

NHS England and NHS Improvement Board meetings held in common

Paper Title: Operational performance update

Agenda item: 4 (Public session)

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Paper type: For discussion

Organisation Objective:

NHS Mandate from Government Statutory item
NHS Long Term Plan Governance
NHS People Plan

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. Bed occupancy for patients with COVID fell from the peak of 35,000 COVID-positive patients in January 2021, to an average of 800 COVID-positive patients in May 2021 and currently stands at >1000.
2. In May 2021, there were just over 2 million patients seen in accident and emergency (A&E) departments; this is an increase of 11.2% compared to April 2021 and almost twice the number of A&E attendances in May 2020, illustrating the rising demand now being seen
3. Since March 2021, NHS111 First data shows that almost a third of calls referred to an Emergency Department (ED) are now given a time slot for attendance and every ED referral from NHS 111 is made known in advance to the relevant department.
4. In April 2021, both Ambulance Category 1 response time performance standards were achieved despite a backdrop of rising demand. To support ambulance crew decision-making on site, 30,000 iPads, are being issued to ambulance staff enabling easier access to patient records and video calling to hospital clinicians.



5. We continue to see growth in patients treated on ‘Same Day Emergency Care’ pathways with ‘zero day’ non-elective spells increased by 3.1% (relative to April 2019).
6. The response to the UEC clinical review of standards consultation was published on 26th May 2021. Responses support the model being proposed, and in some cases suggest further development. They will be considered as part of the implementation plan, subject to Government agreement.

Discharge and Community Services

Hospital discharge and length of stay

7. The Government has provided additional funding for hospital discharge of £594m for quarters 1 and 2 of 2021/22. It is for new or extended packages of care on discharge from hospital starting on or before 30 September 2021 and covers up to six weeks of funded care from 1 April - 30 June 2021 and up to four weeks of funded care from 1 July - 30 September 2021.

Urgent Community Response

8. Rollout of the two-hour crisis response standard for support at home, as first announced in the NHS Long Term Plan, is being accelerated and all parts of England will be offering this service to patients by April 2022. This is the first standard of its type in the NHS. Each system has been allocated funding to support this and a support programme is in place to share best practice and learning.
9. A number of accelerator sites have been identified to test innovative ways to maximise activity and will rapidly share learning across all systems. Seven accelerator sites will reach full rollout by October 2021.

Elective Care

10. The total waiting list for April 2021 stood at 5.12m with 385,490 patients waiting 52 weeks or longer for treatment a fall of around 50,000 compared with the prior month. Median waits have declined from over 19 weeks in July 2020 to 11 weeks in April 2021.
11. Though COVID-related capacity and infection control pressures remain, systems are making good progress in stepping-up activity levels. Total elective activity for April 2021 were at their highest levels since the beginning of COVID as a percentage (84%) when compared to the pre-COVID baseline (April 2019) and has been increasing month-on-month since January 2021 (from 57%). It now stands at around 90% of usual levels. Total outpatient activity for April 2021 was also significantly higher when compared to pre-COVID activity (94%) from January 2021 (76%).
12. We are also prioritising a series of reform initiatives covering demand management, pathway improvement, diagnostics, outpatients and independent sector usage. Work is ongoing to agree the levels of ambition and to model the impact that these initiatives can have on the waiting list.

Diagnostics

13. In total, 1.85 million of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during April 2021, representing an increase of 1.24 million compared to the first wave peak in April 2020.
14. At the end of May 2021, 91% of wave 1 and 61% of wave 2 diagnostic equipment identified for replacement as part of the £200m programme announced in September 2019 has been installed. Over 96% of installations will be completed by September 2021.

Cancer

15. NHS staff have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to seek to maintain cancer services. Between March 2020 and the end of March 2021, more than 2.4 million people were urgently referred for suspected cancer and cancer treatments continued at 98% of the level seen the year before, despite increased pressure and hospitalisations from COVID.
16. Throughout the pandemic patients have been encouraged to come forward with any worrying signs that could be cancer. Urgent referrals for suspected cancer hit a peak in March 2021 with further strong performance seen in April 2021. 209,452 patients were urgently referred (105% of pre-pandemic levels) and more of these patients were seen within two weeks than ever before in a single month. Initial evaluation data from the "Help Us Help You" lung cancer awareness campaign, run through TV, radio and social media, shows an encouraging increase in public awareness of a cough for three weeks or more being a potential sign of lung cancer.

Screening and Immunisations

17. The NHS Breast Screening programme is offering routine screening invitations for 50 to 70-year olds including offering the ability for women over 71-years to self-refer into the programme. Work is underway to restore breast cancer screening to meet national performance standards and to recover backlogs by end March 2022. Since June 2020, many breast screening offices have been offering extended working hours and weekend clinics to support a reduction of eligible women waiting for a screening appointment and there has been over £20m of capital invested in the screening units.
18. The NHS Bowel Cancer Screening Programme has increased new routine screening invites for 60 to 74-year olds at a rate of over 100% of pre-COVID levels which has nearly halved the backlog. Since April 2021, we have started to roll out extension of the programme to include 50 to 59-year olds. This age extension is a key deliverable within the NHS Long Term Plan.
19. Invitation and reminder letters for the NHS Cervical Screening Programme continue to be issued at normal intervals (4 and 18 weeks). All laboratories are reporting that the volume of samples received from primary care and sexual health services continue to be above pre-COVID levels.

20. All NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme sites are screening higher risk patients, with restoration progress monitored monthly. After a successful trial, further mass screening events are planned in June and July 2021 to help restore the programme fully back to pre-COVID levels.
21. The Abdominal Aortic Aneurism (AAA) Screening programme has continued to offer screening to all eligible males over 65-years old. Most AAA services have now screened Phase 1 cohort (higher risk) patients.
22. The Ante Natal and Newborn Screening (ANNB) programmes remain unaffected by COVID which is testament to the NHS providers of these time-critical services. Regions are reporting that the small backlog volumes in the Newborn Hearing Screening Programme are reducing.
23. Despite school closures and local restrictions during the pandemic, all regions have provided assurance that catch-up plans are in place for school aged vaccinations e.g. HPV, Meningitis ACWY, MMR for the 2019/20 cohort of children to be vaccinated by 31st August 2021.
24. The 2020/21 flu vaccination programme was the most successful on record. Despite delivering a significantly expanded programme during a pandemic year and national lockdowns, uptake rates in those aged 65 years and over was the highest ever recorded. Uptake in 2 and 3-year-old children and for individuals aged under 65 years and in a clinical at-risk group were also the highest achieved in recent seasons.

Primary care

25. In March General Practice delivered 34.3m appointments, 19% more activity than March 2019, including COVID vaccination data.
26. PCNs have proven their potential through successfully delivering the vast majority of COVID vaccinations. They have also significantly exceeded delivery expectations against the NHS Long Term Plan goal of increasing physical health checks for people with a learning disability over the age of 14.
27. Latest primary care workforce statistics show that as at 31 March 2021, there were 35,273 FTE doctors working in general practice (47,005 headcount) in England. This represents an increase of 945 FTE (2.8%) over the last year. To further bolster workforce numbers Primary Care Networks are entitled to recruit staff from 14 roles under the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme, and by March 31st 2021 our triangulated data shows that PCNs had successfully secured over 9,100 additional staff in post – on track to deliver against the 26,000 manifesto goal
28. Formal tripartite negotiations on the arrangements for the Community Pharmacy Contractual Framework (CPCF) in 2021/22 began at the end of April 2021. The negotiations are taking place between the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Department of Health and Social Care supported by NHS England and NHS Improvement.

29. Over 95% of community pharmacies have registered to offer lateral flow testing kits to members of the public as part of the Test and Trace Pharmacy Collect service, supporting the government's strategy to expand access to testing.
30. The recovery of dental services remains underway, with IPC guidance continuing to limit activity. Healthwatch published a report in May 2021 setting out the significant challenges that this has created for patients needing to access care.

Mental Health

31. The continued expansion and transformation of Mental Health services is underway as outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan. In the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to expand services have continued and programme delivery against core access, recovery and waiting time standards remain strong.
32. February 2021 data shows an access rate of 38.9% for Children and Young People (CYP) accessing mental health services which is above the 35% target for 2020/21. Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' referral to treatment times are being met with 92.3% of people being seen within 6 weeks and 98.8% being seen within 18 weeks in March 2021, against a target of 75% and 95% respectively.
33. However, evidence from previous emergency situations and the increase in referrals following the first lockdown indicates that COVID-19 will likely result in increased demand for mental health services in future. Furthermore, frontline services are still reporting additional pressures of rising acuity and more complex presentations, most notably within CYP services, and in urgent and emergency pathways
34. Through the 2021/22 planning process, we are agreeing how systems will prioritise NHS Long Term Plan commitments and use the additional £500 million investment for mental health and linked areas awarded as part of the Spending Review to respond to increased need. The commitment to achieving the NHS Long Term Plan access and expansion targets by 2023/24 remains strong, and confidence in achieving them is high.

Learning Disabilities and Autism

35. Reducing reliance on inpatient services is a key priority and we continue to make progress in reducing the number of people with a learning disability, autism, or both, in an inpatient setting. We are also focussing on improving the quality of inpatient care. By the end of March 2021, the number of adult inpatients had fallen to 1,855, and the number of children and young people inpatients was 225. In general practice we have delivered record numbers of Annual Health Checks, covering 73.5% of people on the GP Learning Disability Register over the age of 14, against a target of 67%. Every health check helps people access vital health services, such as cancer screening.
36. Compared with 2020/21, national funding to support the NHS Long Term Plan

commitments for people with a learning disability, autism, or both, will have tripled by 2023/24, providing additional investment in community services and support, the keyworker programme for children and young people, and a range of other programmes. In addition, £31 million of additional money was made available in the Spending Review for 2021/22, enabling us to strengthen services for autistic people.