

30th April, 2019

Statement from Healthwatch Birmingham on West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust Quality Account 2018/19

Healthwatch Birmingham welcomes the opportunity to provide a statement on the Quality Account for West Midlands Ambulance Service University NHS Foundation Trust 2018/19. Healthwatch Birmingham is pleased to see that the Trust has continued to act on stakeholder responses to the Quality Accounts, including our comments to the 2018/19 Quality accounts. For instance, that the:

- Trust will update the final version of the Quality Account to ensure that the information is localised in terms of performance, patient safety, and quality. Including signposting the public to appropriate Trust's webpages.
- Trust develops their priorities through an integrated process using inputs from complaints, compliments, incidents reports, risk management, patient safety and safeguarding reports.
- Trust has updated some aspects of this year's account to provide quantifiable information that demonstrates how the Trust has achieved the previous year's priorities.

Patient and Public Involvement

In our response to the Trust's 2018/19 Quality Accounts, we asked to see the following in the 2018/19 Quality Accounts in relation to patient and public involvement:

- A demonstration of how patient experience sessions have informed changes within the Trust;
- Evidence of how the Trust has used patient experience, insight and feedback to address health inequality; and
- We also asked the Trust to consider developing a strategy that outlines how and why patients, the public and carers are engaged in plans to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequality. Healthwatch Birmingham believes that such a strategy will ensure that there is commitment across the Trust to using patient and public insight, experience and involvement.

It is positive to see the actions taken by the Trust in response to patient experiences and feedback from the Patient Transport Service Survey. The "You said, we did" examples of using patient feedback provided in the Quality Account (p63 of the draft) is useful and encourages patients to provide feedback as there is evidence that their involvement actually influences change and decision-making.

In our response to the 2017/18 Quality Accounts, we expressed concern about the response rate for the Friends and Family Test (FFT). It is positive to see that the FFT response rate has increased from 280 (2017/18) to 1085 (2018/19) with 748 people indicating that they were extremely likely to recommend non-emergency and emergency services to their friends and family (FFT). Whilst this is useful, the Trust could elaborate on whether it collects and how it uses qualitative data gathered from the FFT to understand why people say they were unlikely and extremely unlikely to recommend the Trust to their friends and family.

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We support the Trust's initiative to increase feedback through direct liaison with patients whilst in hospital units. In particular, that the Trust has received 296 pieces of patient feedback by visiting at least one hospital in the five contracts the Trust holds. We look forward to reading in the 2019/20 Quality Accounts how this has informed improvements and learning within the Trust.

In response to our comments to the 2017/18 Quality Account about the lack of evidence of the use of patients and public feedback, especially in developing the Quality Account, the Trust state's: *the priorities are developed through an integrated process using input from complaints, compliments, incident reports, risk management, patient safety and safeguarding reports. This process is shared regularly with commissioners and is held in very high regard due to the robust and thorough approach used.* This is to be commended. However, it is not clear how representative these processes are and how diverse the people who leave compliments, complaints or any other patient safety related issues. Healthwatch Birmingham still believes that the Trust would benefit from developing a Patient Public Involvement (PPI) Strategy that would ensure that engagement activities are equitable and representative of the localities the Trust works in. A PPI strategy would outline:

- Why the Trust is listening?
- What the Trust listens for?
- How the Trust listens?
- Who you want to hear from (including 'seldom-heard' groups)?
- How the Trust will use what it hears?
- Clear arrangements for collating feedback and experience.

Over the past year, Healthwatch Birmingham has worked with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Trusts to benchmark their patient and public involvement (PPI) processes using Healthwatch Birmingham's Quality Standard. Thus enabling them to identify areas of good PPI practice or areas that need to improve. This has led to the development of actions aimed at embedding systems for delivering consistently high quality PPI. Healthwatch Birmingham has been in contact with WMAS Head of Patient Experience on this project and we hope to continue working with the Trust moving forward.

It is positive to see that the Trust has continued to increase the NHS Staff Survey scores, with WMAS ranked amongst the top three performers in the country. Again, more Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME) staff have responded to this survey compared to 2017/18. We note, however, that only 35% of staff report that there is good communication between senior management and staff; and 47.6% say that they are treated fairly when they are involved in an error, near miss or incident; and only 26% say they are involved in deciding changes that affect their work. We would like to read in the 2019/20 Quality Account, the actions taken by the Staff Survey Response Action Group following their analysis and review of the survey results. We would also like to read how survey responses from BME staff inform other equality standards, such the Workforce Race Equality Standard.

We welcome the Trusts five equality objectives, especially on building trust and confidence with the community you work with, patients, carers and their families through effective communication, engagement and partnership working. As already mentioned, we believe a PPI strategy would be useful in meeting this objective.

LEARNING

In our review of the Trust's 2017/18 Quality Accounts, Healthwatch Birmingham asked to see examples of learning that has occurred from complaints and changes taken as a result in the 2018/19 Quality Account. We welcome the inclusion of examples of learning from complaints and PALS provided on p60/61 of the draft. In particular, openness around the cancellation of hospital appointments due to transport delays. It is positive that learning is noted and actioned when a complaint is upheld, it would also be good practice to learn from complaints which are not upheld. We would like to read in the 2019/20 Quality Accounts more examples of learning that has occurred because of complaints and PALS contact. Especially, the impact of changes made as a result of learning.

Learning from Audits

We note the number of audits, in particular local audits that the Trust has been involved in such as the delivery of mental health care, management of head injury, maternity, learning from deaths and the care of patients discharge at scene. These broadly reflect what patients, service users and carers have shared with Healthwatch Birmingham. It is therefore pleasing to see that learning has already taken place in relation to some of these audits. Particularly, the development of an internal Non-transportation and Referral Policy for staff to ensure that there is a system in place for the safe discharge of patients. Discharge has been an issue that Healthwatch Birmingham has heard about from many members of the public, especially where people do not have the right information or support for continued care. We therefore, welcome that the policy includes guidance on referral to alternative pathways, increasing the aim of improving safe care closer to home. We would like to read in the 2019/20 Quality Account, the impact that the policy has had to ensure that patients receive appropriate patient care and advice.

Learning from Death

We welcome that the Trust has implemented the Learning from Death Framework and has employed a full time patient safety officer. We note that during 2018/19, 639 of WMAS patients died. Of these, 106 case record reviews and 18 investigations were conducted, and 515 required no further action.

As a result of these reviews and investigations, we note that the Trust has carried out education & training of staff, purchasing of equipment, and changes to clinical guidelines and policies. However, it is not clear how or whether learning from death is shared across the Trust. We would like to see examples in the 2019/20 Quality Accounts of how the Learning Review Group effectively shares learning across the Trust, and how the Trust ensures that review and investigation findings are implemented effectively. In addition, it would be useful to indicate what lessons (positive or negative) have been drawn from the 515 of the 639 incidents reported that required no further action.

Patient Safety and Experience

The key themes identified by the Trust from patient safety cases and complaints reflect some of the feedback Healthwatch Birmingham has received over the year. We note the key themes of clinical treatment, timelines of 999 ambulance and patient transport service vehicles and professional conduct (especially of call takers). We look forward to reading how the Trust have addressed these in the 2019/20 Quality Accounts.

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It would be useful to put a link to make it easier for the public to access the patient safety section. At present, the Trust refers to the patient safety section of the website under the 'sign up to safety' and 'duty of candour' sections.

Priorities for 2019/20

The priorities for 2019/20 have been clearly set out and we are pleased to see that there is an inclusion of how the Trust will measure success. A continued focus on patient experience, patient safety, and clinical effectiveness is important. Of concern for Healthwatch Birmingham is that, under the patient experience priority, it is not clear how the Trust will ensure that it is hearing from a diverse group of people. We are particularly keen the Trust hears feedback from 'seldom heard groups'. We would like to read in the 2019/20 Quality Account, the range of people the Trust has engaged with using the strategies outlined in the current Quality Account.

We note that the Trust recognises that there are issues they need to address in relation to non-emergency transport services. We suggest that this issue is included as one of the Trust's priorities for 2019/20.

Healthwatch Birmingham is pleased that the West Midlands Ambulance Service continues to meet the new standards under the new Ambulance Response Programme metrics and has been cited by the Lord Carter's Review as one of the most efficient services on every single measure.



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