

Ipswich Hospital is in the process of applying to become an NHS foundation trust

Ipswich Hospital is today offering its patients and visitors their biggest opportunity yet to get involved in decision-making.

The hospital is applying to become a foundation trust and has begun recruiting thousands of local people to become 'members' of the trust. The Mayor of Ipswich David Hale and Chairman of the Ipswich Hospital User Group Gary Miller were among the first to become members.

Foundation trusts provide services in a new way, with greater freedoms from the Department of Health. They are still subject to NHS standards and inspections but are able to make decisions at a local level so the decisions best meet the needs of the local people.

Members can be involved as much or as little as they like, from simply receiving newsletters to becoming active in forums/fundraising and volunteering.

Hospital staff are backing the move. Vicki Decroo, General and Special Surgery matron, said: "This is a real chance for patients, relatives and visitors to get involved with shaping the future of our hospital's services."

Stephen Gee, biomedical scientist, said: "We want to make sure the healthcare our patients receive is the very best and being a foundation trust will help us deliver that."

Hospital Chief Executive Andrew Reed said: "Becoming a foundation trust will help us deliver the best hospital care for our community in the future.

"This opportunity to become a member of our trust gives members of the public the chance to pledge to be a part of that future.

"Patients will not only have a chance to be part of the decision-making process, but will also have access to more information about the current services and future plans allowing them to make informed choices about where to have treatment."

The hospital's new members, which include the majority of the 4,000-strong workforce, will elect a Council of Governors. The governors represent the views of the public and work with the Board of Directors who remain responsible for day-to-day running of the trust.

As well as being answerable to the local community, foundation trusts are also accountable to Monitor, the independent regulator for foundation trusts. Monitor ensures trusts are well-governed and financially strong.

Anyone who is over 16 years old and lives in Suffolk or Essex is invited to become a member.

See www.ipswichhospital.nhs.uk/foundationtrust or call membership manager Sarah Higson on 01473 704769 for details.



Stephen Gee and Ann Noy



Vicki Decroo



Andrew Reed