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Date: 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Ref: MG/KA

Dear Colleague

I hope you are keeping safe and well. Over the course of the pandemic we have, as a nation, recognised the need to take care of our emotional and physical wellbeing. This is so important because we are experiencing an increase in the numbers of people struggling with their mental health. We know this will continue over the year to come as we emerge from the pandemic and address the trauma it has caused. Our staff continue to do everything they can to help people who use our services, their loved ones and carers. We are reaching out more to our communities to offer ideas on how to maintain good mental health or how to get support for common mental health conditions. I hope to reassure you that, although we plan to do much more, we are showing steady improvement.

### **Support during COVID-19**

Staff working in our communities, supporting people calling the First Response helpline and in our wards are extremely busy but coping. Clinicians have volunteered to be redeployed temporarily to wards and to staff our helpline. Others, including corporate staff, are helping our delivery of the national vaccination programme, ensuring we protect our staff, the most vulnerable patients and partners supporting our delivery efforts.

We are pleased to have recently launched, in partnership with Mind, a wellbeing support service for all health and care staff across Norfolk and Suffolk. We have also worked with our NHS colleagues to ensure that as many staff as possible are vaccinated against Covid-19 in line with national guidance. Already, nearly all the people who work for NSFT have had their first dose. We are so proud of our staff who have been innovative in delivering services throughout the pandemic, continuing to offer face-to-face, online and phone appointments, wellbeing webinars and Recovery College courses. Since December, we have produced a podcast, called 'Mental Health and You', every other Wednesday on different wellbeing subjects. Last month we started offering free online workshops to help parents support the emotional wellbeing of their children during the pandemic. Some 300 parents have signed up to our first sessions already.

### **Other projects we are delivering to support mental wellbeing include:**

- Regular suicide awareness online events have continued, including a look at support for carers through 'Stepping Back Safely'. This project is designed to reduce suicides by fully involving service users and carers in effective safety planning. It gives carers the tools they need to support the person they care for while also looking after themselves and building their own resilience. The project, which has received national recognition, is being extended across the Trust following a successful initiative in Great Yarmouth and Waveney.

- Young people at risk of an emergency hospital admission due to repeated self-harm are getting extra support in a separate initiative being tried at Ipswich by mental health staff. Early evidence suggests it has reduced the number who re-attend hospital due to self-harm. This is a nine-month pilot that was launched in October 2020.
- The Ipswich Older People's Team and Dementia Intensive Support Team is pioneering a model of specialist support to help people with dementia remain at home. Offering additional step-up care for community patients who are at risk of admission, as well as step-down care to help them return home more quickly following an inpatient stay.
- The next phase of a service development which helps GPs refer young patients to the right place to meet their needs first time is about to begin. This is part of our system ambition to join up services and improve access to care for children, young people and families.

## **CQC Visit Update**

We wrote to let you know about the recent CQC reports, which looked at two areas of the Trust in November. These were: acute adult services, covering Adult Acute Inpatient and Psychiatric Intensive Care Units (PICU); and crisis services and Health-Based Places of Safety. Whilst the visit was focused, so would not change our rating, we are delighted that the CQC recognised the efforts of our hardworking staff in achieving improvements in several areas, especially during a pandemic. These include the positive steps being taken by our crisis teams to support hospital emergency departments, and how our partnership working is ensuring people receive the right help when they experience a mental health crisis. The CQC also recognised that staff feel valued, and partnership working has improved with strengthening links across emergency, health and social care services.

We already had plans in place to address the challenges in the report and the inspectors' feedback has helped us to further shape those actions. We have already acted to increase staffing in our First Response service, recruiting staff to specifically support a reduction of self-harm, and we will soon be opening an additional 20 beds for older adults in Norwich.

We expect the full inspection, including well-led, to be later this year, when our rating should be reviewed. As you know, we gained an improved CQC rating of Requires Improvement in January 2020. I remain confident that we are on target to meet our ambition to be in the top quarter of trusts for quality and safety by 2023.

## **Here is a summary of other areas of our performance:**

- Medical staff vacancies are continuing to improve, with the November 2020 rate at 11.5%. This is an improvement of 1.5% points since end September 2020 and the lowest vacancy rate in the year to date (in November 2019 it was 22.4%). A further 10 new doctors are joining the Trust before 1 April 2021.
- Registered nursing vacancies are slightly above target with the overall recruitment position remaining generally positive. We have 15 nurses recruited who are due to start with us in the coming months.
- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services have achieved waiting times targets for the past 12 months.
- Emergency (73.5%) and routine (76.5%) waits to assessment remain below target. Telephone assessments have in many instances been used to replace face-to-face assessments due to the pandemic. Including phone calls improves the emergency performance to 83.8%.
- 594 people were waiting for treatment longer than 18 weeks, which is 15.3% of all people waiting for treatment and an improvement of 29 people from October.
- The number of people whose transfer into a new care setting has been delayed (Delayed Transfers of Care) is 1.5% below the 7.5% threshold for the eighth consecutive month. Partners across the health and care system continue to work to address this issue.
- During November and December, 87 complaints were received. This is an increase from 64 in September and October. We welcome people feeling able to speak up so that we can address their concerns, and this helps us improve. Our People Participation Leads continue to work with service

users and carers to resolve issues early and to help with responses. We are also rolling out a service to make it much easier for people to leave feedback.

- Restrictive interventions during December decreased from the previous month, which is positive as other Trusts continue to see an increase due to Covid-19 related limitations.
- We are seeing a decline in those people in out of area beds. However, this is a national challenge and there is ongoing discussion with NHS England and all east of England mental health NHS providers to understand local needs because of the pandemic. It is understood that acuity has increased demand for beds.
- In Suffolk, 20% of people under 19 with an eating disorder received NICE-approved treatment within a week for urgent cases and 65.1% within four weeks for routine cases, which was below locally agreed targets. In Norfolk and Waveney, 76.5% received NICE-approved treatment within a week for urgent cases and 81.3% within four weeks for routine cases, which was below the national target of 95%. We have plans to look at early interventions to support young people, however it will need some extra funding which we are bidding for.
- Our Central Norfolk Youth Team has reduced the number of young people waiting for a first assessment by 31.7%. The service, based at 80 St Stephens in Norwich, has seen the number of people waiting for assessment reduce from 420 on 1 October to 287 on 15 January, despite a significant rise in new referrals. At the same time, the overall waiting list has reduced by 5.95%. We have also made good progress on reducing the wait for an urgent assessment from around six weeks in October to just 72 hours in December.
- The psychology in schools team continue to provide whole school support programmes which 2,500 parents and young people have accessed during the pandemic.

I do hope that you found this useful. If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to write to me using my email address: [marie.gabriel1@nhs.net](mailto:marie.gabriel1@nhs.net) My telephone number is 07507 869 969.

Thank you for your support and challenge. Stay well.

Yours sincerely



**Marie Gabriel CBE**  
Trust Chair, NSFT