

Non-executive appointments: why become a non-executive director?

September 2017

NHS boards play a key role in shaping the strategy, vision and purpose, hold the organisation to account for the delivery of strategy and ensure value for money. The board is also responsible for assuring that risks to a trust and the public are managed and mitigated effectively. Led by an independent chair and composed of a mixture of executive and independent non-executive directors, the board has a collective responsibility for the trust's performance.

Why become a non-executive director?

The purpose of NHS boards is to govern effectively, and in so doing build patient, public and stakeholder confidence that their health and healthcare are in safe hands.

Becoming an NHS non-executive director can be very rewarding. It allows you to develop new skills, raise your profile in your professional or business community and engage with a wide range of different people and organisations. You will be exposed to different leadership styles and ways of working, bringing your skills and experience to bear on fresh challenges.

Non-executives often find themselves being approached for other projects or roles because of the profile they have built in their NHS role. Many claim that once they have one board-level role on their CV, they are more easily able to access further opportunities.

You receive local induction training on appointment, access to national training sessions and other development opportunities.

What is expected?

You will need to attend the monthly board meeting and any further committees you are appointed to. You may also be asked to represent the trust at external events and events to support your continuous development.

We anticipate that an NHS non-executive role will take two or three half days a month but there is no fixed time commitment. Most of our non-executives find that once you get a taste for the NHS you can't resist getting more involved.

What does it take to be a non-executive director?

These roles carry responsibility, and the demands placed on NHS non-executives come from all directions – government, stakeholders and regulators.

These are some important personal attributes needed for the role: independent and impartial thought and judgement, strategic mind, willingness to challenge, inquisitive mind and eagerness to learn, listening and communication skills, influencing without dominating, confidence and sensitivity, clear vision and passion, emotional intelligence, facilitating, enabling and mentoring, integrity, courage, resilience.

Successful non-executive directors bring knowledge gained from many different business and operational settings. They can bring a fresh perspective to entrenched problems, and can promote collaboration and help break down boundaries that hold back progress.

A diverse group of people will learn from, and challenge each other and so be more insightful. You can make a really valuable contribution by offering skills such as finance, commerce, risk and performance management, consumer focus, marketing, the law, organisational development, change management, digital innovation, turnaround experience, HR, workforce development, clinical and patient safety expertise, quality improvement, business development, regeneration, community development, service provision for disadvantaged groups, patient advocacy and community engagement.

If you are considering a non-executive role in the NHS

- Do your homework before starting your application: research the trust to learn about specific challenges, read board papers and speak to those you know who have used its services.
- Who to influence and how: make contact with the chair of the trust to gain an understanding of the trust's priorities and the skills needed. Contacts are usually included in the information packs and an informal conversation will help you decide if this is the right role for you and give you an advantage in completing your application.
- Gathering momentum: engage with healthcare and local community networks to raise your profile and improve your understanding of the NHS and its challenges.

We believe that to make the best possible decisions, NHS boards need people with a mix of skills and experience. We are looking for people from a range of backgrounds who understand the needs and priorities of their local communities and can hold the confidence of patients and the public.

For more information, contact: public.appointments@nhs.net

0300 123 2257

enquiries@improvement.nhs.uk

improvement.nhs.uk

© NHS Improvement date September 2017 Publication code: Corp 06/17
