

People's experience of leaving Worcestershire hospitals during Covid-19

142 patients and their carers shared their experience of leaving hospital during the Covid-19 pandemic with us. We also talked to some care homes and care agencies and to NHS and social care staff. This is a snapshot of what we learnt. Full Report and Summary are on our website. www.healthwatchworcestershire.co.uk

Communication

We heard how important good communication is to patients, carers and care providers.

45% of patients who responded to our Survey told us their family were not informed they were leaving hospital



Feeling prepared

1 in 3 patients did not feel ready to leave hospital. Some unpaid carers felt they didn't know enough about the health of their loved one when they left hospital.



Covid-19 testing

Not everyone is tested for Covid-19 when they leave hospital. This can cause anxiety for families and make it hard for care providers to plan.



Waiting to be discharged

Waiting for transport and medication were the two main reasons people waited to leave hospital.

It could be difficult for patients, families and care providers when people were discharged at weekends or at night.

37% of Survey respondents waited over 4hrs to leave hospital



Medication

Patients, carers and care providers need clear information about medication, what it is for and how to use it.



Discharge letters and forms

The amount of information people were given on discharge forms varied. Patients and carers were not always clear what to expect following their treatment or what was the future plan for their care.



Named contact for follow up

1 in 2 of respondents to our Survey were not given information about who to contact if they needed further health advice or support after leaving hospital.



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Community Services

40 respondents to our Survey had a visit from health or care services after they left hospital about their care and support needs. We had mixed reports about how well this worked. People were pleased when support was provided quickly and praised staff providing it. Concerns were expressed where support was needed, but not available, on discharge; plans for follow up care were not communicated well or where the support provided was felt to be limited.

It is important that patients circumstances at home are discussed with them well in advance of their discharge from hospital.

Support for Families and Carers

Some carers did not see themselves as in need of support, but others described the additional stress placed upon them during the Covid-19 pandemic. Good communication about their loved one during their hospital stay, the plans for them leaving hospital and what happens next are important to families and carers

Half of unpaid carers responding to our Survey felt their caring responsibilities were not considered when they should have been



NHS & Social Care Staff

People recognised that NHS and Social Care staff are working hard, under difficult circumstances, to do their best for patients and families.

Some NHS staff thought hospital discharge could be improved by starting planning earlier, and sometimes it could be difficult to find the right care for people who were ready to leave hospital but needed further support. Social care staff told us they welcomed being able to do things in a way that was right for the person, rather than a more rigid approach.

It was clear that NHS and social care staff wanted to get it right for patients.

What Next?



Based on what people told us we made 29 recommendations about how hospital discharge could be improved for patients and families. These covered improved communication, better planning for and timing of when people leave hospital, Covid-19 testing, transport and medication, information to patients after they have been discharged, follow up contacts, support at home and in the community, improved dialogue with care providers and support for carers. We have asked the NHS and Social Care for a reply and will be following up on the recommendations in this Report.