

# Governor elections:

A simple guide to standing and what  
the role involves

June 2026

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# Welcome

Thank you for thinking about becoming a governor.

Our governors help us stay connected to the people and communities we serve across Torbay and South Devon. This is a voluntary role, but it is an important one. Governors are part of how we are held to account for our leadership, direction and connection to local people.

We currently have public governor vacancies and are keen to hear from people who can help our Council of Governors better reflect our communities.

We would especially welcome interest from:

- people with lived experience of using our services
- people who feel their community or perspective isn't always heard
- younger adults and working-age residents
- carers and people supporting others

You don't need NHS experience. What matters most is your willingness to listen, ask questions and represent the views of your community.

## Key dates at a glance

- Nominations open: **Monday 29 June 2026**
- Nomination deadline: **Monday 27 July 2026 – 5pm**
- Voting period: **Tuesday 18 August to Friday 11 September 2026**
- Results announced: **Monday 14 September 2026**
- Start date: **Thursday 01 October 2026**

# The governor role

## What governors do

Governors do not run the organisation day to day.

Instead, governors:

- represent the interests of members and the public
- hold our Non-Executive Directors to account for how the Board performs
- help ensure strong leadership by appointing the Chair and Non-Executive Directors and approving the Chief Executive
- act as a critical friend — curious, constructive and independent

## What the role is *not*

Being clear about this from the outset matters.

Governors:

- do not manage services or make day-to-day decisions
- do not deal with individual complaints or cases (we will help signpost)
- do not act as individual decision-makers
- are not Non-Executive Directors
- do not represent a single issue or personal agenda

Being clear about these boundaries helps you get the most from the role.

## Is this role right for you?

You may enjoy being a governor if you:

- are interested in your local NHS and how it works
- want to listen to and represent community views
- are comfortable asking questions
- can take a balanced, collective approach

This role may not be right for you if you are looking to:

- make operational decisions about services
- act as a single-issue advocate
- manage individual concerns

## **Time and commitment**

As a minimum:

- four Council of Governors meetings each year
- the Annual Members' Meeting

Many governors also choose to:

- join working groups or committees
- attend additional briefings and events

Expect a small number of meetings each quarter, plus reading time beforehand.

Governors are elected for a term up to three years. Governors may hold office for consecutive terms up to a maximum period of nine years.

## **Who can stand?**

To stand as a governor you must:

- be a member of the Trust
- be 16 years or older
- live in the constituency you wish to represent

Full eligibility and disqualification criteria are included in the appendix.

## **Support we provide**

We want you to feel confident and supported in your role.

You will receive:

- a structured induction programme
- ongoing training and development
- clear briefings and information
- support from our Foundation Trust Office

Practical support includes:

- NHS email account
- reimbursement of reasonable expenses
- free car parking when undertaking governor duties

You are not expected to know everything at the start – we will support you to build your confidence over time.

# About us

## Who we are

We are here for our communities – supporting each person, family and community across Torbay and South Devon to live well.

We provide care in many different ways: in our hospital, in community settings and in people's homes. What matters to us is that care feels joined up and centred around people's lives – not organisational boundaries.

We are a large and complex organisation, caring for people at every stage of life, often supporting those with the most complex health and care needs.

## What we stand for

Our direction is rooted in a simple belief: people should be supported to live well – not just treated when they are unwell.

That means:

- focusing on what matters to individuals and families
- supporting independence wherever possible
- providing high-quality, compassionate care when it's needed
- working with people as partners in their health and wellbeing

## How we work

We bring together a wide range of services – including hospital care, community health services and support delivered in people's homes.

We have a strong history of working in an integrated way with partners, including local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. As our partnerships evolve, we remain focused on what matters most: making care feel joined up from the perspective of the person receiving it.

## Our role in our communities

We are more than a healthcare provider.

As one of the largest employers in Torbay and South Devon, we play an important role in local life – supporting jobs, training and opportunity.

This is often described as being an anchor institution, which means we:

- create local employment and career opportunities
- invest in skills and education
- work with partners to strengthen communities
- contribute to improving health and wellbeing beyond healthcare

## **Working with others**

We work closely with:

- local authorities
- primary care and GPs
- voluntary and community organisations
- wider NHS partners across Devon

No single organisation can meet the needs of our communities alone.

## **Looking ahead**

We know our communities are changing.

Our focus is on:

- strengthening the services people rely on today
- improving how care feels – more connected and accessible
  
- supporting people to stay well for longer
- building sustainable services for the future

## **Why this matters for governors**

Governors are a vital part of this.

Your role helps ensure that:

- we stay connected to the people we serve
- decisions are informed by real experiences
- our organisation remains accountable to our communities

## **The wider context**

The NHS is changing, and expectations of care are evolving.

The government has signalled that NHS governance arrangements may change in the future, including the potential role of councils of governors. At present, nothing has changed in law.

What will not change is the need for organisations to:

- stay connected to the people they serve
- be open and accountable

# How the election works

Our governor elections are run independently by Civica Election Services.

If you're interested in standing, here's what you need to do.

## Step 1: Become a member of the Trust

To stand as a governor, you must be a member of the Trust.

- public members: need to register before the nomination deadline
- staff: are automatically members (unless they have opted out)

You can register quickly online:

[Becoming a member - Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust](#)

If you'd prefer a paper form, contact the Foundation Trust Office and we'll send one to you.

**Important:** you must be registered as a member before the nomination deadline – otherwise you won't be eligible to stand or vote.

## Step 2: Complete your nomination form

Once nominations open, you can complete your form online via the election website:

### Nomination portal:

[www.cesvotes.com/tsd26](http://www.cesvotes.com/tsd26)

If you cannot access the online form, you can request a paper version from Civica Election Services.

### Key deadline:

- **Nomination deadline: 5pm on Monday 27 July 2026**

Nomination forms must be submitted directly to Civica Election Services – not to us.

Late submissions cannot be accepted.

## Step 3: Write your candidate statement

As part of your nomination, you'll need to provide a candidate statement (maximum 250 words).

This is what members will read when deciding who to vote for.

You may find it helpful to include:

- why you want to be a governor
- any relevant experience or perspective
- how you will represent your community

## **Step 4: What happens next**

After nominations close:

- a list of candidates will be published
- if there are more candidates than vacancies, an election will be held
- voting packs will be sent to eligible members

## **Key dates:**

- **voting opens:** Tuesday 18 August 2026
- **voting closes:** Friday 11 September 2026
- **results announced:** Monday 14 September 2026

## **Step 5: If you are elected**

- Successful candidates formally start their role on: **Thursday 01 October 2026**
- You will be invited to attend an induction programme
- You will be supported to get started in the role

## **Need help?**

If you have questions at any stage, we're here to help.

Email: [tsdft.foundationtrust@nhs.net](mailto:tsdft.foundationtrust@nhs.net)

Tel: 01803 655406

# Thinking about standing?

## Join one of our webinars

We know that becoming a governor can feel like a big step.

Our short online webinars are a chance to:

- hear more about the Trust and what we do
- understand the governor role in more detail
- ask questions in an informal and supportive setting
- decide whether the role is right for you

These sessions are open to anyone who is interested in standing – you don't need any previous experience.

## What to expect

Each session lasts around 45 minutes and includes:

- an overview of our organisation and our direction
- a simple explanation of the governor role — including what it is and isn't
- what the time commitment looks like in practice
- time for questions

You'll also hear directly from colleagues who support governors and can talk you through what to expect day to day.

## Webinar dates

We are running a series of online sessions at different times to make it as easy as possible to join:

- Wednesday, 01 July 2026 – 3pm
- Thursday, 09 July 2026 – 8am
- Monday, 13 July 2026 – 12pm
- Tuesday, 21 July 2026 – 5pm

All sessions are held on Microsoft Teams. Email [tsdft.foundationtrust@nhs.net](mailto:tsdft.foundationtrust@nhs.net) or call the FT Office 01803 655406 to book your slot.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## How much time is involved?

At a minimum, you'll be expected to attend four Council of Governors meetings each year and the Annual Members' Meeting.

Many governors also choose to get more involved – for example by:

- joining a committee or working group
- attending informal briefings or networking sessions

These are optional, but a good way to build your understanding and confidence in the role.

## When are meetings held and what if I can't attend?

Meeting dates are shared well in advance so you can plan ahead.

We aim to keep these dates fixed wherever possible. If you're unable to attend a meeting, you just need to let the Foundation Trust Office know in advance.

Regular attendance is important, as it helps you stay connected and contribute fully to the role.

## Will I be paid?

This is a voluntary role, so governors are not paid.

However, you can claim reasonable expenses – for example, travel costs – when carrying out your governor duties.

## How old do you have to be to become a governor?

You need to be at least 16 years old at the time you are nominated.

## What support will I receive?

We want you to feel confident and supported in your role.

You will receive induction, training and ongoing support – including help from our Foundation Trust Office.

## What committees or working groups can governors be involved in?

There are a small number of governor committees and working groups, for example:

- Membership Committee
- Governor Nominations and Remuneration Committee

These meet a few times each year.

Governors can also attend and observe some Trust Committees to build their understanding of how the organisation works.

You'll have the opportunity to express interest in these once you're in post.

## **How will I stay informed and communicate?**

We'll keep in touch with you through:

- your NHS email account
- regular updates and briefings
- meeting papers and information shared in advance

Governors also play an important role in listening to members and communities and feeding back themes and insights.

## **Will my personal information be made public?**

Your name and constituency will be published on our website.

Your personal contact details (such as your address or phone number) will not be shared publicly.

All correspondence with governors is managed through the Foundation Trust Office and your NHS email account.

## **Do I need experience to become a governor?**

No – you don't need any specific qualifications or NHS experience.

What matters most is that you:

- are interested in your local NHS
- are willing to listen and represent others
- are prepared to ask questions and learn

We will provide the training and support you need.

# Appendix A – eligibility and disqualification

There are a number of legal requirements about who can, and cannot, become or remain a governor.

A person cannot become, or continue as, a governor if any of the following apply:

## Financial and legal status

- they are bankrupt, subject to sequestration, or under a debt relief order, and have not been discharged
- they have entered into an arrangement with creditors and have not been discharged
- they are subject to a director disqualification order
- they have failed to repay money owed to the Trust without good reason

## Criminal convictions and conduct

- they have been convicted within the last five years of an offence and received a prison sentence of three months or more (with or without suspension)
- they are required to notify the police under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, or are on a barred list under safeguarding legislation
- they (or an organisation they were a director of) have been convicted of offences under:
  - the Modern Slavery Act 2015
  - the Bribery Act 2010
  - or other legislation relating to fraud, financial crime or terrorism

## Membership and eligibility requirements

- they are not a member of the Trust
- they cease to be a member of the constituency or staff group from which they were elected
- (for appointed governors) the organisation that appointed them withdraws that appointment
- they are under 16 years old at the time of nomination

## Conflicts of interest and roles

- they are a director of the Trust
- they are a governor or director of another NHS organisation (unless agreed in exceptional circumstances by the Chair or through an appointing organisation)
- they hold a role in a local authority that involves formal scrutiny of NHS services
- they are a close family member of a director or governor, or live in the same household

### **Previous conduct in NHS roles**

- they have been dismissed from employment with an NHS organisation within the last two years (except for redundancy or ill health)
- they have previously been removed from office as:
  - a governor of this Trust
  - or a governor of another NHS foundation trust
- they have been removed from an NHS role because it was not in the interests of the NHS, due to non-attendance, or failure to declare an interest

### **Professional and regulatory requirements**

- they are not considered a fit and proper person under the NHS Provider Licence
- they have been removed from professional performer lists under NHS legislation and not reinstated
- they lack the capacity to carry out the duties of a governor (under the Mental Capacity Act 2005)

### **Conduct and behaviour as a governor**

- they have not signed the required declaration agreeing to follow the Governor Code of Conduct
- they have committed a serious breach of the Code of Conduct

### **Other circumstances**

- they are considered a vexatious or persistent complainant or litigant against the Trust without reasonable cause

### **Further information**

These requirements are set out in full in our Trust Constitution – [Trust Constitution](#).

If you are unsure whether any of these apply to you, please contact the Foundation Trust Office – we are happy to talk things through in confidence.

# Appendix B – roles and responsibilities of governors

The role of governors is set out in law, primarily through the NHS Act 2006 and updated legislation.

These responsibilities are specific and important. They are designed to make sure our organisation is well led and accountable to the people it serves – not to duplicate the role of the Board of Directors.

## What governors are responsible for Leadership and appointments

Governors are responsible for ensuring the Trust has strong, effective leadership.

This includes:

- appointing (and, if needed, removing) the Chair
- appointing (and, if needed, removing) the Non-Executive Directors
- agreeing the pay and terms of office for the Chair and Non-Executive Directors
- approving the appointment of the Chief Executive
- appointing (and, if needed, removing) the external auditor

## Oversight and accountability

Governors help make sure our organisation is well led and performing effectively.

This includes:

- holding the Non-Executive Directors to account for how the Board is performing
- representing the interests of members and the wider public
- receiving and reviewing the Trust's annual report and accounts

## Strategy and future plans

Governors play a role in shaping our longer-term direction:

- the Board must take account of governors' views when developing the forward plan
- governors influence thinking about the future by bringing insight from members and communities

## Important decisions requiring governor approval

In some cases, governors have a formal approval role. This includes:

- approving significant transactions
- approving changes to the Trust's Constitution
- approving proposals for mergers, acquisitions, separation or dissolution
- approving increases in non-NHS income of 5% or more
- considering whether private patient activity could impact the Trust's main NHS purpose

For most of these decisions, approval means that at least half of governors taking part in the vote agree.

## **How governors work**

### **Acting collectively**

Governors are expected to:

- bring their own experience, skills and perspectives
- act as a group, not as individuals
- focus on the interests of the organisation as a whole, rather than personal or sectional interests

### **Working with the Board**

It's important to be clear about roles:

- the Board of Directors is responsible for the day-to-day running of the organisation
- governors focus on oversight, accountability and connection to communities

Governors may also be asked by the Board to take on additional responsibilities where this is appropriate.

### **Influencing organisational plans**

Each year, we develop an Annual Plan, setting out priorities for services and delivery.

Governors contribute to this by:

- sharing feedback from members and communities
- offering challenge and reflection on proposed plans

### **Staying connected with members**

A key part of the role is maintaining a strong link between our organisation and its members.

We support this through:

- communication via the Foundation Trust Office
- opportunities to engage with members and communities
- sharing information and updates regularly

### **Standards and conduct**

All governors are expected to:

- follow our organisational policies and procedures
- comply with the Governor Code of Conduct
- act with integrity, openness and respect

This ensures the Council of Governors works effectively and maintains public trust.

# Appendix C – Council of Governors

The Council of Governors consists of elected and nominated Governors who are an important link between our organisation, local people and partners, helping us understand what matters and improve our services.

Four public constituencies have been created to cover our catchment area namely South Hams, Teignbridge, Torbay and the Rest of the Southwest Peninsula.

Governors for these areas are elected by members of those constituencies in accordance with the election rules stated in the FTN Model Election Rules and available on the online governor election platform hosted by Civica Election Services [www.cesvotes.com/tsd26](http://www.cesvotes.com/tsd26). Elections are carried out on behalf of the Trust by an independent election company (Civica Election Services).

There are 18 public Governor positions. In addition, there are elected Staff Governors and Governors appointed by organisations that have an interest in how our organisation is run. There are four Staff Governor positions and nine Appointed Governor positions making up 31 Governor positions in total currently on the Council of Governors.

We hold at least four meetings of the Council of Governors each year, in addition to the Annual Members' Meeting. Members are entitled to attend the Annual Members' Meeting and may also attend routine meetings of the Council of Governors, unless excluded by a resolution on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. We set the dates of the Council of Governors meetings and publish them on our website.

## **Public governors**

Members of the public aged 14 and over can become a Foundation Trust member. Public members are automatically placed in a constituency based on where they live.

To stand as a governor, you must:

- be a member of the Trust
- be 16 or over at the time of nomination
- live in the constituency you wish to represent

Members in each constituency elect governors to represent them.

We have four public constituencies, reflecting our local communities and wider South West catchment area. The current composition is shown below.

Public Constituency	South Hams	3	Governors
Public Constituency	Teignbridge	7	Governors
Public Constituency	Torbay	7	Governors
Public Constituency	Rest of the South West Peninsula *	1	Governor

### Public Constituencies Map



\* all electoral wards in Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset and Bristol, not included in the 3 other Public Constituencies listed above

# Appendix D – key documents

Governors are supported by key documents, including:

- Trust Constitution [Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust Constitution](#)
- Code of Conduct [Code of Conduct for Governors](#)
- Annual Report and Accounts [Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust Annual Report and Accounts 2024/2025](#)
- NHS guidance for governors [BriefGuideForGovernors.pdf](#)

You will be introduced to these during induction.

# Appendix E – example candidate statements

These examples are taken from candidates who have stood in NHS foundation trust elections elsewhere. They are included to give you a sense of how you might structure your own statement. There is no single “right” way to write a candidate statement — what matters most is that it reflects you, your experience and why you want to represent your community.

## Candidate A (public governor)

### Why do you want to be a governor?

I've always had a strong interest in health and education, and I see this as an opportunity for local people to have a real voice in shaping their NHS. I have experience as a school governor and as Chair of Governors at a local college, which I believe would help me contribute effectively.

### What is your connection to the Trust?

My family and I have used services at the Trust over a number of years, including outpatient appointments and eye surgery.

### What would you bring to the role?

I am a good listener and able to reflect the views and concerns of others. I'm focused and able to consider issues carefully before reaching balanced conclusions.

### Declaration of interests

Political party: Labour Party

Financial interests: None

## Candidate B (public governor)

### Why do you want to be a governor?

I want to support the Trust in planning for the future and help ensure that the views of members are reflected as services are reviewed and developed.

### What is your connection to the Trust?

I currently use services provided by the Trust.

### What would you bring to the role?

I bring extensive professional and managerial experience within the NHS at local, regional and national level, including experience as a chief officer.

### Declaration of interests

Political party: None

Financial interests: None

Your statement doesn't need to be formal – what matters most is that it clearly explains who you are, why you want the role and how you would represent your community.