



Sheffield Health and Social Care **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust



Information for Potential Governors



Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in putting yourself forward as a candidate for the SHSC 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 0114 2718825 or by emailing samantha.stoddart@shsc.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.shsc.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.

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

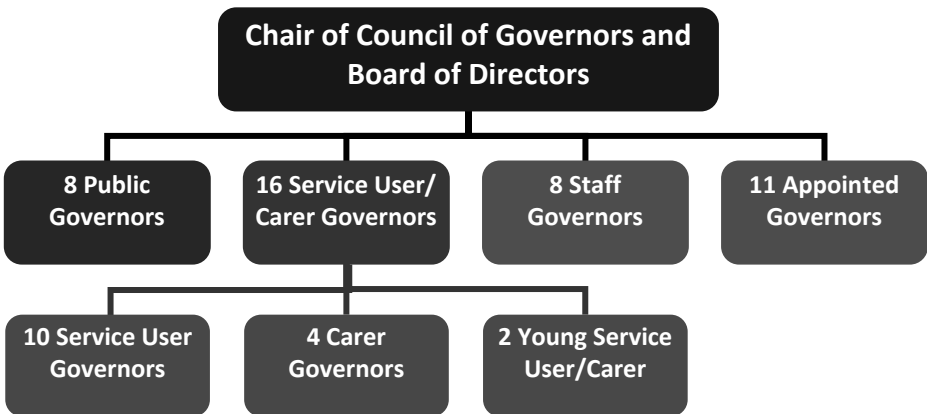
more independent and we are accountable to the communities we serve. This means that instead of being run directly by the Government, we are accountable to local people through a membership arrangement.

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 43 seats in total comprising 24 elected public, service user, carer and young service user/carer governors, along with 8 elected staff governors and 11 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.

Governors have felt very strongly about positive attitudes to the employment of people with mental health problems. Through their efforts and influence, the Trust has signed up to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER® initiative which is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for businesses in recruiting and retaining staff.

What a Council of Governors does is to provide 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).

Governors also choose to get involved in various projects or groups in the Trust - often ones which fit with their particular areas of interest such as dementia, spirituality or talking treatments for example.

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 local mental health, learning disability and substance misuse services and you are helping to shape the future development of health and social care services in Sheffield.

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.

Past governors 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 16 years old; public governors must live in the area they represent and service

user/carer governors have to have been service users or carers in the past five years. In the case of a young service user/carer you need to be under 35 years as well as meeting the criteria for a service user or carer.

You cannot become (or continue as) a 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.
- Your position as a chair, member or director of a health service body has been terminated on the grounds that the appointment is not in the interest of the health service, or for not attending meetings, or for not revealing a relevant financial interest.
- 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.

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 6 meetings a year to attend, but there will be others on top of this that you may benefit from attending.

Council meetings take place in the afternoon or early evening. Other meetings often take place during working hours.

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.

If you would like to find out more about how much time is involved, we can put you in touch with a current governor.

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, bus travel, and childcare (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 and the Membership Manager 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. The Trust and existing governors recognise this so any new governor will be offered the opportunity to have a current governor as a buddy. Buddy's will be available to discuss any questions you may have either before or after Council meetings and in between meetings too. Also, the Trust's membership manager is a source of support and information. Any governor can meet with the membership manager 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 do not attend two consecutive Council meetings 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

Code of Conduct for Governors

As a governor you will be required to sign a declaration saying that you have agreed to follow Sheffield Health & Social Care 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



By Post
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