

Item 6: NHS Waiting Times for Cancer Care

By: Kay Goldsmith, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 19 September 2019

Subject: NHS Waiting Times for Cancer Care

Summary: This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by the Kent and Medway STP.

It provides background information which may prove useful to Members.

1) Introduction

- a) There are nine cancer waiting time performance measures and these are published quarterly by NHS England.¹
- b) One of the measures is that 85% of patients should receive their first treatment within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspected cancer.²

2) The National Audit Office report

- a) In March 2019, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report called "NHS waiting times for elective and cancer treatment".
- b) The NAO reported that the key measure referred to in 1b) above had not been met since the end of 2013.³
- c) The report linked the poor performance with an increased demand⁴ along with staff shortages for diagnostic services, a lack of available beds and pressure on Trusts from emergency care.⁵

3) The local picture

- a) The quarterly statistical data provided on the NHS website reveals the performance of individual providers in meeting the various cancer standards. A summary of Kent providers in meeting the 62-day measure is shown in Table 1. Those failing to meet the performance standard are shown in red, and those achieving the standard are in green.

¹ NHS England (2018) Waiting Times for Suspected and Diagnosed Cancer Patients 2017-18 Annual Report

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

⁴ According to the NAO report, the number of urgent referrals made by GPs for suspected cancer between 2010-11 and 2017-18 had increased by 94%.

⁵ *ibid*

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Table 1: Percentage of patients receiving first treatment within 62 days of GP referral - performance of Kent NHS providers

<i>Provider</i>	<i>Quarter 4 2018/19 (final)⁶</i>	<i>Quarter 1 2019/20 (provisional)⁷</i>
All English Providers	77.42%	77.83%
Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust	63.05%	69.46%
East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust	75.23%	77.34%
Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust	90.84%	89.71%

- b) In their full report, the NAO included a list of the twenty highest and lowest performing Clinical Commissioning Groups⁸ meeting the 62-day cancer waiting times operational standard between October and December 2018.⁹
- i) NHS Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley CCG was the 11th highest performing CCG, with 89% of their cancer patients treated within 62 days of referral.
- ii) NHS West Kent CCG was the 4th lowest performing CCG, with 66% of cancer patients treated within 62 days of referral.
- c) HOSC invited NHS colleagues to prepare the attached paper to address what was being done to address the poor performance in some areas of Kent.

2. Recommendation

RECOMMENDED that the Committee consider and note the report.

Background Documents

National Audit Office (2019) NHS waiting times for elective and cancer treatment, <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/NHS-waiting-times-for-elective-and-cancer-treatment.pdf>

NHS England – Cancer waiting times: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/cancer-waiting-times/>

⁶ NHS England (2019) Cancer waiting times statistics – quarter 4 2018-19 (final)

⁷ NHS England (2019) Cancer waiting times statistics – quarter 1 2019-20 (provisional)

⁸ Nb. The performance statistics provided by commissioners and providers differs because the commissioner-based statistics only include patients who can be traced back to an English Commissioner using their NHS Number. The NHS advises that provider-based statistics are the most complete assessment of performance of the English NHS.

⁹ National Audit Office (2019) NHS waiting times for elective and cancer treatment

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