



**Kent LINK External Representatives  
Meeting Report**

<b>Name of LINK Representative</b>	Peta Groom
<b>Name of External Organisation</b>	Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust
<b>Name of External Group</b>	Patient Experience Committee
<b>Name of lead contact of External Group</b>	Mark Worrall, non-executive Director
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	2 June 2011
<b>Venue of Meeting</b>	
<b>Summary of Meeting (If appropriate attach papers)</b>	<p>This committee which meets every two months is well attended by representatives from both independent and charitable organisations, as well as Social Services. The meeting was chaired by Mark Worrall, a non-executive Director.</p> <p>Ashley Scariff, Associate Director of Strategy and Planning, gave a concise presentation of the Trust's position to achieve its aim to become a lead provider of health services and making it the provider of choice.</p> <p>Particularly important is the fact that the Trust has kept on track with its plans and stayed within its budget. This is commendable, considering that a new hospital is being commissioned whilst continuing to function as an acute unit. It means that patients have not been disadvantaged by the knee-jerk cost saving measures that damages patient care and confidence.</p> <p>Mr Scariff was asked about the future financial implications of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). He said he cannot say because the future is unknown but pointed to the fact that the Trust has stayed within its budget, which augers well.</p> <p>I asked if the Trust Management would discuss forming a policy about treating foreign visitors to prevent misuse of NHS money. Department of Health (DH) guidelines can be interpreted very</p>

liberally on humanitarian grounds.

I asked if admissions to the maternity unit could be monitored to ensure that local women have priority and do not have to travel to another hospital further away. I've spoken to many pregnant women living in the Tunbridge Wells wider area, enquiring about their wellbeing. A significant number are concerned that when birth is imminent they will find the new hospital full, due to the enhanced facilities attracting women from outside the usual catchment area under the 'patient choice' policy. They fear having to travel to an unfamiliar hospital in Ashford or beyond. Certainly we want our local hospital to be a hospital of choice but choice should not disadvantage local people. One woman said to me, "we've put up with an old building for a long time, we should get to have the benefit of a new one".

The Trust places great importance on patient experience and strives to identify where improvements need to be made by the continuing surveys and auditing. I asked if the system for getting hospital appointments could be speeded up. GP referrals can take a seemingly long time in contrast with the usual efficient internal system.

The problem has been made worse because NHS West Kent does not allow consultant to consultant referral. Assurance was given that the two NHS Trusts have regular contact although no one from the PCT comes to the Patient Experience meetings. The meeting was told that the hospital clinics worked as usual during the extra Bank Holiday for the royal wedding, which was introduced at short notice. Patients would have been inconvenienced by having to re-book appointments. The Trust must be commended for this unselfish act, which will have affected many families. Thank you.

Flo Panel-Coates, Director of Nursing, presented a detailed report for 17 pages entitled 'Care and Compassion', showing how the Trust is working already and the plans for further improvement.

Two national reports, one by the Ombudsman for Health and the other by the Patient's Association, described examples of very poor patient care in hospitals. The elderly and those with dementia were particularly vulnerable. None of the cases had occurred in the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells hospitals by Flo emphasised that the reports have been taken seriously and nursing practice scrutinised to see if and where improvements must be made.

Amongst the items that Flo presented was the response about care for patients who have mental health problems. A lady attending a Kent LINK meeting expressed concern about the

difficulties encountered by a patient who had psychiatric problems when attending A&E at Maidstone Hospital. I promised to raise the matter at the next Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Patient Experience Meeting. I was assured that the problem would be given the urgency it deserves.

I am pleased to report that this topic has and is being addressed. A new staff training programme has been introduced to improve knowledge and understanding and give the best care possible. Already, 146 staff has received this training which includes non-medical staff (as personal observation, this number seems small but experience shows that one well motivated person working within a team can influence the rest, as well as many others, through informal encounters and even the wider public). It was emphasised that patients with dementia and mental health problems often have very complex needs and present a considerable challenge, especially when they are in bewildering, unfamiliar and busy acute hospitals.

It will be interesting to see if single bedrooms at the new Pembury Hospital lessen the problem. It would allow more personal contact with their usual carer and might be the Trust's hospital of choice for these particular patients. The Trust is working very actively with the West Kent Dementia Strategy Group to reduce admissions and ensure the hospital stay is as short as possible. Past audits have shown that such patients stay in hospital longer than usual. The Alzheimer's Society and Age Concern, as well as the PCT Commissioning Lead for Dementia, are involved in constructive discussions with the Trust's own senior Trust health professionals.

I hope the lady who raised the problem will read this account and let me know, through the LINK, how satisfied she is with this response. I hope this story demonstrates the value of active participation in Kent LINK activities and the value of constructive networking across the whole community.

Another item I was particularly pleased to read is that one of the most important changes has been to strengthen the roles of the senior and ward sisters. The Trust has put in place a suite of linked leadership development programmes. I hope the title of Ward Manager has been buried. The programme includes appraisal of each individual's competence and performance. It has been introduced to drive up standards and includes zero tolerance of poor behaviour, regardless of the situation or position. Patients feel safer by knowing that a sister is in charge and responsible for all that goes on in the ward. They feel safer knowing who is in charge at any one time.

A £5million investment over the past three years has brought

	<p>staffing levels up to 'average'. The Trust has completed a successful nurse recruitment initiative and new staff now have a two week intensive induction before starting work. These initiatives are likely to make the Trust's hospitals the hospitals of choice for staff at every level to work in. My personal observation is that this has been made possible by good dynamic leadership at the top in conjunction with sound financial control to make it possible.</p> <p>Another item of particular interest is the annual inspection report called the 'Patient Experience Assessment Team' (PEAT), demanded by the Department of Health. I have been one of the voluntary, independent members on these teams for the past eight years and can assure the public that not only are the inspections unannounced, but are very thorough in their scoring system and mark down rather than up. All three hospitals were rated good in three categories entitled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privacy and dignity</li> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Environment.</li> </ul> <p>The food was rated excellent at both Kent &amp; Sussex and Maidstone, and should do so when the new Pembury hospital is fully operational from the end of September and patient activity ceases at the Kent &amp; Sussex. I want to mention that all patients were given the means for hand hygiene before meals. The privacy issue, especially mixed sex wards, is a particular problem in old hospitals.</p> <p>When the new Pembury hospital is fully operational this difficulty will be overcome. It will then allow for a programme to further improve Maidstone so the Trust will comply fully with demands for single sex accommodation and should get an excellent rating in this category.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations / Actions</b> eg</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Items for LINK bulletin</b></li> <li>• <b>Items for individual interest group</b></li> <li>• <b>Issue to Priorities Panel / Governors' Group</b></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p>	

**For office use only**

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**Recommendations / Actions**

<b><i>For Office Use Only</i></b>	<b><i>Recommendation / Action</i></b>	<b><i>Date of Action Taken</i></b>	<b><i>Who By</i></b>
<b><i>Name</i></b>			
<b><i>Date</i></b>			