

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 3rd August 2023.

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on 28 June 2023.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the following key points.

ACF Chair.

The process of electing a new chair of the ACF has now concluded with Mark Burrell, chair of Area Dental Committee, confirmed as chair of the Area Clinical Forum. It was noted that the previous chair had asked for the maximum term of the ACF chair to be reviewed in line with other all non-executive posts which have the opportunity extend for a further four years this is still sitting with the board for consultation. The current chair would like to pass his appreciation and thanks to the outgoing chair Kim Cruttenden who has provided leadership and support to all members of the forum over the last 4 years.

Statutory and Mandatory Training.

The joint ACF/Grampian Area Partnership Forum (GAPF) commission to review statutory and mandatory training for clinical staff was discussed with the head of workforce and development. Clarity was sought regarding the role of the ACF in oversight of this training and it was deemed that this was probably not the appropriate forum for this and following general discussion it was indicated there was probably not the capacity to undertake a full review. There was a suggestion that clinical board will be able to review training for clinical staff through a broader lens with some input from the ACF as and when required.

Bed Base Review

Colleagues who are undertaking the bed base review at ARI presented an overview of the work being done. This review has been commissioned to review data around current bed use and assess whether realignment of beds in ARI would create more flow through the hospital, minimise corridor care and reduce ambulance waiting outside the Emergency Department (ED).

Following the presentation, a number of points were raised from the forum. It was highlighted that the Hospital@Home development was welcomed but it was also acknowledged that this was unlikely to be considered the equivalent of an acute bed as it is part of a different service model.

Recognition of increased pressure on staff was discussed as was the current challenges in workforce and finance.

It was suggested that this modelling may have been taken forward as a result of the recurring 'winter pressures' but it was now becoming recognised that the pressures remain all year round.

The discussion will now be taken back to the advisory committees for discussion.

Public Health Annual Report

The Director of Public Health's Annual Report was presented. It was acknowledged that there had been a widening of the gap between the most and least vulnerable across Grampian and the key threats were:

- An increase in infectious illnesses.
- A fragile health and social care system.
- The cost-of-living crisis.
- Environmental instability.

Following the presentation, the key points discussed with the forum suggested that signposting to appropriate services was essential and the development of pathways was of paramount importance to allow all members of the public navigate to the correct services.

There were some concerns that the lack of screening programmes through the pandemic may still have an impact on delays in presentation and therefore more advanced disease to deal with.

Committee reports.

The main concerns coming through the committees were the usual workforce challenges especially around recruitment and retention. It was noted that there were a number of difficulties in recruiting to junior doctor and dentists posts for secondary care and that this may lead to gaps in rotas.

Concerns were raised regarding cataract surgery with a large number of patients being referred to Golden Jubilee. This is to be raised with the clinical leads in Ophthalmology via the Area Optometric Committee.

Positive news came from our colleagues in Grampian Area Applied Psychologists Advisory Committee with the recent appointment of a Director of Psychology starting in October.

Concerns were raised regarding the workforce challenges with Dr Gray's Hospital still seen as a real concern. It was noted that the leadership team have been giving this high priority and indeed the next Board meeting will be held in Elgin with specific visits to services organised.

Junior Doctors strike.

It was welcomed that a resolution seemed to have been found. This however remains a risk and with current Senior Doctor strikes seen in England there will be ongoing concerns regarding this also happening here in Scotland. It was acknowledged that a huge amount of work had been done to prepare for the industrial action by all members of teams and it is hopeful that a sustainable solution can be achieved.

Winter Response/Monthly update

The ACF continue to have short monthly update meetings with members of the Chief Executive Team (Chief Executive, Medical and Nursing Directors). It is proving very useful to have this direct engagement between the CET 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. Going forward the priorities of the ACF will be on engaging with the individual committees and ensuring that its relevance is understood to the member groups. We must ensure that information flows both upstream to the Board but also downstream to the committees and therefore cementing our place as an advisory group with close relationships to the clinical delivery groups and the Board. With collaborative and partnership working the ACF should work alongside CET and the Board to deliver the 'Plan for the Future' delivering a solution based approach to the challenges that will be ahead of us all.

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 CET 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.

Mark Burrell
Chair Area Clinical Forum
August 2023.