

GENERAL Q&As

Q: What is an NHS Foundation Trust?

A:

- It is similar to existing NHS Trusts and retains the same ethos of providing care free at the point of delivery.
- It is accountable locally rather than nationally through members, governors and directors.
- It remains part of the NHS and will continue to be regulated to ensure it meets high standards.
- It has a membership made up of the public and staff who want to play an active part in the future of the Trust.

Q: Why are we doing it now?

A: Our Trust has performed extremely well over the last two years, turning itself round to reach high standards and achieve financial balance. It is now in a strong position to plan for the future, and as an NHS Foundation Trust will have the ability to plan and deliver services based on local needs.

Q: Why can't we stay as we are?

A:

- More than 100 Trusts have already become NHS Foundation Trusts and most will have achieved this by December 2010.
- We don't want to miss out on the benefits that being an NHS Foundation Trust would bring. We want to be even more involved with our local community and provide them with better services. We also want to provide our staff with improved opportunities.

Q: Is this privatisation?

A:

- No, NHS Foundation Trusts remain firmly part of the NHS, providing high quality care free at the point of delivery.
- NHS Foundation Trusts are about devolving power to local people. There are no shareholders and no dividends.
- They are prevented by law from being taken out of the NHS or sold.
- NHS Foundation Trusts will actually prevent privatisation of the NHS. They are required by law to use their assets to provide NHS services to NHS patients.

Q: What are the benefits of an NHS Foundation Trust?

A:

- NHS Foundation Trust status will help us to maintain and improve standards.
- We will have better and increased community involvement through members.
- We will have stronger financial control enabling us to become more efficient and invest surplus funds in local services, equipment and estate.
- It will provide increased and better opportunities for staff to be involved in the Trust.
- There will be greater opportunities for innovation, harnessing the creativity of front line staff.
- There will be less political intervention from the DH/SHA.

Q: Why do we need NHS Foundation Trusts?

A:

- The Government wants to modernise the NHS, to offer a service that provides fast, convenient, high quality care and is properly responsive to patients' needs.

- The best way to achieve these kinds of changes is to involve local people and the NHS staff who deliver the services on the ground.
- Patients should always come first. If the NHS is to continue to improve care and treatment it needs to involve local communities and the health and social care professionals who deliver services. NHS Foundation Trusts make this possible via the Council of Governors.
- The Trust will have a better ability to develop services in line with local needs, rather than government 'must dos'.

Q: How much independence does an NHS Foundation Trust have?

A:

- They are accountable to the local population through their membership and Council of Governors.
- They are monitored by the Independent Regulator (Monitor) to ensure that they are adhering to the terms of authorisation.
- They are still subject to inspection by the Healthcare Commission and are legally bound to work with partner organisations in their local areas.

Q: Will NHS Foundation Trusts be able to 'opt out' of the NHS?

A: No, they remain part of the NHS 'family', and will continue to treat NHS patients according to NHS principles and NHS standards.

Q: Will NHS Foundation Trusts encourage competition between NHS Trusts?

A: There will be competition, as there is today, because there is already a market in place. Patient's choice also brings an element of competition.

Q: Will NHS Foundation Trusts lead to a two-tier health service?

A: No. NHS Foundation Trusts will uphold the values and principles of the NHS and protect high standards for the NHS. They will have to meet the same national standards as the rest of the NHS and they will be paid at the same national tariff rates as other NHS hospitals.

Q: Will private patients be given priority?

A: No. There will be limits on the amount of private work an NHS Foundation Trust can carry out. If an NHS Foundation Trust wishes to treat more private patients, it will need to treat more NHS patients first. This will ensure they continue to focus on NHS work.

Q: Why are NHS Foundation Trusts regulated?

A: There needs to be regulation and monitoring to safeguard the interests of NHS patients and the wider NHS. However, the regulatory framework is designed to give NHS Foundation Trusts maximum freedom to operate.

Q: What happens if the application fails?

A: If Monitor and the Department of Health decide that the Trust is not quite ready to become an NHS Foundation Trust, then the application will be deferred until we are ready.

Q: What will happen if we don't become an NHS Foundation Trust?

A: The government wants to give all Trusts the opportunity to become NHS Foundation Trusts by 2010. After this, those that have not achieved Foundation Trust status will remain as they are now. If this happens to us it will mean we will be surrounded by neighbouring NHS Foundation Trusts who will be able to develop their services more quickly, leaving us behind and restricting our ability to provide the services that our patients want and need close to home.

Q: Why is the population in the consultation document quoted as 718,000?

A: This is the size of the population of Lincolnshire. 630,000 is the size of the population that the Trust serves.