

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

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Two of NHS England's key strategic objectives are to '*develop, maintain and enhance effective boards*' and to expect the board of every NHS service provider '*to reflect the diversity of the people it serves*'. To help NHS England meet these objectives, it has developed the NExT Director scheme to support the creation of a pipeline of strong and diverse potential candidates for non-executive director roles in the NHS.
- 1.2. The NExT Director scheme is focussed on supporting people from groups who are currently under-represented on our boards into these important roles. Following a successful start in London, the Midlands and East of England the scheme is being expanded. It will focus on supporting women, people from local BAME communities, and disabled people with senior level experience into board level roles in the NHS. People with other protected characteristics may also be considered for placements on a case-by-case basis.

2. What is the NExT Director scheme?

- 2.1. The aim of the NExT Director scheme is to help people from under-represented groups who have the skills and expertise necessary to make a real contribution to take that final step into the NHS board room. It 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 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.
- 2.2. Individual NExT Directors will be offered a placement with an NHS healthcare provider in their area for a 12 month period. This will provide them with the opportunity to learn first-hand about the challenges and opportunities associated with being a non-executive director in the NHS today. Each placement will include a range of support, which will involve some or all of the following:
 - 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 non-executive director mentor for the period to help shape the NExT Directors personal programme and provide regular feedback and advice;
- Opportunities to shadow key senior staff and meet staff and patients' groups;
- Access to training and networking opportunities available to substantive non-executive directors
- The opportunity to observe different types of healthcare providers and learn about a range of organisational challenges, leadership styles and governance structures; depending on the rate of progress, two placements of up to six months each, with different NHS boards may be available.

3. Applying for a placement

- 3.1. Those interested in participating in the NExT Director scheme should submit an application by sending a CV and covering statement to keely.howard1@nhs.net
- 3.2. The supporting statement should highlight particular experience and skills relevant to the non-executive director role. Most importantly it should explain the commitment and motivation for the application and what the candidate hopes to get out of his / her time as a NExT Director.
- 3.3. The next stage of the selection process will involve a short telephone interview with suitable candidates, to explore further their application and identify those who have the potential to be a non-executive director within the next couple of years and would benefit from the support provided to those participating in the scheme. For these individuals, we will then seek to identify a suitable placement at a local NHS trust or Foundation Trust, the chair or which will want to continue the conversation before deciding whether the placement and a place on the NExT Director scheme can be confirmed.

4. Timing

- 4.1. Specific placement start dates will be agreed with the NExT Directors and their host organisations on a case by case basis.