

THE NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

VISIT TO WALKERGATE HOSPITAL, 14th AUGUST

Report Purpose:
Decision / Approval
Discussion
Information

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Brief description of the item and any significant issues:

This paper presents the report of a Governor visit to Walkergate Hospital.

There were no issues of substance other than care of the grounds adjacent to the access road; and a plea to upgrade the visitors' vending machine.

REPORT ON VISIT TO WALKERGATE HOSPITAL

I met with acting Director of Care for the Elderly Aileen Burn just before lunch on the 14 August. I had visited twice before in April 2007 and January 2008. We toured three out of the four wards and spoke to a variety of staff and seven patients. We passed through some of the long connecting corridors and saw the grounds. We checked on some of the matters that had been raised from previous visits and we caught a glimpse of the food. Difficult as it is, I think there are still issues about the use of the orange food boxes, but we can have a look at that another day. I was prompted at every turn to swathe myself in alcohol gel. Touch wood, no incidence of MRSA had appeared at Walkergate for many months.

In essence, things seemed to be in pretty good shape all round. The patients to whom we spoke were complimentary in their regard for the staff, their care, and the food. The staff seemed well motivated and cheerful and assumed an air of industry and calm, benevolent efficiency. The long corridors were free from leaves, the infamous rubber doors had gone at last (to some medical museum somewhere no doubt), the window ledges that suffered from wood rot had been repaired, the ward fax machines were in place, the additional toilet on ward three was fully operational and some wheelchair ramps had been installed. It was stated that the works contractor was giving good attention to running repairs. There was no aromatic evidence of any forgotten urine spills and the atmosphere appeared to be tranquil and restful.

The whole positive picture was spoilt somewhat by the quite unacceptable state of the grass leading all the way along the entrance road up to Reception. This mixture of grass and weeds had not been cut for what looked like a couple of months and it was a disgrace, giving off a very negative message. By some strange quirk, the land on which this grass grows does not belong to Walkergate and the attempts by Aileen Burn to have this grass cut met with failure. It has to be said that a letter to Sir Len Fenwick met with an instant and personal response, despite what must be the colossal demands on his time from other quarters. He fully appreciated the damage that is done to the Trust with this sort of neglect and he pledged to chase up the responsible organisation and get something done.

An urgent need to get the grass cut and a plea to upgrade the visitor's vending machine seemed to be the only requests that came from the staff. No further mention was made of the need for a colour printer. (I forgot to ask whether this had been supplied or not). Other than that, the visit was as ever, a pleasure and I thank the staff for taking the time to show me round.

**Peter Atkinson
Public Governor
August 2008**