Appointment of **Chair, NHS Online**

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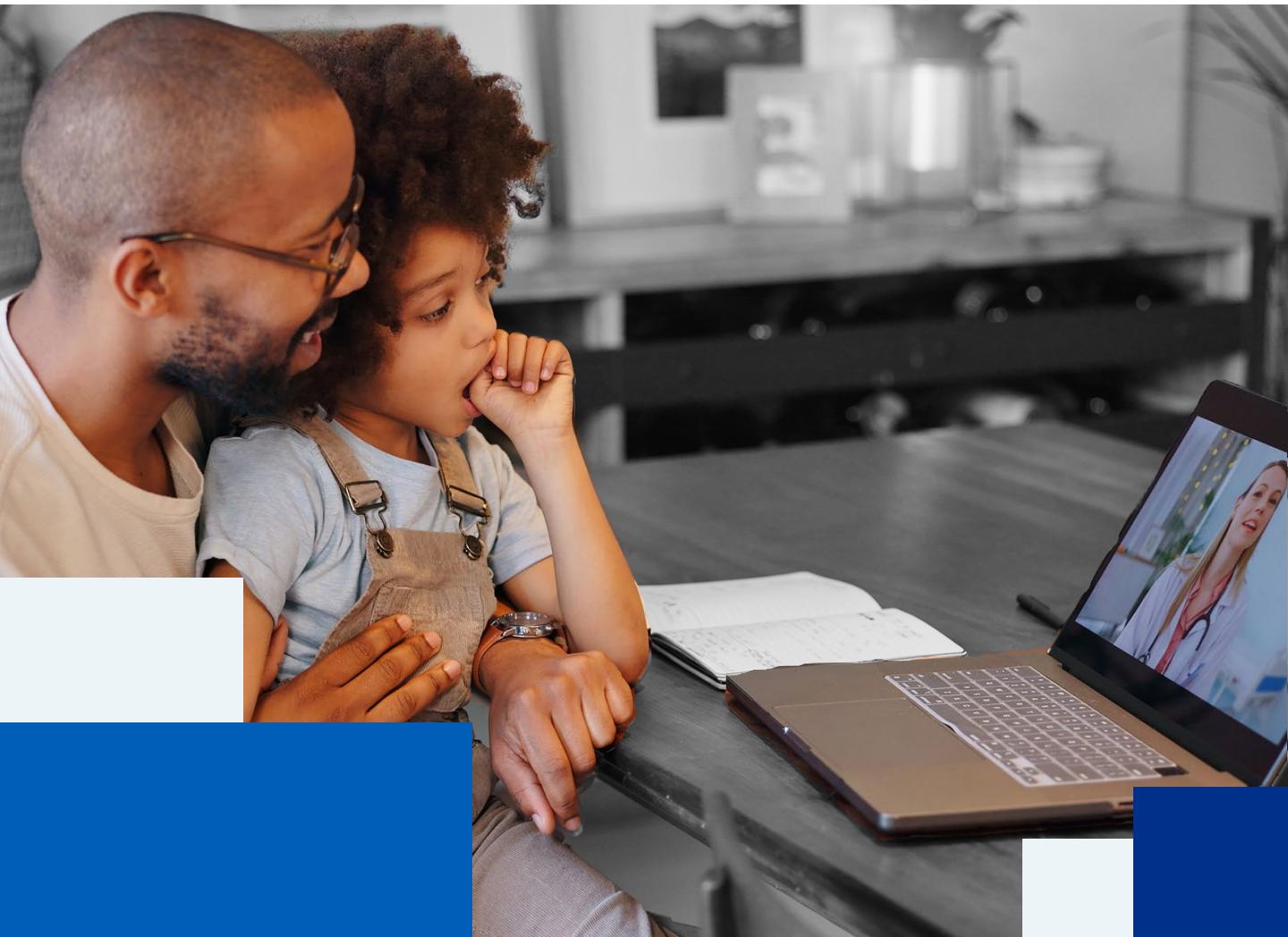
Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of NHS Online. This is a unique opportunity to play a defining role in shaping the NHS's first national, digital-first Trust, created to address some of the most pressing challenges facing elective care in England.

NHS Online represents a bold and deliberate intervention by NHS England. It has been established to tackle excessive elective waiting times, workforce constraints, financial pressures and fragmented digital transformation through a single, nationally scaled virtual care provider. The ambition is not incremental change, but system-level transformation: delivering safe, high-quality elective care unconstrained by geography, and setting a new benchmark for how digital-first care can operate within the NHS.

As Chair, you will lead the Board through the establishment of a new organisation, building strong foundations of governance, culture and credibility, and supporting its evolution into a fully operational Trust delivering services from 2027/28. This role offers the opportunity to shape a national institution from inception, ensuring it is clinically robust, financially sustainable and resolutely patient-centred, while realising the full potential of technology-enabled care at scale.

NHS Online represents one of the most ambitious service transformations undertaken by the NHS in recent decades. As Chair, you will have the opportunity to shape a new national institution from its foundations, helping to redefine how elective care is delivered for millions of patients. This is a role for a leader motivated by public value, system impact and the opportunity to create something enduring, as well as for someone with a focus on digital transformation and understanding of the digital shift. We hope this brief gives you a clear sense of the scale, ambition and significance of the opportunity, and we look forward to engaging with candidates who share our commitment to transforming care for the future.

About NHS Online

NHS Online will be a new national NHS Trust dedicated to delivering elective care virtually. It will be the first NHS provider focused solely on national, digital-first elective services, designed to deliver high-quality, clinically rigorous care at scale while maximising flexibility and productivity.

The Trust's purpose is to set standards for and deliver virtual elective care services.

NHS Online will deliver end-to-end elective services accessed via the NHS App, giving patients greater choice, convenience and timely access to expert clinicians. Referral to virtual care services provided by NHS Online will always be optional, with in-person care continuing to be available through existing providers where preferred or clinically required.

NHS Online will respond directly to major system pressures, including long waiting times, financial constraints, workforce shortages and fragmented digital transformation. With a national remit and no estate constraints, NHS Online will align clinical capacity with patient demand, enable more flexible working, improve access and equity, and support the wider NHS through productivity gains.

NHS Online is planned to be formally established on 1 June 2026, with clinical services launching in 2027/28.

About NHS Online

NHS Online has been conceived at genuinely national scale. It is designed to operate unconstrained by geography, estate or traditional workforce models, enabling clinical capacity to be aligned to patient demand across England rather than within local boundaries.

The scale of ambition is significant. Once operational, NHS Online is expected to deliver the equivalent of up to 8.5 million appointments and assessments in its first three years, around four times the volume of an average NHS trust, while remaining clinically robust and regulated in the same way as other NHS Trusts, including by the Care Quality Commission.

This is not marginal additional capacity, but a material system intervention intended to accelerate elective recovery and free up physical capacity across local providers for patients who need or choose in-person care.

By creating a single national provider focused solely on digital-first elective care, NHS Online is intended to do "once, nationally" what has proven difficult to achieve through dispersed local transformation.

Governance and organisational model

NHS Online will be established as a new NHS Trust, accountable to the public and Parliament, and subject to oversight by NHS England and inspection by the Care Quality Commission.

As an NHS Trust the Board will include an independent Chair, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Medical Director, Nursing Director and Non-Executive Directors.

The Chair and Non-Executive Directors will be appointed from 1 June 2026 and will form a Nominations Committee, leading the recruitment of the Chief Executive and the wider executive team. The full Board is expected to be in place by the end of December 2026.

The role of Chair

The Chair will lead the Board through the establishment of a pioneering, digitally enabled NHS Trust, shaping it into a fully operational provider of virtual elective care services. This role is central to creating a culture of learning, innovation, and patient-centred care, with a strong focus on quality, safety, access, and experience, delivered through technology and digital innovation.

To be effective, the Chair of the new Trust must:

- Uphold the highest standards of corporate governance and integrity.
- Provide strong, visible leadership to the Board and wider organisation, ensuring accountability and transparency.
- Champion innovation and technology-enabled care, creating the conditions for safe, effective, and inclusive digital service delivery.
- Act as an ambassador for digital healthcare at national and international levels.
- Support the creation of a digitally enabled workforce with the skills to deliver care virtually.
- Ensure the Board has the right balance of skills, diversity, and expertise to govern a technology-driven NHS national provider.
- Set a style and tone that will promote effective decision making and constructive debate.
- Ensure that the Trust operates with the highest standards of probity, equality, and patient-centred care, in line with NHS values.
- Understand and give priority to the interests of patients.
- Ensure the effective running of the Board and that constructive relationships based on candour, trust and mutual respect exist between Executive and Non-Executive Directors.
- Undertake regular performance evaluation of the Board, its committees, and Directors.
- Establish and develop constructive relationships with professional and trade union representatives, stakeholders, and regulators, including NHS England, the Department of Health and Social Care, and healthcare partner organisations.
- Represent the Trust and act as both a spokesperson and an ambassador.
- Establish a relationship of trust, collaboration and openness with the Chief Executive and other Board Members.

Responsibilities

- Lead the new Trust through the establishment phase and support its evolution to a fully operational virtual provider of NHS services (in Q1 2027/28).
- Lead the Board in setting the overall strategy and direction of the new Trust, ensuring that it delivers high quality, safe, and equitable services.
- Ensure that the Trust operates to the highest standards of corporate governance, financial stewardship, and regulatory compliance.
- Ensure that the Trust works in strong partnership with NHS partners, national and local government, community, and independent sector partners to maximise the benefits for the patients and public it serves.
- Ensure that decision-making is transparent, evidence-based, and focused on patients' best interests.
- Ensure that the Board has the right balance of skills, experience, and diversity to govern a digitally driven organisation.
- Set the agenda for Board discussions to promote effective decision making, and constructive debate
- Lead the Board in holding the Executive team to account for delivery of operational standards e.g. Referral To Treatment Times (RTT).
- Ensure the effective implementation and communication of Board decisions, holding the Chief Executive and wider Executive Team accountable for their delivery.
- Ensure the Board maintains the financial viability of the Trust, using its resources effectively to meet its responsibilities within the requirements issued by NHS England.
- Develop an effective relationship of Trust with the Chief Executive, providing support and advice whilst respecting executive responsibility.
- Conduct an annual appraisal of the Chief Executive and lead the appointment process for a replacement when necessary.
- Develop and refresh the knowledge and skills of Board Members and ensure that the Non-Executive Directors as a team provide effective and constructive challenge to the executive team.
- Promote inclusion and equality in the treatment of staff and patients.
- Foster a culture of innovation and patient-centred care.

Person specification

This is a unique and high-profile role, requiring the successful candidate to be an outstanding leader with the vision and credibility to guide the NHS's first national provider of virtual elective care. The candidate will have a demonstrable track record of achievement, including managing change, ideally gained in a senior leadership role within an organisation of significant size and complexity, and with a significant budget, in the public, private, voluntary or community sectors.

Essential experience and skills

- Board-level leadership gained in complex organisations, including as a Chair, Non-Executive Director or equivalent level of experience.
- Evidence of successful leadership and of holding senior management teams to account for delivery, driving continuous improvement in quality and managing change.
- Understanding of technology-enabled services, digital health or digital transformation and the benefits these models can deliver.
- Demonstrable knowledge of governance, including strategic planning, financial management, risk, performance management and service development.
- An ability to influence and persuade at the highest levels in private and public sector contexts, along with experience of building strong alliances and productive working relationships with a range of stakeholders, securing high quality outcomes for public benefit.
- Highly developed interpersonal and communication skills with the ability to work in a constructive way and listen sensitively to the views of a wide range of others.
- Political awareness and an ability to think strategically, assimilate complex data and make informed judgements, together with an appreciation of the NHS political and operational environment.
- Evidence of a commitment to inclusion, diversity and equality of opportunity.
- Unwavering commitment to public service, equality and the values of the NHS.

Desirable experience and skills

- Commercial expertise within technology, digital services, or consumer-facing industries.
- Clinical experience.
- Track record of innovation leadership, whether in start-up, scale-up, or disruptive change environments.
- International perspective on digital health, telemedicine or virtual service delivery.
- Previous experience of working with the NHS, government, or large-scale public service organisations in a senior role.

Terms of appointment

Remuneration: £55,000 per annum, this will be reviewed in line with the outcomes of the ongoing pay review.

Time commitment: Two days per week.

Length of term: Three years.

Location: London with expectation to travel nationally as required.

Process overview
Saxton Bampfylde is acting as employment advisor agency to NHS England. Following the longlist meeting, candidates will be invited to attend an online preliminary interview with Saxton Bampfylde.

Following a shortlisting meeting of the selection panel, shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a final interview with NHS England. The appointed candidate will be expected to attend the shortlisting and interviews for the Non-executive Director recruitment process. Key dates for the process can be found below:

Key dates
Application deadline: Friday 13 February 2026
Longlisting: w/c 16 February (candidates not required)
Shortlisting: w/c 9 March (candidates not required)
Informal conversations with Programme Director and Programme SRO: w/c 16 March
Formal interviews: w/c 23 March
Shortlisting for Non-executive recruitment: w/c 13 April
Informal conversations for Non-executive Director candidates with the appointed Chair: w/c 20 April
Formal interviews for Non-executive Directors: w/c 27 April and 4 May

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to NHS Online on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at www.saxbam.com/appointments using code **ZBXXA**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form. Candidates are also required to complete the "Fit and Proper Person" Self Declaration form.

The closing date for applications is **noon on Friday 13 February 2026**.

The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

Due diligence
Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

GDPR personal data notice
According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

NHS England is a signatory to the Government's Disability Confident scheme, which means that we guarantee an interview to any disabled candidates entering under the scheme, should they meet the minimum essential criteria for a role. If you wish to apply under the scheme, you should declare so at the point you submit your application.

Appendix 1: The NHS Leadership Competency Framework

NHS England's Leadership Competency Framework sets out 6 competency domains that are aligned with the NHS values and other regulatory guidance, to support Board members to perform at their best. The framework provides a guide by which, over time, all Board directors can measure themselves and develop proficiency in all areas. It is designed to:

- support the appointment of diverse, skilled, and proficient leaders
- support the delivery of high-quality, equitable care and the best outcomes for patients, service users, communities, and our workforce
- help organisations to develop and appraise all board members
- support individual board members to self-assess against the six competency domains and identify development needs.

For more information on how this framework should be applied: NHS England » NHS leadership competency framework for board members

The six competency domains and definitions are:

1.Driving high-quality and sustainable outcomes

The skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to deliver and bring about high quality and safe care and lasting change and improvement – from ensuring all staff are trained and well led, to fostering improvement and innovation which leads to better health and care outcomes.

2.Setting strategy and delivering long-term transformation

The skills that need to be employed in strategy development and planning, and ensuring a system wide view, along with using intelligence from quality, performance, finance, and workforce measures to feed into strategy development.

3.Promoting equality and inclusion, and reducing health and workforce inequalities

The importance of continually reviewing plans and strategies to ensure their delivery leads to improved services and outcomes for all communities, narrows health and workforce inequalities, and promotes inclusion.

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4.Providing robust governance and assurance

The system of leadership accountability and the behaviours, values and standards that underpin our work as leaders. This domain also covers the principles of evaluation, the significance of evidence and assurance in decision making and ensuring patient safety, and the vital importance of collaboration on the board to drive delivery and improvement.

5.Creating a compassionate, just, and positive culture

The skills and behaviours needed to develop great team and organisation cultures. This includes ensuring all staff and service users are listened to and heard, being respectful and challenging inappropriate behaviours.

6.Building a trusted relationship with partners and communities

The need to collaborate, consult and co-produce with colleagues in neighbouring teams, providers and systems, people using services, our communities, and our workforce. Strengthening relationships and developing collaborative behaviours are key to the integrated care environment.