

Non-executive appointments: about the non-executive director role

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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.

About the non-executive role

The purpose of NHS boards is to govern effectively, and in so doing build patient, public and stakeholder confidence that their health and healthcare is in safe hands. This fundamental accountability to the public and stakeholders is delivered by building confidence:

- in the quality and safety of health services
- that resources are invested in a way that delivers optimal health outcomes
- in the accessibility and responsiveness of health services
- that patients and the public can help to shape health services to meet their needs
- that public money is spent in a way that is fair, efficient, effective and economic.

Roles and responsibilities of the non-executive director

Non-executive directors will work alongside other non-executives and executive directors as an equal member of the board. They share responsibility with the other directors for the decisions made by the board and for success of the organisation in leading the local improvement of healthcare services for patients.

Non-executives use their skills and personal experience as a member of their community to:

Formulate plans and strategy

- Bring independent judgement, external perspectives and advice on issues of strategy, vision, performance, resources and standards of conduct and constructively challenge, influence and help the executive board develop proposals on such strategies to enable the organisation to fulfil its leadership responsibilities to patients, for healthcare of the local community.
- Assist fellow directors in setting the trust's values and standards and ensure that its obligations to its stakeholders and the wider community are understood and fairly balanced at all times.

Ensure accountability

- Ensure that the board sets challenging objectives for improving its performance across the range of its functions.
- Hold the executive to account for the delivery of strategy.
- Provide purposeful, constructive scrutiny and challenge.
- Chair or take part as a member of key committees that support accountability.
- Contribute to the determination of appropriate levels of remuneration for executive directors.
- Being accountable individually and collectively for the effectiveness of the board.
- Accept accountability to NHS Improvement for the delivery of the organisation's objectives and ensure that the board acts in the best interests of patients and its local community.

Shape culture and capability

- Ensure that patients and service users are treated with dignity and respect at all times, and that the patient is central to trust decision-making.
 - Actively support and promote a healthy culture for the organisation which is reflected in their own behaviour.
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- Ensure that the organisation values diversity in its workforce and demonstrates equality of opportunity in its treatment of staff and patients and in all aspects of its business.
- Provide visible leadership in developing a healthy culture so that staff believe non-executive directors provide a safe point of access to the board for raising concerns.
- Ensure the directors of the board are 'fit and proper' for the role and champion an open, honest and transparent culture within the organisation.

Context

- As a member of board committees, appoint, remove, support, encourage and where appropriate 'mentor' senior executives.
- Mentor less experienced non-executive directors where relevant.

Process, structures and intelligence

- Commit to working to, and encouraging within the trust, the highest standards of probity, integrity and governance and contribute to ensuring that the trust's internal governance arrangements conform with best practice and statutory requirements.
 - In accordance with agreed board procedures, monitor the performance and conduct of management in meeting agreed goals and objectives and statutory responsibilities, including the preparation of annual reports and annual accounts and other statutory duties
 - Ensure that financial information is accurate, that financial controls and risk management systems are robust and defensible, and that the board is kept fully informed through timely and relevant information (you may be asked to sit on the audit committee on behalf of the board).
 - Satisfy themselves of the integrity of reporting mechanisms, and financial and quality intelligence including getting out and about, observing and talking to patients and staff.
 - Provide analysis and constructive challenge to information on organisational and operational performance.
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Engagement

- Ensure that the board acts in best interests of patients and the public.
- Be available to staff if there are unresolved concerns.
- Show commitment to working with key partners.
- Act as an ambassador for the trust in engagement with stakeholders including patients and the local community, dealing with the media when appropriate.

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