

Note of the National Escalation Pressures Panel meeting

Friday 2 November, Wellington House

Panel attendees: Kathy McLean (Chair – NHS Improvement), Derek Alderson (Royal College of Surgeons), Jenny Harries (Public Health England), Bruce Keogh (Birmingham Women's and Children's NHS Foundation Trust), Cliff Mann (NHS England), Ruth May (NHS Improvement), Pauline Philip (NHS England and NHS Improvement), Steve Powis (NHS England), Prem Premachandran (Care Quality Commission)

1. The Chair welcomed members of the panel to the meeting and set out that, continuing from last year, the panel would provide advice to the National UEC Director, as necessary during the winter months.
2. Panel members discussed the continuing role of NEPP and its contribution to providing intelligence from the frontline, providing two-way and timely communications, and the need to be responsive. Reflecting on last year, the National Director recognised the contribution that NEPP made to understanding the pressures on the workforce.
3. The National Director described the current picture of both A&E and elective care performance.
4. In elective care, trusts had been working hard to improve the position heading into winter. In particular, an ambition had been set for the number of patients waiting over 52 weeks to be halved by the end of March 2019.
5. The National Director explained that the work NHS England and NHS Improvement undertake with trusts, working through the regions, is year-round and not just focussed on winter. She described the national and regional review and operational mechanisms in place to both understand risks and to ensure support where needed. The focus was on capacity including workforce, numbers of beds that can be opened, and that activity can be delivered.
6. The Chair asked panel members for their views on pressures and any work they were already undertaking. The Royal College of Surgeons had produced guidance for both consultants and trainees on winter, and with the support of Health Education England and the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, this guidance would be tailored for other specialties.
7. Regarding flu vaccination, the National Director updated the panel on the process, progress and distribution of the vaccine to primary care. There had been recent work to ensure that supplies were in the right place at the right time, and that GP practices were timing their flu vaccination clinics to coincide with deliveries of stocks. In addition, a communications campaign would be running to encourage, in particular, people 65 and over to receive their flu vaccination following the final tranche of stocks being delivered on 17 November.
8. On further meetings, the Medical Director said that the panel would be given regular updates on the pressures in the system, and recommended that the panel met again before Christmas, and then more regularly during the winter months of January and February.
9. The Chair concluded the meeting and thanked members for their time.