

**PAPER**  
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## **Report to the Meeting of the Members' Council**

**For: Decision**

**17 February 2009**

### **Report from FT Governors Association Meeting**

#### **Executive Summary**

The attached report has been written by Jeanette Hocking, Governor, and provides an over view of her attendance at the Foundation Trust Governors' Association conference in Leeds.

The Trust was offered a free place for one Governor to attend the conference.

The Trust is not a member of the Association. Attendance at future events and participation in their network would require the Trust to pay a membership fee and join the Association.

#### **Recommendation**

Based on Jeanette Hocking's report and discussion at the meeting, the Council is asked to decide whether or not to join the Association.

**Author and Title:** J Habner, Trust Secretary & J Hocking, Governor

**Date:** 10 November 2008

## **Report to OBMH Members' Council**

### **Report on Foundation Trust Governors' Association**

#### **Jeanette Hocking, Governor**

On Wednesday the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008, I attended the Foundation Trust Governors' Association conference in Leeds. The Association is hosted by the King's Fund to provide space and opportunities for foundation trust governors to meet, exchange views, debate and learn from each other.

I wasn't sure if I wanted to go, but felt strongly that we should have a presence there as a free observer place to the conference had been offered and it would give us the chance to see what services they provide. I expressed an interest, but also stated that if any other governor wished to go, to let them take the place. Nobody did!

#### **The Conference**

The day was very well organised and there was plenty of time for networking with other governors before the event, during lunch and after the event. I found the networking time more useful than the speeches.

Sarah Connelly, Policy Lead for Local Involvement Networks (LiNs), gave a speech and emphasised the importance of foundation trust governors to be involved with their Local Involvement Networks, as this will be of benefit to both organisations and help with communication in both directions.

#### **Issues to Consider**

Whilst networking, several points came out.

- Many governors from other mental health foundation trusts felt that a separate event just for mental health governors to network would be more beneficial.
- Some other foundation trusts that have put their 'service user' governors under the umbrella of 'public' governors, have found that they have few or no service user representation, e.g. the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust have found that their public governor slots are taken up with academics with an interest in mental health – very good, but not what was needed.
- Membership was another point discussed during lunch. Some foundation trusts, such as one in Birmingham, initially joined all their patients as members but they now find it too expensive to keep in contact with their members and are looking at ways of reducing numbers. Many feel the ideal membership is about 4,000, although Monitor seems to require more than this. Some were having problems getting service user membership and were using incentives (like staff discounts).

### **Joining the Association?**

I asked several people if they thought the Association was value for money (it costs £3,700 pa to join). Everyone I spoke to said they thought it was a good organisation but that it was relatively new and still learning. Most thought it would continue to improve and develop over time. Nobody said outright that it was definitely good value for money. At the end of the day, membership fees were discussed and it was said that as more foundation trusts join the Association, the fees payable will be reduced. Currently, the Association is using the fees to fund the production of various information booklets etc which makes the initial running costs high. As the number of booklets needed become less, and more revenue from new members goes up, the overall costs of membership will come down in the future. Fifty two per cent of all foundation trusts are members of the Association – this includes all those that have joined very recently.

Overall, I enjoyed the day and found the networking very beneficial. In terms of the membership fee, I'm not sure the cost is worth it at this time – especially as many governors are too busy in their work lives to attend the conferences (this is recognition of the busy lives we live, not to have a moan). If the cost were to be reduced in future, then I feel it would be good value for money as the benefits of networking could outweigh the cost.

If our trust or any mental health trust could put on a networking day for governors of mental health foundation trusts, then I feel that would be more beneficial in the long run.

Finally, we should remember that the Association in partnership with the Foundation Trust Network (which OBMH is part of) has launched a new programme of learning, developing and networking exclusively for foundation trust governors. This programme is free and will see a series of regional meetings occur where governors from local foundation trusts will be invited to attend to share knowledge and experiences, and debate key issues. The meeting for South Central is planned for 15 July 2009 and will be held in Oxford. I would encourage us to attend that.

Jeanette Hocking  
10 November 2008