



Council of Governors' Meeting

Report Title:	Lead Governor's Report
Report author(s)	David Welbourn, Public Governor for Rest of Suffolk and Lead Governor

Approval

Discussion

Information

Assurance

Introduction

I am sure that all governors stood in their position so that they could play their part in the vital work of building bridges between ESNEFT and the community they serve. They are all committed to breaking down any barriers getting in the way of achieving the very best healthcare services that are truly responsive to community need. In the time since we last met as a Council in March these bridges between ESNEFT and the community are even more important. This newsletter will highlight part of the work we have been carrying out in these unprecedented times.

Lead Governor newsletter

During this time since our last public meeting, I launched a Lead Governor newsletter for the council. It was designed to support governors to fulfil their role. My aim is to take a lead in producing material which in the short term will be helpful for governors to share with various patient groups to keep them in touch with the unfolding improvement and investment work of the Trust. Over the longer term, I envisaged that this regular newsletter would become a forum in which governors would increasingly contribute good ideas and share success stories around the network of fellow governors.

With two issues released so far, I was pleased to see that they were both positively received from governors across the council.

Stakeholder Governor returns to the wards

I have recently spoken with Vikki-Jo Scott, our CoG representative from the University of Essex, she described how lucky she felt to be able to contribute to the fight against coronavirus by returning to the wards.

Vikki has already completed shifts on the critical care unit and Boxted Ward at Colchester Hospital, has praised the HR team for setting up her return so quickly and has provided valuable feedback about her experience.

She said: "It may seem strange to say it, but being back on the frontline as well as being a Governor makes me feel that I am in a privileged position to contribute in this way at this time."

Trust assurance meetings

At the end of March, as part of the emergency response, the board assurance committees (excluding the Audit Committee) were combined into a single monthly interim assurance committee. I was invited by our Chair Helen Taylor to join this monthly, interim assurance meetings (via Teams) during the last couple of months of the public lockdown. This was to become a conduit to fellow governors and to ensure that bridges into the community are maintained. On all our behalf, I added value where I could, hopefully without adding to the stresses all NHS leaders and staff had been facing.

I have also been welcomed onto the weekly NED briefing meeting (also via Teams), and throughout the lock-down period the chair and I have had regular contact to remain informed of important governance issues.

I am pleased to advise that despite the constant pressures of important decisions facing the

management team on a daily basis, there has been a consistent focus on maintaining strong assurance. Throughout this time, the board has demonstrated deep concern for patients, relatives and staff alike, and has made great efforts to anticipate and prepare for the next steps in the evolving situation.

Strategy and Engagement Group

Many of the emergency measures introduced have accelerated the shift to new ways of working already discussed with governors as part of the Trust's strategy. One example is the number of out-patient appointments that have been conducted by video or telephone, with a very positive response and support from patients.

As the Trust emerges from this part of the crisis, many of these measures will be retained as a core part of the reformed way of working. Many governors will be aware of the growing concern about non-Covid-19 related health issues, and the reluctance in many quarters to seek medical help because of the fears created by the pandemic.

Governors must play a vital role in helping to ensure that as recovery and reform gathers pace, the local community plays a strong role in helping shape the services. Governors also have an important role in allaying those fears preventing people from seeking the care they need. I am keen to reinstate the work of the Strategy and Engagement group as soon as possible so that we can step up in this area.

Regional Governors

The East Anglia network of lead governors has been active via email during this period – initially sharing information about how our respective trusts were revising their approach to governor engagement and governance. More recently the discussion has centred on concerns about the effect of potential delays to governor elections, and how to proceed with NED appointments – both relevant to ESNEFT, though I have fewer concerns about local arrangements at ESNEFT than some others are expressing.