

Briefing on the NHS response to winter in Kent 2015/16

To: Kent HOSC
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1.0 Purpose

This report provides a briefing to the Kent Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), which describes the actions that were taken across the health and social care system to manage winter pressures.

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 Response activities are the Systems Resilience Groups (SRGs) that were established in 2014. Kent has four SRGs 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.

A report on the winter preparedness activities was provided to the Kent HOSC in May 2015.

3.0 Winter Pressures

Whilst the health and social care system in Kent experienced the predicted winter pressures – and all of the Kent SRGs moved to Red escalation at some point over the winter reporting period - none of the systems moved into whole system Black escalation. This meant that NHS England was not required to support the activities of the SRGs who were able to manage the system pressures using their own local

Surge and Capacity Management Plans. A review of the escalation reporting suggests that pressures were greatest in the months of February and March.

As with winter 2013-14 there has been no quick recovery from winter pressures in Kent. This is reflected across the South East and England.

4.0 Junior doctor Industrial Action

The preparedness and response for the Junior Doctors Industrial Action involved additional planning and response activities, which are covered in an accompanying report.

5.0 System Resilience Groups Response

Each of the Kent SRGs and the health and social care organisations of which they comprise implemented their Surge Management and Capacity Plans to manage the additional winter activity.

The SRGs, led by the Clinical Commissioning Groups, ran daily teleconferences with SRG member organisations to keep oversight of system pressures. These calls ensured that each organisation were implementing the pre-agreed actions in their plans. These actions ensured that each organisation supported one another to ensure good patient flow across the different parts of the health and social care systems.

6.0 NHS England's Winter Resilience Room

NHS England South (South East) operated a winter resilience room in Tonbridge Kent from 17 December 2015 to 31 March 2016. This room operated between 09:00 – 17:00hrs and was supported by NHS England's on call staff during out-of-hours and weekend/bank holiday periods.

The Winter Resilience Room monitored pressures being experienced across the South East including Kent and allowed NHS England to act to support SRGs as required, when they moved to Red or Black escalation.

The Room provided enhanced information flows between regional and local level and acted as a focal point for winter briefings, escalation discussions and communications through the winter.

It enabled NHS England to collate and analyse up to date information from SRGs. This was used to prepare daily reports which were sent to the South Region's Winter Resilience Room in Reading. This in turn was sent onto the National Winter Resilience Room in London, where the information was used to provide briefings to the Secretary of State for Health.

Situation reports were also sent to SRGs to help them understand the pressures being experienced by neighbouring SRGs.

7.0 Winter Communications

Kent's SRGs implemented their winter communications plans that supported the nationally led 'Stay Well This Winter' campaign, which was a joint initiative between NHS England and Public Health England. <http://www.nhs.uk/staywell/> .

8.0 South East Winter debrief

NHS England South (South East) held a winter debrief on 3 May 2016. Each of the SRGs provided a summary presentation of what went well, what has been learned and what they would like to see improved when the plans are refreshed.

Some key themes that emerged from the debrief were:

What went well?

- Early planning and testing of plans via exercise was valuable.
- The communications campaigns worked well.
- Member of SRGs worked well together to support each other.
- The "SAFER bundle" being applied in hospitals works and should be continued. (This is a systematic approach to discharge best practice)

What has been learned?

- A lack of availability of domiciliary care staff impacting on capacity for care packages at home.

- The nationally confirmed GP indemnity arrangements for out of hours activity worked, but needs to be repeated next year.
- Winter spikes in activity will always happen, but not necessarily at the same point each year and need to be prepared for flexibly.

What can we improve?

- A need to continue the work to unify the escalation criteria and actions taken when they are reached across all organisations.
- To see if we can streamline the national reporting requirements
- Continued work across systems to minimise delayed transfers of care and to streamline both complex and more simple discharges.

9.0 Summary

- In common with the South East and England as a whole the health and social care system in Kent experienced winter pressures: an increased number of patients with higher acuity.
- The Kent SRGs, of which KCC is an integral part, implemented their Surge Management and Capacity Plans which had been tested via exercise ahead of winter.
- These plans worked to manage system pressures locally as evidenced by the fact that no SRGs in Kent moved to Black escalation.
- There were periods over winter where Kent SRGs moved to Red escalation, but the use of their pre-agreed arrangements meant that they were able flex capacity to manage the pressures and de-escalate the system to Amber quickly.
- NHS England monitored pressures across Kent via a South East Winter Resilience Room, but was not required to intervene to support the SRGs in Kent.
- A debrief of winter has been conducted. This has identified good practice, which has been shared and items to be learned that will be included in the update of plans. It identified some key areas where future work is required.
- As with winter 2013-14 there has been no quick recovery from winter pressures in Kent. This is reflected across the South East and England.