**A Coordinated Local Healthwatch (South West) Response to the South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust Quality Account 2019/2020.**

In what has been an especially difficult year due to the impact of Covid-19 the Healthwatch organisations located in the South West welcome the opportunity to comment on the South Western Ambulance Service Foundation Trust Quality Account 2019/2020 and below is the coordinated response from the following local Healthwatch:

* **Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset**
* **Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire**
* **Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay**
* **Healthwatch Dorset**
* **Healthwatch Gloucestershire**
* **Healthwatch Swindon**
* **Healthwatch Wiltshire**

**Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset**

Healthwatch Bath and North East Somerset (HW BaNES) were disappointed not to have been contacted by the South West Ambulance Service for our response this year. HW BaNES are glad to see that one of the 2020/21 priorities will be the development of accessible information, as the trust has been sadly lacking in providing previous quality accounts in an audio format so that our volunteer for quality who is registered blind can contribute feedback. Again, the quality account mentions English as a second language and British Sign Language – but no reference to providing information in an audio format. Healthwatch BaNES note that Covid-19 has had an effect on the trust meeting their priorities during 2019/20 especially the mortality review and the engagement regarding cardiac arrest and hope these priorities can be completed in the future. Healthwatch BaNES were disappointed to read that there has been an increase in serious incidents but welcome the reductions this year in moderate harm and adverse incidents.

**Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire**

We congratulate SWASFT for this Quality Account which demonstrates that you provide positive experiences for patients despite working under pressure and against the clock providing emergency and urgent care services in a large operational area. We note that you are taking steps to improve vehicle numbers, training, and staffing levels to get the right vehicle with the right staff to an incident. We welcome the development you have made to emergency response to 999 calls which now work in three stages. This approach is good for the patient and helps to make efficient use of SWASFT resources. This should improve the response times to 999 calls, as your complaints reflect concern from patients over access and waiting times due to levels of demand on your service, and communication, especially around expectation. There are a number of other issues which we are glad you mention will be a source of learning in relation to non-conveyance, long waits following falls, management of fractures, ambulances being held outside EDs due to hospital capacity, infection control and issues relating to Covid-19. Once the BNSSG areas Integrated Care System (ICS) is in place in 2021, we trust that sharing of data and communications with the other members of the primary and secondary NHS systems will improve the safety and effectiveness of the service even more.

You have implemented the national guidance on a process for ‘Learning from Deaths’ and will be following up on the outcomes from ‘Understanding Patient Experience’ and ‘clinical effectiveness’ following out of hospital cardiac arrest. Embracing staff’s 'Freedom to speak out' and 'duty of candour' and the trusts serious incident process now called Review, Learn and Improve ‘serious incident’ shows a commitment to creating a people centred organisation that is caring and effective. By using Patient Experiences, complaints, and Friends & Family feedback you will further drive your safety and responsiveness targets by continuous learning from the events. It would have been useful to see this year's complaints received compared against last year, to better understand any improvement or deterioration. We are reassured however that you have a commitment to understanding areas of poor performance and developing plans for a robust and committed response, together with better monitoring and reporting of progress. 

Your 2020/21 target to develop awareness and understanding of the Accessible Information Standard is extremely welcomed as it will improve accessibility and outcomes for disadvantaged patients. We would like to see a commitment to combating discrimination and promoting diversity in other ways within your workforce, especially in areas where you serve culturally diverse towns and cities.

If you would like to offer patients a chance to post feedback to Healthwatch using our new GIF link, we would be happy to support your comms team to do this. Keep up the good work.

**Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth & Torbay (HWDPT)**

HWDPT has read the Quality Account with interest and notes the progress made with the 2019-20 initiatives. The development and implementation of Mortality Reviews, the continuation of the implementation of improvements to patient experience using Always Events methodology in end of life care and to improve the survival to discharge following out of hospital cardiac arrest across the South West.

We are pleased that the Trust has taken the initiative with the development and implementation of Mortality Reviews which at the time of writing the draft Quality Account document was a first for an ambulance service. HWDPT welcomes that the Trust continues to implement improvements to patient experience using Always Events methodology in end of life care. The success of effective CPR so that the outcome is that the patient is able to be discharged home is the ultimate component of the Cardiac Arrest Process and HWDPT recognises that SWAST’s efforts with this initiative has rewarded them with an above national average performance.

**Priorities for 20120/21**

Healthwatch in Devon, Plymouth, Torbay is looking forward to the service improvements that the priorities for next year will provide:

* **Priority 1:** Implementation and Embeddedness of the Trust’s Learning from Deaths process.
* **Priority 2:** The development of accessible information.
* **Priority 3:** Sepsis.

Over the past year HWDPT has received feedback about the Trust’s services from patients, relatives and carers which the majority was positive, however, some negative comments were made regarding response times to non-life threatening calls by the service.

**Healthwatch Dorset**

Healthwatch Dorset welcomes the opportunity to comment on South Western Ambulance Service Quality Account for 2019/20. Healthwatch Dorset exists to promote the voice of patients and the wider public with respect to health and social care services.

During a time when health and care services have been under unprecedented pressure, we are pleased to note that continuous improvement remains a priority. We look forward to seeing the Quality Faculty being developed and hope to offer patient and public insight to support this.

We welcome the Trusts prioritisation of developing accessible information. This is a recurring message we receive from local people and we would be pleased to work with the Trust to make information more accessible.

During these exceptional and challenging times, we would like to stress the importance of ensuring that robust services are in place to deal with the impact on the public and staff as a result of COVID 19. We will also be looking for clear assessments on how any different ways of working have had an impact on patients.

We welcome the Public and Patient Involvement initiatives of the Trust. Measures of experience outside of the Friends and Family Test are invaluable and Healthwatch Dorset would be pleased to advise and/or collaborate with the South Western Ambulance Service Trust on this as the Covid-19 situation allows and into the future.

We look forward to further developing our relationships with the Trust over the coming year and working with them to ensure the experiences of patients, their families and unpaid carers are heard and taken seriously.

**Healthwatch Gloucestershire**

Healthwatch Gloucestershire welcomes the opportunity to comment on South Western Ambulance Service Quality Account for 2019/20. Healthwatch Gloucestershire exists to promote the voice of patients and the wider public with respect to health and social care services.

During a time when health and care services have been under unprecedented pressure, we are pleased to note that continuous improvement remains a priority. We look forward to seeing the Quality Faculty being developed and hope to offer patient and public insight to support this.

Looking ahead, we welcome the prioritisation of developing accessible information. This is a recurring message to Healthwatch and we can offer the services of our Readers Panel in the development of public information to help ensure that information and communications is clear, effective and accessible.

During these exceptional and challenging times, we would like to stress the importance of ensuring that robust services are in place to deal with the impact on the public and staff as a result of COVID 19. We will also be looking for clear assessments on how any different ways of working have had an impact on patients.

We welcome the Public and Patient Involvement initiatives of the Trust. Measures of experience outside of the Friends and Family Test are invaluable and Healthwatch Gloucestershire would be pleased to advise and/or collaborate with the South Western Ambulance Service Trust on this as the Covid-19 situation allows and into the future.

**Healthwatch Swindon**

From Healthwatch Swindon point of view, I think SWAST should be congratulated on exceeding the national average standards for both the Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC) and Survival to Discharge, no mean feat given the remoteness of some areas within their catchment area, and major hospital locations.

With regard to my role as the Independent NHS Complaints Advocate for Healthwatch Swindon, between 2019 – 2020, I had only one complaint against SWAST which related to the clinical care given to a patient. I was impressed with the way the complaint was dealt with by the Patient Experience Team.

Just for your information, I spent 30 years working for the ambulance service as a Paramedic with Wiltshire / Great Western Ambulance Service, so how SWAST perform is of great interest to me.

**Healthwatch Wiltshire**

Healthwatch Wiltshire thanks the trust for sharing its Quality account and welcomes the opportunity to comment. Healthwatch Wiltshire is an independent organisation that promotes the voice of patients and the wider public with respect to health and social care services.

Healthwatch Wiltshire recognises that the trust underwent an announced focused inspection of the Effective and Well-Led domains in July 2019. We commend the trust for retaining the ‘good’ rating for Well led and an overall ‘good’ rating. We look forward to hearing more about improvements planned for the trust to raise its rating for Effective from ‘requires improvement’ to ‘good.’

We were encouraged to read about the patient engagement that has taken place over the last year. Feedback that Healthwatch Wiltshire has received is consistent with your findings that delays can be a source of anxiety for patients. We would be interested to hear more about the recommendations you are making to your staff as a result this engagement.

We are pleased to read that the development of accessible information that focuses on patients with additional needs is one for your priorities for 2020-2021 and would be interested to explore how Healthwatch can support this work.

We recognise the significant challenges faced by the Trust due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the changes that have had to rapidly be put into effect. We appreciate the commitment and dedication of staff working at this critical time. This has been reflected in comments we have received from local people.

In partnership with other local Healthwatch we are looking forward to continuing to work with SWASFT, engaging with patients and sharing their views.