

CQC concerns regarding Whipps Cross University Hospital

Warning notice for infection control and equipment in maternity services

Problem identified:

Failing to ensure appropriate standards of hygiene and cleanliness, including premises, equipment and reusable medical devices

Action taken:

Barts Health is committed to striving for excellence in every area and the CQC's findings are extremely disappointing. We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that, from now on, maternity services at Whipps Cross meet the standards our mothers and babies deserve.

To do this we have strengthened our leadership team by relocating expertise from across Barts Health. We have also recently launched our Great Expectations programme Trust-wide to continually improve training, clinical standards and the experience of all mothers and babies.

We have reiterated the high standards we expect from our cleaning contractors. We are discussing this further with our local partners, and further training will be undertaken if necessary. Our senior team are also overseeing an audit of all equipment to ensure fitness for purpose, with on-going and regular checks.

Warning notice for staff appraisals and supervision on two elderly care wards

Problem identified:

Lack of formal supervision and appraisal for nursing staff

Actions taken:

Earlier this year Barts Health launched a new approach to appraisals Trust-wide and phased out the previous legacy Trust programmes which had been undertaken inconsistently and without a formal monitoring mechanism.

We have developed, and are currently implementing, a new appraisal system which is supported by face-to-face training for managers undertaking appraisals and new guidelines for both appraisers and appraisees. Through our Care Campaign, we have a new method to track appraisal completion and we expect compliance.

We have undertaken similar changes to our supervision programme which will see current Whipps Cross and Trust-wide leaders take an increased support role at Whipps Cross, ensuring appropriate training and addressing any supervision gaps identified on our elderly care wards.

We have also introduced our Excellence in Older Person's Care programme across all elderly care wards at Barts Health to bring a special focus to our commitment to providing the very best standards of care for elderly people. Under the programme, all 500 staff who are directly involved in providing care for the elderly spend a week on an intensive

developmental patient experience and care learning exercise, which includes individual and team based assessment.

The CQC reports also cover other areas highlighted during the inspections which covered A&E, surgery and outpatient departments, maternity and two elderly care wards.

Concerns were raised regarding the provision of nutrition in the Emergency Department and on elderly care wards.

We are ensuring that all staff are reminded of the importance of a nutritious diet to a patient's recovery, the need to offer food and drink to patients and to assist those patients who may require help in eating or drinking. We are also ensuring that all staff are up-to-date with mandatory nutrition training, with Trust policy on the checks required during fitting of nasal-gastric tubes and on following the advice of speech and language therapists regarding patient feeding plans.

Staffing levels in the emergency and surgery departments and on two elderly care wards

We have significantly invested in staffing levels within the elderly care service at Whipps Cross. Every older person's service ward manager (the most senior nurse on the ward) now has dedicated time to manage and supervise their teams, to ensure effective supervision and care delivery. This time is over and above the existing nursing hours allocated to each ward. We are also undertaking a review of our rotas to ensure sufficient coverage at all times.

A new consultant-led emergency assessment team is now in place within the Whipps Cross Emergency Department to meet patients brought in by ambulance to reduce any delay in diagnosis and treatment. We have also re-designed the Emergency Department to improve patient flow and speed up treatment and discharge.

Staffing levels within the Emergency Department have also improved as we have successfully recruited to vacant A&E consultant posts, something we were unable to achieve prior to the formation of Barts Health NHS Trust. We have undertaken a review of staff rotas to ensure adequate staffing levels at all times.

An urgent review of staffing levels within the surgery department at Whipps Cross is under way to ensure care and treatment is delivered in a timely and safe way, and the recruitment of permanent staff to vacant posts is progressing at pace to ensure continuity and high standards of care.

Delays in assessing and treating patients in the Emergency Department

As you will be aware, Whipps Cross Emergency Department is extremely busy and we have had difficulty in achieving national standards, including full initial assessments of patients within 15 minutes of arrival and treatment within four hours of arrival.

We are working with primary care partners and London Ambulance Service to ensure that patients, where appropriate, are treated in urgent care or walk-in centres rather than A&E. As outlined above, we have introduced a consultant-led emergency assessment team to meet ambulance-borne patients as soon as they arrive, so that the right treatment can be started rapidly. We have improved staffing levels, including recruiting to all consultant posts, and we are re-designing the acute assessment unit to improve patient flow and ensure patients are discharged or moved to the appropriate inpatient ward as soon as clinically appropriate.