Elections to the Council of Governors 2014

Frequently asked questions

Who are the Governors?
- 31 Public Governors
- 6 Staff Governors
- 11 Appointed/Partnership Governors

Where are the vacancies?
Public Governors:
- Southend 1
- South Essex 3
- Thurrock 1
- West Essex 4

Staff Governors:
- Nurses (Mental Health) 1
- Medical Practitioners 1

What do governors do?
The Council of Governors plays a key role in shaping the future of the Trust, acting as a link between Trust members and the Board of Directors.

Together the Board and Council ‘drive’ the Trust ensuring that we provide quality services and the highest standards of care.

Governors have no operational influence but are not about ‘rubber stamping’ decisions made by the Board. The Council is instrumental in bringing a local perspective to planning and development of services.

Governors attend meetings of the Council of Governors, represent their local communities and work together to advise and influence on how the Trust develops to meet the needs of people in Beds, Essex, Luton and Suffolk.

This means discussing things like major new service developments, the annual report and accounts, forward planning and how members are being recruited and kept informed of developments.

The Council also has statutory responsibilities, such as appointing the non-executive directors and the Chair, and approving the appointment of the CEO.

Governors also act as ambassadors and champions of the Trust, helping to promote the work of the Trust and helping to tackle the stigma associated with any of the services we provide.

How long will I be a governor, if elected?
A term of office is for a maximum of three years, and governors may stand for three terms of office. The maximum number of years is nine (i.e. up to three terms of three years).

Am I eligible to become an elected governor?
As long as you are at least 16 years of age at the date you are nominated, a member of our Trust and meet the restrictions set out in the Trust’s constitution and in the Prospective Governors Guide.

Do I get paid?
No, governors are not paid a salary for this role. However, you are reimbursed for expenses incurred whilst on Trust business, i.e. attending meetings, seeing members from your constituency. These include mileage allowances and other out of pocket expenses.

What sort of person are you looking for?
You don’t need any special skills or qualifications to become an effective governor. You need to be passionate about the NHS, care about your local services and have the enthusiasm and the willingness to represent the views of the people in your community or staff group.

How much time will I need to give to fulfil the role of being a governor?
As a rough guide, we think you may need to set aside about two days a month for these duties.

A governor is expected to attend the Council of Governor meetings which are held quarterly. Time will also be required to prepare and read papers provided for each meeting.
The Trust will also expect governors to be actively involved in other areas of Trust business such as Council sub-committees and working groups, as well as attending public/member events to develop the links with the community you represent.

Additionally attendance at induction and mandatory training events will be required to ensure you are kept up to date with what is happening in the NHS and to learn more about the governor role.

Where are meetings held?
The quarterly Council meetings are held in Beds/Essex/Luton on a rotational basis. For other meetings we usually ensure these are by video-conference link to minimise the amount of travelling time for governors.

Will the Trust provide support for governors?
The Trust Secretary and Trust Secretary Office will be available to support and advise governors. Governors will also have access to a comprehensive induction and training programme.

What do I have to do to become a governor?
Nomination forms will be available from 21 July for anyone who wants to put themselves forward for election. Members receive a statement of each candidate standing in their constituency as part of the postal ballot. Members then decide who they wish to vote for.

Tell me more about the election process
Electoral Reform Society (ERS) run the elections.

Any member wishing to nominate him/herself will submit an election statement which will be sent to all members from the constituency. Candidates will need to give some information about themselves in this statement and why they think they would be an effective governor.

Members who stand for election are required to make a declaration confirming their eligibility and any potential conflicts of interests.

A notice will be sent to members with information about the candidate. If only one candidate comes forward then there will be no need for a vote. Elections are by secret ballot and are a ‘first past the post’ system.

Candidates will need to sign up to a Code of Conduct for Governors agreeing to work to a set of principles such as actively supporting the Trust.

Will there be training for newly-elected Governors?
Yes, newly-elected Governors are required to attend an induction programme.

Would provisions be made for any governor who has a disability?
Absolutely – there will be no barriers be it in terms of access, provision of information in suitable format, etc.

I have more questions!
You can attend a ‘I want to be a governor’ workshop or call the Trust Secretary Office. If they can’t help you immediately they will pass your enquiry on and someone will get back to you.

Trust Secretary Office can be contacted on:
• Freephone: 0800 023 2059
• Email: membership@sept.nhs.uk

What is the election timetable?
For your information the election timetable is as follows:

• 21 July 2014 Notice of Election issued and nomination forms available to prospective Governors from this date
• 5 August 2014 Deadline for receipt of nominations
• 6 August 2014 Summary of nominated candidates published
• 8 August 2014 Final date for candidate withdrawal.
• 22 August 2014 Notice of poll published
• 26 August 2014 Voting packs despatched to members
• 15 September 2014 Closing date for election
• 17 September 2014 Election results announced at AGM.