

Kirkham House  
John Comyn Drive  
WORCESTER  
WR3 7NS

0330 053 4356  
hw.enquiries@nhs.net

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Martin Gallagher  
Acting Chair  
Healthwatch Worcestershire  
Civic Centre  
Queen Elizabeth Drive  
Persore  
WR10 1PT

Dear Martin

**RE: Report of Engagement with People with Vision Impairment**

Thank you for sharing your *Report of Engagement with People with Vision Impairment* and the associated recommendations. The feedback that you have collected is extremely helpful and will be shared with all of the Programme Boards across our Integrated Care System (ICS) for consideration.

The Worcestershire Place Communications Cell, which includes representation from health and care partners within Worcestershire, has reviewed the recommendations and the system response is set out below.

**Identify system wide governance and clear leadership at Integrated Care Board level which takes responsibility for health and care services for people living with Vision Impairment**

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB) is accountable for the arrangement of health and care services within the county. The members of the Board hold collective responsibility for ensuring that decisions about health and care services do not disadvantage any protected groups, including those with visual impairments. A significant part of the governance arrangements introduced by the Board to support this is the requirement for equality impact assessments (EIAs) to be routinely completed when considering any potential changes to services. This allows us to understand the potential impact of our decisions on people with different protected characteristics, and importantly ensures that appropriate action is taken so

that we do not unfairly disadvantage any of these groups. As part of this approach, we routinely consider the impact on people with vision impairments.

**Ensure that services meet the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard. This includes a legal requirement to ask people about their communication needs, record and flag this information on records, pass it on to others when appropriate and ensure that the need is met.**

The Accessible Information Standard seeks to ensure that people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss get information that they can access and understand. All of the organisations in Worcestershire that provide NHS care and adult social care are committed to following the Standard, for example providing information in different formats such as easy read, or by arranging support such as British Sign Language (BSL) or deafblind interpreters where it is appropriate to do so. Trusts and GP practices within the system have different arrangements in place for how these needs are recorded on individual patient records.

**Ensure that health and social care information is available in a variety of formats as appropriate to people's individual needs. This should include paper, digital and braille and audio formats.**

All health and care partners are committed to making information accessible. Where requested, providers can offer face-to-face interpreting, instant telephone interpreting, BSL interpreting. They can also provide information in different formats including braille, large print, easy read, or audio. Once made aware of an individual's need, they will always seek to respond in a format that is relevant to the need of that person.

One area where health and care partners are seeking to improve is in relation to online information and ensuring that our websites demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Bodies (Website and Mobiles Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. This is a programme being led through the Worcestershire Communications Cell which brings together communication leads from health and care organisations across the county.

**Consider the introduction of the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) role within Worcestershire in every secondary health setting where a diagnosis may be made.**

Arrangements are already underway for the introduction of an Eye Care Liaison Officer for Worcestershire Acute Hospital NHS Trust's Ophthalmology Service. The Trust is working with the ICB, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Sight Concern Worcestershire and patient groups to get this set up. It is hoped that the ECLO will start later this year.

**If resources are not available to fully implement the ECLO role ensure that responsibility for ECLO functions as described by the RNIB are allocated to appropriate clinic staff, so that people get the support they need at diagnosis**

N/A

**Consider how people can be provided at the point of diagnosis with access to appropriate information, signposting and advice available in a variety of formats**

Worcestershire's Ophthalmology Service signposts patients to various support services (e.g Sight Concern) that are available to patients. This signposting is carried out both personally by a member of the service, as well as by the provision of information in clinic waiting areas.

**Review processes to ensure that Registration as Sight Impaired is streamlined, and consistently responsive from the perspective of service users**

A review of internal processes that are followed to ensure registration is streamlined and consistently responsive will be carried out by individual organisations across Worcestershire.

**Ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the Worcestershire County Council Sensory Impairment Team to meet the requirements of users, and potential users, of the service**

Worcestershire County Council is currently at the scoping phase of a project as a way to raise and enhance awareness specifically for BSL users and the D/deaf community. This is to ensure that they are aware, supportive, and proactive in providing services in a suitable way to a broader demographic of residents and colleagues.

Members of the Sensory Impairment Team are open to broadening the scope to cover multiple sensory impairments should they receive any requests. This is dependent on the time, skill, and funding resources being made available. The team has recently created and recruited a new post within the team. It has also recruited to replace a long-standing staff member who retired.

The Council continues to monitor waiting lists to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the team to meet demand.

**Consider the provision of vision impairment awareness training for front line staff in health and social care**

Worcestershire County Council's Sensory Impairment Team has some capacity to support social care staff with awareness training and is also contributing to the development of an e-learning module that will also be accessible to staff across the organisation. It is hoped that this e-learning module will also be made available to health staff working across the system via the Integrated Care System's Academy Exchange portal.

I hope the responses 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 this area.

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**

CC Mark Fitton, Director of People, Worcestershire County Council