



East Sussex Healthcare
NHS Trust



Chair

Candidate information pack

August 2026



We value and promote diversity and are committed to equality of opportunity for all and appointments made on merit. We believe that the best boards are those that reflect the communities they serve.

We actively encourage applications from individuals of all backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups and people living with disabilities.

We value the unique perspectives that come from different life experiences, cultures, and identities.

Whether you bring lived experience of using health services, professional expertise, or community insight, your voice matters.

Our recruitment processes are conducted in accordance with the Code of Governance to ensure that they are made on merit after a fair and open process so that the best people, from the widest possible pool of candidates, are appointed.

Welcome from the CEO

Hello and thank you for your interest in East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT). The appointment of our next Chair is the responsibility of NHS England and the rest of this pack gives you information about the role and the process, as well as some useful facts and figures about the Trust; but I wanted to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about who we are and what we need in our next Chair.



ESHT has never been a straightforward Trust to lead. The early years were difficult and the period of regulatory scrutiny between 2012 and 2018 left a long shadow. What changed from 2016/17 was a deliberate decision to take a values-based path to improvement, and it worked.

Steve Phoenix has chaired the Trust through most of that recovery and steps down after seven years having left it in a far stronger position than he found it – with a stable, capable Board and a culture that people here are genuinely proud of.

I joined as Chief Executive in April 2025, returning to the Trust where I gained much of my early management experience and to the county where I live. Since then we have opened the £40 million Sussex Surgical Centre at Eastbourne DGH, continued to build out integrated community models, and put safety at the heart of our decisions, while the financial position has tightened considerably.

I want to be straightforward about that last point: our financial challenge is significant and recurrent. Closing it will require decisions that are harder than anything the Board has faced in the past decade, and we will be subject to a degree of public/political scrutiny unparalleled in the Trust's history.

For a prospective Chair, ESHT offers the opportunity not simply to steward an organisation, but to help shape the future model of health and care for an entire Place. Over the last few years the Trust has begun to turn the “left shift” from aspiration into reality.

We have augmented our community offer with GP-led intermediate care wards and virtual wards, while right-sizing our acute resource. These are part of a deliberate and cogent way of thinking about and delivering healthcare, one that is preventative, more integrated and centred on the lives people lead outside hospital walls.

What makes the opportunity particularly exciting is that ESHT already possesses many of the ingredients needed to go further, being an integrated Trust. We serve a population whose challenges and opportunities are well understood, from ageing and long-term conditions to inequalities and coastal deprivation. The foundations of neighbourhood working, partnership delivery and Place-based thinking are already in place.

The next Chair therefore arrives at a moment where the question is not whether change should happen, but how boldly and successfully we can deliver it. This is an opportunity to help create a model of care that is genuinely designed around the people of East Sussex: one that improves outcomes, reduces inequalities, strengthens communities and ensures the long-term sustainability of local services.

So what are we looking for? First, a Chair who works with the grain of our culture rather than across it. Our values – kindness, inclusivity and integrity – are not decoration. Over 75% of our staff live within five miles of our main sites; our people are also our patients, and the bond between frontline teams, senior clinicians, the Executive and the Board is a real strength worth protecting.

Second, we want someone who can hold our Board to account without doing the Executive's job: we thrive with high challenge and high support, in equal measure, and we want our Chair to have the judgement to know which is needed when. We are a data and evidence-driven Board and want to remain one.

Third is system credibility: given the scale of ambition that we have for our short to medium future the Chair role is a crucial ambassador for sharing our progress and articulating our approach across key partners – NHS Surrey and Sussex, East Sussex County Council, provider collaboratives, the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, MPs and our communities.

Consequently, our next Chair will need to demonstrate political astuteness and the ability to build trust quickly in rooms where we are one voice among many.

Finally, visibility and humility. Our workforce responds to leaders who are interested, present and authentic, and who are as comfortable on a ward in Hastings or with a community team in Rye as they are in a boardroom.

If you want to chair an organisation that is ambitious, well-rooted in its place, and honest about what it still has to fix, I would encourage you to come and see us and you will find that ESHT is a very special place with great people.

Jayne Black

Chief Executive

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust



About Us

We provide safe, compassionate and high quality hospital and community care to over half a million people living in East Sussex and those who visit our local area.

We are one of the largest organisations in East Sussex with an annual income of £720 million and we are the only integrated provider of acute and community care in Sussex. Our extensive health services are provided by over 8,700 dedicated members of staff working from two acute hospitals in Hastings and Eastbourne, three community hospitals in Bexhill, Rye and Uckfield, over 100 community sites across East Sussex, and in people's own homes.

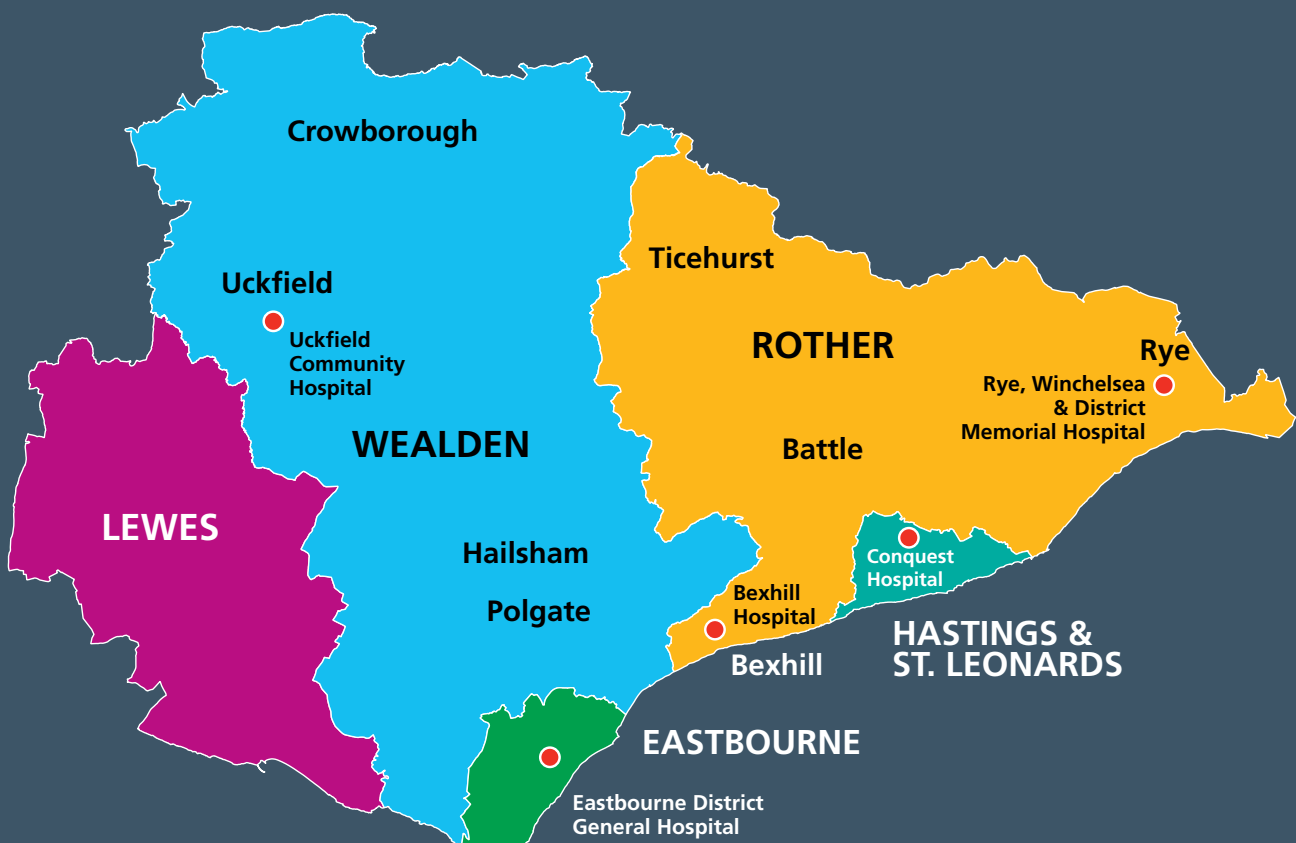
In 2020 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated us as 'Good' overall, and 'Outstanding' for being Caring and Effective. Conquest Hospital and our Community Services were rated 'Outstanding' and Eastbourne DGH was rated 'Good'.

Our two acute hospitals have emergency departments and provide 24 hour a day care, offering a comprehensive range of surgical, medical, outpatient and maternity services,

supported by a full range of diagnostic and therapy services. Our centre for trauma services and obstetrics is at Conquest Hospital, while our centre for urology and stroke services is at Eastbourne DGH. At Bexhill Hospital we offer a range of outpatient, day surgery, rehabilitation and intermediate care services. At Rye, Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital we offer outpatients, rehabilitation and intermediate services. At Uckfield Community Hospital we provide day surgery and outpatient care.

In the community, we deliver services that focus on people with long term conditions living well outside hospital, through our integrated locality teams working with district and community nursing teams. Community members of staff also provide care to patients in their homes and from a number of clinics, health centres and GP surgeries.

We are part of the **Surrey and Sussex Health and Care Integrated Care System (ICS)**, which is made up of health and care organisations across Surrey and Sussex. Read more about the ICS [here](#).



In the Last Year...



Over

2,700

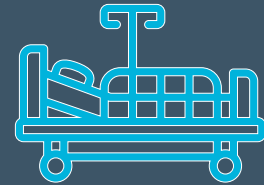
babies were born
in our hospitals



Almost

160,000

attendances in our
emergency departments



Nearly

56,000

people had
planned surgery



We received

21,800

cancer referrals



Over

41,000

referrals to community
nursing – 96% seen
within 24 hours



We prepared

1,109,000

patient meals across our
four main hospital sites



More than

470,000

outpatient appointments



We recycled

227

tonnes of cardboard and scrap metal

Our Current Strategy (2021-26)

“Better Care Together for East Sussex” sets out our vision and how we want to improve services by working effectively with system partners, supporting our colleagues and enabling our residents to access the right care in the right place. It is built on four strategic aims that we believe are key to delivering the vision and goals of the trust:

Improving the health of our communities

- Outside our hospitals, our community based teams have had some great successes this year: our virtual ward is now very well utilised and had a very positive GIRFT review; and our Urgent Community Response team substantially exceed its two hour response targets. We have also piloted new, more integrated approaches, working with the South East Coast Ambulance service, to respond to urgent calls for help more rapidly.
- We have been successful in reducing the number of people waiting too long for planned care interventions (almost reducing the number of people waiting over 65 weeks to zero), reinvigorated our day surgical programme and made good progress in improving the speed of access to urgent care (meeting the 76% four hour target set by NHS England in March 2024).
- In addition, we successfully developed the business case for the Sussex Surgical Centre at Eastbourne District General Hospital and the new centre opened in 2025. We also implemented a large scale ‘Community Diagnostic Centre’ in Bexhill which has become very popular with our patients.
- We continue to build collaborative arrangements across East Sussex, working together with system partners to co-develop joint health and social care priorities.

Collaborating to deliver better care

- We have extended that collaboration by working closely with NHS Sussex on the development of Provider Collaboratives and agreeing their initial set of priorities (i.e. developing integrated community teams and ways to improve access to planned care capacity collectively).
- We continue to play a key role in the Sussex Pathology network which has implemented the Laboratory Information Management System and the Digital Pathology capability and completed the case for a joint managed service. We are also keenly involved in the newer and developing Radiology Network, which has begun to develop the capability to share image content so we can maximise the network’s radiologist and reporting capability.
- As well as collaborating on service improvement, we work very closely with other critical programmes across Sussex, including digital programmes and workforce development priorities. We have also seen early progress made as a system in developing meaningful ways to share information with each other (when it helps us care for patients and people in our communities and is within information governance rules) by working well with NHS Sussex’s ‘Our Care Connect’ programme.
- We also took the first steps in the development of ‘Integrated Community Teams’, joining system partners in the Hastings ‘FrontRunner’ project; and we are beginning to test new ways of joining up services across acute, community and primary care to support people who live with a higher degree of frailty.

Empowering our people

- We continue to focus on keeping our people safe, healthy and well. We are doing this by increasing our capacity to deliver both psychological and wellbeing support and we are committed to deliver the Sexual Safety in the Workplace Charter
- In partnership with university and college partners we have developed new educational programmes to ensure our people have the skills and experience to deliver the best possible patient care.
- We asked our Staff Partnership Forum to review the trust values. Forum partners from all divisions of the trust worked together to identify three key words. More than 700 colleagues attended numerous engagement events in July and August 2023, led by the Chief Executive. After a lot of discussion and feedback, the words which received the most support and were agreed to embody the trust's values were kindness, inclusivity and integrity.
- We have re-designed and developed our recruitment material to attract new people to join our trust. Successful campaigns have reduced our vacancy rate from 9% in February 2023 to 4.5% in February 2024. Alongside this, we have held 'Big Conversations' with our people to understand why they would consider leaving the trust, and how we can create a flexible environment in which our people can grow and develop. During this year, our retention rates have improved to levels seen prepandemic.

Ensuring Innovative and sustainable care

- We have continued to build on some of the innovations from last year, such as implementing digital pathology and rolling out our electronic pharmacy management system, new test ordering system.
- We have also focused on understanding how to derive the most benefit from being an integrated organisation to develop more sustainable service models. The success of our virtual ward service (which is now very well utilized with 56 virtual 'beds'), our HomeFirst pilot, our 'Frailty Enhanced Discharge' pilot and our nationally recognised work on rehabilitation service models are being brought into a new programme of work designed to optimise and showcase the 'art of the possible' as an integrated acute and community provider – which will see more integrated delivery of care, closer to where people live and in more appropriate locations in the coming years.
- In terms of environmental sustainability – we are now benefiting from the investment in the solar farm on the Eastbourne staff Car park, the air source heat pumps and the completed insulation fascia at Eastbourne hospital, leading the way nationally on aspects of the net zero NHS journey.

Our Trust Values



Kindness means treating others how you want to be treated and caring enough to get it right. It's the small acts of kindness both to patients and each other – that make everyone's experience better.

- Treating others as you would wish to be treated
- Being kind to yourself, colleagues and our patients and their loved ones
- Choosing to react in a kind way and being open and friendly
- Being considerate of other people as individuals
- Showing empathy for patients and colleagues

Inclusivity involves embracing differences and working together as a team. It's fundamental to providing the best care for our patients so we can make the trust a supportive workplace where everyone is welcomed and feels involved.

- Working together collaboratively across all areas of the trust
- Involving patients and carers in decisions about their care
- Being part of a supportive workplace where we can all be ourselves
- Valuing that everyone has something different to bring to our trust
- Showing respect to everyone – consistently and without prejudice

Integrity is saying and doing the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons. We should all come to work each day with the intention of giving the best of ourselves and doing the best for our patients, colleagues and the trust.

- Understanding what's acceptable and what's not – and speaking up when something's not right
- Being committed to doing what you say you will do
- Being honest and accountable for your actions
- Being mindful of resources and how they can be used as effectively as possible
- Striving to be the best you can be

Person Specification

We are looking for candidates who want to use their energy, skills and experience to help drive the delivery of sustainable healthcare services for the people of East Sussex, and some surrounding areas.

Required skills, experience and attributes are described in the NHS Leadership Competency Framework for Board Members set out below:

Desirable experience

- Prior experience as a non-executive director (any sector)
- Prior experience on an NHS board (executive, non-executive or associate role)
- Professional qualification or equivalent experience
- Prior senior experience of complex organisations outside the NHS, i.e. private, voluntary or other public sector providers of similar scale



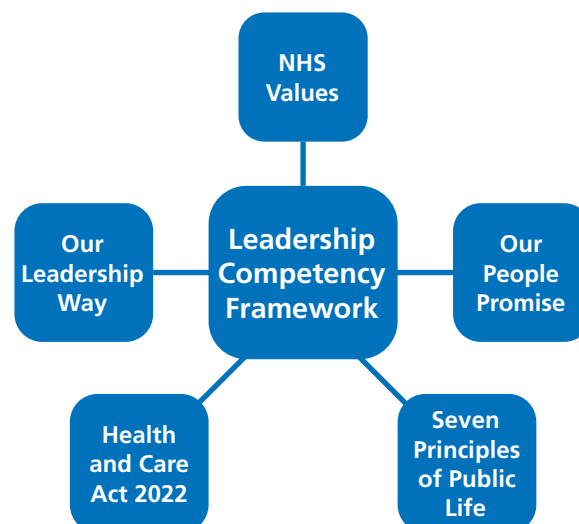
The Person Specification

The NHS leadership competency framework for Board members

Leaders in the NHS help deliver better health and care for patients by setting the tone for their organisation, team culture and performance. We have worked with a wide range of leaders from across the NHS to help describe what we do when we operate at our best.

The competency domains reflect the NHS values and the following diagram shows how they are aligned:

The competency domains are aligned to **Our NHS People Promise**, **Our Leadership Way** and the **Seven Principles of Public Life** (Nolan Principles).



Working together for patients*	Compassion
Building a trusted relationship with partners and communities	Creating a compassionate, just and positive culture
Respect and dignity	Improving lives
Promoting equality and inclusion and reducing health and workforce inequalities	- Setting strategy and delivering long term transformation - Driving high quality sustainable outcomes
Commitment to quality of care	Everyone counts
- Driving high quality and sustainable outcomes - Setting strategy and delivering long term transformation	- Promoting equality and inclusion and reducing health and workforce inequalities - Creating a compassionate, just and positive culture
Providing robust governance and assurance	

The Six NHS Leadership Competency Domains:

DRIVING HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE OUTCOMES

The skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to deliver and bring about high quality and safe care and lasting change and improvement – from ensuring all staff are trained and well led, to fostering improvement and innovation which leads to better health and care outcomes.

Candidates will have:

- A demonstrable interest in health and social care and a strong desire to achieve the best sustainable outcomes for all patients and service users through encouraging continuous improvement, clinical excellence and value for money
- Strong understanding of financial management, with the ability to balance the competing objectives of quality, operational performance and finance
- An appreciation of constitutional and regulatory NHS standards

SETTING STRATEGY AND DELIVERING LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATION

The skills that need to be employed in strategy development and planning, and ensuring a system wide view, along with using intelligence from quality, performance, finance and workforce measures to feed into strategy development

Candidates will have:

- Experience of leading and delivering against long-term vision and strategy
- Experience leading transformational change, managing complex organisations, budgets and people

PROMOTING EQUALITY AND INCLUSION, AND REDUCING HEALTH AND WORKFORCE INEQUALITIES

The importance of continually reviewing plans and strategies to ensure their delivery leads to improved services and outcomes for all communities, narrows health and workforce inequalities, and promotes inclusion.

Candidates will have:

- A clear commitment towards issues of equality, diversity and inclusion
- Significant experience of engaging with the diverse social, economic and cultural groups served by the organisation

PROVIDING ROBUST GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE

The system of leadership accountability and the behaviours, values and standards that underpin our work as leaders. This domain also covers the principles of evaluation, the significance of evidence and assurance in decision making and ensuring patient safety, and the vital importance of collaboration on the board to drive delivery and improvement.

Candidates will have:

- Prior board experience (any sector, executive or non-executive role)
- Evidence of successfully demonstrating the NHS Leadership competencies in other leadership roles
- An ability to identify and address issues, including underperformance, and to scrutinise and challenge information effectively for assurance

CREATING A COMPASSIONATE, JUST AND POSITIVE CULTURE

The skills and behaviours needed to develop great team and organisation cultures. This includes ensuring all staff and service users are listened to and heard, being respectful and challenging inappropriate behaviours.

Candidates will have:

- A clear commitment to the NHS and the trust's values and principles
- Experience of building effective teams, encouraging change and innovation and shaping an open, inclusive and compassionate culture through setting the right tone at the top and championing diversity at, and across, all levels
- Strongly focused on the experience of all staff and patients
- Experience managing conflict, finding compromise and building consensus across varied stakeholder groups with potentially conflicting priorities

BUILDING A TRUSTED RELATIONSHIP WITH PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES

The need to collaborate, consult and co-produce with colleagues in neighbouring teams, providers and systems, people using services, our communities, and our workforce.

Strengthening relationships and developing collaborative behaviours are key to the integrated care environment. Candidates will have:

- A desire to engage with the local population and to collaborate with senior stakeholders across the health and care system
- Strong interpersonal, communication and leadership skills

Applications will be assessed on merit, as part of a fair and open process, from the widest possible pool of candidates. The information provided by applicants will be relied on to assess whether sufficient personal responsibility and achievement have been demonstrated in previous/other roles, to satisfy the experience being sought.

The best boards are those that reflect the workforce and communities they serve. We particularly welcome applications from women, people from local black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and people with disabilities, who we know are all under-represented in these important roles.

Role of the NHS Board & Chair

NHS boards play a key role in shaping the strategy, vision and purpose of an organisation.

They hold the organisation to account for the delivery of strategy and ensure value for money. They are also responsible for assuring that risks to the organisation and the public are managed and mitigated effectively. Led by an independent chair and composed of a mixture of both executive and independent non-executive members, the board has a collective responsibility for the performance of the organisation. The Chair also ensures the Board is focused on improving outcomes in population health and healthcare, and fosters a culture of learning and continuous improvement, with a particular focus on quality, safety, access, patient experience.

The purpose of NHS boards is to govern effectively, and in so doing build patient, public and stakeholder confidence that their health and healthcare is in safe hands. This fundamental accountability to the public and stakeholders is delivered by building confidence:

- in the quality and safety of health services
- that resources are invested in a way that delivers optimal health outcomes
- in the accessibility and responsiveness of health services
- that patients and the public can help to shape health services to meet their needs
- that public money is spent in a way that is fair, efficient, effective and economic.

Role description

To carry out their role effectively, the chair must cultivate a strong, collaborative relationship with the chief executive. Many responsibilities in this role description will be discharged in partnership with the chief executive. It is important the chair and the chief executive are clear about their individual and shared roles, and their respective responsibilities towards the unitary board.

Together, the chair and the chief executive set the tone for the whole organisation. They are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the population the trust serves and the wider system in which the organisation sits receive the best possible care in a sustainable way.

Responsibilities of the chair

The Chair has a unique role in leading the NHS trust board. The role combines the duty to lead effective governance, consistent with the Nolan principles and NHS values, with securing a long-term vision and strategy for the organisation.

Fundamentally, the chair is responsible for the effective leadership of the board. They are pivotal in creating the conditions necessary for overall board and individual director effectiveness. Central to the chair's role are the six NHS leadership competency domains.

How to Apply

The closing date for applications is **28 September 2026**.

Applications should include:

- A **covering letter** explaining why the appointment interests you, how you meet the appointment criteria and what you specifically would bring to the post (**ideally no more than two pages**).
- A **Curriculum Vitae (CV; ideally no more than three pages)** with education and professional qualifications and full employment history. Please include daytime and evening telephone contact numbers and email addresses. The CV should include names and contact details of three referees. References will not be taken without your permission.
- You will need the following reference code: **ESHT-CHAIR-0826**

All applications will be acknowledged.

For an informal conversation about the post, please contact Rhiannon Smith or Jenny Adrian at our recruitment partners, Hunter Healthcare by email: jadrian@hunter-healthcare.com or phone: **07939 250362**

[CLICK HERE TO APPLY ONLINE](#) ➔

KEY DATES:

Application deadline	28 September 2026
Shortlisting	w/c 5 October 2026
Stakeholder sessions	16/17 October 2026
Interviews	19 October 2026 (Eastbourne)
Proposed start date	early 2027



Appendix 1:

Values and concepts from NHS Leadership Competency Framework

Our people promise:

- We are compassionate and inclusive
- We are recognised and rewarded
- We each have a voice that counts
- We are safe and healthy
- We are always learning
- We work flexibly
- We are a team

NHS values

- Working together for patients
- Respect and dignity
- Commitment to quality of care
- Compassion
- Improving lives
- Everyone counts

Health and Care Act 2022

- Collaborate with partners to address our shared priorities and have the core aim and duty to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of England.
- Improve the quality, including safety, of services provided.
- Ensure the sustainable, efficient use of resources for the wider system and communities

Seven principles of public life

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

Our leadership way

We are compassionate

- We are inclusive, promote equality and diversity, and challenge discrimination
- We are kind and treat people with compassion, courtesy and respect.

We are curious

- We aim for the highest standards and seek to continually improve, harnessing our ingenuity
- We can be trusted to do what we promise

We are collaborative

- We collaborate, forming effective partnerships to achieve our common goals
- We celebrate success and support our people to be the best they can be

Appendix 2:

Further information

Terms of appointment

The current remuneration for this role is £55,000 per annum.

- You will have considerable flexibility to decide how you manage the time needed to undertake this role. On average, it will require 2 to 3 days a week, including preparation time away from the Trust, the occasional evening engagement and events designed to support your continuous development.
- Applicants should live in or have strong connections with the area served by the Trust.

Given the significant public profile and responsibility members of NHS Boards hold, it is vital that those appointed inspire confidence of the public, patients and NHS staff at all times. NHS England makes a number of specific background checks to ensure that those we appoint are “fit and proper” people to hold these important roles. More information can be found on our website.

More information

For information about the ICB, such as business plans, annual reports, and services, visit the NHS East Sussex [website](#). Follow the links for more information about:

- **Support to prepare candidates to apply for a non-executive vacancy including:**
 - ▶ Building your application
 - ▶ Sources of information and useful reading
 - ▶ Eligibility and disqualification criteria
 - ▶ Terms and conditions of chair and non-executive director appointments
 - ▶ How we will handle your application and information
- **View all current chair and non-executive vacancies**
- **Sign up to receive email alerts on the latest vacancies**
- **Contact details for the Non-executive Appointments Team**

NHS England respects your privacy and is committed to protecting your personal data. We will only use personal data where we have your consent or where we need to comply with a legal or statutory obligation. It is important that you read this information together with our privacy notice so that you are fully aware of how and why we are using your data.



NHS

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NHS Trust



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