



Report Title	YAS Together Culture Development Programme End of Year Report 2025/26
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Previous committees/groups	People Committee 5 May 2026 (presentation) YAS Together Programme Group 24 April 2026 (end of year review meeting) TEG 20 May 2026
Recommended action(s) (assurance, approval, information)	Information/Assurance
Purpose of the paper	To provide end of year assurance on the Trust's culture position as of March 2026, using the OD Culture Maturity Framework as the primary measure of progress, supported by NHS Staff Survey insight and delivery evidence from YAS Together.
Executive Summary	
<p>Position at March 2026: Using the Culture Maturity Framework as the primary measure, average maturity has increased from 2.3 in March 2023 to 3.6 in March 2026, delivering in line with the predicted position and placing the Trust between Defined / Developing and transitioning into Managed / Maturing. This reflects sustained, cumulative improvement over multiple years, with progress driven by structured delivery rather than short term or reactive change.</p> <p>What is driving improvement: NHS Staff Survey 2025 results corroborate the maturity assessment, showing improvement across all nine People Promise themes, the highest response rate in the Trust's history, best-in-sector performance in seven areas and above-sector performance in the remaining two. Strategic direction and values are now well embedded, leadership practice and quality and improvement approaches have strengthened, and firm foundations are in place for speaking up, inclusion and wellbeing. Together, this demonstrates that cultural improvement is being delivered in a more consistent, planned and evidence led way through YAS Together.</p> <p>Where risk remains: Despite overall progress, variation persists at local and team level. Key constraints to further maturity include staff involvement in decision-making and shaping change, visibility and consistency of career pathways, team cohesion, clarity and line of sight in communications, and continued exposure to violence and unwanted behaviour from the public. These factors continue to impact staff experience and workforce sustainability and are reflected in Board Assurance Framework Risk 6.</p> <p>2026/27 focus: Priorities are focused on embedding and consistency rather than new direction, aligned to Trust Strategic Priority 3: Reducing sickness absence. Key activity includes strengthening staff involvement through Team Based Working and Quality Improvement engagement; improving career visibility through Inclusive Talent Development; continued rollout and embedding of the Behavioural Framework; improving clarity and consistency of</p>	

communication; and aligned wellbeing and leadership activity to support sustainable absence reduction.

Recommendation(s)

The Trust Board is asked to:

- Note the progress and impact of the YAS Together Culture Development Programme during 2025/26, evidenced through NHS Staff Survey trends from 2024 to 2025
- Note the Culture Maturity Framework assessment and continued progression
- Support delivery of the 2026/27 priorities to address identified risks and sustain cultural improvement.

Link to Board Assurance Framework Risks (board and level 2 committees only)

6. Develop and sustain an open and positive workplace culture.

YAS Together Culture Development Programme End of Year Review 2025/26

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 YAS Together is the Trust's established framework for culture development, supporting improvement in staff experience, leadership practice and organisational culture in line with the YAS Strategy 2024/29 and 'Our People' bold ambition.
- 1.2 This end of year report provides assurance on the Trust's culture position as of March 2026, using the Culture Maturity Framework, supported by NHS Staff Survey insight and delivery evidence.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Culture Maturity Framework is the Trust's agreed mechanism for assessing and assuring cultural improvement over time, with YAS Together aligned as the delivery framework. Developed following the Trust's initial maturity assessment in 2022, it provides a shared baseline, defines what good looks like and supports phased improvement across eight linked areas over a five year horizon (2024/28).

3.0 PURPOSE OF THE MATURITY FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The Culture Maturity Framework is applied as an annual review to assess progress, reset priorities and align culture activity to current risks and focus areas (**See Appendix A, 5-Point Maturity Scale**). Executive Sponsors provide oversight to ensure assessments are grounded in delivery and observable practice. The agreed prioritisation principles are used to maintain minimum standards, address key gaps, drive wider improvement and protect areas of strength.

4.0 GOVERNANCE, ASSURANCE AND EVIDENCE

- 4.1 Progress under YAS Together is reviewed annually using a triangulated evidence base, including NHS Staff Survey trends, delivery evidence from YAS Together pillars, workforce and operational data, and audit and quality assurance findings. Each pillar is aligned to an Executive Sponsor, who reviews delivery evidence and maturity judgements to confirm that reported progress reflects demonstrable improvement in practice. This provides confidence that the maturity assessment is evidence-based, subject to senior challenge, and appropriate for Board assurance.
- 4.2 During 2025/26, all priority YAS Together workstreams were explicitly aligned to identified maturity gaps, including behavioural expectations, flexible working fairness, inclusive talent development and enhanced culture insight through dashboards and triangulated evidence. This ensures culture improvement remains sequenced, evidence-led and focused on areas of greatest need and impact, rather than driven by individual issues or findings.

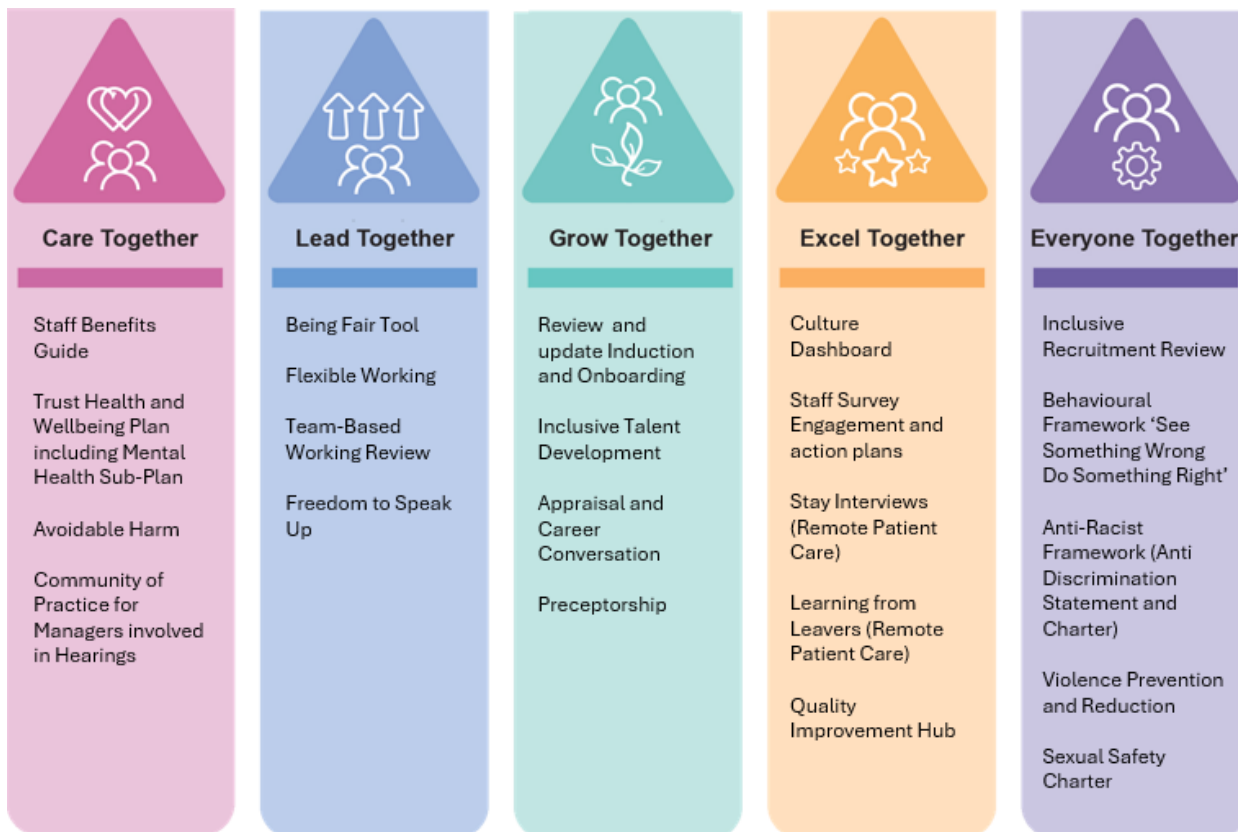


Figure 1 The YAS Together Programme Plan 2025/26 priority projects

5.0 DELIVERY EVIDENCE IN 2025/26

5.1 Examples of delivery against key milestones for 2025/26 as part of the YAS Together Culture Development Programme include:

Milestones	Status	Year End Commentary
1. Embedding YAS Together as part of overall YAS Strategy 2024/29		YAS Strategy and YAS Together Engagement YAS Together is now firmly positioned within the Trust Strategy. Engagement Round 4 launched in April 2026, reinforcing Strategic Priorities for 2026/27 and aligning YAS Together activity with wider Trust and national priorities, including the NHS 10-Year Workforce Plan. Communications plan and digital channels have been refreshed to support delivery of priority work and improve visibility of tools and resources.
2. Engagement from key stakeholders within the Trust and collaboration with regional and national People Promise Communities of Practice, and sector working to drive improvement and culture change.		Active engagement continues across Trust governance groups, equality support networks, operational areas and external partners to support culture improvement. Executive leads are aligned to each YAS Together pillar, providing senior sponsorship and accountability. Ongoing collaboration with regional and national People Promise and retention communities supports shared learning and sector consistency. All national reporting requirements, including the NHS England Retention Return, have been met.
3. Delivery and oversight of projects aligned to the Culture Review of		Culture Maturity Framework scores have been agreed by Executive Leads and are presented within this Board report. The framework is explicitly aligned to the YAS Together pillars, providing a consistent, organisation-wide

Ambulance Trust 6 Recommendations and delivery against the NHSE People Promise Retention drivers based on NHS Staff Survey Results 2023 and 2024.

structure for planning, delivering and tracking culture change activity. This ensures prioritisation is evidence-led and directly connected to how culture work is delivered across the Trust.

The Culture Dashboard has been launched to support clearer oversight of workforce and culture data, with further development planned to strengthen insight. Progress has continued across priority workforce programmes including **Flexible Working, Inclusive Recruitment and Inclusive Talent Development**. Work this year has focused on streamlining resources and improving access, ensuring managers and staff can easily find practical tools and guidance at the point of need. Delivery is supported through clear governance arrangements, defined Senior Responsible Officer accountability and programme oversight.

6.0 STAFF EXPERIENCE INSIGHT

6.1 The 2025 NHS Staff Survey demonstrates strong organisation wide improvement, with increases across all People Promise themes and the highest response rate recorded in the Trust's history. Several measures are now best of sector, including 'We are compassionate and inclusive', 'We are recognised and rewarded', 'We each have a voice that counts', 'We are safe and healthy', 'We are always learning', 'Staff Engagement and Morale', with 'We work flexibly' and 'We are a team' above sector average (see **Appendix B, People Promise elements and themes: Overview**). Strengths include compassionate and inclusive leadership, staff engagement and speaking up, with improving indicators for workload pressure and wellbeing.

Question	2023 Score	2024 Score	2025 Score	Diff YoY	Sector Position
PP1 We are compassionate and inclusive	7.0	7.12	7.27	+0.15	Top
PP2 We are recognised and rewarded	5.4	5.48	5.64	+0.16	Top
PP3 We each have a voice that counts	6.1	6.14	6.24	+0.10	Top
PP4 We are safe and healthy	5.7	5.84	5.94	+0.10	Top
PP5 We are always learning	5.1	5.16	5.32	+0.15	Top
PP6 We work flexibly	5.5	5.72	5.87	+0.15	Above average
PP7 We are a team	6.3	6.36	6.58	+0.22	Above average
E Staff engagement	6.2	6.25	6.30	+0.05	Top
M Morale	5.7	5.90	6.08	+0.17	Top

Table 1 NSS People Promise Scores 2025 'We Are Compassionate and Inclusive' is the highest-scoring People Promise theme for YAS and performs best in sector comparators, while 'We Are Always Learning' is the lowest-scoring theme for YAS but remains best in sector.

6.2 This sustained improvement reflects the cumulative impact of YAS Together delivery over multiple years, indicating that cultural change is being embedded in a structured, evidence-based way. However, challenges remain around involvement in change, career progression, team cohesion and exposure to violence from the public.

7.0 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE MATURITY ASSESSMENT

Framework Area	Starting Score March 23	As is March 24	As is March 25	As is March 26	Predicted (To be March 26)
Vision	2.4	2.9	3.7	4	4
Talent	2.0	2.6	3.3	3.45	3.62
Leadership	2.2	2.6	3.2	3.5	3.67
Experience	2.4	2.7	3.2	3.42	3.6
Employee voice	2.2	2.5	3.2	3.75	3.75
Communications	2.1	2.2	2.9	3.17	3.17
Behaviours	2.4	2.7	2.9	3.5	3.5
Quality	3.0	3.1	3.4	3.75	3.75
Overall	2.3	2.7	3.2	3.6 (3.57)	3.6 (3.63)

Table 2 Average year on year culture maturity scores and predicted March 2026 (2023-2026)

7.1 Drawing on combined self-assessment activity, staff feedback and assurance, the Trust has assessed its organisational culture maturity position at the end of 2025/26. Overall maturity has strengthened consistently year on year, increasing from 2.3 (Rarely Present / Emerging) in March 2023 to 3.6 in March 2026, delivering in line with the predicted position and placing the organisation in the upper Defined / Developing range, moving into Managed / Maturing. This reflects clearer expectations, stronger and more consistent leadership practice, and more established ways of working across the Trust. The assessment also highlights that further progress depends on reducing variation in local experience, strengthening staff involvement in shaping change, and improving consistency in communication and application at team level.

Framework area	Average Maturity Rating (5-point scale)	Maturity position (Definitions in Appendix A)	Direction of travel
Vision	4.0	Managed / Maturing	Improving
Talent	3.45	Defined / Developing	Improving
Leadership	3.5	Defined → Managed	Improving
Experience	3.42	Defined / Developing	Improving
Employee voice	3.75	Defined → Managed	Improving
Communications	3.17	Defined / Developing	Stabilising
Behaviours	3.5	Defined → Managed	Improving
Quality	3.4	Defined / Developing	Improving

Table 3 Maturity position across each framework area March 2026

8.0 SUMMARY OF MATURITY ASSESSMENT BY YAS TOGETHER PILLAR

8.1 Maturity varies across the YAS Together pillars, reflecting both sustained progress and areas where consistency remains the limiting factor. Lead Together and Excel Together are the most mature pillars, both transitioning into Managed / Maturing, demonstrating strong strategic alignment, clearer leadership practice and more embedded approaches to quality and improvement, although staff involvement in shaping change remains uneven. Grow Together and Care Together sit within Defined / Developing, with clear foundations in place but continued variation in experience, progression and wellbeing outcomes constraining further maturity, including the ongoing impact of violence and abuse from the public. Everyone

Together is moving from Defined towards Managed, with strong speaking-up and inclusion foundations now established, and the next phase focused on improving consistency and visible follow-through in addressing behaviour. Communications remains the least mature pillar and a critical enabler across all others, with inconsistent clarity and line-of-sight continuing to moderate the pace of cultural progression.



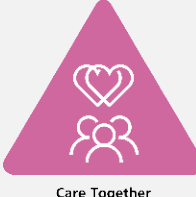


YAS Together Pillar	Maturity Score	Position	Key Insight (2025/26)	2026/27 Focus
 <p>Lead Together</p>	3.75	Defined → Managed	Strategic direction embedded; leadership expectations clearer, but staff involvement in change remains uneven	Strengthen staff involvement in shaping change; embed consistent leadership practice
 <p>Grow Together</p>	3.45	Defined / Developing	Talent processes established; progression experience inconsistent	Improve visibility and consistency of career pathways and succession planning
 <p>Care Together</p>	3.42	Defined / Developing	Wellbeing indicators improving; violence and abuse remains significant risk	Tackle violence and presenteeism while consolidating wellbeing gains
 <p>Excel Together</p>	3.75	Defined → Managed	Quality and improvement approaches increasingly embedded; variable staff involvement in change	Embed staff involvement and visible follow-through on improvement
 <p>Everyone Together</p>	3.63	Defined → Managed	Strong speaking-up foundations; confidence and consistency in addressing behaviour still variable	Increase confidence and consistency in addressing poor behaviour
Communications (Enabler)	3.17	Defined / Developing	Core channels in place; clarity, consistency and line-of-sight remain variable	Improve clarity, consistency and local communication

Table 4 Culture Maturity Framework average position per YAS Together Pillar, culture gaps 2025/26 and areas of focus 2026/27

9.0 OVERALL MATURITY POSITION

- 9.1 Overall, the Trust's culture maturity sits between Defined / Developing and transitioning into Managed / Maturing, reflecting sustained and credible progress over multiple years. Strength is most evident in areas aligned to Vision, Leadership, Quality and Employee Voice, which are now moving into Managed maturity. Progress is more constrained by communications, consistency of experience, and staff involvement in shaping change, particularly at local and team level, which continue to limit the pace of further progression. This assessment is consistent with staff survey trends and wider self-assessment activity and provides a clear, evidence-based foundation for prioritisation in 2026/27.
- 9.2 The assessment continues to identify areas where maturity remains variable, including team-based working and local leadership capacity, career pathways and progression, staff involvement in change, expected professional behaviours as set out in the Behavioural Framework and its associated call to action, and exposure to violence and unwanted behaviour. The 2026/27 priorities are therefore focused on embedding and consistency, ensuring that cultural improvement remains cumulative, evidence-led and aligned to Trust risk and strategy.
- 9.3 The workstreams set out in Figure 2 remain priority areas for the YAS Together Culture Development Programme in 2026/27 and support delivery of Strategic Priority 3: Reduce sickness absence, by strengthening the cultural conditions that influence absence.

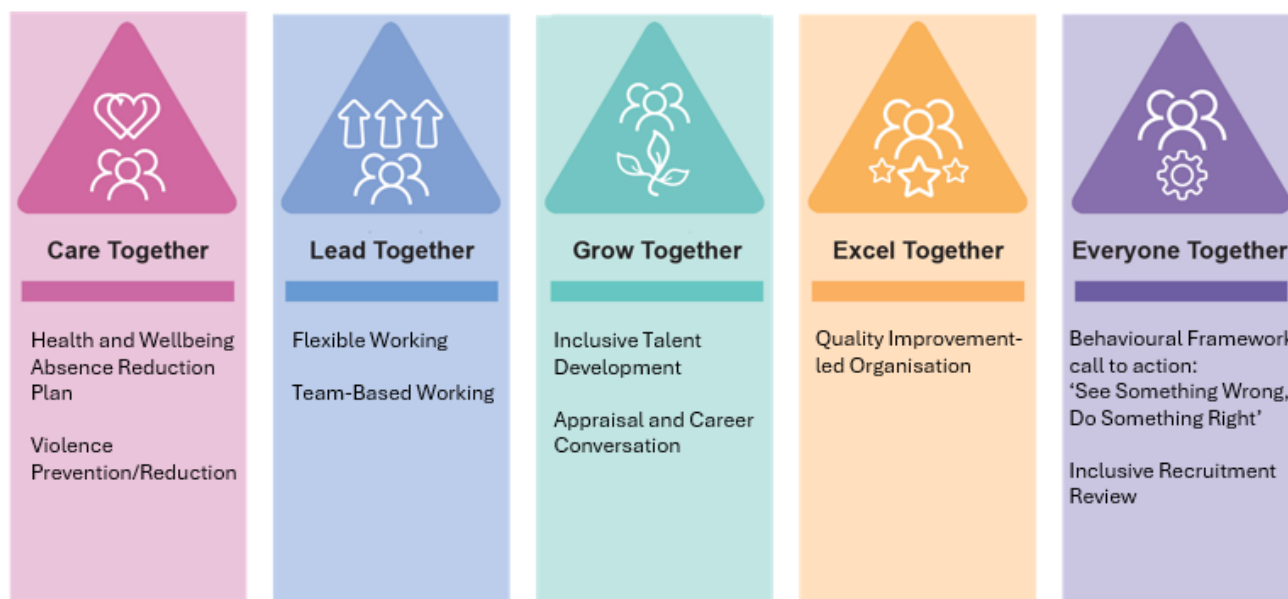


Figure 2 YAS Together Culture Development Programme Top 5 Priorities 2026/27

10.0 RISKS AND MITIGATIONS

10.1 Risks

- Sustained sickness absence above target levels.
- Operational pressures limiting capacity to engage in development activity.
- Team Leader capability and capacity impacting leadership effectiveness.

10.2 Mitigations

- Targeted absence reduction plans informed by culture and workforce data.

- Team Based Working Steering Group and leadership pathway development.
- Enhanced use of culture and workforce dashboards for oversight.

10.3 These risks align directly to Board Assurance Framework Risk 6: Develop and sustain an open and positive workplace culture, with YAS Together providing the Trust's primary mitigating delivery framework.

11.0 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 The Trust Board is asked to:

- Note the progress and impact of the YAS Together Culture Development Programme during 2025/26, evidenced through NHS Staff Survey trends from 2024 to 2025.
- Note the Culture Maturity Framework assessment and continued progression.
- Support delivery of the 2026/27 priorities to address identified risks and sustain cultural improvement.

APPENDICES

Appendix A



The 5-point maturity scale

**1. Not present/
Damaging**

Existing behaviours actively prevent performance in this area
There is a lack of supporting processes to enable the Trust to perform well in this area
Knowledge of management of development and improvement is limited

**2. Rarely present/
Emerging**

There are some elements of good behaviour identified and embedded in place
Some processes are defined and implemented, but there is no/very little consistency
There is no/very little consistency or alignment of knowledge across the Trust

**3. Defined/
Developing**

Behaviours and processes are clearly defined in this area, but there is a lack of standardised practice or they are not consistently applied
There is evidence of knowledge across the Trust, but this is not deep and/or consistent

**4. Managed/
Maturing**

Behaviours are consistently showed in this area and aligned with the Trust's standards
There is alignment of processes used and clarity on best practice and how to achieve it
There is evidence of deep knowledge across the Trust

**5. Optimised/
Thriving**

The desired behaviours are present consistently in this area
Processes enable achievement of performance.
Continuous improvement is enabled and change is championed and embraced.

Appendix B

People Promise elements and themes: Overview

People Promise elements, themes and sub-scores are scored on a 0-10 scale, where a higher score is more positive than a lower score.

