

## **NHS response to winter in Kent 2017/18**

**To:** Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
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### **1.0 Purpose**

This report provides a briefing to the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee that describes the performance of the Health and Social Care system winter plans for winter 2017/18.

### **2.0 Background**

Historically, the effects of winter have been shown to place additional pressures on health and social care services across Kent. This is caused by a number of issues including an increase in respiratory illness, increased slips and falls and the impact of seasonal influenza.

The key vehicle for winter Preparedness and Response activities are the Local A&E Delivery Boards that were established in 2016. Kent has four Local A&E Delivery Boards covering the Dartford Gravesham and Swanley; East Kent, West Kent and Medway and Swale. Kent County Council is a core member of each of these groups and is represented on them by an Executive Director.

### **3.0 Winter Assurance**

NHS England set a clear expectation that all Local A&E Delivery Boards would have in place robust plans to deliver the urgent care standards and to ensure that plans are in place to effectively manage winter pressures. Therefore ahead of winter 2017/18 NHS England South (South East) and NHS Improvement facilitated a dual assurance process, via self-assessment and peer review, which required Local A&E Delivery Boards to provide assurance that they have put in place preparations for the winter period. This included a review of the key actions being taken to improve on last year's plan, delivery of the national ten high impact interventions, the flu programme for staff and patients and work on Delayed Transfers of Care. LAEDB Winter Plans were assessed through a two part bipartite process.

A workshop for LAEDBs to share good practice between LAEDB systems, begin developing common escalation criteria and provide guidance on effective teleconferences was held in September. Additional exercises based on STP footprints were held in November 2017 to address cross-boundary issues and mutual aid.

#### **4.0 Winter Performance 2017/18**

Winter 2017/18 was an additionally challenging year: alongside the usual increased winter demand, temperatures were lower than average, snow storms arrived in February and March, which then caused a significant number of leakages in the water systems and periods of water outages. Seasonal Influenza was also at its peak in January 2018 with GP influenza like illness consultant rates reaching nearly double those of 2016/17. The prominent strain of seasonal flu this year was also the unusual Type B Yamagata strain, not included in the trivalent vaccine due to its rareness and leading to significant hospitalisation rates.

#### **5.0 Debriefing**

There have been a number of debriefs throughout the winter period to ensure lessons were identified and addressed ahead of future peaks in demand. These have taken a number of different formats:

- A Christmas and New Year informal debrief was held on the Thursday 4 January 2018 weekly system teleconference call.
- A Local AE Delivery Board system Kent, Surrey and Sussex interim winter stocktake was held on 7 February 2018 to review lessons ahead of the half term and Easter holidays.
- An informal debrief was held on the Thursday system calls after the February half term and Easter bank holiday.
- All Local AE Delivery Boards have undertaken system debriefs.
- The full winter Kent, Surrey and Sussex Local AE Delivery Board debrief was held on Wednesday 9 May 2018.

Due to the challenging nature of this year's flu season it was decided that a Kent, Surrey and Sussex wide debrief would provide the opportunity to share good practice and improve plans and therefore response ahead of the 2018/19 influenza season. This was held on Tuesday 8 May 2018. During the debrief a number of good initiatives and plans were identified including the Sussex and East Surrey STP flu protocol and staff vaccination initiatives particularly the vaccine donation programmes. Public Health England's Flu impact predictive data tool was also well received.

Key lessons identified included the need for better communications about both the strains of Influenza, vaccination effects and Influenza management; care home support for Influenza outbreaks and antiviral distribution plans.

The invitation to attend the full winter Kent, Surrey and Sussex Local AE Delivery Board debrief went to all Kent, Surrey and Sussex Local A&E Delivery Board Chairs and Leads, with the opportunity to send a representative from each of the six delivery strands (CCG, Acute, Community, Mental Health, Social Care, Primary Care). An invitation was also extended to Public Health England and Local Authority Directors of Public Health. There were 51 participants on the day across a variety of workstreams and LAEDB areas. The format of the day was well received and the level of discussion and learning was high.

There has been a notable improvement in relationships and partnership working over the Winter 2017/18 period. The dedication of staff across all sectors was recognised and praised. A number of initiatives were also recognised as positively impacting on performance and patient experience such as home first and discharge to assess schemes, improvement in delayed transfers of care and support for care homes. Three key areas for focussed planning ahead of winter 2018/19 were consistent escalation metrics, a review of out of hospital attendance avoidance schemes and in hospital admission avoidance schemes to identify best practice and interoperability of IT systems working across the community.

All lessons have been captured in the relevant debrief reports and an action plan developed for implementation ahead of winter 2018/19.

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