

JM/JS

31 May 2011

Mrs Johanne Mears
LINK Manager
North Tyneside LINK
The Shiremoor Centre
Earsdon Road
Shiremoor
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Dear Johanne

Enhancing patient experience is fundamental to providing good quality care and is a key priority for Northumbria Healthcare. For us, it involves many things including getting good treatment in a comfortable, caring and safe environment, delivered in a calm and reassuring way. We want our patients to have information to make choices, to feel confident and to feel in control. We expect that they will feel listened to and treated with honesty, respect and dignity at all times.

Our Trust has a strong track record of delivering high quality care and we are consistently in the top 25% of hospitals providing safety, effective care and excellent patient experience. Our extensive survey programme captures the views of over 20,000 people and demonstrates just how committed we are to really listening to what patients, families and the public have to tell us.

We very much welcomed the recent LINKs report on the 'Patient Experience at North Tyneside General Hospital.' We hoped this information would build on our own ongoing assessment of the quality of our care, allow us to act swiftly to improve where we needed to, as well as design the type of services that the people of North Tyneside need and will use.

As an organisation, we are deeply committed to transparency about all results, good and bad, because we believe it is one of the most effective ways to improve performance. That said, we owe it to ourselves, our patients and our teams to ensure that any assessment of the quality of care is part of a fair process with robust methodology.

The LINK report provided a welcome focus on essential aspects of our care and has been shared widely within the organisation. We understand the importance of effective and compassionate communication. Communication at discharge is an identified priority of our Patient Experience work programme in the year ahead. We are already prioritising approaches to improve nutrition and support at mealtimes and have made great strides in ensuring a more person centred approach for people with Dementia including the design of our ward environment.

It is however, also fair to say that we did have a number of significant concerns about the survey methods used to capture the information, and the interpretation and validity of some information contained in the report. We have taken the opportunity to discuss these in detail with the Chair and Manager of North Tyneside LINK and agree a way forward.

We know of a number of organisations nationally who have successfully engaged enthusiastic volunteers and appropriately trained members of the local community to capture an independent assessment of patient experience. The Trust would be keen to build on this work and the lessons we have all learnt, to explore further opportunities to work together in this way in the future.

Yours sincerely

JIM MACKEY
Chief Executive