

Office of the Chief Executive Officer & Chairman

CEO: Ms Michelle McKay

Interim Chairman: Sir David Nicholson

PA – Donna Wark 📞 01905 733960 ext.30883 ✉ d.wark@nhs.net



Our Ref: MM/JE/5728

15 May 2018

Jane Stanley
Director – Healthwatch Worcestershire
Civic Centre Queen
Elizabeth Drive
Pershore
R10 1PT

Dear Jane

Thank you for sharing Healthwatch Worcestershire’s informative report on Autism Spectrum Conditions. I am sorry for our delay in sending our response.

As a trust we certainly welcome the report and its findings and recommendations.

We will shortly be launching our Patient, Carer and Community Engagement Plan which is underpinned by the Values of The Trust and is embedded within our cultural change programme - this is a culture where patients and their carers are at the forefront of all we do. I have enclosed a copy of this for you.

Inherent in the strategy you will see is that of reaching out to underrepresented groups and it is essential for us to ensure that we have “good information and understanding about patient needs”, that our communication is “informed” and “involving” throughout and to achieve this “we will ensure patients understand their condition, treatment and pain management options”. Therefore we welcomed the findings within your report.

We are on a journey and we have areas to share and to celebrate as well as improvements. I have shared both with you below and welcome further conversations going forwards. We fundamentally believe that by listening and working together, we can provide an enhanced patient experience for all.

In our commitment to the strategy and ensuring quality of care and a positive patient experience for all we have appointed a new post of Head of Patient, Carer and Community Engagement Anna Sterckx and Deputy Chief nurse for quality – Jackie Edwards, both will be taking forward this important work.

Please find detailed below, responses to each of the recommendations in the report relating directly to Worcester Acute Hospitals Trust in:



Section iii Access to health Services: Going to the Hospital.

Ensuring all staff, including reception staff, have an updated knowledge of Autism Spectrum Conditions, via access to training and appropriate information and resources.

In particular, that staff have an understanding of the importance of using clear language, avoiding the use of jargon and figurative language and allowing time to process information and check understanding.

Providing visual resources to help aid communication during appointments

We will ask the Training and Development Team to identify packages of training suitable for all staff, which will provide a range of awareness from basic knowledge to more detailed clinical information. Our suggestions will include delivering these packages be in a variety of formats to enable greater access for all staff (e-learning and face to face sessions for example). We consider it to be key to identifying training that has been developed alongside service users and their lived experience and we welcome conversations with you going forwards to progress this.

As we endeavour to work increasingly closely with the Health & Care Trust, I feel that it could be beneficial to explore offering out the same training across the two Trusts in Worcestershire – to amplify awareness.

Flagging system to enable staff to see that patients have a diagnosis of Autism so appropriate adjustments can be made.

I am pleased to be able to share that Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust is currently undertaking a piece of work in respect of the flagging system used – leading on from the Accessible Information Standard 2016. This system enables staff to see at a glance any adjustments that service users may require in terms of information required in a different format. Whilst this will not flag specific conditions, it will support and enhance communication across the board. I can update you once this area of work has been completed and implemented.

How to enable patients with Autism Spectrum Conditions to have appropriate support to attend appointments where possible, for example, booking appointments at a time a carer is available.

If reminders, such as a text message can be sent to patients prior to their appointment

Offering appointments at a quieter time of day

Offering longer appointment times



On 19th March 2018 Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust changed from sending text message appointment reminders to a 2 way text system, which enables patients to confirm or change their appointments – to communicate and be in better control of their healthcare.

This means that everyone who provides a telephone number will receive a text message unless they choose to opt-out. We offer a text system by mobile telephone and by landline phone to ensure accessibility is as wide as possible. This also ensures that a patient can reply by text or by using the buttons on a landline.

Offering a quiet place to wait

Providing patients with information about the expected waiting time for their appointment

We will work towards ensuring where possible we offer a quiet place for patients to wait. We will work with divisions to encourage patients or carers to request this in advance and would recommend that communication is channelled through the text service or phone number provided with an appointment letter. Where this is not possible we will suggest that appointments are requested at quieter times of the day.

Should any patient require specific information such as suggested waiting times, this can be asked in advance. As a trust we are developing the advertising of waiting times. At present this is happening in some of our clinics and it is our aim to work towards the promotion of this across all clinics, across all sites.

Providing activities for a variety of age groups in the waiting area, if possible to include fiddle toys and sensory items.

As we seek to equip more areas of the hospital with appropriate sensory items, we would absolutely encourage people to bring items with them into hospital to make their stay a comfortable one.

Sending written and Easy Read information to patients in advance about the Hospital, the purpose of the visit and what will happen at the appointment.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust at present is not able to support the provision of Easy Read – we do not have the licence for the “Photo Symbols” software.

Once we have developed and launched our enhanced flagging system however, staff will be enabled to see at a glance any adjustments that service users may require at any time in their healthcare journey. I can update you once this area of work has been completed and implemented.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust is absolutely committed to enabling reasonable adjustments for people living with a condition on the Autistic Spectrum. This extends to the whole of the patient journey, including all the areas identified in the recommendations.



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**Worcestershire
Acute Hospitals**
NHS Trust

We have recently made contact with the National Autistic Society and we look forward to developing a meaningful link together. The Worcestershire branch will be attending an awareness raising event for staff, patients and visitors held in the trust during Equality & Diversity week on 14th May and I would like to extend this invitation to you and any of your colleagues.

We will be taking these actions forward and will track progress through an action plan within the patient, care and community plan. We will provide you with an update at the end of September 2018.

Once again, thank you for sharing your report with me directly and I look forward to our continued dialogue.

Yours sincerely

Michelle McKay

Chief Executive Officer

