THE ROLE OF THE STAFF GOVERNOR

1. WHAT DO STAFF GOVERNORS DO?

1.1 The simplest way to explain the role is perhaps to see it as a cross between being a school governor and an MP. Being a staff governor is like being a school governor because it involves working with others to improve a service, to check that the organisation is working effectively to achieve its purpose, and to protect the interests of the people who use the service as well as the people who provide the service (staff).

1.2 It’s like being an MP in that a staff governor has a responsibility to the people who elect him or her. The role involves talking and listening to staff about issues and concerns, about what’s working well and what could be improved, and feeding those views into the work of the Council.

1.3 The Council of Governors fulfil a number of statutory (legal) duties as well as other responsibilities. The statutory duties are set out in the Governors’ Handbook. The additional roles and responsibilities for all elected Governors are also set out in the Handbook and the Constitution. As applied to staff governors in particular, they are as follows:

2. ADVISOR

2.1 Staff governors should communicate with staff in their constituency and feed the views of staff back to the Council of Governors and into any working groups or committees they are part of. Staff governors should advise the Council of the impact of decisions on staff and advise on how staff can contribute to improving services for patients. They should regularly advise staff of work undertaken by the Council of Governors and seek their views. The Trust will work with the staff governors to develop effective ways to make sure this happens.

3. AMBASSADOR AND GUARDIAN

3.1 As an ambassador, staff governors should seek to engage with staff as much as possible about the work of the Council and the Trust and encourage staff to remain part of the FT membership so they can influence the formal governance structures of the Trust. Staff governors will be expected to conduct themselves appropriately within the Trust, at Council meetings and when involved in any external work as a staff governor: in some situations a governor is the public
face of the Trust. Please read the summary of the Code of Conduct for Governors included in the Governors’ Handbook.

3.2 All governors will be expected to sign-up to the Code of Conduct. If it is believed a staff governor has failed to observe the Code of Conduct, the Chair of the Council of Governors will deal the case according to the procedure set out in the Code. However, the Trust’s normal disciplinary procedures will be followed in the case of misconduct in a staff governors’ substantive role.

3.3 Working alongside the rest of the Council, staff governors will ensure that the Trust works to fulfil its aims and purpose.

4. **KEY PRINCIPLES**

4.1 There are some principles that underlie the role. Staff governors:

- Work as part of the Council of Governors
- Should adhere to the Code of Conduct for Governors and respect the confidentiality of information they may receive in their role
- Are representatives of all staff members
- Should seek the views of staff and communicate with staff about the Council of Governors and the Trust and its work
- Have the same rights as all other governors
- Should not pursue a personal agenda at the expense of others’ or participate in discussions where they have a personal interest in the outcome
- Should not get personally involved in staff members’ individual problems or issues and never promise to solve someone’s problem themselves
- Are not expected to always agree with other staff governors or other governors in general. Governors are expected to be professional when disagreement occurs
- Who disagree with or question the Board of Directors will not find their professional standing within the Trust affected in any way as long as the Code of Conduct is complied with
- Do not perform the same role as, or replace, staff-side representatives

4.2 In addition, Staff Governors should:

- Maintain a rapport with the body that elected him/her – i.e., Trust staff members and keep aware of their views and concerns
- Be available to advise staff members on appropriate routes to resolve concerns
- Report in good faith any widely held staff views to the Council of Governors, bringing a staff member view-point and perspective to discussion and debate
• Attend any training sessions for Governors
• Play an active part in Council of Governors’ meetings
• Be very clear about what information can be reported back to colleagues/staff members

4.3 No Governor has the authority to act individually on behalf of the Trust

5. **STAFF GOVERNORS AND STAFF-SIDE REPRESENTATIVES**

5.1 The role of staff governor is significantly different from that of a Trades Union representative. Staff governors do not work on behalf of individual staff members or represent individuals to resolve issues or problems neither are they a go-between or staff delegate. However, staff governors do have a responsibility for reporting staff views in the Council and other meetings and working groups where there may not be a staff-side representative.

6. **STAFF GOVERNORS AND SIGN-POSTING**

6.1 Staff Governors should be able to advise Trust staff members on appropriate routes of action, keeping in mind the role of the individual’s Line Manager and/or Staff representative. If the individual staff member has not approached their Line Manager or Staff representative first, then the staff governor should direct the individual back to these sources. If there is any concern on the part of the staff governor that this is not the appropriate course of action (and it is likely to be only in exceptional circumstances that it is not) then the staff governor should refer to the Line Manager’s Line Manager and/or the Human Resources Department. The Staff Governor may also sign-post the availability of Trust policies and procedures, clinical standards etc., that are available on the intranet.