

Chief Executive's Report to the Trust Board 14th January 2021

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report updates the Board on activities undertaken since the last meeting and draws the Board's attention to any other issues of significance or interest.

1. NEW YEAR MESSAGE

To coincide with the New Year, I issued an upbeat message to all our staff and stakeholders to thank each and every one for all they have done throughout the extraordinary year just past - for each other, for our Trust and for the communities, families and people we serve.

During the worst of times, they have displayed the very best we can be. And as we continue together to rise to the challenge of this dark Winter, I genuinely believe we can look forward to a Spring of hope.

One reason for this, of course, is the news just yesterday of approval for the Astra Zenica vaccine – see below

In the meantime, I thought it might be worth taking a step back and looking at some of the highlights of what we have achieved during 2021, as well as looking at some of the fantastic plans and progress we have coming up the rails to make 2021 a truly memorable year for Combined Healthcare for all the right reasons.

Of course, the year has been dominated by Covid-19. The response of Combined Healthcare to this unprecedented medical and organisational challenge has been nothing short of magnificent. Together we have not only risen to the challenge, but in many ways, we have changed and improved how we work in ways that will last long after the current times have faded.

Just a few of the highlights include:

- working together at speed to identify, prioritise and maintain our 'critical' services throughout the year;
- transforming the ways we deliver all of our frontline and back office services, harnessing in real-time new technologies, new techniques and new ways of remote and dispersed working - including mobile messaging, video conferencing, telephone and video consultations and of course MS Teams;
- deploying support materials, guidance and advice - as well as new online support and counselling services - to ensure we have protected the health and wellbeing of our staff - one of the most important duties of the Trust;
- applying additional measures to protect our staff from BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) backgrounds during the coronavirus pandemic, in response to reports from Public Health England which show that these groups of people are more likely to be adversely affected by COVID-19;
- moving significant parts of our business from a largely buildings and desk-based operation to virtual and cloud-based;
- equipping scores of teams with the most up-to-date laptops and mobile devices to facilitate federated working;

- significantly reducing our carbon footprint through slashing the number of car journeys needed to get our people to work;
- introducing Exec Drop-Ins Online to maintain the momentum and welcome for our new Exec Drop-In face to face sessions;
- creating new and innovative digital communications and engagement channels and tools - many of them unique in the NHS - including "Ask the Board Online", Patient Story Plus and our new Digital Avatars; and
- introducing enhanced service user risk assessment processes to ensure we maximise the effectiveness of our service offer.

The sheer range of things we have done is so vast I could have provided a list a mile long and still not capture it all. But sometimes the things our staff say to each other is more powerful than any words a Chief Executive is able to provide. In that vein, you might really enjoy spending a few moments with a cup of tea or coffee looking through the fantastic tributes and messages of support and recognition we have provided to each other through our **"Combined United"** facility on our website - **which is still available and open to any of you to post further tributes and items of recognition for your teams and colleagues.** [You can click here to see it all.](#)

But it's not been all about Covid.

One of the hallmarks of an Outstanding organisation like Combined Healthcare is that, even in the toughest of times, its commitment and performance to excellence continues across a whole range of activities. So I think it's also worth noting some other notable achievements we have delivered together during 2020, including:

- the best ever response from our staff to the NHS Staff Survey – (see below);
- a record take-up of flu vaccinations;
- the highest ever number of entries in our annual REACH staff awards – (see below);
- our All Age Mental Health Access Team, Crisis Care Centre being named the Regional Champion in the 'Excellence in Mental Health Care' category of the Parliamentary Awards;
- our "Combined Race Forward" initiative shortlisted for the NHS Workplace Race Equality Award at the 2020 HSJ Awards;
- our collaboration with Vancouver's Cognetivity Neurosciences Ltd to deploy its Integrated Cognitive Assessment (ICA) within our care pathway for patients with suspected dementia - the first use of the ICA within the NHS;
- singled out by the NHS Regulator - the Care Quality Commission - as an example for others to learn from in how to sustain improvements in high quality care and performance after receiving the CQC's highest possible rating - Outstanding - in its keynote Report - "Sustaining Improvement"; and
- launching on behalf of the entire Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire system the first national pilot of the NHS High Potential Scheme to promote and support outstanding talent.

All of these achievements and many more are a lasting testament to the brilliance and dedication of everyone working in and with us.

As we look ahead into 2021, there are two hugely significant developments which I want to highlight. On both of these, we will be engaging extensively and imaginatively right from the start of the year with you - our staff - and all of our stakeholders.

The first is [our long term Trust strategy](#) - agreed by the Board and launched a few weeks ago – (see below).

The second is the development and deployment of the fantastic announcement of a [record £15 million investment](#) in our acute and community services. The results of this record investment will begin next year and continue until 2025. We have already begun discussions internally about the best way to maximise the benefits of this huge vote of confidence in our Trust and its people.

2. ENGAGEMENT ON TRUST STRATEGY THROUGH ‘ACTIVE LISTENING’

Following the launch of our new Trust strategy in November, we are now ready to commence the engagement phase. We intend this to be one of the most extensive engagement exercises the Trust has ever undertaken.

Our public website now contains a dedicated portal page for the strategy – at

<https://www.combined.nhs.uk/our-trust-strategy/>

On this portal page, anyone is able to:

- download a full copy or a summary ‘Plan on a Page’ of the full strategy document and watch my video introduction to the overall strategy;
- download a summary ‘Plan on a Page’ and watch introductory videos from our Executive Leads for each of the supporting strategic themes – Quality, People, Partnerships, Sustainability; and/or
- download full copies of each of our enabling strategies – Quality, People, Partnering, Digital – as well as our supporting Communications and Engagement strategy.

They will also be able to access an easy-to-use initial feedback form, where they can:

- ask a question about any or all of the overall strategy and/or themes;
- make a comment about any or all of the overall strategy and/or themes; and/or
- give us details of the contribution they think their organisation and/or its members can make to the successful implementation of any or all of the overall strategy and/or themes.

The Board will recall that as part of our Strategic Review of Communications, signed off by the Board in October 2019, we set out our commitment to what we call “Active Listening”. That means that we don’t just listen to our staff, service users and stakeholders, but are seen to listen, respond and act on what we have heard. This approach is particularly important for the implementation of our Trust strategy and we have allocated specific resources from our communications and engagement team, underpinned by a sophisticated engagement and actions tracking tool we are deploying, to support it.

At the core of Active Listening is a structured process whereby every person or organisation who provides a comment, question or offer of contribution ALWAYS receives a response at the appropriate time in the Active Listening “Listen > Consider > Respond” process

For our internal staff engagement, the Executive Team are finalising a comprehensive list of opportunities for connecting with our people between now and June, promoting the Strategy vision, hearing their views and inviting contributions.

Each opportunity will have a named Executive Lead, who can choose whether or not to use each event to:

- Simply draw attention to the strategy and direct staff to the website to find out more and provide input;
- Show the summary film from myself introducing the strategy - <https://youtu.be/RmQWwOdKEQo>; and/or
- Lead a more detailed discussion on the strategy overall or in depth on one of the themes

For external engagement, the Communications and Engagement Team have identified 93 initial stakeholders/organisations and prioritised them into 3 tranches. They are now beginning the process proactively reach out to them to:

- confirm their understanding of how their organisation and/or their members can use the portal page on our website to find out more and provide input;
- invite them to give us details of any of their own activities or meetings where one of our Executives could join and present our strategy; and/or
- invite them and/or their members to a MS Teams 'coffee morning' where one or more of our Executives can present the strategy and lead a facilitated conversation with them.

Alternatively, if any of the above are opportunities they would like to take advantage of, they can also contact Chris Bird, Director of Partnerships, Strategy & Digital on chris.bird@combined.nhs.uk or Joe McCrea, Associate Director of Communications on joe.mccrea@combined.nhs.uk who are coordinating and managing our continued engagement.

3. REACH AWARDS NOMINATIONS RECORD SMASHED FOR FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW

We have been simply delighted with the enthusiasm and welcome from our staff to this year's staff awards – REACH 2021 – which we have agreed will take place in March.

2020 has been incredibly difficult for everyone, affecting our personal and professional lives in ways that we could not have imagined. But seeing Combined Healthcare staff pull together and go above and beyond while facing so many pressures is truly inspirational and something to be celebrated.

Usually held in the summer, this year's staff REACH (Recognising Excellence and Achievement in Combined Healthcare) Awards were understandably postponed while the Trust came together to tackle one of the biggest challenges the NHS has ever faced.

While we could have cancelled the awards altogether for 2020/21, there was a unanimous feeling that we all need the awards this year, more than ever – to show each other how much we value each other and to celebrate to the world the amazing things we have all done and continue to do.

The REACH Awards gives us all the opportunity to look back over the past year, take a moment to recognise outstanding accomplishments and shine a well-deserved spotlight on the positive outcomes of the year.

The ceremony is also a great way for staff to learn about each other's successes and to publicly thank staff, teams, volunteers and service user representatives who have made an exceptional contribution.

Though we won't be holding a physical event that we all enjoy attending, socialising and celebrating, we will be bringing the awards to everyone through an interactive online event. There will be opportunities for attendees to make a contribution to proceedings and we have some GREAT ideas on how they can be part of the fun.

I will update the Board be with more details closer to the event itself, but in the meantime, the first step has been to get nominating, so we are delighted and proud to announce that we have smashed the record for nominations received, for the fifth year in a row. 2017 was the first time the REACH Awards ever passed the 200 mark. In 2018 and 2019 we built the total into the 300s. THIS year we have attracted close to 500 nominations – a truly stunning achievement.

We will be introducing a new category for this year's event – "Learner of the Year" – which will give us an opportunity to celebrate our partnerships with our universities, as well as the importance we attach to apprenticeships and workplace learning and development.

4. NHS STAFF SURVEY – OUR HIGHEST EVER STAFF RESPONSE

We are delighted to have announced the highest ever response from our staff to the NHS staff survey

In all, 983 staff responded to this year's NHS staff survey – a record number and also, at 61%, the highest percentage of eligible staff ever recorded.

This beats last year's record number (801) and is only the second time we have broken through the 800 mark.

We asked our staff to have their say and they certainly did!

This shows our people believe action happens as a result of sharing their views which is something we have worked hard at achieving.

The National Staff Survey results are published in March each year, which we share with all staff. Following this, action plans are created at both Trust level and Directorate level to help further improve the working lives of all our staff in the coming year.

Shajeda Ahmed, Executive Director of People, Culture and Inclusion shared her views by saying;

"Undoubtedly this has been the toughest year the NHS has ever experienced. For some of us, this will be the toughest year of our careers.

I am absolutely delighted so many of you have completed the survey this year, as your feedback is really valuable in better understanding your experiences of working at Combined.

We have worked hard to provide increased support and measures to protect staff during the pandemic and your feedback will help us to understand the impact of this and understand how we can further support you.

My plea to all staff, is that you take time to focus on your own psychological health and wellbeing during these difficult times too. The saying I have used throughout the pandemic still rings true, 'You need to look after yourself, so you can look after others'.

5. OVER 30 LEADING REGIONAL FIGURES COME TOGETHER IN COMBINED-LED CAMPAIGN

We are proud to have created a powerful film on behalf of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent system, as the centrepiece of an NHS-led campaign reinforcing the message "You are not alone - help is out there". The film can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iudED8577WQ>

The film and campaign – created and delivered entirely in house by the Trust Communications and Engagement team – features 37 stakeholders from the NHS, local government, elected officials, police, fire, sport, arts and voluntary sector from across the region all coming together to deliver an important message to local people who may be feeling depressed or worse – “YOU ARE NOT ALONE. We are here to help you”.

The following organisations and individuals are featured in the film:

- Alan Barrett
- dDeaflinks
- Healthwatch Staffordshire Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent
- Keele University
- Levison Wood and Wolfsong Media
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust
- North Staffs Mind
- Offices of Stoke -on-Trent and Staffordshire MPs
- Steve Howey and Show Racism the Red Card
- Office of The Worshipful the Mayor of Stafford Borough Councillor Gareth Jones
- Stafford Borough Council
- Office of the Staffordshire Commissioner for Police, Fire and Rescue and Crime
- Staffordshire County Council
- Staffordshire Football Association
- Staffordshire Police and Fire and Rescue
- Staffordshire University
- Office of the Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent
- Port Vale FC
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council
- Stoke City F.C
- University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust
- University of Wolverhampton
- VAST

These are anxious and worrying times for us all. We know as a mental health trust that demand on our services is increasing and will only increase further due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are proud that so many regional figures have come together with the NHS to reassure our community with the message of ‘You Are Not Alone’. You may be worried, and this is normal. Help and support is here for you.”

The video signposts the community to the 24/7 mental health support telephone numbers available from North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust and Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. We are delighted to announce the appointment of Eric Gardiner as Executive Director of Finance, Performance and Estates.

6. WELCOME TO ERIC GARDINER AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND ESTATES.

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Eric Gardiner as Executive Director of Finance, Performance and Estates.

Eric will be joining the Trust in the Spring, from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board where he is currently Finance Director – Provider Services. Eric has worked in a variety of roles in NHS organisations in the North West of England and has a broad range of financial experience including contracting, costing and all aspects of financial management. He is a CIMA qualified accountant and has over 20 years of experience in working in the NHS.

He is a keen supporter and advocate of staff development and holds a mentoring qualification with Lancaster University.

He was previously Deputy Director of Finance at North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust.

Eric has worked with a number of mentees to improve their performance with a particular focus on supporting students to study and balance their working life, and also with individuals to progress their careers.

We are delighted with Eric's appointment. He is someone with a huge range of experience across senior and Executive finance roles in the NHS. He really impressed us with his understanding of the long-term vision for Combined Healthcare and imaginative ideas for how to continue our journey to be outstanding in all we do and how we do it. We really look forward to him joining our team

Eric said:

"I am really excited, happy and honoured to be joining the Trust to help support the delivery of high quality patient care to the local population. It is my first executive role, and I am looking forward to working through the challenges with the support of the team and helping the Trust deliver the NHS Long Term Plan. It will be great to start the role meeting new people, even if it will take some time to meet people in person.

7. INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM UPDATE

Although the system remains under significant operational pressure, we remain committed to progressing our ICS application. This work includes ongoing discussions to progress a merged CCG during 2021 and development of our three ICP footprints. The national consultation launched in December 2020 that discusses the transition of CCGs into ICS strategic commissioning functions is aligned to current system plans and supports the move for providers to collaborate at place level.

8. COVID 19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME AND LOCKDOWN ARRANGEMENTS

The very welcomed introduction of both the Pfizer and more recently approved Astra Zenica vaccines has over recent weeks provided a huge morale boost for staff and the wider population. The national announcement that NHS front line staff are now eligible for the vaccine is also welcomed news. Many of our staff have now received the vaccine and we anticipate that many more will receive their first dose over the next few weeks. We are also in the process of mobilizing the Harplands site to become one of a number of large scale vaccination centres spread across the county. This will help ensure that we continue to significantly support the fight against the virus over coming months. I've been hugely impressed with the work done by the clinical and operational teams to deliver this promise.

Like all environments within our NHS, Primary Care has been an interesting, exciting and terrifying place to be working throughout the pandemic. We have seen significant technological advances in a very short space of time which have enabled us to continue with the 'day job' remotely and in a way that has ensured and maintained both patient and staff safety. We have of course remained open throughout and all patients who have needed a face to face appointment have been managed in a covid secure environment.

Over the last 6 weeks, along with our PCN colleagues, we have been involved in the planning and implementation of covid vaccine delivery. It has required a huge amount of planning in terms of logistics of delivery which has been made even more complicated by 'flu vaccine delivery and continued restoration of services. We are proud that one of our practices has been chosen as a vaccination centre and were very fortunate to be included in wave 2 vaccine delivery.

We received our first batch of vaccines on 17th December. Thanks to a huge collaborative effort from our PCN (both clinical and non clinical), we managed to vaccinate 975 patients from all 4 member practices over 2.5 days. We then spent a day on 30th December vaccinating 75 of our care home residents and staff.

Our second delivery of vaccines arrived on 7th January and to enable us to vaccinate in excess of 1500 people over the next few days. It has been truly heart-warming to realise the gratitude of our patients and we feel very lucky that, with support from both our PCN colleagues and NSCHT, we have been able to stand this service up.

I am also pleased to note that we are dealing well with the latest lock down arrangements that came into effect at the beginning of January. Having ensured that processes were well established to deal with previous similar events we have continued to operate services in an effective way whilst keeping staff protected and supported through our now well established health and well-being offer.

9. LOSS OF HILDA JOHNSON - A MUCH VALUED FRIEND TO COMBINED

It was extremely sad to learn of the death, shortly before Christmas, of Hilda Johnson. For many years, no Trust Board meeting was complete without the attendance and contribution from the public audience of Hilda. One of the original founder members of our Service User and Carer Council, and a passionate and hugely knowledgeable service user advocate, Hilda always brought experience, insight, positive challenge and human warmth to our proceedings.

She was always to be seen at Service User consultation and engagement events, as well as our annual REACH Awards and she was a true friend to Combined.

For many years, Hilda was based at Harplands Hospital two days a week in her role for North Staffs User Group two days a week. She attended Trust Board meetings regularly and when necessary would ask challenging questions but always be supportive and give praise where praise was due. She was well known throughout the Trust both by community and inpatient staff as well as service users and carers for her commitment to improving services.

She continued this commitment even after NSUG was closed. She became a proactive member of Stoke Healthwatch and sat on the Board there where she continued to champion the rights for the support and appropriate services for people who experience poor Mental Health.

If there was ever a living embodiment of our Trust values of being Compassionate, Approachable, Responsible and Excellent, it was Hilda. She truly was outstanding in all she did and how she did it. Combined Healthcare will be immeasurably poorer with her loss to us.

We mourn her passing and pass on our heartfelt condolences, as well as our gratitude for the privilege of knowing her, to her friends, family and loved ones.