



Suffolk User Forum
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7th November 2020

Chair of Trustees October 2020 Board Meeting Update

Dear SUF Community Member,

We have all seen many changes over the last six months. Here at Suffolk User Forum we have been thinking about how we can adapt and in particular how we can keep you informed about our work. We thought it would be useful to write to you every month to keep you in the loop. This is my first monthly update as the Chair of trustees, and I hope you find it interesting. As always, we are keen to hear your views on how helpful it is.

CQC inspection of NSFT

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) is now being inspected again by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which is the watchdog for care services. As you probably know, NSFT has had a series of poor reviews from the CQC dating back to 2014 and has been in 'special measures' for many years. Although the CQC looks at many aspects of NSFT's work, arguably the most important perspective comes from people who use the services and their family carers, that's you.

SUF provides one of the main voices for service users in East and West Suffolk so we have been concentrating on preparing our report for the CQC, our published report can be read [HERE](#). We are pleased that over the years we have built a strong reputation for the quality of our reporting. We work hard to make sure that everything we say is based on clear evidence. We put together a clear picture, like a jigsaw, from the many hundreds of insights that you provide. We also try our best to ensure that our feedback is as objective and fair as possible. We recognise where services have improved, and we point out where there are still problems. People know that they can trust us to be fair and honest.

You can see our previous quarterly feedback reports called Making Our Voice Count [HERE](#)

Support during COVID restrictions

When the lock-down started in March we made it a priority to contact our community members and to offer regular support. We were pleased that Suffolk County Council recognised the importance of this work and supported us with additional funding. We were also able to extend our support to some GP surgeries with new short-term funding from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). The project is now winding down and I am pleased to say that the feedback has been extremely positive. We are lucky to have a dedicated team who have really made a difference to many people who were isolated over the summer.

Providing advocacy services to the inpatient wards has of course remained a priority even with the practical difficulties that COVID has brought. Trustees received a report from James Woolnough, our advocacy worker, with an anonymised case study. It showed how complex advocacy can be and it was heartening to note how NSFT staff have supported patients to access the advocacy service.

We will be looking at how we can continue this part of our work when the contract comes up for renewal next year. It's a vital service at a time when people can be at their most distressed.

Practical matters including our finance and office base

The board of trustees has a rolling programme of reviewing every aspects of the way SUF is run. This month we reviewed the way we look after our information and our cyber-security arrangements. It's an area where constant vigilance is needed, and we did recently have one Microsoft Office 365 (Cloud) email hacking event. But because we have strong systems this was intercepted within minutes and no harm resulted. We informed the Information Commissioner who recommended no further action.

We also spent some time looking at our finances. I am pleased to report that our finances are stable, and we face no immediate problems. Of course, all charities have to continually fund raise. We are no exception and we also look at how we might be able to work more efficiently to make every pound count.

Our office has been at Kesgrave since 2013 and we will need to think about our future office needs at some point. However, right now this is difficult to predict and so we agreed to renew our lease for our Kesgrave office from January 2021 for a further three years.

Our new Chair

It has been a real privilege to chair SUF during the past eventful four years, but I decided a few months ago that it was time to hand the baton on. I am very pleased that SUF has grown significantly during the period and that we have managed to considerably strengthen the Board with the arrival of new trustees with key skills and experience. I would like to thank all the SUF staff, especially our CEO Jayne Stevens, our trustees, and our tremendous community members for all your brilliant support. I am delighted to be able to report that Guenever Pachent has been elected as the new Chair by the board. Guenever will be known to many of you as the vice-chair of SUF since 2017 and prior to that she was a public governor at NSFT for several years. You have not seen the last of me however! I remain as committed as ever to SUF's values and objectives and I plan to continue as a trustee.

Don't forget our online AGM on 19th November 2020

You will have already have received a 'save the date' message about our AGM and you can find out more information [HERE](#) It's the first time we have held a meeting like this online so we are busy with preparations to try to ensure that it can run as smoothly as possible. We will send out more information about how we will use Zoom for this year's AGM in a few days' time.

I hope you have found this summary useful. Your next letter will come from Guenever as our new Chair. I would like to thank you for your support for SUF over the years. We simply could not be as effective without your help and it is highly valued and appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Stern

Jeff Stern
On behalf of the board of trustees for SUF