

Hospital Trusts have Governors on their Boards who have been elected by members of the Trust (which anyone can be who lives in the area the hospital Trust serves), and by hospital staff.

NHS Improvement's Governors' Guide [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/284473/Governors\\_guide\\_August\\_2013\\_UPDATED\\_NOV\\_13.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284473/Governors_guide_August_2013_UPDATED_NOV_13.pdf) says this is,

*"[T]o ensure that people from the communities served by the trusts can take part in governing them. NHS foundation trust governors are the direct representatives of local communities."*

**So let's make sure our elected Trust governors represent our communities' interests properly.**

To do that, we all need to become members of our NHS Trusts - whether hospitals, mental health, community services or ambulance Trusts. Because the elected governors are accountable to the Trust members - if we want to hold them to account, we have to be members.

### **How to become an NHS Trust Member**

If you don't know which is your local NHS Foundation Trust, there is a list: [NHS TRUST DIRECTORY](#)

Click on your local NHS Foundation Trust and then scroll down until you find the website for your Trust.

Click on your Trust website link. Find the contact email and send them an inquiry about how to become a member - and include the url of their Members section of the website as the origins of your enquiry.

### **Governors' statutory duties and powers. Surprising powers that could be of great use to campaigners.**

These include:

- In preparing the NHS Foundation Trust's Forward Plan, the board of directors must have regard to the views of the council of governors
- Hold the non-executive directors to account for the performance of the Board of Directors
- Represent the interests of the members of the Trust as a whole and the interests of the public
- Approve significant transactions
- Decide whether the trust's non-NHS work would interfere with its principal purpose, which is to provide goods and services for the health service in England
- Help the council of governors to decide whether to propose a vote on the trust's or directors' performance

## Make your elected Governors more than a tick box exercise

Despite these significant duties and powers, one elected hospital Trust Governor said:

*"I think we are simply a tick box exercise. I don't feel we have any real influence and I've never felt I've made a difference to a Trust decision of any significance. The membership elect the councillors by email ballot but we have no contact with them so have no route to be accountable to them."*

So perhaps if people become members of the hospital Trust and start contacting the elected Governors with their views, in order to help them develop their own views and advise the policy and aims of the Trust, that could be interesting?

Particularly with regard to Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships and Accountable Care Systems/Organisations.

## How hospital trusts are involved in STPs/ACOs

The national failure to fund the NHS properly and to carry out adequate workforce planning are the root causes of the decision to reconfigure many hospitals.

We have no confidence that government decisions to under-fund the NHS and national NHS workforce planning failures are appropriate reasons for reconfiguring our NHS and social care services.

Two years ago NHS and social care organisations - including hospitals Trusts - were told by NHS England to prepare for upwards of £22bn cuts by 2020/1 compared to what spending levels would have been then if cuts were not imposed. The operations of the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (now Partnerships and in many areas, soon to be Accountable Care Systems or Organisations) have been carried out in a secretive a fashion, without scrutiny or public consultation.

Hospital Trusts have been affected and have grouped into Associations of Acute Trusts which meet in private and publish no minutes.

It is unclear whether:

- Membership Council governors are aware of their statutory roles and responsibilities and additional powers.
- Whether and how they have exercised them during the last few years when Sustainability and Transformation Plans/Partnerships and now Accountable Care Organisations/Systems have been in development.

By becoming a member of your Local Trust, you will be able to demand that they improve their exercise of their roles, responsibilities and additional powers.

NHS Providers - the Association of Hospital Foundation Trusts - themselves want greater clarity about what on earth is going on. And they keep on stressing the need for support and collaboration of members - so we should use their invitation.

Read this: [SUPPORTING STPS & Accountable Care](#)

**NOTE on Future ACO work:** NHS Improvement and NHS England are reputedly cooking up new forms of NHS trusts to become Accountable Care Organisations, according to HSJ reporter Dave West - although that's another story. <https://www.hsj.co.uk/commissioning/new-form-of-nhs-organisation-planned-for-first-acos/7021292.article> He said this latest wheeze was to avoid VAT problems and potentially reduce political controversy about the private sector's role in ACOs.