

Item 6: East Kent Hospitals Covid-19 update

By: Kay Goldsmith, Scrutiny Research Officer

To: Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 17 September 2020

Subject: East Kent Hospitals Covid-19 update

Summary: This report invites the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the information provided by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.

It provides background information which may prove useful to Members.

1) Actions from the meeting held on 22 July 2020

- a) During the covid-19 update at the meeting of 22 July 2020, HOSC members raised some questions in relation to East Kent Hospitals that were unable to be answered during the meeting. The CCG undertook to provide a response as soon as possible.
- b) The responses to the two questions are set out below.

Staff testing at East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust (EKHUFT)

- i) Kent and Medway CCG Accountable Officer Wilf Williams assured the committee that the rate of infection amongst EKHUFT's staff was very low and that all staff were being tested. He undertook to provide a written response to the committee on the issue.
- ii) Response (provided on 30 July 2020): "EKHUFT carried out a rapid testing programme of 9,000 staff over five days as part of an on-going package of measures to keep patients, staff and the wider community safe and minimise the risk of transmission within hospital. 15 Trust staff were isolating in line with national guidance following a positive test result.

The Trust had reported that they were taking all possible steps to keep patients and staff safe, including limiting the number of people on site, having a strict "front door" policy including taking temperature checks before people enter the hospitals, providing face masks for those entering and hand cleansing facilities, and testing asymptomatic patients regularly whilst they are in hospital."

Use of Perspex screens across EKHUFT sites

- iii) A committee member asked if Perspex screens had been installed to protect staff, particularly in A&E, at QEQM, William Harvey and the Kent and Canterbury hospitals. Mr Williams undertook to provide a written response to the Committee.

Item 6: East Kent Hospitals Covid-19 update

- iv) Response (provided on 30 July 2020): “Protective screens are in place within the emergency department receptions at Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother Hospital in Margate and The William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, and at the Urgent Treatment Centre at Kent and Canterbury Hospital.”

2) Recent events

- a) Following an inspection on 12 August at EKHUFT’s William Harvey Hospital, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has taken enforcement action over “serious” safety concerns at the Trust. The action comes after reports of high numbers of people contracting Covid-19 whilst in the care of its hospitals.¹
- b) The CQC has used its regulatory powers to impose formal conditions on the hospital which if breached could lead to further action including prosecution. The Trust has 28 days from the date of notice to appeal the conditions, after which date the CQC can make their concerns public.
- c) The Chair of HOSC has invited the Trust to attend today’s meeting to answer Member’s questions. It should be noted that the Trust will not have responded to the regulator before today’s meeting and therefore there may be constraints on what they can share.

3) Recommendation

RECOMMENDED that the Committee consider and note the report and that the Trust be invited to attend a future meeting at the appropriate time.

Background Documents

Kent County Council (2020) ‘*Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (22/07/20)*’, <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=112&MId=8496&Ver=4>

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¹ BBC News (27 Aug 2020) East Kent Hospitals faces action over Covid-19 controls, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-53937887.com>