Becoming a foundation trust governor
A guide for members

- Why have governors?
- What do governors do?
- What should I do if I decide to stand for election?
Demand continues to increase for our service – roughly by five per cent each year – and the spectrum of patient need that we are now seeing is broader than ever before. It ranges from critically ill and injured patients suffering from conditions such as trauma, stroke and coronary heart disease, to patients at the other end of the spectrum with less serious healthcare needs such as minor injuries and illnesses.

We must change and adapt in order to meet the changing needs of all of our patients – no matter what their condition or healthcare need – and deliver continuous improvements in patient care. We are committed to driving that change in order to deliver the best possible care, and therefore outcomes, for patients across Surrey, Sussex and Kent.

Delivering world class outcomes for patients is what we aspire to do; our patients deserve and expect nothing less. We are confident we will achieve this goal and becoming a foundation trust will help us.

Foundation trust status will give us the financial and operating freedoms needed to make the improvements that our patients need and deserve at a much quicker pace, meaning higher quality care for all. It also means that these changes will be made with true involvement from local people, patients and staff – our members – meaning that we will directly be meeting the needs of local communities.

The role of governor is an important one, providing a direct link between the Trust and local communities. As a governor you will engage with local members to gather their feedback and views and ensure their voice is heard by the Trust. You will have the opportunity, as part of the Council of Governors, to work with the Board of Directors to help shape the Trust’s plans for the future and therefore be directly involved in achieving our vision of world class services for patients.

We have developed this handbook to explain the role of governor in more detail – we hope you find it useful.

Please help us to achieve our vision and provide world class services to local people.

Mike Harris   Paul Sutton
Chairman   Chief Executive
SECamb as a foundation trust

Foundation trusts are a relatively new type of NHS trust that are accountable to the communities they serve rather than to the government. Becoming a foundation trust involves major changes in the way the Trust is governed, with our members and governors playing a vital role in this new governance structure.

SECamb has a public membership of around 5,000 people, drawn from all over the South East Coast region. These people may have a personal or professional interest in SECamb, they may be a patient or a carer, or they may simply be members of the public who want to know more about their local ambulance service.

When we become a foundation trust, SECamb will not only have a membership but also a Council of Governors. All our public and staff members are entitled to stand for election to the Council of Governors. Public members will vote for governors in their geographical constituency and staff members will elect governors according to their role, e.g. operational or non-operational.

Benefits of becoming a foundation trust

- You will have a greater say in helping us to develop a service which reflects the needs of local people – designing today the service that you want tomorrow.
- There will be improved care for patients. This is because, as a foundation trust, we will be able to introduce new technology and treatments much more quickly, and provide more education, training and development for staff.
- We will be able to work more closely with local communities to provide more advice and education on conditions such as stroke and heart disease, helping local people learn how to save a life.
- We will be better able to take into account the varied range of needs within our communities, by making sure our membership represents all the communities we serve.
- There will be more opportunities than ever before for our staff, including more training, education and development, as well as more opportunity for progression.
- We can increase our investment in new services, upgrading buildings and emergency vehicles as well as developing our staff.
- As a foundation trust, we will have more freedom to introduce new ideas, technology and techniques as we will be able to make decisions much more quickly. We won’t have to get permission from other organisations such as the Department of Health to change and improve our services, which means we can respond better to our patients’ changing needs.
The Council of Governors

The Council of Governors will work in conjunction with the Trust’s Board of Directors to steer the Trust forward, and will be involved in developing its plans for the future as well as advising on local health issues.

The Council will be made up of 26 people in total, plus a Chair, who is also the Chair of the Board of Directors. There will be 14 elected public governors, four elected staff governors, and eight appointed governors (appointed by the Board of Directors) from organisations that SECAmb works closely with.

### Staff governors (elected)
- Operational: 3
- Non-operational: 1

### Public governors (elected)
- Brighton and Hove: 1
- East Sussex: 2
- Kent: 4
- Medway: 1
- Surrey (including the parts of Berkshire and north-east Hampshire that we serve): 4
- West Sussex: 2

### Appointed governors
- Commissioner: 1
- Local authority: 1
- Voluntary organisation or charity: 1
- Regional Resilience Forum: 1
- NHS acute trust: 2
- NHS mental health or social care trust: 1
- University: 1

### Why become a governor?

If you have an interest in, and commitment to, improving public health, increasing the public’s understanding and awareness of the ambulance service, and want a challenging role that can make a difference, then becoming a SECAmb governor may be for you. You do not need to be a health specialist.

SECAmb does not choose its public or staff governors – they are elected by our members – but we do have an idea of what we’d like our Council and governors to be like. We are looking for an active, engaged and challenging Council of Governors; one that truly engages with members and ensures their views are heard and considered in the development of services.

SECAmb has a long history of involving patients and the public, and as a foundation trust this will happen in a formal way through the new governance structure. Governors will represent the voice of the people in their constituencies, protect and promote their interests, and will make and scrutinise decisions to ensure they are in the best interests of patients.

The role of the governor will develop over time as we work with our governors to ensure their skills and commitment are effectively channelled for the benefit of patients.

### Roles and responsibilities of governors

In addition to engaging with members and ensuring their voice is heard, governors will have certain statutory duties that they are expected to perform as part of their role.

Governors should not incur personal expense in discharging the role of governor, and will be reimbursed for all reasonable expenses.

### Statutory duties

The statutory responsibilities of governors as a collective are:

- Appoint and, if necessary, remove the Chairman and Non-Executive Directors.
- Set the pay levels and conditions of employment for the Chairman and Non-Executive Directors.
- Approve the appointment of the Chief Executive (the Council does not appoint the Chief Executive).
- Receive the Trust’s Annual Report and Accounts and the Auditor’s Report.
- Approve the Trust’s Annual Report and Accounts and the Auditor’s Report.
- Appoint or remove the Trust’s Auditors.

When preparing the SECAmb Business Plan that sets out our plans for the coming years, legislation also states that the Trust Board of Directors “must have regard to the views of the Council of Governors”. In practice, this means that the Council will have a role to play in influencing and shaping the development of the Business Plan.
Governors are expected to be committed to the goals, aspirations and philosophy of the Trust.

Public governors will also be expected to make a time commitment to the Trust. It is difficult to put an exact figure on this but we would expect it to be in the region of three days per month (minimum). The time would be spent undertaking the various responsibilities of a governor, including attending the formal Council of Governors meetings which take place at least four times a year. In addition, the Council will have working groups, of which some governors will be members, which meet on a regular basis to help the full Council fulfil its statutory and engagement duties. From time to time, governors will also be required to attend training events, seminars and community events. Every effort will be made to ensure venues are accessible and that the locations of meetings vary in order to ensure fairness and equity of opportunity as far as possible.

Advisor

Being a governor is not about ‘rubber stamping’ decisions made by the Board of Directors. The Council of Governors should advise the Board of Directors as to public opinion and be guardians of the public interest. They should make suggestions and when necessary question Board decisions.

As the key link between the Trust and the community we serve, public governors should advise the Trust about the needs of patients and the community at large, as well as suggesting ways of involving patients and the public in developing and delivering services. The staff governors will adopt the same advisory role on behalf of our workforce. All governors will be expected to ensure that the views of the constituencies they represent are heard and fed back to the Trust. SECAmb will work with governors to support them to do this effectively, for example by providing meeting venues and a dedicated area of the SECAmb website.

Ambassador and guardian

As ambassadors, governors should promote the work of the Trust within their constituencies and promote current health awareness campaigns. This may involve attending and/or speaking at local events or holding local surgeries for patients, members of the public or staff. Governors should be keen to recruit more people as members of the Trust so the widest possible range of views can be heard.

As guardians, governors should ensure that the Trust is run in a way that reflects its purpose, and complies with the obligations placed on it as a foundation trust. Governors will receive training to enable them to carry out this responsibility.

Governor Code of Conduct

As ambassadors and guardians for the Trust, governors should conduct themselves in ways that is fitting for a public role. All governors must sign a declaration stating that they agree to follow the Trust’s Code of Conduct for Governors. In brief, this states that governors should:

- Contribute to the workings of the Council of Governors in order for it to fulfil its role and functions.
- Act in the best interests of the Trust and its members.
- Adhere to the Trust’s rules and relevant policies and support its objectives, in particular those of retaining foundation trust status.
- Actively support the vision and aims of the Trust.
- Not use the role to pursue personal or political agendas.
- Recognise that the role is a collective one. Governors exercise collective decision-making on behalf of all patients, members, local public and staff.
- Note that the functions allocated to governors are not of a managerial nature.
- Recognise that, other than when attending meetings and events as a governor, governors have no rights or privileges over any other member of the Trust or member of the public.
- Value and respect other governors and all members of staff.
- Respect the confidentiality of information received in the role.
- Attend meetings of the Council of Governors, members’ meetings and training events, on a regular basis, in order to carry out the role.
- Abide by the “Nolan Principles of Public Life”: Selflessness; Integrity; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Honesty and Leadership.

Representing members

As mentioned earlier in this handbook, one of the key roles governors will play is to ensure that the voice of members is heard in SECAmb. We’re not planning to exclude people who are not governors or members from consultation and communication – far from it – but governors’ input provides a clear and formal structure for listening to and involving patients, the public and staff. SECAmb has a strong track record of effective involvement but governors’ input provides a clear and formal structure for listening to and involving patients, the public and staff. SECAmb has a strong track record of effective involvement and we wish to work with our governors to build on this as a foundation trust.

Foundation trusts use various methods to enable governors and members to interact, and SECAmb will work with governors to facilitate this appropriately. Methods may include the web, email, constituency meetings, seminars and surgeries. Governors should also be seeking to increase the number of members in their constituency in line with the Trust’s target membership. Having a broad and diverse membership will help us be sure we’re listening to all groups within our communities, including those that are seldom heard.

SECAmb will provide lots of support for governors. The Company Secretary will be the first point of contact for governors once they are elected, and will support governors in their role. The Trust’s Membership Manager will also be available, through the Company Secretary, to support membership recruitment and engagement activities. Governors may also choose to work together, particularly in constituencies where there is more than one governor, to inform people about SECAmb, membership, and to engage with existing members.
Am I eligible to become a governor?

All members of SECAmb are eligible to nominate themselves for election to the Council of Governors, with the following exceptions. You may not become an elected governor if:

- You have been declared bankrupt;
- You have been sentenced to prison for three or more months;
- You are under 16 years old on the nomination date;
- You are the spouse, partner, parent or child of a member of the Board of Directors of the Trust;
- You are a member of a local authority’s scrutiny committee covering health matters;
- You are a councillor or director of another NHS Foundation Trust or NHS Trust;
- You have been dismissed from paid employment with a health service body in the previous two years (not including redundancy);
- You are required to register under the Sex Offender Act 1997 or are considered unsuitable (by the Board of Directors) on the basis of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures.

Governors are expected to be in post for up to three years (one term). After the term, they can choose to stand for re-election for up to a further three years. After two terms they are no longer eligible for re-election. Governors can resign at any time, but will be encouraged to see out the full term of their appointment where possible. In certain circumstances (for example during initial elections or by-elections), the Trust may encourage nominations from people who wish to stand for shorter periods of time.

If you are not already a member of SECAmb, please join us online: [www.nhs-membership.co.uk/seas](http://www.nhs-membership.co.uk/seas) or contact the Membership Office:
Tel. 01273 897840 Email: ftmembership@secamb.nhs.uk SMS/text: 07770 685772.

The latest election timetable will be available to view on the members and governors sections of our website or can be requested using the contact details below.

How do governor elections work?

Candidates will be given the opportunity to write a brief statement about why they are standing for election, to introduce themselves to members and encourage people to vote for them. An external agency is used to run the governor elections, to ensure that they take place completely impartially. Nominations and ballot papers are handled by this external agency, and the agency sends out information to all members to enable them to vote.

The election takes about two months and follows this process:

► **Week 1**
Notice of elections and nomination papers (for members to nominate themselves to stand as a governor) are made available to all members.

► **Week 4**
Nomination forms to be returned to election agency.

► **Week 5**
Nomination statements from candidates made available to all members, along with ballot papers.

► **Week 8**
Close of election and date by which completed ballot papers must be returned to the agency.

► **Week 9**
Publication of results.
What should I do if I decide to stand for election?

1. Remember, you cannot vote or stand for election unless you are registered as a member of the Trust. If you want to become a member, please contact the Membership Office.

2. All public members will be sent notice of the elections and nomination papers. Details of elections will be publicised to staff via internal communication mechanisms.

3. Please ensure you have read this handbook carefully and understood the time and effort required to undertake the governor role.

4. When you receive your nomination form, complete it and return it to the Election Agency within the notified deadlines.

SECAmb values diversity, equal access and quality of service for patients, and equality of opportunity for staff, and we aspire to reflect this in our membership and our Council of Governors. The Trust cannot influence the nomination or election processes, but we have worked hard to build a membership that is representative of the population of the South East Coast region. We sincerely hope that many of our members will stand for election, and we greatly look forward to working with both members and governors as we move forward.

Please get in touch with us:

For more information about becoming a governor, please contact David Ogbonna, Company Secretary:

By telephone: 01737 363524

By email: governors@secamb.nhs.uk

If you are not already a member of SECAmb (for members of the public only), please join us:

Online: www.nhs-membership.co.uk/seas

By telephone: 01273 897840

By email: ftmembership@secamb.nhs.uk

By SMS/text: 07770 685772