

Health Scrutiny Report – HCC Meeting 19th May 2016

HSC Budget and Quality of Care Café

The first item on the agenda was a series of responses from health organisations for the information requests asked at the HSC Budget and Quality of Care Café, held on 17th March 2016.

The responses were detailed and extensive, and a full report can be found here:

[Health Organisations Responses to HSC Budget and Quality of Care Cafe](#)

West Herts Hospitals Trust Report

After discussing the feedback and information from the café, the next item on the agenda was a report from West Herts Hospitals Trust. This was probably the most frank and open report and discussion in recent years on the current state of the Trust.

Jac Kelly (CEO) gave a presentation entitled 'Our Year of Improvement: A Progress Report'. This is a brief summary of a very detailed presentation:

In the last year there have been some significant improvements, but there is also still much to do. One major difficulty is that 80% of the Watford site (buildings etc) is deemed 'poor', and the Trust requires a fund of £11.9m to 'firefight' the situation by patching up and repairing what is evidently a very old and tired complex.

The Trust have undertaken a major recruitment campaign in the UK and abroad, and as a result 300 new permanent nurses and midwives have been recruited since September 2015, with support (including language skills) offered to nurses from overseas. This has resulted in a reduction of agency staff costs by £500k per month and agency nursing is down, with 11% vacancies now in the Trust. The Trust has managed to attract and recruit senior staff (consultant level) and has recently recruited 5 radiologists.

80% of student nurses have remained in the Trust with permanent jobs after completing their training. Over 100 managers have completed the Leading for Excellence programme. All staff now receive mandatory training, but online training systems require further development.

Initiatives such as the Listening into Action programme, organisational values (Commitment, Care, Quality), and the implementation of Schwartz rounds have all helped to improve the culture and care of staff in the Trust. Midwives have set up a Twitter account to communicate with patients.

Other areas such as 'Getting the Basics Right' (avoiding harm, medicines and patient experience) and focussing on patient care are being implemented – this has resulted in on ward cardiac arrests calls being reduced by 50% with fewer transfers to ICU, shorter hospital stays, waiting time for take-home meds is reduced from 2 hours to 15 minutes etc. WHHT is now in the top 20% of providers for stroke care having previously been in the bottom 6%. End of life care is enhanced with training for new starters and

individual care plans being implemented. The Trust is working in partnerships with providers to deliver activities to enhance the patient experience (pet therapy, music etc). A new integrated frailty service to assess older emergency patients is helping to avoid unnecessary admissions. Free wifi for patients, staff and visitors is being rolled out.

In Outpatients care, the new telephone system has reduced waiting times from 19 to 4-5 minutes and thus reducing the number of abandoned calls from 50% to 5%. New electronic notice boards show waiting times in waiting rooms.

The private obstetrics unit has been closed following concerns that private patients were being prioritised over NHS patients.

Infrastructure – all operating theatres in ST Albans are back in use after refurbishment. CCTV has been updated and improvements have been made to the mortuary. New MRI/CT scanners in Watford will be operational by this summer and a £25m IT upgrade has been implemented.

Challenges still to be met:

There are financial challenges facing the Trust, in particular a budget deficit last year of £41.2m, £13.5m lower income in 2015/16.

Emergency care – The Trust is still falling short of treating 95% of all A&E patients within 4 hours; during last winter the Trust was one of the worst performing nationally (74.1% Feb 16); increase in complaints.

Step Down Care – 100 patients were (as at 19.5.16) waiting to move to a community hospital or for care packages to be completed to go home. One patient waited 80 days for a care package to be put in place.

Fines – In 2015 £2.3m was imposed to the Trust in fines for failing to offload patients from ambulance services

Estate – Still needs redevelopment. Greenfield sites are being looked at as an alternative to a rebuild at Watford.

Future Works Programme

A topic group has been included in the future works programme entitled “Supported Discharge’.

Jan Maddern

Dacorum Substitute Representative on Hertfordshire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee