HOSC Briefing Report: Winter Planning & Stroke Services Transformation
Meeting Date: 12 October 2026
Cllr Bakul Kumar

2 Items on the agenda

- **Urgent care & Winter Planning 2026/2027**
- **Stroke Services Restructuring**

Urgent Care & Winter Planning 2026/27

The primary goal of the county-wide Winter Plan is to actively mitigate severe urgent and emergency care pressures by moving care pathways out of major acute hospitals and into secondary settings.

Key System Metrics & Local Impacts:

• **Emergency Department Redirection:** Shifting up to 200 to 400 patients per month away from overstretched acute Emergency Departments (EDs) by expanding the Single Point of Access (SPA) and utilizing NHS 111 triage. While positive for major hospital flow, this creates an unquantified risk of shifting the physical waiting room burden onto local high street services.
• **Princess of Wales MIU Capacity:** The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust is investing £300,000 to scale up Minor Injury Unit (MIU) staffing. This funding is critical for the Princess of Wales Community Hospital (Stourbridge Road, Bromsgrove) to expand triage and emergency care practitioner capacity and prevent out-of-hours service suspensions.
• **Virtual Ward Framework Limitations:** The plan expands county-wide 'Hospital at Home' and Virtual Ward capacity from 20 to 45 beds, focusing heavily on severe respiratory and frailty conditions. Given the vast geographic footprint of the county, a 45-bed limit provides a highly restricted localized safety net for clinically vulnerable or fuel-poor residents in Bromsgrove.

Agenda Item 2: Stroke Services Restructuring

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) has advanced an Outline Business Case to completely restructure acute stroke care pathways, resolving longstanding workforce fragility and reliance on locum clinicians.

Clinical Centralisation & Local Realities:

• **Projected 70% Demand Surge:** In 2025/26, Worcestershire recorded roughly 700 stroke admissions. Driven by an ageing demographic, this figure is modeled to skyrocket by nearly 70% to 1,200 annual stroke admissions by 2040.
• **Centralised Hyperacute Care:** The new endorsed model permanently eliminates all acute stroke beds from Hereford and consolidates a centralized Acute Stroke Centre exclusively at Worcestershire Royal Hospital. Confirmed stroke patients will bypass or be transferred instantly out of local district borders for hyperacute clinical intervention.

• **The Evesham Rehabilitation Travel Burden:** Crucially for our district, inpatient rehabilitation will be provided at the designated Stroke Recovery Units at Evesham Community Hospital or Hereford County Hospital, utilizing a reduced bed base that aligns with regional averages.

Key District Scrutiny Challenges

To safeguard public interest and ensure care accessibility, Bromsgrove District Council through Cllr Karen May, Leader of the Council should hold health partners to account across the following three key dimensions:

1. Travel & Isolation Barriers: Evesham Community Hospital is located more than 20 miles away from Bromsgrove. Public transport connectivity between these two areas is severely limited, placing a major financial and logistical travel burden on elderly spouses and disadvantaged families visiting recovering relatives.

2. Community Care Capacity Deficits: The strategy to reduce physical stroke recovery beds relies entirely on shifting patients to community 'Home First' models. However, the Winter Plan openly identifies that domiciliary social care capacity remains a 'significant risk' that is already stretched to the limit, threatening to leave patients stranded at home without adequate physical rehabilitation.

3. Consultation and Funding Loopholes: Paragraph 36 explicitly states that public consultation on these major acute modifications will only proceed once full funding is secured. The Council must ensure that these 'fragile' services are not altered incrementally on the ground due to operational pressures before the public has a formal right to look at the plans.
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