

18 April 2011

Ms Johanne Mears  
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Dear Johanne

Thank you for sending us the LINK's report on patient experiences at North Tyneside General Hospital.

We were interested to see the first report from the 'enter and view' visits by the LINK members.

Both the recommendation relating to prioritising communication with vulnerable patients and their families and carers, and the recommendation about providing information for patients and families and carers on accessing services such as dental and chiropody care whilst in hospital are very important, particularly for the vulnerable and people in hospital for a long time. This work highlights there is always room for improvement, even when a majority of people talk of their positive experiences.

We understand that you have shared your draft report with Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's executive director of nursing, Rosemary Stephenson. We expect the trust to respond formally to the recommendations regarding inpatient care.

We would like to make the following comments regarding the two recommendations linked to investment.

- **consider further investment in the psychiatric liaison team to increase resources from one full time nurse**

We will pass this to our lead commissioners for consideration. That said, the level of comment in the report suggests that further evidence would need to be gathered before this could be raised as a recommendation for investment.

- **consider ways of increasing the number of nursing staff to patients**

The management of the hospital is a matter for Northumbria Healthcare and they no doubt will respond to the recommendations in the report about levels of staffing on these specific wards.

As commissioners, and working with local GP consortia in this period of transition of health reform, we must acknowledge that these are challenging economic times. We would expect the trust will keep us informed of any long term difficulties relating to staffing which would impact on the quality of care for patients, although they have not raised any issues with us this year in this respect.

Finally, it is reassuring to know the report concludes that the majority of patients at the hospital have had positive experiences of their care which on the whole reflects the results of other patient experience surveys of Northumbria Healthcare's inpatient services.

Yours sincerely

**Rachel Chapman**  
**Director of public engagement and communications**