

NOTE SENT TO RECIPIENTS OF THE CABINET PAPERS – OCTOBER 2009-

This is to let you know that the figure reported in the corporate performance report considered by Cabinet on 24 September regarding delayed hospital discharges to the end of June was wrong.

The figure reported was 12 per 10,000, which compared favourably with the end of 2008-09 position of 32. It has subsequently come to light that the wrong figure was provided by mistake; what should have been reported was 36, which on the face of it looks like a deterioration rather than an improvement.

There is, however, good reason to believe that the figures have in the past seriously over-stated the extent of delayed discharges in Herefordshire compared with other authorities. This is primarily because until very recently the figures, which are reported by the hospital staff, have erroneously been based on when the clinical decision has been made that someone is ready to be discharged, rather than, as the national indicator definition requires, when the multi-disciplinary team has confirmed this judgement and that it is safe for the person to leave hospital.

This has been an issue and the subject of discussion for some time but has now been resolved, so that there is now a seven-day window for the multi-disciplinary team to confirm its agreement following the clinical decision. The results of this change should be reflected in our being able to report better performance in future.

Even so, there is no complacency about the need to continue to tackle substantive issues that can lead to avoidable delays. Relatively few delays are attributable to social care but there have been some local difficulties with therapeutic services. These are being addressed. Work is also in hand to prioritise continuing health care assessments in the acute sector and, with the Ambulance Service, to reduce delays in transferring patients to tertiary units.