

Your guide to becoming a governor at one of our hospitals (2026)

Foreword from the Group Chair, David Roberts

Our governors play a vital role in helping to improve the services we provide. They represent the views of patients, staff, members and local communities, and influence important decisions about how our hospitals work.

We are looking for people from a wide range of backgrounds who care about local health services and want to make a difference. What matters most is a commitment to your community, an interest in improving services, and a willingness to represent the views of local people.



We are at an important moment. Work is progressing to build two new hospitals; we are making significant investments in technology; and all three hospital trusts are now working together as one Group to improve patient care for the residents of Norfolk and Waveney.

If you want to be part of the journey and make a difference for patients, staff, families and communities, I encourage you to stand for election.

Thank you for your support.

David Roberts
Group Chair
Norfolk and Waveney University Hospitals Group

Introduction

Thank you for your interest in becoming a governor at one of our hospital trusts:

- James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust

This document provides information about the trusts and the important role that governors play in ensuring that we can provide the best possible care to our patients and communities.

The Norfolk and Waveney University Hospitals Group

In 2025, the three hospital trusts started to operate as the Norfolk and Waveney University Hospitals Group (NWUHG). Each of the hospital trusts continues to be a statutory organisation, but by working together we can share expertise, align our ambitions and make the best use of our resources to improve care for patients across Norfolk and Waveney.

Becoming a hospital Group will help us to:

- Transform health services based on the needs of our patients and communities, particularly focusing on preventative and proactive healthcare for people with long-term conditions, and delivering a consistent best practice model of urgent and emergency care.
- Build on our combined knowledge, skills and experience to implement safe and sustainable care models, level-up access and outcomes and improve outcomes for people with cancer.
- Take a co-ordinated approach to the development of the two new build hospitals in King's Lynn and Gorleston.
- Work at scale to improve the resilience of our services, enhance staff development and training, and create a University Hospital system that strengthens our potential for research, training and innovation.
- Tackle underlying financial challenges and take advantage of the negotiation, purchasing and investment power that comes with being part of a group.

About our hospitals

James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

We are a vibrant university hospital providing care to a population of 250,000 residents and visitors. We employ 4,000 full-time and part-time staff and serve a catchment area which includes Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, and villages and smaller towns to the north, south and west.

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Our hospital is a 1,200 bed teaching hospital with state-of-the-art facilities employing 9,500 full-time and part-time staff. We provide care to a population of around one million people from Norfolk and further afield and offer a full range of acute clinical services, including more specialist services. The trust works closely with the University of East Anglia's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences to train health professionals and undertake clinical research.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn is a busy district general hospital and employs 4,000 full and part-time staff. We offer a comprehensive range of general acute services, as well as specialised services, for a population of 375,000 people across West and North Norfolk, Cambridgeshire/Fenland and South East Lincolnshire.

What is an NHS Foundation Trust?

An **NHS Foundation Trust (FT)** is a not-for-profit membership organisation that provides NHS services and forms an integral part of the NHS in England. It is a governance model designed to strengthen local accountability and give patients, staff and the public a formal voice in how NHS services are run. Foundation trusts:

- Provide care that is **free at the point of use**, based on clinical need, not the ability to pay.
- Are regulated nationally, including by **NHS England** and the **Care Quality Commission**.
- Have **greater local autonomy** than non-foundation trusts in how they organise services, manage resources and invest surpluses for patient benefit.
- Are **membership organisations**, accountable to their local communities through public and staff members and an elected **Council of Governors**, as well as to Parliament and commissioners.

How does a Foundation Trust work?

A foundation trust is led by a Board of Directors, consisting of a Chair, Chief Executive and Executive and Non-Executive Directors. They are collectively responsible for the management and performance of the trust.

The role of the Council of Governors is to hold the Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the Board of Directors, communicate with members and the public and provide vital feedback.

Membership

Anyone aged 16 years or over can apply to be a public member of a Foundation Trust. Membership is free and without obligation. Membership has no bearing on anyone's care. Once you are a member of the Foundation Trust you can, if you wish, nominate yourself for election as a Governor in the same constituency of which you are a member and/or to vote for your candidate of choice.

To apply to become a public member of one or more of our trusts, please visit the website for the trust you would like to join:

James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (JPUH): www.jpaget.nhs.uk/get-involved/

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NNUH): www.nnuh.nhs.uk/getting-involved/benefits-of-becoming-a-member/

Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn NHS Foundation Trust (QEHKL): www.qehkl.nhs.uk/ft-welcome.asp

Please note that all hospital staff are automatically staff members of the trust where they are employed.

The Role of a Governor

Governors sit on the Trust's **Council of Governors (Council)**. The Council acts as a crucial link between the hospital trust and the community.

Governors can be privy to confidential trust business which may not be discussed with colleagues and the public. This is vital to ensure transparency between the Board and the Council of Governors. Governors sign a code of conduct where this is made clear.

The **key statutory purposes** of governors are to:

- **Represent the interests of Trust members and the public,**
- **Hold the Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) to account** for the performance of the Group Board of Directors.
- Play a vital role in influencing and shaping the future of the Trust.

Governors provide challenge, assurance and insight, ensuring the Board remains accountable, transparent and focused on public benefit. Governors act as a 'critical friend' but they do not run the trust - that is the responsibility of the executive team.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Governors

Under the **National Health Service Act 2006**, the Council of Governors has specific statutory duties, including:

- Holding the **Non-Executive Directors**, individually and collectively, to account for the performance of the Board.
- **Appointing, re-appointing and removing** the Group Chair and Group Non-Executive Directors.
- **Agreeing the remuneration and terms of office** of the Chair and Non-Executive Directors.
- **Approving the appointment (or removal) of the Trust's Chief Executive.**
- **Appointing the Group's external auditor.**
- **Receiving the Trust's annual report and accounts**, and the auditor's report.
- **Approving significant transactions**, such as mergers, acquisitions, separations or dissolutions.
- Approving changes to the Trust's **Constitution**, jointly with the Board.

Since 2022, Governors are expected to exercise these duties with an awareness of **system working and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs)**, mindful that their legal responsibilities relate to their own Foundation Trust.

It is important to understand the **boundaries** of the Governor role.

Governors are NOT responsible for

- **Managing services** or staff.
 - **Making operational decisions** (for example about waiting lists, staffing rotas or individual complaints).
 - **Acting as inspectors or regulators.**
 - **Representing their personal views or experiences**, but the broader interests of their constituency.
 - **Directing executive directors** or becoming involved in day-to-day performance management.
 - Acting as a **representative for a member of staff** or an **advocate for individual patients.**
 - Dealing with patient complaints directly and should **signpost patients to PALS** or to the appropriate Trust team.
 - Getting **involved in staff grievances**, employee relations cases or negotiations.
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Why Become a Governor?

People choose to become Governors for many reasons. Common motivations include:

- Making a **positive contribution to local NHS services.**
- Giving patients, staff and communities a **stronger voice** in decision-making.
- Supporting **openness, transparency and good governance** in the NHS.
- Using professional skills or lived experience to **add value.**
- **Gaining insight** into how hospitals are governed.

Governors play a valuable civic role and many find the experience both **challenging and rewarding.** The role is voluntary but well supported through induction, training and ongoing development.

Who Can Become a Governor?

To stand for election as a Governor, you must:

- Be a **member** of the Foundation Trust
- Belong to the relevant **constituency.**

As a Group, we are committed to ensuring that our Governors are **supported**, including induction, access to information, mentorship and ongoing development.

Public Governors

Public governors are elected to represent member constituencies. They have a key role in informing the Council about the views of their constituency and the public, providing feedback to the Council.

Public Governors are elected by **public members** and must:

- Live within one of the defined geographical areas (public constituencies) set out in Appendix 1
- Be aged 16 or over.

Staff Governors

Staff governors are elected by **staff members**. They represent the views of colleagues and patients to the Council. The governor role provides opportunity to help shape how the hospital works, contribute to discussions about its future and raise awareness of issues, concerns and what is working well.

Staff governors must be (subject to specific restrictions) at least:

- Employees of the Trust with a contract of employment with no fixed term or a fixed term of at least 12 months
- Exercising a function for the Trust through qualifying organisations.

Appointed Governors

Appointed Governors represent stakeholder organisations such as the local council or local charities and attend the same meetings and events as public and staff governors.

Restrictions

The Trust's Constitution sets out the restrictions on individuals who can become or continue as a Governor. These include criteria related to bankruptcy and criminal convictions. Full details are set out in the Constitution on the Trust websites.

You can stand for election as a Governor in one or more of the Trusts in the Group.

Term of Office

Subject to proposed changes in government legislation, governors are expected to serve for a term of three years.

Election process and timetable

The election of Public and Staff Governors to the Council of Governors follows the national Model Election Rules and is run by an independent Presiding Officer to ensure that elections are free and fair.

Members who wish to stand for election as a Governor will need to write a nomination statement, maximum 250 words, outlining their reasons for standing for election to be a governor and the skills, knowledge and experience they feel they could bring to the role.

The election process includes:

1. **Election launch** – publication of vacancies and timetable.
2. **Nominations open** – members can put themselves forward.
3. **Governor awareness sessions** – information events for prospective candidates.
4. **Close of nominations** – deadline for nomination forms and candidate statements.
5. **Publication of candidates** – validated statements issued to members.
6. **Ballot period** – members vote (electronically or by post).
7. **Close of poll** – votes counted by independent scrutineers.
8. **Declaration of results** – new Governors announced publicly.
9. **Induction and start of term** – elected Governors receive training and formally take up post.

Appendix 2 sets out the 2026 Norfolk and Waveney University Hospitals Group election timetable and the number of Governors to be elected.

Time commitment and support

The Governor is **voluntary**. Governors are not paid to undertake the role but may claim reasonable expenses in line with the Trust's expenses policy.

The time commitment varies but typically includes:

- Attendance at formal Council of Governors meetings (four per year).
- Attending Council working groups.
- Attending Group Board meetings via Teams, when possible, to observe the Non-Executive Directors holding the Board to account.
- Preparation and reading of papers.
- Briefing, training and development sessions.
- Engagement with members and attendance at Trust events.
- Attending external meetings to bring the hospital perspective to the meeting.
- Taking part in hospital-based patient experience activities.
- Reaching out to into local communities to encourage a wide and representative membership of your Trust and attending membership and engagement events.

Information Technology

Papers for meetings and communications with governors outside meetings are all provided electronically. Those applying to be a governor should be able to use technology, particularly email, iPads and electronic meetings using conference facilities e.g. Microsoft Teams.

In Conclusion

Governors play a **distinctive and important statutory role**. They are neither managers nor campaigners, but **guardians of public accountability and critical friends of the hospital**. They ensure that NHS Foundation Trusts remain focused on patients, communities and long-term sustainability.

For individuals with an interest in the NHS and a commitment to public service, the governor role offers a meaningful way to make a difference at the heart of local healthcare decision-making.

We very much hope that you will decide to stand for election to the Council of Governors of one or more of the James Paget University Hospitals, the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals and The Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn, NHS Foundation Trusts.

Appendix 1: Public and Staff Constituencies

James Paget University Hospitals

- Public Constituencies - Norfolk, Suffolk & Whole of England
- Staff Classes - All Staff

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals

- Public Constituencies - Breckland
Broadland
Great Yarmouth/Waveney
North Norfolk, Norwich
Rest of England
South Norfolk
West Norfolk
- Staff Classes - Admin and Clerical
Clinical Support
Nursing and Midwifery
Contracted Staff and Volunteers
Medical

Queen Elizabeth Hospital King's Lynn

- Public Constituencies - Breckland, North Norfolk and Rest of England
Cambridgeshire/Fenland
South East Lincolnshire
West Norfolk
- Staff Classes - Clinical
Non-clinical

Appendix 2: 2026 election timetable and number of Governors to be elected

NNUH Public Governor vacancies	
Breckland	2
Broadland	2
Great Yarmouth/Waveney	1
North Norfolk	1
Norwich	3
South Norfolk	2
West Norfolk	1
Total	12
NNUH Staff Governors vacancies	
Admin & Clerical	1
Nursing & Midwifery	1
Contracted Staff & Volunteers	1
Medical	1
Total	4

QEHKL Public Governor vacancies	
West Norfolk	6
Cambridgeshire/Fenland	2
South East Lincolnshire	1
Breckland, N Norfolk & Rest of England	1
Total	10
QEHKL Staff Governors vacancies	
Clinical	2
Non-clinical	2
Total	4

JPUH Public Governor vacancies	
Norfolk, Suffolk & Whole of England	10
Total	10
JPUH Staff Governor vacancies	
All Staff	1
Total	1

Subject to proposed changes in government legislation, governors are expected to serve for a term of three years.

Election Timetable

Action	Date
Last Day for Publication of Notice of Election	08/06/2026
Deadline for receipt of nominations	01/07/2026
Publication of Statement of Nominations	02/07/2026
Deadline for candidate withdrawals	06/07/2026
Notice of Poll/Issue of ballot packs	16/07/2026
Close of Poll 5.00pm	10/08/2026
Count and Declaration of Result	11/08/2026

Please note: some Governor seats will be immediately available while others will become available through to December 2026