

**Portsmouth Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Portsmouth Hospitals University NHS Trust update
20 January 2022**

Introduction

This remains an extremely busy period for the organisation across all our services. As a Trust we have continued to see an increasing number of patients attending our emergency department at Queen Alexandra Hospital, alongside a rise in non-elective demand, which is also being seen nationally.

Over the last 12 months, we have been working hard to continue providing outpatient appointments, procedures and operations, and planned care alongside demand for urgent and emergency services. Winter is always a challenging time and we have been monitoring the emerging situation with the Omicron variant and how that may impact services.

Maintaining the safety and effectiveness of our services remains our priority and we continue encouraging members of our communities to make the right decision when it comes to where they attend for treatment and support. We recognise that it is unlikely we will face a reduction in demand soon and the level of pressure on all services remains high, so choosing the right service for their needs is one way people can continue supporting us.

In line with our winter plan, several developments including the opening of new facilities and services have taken place over the last few months and we are already seeing the benefit of these. However, improving flow within our services and supporting timely discharges remain vital in the success of this work.

Providing support and wellbeing to our staff, who have faced sustained pressure, remains a priority for us. We continue evaluating the services we offer and ensuring these meet the needs of our colleagues.

Ongoing response to COVID-19

We continue to see high prevalence across Portsmouth and the surrounding areas and are currently treating around 100 patients with COVID-19 (as of 10 January 2022) including around ten per cent requiring more intensive care in our critical care unit. This rise in the community has also been seen in our pathology laboratories where in early January the number of positive cases they were reporting, nearly doubled from 350 to 623 (week commencing 3 January 2022).

In September 2021, we began offering the COVID booster to staff and were pleased to see many colleagues deciding to get this alongside their annual flu vaccination as soon as they were eligible. In response to the government's announcement to offer the booster to all eligible adults, on 20 December 2021, we re-opened the Queen Alexandra Hospital vaccination hub to the public through the national booking system. Due to demand, we are now offering first and second doses, as well as able to vaccinate 16- to 17-year-olds.

We are proud of the role we have played in the vaccination programme after being the first hospital hub to open in Hampshire and Isle of Wight in December 2020, however, remain aware of those individuals who remain hesitant or not yet vaccinated so are working with other organisations to do what we can to encourage uptake and share accurate information.

In line with other NHS organisations and infection prevention and control guidance, we have reintroduced restrictions to visiting. Visiting is still supported in circumstances such as for a patient receiving end of life care, patients with a learning disability or dementia, or patients with an extended admission of more than two weeks. Visitors accompanying patients to outpatient appointments are now required to show evidence of a negative lateral flow test before entering the hospital. We continue requiring patients, staff, and visitors to wear face masks while on our sites.

As seen in other health settings, some of the patients we are treating with a positive COVID-19 result are not requiring admission due to the virus, but for other conditions or injuries. This for us highlights the importance of continued community testing such as lateral flow tests for asymptomatic individuals and we continue screening patients for the virus on admission.

Demand across our services: urgent and emergency care

We understand the need to address waiting lists whilst facing sustained pressure on urgent and emergency care, but this remains challenging at a time when higher than usual numbers of staff are themselves unwell and unable to attend work. We continue working with colleagues to identify ways of reducing the delay faced by patients, whilst providing safe and sustainable care.

In response to the increase in demand for inpatient beds, plus number of ambulance conveyances, our winter plan incorporated several new ways of working that we have since implemented. We continue working closely with South Central Ambulance Service and other providers to identify ways we can improve the number of ambulance minutes lost at our ED. This includes extending pathways for them to access same day emergency care (SDEC).

In November 2021 we opened the emergency care centre, which runs alongside the existing ED footprint, and offers a new model of care for patients arriving at the ED with minor injuries or illnesses that require emergency intervention, but don't necessarily require admission. Following the success of this, we have increased the scope of this pathway by providing additional training for the teams involved.

In December 2021 we progressed with the medical village project which saw the acute medical unit, short stay unit and SDEC being co-located to one footprint within the hospital. This co-location and new medical model play an important part in our work to reduce delays for ambulances coming into the emergency department by improving flow. This is being done by the new clinical model focusing on moving patients who require a short stay with us out of the emergency department quicker and reducing the overall length of stay of these patients by minimising diagnostic and treatment wait times. This frees up space for those who require the most urgent and emergency centred care to be admitted quicker.

The ambulance service is now able to access SDEC services directly when bringing a patient in, if appropriate. While our older person's medicine SDEC service helps identify patients in the emergency department who need their specialised care quickly and moves them to a more suitable location for treatment.

Demand across our services: elective and outpatient's care

In November 2021, our new pharmacy for outpatients, to be run and managed by Lloyds Pharmacy, opened on the QA site. Located near the north entrance it also includes a retail

outlet for patients, visitors, and colleagues. The new facility is in response to the high demand on our previous outpatient pharmacy and we hope it will reduce the length of time patients have to wait for their prescriptions.

We continue working closely with system partners to manage the increase in planned activity safely and effectively, alongside the rise of patients with COVID-19 seeking our care. Following the success of virtual clinics during the pandemic, we continue to offer this to patients where their review or consultation can be safely and compassionately carried out in this way.

We recognise that some patients are waiting longer than they, or we would like, so are working hard to ensure those who require the most urgent treatment receive it within a suitable timeframe. Our clinicians are regularly reviewing waiting lists and reprioritising patients according to clinical need. In line with this, we have maintained service across all cancer pathways and have met eight of out the nine cancer standards.

Some of our services have been able to provide extra capacity to meet the increased level of demand we are seeing. This includes the introduction of weekend clinics. Another initiative we are introducing across additional services is patient initiated follow up (PIFU), where instead of a patient who may not require an appointment being automatically offered it, they are given the ability to request support or additional clinical input if they need it. This reduces the number of unnecessary appointments being made and not needed by the patient.

As a Trust, we also continue to be a national exemplar in advice and guidance, providing pre-referral two-way digital dialogue and advice for other health providers. This helps to support patient care and reduce unnecessary referrals.

In October 2021, we were announced as one of the successful locations to receive funding to create additional community diagnostic services. The aim of these centres is to provide earliest diagnostic tests for people closer to home and reduce the length of time patients are waiting to receive these. Currently additional phlebotomy and endoscopy services are being provided at St Mary's Community Health Campus with more to follow in the coming months.

Further updates

We will ensure that committee members are regularly updated, and the Trust would be pleased to provide further updates as required.