

Meet the governor: Frances Kitson



Frances Kitson has been a governor at Kingston Hospital for over seven years and recently stepped in to the role of Lead Governor. We spoke to Frances about the role.

Q. When were you first elected as a governor?

I was first elected in October 2012, to represent Richmond, and when I moved to Kingston, I was re-elected as a Kingston governor. This will be my last term as governor. I was Lead Governor from 2013-2016, and again from June this year.

Q. Why did you decide to be a governor at Kingston Hospital?

I saw a leaflet in my local GP surgery, and thought it would be an interesting opportunity to use my skills (I'm a government lawyer, and trustee of another charity) to contribute to the formation and establishment of a new form of governance in our local hospital, to contribute to the community and to learn more about the local and national healthcare system.

Q. What does the role of Lead Governor involve?

The Lead Governor is no more important, and has no different duties, from all the governors. The Lead Governor acts as a channel between the rest of the governors and the Chairman, although Sian, our current Chair, has had an open door to all governors at all times. I see my role as a sounding-board for any governor who might have a concern, or a question s/he can't answer; as perhaps a mentor to less experienced governors; as someone who encourages other governors to use their skills to get involved; and as someone who has the very best interests of the Trust at heart, and takes the hospital values out into the community.

Q. Do you live locally?

Yes, 10 minutes' walk from the hospital. I moved to Kingston from Mortlake, the other side of the Park, six years ago.

Q. How does your role as a governor support the hospital, patients and members?

Public governors (we also have staff and appointed governors) have two legal duties, the first to represent their constituency members, and the second to hold the Non-Executive Directors to account. However, the role can be a great deal more than that – we work together with directors and other staff on committees which focus on quality of care, strategy, senior non-executive appointments and membership engagement; we are usually in the hospital a great deal, talking to patients and staff and seeing how specialist functions operate. We are also invited to attend local health bodies' meetings and we are there to represent the hospital in the wider community.

Q. Would you recommend the role of governor to members of Kingston Hospital?

Definitely. Like any voluntary work, it is very rewarding to know that the time and skill you devote to the role (and that need not be too onerous – many governors also work full time) is so highly valued. You would learn a great deal and definitely feel part of a team. You would have the opportunity to meet people who work in all roles in the hospital, and also to see the hospital in action by interacting with its users – patients and their families and friends.