

MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY

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Membership Strategy

FORWARD

In 2006, SEPT became one of the first mental health and learning disability Trusts in the country to become an NHS Foundation Trust. SEPT currently provides an extensive range of mental health and learning disability services for the people of Bedfordshire, Essex and Luton and expects to provide community services from 2011/2012 onwards.

NHS Foundation Trusts are run locally, not by the Government, so are able to work closely with their communities, involving patients and the public to develop services in the way that best suits the needs of local people.

Foundation trusts are public leaders in improving quality in health services. They are part of the NHS – yet decisions about what they do and how they do it are driven by independent boards. Boards listen to their elected governors and respond to the needs of their members – patients, staff and the local community.

Foundation trusts provide what the health service wants, yet are also free to invest quickly in the changes the local community needs, in striving to be the best, and in putting their patients first.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Our Membership Strategy sets out our plans to:

- recruit, maintain and develop an active and engaged membership;
- work with communities and voluntary organisations to achieve better engagement;
- build connections to raise mental health and learning disability awareness and deal with the associated stigma and social inclusion;
- sustain, develop and promote local community health services in those areas where SEPT acquires them; and
- involve our members in actively participating and shaping future services.

The Strategy also defines who our members are and the role they play in our organisation.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This framework outlines how the Trust will engage with local communities to encourage people to become members. The document sets out the benefits of membership and what the Trust undertakes to do to encourage and develop the membership.

It also outlines the governance arrangements and identifies where membership sits in these arrangements.

There are two categories for membership; public and staff.

3.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

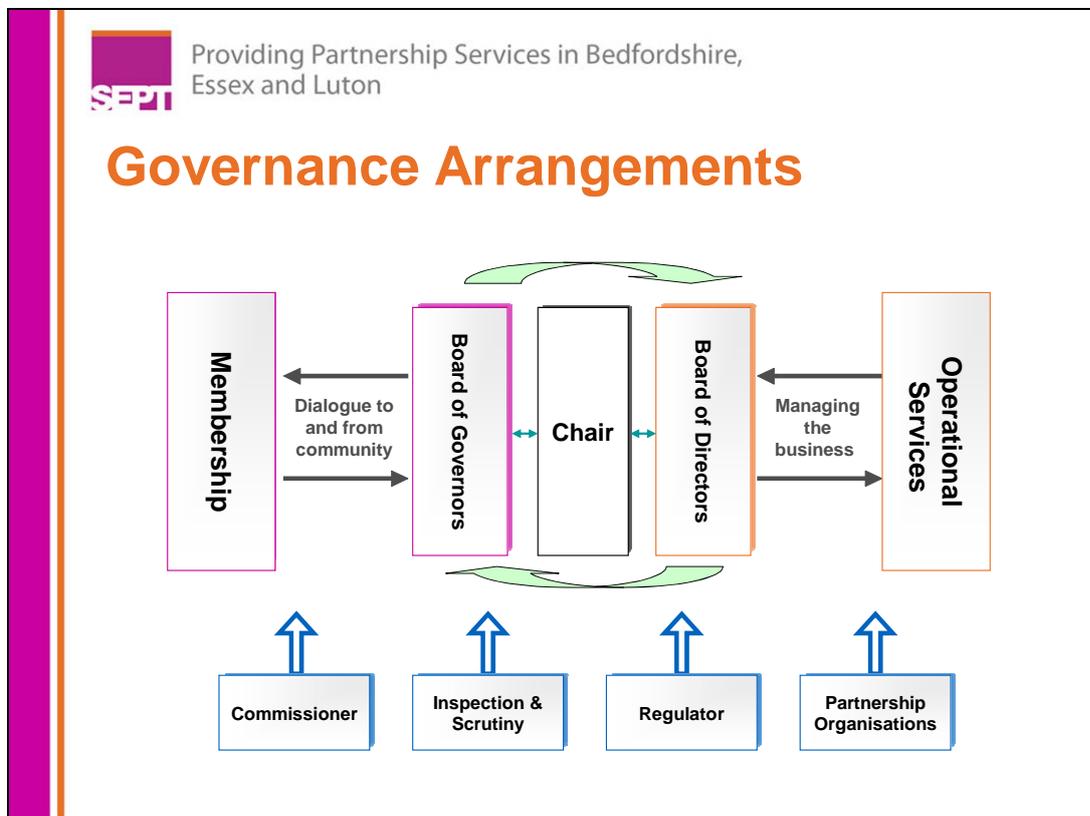
The Trust now has a membership database which includes Bedfordshire & Luton and Essex members. Membership Office support is provided in both areas.

4.0 BODY OF THE FRAMEWORK HOW WE ACHIEVE GOALS SET

Why we need members?

As an NHS foundation trust we will engage with our local community and encourage local people to become members of the Trust. Local people – our communities, services users (and their families) and staff – can join us in deciding how we will work to improve services and enhance our service users' experience.

Members are a crucial part of the Foundation Trust. Members elect governors who in turn appoint the chair and non-executive directors of the Foundation Trust. The chair, non executive directors and executive directors are collectively called the Board of Directors. The directors are accountable to the governors for ensuring the Trust delivers services in a responsive way to the local community. The diagram below shows how the organisation, through its directors, is accountable to the members (local community).



In addition, members by getting involved through membership activities organised by the Trust, are able to influence how mental health and learning disability services are provided.

Therefore, representative, engaged membership is at the very heart of local, accountable NHS Foundation Trusts.

Who can be a member?

There are few specific requirements and no special skills or experience required to be a member of our NHS Foundation Trust. Members just need to be interested in our services and the people we care for.

The Trust has two categories of membership:

Public Members

The Trust is committed to encouraging our service users, their carers and families, as well as the broader community of Bedfordshire, Essex and Luton to join as members.

Public membership is divided into eight areas. For example if you live in Southend you become a public member for the Southend area (Constituency):

- Bedford
- Central Bedfordshire
- Luton
- Rest of Essex
- South Essex
- Southend
- Thurrock
- West Essex

Membership is open to anyone:

- who is over 12 years of age; and,
- resides in the areas covered by Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, Harlow District Council, Luton Borough Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Thurrock Unitary Council and Uttlesford District Council.

If you meet the above criteria you are eligible to become a member of our Foundation Trust.

(Some exclusions and termination of membership apply, please see appendix 1 for details.).

Staff Members

- All staff on permanent or fixed term contracts that run for 12 months or longer are automatically members (unless they opt out).
- Staff who are seconded from our partnership colleagues and working within our Trust on permanent or fixed term contracts that run for 12 months or longer are also automatically eligible to become members.

The staff membership is divided into the following groups:

- medical practitioners
- social workers
- support staff
- nursing
- other clinical specialities
- Community staff

Benefits of being a member:

To ensure that The Trust is truly responsive to the needs of local people, we will encourage members to be involved in a range of activities that will contribute to the development of the services provided by the Trust and the well-being of the community served by the Trust.

Members will have the opportunity to:

- influence future services by providing feedback to the Board of Governors on the Trust's plans;
- vote for representatives on the Board of Governors;
- stand for election as a governor (must be over 16 years of age);
- stand for appointment as a non executive director or chair of the Trust;
- advocate for and publically champion mental health, learning disability and community health services issues;
- promote good mental and physical health within the community;
- recruit other members to the NHS Foundation Trust;
- receive information on Trust services and developments; and,
- attend meetings, local workshops and other community activities to develop an understanding and awareness of mental health and learning disability issues and Trust services.

We appreciate that not all members will want to be active to the same extent or in the same way. Some members may want to just be involved in areas that affect their immediate locality or specific interest. Therefore our membership database has been developed to identify members with specific interests, making membership meaningful to the individual.

Members will not receive any payment or preferential clinical treatment. Local people and staff members, who choose not to become a member of the NHS Foundation Trust, will have the same access to local NHS services and will not be discriminated against. All members will have the same rights but will have different interests, which will make their membership meaningful to them.

The Trust is required by law to hold a public register of members. Members can decide how they want to be contacted or request to have their names removed. Where possible, our preferred method of contact would be through email in order to reduce spending costs.

What the Trust will undertake to do:

The Trust recognises that it needs to encourage people in local communities to want to be a member of our Foundation Trust. We are keen to use the opportunity of

having greater community involvement in our activities to promote good health, improve understanding of mental illness and to help overcome barriers like stigma and greater social inclusion. This has already proved to be a successful reason to encourage people to become a member.

The Trust will ensure the following is undertaken to achieve this:

- recruit and maintain an engaged membership;
- ensure membership is representative of the communities we serve;
- encourage Trust staff, as champions of mental health and learning disability services, to talk to their service users, friends and family about Trust membership;
- work with existing forums and links with the community that the Trust already has, with services users; carers; partner organisations; community, voluntary sector and staff networks, in attracting and building a membership representing the people of Bedfordshire, Essex and Luton;
- work with minority groups and those experiencing social exclusion;
- seek partnerships with likeminded organisations and key stakeholders in the community and pursue co-operative projects which resolve important local issues;
- communicate with members through the Trust website and by sending correspondence by post and email;
- distribute a membership magazine(*1 in 4*) to all members and local community groups, three times a year;
- work with members to eradicate the stigma surrounding mental health;
- develop mental health promotion information for governors and members;
- invite members to local meetings, workshops and health promotions covering specific topics;
- ensure all new members receive a membership welcome pack;
- encourage members to participate in the election of governors; and,
- appropriately resource the membership office and provide information and support to governors and members.

The Role of Governors and Elections:

The Trust will be directly accountable to its members through the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors will represent local views and have the right to voice these views on future strategy of the organisation.

The Board of Governors is made up of governors who are appointed by partner and stakeholder organisations and governors who are elected by the Trust's staff and public members. Any member of the Trust can nominate themselves to stand as a Governor if they are over 16 years of age.

All governors will hold terms of office as set out in the Trust's constitution. (Normally three years with a maximum six year term of office).

Voting by members in elections is a good indicator of an active membership. The Trust will therefore take steps to ensure that candidates and members actively participate in the election of public and staff governors.

Future Membership:

The Trust aspires to have approximately 23,000 public and staff members throughout Bedfordshire, Essex and Luton by 2013 who will be representative of the local communities that we serve. This will be achieved through a number of initiatives as set out in the action plans and will be regularly reviewed through the Membership Development Strategy Committees in order to make sure that the Trust is reaching its membership targets.

5.0 ACTION PLAN

The Membership Strategy will be achieved through the action plan attached in appendix 2:

- Membership Engagement and Recruitment Action Plan

6.0 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The Strategy will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Governors to ensure that all objectives are being met. A report on the outcomes will be presented to members of the Trust.

The Board of Governors will take responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of the Strategy and ensuring it remains meaningful and relevant as the membership of the NHS Foundation Trust grows and matures.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The Membership Strategy outlines the actions the Trust needs to take to ensure a representative and engaged membership.

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