

SERVICES, PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE

Q: How are standards of care maintained in an NHS Foundation Trust?

A: NHS Foundation Trusts are subject to NHS standards, NHS performance ratings and NHS systems of inspection.

Q: Ultimately NHS Foundation Trusts and Primary Care Trusts will have to deliver on national targets and standards like the rest of the NHS. What real freedom is there for NHS Foundation Trusts within these national standards?

A: NHS Foundation Trusts will have to deliver on the national targets and standards just like the rest of the NHS because becoming an NHS Foundation Trust does not mean opting out of the NHS. However the key difference is that they will be free to decide how they achieve this. They will not be subject to performance management by Strategic Health Authorities and can retain and re-invest surplus funds.

Q: Are NHS Foundation Trusts able to pick what services they provide?

A: No. Under the terms of authorisation, each NHS Foundation Trust will have to continue to provide essential services, such as Accident and Emergency services. They will only be able to change these protected services if the independent regulator (Monitor) supports their proposals.

Q: What happens if an NHS Foundation Trust performs poorly?

A: If an NHS Foundation Trust continues to perform poorly and is unable to rectify any problems, the independent regulator, 'Monitor' has statutory power to intervene and if necessary remove members of the Board.

Q: Shouldn't the Government be concentrating on helping poorly performing hospitals rather than best performers?

A:

- NHS Foundation Trusts form part of a wider reform programme designed to raise standards across the NHS as a whole. The Government is committed to raising performance right across the NHS, bringing all NHS Trusts and primary care organisations up to the standard of the best.
- NHS Trusts will be supported to help them achieve the required standard in order to be able to submit an application for Foundation Status.

Q: What is the cost of the application?

A: There will be a cost for the application process because Trusts have to consult on their services which involves producing materials and holding meetings. There will also be costs to run the membership data base but the benefits of this will be seen in the increased involvement of the community. Once we are established as an NHS Foundation Trust, there will be on-going running costs which will include the communication material and focus groups / workshops / events with members and the management of elections to the Council of Governors and the activities of the Council of Governors.

Q: Can NHS Foundation Trusts borrow money without seeking external approval?

A:

- NHS Foundation Trusts can borrow money to improve services and increase capacity as long as they can afford it, without seeking external approval. They can borrow money from private sector lenders as well as the government.
- The borrowing limit for each NHS Foundation Trust is set in their authorisation and subject to annual review by 'Monitor'.

Q: Does this mean NHS Foundation Trust status will lead to more money for services?

A:

- The financial regime for all NHS Trusts remains challenging and we cannot expect NHS Foundation Trust status itself to provide extra income.
- However, we can borrow to invest (though we will need to be able to repay any loan and interest) and it does give us more control over our costs and long term service strategy. This means we can gain money to invest in clinical innovation and better services for patients which is what we all want.