

Report to: East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC)

Date of meeting: 3 March 2022

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Hospital Handovers

Purpose: To provide the Committee with an update on the work being undertaken to reduce Hospital Handover times.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) consider and comment on the update on hospital handovers; and
 - 2) consider whether to request a further report on any of the other areas covered in the update.
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1. Background

1.1. Ambulance crews arriving at hospital Emergency Departments (ED) with patients requiring admittance must wait for ED clinical staff to handover the care of their patient before they may leave and respond to additional calls. This process is called a hospital handover.

1.2. Hospital handovers require co-ordination between two separate NHS trusts – the ambulance trust and the hospital trust. In the case of East Sussex, the ambulance trust is South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) and the hospital trusts are East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT), University Hospitals Sussex NHS Foundation Trust (UHSussex), and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW).

1.3. The NHS national standard for hospital handovers is 15 minutes and there is an expectation of there being strictly no delays over 60 minutes and of hospital trusts aiming to avoid any over 30 minutes.

1.4. Delays in hospital handovers result in ambulance crews having to stay with their patients rather than getting back on the road. It also means that patients may have to wait in sub-optimal conditions for assessment and treatment. Hospital handover delays had increased due to COVID-19 and the effects this has had on patient care and ambulance response times have been widely reported.

1.5. At its last meeting on 2nd December 2021, the HOSC considered a winter planning update from the local NHS system that included an ambitious target to reduce hospital handover times to 30 minutes. The figure of 30 minutes is to allow crews to handover patients to the hospital trust in 15 minutes and then spend 15 minutes doing paperwork and cleaning the ambulance. The HOSC requested a report on hospital handovers at its next meeting in March 2022 to consider how the system had performed against this target.

2. Supporting information

2.1. The report attached as **Appendix 1** sets out the performance of South East Coast Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust (SECAmb) against hospital handover times for the four main hospital sites that East Sussex residents may attend – Eastbourne District General Hospital, Conquest Hospital, Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton and Tunbridge Wells Hospital.

2.2. The supplementary information provided in **Appendix 2** sets out the measures that East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT) is taking to address ambulance handover times. This includes

several focussed programmes to support discharges to reduce bed occupancy and improve bed availability for admissions for those who need acute level care. The report outlines the targets for improvements in hospital handovers and an initiative called “Ambulance Awareness Week” to be rolled out in early March. ESHT is also exploring other measures with SECamb and other partners to reduce the need to transport patients to hospital, ensure crews take patients to the right site first time, and to reduce the need for admissions where medically appropriate.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The reports attached as appendices provide an update to the Committee on the extent of hospital handover delays and the efforts being made to tackle them. HOSC is recommended to consider the reports and decide whether future updates are needed on any of the areas covered in the report.

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