

Healthwatch Worcestershire's response to the Quality Account of the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust for the financial year 2019/20

Healthwatch Worcestershire has a statutory role as the champion for those who use publicly funded health and care services in the county and therefore we welcome the opportunity to comment on the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust Quality Account for 2019/20.

As is our normal practice we have used Healthwatch England guidance to form our response as follows:

1. Do the priorities of the provider reflect the priorities of the local population?

Healthwatch Worcestershire believes that the overriding priority of patients, their carers and the public regarding Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust is that the Trust should provide safe, quality, and accessible services at its hospital sites across Worcestershire. Therefore, the findings of the Care Quality Commission's unannounced inspections in May and June of 2019, which saw the overall rating of the Trust improve from 'Inadequate' to 'Requires Improvement' are to be broadly welcomed. However, it is of concern that urgent & emergency services continue to be assessed as 'Inadequate', particularly given in the public eye it is probably the service which defines the Trust.

We are pleased to see that the Trust has continued with the implementation of the Quality Improvement Strategy and its 3 Priorities that were co-produced with stakeholders including patients and the public in 2018. We welcome the continuation of the Quality Indicators from 2018/19 and the inclusion of new Quality Indicators which reflect some of the areas of improvement identified in the Care Quality Commission's Inspection Report, the delivery of which will improve the safety of services for patients.

We have noted that in 2018/19 improving the management of the Trust's complaints system was a Quality Indicator within Priority 3 of the Quality Improvement Strategy with a target of responding to 80% of complaints within 25 working days of receipt. We are aware that the management of complaints is a focus for patients and influences perception of the Trust. Given the Quality Indicator was achieved in 2018/19 we would therefore have expected the Trust to set itself a stretch target for improvement beyond a target it has achieved.

Healthwatch Worcestershire appreciate the commitment and efforts of all those at the Trust who have been involved in responding to Covid-19 and understand that the response has disrupted much of the work to improve quality.

However, as a priority going forward, we believe that the Trust needs to explain to the local population when and how services for patients which were delayed by Covid-19 such as some cancer treatments and elective surgery will be restored.

2. Are there any important issues missed?

We have welcomed the Trust's open and transparent approach to engaging with Healthwatch Worcestershire in its drive to improve quality. Whilst the strategy and activity to deliver it over the past year is documented in the Quality Account it is our view that the Account falls short in reflecting the evident commitment of the Trust's Executive Team and the Trust's clinical and non-clinical staff at all levels to make the improvements that are expected by patients and the public.

Without wishing to detract from the effort referred to above we believe it would have enhanced the Quality Account from a patient and public perspective if the key actions in the Trust's strategy and associated plans to improve urgent and emergency care were clearly incorporated as Quality Indicators.

The Quality Account emphasises that values and behaviours are the foundation of quality improvement at the Trust. In the context of national promotion by NHS England of the importance of the Duty of Candour in influencing individuals' values and behaviour we have noted and welcome the reference in the Quality Account to the role of the Trust's 'Freedom to Speak Up Guardian'. We believe the Quality Account would be enhanced if data was provided to evidence the effectiveness of the role and from which patient and the public could take assurance.

3. Has the provider demonstrated that they have involved patients and the public in the production of the Quality Account?

In the Trust's 2018/19 Quality Account we welcomed the Trust's commitment to the continuation of the patient and public consultation around 'What does Quality mean to you?' and the involvement of the Patient Experience Committee in the discussions around the Quality Priorities for 2019/20. Whilst we acknowledge the express commitment in the Quality Account to working with patients to improve the quality of services and learning from their experiences it is not clear to us that patients and public have been specifically engaged in developing the Quality Indicators for 2020/21 that are set out in the Quality Account.

Healthwatch Worcestershire encourages the Trust to increase and report upon its engagement with patients, their carers and the public and from minority groups such as those with a learning disability, autism, who live with health inequalities, are members of Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities or the LGBT+ community. Evidence of outcomes from patient engagement should also be included, for example the Action Plans that were produced in response to HWW's work on patients experience of the Trust's Fracture Clinics.

We have noted that each of the Trust's clinical Divisions is required to produce a Quality Improvement Plan annually to support the delivery of the Trust's quality priorities.

We believe that where appropriate the preparation of these plans provides an opportunity for the Trust to engage with patients and the public to co-produce them.

4. Is the Quality Account clearly presented for patients and the public?

Healthwatch Worcestershire acknowledges the challenge in producing a Quality Account with the detailed information required by NHS England which is also clearly presented and meaningful for patients and the public. In previous comments on the Trust's Quality Accounts we have made suggestions around the presentation of information and we welcome the graphical representation of demand on the Trust during 2019/20 at page 10 of the Quality Account. This year Healthwatch Worcestershire suggests that the Trust publishes a summary of the Priorities, Quality Indicators and results in accessible formats for the information of the public, and includes a glossary of terms and acronyms in the Quality Account.