

# Chairman's Note

Trust Board paper E

Dear Board Member,

In previous notes to the Trust Board I have commented on the five priorities for which we as a unitary board should continually be seeking tangible delivery outcomes. These are in relation to the quality of our services; ensuring the restoration and transformation of our services; ensuring the physical reconfiguration of our estate is on budget and on time; achieving financial sustainability in the short and longer term, and making a positive contribution towards addressing health inequalities in our local communities. I continue with these themes below.

## ***Our short term focus over the next few months***

The recent comments by the Prime Minister and his scientific and medical advisers have underlined the ongoing challenges posed by Covid 19, restoring services to meet the non Covid 19 related health needs of our communities and taking account of seasonal winter pressures. The weekend announcement of new national restrictions brings these challenges into sharp relief and elsewhere on this agenda today we will discuss these issues. It is important that we are able to give confidence to our local communities about our ability to recognise the challenges and our capability in responding to them. I look to colleagues on our People, Performance and Process Committee to highlight to the Board how we are keeping these issues under review.

We also face financial challenges, both in the short and longer term. We need to understand the key drivers for our current financial position and to take corrective decisions as necessary. An essential building block for this will be the transparency and robustness of the financial reporting and I look to colleagues on our Financial and Investment Committee to highlight to the Board how we are keeping these short and longer term issues under review.

Sustaining the quality and safety of our clinical services, bearing in mind the positive rating of Good which we received earlier this year from the Care Quality Commission, also has to be a major area of focus for this Board. This includes not only the measures such as robust infection prevention and designated arrangements for responding to Covid 19, but also how we are responding to the non Covid 19 health needs of patients. I also note that the CQC is reassessing how it proposes to undertake future inspections of services within NHS Trusts. I look to colleagues on our Quality and Outcomes Committee to highlight to the Board how we are keeping all these quality and safety issues under review.

## ***Addressing Health Inequalities***

The Trust Board will be aware that I am keen to ensure there is an ongoing focus at each Board meeting on some aspect of health inequalities. Given the absence of a report from the executive team this time, I would like to use my report to highlight the connection between our role as a major employer and what we can do as an acute hospital trust. Next week we will be holding an informal meeting with the Board of University Hospitals of Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust in order to discuss how acute hospitals can make a positive contribution to address health

inequalities in their roles as employers, service providers and anchor institutions in their local communities.

Colleagues will recall the recent presentation from Dr Prashanth Patel about how testing in our staff underlined the links between varying types of housing tenure, the frontline roles being undertaken and the risks associated with this. We are all aware of the continuing and disproportionate impact of Covid 19 on our diverse communities and how it has exposed existing and longstanding health inequalities. In attending our second annual BAME staff network conference last week, which had some excellent presentations as well as expert chairing by Ballu Patel, I was struck by the information provided by the keynote speaker Dr Habib Naqvi (the Director of the NHS Race Equality Observatory). Dr Naqvi, who has previously visited our Trust, reverse mentored Sir Simon Stevens the Chief Executive of NHSI/E. His slides are available by clicking on the link [here](#) and I would draw your attention to three themes in particular which I believe are linked to health inequalities and that we can focus on:

- the link between perceptions or experiences of racial discrimination and individual health
- the specific data relating to this NHS Trust showing the discrepancies between our staff from different ethnic groups and their absence from leadership roles
- their experiences within our selection processes at key points such as shortlisting.

Given the makeup of the communities we serve how we act, as opposed to what we promise to do, will be crucial in securing changes in culture and a wider sense of health and well-being amongst our staff. Elsewhere on the agenda we will be discussing the NHS People Plan, which is probably the first time in its 72 year history that such a document has been produced. It is noticeable that one of the key strands within it is equality, diversity and inclusion.

Another theme relevant to our consideration of health inequalities is the adoption of a social values strategy within our physical reconfiguration of the Trust estate and the transformation of our services. The strategy should (as one strand) actively seek to deliver employment and training opportunities for individuals residing within our most deprived communities. This issue will be discussed this afternoon when the Board meets to consider matters relating to Reconfiguration. A major focus throughout those afternoon Board discussions will be to ensure that our reconfiguration programme delivers on budget and time milestones.

### ***Environmental Sustainability***

This issue is one that I have been reflecting on for some time and was recently raised with me by staff. There are of course many facets to this including the impact of air pollution; transport arrangements and policies; our existing and future built environment; the extent to which we actively recycle products of various kinds; and the behaviours that are necessary to ensure a sustained commitment. These are only a few of the themes that come to mind. Given our footprint in our local community, I would like to see us return to this topic early in 2021 at one of our informal Board discussions.

I look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming Trust Board meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

Regards

**Karamjit Singh, Chairman, UHL**