

Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 11/10/2023

Link to papers:

<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=5774>

Agenda items:

5. Vice Chairman

Congratulations to Cllr Christine Wild from Malvern for being elected as the Vice Chair.

6. Hill Crest Mental Health Ward

Concerns were raised about the Hill Crest Mental Health facility by the CQC in July 2022. The themes of the concerns raised were:

- Patient care plans and records
- Patient risk assessments
- Incidents reporting
- A reliance on agency staff
- Environment and estates issues
- Sexual safety on a mixed gender ward
- Staff handovers
- Governance of the ward.

Actions have been put in place to improve the situation. These measures include reducing the number of beds from 18 to 10, installing CCTV in hard to see areas, block booking agency staff for continuity and new management. The Leadership team created a multi-level improvement plan which resulted in 56 workstreams and over 200 individual tasks. The improvement plan has been completed with no critical outstanding issues. Workforce continues to be an issue nationally.

The lost beds in this facility have meant the trust has been outsourcing beds to an external supplier Ty Grosvenor in Wrexham; this is not an ideal set up due to the distance away and is not a good long term solution.

Due to the design of the Hill Crest suite, which is no longer a design that would be deemed good within clinical environments and its isolation to other mental health wards the trust are looking at a more permanent solution.

Recently the Trust upgraded Athelon ward with the purpose of it being used for older adult acute care. However due to the new Hospital at Home Team, there is no requirement for this ward after February 2024 and it is likely to be mothballed.

The Athelon ward has had significant investment, is a much better set up with no dormitories and it is close to another mental health ward. The bed capacity is 14 beds. Moving the Hill Crest facility to Athelon will result in the trust no longer needing to outsource beds to Wrexham and will see an improvement in the offering to patients. Ultimately resulting in better outcomes.

It is important to note that beds in Hill Crest are for the entire County and not specific to Redditch and that the building would be repurposed for psychiatry and rehabilitation services and not mothballed.

Currently the Trust are in consultation mode and have consulted with staff involved. There is a listening session scheduled for November 13th at 1.30pm at the Ecumenical Centre for residents to ask questions and voice their opinions on the plans.

7. Childrens Hearing Services

In October 2022 inconsistencies in the interpretation of the ABR hearing tests were identified by WHAT. The ABR test is a hearing screening which babies are sent to if a baby fails the newborn hearing screening.

The Trust have re-tested 140 children born after 2018 and so far, found 23 cases of harm due to misdiagnosis have been found. The trust is working with parents to give advice and support.

The trust is now reviewing ABR's conducted on babies born in 2015 to 2018. Children in this age group would likely already be under the speech and language therapist, in specialist education settings or awaiting behavioural testing. The expectation would be that there would be very few children who are still unaware they have hearing loss.

8. Planning for winter

This winter the trust is concentrating on keeping people out of hospital through working with care homes and operating virtual wards. Virtual wards will allow patients who need to be monitored regularly (around 4 times a day) to remain at home. This covers respiratory tract infections and other conditions which do not require continual monitoring. Utilising technology to monitor patients remotely will be an important aspect in the virtual ward.

Covid is no longer seen as a major risk factor. Patients are not entering the hospital because they are sick from Covid at this point. However, patients are being found to have Covid once admitted for another reason. The continuation of the vaccine roll out will continue to be important to maintain this position.

The Trust is creating a single point of contact for doctors, health care professionals etc to contact. This is expected to reduce the numbers of people coming into hospital. Messaging to residents will still be important to ensure patients present at the most appropriate place such as GP or minor injury units rather than A&E.

20 extra beds will be available this winter in community hospitals to reduce the pressures on the acute hospitals.

During the debate I brought up Occupational Therapists and the ongoing need for reports to be generated to facilitate social housing to carry out necessary adjustments on properties to both prevent hospital stays and to allow patients to return home swiftly. OT reports are also vital to allow for the DFG to be spent for those in private properties.

9. Work Planning

In light of the discussion around DFG it was proposed that the Committee have a task and finish on how the current system is working. We are therefore asking all district councils to request a report be brought before their appropriate scrutiny committee. This report will then be fed into the HOSC task and finish group. We need to know how much we are typically spending from the funding, how

much Officer time it is taking up and what the challenges are in delivering the funding efficiently to actively keep residents out of either hospital or care facilities. We must be honest that the current system is not seeing the improved outcomes it is intended for and therefore it is prudent to have a deep dive into the system and what could be done on the Councils side to improve it.

Councillor Emma Marshall

Redditch Borough Council's Representative on Worcestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee