

Healthwatch Worcestershire
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Sir David Nicholson KCB CBE
Interim Chairman
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

26 October 2018

Dear Sir David

Ref: Stroke services in Worcestershire

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Healthwatch Worcestershire. One of the functions of Healthwatch Worcestershire is to enable local people to monitor the quality and safety of health and care services. My purpose in writing to you is to draw your attention to our concern about stroke services in Worcestershire generally, and the part we are advised that Worcestershire's Acute Hospitals Trust can play in improving them.

At the Healthwatch Board meeting in August my Board reviewed the performance of stroke services in Worcestershire as we had become increasingly concerned about the quality and safety of those services following NHS performance data published by the Clinical Commissioning Groups, publicly reported delays in transferring stroke patients from ambulances to hospital care at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital, and patient experience of the stroke pathway. As a consequence, I wrote to Simon Trickett of Worcestershire CCGs seeking assurance on the quality and safety of stroke services.

To date, although that assurance has not been provided, the Clinical Commissioning Group has briefed my colleagues on plans to improve current services in Worcestershire and future services across the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership footprint. In addition, we have been invited to attend the Worcestershire Stroke Strategy Forum which next meets on 13 November 2018.

Whilst we recognise the challenges associated with improving stroke services, eg the availability of clinicians, and that the responsibility for improving the stroke pathway lies with a number of partners across Worcestershire's health and care economy we are also advised that there are a number of actions that the Acute Trust could take which would immediately improve the service; these include:

- Implementation of a straight to scan pathway - with pre-alert to the specialist nurses to meet the patient and divert straight to scan thereby avoiding Emergency Department and potential delays in the patient's treatment
- Direct access to a Hyper-Acute Stroke Unit [HASU], which we understand will involve ring-fencing two HASU beds to improve performance, and
- Improvement in the number of patients spending more than 90% of their time on a stroke ward.

From our enquiries we understand these actions have been in existence for some time with little progress being made by the Trust to deliver them.



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Please can you provide assurance that the Trust's Executive Officers are progressing the implementation of the actions I have specifically referred to above, together with the time scale in which they will be implemented. We are particularly concerned about the delay in implementing a 'straight to scan' pathway as we understand that's it is already in place across several hospitals in the West Midlands.

If it would help pursue this matter I am prepared to attend a Trust Board meeting and raise the issue in the Public Participation session. If you require further information please contact our Chief Operating Officer, Simon Adams [simonadams@healthwatchworcestershireshire.co.uk].

I would appreciate your written response within 20 working days of receipt of this letter. Please be aware that this letter and your reply will be published.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Pinfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P' and 'P'.

P Pinfield
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire

cc. M McKay, Chief Executive Officer, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
S Trickett, Accountable Officer, Worcestershire & Herefordshire CCGs