foster a positive team culture, drive innovation, and engage staff effectively to deliver on the shared vision.

VS

Management

Management in social care focuses on the day-to-day delivery of administrative and operational projects and tasks to achieve the efficient running of compliant care services.

A good manager plans, organises, and coordinates available resources to ensure quality outcomes relating to the continuity of care delivery.

Focus - Approach - Skills - Goals

|	Focus	Approach	Skills	Goals
Leaders	Vision and direction – aiming to inspire and guide teams towards long-term goals and improvements in care quality.	Uses inspirational and motivational techniques to engage and empower staff, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation.	Strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, excellent communication, and the ability to inspire and influence others.	Long-term achievements and strategic advancements, often involving transformative projects and cultural shifts.
Managers	Quality outcomes, ensuring that day-to-day operations run smoothly and efficiently	Relies on administrative and procedural methods to organise tasks, allocate resources, and maintain order.	Skills in planning, budgeting, problem-solving, and operational management.	Short-term objectives and operational efficiency, ensuring that immediate tasks and responsibilities are met.

Examples of Leadership

Example 1: Driving a cultural change

A leader might be responsible for driving a cultural change towards better person-centred care in a complex care environment – tailored to each individual's complex needs.

To do this, they hold workshops and training sessions, designed to inspire and educate their staff on the importance of this new approach.

Through patience and encouragement, they help staff to adopt new practices for improved care delivery.

The result? Staff are left feeling motivated and engaged, leading to best-in-class outcomes for the individuals receiving care.
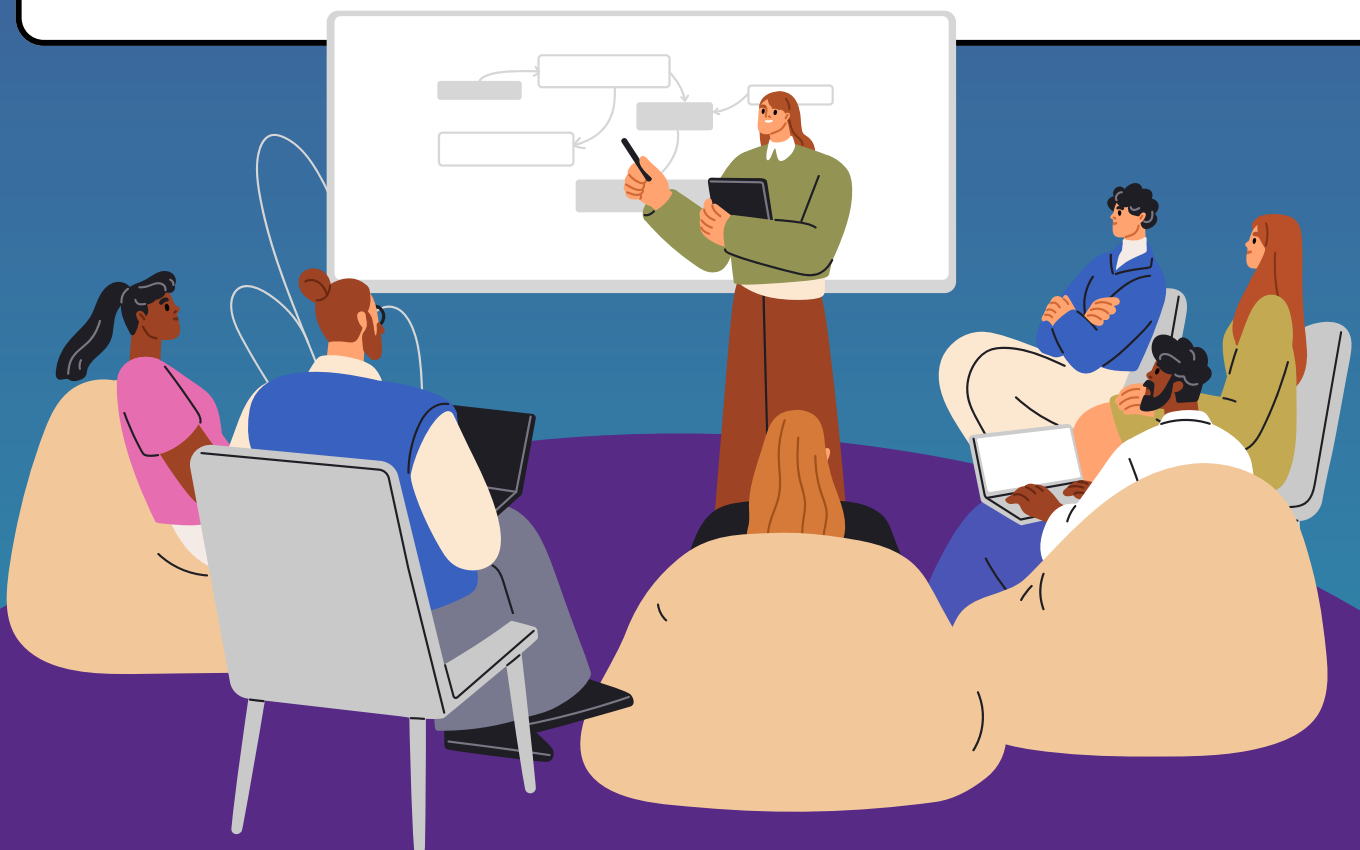
Examples of Leadership

Example 2: Expanding available care services to the local community

A leader wants to open up their care services portfolio to other care settings to better support the local community.

At the moment, the team delivers home care only – but the vision is to expand into complex care delivery and residential nursing homes. This way locals will not have to travel far or relocate entirely to receive the care they need.

To do this, they recruit new team members with specialist skills that suit these new care settings. Some may require physical strength and other capabilities to help patients with physical disabilities, while others will need skills in medication administration and medical care in a nursing home.

By choosing the right hires and skills, a leader can inspire the team to work together for the greater good – delivering more care services to their local community.

Examples of Management

Example 1: Moving to a new electronic records system

A care manager needs to oversee the move to a new digital social care records system.

They manage the data migration of service user details, coordinate training sessions, and make sure the right equipment is in place. Throughout the process, they oversee timelines and create a schedule that creates minimal disruption to service user care.

Thanks to a comprehensive plan and effective management of finer details, the new system improves efficiency and compliance with regulatory standards with immediate effect.

Examples of Management

Example 2: Resource allocation and staff scheduling

A manager wants to improve operational efficiency.

To do this, they create staff schedules which ensure cover for all shifts, balancing the skills of the team accordingly and the preferences of the service users.

This allows the organisation to run smoothly, ensuring minimal staff shortages or disruption to the care delivery and bringing a consistent level of care to service users.

Summary and next steps

Understanding the difference between leadership and management is essential in social care.

Leaders drive change and inspire teams, while managers ensure smooth, efficient day-to-day operations.

Both roles are essential for the success and improvement of social care services today, tomorrow and into the future.

If you're ready to take the next step on your leadership journey, check out our dedicated leadership hub – filled with research, guidance, and tips from established leaders.

Visit everylifetechnologies.com/leadership
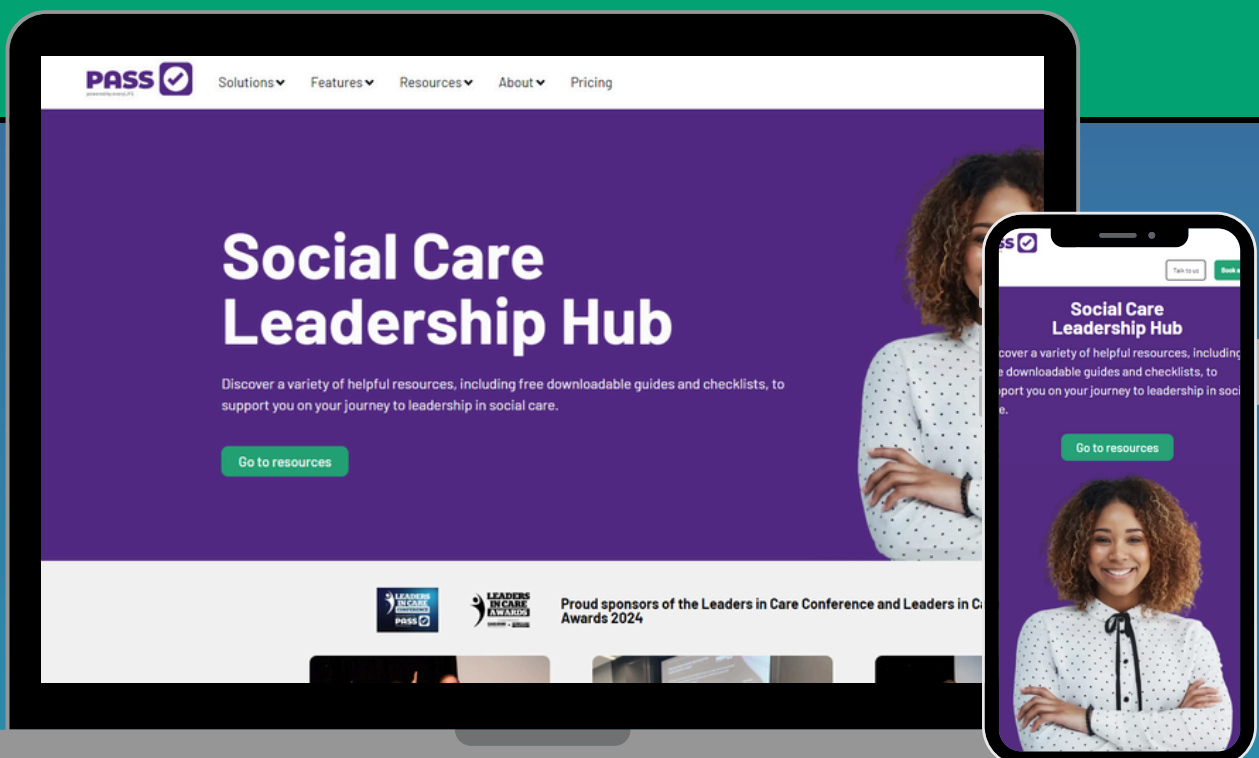
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