

HEALTHWATCH WORCESTERSHIRE - CARE IN THE CORRIDOR

FOLLOW UP VISIT - JULY 2019

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

Healthwatch Worcestershire (HWW) provides an independent voice for people who use publicly funded health and social care services. Our role is to ensure that people's views are listened to and fed back to service providers and commissioners in order to improve services.

We don't think that a corridor is the right place for patients to be looked after. Neither do the Worcestershire Acute Hospital Trust, who run Worcestershire's hospitals or the Care Quality Commission who inspect them.

Nevertheless, patients report to us that care is regularly being provided in the corridor at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital. We are also aware that this is the case through our work with the Hospital.

This is not a new issue. We produced our first Report about this in June 2017. We made 38 recommendations about how things could be improved, based on what 119 patients told us. The Trust produced an Action Plan and we went back in 2018 to see what had been done. Whilst some progress had been made there was still more to do. The Trust produced a further Action Plan in July 2018 based on our original recommendations. We decided to carry out a one off visit in July 2019 to see if the Trust had done what they said they would. This is a summary of what we found out.

The full Report of our visit and the evidence we gathered can be found on our website.

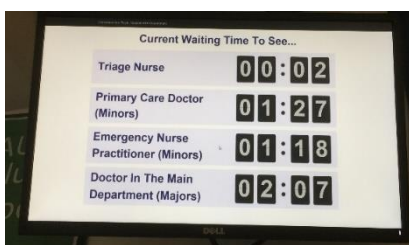
What We Found Out

Information

What's been done?

We saw an improvement in signage and the information available to patients and visitors across the A&E Department.

The main A&E Waiting Area now contains clear visual information about the Department. There are signs explaining: Check In, Patient Journey, Triage Assessment, Assessment Categories, Minor injuries and the Children's Waiting Room.

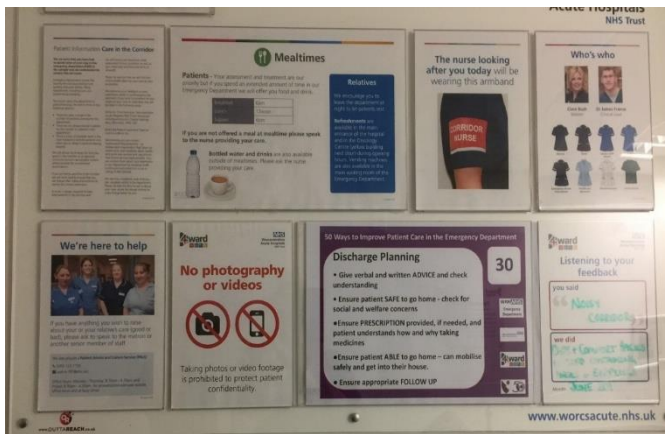


Screens either side of reception display “real time” waiting times to see the triage nurse; a nurse or doctor in “Minors” (injuries) and an A&E doctor.

Coloured lines on the floor or walls direct patients around A&E and to different Departments (e.g. X-Ray).

Healthwatch Worcestershire leaflets are available to patients in the A&E waiting area.

Large pictorial boards in the main A&E Department and in the main corridor provide information to patients about their journey through A&E.



Notice boards in the main and side corridors display information about: Care in the Corridor; Mealtimes; “Who’s Who”, Patient Advice & Liaison Service Discharge Planning and how the Trust are “Listening to your Feedback”.

A large, engaging display called “Improving Patient Care” depicts a number of initiatives taken by the Trust to improve care for patients and to recognise the work of staff.





An issue for patients on our previous visits was not knowing who they can ask for assistance if they need it. The A&E team now all wear purple uniforms. Their roles (doctor, nurse etc) are clearly identified on the back of their uniforms. We think this is a great new initiative by the Trust.

What's still to do?

The WAHT has produced a letter explaining to patients about being in the corridor. It is on display on the notice board. The Trust had included information about Healthwatch in it as we requested. **However**, the Trust said they would give the letter to all patients being cared for in the corridor areas. None of the patients we spoke with had been given the letter and we didn't see it on the trolleys. The Trust need to routinely give this letter to patients. **It needs to be available in large print & alternative formats.**

Notice Boards need to be updated to show the new uniforms, so patients know that staff wearing purple uniforms work at A&E, three of the four patients we spoke with were still not clear who they could ask for assistance.

We heard staff introducing themselves to patients by name and two patients told us that they had been told their nurses and doctors names, but two told us they had not. All staff need to consistently introduce themselves to patients by name.

Staff also need to explain to all patients about how to use the call bells in the corridor or provide some clear signage about this. Two of the four patients we spoke to hadn't been told this.

Patient Care

What's Been Done?



During our visit there was no one who appeared to be living with dementia or with a specific need (such as a visual or hearing impairment) in the corridor. We noticed that the corridor display called "Improving Patient Care" referred to a "Dementia Trolley", which displayed an "About Me" form and Twiddle Muff, to provide activity and comfort.

All the patients in the corridor area had a bottle of water on their trolleys. There are notices on the Boards about mealtimes and asking for refreshments outside of these times. Relatives are told about facilities available in the hospital.

There are signs telling visitors about where to find drinks and snacks.



What's still to do?

Two of the four patients we spoke to had been in the corridor over 4 hours but had not been offered any food.

Staff need to routinely check that patients are as comfortable as possible on their trolley. Two of the four patients reported that they had not been offered a pillow and one was waiting for one. One had not been offered a blanket. Two patients who had been in pain felt that this had been managed "to some extent" within the Department.

Toilet doors are clearly labelled, but there is no direction signage or information about asking for assistance with going to the toilet.

The Environment

What's Been Done?

The A&E corridor is a busy and noisy environment.



The noticeboards said that in response to patient feedback about noise "Care and Comfort" packs had been introduced containing an eye mask and earplugs, along with a notice so patients could indicate if they wanted to be disturbed for food or to see a doctor. We think this is a good initiative.

We noticed that soft closure mechanisms have been added to doors to reduce noise.

There is a sign in the main corridor about personal belongings, but this mostly deals with the Trust's liabilities.

What's still to do?

Being able to rest and noise are still issues for patients. 3 of the 4 patients we spoke with had been bothered by noise. Three patients didn't know that earplugs were available in the Department. None of the patients we saw had the Care & Comfort packs. We think these should be available to patients waiting over 4 hrs in the Department during the day and at night.

"It's just not comfy, I just can't relax. I haven't slept all day because of people walking past and making noise" Patient – A&E side corridor

The Trust could investigate if there is anything else that can be done to limit noise.

Three of four patients did not know there was a safe available in the Department. One patient reported that their property had not been logged by staff and two were not sure if this was the case. The notice on Personal Property limits the Trusts liability to property that has been deposited for safe custody and for which patients have a receipt. The availability of the safe should be made clear to patients.

Privacy and dignity

What's Been Done?



The Trust's policy is that the designated "M" cubicles in the main Department should be used for private and sensitive conversations wherever possible. The cubicles should also be used for examinations and treatments. If this is not possible privacy screens should be routinely used.

A new sign in the corridor area reminds staff of this.

We saw that privacy screens were available in the corridor area.

What's still to do?

Of the three patients we spoke with who had been examined or treated in the corridor one patient reported that they had definitely been given enough privacy, whilst two patients agreed with this only to some extent. For one patient a screen was put in place, but the patient did not feel it provided them with privacy. The other two patients reported that screens were not used. One patient felt that screens were not needed, the other patient felt that screens should have been used.

One patient reported that they had not been given enough privacy when discussing their personal details, condition or treatment in the corridor and that screens should have been used.

"It's an open area, it felt a bit uncomfortable, even though it was just talking you could see people looking" Patient, side corridor A&E

The Trust needs to consistently apply its policy about privacy in the corridor areas.

Information about waiting times

What's Been Done?

Everyone we spoke with knew the reason that they were waiting in the corridor area, this is an improvement from our previous visits.

What's still to do?

Patients are still not clear how long they might be waiting in the corridor area for. We appreciate that things change, and it can be difficult to inform patients accurately about this, but we think the Trust could do more to implement their action of staff having clear conversations with patients, carers and relatives about waiting times.

Visitors

What's Been Done?

There are now some clear signs around the Department directing visitors, friends and relatives to refreshments and hospital facilities.

What's still to do?

During our visits some visitors were seated on patient trolleys. There was only one chair available for visitors. We think that consideration should be given to providing some chairs for visitors in the side corridor area but are mindful of chairs causing obstructions in a busy A&E Department.

Other Issues

What's Been Done?

"I've been amazed at the extent to which the hospital is using volunteers. There's been lots of volunteers, like with books and magazines. It's wonderful to have some conversation, it's incredibly important for your wellbeing"

Patient, main corridor area A&E

One patient commented on the use of volunteers in the A&E corridor areas, providing refreshments and book/magazine rounds as well as conversation with patients. We think this is a positive initiative on the part of the Trust.

The Patient Public Forum carried out 28 Care in the Corridor audits at the WRH between July 2018 - July 2019 and spoke with 93 patients about their experience. **These visits also showed inconsistencies in the way that the Trust's actions from their Plan are being implemented.**

What still needs doing?

We noticed the WAHT webpage that informs people of A&E waiting times states that technical difficulties are being experienced which they are working to fix. However, when you click through to the waiting time information it does appear to be updated in "real time". The information is confusing, as people cannot be certain of its accuracy. This needs to be resolved.

OVERALL

Our visit showed that the Trust has made progress with their Action Plan of 2018 to implement our recommendations. We saw improvements in signage, information for patients and some positive initiatives such as the care and comfort packs, aids for people living with dementia and the use of volunteers.

Nevertheless, patients being looked after in the corridor is not a satisfactory situation **and should not be allowed to become a "normal" way of looking after people. Whilst the situation continues the** Trust need to ensure the Actions that are identified in their **own** Plan are consistently and routinely applied to every patient, every day.

"There are too many of us [patients] going through. They have so much to do, so many people. They are all super, but there's too many people so they tend to forget" Patient, Main Corridor A&E

Healthwatch are committed to continuing to work with the Trust to improve services for patients in the A&E Department and across the hospital. We acknowledge the co-operation of the Trust and their staff, and we look forward to continuing as a "critical friend" in the pursuit of improved patient care.