

WRITTEN QUESTIONS PURSUANT TO STANDING ORDER 44

1. Question from Councillor Sarah Osborne to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Residents of Ditchling, many of whom are parents with children at Downlands School in Hassocks have been in contact with you about the dangers for pedestrians and cyclists along 'the Keymer straight' (the B2116) including submitting a petition asking for safety measures. So far, all their requests for any improvements have been rebuffed. They have also asked if you and an officer from the ESCC Road Safety Team to attend the site from 8-8:30am term time, to witness the danger to life for young people trying to access their place of education. All road users are put unnecessarily at risk due to the 60mph speed limit and we need to see a scheme suggested that primarily reduces the speed of traffic but also makes this stretch of road safer in the day and night for all users.

Will you take up their invitation please so that you can properly appreciate the situation?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

I can confirm that the Road Safety Team have previously visited the site in order to consider whether a lower speed limit would be in accordance with our policy and what, if anything can be done to address road users concerns on the B2116 at this point. As the Road Safety team have already visited the site, I do not feel it would be appropriate to attend a site meeting on this occasion.

I refer to the report presented to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment in October 2024, in response to the petition received. The setting of appropriate and effective speed limits has been subject to a significant level of research nationally, which is also set out in the DfT's guidelines 'Setting local speed limits', which was revised in March 2024. The East Sussex County Council policy on setting speed limits is based on these guidelines.

It is important drivers are provided with a consistent message, so they know what is expected of them as they enter different road environments. The predominant factor considered when determining an effective speed limit is the number of properties that are visible to drivers which contributes to the road character and environment. There is little to no visible frontage development on the section of Keymer Road between the Ditchling Parish Council Car Park and the county boundary. This section of road does not meet the Council's policy requirements for a lower speed limit therefore the national speed limit is the most appropriate.

I acknowledge that, in many cases, we simply do not have the funding to implement the proactive road safety improvements that our residents wish to see, however I must stress that this road does not meet the requirements set out in our policy for a lower speed limit to be introduced and even if external funding was available to reduce a speed limit on the B2116, a lower speed limit still could not be supported here due to the requirements set out in the policy.

Implementing speed limits that are not appropriate are unlikely to result in a significant reduction in average speeds and can dilute the effectiveness of speed limits that are appropriately set. This will also lead to an increased demand for enforcement from Sussex Police.

Whilst this section of road is subject to the national speed limit, the onus is on the individual driver to drive in a safe and judicious manner, and to the conditions of the road and the surroundings through which they pass.

2. Question from Councillor Stephen Shing to the lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Residents enquire about the process and statistics surrounding Blue Badge applications in our county area. They have raised concerns about the length of time it is taking to process applications. Currently, the waiting time is a minimum of 16 weeks from the submission of a completed application.

Could you kindly provide the following information:

1. The total number of Blue Badge applications received by the county council for the years 2023-2024 and 2022-2023.
2. The average waiting time for Blue Badge applications in these two periods.
3. The number of Blue Badges issued and the number of applications that were rejected in these two periods.
4. Does the county council monitor or carry out checks to ensure that Blue Badges are being used appropriately?
5. How many Blue Badge holders were disqualified and/or paid a penalty in 2023-2024 and 2022-2023?

Answer by the Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

The estimated waiting time for the processing of a Blue Badge application is reviewed regularly and is normally in the region of 12 weeks as per the response to Question 2 (Below).

It should be noted that renewal applications are prioritised and the processing time for those and for applications that are supported by all of the required evidence and documentation would be lower. All other applications are processed in the order that they were received. The current 16 week estimate has, in part, been influenced by the currently high proportion of applications received without any, or sufficient, supporting information, which take longer to process and resolve.

The following table responds to the numbered questions:

Year	New Applications	Renewal Applications	Total Applications (Note 1)	Issued	Rejected	Estimated Average Wait	Enforcement Action (Note 2)	
							Community Resolution	Seized
2022/23	6,819	6,623	13,442	11,031	1,715	12 Weeks	15	67
2023/24	7,870	6,979	14,849	11,763	3,034	12 Weeks	39	81

Note 1: In 2022/23 there were also 9 applications for a replacement for a lost, stolen or damaged badge and 1 in 2023/24.

Note 2: There is an Enforcement Officer within the Blue Badge Team who inspects badges alongside the Parking Team. Enforcement action includes Prosecution and local resolution whereby the offender pays an administration fee and are invited to attend a video showing the impact of their actions on genuine badge holders.

3. Question from Councillor David Tutt to the Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Please can you provide details of the number of delayed hospital discharges per month over the past year and the reasons for them?

Answer by the Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

‘Delayed hospital discharges’ are now described as patients who have ‘No Criteria To Reside’ (NCTR) and is used to describe when a patient no longer has a medical reason to be in an acute hospital. The definition and application of an individual’s NCTR status differs significantly from the previous Delayed Transfer of Care (DToC) definition as it is solely determined by an NHS clinician (as opposed to a multi-agency, multi disciplinary team) and occurs much earlier in an individual’s recovery journey.

Delays are not attributed to individual agencies as it is acknowledged that all but the most simple discharges (Pathway 0) require a multi-disciplinary or whole system approach. Patients who are identified as NCTR by the NHS are categorised into one of five discharge pathways, as follows:

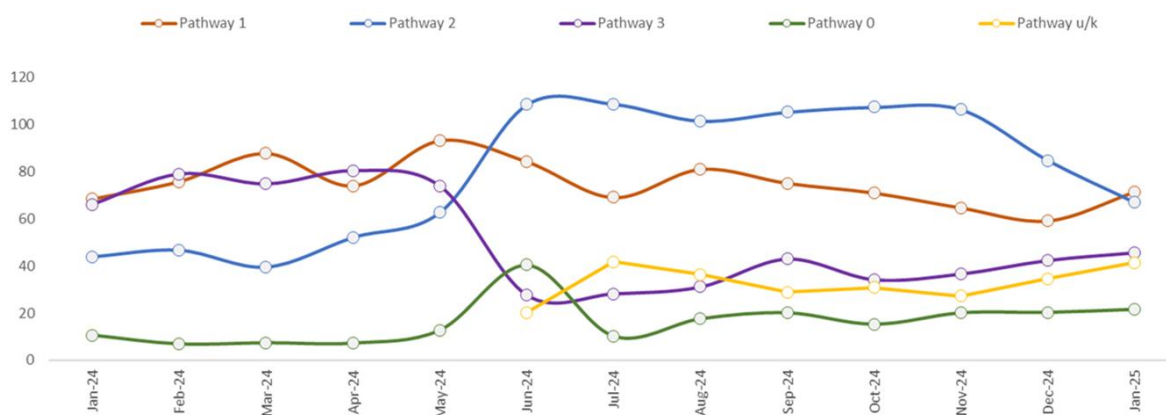
- Pathway 0: discharges home or to a usual place of residence with no new or additional health and/or social care needs
- Pathway 1: discharges home or to a usual place of residence with new or additional health and/or social care needs
- Pathway 2: discharges to a community bed-based setting which has dedicated recovery support. New or additional health and/or social care and support is required in the short-term to help the person recover in a community bed-based

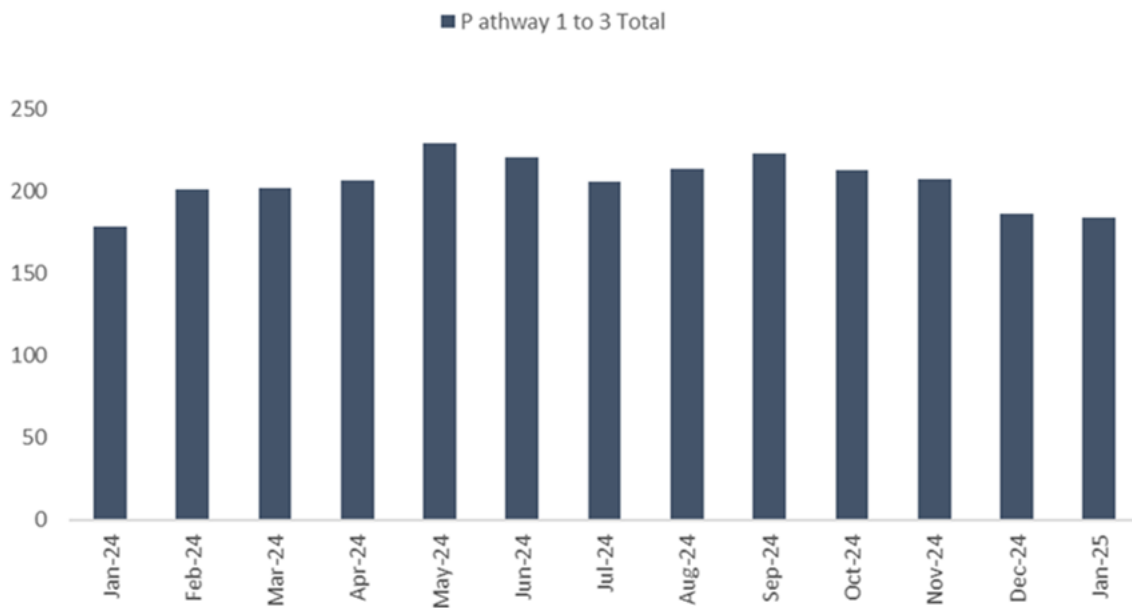
setting before they are ready to either live independently at home or receive longer-term or ongoing care and support

- Pathway 3: discharges to a new residential or nursing home setting, for people who are considered likely to need long-term residential or nursing home care. Should be used only in exceptional circumstances
- No Pathway identified – an individual has been recorded as NCTR but no route out of hospital has been identified or recorded.

The table and charts below show the monthly mean daily number of East Sussex residents who have NCTR status, broken down by pathway.

East Sussex	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24	Oct-24	Nov-24	Dec-24	Jan-25
Pathway 1	68	76	88	74	93	84	69	81	75	71	65	59	71
Pathway 2	44	47	40	52	63	108	109	101	105	107	106	85	67
Pathway 3	66	79	75	80	74	28	28	31	43	34	37	42	46
Pathway 0	11	7	7	7	13	40	10	18	20	15	20	20	22
Pathway u/k						20	42	36	29	31	27	35	41
Total	189	208	209	214	242	281	258	267	272	258	255	241	247
Pathway 1 to 3 Total	178	201	202	206	229	220	206	213	223	212	207	186	184





Notes:

- *Data and charts provided by NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board.*
- *Includes individuals in acute hospitals operated by East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT), University Sussex Hospitals NHS Trust (UHSx) and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW):*
- *There was a change to national methodology in June 2024 and this has affected the P2/P3 levels in East Sussex compared to previous months.*
- *Changes in ESHT methodology will further impact on P2/P3 levels from June 2024 compared to previous months*

There are multiple reasons for an individual having No Criteria to Reside but remaining in an acute hospital bed:

- An inconsistent approach to the application of the NCTR definition (resulting in potential over reporting).
- An increase in the number of individuals admitted to hospital and the proportion requiring complex supported discharge (including lacking mental capacity and requiring a Best Interests decision and/or Deprivation Of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) and/or Court of Protection Determination, Safeguarding and Homelessness).
- A reduction Discharge to Assess (D2A) Pathway 2 beds from 01/04/2024 – partially mitigated by an additional £1m joint investment by ESCC and NHS Sussex for additional Winter capacity.
- Insufficient NHS therapists, nurse assessors and social care assessors to maintain timely flow, as a result of increased activity, complexity and recruitment and retention challenges.

- Actions and decisions required from individuals, their family members and informal carers – including those who are responsible for arranging and fully funding their onward care.
- The identification of highly specialist placements and packages for people with particularly complex and multiple health and care needs (including those eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare – CHC)

4. Question from Councillor David Tutt to the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

Please can you tell me how many books have been presumed lost to East Sussex libraries in the past 3 years?

Answer by the Lead Member for Transport and Environment

East Sussex libraries contain many thousands of books which are available for library members to borrow for free. However, each year some books are reported as lost. Over the last 3 years, on average each year 8,215 loans (books and items) were not returned.

Annually, the library team run an amnesty, and this commences on 17 February. During this period fines are waived by the library service for any books returned. Last year the amnesty resulted in over 700 books coming back into circulation during the amnesty period.

Books can be returned to any East Sussex library during opening hours. Alternatively, most libraries have drop boxes for out of hours returns. Some people may not have finished with the books they have out on loan, and in those cases the library service is asking members to renew them as soon as possible.

If customers are not quite ready to part with their favourite items, customers can help the library team by renewing the books online with their membership number and PIN.