More of our staff report that care is our top priority. Nine out of 10 of patients admitted to our hospitals in 2013 said they were treated with dignity and respect\(^1\) while 83% of our cancer patients rate their care as excellent or good\(^2\).

Yet we know there is more we can do to improve our services for patients. Like NHS trusts across the country, demand for emergency care is rapidly increasing, patients’ needs are becoming more complex, and we need to deliver the best value for every pound spent.

We have launched a comprehensive programme to transform patient care and experience over the next five years in partnership with our staff, patients, carers and local partners. At the same time, we will develop our long-term clinical, financial and estates strategies. This is our transformation programme.

Whilst our transformation programme will make the changes that we need to improve patient care in the long-term, we also need to keep driving continuous improvement on a daily basis to ensure our patients receive the right care in the right place – first time. We need your support to do this.

We encourage staff at all levels to get involved in our transformation projects by contacting the transformation team or attending a staff forum. Look out for updates in e-update, Team Brief and Herts & Minds.

\(^1\) Care Quality Commission inpatient survey 2013, published April 2014
\(^2\) 2014 National Cancer Patient Experience Survey

Samantha Jones
Chief Executive
@SamanthaJNHS
1. Why do we need a transformation programme?

We face some significant challenges which make it difficult to always deliver the standard of patient care to which we aspire:

1. More patients are using our services. Patients visiting A&E increased by 5% in the past year while admissions rose by 12%. Our patients’ needs are also becoming more complex which means they require longer periods of treatment or more support to return home;

2. Our patients are waiting too long for an appointment to see a specialist or have planned surgery. Too many planned procedures are cancelled on the day because we are too busy caring for patients who need emergency care;

3. We have a dedicated and committed team. But, like many hospitals bordering London, we find it more challenging to recruit and retain our staff and we need to address this through our ‘Developing our Organisation’ (DO) programme;

4. Despite ongoing investment in upgrading our hospital buildings, much of our estate is not fit for purpose for delivering modern, efficient healthcare;

5. Financial pressures mean we need to have a clear, long-term plan for how we balance the books. We also need to identify areas where we can make savings to reinvest in patient care.

2. How are we responding to these challenges?

To address these challenges, we need to do things differently. We need to plan for the future – this is our clinical strategy; we need to deliver planned changes to improve patient care – these are our transformation projects; and, we need to ensure that right support is in place to transform services for patients – these are our enabler projects. Together they make up the transformation programme.

The clinical strategy

Our clinical strategy will help us to be clear about how we can best provide patient care in the future. The clinical strategy will also help to inform Your Care, Your Future, the local review of health and social care services across west Hertfordshire.

Transformation projects

We have identified around 60 projects which will help us to improve our patient care – from introducing new systems, processes and ways of working to make our care safer, to developing new services that better meet the needs of our patients requiring urgent care, cancer services or planned care. These projects are aligned with the Care Quality Commission’s themes – ensuring services are:

- Well-led;
- Safe;
- Effective;
- Caring;
- Responsive.

Projects that make the transformation happen

Empowering our staff to lead the transformation of frontline services through our ‘Developing our Organisation (DO)’ programme and investing in information technology are key enablers for the transformation projects.
3. What is happening now?

Work is underway across all our transformation projects to improve patient care. Some of these projects are highlighted below.

i. Developing our long-term clinical strategy

We are in the first phase of developing our clinical strategy. This involves looking at our clinical and financial position against a set of standards agreed by our clinicians. The next step will be to look at potential opportunities to improve the quality and sustainability of services in the future. Four clinical workshops are being held between December 2014 and February 2015.

ii. Safe and effective care

Building on progress we have made in complaints and quality governance, we aim to improve safeguarding of patients and enhance measures to prevent and manage infections. We are also extending 7/7 working – making key hospital services like diagnostics available seven days a week to help get patients home sooner and enhancing clinical cover at night to ensure senior doctors are available for longer.

iii. Unscheduled care

Our unscheduled care programme is helping to reduce waiting times, the length of time patients stay on our wards when they are clinically fit to go home and improve patient experience. Some of the ways we are improving urgent and emergency services for patients are:

• A new social and frailty assessment to help patients get home sooner with the right support;
• Faster access to specialist advice for neurology patients;
• Children with minor conditions now see an emergency nurse practitioner within 15 minutes of arriving;
• People referred to our hospitals by their GP are fast tracked through the acute admissions unit (AAU) and seen by a senior doctor or senior nurse as soon as they arrive. GPs also have increased access to consultant advice.

iv. Cancer

Recent improvements to cancer services mean that our cancer patients now have faster access to services and a better experience of care. We need to continue and build on this by:

• Improving the way we manage the service in line with best practice, national standards, the NHS Constitution and external recommendations;
• Increasing staffing and providing training to better support our cancer team;
• Upgrading information systems used to manage demand and capacity so any issues are raised immediately.

v. Referral to treatment time (RTT)

Patients who need planned care are currently waiting too long for treatment. We are improving internal processes and better matching capacity and demand to ensure that our patients receive the highest levels of customer care and are seen in a clinically appropriate and equitable order.

vi. Developing our Organisation (DO)

Our DO programme aims to empower our staff to be leaders in continually improving our frontline services for patients. We are also improving how we recruit, appraise and develop our staff, underpinned by our new values.

vii. Better, more efficient care

We know that better patient care is also more efficient. For instance, by reducing cancelled operations and offering more procedures on a day-case basis we improve the patient experience, it costs less to provide the care and we are paid more for day surgery. We want to hear from staff about anything we can do to get the best possible value for the money we spend, such as:

• Using theatres more efficiently so we can treat more patients;
• Getting the best value for money for things we purchase;
• Better recording data to ensure we are paid for the care we give to our patients;
• Using our estates and facilities efficiently.

viii. Investing in information technology

Up to £25.5 million is being invested into our IT systems over the next five years to replace outdated IT equipment, deliver more reliable IT support services, faster networks, improved telephone systems and increased IT security.
4. Who is leading the work?

The transformation programme is led by Helen Brown, Director of Transformation, and Sally Tucker, Deputy Director of Transformation.

The projects are led by a clinician and a member of our senior leadership team. A transformation committee monitors the progress of all the projects and includes representatives of staffside (unions), Hertfordshire Healthwatch, our Patients’ Panel, Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group and Hertfordshire County Council.

5. Get involved

We welcome comments, ideas and feedback from staff and patients:

- Email: transform@whht.nhs.uk
- Telephone: 01923 436274
- Twitter: @WestHertsNHS

Staff can also attend one of our forums happening across all three hospitals:

- ‘Onion’ meetings
- TalkTime – every Wednesday at Watford
- Meet the Chief Executive – every month.

See e-update for information.

6. Find out more

More information about the transformation projects is available on our intranet. We will provide regular updates as these projects progress.

www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk