

Response to Sandwell Healthwatch Report into Care at Sandwell Hospital

Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has reviewed the contents of the report from Sandwell Healthwatch that outlines concerns raised by 11 patients or carers in August 2015. We have also met with Healthwatch leaders to discuss the report in detail.

We are disappointed to hear about the concerns that have been raised and would like to apologise to the 11 individuals who have received or observed care that is below the standards that all our patients should expect and deserve. We would welcome the opportunity to meet these individuals to further understand their experiences and learn from them.

We regularly seek feedback from patients and their relatives to ensure that we consistently provide good standards of care and that we continue to learn and improve based on what patients tell us. This includes our regular patient surveys, the friends and family test, our Patient Advice and Liaison Service, complaints and comments posted on patient websites. The report from Healthwatch Sandwell highlights the great work that is usually carried out by staff as reflected in the positive patient feedback that we have received. Our aim is to make sure that every patient receives high quality care from us at all times.

Patient Experience Survey results- April 2015 to January 2016 (Quarterly Average)									
	QTR 1 (710 responses)			QTR 2 (277 responses)			QTR 3 (150 responses)		
Do you feel that Patient Safety Standards are given a high priority at our hospital:									
	Yes always	Yes, sometimes	No	Yes always	Yes, sometimes	No	Yes always	Yes, sometimes	No
Sandwell Hospital	84%	15%	1%	89%	10%	1%	88%	11%	1%
Overall, how would you rate the care you received on this ward/unit:									
	QTR 1 (511 responses)			QTR 2 (294 responses)			QTR 3 (156 responses)		
	Excellent /Good	Fair	Poor	Excellent /Good	Fair	Poor	Excellent /Good	Fair	Poor
Sandwell Hospital	98%	2%	1%	96%	2%	0%	96%	2%	2%

Sandwell & West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust has a number of ways to monitor the care provided in our patient services, including care that patients receive on our wards. We use this information to alert us to any potential safety or quality issues so that steps can be taken to rectify any problems. There are no safety concerns that arise from this report.

In September 2015 our own monitoring systems identified concerns about care in one particular ward at Sandwell. That ward was closed because we felt we were no longer able to staff that ward to the standard we pride ourselves on. In the last six months we have seen improvements in our substantive staffing levels including reductions in the numbers of nurse vacancies across the wards at Sandwell Hospital. That provides a basis for confidence in care, alongside the data that we evaluate about what we do.

We do remain concerned by the large number of extra beds open at Sandwell this winter, which place additional pressure on all clinicians, and increase our reliance on temporary staff. The health and social care system must explore why projects to prevent admissions have failed over the last 12 months and why, in spite of the Better Care Fund, demand on the hospital is rising.

End of life care in our Trust was rated Good by the Care Quality Commission. We have been commissioned to provide a new end of life service for Sandwell and West Birmingham patients that will begin later this year. This service will be provided in partnership with local hospice providers, and local community organisations and will provide a care coordination service as well as rapid response specialist palliative care teams. We expect this service will continue to build on our existing good end of life care.

Over the past few months we have made improvements to better communicate with carers and visitors to our hospital wards. This has included the introduction of open visiting hours giving more flexibility to visitors and enabling our staff to have more opportunities to listen and talk to relatives and carers, responding promptly to any worries or concerns. In the last year our complaints system has changed beyond measure, both in the timeliness of replies, and in the way in which we seek to ensure that real change happens as a result.

In March 2015 we published our improvement plan as the CQC published their inspection report. This sets out clearly the steps we committed to take, and indeed were already working on, to improve the quality of care across the Trust. Our next public Trust Board will receive a report on that action plan so that our patients, visitors and local residents can see what we have achieved.

In March we will publish our three year plans for quality and safety. Our safety plan sets out our commitment to meeting safety standards for each and every patient. Our quality plan comprises 10 ambitious goals to deliver care to a standard that is in the top 20% of comparable NHS Trusts.

We welcome the support from Healthwatch Sandwell in listening to patients and contributing to our work of continual improvement across all the services we provide, that is in hospital, in clinics and in the community. We have invited Healthwatch Sandwell to repeat their study in summer 2016 to test independently whether the work to improve the care experience is reflected in patient feedback.