

**Healthwatch Worcestershire's response to the Quality Account (draft sent 05/05/2023) of the West Midlands Ambulance University NHS Foundation Trust (WMAS) for the year 2022/23 approved at the HWW Public Board Meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023.**

Healthwatch Worcestershire [HWW] has a statutory role as the champion for those who use publicly funded health and care services in the county. Healthwatch Worcestershire welcomes the opportunity to comment on the West Midlands Ambulance University NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account [QA] for 2022/23.

This has been another challenging year for providers of NHS services and Healthwatch Worcestershire acknowledges the effort and commitment of the staff at the Trust who have been working hard to do their best for patients under difficult circumstances.

WMAS is not commissioned to deliver Non-Emergency Patient Transport in Worcestershire.

We have used national Healthwatch England guidance to form our response below.

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

We would make the following comments:

**Progress against 2022/23 Improvement Priorities:**

Of the five improvement priorities identified for 2022/23 four are being carried forward as improvement priorities for 2023/24 the exception to this is

- **Maternity:** which was an improvement priority in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Whilst good progress has been made not everything has been completed and it would be of benefit if the continued progress around maternity could be reported again in the 2023/24 Quality Accounts.

**The five improvement priorities for 2023/24:**

Healthwatch Worcestershire recognises that the five identified improvement priorities for 2023/24 are likely to improve patient experience, safety and outcomes although four of them have been carried over from 2022/23. However, there is a lack of detail around how the Trust will achieve its objectives and little in the way of measurable targets except in the final improvement priority of reducing patient harm incidents across the Trust. Therefore progress against the other four priorities will be subjective and difficult to evaluate.

- **Mental Health:** we welcome the continued focus on mental health supporting many of the most vulnerable patients. We note the proviso around funding from Integrated Care Boards to enable the delivery plan to be completed.
- **Integrated Emergency and Urgent Care Clinical Governance:** we acknowledge that the ability to quickly and accurately assess patient needs and identify the best response is key to achieving the best patient outcome

and that a renewed focus on this after exiting the NHS111 contract is reasonable. However, there is little detail about how this will be achieved and no specific targets or measures against which progress can be assessed.

- **Utilisation of Alternative Pathways** we are aware that as part of providing an effective emergency service to those who need it, there is also a benefit in creating the appropriate links into other services for those patients who do not have immediately life and limb threatening illness and injury. We note the continuing development of the Urgent Care Response pathway, the emphasis on collaboration and the pleasing number of referrals in Worcestershire. The QA improvement priority for 2023/24 mentions the continuing work to develop the most appropriate service model within each locality to most effectively manage long term conditions at home. However there is very little detail as to how this will be achieved or progress monitored.
- **Developing Role in Improving Public Health** whilst recognising that WMAS has an opportunity to support and improve public health through liaison with both patients and other healthcare providers, there is very little detail as to how this priority might be achieved and how progress will be evaluated.
- **Reducing patient harm incidents across the Trust.** This is a very straightforward improvement priority introduced this year and there is a clear link with improving patient care and patient outcomes. Reducing patient harm incidents, whilst retaining high incident reporting is key to continuous improvement which should enhance the standard of care received by the patient. The number of harm incidents for both Emergency and Non-Emergency patients will be recorded by quarter. Whilst there is no target set due to data fluidity and variance it will be a clearly measurable outcome.

## 2. Are there any important issues missed?

Healthwatch Worcestershire's principal concern is that patients who live or work in Worcestershire receive safe and quality services from the Trust. The main feedback we receive from patients and which is also reflected in the WMAS QA is around response times. Whilst we understand that this is largely a system issue there is very little in the improvement priorities which will impact on those response times.

We acknowledge that this has been another difficult year for NHS providers with system pressures continuing throughout the year. We appreciate the challenges that the Trust has faced particularly from Ambulance Handover delays.

Comparing with the 2021/22 QA we note that there has been a deterioration in response times in all four categories in 2022/23. This is particularly noticeable for Category 3 & Category 4. We are aware that this has occurred against a national background of deteriorating response times and ambulance handover delays. We note that WMAS has continued to exceed the national average in Category 1 response times.

Reviewing the Ambulance Quality Indicators (AQIs) we note that there has been a deterioration against previous years for the implementation of the STEMI and Stroke Care bundles and whilst the STEMI compares favourably with the National average the Stroke does not being ~9% lower. There has been a small increase in the SEPSIS Care Bundle application year on year which compares favourably with the National Average.

It would be useful to have an explanation of the significance of changes in AQIs for patients and the public.

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

In the section on Quality Priorities for 2023/24 there is a statement that:

"In deciding our quality priorities for 2023/24 for improving patient experience, patient safety and clinical quality, we have reviewed outputs from discussions with stakeholders throughout the year, engagement events, surveys, compliments, complaints and incident reporting. We regularly review all information available to us to identify trends and themes, this helps us to identify causes and priorities for improvement."

There is no other evidence that patients and the public have been involved in the production of the Quality Account.

We are not aware of the extent of patient engagement by WMAS in Worcestershire but would welcome any contact with the Public Governor representing the county.

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

Healthwatch Worcestershire acknowledges that a significant level of technical detail and content is required in the QA by NHSE and this makes it difficult to present the Quality Account clearly for patients and the public. However the 2022/23 QA is long, technically complex and contains many acronyms and a significant level of jargon which is not always explained. We suggested last year that perhaps the Trust could consider asking their patient group to review the QA template to provide input on a clearer and more approachable format. It would also be of benefit to patients and the public if a summary and easy read version were available.

Jo Ringshall

Chair

Healthwatch Worcestershire