

# Report to the Meeting of the

# Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

**BOD 43/2022**

(Agenda item: 5)

# Board of Directors

**20 July 2022**

**Trust Chair’s report and system update**

**For: Information/Discussion**

**Executive Summary**

Led by Lords Richard Layard, the innovator of Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (**IAPT**), and the former cabinet secretary Lord Gus O’Donnell, academics and policymakers recently gathered in Oxford to try to nudge us towards a wider conception of wellbeing – hoping to redesign welfare, housing, health and education to target what makes us happy. Money is a big part of it, of course, and high rates of inflation and a recession deliberately engineered by the Bank of England are inevitably going to stretch households and reduce wellbeing. The happiness of our staff, already under threat because of demanding workloads, will suffer if their pay is not fairly adjusted to the soaring cost of living by the review bodies and the government’s response to them. Trying to make some contribution to reducing our carbon output we have been studying the journeys made by staff and service users. Many involve cars because of the geography of our area and gaps in public transport. Eventually we will assist more into buying or leasing electric vehicles but for the time being, we are a petrol-dependent trust, where higher fuel costs inflict pain.

Wellbeing is not entirely driven by income. IAPT, validated by rigorous standards of evidence, has shown what cognitive behavioural therapy can offer to counter depression and mental malaise. The extension of such outreach therapies to children and young people plus online psychodynamic approaches is an exciting frontier. The Trust has so much to offer as the focus of health management shifts to preventing ill-health and maximising wellbeing in that wider sense. But the ‘day job’ for many staff is coping with acutely ill patients, managing large risks of self-harm and their appetite and capacity to look across the terrain of wellbeing are limited: ‘running to stand still’ and ‘keeping your head above the water’ are phrases heard all too often, in our community as well as our mental health services.

Yet we have to try to find time and space to exhale. The Board has begun to think hard about the future shape of the Trust, the forks in the road ahead, including the shape of our services profile and their geography – our children’s and young people’s services in the Bath, Swindon and Wiltshire Partnership make us a significant player in that Integrated Care System (**ICS**) as well as in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (**BOB**). But Board thinking has to be informed by and in turn inform our staff, especially our clinicians, building on their sense of what is doable, what is needed to make the Trust a better employer and so better able to attract and retain staff.

The wellbeing debate reminds us that we are by no means alone in thinking and doing in the mental health space. The ICS, which took statutory form this month, gives local government a formal place on the board of BOB. In addition, wellbeing and mental health services involve multiple charities and voluntary bodies, large and niche. We are obliged to recognise and respect their idiosyncrasies and intense local connexions while also planning services across time and space – it is not always easy to do both.

Two personal observations, if I may. In June we convened for the first time in many months the Council of Governors face to face. It was a delight to see colleagues and all credit to the team who made a ‘hybrid’ event work smoothly. It is most welcome that Mike Hobbs is staying on as Lead Governor providing continuity and sharp-eyed observation of Board activities; he is joined by a number of new governors, for whom we hope to organise a programme of activities that pique their interest and avoid their meeting turning into a string of business items.

I recently had the chance to visit our community hospitals in Didcot and Wallingford. I know the pressures and know, too, that visits are brief moments in time from which you should not generalise. However, on sunny, summer days I found those two places oases of calm care; their gardens well-tended; the atmosphere composed; staff attentive and (dare I say it) happy.

**Recommendation**

The Board is asked to note the report

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1. *A risk assessment has been undertaken around the legal issues that this report presents and there are no issues that need to be referred to the Trust Solicitors*
2. ***Strategic Objectives/Priorities*** *– this report relates to or provides assurance and evidence against the following Strategic Objectives of the Trust:*

*1) Quality - Deliver the best possible care and health outcomes*

*2) People - Be a great place to work*

*3) Sustainability – Make best use of our resources and protect the environment*

*4) Research and Education – Become a leader in healthcare research and education*