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Welcome

It is hard to avoid the Francis report and its impact on heightening sensitivity about patient safety and the integrity of clinical care.

Since publication Verita has seen a marked increase in enquiries ranging from concerns about the actions of a single doctor working in the private sector to questions

Contacting us

For more information about Verita and any of the services we provide please contact

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www.verita.net

about a surge in serious incidents in an NHS acute trust.

Encouragingly we have also seen an increase in requests to review 'weak' signals that all is not well, for example the hard to explain variations in a surgeon's activity figures or unexplored concerns about poor staff relations in a clinical team. A well-established feature of our work is that in the past struggling providers often ignored these signals and missed the opportunity to intervene to prevent serious harm.

Doubts about safety and services need intervention, the earlier the better.

The challenge for us all is to ensure that the initial post-Francis enthusiasm for addressing concerns about safety and quality become part of the fabric of everyday life for everyone involved in healthcare.

With best wishes

Ed Marsden
Managing partner

Review of care for elderly people

A leading provider of residential and nursing care for elderly people has asked Verita to help it improve the quality and safety of services at one of its homes.

Chris Brougham, senior consultant at Verita, explains: "Quality and safety is everyone's responsibility and everyone working in the home needs to understand what it means for them collectively and individually.

"We developed an assessment tool to determine whether the checks and balances in place were being executed in a way that enabled senior managers to monitor services accurately and act quickly to make improvements when needed."

The assessment tool covers issues such as clinical leadership, quality assurance and clinical governance, and *Essence of care* - the Department of Health's benchmarks

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for basic nursing care. Reporting of incidents and complaints and involvement of residents and families are also included.

Chris Brougham and Kathryn Hyde-Bales held a series of one-to-one and group meetings with staff, carers and, where possible, residents at the home so they could benchmark what happens at present against established best practice. They also reviewed the systems and processes in place to support practice and identified gaps and omissions. Their final report will include practical recommendations for improving the quality and safety of care.

CCG authorisation irregularities

Verita was commissioned to investigate apparent irregularities in the authorisation submission for a clinical commissioning group (CCG) after NHS England raised concerns.

NHS England was concerned that the CCG's submission contained misleading and inaccurate information and that its proposed governance structure was unconstitutional and open to potential malpractice.

Verita undertook an initial desk-based review of the submission documents and subsequently interviewed key individuals from across the CCG and relevant PCT cluster to establish timelines and identify individuals responsible for the decisions that had caused concern. Central to our investigation was the separation of fact from hearsay.

The investigation established that senior CCG officers had displayed significant lapses in judgement and undertaken actions outside what is expected of a public sector organisation. Our findings allowed NHS England to take corrective action before the CCG authorisation date, avoiding legal and constitutional complications in an established NHS body. The CCG is now under direct supervision from NHS England.

Seminars for LATs and CCGs

Verita has launched the first of a series of half-day seminars aimed at newly appointed leaders of local area teams and clinical commissioning groups throughout the country.

The first two, *Commissioning an investigation* and *Board development and governance*, will be held in Leeds and be chaired by Kathryn Riddle, former chair of North of England SHA cluster.

Commissioning an investigation will cover every step of the commissioning process, from drafting the terms of reference to publishing the findings. It is aimed at senior managers of LATs and CCGs and will take place on Wednesday 22 May.

Board development and governance considers the roles and responsibilities of CCG board members, and the importance of sound financial and corporate governance to ensure safe care and good patient outcomes. It is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 12 June.

For more information about the seminars please contact Chloe Taylor on 020 7494 5670 or chloetaylor@verita.net.

Mental health commissioning

A Midlands clinical commissioning group (CCG) has commissioned Verita to carry out an audit of 300 adult mental health referrals.

Geoff Brennan, Verita associate, explains: "The CCG suspects that there may be gaps in service provision. Our role is to map referrals against service provision to find any gaps and put forward practical recommendations for commissioning a more comprehensive service in the future."

The task includes seeking information from providers on mental health care pathways and services, compiling a database to generate the audit data, and reviewing the

"Our role is to map referrals against service provision to find any gaps and put forward practical recommendations for commissioning a more comprehensive service in the future."

referrals and allocating them to specific pathways and services.

Cases in which the pathway is not clear or includes a number of different services are discussed with the CCG to determine the best treatment options and how they match with current service provision.

The challenge for us all is to ensure that the initial post-Francis enthusiasm for addressing concerns about safety and quality become part of the fabric of everyday life for everyone involved in healthcare.

Francis fuels demand for independent complaint investigation

Verita has launched a dedicated service to investigate NHS complaints in response to growing demand from providers and commissioners fuelled by the Francis inquiry report into Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust.

Verita consultant Kathryn Hyde-Bales explains: "The Francis report recommends that complaints should be investigated independently when certain conditions apply. Verita has a wealth of experience in handling NHS complaints, both as an independent investigator and working collaboratively with health and social care providers. This experience combined with our reputation for providing evidence-based reports makes us ideally placed to offer providers a dedicated complaint investigation service."

The team conducts an initial assessment of the complaint, scoping the breadth of the work and identifying the key issues. It then carries out an indepth investigation that typically takes between one and five days depending on the complexity of the case. The nature of the investigation will vary with each case but usually involves a documentary review, interviews and expert advice. The team produces a written report detailing its findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The Francis report recommends an independent investigation when:

"Verita has a wealth of experience in handling NHS complaints, both as an independent investigator and working collaboratively with health and social care providers."

- subject matter involving clinically-related issues is not capable of resolution without an expert clinical opinion
- a complaint raises substantive issues of professional misconduct or the performance of senior managers
- a complaint involves issues about the nature and extent of the services commissioned.

For more information about Verita's independent complaint handling service, contact Kathryn Hyde-Bales on 020 7494 5670 or email kathrynhyde-bales@verita.net

Patient safety: external assurance

A foundation trust in the south east has commissioned Verita to carry out a review of its serious incident investigations completed in the last 18 months and to examine reported grade 3 and 4 pressure ulcers.

The purpose of the work is to reduce the risk of recurrence by analysing themes and trends and establishing the extent to which lessons have been learnt and embedded within the trust.

The review will be conducted in two phases. The first, comprising a brief scoping exercise, will pull together data about each of the incidents. In the second phase each incident will be assessed to determine the progress made in implementing action plans and improving patient services.

Verita partner Derek Mechen comments: "NHS boards are increasingly looking for external support to reassure themselves that the services they provide are safe. Verita works alongside inhouse teams to deliver information that enables them to address quickly shortfalls in service provision."

Jimmy Savile investigations

Kate Lampard is calling for evidence from all NHS staff

"NHS boards are increasingly looking for external support to reassure themselves that the services they provide are safe."

as part of the second stage of her role in overseeing NHS investigations into allegations of sexual abuse by Jimmy Savile at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Leeds General Infirmary and Broadmoor Hospital.

In addition to overseeing the three NHS investigations, the secretary of state for health has asked Ms Lampard to identify the themes and issues arising from them and look at NHS-wide procedures in the light of their findings.

Ms Lampard would like to hear from NHS staff about:

- safeguarding – how policies, procedures and practice take account of and affect patients, visitors and volunteers within NHS settings
- governance arrangements in relation to fundraising by celebrities and others
- celebrities – the use and value to NHS organisations of association with celebrities, including in relation to fundraising, and the privileges, including access, accorded to them
- complaints and whistle blowing – how and to what extent do policies and procedures and the culture of NHS organisations encourage or discourage proper reporting, investigation and management of allegations of the sexual abuse of patients, staff and visitors in NHS settings.

Anyone with information should contact Ms Lampard at lampardcomments@dh.gsi.gov.uk by 30 June 2013.

NHS staff with specific information about Jimmy Savile's abusive behaviour should contact the relevant helpline:

Broadmoor Hospital
Tel: 0800 783 5865
Email: savileinvestigations@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Leeds General Infirmary
Tel: 0113 206 7274
Email: speakingoutleeds@leedsth.nhs.uk

Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Tel: 07500 100642 or 01296 316042
Email: speakingoutinvestigation@buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Project Round up

Since 1 April Verita has been commissioned to carry out nine investigations and reviews for a variety of commissioners. New commissioners include NHS England - South Region, the National Trust Development Authority, and acute trusts in Yorkshire and Essex.

The work ranges from investigating concerns about poor financial governance to allegations against individual NHS board members, and reflects the increasing diversity of Verita's workload.

In the last four months Verita has carried out investigations and reviews into patient safety systems and complaints for a number of NHS commissioners in addition to seven mental health homicides and a complaint review for the Lottery Forum. We have also delivered a two-day intensive training course in the Middle East on developing a patient safety culture.

