



Making the difference

Chairman's Report

November 2014

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT to the 2014 AGM

I am always surprised and delighted at the challenges our charity faces and the ways these are overcome by our staff. For any charity working in the state sector alongside state services these are very difficult times indeed. Since the economy fell off a cliff in 2008 public money is in short supply. Even now, 6 years later, we are only just leaving recession and despite signs of healthy growth the amount of money the government borrows to pay for public services is still greater than the amount it receives from tax. This means that there will be little relaxation in rates of tax – which restricts charitable giving – and little prospect of our state partners (the local Clinical Commissioning Groups of the NHS and Devon County Council) increasing what we are paid to provide our clinical and educational services. The effect of this can be seen in our audited accounts which the Chief executive will talk about later. The amount we receive from our two partners has not changed in 6 years by so much as a single penny.

Against this gloomy background, how has the charity performed? Remarkably, very well indeed. Outpatients and school pupil numbers have been maintained at over 2,200 and 22 respectively while average waiting times have been reduced to just two-thirds of the national benchmark (12 weeks against an 18 week target). The total number of employed staff increased to 67 while churn (the rate at which people leave us) is very low (around 5% a year) and absences due to sickness was slightly less than 3 days per employee per year (the average in the state sector is 16.7 days). Despite the financial gloom, the charity remains solvent. If depreciation (which is not a charge in cash) is removed, we made a surplus of £33,242. A further £98,741 went to a legal pension debt created because one of our old pension funds developed a deficit. If this unusual expenditure had not taken place, the cash surplus for the year would have exceeded £120,000.

We have also somehow managed to reward our excellent staff as they properly deserve. Although the NHS has had an effective



pay freeze for over three years, Vbranch House has had only one pay freeze in the last 6 years. I am delighted to report that the delivery of our NHS services through the partnership of our Clinical Director, Ginny Humphries, and our Head of Therapies, Kate Moss, has earned us the second of two annual quality improvement payments. Our new Head Teacher, Viktoria Pavlics, has revitalised our educational services by developing novel ways of delivering a revised curriculum. This enables an ability to target the curriculum to individual pupils with the greatest possible efficiency in terms of staff time and resources. At the same time, all the charities processes, policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated. To all the staff who have worked so hard to bring down waiting times, meet all our quality targets and to make the learning experience at Vbranch House School a valuable one for all pupils we can only say a very sincere "thank you"!

