

Women's networks

How to set one up in your organisation

First steps: things to consider

- Define your network's aims, and how you might achieve them, summarised in a mission statement.
- Clarify your network's role and responsibilities.
- Explain how your network aligns with your organisation's business goals and/or wider vision and values.
- Agree what your network will be called.
- Review what your responsibilities are (if any) under the Equality Act 2010, WRES, and EDI agenda
- Consider how the group reflects the values and beliefs of the NHS Constitution.
- Create formal terms of reference to guide your network's work.
- Establish who your key supporters are in your organisation, for example your chief executive or director of human resources. You may need a business case to get supporters on board.
- Talk to your key supporters about funding and resource needs to manage and maintain the network.
- Consider the requirement of ringfenced time to fulfil network duties alongside your day job.

Membership: things to consider

- Target audience, who can (and potentially can't) join and whether members can be removed from the group.
- How you will invite members to join and what their commitment to the network will be.
- Why people should join your network and what the benefits are.
- How you can support your members to become involved in the network and attend meetings.
- Ensure that the network is inclusive and accessible to all members.

Accountability and reporting: things to consider

- Develop an effective reporting and evaluation system to share your network's impact and outcomes with senior colleagues and your wider organisation.
- Any internal governance processes you'll need to have to ensure smooth running.
- Recruiting an executive committee or decision makers with specific roles, such as chair or vice-chair.
- How you'll support any equality objectives or frameworks, new or existing.
- How you'll keep your network relevant and required.
- How much time you can reasonably commit.

Logistics: things to consider

- Meeting logistics: who can attend, frequency, location, and format (face-to-face, virtual, or mixed).
- What support and resources you'll need to help organise the meetings and actions.
- A budget to provide refreshments, venues, printed papers and products.
- Rotating the role of chair around the group.
- Consider how to record discussions, generate agenda topics and how and when to circulate meeting papers.
- Ensure accessibility of meetings and materials for all members.
- Whether any subgroups are required.

Communications: things to consider

- How you'll share news, information and resources with the group.
- Handling confidential materials, copyright and GDPR issues.
- Reach out and connect with other networks for support and to share learning.
- Branding for the group such as a logo to raise its profile and provide a recognisable identity.
- Get support from your communications team about brand guidelines.
- Creating online functionality for the group, for example, an intranet page for members to access resources, news and updates.

Once you have set up your network, join the Health and Care Women Leaders Network of Women's Networks from the [NHS Confederation website](https://www.nhsconfed.org/womenleaders), to access peer support, ideas and best practice.