

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

Date of meeting: 29 June 2023

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 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 further 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 meeting on 3 March 2022, the HOSC considered a report on hospital handovers to consider how the local NHS system was performing against its target to reduce hospital handover times to 30 minutes. The Committee received a further update report for its 22 September 2022 meeting, which included details on the actions being taken to improve handover times at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton and Tunbridge Wells Hospital, which had not been covered in the March report. The Committee requested another update report on hospital handover performance be brought to this meeting, and to include evidence of how trusts have worked together to make a difference in this area. The Committee also requested an update on ambulance response times when it considered the NHS Sussex Winter plan update at the March 2023. These are covered in section 1 of the attached report.

1.6. Since the Committee's last update SECAmb has seen an overall improvement in ambulance response times, and the hours lost to ambulance handover delays have reduced to a lower level compared to the previous year, details of which are set out in the report.

2. Supporting information

2.1. The report attached as **Appendix 1** provides an update from SECAMB on the issue of hospital handover times. It covers:

- Average response times to 999 calls broken down by type of medical emergency;
- Work to reduce hospital handover delays at each of the four main hospital sites that East Sussex residents may attend: Tunbridge Wells Hospital, Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton, Eastbourne District General Hospital and Conquest Hospital;
- Going Further for Winter NHSE Programme
- Medway Multi-purpose ambulance Centre

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 HOSC is recommended to consider the report and decide whether future updates are needed on any of the areas covered in the report.

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