**Future Chairs – the succession solution for school boards**



One of the [**eight elements of effective governance**](https://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Eight-Elements-of-Effective-Governance.aspx) is to have a good chair. The [**role of the chair**](https://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Chairs-of-Governors.aspx) of the governing board is a crucial one that ensures that the other elements of effective governance are in place. Despite the importance of the role, governing boards often report that they find it difficult to attract a good chair with 36% respondents to the [**annual school governance survey 2017**](https://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/School-governance-in-2017-an-annual-survey-by-NGA.aspx) agreeing that it was difficult to find a good chair. Over half of respondents to the survey also said they would not consider becoming chair in the future, frequently citing time, commitment and responsibility as barriers.

Future Chairs is a free recruitment service, brought to you by [**Inspiring Governance**](https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/recruiting-governors/) and the National Governance Association, designed to help governing boards find volunteers with the right skills and willingness to take on the role in the near future. The service connects boards that expect to have a requirement for a chair, vice-chair or committee chair within 12 to 18 months with appropriately experienced and skilled individuals who have the potential to lead a school governing board or committee. These individuals are not new to chairing or senior and strategic roles but may be new to education.

**Succession planning**
Good succession planning is about thinking ahead to the future needs of your governing board to ensure it has the right mix of skills and experience, as well as someone to lead it, rather than waiting for a vacancy to arise. If the chair or vice-chair of the governing board or a committee chair is considering moving to another school or stepping away from governance, then there should be a plan in place to ensure a smooth transition of leadership. An important part of succession planning is developing future leaders by nurturing talent, sharing responsibility and undertaking training. Where boards have a gap in their succession plan but they do not already have a suitable skilled individual on the board, they should not hesitate to recruit externally to fill. This might be particularly appropriate where the school is engaged in a period of transformation, such as expanding, forming a federation or joining a MAT.

**How the service works in our priority areas**

* Utilising the technology behind Inspiring Governance, we identify and handpick volunteers based on their senior level experience, capacity and skills that will drive school improvement
* We conduct a screening interview with volunteers and ensure they understand the expectations of the role
* We recommend suitable volunteers based on your location and requirements, along with their preferences
* You conduct an interview with the volunteer, and follow your normal recruitment process should the interview be successful
* You appoint the volunteer to your governing board as a governor/ trustee with the view that they will take on a chairing position at an agreed interval
* We support you and the candidate throughout the appointment process, and after a suitable match is made.

**Supporting Future Chairs**
Each Future Chair receives a year’s free support from the National Governance Association including:

* Mentorship from an experienced chair including NLGs
* The opportunity to join a Department for Education funded governance development course
* A dedicated phone line and email support, and access to online guidance centre
* In-depth e-learning modules though [**NGA Learning Link**](https://www.nga.org.uk/ConsultancyandTraining/NGA-Learning-Link-e-learning.aspx)

**Priority areas**
Since the service commenced in March 2017, over 50 people have been appointed as Future Chairs. We currently offer a bespoke recruitment service in the following areas:

* Birmingham
* Blackpool
* Bradford
* Brent, Barnet and Ealing
* Derby and Derbyshire
* Fenland and East Cambridgeshire
* Hastings
* Ipswich
* Knowsley
* Liverpool
* Northamptonshire
* Norwich
* Oldham
* Plymouth
* South Yorkshire (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield)
* Stoke on Trent
* Wandsworth
* West Somerset

If you are in one of these areas and may have a requirement for a new chair in the next 12 to 18 months, please contact Simon Richards, Chairs Development Manager for a discussion by emailing **simon.richards@nga.org.uk** or calling 0121 237 3780.

Schools outside of these pilot areas can search for local volunteers who have indicated an interest in becoming a Future Chair by [**registering for Inspiring Governance**](https://www.inspiringgovernance.org/recruiting-governors/) and selecting 'future chair' in the volunteer search.