LOCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

CHAIR
Angela Dempsey, clinical associate director, RSM

SPEAKERS
Dean Fathers, chair, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
Rupert Nichols, chair, Calderstones Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Frances Blunden, governor, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

SESSION SUMMARY

- The session explored governance as a cycle with a series of cyclical processes, including accountability and the chair playing a key role in this. It was suggested that, whilst accountability is sought by a diverse range of stakeholders, boards should also ensure that stakeholders have input to inform planning, visions etc. This would lead to a form of accountability which contributes to strategic thinking on sustainability.
- Challenges arise from a multiplicity of accountabilities, such as managing competing interests/demands, maintaining quality and implementing policy and finance reduction at the same time, limitations of resources particularly in a small trust with a consequent impact on staff, patients/service users and particularly in staff recruitment and retention.
- There is increasing emphasis on local accountability with this being a fundamental characteristic of good governance. Local accountability was characterised as responsive to the needs of the community, equitable and inclusive, and participative.
- In the FT environment there are the added accountability responsibilities to and by governors and the key to success in this area is in the questions governors ask. Participation and good communication are most important with open dialogue and involvement helping governors in their duty of holding NEDs to account.

PANEL Q&A SESSION:

Discussion arising from questions from the audience included:

- Sustainability of the FT model
- Developing a culture of accountability as second nature rather than an imposed requirement
- If the NHS as a whole is an “organisation”, is there a need for local boards in future?
- The role of local accountability in key projects
- Lack of investment in engagement and communications
- Hearing the FT member voice effectively
- AGM attendance
- Managing expectations and understanding of the governor role (as opposed to) the NED role including communication with potential governors
- Do boards and governors need to change their role in light of current policy?