

Governors' Bulletin



October 2018

As Governors at Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT), we provide a link between local people and the Trust's Board of Directors.

The Council of Governors met on 11 October and considered a number of important issues. Whilst we do not have any operational remit we do probe and scrutinise reports from the Board of Directors and raise issues that require further explanation or evidence. The Council has limited powers but in recent months we have been fulfilling our statutory duty to recruit and appoint Non-Executive Directors as vacancies arise. The outcome is highlighted below together with other main matters that will be of interest to members of the Trust. Please let us know if you want us to expand on any issue.

Mental Health Transformation Projects

Many members are likely to have attended one or more of the Trust-wide workshops that are considering the views of all stakeholders on the development of mental health services including commissioning options. The projects are being carried out by the Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) in Norfolk and Waveney and Suffolk and North Essex, supported variously by the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), Public Health, Healthwatch and the voluntary sector.

Each study is being helped by up-to-date mental health needs assessments. In Suffolk, the work is being fully supported by the work of Suffolk Family Carers, Suffolk User Forum and Suffolk Parent and Carer Network in seeking views from thousands of people through questionnaires targeted at different groups. This will be crucial in understanding and responding to issues of access, funding, community support and, most critically, help in a crisis. In Norfolk and Waveney, the STP has chosen a consultant-led route with fewer opportunities for engagement. Governors have voiced their criticism of this method direct to the Accountable Officer of the CCG. The outcomes and proposals are not likely to be available until early in the new year.

Recruitment of Non-Executive Directors and Chair of the Trust

We reported in the last bulletin that two Non Executive Directors (NEDs) have stepped down. Since then Gary Page, the Trust's chair has confirmed that he will not be seeking a further term of office. Governors are responsible for recruiting and appointing NEDs so we have been very busy agreeing new job roles and supporting recruitment information. We are very pleased to report that we have unanimously appointed three new NEDs who matched our stated needs for applicants to have an understanding of mental health or an empathy with it. Details of the new appointments can be found on the Trust's web site [here](#).

The process for recruiting a new chair has just begun and we are hopeful of an appointment being made in December. It is without doubt that Gary Page has been chair in a very turbulent period and although he would be the first to say that he and the Board must take responsibility for what has occurred in recent years, Gary has been a very visible, accessible and supportive chair who has shouldered the lows and highs of public office with great humility and professionalism.

Crisis Resolution, Home Treatment and Acute Mental Health Liaison Services

Governors received an honest but critical report from one of its NEDs, Adrian Matthews, about the above services. The report noted that the services are commissioned through two main contracts but specified separately; it also appears that the specifications are in need of improvement and updating. NSFT has also not clearly defined the services it wants to provide which means that service provision is disjointed. Governors confirmed that the service user and carer experience is generally poor and that rising demand is not being met within acceptable timeframes. In particular, the provision of crisis support is not uniform across the Trust, is woefully under resourced and drive times across the Trust's area makes it very difficult to respond to more than a few calls for crisis help. Staff work extremely hard to keep vulnerable people safe and they work under a lot of pressure and at unsocial hours but this is an area of work that is repeatedly seen as needing new resources. The Trust's Board has acknowledged that the linked services and, particularly crisis resolution, has to be improved so work is underway to explore how this can be achieved by the Trust with its partners. Governors will be tracking the outcomes.

Redefining the Governor Role

For some time Governors have been questioning their role and how it can be better utilised to achieve outcomes that are measurable and meaningful. In other words, there is a lot of frustration but with that comes a lot of good ideas about how we can improve the role, how it functions and what it can contribute. Governors come from all walks of life, are unpaid volunteers and represent the views of the public, service users, carers and staff. We also hold the Board to account. The skills and experiences of Governors are many and varied but we all have one common interest; supporting the mental health community. Rather than simply accept what the Health Act says and slavishly follow 'guidance' we have created a Task and Finish Panel to examine how we can improve the role. In this work we have looked at what other Foundation Trusts do to enhance the democratic role of Governors and their relationship with the Board of Directors. We wish to develop our role as both 'strategic partners' and 'critical friends' of the Trust.

A far reaching report has now been considered and approved by Governors for discussion with NEDs and Executive Officers. We have not at this stage worked up all the details but we can share with Members the main recommendations in summary:

- The Trust must understand and demonstrate its commitment to the Foundation Trust model – ie, the Foundation Trust model requires better resourcing if the Trust is to support its Governors to be effective and to engage with its members
- The Board should include Governors as part of the overall approach to engagement – ie Governors want a more focused approach to information gathering about how Trust services are experienced by users and carers
- The Board should establish a focal point – a Service Experience Committee perhaps – where information about service quality and service user / carer experiences can be shared, evaluated and channeled for action
- A pilot should be established that has two Governors acting as a participating and observing member of two Board committees – ie Governors feel that their experience is not being utilised in consideration of service user and carer matters or issues that require public issue input
- The Board and the Council of Governors should agree that the focus for Governor monitoring and evaluation of NED and Board performance (our statutory role) should be a balance between the setting of targets on strategic and annual plans and quality of Trust services
- The current role description of Lead Governor should be reviewed and a steering group of Governors should be created to help share the work that is required
- A separate budget should be created for Governor activities and a full-time role created (currently part-time) to support all aspects of the Foundation Trust model.

There are other matters such as reviewing constituency groups, election procedures, member forums and location of meetings that we will review over the coming months.

In summary, what we are seeking is to ensure that the Trust is indeed a Member based organisation that seeks to involve and listen to its members and respects the role of the Governor in the duties that are expected of us. We are passionate about what we do and want to reset the relationship with the Board so that together as a team we can make the Trust an organisation that really does have the service user and carer at the heart of what it does. We believe we can achieve this with the refreshed Board and new set of Executive Directors encouraged as always by our outgoing Chair.

Your thoughts on what we are seeking would be appreciated by contacting us at: governors@nsft.nhs.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

NSFT PALS provides confidential advice, information and support, helping you to answer any questions you have about our services or about any health matters.



If you would like this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or a different language, please contact PALS and we will do our best to help.

Email: PALS@nsft.nhs.uk
or call PALS Freephone: 0800 279 7257

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust values and celebrates the diversity of all the communities we serve. We are fully committed to ensuring that all people have equality of opportunity to access our service, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership or social and economic status.



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Working together for better mental health...



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