

Briefing to the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – January 2019

Dermatology service

As reported to the Committee in September 2018, Medway NHS Foundation Trust is currently undertaking a programme to review the portfolio of our services as we further develop our plans to become a specialist emergency centre.

We need to identify which services should be provided in an acute hospital, and which are better for patients, potentially in a different setting, such as within primary care or in the community, working together as system partners. As we do this we are working with commissioners towards transitioning services where appropriate, maintaining continuity of care for patients through any change.

Last summer we notified our commissioners of our intention to stop providing dermatology services at the Trust from 1 April 2019. Our dermatology service has been experiencing serious challenges in managing demand for some time and although we have made every effort to stabilise the service, we have been unable to consistently provide the level of care we aspire to, and therefore a decision was taken in the interests of patients.

Ensuring that our patients receive treatment in a timely manner is of the upmost importance to us and we accept that the delays experienced are unacceptable.

At the same time, Medway Community Health also gave notice to the commissioner that they too would cease providing community dermatology from April 2019.

As part of a joint plan with our commissioners, we worked with a partner to clinically review all patients waiting longer than 14 weeks for an appointment, to determine whether these patients were appropriate for the partner to see in additional clinics within the community, ensuring that patients could be seen faster.

The third party provider was engaged by MFT to provide 868 outpatient procedures and 341 outstanding minor operations; this began in November 2018 and is expected to be completed in February 2019. This has improved our responsiveness to booking new referrals, minor operations, and long waits.

Meanwhile, Medway Clinical Commissioning Group has been carrying out a procurement exercise to find a new provider for dermatology services from 1 April 2019. At this stage a new provider has not been announced.

We are supporting our dermatology staff during this period of uncertainty. Retaining staff to continue to provide the service until the end of March is a priority for us.