
Thinking of becoming a governor?

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and the important role of our council of governors.

By reading this booklet it is good to know that you are considering becoming a governor and we hope this information will help you decide. Please feel free to contact Natalie Hennings, Corporate Governance Manager: natalie.hennings@sussexpartnership.nhs.uk if you wish to discuss the role further.

WHAT ARE FOUNDATION TRUSTS?

In order to be licensed as a Foundation Trust we have undergone a rigorous financial and governance assessment by both the Department of Health and an independent regulator called NHS Improvement (formerly Monitor).

As an NHS Foundation Trust we have greater freedom from central government than NHS Trusts and thus have greater control over decisions about the services we provide. We have more freedom to innovate and develop services tailored to the particular needs of our local communities.

As a Foundation Trust we are modelled on member-based cooperative or mutual sector traditions, and local communities are at the heart of the way we operate. To do this we have a membership of people who use services and local people who want to get more involved in the way services are provided.

As a Foundation Trust we are ultimately accountable to our members through a council of governors, but also to the health service regulators (including the Care Quality Commission) and to the organisations that commission services.

About Sussex Partnership

NHS Foundation Trust

We are a specialist NHS organisation providing mental health and learning disability services. We are a member of the University Hospital Association, which recognises our strengths in research and education. We are part of Sussex Health and Care Partnership, working together with other organisations to improve services for our local communities. We provide care in a range of locations including people's own homes, specialist clinics, hospital, low and medium secure units and GP surgeries. Our services are for children, young people, adults of working age and older people. Many are provided in partnership.

Our organisational strategy is about building for the future by having a clear plan about what we're going to do to continue improving the experience of patients, families, carers and staff. It's also about how we play our part in delivering the NHS Long Term Plan.

Our values



People First

People are the heart of what we do.



Embracing Change

We are bold, innovative and disciplined about making use of our resources to continuously improve



Future Focused

We are optimistic, we learn and we always try to improve



Working Together

We provide services in partnership with patients, families and others



Everyone Counts

We value, appreciate and respect each other

What is the Council of Governors?

The Council of Governors is a key mechanism by which the trust is accountable to local people. It is an important link between the Board of Directors and members. It meets formally at least three times a year in public. In addition, committees and working groups established by the Council of Governors provide governors with the opportunity to assist and advise on the work of the Trust and to develop plans for the future.

The Council of Governors currently has 34 Governors, consisting of 26 elected Governors (including service users, public, carers and staff) and 8 appointed Governors.

SERVICE USER GOVERNORS	Brighton and Hove (2) East Sussex (3) West Sussex (4) Outside of Sussex (1)
PUBLIC GOVERNORS	Brighton and Hove (1) East Sussex (2) West Sussex (3) Outside of Sussex (1)
CARER GOVERNORS	All areas (4)
STAFF GOVERNORS	All areas (4)
APPOINTED GOVERNORS	Local Authorities (2) Universities (1) Other NHS Trusts (1) Sussex Police (1) Third Sector Organisations (3)

The Board of Directors is made up of the Executive Directors and Independent Non-Executive Directors. The Council of Governors is responsible for appointing Independent Non-Executive Directors, including the Chair.

The Board of Directors, working with the Council of Governors, is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Trust. The Executive Directors are responsible for managing the Trust on a day-to-day basis.

The Chair of the Trust is also the Chair of the Council of Governors. Members can only vote for and stand for election in the constituency of which they are a member.

Who can be a governor?

Governors must be members of the Trust and be aged 16 years or over. Formal qualifications are not required and support and training will be provided to help Governors carry out their role. If you are considering standing for election, broadly speaking this is what a Governor will need to do:

- Commit a certain amount of time (approximately one or two days a month).
- Attend meetings and present the views of the members and general public.
- Read and interpret the content of papers and reports to be able to make informed recommendations and decisions.
- Communicate with members to find out their views and concerns
- Help recruit new members by attending public and community events

TERMS OF OFFICE

The term of office for all Governors, elected and appointed, is three years. Any Governor may serve for a total of 9 years if they are re-elected or re-appointed.

WHAT DOES A GOVERNOR DO?

Governors perform a range of statutory and non-statutory duties. The statutory duties are set out in the NHS Act 2006 and the Health and Social Care Act 2012. A useful guide to look at is Monitor's: Your statutory duties a reference guide for NHS foundation trust governors, available at www.gov.uk

MAIN DUTIES INCLUDE:

- To appoint, remove and decide upon the terms of office of the Chair and non-executive directors of the trust
- To determine the remuneration of the Chair and non-executive directors
- To appoint or remove the trust's auditor
- To approve or not approve the appointment of the trust's chief executive
- To receive the annual report and accounts and auditor's report at a general meeting
- To hold the non-executive directors to account for the performance of the board
- To represent the interests of members and the public
- To approve or not approve increases to non-NHS income of more than 5% of total income
- To approve or not approve acquisitions, mergers, separations and dissolutions
- To jointly approve changes to the trust's constitution with the board
- To express a view on the board's plans for the trust in advance of the trust's submission to NHSE/I

- To consider a report from the board of directors each year on the use of income from the provision of goods and services from sources other than the NHS in England.

There will also be the opportunity for governors to be involved in a range of non-statutory duties which may include focus groups, review days, patient experience feedback, site visits and much more. We recognise that governors will have different interests and will be able to spend different amounts of time undertaking the role.

“As a carer I wanted to make sure carer issues were at the forefront of the Trust’s thoughts and being a governor has allowed me to influence policy and represent carers at the highest levels”

Mark Hughes, Carer Governor

“As a SU Governor I have learned that I can assist, give knowledge and share knowledge. Your experiences mean that people can talk to you and share things. They speak to you because you truly understand. I cannot recommend this experience enough - you are both wanted and needed; not wanting and needing.”

Mel Smith, Service User Governor

Am I eligible to stand as a governor?

YOU CANNOT BECOME A GOVERNOR OR CONTINUE TO BE A GOVERNOR IF:

- You cease to be a member of the Constituency or class of constituency you represent.
- 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 body in the last 2 years for reasons other than redundancy or ill-health.
- You are a Director of the Trust, or a Governor, Executive Director, Non-Executive Director, Chair, Chief Executive Officer of another health service body or a corporate body whose business involves the provision of health care services or the provision of goods or services to the Trust.
- Your position as a Chair, Member or Director of a health service body has been terminated on the grounds that appointment is not in the interest of the health service.
- You have shown aggressive or violent behaviour at any Trust site and have been asked to leave, been removed or excluded from any Trust site or healthcare facility.
- You are an un-discharged bankrupt.
- You have made a composition or arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for your creditors and have not been discharged yet
- You have in the past 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 was imposed.
- You are subject to a Sex Offender Order and/or your name is on the Sex Offenders Register.
- You have refused, without reasonable cause, to undertake any training which the Trust and/or the Council of Governors requires all Governors to undertake.
- You have failed to repay, without good cause, any amount of monies owed to the Trust.
- You have acted in a manner deemed contrary to the interests of the Trust.
- You have failed to sign and deliver to the Trust a signed statement confirming your acceptance of the Governors' Code of Conduct.

MEETINGS

The Council of Governors meets formally at least three times a year. Governors may also be asked to attend meetings at other times. Most meetings take place on weekdays. Meetings are regularly reviewed to ensure the process is transparent and minutes are in plain English. All our Governors are encouraged to attend public events to raise the profile of the Trust and to help recruit new members.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING

If you are elected we will provide an induction programme and also identify what individual training and development needs you may have. We also run training sessions and encourage Governors to attend national conferences to network with their colleagues from other Trusts. Governors are expected to take advantage of these training and development opportunities to ensure they can be effective in their role. You will be expected to attend an Induction, the date for this will be advertised on our website.

EXPENSES

Governors are not paid a salary but are entitled to claim expenses incurred in connection with their duties such as travel to and from meetings of the Council of Governors, training days and conferences.

IMPACT ON BENEFITS

Taking on the role of a Governor should not impact on any benefits which you may currently receive. However, you should inform your local Job Centre Plus office if you are elected. The Trust can provide a letter explaining the role of a Governor and the anticipated time commitment.

SUPPORT TO GOVERNORS

The Corporate Governance Office provides day-to-day support to the Governors. This includes:

- responding to queries
- managing the dedicated Governors' inbox and taking appropriate action
- researching information to provide Governors with appropriate information to respond to members' queries
- authorising governors expenses
- preparing agendas and papers for the Council of Governors meetings and its committees
- supporting Governors at public events
- Governors also elect a Lead Governor. The Lead Governor has a number of specific responsibilities, including supporting the other Governors and being available to give advice and speak on behalf of the Governors.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICES

Once elected or appointed all Governors are required to consent to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formally known as CRB). The DBS check is designed to confirm whether or not you have a criminal record. This is important for the Trust which has a responsibility for young or vulnerable people. Clearance from the DBS means the Trust can confidently allow Governors to carry out their role.

A Governor may be disqualified on the basis of disclosures obtained through a DBS check.

ADDITIONAL MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Once elected or appointed all governors are required to sign a Code of Conduct declaration and annually thereafter there is a requirement to complete a 'Fit and Proper' persons declaration as defined by the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulation 2014 and a Declaration of Interests form as required by the Trust's Constitution. These declarations will be explained as part of the governor induction programme.

“Having had mental health needs for years, and worked for NHS, I stood as a Governor to give something back. The role is fulfilling, rewarding and satisfying. As a member with an interest in mental health I urge you to consider standing for Governor; mental health needs you.”

Elizabeth Hall, West Sussex Public Governor

"I joined Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust in September 2020 and found it a warm and welcoming environment where the Team give you access to excellent resources to enable you to navigate the role.

I have learned so much from the other Governors who are open and always willing to share their local knowledge of what is happening in the community. If you want to make a difference and meet some new friends please join our friendly Council of Governors"

Julie Barker, Carer Governor

What you need to do next

The election process must be undertaken by an independent organisation. The election system used by the Trust is based on the 'single transferable vote' and voting is by return of the ballot paper.

If you decide to stand for election you will need to request a nomination form from the organisation running the election on behalf of the Trust. This form will be available through our website. On the form you will be asked to write a short statement about yourself and why you are standing for election. This statement will be your introduction to members and will help them to decide whether to vote for you.

The election process follows a strict timetable. The important dates are listed in a separate factsheet which also contains contact details for the Returning Officer who will send out the nomination mailing and ballot papers and can answer any election queries.

The Trust cannot reimburse any expenses incurred during the election process by members who are standing for election.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU WANT TO STAND FOR ELECTION AS A GOVERNOR

- Be a member of the Trust in the constituency for which you wish to be elected
- Agree to carry out your duties if elected as a Governor
- Have read the eligibility criteria that will be sent to you with the nomination pack and make sure that none of them apply to you
- Be sure you can commit the time necessary to be an effective Governor. This will include attending meetings of the Council of Governors, induction and training sessions.
- Visit our website for further information on our current vacancies, timetable and who to contact for a nomination form: <http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/election>



Sussex Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

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