

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. Following our communications campaigns to reiterate to the public that the NHS is open for business, we have seen an increase in patients accessing emergency care services. In October 2020 there were nearly 1.6 million attendances at A&E, which is a 68.8% increase since April 2020. There were also 480,000 emergency admissions in October 2020 – a 42.3% increase since April this year. Performance against the 4-hour standard also remains better than last year (84.4% in October 2020 compared to 83.6% in October 2019).
2. NHS 111 core service demand remains higher than expected for this time of the year. There were 1.6m calls made in October 2020 - 18.8% higher than the previous year and an average of almost 54 thousand calls per day. There were nearly 167,000 more calls answered in October 2020 compared to the same month last year.
3. The NHS 111 First initiative, which encourages the public to call NHS 111 before attending A&E continues to be rolled out. It aims to maintain social distancing in A&E and ensure that callers have access to a wider range of urgent care services and receive the right care in the right place in a more timely way. Nineteen areas are operational and a further seventeen have been

NHS England and NHS Improvement



assured and will shortly be going live. We are on track for this service to be available across the country by December 2020, and a national public information campaign is being launched.

4. For the year to date, four ambulance response time standards continue to be met nationally. Overall incident demand increased by 3.7% from 718,556 in September 2020 to 745,327 in October 2020.

Elective Care

5. In the initial phase of the COVID-19 response, the waiting list fell as demand reduced and the NHS focussed on treating urgent elective patients as well as those with COVID-19 or other emergency or urgent care needs. Increasing numbers of patients are now being treated - completed elective pathways have been increasing month on month since April (other than in August). There were more than 1m completed pathways in September - an 87% increase since April. The total waiting list stood at 4.35m in September 2020, down from 4.42 in September 2019. There are 139,545 patients waiting 52 weeks or longer for treatment.

Cancer and diagnostics

6. In September 2020, 199,801 referrals were received on the urgent cancer 2 week wait pathway, which is above the numbers seen in the same month last year (2% more than in September 2019). 24,445 people started cancer treatment in September 2020 and the total numbers of cancer treatments was above the same time last year.
7. We are supporting the use of alternative drug treatments in response to infection risk from COVID-19 (with a £160m initiative announced in August 2020), innovative radiotherapy regimes which reduce footfall to hospitals, and expanding the surgical hub model. The 'Adopt and Adapt' blueprint for cancer outlines further actions to maximise efficiency and productivity of treatment services, and 200 cancer specialists have returned to work following their engagement with the 'Bringing Back Staff' programme. To ensure cancer recovery is maintained, we will regularly test asymptomatic staff, maintain COVID-protected hubs for cancer surgery, and continue to prioritise cancer services for non-COVID capacity.
8. Encouraging people to see their GP if they have any worrying symptoms remains key. Two social media phases of the 'Help Us Help You' campaign ran in April and August 2020, with the most popular video of support receiving 40,000 views on Twitter; referrals have been steadily increasing since April. Two cancer symptom phases of the Public Health England and NHS England and Improvement campaign 'Accessing NHS Services' have also launched: A general cancer symptoms phase in October 2020, and an abdominal cancer symptom focus in November 2020. The campaign messages will be shown across a range of communication channels including TV advertising, social media and regional press.

9. Local systems are continuing to make good progress in re-introducing capacity across the spectrum of diagnostic tests. In total 1,711,100 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during September 2020, representing 88% of the activity carried out in September 2019 - a 12% increase on August 2020. Forty-four Rapid Diagnostic Centres (RDCs) are currently live, with a similar number in development, and have been asked to focus on two-week wait pathways. Systems are implementing 'Adopt and Adapt' blueprints for endoscopy and CT/MRI which is supported with £150m capital funding. These initiatives include increasing working hours, procurement of equipment to increase capacity and enabling staff to work across areas more flexibly to provide mutual aid. An increased use of FIT testing and CT colonoscopy and Colon Capsule Endoscopy are also being utilised to reduce the demand for traditional endoscopy.

Screening and Immunisations

10. The NHS Breast Screening programme is now offering routine screening invitations for 50-70-year olds across all sites, with the service for self-referrers (over 71 years) restarting. NHS Bowel Screening is offering new routine screening invitations and undertaking diagnostics in all 64 screening centres. Cervical invitation and reminder letters have returned to the normal intervals (4 and 18 weeks). All Diabetic Eye Screening and AAA services have restarted routine screening invitations.

Flu vaccination programme

11. Flu vaccination uptake rates are the highest they have ever been at this stage of the season and are over 2 million people ahead of this time last year. Trusts have set trajectories to deliver their workforce flu vaccination programme by early December.

Primary Care

12. Work is continuing to ensure as many patients as possible are seen across primary care. There were 26.7 million GP appointments in September 2020. This compares with 16.0 million in April 2020 and 25.7 million in September 2019, demonstrating that GP appointments are increasing and now above the same levels as this time last year. This includes activity to help get the balance right between phone/online and face to face appointments (which are running at around one third to one half of the total). A toolkit to support appropriate public messaging that general practice is also "open for business" (including face to face appointments where needed) was shared with practices in September 2020. A national campaign to encourage the public to seek help when necessary began in October 2020 in partnership with Public Health England.
13. Outbreak reporting continues to be monitored across primary care services, and COVID-19 specific procedures remain in place, particularly to support Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) people. The medicines home delivery service has been recommissioned for CEV groups during the current

lockdown.

14. On 9 November 2020 NHS England wrote to systems announcing the establishment of a new General Practice COVID Capacity Expansion Fund. £150 million of revenue is being immediately allocated through ICS to CCGs for general practice, for the purpose of supporting the expanding general practice capacity up until the end of March 2021. Systems are encouraged to use the fund to stimulate the creation of additional salaried GP roles that are attractive to practices and locums alike. The fund could also be used for the employment of staff returning to help with COVID, or to increase the time commitment of existing salaried staff.
15. Rapid work has taken place to plan to mobilise primary care capacity to support the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Sites are being identified across PCN footprints.
16. In preparation for EU Exit, we continue to work closely with teams and departments across NHS England and Improvement to understand and help mitigate risks that may arise at the end of the transition period.

Mental Health

17. Mental health services have continued to remain open. The original lockdown did impact on referral routes and access rates; however, referrals rates have subsequently started to rise again, and in some cases have reached pre-pandemic levels.
18. COVID-19 is expected to result in increased mental health needs for the foreseeable future, resulting in pressures on the system and demonstrating the need for continued expansion of services as set out in the Long Term Plan.
19. Delivery against core access, recovery and waiting time standards remains strong in the context of COVID-19, with more than 403,800 children and young people accessing mental health services, which is above target for 2020/21 and Improving Access to Psychological Therapies waiting times being met at 89.1% for urgent cases and 97.8% for routine cases in August 2020. However, the pandemic has inevitably impacted the delivery of some mental health services and will result in increased mental health needs and this impact on delivery is expected to continue for the rest of 2020/21.
20. The delivery of the LTP remains as relevant as ever whilst responding to the pandemic. Local areas should strive to meet the 2020/21 LTP ambitions and continue to expand capacity and quality of mental health services in order to reduce the treatment gap. It will also be critical to lock-in the beneficial changes made in mental health services in the last few months, such as enhanced use of digital solutions to complement face-to-face provision of services where appropriate and increased access to crisis helplines, while pivoting the delivery plan towards additional COVID-driven mental health need going forward. The programme will work closely with regional colleagues to support delivery and strive for recovery of trajectories by end 2021/22, taking

into account any additional in-year pressures. The commitment to achieving the access and expansion targets by 2023/24 remains strong. It is worth noting, however, that this is also dependent on funding to address education and training needs for Health Education England, and any additional COVID-related pressures that may arise.

Learning Disabilities and Autism

21. The number of people in an inpatient setting has reduced by 29% from 2,895 in March 2015 to 2,060 (1,855 adults and 205 people aged under 18) as at the end of September 2020. This reduction represents unprecedented progress, but further work is required 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.
22. Whilst the number of patients with the longest stays has significantly reduced, there remains a proportion of people who have been in hospital for a long time, some on Ministry of Justice legal restrictions. Just under half of inpatients now have a date planned for them to leave hospital.