

A guide to becoming an NHS Foundation Trust Governor

Shining a light on the future



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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Governor of our NHS Foundation Trust.

'NHS Foundation Trust Governors are the individuals that bind a Trust to its patients, staff and local stakeholders'

Monitor

This leaflet briefly explains what an NHS Foundation Trust is and how a Governor can represent the interests of members and the public.

If you need any more information or would like to talk to someone in our membership office, please do contact us on 0191 223 2468. Additional contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

What is an NHS Foundation Trust?

NHS Foundation Trusts were first set up in 2004 as part of the Government's drive to make sure NHS organisations:

- make more local decisions,
- have more financial freedom,
- are more accountable to local people for the services they provide.

Following a rigorous assessment process, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear (NTW) became a Foundation Trust on 1st December 2009.

NHS Foundation Trusts are different from NHS Trusts because they:

- are not directed by Government so have greater freedom to decide, with their governors and members, their own strategy and the way services are run,
- can retain their surpluses and borrow to invest in new and improved services for patients and service users,
- are accountable to local communities through their members and governors and therefore can be more responsive to the needs and wishes of their local communities,
- are also accountable to:
 - their commissioners through contracts,
 - Parliament (each foundation trust must lay its annual report and accounts before Parliament),
 - the Care Quality Commission (through the legal requirement to register and meet the associated standards for the quality of care provided),
 - Monitor, through the NHS provider licence.

Membership

We want our membership to be representative of the communities we serve and we would like to retain at least 12,000 members.

You can be a member of our Foundation Trust if you are at least 14 years old and:

- live in England or Wales,
or
- have used any of our services in the last four years (regardless of where you live),
or
- have cared for someone who has used any of our services in the last four years (regardless of where you live),
or
- are a member of our staff on a permanent contract or a fixed term contract of more than 12 months,
or
- exercise functions continuously on behalf of NTW for at least 12 months but are not employed by NTW under a contract of employment.

If you are not sure whether you are eligible to be a member, please ask us. Our contact details are at the back of the leaflet.

The Council of Governors

What is the role of the Council of Governors?

The role of the Council of Governors is set out in the NHS Act 2006 and as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

It includes:

- appointing and, if appropriate, removing the Trust Chair and other Non-Executive Directors,
- deciding the remuneration and allowances and other terms and conditions of office of the Chair and the other Non-Executive Directors,
- approving (or not) any new appointment of a Chief Executive,
- appointing and, if appropriate, removing the Trust's auditor,
- receiving the Trust's annual accounts, any report of the auditor on them and the annual report, at a general meeting of the Council of Governors,
- providing views on the Trust's forward plan,
- holding the Non-Executive Directors, individually and collectively, to account for the performance of the Board of Directors,
- representing the interests of the members of the Trust as a whole and the interests of the public,
- approving significant transactions,
- approving an application by the Trust to enter into a merger, acquisition, separation or dissolution,
- deciding whether the Trust's non-NHS work would significantly interfere with its principal purpose, which is to provide goods and services for the health service in England, or performing its other functions,
- approving amendments to the Trust's constitution.

Who can be a Governor?

You can stand for election to the Council of Governors if you are a member of our Foundation Trust and are at least 16 years old.

You can only stand for election by the constituency in which you are a member. For example, if you are a carer member you cannot put yourself forward for election as a public Governor. However, some people may be eligible to be a member of more than one constituency. Please contact us for clarification if this applies to you.

We also ask our partner organisations to put forward representatives to sit on our Council of Governors; so you can be an appointed Governor if your organisation asks you to be its representative.

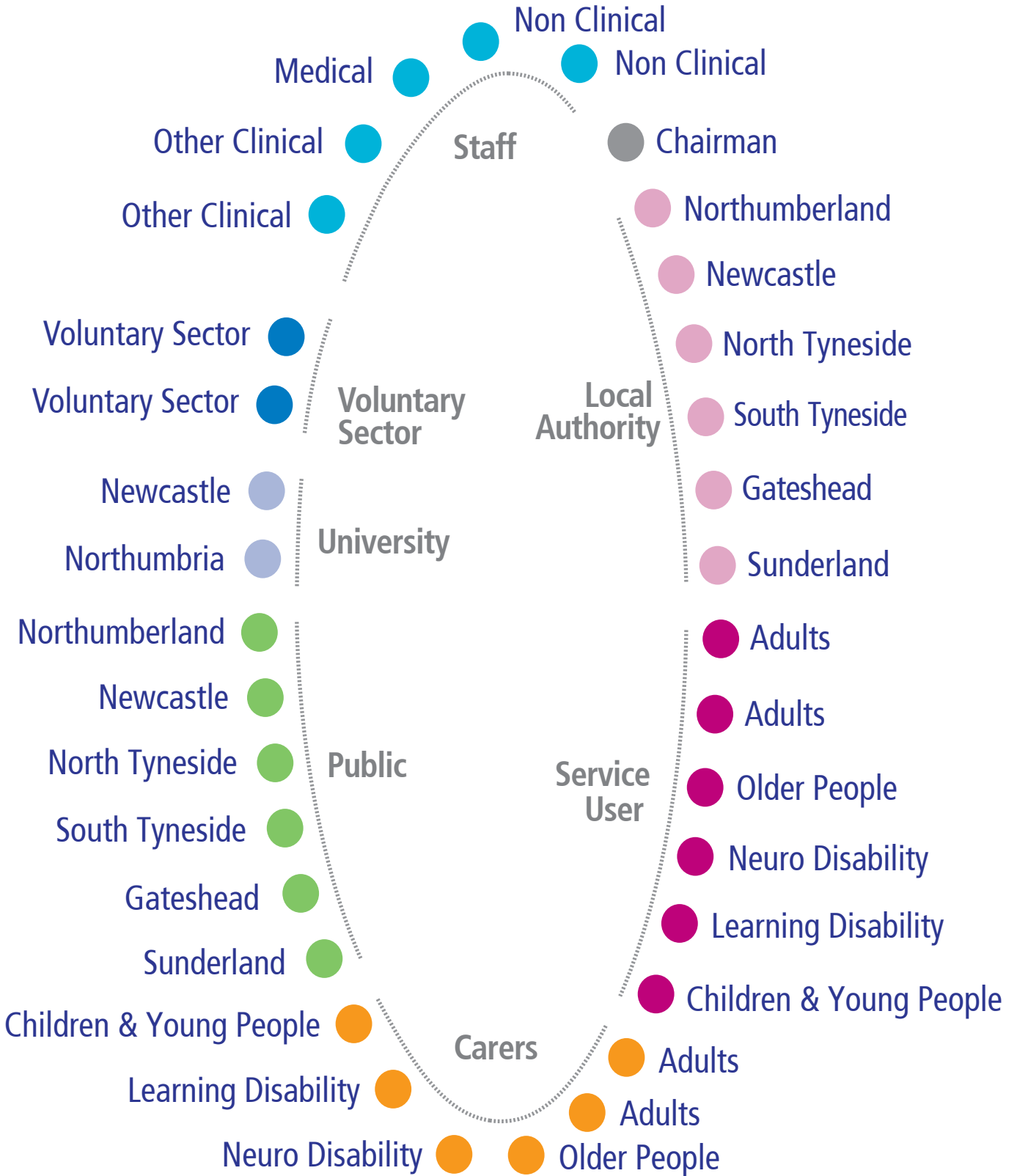
There are a small number of people who can be a member but not a Governor. These include people who:

- are Governors of other NHS Foundation Trusts,
- have been convicted of an offence (or equivalent sections of the Mental Health Act) within the last five years leading to imprisonment of three months or more,
- have been declared bankrupt.

If you are not sure if you are eligible to be a Governor, please ask us. Contact details are at the back of this leaflet.

Who is on the Council of Governors?

The Council of Governors is made up of elected and appointed Governors. It is chaired by the Trust's Chairman. The Council of Governors has 33 Governors:



How do I get elected?

When there is a vacancy for a Governor, we will write to all eligible members to ask if they would like to stand as a Governor.

If you would like to stand as a Governor, you just need to complete a simple form which includes a short statement saying why you want to be a Governor. You may also want to include a photograph of yourself.

If you need help to fill in the form or would like it in a different format such as large print or easy read, please ask us.

Do I have to run an election campaign?

No. Members will choose a Governor to represent them based on the short statement you give. And don't worry, your home address and contact details will not be given out – we will keep your information confidential.

What happens if only one person stands for election?

If only one person stands for election in a constituency, he/she will automatically become a Governor.

How long are Governors members of the Council?

Governors will be elected or appointed for three years initially. If you are unable to carry out your duties or are no longer eligible to be a Governor, you will stand down earlier.

How much time will I need to give?

The Council of Governors meets four times a year. In addition to this there will be a programme of engagement sessions, training and service visits.

The times, dates and venues of our Council of Governors' meetings will be agreed in advance to try to make sure that as many Governors as possible can attend.

The Council of Governors has also set up working groups to look at various issues, eg membership and quality of services. If you have a special interest, you may want to get involved in one or more of those groups.

Will I be paid?

No. Governors are volunteers and so are not paid, but we will make sure you are reimbursed any travel expenses and other reasonable costs, by agreement.

Why we want you

By becoming a Governor, you will help us to:

- understand and respond to the views of our service users, carers, staff, partner organisations and members of the public,
- shape how the Trust develops to meet future local need,
- tackle the stigma associated with mental illness and disabilities,
- recruit more members to help make our membership representative of the people we serve.



Want to know more?

If you would like more information about becoming a Governor or want to talk to a member of the Membership Office, please contact:

Wendy Pinkney
Membership Manager
0191 223 2468
wendy.pinkney@ntw.nhs.uk

or e-mail: governors@ntw.nhs.uk
members@ntw.nhs.uk

or log on to our website www.ntw.nhs.uk and click on the 'Get Involved' box and follow the link.



For more information about Foundation Trusts in general, log on to the Foundation Trust Network site:

www.foundationtrustnetwork.org

www.ntw.nhs.uk