**TERMPLATE TEXT FOR LETTER FROM HEALTHWATCH TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS**

**ADD NORMAL HEADER AS APPROPRIATE**

**Re: Findings from joint Healthwatch/British Red Cross investigation into post-COVID hospital discharge processes**

Tuesday 27 October 2020

Dear INSERT NAME OF STAKEHOLDER,

I wanted to make you aware of a significant report being published today by Healthwatch and the British Red Cross concerning the impact revised hospital discharge arrangements have had on patients, families, carers and staff.

The report, *Discharge to assess: 590 people’s stories*, INSERT LINK WHEN AVAILABLE explores the impact the new processes have had since their introduction in March to help manage the sudden rise in COVID-19 patients. Our research consisted both of in-depth interviews with key staff groups involved in the discharge process INCLUDE REFERENCE TO LOCAL FIELDWORK HERE IF ONE OF THE EIGHT LOCAL HW WHICH PARTICIPATED and a survey which gathered the experiences of more than 500 patients and carers across England from late March to late August.

Understandably, our findings show patients are very grateful to hard-working doctors, nurses and care staff for continuing to deliver compassionate care in difficult circumstances during the pandemic. Increased collaboration between services was also identified as a positive outcome of the new guidance.

However, among other areas for concern:

* 82% of respondents did not receive a follow-up visit and assessment at home, one of the key recommendations of the new policy. Almost one in five (18%) of those also reported having unmet needs, such as equipment, medication or advice.
* Some people felt their discharge was rushed, with around one in five (19%) feeling unprepared to leave hospital.
* Over a third (35%) of respondents and their carers did not get a contact for further advice, despite this being a recommendation within the policy.

INSERT IF ONE OF THE EIGHT LOCAL HW PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS:

Specific local findings for the XX area based on our interviews with local staff included:

INSERT ANY NOTEWORTHY LOCAL FINDINGS/OBSERVATIONS AS APPROPRIATE & STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT

As a result of the findings, recommendations from Healthwatch and the British Red Cross ahead of winter to help manage a second wave of COVID-19 hospital admissions include:

* **Post-discharge check-ins:** services should ensure these take place as per policy, whether by phone or in person.
* **Discharge checklists:** questions should include transport home, and equipment required.
* **Communication:** patients and carers should be assigned to a single point of contact for further support, in line with the national policy.
* **Medication:** linking patients to voluntary sector partners who can deliver medicine could avoid discharge delays. Pharmacists should also be considered as part of multi-disciplinary teams supporting in the community**.**

I appreciate some of these measures may already have been implemented here in INSERT AREA but please take a few moments to familiarise yourself with further findings and recommendations in the full report LINK. We are also asking that action be taken at a national level to further support local systems - these recommendations have already been shared with the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS England/Improvement.

Do let me know if you would like further information or an informal discussion. Our colleagues from the British Red Cross may also contact you to discuss how they can help improve discharge processes at a local level.

On behalf of local patients, their families and carers, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank staff throughout your organisation for the courage, dedication and professionalism they have shown and continue to show through these incredibly difficult times.

Best wishes,

INSERT SIGNATURE/CONTACT DETAILS