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Dear Chair

Update letter from Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust

I write to provide the Health Overview Scrutiny Panel with an update from Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust. We have had a busy and successful few months since my last update.

We continue to see a very challenging time for NHS colleagues across the country. In the national headlines we have seen much commentary on the NHS' financial constraints; unscheduled care pressures; missed national targets; ever increasing demand on services and of course the junior doctors' strike action. We have not been immune to many of these pressures ourselves. Indeed, we are going to end the year with a financial deficit, which most hospital Trusts in the country will be reporting.

Despite relentless high demands on our unscheduled care pathway, we continue to be a very well performing hospital Trust. Our reputation for patient centred care continues to grow and we were delighted with being recognised as among the best when the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ranked us as outstanding for the levels of care we give our patients in their 2015 inspection. This is something we continue to be hugely proud of.

This winter is proving to be one of the most difficult and challenging in the history of the NHS. Locally we have been working with our health system partners in a programme called ECIP (Emergency Care Improvement Programme). This is supported by the Department of Health, the NHS Trust Development Authority, NHS England and Monitor.

ECIP is a clinically led programme designed to offer intensive practical help and support to urgent and emergency care systems to deliver improvements in quality, safety and patient flow. The programme has a particular focus on improving whole system performance across health and social care in the winter months when emergency care systems are working under additional pressure. It is focusing on 28 urgent and emergency care systems across England that are under the most pressure, helping implement measures to improve patient outcomes, experience and to meet national standards.

We continue to provide outstanding, well led services. I am delighted that our maternity services have recently been highly rated by new mums. As part of the Care Quality Commission's annual maternity survey, published last month, patients gave feedback about all aspects of their care at Portsmouth Hospitals Maternity services. New mums were asked about their labour and birth, how staff interacted and how they were cared for after the birth.

Their responses reflected the high quality of the service. 98% said their partner was able to be involved as much as they wanted, 95% said that they were either able to get a member of staff's attention within a reasonable time, or that a member of staff was with them throughout the whole birth. An incredible 97% said they had confidence and trust in staff caring for them. We are one of the higher scoring services locally and it is something we can be very proud of.

I have often reported on our innovation and research work, of which I am extremely proud. We are again at the forefront of clinical research as we took part in a ground breaking clinical study published in the Lancet and appearing in national news. This has found that ovarian cancer screening may cut deaths by a fifth. The results from the world's biggest ovarian cancer screening trial suggests that screening, based on an annual blood test, may help reduce the number of women dying from the disease by around 20%.

Ovarian cancer was diagnosed in 1,282 women during the 14-year study of more than 200,000 post-menopausal women aged 50 to 74, of whom 649 had died of the disease by the trial end in December 2014. The study showed a delayed effect on mortality between the screening and control arms, which became significant after the first seven years of the trial. The research team are now following up the study for three more years to establish the full impact of ovarian cancer screening. The early results suggested that approximately 15 ovarian cancer deaths could be prevented for every 10,000 women who attend a screening programme that involves annual blood tests for between seven to 11 years.

I am also delighted that our Hepatology department has climbed to number one in the country for clinical trial recruitment, out of 42 large acute NHS Trusts. This is a huge achievement and illustrates the hard work and determination of the team to provide their patients with the very best care.

Our Hepatology team, and other clinicians within the hospital, work very closely with the Director for Public Health, Dr Janet Maxwell, which is a partnership that we greatly value. We do however recognise that we still have much to do. We are different to our neighbouring city Southampton, even though it is only 20 miles away from us. Our population here in Portsmouth is older than the national average and our demographic is poorer and notably sicker than the surrounding geography. All of the public health indicators show complex needs, as our population has a higher prevalence for diabetes; stroke; heart disease; respiratory illnesses; obesity and liver disease. We will continue to work together for better outcomes for our patients and local people.


I was also recently delighted to cut the ribbon at the re-launch of the Portsmouth Enablement Service, which changed its name to better reflect the positive work of the staff and the attitude of the service users. The centre, in St Mary's Community Health Campus, is one of only 40 such centres across the UK, and sees more than 1,600 patients every year.

Finally, it is no surprise that we have been recognised as among the top NHS places to work, and a prestigious award was given to us by the Health Service Journal, Nursing Times and NHS Employers. Indeed the latest results from the national annual staff survey is showing further improvements and our organisation is rated highly as both a place to work and receive treatment. As the second largest employer in the city we have much to offer and are committed to making a wider contribution.

The Trust has been highly successful in the apprenticeship scheme and has achieved national recognition for this. This is proving to be a great source for future recruitment as the vast majority of apprentices that have been trained have gone into full time employment within the hospital Trust.

I hope that this update has been informative, and my colleague Peter Mellor, Director of Corporate Affairs, will be delighted to further expand on this information or answer your queries at the HOSP meeting on 23 February. I also continue to offer my hospitality to you if you would like to come and visit the hospital, to view for yourselves the patient centred care we are provide.

Kind regards



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