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Tuesday 7 March 2017

How long are patients waiting to be discharged, asks local Healthwatch

The latest report from Healthwatch Leicestershire (HWL) provides an independent insight into some of the issues of hospital discharge that remain important to local patients, carers and staff.

The report found that just over a third (36%) of patients had experienced a delay in their discharge from hospital and that almost a third (30%) of patients had previously been discharged from hospital for the same condition.

Patients told Healthwatch that in many cases, they are waiting the entire day to go home with minimal updates as to the progress of their discharge.

Rick Moore, Chair of Healthwatch Leicestershire, said:

“For many patients, being in hospital is a difficult time and the thought of going home is often a welcome one. Listening to the lived experiences provides an opportunity for patients, carers and staff to share insights. Healthwatch Leicestershire has a quarterly meeting with the Chief Executive and Chair of the hospital trust and this report will surely be discussed as we want our findings to be used to improve services.”

John Adler, Chief Executive of Leicester’s Hospitals said:

“We welcome this report as a very helpful insight into the discharge process within our hospitals from the viewpoint of patients, carers and our own staff. It is quite clear that there is much that we can do to improve the experience of patients in this area and we are already working hard on this.”

“We have in place a “Red2Green” programme which is designed to eliminate or reduce delays of all kinds. We started this on 14 of our wards at the Royal Infirmary before Christmas and it has already proven very effective in cutting delays, in particular waiting for medication. We will soon be rolling out this approach to the Glenfield Hospital. The process that is used to manage the most complex discharges (where patients need significant support after leaving hospital) is also being completely re-designed in conjunction with our partner organisations in the NHS and social care. It is complex discharges that cause the longest delays for patients.”

“I will also be meeting with Healthwatch colleagues on 20th March when we can also discuss next steps to tackle this important issue”.

The report also highlights communication as a key issue and states that half of the carers that responded said they were not involved in discussions or the planning of discharge for the person they care for. This was further emphasised when two thirds of patients stated that hospital staff had not discussed their discharge with a family member or carer. Training staff is identified as a recommendation.

Healthwatch presented the report to the Leicestershire County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on 1 March 2017 where it was well received.

Councillor Dr Eynon commented, "Thank you Healthwatch, this is a brilliant report".

Councillor Camamile commented, "The report is beautifully presented and very easy to read".

In response to the report, HOSC have said that they will invite the Chief Nurse of UHL to the next meeting in June to discuss discharge from their perspective.

The report will also be presented at the Leicestershire County Council Health and Wellbeing Board on 16th March, where UHL will provide an action plan showing how they will respond to the specific recommendations that are included in the Healthwatch report.

The full report and recommendations are available on the Healthwatch Leicestershire website - 'The Lived Experience of Hospital Discharge'
<http://alturl.com/64mc8>

For more information, contact Healthwatch Leicestershire on 0116 257 4999 or visit the Healthwatch Leicestershire website at
<https://www.healthwatchleicestershire.co.uk>

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Editor notes

About Healthwatch Leicestershire

Healthwatch Leicestershire is an independent consumer champion for health and social care in Leicestershire. The organisation helps to shape and improve local health and social care in our community. Healthwatch Leicestershire is part of the Healthwatch national network, established by the Government to ensure local patients and users have a greater input to shaping and designing local services.

About Healthwatch England

Healthwatch England is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in England. The organisation has independent statutory powers, as stated in the Health and Social Care Act 2012, to ensure the consumers' voice is heard and best practice is delivered in health and social care nationally. Healthwatch is also focused on providing leadership, guidance and support to the development of the Healthwatch network. To find out more please go to www.healthwatch.co.uk.