

Area Clinical Forum Report to Grampian NHS Board Meeting on the 10th of March 2021

Purpose of Report

This report updates the Grampian NHS Board on key issues arising from the Area Clinical Forum (ACF) meeting on the 10th of March 2021.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the following key points:

Forum membership

We welcomed a few new members to our meetings as committee chairs and vice chairs have changed and note that the Area Medical Committee has also been restructured and will begin with a new membership and refreshed terms of reference at its next meeting in April.

Health and Wellbeing

As a key objective in Operation Snowdrop and a topic which is usually discussed within ACF meetings, health and wellbeing was again discussed. Note a member of ACF has now joined the health and wellbeing group. The pandemic response resulted in many staff moving to different areas and/ or into different roles and many teams were redeployed in part or full causing considerable uncertainty for those moved and those left behind. As services restart they may be very different and there are considerable multi-professional concerns around staff resilience and capacity for change going forward. In addition there are concerns around remobilisation and the capacity to manage the backlog of workload and the associated health debt and how this is impacting on our staff health and wellbeing.

Training

Although raised by more than one profession, the main concerns around the impact on staff training is from the Dental profession. The pandemic response caused the closure of most dental services and significantly reduced the clinical training for undergraduate dentists. As a result the graduation from all dental schools in Scotland will be delayed although the Aberdeen students will graduate in December 2021. These graduates will not be able to start the vocational training as the current trainees will not yet have moved on and the next opportunity in Scotland is September 2022. However in England there is also a March 2022 intake and there is considerable risk that graduates will take up posts elsewhere. Overall there will be significant recruitment issues and as the profession is already dealing with a significant backlog of patient treatments there will be an increased pressure to fill roles. There will also be only half intake in 2022 and this has the potential to have an ongoing reduced output in a number of years which could raise the possibility of reduced workforce.

Vulnerable services

The Healthcare Science (HCS) forum shared their concerns around many of their services being at risk in terms of provision of services and sustainability. Many services are reliant on <5 and in many cases, one Healthcare Scientist to deliver an entire diagnostic service for NHS Grampian, Orkney and Shetland. Many of the roles are very hard to recruit to for a variety of reasons and often require in role training which places considerable pressure on the existing services and are in some cases prohibitive to taking on a trainee. Leadership for HCS was also discussed, particularly in relation to there being no dedicated director for the HCS profession as other professions and that Clinical Physiology services do not have a dedicated leader similar to what Medical Physics and Laboratory sciences have. They have formed a short life working group with Alan Gray, Director of Finance, around sustainability of vulnerable services.

Remobilisation Plan

We welcomed Alan Gray (Director of Finance) to the meeting to discuss the Remobilisation Plan. This was a really useful discussion and sharing of key points. We have agreed to keep this topic on our agenda for future meetings and to share ideas on a regular basis with the System Leadership Team (SLT).

Baird and ANCHOR Project update

The ACF welcomed Professor Mike Greaves and Gail Thomson to provide an update on the Baird and ANCHOR project. We are delighted that this essential project is gathering pace again and look forward to seeing it progress.

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 SLT and Board on relevant topics. We look forward to planning our meetings in 2021 aligning with the new Board programme when it is available.

Kim Cruttenden
Area Clinical Forum Chair
March 2021