

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the Chief Executive of Portsmouth Hospital NHS Trust and have responsibility for the provision of comprehensive secondary health care and a number of specialist services to a local population of 675,000 people across South East Hampshire. I lead one of the largest hospitals across the South coast employing over 7,300 staff and am the largest employer in Portsmouth. In order to deliver our services, I must rely upon the actions of our staff, clinicians and support staff, who do their best every single day to provide excellent care for our patients.

In providing this statement, I hope that it will assist in my duty to protect the members of the organisation who work tirelessly to serve our communities.

NHS staff are subjected to violence and threats on a daily basis, which too often result in injury. On average in Queen Alexandra hospital there are forty three assaults or incidents of aggression against staff per week.

It is recognised that, on occasions, violence against our staff is as a result of a clinical condition. However, on many occasions that is not the case. Violence against our staff is all too often deliberate and intentional, and whilst the severity of such acts changes, the impact upon our staff does not. It is never acceptable to assume that assaults upon our NHS staff should be tolerated; it is not simply 'part of the job'. The nature of our work requires members of staff to deal with difficult, emotional, challenging and sensitive situations. Assaults upon them are serious and unacceptable. The sentencing guidelines reflect this fact and highlight that assaults on emergency workers performing their duty are an aggravating feature.

There are many ways in which assaults against any public servants impact upon society. Each time a member of staff is assaulted there are potential sickness absences, which acutely affect resourcing, and the ability to deliver our 'frontline' service. They also place additional strain on other members of the organisation due to the increased workload, which in turn can have significant impact on the wellbeing of other staff.

Not only do assaults on staff have a negative impact on the community but also internally to the organisation. On a personal basis, staff suffer not just physical injuries, but also the psychological effects. Many who have been assaulted subsequently find the prospect of dealing with patients challenging or traumatic. Their self-confidence can be seriously affected. On a wider scale, morale is impacted when staff see their friends and colleagues being assaulted and abused.

Staff within the NHS are there to help members of our community when they are most in need. We should not be prevented from doing so due to violent individuals who choose to attack those who are there to help them.

Most importantly, it should be remembered that our staff are people; they are fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. When they are attacked, they become victims just like any other, but victims who have been attacked while trying to help others.

This case relates to nursing and reception staff who were assaulted on Boxing Day when they were working, caring for our patients, instead of spending time with their families. The Trust supports this prosecution and believes it will have a significant positive impact on maintaining confidence amongst all those within the hospital community.

Yours sincerely



Mark Cubbon

Chief Executive Officer