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20 June 2017

Dear patient

Care Quality Commission reports following inspection of Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust in November and December 2016

As you may be aware, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has today published its reports into Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, and the hospitals and services we run – Worcestershire Royal Hospital, the Kidderminster Hospital and Treatment Centre and the Alexandra Hospital. The reports recommend that the Trust remains in ‘special measures’ and I wanted to let you know what that means for patients and the services you use.

Hospitals in special measures aren’t considered to be delivering high quality care consistently, across all services, all of the time. These hospitals therefore receive support to make urgent improvements, and the quality of care they provide is monitored. The Trust has been in special measures since November 2015.

In November 2016, the CQC made an announced inspection of our hospitals, followed in December by an unannounced visit, as part of its programme of checking that NHS services meet certain standards. The CQC reports give the full detail of the inspections and based on the findings from their visit it rates the Trust ‘inadequate’ overall.

We are disappointed with, but fully accept, the CQC’s findings. We are sorry we have let you, the people that use our services, down by not meeting the quality standards you rightly expect from us. We want all our patients to get the best care possible and we regret that this isn’t always happening, but we are determined to put things right. We have already made a number of improvements since the inspections, including to our children’s and maternity services, but we still have some way to go.

One of the problems identified by the CQC was leadership; for many years the Trust’s senior posts were filled on an interim basis. We now have a new and permanent leadership team in place, and have continued building on and strengthening the Trust’s improvement programme. We are committed to making the changes needed happen as quickly as possible so we can consistently deliver high quality standards for patients across all our services. For example, we have:

- Updated our plans for dealing with significant peaks in the number of patients we see, particularly so patients have a better experience at busier times
- Updated our policy and the way we ensure male and female patients are treated in separate areas when clinically appropriate to do so, making sure we focus on their privacy and dignity
- Improved our systems and processes to make sure medicines are stored correctly and all staff receive full training around administering medicines safely
- Ensured we learn from mistakes when they do occur; with robust systems in place for reporting incidents, and improved induction and training for staff – as per best practice in other hospitals
- Ensured staff have received appropriate levels of training to care for the specific needs of children



- Ensured patients with fractured hips quickly receive the appropriate surgical treatment for their condition in our theatres which improves their experience and their outcomes from surgery
- Introduced a system for senior nurses when they lead audits and reviews on professional standards, to make sure these are consistent across the Trust
- Launched a Trust wide dementia strategy to support staff to better care for the needs of patients with dementia
- Ensured patients with urgent gynecological problems are fast tracked so they are seen quickly and offered the appropriate treatment as soon as possible for their condition
- Implemented new processes to our electronic systems, working with the Regional Safeguarding Board to ensure appropriate levels of safeguarding is in place for children in our care.

In the meantime, we would like to assure patients that you should continue to use our hospitals as normal. We do not want you to put off seeking advice or receiving treatment from us because of this. It is really important you continue to attend our hospitals for appointments, operations and treatment as planned.

The national regulators themselves (the CQC and NHS Improvement) say it is safe to be treated in a hospital that is in 'special measures'. The report acknowledges the good care across our organisation. It is aspects of our systems, processes and culture that we must rapidly address. Our staff continue to deliver compassionate care to the thousands of patients who use our services every day. The inspectors said that services were provided by dedicated, caring staff, and that patients were treated with kindness, dignity and respect and were provided with the appropriate emotional support.

On our website www.worcsacute.nhs.uk are some 'frequently asked questions' that you may want to refer to, and you can also ask our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) for a copy of these. To get more information you can talk to a member of staff, or speak to someone in our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 123 1732 or by email at wah-tr.PET@nhs.net

Whilst we have improvements to make in some services we are working hard to make the necessary improvements to deliver the highest standards every day in every service for our patients and local communities.

Yours faithfully

Michelle McKay
Chief Executive

