

# Thinking of Becoming a Staff Governor



# Message from our Chairman and Chief Executive

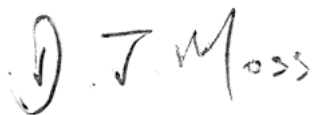
On behalf of University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust, we would like to thank you for expressing an interest in joining our Council of Governors. Governors have an important role in making our trust publicly accountable for the services we provide, and bring a valuable perspective to all our activities.

You will already know that being a members gives you a real opportunity to stay involved and play a part in shaping the future of the services within your community. At the present time, with the creation of our new organisation and the implementation of our exciting Dorset-wide transformation programme, the role of the governor has never been a more important.

As a governor, you will hold non-executive directors to account for the performance of the board and represent the interests of NHS foundation trust members and the public. Our governors play a vital role in helping us to connect with our members, staff, stakeholder groups and our local communities. In doing so, the Council of Governors has a key part to play in the delivery of our mission - that is, to provide excellent healthcare to our patients and the wider community, and be a great place to work.

You can help make a real difference for our patients, using your skills, knowledge or interest in health services to give something back. Our hospitals rely on governors to engage with the public and those who use our services to share information about what is happening and get feedback on how we are doing.

The work of the Council of Governors is extremely interesting, with the role being both challenging and rewarding. As you would expect, it takes time and commitment. This guide introduces you to the Trust and provides an overview as to what is involved in being a governor. We hope this will encourage you to stand for election and in doing so, help us to continue providing high quality care and create a positive future for our patients and staff.



David Moss  
Chairman



Debbie Fleming  
Chief Executive



On Thursday 1 October 2020 The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust will merge to become University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (UHD).

This long awaited merger will be a major step forward for ambitious plans to invest £250m in our three hospital sites, making better use of our combined resources and serving our population even more effectively as a larger, more resilient Trust. Becoming a university hospital also reinforces our commitment to learning, innovation and research.

## Our vision and values as an NHS Foundation Trust

Our organisational vision is **To positively transform our health and care services as part of the Dorset Integrated Care System.**

The vision is backed by the values we operate under:

- Communicate
- Improve
- Pride
- Teamwork
- Compassionate
- Open
- Respectful
- Accountable
- Safe

## The Role of the Governor

The simplest way to explain the role is perhaps to see it as a cross between being a school governor and an MP. Being a staff governor is like being a school governor because it involves working with others to improve a service, to check that the organisation is working effectively to achieve its purpose, and to protect the interests of the people who use the service as well as the people who provide the service (staff).

It's like being an MP in that a staff governor has a responsibility to the people who elect him or her. The role involves talking and listening to staff about issues and concerns, about what's working well and what could be improved, and feeding those views into the work of the Council.

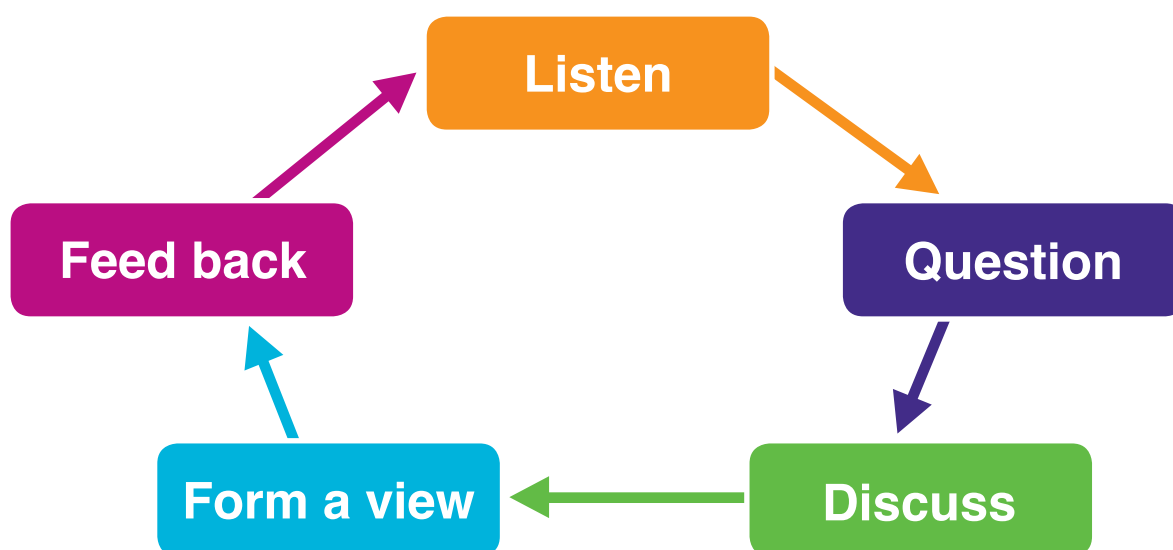
Staff Governors have the same rights and responsibilities as other types of Governors (i.e. Public Governors, Stakeholder Appointed Governors). Staff Governors can play a key role by informing the Council of Governors about widely held staff views - especially if these views have an impact on issues of patient experience and quality of services and the Staff Governors consider that these issues are not being fully addressed by the Board of Directors.

The Council of Governors fulfil a number of statutory (legal) duties as well as other responsibilities.

## Do's

Governors have two main responsibilities:

- **To represent the views of staff, patients and the public, particularly in relation to the Trust's strategic direction.** Representing the views of members. As a member of the Council of Governors, you would act as a link between the Foundation Trust members and the Board of Directors. The Council helps the Board to make sure that the views of local communities, staff and people who use the Trust's services are taken into account when plans for services are being developed
- **To hold the Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the Board of Directors.** Governors are given various opportunities to hold Non-Executive Directors to account, for example by observing their activities, or meeting with them and asking questions. The holding to account process can be visualised by this cycle:



## What other powers and duties do governors have?

Governors have certain powers and duties to help them with the role. These are:

- Appoint and, if appropriate, remove the Chair of the Trust
- Appoint and, if appropriate, remove the other Non-Executive Directors of the Trust
- Decide the pay and allowances and other terms and conditions of office of the Chair and the other Non-Executive Directors
- Approve the appointment of the Chief Executive
- Appoint and, if appropriate, remove the Trust's Auditor
- Receive the annual report and accounts and the Auditor's report on the accounts
- Give a response when consulted by the Board of Directors on the Trust's Annual Plan
- Agree, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, changes to the Constitution
- Approve any proposal to increase by 5% or more the proportion of the Trust's total annual income from activities other than the provision of health services in England
- Approve any applications for mergers, acquisitions, separation or dissolution of the Trust

- Decide whether the Trust’s private patient work would significantly interfere with its main purpose, i.e. the provision of goods and services for the health service in England or the performance of its other functions
- Inform the regulator, Monitor, if there were any ‘material concerns’ about the actions of the Board of Directors which could not be resolved locally

## Don'ts

### What can't governors do?

Governors do not get involved in the day to day running of the hospitals. They:

- don't seek or act as a staff representative or union representative on employment issues (e.g. disciplinary or grievance issues; changes to individual staff contracts), as there are other channels for dealing with such concerns
- don't get involved in the detail of how services are run (outside of your own job remit) this is the role of the Board, clinicians and manager
- don't deal with patient complaints directly, but signpost to the appropriate Trust department although Governors may wish to highlight if several complaints raised to them suggest a recurring issue with Trust services
- don't act as advocates for individual patients
- don't seek to be elected to represent a single issue or cause - governors should seek to represent the interests of the whole constituency they represent
- don't get involved in staff grievances, employee relations cases or negotiations
- don't need to scrutinise the performance of the hospitals (the Governor's job is to make sure that the Board of Directors is doing this)

Notwithstanding the above, the holding of the Board of Directors to account may well involve specific issues, e.g. infection control, which may require Governors to intervene.

## How Staff Governors fulfil their role in practice

(staff) Governors will attend a number of formal meetings:

Meeting	Time Commitment	During/outside office hours
Council of Governors	Up to 3.5 hours, 4 times a year	During office hours
Annual Members Meeting	3-4 hours, annually	During office hours
If relevant (i.e. Governor representative), observing Board Committees	Up to 3 hours - 4-6 times a year	During office hours
If relevant (i.e. if elected a member) Governors Nomination and Remuneration Committee	Up to 2 hours - 4 times a year	During office hours
If relevant (i.e. elected a member) Working Groups: Membership and Engagement, Constitution Review Group	Up to 2 hours - 4 times a year	During office hours

Governors are expected to attend meetings of the Council of Governors and the Annual Members Meeting

Like any other member of the public, Governors are entitled to attend public Board meetings. That said, the Lead Governor attends Board meetings as a matter of course.

Additionally, staff governors will engage with staff and feedback issues; will take part in training; and will participate in social gatherings of the Council of Governors and Non-Executive Directors.

Other mechanisms of getting involved and fulfilling the role include:

- staff engagement - e.g. holding staff 'surgeries'; to listen to their views, concerns and ideas;
- informing the staff about the work of the Council of Governors
- acting as a conduit for widely held staff views and bringing these to the attention of the Council of Governors
- visits to wards and departments (e.g. quality, environmental / cleanliness);
- representing the Council of Governors on major projects
- attending Membership events
- proofreading and suggesting amendments to hospital publications to make sure they can be easily understood by the general reader.

## Frequently asked questions

### Are staff governors similar to staff-side representatives?

No the role of staff governor is significantly different from that of a Trades Union representative (or professional bodies). Staff governors do not work on behalf of individual staff members or represent individuals to resolve issues or problems neither are they a go-between or staff delegate.

However, staff governors do have a responsibility for reporting staff views in the Council and other meetings and working groups where there may not be a staff-side representative.

### Can staff governors advise staff members?

Staff governors should be able to advise Trust staff members on appropriate routes of action, keeping in mind the role of the individual's Line Manager and/or staff representative.

If the individual staff member has not approached their Line Manager or Staff representative first, then the staff governor should direct the individual back to these sources. If there is any concern on the part of the staff governor that this is not the appropriate course of action (and it is likely to be only in exceptional circumstances that it is not) then the staff governor should refer to the Line Managers Line Manager and/or Human Resources. The staff governor may also sign-post the availability of Trust policies and procedures, clinical standards etc., that are available on the intranet.

## Am I entitled to time off work to undertake Governor duties?

The Trust is supportive of its staff undertaking the role but as always it would be courteous of the staff member to discuss their request with their line manager and consider it in the context of their own service and the effects that the employee's absence would have upon it on a regular basis. With good will on both sides, it should be possible to allow the staff governor to undertake their role with minimal impact on the day job.

## Should staff governors bring issues brought up by staff to the Board's attention?

While bringing an issue raised by an individual to the Board's attention may not be appropriate, if an issue is indicative of a trend, or highlights a significant concern, it would be appropriate to bring it up (and/or direct through the appropriate channels - e.g. incident reporting).

## What about conflicts of interest?

Being a staff governor can, occasionally, bring conflicts of interest when dealing with the Trust business. In such circumstances it is best to be clear upfront 'which 'hat you are wearing': are you an employee, a manager or a Governor? The Chair and Company Secretary can advise you on handling any conflicts.

## Support for governors

Our governors are a vital part of our work and we strive to support you in your role. Governors do not need to have particular expertise or qualifications. We will strive to support you to develop the skills you need to carry out your duties successfully.

## 2020 Election Timetable

Nominations are open for staff members who wish to represent the following areas:

Administrative, Clerical and Management	1 post
Allied Health Professionals, Scientific and Technical	1 post
Estates and Ancillary Services	1 post
Medical and Dental	1 post
Nursing, Midwifery and Healthcare Assistants	1 post

<b>Election stage</b>	<b>Timetable 2 - 41 Days</b>
Notice of Election / nomination open	<b>Friday, 16 Oct 2020</b>
Nominations deadline	Monday, 2 Nov 2020
Summary of valid nominated candidates published	Tuesday, 3 Nov 2020
Final date for candidate withdrawal	Thursday, 5 Nov 2020
Electoral data to be provided by Trust	Monday, 9 Nov 2020
Notice of Poll published	Thursday, 19 Nov 2020
Voting packs despatched	Friday, 20 Nov 2020
Close of election	Thursday, 10 Dec 2020
Declaration of results	Friday, 11 Dec 2020

## Contact

**Membership Officer** Email: [ftmembers@uhd.nhs.uk](mailto:ftmembers@uhd.nhs.uk) Telephone: 0300 019 8723

## Links

Keep up to date with our hospitals at [www.uhd.nhs.uk](http://www.uhd.nhs.uk)

follow us on **Twitter**  [@UHD\\_NHS](https://twitter.com/UHD_NHS)

or find us on **Facebook**  [@University Hospitals Dorset](https://www.facebook.com/UniversityHospitalsDorset)

## Guidance for NHS Governors

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-foundationtrust-governors-and-membersdocuments-and-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-foundationtrust-governors-and-membersdocuments-and-guidance)

## Nolan Principles - Committee on Standards in Public Life

[www.public-standards.gov.uk](http://www.public-standards.gov.uk)