

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 3rd of May 2023

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on the 3rd of May 2023.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the following key points:

ACF Chair

The process for election of a new chair of the ACF has begun and will complete by the next meeting scheduled in June. The current chair has served the standard four year term and current process requires a new chair to be appointed. The current chair has asked that the maximum term for the ACF chair be reviewed in line with all other non-executive posts which have the opportunity to extend for up to a further 4 years. This has been passed to the board chair for consideration.

NHSG Plan for the Future - Three Year Delivery Plan

The ACF welcomed Jenna Young (Planning Manager) to the meeting to update on the progress with the development of the three year delivery plan. There is a short timeframe for the forum to provide comments on this therefore the ACF members were to provide any feedback individually following the meeting.

Ethics Advice and Support Group

The ACF welcomed Manisha Kumar to talk about the Ethics Advice and Support Group which is well established since March 2020. Started in line with Scottish Government guidance, to support colleagues navigating the challenges presented during the pandemic and to ensure an ethical approach to decision making. The purpose was to raise awareness and to ask if ACF members or those from the wider professional committees would like to become members of the group as additional clinical representation is required.

Paediatric anaesthesia

Concerns were raised via the Area Medical Committee on the challenging staffing situation within the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital anaesthetic team. This is a known problem and the staffing situation is predicted to worsen over the summer months placing service sustainability at risk. Hospital management and board executives are aware of the situation and work is ongoing to find a solution to minimise the impact and to enhance recruitment and retention in the area.

Dentistry

There continue to be concerns about recruitment and retention into dentistry roles in Grampian however the Area Dental Committee did note an increased interest from current students to remain in the area. Access to NHS dentistry in particular in Moray and Aberdeenshire continues to be challenging for patients. Work is ongoing to attempt to mitigate both of these issues.

Workforce challenges

Workforce challenges continue to be a recurring theme of discussion at the ACF meetings. Staff attraction and retention sited as issues in many parts of the system and high vacancy rates leading to low staff morale. In particular at this meeting the Area Medical Committee raised concerns about Dr Gray's Hospital. Adam Coldwells (Deputy Chief Executive) noted that leadership teams are coordinating work to address issues at DGH.

In addition, the Area Pharmaceutical Committee noted ongoing concerns regarding primary care pharmacy teams' ability to meet the requirements of the General Medical Services Contract due to insufficient workforce.

GP practice

There is continued concern regarding sustainability of GP practices. There are an increasing number of practices with closed patient lists in particular in Aberdeen City centre area and the number of GP practices handing back their contracts is also increasing. Both of these have negative impact on patients and their ability to access primary care services. Discussions are ongoing regarding both of these points to attempt to minimise the impact on patients and the system.

Staff Breaks, Rest and Recovery

This commissioned joint working group comprising of members of the GAPF and ACF, has been set up and has now had two meetings and is making progress.

Winter Response

The ACF continue to have short monthly update meetings with members of the systems leadership team (Chief Executive, Medical and Nursing Directors) around the winter response. It is proving very useful to have this direct engagement between the SLT and ACF, opening up channels of communication and sharing of challenges and concerns. All members of the ACF are keen to continue these short meetings on a long term basis.

ACF integration

Following engagement meetings and a workshop the ACF are still working on connecting with the new portfolios and systems. The chair has attended meetings with three of the portfolios and last one is still yet to happen. We are spreading the message about the composition and purpose of the ACF which is helping raise awareness but are still requiring a steer from system leaders on how to link into the relevant forums. We need to ensure that we have representation across the system so that we are able to volunteer for appropriate activities and link into suitable strategies in development at an early stage.

Board Programme

The Board programme is a standing item on the ACF agenda to allow the forum to fulfil the role of providing clinical and professional advice to the SLT and Board on relevant topics. We look forward to planning our meetings in 2023/4 aligning with the new Board programme when it is available.

Kim Cruttenden
Area Clinical Forum Chair
May 2023