

CEO Board report

February 2024

National

- **Waiting list:** NHS England has reported that the national waiting list fell in December for the third month running, while winter pressures continued to hit the health service. The report also says that NHS staff delivered more elective activity in 2023 than any other year since the start of the pandemic, with more than 17.3 million people treated.

At the Royal Devon, we are continuing to make progress on our waiting list which is a reflection of the hard work of the entire team. Over the course of 2023, we are in the top ten trusts nationally for reduction in the number of patients waiting more than 78, 65 and 52 weeks. We have improved our forecast for the end of March for the number of patients waiting more than 78 weeks, reducing the number of patients waiting to 210 and for patients waiting more than 65 weeks to 1172. This is really positive news and we are sharing with our staff and stakeholders to show how the efforts of our colleagues are making a real difference for our patients.

- **Industrial Action update:** Industrial action continues and teams across the Trust continue to plan and prepare diligently to keep our services safe. The BMA have just finished a long period of industrial action for junior doctors (24 – 28 February). We also saw our Sodexo facilities services colleagues at North Devon District Hospital take industrial action between 16 and 19 February, with more dates planned in March. We are focussed on keeping our services safe whilst also protecting as much planned activity as we can.
- **Martha's rule:** From April, the NHS will begin implementing Martha's rule, which will give patients, families, carers and staff round-the-clock access to a rapid review from a separate care team if they are worried about a person's condition. This is in response to the death of Martha Mills in 2021, who died from sepsis after being admitted for a pancreatic injury after a bike fall. Martha's family's concerns about her deteriorating condition were not responded to promptly, and in 2023 a coroner ruled that she would probably have survived had she been moved to intensive care earlier. The implementation will begin by asking at least 100 critical care provider sites for expressions of interest to be part of the first phase of the programme.
- **Maternity:** The national focus on maternity services continues with the Thirlwall Inquiry. In January we submitted responses as a Trust to questions, we are now supporting the Inquiry to share a confidential survey focussing on culture with midwives, doctors, nurses and managers working in or in connection to neonatal units. Separately, we were able to share this month that we performed well in the most recent Care Quality Commission maternity survey, with new mothers praising our staff for listening, explaining and respecting their views and decisions. There is always learning to take and we will be studying these results to see what improvements can be made.

- **NHS estate:** There have been a number of national media stories in February about the condition of the NHS estate, and our colleagues in Torbay featured on BBC News. The Health Service Journal also reported on our January paper highlighting the risks with potential delays to the New Hospital Programme at North Devon District Hospital. We also dealt with a local media enquiry about the repair backlog position at the RD&E Wonford – where like many trusts in the NHS, the % of the estate deemed in good condition by DHSC is declining over time.

Locally in Devon

- **Major incident:** Last week we supported a major incident in Plymouth caused by the location and need to dispose of an unexploded World War Two bomb. Our staff focused on patient flow to get us into the best position to support Plymouth patients if we were needed.
- **Financial recovery:** There has been continued focus across the ICS on financial recovery and extraordinary efforts across the Trust to contain our deficit to £40m, and we are on track to deliver our plan. Despite this it's clear that the level of challenge continues into the new financial year. We don't have any formal planning guidance yet but what we do know is the financial position is challenged across the country. As we look to next year we will see a number of workstreams shared across the Devon system, with leads in each organisation.
- **Visits:** We welcomed some high-profile national visits to Devon in February to demonstrate how we are working innovatively and in partnership to reduce our waiting lists and to show how our electronic patient record is improving care. NHS England's Professor Tim Briggs, national clinical director for clinical improvement and elective recovery and Elin Jones, national programme director for elective recovery, visited the Nightingale Hospital Exeter. National medical director Professor Sir Steve Powis visited NDDH, Tiverton Hospital and the Nightingale. Thanks to all of the teams involved – taking these opportunities to demonstrate to national leaders how we are investing and improving is so important.
- **Updates from our partner organisations in Devon:**
 - The Care Quality Commission published a report last week into Torbay's maternity services. There were many positive findings but the rating for maternity services and the whole Trust, remains requires improvement.
 - In January, Torbay announced Epic as their preferred supplier for their electronic patient record. They are working closely with Devon partners on the next steps.
 - There are some changes to leadership: the new CEO at NHS Devon, Steve Moore, has commenced in post and University Hospitals Plymouth's CEO Ann James has stood down.

Royal Devon

- **First month reflections:** In my first month I've been visiting teams across the Trust. I've been struck by how friendly and dedicated everyone has been and look forward to meeting more teams over the coming weeks. I've also been struck by the input from volunteers, Governors, communities, partners and charities – we couldn't provide the services we do without everybody's support and I look forward to working with everybody to deliver the best possible care.

- **MY CARE:** We have passed the milestone of 100,000 patients signed up to MY CARE, supporting our ambitions to be digital-first with patients empowered and connected in their care. We also learned we are using MY CARE to collect more results remotely than any other Epic equipped hospital in Europe. We are continuing to promote the portal to our patients and staff. It's exciting to think about how the technology and ingenuity of our teams will transform healthcare for our patients as we continue on this digital journey.
- **Social prescribing:** Working with Westbank, we are piloting a social prescriber link worker in the Eastern ED team over the next six months. Although social prescribing is well established in primary care, it is less often deployed in acute settings with only one or two examples from around the country. This clinically led project will test out whether linking identified people coming through the ED pathway with support from VCSE organisations in their own community can help to better support people at home as well as potentially reducing pressures on ED.
- **Staff recognition:** We launched a new shout out Thursday scheme. In the first month, we received almost 50 shout-outs and we will keep promoting this to colleagues as a way for staff to celebrate each other.
- **Apprenticeship week:** We celebrated our 500 apprenticeships and promoted apprenticeship opportunities during apprenticeship week (5-9 February) with sessions for managers and prospective learners, and a careers fair.

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