



**ERS  
RESEARCH**



**Membership  
Engagement  
Services**

## **The Membership Bulletin**

**Foundation Trust Member  
Engagement Survey**

Every year Membership Engagement Services (MES) holds a user group for its clients in the FT sector to get together and share ideas about the year ahead. In 2009 our clients expressed a wish to be able to benchmark their members against other Trusts, to see how well engaged and active they are.

ERS Research, a division of Electoral Reform Services, took on this challenge and developed a questionnaire to measure the extent to which members are engaged with their Trusts. The study was designed so that each participating Trust could measure their own performance against similar Trusts. As more Trusts add in their results the more robust and useful the benchmarking information will become. A number of Trusts took part in this first exercise, including:

- Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Hampshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

- Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

## Background

One of the core principles of Foundation Trusts is that they are publicly accountable - responsive to the needs of, and answerable to, their local population and service users. Building active and engaged membership bodies is key to this, as is electing a Board of Governors from this membership.

Monitor, the independent regulator of Foundation Trusts, is increasingly looking for evidence of engagement among FT members (see edition 4 of The Membership Bulletin). As an organisation MES is committed to trying to think one step ahead to provide Trusts with information, help and innovative ways to recruit and retain members. We also use existing, effective methods that have a proven track record.

To provide this information a sample is needed from a range of Trusts. Our research is a starting point from which Trusts can begin to compare their membership engagement levels. We hope to add to this body of work over time, increasing the value of its contribution.

## What we looked at

There were a number of key points the survey was designed to provide information on:

### How engaged members were with their FT

- Barriers to involvement.
- How engagement could be extended.

### Attitudes to Board of Governors

- Knowledge of the role of Governors.
- Voting behaviour.
- How turnout could be improved.

## Are there any differences between staff and public members?

### Who responded?

- Public respondents more likely to be male, older and newer members.
- Staff respondents more likely to be female, older and members for over two years.

	All Public (%)	All Staff (%)
<b>Gender</b>	(%)	(%)
Men	47	25
Women	51	75
Not given	2	0
<b>Age</b>	(%)	(%)
0-16, 17-21, 22-34	6	22
35-54	25	57
55+	69	21
<b>Ethnic origin</b>	(%)	(%)
White	86	81
Mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Other	11	16
<b>Length of membership</b>	(%)	(%)
Up to 2 years	65	28
2+ years	35	72

Base: all public members (369), all staff members (205)

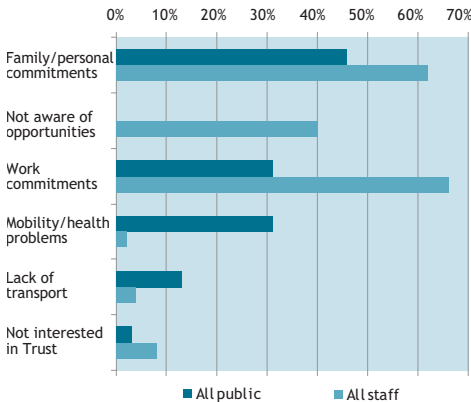
Full technical details are available from ERS Research

# THE RESULTS

## Involvement with Trust

- One in five members are involved with their Trust. Staff (29%) more so than public (9%).
- Around four in ten who are not involved say they are not aware of opportunities.
- Understandably, work commitments are the largest factor for staff not being more involved with their Trust (66%).
- Mobility/health problems (31%) and transport issues (13%) are particular problems for public members that are not associated with staff members.

*Q: These are some reasons other people have given for not being more involved with their Trusts. Which apply to you?*



*Base: all public members not involved in Trust (318); staff (144)*

## Current engagement

- Receiving newsletters or e-bulletins most common methods of engagement.

*Q: Which of these have you done in the last year?*



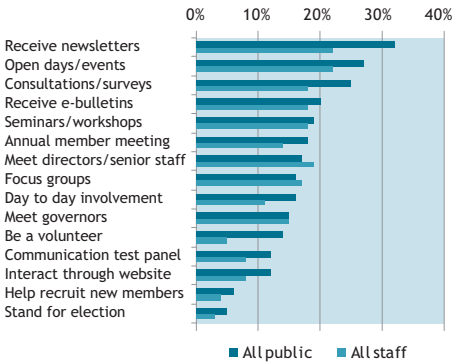
*Base: all members (574)*

- With the exception of newsletters, staff tend to be more involved than public members.
- Staff are much more likely to have answered a survey/consultation (26%), or attended a seminar or workshop (23%) than public members (15% and 4% respectively).
- Staff are also more likely to have met with directors (24%) than the public (4%).

## Future engagement

- About one in five members would like to be more engaged: receiving e-bulletins, or being involved in surveys, open days and seminars.
- Public members want to be more involved than staff.
- Attending open days/events (27%) and taking part in consultation/surveys (25%) are two of the most common activities public members would like to be involved in.

Q: Which would you like to do in the future?

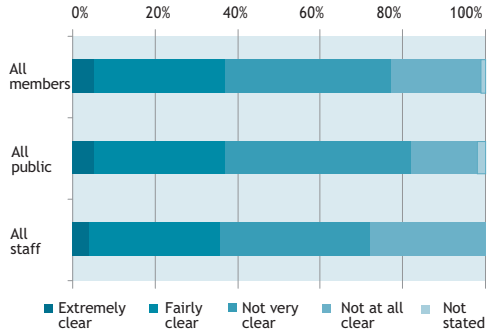


Base: all public (369) all staff (205)

## Knowledge of Council/Board of Governors

- Only one third of members are clear about the role of the Council/Board of Governors.

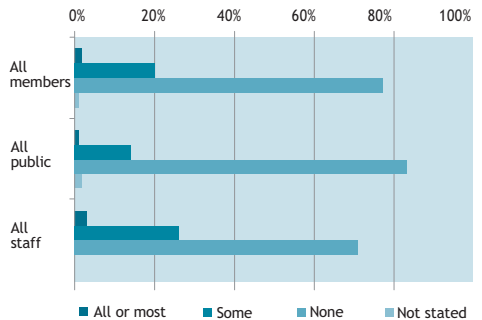
Q: How clear would you say you are about the role of your Council/Board of Governors?



Base: all members (574)

- Three quarters of all members do not know any of their elected representatives; staff are slightly more knowledgeable than public.

Q: How many of the Council members/Board of Governors do you personally know?

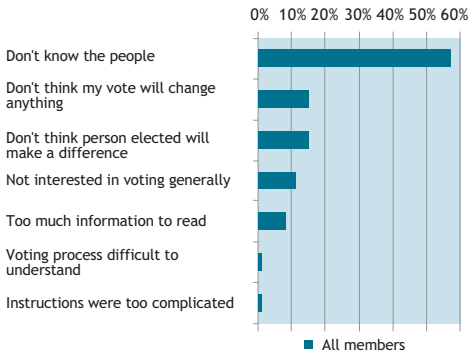


Base: all members (574)

## Current voting behaviour

- A quarter of members say they vote 'every time' - this roughly matches the recent turnout for FT elections in 2008/9.
- More public members say they vote 'every time' (35%) than staff (14%).
- 45% of staff say they 'never' vote in FT elections.

*Q: These are some reasons which other members have given for NOT voting in elections. Which apply to you?*



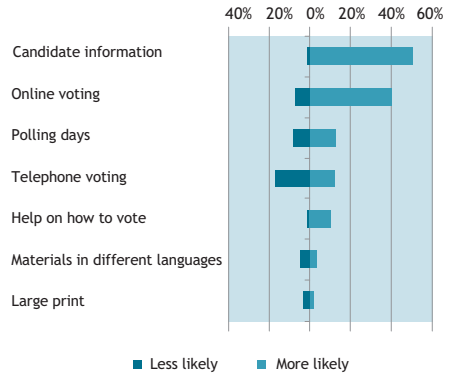
*Base: all members who voted in elections, most but not every time, rarely or never (361)*

- Not knowing the candidates involved is the main reason for not voting (57%).
- Staff (19%) are more likely to think their governors will not make a difference than public members (8%).

## Improving turnout

- Members say that providing more candidate information and online voting would make them more likely to vote.
- Online voting would prove very popular among staff (54%).

*Q: If the Trust were to offer the following, would they make you more or less likely to vote or make no difference?*



*Base: all members (574)*

## CONCLUSIONS

- Can opportunities for involvement be better publicised?
  - Events targeted to an individual's interests and needs could be a better way to get members involved. Other studies have shown these smaller, stand alone opportunities work better at getting members into the system.
- Awareness of the role of Council/Board of Governors is relatively low, and few candidates are known to members.
  - Can this be improved? Why would you vote for something you don't understand?
  - Providing more information about candidates could encourage voting. How can your Trust improve your candidate statements and information? Have you tried video statements and podcasts? Debates/hustings? Has your Trust developed an election micro-site or hosted any polling parties etc.?
- Online voting (when allowed) could help boost turnout generally (especially so among staff). Combined with low-cost email reminders and useful, resource-led election micro-sites, results could be seen quickly.

## Technical Details

- Representative samples of members from seven FTs were included in survey universe.
  - Six Acute Trusts and one Mental Health Trust.
  - Represent c.70,000 members.
- Postal questionnaire mailed to 2,401 public and 1,800 staff members.
- 369 public and 205 staff members, i.e. 574 members, responded
- Fieldwork dates: 13 November - 4 January 2010.

All research undertaken meets the standards of ISO 20252.

ERS Research is a registered Company Partner of the Market Research Society.



## DO YOU WANT TO BENCHMARK YOUR MEMBERS?

We hope that this data can become a standard tool for Trusts to benchmark their membership involvement and engagement. The more Trusts that take part, the more robust this information will become.

Once the survey has been conducted, participant Trusts receive a full, personalised report of results that show how your Trust compares to the benchmark. Each questionnaire also allows for a number of individual questions for your Trust.

If you would like to know more about how you can benchmark your membership, or information regarding member engagement/awareness campaigns and non-voter research, please contact us using the details below.

**For more details please contact the Foundation  
Trust teams at either ERS Research or  
Membership Engagement Services**



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**For Membership Participation,  
Electoral Management and Research**