

Chief Executive's Department

2 Kings Court
Kings Court Business Park
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester
WR5 1JR

Tel: 01905 681517

Email: WHCNHS.PALS@nhs.net

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18 March 2022

Ms Jo Ringshall
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire
Civic Centre Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persnore
WR10 1PT

Dear Jo

Thank you for your letter dated 10 February 2022. I acknowledge the concerns you have raised about the waiting times for the Healthy Minds Service. I would like to thank you for the invitation and opportunity to attend the meeting on 24 March 2022. I can confirm that Sue Harris (Director of Strategy and Partnerships), David Thomas (Deputy Associate Director, Primary Care and Community Mental Health Services) and Dawn Stallard (Interim Service Lead for Healthy Minds Service) will be attending the meeting

I thought it might be helpful to explain how the Healthy Minds Services works. The service offers various treatment options in Step 3 that include Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy (DIT). Interpersonal Psychotherapy Therapy (IPT), Counselling for Depression (CfD) along with Step 2 CBT. A majority of Worcestershire patients embark on a specific treatment pathway in four months or less. It is certainly true that the service has long waiting lists for some modalities of treatment. Some patients unfortunately may have over 12 to 18 months wait. In view of this we are actively encouraging patients to engage with our group courses or Silvercloud (an interactive online CBT course). These options are accessible in a relatively short timeframe. Patients are also encouraged to look at our website whilst they are waiting to access these alternatives. We also provide additional resources to assist whilst patients are waiting to access services. It is also important to stress, whilst there are long waits, a substantial number of patients do not face such delays. The service continues to meet or come close to meeting the national expectation that 75% of patients discharged from the service should have received their first treatment within 6 weeks and 95% within 18 weeks. Over the

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last 6 months on average almost half (46.6%) of patients receiving their second treatment session will have done so within the desired 90 days (3 months).

Recognising that there is work still to do, I would like to reassure you that the Healthy Minds Service is currently completing an Improvement Plan and meeting regularly with members of the Trust Executive team and colleagues at the CCG, NHSE and Health Education England (who oversee the relevant training programmes for staff) to agree the actions required. Our Trust Board is being updated regularly on progress.

The Healthy Minds Service has plans to extend its workforce to address the concerns around waiting times which is being supported by the Clinical Commissioning Group. We are also currently liaising with NHSE as the access target for 2022/23 significantly increases across our ICS and unfortunately the accredited training places for the IAPT workforce do not match this projection. We are working with partners through the Mental Health Collaboration to look at interim solutions to meet this need whilst the number of IAPT trainee places increases. So whilst we will continue to recruit both high and low intensity practitioners to the service investing in alternate provision is key to ensuring people's needs are met over this timeframe.

Our clinical leads have developed a framework of evidence-based psycho-education and psychological interventions with the plan that these will be available from the summer. In the interim the service is holding twice weekly huddles to address immediate action planning. From the huddles they have identified that staff are dealing with high-risk patients who are deemed inappropriate for a primary care service. To support these patients, the Healthy Minds Service operate a daily 'Duty' system to enable these patients to be signposted to appropriate services to meet their needs. The service have noted that both their duty system and screening assessments carried out by the High Intensity workforce have impacted on therapeutic delivery. So plans for this year include additional staffing for dedicated Duty Workers to relieve this pressure which we are currently recruiting. Furthermore Step 2 (low intensity) Leads are now in post to support Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners to deliver timely assessments and delivery of Therapeutic Groups which will further help to work through the waiting list of patients seeking low intensity support.

We are also mindful that following the pandemic Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services were also promoted as a treatment for NHS staff who had been significantly impacted by the pandemic to enable them to receive psychological interventions which as you can appreciate has increased the demand and is reflected in the waiting times, although some additional clinical sessions for staff are funded through the national wellbeing hub funding allocation.

I do acknowledge that at present the waiting times to access this service remain high, but I hope this letter provides reassurance that the Healthy Minds Service is actively working on initiatives to improve their waiting times to deliver timely therapeutic interventions. Colleagues from the Trust welcome the opportunity to attend the meeting on 24 March 2022 and will be happy to address any further queries. Since your original letter, I understand that you have requested some key performance and waiting data in advance of the meeting.

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I would like to reassure you that this will be made available.

In the meantime if we can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact the Patient Relations Team.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Dugan
Chief Executive

Copy
Mr S Trickett
Chief Executive
Herefordshire & Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group