

PRESS RELEASE

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Care Quality Commission report published highlighting good care

Following its inspection back in July, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) recognised Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust as a very caring organisation, although it was given an overall rating of inadequate due largely to concerns over the risks about its maternity and paediatrics services.

Despite these concerns, maternity services were actually rated as outstanding for care being given in sometimes difficult circumstances and the CQC also commended the Trust's leadership team for the level of understanding and commitment shown over recent months.

Of the 115 domains reviewed in July, 54 were rated as good, 46 require improvement, 13 were inadequate and 2 domains were outstanding. Whilst the overall rating from the CQC is disappointing given the many positives found, it should be noted that the areas rated as inadequate are largely centred on services that the Trust and its commissioners have already recognised as needing change. Therefore, the CQC report is helpful in endorsing the actions already taken or planned to occur in the near future. For example, the enhanced leadership and governance support provided to maternity and paediatric services since July, coupled with the recent decision to temporarily suspend birthing services at the Alexandra Hospital, has significantly reduced the risk profile of the services.

Chris Tidman, Chief Executive said: "We are grateful to the CQC inspectors for their comprehensive report following their visit four months ago. They clearly recognised the challenges we were facing and the high level of care delivered by our staff across all areas of our services, rating all areas good with outstanding ratings for care in our maternity and gynaecology services. Some 95% of our patients, who respond to our monthly patient feedback survey, say that they would recommend the service to their family and friends, which is better than the England average of 88%. The feedback from patients during the inspection also demonstrates the excellent and compassionate care delivered to our patients on a daily basis.

"Everyone working at our hospitals will be very disappointed that overall we are rated as inadequate, especially following the efforts all our teams have made in the last four months since the inspection to improve our services. We recognise that we have achieved a great deal in a short space of time, including improving

against key performance targets, but we are by no means complacent. We still have a great deal of work to do especially around processes and procedures. We remain focused on continuing to improve. The added support from organisations in specific areas, as confirmed by the Trust Development Authority as part of the special measures arrangement, are welcomed and we look forward to the additional expertise these will bring.

“We would like to thank our patients, our staff and local people for their loyalty and support, and assure them that we are committed to making these improvements so that we can continue to offer caring services to local people.”

At the time of inspection, the CQC has recommended that the Trust required an enhanced level of support. Special measures in the NHS means that an organisation is provided with additional support to assist in a programme of further improvement. With an Improvement Director in place, support being received from ECIP (the national Emergency Care Improvement Programme team) and external leadership support already being received in maternity and paediatrics services, much of this has effectively already been put in place. The Trust will continue to review where other support may be of assistance.

In its report the CQC reflected on the concerns raised by the Trust with regard to emergency surgery at Alexandra Hospital due to the shortages of substantive staff. Whilst plans are in place to address this, the clinical teams are ensuring that patients are seen and treated appropriately across all sites. Despite the complications and risk of running two sites, the Trust’s outcomes for patients are generally comparable with peer trusts. One area which has been highlighted by the CQC for further consideration is the Trust’s elective caesarean rates which appear to be showing an increasing trend. The Trust is above the national average for performing elective caesarean procedures.

Commenting on this the Trust’s Chief Medical Officer Dr Andy Phillips said: “We actively look at every area of our services, benchmarking with our peers locally and nationally. We need to assure ourselves that our elective caesarean rates are appropriate. In addition, we are undertaking comprehensive work to ensure that every hospital death is reviewed by a senior clinician to ensure that any improvements in care are identified and practices are improved to deliver the safest services possible. We are committed to making sure we deliver quality safe services for every patient every time.”

Outstanding practice

The CQC report has detailed areas of outstanding practice including critical care, palliative care and the elderly care delivered on Avon 4 ward at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital. The Trust’s innovative pharmacy seven-day clinical service already operating in A&E helps patients and prevents

unnecessary admissions. Also the direct access to electronic information from community services, including GPs, enables the Trust's clinical teams to access up-to-date patient information, supporting faster diagnosis and treatment.

Outcomes have been highlighted in A&E at Worcestershire Royal Hospital to be better than the national average. Back in March 2015 the CQC inspected Worcestershire Royal Hospital and in just three months the CQC team reported they had seen major improvements following their July visit.

Dr Andy Phillips, Chief Medical Officer, commenting on the recent visit from Health Education West Midlands said: "We recognise we still have a great deal of work to do and want to reassure all of our patients and local people that safety remains our top propriety. In November we hosted a visit from Health Education West Midlands which assessed junior doctors' experiences and the support provided to our trainee doctors. The feedback from the visit was very positive with the inspection team highlighting significant improvements.

"We have focused on continuing to improve all of our services since the CQC inspection in July and in the last four months we have improved performance in emergency services with us now seeing and treating over 91% in November, in under four hours (when the CQC visited this was averaging 85%). The CQC inspectors highlighted how the introduction of our pre-admissions area had reduced overcrowding in A&E and this improvement work has continued with the opening of a new ward at Worcestershire Royal Hospital in November. This will enable us to continue to improve our performance during the coming busy winter months. Our new ambulatory care service, which has just commenced, will mean that those who need support, but not a hospital bed, will receive it quickly without having to be admitted to a ward. This will continue to reduce pressures, improve ambulance handover times and improve patient care and safety."

One of the five domains which the CQC judges organisations on is 'well led'. In the Trust's report the CQC complemented the existing executive team for the work over recent months. However, when assessing the well led rating, the CQC raised concerns about the number of interim arrangements, and the need for stability.

Harry Turner, Chairman of the Trust said: "I am pleased that the effort of the executive team has been recognised in this report. The Board is committed to ensuring stability as this is a key feature of a well led organisation. We are currently, actively looking to recruit a permanent executive team and have already commenced the recruitment process for a permanent chief executive. Since the inspection visited us, all of our teams and staff have worked relentlessly to make further advancements so that we can continue to deliver quality safe care for our patients. This is something we will continue to drive over the coming months."

Simon Hairsnape, Chief Officer, and Simon Trickett, Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of the three Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Groups said: “We welcome the findings from the latest CQC report. Although disappointed with the overall rating for the Trust and the recommendation for it to be placed in special measures, we are pleased to see the CQC judged that the Trust’s staff do treat people with compassion, kindness, dignity and respect. We are determined to ensure that the issues raised by the CQC are being addressed by the Trust. Patient safety remains our top priority and we will continue to work closely with the Trust to help them make the improvements that are required.”

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