**Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association**

Tony Chambers

Interim Chief Executive

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Queen’s Hospital,

Romford, Essex, RM7 OAG

April 28th 2020

Dear Tony, you will recall that I wrote to you on April 3rd 2020, concerning a number of C-19 staff safety issues. You replied quickly and put me in touch with David Amos

your Interim Executive Director of People and Organisational Development.

Since that time, I have been struggling to get answers to questions I sent to you. Although David has replied, he has done little more than acknowledge my letters and is clearly unwilling to reply to the 7 key points below.

1)      That following the death of Thomas Harvey, that there has not been adequate action to protect staff in the BHR NHS Trust, from the risk of harm and death associated with Corona virus infection.

 [www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/health/nurse-dies-of-suspected-covid-19-1-6587770](http://www.ilfordrecorder.co.uk/news/health/nurse-dies-of-suspected-covid-19-1-6587770)

2)      Nursing staff feel unsupported and are being given conflicting information about safety measures to protect patients and staff, and do not have the right equipment. They told me that staff have had short teaching session on PPE, in some cases post-exposure and that the training was not adequate to ensure that nursing staff were clear about their roles and best practice. Many staff have been transferred to unfamiliar wards after working in non-ward environments for many years.

3)      Some staff feel very angry that they have to go off sick in order to protect themselves and their families, because they do not have the right support and equipment. They also report poor support from senior nursing staff.

4)      Many nursing staff are particularly concerned that they are at greater risk themselves because pre-existing conditions, and are often caring for vulnerable people at home who have high level disabilities and critical health conditions. They don’t want to withdraw from their nursing duties, but feel they are being given no choice in some cases.

5)       There is no adequate risk assessment process to determine which staff should work on which wards, e.g. in relation to their age, chronic illness and other vulnerabilities. This is particularly critical in wards that have too few side-rooms to contain infected patients.

6)      The current nursing leadership is sometimes antagonising staff, through apparent insensitivity to the needs of staff, i.e. staff do not feel listened to. This includes staff who have worked in the Trust for many years.

7)      When staff return to work after being off sick with Covid-19 symptoms, there is inadequate assessment of their condition, and of support and action to ensure their safety and the safety of patients. This includes a paucity of viral testing.

Although there are clear improvements in the operation of PODD, this failure to respond is causing distress to the staff who have approached HAPIA for assistance, shows disregard for to needs of staff, attempts to silence their voice. This suggests serious weaknesses in your People and Organisational Development Department. We realise that the leadership of the organisation is under great pressure at the moment, but by ignoring the expressed needs of staff, the safety of staff and patients is put at greater risk.

As we can get no reasonable response from David, I am copying this letter to Jane Milligan, Joan Saddler, Mark Ansell and members of the Health Scrutiny Committee.

I will also send you our draft press release tomorrow for your comment.

Below you will find the trail of correspondence with you and your colleagues on this matter.

Yours sincerely.

 

Malcolm Alexander

Chair

Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association (HAPIA)

HAPIA2013@AOL.COM

Copy to: Jane Milligan, Accountable Officer for North East London Commissioning Alliance and Executive Lead for East London Health and Care Partnership –

Joan Saddler, Board Member, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Mark.Ansell@havering.gov.uk - Acting Director of Public Health

20th April 2020

**HAPIA2013** (hapia2013@aol.com)To:**david.amos@nhs.net** + 3 more

Dear David, thank you so much for your response. I did ask in my letter if you: "Could you therefore please take urgent steps to ensure that David and yourself respond fully to the concerns that we originally raised on April 3rd".We did raise seven specific concerns in our letter.

I will certainly pass on your request to staff.

Very best wishes

Malcolm Alexander

Chair

Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association

-----Original Message-----
From: AMOS, David (BARKING, HAVERING AND REDBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST) <david.amos@nhs.net>
To: HAPIA2013 <hapia2013@aol.com>; CHAMBERS, Tony (BARKING, HAVERING AND REDBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST) <tony.chambers@nhs.net>; joan.saddler@nhsconfed.org
CC: imelda.redmond@healthwatch.co.uk

Sent: Mon, 20 Apr 2020 15:43
Subject: RE: Continuing concerns relating to the safety of staff

Dear Malcolm,

I am writing in response to your follow up letter dated 15 April 2020.  As the employer of over 7,000 staff, we are totally committed to promoting the health and safety of our staff.  This is what Tony stated in his letter to you of April 3rd.

Any concerns which are raised by staff are considered by Silver Command to make sure that there is an adequate provision of PPE.  I note that you have not asked for a detailed response at this stage.  I can assure you that we continuously monitor the availability and supply of PPE.  I meet weekly with our trade unions and we routinely address this matter.  If our staff do contact you, it would be useful to know about their specifics concerns so that we can address them – I do understand that they might want to remain anonymous.  Please do advise them that they can contact the completely confidential guardian service to do so.

Thanks

David

David Amos

Interim Executive Director of People and Organisational Development Trust Headquarters, Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Queen’s Hospital, Rom Valley Way, Romford, RM7 0AG

**PLEASE NOTE MY NEW EMAIL ADDRESS**

Tel: 01708 435 000 ext 2438

Mobile: 07976 424218

Email: David.Amos@nhs.net    Website: [www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/)

**From:** HAPIA2013 [mailto:hapia2013@aol.com]
**Sent:** 20 April 2020 15:23
**To:** CHAMBERS, Tony (BARKING, HAVERING AND REDBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST); AMOS, David (BARKING, HAVERING AND REDBRIDGE UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS TRUST); joan.saddler@nhsconfed.org
**Cc:** imelda.redmond@healthwatch.co.uk
**Subject:** Continuing concerns relating to the safety of staff

**Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association**

Tony Chambers

Interim Chief Executive

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Queen’s Hospital,

Romford, Essex, RM7 OAG

20/4/20

Dear Tony, I hope you are well.

You will recall that your reply to my letter to you on April 5th 2020, provided assurances about the Trust’s intentions in relation to staff and patient safety, and referred me to your colleague David Amos.

I wrote to David but he did not reply. I have heard from Joan Saddler who also provided important assurances about the intent of the Trust. I again wrote to David on April 15th and he has neither acknowledged nor replied. This is a matter of great concern.

I asked David to confirm the actions he has taken to protect staff and patients since your response to me of April 5th. These related to the seven key issues listed below.

I also advised Tony that the staff group we are working with have confirmed a number of positive actions to support their safety and are very grateful for these developments.

Joan advised me that she has discussed the issues we raised with Joe Fielder, joint Chair of NELFT and BHRT and is also working with yourself and Professor Shanley to ensure follow up of concerns that we raised. Joan added:

“Patient care and staff protection are our greatest concern at this very stressful time for everyone. Your concerns will particularly be addressed in that light, enabling staff to continue their vital role to offer care for very ill and vulnerable patients”.

Could you therefore please take urgent steps to ensure that David and yourself respond fully to the concerns that we originally raised on April 3rd.

Very best wishes and thanks.

Malcolm Alexander

Chair

Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association (HAPIA)

**Letter to David Amos attached and below.**

David Amos,

Interim Director of People and Organisational Development

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Queen’s Hospital,

Romford, Essex, RM7 OAG

Dear David,

**Further Concerns regarding C-19 at BHR NHS Trust**

I am writing to follow up the letter that I sent to Tony Chambers on April 3rd and his response on April 5th.  As you know he directed me to you.

The serious alerts we have from your staff, impact on the work that hospital staff are doing to care for Covid-19 patients. We are aware of the extent to which your hospital is affected by the pandemic.

Many staff are feeling very stressed and are finding it difficult to work. They are of course concerned about the impact of their absence from work on patients, but also over their personal health, the health of their families, the adequacy of protective equipment, and the need for effective training to reduce infection risk. It is imperative that the leadership of the Trust recognises this and sends out powerful messages to all staff to reassure and support them. The webinar that I suggested made by GSTT has had a strong and positive impact on staff.

Tony did tell me that: “Taking the best care of the carers who care for our patients is the only way to get through this difficult time and we have in place a whole host of initiatives to achieve this”.

However, we continue to receive messages of great anxiety from some staff about the Trust leadership, in relation to their support for staff who are dealing with C-19 patient cohorts.

The issues raised in my letter to Tony are repeated below. I don’t need a detailed response at this stage – I know you have a great many pressures and priorities right now, but some indicators of how you will quickly achieve best practice in relation to the seven issues below would be greatly valued by staff:

1)      That following the death of Thomas Harvey, that there has not been adequate action to protect staff in the BHR NHS Trust, from the risk of harm and death associated with Corona virus infection.

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7)      When staff return to work after being off sick with Covid-19 symptoms, there is inadequate assessment of their condition, and of support and action to ensure their safety and the safety of patients. This includes a paucity of viral testing.

I would be very grateful if you could ask your colleagues to urgently review these issues and to make an urgent statement to all staff about the action you will take to address these critical concerns.

An example of best practice in relation to Covid-19 communication with staff is available from Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital (Anita.Knowles@gstt.nhs.uk) and I would strongly recommend having sight of it.

Very best wishes and thanks.

Malcolm Alexander

Chair

Healthwatch and Public Involvement Association.

HAPIA2013@AOL.COM

07817505193

8/4/20

David Amos,

Interim Director of People and Organisational Development

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust

Queen’s Hospital,

Romford, Essex, RM7 OAG

**david.amos@nhs.net**

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