

East Kent Hospitals Update for Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

General Update

1 Winter planning and improvements to 4 hour performance

- 1.1 The Trust has maintained a stable position in the number of patients we assessed, treated, discharged or admitted within the national standard of four hours. This was 74% in January 2020, the same as in January 2019, compared to 69% in January 2018. This is against a backdrop nationally of more frail, elderly patients who are particularly susceptible during the winter, needing emergency hospital care.
- 1.2 Between April 2019 and January 2020, the Trust saw 13,317 more attendances by patients to its emergency departments, an increase of 7 per cent than over the same period the previous year. In total we treated 197,854 people over that period, or 647 people a day.
- 1.3 The Trust has invested in its emergency departments, creating space for new assessment units in addition to the observation wards put in last winter, has increased staffing and made more beds available for emergency patients.
- 1.4 The Trust is also working with GPs in east Kent to deliver 24/7 Urgent Treatment Centres which replace Minor Injury Units at Kent & Canterbury Hospital, Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital, William Harvey Hospital and Buckland Hospital.

2. Other key access targets

- 2.1 Staff have worked extremely hard to improve access to Cancer care. The percentage of patients receiving an appointment within 2 weeks of an urgent GP referral is now 97.97% in January 2020. Patients starting first treatment within 31 days from decision to treat, regardless of route of referral, has been met for the last seven consecutive months.
- 2.2 In the third quarter of the year, the Trust achieved the national standard of 85% for the percentage of cancer patients starting their treatment within 62 days, for the first time since 2014. The Trust is now ranked 59th out of 150 trusts in the country.
- 2.3 Waiting times for planned care are also improving, with 81.18% of patients in January 2020, compared with 76.1% in January 2019, starting their treatment within 18 weeks. Despite increased demand we are working hard so that no patient waits more than 52 weeks, at the time of writing four patients were waiting more than 52 weeks, compared to 222 in April 2018. Improvement is due in part to improved efficiency in theatres and patient pathways and extra capacity as a result of the orthopaedic pilot.

3. Staffing

- 3.1 The 12 month vacancy rate decreased to 9.5% for the average of the last 12 months, an improvement on the previous year. There are currently approximately 715 WTE vacancies across the Trust. More work is being undertaken to target hard to fill vacancies, particularly within nursing and medical specialties. There are around 480 people in the pipeline (going through clearance processes) to join the trust covering a range of roles and job types. Turnover has remained stable with minor fluctuations normal for this time of year.

- 3.2 The percentage of substantive staff versus agency workers has improved and this continues to reflect the increase in use of bank workers rather than agency workers. Bank workers are mostly drawn from our substantive workforce thereby providing a better standard of patient care and continuity of provision. Statutory training completion remains high and above target showing a high level of compliance.
- 3.3 Sickness absence remains high and we are supporting staff in order to reduce this through return to work interviews, support from occupational health and through increased focus on mental health and wellbeing, this is important for NHS staff who work in a challenging environment with high demand.

4. Financial performance

- 4.1 The Trust continues to work hard to improve its financial position. For the third year running the Trust has an annual £30m savings target to make. To date this year we had delivered £20.7m in savings against this target and are on target to achieve the total by the end of the year.
- 4.2 This has involved considerable effort from staff who worked extremely hard to put in place efficiency schemes. All schemes involving clinical services are assessed to ensure that they maintain or improve patient care, for example by providing treatment which is more effective and leads to quicker recovery times.
- 4.3 The year to date position is a deficit of £26.4m, £0.4m better than plan. With recovery plans in place and a robust internal operating framework, the Trust remains on target against the planned position of £36.5m deficit agreed at year end.

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