

# Chairman's Note

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Trust Board paper C

Dear Board Member,

## Key considerations

Since we last met the key things on my mind have been:

- As a Board how do we reassure internal and external stakeholders that (notwithstanding the current financial and other pressures impacting on the NHS both locally and at a national level) we are committed to delivering our short and medium term strategic objectives with a continuing focus on safety, quality and efficiency?
- As a Board how do we ensure there is an appropriate balance between taking this longer term perspective and also focus on the here and now issues?

## Priority Items & Questions

As a Board we are aware of the challenging environment that the NHS is operating in and the pressures which this is creating for individual Trust such as ours. In preparation for our next board meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015 I would like to highlight the following issues:

I recently attended a conference jointly organised by the Health Services Journal and the McKinsey Hospital Institute which focused on a number of strategic issues which were central to the theme of acute hospital transformation. These included speakers and discussion around topics such as:

- (a) the debates around clinical variation and why this occurred , the data that was increasingly available to highlight this and the varying degrees of enthusiasm to use this data to make informed clinical decisions affecting the use of resources . One interesting question arising from this was how certain were we that patients were receiving the most appropriate care and that the NHS (both nationally and locally) was getting the most from its resources?
- (b) the challenges around achieving better management of staff productive time and workforce rostering , effective staff engagement programmes and declining sickness rates. One interesting question arising from this was whether there should be a focus on training managers?
- (c) the NHS is facing both short term and long term workforce challenges. If new operating models are to be delivered , Trusts such as ourselves and national agencies

need to address these challenges and ensure the future workforce is fit for purpose. One interesting question arising from this is how can we effectively recruit staff as well better utilise the staff we have?

- (d) the Carter review is the latest foray into the area of NHS procurement and our Trust is one of those who are actively participating in the review process including hosting a recent visit by Lord Carter. We had an interesting presentation and discussion around the themes of tracking costs in theatres to staff and patients allowing for both workforce productivity data and procurement costs to be analysed. An interesting question arising from this is could we do something similar and if we are already doing it, can it be extended?
- (e) The Editor of the Health Service Journal also presented their recent research into agency spend by individual Trusts which showed comparative analysis of headcount growths and agency spend growths, together with an analysis of how the recent cap on agency spending was affecting responses.
- (f) The policy director from Monitor focused on the theme of realising efficiencies in elective care and the regulators perspective on how the very best providers were saving money and driving improvement.
- (g) The Head of Acute Policy from CQC informed us that from 2016 onwards the regulator will continue with its focus on quality but will also begin to rate the economy, efficiency and value of provider or Trust services. He stressed that the CQC is beginning to engage with Trusts around these themes and I have asked him to include our Trust in this process.

I thought this was a very worthwhile conference because it was considering the theme of securing value from a number of different perspectives and dimensions which are interrelated. I think the single most important point that came across to me was that this is not simply a primary concern for our executive Finance colleagues but was a whole Board strategic issue . We will be discussing our future programme of Board Thinking Days in 2016 soon and I think we need to weave in this theme of securing value (however it is defined). Encouraging innovation, challenging established orthodoxies and adopting a commercial mindset (where this relevant) is an important part of this. Needless to say safety and quality issues should be considered as being non negotiable.

This brings me to me second theme in my report which is our continuing need to focus on the here and now issues in addition to our strategic perspective in Thinking Day discussions. The report dealing with our emergency admissions underlines the immense pressures that we face as an organisation and the efforts which our staff are making. Despite this the unprecedented numbers of patients presenting at the front door of our Trust and also being admitted because of their acuity highlights that there are dynamics at

work here which affect our communities, our health partners and ourselves. As a Board we should be supportive of our staff and this issue does merit our ongoing attention not only because of the immediate performance and resource implications but also for the wider health economy and planning assumptions that have been made within the Better Care Together programme.

I look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming Board meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

Regards,  
Karamjit Singh

*Chairman, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust*