

Item 5: NHS preparations for winter in Kent 2015/16

By: Peter Sass, Head of Democratic Services

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 27 November 2015

Subject: NHS preparations for winter in Kent 2015/16

Summary: This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by NHS England.

It provides additional background information which may prove useful to Members.

1. System Resilience Groups

- (a) Following the pressure experienced during the winter of 2012/13, Urgent Care Working Groups (UCWGs) were developed by NHS England as a mechanism for local health economies to bring together commissioner and provider organisations involved in urgent care. The UCWGs were charged with co-producing winter plans to deliver safe and efficient services for patients. In 2014/15 UCWGs' roles were expanded to cover elective, as well as non-elective care, as reflected in a change of name to System Resilience Groups (SRGs) (NHS England 2014).
- (b) In 2014/15 an additional £700 million of non-recurrent winter funding for NHS services was allocated. The Government initially announced a £400 million fund to improve local health services (NHS England 2014):
 - £350m was allocated to SRGs through CCGs, on a 'fair shares' basis (based on the population within the CCGs geographical footprint)
 - £50m was held in total in a central reserve to be targeted towards national initiatives including £18m specifically directed to support ambulance trusts, £6m for NHS 111 services and £11.2m for specialised commissioning (including adult critical care and neuro-rehab beds and staffing)
- (c) In November 2014 the Government announced a further £300 million to help provide more bed space; pay for additional clinical staff; increase access to GPs; and support ambulance services to meet additional demand (Department of Health 2014).
- (d) In 2015/16, £350 million of operational resilience funding has been shared with CCGs as part of their baseline allocations - no additional resilience funding has been announced for this winter (Monitor 2014).
- (e) In preparation for this winter, SRGs have been asked to provide assurance to NHS England on their plans to (NHS England 2015a; NHS England 2015b):
 - implement high impact actions for general operational resilience
 - implement high impact actions to improve ambulance performance
 - implement 24/7 liaison mental health services in A&E departments

Item 5: NHS preparations for winter in Kent 2015/16

- undertake acute and out of hospital capacity and demand projections
- improve upon last year's resilience plan

2. Winter 2014/15

- (a) Between November 2014 and February 2015, there were 7,063,000 A&E attendances in England - 190,000 more attendances than for the same period in 2013/14. At its peak, there were 446,000 attendances in one week (week ending December 21) – up by 9.3% on the same week for winter 2013/14. This is the highest attendance figures ever recorded for a winter period (NHE England 2015c).
- (b) Emergency admissions showed a similar increase in demand: there were 1,821,000 emergency admissions in winter 2014/15 compared with 1,770,000 in winter 2013/14 - an increase of 51,000 (NHE England 2015c). 1,024 patients waited over 12 hours for admission to hospital - eighteen times over the 2012/13 figure, and over seven times the 2013/14 figure (House of Commons Library 2015).
- (c) NHS 111 service faced similar unprecedented demand, dealing with 4.6 million calls in winter 2014/15 – up by one million calls or 27% on winter 2013/14. Of all the calls triaged, just 11% had ambulances dispatched and 7% were recommended to A&E (NHE England 2015c).
- (d) Figures for winter 2014/15 show that since the winter 2009/10 there has been a 14.1% increase in A&E attendances, and a leap of 26.3% since the winter 2004/5. Emergency admissions have risen substantially too – winter 2014/15 figures show an increase of 8.8% on the winter 2009/10 and by 25.7% on 2004/5 (NHE England 2015c).
- (e) Between November 2014 and March 2015 there were 380 A&E diverts where emergency patients had to be diverted to other hospitals due to demand - an increase of 26% on winter 2013/14. There were 133,026 incidences of ambulance handovers delayed for over 30 minutes - an increase of 62% on winter 2013/14 (House of Commons Library 2015).
- (f) There were also increases in the number of bed days lost to norovirus and delayed transfer of care. 101,144 bed days were lost due to closures related to diarrhoea and vomiting/norovirus symptoms – an increase of 37% on winter 2013/14. 375,700 beds were unavailable due to delayed transfers of care - an increase of 29% on winter 2013/14 (House of Commons Library 2015).
- (g) 1,407 urgent operations and 29,339 elective operations were cancelled - an increase of 24% and 32% respectively on winter 2013/14. Trusts reporting operational problems increased to an average of 12.1 trusts reported serious operational problems daily - this compares with 6.4 trusts per day in winter 2013/14 (House of Commons Library 2015).

3. Recommendation

RECOMMENDED that the report be noted and NHS England provide an update about the performance of the winter plans to the Committee at its April meeting.

Item 5: NHS preparations for winter in Kent 2015/16

Background Documents

Department of Health (2014) '*NHS well prepared for cold winter pressures (14/11/2014)*', <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-well-prepared-for-cold-winter-pressures>

House of Commons Library (2015) '*NHS Winter Pressures 2014/15 – Weekly Update (27/03/2015)*', <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07057>

Monitor (2014) '*Operational resilience funding for 2015/16: updates (19/12/2014)*', https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/423116/Operational_resilience_FAQs_FINAL.pdf

NHS England (2014) '*NHS England Board Meeting (17 December 2014) - Update on NHS preparedness for winter 2014/15 (12/12/14)*', <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2014/12/12/board-meet-17-dec14/>

NHS England (2015a) '*Resilience Planning (24/04/2015)*', <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/resilience-planning-assurance-letter.pdf>

NHS England (2015b) '*Preparation for winter 2015/16 (11/08/2015)*', <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/winter-readiness-letter-1516.pdf>

NHS England (2015c) '*Winter Health Check - 13 March 2015 (13/03/2015)*', <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2015/03/13/winter-health-chck-130315/>

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