

NHS England and NHS Improvement Board meetings held in common

Paper Title: Operational performance update

Agenda item: 3 (Public session)

Report by: Amanda Pritchard, Chief Operating Officer
Pauline Philip, National Director for Emergency and Elective Care

Paper type: For discussion

Organisation Objective:

NHS Mandate from Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	Statutory item	<input type="checkbox"/>
NHS Long Term Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Governance	<input type="checkbox"/>
NHS People Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Action required:

Board members are asked to note the content of this report.

Executive summary:

This paper provides a summary of operational performance based on published data and work to restore services.

Urgent and Emergency Care

1. The NHS is continuing with its unprecedented emergency response to the pandemic. Hospitals have already cared for nearly 250,000 COVID-positive patients and there are 33,000 patients occupying beds.
2. During 2020, nearly 19 million patients were seen in accident and emergency (A&E) departments. In December alone there were nearly 1.5 million attendances in A&E, an increase of 56% compared to April and 460,300 emergency admissions. Performance against the 4-hour standard was 80.3% in December 2020 compared to 79.8% in December 2019.
3. During December 2020 NHS 111 has dealt with a 27% increase in demand compared to July 2020. NHS 111 First went live on 1 December 2020. NHS England/NHS Improvement continues to work with providers on service design and operations, with the latest data showing that approximately 27.7% of calls referred to an Emergency Department are now given a time slot for attendance.
4. For the year to date, over 90% of category 1 ambulance calls, those classified as life threatening, are met within 15 minutes. To ensure ambulance service resilience at times of enhanced pressure, mutual aid has been enacted across services.



5. The “Transformation of urgent and emergency care: models of care and measurement” report was published on 15 December 2020, setting out a number of priority service transformation workstreams for urgent and emergency care (UEC) systems. The report also sets out the recommendations of the UEC Clinically-led Review of National Standards.

Elective Care

6. Approximately 1.2m patients started elective treatment in November compared to 600,000 in April 2020. The Referral to Treatment (RTT) standard saw 68.2% of patients waiting less than 18 weeks at the end of November 2020, with 192,169 waiting 52 weeks or longer. Median waits fell from over 19 weeks in July 2020 to under 11 weeks in November 2020.
7. With support from the Royal Colleges, trusts are establishing clinical prioritisation of patients on waiting lists, including supporting clinicians to ensure that shared decision making discussions with patients.
8. Trusts are continuing to work with Independent Sector providers to ensure capacity is made available and is utilised effectively to maximise capacity and treat patients.

Cancer and Diagnostics

9. Between March and November 2020 nearly 1.5 million people were urgently referred by their GP with suspected cancer. Over this period more than 203,000 people started treatment, of whom 95% received their first treatment within 31 days. In December and January rapidly increasing COVID-19 numbers have put pressure on services. Despite this, NHS staff are ensuring that radiotherapy, chemotherapy and the majority of cancer surgery is continuing. Local systems are consolidating cancer surgery in COVID-protected hubs, prioritising people for surgery on the basis of clinical need and maximising the use of the independent sector. We have added in additional data points into existing information collections to monitor the delivery of cancer services.
10. Supporting the continuity of urgent cancer services remains a national priority for the NHS. In November we [published advice](#) to all hospital trusts to support services through the Winter pressures and the continuing COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that: COVID-safe hubs are in place for cancer surgery. Capacity is protected for cancer diagnostics and the delivery of the Long Term Plan (LTP) commitments continues for cancer care. We also published our national [Recovery Plan](#) for cancer in December 2020 to reduce waiting times and ensure capacity is in place to meet demand. The plan was developed with our cancer stakeholders, including patients, cancer charities and members of the national Cancer Recovery Taskforce.
11. Despite the significant challenges of the pandemic, delivery of LTP commitments for improving cancer services has continued this year. In December 2020, we launched the national [Cancer Quality of Life Survey](#) to broaden our understanding of the impact of cancer and its treatment, and how well people are living after treatment. Nationally we have launched 22 new

Rapid Diagnostic Centres (RDCs) since June 2020 (totalling 53 RDCs now operational) to enable patients with non-specific symptoms to get quicker access to an accurate diagnosis and begin their treatment. Despite the pandemic, 10 Targeted Lung Health Checks sites were running by December 2020, helping to identify lung cancers at an earlier stage and reducing inequalities in cancer outcomes. The roll-out of Colon Capsule Endoscopy across the country from January 2021 will allow us to detect or exclude cancer more quickly, as well as reducing the waiting time for colonoscopies.

12. We continue to encourage people to see their GP if they have any worrying symptoms that could be cancer. This message is a core part of the joint Public Health England and NHS England/NHS Improvement “Help Us, Help You – Accessing NHS Services” campaign, which seeks to address barriers deterring patients from accessing the NHS during the pandemic. Lung cancer is the latest campaign due to be launched in early 2021. The campaign messages are being shown across a range of communication channels including TV advertising, social media and regional press.
13. In total, 1,778,273 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during November 2020, representing 88% of the activity carried out in November 2019 and an increase of 190% compared to the peak in April 2020. Systems continue to implement ‘Adopt and Adapt’ blueprints for endoscopy and CT/MRI, a regionally led and nationally supported programme established to accelerate recovery following the first wave of COVID which is supported with £150m capital funding. An increase in alternative clinically appropriate tests are being utilised to reduce the demand for traditional endoscopy.

Screening and Immunisations

14. Screening programmes have continued in the latest COVID-19 wave despite some sites being under pressure. The continuation of the screening services has been supported by clear regional guidance to maintain services.
15. The NHS Breast Screening programme is offering routine screening invitations for 50-70-year-olds, with a service available for people over 71-years to self-refer.
16. The NHS Bowel Screening programme is offering new routine screening invitations. Regions are working with providers to deliver an increase on usual levels of Bowel Screening invitations to return to the standard of screening within at least 6 weeks before or after an invitation due date.
17. Cervical invitation and reminder letters have returned to their normal intervals (4 and 18 weeks). As a result of increased referral volumes, colposcopy services are expanding their capacity to increase activity and manage rising demand.
18. All Diabetic Eye Screening and Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm services have restored to offering routine screening invitations.

Flu vaccination programme

19. As of 12 January 2021, GPs and Pharmacists have vaccinated around 18 million people for flu, so far this winter. An estimated 1.3 million more (+10.3%) individuals have been vaccinated than at this time last season.
20. Vaccine coverage for the over 65s is 80.5%. Compared to the same time last season, this is 9.8% higher with 1.1 million additional vaccines given for over 65s. Coverage is also higher than ever before among 2 and 3-year olds.
21. For those in clinically at-risk groups, uptake is higher than it has been at the same point for the last seven seasons.

Primary Care

22. Rapid work has taken place to mobilise primary care capacity to support the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Around 1,000 General Practice-led sites were identified across Primary Care Networks along with community pharmacy providers. Most general practice-led sites have been mobilised already with the remainder stood up in the week commencing 11 January, with pharmacy sites coming online during January 2021 as vaccine supply increases.
23. The delivery of the vaccination programme and the current COVID-related pressures is causing pressure across general practice. We have published a letter setting out additional support and action to help free-up capacity and ensure services remain fully and safely open for patients.
24. In-light of the reintroduction of shielding nationally, a Home Delivery Service for Medicines has been commissioned from community pharmacies and dispensing practices for all patients on the Shielded Patient List in England.
25. Working with the Department for Health and Social Care, we have delivered lateral flow testing kits to organisations placing requests in December 2020 to support front-line NHS staff.
26. We will introduce the NHS Discharge Medicines Service as a new essential service for community pharmacy contractors from 15 February 2021, with an aim to ensure better communication of changes to a patient's medication when they leave hospital, improving outcomes, preventing harm and reducing readmissions.

Mental Health

27. Mental health services have remained open throughout the pandemic. Referrals have now returned to pre-pandemic levels. Local services continue to work rapidly to respond to the changing context.
28. Delivery against core access, recovery and waiting time standards remains strong in the context of COVID-19, with 250,489 children and young people accessing mental health services, which is above target for 2020/21. Improving

Access to Psychological Therapies waiting times being met at 91.1% for urgent cases and 97.9% for routine cases in October 2020. However, the pandemic has inevitably impacted the delivery of some mental health services.

29. Evidence from other emergency situations (and the increase in referrals following the first lockdown) indicates that COVID-19 will result in increased demand for mental health services in future demonstrating the need for continued expansion of services as set out in LTP. The £500 million additional investment in mental health for 2021/22 announced as part of the Spending Review help respond. Delivery of the LTP remains the focus of our COVID-19 response and the expectation is that local areas should strive to meet the 2020/21 LTP ambitions to the extent that they are able. It will also be critical to lock-in the beneficial changes made in mental health services over the last year.
30. In line with the priorities outlined in the Advancing Mental Health Equalities Strategy, NHS England/NHS Improvement has been holding a series of engagement sessions with Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) stakeholders to help shape the upcoming Patient and Carers Race Equality Framework. Over 200 participants attended the virtual sessions to identify ways BAME patient and carer experiences of mental health services can improve.

Learning Disabilities and Autism

31. The number of people in an inpatient setting has reduced by 28% from 2,895 in March 2015 to 2,075 as at the end of November 2020. Further work is underway to reduce the number of adults in an inpatient setting to 30 adults per million adults and 12-15 children and young people in an inpatient setting per million children by March 2024.
32. Whilst the number of patients with the longest stays has significantly reduced, a proportion of people who have been in hospital for a long time are on Ministry of Justice legal restrictions. Nearly half of inpatients now have a date planned for them to leave hospital.

COVID Vaccination Programme

33. The NHS made history when Maggie Keenan became the first person in the world to be protected against coronavirus outside of a clinical trial when she received the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine at Coventry Hospital on 8 December 2020. The NHS was also the first health system to deliver the new Oxford AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine when Brian Pinker, 82, received the vaccine on 4 January 2021.
34. [The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation \(JCVI\), advised to Government that the priority for the current COVID-19 vaccination programme](#) should be the prevention of COVID-19 mortality and the protection of health and social care staff and systems.

35. The [4 UK Chief Medical Officers agreed with the JCVI](#) that at this stage of the pandemic, prioritising the first doses of vaccine for as many people as possible on the priority list would protect the greatest number of at-risk people in the shortest possible time. The Government has instructed the NHS to vaccinate on that basis, with second doses at 12 weeks after first doses.
36. Since 24 December 2020, we have published [weekly data on the total number of vaccinations](#) in England, including the breakdown between over and under 80s for England. From 11 January 2021, we have published daily data showing the total number vaccinated to date, including first and second doses. From 14 January 2021 and then on a weekly basis, we published a more detailed breakdown of vaccinations in England, including by region.