

# The Legs Matter strategy for 2026: Accelerating national guideline implementation to reduce harm

The year started with a productive coalition meeting, with all organisations contributing to our updated strategy. This ensures that Legs Matter enters 2026 with a sharper, more defined purpose: ensuring that national lower-limb best-practice guidelines are implemented consistently across the UK. Anecdotal evidence from the past year, and feedback from clinical leaders, Legs Matter champions and patients, has made one thing clear: implementation of national guidelines is the single most effective way to reduce preventable lower-limb harm.

This strategic shift recognises that while awareness-raising and engagement remain important, real change happens when guidance is translated into everyday clinical practice. We love to see all the fun awareness-raising activities during the awareness week, but this year, we want to help busy teams fight for change locally. Therefore, the 2026 strategy streamlines activity to focus on one shared goal: turning guidelines into action at neighbourhood and community levels.

Our focus has shifted somewhat as in the last year Legs Matter has worked towards two parallel goals: mobilising healthcare professionals and improving public understanding of lower-limb conditions. Through initiatives such as the Champions Programme, professional mobilisation has been a notable success – the network is active, engaged and highly motivated. This work is now embedded enough to continue as business-as-usual. If you are interested in becoming a champion, keep a look out on social media and our website as we will be opening applications again for more Legs Matter Champions to join us and help initiate and support change at that local level where it is needed.

Feedback from across the coalition and our Legs Matter Champions has highlighted a more pressing need: in many areas, national lower-limb guidelines still are not being applied consistently – and patients are being harmed as a result.

We know outcomes improve when guidelines are implemented. When they are not, people continue to experience, delayed assessment, avoidable deterioration, development of severe infection and admission to hospital, limb-threatening complication, amputations and, in the most tragic of cases,

preventable death.

The awful case of a woman in her mid-50s who died from sepsis, potentially linked to delayed action on her leg condition, illustrates just how catastrophic the consequences of delayed or inconsistent care can be. Sadly these events are not isolated – they are reflective of a wider systemic problem that continues to put patients at risk.

Therefore, the core purpose of our 2026 strategy is to ensure that national guidance is not simply known, but applied – reliably, consistently and across every neighbourhood in the UK.

This means prioritising the audiences with the greatest ability to change pathways, equipping them with practical and ready-to-use tools, encouraging and supporting local services to take the first steps, demonstrating what “good” looks like in real-world settings, and maintaining the pressure and visibility around the harm and needless suffering that occur when guidelines are not prioritised and incorporated with good clinical assessment. Everything Legs Matter does in 2026 and 2027 flows back to this mission.

Real implementation happens at neighbourhood and community level. Legs Matter will work closely with neighbourhood health leaders, community nursing leadership (through the Queen’s Nursing Institute, Royal College of Nursing and wider professional networks), and primary care networks and district nursing teams. These partners are uniquely positioned to drive meaningful, local change and to influence how care pathways are delivered in practice. Engagement with national leaders will support visibility, but the emphasis remains firmly on local delivery.

The strategy moves beyond raising

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awareness and into hands-on, practical support.

Legs Matter will develop an implementation action pack containing tools, templates and step-by-step instructions; provide clear starting points to show teams exactly where to begin; share real examples from services to demonstrate that progress is possible in any context; and create case studies that highlight not only the outcomes achieved, but also the processes that made change possible. Together, these resources are designed to remove uncertainty and give teams the confidence, clarity and guidance needed to take the first steps.

To support national rollout, Legs Matter will highlight diverse models of lower-limb service delivery, showcase examples where guideline implementation has directly reduced harm, and share practical lessons from teams who have successfully overcome barriers. The emphasis throughout is on actionable learning that services can immediately apply.

While the strategy is firmly solutions-focused, Legs Matter will continue to draw attention to situations where poor care results in preventable harm. Patient stories will remain essential, illustrating the risks of inconsistent practice, the systemic nature of delays and unmet need, and the urgency of ensuring that guidance is embedded across every setting. This balance of support and accountability is vital for driving meaningful, sustained improvement.

Further insights from years of patient

enquiries to the Legs Matter website has enabled a thematic analysis, revealing repeated patterns of confusion, delay, and preventable harm. These findings will support the case for urgent, consistent guideline implementation.

Patient partner representation has been high on our agenda, and we are pleased to confirm that Barrie Evans will be joining the coalition in April as a patient partner with lived experience of lower limb amputation. He will help to ensure strategy and messaging remain grounded in real patient experience and journeys.

Legs Matter Week 2026 will be upon us soon and campaign activity will be explicitly aligned to reinforcing guideline implementation, celebrating progress, and spotlighting examples of improved pathways.

The 2026 Legs Matter strategy places national guideline implementation at the centre of all activity. This sharpened focus reflects both the evidence and the reality: when guidelines are followed, lives improve. When they are not, preventable harm continues.

By prioritising neighbourhood-level leaders, supporting practical implementation, and continuing to hold the system accountable, Legs Matter aims to drive the real-world changes needed to ensure safer, earlier, and more effective lower-limb care across the UK.

So, watch social media for new resources, and consider would you or anyone in your teams benefit from becoming a Legs Matter champion! We are always stronger together. ●