

NHS Foundation Trusts information guide

Introduction

The creation of NHS Foundation Trusts is a key step in public sector reform – giving greater freedoms to NHS organisations. This is part of the wider programme of moving from an NHS controlled nationally towards an NHS where standards and inspection are national but delivery and accountability is local.

NHS Foundation Trusts will remain fully part of the NHS and will have a primary purpose of providing NHS services to NHS patients. They will be subject to NHS standards, NHS performance ratings and NHS systems of inspection. NHS Foundation Trusts will pioneer a new model of social ownership, giving local communities real opportunities to get involved in the stewardship of their local hospitals.

This information document is part of a first series of 8 short documents covering key aspects of NHS Foundation Trust policy and interrelated areas.

Engaging the community

NHS Foundation Trusts will strengthen the link between hospitals and local communities. Local communities will have social ownership of their NHS Foundation Trust. The aim is to extend involvement beyond the current arrangements and build on the sense of ownership people feel towards their local NHS hospitals.

Central state control will be replaced by accountability to communities. Local people, carers and staff will be eligible to become members of their local NHS Foundation Trust. Members will be able to stand and vote in elections for Governors

of the NHS Foundation Trust and can expect to receive regular information about their local Trust and be consulted on plans for future development.

All NHS Foundation Trusts will have a duty to engage with local communities and encourage local people to become members of the organisation. NHS Foundation Trusts will need to take steps to ensure that the membership is representative of the communities they serve.

As part of the application process, NHS Trusts will be required to set out their detailed proposals for the minimum size and composition of their membership.

Members



They will need to demonstrate:

- That the full range of potential members' interests is represented, and there is a proper balance between different interest groups; and
- Arrangements for recruiting and informing members are workable.

Applicants must also consult the local community about their plans for such things as:

- Encouraging local participation;
- Communicating with members; and
- Holding elections for the Board of Governors.

NHS Foundation Trust members

Members will be able to:

- Elect representatives to the Board of Governors;
- Stand for election to the Board of Governors;
- Put themselves forward for appointment as Chair of the Trust or non-executive directors on the Board of Directors; and
- Through the Board of Governors, receive information about the NHS Foundation Trust and be consulted on plans for future development of the Trust and its services.

Through the Board of Governors, members will have an opportunity to have a greater say in how their local NHS Foundation Trust is run. However, members won't receive a 'dividend' or bonus and won't receive any special benefits – in terms of NHS care or treatment – over non-members.

Becoming a member

Eligibility for membership of an NHS Foundation Trust will be open to local residents, carers and staff. Individual NHS Foundation Trusts may provide for people who live outside the area but have been patients or carers at one of the Trust's hospitals to be eligible for membership.

There will be no limit on the number of people who can register as members, providing they meet the eligibility criteria.

Membership of an NHS Foundation Trust is about participation and real responsibility and all members must agree to pay a token sum (fixed in law at a maximum of £1) to the Trust as a symbol of their commitment. This is not a membership fee, and members will not be required to pay a regular subscription.

Further Information

This information document is part of a first series of 8 short documents covering key aspects of NHS Foundation Trust policy and interrelated areas.

Other titles in the same series are: System Reform in the NHS, Financial Reforms: Payment by Results, Financial Freedoms, Accountability and Regulation, Governors, Human Resources and Contracting.

A Guide to NHS Foundation Trusts and A Short Guide to NHS Foundation Trusts, published by the Department of Health, are available at www.doh.gov.uk/nhsfoundationtrusts