



Board Members Capability Checklist

Key contributions expected of a highly effective board member include:

- **depth of contribution** – expertise in a given area (e.g. marketing)
- **breadth of contribution** – contribution to discussions outside area of expertise/ function
- **strategic contribution** – forward-looking contributions
- **challenge contribution** – listening, probing and challenging

In order to contribute in these 4 ways, board members should have the following underpinning capabilities:

- **insight into the organisation** – for example, ability to describe the services provided by the organisation and understand at a high level the capacity, capability and culture of the organisation
- **awareness of the organisation's environment** – for example, an understanding of how the organisation as a whole; and key services provided by the organisation; are perceived by the local community and media
- **clarity of role** – for example, ability to describe the role of the board and their own role on that board
- **personal values and motivation** – for example, consistently acting in the interests of patients and carers
- **personal style** – for example, an individual's ability to explain things without using jargon
- **personal development and learning** – for example, willingness to admit and take responsibility for own mistakes and shortcomings.

Use the checklist that follows to review your overall effectiveness and identify your signature strengths within your current role and to create a personal profile for use when applying for future roles.



Key contributions to the board

DEPTH OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOARD						
<i>'Board colleagues would say that I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not tend to use my expertise at all in meetings of the board or its subcommittees 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a defined area of expertise and routinely use this expertise when in board meetings and subcommittee meetings for the benefit of the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am not approached by colleagues or others to help out in areas where I have expertise 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am approached by board colleagues and others outside formal board meetings to help contribute in areas where I have expertise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use a lot of technical language and jargon when I'm contributing in board meetings 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not use overly technical language or jargon when contributing at board-level so everybody can understand the question(s) I'm asking or the point(s) I'm making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am the only board member that knows what they are talking about in a certain area and therefore the board defers to my judgement 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make every effort to ensure that the board does not become overly dependent upon my expertise

Key contributions to the board (continued)

BREADTH OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOARD						
<i>'Board colleagues would say that I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> only tend to contribute in areas where I am confident and good at 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> routinely contribute outside my own area of functional responsibility and expertise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> would find it difficult to describe the organisation's capability, capacity and culture 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use my insight into the organisation's capability (skills and knowledge), capacity and culture to help inform and shape board debate and decision-making
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a limited understanding of how services both within and outside the organisation are interconnected 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> remind the board about how change(s) in one service might impact upon other services (e.g. major care pathways or commissioning cycles)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have limited experience of working in other organisations or sectors 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have brought to the board's attention new ways of doing things based upon insights from elsewhere (e.g. how other organisations, either in the NHS or outside the NHS, have managed to improve efficiency)



Key contributions to the board (continued)

STRATEGIC CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOARD						
<i>'Board colleagues would say that I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have been quiet and tended to 'go with the flow' when discussing the vision and strategy for the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have made a significant contribution in helping the Board to develop its vision and strategy for the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would have a limited understanding of how demographics or disease profiles are changing 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have helped shape the board's thinking about how it can best respond to national and local demographic trends and changes in disease profiles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tend to be focused on the 'here and now' when contributing to the board 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will raise potential future opportunities and threats for the board to consider and make suggestions as to how to best respond to them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • will make contributions that are not aligned with or are even at odds with the board's vision and strategy for the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • align my contributions with the board's vision and strategy for the organisation



Key contributions to the board (continued)

CHALLENGE CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOARD						
'Board colleagues would say that I...'						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> challenge in a way that is not always helpful 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> probe and challenge board colleagues constructively and in a way that adds value to the board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not pay a lot of attention to how the organisation is progressing 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> help to ensure that the organisation is progressing towards achieving the board's vision and meeting all its national and local targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tend to take the information I receive at face value 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> will question the accuracy of the board-level information I receive when appropriate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can become defensive when challenged or take challenge personally 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond positively to challenge from others



Underpinning capabilities

INSIGHT INTO THE ORGANISATION						
<i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> would not be able to describe the key services provided by the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can explain the organisation's key services provided and/or commissioned by the organisation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not understand how the organisation is structured 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can explain how the organisation is structured
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> would not know which services are either performing well or not so well 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can describe which services within the organisation are high- and low-performing from a variety of perspectives, including care quality and profitability perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> struggle to understand the board reports and papers 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the performance monitoring information presented at board meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not know the key internal risks facing the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can describe the key internal risks facing the organisation and how these are being minimised
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not have a grasp of finance 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can explain the financial position and performance



Underpinning capabilities (continued)

AWARENESS OF THE ORGANISATION'S ENVIRONMENT						
<i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not comprehend how the organisation is perceived by others 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand how the local community and media perceive the organisation as a whole and its key services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> would struggle to articulate local and national health policy 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand current local and national health policy and likely future policy development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not appreciate the health and social market within which the organisation operates 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a good understanding of the organisation's health and social care market
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> could not describe my legal and regulatory responsibilities 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the regulatory and legal environment the organisation operates within
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have no appreciation of how disease profiles will change or demographics will be different 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appreciate national and local demographic trends and changes in disease profiles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have no sense of how my organisation is performing relative to others 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have insight into how my organisation's services perform relative to those of other similar organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot see how various national and international agendas will impact on the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am mindful of how a number of national and international agendas will affect this organisation (e.g. the green agenda; an increased emphasis on corporate social responsibility).



Underpinning capabilities (continued)

CLARITY OF ROLE <i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not understand the difference between the board and other decision-making groups within the organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the role of the Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not appreciate the difference between management and governance 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can explain the differences between governing and managing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> could not describe the board's governance structure 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can describe the board's governance structure, including the roles of board sub-committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am not clear about what is expected of me on the board and could not describe what my legal duties are 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> can describe my own role on the board and my statutory duties as a board member.



Underpinning capabilities (continued)

PERSONAL VALUES AND MOTIVATION						
<i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a tendency to put my own interests before those of patients, carers and the public 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently act in the interests of patients, their carers and the public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am not committed to the NHS and the NHS Constitution 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a strong commitment to the NHS and the NHS Constitution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am not trusted by others 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am known internally and externally as a Director that operates with integrity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have tried to influence decisions for my own benefit 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have never influenced a board decision for financial or other material benefits for myself, family, friends or others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not believe that declaring any possible conflicts of interest is important 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> always declare any possible conflicts of interest



Underpinning capabilities (continued)

PERSONAL STYLE						
<i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have deliberately kept things back when communicating with the board 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am open and honest when communicating with the Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not react well to being challenged 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> welcome challenge of my reasoning, decisions and actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a tendency to say my piece before fully understanding an issue 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask questions to comprehend discussions fully
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tend to dominate board meetings 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> don't speak unnecessarily or dominate board meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use a lot of technical language without explaining what it means 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tailor what I'm saying to the needs of my audience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not deliver on my commitments to the board 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> always deliver on my commitments to the Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> get angry or despondent easily 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> maintain composure and effectiveness in the face of adversity, setbacks, opposition or unfairness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> try to unravel what has been agreed 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have displayed courage in some of the board decisions I have contributed to making.



Underpinning capabilities (continued)

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING						
<i>'As a Board member I...'</i>						
	Capability level					
	1	2	3	4	5	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have only ever worked in this organisation 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have worked at senior levels in other organisations, including at board-level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have only ever worked in the NHS 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have worked in other sectors (e.g. wider public sector; private sector)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blame others or explain away what has happened when things go wrong 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> am willing to admit and take responsibility for my mistakes and shortcomings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not believe that I need to be developed 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> invite and accept feedback on my own strengths and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> do not believe that a Personal Development Plan is necessary 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> have a Personal Development Plan in place to address my skills and knowledge gaps.