

**ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS 2025**

**COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS REPORT**

**Annual Review of Council Year 2024/25**

**(To be formally presented at the Annual Members Meeting)**

**On Wednesday 24 September 2025**

Presented by Brian Wilson, Lead Governor

September 2025

## Purpose

This report provides an overview of the work of the Council of Governors of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust that has taken place since the last annual meeting.

## 1. Background

Governors play a very important role in our Trust, acting as a link between our Board, our members and the wider public. Governors add a level of public scrutiny to NHS Foundation Trusts. The Council of Governors has a number of statutory responsibilities. The Council is not responsible for managing the Trust but does hold the Non-Executive Directors to account for the performance of the Trust. It also has the authority to appoint and remove the Chair and other Non-Executive Directors.

## 2. Review of the Last Year – 2024/25

### 2.1 Farewell to Martin Earwicker, Trust Chair

Martin Earwicker, Trust Chair left the Trust at the end of July 2025 having served for 8.5 years. Martin has been an outstanding Chair and made a significant contribution to the work of the Trust. Unfortunately, the first recruitment round to appoint a new Trust Chair was unsuccessful and the Council of Governors appointed Mark Day, Vice Chair as Interim Trust Chair with effect from 1 August 2025 until a new Trust Chair can be appointed.

### 2.2 Governor Elections and Appointments

Public Governor Elections were held in the following constituencies. The following Governors were elected:

Constituency	Name of Governor Elected
Slough	Sharon O'Reilly
Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead	Vacancy
Wokingham	Sofia Barbosa Boucas

There was also an election for:

A Clinical Staff Governor and Marcella Browne was elected.

The following new partnership Governor was appointed to the Council:

Name of Partnership Organisation	Name of Governor
Family Action Org Uk	Sarah Collin

## 2.3 Council of Governor Meetings

There are four quarterly meetings to conduct formal business and to receive reports from the Trust Board and Executive on Trust performance. All governors are involved, and these meetings are open to the public. Areas of focus are patient safety and service quality together with financial sustainability. Governors are broadly satisfied with the assurances given.

In addition, there were informal quarterly ‘joint’ meetings – two with the Trust Board and one with only the Non-Executive Directors. These allow governors to explore a broader range of subjects involving the Trust. Governors also have an opportunity to meet with the Non-Executive Directors in small groups at the joint meetings to discuss the performance of the Trust and to raise any issues and/or concerns. We also held a governor training day in February 2025 facilitated by NHS Providers. The training covered a range of topics including governance and the role of the governor, effective questioning and challenge, member and public engagement and the role of governors in quality.

The Chair holds online monthly informal “coffee morning” meetings which are open to all governors to attend. These meetings provide an opportunity for governors to have a conversation with the Chair and to raise any issues of concern and/or suggestions for improving the interface between the Council and the Trust Board.

Governors have the opportunity to attend and participate in the AGM.

Formal meetings were held online in September 2024, December 2024 March 2025 and June 2025. We also held extraordinary meetings in May 2025 to appoint a new Non-Executive Director and in July 2025 to appoint an Interim Trust Chair.

Informal Joint meetings were held in person/online in November 2024, May 2025 and July 2025.

Recordings of the formal public Council meetings were published on the Trust’s website.

At these meetings Governors received briefings on a range of topics, including:

- Strategic Updates on the Integrated Care Boards
- “One Team” – Mental Health Services
- Estates Strategy
- Digital Strategy
- Trust’s Strategy Refresh Process
- CAMHS Getting Help and Mental Health Support Team
- Trust’s Anti-Racism Work
- “Silver Cloud” Presentation
- Trust’s Financial Plan 2025-6
- National NHS Staff Survey Results
- Carers Strategy Update
- Forbury Gardens Incident
- NHS Ten Year Plan

At the joint meetings, Governors have an opportunity to question members of the Trust Board and the Non-Executive Directors.

## **2.4 Council of Governors’ Appointments and Remuneration Committee**

The Appointments and Remuneration (A&R) Committee is a group of governors responsible for recruiting Non-Executive Directors and the Trust Chair.

The A&R Committee also meets with the Trust’s Senior Independent Director to agree the Chair’s appraisal process and the Senior Independent Director feeds back the outcome of the Chair’s appraisal process to the A&R Committee.

The A&R Committee is responsible for reviewing the Chair and Non-Executive Director’s remuneration. The A&R Committee agreed to recommend to the Council of Governors that the remuneration of the Chair and Non-Executive Directors be increased by 5% for 2024-25 in line with the remuneration uplift for Executive Directors.

The A&R Committee recommended to the Council of Governors that, if possible, terms of office should be managed to limit the frequency of appointments to one new director a year. This is in recognition of the time it takes to learn about the Trust and to become an effective member of the board.

The Council of Governors followed the A&R Committee’s recommendation and re-appointed Sally Glen, Non-Executive Director for a second three-year term. The Council of Governors also

extended the terms of office of Aileen Feeney, Non-Executive Director by one year and Mark Day, Non-Executive Director by six months.

The Council of Governors also followed the A&R Committee's recommendation for the appointment of Sonya Batchelor as a new Non-Executive Director and Mark Day, Vice Chair as the Trust's Interim Chair until the appointment of a new Chair.

## **2.5 Governor Working Groups**

There are three other Governor Committees which meet four times a year.

### **Quality Assurance Group**

The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to consider and provide assurance to the Council of Governors on all quality related matters.

- The group reviews the Trust's quarterly Patient Experience Reports which provides details of complaints, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALs) contacts and the outcome of formal complaints referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.
- At each meeting, the group reviews an anonymised complaint, including the Trust's response to gain assurance about the Trust's complaints process.
- The group reviews a quarterly report on Trust's waiting times for individual services at each meeting.
- Pre-viewing the Trust's Quality Account is a regular part of the Group's annual program. The Lead Governor shared the Trust's 2024-25 Quality Account with governors who were given the opportunity to offer comments. These comments are appended to the published report which is now available on the Trust website.
- Members of the group are encouraged to undertake service visits 'to look at quality through non-professional eyes.'

Since the 2024 AGM, Governor Visits to services have included:

- Berkshire Community Dental Services
- Lower Limb Service (Physical Health East)
- Community Nursing – Bracknell

- Podiatry – West Berkshire
- Bluebell Ward
- Oakwood Ward
- Minor Injuries Unit – West Berkshire Hospital
- CAMHS Bracknell & Wokingham
- Children’s Specialist Community Services East

The Quality Assurance Group discusses governor feedback about their visits and the visit reports are shared with the Trust Board’s Quality Assurance Committee.

The group has extended invitations to the following services to present their service improvement initiatives. Since the 2024 AGM, the following presentations have been delivered to the group:

- Update from Children’s Services (CYPIT) on work on reducing waits.
- Update from the Head of Intelligent Automation on the use of intelligent automation within our services and future plans.
- ADHD pathway update – Children’s and Adults
- CRISIS Team – Gaining Patient Feedback for Patients in Crisis

## **Membership and Public Engagement**

The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to support Trust membership and to support Governor engagement with members and the public.

- This group supports the Trust in public events and the Trust Membership Strategy for maintaining a representative selection of members.
- Public Membership, representing almost 1 million people of Berkshire, stands at 7,267 (as at May 2025). The profile of membership is regularly reviewed in relation to area and diversity.
- The group supports the Trust’s use of social media, across the popular channels, to improve the spread of knowledge about the Trust, its services, membership and Governors’ activities.
- A standard template letter is available for Governors to promote membership and becoming a Governor in their constituencies.
- The group suggests ideas for articles to include in the Trust quarterly Membership Newsletter.

## **Living Life to the Full**

The group meets quarterly, and its purpose is to champion good practice that enables people to live their lives to the full beyond diagnosis by supporting autonomy, expertise, and well-being. The Group helps to encourage understanding, collaboration and innovation across the boundaries of the Trust in the areas of patient well-being and autonomy by increasing knowledge and understanding.

Partner organisations including statutory bodies, the voluntary sector and user groups are invited to give presentations at the quarterly meetings of the group.

- The main items reviewed during the year have been: -
- A presentation from the Public Health Strategic Development Manager for Mental Health Integration in Bracknell about the combined working of CMHT & Social Services in Bracknell Forest to support the recovery of patients and carers.
- A presentation from Abri Housing by the Community Investment Manager for South-East, and Tenancy Support Services Manager on how they currently support customers with mental health vulnerabilities, including case studies. Followed by a Q&A session with Governors to gain ideas/suggestions on how their focus could be improved and support the work of the Trust.
- The group receives a carers update at the meetings every 6 months. This includes an update from Katie Humphrey, Carers Lead, on the Trust Carers Strategy providing context and an understanding of what underpins the strategy, as well as any updates to developments and improvements to the strategy and its processes.

Each meeting also includes a round-up of information about local support groups in Berkshire from members of the group.

## **2.6 Trust Board Meetings**

The Trust holds six public Trust Board meetings a year. There are also five private 'discursive' meetings where emerging strategy is discussed.

From April 2020 the public meetings, which are held online, have been recorded and published on the Trust's website. This enables both governors and the public to watch the meeting. Governors

and members of the public have an opportunity to submit questions to the Board which are answered at the Board meeting.

### **3. Other Activities**

#### **Service Visits**

A number of Governors have made visits to the Trust's services to meet staff and to gain a better understanding about the work of the Trust. Governors produce reports of their visits which are discussed at the Council of Governors Quality Assurance Group and at the Trust Board's Quality Assurance Committee as well as being shared with the Director of Nursing and Therapies.

#### **15 Steps Visits**

Governors are actively encouraged to participate in our programme of 15 Step Visits. These visits are a structured quality assurance initiative, originally developed by the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement. The visits are designed to help healthcare organisations understand what good quality care looks and feels like from a patient's perspective within the first 15 steps of entering a care environment. The visits focus on:

- First impressions of cleanliness, safety, and welcome.
- Patient experience and how it aligns with NHS values.
- Observational feedback to identify areas for improvement.

#### **Patient Menu Taster Session:**

In May 2025 NHS Property Services in collaboration with Apetito, organised a menu tasting session which included representation from our Governors. The aim of the session was to review and gathering feedback on proposed new patient meal options. The event was part of a broader effort to enhance patient experience through improved meal offerings.

#### **Armed Forces Strategy:**

Our Governors were given the opportunity to join us on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June for the Armed Forces Strategy Launch at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. The launch coincided with Armed Forces Week, underscoring the Trust's commitment to supporting both current and



former service personnel. The event was described as a celebration of shared values and a new chapter in how the Trust supports the armed forces community across Berkshire.

## **PLACE (Patient-Led Assessments of the Care Environment) Visits**

Governors participated in the Trust's PLACE programme. PLACE assessments are a national initiative and provide an annual evaluation of the physical environment and non-clinical services within a hospital setting. This includes:

- **Cleanliness:** How clean are the buildings and facilities?
- **Food and Hydration:** The quality and provision of food and drink.
- **Privacy and Dignity:** How well the environment supports patient privacy and dignity.
- **Environment:** The general maintenance and suitability of the premises for people with disabilities and dementia.

The purpose of the PLACE assessment programme is:

- To provide a framework for assessing the quality of care environments against common standards.
- To drive improvements by publishing results and providing insights into how well different hospitals are performing.
- To give patients and the public a greater voice and influence in the way health and care services are run.

## **4. Looking Ahead**

The Trust, like the whole of the NHS, continues to face very challenging times with pressure to maintain quality of service as demand continues to rise, while at the same time there are considerable financial constraints.

Social care continues to be underfunded, and this impacts demand and outcomes for our mental health and community health services.

Reform of the NHS will see the demise of NHS England with most of its functions being transferred to the Department of Health and Social Care or to the Integrated Care Boards. In addition, the number of Integrated Care Boards is reducing. For Berkshire, this means that the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West and the East Berkshire part of Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care Boards will merge into a Thames Valley Integrated Care Board covering

the whole of Berkshire. The current Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care Board footprint also includes Surrey Heath, Northeast Hampshire and Farnham. The Surrey Heath component will transfer to the Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care Board and the Northeast Hampshire and Farnham component will transfer to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board.

As the Trust moves forward in this complex and uncertain world there will be much for Council to follow in maintaining oversight on performance and to ensure that the needs of patients are kept at the forefront of decision-making.

Please get in touch if you are interested in our work!

We are also keen to meet those who would like to join us as governors of the Trust. You may send questions on this report or any other matter to the Trust's Company Secretary – by email to: [Julie.hill2@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:Julie.hill2@berkshire.nhs.uk) or post to Julie Hill, Company Secretary, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, London House, London Road, Bracknell, RG12 2UT.

Governors may be contacted directly or via the Company Secretary or via email; to: [governor@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:governor@berkshire.nhs.uk)

**Brian Wilson**, Lead Governor

September 2025