



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Matthew Hopkins
Chief Executive
Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
WORCESTER
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12 November 2021

Dear Matthew

I am extremely concerned to read in the local press yesterday evening that the Acute Trust have decided to stop admitting some trauma patients with effect from Saturday.

I was very disappointed that a short statement was released to Members of Parliament only after the story broke in the media, giving myself and other Worcestershire MPs no opportunity to ask questions.

I want to start by putting on record my thanks to everyone working in the NHS at this time, and I fully recognise the intense pressure on local services from a combination of the pandemic, the backlog of treatment, adult social care pressures and the uptick in seasonal flu and other illnesses that are greater than they normally would be at this time of year.

However, we have spoken on countless occasions about the particular sensitivity of any changes to services at the Alex, given the very difficult history in the town. I have reminded you that while neither you nor I were in post at the time of removal of maternity or children's emergency services, the local community that we are both here to serve, remember these changes very well, and they are extremely concerned, as they have been badly let down before. It is therefore vital that any changes to emergency services at the Alex are communicated with full transparency, have the buy-in of all local stakeholders and are considered only with the best interests of the town in mind.

As you will doubtless appreciate, I have been inundated with questions from local residents and the press and I am unable to provide the detailed answers that they deserve. We need answers to restore confidence in the management and provision of our local NHS that we all rely on. Therefore, I would ask for very swift and full answers to the questions below as a starting point to provide much needed reassurance to the people in Redditch and to ensure their full co-operation with front line staff as they implement these changes.

1. First of all, can you please set out in more detail exactly which types of trauma will still be treated at the Alex, and for which patients. The statement

that was sent to local MPs states that:

*“it’s important to stress that **we will also continue to run an emergency trauma service at the Alexandra Hospital.** We are working closely with our colleagues in the West Midlands Ambulance Service to make sure that their crews get the clearest possible guidance on which patients need to come to Worcester and which can be taken to the Alexandra to avoid unnecessary conveyances to Worcester. **Walk in trauma patients will also continue to be seen and treated at the Alex ED”***

Can you publish a clear list of exactly what type of walk-in traumas will be seen at the Alex so that residents can access the right care over the busy winter and Christmas period and not place further pressure on the system by having to be redirected? At the same time, can you provide detail on what can be treated at the county’s Minor Injuries Units which could be more geographically convenient for some of my constituents.

2. Can you set out, in full, the criteria which has led to this decision and whether this was supported by any recent consultations and with whom?
3. What criteria has been shared with the ambulance service regarding which hospital trauma patients should now be conveyed to? I note that the BBC is reporting comments from a paramedic who is concerned that the timing of this change may exacerbate rather than relieve the current well documented pressures on the WRH. What is your response to this?
4. In September, 622 patients waited more than an hour to be discharged from the Worcestershire Royal, when ambulances are supposed to be able to offload patients within 15 minutes of arrival at hospital. To ease pressure on the A&E there, the trust decided to send patients, including those from Stourport, who otherwise would have gone to the Worcester Royal to the Alexandra. It therefore seems counterproductive to remove trauma care from the hospital which is currently coping with demand. In view of this and the ongoing investigation into the tragic death of a patient who died after waiting more than five hours in the back of an ambulance, please can you explain the decision to implement the changes you have proposed so suddenly.
5. I am particularly concerned that these changes will exacerbate existing health inequalities as local Redditch patients will be required to travel further for treatment. What impact assessment have you made of this and what mitigations have you planned to ensure that my constituents are not further disadvantaged by this change, taking into consideration the limited public transport options that exist between Redditch and Worcester?

6. How will you ensure the best outcomes for patients currently being treated at the Alex as changes are implemented? Do you expect any disruption for current in-patients at the Alex? What does this mean for people who are not ready to go home on Saturday?

7. Paul Brennan, deputy chief executive and chief operating officer at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, is quoted as saying: "*Focussing more inpatient trauma surgery on our Worcester site will also help us protect beds at the Alexandra Hospital for patients on waiting lists for planned surgery, reducing waiting times and the risk of cancellations and **supporting our plans to develop the Alexandra as a centre of excellence for planned surgery.***" It is now imperative that you provide the clarity I have repeatedly requested, on when you will come forward with the long awaited details for the plans to develop the Alex as a centre of excellence, and what investment from the £31.2m overall pot of funding that I and other county MPs secured for the Acute Trust's business case will be dedicated to the Alex.

8. What positive outcomes will the town of Redditch see from these "centre of excellence" plans? What impacts will there be on waiting lists? How much quicker will people get their operations? How many patients will now not have to travel further because they can have their operations locally? I know that many people will welcome this progress once they can understand what exactly it means.

9. What is your long term plan to retain emergency services at Redditch, and can you provide a cast iron reassurance that no further changes will be made without full and open public conversation?

10. As you know, I am campaigning for the return of the Garden Suite to the Alex. My petition has now attracted over 7,000 signatures, and is supported by the MP for Kidderminster, who alongside the MP for Wyre Forest, agrees with me that it is only right that patients can access locally delivered cancer services. While writing, it would be wrong not to ask for your update on when you will be making a decision on the future of this much needed service.

I look forward to receiving your answers very quickly so that I can provide them to my constituents.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a white background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Rachel Maclean'.

Rachel Maclean MP