

## **HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **27 JANUARY 2021**

## **UPDATE ON HEALTH SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

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### **Summary**

1. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) is to have a further update on the restoration stage of health services following the initial COVID-19 response.
2. The HOSC received reports on 18 June, 20 July, 30 September and 16 November 2020 outlining the response of health and social care services to the COVID-19 pandemic and early thoughts about how working practices were envisaged to change as a result of learning from new ways of working. The HOSC was also advised about services which have changed temporarily in response to the pandemic, either because it was not possible to keep the service safe, or because staff had to be redeployed to services considered of higher priority.
3. Representatives have been invited from NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.
4. It is envisaged that this update will contribute to further scrutiny as health services continue to recover, and HOSC members have requested regular updates on any temporary service changes made in response to COVID-19.
5. The update will also build on the HOSC's on-going scrutiny to review performance of acute hospital services in Worcestershire and the impact on, and roles of, commissioners and health and care providers.
6. The information provided for the Committee's most recent update on 16 November 2020 is available here: [agenda and minutes](#)

### **Restoration of temporary service changes**

7. The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) remains the road map for service integration and transformation and the majority of temporary service changes that have been made align with the LTP.
8. Whilst the NHS remains in emergency response mode, it may be necessary to make rapid changes to services as the situation changes. The NHS will retain flexibility across the system to respond to the changing environment.
9. As the NHS works through the temporary service changes it will always prioritise the safety of service users, patients, staff and the public – for some services it is currently not possible to fully restore them and comply with social distancing guidelines.

10. The NHS is continuing to monitor the impact and any benefits of temporary service changes on all the users of our services, keeping quality and equality impact assessments up to date, monitoring health inequalities and digitally excluded users of services. All services are proactively reviewing patients who are waiting to be seen and prioritising those at highest risk.

11. Proposals to make any temporary service changes into permanent changes would be subject to appropriate engagement and consultation to ensure patients and stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved before any decisions are made.

### **Current system pressures and service changes**

12. On 4 January 2021, the UK Chief Medical Officers recommended that the UK COVID-19 alert level should be moved from Level 4 to Level 5 based on the NHS being under immense pressure.

13. Unfortunately, these same pressures are being reflected within the local health system. Over the past few weeks, the number of in-patients within Worcestershire's hospitals who have tested positive for Covid-19 have continued to increase, and community prevalence rates across Worcestershire remain high. Demand for primary care services also remain high at a time when they are delivering the COVID-19 vaccination to patients.

14. As a result of the current situation, system partners have agreed that all health organisations in Worcestershire move to the highest level of COVID-19 alert escalation.

15. This decision means having to take some very difficult decisions in the interests of patient safety, including restricting elective activity taking place at the Alexandra Hospital and Worcestershire Royal Hospital to prioritise more urgent and emergency services, and to improve the flow of patients out of hospital and into the community.

16. As part of this, community services that provide care to people in their own homes are reprioritising their work to focus on essential care to support admission avoidance and supporting timely hospital discharge.

17. Additionally, all face-to-face, non-essential countywide community services out-patient clinics in Worcestershire have been temporarily stood down so that staff can be redeployed into other critical services to support patients.

18. All affected patients are being contacted and, where appropriate, reviewed to determine any additional support required during this time.

19. It is expected that this situation will continue for several weeks, but it will be regularly reviewed, and normal services will resume at the earliest possible opportunity.

## Supporting Information

20. System performance:

- [NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG Performance Report – November 2020](#)
- [Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust Board Papers - Integrated Performance Report – 14 January 2021 \(page 29\)](#)
- [Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust Board Papers - Performance Report – 13 January 2021 \(page 117\)](#)

21. COVID-19:

- [Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust Board Papers - COVID-19 Longer View Update 31 December 2020 - 14 January 2021 \(page 16\)](#)
- [Data Dashboard - Deaths with COVID-19 on the death certificate by area](#)
- [Data Dashboard - Number of COVID-19 vaccinations by region](#)

## Purpose of the Meeting

22. Members are invited to consider and comment on the information discussed and agree:

- whether any further information is required
- whether any further scrutiny work is required at this stage.

## Contact Points

Emma James / Jo Weston, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844964 / 844965  
Email: [scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk)

## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes from the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 March, 18 June, 20 July, 30 September and 16 November 2020 – available on the website: [Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agendas and Minutes](#)
- Agenda and Minutes from COVID-19 Report to Cabinet on 4 June and 25 June 2020 – available on the website: [Cabinet Agendas and minutes](#)