

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 2nd of November 2022

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on the 2nd of November 2022.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the following key points:

Dr Gray's Hospital Plan for the Future

The forum welcomed Christina Cameron (Programme Lead) to the meeting to discuss the Dr Gray's Hospital (DGH) Plan for the Future work which is ongoing. The NHS Grampian Board members had a recent opportunity to participate in a workshop on this following a very informative visit to the hospital site. It was very useful to hear about this focus on DGH and future plans as this has been a topic of discussion within ACF before, particularly around engagement with staff which we were pleased to note has been extensive with many well attended multiprofessional workshops over the last few months. The forum had a number of questions and comments for Christina to add into the process.

Doctors in Training

The forum welcomed Dr Elizabeth Visser to discuss junior doctors in training and the provision of breaks. We discussed the circumstances around junior doctors' rotas and how they may become 'non-compliant' and the implications of this. Our multiprofessional forum were very interested in this topic and the inequities between medicine and the professions. However the forum are mindful that messaging around adequate and uninterrupted staff breaks for all disciplines should be the goal and we should work together to respect these. The Grampian Area Partnership Forum (GAPF) and ACF will be jointly leading a short life group on staff breaks, rest and recovery which will start soon.

Radiology

Radiology department had been reliant on additional non-recurring funds for many years to manage the waiting times in CT, MRI & ultrasound examinations. Due to decreased Access funding and other significant cost saving measures in October 2022, non-recurring funded activities have been stopped across CT, MRI and ultrasound. This will result in an increasing capacity gap as the radiology department's ability to cope with the referral demands versus activity is challenged. An impact assessment led by the department is now underway to describe waiting times, patient and service risk. There is considerable concern raised by Radiography and medical staff around the relative lack of clinical discussion with regard to the immediate and ongoing effect of these reductions, although it is appreciated that the reduction in funding was, in itself, an immediate instruction. There is considerable concern regarding the marked effects of these reductions in imaging diagnostics on waiting times, which are already long. The lengthening of waiting times will have a serious effect on provision of elective services in secondary care, as well as significantly reduced access to diagnostic imaging in primary care.

It is most important that there is wide and deep understanding of these effects by senior officers of NHS Grampian as well as clinicians in secondary and primary care. It is hoped that communication around this will improve; the radiography (AHP) and medical representatives in the ACF maintain considerable concern about this.

Psychology Director

The ACF psychology representatives noted that, despite multiple rounds of recruitment, the director post is still unfilled although interviews are to be held again soon. It was raised that the absence of this lead had led to additional pressure and workload for other senior team psychologists, now for a considerable time.

Asset Management Group

There was a request from the Asset Management Group Chair to increase the clinical representation and they now have additional members from the ACF and wider associated professional groups.

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 two of the portfolios and others to be scheduled soon. 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 System Leadership Team and Board on relevant topics. We look forward to planning our meetings in 2022/3 aligning with the new Board programme when it is available.

Kim Cruttenden
Area Clinical Forum Chair
November 2022