



**Herefordshire and  
Worcestershire**  
Clinical Commissioning Group

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Jo Ringshall  
Chair  
Healthwatch Worcestershire  
Civic Centre  
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Dear Jo,

**RE: What patients told us about why they ‘walk in’ to A&E departments in Worcestershire’**

Thank you for sharing your Healthwatch Report on ‘*What patients told us about why they “walk in” to A&E Departments in Worcestershire*’ and the associated recommendations. The feedback has helped us to identify specific actions that we can take across the system to help reduce demand on our busy Emergency Departments.

The report has been discussed at a number of system forums and meetings across Worcestershire including the Worcestershire Pre-Hospital Working Group (which is a sub-group of the Worcestershire Home First Committee) and the Worcestershire Communications Cell. We were very grateful to Margaret Reilly for presenting the report at the latter, and for discussing the key findings in more depth with our senior communication officers.

As requested, I have outlined below some of the work already underway since the survey was undertaken, as well as additional commitments relating to your specific recommendations.

**Recommendations**

- 1. Review online information across all NHS organisations about access to urgent and emergency care to ensure that it is giving consistent, accurate messages to the public about alternatives to A&E and the preferred pathway**

The provision of clear, accurate and consistent online information to patients remains a priority for all system partners and piece of work to review this is being considered by the

Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS Communications and Engagement Group. As we become established as an ICS we recognise the opportunity to reduce duplication of information and make it easier for patients to access the information that is relevant to them. As part of this work a single website for Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICS is expected to launch next month which will include detailed information about the local urgent and non-urgent care pathways and provide advice about how to access services in an appropriate way. The aim is to provide a single source of information for patients seeking help and advice.

**2. Consider a single source of online information about NHS services in Worcestershire, that brings together up to date and accurate information for patients about Urgent & Emergency Care services that they can access in the County**

This should be achieved through the launch of the ICS website described above (in response to recommendation 1).

**3. Target communication about NHS 111 First, “Help Us to Help You” and alternatives to A&E - we found that males and younger people were more likely to self-refer to A&E, as were respondents who were private or social/housing association tenants, or living in supported or temporary accommodation and that self-referrers lived nearer to the A&E Departments and visited more frequently at the weekends**

As part of our system's 2021/22 winter plan, we worked together to deliver a single communication campaign with three phases under a refreshed 'Help Us Help You' brand. Elements of these phases include promotion of the NHS App, Primary Care, MIUs, NHS 111 and Pharmacies. The NHS 111 part of the campaign aimed to encourage people to use NHS 111 online first when they had an urgent but not life-threatening medical need, rather than going straight to A&E. The target audience was all adults, with a particular focus on young people (20-29) and parents of children (aged 5-12) and ran across TV, video-on-demand, social media and local print media.

Similar to your findings, we had also identified that many self-referrers lived near to the Emergency Departments. One specific targeted element of this campaign was therefore the delivery of an NHS 111 leaflet to all household addresses within a 5 km radius of both the Alexandra Hospital in Redditch and the Worcestershire Royal Hospital in Worcester.

We did not however target any communication specifically at those people living in social housing and this is certainly something our communication leads will undertake as part of the next phase of NHS 111 promotion during Spring.

**4. Promote the availability of the HANDi Paediatric App to parents in the County**

It is disappointing to see low levels of awareness surrounding the HANDi Paediatric App and confirms that additional targeted promotional activity is necessary. To date, we've shared information with partners and health professionals, and across a wide range of settings including schools and community health locations.

From April we will directly targeting parents and guardians of young people who have arrived at Emergency Departments, but who could have benefitted from using the app prior to visiting. We hope that this intervention will increase awareness and subsequent utilisation of the app ahead of any future visits.

**5. Ensure that information about NHS 111 First and alternatives to A&E are available in a range of formats, in accordance with the Accessible Information Standard, recognising that not everyone is able or willing to access online information**

We recognise the need to ensure that critical information is made available in a variety of different formats. In terms of NHS 111 information, we continue to work with health and community settings across the county to ensure hard copies of leaflets and posters are available for those people who may be reluctant or unable to access online information.

The recent leaflet door drop described above (in response to recommendation 3) also included information in a variety of different languages to encourage an understanding of the service among those groups whose first language may not be English.

We will continue to look at alternative offline methods of communication including digital advertising boards, mobile vans and continued engagement with print and broadcast media partners.

**6. Promote information about how the NHS 111 Online service can assist patients**

As part of the NHS 111 campaign that has recently been running all partners across the system have been supporting messages in relation to NHS 111 online and its associated benefits to patients. This campaign has been focusing specifically on helping patients to access the right treatment at the right place and has highlighted that NHS 111 online can direct patients to MIUs, GPs, pharmacies and emergency dental services, as well as arrange a call from a healthcare professional when appropriate.

**7. Promote information about what the NHS 111 telephone service can do for patients if they contact it - including providing advice and guidance, referral to community pharmacy, booking an appointment at a GP practice or Out of Hours GP service, booking a timed appointment at a Minor Injuries Unit or Accident & Emergency Department, and where necessary send an ambulance**

While the NHS 111 campaign described above (in response to recommendation 6) focuses on the online element of the service, it also involves promotion of the telephone option.

We will continue to promote and encourage the use of NHS 111 with posters in areas such as waiting rooms, reception areas and treatment rooms to give information on what the service can offer.

**8. Ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the NHS 111 telephone service to meet service demand in a timely fashion**

The NHS 111 telephone service performance has seen improvements in recent months. West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust, who provides the NHS 111 service in Worcestershire, has also recently recruited new call handlers. These call handlers are currently being trained, after which we expect to see further recovery in local performance.

**9. Review the information about Minor Injuries Units across organisations websites to ensure that there is clear and consistent information about what injuries can be treated at a Minor Injuries Unit, any exclusions due to age or injury, and when X-Ray facilities are available**

As part of the discussion at the Worcestershire Communications Cell it was agreed that all MIU information currently available online will be reviewed, and will be updated to include additional information as suggested where this is not currently provided.

**10. Ensure that this information is updated if there is a change to the published information**

Linked to the activity agreed through the Worcestershire Communications Cell (in response to recommendation 9) the group will also regularly review the online information to ensure there is a consistency between the services delivered by the MIUs and the information that is published on respective partner sites.

**11. Consider whether extending the X-Ray Department opening hours (for example into evenings and weekends) at Minor Injuries Units would be a realistic and effective way of relieving pressure on the A&E Department**

We are currently reviewing the MIU provision within Worcestershire, including the impact that diagnostics has on the utilisation of these services.

We are aware that MIU activity has not yet reached pre-pandemic levels and yet walk-in attendances to the A&Es have risen. We are working in partnership with all the relevant services to ensure that MIUs are able to meet the demands of the public. This includes an audit into the x-ray opening times at MIUs and associated impact on attendances to A&E, as well as considerations into Urgent Treatment Centres within Worcestershire.

**12. If part of the role of the Minor Injuries Units is to reduce patients presenting as walk ins at the two A&E Departments, the NHS system to consider whether MIU's are correctly located to meet the needs of patients in Worcester and Redditch**

This will be considered as part of the review into MIUs that is currently taking place as described above (in response to recommendation 11).

**13. Make patients aware that NHS 111 and their GP practice can alert A&E about a referral and that NHS 111 can book a timed appointment at A&E and MIU's**

This will be included as part of the messaging for the next phase of the NHS 111 communication campaign during Spring.

**14. Consider how to increase the proportion of patients who are sent to A&E by their GP with an alert or who are booked a timed appointment by NHS 111**

We will issue a reminder notice to all GPs via the CCG's weekly update to remind practices that they can book a timed appointment at A&E and MIUs where appropriate to do so.

**15. Ensure that there is sufficient capacity across the system so that alternatives to A&E are timely, accessible, and available to patients**

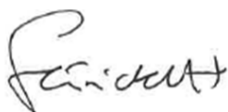
We have several collaborative working groups in place looking to increase the utilisation of alternatives to A&E. The overarching group is the Home First Committee, which is chaired by Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust's Chief Executive Matthew Hopkins. The Pre-Hospital workstream, which sits underneath this group, is looking to increase the use of services within the community, with the most significant scheme being the 2-hour community response service, which is primarily aimed at reducing ED attendances via ambulance.

In addition to this, the new Urgent and Emergency Care Major Redevelopment at Worcester will incorporate an expanded unit for Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC), to ensure those referred to specialist hospital teams by GPs do not need to present to the Emergency Department upon arrival.

NHS 111 has access to Primary Care appointments across the county and we regularly review the occasions where appointments are searched for but cannot be accommodated. We will continue to do this to identify trends and identify any mitigating actions that could be undertaken.

I hope the response to your recommendations demonstrate our collective commitment to acting upon the feedback provided within your report. May I take this opportunity to thank you again for the work undertaken, and for your ongoing support in seeking to improve urgent care provision for our patients in Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely,



**Simon Trickett**  
**Chief Executive**  
**NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG**



**C.C.**

Matthew Hopkins, Chief Executive, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Sarah Dugan, Chief Executive, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust

Mark Docherty – Director of Clinical Commissioning and Strategic Development / Executive Nurse

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