

Council of Governors' Highlights Report for Trust Members

The Council of Governors met on 11th January 2018 and the agenda and draft minutes can be seen here: <http://www.nsft.nhs.uk/Event/Pages/Council-of-Governors---Diss.aspx>

Here is a summary of some of the more significant matters discussed:

1. Trust Improvement Plan

We received updates from the Chief Executive and our Lead Governor about how the Trust is responding to the last Care Quality Commission inspection report. Progress is being made on many fronts, but there are also areas such as staffing which remain as major challenges. We confirmed how we as Governors are going to monitor progress over the coming months; a combination of receiving and questioning in depth progress reports from Non-Executive Directors about their service oversight and reviewing reports to the Board and stakeholder assurance groups, following which we may bring forward observations and concerns to the Board.

2. Representing Interests Register

We received answers to several issues raised with the Trust and discussed these. Two issues are highlighted here:

Lorenzo (the Trust's clinical records system) - we heard about progress with recruiting additional Administrative staff to help reduce the workload for clinical staff and are concerned that this is not progressing as quickly as expected. We are also concerned that as governors our early warnings about the potential problems with introducing this new system were not heeded. We have agreed to receive a further update report at our next meeting and will also use Lorenzo as a case study to examine how we might improve our influence over Trust decision-making.

Homelessness- we shared concerns at the rising tide of homelessness in cities and towns across Norfolk and Suffolk and heard about what the Trust is doing to help to meet the mental health needs of many homeless people. We reflected on the range of causes and other factors aggravating the problem and agreed to write a collective letter to local M.P's and other key people to press for action.

3. Surveys

We received the results of three surveys:

Community Service Users- the results of the latest annual survey (held between February and June 2017) reveal that the Trust has made significant improvement in the comments of community service users on various aspects of their care. This trend is in line with other Mental Health Trusts nationally, but NSFT has made even greater improvement so that it is no longer in the worst performing 20% of Trusts, but remains below the national average. We were especially pleased to hear of the dramatic improvement seen in East Suffolk locality and to a lesser extent in Central Norfolk and have asked for a further report once some analysis of the results, including examination of the

reasons for the overall and local improvements has been completed. We have also asked about how response rates can be improved so that a complete local analysis can be achieved (West Norfolk's response was too small to be statistically reliable).

Governor Self-evaluation- as in previous years we have received our own assessment of our individual and collective performance as governors. This is complemented by a survey of Trust Members (see below) and comments from the Board of Directors. The survey covers our knowledge, skills, work of the Council of Governors, its sub groups, our lead governor and relationships and support. Overall, most governors feel that they have the knowledge and skills needed to perform their role effectively. We rated the effectiveness of the Council of Governors as lower than last year (43.5% rated it as having 'some weaknesses' or 'very poor' compared to 31.5% last year). Whilst operating in a broadly effective way, we judged that most of our sub groups could be improved in some way. Some aspects of our relationships (e.g. the pairing of governors with a non-Executive Director) show a mixed picture of effectiveness. We feel that the overall support and training given to Governors is very good. We also had some feedback from the Board, which included acknowledging that there is bound to be a tension between us by virtue of our respective roles, but that the Non-Executives value the observation and feedback we give them in their role of chairing Trust committees.

The results are being used to inform our Annual Training Plan and we have also agreed to explore new ways of working in some areas (e.g. having joint board- governor workshops to discuss strategic issues).

Members Survey- we heard of the results of a slightly larger survey of members this year. This provides some interesting feedback and whilst the response rate is relatively low it did indicate that we need to improve our communications and engagement with Members and that there is a good number of Members who would like to be more involved in the work of the Trust. We also heard that the survey did not include staff members as they are not on the same email database as other members. We have had a commitment from the Trust that all Members (including staff, using their work email address) will now receive the same information and communications.

Improving understanding of the role of governors among Trust members and the public is an area we are trying to address, and we received some draft display material and a new leaflet about the role and work of governors which we will use when attending events. The broader findings from the Member Survey are being used to inform the Trust Membership strategy.

4. Governance

Governor elections- we received the results of the recent elections and welcome 6 new governors representing a mix of public, service user, carer, and staff constituencies. We also welcomed a new governor appointed by the Trust Youth Council. The induction training for these new Governors is planned over the next few weeks and they will also be offered a 'buddy governor' to help them settle into their role.

Service User and Carer Non-executive role- we discussed the idea of appointing a Service User/Carer as a non-executive member of the Trust board and agreed to ask our nominations committee to explore this further.

Regional workshop- we received a report from four of our governors who had attended a regional Trust workshop which examined ways in which Trust governors fulfil their roles. Several ideas for the Trust to consider came out of this including reviewing the overall number and makeup of the Council of Governors, developing more effective Board- Governor working relationships, ways of increasing Trust Membership and engagement including the use of social media. We decided to set up a 'Task and Finish Group' to examine these ideas and report back to our next meeting.

5. Members' Event

As in previous years we are working on holding two half day events for members and others to increase awareness of a topic in mental health and promote interaction between the wide range of people who attend. The dates of the 2018 events are:

22nd March (pm)- King's centre, Norwich

1st November (pm)- Ipswich (venue to be confirmed)

The topic for the first event will be '**social prescribing**', and with a focus on the work being done as part of the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. This involves connecting service users to a range of 'non-medical' opportunities and support (e.g. welfare and housing advice, gardening, walking, crafts, and hobby groups etc.) as a way of promoting positive mental and physical health, relieving pressure on primary care services and supporting the recovery of people who are returning to the community after a period of inpatient care.

Further details, including joining instructions, will be issued shortly, but please put these dates in your diary if you are interested in attending.

Nigel Boldero

Norfolk Public Governor and Chair of the Trust Member and Governor Development Sub Group, NSFT