



The NExT Director scheme - supporting tomorrow's non-executives

A practical guide for NHS host trusts and placements

1. Introduction

1.1. Two of NHS Improvement's (NHSI) key strategic objectives for 2020 are to '*develop, maintain and enhance effective boards*' and to expect the board of every NHS provider '*to reflect the diversity of the people it serves*'. To help meet these objectives, we have developed the NExT Director scheme to support the creation of a pipeline of strong and diverse candidates for future non-executive director roles in the NHS.

2. What is the NExT Director scheme?

2.1. The NExT Director scheme provides support to senior people from groups who are currently under-represented on trust boards with the skills and expertise necessary to take that final step into the NHS board room. Following success in London, the Midlands and East the scheme is being expanded. The focus of the scheme will be on supporting women, people from BAME communities or with disabilities into NHS board roles. People with other protected characteristics that are under-represented on boards may also be considered for inclusion in the scheme.

2.2. The NExT Director scheme will give participants a unique insight into the role and responsibilities of being an NHS non-executive director by helping them to bridge gaps in their own experience such as:

- Operating at board level
- Transition from executive to non-executive roles
- Board level exposure in organisations of huge size and complexity
- Gain knowledge of NHS structures and accountability, how the money flows, who the key partners are, where all the regulators fit and the board's role in quality and safety.

2.3. Individual NExT Directors will be offered a placement with one or more NHS healthcare providers in their area, over a six to 12 month period and will give them the opportunity to learn first-hand about the challenges and opportunities associated with being a non-executive director (NED) in the NHS today. Each placement will be shaped to meet the individual needs of participants but will include a range of support such as:

- Access to board and committee meetings and papers, including an opportunity to review and analyse meetings to learn with board members, as appropriate;



- The assignment of an experienced NED mentor for the period is critical to help shape the NExT Director’s personal programme and provide regular feedback and advice;
- Access to training and networking opportunities available to substantive non-executive directors.

3. The NExT Directors

3.1. The NExT Directors were identified from a range of sources and have been through a selection process by NHSI’s Non-executive Appointments Team to ensure that they have the attributes needed to be a NED one day and that they are willing and able to make the most of the opportunity provided by the scheme. They were then “matched” with participating trusts based on their geography and any service area preferences before being introduced to the trust chair, to ensure they were a good fit for that organisation.

3.2. All NExT Directors have been subject to due diligence checks and have signed the NExT Director Placement Agreement at Annex A before their placement was confirmed.

4. A strong starting point

4.1. There will be a short planning period before any placement starts to give both the NExT Director and their host trust the opportunity to prepare so that the placement gets off to a strong start. Each placement will be different but before starting NExT Directors and their trust should have a high level, shared understanding of what it will offer and the level of commitment the NExT Director will be able to make.

4.2. In this planning period, and before the placement starts, the trust chair should:

- Ensure there is “buy-in” from the whole board and establish some basic rules of engagement that wherever possible are inclusive – ie will the NExT Director have access to confidential sections of board meetings, or be invited to participate in discussions? NB – individuals will have different levels of experience and these arrangement can always be changed as the relationship between the NExT Director and trust develops over the placement;
- Identify an experienced NED from within the trust to act as mentor to the NExT Director – some host trusts identified more than one mentor but it is important everyone understands who is responsible for what;
- Ensure the NED Mentor meets their NExT Director to explain the rules of engagement and agree the first set of high level outcome based development objectives. The NExT Director should confirm the time commitment they are able to give to the placement, we estimate a minimum of two days a month, whether they have the support of their employer (where appropriate), and confirm their availability for key board / committee dates which for many trusts will be during the day;



- Ensure administrative arrangements to allow NExT Directors to have access to board and committee meetings and papers, as required and to claim travel expenses if required;
- Ask the NExT Director to sign a confidentiality agreement if he / she will have access to confidential board meetings and sub-committees or other sensitive information. Depending on the level of contributions envisaged by individual NExT Directors consider whether indemnity arrangements would be appropriate;
- Ensure that NExT Directors who will receive sensitive information know how to and are able to protect it properly. This may mean creating a secure email address, providing access to the same IT as NEDs and providing the appropriate Information Governance training;
- Develop a comprehensive local induction programme for the NExT Director. Individual trusts should determine what this will be and how this is delivered, depending on local circumstances, but it could be based on the induction provided to new substantive NEDs, and include information about the key policies and procedures that may be relevant during the NExT Director's placement; and
- Provide the NExT Director with a tour of the major sites of the trust and an opportunity to meet key members of staff. It is important that he / she is introduced to both the executive and NED team, as well as key members of the trust's wider management team.

5. NED mentors

5.1. NED mentors are experienced non-executives responsible for making sure their NExT Director is provided with the support they need during their placement and are therefore critical to its success. It is not expected that it will be too time consuming but should include:

- Regular diarised meetings with the NExT Director before and after each board meeting to discuss key issues and observations and answer any questions they may have;
- Regular and timely feedback between mentors and NExT Directors including honest reviews of development objectives. Regularly refresh these objectives and consider establishing a deliverable project - this will ensure the learning experience is targeted and productive. Experiences and exposures need to be tailored to the development needs of each individual and their journey to step into a NED role on an NHS board;
- Arranging opportunities to learn from other board members and key staff, as appropriate.



6. Maximising the placement

6.1. Any programme should be customised to the development needs of each NExT Director (see above). This paragraph provides a list of ideas that will help the trust and the NExT Director get the most from the placement:

- NExT Directors should take responsibility for their own learning and development by documenting experiences and learning outcomes, and identify areas the trust can help them develop further;
- Arrangements should be made to provide NExT Directors with a full briefing on the NHS, the trust and its stakeholders – internal and external - as part of or soon after the induction programme;
- NExT Directors should be encouraged to feel part of the team and depending on individuals experience could be invited to take part in board discussions. If this isn't possible then participating in committee debate may be more appropriate;
- Consider inviting NExT Directors to participate in any organised programme of NED ward and / or site visits, or allocate a senior member of staff who could accompany them on such visits;
- Opportunities for the NExT Director to shadow key senior staff should be offered, and meetings with representatives from staff and patient groups, HealthWatch, volunteers and hospital charities should be considered.
- Consider whether the NExT Director should observe public board meetings of other trusts in the area to gain an insight into other leadership styles and approaches to governance as well as other types of providers;
- NExT Directors will be strongly encouraged to network with and learn from other NExT Directors. NHSI will be able to support them in this (see below).

7. Support from NHSI

7.1. Workshops, networking events and webinars will take place throughout the year, the agendas for which will be largely driven by the NExT Directors and will give them exposure to subjects of wider interest both within and without the NHS. They will also provide an opportunity to reinforce connections between NExT Directors and allow them to share experience and learn from each other.

7.2. Regular tracker conversations with providers and NExT Directors will enable NHSI to track progress, quickly identify any potential issues and offer advice / guidance to ensure that the scheme provides the best possible experience and outcomes.

7.3. Access to the NExT Director LinkedIn network, reading materials and regular updates from NHSI's provider bulletin.



8. Moving towards the end of a placement

- 8.1. Placements with a trust can be for any period of up to twelve months, and NExT Directors can opt to rotate to a placement on a different trust if this matches their development needs. For example, an individual may wish to increase understanding of challenges faced by other service providers or exposure to different approaches to governance. If after six months it is felt that a NExT Director would benefit from such a move they and their current trust should contact NHSI to discuss options before the current arrangement comes to an end.
- 8.2. At the end of any placement, the trust should provide their NExT Directors with a structured appraisal, including an honest assessment of their progress and how close they are to being “board ready”. The NExT Directors should also be clear about any further development needs and be given guidance on how they might fill any gaps in their knowledge and experience going forward, particularly if the NExT Director is moving on to another placement.
- 8.3. At the end of the scheme, NHSI will offer NExT Directors additional support in applying for NHS NED roles in the future, including help preparing CVs and applications: independent panel assessment with a mock interview, summing up session, introductions to head-hunters, and scheme evaluation questionnaire.



NExT DIRECTOR PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

This is important information about your placement as part of the NHS Improvement (NHSI) NExT Director Scheme. Please read it carefully and contact the NHSI Non-executive Appointments Team if you have any queries.

1. **The NExT Director Scheme** – provides you with an opportunity to gain first-hand experience of an NHS board through a placement with an NHS trust or NHS Foundation Trust. Although this will give you access to board and committee meetings, you will have no formal board role. This is not a public appointment or employment and does not entitle you to a position with the host Trust or any other Trust at the end of your placement.
2. **Principles of public life** - Public service values are at the heart of the NHS and Trust boards play a critical role in shaping and exemplifying an organisational culture that is open, accountable, compassionate, and puts patients first. Respect, compassion and care are at the centre of good leadership and governance in the NHS, and organisational and personal interests must never be allowed to outweigh the duty to be honest, open and truthful with patients and the public. You are therefore expected to:
 - understand and commit to the personal behaviours, values, technical competence and business practices outlined in [“The standards for members of NHS boards and clinical commissioning group governing bodies in England”](#) produced by the Professional Standards Authority;
 - reflect the standards of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life;
 - uphold the policies and procedures adopted by the host Trust;
 - treat any information that is gained during the course of your placement with the Trust in the strictest confidence.
3. **Time commitment** – To get the most from your experience, you should attend all of the board, committee and other meetings you have agreed as with your mentor that you should attend as part of your development. You should confirm the time commitment you are able to give to the placement with your Trust, a minimum of two days a month, and whether you have the support of your employer (where appropriate).
4. **Public speaking** – You should not make political speeches or engage in other political activities relating to the work of the Trust during your placement.
5. **Conflicts of interest** – At the beginning of your placement you should declare to the Trust any business interests, position of authority in a charity or voluntary body in the field



of health and social care, and any connection with bodies contracting for NHS services that may be relevant to the Trust.

6. **Visiting guidelines** - Visits to wards or other areas with access to patients must always be accompanied and planned beforehand, identifying where you are going and who you will speak to. Senior staff should be notified well in advance and always be clear about who you are and why you are there.
7. **Change in circumstances** - You should also notify the Trust and NHSI if there is any change to your situation or connections during the period of your placement. Any failure to do so could jeopardise the reputation of the Trust and / or NHSI and result in an end to your placement.
8. **Allowances** – Your Trust can reimburse you for reasonable and receipted travel and expenses incurred during your placement if necessary.
9. **Length of placement** – Your placement will last a minimum of six months. You may leave the scheme at any time by giving notice to your Trust and NHSI. Where possible, you should first speak with the chair of your host Trust.
10. **Ending your placement** - When your placement comes to an end, for whatever reason, you will immediately return any Trust property in your possession or under your control, and irretrievably delete or destroy any electronic or other information you hold that is relating to the business of the Trust and if requested, provide a signed statement that you have complied with this obligation.

I have read and understand the information above:

SIGNED..... Date.....

PRINT NAME.....

