

Worcestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) - 18th April 2023

In the premeeting there was a general discussion on pharmacies, the different types and what they could prescribe. Also, the second item was on the safety of computers and digital technology.

We were told that the role of pharmacies has been changing but that as in all health-related industries there was a shortage of staff and in pharmacies there was also a shortage of some drugs. Pharmacies work on a 40-hour contract but may be asked by Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) to open for longer and would be paid more for this. It was explained that locums were expensive and difficult to find when opening longer.

Given the government's Self Care Agenda there was the need for the enhancement of services and as pharmacists were highly qualified there was room for even more, such as the prescribing of antibiotics. On the issue of charges, HOSC were told that in many cases the majority of the costs is tax collected by the pharmacist on behalf of the government.

It is possible for pharmacies of high quality to be paid more but needed to deliver exceptional quality. It was a shock to learn that the Lloyds group was closing many of its branches in June but we were told that pharmacies are resilient and this would be covered. It was hoped that GPs and pharmacies could work more closely to improve the health of everyone. For example, GPs can dial up a translator if needed but this is not available to a pharmacist.

The situation relating to the cyber-attack of the health records was explained and it was anticipated that all records for Worcestershire would be available again by late June 2023. Only one supplier of IT software had been attacked but they supplied the whole of UK. When asked we were told that the cost to Worcestershire was about £1m even though we had a range of storage arrangements, some data has been lost and other data will take time to reinstall. The officers believed that no damage to/or loss of personal details was involved.

As this may be my last report, I do hope that it has been an aid to sleep and has shed some light on what happens at outside body meetings.

Councillor Mike Chalk