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# CQC report highlights improvements at North Cumbria's hospitals

Posted on Tuesday 8th September 2015

A report published today by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has highlighted many improvements at North Cumbria's hospitals.



The report follows the Chief Inspector of Hospitals visit to the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle and West Cumberland Hospital in Whitehaven which took place from 31 March to 2 April 2015.

Overall, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust has been rated by the CQC as 'requires improvement'. However, this year's inspection saw many more services being rated as 'good'.

As with last year's inspection, every single service across both hospitals was rated as 'good' for providing a caring service to patients. The CQC saw 'services being delivered by caring and compassionate staff. They witnessed staff treating patients with dignity and respect, with care planned and delivered in a way that took into account the wishes of patients.

Following the Trust's 2014 inspection, critical care was rated overall as 'good' across both hospital sites. The service has maintained that rating this year with further improvements noted and has been joined by surgery and services for children and young people which have all been rated as 'good' across both the Cumberland Infirmary and West Cumberland Hospital.

Last year, the CQC found that outpatient services at both hospital sites were rated as 'inadequate' under the safe domain, largely due to issues around the timely supply of up-to-date medical records to outpatient clinics. Over the past 12 months, the Trust has carried out a significant amount of work in order to improve outpatient services including the opening of a new Contact Centre, which along with other improvements, has resulted in more 'good' ratings for the service. The inspection team noted that performance had improved by over 20% with 95% of patient records now available for appointments. It was also noted that with a clearer plan and vision for the service, staff were very positive and feel supported.

In surgery, the inspection team found 'a number of improvements to the service' which is now rated as 'good' overall. Good patient outcomes were demonstrated through patient reported outcomes measures (PROMs) data which showed the percentage of patients with improved outcomes following groin hernia, hip replacement, knee replacement and varicose vein procedures was either similar to or better than the England average. It was also found that the average length of stay for planned and emergency surgical admissions was better than the England average across all specialities.

In services for children and young people, it was noted that the service has improved since the last inspection in both hospitals with a 'visible children centred culture within the service.' The team found 'staff were motivated and offered care that was kind, sensitive and supportive.'

The report acknowledges that the Trust has sustained the improvement in its mortality rates and says it is 'evident the leadership team were committed to service improvement for the benefit of patients and were keen to include staff in the improvement journey.'

The Trust received one rating of 'inadequate' for the safety and responsiveness of medical care at West Cumberland Hospital as a result of the ongoing issues with regard to recruitment of medical staff and the high number of vacant consultant posts.

The CQC has outlined a series of recommendations which must be made to further improve services and the urgent actions required by the health system in order to agree and implement a clear clinical strategy which will help the Trust address the longstanding challenges which it has been unable to solve alone. The Trust will remain in special measures with the NHS Trust Development Authority and will continue to work closely with buddy trust Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and as part of the newly formed Success Regime which aims to accelerate the scale and pace of improvements needed across the entire health economy.

Ann Farrar, chief executive of North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust said: "We wholeheartedly welcome this CQC report and recommendations. All of our staff have put a huge amount of work in over the past year to make improvements to our services and today I would like them to celebrate the successes we can clearly see within the report.

"I am immensely proud of our teams who have once again been recognised by the CQC for the care and compassion they

show our patients every day in what can be very challenging circumstances.

"I am delighted to see more services being rated as 'good' at both hospital sites and it is fantastic to see such significant improvements in outpatients and surgery. I stated last year that improvements relating to outpatients were within the gift of the Trust to deliver and I would like to pay tribute to the teams who have worked so hard to implement and drive forward change.

"Critical care has not only maintained their 'good' rating but further improvements were also noted and children and young peoples' services were very determined to receive a 'good' rating this year so I am thrilled that their hard work has paid off.

"Although we know there is undoubtedly still a lot of work to be done, our staff, patients and members of the public should take confidence and reassurance from today's report and the significant amount of progress which has continued to be made thanks to the unwavering commitment and hard work from our staff.

"The support and counsel of our buddy trust Northumbria Healthcare continues to be invaluable and we are pleased to see acknowledgement from the CQC that a clear path for the future is now required.

"The CQC has also clearly recognised that the deep-rooted problems faced by our hospitals, in particular the ongoing fragility of services at West Cumberland, require NHS system-wide solutions and a clear clinical strategy to be agreed with urgency. We hope the newly formed Success Regime for the health economy in North Cumbria will now give the extra focus and pace urgently required so that we can develop services which are of the highest possible quality for our patients for many years to come."

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