



Major Career Roles

Chief Executive, The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust
National Cancer Director, NHS England

Board member, Institute of Cancer Research

Trustee, Royal Marsden Cancer Charity

Chair, National Cancer Board

Other Career Highlights

Governor, St Paul's Girls School

Non-Executive Director, Imperial College Academic Health Science Centre

Dame Cally Palmer has over 25 years of board-level leadership as Chief Executive of The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, one of the world's leading cancer centres. Under her leadership, The Royal Marsden became one of the first NHS Trust status hospitals in the UK and has been propelled into the top five cancer centres globally, in close collaboration with the Institute of Cancer Research.

Alongside her executive role, Dame Cally has played a central part in shaping national health policy and delivery. As National Cancer Director, she works closely with Government and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the development and execution of national cancer strategies. She has chaired the National Cancer Board for NHS England, bringing together leaders from healthcare, life sciences and industry to drive innovation in prevention, diagnosis and treatment. She has spearheaded major national transformation programmes and secured significant public funding to support their implementation.

Dame Cally's governance experience spans both provider and research institutions. As CEO at The Royal Marsden, she worked with the Chair to build a high-calibre board blending C-suite leaders from finance and industry with senior clinical professionals, and has consistently focused on board effectiveness, risk, and clinical and financial performance. As a board member of the Institute of Cancer Research, she operates at the interface of discovery science, clinical practice and industry partnership, contributing to the development of treatments used globally. She played a pivotal role in shaping the UK's most recent 10-year national cancer strategy, launched by the Prime Minister, working across government, NHS and academic stakeholders.

Her strategic leadership extends across workforce, major capital programmes, digital infrastructure and the creation of innovative facilities that support cutting-edge care and research. Internationally, Dame Cally has cultivated relationships with donors, foundations and corporations and is a regular presence at high-profile fundraising events, including those hosted by HRH The Prince of Wales.

Dame Cally brings deep cross-sector expertise in:

- Healthcare leadership & hospital transformation – leading a world-class specialist hospital through major clinical, operational and cultural change in highly complex environments.
- National cancer strategy, policy & funding – shaping and delivering long-term cancer strategies, securing significant public investment and aligning government, NHS and industry stakeholders.
- Board governance, research & innovation – building high-performing boards, integrating discovery science and clinical practice, and fostering partnerships that accelerate new treatments.
- Public–private healthcare models & philanthropy – designing and scaling integrated public–private care, and engaging global donors, foundations and corporates to support breakthrough facilities and services.

She has overseen all aspects of operational management in a complex healthcare environment, developing a distinctive model that combines world-class public healthcare with a high-performing private patient business, recognised through multiple “best private hospital” awards and widely regarded as a benchmark for integrated public–private care in the UK. She holds an MSc in Management from London Business School, an honorary doctorate from Queen Mary University of London and is a member of the Institute of Health and Social Care Management. She was appointed CBE in 2004 and Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2020 for services to healthcare and life sciences.