

Chief Executive Update

Trust Board

Thursday 28 September 2023

1.0 Daisy Hill Hospital

- 1.1 A new group, The Daisy Hill Hospital Expert Panel, has recently been established to work with the Southern Health Trust to implement the ongoing stabilisation plans for acute inpatient medical services at Daisy Hill Hospital. It will also support the development of a longer term plan for the future of the Newry Hospital.
- 1.2 The Expert Panel is independently chaired by Mairead McAlinden and includes: independent professional and clinical advisors, involvement advisor, regional partners, Trust clinicians and management and Trade Union officials. The Panel has met four times so far.

2.0 Cervical Screening

- 2.1 BBC News NI reported recently that at the start of September, 7,104 women were waiting three to six months for results in Northern Ireland. In the Southern Trust, two in five women have been waiting at least three months, while in the Belfast Trust it is one in three women.
- 2.2 The Department of Health (DoH) said it was due to a lack of specialist staff and "fully acknowledged that the backlog needs to be addressed".
- 2.3 The DoH and PHA said DoH is to officially introduce HPV screening across Northern Ireland "in the very near future" and that it was an absolute priority to completely replace primary cytology screening with primary HPV Screening.

3.0 Industrial Action

- 3.1 A wide range of unions recently participated in strike action across Northern Ireland over several days in September. This included members of the trade union Unite as well as Midwives and maternity support worker members of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM). Radiographers in Northern Ireland also voted to take 48-hour strike action in September.
- 3.2 Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP) members working for Health and Social Care Northern Ireland (HSCNI) also voted to take strike action in their first ever ballot on pay and retention issues.
- 3.3 The Department of Health has said there is no money for health service staff in Northern Ireland to get pay rises. The comments were made in a

submission to an independent pay review body. The review body said that as a result pay in Northern Ireland may fall behind other parts of the UK.

4.0 Mental Health Budget

- 4.1 Peter May, the permanent secretary at the Department of Health (DOH), said recently that the current financial constraints had meant DOH cannot allocate the recommended level of funding to the latest mental health strategy delivery plan.
- 4.2 It is the second annual delivery plan to be published under the Mental Health Strategy 2021-31, and sets out the key priority actions that will be delivered during 2023/24, as well as details on progress against the 2022/23 annual delivery plan.
- 4.3 Mr May said mental ill health remains a key challenge, with many services continuing to experience considerable pressures, resulting in individuals waiting longer than the department would like to access provision.

5.0 Waiting Times

- 5.1 The latest hospital waiting list figures for Northern Ireland were published recently. The number of patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by June 30 was up 3.7% from March 31 and 10.1% higher than at June 30 2022. Almost half (203,682) of the patients were waiting for more than 52 weeks.
- 5.2 The number of patients waiting to be admitted for inpatient or day case treatment was 2.3% fewer than at March 31 and 6.6% fewer than at June 30 2022.
- 5.3 9% more patients were waiting for a diagnostic test than at March 31 and 13.5% more than at June 30 2022.
- 5.4 Northern Ireland director of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England) Niall McGonigle said the figures were “deeply worrying”.

6.0 Cancelled Appointments

- 6.1 Recent statistics from the Department of Health show that over 200,000 outpatient appointments were cancelled by hospitals in the 2022/23 financial year. Hospitals cancelled 12.6% of outpatient appointments.

6.2 Staff shortages are blamed and the situation is not likely to change soon, the Royal College of Nursing has indicated.

7.0 Gynaecological Cancer

7.1 Hans Nagar, from the Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecologists said recently to the BBC that the system for treating gynaecological cancer patients in N. Ireland "is close to the brink" and investment is needed to improve survival rates.

7.2 DOH latest figures show 19.8% of patients started treatment within 62 days of being referred - the target is 95%. Mr Nagar said clinicians, nurses, or patients should not be "satisfied with the current system" or the statistics around treatment and waiting lists. In the Southern Trust, there was a 41% increase in gynae red flag cancer referrals between 2019 and 2023.

7.3 An independent and rapid review is taking place by the Getting it Right First Time (GIRFT) programme. The department of Health received the first draft of the GIRFT report and it is hoped that the report will be finalised in September 2023, at which point the focus will shift to implementation of the recommendations.

8.0 Junior doctors

8.1 The latest General Medical Council's Trainee satisfaction survey has reported that trainee doctors rank N.Ireland hospitals among worst in UK for satisfaction.

8.2 None of the NI hospitals were ranked in the top half of the 1,500 hospitals and SWAH was rated in the bottom 20.

9.0 RVH ED

9.1 The RQIA published a report in July after they carried out an unannounced inspection in November 2022 at the Emergency Department at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH). It said the department was operating beyond its core purpose and capacity.

9.2 The RQIA said that during its inspection it found each of the five standards were breached, namely fire safety, workforce, environment, infection prevention and control, and medicines management. It added there was an escalation due to service pressures regionally.

9.3 Emergency Department staff at RVH have described the report into patient safety as "wholly unsatisfactory". The RQIA said it will follow up

with the Belfast Trust to seek evidence of progress on the actions the trust has committed to take to address the issues identified in the inspection report.

10.0 Car Parking Charges

- 10.1 The Northern Trust is anticipating an initial £1m cost of reversing car park charges will be paid by the Department of Health with a further £874,005 cost expected in 2024/2025 and £953,475 in 2025/26.
- 10.2 The board of NHSCT was considering the cost of scrapping parking charges in line with new legislation which comes into effect in May next year.
- 10.3 In 2018/19, hospital car parks in Northern Ireland raised approximately £7.5m from charges but incurred running costs of £8.8m. The sum of £7.9m was collected in 2019/20.

11.0 GP clinics

- 11.1 Specialist GP clinics in N. Ireland set up to help tackle hospital waiting lists are to have their services cut by 50%.The GP Elective Care Service covers medical procedures such as dermatology, gynaecology and minor surgery. The reduction in funding also means vasectomies will no longer be carried out by GPs from October.
- 11.2 Between November 2018 and March 2023, more than 51,000 patients have been seen through the GP Elective Care Service. The Department of Health said it would work with GPs to continue services within the available funding - £2.1m had been secured to support the continuation of the services the end of March 2024.
- 11.3 Dr Alan Stout, the chair of the British Medical Association's GP committee, said the change would affect patients. Dr Stout said it was "a really good example of transformation" and "a project which is actively reducing waiting lists but it is being downturned".

12.0 Urology Lookback Review

- 12.1 The Southern Trust recently published the first outcomes of the Urology Lookback Review. The Trust has been reviewing the care patients received from the now retired consultant urologist, Mr Aidan O'Brien between January 2019 and June 2020.

12.2 The Trust examined the records of 2,112 patients. As a result of this, 527 patients were identified as requiring an appointment with a Southern Trust Urology Consultant and of these, 352 patients required a change in their care and treatment. The remaining 175 patients did not have any change.

12.3 The Urology Lookback Review is now being extended to patients who were treated by Mr O'Brien for a urology cancer which includes prostate, bladder, kidney and testicular cancers and treated for renal stone disease, who are alive today and have not had their care reviewed as part of the first Lookback Review group, or seen by another Southern Trust Urology Consultant.

13.0 Urology Services Inquiry Update

13.1 The Urology Services Public Inquiry recommenced Public Hearings on 12 September following the summer break. The Inquiry continued to hear from more witnesses regarding governance within the Trust and then moved on to hear from the clinicians who practiced in the Trust's urology service.

13.2 Full details of the hearings are on the USI website, www.urologyservicesinquiry.org.uk, including witness schedule and transcripts of all the public hearings. There is also a link to the live stream, available while the hearings are in session.

14.0 New ED

14.1 The South Eastern Trust opened its new state-of-the-art Emergency Department (ED) at the Ulster Hospital on Wednesday 6th September 2023. The ED, which is in the Acute Services Block (ASB), is the final stage of the £280m Phase B redevelopment project.

14.0 A new consultant-led Urgent Care Centre opened on the same day at the Ulster Hospital alongside its emergency department. It will operate 7 days a week 8am to 6pm on the site of the former Emergency Department, at the Ulster Hospital

14.2 The move will also see the closure of minor injuries units in Bangor and Ards Hospitals.

15.0 Causeway Hospital

15.1 The Northern Trust has offered to review how the transfer of hospital births from Causeway Hospital to Antrim Area Hospital is working. The

service moved from Coleraine in July following a decision by the Department of Health.

- 15.0 Campaigners raised their concerns at a recent meeting with health officials. The Trust said it would continue to monitor the arrangements in place "to support the reconfiguration". The internal review of services will focus on how the change is affecting both staff and those in maternity care.

16.0 Neurology

- 16.1 The Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service (MPTS) recently held a fitness to practise hearing into Dr Michael Watt. An assessment report found that he repeatedly failed to make correct diagnoses, which led to patients inappropriately being given drugs with "serious and toxic side-effects"
- 16.2 The hearing was also told that the assessment found his use of "idiosyncratic diagnostic criteria" had led to patients receiving unnecessary invasive treatment.
- 16.3 The three-person tribunal was told that Dr Watt will not be in attendance but will be legally represented. A previous MPTS tribunal granted Dr Watt voluntary removal from the medical register. However, the High Court quashed that ruling due to concerns it was "not sufficient to protect the public

17.0 Surgery

- 17.1 The DOH has published a progress report on the implementation of the Review of General Surgery. The Review was published in June 2022, setting out key actions to improve general surgery provision in Northern Ireland.
- 17.0 The Review, led by a group of expert clinicians, sets out evidence-based standards for emergency and elective general surgery. Of the 10 actions in the Review, one action has been fully completed and six actions are on target to be delivered. The remaining three have an amber rating, which means some anticipated delay to delivery.
- 17.0 Key Review actions include the establishment of Elective Overnight Stay Centres (EOSC). Another key action in the Review is the establishment of Post Anaesthetic Care Units (PACUs). These provide an intermediate level of care where a higher degree of observation, monitoring and interventions can be provided for than in a general ward. Craigavon Area Hospital opened two PACU beds on 7 August 2023.

18.0 Complaints

- 18.1 Complaints raised against NI health trusts have increased. The latest report from the Department of Health (DoH) shows that 5,033 complaints relating to 7,671 issues were received in the last financial year. This represents a 27% increase in complaint issues received since 2018/19.
- 18.2 Of all the health trusts, the largest increase (of 68.1%) in complaint issues since 2018/19 was in the Southern Trust. The report also shows that trusts received 26,474 compliments in 2022/23, with over a third relating to the Southern Trust.

19.0 Assaults

- 19.1 More than 46,000 assaults were reported at Northern Ireland's hospitals in the past five years – based on information released after a Freedom of Information request.
- 19.2 From 2018/19 to 2022/23, The Belfast Trust recorded 15,862 assaults, The Southern Trust details 17,215 incidents. In the Northern Trust, 5,931 violent or aggressive incidents were recorded. The Western Trust breakdown of figures detailed 4,064 assaults on staff, 824 on patients and 46 on visitors. In the South Eastern Trust, 2,542 incidents took place from 2019 to 2022.
- 19.3 It has led to calls for greater protection of workers, with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) warning that a failure to safeguard staff will have a “devastating impact” on the system.

20.0 NHS Ombudsman

- 20.1 The NHS ombudsman has warned that the culture of fear in NHS trusts is not isolated and many "still pay a heavy price for speaking up" about other colleagues.
- 20.2 In a letter to Health Secretary Steve Barclay the watchdog called for a wider review of leadership and culture in the health service following allegations concerns about Lucy Letby had been dismissed, with some made to apologise for them.
- 20.3 Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Rob Behrens also called for the planned inquiry into serial child killer Letby to be put on a statutory footing, expand the powers available. He said: "Time and again we see mistakes repeated across the NHS and the system as a whole is not learning from this experience.
"We cannot let the environment in which Letby was allowed to perpetrate her crimes emerge again.

21.0 Private Clinics

- 21.1 13 new community diagnostic centres (CDCs) will be opened across England to carry out an additional 742,000 scans, checks and tests per year. 8 of the new facilities will be operated by the private sector – although services will be free to patients – and five will be run by the NHS.
- 21.2 Private centres will operate similarly to their NHS counterparts, the Government said, but staff will be employed by private operators, which also own the buildings.
- 21.3 The Government pledged to open 160 CDCs by 2030. There are currently 114 operating, which have carried out 4.6 million tests, checks and scans since July 2021.

22.0 Cancer Targets

- 22.1 Two-thirds of NHS cancer waiting time targets are expected to be dropped in England. 3 targets are set to be kept: diagnosis of cancer within 28 days of referral starting treatment within two months of an urgent referral and starting treatment one month after a decision to treat. 6 other targets, such as a two-week wait for a first consultant appointment, will be dropped.
- 22.2 NHS England the plan is backed by leading cancer experts and will simplify the "outdated" standards. The changes have been under consultation since last year.

23.0 Nursing Applications

- 23.1 Applications to join nursing programmes in Scotland have dropped 19% in the past year, up to 30 June according to UCAS data.
- 23.2 The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) has called the figure "significant" and a "cause for concern". The Royal College of Nursing said 8.5% of registered nurse posts remained vacant at the end of March.

24.0 Pay Offer

- 24.1 Scotland's junior doctors recently voted to accept a pay offer from the Scottish government. The deal will include a 12.4% pay increase for 2023/24. This is in addition to a wage rise of 4.5% for 2022/23 with ministers also promising talks on future pay increases.

24.2 Junior doctors had been planning to take strike action before the latest pay offer was made by Scottish ministers. The deal will cost the Scottish government £61.3m and will be met from existing budgets.