



Enter & View Report

Austen Ward- Hollins Park Hospital

Visit: 1st February 2022

Report Published: March 2022

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Background

What is Healthwatch Warrington?

Healthwatch Warrington helps the residents and communities of Warrington to get the best out of local health and social care services. We gather the views of local people and make sure that they are heard and listened to by the organisations that provide, fund, and monitor services.

What is Enter and View?

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to conduct Enter and View (E&V) visits. Local Healthwatch representatives, who are trained staff and volunteers, conduct E&V visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act (2012) allows local Healthwatch representatives to observe service delivery and talk to service users, their families, and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, opticians, and pharmacies. E&V visits can happen if people identify a problem. Equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation; enabling lessons to be learned and good practice shared.

Healthwatch E&V visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues. If safeguarding issues are raised during a visit, Healthwatch Warrington safeguarding policies identify the correct procedures to be followed.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to the findings observed on the specific date of the visit. This report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users/residents and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time. Wherever possible, the report below is in the words of the E&V team members present at the time of the visit. The report has been collated by Adrienne Roberts, Volunteer Co-ordinator and Enter and View Lead, and some of the text has been formatted to allow for easy reading.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Warrington would like to thank everyone on Austen ward for their welcome, and in particular, Andrea Cox, Ward Manager, who was available to share information with the reviewers, escort them around the ward and answer questions.

Purpose of the visit

Since the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the way that Secondary Healthcare services and hospitals are able to operate, Healthwatch Warrington is looking at the impact that the restrictions are having on patients and their family/carers. Covid restrictions also prevented Healthwatch Warrington from undertaking visits until recently.

During the Covid pandemic, E&V visits were suspended for 16 months, and Healthwatch England published guidance and recommendations on recommencing them in August 2021. All visits are risk assessed and planned in agreement with the Ward Manager and senior management team.

The E&V visit was conducted by two Authorised Representatives from Healthwatch Warrington, who obtained information by speaking to staff and patients, observation of interactions and the environment.

On the day of the E&V visit to Austen ward, three in-depth interviews with patients took place. Other patients spoke briefly to the review team

Details of the Visit

Details of the Service

Austen ward is a male inpatient ward situated on the first floor of Hollins Park Hospital and can be accessed by either stairs or lift.

The ward is commissioned by Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to provide 17 inpatient beds. On the day of the visit one bedroom was out of use due to

a problem with the radiator, which had been reported and was awaiting a heating engineer that day.

The inpatient mental health services on Austen ward are for adults with severe mental health problems like schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and severe depression.

Wherever possible, mental health services aim to support people in the community and only a small number will need to be treated by inpatient services. If a persons' mental health needs do become more complex, it may be felt that a stay on Austen ward would be the best way to meet their current level of needs.

Details of Visit	
Service Address	Austen Ward Hollins Park Hospital Hollins Lane Winwick WA2 8WA
Service Provider	Hollins Park Hospital
Date and Time	1 st February 2022, 10.30am
Authorised Representatives undertaking the visit	Adrienne Roberts Jim Sinnott

Provider Service and Staff

The care and treatment on Austen ward is provided by Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust. On 1 June 2021, all the healthcare services previously delivered by North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust transferred to Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

Patient care records have transferred to the new organisation and remain secure and confidential, in line with Mersey Care's privacy policy. The referral processes and contact details remain the same.

The Ward Manager stated that there were several vacancies for band 5 Staff Nurses and at the time of the E&V visit, there was only one permanent Staff Nurse available. This was impacting the Ward Manager and the band 6 Deputy Ward Manager, who were both included in the nursing numbers, and this prevented them from fully conducting their supernumerary roles and managerial responsibilities.

Spotlight on Services

The information below has been taken from the Mersey Care website

Our inpatient wards provide a safe and comfortable environment to promote recovery and mental wellbeing and meet your needs as an individual. Every service user will have their own private en-suite bedroom, as well as access to communal living areas and activity rooms on the wards.

We work closely with our community mental health services such as our assessment teams, home treatment teams and recovery teams to ensure a smooth transition to community services when you are discharged from one of our wards and make sure you have the right support in place to enable you to stay well in the community.

We also work with other local services such as social services, housing services, substance misuse services and your GP.

As our mental health wards are specialist services, you can't self-refer to them.

If you are experiencing symptoms of mental illness, please make an appointment to see your GP who will be able to talk to you about your symptoms and how they are affecting you. They will then be able to advise on which local services they think will be able to help and make a referral for you.

If you are already open to one of our community mental health services, contact your care coordinator or alternatively, you can contact your local mental health assessment team directly.

If you are experiencing mental health crisis and need urgent help, please visit the 'help in a crisis' page on our website.

Results of the Visit

First Impressions

There is free parking available for all staff and visitors to the Hollins Park site, and on the day of the visit there was ample parking available. There are parking spaces for those with disabilities (blue badge holders), close to the hospital main entrance.

There is a bus route that passes the Hospital and there are bus stops for buses travelling in both directions that are directly outside the site entrance on Hollins Lane.

The car park, exterior of the building and the approach road are well maintained and clearly sign-posted. There are well presented gardens and green spaces surrounding the hospital site, and there is also a clearly defined walking route around the perimeter of the grounds.

There are several buildings, including single storey low-secure units in the grounds of Hollins Park. The main hospital is a large three storey building and the entrance is clearly sign posted and easily accessible. The doors open automatically and there is a reception area and switchboard directly on the left of the entrance doors.

Reception/Waiting Area

The main hospital reception area has clear signage to all wards and departments within the building. The area was clean, tidy, and the décor was well maintained.

The reviewers used the stairs to the first floor and Austen ward is located close to both the stairs and the lift. The area immediately outside the ward entrance is clean, bright, and welcoming. There are well organised notice boards displaying up to date information.

The entrance to Austen ward is always locked to ensure the safety and security of the patients. There is a reception area immediately inside the ward entrance, which is usually staffed during daytime hours (9.00am – 5.00pm) by a member of administration and clerical staff. At the time of the E&V visit, there was a vacancy for this role and the responsibility for opening and closing the door was shared between the clinical team to enable access and egress for service users and staff. This meant that nurses and support staff were being taken away from their usual duties at a time when they were already extremely busy.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, family and friends are only allowed to visit at a pre-booked time, using the visiting room adjacent to the ward. This room is shared with Sheridan ward. Visitors are unable to attend the ward at the present time.

On arrival the reviewers were given access to the ward by Andrea Cox, the Ward Manager. At the time of the visit there was no visitor register, and the reviewers were not asked to sign in. The ward Manager was working an early shift (7.00am – 2:30pm) and she was included in the staffing numbers. However, she made herself available to escort the reviewers around the ward and was very open to answering any questions.

Food and Refreshments

The review was planned to incorporate a lunch-time meal service at 1200 hours and one of the reviewers was able to observe the food quality and service from beyond the dining room. The overall impression was that the food was well presented, and patients were offered a choice.

One of the reviewers spent approximately 15 minutes observing lunch from outside the dining room, trying to be unobtrusive. It was a calm atmosphere and only three patients went to the hatch for meals in that time. Two other patients sat separately from those eating. One was playing a game and another writing in the corner of the room.

The reviewer looked at the three-week menu on display in the dining room, which appeared to suit the dietary requirements of most people. The reviewer asked one of the patients what he thought of the food, and he replied,

"it's a bit variable - it can be good, but I never look at the menu".

When other patients were asked about the food, there were mixed responses. One patient stated that there was not much choice and if you did not want a sandwich at lunchtime, the other option was usually omelette. Another said the food was terrible but did not elaborate.

Another patient said "the food is gorgeous, and the steak pie was the best I have ever had. There is a good variety of food and large portions."

The patients confirmed that drinks and snack were always available throughout the day.

Activities and Leisure

The ward employs a part-time Activity Co-ordinator who was on duty at the time of the visit. There is also a full-time position for another Activity Co-ordinator. The post has been vacant for several months; however, someone has been recruited and will be commencing soon.

There is an activity/craft room, which is pleasantly decorated and equipped with craft materials and displays examples of work completed by patients.

There is a separate area on the ward which is kept locked when not in use. This area consists of four decommissioned bedrooms that have been converted into other uses. One room is used for exercise and has minimal exercise equipment. Another room is used for relaxation, there is also a fully equipped music room and an office for staff members. The music room had lots of equipment; however, it was under utilised because there was no staff member musically trained at the time of the visit.

This area of the ward can only be used by patients when they are accompanied by a member of staff, due to environmental risks and the necessity to observe patients.

When asked about activities, one of the patients stated that he had only recently started to join in social activities on the ward. He had played pool the previous evening, joined in a relaxation class, and had started to read one of the books that a member of staff had brought for him.

Another patient told the reviewers that he does relaxation classes with the activities Co-ordinator, and she gets the patients involved in other activities.

“The staff are absolutely great but understaffed and it's regimented. A lady brought this game in for me called Shut the Box - it's good- it's with dice and numbers”.

Privacy, dignity and meeting individual needs

All the bedrooms on Austen ward are individual rooms and have en-suite facilities. One bedroom has wheelchair accessible facilities and there are also additional toilets and bathrooms in communal areas that are fully accessible.

Staff were observed to be respectful when interacting with the patients. One young man was demanding to leave the ward with his parents, who had brought some personal belongings to the door. He became upset when they left, and a member of staff followed him to his bedroom and spent some time with him.

Some of the patients appeared to be acutely unwell and were detained under the Mental Health Act (MHA), and some were also a high risk of absconding from hospital. During the visit, one of the high-risk patients was requesting to go outside for a cigarette and required three members of staff to safely escort him. This was proving to be difficult, and the Ward Manager had requested assistance from another ward.

Because Austen ward is on the first floor of the hospital, there is no direct access to safe outdoor space. There is a small enclosed outdoor area that can be accessed

via the stairs, however, it is not suitable to prevent patients from absconding. Improvements to this area are being made and this will include making the fence higher.

The three patients who agreed to be interviewed by the reviewers, spoke positively about the ward staff and the following comments were made:

“Staff are caring but there are not enough of them. They are very short-staffed”

“The staff have been incredible from the moment I came onto the ward. They understand, don't look down on you and help in any way that they can.”

“The staff are fantastic. They are understaffed, underpaid and overworked.”

As part of the admission process, the patients are asked about their Covid-19 vaccination status, and vaccinations are offered to those patients who want to be vaccinated. The Medication Management Team is available to offer advice and answer any questions that patients may have about vaccinations.

The hospital has a gym that can be used by staff and patients. The patients must be supervised by a qualified gym instructor. At the time of the visit there were no staff who were qualified, and patients were unable to use the gym. One patient asked the review team why he could not use the gym. He said, “I would love to go to the gym and use a punchbag.”

One of the patients who spoke to the reviewers, described having poor physical health and requiring treatment for leg wounds. He stated that since coming into hospital, his condition had improved, and he praised the physical health practitioner who monitored his condition and

dressed his wounds. He believed that this had contributed to an improvement in his mental health.

The ward has a seclusion suite, which was viewed by one of the reviewers. All areas were clean and in a good state of repair. The ward Manager was asked how often it is used and she stated that it has not been used for some time and is very rarely used.

Patient Voice and Feedback

The patients who spoke to the reviewers described being listened to and said that the staff always make time for you even though they are very busy.

The last Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report is displayed at the entrance to the ward. The last inspection report for North West Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, which includes Hollins Park Hospital was published on 20th February 2020. The rating for the Trust was 'Good' in all areas.

Hollins Park Hospital was registered with the CQC by Mersey Care on 1 June 2021 and this provider has not yet been inspected.

The CQC is – the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. They make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve.

Cleanliness, Environment, and Infection Control

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT) have provided additional support and guidance to the ward. The ward communal areas and all the rooms entered, appeared clean, well maintained and there was no clutter. The décor is pleasant and throughout the communal areas and corridors on the ward, there are several large pieces of wall art and pictures that enhance the environment.

There were additional infection control precautions being taken by staff and patients, including the use of face masks, and hand sanitisers. Staff wore uniforms, "scrubs," that could be washed at high temperature.

The restrictions imposed to stop the spread of Covid-19 meant that the patients did not have the same contact with their friends and family that they would usually, and they were asked about the impact it had on them. They described being able to maintain contact by phone and electronic tablets.

Patient multi-disciplinary review meetings with the Psychiatrist were held on the ward and family and friends were invited to attend virtually. One patient had attended a multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting that morning and his son had attended virtually.

Although family and friends were not able to enter the ward, patients were still able to see them with some limitations. This was made possible by either using the visiting room off the ward or going on ground leave and/or home leave.

All the visiting or leave options are dependent on the Mental Health Act (MHA) status and individual risk assessment of the patient. During full Covid-19 lock down all visits were stopped due to national restrictions.

Staffing and Leadership

As mentioned earlier in the report, Staff Nurse vacancies were being covered by senior nurses on the ward. The fact that the ward was short-staffed had been highlighted at Trust Board level and the risk had been added to the risk register. Action had been taken to redeploy staff from other clinical areas to support the ward.

The reviewer was informed that Staff Nurse recruitment is an ongoing problem for the Trust and has been identified as a wider NHS problem.

Additional clinical leadership roles have been developed and include a Least Restrictive Practice Lead and Clinical Lead for acute services. Both support the ward staff to deliver safe and effective care.

Other Comments

Healthwatch Warrington recognises that there is no universal term used to describe inpatients on mental health wards. Some people prefer 'service users', others prefer 'clients'; however, after consulting the Mersey Care website, the term 'patient' is used throughout the report.

Healthwatch Warrington aimed to collect feedback on the experience of patients on Austen ward who were in hospital during the Covid-19 pandemic. The comments are only reflective of the time that the visit took place, and the reader should consider that some practices had changed due to the restrictions imposed.

Although the ward is short staffed, and the staff are extremely busy, all the comments about the team on Austen ward were very positive.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that family and friends can return to visiting their loved ones on the ward as soon as it is safe to do so.
2. It is recommended that the improvements to the enclosed outside space are undertaken as soon as possible, thus allowing safe access to fresh air for those patients who are unable to safely use the hospital grounds.
3. It is recommended that staff recruitment is ongoing, and the high number of vacancies on the ward are filled. However, Healthwatch Warrington is aware of the present difficulties with recruitment and retention throughout the NHS.

Distribution List

This report has been distributed to the following:

- Warrington Borough Council
- Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group
- Care Quality Commission
- Healthwatch England
- Austen Ward Manager

Appendices

Appendix 1

Response from the Assistant Clinical Director Lorna Pink

Thank you for your feedback report following the Enter and View visit to Austen Ward on 1/2/22 by Warrington Healthwatch.

Both the ward team and leadership team were delighted to receive the positive feedback particularly from our services users about their experiences on the ward and in relation to our staff who consistently show care and compassion despite the workforce challenges.

We recognise your areas of recommendation and as you noted they were known areas of risk; to respond more specifically please see below:

1. [It is recommended that family and friends can return to visiting their loved ones on the ward as soon as it is safe to do so.](#)

Contact with family and friends is such an essential part of good mental health and the team and trust will continue to support this to happen face to face wherever it is possible and to review this in line with COVID safety. Until visiting on the ward is fully mobilised again should there be any difficulty having visitors off the ward then virtual platforms will be offered and supported.

2. [It is recommended that the improvements to the enclosed outside space are undertaken as soon as possible, thus allowing safe access to fresh air for those patients who are unable to safely use the hospital grounds.](#)

An immediate action has been taken of a task and finish group to review the environment and progress requests with the estates team to make improvements.

3. [It is recommended that staff recruitment is ongoing, and the high number of vacancies on the ward are filled. However, Healthwatch Warrington is aware of the present difficulties with recruitment and retention throughout the NHS.](#)

Our Trust continue to implement the workforce strategy to aim to address workforce shortages and we are pleased that some recent recruitment has been successful for newly qualified nurses who will be able to start in post once registered later in the year.

We appreciate the role and support you all play in Warrington Health Watch in contributing to our understanding of patient, service, user and carers experience of our services as we aim for continuous improvement from all the feedback.



healthwatch

Healthwatch Warrington

The Gateway

85-101 Sankey Street

Warrington


WA1 1SR

www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk

t: 01925 246 893

e: contact@healthwatchwarrington.co.uk

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