

## **NHS preparations for winter in Kent 2015/16**

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### **1.0 Purpose**

This report provides a briefing to the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which describes the actions that are being taken by across the Health and Social Care system to prepare for winter.

### **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 Systems Resilience Groups that were established in 2014. Kent has four Systems Resilience Groups covering the North, East, West 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 System Resilience Group Assurance**

NHS England expects all Systems Resilience Groups in Kent to 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 2015/16 NHS England South (South East) has facilitated an assurance process via a self-assessment template which required System Resilience Groups 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 eight high impact interventions, the flu programme for staff and patients and work on Delayed Transfers of Care.

Delayed Transfers of Care can be a result of difficulties placing patients, who are considered by the hospital to be medically fit for discharge (that is patients who no

longer require an Acute Hospital bed), back into their homes with appropriate support or into NHS Community or KCC Social Care beds.

#### **4.0 South Surge Management Framework and Systems Resilience Group Surge Management & Capacity Plans**

NHS England has circulated a South Region Surge Management Framework which has been agreed by the South Region Tripartite of NHS England, Monitor and the NHS Trust Development Agency. All Systems Resilience Groups have prepared Surge Management Plans that are aligned to this Framework. NHS England South (South East) has requested that these be tested via exercise ahead of winter.

#### **5.0 Systems Resilience Groups Surge Capacity Exercises**

NHS England South (South East) ensured that each Systems Resilience Group has conducted a Surge Capacity exercise ahead of winter 2015-16. A debrief report from each exercise will be prepared and presented to each Systems Resilience Group to ensure that lessons identified are learned ahead of winter. The Systems Resilience Groups' Surge Management plans will be updated to ensure that these lessons are addressed.

#### **6.0 Winter Reporting**

NHS England, the Trust Development Authority and Monitor will be conducting winter reporting on all NHS providers of Healthcare. The full details of the content and schedule of this reporting is due to be finalised shortly. However, there is expected to be additional focus on winter reporting during the two Bank Holiday periods.

#### **7.0 Winter Communications**

All SRGs have in place plans winter communications plans that support the nationally led 'Stay Well This Winter' campaign, which is a joint initiative between NHS England and Public Health England. <http://www.nhs.uk/staywell/>

This campaign drives home key messages to the public which it is hoped will help take the pressure off frontline services. The messages ask the public to protect themselves as the cold weather sets in by staying warm, stocking up on prescription

medicines or checking in on friends and neighbours to make sure they are keeping well and taking up the offer of a seasonal flu vaccination where eligible.

## **8.0 Seasonal Flu Vaccination**

Outbreaks of flu can occur in health and social care setting, and, because flu is so contagious, staff, patients and residents are at risk of infection. As a result front-line healthcare workers are offered a flu vaccination. Systems Resilience Groups have put in place measures to maximise and monitor uptake by eligible Health and Social care staff.

The flu vaccination is also offered free of charge to people who are at risk, pregnant women, carers and some young children to ensure that they are protected against catching flu and developing serious complications. The continued support of KCC in promoting the uptake is recognized and welcomed.

## **9.0 Summary**

- Systems Resilience Groups, of which KCC is an integral part, have taken steps to prepare the health and social care system to manage winter pressures.
- Individual Health and Social Care organisations and System Resilience Groups have Surge Management plans.
- These Surge Management plans are currently being tested by exercise and will be amended to take account of lessons identified before the winter period.
- A strong national communications campaign is being supported and delivered locally. The NHS recognises and welcomes KCC's ongoing support to successfully deliver these important messages to the population of Kent.
- KCCs support in encouraging the uptake of seasonal flu vaccination is welcomed.
- A robust system of winter reporting will be put in place to identify and respond any challenges as they arise.
- In addition to the Surge Management Plans, all the members of Systems Resilience Groups have robust, well-rehearsed plans in place to manage the impact of emergencies that can result from severe weather, infectious disease outbreaks or industrial action.
- The high rates of Delayed Transfers of Care at some NHS Hospital sites are highlighted as an area where further work is required in coordination with KCC.

