

AN INTERVIEWEE'S GUIDE TO THE SDS LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES

WHAT ARE THE LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES?

Bespoke to SDS, and informed by robust research and our organisational values, the model sets out the leadership attributes required to lead effectively now and in the future. It clearly defines the attributes and behaviours leaders are expected to demonstrate across SDS.

The full guide to our Leadership Attributes can be found below.

HOW CAN I PREPARE?

If you are invited to interview we will advise you which of the criteria from the guide below you are being assessed against. We will also provide you with the questions in advance to allow you time to consider how your strengths, personal attributes, skills and experience can be demonstrated to evidence your suitability for the role.

The questions may be asked in a hypothetical, situational or competency style. You may also be asked to give specific examples of where you have demonstrated these attributes.

All interviewees for the same post are asked the same non-discriminatory questions, this ensures fairness and consistency across the selection process. These pre-disclosed questions form the main scored part of the interview (along with any secondary assessment tool). You should also be prepared for the manager to ask follow up or probing questions to further explore your initial response. You may also be asked job specific or technical questions relative to the requirements of the job.

You should spend some time reflecting on your best work achievements over recent times. You can use evidence from outwith the workplace if you feel it better demonstrates your capability in a particular area – e.g. perhaps where you carry out voluntary work or sit on a committee. However, it is generally better to use work-based evidence where you can. Make a list of these situations and jot down some notes following the STAR technique described below.

HOW DO I ANSWER THE QUESTIONS?

You should pay particular attention to how the question is being asked to help shape your response. Are they asking a hypothetical question to explore your thoughts and ideas or have they asked for a specific example to showcase your experience? However, even if the initial question is asked in a hypothetical style, the panel may ask you to provide an example, so it is always best to be prepared.

It can be helpful to prepare a few bullet points for each question rather than memorising a full response. This allows you to speak more naturally and adapt your answer on the day, ensuring you respond fully to the panel's questions and any follow-up prompts.

If asked to give an example a good way to structure your answer is by using the **STAR** technique:

- S Situation** (what was the situation **you** were in?)
- T Task** (what was the task **you** were faced with?)
- A Action** (what was the action **you personally** took? What were the challenges/obstacles you faced and how did you overcome them?)
- R Result** (what was the outcome following **your** intervention?)

When providing specific examples, focus on what **you** did by using 'I' statements. The interview panel wants to know what **you** did, not what you did as a team and will want to understand what changes happened as a result of **your** actions and what the effects of these actions were on others.

You may also be asked to **reflect** on your actions and could be asked questions such as 'if you had to deal with a similar situation again, what would you do differently?' 'What have you learned from this experience that would be relevant to this post?'

USE OF AI

We recognise that AI can be a useful aide in your preparation, however, your answers should genuinely represent your own knowledge, skills and experience. We value authenticity and want to hear your real story so that we can better understand your suitability for the role you are applying for. So please note that the interviewer may ask follow up or probing questions to get a better understanding of what you did. As a result, any candidate who is not giving a genuine and personal response may find it very difficult to provide enough detail to answer the questions fully.

A Model of Leadership Attributes for SDS

A Model of Leadership Attributes for SDS



These leadership attributes are underpinned by the **SDS values** and culture of **Everyday Leadership**. At the core is **Personal Brand**, the presence and style of a leader and their ability to gain buy-in, build credibility and trust to achieve maximum impact for themselves, their teams, and SDS.

Setting Direction

Attributes that enable leaders to set a future-oriented vision and direction and drive SDS to operate effectively and responsibly towards achieving its strategy and objectives.

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Future Visioning

Why: Thought leaders who deliver future thinking, breakthrough ideas and concepts create transformational change based on drivers, events and trends. This provides a clear sense of something to move toward and generates creative thinking, energy and passion.

Definition: Leaders need to be able to think independently and work collaboratively, using initiative to anticipate the future, consider a wide range of variables and set a long-term vision. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Takes a long term, wide perspective	Looks to the future and can identify and act on potential opportunities. Thinks and acts with a long-term, futuristic perspective.
Understands broader aims within a changing context	Provides a strategic perspective on current and future trends, taking account of wide-ranging challenges and possibilities across the wider landscape.
Identifies priorities in terms of importance	Identifies priorities, distinguishes between short-term and long-term concerns and focuses energy and resources appropriately.
Translates vision into reality/ sense making	Generates and implements a range of innovative approaches, understands the broader trends and interdependencies towards improvement and service delivery. Articulates and communicates a compelling and positive vision through a growth mind-set.

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Strategic Business Acumen

Why: The ability to combine experience, knowledge, diverse perspective, and contextual awareness to make sound business decisions leads to better judgment of impacts to enable and achieve organisational outcomes.

Definition: Leaders require the knowledge and understanding to steer the organisation towards achieving its objectives while operating effectively, responsibly, legally and sustainably. Responsive in understanding and dealing with business situations in a manner that is likely to lead to good outcomes. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Corporate governance practice	<p>Recognises best practice in corporate governance and organisational social responsibility, including roles, duties, responsibilities at a leadership level.</p> <p>Promotes sustainable practice ensuring SDS's commitment to the Environmental Agenda.</p>
Contextual astuteness	<p>Understands strategy and policy at a national and local level and can plan a way ahead that takes account of these strategies.</p> <p>Shows an ability to understand diverse interest groups and decision makers within the organisation, and the dynamic between them, to lead SDS services more effectively.</p>
Political acuity	<p>Displays sensitivity in relation to the work of SDS and the wider policy and political backdrop.</p> <p>Gains the trust and confidence of the political community and can respond appropriately to the range of risks, opportunities and external factors affecting SDS.</p> <p>Makes connections to the wider economic and political context.</p>
Budget and risk management	<p>Ensures effective planning and management of finances, resources and contracts to meet strategic need.</p> <p>Demonstrates effective risk management practices.</p>

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Strategic Thinking

Why: By thinking strategically leaders can create a strategy that is a coherent, unifying and integrated framework for decisions, especially about direction of the business and resource utilisation.

Definition: Leaders need to think strategically, proposing ideas, options and plans to inform and make decisions that take advantage of available opportunities while reflecting a broad and future-orientated perspective. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Takes a broad perspective	Offers a broad view beyond the immediate situation and own area of expertise, including short, medium and long-term perspectives.
Consider the impact of decisions/ critical thinking	Applies critical thinking to identify the potential impact of decisions and offer contingency plans and risk mitigation.
Identifies opportunities and threats before making decisions	Identifies opportunities and threats to the organisation, taking account of the internal and external business environments.
Proposing options	Interprets evidence, proposes alternative options and presents creative solutions and innovations.

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Encouraging Innovation

Attributes that enable leaders to foster creativity, innovation and growth and to achieve breakthroughs through challenging the status quo and effectively leading change and transformation.

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Digital Enablement

Why: Reimagining how technology and data can be utilised and making full use of existing and emerging technologies can support new ways of working, build organisational resilience, improve connectivity and efficiency and help drive value and achieve international advantage in a globalised environment.

Definition: Leaders need to think strategically, proposing ideas, options and plans to inform and make decisions that take advantage of available opportunities while reflecting a broad and future-orientated perspective. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Advancement	<p>Understands how existing and new digital innovation, technology and applications can be leveraged and effectively utilised, both internally and externally, to influence how things are done and help reduce costs and improve business processes, efficiency, engagement and value.</p> <p>Understands the SDS digital development approach and processes and takes accountability for ensuring these are followed to safeguard that any new digital developments, both internal and external, are fully considered and implemented effectively.</p>
Digital data	<p>Ensures data handling and security are build into approaches to minimise the risk of data breaches.</p> <p>Understands and utilises the data made available through digital technology; through business analysis, considers what the data is telling us and how it should be used to inform decisions and performance.</p>
Sensemaking	<p>Makes sense of turbulent and digital environments, taking account of threats and opportunities and responding to these appropriately by providing solutions and direction.</p>
Technological proficiency	<p>Effectively utilises a range of resources and technologies to communicate and collaborate with others digitally.</p> <p>Encourages colleagues to upskill, engage and fully utilise new and existing digital tools and technologies in line with the SDS Digital Enablement Strategy.</p>

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Digital Enablement

Digital Enablement continued...

Indicator

Positive behaviour

Cyber security

Recognises the importance of cyber security and the threats that may exist; builds in security considerations when designing and development new approaches.

Assesses and mitigates risks on an ongoing basis, responding quickly and appropriately to any challenges experienced.

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Growth Mindset

Why: Commitment to lifelong learning and improvement builds personal and organisational resilience and energy, encourages the organisation to adapt and continually improve for ongoing fulfilment and opportunity.

Definition: Leaders need to see challenges as learning opportunities and to grow beyond limitations, constantly learning and growing. Enjoying challenges and believing intelligence, talents, and basic abilities can be increased or enhanced through hard work and dedicated effort. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Coaching & mentoring	<p>Focuses on development and growth.</p> <p>Fosters a high-performance culture through coaching and mentoring, always seeing and nurturing the potential in others.</p>
Feedback (giving and receiving)	<p>Seeks feedback and improvement opportunities, takes a balanced view and is willing to respond appropriately.</p> <p>Shows willingness to create a culture of feedback, encourages openness, learns from own successes and mistakes and encourages a culture of learning in the organisation.</p>
Resilience	<p>Approaches problems as active learning opportunities that can be resolved and overcome.</p> <p>Recovers quickly from setbacks, showing adaptability to changing situations to deliver the best outcome.</p>
Motivation	<p>Demonstrates optimism even when faced with adversity and challenge.</p> <p>Aspires to progress own career and the organisation.</p> <p>Proactively stretches them self and takes opportunities.</p> <p>Recognises and motivates others to develop and grow.</p>

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Positive Disruption

Why: By giving space for new ideas and growth, and focusing on challenging current issues, breakthroughs can be achieved. Creates positive engagement and provides a new way of thinking to generate new ideas and concepts

Definition: Leaders need to enable and set a positive culture that values creativity, engages, motivates, and encourages employees to question the status quo to benefit the organisation. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Intellectual humility	Displays a willingness and openness to having ideas questioned, responding in a non-defensive way when proposed ideas or directions are criticised or challenged by others.
Leading change	Embraces and manages ambiguity and complexity, open to creativity in leading and developing change or improvement. Promotes innovative working practices that are motivational. Communicates directly with employees about change, advocating and sponsoring change, managing resistance and leading, coaching and supporting teams through transitions in line with best practice change methodology.
Innovation and creativity	Inspires creativity and innovation, pushes boundaries to broaden mindsets, creates psychologically safety for people to speak out, to say things that perhaps are not popular or that perhaps go against the norm.
Adaptive planning	Takes action to drive the best outcomes, monitoring, adapting and modifying assumptions and approaches to achieve breakthroughs which result in new insights to shape future strategies and plans.

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Leveraging Partnerships

Attributes that enable leaders to positively influence and build effective relationships, internally and externally, to create and deliver value through working collaboratively and leveraging partnerships for mutual benefit

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Collaborative Mindset

Why: Collaborative mindsets value the ideas and opinions of all which actively prevents silos, helps deliver outcomes without frictions, blurs experience gaps and enables people to operate as peers, valuing combined strengths and expertise.

Definition: Leaders need to work collaboratively to develop, maintain and strengthen relationships. Working with others, forging connections, cultivating win-win relationships and building coalitions, leaders are required to work horizontally as well as vertically internally and externally. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Collaboration	Keeps networks active by sharing information and communicating frequently and openly with stakeholders, highlighting the win-win nature of collaboration.
Partnership working	Provides advice and coaching on the types of partner relationships to pursue as well as the rules of engagement for an effective collaboration. Establishes new relationships and expands sphere of influence to better position SDS services to create effective ways of working.
Leverages strategic partnerships	Understands and uses internal or external relationships to move priorities forward when appropriate.
Influencer	Utilises highly effective influencing or negotiation techniques when proposing or presenting business cases, business or personal differences.

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Creating Value

Why: It is the purpose of the organisation to create and deliver value in an efficient way and utilising combined strengths to deliver excellence in customer service.

Definition: Leaders need to place significant attention towards current and future needs by putting the customer at the heart of everything that is done. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Customer centric	<p>Truly listens to the voice of the customer, engages deeply and builds long-term relationships.</p> <p>Works in partnership to improve customer experience.</p>
Open communication	<p>Demonstrate transparency, fairness and openness wherever possible.</p> <p>Recognises the value of public relations and works to ensure consistent messaging on the work of SDS and the impact of activities and achievements of colleagues.</p>
Results oriented	<p>Displays a strong commitment to making service performance improvements to achieve positive customer outcomes.</p> <p>Evaluates activity and outcomes to ensure continuous development and achievement of business objectives.</p>
Make a real difference to others	<p>Puts own experience and expertise at the disposal of others in the wider organisation, for the greater good.</p> <p>Advocates for the use of combined strengths and expertise to deliver the best outcomes.</p> <p>Identifies and effectively delegates expertise of staff and teams to meet needs of internal and external customers, partners and stakeholders.</p>

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Stakeholder Relations

Why: Understanding and influencing stakeholders' attitudes, decisions, and actions can lead to mutual benefit and better outcomes for all parties.

Definition: Leaders need to build and maintain credibility with a range of stakeholders, internally and externally to SDS. Understands and influences stakeholders' attitudes, decisions, and actions for mutual benefit. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Stakeholder engagement	Utilises methods and tools for effective stakeholder engagement and management. Demonstrates the ability, energy and willingness to operate as a leader of a complex multi-stakeholder organisation Promotes the wider expertise and services of SDS.
Relationship building	Leverages positive and trusted relationships with a diverse group of people across all levels and functions, internally and externally, for work related outcomes.
Conflict management	Positively addresses disagreements, conflicts and challenging situations, seeking solutions and resolutions. Understands others underlying objectives, concerns, emotions and feelings. Shows and encourages mutual respect.
Partnership working	Builds effective partnerships and networks to jointly deliver shared objectives. Can leverage additional skills and resources to achieve added value through collaboration and partnership working.

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Creating the Culture

Attributes that enable leaders to think differently and create a positive, inclusive culture where diversity is harnessed, and decisions and actions are human-centred, values-led and aligned to the principles of Fair Work

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Authentic Leadership

Why: Authentic leaders are positive with truthful self-concepts who promote openness and transparency. Through developing honest relationships based on values and an ethical foundation a positive organisational culture can be fostered.

Definition: Leaders must act with the highest level of personal integrity with a deep sense of purpose, continuously building self-awareness and coaching and empowering others to excel. Focus on promoting a culture of aspiration, Fair Work and well-being with a mind-set of optimism and resilience. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Self-awareness	Continually reflects and understands self-awareness, developing insight into self through exposure to others and being aware on one's impact on others.
Shows care and diligence	Establishes credibility through living SDS values and is a role model of Everyday Leadership through personal interactions, decision-making and attitude to work. Establishes a culture of dignity and respect and sets expectations for others to behave with integrity.
Communication	Communicates thoughts and ideas on priorities regularly, clearly, and concisely in an open, honest and compelling manner. Encourages a culture of open and honest two-way communication.
Collaboration	Builds and maintains collaborative working relationships with people with a diverse range of professional and personal experiences. Breaks down barriers to effective collaborative working and encourages others to do the same.
Act ethically and morally	Is true to own values and expresses moral and ethical values as drivers through decision making and behaviour. Builds trust by role modelling ethical behaviour and applying principles and SDS values consistently.

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Emotional Intelligence

Why: Those with emotional intelligence are effective across diverse groups, with an ability to inspire others and ultimately create more connected, engaged and motivated teams.

Definition: Leaders need the capacity to recognise their own feelings and those of others, and to manage emotions effectively in themselves and their relationships. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Emotional self-awareness	<p>Recognises personal emotions and the impact they can have.</p> <p>Knows which emotions are being felt and why, realises the links between their feelings and what they think, do, and say.</p> <p>Recognises how their feelings affect their performance and have a guiding awareness of their values and goals.</p>
Self-control: Managing disruptive emotions and impulses	<p>Manages own impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well, whilst remaining composed, positive, and calm even in trying moments.</p> <p>Thinks clearly and stays focused when under pressure.</p>
Social awareness	<p>Demonstrates empathy, senses how others are feeling.</p> <p>Takes an active interest in understanding the views, concerns and perceptions of others, is attentive to emotional cues and listens well.</p>
Self confidence	<p>Recognises their own self-worth and capabilities</p> <p>Conducts self with motivating presence and self-assurance, voicing views that may be unpopular and advocates for what is right.</p> <p>Makes sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures and to gain the buy-in of others.</p>

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Inclusive Leadership

Why: Developing an inclusive culture, where diversity is harnessed and the talents and different perspectives that everyone possesses are recognised and valued, enhances diversity of thought, improves employee engagement, challenges discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity for all.

Definition: Leaders must be able to set the ambition to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into everything we do in relation to providing services for our customers and throughout the SDS employee lifecycle. Aware of their own biases and preferences and actively seeking out and considering different views and perspectives to inform inclusive decision making. Leaders will be expected to challenge inappropriate practice. A leader should demonstrate:

Indicator	Positive behaviour
Valuing diversity	<p>Gains trust through actively listening to and empathising with perspectives of others whether internal staff, customers or stakeholders.</p> <p>Develops a culture of psychological safety where people feel comfortable to speak out and bring their own experiences into work.</p> <p>Values and makes best use of colleagues' expertise and skills.</p>
Ambassador	<p>Displays through actions and role modelling respect for individuals.</p> <p>Champions the case for diverse and inclusive teams.</p> <p>Influences and inspires others with vision on building an organisation where everyone's individual contribution is valued.</p>
Inclusive environment	<p>Challenges inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour.</p> <p>Embeds the dimensions of Fair Work in relation to respect, opportunity, fulfilment, security and effective voice, within teams and through their work.</p>

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