

GOVERNORS AND THE NHS FIVE YEAR FORWARD VIEW

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When NHS foundation trusts were first created, the health and care landscape looked quite different to the one we face today. Changes in people's health needs and expectations, new treatments and technologies, and the funding available now demand a very different approach to how we provide health services.

Yet the foundation trust model has proved durable. This reflects the strength of leadership in foundation trusts and the support and challenge that boards receive from their governors.

The arguments for health and care organisations working more collaboratively are now well rehearsed. It is only by stepping back and making shared decisions about how each local health economy uses its collective resources – its workforce, its estates, its technology and information, and its community assets – that we can be confident of providing clinically and financially sustainable services for local communities.

Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships (STPs) are essentially a way to allow providers (including trusts and primary care providers), commissioners and local authorities to achieve this collaborative goal. Foundation trusts have a critical role in helping build these partnerships. It's vital we bring to bear the skills, knowledge and dedication of their staff to addressing the big priorities for local health systems. That could be by designing more streamlined systems of urgent and emergency care, or improving the experience of people with mental health problems. It could be by bringing together multidisciplinary community-based teams to provide more proactive support for people with complex needs. Or it could be by developing a consistent approach to (say) diabetes management that spans general practice, community and hospital services. It will have to involve taking a more coordinated approach to workforce development, including retention and recruitment of staff.

As described in the recent 'Next Steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View', STPs will need to evolve to achieve these goals. This includes creating governance arrangements that hardwire the collaborative approach into our everyday ways of working, while ensuring we remain clear about the statutory responsibilities and accountabilities of each individual organisation within an STP.

Non-executive directors and governors will have an important role in helping build common purpose across the leadership of local health and care organisations. By representing the public's interests, governors are particularly well placed to provide challenge as to how foundation trusts and their local partners are collaborating in local people's best interests. Governors can question how tangible and focused STPs' goals for quality and health improvement are, and how they are getting greater value – better health and better care – from the public funds collectively entrusted to providers and commissioners.

There are already great examples of community and staff engagement, but every STP will need to raise its game in involving staff, patients and the public. Governors will have invaluable experience and insights into how to do this in a practical and meaningful way.

At their heart, both STPs and accountable care systems are group of providers, commissioners and local authorities committed to acting as one system for their local population's benefit. They do this not by seeking to cloud the

distinct responsibilities of individual organisations for the quality and efficiency of their services, but by recognising that these organisations have to work together to use their collective resources for the greatest good.

Above all else, that will require a determined approach to building and nurturing common purpose and strong, trusting relationships that span traditional sectoral boundaries.