

## **Chair's Report - April 2021**

I am pleased to provide a written report to the Board of Directors which covers some key updates for members' attention and assurance.

As we start the new financial year, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the last 12 months and the extraordinary efforts and commitment shown from every corner of the organisation. The start to the new calendar year has presented some of the most challenging months and, thanks to our staff, the Trust has continued to play a vital role in the response to COVID-19 across the communities we serve.

In early January we opened, at significant pace, the first bedded facility for the Trust at the Community Intermediate Care Centre (CICC) on the Clatterbridge site. The first ward, Bluebell was swiftly followed with a request to open a second ward, Iris, in order to support and ease the pressure on the hospital trust. The dedication and enthusiasm of everyone involved has been impressive. The commitment to partnership and collaboration within and outside of this organisation has been remarkable and the feedback from those working, visiting and indeed receiving care and support on the wards has been positive. We are delighted that the Bluebell ward will remain open as we begin the new financial year and we are hopeful of continued cross-system support to commission the CICC on a permanent basis. It should be emphasised that this bedded service is a very different service, having a very clear emphasis on therapy support to enable our patients to recover readily in order to get them home safely at the earliest time.

Our efforts to support our patients and service users remotely during the pandemic have continued thanks to the determination and professionalism of our staff. One example is our telehealth and COVID @ Home service which has been going from strength to strength, providing vital support to allow those with long-term conditions or diagnosed with COVID-19 to remain safely at home.

These are just two examples of ways in which the Trust has adapted to meet the needs of our local population and to support the wider health and care system, and there are many more. As we see restrictions ease across England and a hope to return to a more 'normal' way of life, I remain positive about the future for the Trust and the ways in which we can provide support to those we care for every day.

I remain very proud of this organisation and the individual and collective determination of our staff and teams to deliver the best possible care to our local communities.

I want to recognise the Executive Team for their hard work, motivation and unwavering commitment over the last 12 months, showing determination, stamina and innovation skills. I especially want to recognise the leadership of our interim Chief Executive, Mark Greatrex during his 6-month secondment, during what has been to say the least a challenging winter.

### **Emergency governance arrangements**

The emergency governance arrangements established at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic remain in place following an extension agreed at the formal meeting of the Board of Directors in February 2021.

However, with the NHS emergency response now reduced to Level 3 we will transition to review our extant governance arrangements during quarter 1. The opportunity to reflect on the success of the emergency arrangements, particularly the efficiency, focus and collaborative approach that has resulted, has provided us with an opportunity to refine and strengthen for the future. Consequently, we are emboldened to look again at our governance arrangements to streamline our processes and ensure natural engagement and professional challenge throughout and in all parts of the organisation.

## **Weekly NED assurance meetings**

The weekly NED assurance meetings (*conducted via video conference with all Non-Executive Directors present and with some Executive colleagues*) have continued during February and March 2021 as part of our emergency governance arrangements. They remain important in providing a high degree of assurance to Non-Executive Directors.

Each of these meetings includes a detailed briefing on the local and regional situation, longer-term trends in Wirral and Cheshire East and the wider Cheshire & Merseyside and North West regions. The weekly workforce position is reported, providing an overview on staff capacity and absence levels, together with the latest data on staff testing for COVID-19 including Lateral Flow Testing and the COVID-19 staff vaccination programme. The Trust position in relation to PPE is shared, including opportunities and requests for mutual aid across the region. The financial position is reported every week, based on briefings received at regional level from NHSE/I and updates from weekly CEO and Chairs' regional briefings are also reported for information and assurance.

A report on high-level organisational risks is shared at every meeting following escalation to the Strategic Command Group or Executive Leadership Team.

Other exceptional items are discussed or shared for information through this forum. During the reporting period of February and March these have included;

- The stepdown of services in view of the third wave of COVID-19 and the subsequent planning for the restoration of services
- The extension of service for the Community Intermediate Care Centre
- The Marine Lake Health & Wellbeing Centre development
- The Urgent Treatment Centre development at APH and the associated governance arrangements
- A briefing on the national Staff Survey results
- A review of the emergency governance arrangements and plans for transition during Q1
- An update on the IM&T strategic plan
- A briefing on a reciprocal mentoring programme to be implemented across the Trust

## **Informal Board**

The informal board session in March 2021 took place, in line with the annual programme and provided an opportunity for all members of the Board to come together, albeit virtually, to discuss key topics. A briefing is included on the agenda at item 9.

## **Council of Governors**

We had a productive development session with our governors on 29 March 2021. This included multiple topics for debate and discussion including;

- The development of the ICS and ICP including the impact and opportunities for the Trust
- The ambition in relation to Social Value, following the recent accreditation of the Trust by the Cheshire & Merseyside HCP
- The quality priorities for the new financial year and the requirements in relation to the Quality Report/Account
- The plans for restoration of services
- An update on the work of the Trust's Staff Council

The governors also convened a short formal session to consider the external audit contract and a recommendation from the Audit Committee in respect of the contract for 2021-22.

My thanks to all our governor colleagues who continue to support the Trust during these unprecedented times.

Our next formal meeting will take place on 26 April 2021.

## **Healthy Wirral**

Together with our Interim CEO and other Executive colleagues, I continue to participate actively and represent the Trust in the Healthy Wirral programme of work and in a range of regional and national fora. I appreciate valuable and productive discussions with Chair colleagues across the system.

Over the last few months, we have been focused on the development of governance arrangements in respect of the emergence of the ICS and ICP. This work will continue over the coming months and I am personally grateful to the continued leadership of David Eva, Independent Chair, who will remain in post, as agreed by the partnership, for another 6 months.

Finally, I would like to formally welcome back Karen Howell, Chief Executive to the Trust following her secondment to NHS England for 6 months, where she has led the work on discharge and recovery. Karen returned to the organisation on a part-time basis during March 2021 but returned substantively from 1 April 2021.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would also like to recognise and thank Mark Greatrex for his leadership as interim Chief Executive over the last 6 months. Mark has provided a strong, stable and confident leadership during a particularly challenging winter and has led the Executive Team to further success with our continued response and system support during the COVID-19 response.

I would also like to recognise and thank Jennie Birch, interim Chief Finance Officer for her contribution and leadership during her time with the Trust. I am delighted that following agreement by the Board of Directors, Jennie will remain in post for a further two months to lead the external audit and the submission of final accounts for 2020-21 for the Trust.

I invite the members of the Board of Directors to receive this report for information.

**Professor Michael Brown CBE DL**  
**Chair**

29 March 2021

## Lead Governor Report

### Council of Governor development session

The members of the CoG joined the Board of Directors and senior leaders from across the Trust at a virtual development day on 29 March 2021. The development sessions have become a useful forum for informal discussions, briefings and debates on the issues and opportunities affecting the Trust.

At the meeting in March 2021, the agenda included a briefing on the government White Paper *Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all* and provided governors with an update on the development of PLACE across the Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). The governors were particularly interested to learn more about the associated governance arrangements given the ambition to strip away unnecessary legislative bureaucracy to empower local leaders and services to tackle health inequalities. The intention for Foundation Trusts to remain separate statutory bodies (as part of the Integrated Care System (ICS)) with their functions and duties broadly as they are in the current legislation was debated and agreed as a key topic for future discussions with governor members as the proposals are carried into law.

The governors have collectively remained briefed on the Trust's response to COVID-19 and a further update on the plans for service restoration was provided at the meeting, which was both useful and reassuring.

A useful update on the strategic workplan was shared by the Trust's Chief Strategy Officer and following a recent Social Value Award the opportunities and ambitions of the Trust to further strengthen its role as a local anchor institution as part of the future strategy were discussed.

The Chief Nurse provided an update on the quality priorities for 2021-22 particularly in the context of COVID-19 recovery and the position in relation to the preparation of the Quality Report and Account was noted. The governors acknowledged the requirement to audit the Quality Report was not required for the year-end reporting of 2020-21.

The governors individually and collectively spent a lot of time discussing opportunities to enhance and strengthen communication with public members of the Trust and the wider local community. The attendance and active contribution of governors at the Your Voice group has been welcomed and will continue as the group continues to evolve to support the Trust's strategic priorities. A generic e-mail address allowing public members to contact governors has also been set up and at the development day the process for triage and response to communications was received.

All Trust governors can now be contacted via the following e-mail address which is also available on the Trust's public website - [wchc.governors@nhs.net](mailto:wchc.governors@nhs.net)

A short formal session of the Council of Governors was convened as part of the development day session to consider a series of recommendations from the Audit Committee on the appointment of the external auditors for the Trust. A summary is provided below.



### **External Audit contract 2021-22**

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Brian Simmons, NED advised members of the CoG that at the meeting of the Audit Committee on 24 March 2021, the potential to direct award to Ernst & Young for 2021-22 was discussed and supported as a recommendation to the CoG.

This recommendation was based on securing consistency, in a turbulent market and allowing more time to re-procure external audit services for 2022-23 and beyond.

The Council of Governors supported the recommendation to direct award to the existing auditors for 2021-22 and to continue with the plans to form a subgroup of governors to work alongside the Audit Committee to appoint external auditors from 2022-23 and beyond.

### **Your Voice Group**

A number of governors were pleased to attend the meeting of the Your Voice group in March 2021 to engage with members and to provide an update on the work of the Council of Governors.

My thanks to those governors who support the Your Voice group.

I provide this report for information and assurance.

The next formal meeting of the Council of Governors will be on 26 April 2021.

**Bill Wyllie**  
**Lead Governor (public governor, Wallasey)**

30 March 2021

<b>Chief Executive Report</b>		
<b>Meeting</b>	Board of Directors	
<b>Date</b>	14/04/2021	<b>Agenda item</b> 8
<b>Lead Director</b>	Karen Howell, Chief Executive	
<b>Author(s)</b>	Alison Hughes, Director of Corporate Affairs	
<b>Action required</b> (please tick the appropriate box)		
<b>To Approve</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>To Discuss</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>To Assure</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Purpose</b>		
<p>The purpose of this report is to appraise members of the Board of Directors on developments of national interest, and issues relating to the local health and social care economy, particularly those that may impact upon the Trust, and its further development.</p> <p>This report also intends to provide a brief overview of the communications and engagement activities undertaken by the Chief Executive, both internally and externally and any forthcoming events.</p>		
<b>Executive Summary</b>		
<p>The Chief Executive's report provides an update on matters of interest at a national, regional and local level. The report also celebrates many good news stories from the Trust and shares information on the work of the Executive Leadership Team.</p>		
<b>Risks and opportunities:</b>		
No risks identified		
<b>Quality/inclusion considerations:</b>		
Quality Impact Assessment completed and attached <input type="checkbox"/> No Equality Impact Assessment completed and attached <input type="checkbox"/> No This report is for information and assurance only on key news items and developments. Specific projects or initiatives referred to in this report are managed separately and in accordance with Trust policy to complete the necessary EI and QI assessments		
<b>Financial/resource implications:</b>		
No financial or resource implications.		
<b>Trust Strategic Objectives</b>		
Please select the top three Trust Strategic Objectives that this report relates to, from the drop down boxes below.		
Our Populations - outstanding, safe care every time	Our People - improving staff engagement	Our Performance - growing community services across Wirral, Cheshire & Merseyside
<b>Board of Directors is asked to consider the following action</b>		
The Board is asked to note the contents of the report and be assured by the updates provided		
<b>Report history</b>		
<b>Submitted to</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Brief summary of outcome</b>
Board of Directors	Bi-monthly regular report to public Board of Directors	The report is received for information and assurance purposes

## **Chief Executive's Report - April 2021**

1. I am delighted to have returned to the Trust on 1 April 2021. Having been asked to join the national team for six months to lead the implementation and systemisation of the national discharge policy and recovery, it is good to be back to focus on the restoration and strategic redesign of our organisational and system-based services.
2. Whilst I have been doing this work our Deputy Chief Executive Mr Mark Greatrex has been leading as Interim CEO and has done us proud. I would like to formally record my sincere thanks to Mark and indeed the Executive Team who have supported him so very well.
3. It has without doubt been challenging navigating through the months of winter and a third lockdown for all, but so much has been achieved during the last twelve months. For Wirral it started earlier than most as we received and hosted our visitors returning to the UK from Wuhan and quickly evolved into the establishment of responsive services including the Community Intermediate Care Centre and the introduction of pulse oximetry. In addition to this the Trust bid for and was awarded the contract for the 0-19 Healthy Child Programme in St Helens. The Trust has done all of this and so much more which ensuring the continuation of essential services.
4. I know it has been a team effort and the hard work, commitment, dedication and compassion from everyone has shone through and in many ways established new and smarter ways of working that bode well for the future.
5. I look forward now to leading the Trust through the next chapter in the development of our organisation. We have a positive future ahead as a lead provider of community health and care and together with the Executive Team and indeed the Board I look forward to working with our workforce, patients and clients to shape what that future looks like and defining our next five year strategic build.

### **Local news and developments**

#### **Our response to COVID-19**

6. As a Trust we have continued to actively support our local communities in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The last few months have been challenging as we have faced normal winter pressures with the added complexity of COVID-19 infection rates whilst also maintaining our non-COVID services as far as possible safely and establishing new services to support the people we serve and our local health and care partners.
7. We have undeniably learnt a lot since the start of the pandemic, and we are proud of the efforts from every corner of the organisation.
8. On 23 March 2021, the Trust recognised the National Day of Reflection marking the first anniversary of the national lockdown and to remember those we have lost to COVID-19. It was an opportunity to look back over the past 12 months, to reflect while looking ahead to a brighter future. Whilst we all choose to do this in our way, it was important that we paused and took stock of everything that has, and hasn't, happened in the last year. It was wonderful to read some shared reflections from staff across the Trust on their

experiences of the last 12 months; the stories of teamwork, support and collaboration are something we will all remember.

9. We have all had a unique experience of 2020 and beyond, but one thing we share is the sacrifices we have all made to protect others. I would like to recognise the individual and collective commitment to fighting the virus that every member of our staff has shown.

#### ***Lateral flow testing programme for staff***

10. We continue to encourage and support all staff to participate in Lateral Flow Testing and in mid-February we received our second supply of testing kits.
11. My thanks to the team that continue to support this programme, to managers for providing advice and guidance to staff and to all those staff who are taking part.
12. Following guidance in recent weeks, we are also actively supporting members of our staff who are working in or regularly visiting care homes in Wirral.

#### ***COVID-19 vaccination programme***

13. Almost 90% of our workforce have now received the first does of the COVID-19 vaccine with a further 48% having received the second vaccine.
14. We are grateful to our partners across the healthcare community who have provided the opportunity for our staff to receive the vaccination. In particular my thanks to Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS FT and Cheshire & Wirral Partnership NHS FT.
15. The Leader of Wirral Borough Council, Cllr Janette Williamson has written to healthcare leaders following a motion debated on 24 March 2021 on the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The letter recognises the heroic efforts of both the Wirral community and healthcare workers in responding to the pandemic and offers a note of thanks as follows;

*“Council wishes to place on record its sincerest thanks to the scientists (publicly and privately funded), pharmaceutical companies, procurement professionals, GPs, healthcare professionals, Council staff and volunteers who have made this miracle a reality by ensuring the success of the vaccination programme here in Wirral.*

*Council also wishes to place on record our sincere thanks to all front-line workers (too many to mention here), who have placed their own health and lives in danger, to ensure that Wirral residents were able to live their lives as well as possible, under extremely difficult circumstances”.*

16. This recognition is gratefully and warmly received, and we have shared it with our staff all of whom have worked tirelessly showing great commitment and pride in serving and caring for our local communities over the last 12 months.

#### ***Maintaining performance during our response to COVID-19***

17. As a provider of community NHS health and social care services we have continued to see and treat people in their own homes and in clinics every day, prioritising the most vulnerable and the most high-risk patients and service users.



18. We have continued to provide vital services; Community Nursing, Specialist Nursing, Therapy Services and Social Care - all supporting people to stay well, independent and in their own home wherever possible during the crisis.
19. We have supported the safe discharge of patients from hospital, ensuring they have the care they need at home whilst creating much needed capacity within the hospital. The work from our teams has frequently been recognised at regional and national level with regulators and NHS England.
20. We have introduced new services such as COVID @ Home and adapted to new ways of working and connecting with our patients and service users. In January we were also extremely proud to open our first bedded facility, the Community Intermediate Care Centre (CICC) on the Clatterbridge site which continues to provide vital support to our system but most importantly to the people we are caring for there. I am delighted that the Journey of Care story and the Staff Story shared at today's meeting will provide an insight into the valuable work of the CICC.
21. Despite the pressure of winter, our staff attendance levels have remained stable throughout the COVID-19 response and this is testament to the dedication and commitment of our workforce.
22. Our duty of care to our staff has remained a priority and their individual and collective health and wellbeing has been an important focus of our staff support over the last 12 months. In addition to the plethora of national, regional and local support options available, we were pleased to team up with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership in March 2021 to provide further wellbeing support to our staff. Alongside Healthbox CIC and Insight IAPT a series of initiatives including an emotional support line and counselling service was launched.
23. Our mandatory training compliance has remained consistently strong and at the 31 March 2021 we completed the financial year achieving our target of 90% compliance.
24. We continue to track the quality and safety of the care we provide through established indicators, including risk and incident management. Our Quality & Safety Committee continues to meet on a bi-monthly schedule and whilst the scheduled meeting in January 2021 was postponed due to the third wave of the COVID pandemic, the committee met in February and March to ensure continued assurance on all quality and safety matters.
25. The 2020-21 operational planning process was suspended nationally due to COVID-19, and emergency funding arrangements were put in place to support Trusts to manage the financial pressure as a result of the pandemic. From October to March 2021 the Trust has been awarded additional funding to manage COVID-19 and winter pressures.
26. We are not currently being assessed against the Use of Resources performance requirements by NHS Improvement and as a result of COVID-19 our Cost Improvement Programme savings plans remain on hold and under review.

### **Service recovery**

27. Following the second/third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and the NHS Emergency Alert Level now having reduced to Level 3, the full recovery and restart of services to a business as usual state is now underway. This will ensure that action plans are in place

for services that now have extended waiting lists and ensure equitable access to front-line services.

28. As we restart our services, we are also transitioning from emergency governance arrangements to extant arrangements whilst learning from the structures that have been in place and supported effective decision-making over the last 12-months.

### **St Helens 0-19 Healthy Child Programme**

29. Following a competitive tender process, the Trust has been awarded the integrated 0-19 Healthy Child Programme for St Helens.

30. This is a great achievement for the organisation and a true reflection of the excellent work we already deliver in Wirral and Cheshire East with children, young people, and their families.

31. Over the past seven years we have been delivering an outstanding, responsive, and innovative integrated 0-19 Health and Wellbeing Service in Wirral, providing support for local children and young people. Following the award of the Wirral contract in 2015 our 0-19 journey soon travelled to Cheshire East. From birth to adulthood our teams give young families the best possible start in life and have a huge impact on the long-term health of young people and children.

32. We are very proud that over the years our services have improved the health and wellbeing of local children and young people and helped to reduce health inequalities. We have listened and responded to local children and young people and those who care for them and we've worked in partnership with local organisations to ensure we deliver services that are tailored to local communities and their needs.

33. We are thrilled to have been awarded the contract in St Helens and we look forward to welcoming our new colleagues to the Trust over the coming months.

### **Staff Survey 2020**

34. The results of the national NHS Staff Survey were published in mid-March 2021 and we are now working across the organisation to understand the results and to agree our next steps.

35. We achieved a response rate of 52% and overall, we improved across four themes

- Health and Wellbeing
- Morale
- Quality of Care
- Safe Environment/Bullying and Harassment

36. We also maintained performance in two themes

- Safe Environment/Violence
- Safety Culture and Staff Engagement

37. In the context of COVID-19 these results are positive, and our teams have shown so much resilience and commitment over the last 12 months. However, as a learning

organisation we recognise that there are areas where we want to improve and to do this, we are involving all members of staff.

38. We have asked our managers across the entire Trust to hold 'Team Talks' to reflect on the results at a local level and to identify one intention that teams can commit to work on that will improve the experiences of staff.
39. We want our staff to understand the results and what they mean to them as a team and as individuals. We want them to be able to shape and own the solutions that they can control. We hope this engagement approach with staff will provide an opportunity for everyone to consider how they can have an influence on changing things for the better and make being part of Team WCHC a positive experience.
40. We will also be rolling out the NHS People Pulse national online survey to further support local listening and engagement activities. We hope that the results will provide a regular local view of staff experience and wellbeing.

### **NHS Cadets - our journey continues**

41. The Trust is delighted to be the first Community Trust in the country to be involved in the NHS Cadets pilot programme.
42. The programme, which began in October 2020, is a 12-month course designed to engage with young people who wouldn't normally get the opportunity to work or volunteer within the NHS.
43. Here in Wirral the programme is being delivered as a joint initiative between our Trust, St John Ambulance and The Hive. It provides 14 to 16-year-olds with courses to develop their leadership skills, and in normal circumstances, first aid training and volunteering opportunities in the NHS - including vital hands-on work experience in NHS settings.
44. Thanks to the dedication and passion of the team at The Hive we have continued the programme throughout lockdown which, at a time when traditional education and socialising weren't happening – perhaps two of the biggest elements of a young person's life – has been an invaluable resource for the cadets.
45. Over the last 15 weeks of the programme, the team has delivered a staggering 45 sessions, with a total of 835 cadets participating. The cadets have engaged in sessions on transferable skills such as communication and teamwork, as well as sessions on mental health and wellbeing and infection prevention control - paramount lessons in these challenging times
46. During lockdown, cadets have received wellbeing packs, including mindfulness colouring books and self-care items. Delivering these much needed resources has also been an opportunity for the team to check-in with the young people to get a sense of how they are coping and together with the social media group set up by the cadets themselves, it has given them a sense of belonging and community in what could have been a lonely or isolating period.
47. While the virtual programme has been a lifeline in recent times, the cadets, the Hive team and members of our Trust look forward to being able to meet in person once again to run face-to-face courses and continue meeting new friends and building relationships.

48. To work alongside our partners at The Hive and St John Ambulance to deliver Wirral's first NHS Cadet Programme is something that I and all my colleagues here at the Trust are truly proud of. Volunteering and working in the NHS is about learning new skills and having new experiences - so this programme helps the cadets develop tools they can use in the next steps of their journey.

### **Celebrating Social Care Week**

49. We were proud to recognise and celebrate Social Work Week in March 2021 by sharing the experiences and reflections of our colleagues from Adult Social Care and the integrated services they work alongside, in a Daily Diaries series. Shining a spotlight on social care, these accounts provided an insight into the roles of social care staff and how our services work together to care for our community.

50. Social work (and social care) plays a vital role in building and sustaining communities on a micro level. At its core it is about helping and supporting people, but as a wider concept it is directly linked to social justice, addressing inequalities and civil rights.

51. During the last year, our social workers and social care colleagues have worked alongside health colleagues to tirelessly deliver key services and protect and empower the most vulnerable. As part of the celebrations it was great to be able to showcase some key messages from staff about what social work means to them.

### **Social Value Award**

52. I am delighted that the Trust has been awarded the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Value Award which recognises the work we continue to do with our local communities and recognises us as an important anchor institution. We look forward to and remain extremely committed to our social value journey and seeking more opportunities to deliver our corporate social responsibility.

### **Congratulations...!**

#### **REACH-HF**

53. The Trust's Cardiac Rehab Team has received recognition again for the REACH-HF programme which has been published in NICE's Shared Learning Collection.

54. The example describes how the Wirral Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (CPRP) has integrated home-based rehabilitation (REACH-HF) through new delivery methods, prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic, for patients with chronic heart failure.

55. Congratulations to all involved in gaining this national recognition; it is wonderful to see wider dissemination of the services' activities which are still so relevant in the context of the pandemic.

### **NHS benchmarking webinar**

56. Nicky Williams, Community Cardiology service lead presented at the recent Community Services Benchmarking Findings webinar, showcasing the work in the service during the first wave of the pandemic.
57. Well done Nicky for sharing this important work at national level.

### **Happy 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday to the Trust**

58. Finally, I would like to recognise the 10<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations on 1 April 2021 for our Trust. It was a wonderful moment to recognise the achievements of the past decade and to reflect, celebrate and toast the organisation. My thanks to the Communications Team who led us in the celebrations with lots of wonderful activities and birthday messages.

### **National news and developments**

#### **NHS 2021/22 priorities and operational planning guidance**

59. NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSE/I) published priorities and operational planning guidance for 2021/22 on 25 March 2021.
60. This overarching document sets out six priorities for the year ahead and asks systems to develop fully triangulated plans across activity, workforce and money for the next six months.
61. In the context of responding to the on-going challenges presented by COVID-19, while also restoring services, meeting new care demands and tackling health inequalities, the six priorities for the year ahead are;
- supporting the health and wellbeing of staff, and taking action on recruitment and retention
  - delivering the NHS COVID vaccination programme and continuing to meet the needs of patients with COVID-19
  - building on what we have learned during the pandemic to transform the delivery of services, accelerate the restoration of elective and cancer care, and manage the increasing demand on mental health services
  - expanding primary care capacity to improve access, local health outcomes and address health inequalities
  - transforming community and urgent and emergency care to prevent inappropriate attendance at emergency departments (ED), improve timely admission to hospital for ED patients and reduce length of stay
  - working collaboratively across systems to deliver on these priorities
62. These arrangements are supported by an additional £8.1bn of funding to reflect the ongoing impact of COVID-19. Locally we are now working to develop our plans both for the Trust and recognising our system collaboration.

### **Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all**

63. In February 2021, the Department of Health and Social Care published the White Paper *Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all*, which sets out legislative proposals for a health and care Bill.
64. The White Paper brings together proposals that build on the recommendations made by NHS England and NHS Improvement in *Integrating care: next steps to building strong and effective integrated care systems across England* with additional ones relating to the Secretary of State's powers over the system and targeted changes to public health, social care, and quality and safety matters,
65. The proposals are grouped under the following themes;
- working together and supporting integration
  - stripping out needless bureaucracy
  - enhancing public confidence and accountability
  - and additional proposals to support public health, social care, and quality and safety
66. NHS Providers has published a useful briefing on the White Paper which can be accessed via the following link - <https://nhsproviders.org/media/690914/nhs-providers-otdb-dhsc-white-paper-final.pdf>
67. The briefing suggests that the White Paper *“marks an evolution of the proposals for legislative change....with its purpose to create an enabling framework for local partners to build upon existing partnerships at place and system levels, and to align services and decision making in the interests of local people”*.
68. The King's Fund has also published a paper describing the main proposals under each theme and the rationale for each together with providing an initial assessment of the proposals and their implications for the health and care system. The article can be accessed via the following link - <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/health-social-care-white-paper-explained>
69. For this Trust, we are engaged with colleagues across Cheshire & Merseyside and locally in Wirral to determine the details of ICS and ICP governance and to set our vision and approach for the future. The opportunity for cross system collaboration beyond the NHS, actively working with the Health & Wellbeing Board and the community and voluntary sector in provider collaboratives is ambitious and provides the foundations to improve health outcomes for our local populations.

### **Funding for discharge to assess (D2A)**

70. The recent announcement of new funding for discharge to assess (D2A) has been welcomed and the certainty it provides for the first half of the financial year 2021-22. The Chair of the Community Network, which is hosted by NHS Confederation and NHS Providers, Andrew Ridley recently commented;

*"Throughout the pandemic, both the additional funding and the new ways in which patients have been discharged safely from hospital into the community have been hugely*

helpful.

*"Discharge to assess has been a vital policy during the COVID-19 crisis, and has helped local health and care services to increase the numbers of people being discharged, as well reducing delays and, crucially, the length of stay in hospital. The move to continue this funding for the first six months of the next financial year also reflects the direction of travel in the recent NHS white paper, which set out proposals to include these policies in primary legislation"*

*"Leaders across both health and social care now want to be able to embed these changes permanently and see recurrent funding included in the next spending review so they can continue to provide these new services going forward."*

71. We welcome the recognition of the vital role community services play in effective D2A models and are proud to have actively supported this effort with success during the pandemic.

### **Regulatory lessons to be learned from the pandemic**

72. A new report by NHS Providers on trusts' experience of NHS regulation highlights strengths and weaknesses in the approaches taken by Care Quality Commission (CQC) and NHS England and NHS Improvement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
73. The report titled, "*Reconsidering the approach to regulation*" concludes that both organisations implemented welcome changes in response to the onset of the pandemic, scaling back their activity to allow trusts to concentrate their full efforts on patient care.
74. The report outlines the findings from the sixth annual regulation survey carried out by NHS Providers which was sent to all trust chairs, chief executives and company secretaries. The full report can be accessed via the following link <https://nhsproviders.org/reconsidering-the-approach-to-regulation>

### **UK Health Security Agency**

75. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) launched on 1 April 2021 and brings together Public Health England, NHS Test and Trace and the Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC).
76. The UKHSA will be responsible for planning, preventing and responding to external health threats, and providing intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage. UKHSA will ensure the nation can respond quickly and at greater scale to deal with pandemics and future threats
77. UKHSA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care.

### **Office for Health Promotion**

78. A new Office for Health Promotion has been established to lead national efforts to improve and level up the public's health by tackling obesity, improving mental health and promoting physical activity.

79. The Office's remit will be to systematically tackle the top preventable risk factors causing death and ill health in the UK, by designing, implementing and tracking delivery policy across government. It will bring together a range of skills to lead a new era of public health polices, leveraging modern digital tools, data and actuarial science and delivery experts.
80. The Office for Health Promotion will sit within the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

### **Communications and Engagement**

81. Our monthly Executive Briefing session has moved to an on-line event which is open to every member of staff across the Trust to attend. During January – March 2021 we have been pleased with the increasing numbers of staff attending to hear about news from across the Trust but also and most importantly to answer any questions from our staff. We have been inviting questions to be submitted in advance to help us shape the agenda to respond to questions or concerns from across the Trust and responding to questions live at the briefing. From recent surveys we are receiving positive feedback on this approach and we look forward to welcoming more staff over the coming months.
82. Clear, timely and informative communication to our staff has been vital over the last 12 months and our Communications Team has been instrumental in supporting the dissemination of these messages. I am pleased that the report on Communications & Marketing Activity will be presented and shared with the Board of Directors today.
83. I am looking forward to having an opportunity to reconnect with teams over the coming weeks and months and firstly I am thrilled to be joining our staff on the Bluebell Ward at the CICC to support them on a shift as a HealthCare Assistant.

### **Summary of Executive Leadership Team (ELT) business**

84. As part of our response to COVID-19, the Trust established an emergency command structure to ensure timely and appropriate response to both national and local requirements. This included a Strategic Command Group chaired weekly by the Chief Executive and a Tactical Command Group chaired daily by the Chief Operating Officer.
85. Following the initial peak of the pandemic the Strategic Command Group was incorporated into the established weekly Executive Leadership Team meetings. However, from 5 October 2020 the two meetings were separated, with SCG receiving weekly assurance on the Trust's continued response to COVID-19 through reports on the following;
- Wirral system SitRep including ED attendances, hospital occupancy and discharges and emergency beds capacity
  - Workforce capacity and reassignments
  - Workforce COVID-19 absences and swabbing
  - PPE stock levels
  - COVID-related operational risks with a score of 15 or above
  - Outbreak information and data
  - The COVID-19 vaccination programme
  - The lateral flow testing programme
  - The Oximetry at Home programme



86. From 22 March 2021 SCG was once again incorporated into ELT, with the above reports forming part of a weekly System Sitrep update provided by the Chief Operating Officer.

87. ELT has continued to receive regular updates on the following:

- Service reset and restoration plans
- Winter planning (both Trust and system-wide)
- The establishment of the Community Integrated Care Centre
- Restoration of Continuing Healthcare (CHC) assessments which were paused during phase 1 of COVID
- The on-going review of Extra Care Housing
- Progress towards achieving the savings required against the Community Care Budget
- Progress towards achieving the requirements of KPI 13 in relation to closure of Section 42 safeguarding enquiries within 28 days
- The action plan drawn up in response to the MIAA review of the Digital Service
- Development of the Marine Lake Health & Wellbeing Centre in West Kirby
- The collaborative work that the Trust is undertaking with Wirral Council and an external change management agency to transform social work practice and ensure a full strength-based approach.
- The Trust's operational redesign process, including implementation and the appointment of Service Directors
- Up to and including 16 March 2021, non-COVID related high-level operational risks and from 23 March, all high-level organisational risks.

88. In accordance with the emergency governance arrangements established in March 2020, during the temporary pause of the Programme Management Board (PMB) ELT has continued to receive capital business cases for approval, including significant planned investment in Estates and IM&T. Following the re-establishment of PMB in March 2021, all capital and revenue business cases will be processed through this group.

89. During February and March 2021, further specific items submitted to ELT for approval have included;

- The Trust's draft Quality Strategy for 2021/22, in advance of submission to Quality & Safety Committee for formal approval.
- The draft Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22, in advance of submission to Audit Committee for formal approval.
- The 2020 NHS Staff Survey results
- A business case for revenue funding to permanently implement a workforce team to manage the E-Roster, E-Expenses and Liaison functions on behalf of the Trust.
- The proposed approach to the implementation of reciprocal mentoring
- Agreement to proceed to the first stage of the bidding process for the Knowsley 0-25 tender.

- A recommendation to award the contract for speech recognition software to the company that had partnered with the Trust during the successful pilot programme.

90. Additional items were also presented to ELT for assurance or discussion including,

- Proposed changes to Wirral system governance.
- The proposed governance structure of the Urgent Treatment Centre redesign programme.
- Regular updates on progress towards achieving the £500k CIP target for the Wirral and Cheshire East 0-19 Services
- An update on the use of the Trust's reserve funds for 2020/21.
- A presentation from the Chief Nurse on the Trust's CQC preparedness.
- The new dashboard for monitoring referrals and waiting lists.
- A preview of the Trust's presentation to commissioners in relation to the new D2A provision
- An update on the Agile Working Programme

### **Conclusion**

91. I hope you find this report interesting and helpful and it provides a clear description of the current priorities for the Trust and the key activities underway to address them.

**Karen Howell**  
**Chief Executive**

Alison Hughes  
Director of Corporate Affairs

1 April 2021



**Report from Sub Committee of the Board  
Audit Committee 24 March 2021 - Chair Briefing**

**Introduction**

1. The Audit Committee has continued to meet normally during the Covid emergency to ensure appropriate Governance is maintained across the Trust. The Committee's main business covered:

**Governance**

2. The Committee reviewed:
  - **Board Assurance Framework (BAF)**  
The Committee received an update on the use and further progress made in reviewing and developing the BAF for managing key risks for the Trust which is on today's Board Agenda. This was supported by an Internal Audit Review of the BAF noting it is used by the Trust to manage its risks agreed by the Board but recommended it could be better aligned to the National Framework.
  - **Audit and Quality Improvement Annual Programme 2021/2022**  
The Committee was assured to receive the annual Audit and Quality Improvement Programme for 2021/2022 (following review and approval by the Quality & Safety Committee) which will undertake service reviews to ensure the consistent provision of care across a range of factors. These include: Patient Safety and focussed care; Clinical Effectiveness; Service access, adapted working and patient engagement; Professional Body and Safeguarding Audits. The Plan is developed by the Trust in collaboration with Quality Leads and takes into account National Audits.
  - **Risk Management Review Final Assignment Report**  
The Committee was pleased to receive Substantial Assurance from the independent Internal Audit review of the Trust Risk Management processes and noting "there is a good system of internal in place designed to meet system objectives".

**Finances**

3. The Committee received an update on the arrangements for preparing the Annual Financial Accounts & Statements. The Committee was made aware of the significant and unprecedented complexity and timing delays caused by the Covid emergency. The Committee was assured by the oversight and management of the process being undertaken to align with both professional and national NHS accounting requirements and approved some specific proposals.

## **Policies**

4. The Committee approved an Updated Risk Policy.

## **Internal Audit**

5. The Committee received the following papers covering:
  - **Progress Report 2020/21**

Despite the Covid emergency Internal Audit were able to report that 4 further reviews had been completed. Three of these received Substantial Assurance and one Limited Assurance and Non- Executive Directors followed up at subsequent NED Assurance meeting for further assurance. Two advisory reviews had also been completed to assist the development of Trust processes.
  - **Follow Up Summary Report March 2021**

The Committee was assured to receive a report noting generally good progress on the implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations during the year but noting one Critical / High recommendation had only been partially implemented and further assurance on the context for this was obtained via NED Assurance meeting.
  - **Head of Internal Audit Opinion Report**

The Committee was assured to receive this annual report concluding there is a good system of internal control in operation across the Trust.
  - **Draft Internal Audit Plan 2021/2022**

The Committee reviewed and approved the proposed Plan noting that it would be subject to review during the year to be able to react to new requirements or changing circumstances eg Covid implications.
  - **Internal Audit Charter**

The Committee noted this formal document that defines the scope of Internal Audit and authorises access to the records, personnel and physical information needed to undertake their work.

## **External Audit**

6. No specific papers were presented to the meeting but information regarding new Code of Practice requirements to assess Value for Money was circulated separately.

## **Anti-Fraud Service**

7. The Committee received the following reports:
  - **Annual Report 2020/21**

A comprehensive report was provided which concluded the Trust remains committed to tackling fraud and corruption evidenced by its high level of compliance and performance against National Standards.
  - **Introduction of the Government Functional Counter Fraud Standard**

The Committee was made aware of this new national standard which incorporates previous standards and introduces some new areas. Plans to introduce these during 2021/22 are being developed in what is recognised as a year of transition.
  - **Anti Fraud Workplan 2021/22**

The Committee reviewed and approved the annual plan.

## **Tender Waivers**

8. The Committee noted seven Tender Waivers had been approved in accordance with Standing Financial Instructions. Three of these sought continuity in providing expertise and advice for a developing programme and the remainder covered specific equipment or service needs.

## **Security Management Summary Report**

9. The Committee was assured to receive a regular update on the management of a range of security issues and incidents noting the continued impact of covid.

## **Chair Summary**

10. This report reflects a lot of the work of the past year and gives confidence that the Trust continues to manage its affairs diligently and following sound financial and management practices despite the huge challenge and disruption of Covid. There have been changes to speed decision making and freeing-up management time but overall, I believe the Trust is continuing to operate successfully while carefully managing public funds.

**Brian Simmons**  
**Chair, Audit Committee**

8 April 2021

## **Briefing from Informal Board Session - March 2021**

### **Purpose**

1. This is a brief report to record the key topics discussed and the information shared at an informal board session held on 3 March 2021.
2. The informal board session scheduled for January 2021 was cancelled due to the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was reported to the Board of Directors via the Chair's report in February 2021.

### **Key Topics discussed**

3. The board session included a variety of relevant topics for discussion.
4. An update on the Shaping Our Future programme of work including the values exercise, strategy refresh and 12-month strategic workplan development was provided for comment and discussion.
5. A lively and productive discussion on risk appetite and the future management of risk, including lessons learnt during the emergency response, was welcomed.
6. The project governance arrangements for the Urgent Treatment Centre were presented providing an opportunity for comment to ensure all partners remained involved and engaged in the process.
7. The Board also welcomed Karen Milnes, Divisional Manager and Nicky Williams, Service Lead to provide their reflections and learning from the telehealth and pulse oximetry service and to answer any questions.

**Alison Hughes**  
**Director of Corporate Affairs**

27 March 2021