

Chairman's bulletin

May 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.

A big thank you from the board

At our last board meeting we were updated about the year we have just had and the challenges facing us this year.

It has been a very tough year but it's worth putting this into context.

- Though we hit the four hour target (95% of patients being seen, treated, admitted or discharged within four hours) in the first three quarters of the year, we just missed the target in the last quarter. We achieved 94.19%. We are still one of the top performers in the region and the country
- We had 20 cases of Clostridium Difficile (we were given a tolerance of 40). However because we have achieved this, next year's tolerance is only 13 cases. Again we are among the top performers in the region and the country
- We achieved all but one of the cancer standards, despite a massive rise in referrals

Mortality

One area of great concern to us is the mortality (death) rates which are reported as Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratios (HSMR) and Summary Hospital-level Mortality Indicators (SHMI).

These rates are not in line with the performance and care we see elsewhere in the trust so we need to get to the bottom of them, understand why they are happening and, most importantly, improve them.

A great deal of work has been done in the trust and we have had outside organisations looking at the information to advise us about what we should focus on, namely:

- care for patients with pneumonia
- making sure all the care we provide is coded properly so it reflects the complexity of the patients we are caring for

The chief executive has written to all consultants in medicine and critical care to stress the importance of improving these figures and will be holding summits with clinicians in each directorate. We all have to work together to improve these figures. We did it (and are still doing it) with MRSA and CDiff; we can do it with mortality.

CQC visit – 7-10 July

We are now preparing for the visit of the Care Quality Commission which will take place from 7-10 July.

At the moment we are completing a large document called a provider information request which gives the inspectors a huge amount of information about the trust and helps them decide which areas they want to concentrate on when they get here. We're also getting out and about talking to colleagues about the visit so they can understand a bit more about it and know what to expect.

To prepare for the visit it has been agreed that each core service (ie surgery or accident and emergency) will complete self-assessment report templates. This is an opportunity to highlight any areas of good practice under the CQC domains alongside any challenges.

The visit is our chance to show the inspectors what we're proud of and our dedication to caring for patients.

The staff survey

We have now had the results of the annual NHS staff survey. The published results are based on how we scored compared to other trusts in the country.

In comparison to other trusts, we have:

- fewer staff working longer hours than what they are contracted to work
- fewer staff witnessing potential harmful errors findings, near misses or incidents
- fewer staff experiencing harassment, bullying or abuse from staff
- fewer staff experiencing discrimination at work
- more staff believing that the trust provides equal opportunities for career progression or promotion

Areas where we need to improve include:

- ensuring all staff are aware of the difference they can make to patients and the vital part we all play in ensuring that patients come first
- looking into the reasons why staff feel pressure to attend work when feeling unwell
- ensuring there is a motivated and fully engaged workforce
- improve colleagues' understanding around health and safety training and what this relates to

There is work underway to look at the results and make improvements.

Money

The figures have to be finalised It's looking like we're going to be £3.9m overspent at the end of 2014/15. We were planning to be £2.6m in surplus at the end of the year so we're actually £6.7m away from where we planned to be. It's been a long time since we've been in deficit and it's not a place we like to be.

In 2015/16 we are planning to forecast a deficit of £5m and we will still need to make efficiency savings of £10.9m. Again we have not forecasted a deficit since before becoming a foundation trust. We are forecasting the deficit because, if we didn't, this would be more savings to find and we believe we can manage this by using our own cost reserves to bring the efficiency savings to a more manageable level.

Costs are going up but the income we're getting in is not. For example our clinical negligence insurance is rising by 54% (by £3.1m to £9.1m) but we will not receive any extra money to pay for it so the money will have to be found from efficiency savings.

Just like at home when our bills go up but our income doesn't, we have to prioritise and decide what we're going to do without or we're going to do differently.

On the bright side we have continued to invest in buildings and equipment to maintain a good environment for you and for patients. In the last few months we have:

- completed the work on bringing together a number of services and departments in the tower block at the University Hospital of Hartlepool
- refurbished the West Wing entrance and added a new entrance lobby
- relocated the catheter lab to the University Hospital of North Tees
- installed a new MRI scanner at the University Hospital of North Tees

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.