

Chairman's bulletin

July 2015

Dear member

Our board of directors meet around six times a year to discuss performance, new developments and make decisions on how the trust is run. I wanted to be able to share with you an update from our latest board of directors' meeting. I hope you find this bulletin informative. I will be writing to you after every board meeting. If you have any comments about the format or content please contact the private office.

Member event – 25 July

It was good to see many of you at the member event on Saturday 25 July which was about nutrition and hydration.

CQC visit

We had an inspection by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) from 7 to 10 July. As I'm sure you appreciate, the preparation for these visits is considerable.

We were asked for hundreds of pieces of information and we were required to assess ourselves, both as a whole trust and in separate service areas, against the five domains of the inspection which are:

- Safe
- Effective
- Caring
- Responsive
- Well led

From the preparation to the visit itself the response of all our staff has been amazing. I have passed my thanks, along with that of our board of directors and council of governors to everyone who contributed in any way, either in front of or behind the scenes.

The inspection was very thorough with more than 60 inspectors involved in the visit. Initial feedback has been very positive. We expect to see a draft report in the autumn.

Welcome to our two new non-executive directors

I am pleased to announce the appointment of two new non-executive directors who replace two vacancies we had on our board of directors.

Jonathan Erskine and Kevin Robinson take up their posts officially on 1 August. Both individuals bring a wealth of experience and expertise which will help us develop and further improve in the interests of patients.

Recruiting from the Philippines

We currently have small a team in the Philippines who have gone there to recruit up to 60 nurses. Our vacancy rate is much lower than those around us; and we have a continuous programme of nurse recruitment from the local university as our aim is to fill all our vacancies. While we also recruit from the local area that will still not be enough, especially as we approach winter, so that is why the decision was made to go to the Philippines once again.

MRSA and Clostridium Difficile (CDiff)

It is now more than 220 days since there was a case of MRSA bacteraemia (blood borne infection) identified. It's not that long ago that we would have thought having no cases was impossible but thanks to everyone's hard work this has been achieved.

Our Clostridium Difficile (CDiff) rates are the lowest they have ever been. However the better we perform the tougher the targets get. We knew at only 13 allowable cases for the whole year it would be tough. While we had no cases in June we did have four in April and a further four in May. This means we now have eight cases up the end of June against our annual allowance of 13. It is going to be very challenging to stay within the allowance for the whole year but we must do everything we can to achieve this.

Please help us in the fight against infection by:

- not visiting friends or relatives in hospital if you are feeling ill yourself
- washing or cleaning your hands thoroughly if you are visiting a friend or relative
- reminding your friends and family about the importance of hand hygiene and tackling infection

Mortality

Our mortality figures (the numbers of people who actually die compared with the number of people who could be expected to die) is higher than we would like them to be. We also know there is no single reason why we are seeing these higher rates; there are a number of reasons. We are working hard to address these as well as visiting other organisations and inviting external organisations in to review what we're doing so we can learn and see if there is anything we can improve on.

Our strategy - the next 10 years

Planning for tomorrow is as important as providing excellent care today. In our Council of Governors meeting on 16 July deputy chief executive and chief operating officer Julie Gillon took our governors through a development session on the trust strategy for the next 10 years.

There will be an opportunity for you to be involved later in the year.

Our performance

At the end of the first quarter we achieved our four hour emergency care target (that 95% of patients attending A&E are seen, treated, admitted or discharged within four hours).

The challenging area is our cancer targets because we are seeing a significant rise in the numbers of patients being referred with suspected cancer. This is attributed to patient choice and a number of Be Clear on Cancer campaigns.

We have geared up to manage the increase in referrals and we are planning for further rises in the near future.

It's vital that people see their GP if they have the symptoms described in the Be Clear on Cancer campaigns. The earlier people seek help the better. Many cancers are curable if they are caught early.

Investing in services and equipment (the capital programme)

It is vital to continue to invest in our estate, technology and equipment to ensure you have the best environment possible to provide patient care. £10.8m was allocated for this type of work for the year.

In her report to the board director of finance, ICT and support services Lynne Hodgson reported that:

- sterile services had been centralised at the University Hospital of North Tees
- the Trakcare (electronic patient record) programme continues
- window replacement at the University Hospital of North Tees has been completed
- the ventilation system in day case theatres has been upgraded
- the electricity system has been upgraded and the patient environment improved in critical care
- a large open plan office has been created in the old ward 8 at the University Hospital of Hartlepool to house the single point of access (SPA) team and staff from Hartlepool social services department
- a community simulation suite has been created to enable those caring for patients at home to work through clinical situations in a more realistic environment

Money

Very unusually for us we ended 2014-15 in a financial deficit and we planned to post a deficit of £5m this year. At the end of June we had planned to be in deficit by £992,000, we were actually £4.7m in deficit so this is £3.7m away from where we should have been.

We will still need to make efficiency savings of £10.9m this year so we need to continue to find new ways of working and cut out waste where we see it.

The financial picture for all NHS provider organisations across the country is very challenging. The deficit position expected for 2014-15 is in the region of £2.5bn but this is unaffordable.

Feedback from medical education quality visits

We had a visit from the Durham and Tees Valley GP training programme in May. Overall the visit was extremely positive with many comments about the quality of training and clinical supervision.

Department of Health Cost Recovery Support Team

When you go abroad you either expect to pay for healthcare (if you are outside the European Union) or, if you are on holiday in Europe, the health care provider you see will want to see your European Healthcare Insurance Card (EHIC) so they can reclaim the cost of care from your country.

The Department of Health visited us recently to look at the work we have been doing to identify people who are not entitled to free NHS care and charge them accordingly.

They published a positive final report which said how impressed they were by our enthusiasm and awareness of chargeable patients throughout the trust.

It's important to ensure we recoup these costs to use for patients who are entitled to free NHS care. We do ensure all patients in immediate or urgent need will always have access to the high quality healthcare they require. However we need to safeguard the NHS finances for those who are eligible and reclaim the costs of the treatment from those who aren't.

The board papers

The board papers from the last board meeting are posted on our website when the minutes of the previous meeting are approved. If you would like to read the board papers please go to www.nth.nhs.uk/about/board-meetings.

Board meetings are held in public and you are welcome to attend. To find out more visit our website at www.nth.nhs.uk or to confirm your attendance please contact the private office on 01642 624060.