

Council of Governors Meeting: Wednesday 12 July 2023

CoG2023.18

Title: Guidance for Governors on Raising Issues

Status: For Decision

Approval Path: Paper to Council following Committee Chairs discussion.

History: New Item

Board Lead: Trust Chair

Author: Neil Scotchmer, Head of Corporate Governance

Confidential: No

Key Purpose: Policy

Guidance for Governors on Raising Issues

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to outline the routes that are currently available to governors to raise issues of concern to patients and the public and to consider next steps in improving and streamlining these.

2. Background

- 2.1. One of the core responsibilities of governors is to represent the interests of members and the public. It is not part of the governor role to become directly involved with individual patient complaints or to advocate on behalf of individuals. However, governors will wish to represent the public's interests by highlighting broader issues of importance which are raised with them by constituents or of which they otherwise become aware.
- 2.2. It has been recognised that it would be beneficial to provide greater clarity for governors regarding the most appropriate and effective ways to ensure that the issues that they raise are appropriately investigated and addressed in order to better support governors in being effective in their roles. This should lead to better and more timely responses, reduced duplication of effort and more effective use of the time of senior Trust staff.
- 2.3. This issue was one of the matters raised at a recent meeting of the Trust Chair with the chairs of the governor committees and this paper represents one of the next steps that was agreed in that discussion.

3. Current Routes for Raising Issues

- 3.1. Whilst it is not expected that governors should take a direct role in individual patient concerns or complaints, it is important that they are able to signpost individuals so that these can be dealt with through the most appropriate channels. The Governor Handbook which has been provided to all governors clarifies the recommended routes through the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and its Complaints Department. (see pp14-15).
- 3.2. Where governors wish to raise more general issues to be followed up or for additional information they are encouraged to do this via the governors@ouh.nhs.uk address so that these can be directedly appropriately. Where possible Trust staff also aim to note and address any queries posted on the Governors Forum. Where issues are likely to be of broad interest the aim is to post responses so that all governors can see these.

4. Proposals

- 4.1. Whilst the approach above is probably suitable for simple requests for information it is suggested that this could be strengthened for matters that might merit more substantial briefings or discussion by governors.
- 4.2. It is suggested that these matters may best be directed through the Lead Governor so that they can be raised in their regular discussions with the Chair and Head of Corporate Governance to consider the most appropriate approach. Options would include:
 - 1) preparation of a written briefing for all governors;
 - 2) delegation of the issue for consideration by the appropriate governor committee;
 - 3) an agenda item at the Council of Governors; and
 - 4) a governor seminar session on the issue.
- 4.3. In relation to Option 2 it is noted that the involvement of non-executive directors attending governor committees at an earlier stage in the agenda setting process will enable them to contribute more effectively.
- 4.4. It is also suggested that a small working group of governors and other relevant individuals be tasked with reviewing the content of the Governors Handbook more broadly to ensure that the content in relation to this and other matters remains up to date and useful.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. The Council of Governors is asked to:
 - **note** the existing arrangements for raising matters in the interest of the public;
 - **support** the proposals made for ensuring that broader issues are addressed in the most appropriate way; and
 - **approve** the proposal that a working group be asked to review the content of the Governors' Handbook.