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27 February 2024

Jo Ringshall
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire
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Dear Jo

RE: ICS governance arrangements for taking forward system wide service improvements for people living with sensory impairments

Thank you for your letter regarding the governance and oversight of initiatives aimed at improving access to and experience of health services for people with sensory impairments. I appreciate Healthwatch Worcestershire's dedication to this important matter and your commitment to seeking equitable access to health and care services across Worcestershire.

Firstly, it is important for me to highlight that there is no single individual with sole responsibility for addressing sensory impairments within NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB). It is imperative that all of our senior managers involved in either commissioning or redesigning services are conscious of the needs of individuals with sensory impairments within their respective programme or service areas.

As such, the *Community Intelligence: Access to Services for D/deaf People* report by Worcestershire Public Health has been shared with programme leads across the ICB for their consideration in discussions about their respective programme areas.

You will also be aware that equality impact and risk assessments are completed by ICB programme leads when considering any changes to health services, and these

are crucial for ensuring inclusivity for all individuals, including those with sensory impairments.

Similarly, with regards to governance arrangements, there is no single committee or board that would consider these matters. Sensory impairment cannot be considered in isolation but instead needs to be considered across the broad range of services and programme areas that we are responsible for. Programme boards are comprised of senior strategic leads across the Integrated Care System (ICS) so are a suitable place for ensuring strategic oversight of initiatives that seek to improve services for people with sensory impairments.

Programme boards themselves do not make decisions on how services are delivered but do make strategic recommendations to the ICB's Strategic Commissioning Committee (SCC) which has delegated responsibility from the ICB Board to make commissioning decisions.

I agree with your point about systemwide ownership of these issues, and it is pleasing to learn that the report and its recommendations are also being considered by other system partners as well as the ICB. It is the responsibility of organisations that provide NHS care and / or publicly funded adult social care to follow the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) and ensure that an individual's information and communication support needs are met.

In terms of that wider governance, all partner organisations working across Worcestershire will have their own internal arrangements by which they can make decisions about how the services they provide can be improved based on the recommendations contained within the report.

Thank you for the valuable contribution of Healthwatch Worcestershire and other partners in carrying out this work, and for highlighting areas where health and care partners across the ICS can improve service delivery to people living with sensory impairments. I look forward to receiving your report on the experiences of people living with visual impairments in due course.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Trickett', written in a cursive style.

Simon Trickett
Chief Executive Officer
NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire