

Council of Governors

19 September 2023

Report Title:	Membership Engagement Plan 2023-24
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Report author(s):	Ann Filby, Trust Secretary
Previously considered by:	Membership and Engagement Working Group

Approval

Discussion

Information

Assurance

Executive summary

Membership activities form part of the Trust's Communications and Engagement Strategy, whilst a separate membership plan has not been developed since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Membership and Engagement Working Group at its meeting held in June 2023 considered a first draft plan. This has now taken account of the Trust's corporate communications and engagement priorities to enable a final draft of the plan to be reviewed at its meeting held on 6 September.

Governors are not able to direct the Trust's financial spending, nor do they have budgetary responsibility, so the plan meets Trust priorities and costs are to be contained within existing budgets.

Implementation will be led by the Committee and Membership Secretary under the direction of the Trust Secretary.

This plan aims to more clearly set out how the Council's general duty to engage is being delivered, and to enable this to be tracked and evidenced. An action plan will be prepared and this will be considered at each meeting of the Working Group. Its effectiveness will be assessed prior to preparation of a new Communications and Engagement Strategy and membership engagement plan during 2024.

Action Required of the Committee/Council

The Council is invited to approve the final membership plan for 2022-24.

Membership Engagement Plan 2023-24

Approved by:
Council of Governors' Membership and Engagement Working Group 6 September 2023
Council of Governors 19 September 2023 TBC

1. Context

ESNEFT's membership is an important element of being an NHS Foundation Trust, ensuring that staff and local people's views are represented in how the Trust operates.

Individuals who wish to be elected to the Council of Governors or appointed as a Non-Executive Director are required to be a member.

Membership and Constituencies, how to apply, eligibility and restrictions are contained within the Trust's Constitution, August 2020. The Staff and Public Constituencies are divided as follows:

Constituency	Class	Ward areas
Public	Colchester	All in Colchester Borough Council
Public	Rest of Essex	Tendring District Council Basildon District Council Braintree District Council Brentwood Borough Council Castle Point Borough Council Chelmsford Borough Council Epping Forest District Council Harlow District Council Maldon District Council Rochford District Council Uttlesford District Council Southend on Sea Unitary Authority Thurrock Unitary Authority
Public	Ipswich	All in Ipswich Borough Council
Public	Rest of Suffolk and South Norfolk	Babergh District Council Forest Heath District Council Mid Suffolk Council St Edmundsbury Borough Council East Suffolk Council Waveney District Council
Public	All areas of England excluding areas mentioned above	All
Staff	Colchester	Those whose main place of work is at the Colchester Hospital site, Essex County Hospital, Clacton Hospital, Harwich Hospital, Halstead or any locations not listed above that are within the county of Essex
Staff	Ipswich	Those whose main place of work is at the Ipswich Hospital site, Blue Bird Lodge Community Hospital, Felixstowe Community Hospital, Aldeburgh Community Hospital or any locations not listed above that are within the county of Suffolk.

2. General duties of the Council of Governors

The Council has two main functions/general duties in legislation¹, included at paragraph 16 of the Trust Constitution, and as most recently described in The Code of Governance for NHS provider trusts 2022:

NHS foundation trusts are public benefit corporations and their boards of directors have a framework of local accountability through members and a council of governors. The NHS foundation trust council of governors is responsible for holding the non-executive directors individually and collectively to account. In turn, NHS foundation trust governors are accountable to the members who elect them and must represent their interests and the interests of the public.

The Council's representative role is now wider than patients and the public local to ESNEFT and includes the whole population of the Integrated Care System – Suffolk and North East Essex.

In fulfilling the Code's requirements of good governance, it states: *Satisfactory engagement between the board of directors, the council of governors and members of foundation trusts, and patients, service users and the public is crucial to the effectiveness of trusts' corporate governance approach.*

The Trust must take steps to ensure that governors are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they require to undertake their role. A disclosure is required for inclusion in the Annual Report on how governors have canvassed the opinion of the Trust's members and the public and, for the body that appointed governors represent, with regard to the Trust's forward plan.

3. Oversight of membership engagement

Delivery of the Trust's engagement responsibilities is through the Board approved Communications and Engagement strategy 2022-24. That document sets out the strategic direction for communications and engagement and what patients, staff, the public and stakeholders – including our membership – can expect from us.

The ESNEFT approach is *the active participation of citizens, patients and carers and their representatives and foundation Trust members in the development of health services and as partners in their own health care.*

These are the strategy objectives – delivery of the Council's general duty will form part of this wider strategy to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

The demographic breakdown of the population will be considered carefully in ESNEFT communications to ensure we are always inclusive. The team works with partner organisations across the Integrated Care System to secure delivery of health and social care service transformation to meet the needs of our local population.

- To **raise the profile** of ESNEFT and positively promote its work and reputation.
- To **proactively promote** ESNEFT as a place to work and receive care.
- To make sure patients and other stakeholders **receive timely, relevant and accurate information** about ESNEFT.
- To **listen** to stakeholders, respond to their views and adapt our communication methods to suit their needs.
- To **maintain public confidence** in the care and services provided by ESNEFT.
- To **maintain good relations** with the media and provide media handling advice, training and support to the Chief Executive, the executive committee, Board, senior managers and staff across ESNEFT.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/7/part/4/enacted>

4. The data

The membership database is provided by Civica UK Limited Engagement Solutions supported by staff details via the national Electronic Staff Record.

Membership is made up of our local community and our staff since the merger to become ESNEFT on 1 July 2018. Staff are members unless they choose to opt out.

On 31 March 2023, the staff membership is 9,315 and the public membership is 10,253, giving a total of 19,568².

5. Communications and Engagement Strategy - membership vision and priorities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was challenging for governors to engage with the membership and local people. It is now a good opportunity to reconsider what we want to achieve.

The Strategy vision was that by 2023 the ESNEFT public membership will be a more representative and active community of patients, citizens and local voluntary and community organisations who work with us to improve and support our services. This work has been ongoing at a corporate communications and engagement level since the approval of the strategy. A separate membership plan – this plan – is now required to set out how we will engage and involve our members who have indicated that, as a group, they have a specific interest in our day-to-day work.

The activities set out below are those requiring minimal additional financial investment, that is achievable within existing budgets. Any additional expenditure would require a business case to be developed and considered alongside all other Trust requests.

The priorities previously agreed are as follows, with progress to date set out. Further actions are proposed, which will form the basis of the new action plan to implement this plan.

1. **We will encourage more members to vote in governor elections, contribute to transformation projects and take part in engagement events and advisory groups, including annual members' events to report on progress and consult on our plans.**

Actions undertaken:

- Advice taken from Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in August 2022 on the imagery to be utilised in the Council nomination/election paperwork. The aim was to maximise nominations received from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and reflect the diverse community we work with and serve so that together we can ensure the views of everyone are heard and well represented
- Elections August-October 2022 widely publicised via social media, press release, microsite operated by Civica, independent election provider, and our staff through general communications
- Report of voting shows turnout rates between 8.5% and 14.3%. Whilst disappointing, these compare well to most Trusts' range of 8-15% as advised by our election provider
- Members' views sought in relation to annual quality priorities – 2022/23 and 2023/24
- Members invited to Annual General Meeting/Annual Members' Meeting 2022

² Source Annual Report 2022/23

- New quarterly Get Involved e-newsletter led by the communications and engagement team with input from the Trust secretariat and governors. First issue August 2023 covering Council activities including Non-Executive Director appointments and Suffolk Show engagement, membership, volunteers, charity, highlighting all opportunities

Proposed actions:

- a. Get Involved newsletters to be implemented, circulated electronically two to four times each year following publication of ESNEFT Life magazine. Council and membership content to be considered at each of the Membership and Engagement Working Group meetings – first issue released August 2023.
- b. A programme of planned governor engagement sessions implemented four-six times each financial year supporting Trust priorities and participation in campaigns led by the communications and engagement team:
 - Highlight opportunities for staff, patients and local people to engage with ESNEFT, signposting to Trust services such as Patient Advice and Liaison Service
 - Ask 3 Questions, to encourage patients to ask about their options and understand what's happening to them, helping them to feel in control of their care
 - Extension of the NHS App
- c. Development of a customer service charter and how we could improve, i.e., welcome on arrival on wards, answering phones

Pull up banner and posters/social media images to be secured; timing to be confirmed for appropriate months/locations and not at the same time as externally sourced charity fundraisers.

2. We will improve the ways we communicate with our members about the positive changes we are making and the challenges we face.

Actions undertaken:

- Governors attended Suffolk Show, Wednesday 31 May and Thursday 1 June 2023, and Tendring Show, Saturday 8 July, with a single question to gain feedback: *What would you like to see in the NHS of the future?*
- Get Involved e-newsletter – as mentioned at (a)
- Membership engagement plan finalised with Associate Director of Engagement – this plan.

Proposed actions:

- a. Implement a quarterly, short key messages briefing for governors from November 2023 to enable consistent messaging and support for engagement undertaken, for consideration at Membership and Engagement Working Group meetings
 - What have we heard from local people and staff?
 - What are they concerned about?
 - How can they help?

First one – November 2023 to reflect on year so far, industrial action, waiting lists and focus on patient safety, preparing for seasonal pressures

This will support governors in their role to represent the views of our staff and our community and enable them to be fully informed when talking to local people. The corporate communications and patient experience teams respectively will lead on Trust and system-wide engagement strategies and implementing the Patient Experience and Carers Strategy implementation with regard to patients who have experienced care.

- b. A single, easy to use feedback mechanism to be agreed for all governor engagement
- c. Map governors' existing engagement to ensure that duplication is minimised, we are being fully inclusive, feedback to ESNEFT is not confused with work being undertaken by the Integrated Care Board/within primary care and patients aren't overburdened
- d. Work with Staff Governors to confirm their future representative role, providing the same opportunities that are available to public members.

3. We will develop a programme of health talks – creating more opportunities for patients and communities to talk with us about their health needs and experiences, as well as learn about the developments in medical care at ESNEFT.

Actions:

- Content added to first Get Involved newsletter August 2023: we are considering reinstating health talks, let us know what you would like to hear about.
- Research and development and innovation presentation to Annual Members' Meeting/ Annual General Meeting, November 2022.

Proposed actions:

- a. Consider membership/community feedback and schedule/confirm publicity for two to three talks each year, avoiding August and the winter months.

4. Our recruitment priorities for the next three years are to retain our current members and to build our membership in those areas and from those communities who are under-represented. This includes the Tendring District Council area, some seldom heard groups including minority ethnic communities and younger people under 21 years of age.

Proposed actions:

Additional work is required to become more inclusive and for governors and members to be more representative of our community.

- a. Membership reports to be considered by the Membership and Engagement Working Group on a six-monthly basis with effect from October 2023, to enable targeted engagement in the right areas
 - i. Outcome to focus the location of governor and other engagement opportunities
- b. Further action required when planning and communicating for the next scheduled governor elections in 2024 to enhance the diversity of the Council.

5. We will use ESNEFT’s membership to formally strengthen our engagement with voluntary and community groups and patient charities linked to our Trust. We aim to improve two-way communication, providing better information to voluntary organisations about our work, but also promoting the important support these organisations provide local people and our patients.

Actions:

- Get Involved e-newsletter – as 1a – acting on feedback received.

6. Delivery, impact and measurement

Progress on delivery of the Trust’s Communications and Engagement strategy is monitored through the People and Organisational Development Committee, reporting to the Board of Directors through the Key Issues Report.

The Director of Communications and Engagement, Director of Governance and Trust Secretary will work together to ensure appropriate assessment of governors’ contributions and delivery of the Council of Governors’ general duty. This will include a process for recording and evidencing governors’ contributions.

The Committee and Membership Secretary will be responsible for implementation of this plan, as directed by the Trust Secretary.

Progress will be included in the Trust’s Annual Report to meet regulatory requirements and those of The Code of Governance.

7. Review date

A revised plan will be prepared as part of the next review of the Trust’s Communications and Engagement Strategy during 2024.