

## NEWS

## Alder Hey hospital fails four in five UK quality and safety standards

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Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool has been deemed "potentially unsafe" after failing to meet four in five standards of quality and safety in an unannounced inspection by the Care Quality Commission.

The health watchdog, which acted after it was contacted by operating theatre staff, found failures to report serious adverse incidents, "near misses," "very worrying" staff shortages, and problems with essential equipment.<sup>1</sup>

Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust had a low rate of reporting safety incidents, and its staff were uncertain which types of incidents to report, inspectors found. The inspectors said that airways monitoring equipment was not in place and that the emergency call alarm system in the day surgery theatre was faulty.

The theatre department was found to have a high staff sickness level, staff sometimes had to work long hours, and operation schedules often overran.

On the days of the inspection the hospital complied with minimum staffing levels for theatres but not for the recovery area. The inspectors found that the level of staff for the recovery area was "potentially unsafe and meant that patient safety and welfare was at increased risk."

The inspection followed an internal review by the trust's director of nursing that found "shortcuts being made to safety processes that have created high risk activity."

Hospital consultants told the inspectors that the trust had an open culture, but "this was not the view of some of the staff in the theatre department who reported they had not been supported to raise concerns in the past and had not been listened to when repeated concerns had been raised."

The Care Quality Commission said that senior managers had begun to engage with the issues but that it had asked the trust for written assurances about the steps it had taken to ensure the safety of patients after a 2013 review by the hospital's director of nursing. The commission also asked NHS England to convene a risk summit to review the trust's response.

Louise Shepherd, the trust's chief executive, said, "Actions have already been taken to improve training, staffing allocation and quality processes in theatre. I would like to reiterate that there is no evidence that patients have been harmed as a result of these concerns and we remain confident that we are providing a safe service for our children and young people."

1 Care Quality Commission. Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust inspection report. 7 Feb 2014. [www.cqc.org.uk/directory/rbs25](http://www.cqc.org.uk/directory/rbs25).

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