

East Kent Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Guidance on Board meetings held in public

This document provides information about attending one of our Trust Board meetings which are held in public.

A meeting in public is where members of the public can attend to observe a formal meeting of a Board. As such, observers can see the Board in action and the decisions it makes but are not allowed to join the discussion, or take part in the meeting in other ways. (This is clearly different from a public meeting, which is usually an open forum where the public can express their views and discuss issues, usually on a specific topic.)

However, where the Board is meeting in public, members of the public are able to ask questions at the end of the formal business. If you would like to ask a question, it would be helpful if you could do so in advance. This allows us to group similar questions together, answer as fully as possible, and make the best use of time.

To send in a question please email Sylvia Robson whose details are below. The Chairman may not be able to cover all questions, but every one of them will be recorded in the minutes and responded to on our website alongside the meeting papers.

Advanced booking

We have limited spaces at our meetings, so we do ask those wishing to attend to reserve a place in advance. If the public seating is full, we will not be able to allow entry to anyone without a booking.

Many of our meetings are now in person but with a facility for people to join online. If you would like to do this, please let us know and we will send you a link to join the meeting.

If you would like to attend, in person or online or you wish to submit a question please contact Sylvia Robson via Sylvia.Robson2@nhs.net

Questions from the public

We welcome questions from the public – they are an important mechanism for the leadership of the Trust to engage with and hear and learn from the people we serve. They enable us to demonstrate our commitment to openness and the fact that we are accountable.

There will of course be some issues, such as individual concerns or complaints, or general media queries which may be better handled through our various routes for enquiries:

- Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) / Complaints; [PALS Team](#)
- Media enquiries; please [contact the Communications Team](#)
- FOI: [FOI Request](#)

Queries before the meeting

When you register to observe a meeting in public, we will use your contact details to confirm the meeting arrangements or send you the link to join virtually. When you submit a question, we will use your contact details to confirm we have received it. We will not retain your contact details beyond the date of the meeting that you wish to observe and/or have submitted a question to.

Meeting etiquette

Please keep noise and distractions to a minimum during the meeting to allow everyone to follow the proceedings. The following can be distracting:

- Talking while another person is speaking.
- Use of mobile telephones. Please switch your phone off or put it on silent mode.
- Laptop keyboard noise. Please don't type during the meeting.

If you are joining virtually please make sure your microphone and camera are switched off (any Board member joining virtually will have their camera enabled). The chat and Q&A functions will be disabled.

Arrival

The meeting will begin promptly, so please arrive in plenty of time. On arrival, you will be asked to sign in, so we can keep an accurate record of attendance.

If you are joining virtually, we recommend that you log on 5-10 minutes before the scheduled start time.

Accessible venues

Venues will have disabled access. Please let us know in advance if you have any specific requirements. We will have staff on hand on the day to support you.

Microphones and hearing loops

To support everyone to hear speakers, there will be microphones and a hearing loop.

Papers for the meeting

We will make the meeting papers available before the meeting via our website. The minutes and responses to questions raised will be published on our website. Minutes are normally approved at the next meeting of the Board.

Frequently asked questions

Who is in charge of the meeting?

The Chairman of the Board is in charge of the meeting. It is the role of the Chairman to make sure that members of the Board can discuss the published agenda items in the time available.

How will I know who the members of the meeting are?

You can find information about members of the Board [here](#). Board members and regular attendees will have nameplates in front of them at the meeting.

Can I record proceedings?

Should you wish to record the meeting this must be by prior agreement with the Chairman. Any recording that is permitted must not disrupt the meeting for anyone else.

What happens if the meeting is disrupted?

Obviously, the Board needs to be able to conduct its business without interruption. A public body has a common law power to prevent anyone from entering a meeting if it has reasonable grounds for believing that they would disrupt the meeting and make it impossible for it to conduct its business., In the event of a disruption, the Chairman can exclude members of the public and close the meeting.