

Healthwatch Worcestershire
Civic Centre
Queen Elizabeth Drive
Persnore
WR10 1PT
Tel: 01386 550 264
info@healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk
www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk



M Hopkins
Chief Executive Officer
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester
WR5 1DD

1 December 2021

Dear Mr Hopkins

Ref: Trauma Services and Planned Surgery

I am writing to you following Healthwatch Worcestershire's Public Board Meeting on Thursday 18 November 2021 about the changes the Trust recently implemented during the 'Perfect Ten' exercise to relocate more complex trauma cases from the Alexandra Hospital to Worcestershire Royal Hospital and planned surgery across a range of specialities from the Worcestershire Royal Hospital to the Alexandra Hospital. In doing so, I am aware that following media interest on 12 November, you met with Healthwatch Worcestershire's Managing Director and later that day the Trust, responding to our request published a briefing document which provided some further information about the changes.

Healthwatch Worcestershire's Board recognises that in making these changes the Trust was implementing recommendations that were first agreed as outcomes of the 'Review of Acute Hospital Services in Worcestershire' following a public consultation and were subsequently incorporated by the Trust in its' Clinical Services Strategy.

As I am sure you are aware the project to deliver the Review of Acute Hospital Services in Worcestershire took some 5 years to deliver, culminating with the Clinical Commissioning Groups decision in 2017. Whilst the Review was a matter of intense public debate in North Worcestershire, with considerable focus on the transfer of services from the Alexandra Hospital to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital there was relatively little publicity given to the Review's recommendations relating to elective surgery which will impact on patients in South Worcestershire.



Directors: Jo Ringshall, Simon Adams,
Jane Stanley, John Taylor, Martin Gallagher
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In response to the consultation the Decision-Making Business Case on which Worcestershire's Clinical Commissioning Groups agreed the future of acute hospital services in Worcestershire contained 2 recommendations which we understand were intended to mitigate the concerns of patients and the public as to the impact of relocating services across the Trust's hospital sites.

The recommendations I refer to are set out below:

- **Recommendation 8**
Transport and access - Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust must review the scheduling of its outpatient appointments and operations to take account of patient travel needs and individual circumstances. The Clinical Commissioning Groups and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals should work together with Community Transport Providers in Worcestershire to provide an enhanced transport service between the Alexandra and Worcestershire Royal Hospitals.
- **Recommendation 9**
Communication and education - Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and other local NHS partners must implement a comprehensive publicity campaign which clarifies where health services are available across the county and how people should access them.

At the time that the Review was agreed by the Clinical Commissioning Groups in 2017 maternity and paediatric services had already been moved from the Alexandra Hospital to the Worcestershire Royal Hospital for safety reasons. As I have indicated those changes attracted considerable publicity and thus it was reasonable to conclude that the community were aware of them, thus meeting the requirement of recommendation 9. Given the relatively limited nature of the changes in the context of the Review travel issues were focused on travel between Redditch and Worcester and whilst various initiatives were trialled there was little uptake for them which is not surprising given the nature of the services that had been moved.

Since 2017 there has been little if any publicity about the Review of Acute Hospital Services in Worcestershire and therefore Healthwatch Worcestershire's Board was concerned given the circumstances to learn of the Trusts implementation of changes to trauma services and planned surgery without a conversation about the progress in delivering the requirements of Recommendation 8 relating to transport and access, and how the Trust intended to meet the requirement of Recommendation 9 relating to communication and education.

During the Review of Acute Hospital Services In Worcestershire Healthwatch worked with NHS organisations to ensure the views of patients and the public from across the county were considered in developing the Review's recommendations. We will continue to work with you and other NHS organisations to ensure their successful implementation from a patient and public perspective. To that end, I would appreciate it if you could provide assurance about the Trust's progress and plans for implementing Recommendations 8 and 9 of the Review, and how Healthwatch might be able to contribute.

Our next Public Board Meeting is on the morning of 27 January 2022, to which, given the public interest in this matter, I would like to extend an invitation to you or your representative to attend to discuss the implementation of the Review's recommendations with Healthwatch Worcestershire's Board. I look forward to receiving your response to this letter and the invitation to attend our Board meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Ringshall'.

J Ringshall
Chair
Healthwatch Worcestershire

cc Simon Trickett, Chief Executive Officer, Herefordshire & Worcestershire NHS Clinical Commissioning Group

