



Information for Potential Governors

Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in putting yourself forward as a candidate for the North East Ambulance Council of Governors. This booklet provides information about being a Governor and is intended to help you to decide whether or not to put yourself forward for election.

Anyone wishing to become a Governor should read this information carefully. We are happy to answer any questions and can be contacted by phone on 0191 430 2263 or by emailing susan.coldron@neas.nhs.uk

This Trust serves a wide catchment area and as such is committed to establishing a representative Council of Governors with nominations from all backgrounds and ability. Your involvement as a Governor is important to us. However we recognise that being a Governor will require time and commitment so we ask that you consider this carefully.

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. We hope that you will want to get involved by standing for election as a Governor.

More information

You can find out more about us by contacting us or visiting our website www.neambulance.nhs.uk. If you have special communication needs or would like this document in large print, please let us know. Our contact details are on the back page. You should also be aware that all council business will be conducted in English.

Looking to the Future

As a Foundation Trust we remain part of the NHS and as such still need to meet national standards, but the difference is that we are more independent and we are accountable to the communities we serve. This means that instead of being run directly by the Government, we are accountable to local people through a membership arrangement. Our independence allows us to make changes to the Trust's services in a more responsive and less bureaucratic way and being a member of this Trust gives people a voice in our decision making process.

The Council of Governors

How big is it? - There are 34 seats in total comprising 21 elected public, along with 4 elected staff governors and 9 appointed governors.

What does a governor do?

Governors play a crucial role in the accountability structure of the NHS. Every foundation trust is accountable to its members and governors. Governors have responsibility for making sure that a Trust does what it says it will do and that it abides by its terms of authorisation (this explains how an organisation will operate, what it can and can't do). Governors have some statutory duties which have a significant impact on the organisation. These are:

- To appoint and/or remove the Chair and non-executive directors
- To set the pay levels and conditions of employment for the Chair and non-executive directors
- To approve the appointment of the Chief Executive
- Appoint or remove the Trust's external auditors

There are also other less tangible but equally crucial responsibilities which relate to influencing the Trust in its strategy and vision. Governors help plan and steer the direction of the Trust. This includes being consulted by the Board of Directors when setting priorities for improvements to services.

Governors also act as the link between the public, service users, carers, staff and other organisations. They are responsible for feeding back to the Trust the views and ideas of their members. Also, the knowledge and experience each individual brings to the role is used to influence the direction taken by the Trust. The Trust has a wealth of experience it can draw upon in the governors and governors can reinforce to the Trust the importance of certain issues. Governors are accountable to their members, so as well as making sure they represent their members' views, they also need to tell them what they have been doing on their behalf.

A Council of Governors provides a line of communication and accountability between the public and the NHS in a form that has never previously existed. To summarise, governors:

- Represent the interests of the local community, including the people who use the Trust's services and their carers as well as partner organisations;
- Advise and support the Board of Directors in setting the long-term vision and strategy for the Trust;
- Act as a source of ideas about how the Trust can provide its services in a way that meets the needs of the communities it serves.

How does it work?

The Chair of the Trust chairs both the Board of Directors (Trust Board) and the Council of Governors and is responsible for making sure that governors' views are represented at Trust Board and that

information is fed back to governors from the Trust Board. The Council of Governors is given information about the Trust's performance relating to quality and finance which governors can then question and discuss with Board members.

Governors can also raise issues at Council meetings which may have arisen from discussions with members. It also provides governors with a chance to highlight areas of concern which the Trust may not know about or equally to highlight areas where service is outstanding and greatly valued.

However, not everything takes place in Council meetings. Sometimes governors are asked to put themselves forward for certain jobs, such as sitting on the Nominations and Remunerations Committee or sitting on the Membership & Communication Subgroup (which steers the membership strategy and looks at how governors and the Trust can engage with members).

What Governors Can't Do

Governors bring a great deal of benefit to the NHS through their experience, influence and role as a critical friend. However, there are some things which governors can't do. These include:

- Vetoing or over-ruling decisions made by the Board of Directors.
- Getting involved in the day to day running of the Trust, setting budgets, staff pay or other operational matters.
- Inspecting the Trust's services (this task is carried out by the Care Quality Commission and the Local Involvement Networks).
- Raising complaints on behalf of individuals.
- Representing the interests of single pressure groups.

Why become a Governor?

There is no single reason why people choose to become governors - it often reflects your own position such as being a service user or a member of the public.

However, it is certainly a rewarding experience irrespective of your background. From the Trust's perspective, being a governor means that you are an important part of working to improve and help to shape the future development of the ambulance services in the North East.

However, from a personal perspective, benefits of being a governor include:

- Being better informed about the Trust's services and the wider health community
- Using your personal experiences and the experiences of people you represent to help make positive changes.
- Meeting other like-minded people who want to make a difference.
- Learning about new things and knowing that you are contributing to the NHS
- Improving your skills through training and new experiences
- Getting a chance to experience the NHS from a new perspective.

Governors of other foundation trusts have said they have really benefited from their experiences, often in ways they didn't anticipate. It certainly gives people a real insight into and a new appreciation of the complex world of the NHS.

Qualifications to become a Governor

It's easy to become a governor. You need to be at least 18 years old; public governors must live in the area they represent and service. You cannot become (or continue as) a Public Governor if:

- You are a director (executive or non executive), a governor, a chairman or a chief executive of another NHS Foundation Trust.
- You are a member of a Local Authority's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- You have been dismissed from paid employment with a health service or local authority body in the last two years for reasons other than redundancy.
- You are an undischarged bankrupt.
- You have made a composition or arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for your creditors and have not been discharged yet.
- You are subject to a Sex Offender order.
- You have in the last five years been convicted in the British Isles of any offence and a sentence of imprisonment for a period of three months without the option of a fine being imposed.
- You have refused to sign a declaration about your qualifications to vote as a member of the Foundation Trust.
- You have been disqualified from a health service or social care register.
- If you have verbally or physically abused any member of NHS Staff, Carer, patient or registered volunteers or have been issued with a personal safety and Security warning issued by the Trust

How much time is involved?

This depends entirely upon the amount of time you have to give, but there are some things which you need to make sure you can attend. These include the Council of Governor meetings, induction training and meetings with the Trust Board to discuss the Trust's priorities, or annual plan as it is called. Some people choose to get involved in a number of different things so spend quite a bit of time on Trust business. As a minimum there are four meetings a year to attend, but there will be others on top of this that you may benefit from attending.

As well as attending meetings, we hope that governors will take an active part in meeting their members through attending membership events. These take place on a regular basis throughout the year. It's important that you think seriously about taking on the role. Whilst every help and support is offered to you, and we appreciate that there may be times that you cannot attend some meetings, the role is a responsible one and will require you to give up some of your time.

How long do Governors serve?

A term of office lasts for three years. The maximum a Governor can serve is nine years.

Expenses

Governors are not paid a salary, but are entitled to claim reasonable expenses in connection with their duties such as mileage, parking and bus travel, (in line with Trust guidelines).

Induction and Training

The Trust provides an induction and training programme for the Council of Governors. Induction is vital as it helps to clarify governor duties, how you carry them out, how the NHS works, what the Trust looks like and much more. Because of its importance, governors are required to attend induction training.

On top of induction, sessions on various topics will be held throughout the year. These are determined by governors, based on their needs. Sometimes, we will hold sessions on topics which have become more prominent and which governors would benefit from exploring. These sessions are not mandatory.

Support for Governors

The Trust's Company Secretary, Governor Support Officer and the Membership Officer will be responsible for supporting the Council of Governors. This will include working with governors to:

- Develop training programmes
- Identify individual training needs
- Organise meetings
- Provide governors' briefings and information
- Supporting governors to communicate with their members New governors can often find all this to be a little overwhelming.

Any governor can meet with the Trust Secretary, Governor Support Officer and the Membership Officer as often as is necessary to discuss issues or concerns or support needs they might have. The Trust will endeavour, wherever possible, to meet a governor's needs.

Termination of Office and Removal of Governors

Just as there are rules which determine who can become a governor, the same applies to the termination of the office or removing a governor from office. If you wish to resign your position, you must put this in writing to the Trust's Company Secretary. A governor can be removed from the Council if:

- They breach any requirements for attendance at Council meetings as set by the governors unless they can give a reasonable cause, or start attending meetings again
- They do not take part in the induction programme which is considered essential for all governors unless they have a reasonable cause
- They are no longer a member of the constituency they were elected to represent
- The organisation they represent, in the case of appointed governors, terminates their appointment

- A change in their circumstances means that they no longer meet the criteria for being a Governor
- They have filed to discharge their responsibilities as a Governor

Code of Conduct for Governors

As a governor you will be required to sign a declaration saying that you have agreed to follow North East Ambulance Service Trust's Code of Conduct for Governors. All governors are asked to abide by the seven Nolan Principles of Public Life which are:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

How to contact us

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