

The role of Foundation Trust governors and members in quality and patient safety **King's PSSQ project summary**

Overview:-

Patients and the public have a say in the NHS - by law. Current thinking is that involving local people and users in developing and overseeing services will drive up standards of care. In reality however, this involvement has yet to become mainstream in the NHS.

We have been investigating how patients and local communities take part in ensuring that safety and quality are maintained at King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Foundation trusts have a duty to consult and engage governors elected from patients, the public and staff. Governors, in turn, represent those recruited as foundation trust members from local residents, service users and employees.

Nutrition, maternity and checking care and safety on the wards have been our focus. We are currently exploring how governors and members can assist the work of the hospital's patient food service and nutrition committee, maternity services liaison committee, quality accounts and nursing quality ward rounds.

Early findings suggest that:-

- Governors and members are interested in quality and safety and want to work with health professionals to improve them.
- Governors and members tend not to take part in the formal mechanisms governing the safety of patient care, although governors are involved in improving the quality of care.

"The research has explored how governors can make a difference and what the barriers are," says foundation trust governor Hedi Argent.

To involve the public and patients, we suggest that NHS organisations need to:-

- Promote involvement as a positive activity, with very real benefits for safe and high quality care, to both staff and members
- Make explicit to members, governors and staff how members and governors can be involved in improving safety for patients
- Identify what hinders or supports this involvement.

Jessica Bush, Head of Patient and Public Involvement at King's and a member of the research team comments; *"This research will make an important contribution to the patient safety agenda. Exploring how to engage our governors and members effectively will help to make sure that we have an independent voice to ensure that the patient is at the heart of what we do."*

The next steps will be to use our observations to design and test two different ways of involving governors and members in safety matters. We will be looking at potential improvements to make the maternity services liaison committee more effective and widen its membership to include governors and members, and also involving governors and members in audits of the food served on wards.