

Chairman's Note

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Trust Board paper J

Dear Board Member,

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Since our last meeting I have been thinking about three specific issues.

The first issue is Brexit and how the uncertainty in the wider external environment could have implications for this Trust both in terms of staff and the service they provide to our patients, their families and local communities. The unfolding scenario nationally has short term implications for the NHS as a whole as well as this Trust, and the verbal report later on this Agenda will focus on the immediate preparations which have been made. There is a longer term significance to Brexit and we need to ensure that this dimension is considered appropriately by the Board in due course both in terms of opportunities and challenges it may present, and in the case of the latter what mitigating steps might be taken. This will have implications in workforce and service terms which need to be considered as part of our strategy over the next five years.

The second is recently published national survey results taking note of the public view of the NHS. This high level perspective covering major themes identified by the public such as longer waiting times for access to services and the issue of workforce shortages is in my view also relevant to this Trust.

The first theme identified in the public survey relates to actual and perceived patient experiences and does connect with some of the anecdotal evidence that I have been made aware of. In addition to considering access times to services as in patients, an obvious area of focus has to be on the experiences of those persons attending out patient clinics because of the volumes concerned in terms of contact with our clinicians. This has rightly been identified in the NHS Long Term Plan as an area of activity which needs a root and branch consideration for each service which could ask such questions as do these out patient clinics need to take place in this form , or at these intervals of time , or at the same location or indeed elsewhere. All these questions are for clinicians and their teams to consider but I would welcome comments from colleagues about how significant and radical they think this change process should be.

The second theme identified in the public survey is interesting because it highlights external perceptions about the shortage of staff. This may result from direct personal experiences or those gleaned from the sharing of anecdotes, but the Board will be aware that whilst there are indeed staff shortages every effort is made to ensure that the team around the patient is as complete as possible. Receiving reports such as the Nursing and Midwifery Quality and Safe Staffing regularly is one way of seeking assurance but all of us will recognise that this may not be sufficient to allay concerns or perceptions that the public (or indeed staff) may have. As a Board we have to recognise our role in promoting confidence in the safety of our services and the necessity for assuring ourselves, but also the centrality of this theme for our patients and local communities.

The third issue, and which is also highlighted in the NHS National Plan, is the greater focus and necessity to work with our health and social care partners (and others) in order to work with a greater sense of alignment and tackle deep seated health access and morbidity questions in our local context. In addition to changes in mindsets and behaviours on the part of those executives and clinicians working within the system, it also requires greater interaction between Boards and transparency and engagement with patient groups and local communities. In my view we also need to ensure that changes in structures, personnel and governance processes are commensurate. Ultimately the test of this partnership work will be service changes which are mooted, implemented and produce better outcomes for patients and local communities.

Recently I had the great pleasure of formally opening two different sets of exhibitions by local artists along walls within the Balmoral building. I would urge colleagues to take the time to view these paintings and would like to highlight the hard work undertaken by Sallie Varnam our Arts Heritage staff member.

I look forward to seeing you at the next Board meeting on 4th April 2019.

Regards

Karamjit Singh

Chair, UHL