

Briefing: NHS Providers governance survey 2022

This briefing summarises the results of the 2022 NHS Providers governance survey. For details of the survey findings read the full report.

Methodology

This survey was sent to company secretaries and others responsible for corporate governance in NHS trusts and foundation trusts (FTs) in September and October 2022. We received 126 responses from 102 unique trusts, accounting for 48% of the sector. Two thirds of responses were from FTs; all trust types and regions were represented in the survey. The survey explored perspectives on the fundamentals of board governance and included a new set of questions to help us benchmark how providers feel about the development of, and governance within, integrated care systems (ICSs). The report's findings are broken down by provider type, region and trust/FT.

Key findings

Systems

- Respondents reported considerable variation in levels of confidence about their organisation's ability to influence their system(s).
 - Around three in five (62%) respondents agree the trust board can influence the development of the system(s) they are part of (47% agree, 15% strongly agree).
- Free text comments suggest a degree of confusion around the role and responsibilities of Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).
- We found no correlation between those providers where a member of the board is also a partner member on the ICB and those providers reporting feeling more confident about roles, responsibilities, and influence in systems.
- There was also significant variation in whether respondents believed the trust partner member on the ICB would appropriately contribute the perspectives of relevant trusts at that forum.
 - 40% of respondents agreed their board was to some degree confident about the contribution of trust partner members, while 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 22% disagreed. 8% didn't know. Ambulance and acute specialist trusts were most likely to disagree or not know.
- Respondents also reported a significant lack of confidence around risk management and continuous improvement in systems.
 - Only 20% of respondents reported confidence that risk was being managed effectively across their system(s) and 17% were confident that continuous improvement is or will be managed

across the ICS(s). Free text comments suggested in many cases this was because it was early days in the development of ICSs.

- Respondents perceived a lack of confidence on the part of non-executive directors (NEDs) regarding the trust NED role in a system context. Free text comments suggest executive directors are more engaged but face challenges around capacity given their organisational responsibilities.
 - Only a quarter (24%) of respondents agree that trust non-executive directors are confident about their role and responsibilities in the system(s) (19% agree, 5% strongly agree).

Boards

- The survey established a baseline position regarding executive director capacity and capability regarding their roles on a unitary board role and their managerial responsibilities. We will continue to test this annually as system working evolves.
 - 92% of respondents agreed that executive directors are effective in their trust board role and their managerial role (42% strongly agree, 50% agree).
 - 82% agreed that executive directors allocated enough priority to fulfilling their board role (40% agree and 42% strongly agree).
- Respondents flagged the need for constructive board challenge with around a quarter highlighting the need for development and support in this space.
 - Around three quarters (73%) agree (43%) or strongly agree (30%) that executive directors at their trust provide constructive challenge to the board.
- The quality of papers presented to the board and its committees remained a concern for many respondents.
 - Just under half (47%) of respondents reported that they have concerns about the quality of papers presented.

Next steps, feedback and comments

This survey has helped us identify and prioritise the governance support our members require. We are focused on providing actionable good governance advice in the context of sustained pressures and the evolution of system working. The full report is available to download from our website.

Comments and questions on this survey or any governance matters should be directed to:

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