



Bold thinking for better health

Nexus: systems leadership

Applications open for 2025-26

kingsfund.org.uk/nexus



nexus [nek-suhs] *noun*:
a complex series of connections;
the fundamental links between parts of a system

What is Nexus?

The King's Fund's Nexus programme and community offer participants a life-enhancing experience – one that will impact how you think, feel and act as a senior leader.

At its core, Nexus is an annual **nine-month executive leadership programme** that brings together senior executives (CEO, National Director, President, Chair, Permanent Secretary, elected Council Leader, elected Mayor or equivalent) whose roles span the most complex, challenging sectors in our society.

Beyond this, Nexus is a **community of senior leaders** from across UK public services convened by The King's Fund to enable ongoing learning both *within* and *between* cohorts across the full breadth of government, education, housing, health and care, business, politics and civil society. As an alumnus of the Nexus programme, you will join a thriving community with access to ongoing peer learning and support.

Structure:

A five-day USA study visit (Boston, USA)

Four immersive residentials in the UK (between two and five days each)

1:1 coaching; small group sessions and workshops (mix of in-person and virtual)

Optional post-programme Nexus community events (ongoing)

Duration: Nine months. Mainly in-person, with some virtual sessions.

Start date: October 2025. Applications now open.

Fees: Small charities and elected officers: £6,000. Public sector and large charities: £15,500. For-profit organisations: £24,250. Additional financial support may be available.



Working with a cohort of senior peers helped me to make real breakthroughs in my thinking. As I enter the next phase of my career, I can see how it's changed the way I show up as a leader.

Senior official in UK government (security)

Who is Nexus for?

Nexus is for the most senior leaders whose roles require them to work across traditional boundaries to address systemic challenges.

As an experienced leader, you already know a great deal about how to lead effectively, but despite all your skill, experience and effort, progress is difficult. Your experience on Nexus will confront you and stretch you developmentally. Our aim is to better equip you to meet the challenges of the moment, in service of more meaningful impact.

We won't 'teach you' how to be a more effective leader – we don't believe that's how it works. Instead, Nexus creates a powerful learning environment in which you can explore the edges of your thinking, feeling and behaviour alongside your peers.

You and your cohort will inform the design, based on your shared interests and concerns. Our approach is designed in collaboration with the Nexus community – senior leaders who are recent participants of executive programmes led by our faculty.

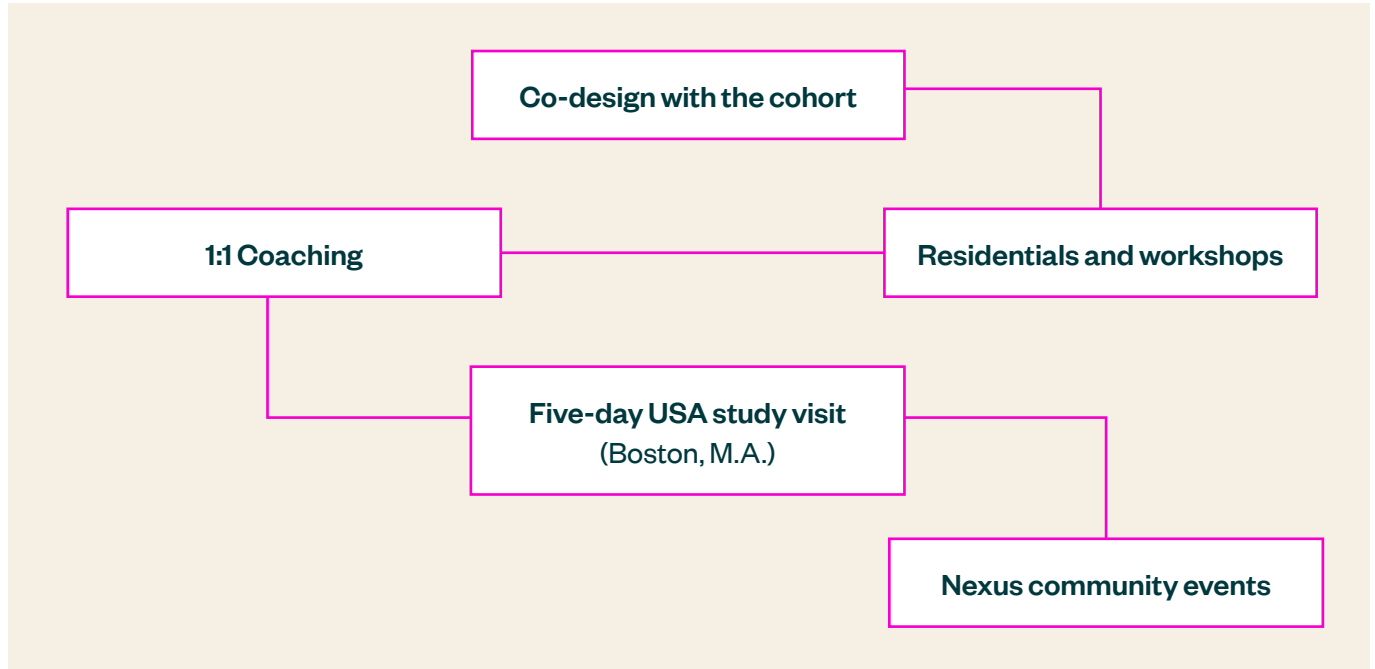
The Nexus Advisory Group – past participants in executive leadership programmes led by our core teaching team – includes:

- local government CEOs
- central government national directors (and equivalent)
- NHS ICB and trust CEOs and COOs
- Members of Parliament, police and crime commissioners, council leaders and other elected representatives (across parties)
- charity and charitable foundation CEOs
- CEOs and managing partners of businesses working with government
- chief officers in science and biomedics
- chiefs of emergency services and chief constables
- senior officials in security and defence





Nexus: at-a-glance



Residential 1: Co-design and introduction to systems leadership

9–10 October 2025

- Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park
- 24 hours spread over two days

Residential 2: Public narrative and framing; Leading systemically; and Experimentation

16–20 November 2025

- Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park
- Four days and four nights

Virtual workshop 1: The emerging future: guest input shaped by co-design

6 February 2026

- Online
- Half-day (three hours) in the morning

Study visit: Adaptive leadership; Being human; Immunity to change

8–12 March 2026

- Boston, USA
- Designed and delivered in collaboration with guest faculty from MIT, Harvard and Suffolk universities
- 4.5 days and five nights

Residential 3: Vulnerabilities in leadership

22–23 April 2026

- Vulnerabilities in leadership
- Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park
- Two days and one night

Virtual workshop 2: Leading for/with future generations: guest input shaped by co-design

15 May 2026

- Leading for/with future generations: guest input shaped by co-design
- Online
- Half-day (three hours) in the morning

Residential 4: Beginnings, transitions and endings

22–23 June 2026

- Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park
- 24 hours spread over two days



Co-design with the cohort

The first residential of each Nexus programme is a chance for you to explore shared interests and concerns. The faculty invites you to bring difference, creativity and imagination into the room. You'll have the chance to reflect critically with others on yourself and your context. The insights from this process helps the faculty to shape your Nexus programme, drawing on The King's Fund's extensive network of practitioners, academics and partner organisations.



The faculty team took care to co-design the experience with the participants and then to involve a wide range of experts to work with us... It was a life-changing experience that profoundly impacted on how I think and act in my role.

Council leader (local government)

Five-day USA study visit (Boston, USA)

The midway point in your Nexus programme is a study visit to the city of Boston, USA. Here, you'll be exposed to some of the latest thinking and practice in leadership and change, working directly with people from across the USA.

The study visit is built on multi-year collaborations between our UK faculty and leading practitioners at Harvard, MIT and Suffolk universities. It includes:

- a tailored orientation tour of the city of Boston
- workshops designed specifically for the Nexus programme
- facilitated sessions with world-renowned experts, including Professor Marshall Ganz (community organising and social movements), Professor Houman Harouni (adaptive leadership) and Professor Katrina Graham (conflict resolution)
- social events with esteemed guests from across the city of Boston.



The Boston trip was a highlight and I unexpectedly encountered a number of breakthroughs in my leadership practice and life in general whilst there.

Managing Partner, Global Consultancy



Residentials and workshops

Each Nexus programme includes four immersive residentials (varying between two and five days each). A blend of whole-group sessions, small-group activities and individual reflective practice gives you the chance to deepen your learning. Virtual workshops in between the residentials expose you to additional guest contributors and give you regular touchpoints as a cohort of peers.

1:1 Coaching

Traditional leadership development programmes may offer coaching in-tandem with the main sessions. Nexus is different. You will be matched with an experienced coach whose role is to walk alongside you throughout the programme. When you invest in an executive leadership programme, you expect it to make a difference in your everyday work. Integrated coaching is designed to ensure that what you learn survives contact with reality.



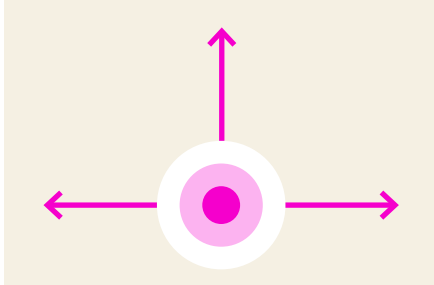
[Working with the international faculty] was life changing in many ways... There were elements of provocation about the role of a leader to ‘imagine the future and deliver the future’, which led to a significant mindset change on my return to my CEO role.

CEO, NHS trust

Nexus community events

As an alumnus of the Nexus programme, you will have access to ongoing learning opportunities, both within and between cohorts, across the full breadth of government, education, housing, health, care, business, politics and civil society.

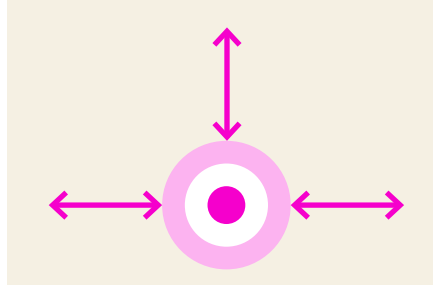
What will I learn?



Inside-out: strengthening your inner leadership

True leadership starts from within. Nexus will help you cultivate the awareness needed to lead effectively in complexity.

- **Making sense of uncertainty** – recognising patterns, connecting the dots, and integrating different perspectives.
- **Stepping back to see the bigger picture** – moving beyond immediate concerns to embrace a broader, more strategic view that spans beyond the boundaries of your specialism and sector.
- **Understanding how you process new challenges** – noticing your habits, assumptions and emotional responses to change.
- **Working with contradictions and tensions** – staying engaged with 'sticky' dilemmas rather than rushing to easy solutions.



In between: mastering interpersonal leadership

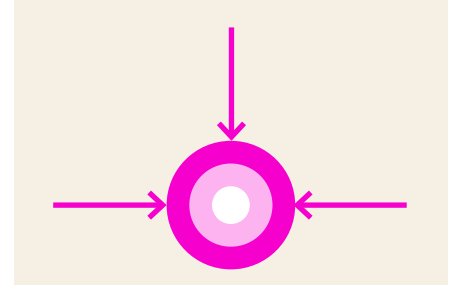
Leadership is about people. This part of the programme helps you **inspire, engage and lead** those around you by:

- developing **stronger communication and influencing skills** beyond a reliance on your positional authority
- learning to **navigate polarised conversations** with more subtlety and confidence
- practising skills to **motivate, challenge and align cross-organisational teams** towards a shared purpose.



The programme was transformative across my life. I understood a great deal more about how I turned up in leadership situations and what baggage I was carrying, and found connection with other leaders that grounded my perspective.

Managing Partner, Global Consultancy



Outside-in: expanding your systemic impact

Leadership doesn't happen in isolation. We help you work across boundaries and sectors by:

- applying **systems thinking** to complex global challenges
- engaging with **political, economic and environmental forces** shaping our world
- learning from **practitioners, experts and changemakers** from diverse fields and from across the globe.

Fees

Apply today

Applications for the Nexus programme 2025–26 are now open. Apply now:

kingsfund.org.uk/nexus

To nominate a potential participant, or to express an interest in the Nexus programme, please email Judith Osorio, Programme Co-ordinator, J.Osorio@kingsfund.org.uk

For-profit organisations

£24,250 + VAT

Applicable to all private companies and organisations that are for profit of its owners and shareholders.

Public sector and large charities

£15,500 + VAT

Applicable to local government officers, NHS, emergency services, central government departments, combined authorities and all other branches of the UK public sector.

Also includes registered charities based and working in the UK, with a turnover above £3 million.

Small charity and elected officers

£6,000 + VAT

Applicable to registered charities based and working in the UK with a turnover of £3 million or less.

Includes elected representatives, including council leaders, Members of Parliament, mayors and deputy mayors, police and crime commissioners and all others participating in the programme in an elected capacity.

What's included?

Included:

- All teaching sessions and materials (residentials, workshops, coaching, USA study visit and virtual workshops)
- Residential accommodation, meals and refreshments for all residentials and the five-day USA study visit (Boston, USA)
- A formal evening reception in central Boston, USA, with senior leaders from across the city
- Transport within the city of Boston for all elements of the five-day USA study visit

Excluded and the responsibility of each participant:

- Travel to and from the residentials and the five-day USA study visit (including return flights to the USA)
- USA visa (or visa waiver), as applicable
- International travel insurance

Additional financial support may be available

We recognise that some leaders may wish to participate in Nexus but face funding challenges. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you directly. We especially welcome applications from individuals and organisations that are historically underrepresented in senior leadership development initiatives of this nature. Please email leadership@kingsfund.org.uk for a confidential conversation.

Meet the team

Core faculty



Axelle Bagot

Axelle is the Chief Executive of Leadership Lab International, based in Boston, USA. She has worked with UNICEF, the World Bank, and civic programmes, including the Obama Fellowship and Paris Peace Forum. In the private sector, Axelle partners with boards and C-suite executives in tech, health care and the arts.



Kathryn Perera

Kathryn leads Nexus on behalf of The King's Fund, following a decade in senior roles in NHS England and as Director of NHS Horizons. A practising barrister by background, Kathryn is a US-UK Fulbright Scholar. She is a trustee of the Leading Change Network and Act Build Change.



Christopher Pietroni

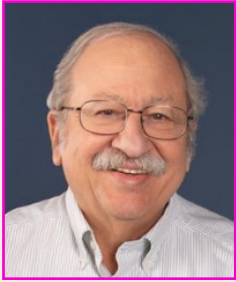
Christopher is the Director of the Birmingham Leadership Institute (BLI) at the University of Birmingham. His work integrates systems thinking, leadership studies and development, and he is known for combining narrative, storytelling, adaptive leadership and movement building.



The full year of working with the faculty team (Christopher, Kathryn and Axelle) had a profound impact on my leadership and how I have continued to work confidently, and with impact, across different sectors. The breadth of leaders from across different sectors is important and those relationships are sustained many years on.

Police Chief Constable

Other faculty



Marshall Ganz

Marshall is the Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in Leadership, Organizing and Civil Society at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Through the Leading Change Network, the organisation he founded, Marshall has trained thousands of activists in public narrative, strategy and action. He is regarded as among the most prominent social movement practitioners teaching today.



Katrina Graham

Katrina is Associate Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship, and the Director of Management and Organizational Leadership at Suffolk University, Boston, USA. Katrina's research and practice are at the intersection of leadership, ethical decision-making, and conflict in the workplace. She is widely published and serves on the editorial review board of the Journal of Organizational Behavior.



Houman Harouni

Houman is a Lecturer on Leadership and Education at Harvard University. His practice-based courses push mid-career students to sharpen their thinking and resilience, with a focus on navigating complex public service challenges with skill and agility. Houman holds advisory positions to various governments, international organisations and nonprofits in the USA and globally.



Steve Whittaker

Steve is the Programme Director of the Industrial Liaison Program at MIT. Before joining MIT, Steve was responsible for British Telecom's partnerships with US research universities and business schools. Steve convenes learning experiences for Nexus with other MIT contributors, based on his interests in emerging technologies and their impact on individuals, organisations and society.

Coaches



Kiran Chauhan

Kiran is an organisational consultant with deep experience of working with people across the health and care sector. He combines his experience from working in senior public sector roles alongside complexity, psychodynamic and critical theory to support his clients to explore and develop their leadership practice.



Naja Felter

Naja leads work in organisational development, leadership development and coaching. Her professional experience includes senior roles in the UK government, and working with international organisations including the OECD and EU. Naja is the Programme Director for The King's Fund's CIRCLES programme for women.



Mark Patterson

Mark is a coach and leadership development practitioner, with extensive experience across the health and social care system. He has held senior roles in the NHS, UK civil service and local government. Mark is the Programme Director for the Top Manager programme, The King's Fund's longest running senior leadership programme.



Mandip Randhawa

Mandip's work focuses on system psychodynamic principles to support and develop teams, organisations and systems. Mandip leads a range of commissions for The King's Fund and is a faculty member on the Top Manager programme.

Programme sponsor



Sarah Woolnough

Sarah is the Chief Executive of The King's Fund. She joined the Fund in 2024, having spent more than 15 years at Cancer Research UK in a range of senior policy and executive board roles, alongside non-executive and trustee roles. Sarah is passionate about improving health and has led several national campaigns to deliver social change, including the plain packaging of tobacco and for bolder clean air laws. She has a particular interest in prevention, early diagnosis and community care, and the adoption and spread of innovation across the health and care system.



The King's Fund is an independent charity working to improve people's health. Our vision is a world where everyone can live a healthy life. Our mission is to inspire hope and build confidence for positive change. We achieve this through expert insights and original research, developing leaders and their organisations, convening, and strategic, collaborative partnerships.

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