



PRESS RELEASE

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GHA Management strongly rejects the accusations of the Unions that it has not been addressing safety issues and that it has failed in its duty to protect its employees. Furthermore, in Management's view, the GGCA's contention that the Chief Executive of the GHA is personally accountable for the stabbing incident that occurred on Friday is a defamatory statement.

The new hospital was designed with the safety and security of staff foremost in the mind of management with the incorporation of security cameras and controlled security access to wards and departments at the design stage.

The observance of the Zero Tolerance Policy is taken very seriously by management. Contrary to the Unions' contention, zero tolerance letters have been issued to members of the public and will continue to be issued whenever it is warranted. In addition, members of the public have been escorted out of the premises by security staff when instances of verbal or threatened physical abuse have been recorded. Furthermore, in areas where concerns of such a nature have been registered or deemed to be areas where there is potential for such events, staff have been offered specialist training in de-escalation techniques.

Staff in the A&E Department have previously been offered a security presence in the clinical part of the department where the incident occurred, but staff considered this to be too intrusive. In lieu of this, the frequency of security guard rounds was increased and an auditable electronic scanning system was introduced more than a year ago. In addition, there is a panic button in the nurse's station which links directly to security. The security cameras within A & E are also connected directly to the main LCD panels in the main reception area which is manned by a security guard at all times. The security strategy has been one of a non intrusive security presence to assist in good data protection and patient confidentiality practice.

The security access to the A & E Department has been continuously reviewed and further improvements incorporated in 2007 and again in September

2009. These include a new security access to the Ambulance Entrance with the works due for completion shortly. The works include the installation of a barrier to the ambulance ramp and swipe card access to the ambulance entrance. Further changes commissioned in September include a review of the design of the A & E waiting area to improve the safety and security at reception and also improve patient confidentiality.

The GHA's system of interaction with the Police has also been reviewed in the past and a link officer in each department was appointed two years ago to ease communication and to prevent problems. Since then, on request from the GHA, additional police patrols have been implemented.

Following the incident on Friday, a support programme for all staff involved was initiated immediately and will continue with a Critical Incident Debriefing Session facilitated by a professional psychologist. The aim of this programme is to support staff as they cope with the management of the shock associated with the incident. Counseling will be offered on an on-going basis to all affected by the incident.

Management also takes issue with the comments of a Unite Union spokesman at yesterday's demonstration, who demanded that access to **all** areas of the hospital where staff work should be just as restricted as the areas where management is located. The Union is perfectly aware that many of the clinical areas, including the A & E Department and all the wards (outside visiting times), are just as restricted to members of the public as the floors where Management is located i.e a swipe card which is only issued to members of staff needs to be used to gain access.

Whilst wishing to reassure staff that it is doing everything within its power to protect them from abuse, Management will not create an environment in any of the GHA facilities which hinders or impedes access to areas which the general public, (the vast majority of whom are law-abiding citizens) are entitled to use.

It is the view of management, that shocking and disturbing incidents of this nature cannot be totally prevented within a healthcare environment, irrespective of the amount of security measures that are deployed.

The GHA believe that it has a very good track record on employee safety and it will continue in its efforts to make it an even safer workplace. It will also continue to plan and develop its programmes and services in the best interests of staff and patients.

The GHA would again like to express its thanks to all staff involved in the incident for their bravery in dealing with such a shocking situation.