

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2023

HILLCREST MENTAL HEALTH WARD

Summary

1. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on Hillcrest Mental Health Ward, in order to seek assurance on actions taken by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust (the Trust), following concerns about safety and staffing raised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
2. The Chief Executive of the Trust has been invited to the meeting to respond to any questions the Committee may have.

Background

3. In July 2022, the CQC carried out an inspection of Hillcrest, a mixed-gender 18-bed ward which supports people between 18 and 65 with acute mental health difficulties, and those detained under the Mental Health Act.
4. The Trust has responded to CQC feedback with a comprehensive action plan and recently reduced bed numbers, to improve the ability to carry out quality improvement work.

CQC Inspection

5. On 21 and 22 July 2022, the CQC attended the ward for an unannounced inspection of the services. Following the inspection, the Trust was issued with a notice of possible urgent enforcement action under Section 31 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008. 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.
6. The overall CQC inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, including Acute wards for adults of working age and psychiatric intensive care units, is available at Appendix .

7. In response to the concerns raised, a multi professional task force was assembled led by the Associate Director for Specialist Mental Health and Learning Disabilities and overseen by a risk summit chaired by the Director of Nursing and Chief Operating Officer. An improvement plan was devised to address the issues and processes, embedding best practice and a governance structure to monitor and provide assurance internally and to stakeholders.

Hillcrest Ward

8. Hillcrest is a mental health ward in Redditch for adults of working age. The ward provides a 24-hour service offering intensive input for patients who experience acute mental health difficulties. It provides care to people aged between 18 and 65, some of whom may be detained under the Mental Health Act, with a focus on patients with a home address in Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest areas. The Trust uses its admission beds flexibly and patients from anywhere in Herefordshire and Worcestershire may be admitted to any of the 3 Acute Wards in the two counties, dependant on bed availability and need. The other two Acute Wards in the County are Holt Ward, a 16 bedded mixed gender ward in Worcester and Mortimer Ward a 21 bedded mixed gender ward in Worcester.
9. Although the ward was originally designed to have 25 beds, this number was reduced to 18 in August 2021 to enable estate improvements and to provide a more manageable environment.

Improvement plan

10. The improvement plan has consisted of:
 - A review of the organisation's leadership structure of the working age inpatient wards to ensure clear, consistent, robust operational and clinical leadership across all the inpatient wards.
 - A review of all incidents from the previous six months was undertaken, to ensure that remedial action was taken to address any identified patient risk.
 - An immediate review of all patients' observations was undertaken to ensure that staffing levels met the correct levels required to meet the safety needs of the ward, and that observation levels met the identified needs of patients, including details as to how the team ensure observation levels are regularly reviewed and kept up to date.
 - An immediate review of all patient risk assessments and care plans, with immediate action taken to ensure these were up to date and comprehensive, and a governance structure was developed to provide assurance, along with action plans to address issues where required.
 - Development of the handover document and processes, to ensure all risks and needs were captured and communicated to all team members at the commencement of all shifts.
 - Review and improvement of inductions for bank and agency staff to ensure they had a robust introduction to the ward and patients.

- Introduction of an environmental audit to address concerns of cleanliness, fire safety and clutter.
- Immediate review of the ward operations to ensure that sexual safety is prioritised, whilst providing care to a mixed sex patient cohort.
- A review of storage in patient bedrooms and remedial action taken to ensure that patients had adequate and suitable storage.
- A review of estates issues and a program developed to ensure all work regarding patient safety and therapeutic environments was undertaken in a timely manner.
- A review of HR issues, concerns, and complaints raised within the previous six months, alongside regular interface sessions with the Trust's Freedom to Speak up Guardian¹, ensuring staff concerns were captured and acted upon appropriately, and to improve a culture of openness and transparency

Issues for the HOSC to consider

Consequential Findings and Actions

11. Through the reviews completed during the initial 8-week improvement plan, further areas to improve the ward were identified, that as an organisation the Trust recognised needed to be addressed, in order to make substantial improvements and embed new processes and culture.
12. Following the Trust's findings further improvements included:
 - To create a culture of openness and transparency for staff, work took place with Freedom to Speak up Guardians, with meetings for staff to ask questions and have concerns addressed, and regular team meetings are held and documented. Safeguarding procedures have been revisited to ensure team members recognise when concerns need to be captured and escalated.
 - To create a culture of openness and transparency for patients, the Trust has worked with advocacy services and ensured they are promoted on the wards. Regular community meetings are being held for patients with feedback following the 'we said, you did' model.
 - To address the acuity of patients on the ward, and to ensure there are appropriate care pathways to meet people's needs, and to support admissions and discharges, a patient flow service manager role has been created and appointed to. This will ensure the Trust is strategically utilising beds appropriately, and will support reduction of risks and improve patient and staff safety on the wards

¹ The National Guardians Office and the role of the Freedom to Speak Up Guardian were created in response to recommendations in Sir Robert Francis QC's report 'The Freedom to Speak Up' (2015)

- It was observed that there was a need for increased therapeutic provision on the wards, therefore the Trust has invested in resources to provide therapeutic activity and spaces on the ward. This includes arts and crafts, sensory equipment, gym equipment and investment in therapeutic outdoor space. To provide improved Occupational Therapy leadership, the allied health care professional leadership structure has also been reviewed.

Current Position

13. Hillcrest beds have now reduced to 10, ensuring there is a manageable patient group, while processes and procedures are improved and embedded.
14. The ward now has a new leadership structure consisting of
 - Working Age Inpatient Wards Service Manager
 - Clinical Matron
 - Ward Manager
 - Quality Improvement Manager
15. A temporary 'staff team' has been established utilising NHS bank staff and agency workers, which will provide consistency for patients and ensure the Trust is able to upskill these team members, setting the culture for the ward while recruitment of substantial staff is in progress.
16. A recent CQC revisit to Hillcrest identified that while there were still improvements to be made, they were, however, assured that the leadership team were aware of areas of development, and were moving forward in improving the issues previously highlighted during inspection and additionally identified.
17. The governance structure remains in place overseen by the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Nursing for monthly assurance on improvements and pace of action plan.
18. Environmental work has been done to repair damage to walls and structure, with corridors painted.

Staffing

19. From the leadership review, it was recognised that increased operational and clinical leadership was required to implement the improvement plan, supporting the culture change required and to embed best practice. To implement this, additional funding and recruitment was required. Funding was agreed, and internal recruitment was completed to provide a dedicated Service Manager for working age inpatients, a clinical Matron, specifically to focus on Hillcrest, and a Ward Manager to oversee the day-to-day operational running of the ward. To ensure HR and for Joint Negotiating Consultative Committee (JNCC) policies and procedures were adhered to, and that suitable professionals were appointed, the new leadership team were not able to commence the role until November 2022. Interim measures were put in place during this process to support the ward.

20. A national nursing and care worker shortage has affected staffing across all the Trust's clinical services, and the concerns raised, and recent media attention has affected recruitment and retention on Hillcrest significantly. The table below sets out the current staffing position.

Staff Role	Requirement for ward	Currently recruited
Ward Manager	1	1
Band 6 RMN	3	1
Band 5 RMN	12.5	3.5
Band 3 HCA	17.5	11
Occupational Therapist	1	1
Total	35	17.5

21. The Trust continues to make efforts to recruit to the ward through advertisements, recruitment fairs and development of roles, along with flexible working patterns, to attract qualified and experienced professionals into these roles.

Purpose of the Meeting

22. The HOSC is asked to:

- Consider and comment on the information provided
- Agree whether any further information or scrutiny is required at this time.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – CQC inspection of Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust, including Acute wards for adults of working age and psychiatric intensive care units [Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust - Care Quality Commission \(cqc.org.uk\)](https://www.cqc.org.uk)

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)