

Membership matters

Foundation Trust Members Newsletter – March 2026

News and updates from Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (WHH).

In this issue:

- Welcome from your lead governor
- Reflections from the chair
- Better Care Together
- Hello from your governor
- Your governors: Our role and our work
- WHH volunteers
- Work at WHH
- Get involved

Welcome

I am pleased to share some updates and reflections from recent months, and to extend a warm welcome to our newly appointed governors.

In January, we welcomed our new governors at our induction day, where we explored the trust's purpose, values and the important role governors play. This included a reminder of governors' statutory responsibility to hold our non-executive directors to account and to represent the voices of our members, patients and the wider public.

It was a full and information-packed session, with plenty of NHS terminology and acronyms, and I hope we didn't put anyone off. Learning the language and systems of the NHS takes time, and both Diane and I are always happy to offer support as governors settle into their role.

Being a governor is a vital and rewarding responsibility and we encourage all governors to become actively involved. Observing board and committee meetings provides valuable insight into how the trust is run and helps ensure that non-executive directors are appropriately challenging executive directors. Diane shares further insight into these meetings later in this edition.

Observation visits across the trust are another excellent way to engage with patients and staff, learn more about our services and see first-hand the work taking place in our departments and wards. Attending events such as Disability Awareness Day (DAD), MELA, our multicultural festival and other community activities also offers great opportunities to connect with the public we serve.

We will soon be saying a fond farewell to Steve McGuirk. Steve joined the Trust in 2015 and has served as chair for more than a decade. You can read more from Steve in this edition, but I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his guidance, support and encouragement. I wish him every success in his next chapter and hope he enjoys spending more time with his new granddaughter.

Looking ahead, I am excited about the start of the new financial year, when we will officially, subject to approvals, become one organisation - North Cheshire and Merseyside NHS Foundation Trust, providing better care together from 1 April. There is more information about this transformation in this edition, and further details can be found on the North Cheshire and Merseyside Healthcare Partnership website. I particularly enjoyed the short animation, which clearly explains the benefits of becoming a single organisation for patients and our communities.

If you have any suggestions that you would like us to cover in the newsletter, do not hesitate to get in touch on whh.foundation@nhs.net We look forward to hearing from you.

Sue Fitzpatrick



Reflections from the chair

Professor Steve McGuirk CBE DL

As I prepare to step down at the end of March, I've been asked to share a few reflections on my time as chair of WHH, a role I've had the privilege to hold since April 2015.

What first drew me in was a strong sense of public service. That wasn't surprising, as I had already completed a 40-year career in another vital, life-saving part of the public sector. But I was also motivated by a belief that the trust plays a central role at the heart of the community and importantly, my community.

I wanted to help strengthen that role, support the people within the organisation, and be part of something that makes a genuine difference to local lives. Those lives include my own family and friends.

That's not just a figure of speech. Both of my granddaughters were born in this hospital, one memorably, on Christmas Day 2015, and the other just this January. I have also experienced our care first-hand after a spell in hospital with pneumonia. So when I talk about our staff's dedication, I do so not only as chair, but as a very grateful grandparent and patient.

Looking back, there have been many significant milestones. We moved from a CQC rating of 'requires improvement' to 'good', and have been rated 'good' twice for maternity. These achievements reflect not just systems improving, but people striving. I have worked with outstanding chief executives, each bringing their own strengths and vision, and I've had the privilege of working with talented and committed executives, non-executive directors and passionate governors.

Together, we have overseen major developments: new MRI and CT scanners, community diagnostic centres and extended outreach services all bringing care closer to home.

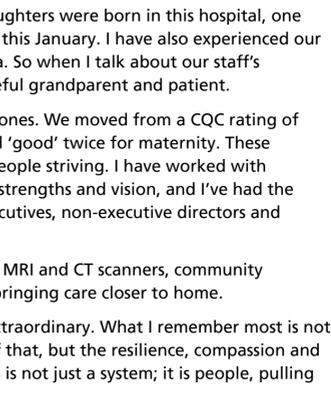
Naturally, the pandemic years stand out as the most extraordinary. What I remember most is not the stress or the challenge, though there was plenty of that, but the resilience, compassion and ingenuity shown by staff. It reminded me that the NHS is not just a system; it is people, pulling together when it matters most.

What makes me proudest is not any single initiative, but the culture we have built together. A trust that listens more. That collaborates. That adapts. That cares not only for patients, but for its own people.

Chairing through times of pressure and progress has taught me a lot about leadership above all, the value of humility, consistency and staying visible even when the path ahead isn't clear. This role has shaped me professionally and personally. I leave with a deepened respect for the power of collective effort and quiet heroism.

To my successor, I would simply say: listen well, trust your instincts and never underestimate what people are capable of.

And to everyone across our hospitals, community partners and local residents, thank you for your dedication, your support and your belief in what this trust can be. It has been the greatest honour to work with you and alongside you.



Better Care Together

Our Better Care Together programme is progressing well, and we are now entering the final stages of our integration to bring together hospital and community services. In early December, the full business case was submitted to NHS England following formal approval by both Trust Boards. These documents set out more detail behind our plans for the future integrated organisation, which is focused around delivering care at 'home first, community next and only then hospital'.

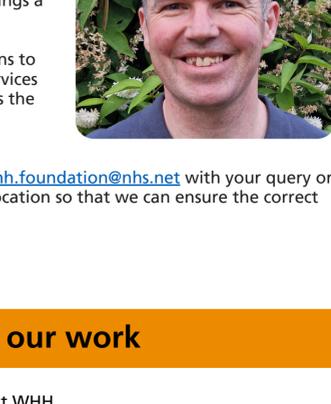
As we work towards becoming North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust on 1 April 2026, we are holding regular review meetings with NHS England and are actively engaging and consulting with staff from both WHH and BCH and preparing our organisations for a safe and successful 'day one' as an integrated trust.

From April, our focus will turn towards the next phase of our work, strengthening priority clinical pathways and foster a culture that embraces new ways of working, strengthens collaboration and continues to deliver the outstanding services our patients and communities deserve.

We are committed to ensuring the voice of patients and the public help shape our plans for integrating services and delivering care, and we are working with Healthwatch Halton and Healthwatch Warrington to do this. Work is already underway through our Patient and Public Reference Group, which you can read more about on the North Cheshire and Mersey Healthcare Partnership website.

We know that our two organisations are stronger and better together, and we look forward to continuing our journey to deliver high quality, sustainable services for our communities.

[Find out more about our integration.](#)



Hello from your governor

Matt Machin

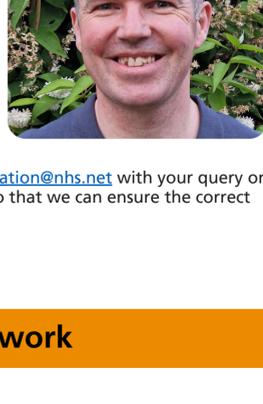
It's a pleasure to welcome Matt Machin as a governor of Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Having spent six years as a governor at Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Matt brings a wealth of experience in children's services and patient engagement. With the two trusts set to integrate in April 2026, we caught up with him to hear how he plans to use his knowledge of both community and hospital services to ensure patients' voices continue to shape care across the new organisation.

[Read more](#) from Matt.

If you want to contact your governors, please email whh.foundation@nhs.net with your query or with a request for them to contact you, include your location so that we can ensure the correct governor gets in touch with you.

You can also call us on 01925 662139.

[Find out more about your local governors.](#)



Your governors: Our role and our work

I am delighted to have been re-elected as a governor at WHH. The past three years have gone by so quickly, and I continue to love the role and the people I work with.

It has taken me an open of that time to fully understand the role itself. WHH is an open and honest foundation trust and welcomes governor involvement in many areas, so there is a lot we can contribute if we wish. There is genuine recognition of the knowledge and experience governors bring.

When I was asked to write a piece for the newsletter, I thought I would share some of the activities my governor colleagues and I are involved in.

Let's start with the two main duties of a governor:

1. hold the non-executive directors individually and collectively to account for the performance of the board of directors
2. represent the interests of the NHS foundation trust members and the public

On the first point, the trust has an established governance structure with several committees. Each is chaired by a non-executive director and includes a nominated governor observer. My role is to observe the quality assurance committee, which oversees the delivery of safe, effective and patient-centred care. It acts as a sub-committee of the Trust Board to scrutinise performance and maintain compliance with national standards.

These meetings take place monthly. My role is to observe and compile a report for the Council of Governors. Naturally, questions arise from these observations, which we discuss at our governor only meetings before putting them to the non-executive directors at the Council of Governors.

Over the years, I have learned that patience is key. Coming from a blue-chip background where decisions are made quickly, I initially found the pace challenging. I now see my role as that of a 'critical friend'. Following the right processes and asking questions to gain assurance really does pay off.

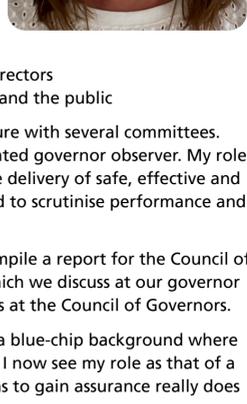
A colleague of mine, Alan Davies, has coined the phrase 'eyes on, hands off'. This perfectly captures our role when holding non-executives to account.

The second point is how we represent the interests of our members and the public. There is a great deal we can get involved in. One example is our monthly observation visits. Each month, a group of governors visits a department, ward or area within the trust. We go unannounced, speak to patients, families, staff and volunteers, and walk in the footsteps of those using our services. We then compile a report, which goes to the Council of Governors. We have also developed a cycle of feedback to ensure any issues raised are addressed and that positive feedback is shared with the teams who deserve it.

We are also involved in public and community events such as Armed Forces Day, Disability Awareness Day and Pride. These events help us grow our membership and our Experts by Experience group, meet local people, hear their stories and signpost where needed.

In addition, I chair the governor engagement group, which meets quarterly. This group helps strengthen the link between the trust and our communities and acts as a source of ideas to ensure our services reflect the needs of patients and the wider public.

We would love to hear from you if you have any feedback or ideas you would like to share please email us whh.foundation@nhs.net.



Volunteer with us and make a difference

Our hospitals simply wouldn't run as smoothly without the dedication and energy of our amazing volunteers. Across Warrington and Halton, more than 150 people from all walks of life give their time to support patients, visitors, and staff. Whether offering companionship through conversation or reading, guiding visitors to appointments, or helping care for our hospital gardens, volunteers make a meaningful difference every day. Their presence helps create a welcoming, supportive environment where people feel at ease.

Volunteering is rewarding in many ways. It can provide valuable experience for anyone considering a career in healthcare, strengthen applications to college or university, and support a return to employment. Many volunteers appreciate the chance to build confidence, learn new skills, meet new people, and stay active within their community. For some, it offers comfort and purpose during retirement or recovery after difficult times.

Our volunteer team is vibrant, friendly, and valued across both hospital sites. Roles vary to suit different interests and abilities, and every contribution makes a real difference to the daily running of the trust.

Take the first step today and become part of a team that truly makes a difference. Your time, skills, and compassion could change someone's day or even their life.

[Visit our website](#) to learn more and apply.

News at WHH

News and updates from the Trust are available to view on the [latest news pages](#) on our website.

Events at WHH

For more information on events that WHH are involved with or arranging visit the [events section](#) on the WHH website or contact whh.engagement@nhs.net

Work at WHH

If you are interested in a role in healthcare and with us, check out our latest vacancies.

[Click here to view our current vacancies.](#)

Get involved

Support vital research work at WHH by signing up to take part in clinical research as part of the Pathway to Research programme.

[Find out more.](#)

Experts by Experience (EbyEs) are volunteers with lived experience, who help us to understand how it feels to either access services, or to care for someone who does.

Signing up takes just a minute or two. Just fill in the form at [here](#) and we'll be in touch.

For more information, please email whh.engagement@nhs.net

Your governors
For more information on the role of governors at WHH, from some of our current governors, please watch our [YouTube video](#).

For more information on Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust visit www.whh.nhs.uk



Working Together



Excellence



Inclusive



Kind



Embracing Change