**REPORT ON THE LAS MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**MAY 30TH 2017**

**KATHY WEST, PATIENTS’ FORUM – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

I attended my 2nd meeting of the Mental Health Meeting on 30th May. Unfortunately, Malcolm rather than me or both of us got sent the papers and I had difficulty reading them on my computer beforehand. We met in the Pocock Street meeting room, and were only quorate because I attended, making the required 6 people attending.

I am going to make some general comments as this is a time of many changes, with a new government imminent, many new LAS staff at executive and front line levels, and huge pressures on the resources vital to developing the mental health services, which are desperately needed by patients in crisis.

Compared to say 3 years ago the importance of mental health within LAS has grown very constructively and the few people attending the Mental Health meetings, co-ordinated by Briony Sloper, are working hard to raise the profile and develop good practice. In past times there seemed to be little interest in mental health and now interest within LAS is substantial and progress is genuine and positive.

The introduction of mental health nurses into the Emergency Operations Centre about 3 years ago, encouraged the development of mental health knowledge and services. Recently, permission was granted to hire more mental health nurses and raise their salaries to level 7. There will also be a full time Mental Health lead in the LAS.  This will allow access to better and more consistent mental health clinical resources, and more opportunities to develop mental health expertise and support, including being involved in mental health training. The new title for the person leading the mental health team will be: Advanced Nurse Practitioner. Kuda, the first mental health nurse, has now left LAS.

A variety of mental health initiatives are being pursued - more than can be fully developed in the immediate future with the current pressures on LAS, but goals are aspirational and moving towards a more comprehensive service with higher standards.  One of the key problems relates to patients being conveyed to A & E when there are no local mental health pathways available. This can cause prolonged delays in getting appropriate care and can potentially harm the patient.

The LAS academy is offering a full day’s training on mental health care, including the importance of safeguarding, which should be considered in respect of every patient. More clinical staff are now completing safeguarding notifications.  A Safeguarding Mental Health Conference is being planned for the end of the year and a risk assessment tool is being developed.  Safeguarding for children has improved overall. A Core Skills Refresher course will be available in September 2017 for all front line staff and an improved e-learning package is in the process of being developed. A personality disorder video is also available and an award winning dementia DVD has been developed.  The CQC rated mental health practice in the LAS very highly.

The LAS is working with SLAM and the police to further extend training and funding is being sought for this initiative. Plastic, printed cards have been developed for homeless people describing their needs if they require access to NHS service. We will get copies of these for further distribution to Forum members. A draft Mental Health Annual Report has been written for the next LAS Board meeting - the first yearly mental health report for the Board - and I am currently reviewing this document.

There is very impressive progress in the mental health area, but much more needs to be done. The 5 staff who have been able to attend the 2 mental health meetings which I have attended are interested, committed and working hard to develop knowledge and good practice. The attitudes and input of the new government will be important as to how mental health issues will be supported and developed in the future.

Unfortunately, services have been poorly funded in recent years and this has hampered progress towards the ‘duty of esteem’ for patients with mental health problems, which is fundamental to the development of good practice.

Kathy West

Member of the LAS Mental Health Committee