

Healthwatch Coventry commentary

Healthwatch Coventry represents the interests of patients and public in local NHS and social care services. This is our 'commentary' on the evidence WMAS has produced about how it addresses quality of service.

Local Healthwatch are asked to consider if a Trust's quality account shows the following:

- Does it reflect peoples' real experiences as told to Healthwatch
- Is it clear from the draft that there is a learning culture in the Trust that allows people's real experiences to help the provider get better
- Are priorities for improvement in the Quality Account challenging enough and is it clear how improvement will be measured?

This has been an extraordinary and difficult year for NHS services due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this has impacted on the focus of West Midlands Ambulance Service and progress toward the priorities it set for the year.

The Trust reports increasing its fleet and keeping pace with demand of PPE.

They also took on the provision of NHS 111 in the region again stating that *calls [were] answered more quickly than many other 111 services in the country*. However there remains a lack of transparency regarding NHS 111 performance and the Healthwatch Coventry Steering group would like to see this addressed through regular performance data and information being available throughout the year. Information is not in the public domain and it is not possible to see the figures behind this statement that WMAS 111 was able to answer calls more quickly than other areas of the country. Concerns about the responsiveness of NHS 111 were raised with us by patients/public during this year. A lot was being asked of the service with national announcements made to encourage people to use the service seemingly before the service was able to scale up to meet the demand.

Priorities for Improvement 2021/22

Cardiac arrest management

The Trust gives a clear rationale for the inclusion of this priority

Maternity

The interim Okenden report about failings in maternity care has brought a focus in the NHS on maternity care and it therefore appropriate for WMAS to add a priority for the coming year. The steps the trust highlights to improve information and gather feedback from women are welcome.

Reduction on patient harm incidents

We would expect the trust to continually be working to reduce patient harm.

Learning from Patients feedback

We agree that gathering patient feedback about NHS111 should be a priority for the trust and look forward to hearing the insights from those who use the service. We strongly suggest the trust invest in mixed methods for doing this as using a purely online approach will disadvantage some people who are excluded from this route, for different reasons. The trust should also have an equalities plan around gathering feedback. Healthwatch would be interested to understand the questions to be used and the West Midlands Healthwatch network could be a useful touch point for the trust regarding this work. We hope that this can become a rolling route to gathering feedback rather than a one off survey.

For the patient transport service the trust will use a new way to try to gather patient feedback via a quarterly telephone survey. This is positive development. We know from our previous work that people who use the non-emergency patient transport service regularly can be concerned about raising comments. Therefore, the trust should consider how they can provide reassurance that raising an issue or giving a view will not negatively impact on care.

Generally, WMAS should gather more feedback and use this to feed into its quality goals.

NHS 111

The trust provides some overarching figures for the percentage for the outcomes of calls to NHS 111. I would be helpful to be able to see a more detailed breakdown, for example GPs separate from other services and detail on what the other service are. Ensuring caller are directed to the most appropriate service is crucial for the NHS 111 effectiveness.

Quality indicators and research

There is a good spread of projects across the clinical spectrum reported, covering the main life-threatening conditions for patients. It is also pleasing to note an investigation into the wellbeing of ambulance staff, given the particularly high rate of sickness in this group.

The collection, reporting and auditing of clinical data is appropriate and the service has performed well against the national averages for the four categories, as measured by the Ambulance Quality Indicators.

Operational performance

The trust is reporting emergency ambulance response times that are better than the national average.

Environmental and sustainability report

It is positive that the ambulance fleet meets the new Birmingham emissions targets.

Learning from deaths

The Trust is undertaking case record reviews for all deaths in WMAS care and evidences its work to review incidents.

Staff survey

The document highlights the areas where staff are more positive in their responses than the national average and those were they are less positive.

Review of the priorities for 2020-21

Achievement of the priorities set for 2020-21 was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of responses to the patient experience survey was small but then the survey was not sent out to a big sample.

Overall

From the document it does appear that the Trust is keen to note and willing to learn from mistakes. The Trust identifies key areas to focus their learning and staff development.

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