

## **Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2023.**

### **Purpose of Report**

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on 6th September 2023.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to note the following key points.

#### **ACF Vice Chair.**

With the process of electing a new chair of the ACF having now concluded a new Vice Chair position is open. All eligible members were asked to submit an application by 21 September. Once nominations are received then voting will take place and the successful applicant confirmed to the committee.

#### **Vaccination Programme 2023/24 update.**

Dr Clare-Louise Walker, Consultant in Public Health and NHS Grampian Immunisation Coordinator, attended to provide an update on changes to the winter vaccination programme in response to potential risks of variant BA.2.86. She highlighted there could be potential challenges bringing forward the programme and that the mixed model of delivery across the partnerships will need explanatory information from staff. All professional groups were asked to share this information and ensure all staff were aware of the programme.

#### **Whistleblowing**

Mr Bert Donald, Non-Executive Member of NHS Grampian Board, introduced himself to the ACF and explained his role as the Board's Whistleblowing Champion since February 2022.

Mr Donald gave an overview of the National Whistleblowing Standards introduced across Scotland in April 2021. Following the presentation there was some discussion regarding which mechanisms should be followed to ensure that HR processes are used as required and it was more likely to be matters of wider public interest should be dealt with using whistleblowing standards.

It was felt that more information to staff regarding the training that is available would be helpful with signposting to the TURAS modules.

Mr Donald already visits service areas to raise awareness of the standards and it was felt that this would influence the culture around reporting for those with concerns.

Overall, an excellent presentation and one that will be fed back to all the professional groups.

### **ACF Relationship with Wider System**

Continuing the work of the previous ACF chair, Mrs Cruttenden, it was reflected that it had been challenging to engage with Portfolio Executive Leads across the system, but it was agreed that progress had been made.

There are regular meetings with the Chief Executive, Medical Director and Executive Nurse Director and this has been helpful in providing the opportunity to raise concerns and to be informed of actions taken. This sits well within the 'Blueprint for Good Governance' documentation.

It was highlighted that reports from ACF to the Board can raise concerns and it is important professional groups are reassured that the ACF provides them with a place where their voice is represented and heard by those in the leadership/transformation roles.

### **Terms of Reference/Constitutions**

The Chair introduced this item and explained he was aware that some advisory committees had started to review their terms of reference/constitutions. It was agreed that reviews should ensure alignment with the ACF Constitution, and that gender neutral/inclusive language is used to avoid reinforcing stereotypes or prejudice

### **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 several difficulties in recruiting to junior doctor and dentists' posts for secondary care and that this may lead to gaps in rotas. There were concerns raised that these difficulties could manifest themselves in the future with potential difficulty in recruiting to Specialist training programmes.

Following on from the recruitment problems noted above the main areas of concern were ED staffing particularly Paediatric ED and Radiology reporting. It was noted that there was a significant backlog of routine images not reported. It was noted that this was a national problem and that significant efforts are being taken to improve this. It was of note that 'urgent' scans were being prioritised.

It was noted that there is no Healthcare Science Lead/Director post, and this raised concerns regarding the leadership of this important group of staff. The forum has noted the adverse impact of not having a Lead in ensuring appropriate governance arrangements across the disciplines and an overview of service audits.

Positive news came from our colleagues in our Allied Health Professions Advisory Committee with Physiotherapy had reported successful recruitment and Occupational Therapy have confirmed that it had reached a position where it could remove staffing gaps from the risk register.

### **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. As ACF Chair, I will be attending as many of the professional groups as possible to bolster the visibility of the committee and increasing our interactions with all stakeholders. 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 the Chief Executive Team 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**

**September 2023. .**