

Briefing for HOSC

Review of Emergency Ambulance Conveyances for the Swale CCG Population

January 2016

Summary

A key priority for Swale CCG continues to be the improvement of patient experience and outcomes for the communities it serves.

Following a number of concerns raised by the Care Quality Commission, local GPs and the public in relation to care being provided at Medway Foundation NHS Trust (MFT), Swale CCG has committed to review a potential change in blue light conveyance.

This possible change in the emergency care pathway, will only cover the Swale population and will look at the feasibility of aligning *some* ambulance conveyances to a Kent provider at Maidstone Hospital (part of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust).

The feasibility study supports existing strategic intentions that seek to develop a more integrated approach across health and social care, in order to enable seamless services and avoid unnecessary organisational bureaucracy.

The review will assess all possible impacts and more specifically, look at how additional bed capacity might be made available at Maidstone Hospital. The CCG is working with all relevant partners including Kent County Council and MFT to assess the practicality of this proposal.

Once this preliminary feasibility work has been undertaken, any long-term change in the destination of ambulances from Swale, would require formal public consultation, with any proposed change unlikely to be implemented until the summer of 2016.

Briefing note

1. Swale CCG is considering a potential change in the emergency care pathway for the population for whom it has commissioning responsibility. As part of the development of commissioning intentions the CCG is considering whether some emergency (“blue light”) ambulance conveyances for its population should transfer from Medway Foundation NHS Trust to Maidstone Hospital (part of Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust).
2. This change is being considered for a number of reasons:
 - i. Strategically the CCG is considering the future development of accountable care organisations (i.e. integrating the commissioning and provider functions). As an enabler to this the CCG believes there is a strategic argument to align Swale with a Kent acute hospital provider, which will facilitate the delivery of integrated care with the local authority by streamlining the emergency care pathway. Kent County Council are responsible for the social care needs of the Swale population and whilst they work with Medway Foundation NHS Trust, this provider is not in their area. Transferring conveyances for the Swale population would potentially align health and social care and facilitate the development of accountable care organisations.

- ii. In response to issues identified by the Care Quality Commission at Medway Foundation Trust, a number of actions were identified in collaboration with NHS England to support the hospital. This included actions to reduce demand on the hospital so as to provide an opportunity for the organisation to review its operational practices and support staff training. One action was to consider a possible transfer of blue light ambulances for the Swale population from Medway Foundation NHS Trust to Maidstone Hospital.
 - iii. Concerns around the care provided at Medway Foundation NHS Trust have been raised by local GPs and the public, including at the CCG's recent Annual General Meeting. In response to these concerns Swale CCG has committed to review a potential change in blue light conveyance.
3. Swale CCG has now initiated a project to review this potential change in conveyances. This focuses on emergency medical patients and the following categories of patients are not being considered as part of this work (i.e. if changes are made these patients would continue to be transferred to Medway Foundation Trust):
 - All suspected maternity, obstetric and gynaecological patients
 - All paediatric patients under 16 years of age with any condition
 - All suspected vascular emergencies (including AAA and ischemic limbs)
 - All major trauma (Adult major trauma tree stages 1-4)
 - All cardiac arrests, imminent cardiac arrest (patients at high risk of cardiac arrest based on the clinical assessment of the ambulance clinician); and
 - All suspect surgical patients.
4. The main rate limiting step, which would delay any change being implemented should a decision be taken to proceed. is likely to be identifying additional bed capacity at Maidstone Hospital. This is mostly likely to be achieved through improving the flow of patients at Maidstone Hospital, through actions such as reducing the number of Delayed Transfers of Care and delivering internal operational efficiencies.
5. Any long-term change in the destination of conveyances from Swale, as part of the CCGs regular, ongoing review and development of commissioning intentions, would require formal public consultation, with any change unlikely to be implemented until the summer of 2016. However, Swale CCG reserves the right to take any appropriate and immediate commissioning action it deems necessary if there are significant concerns regarding patient safety.

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