

Winter demand management

People Overview &
Scrutiny Sub Committee

Tuesday 13 January 2026

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Director of Performance



Winter picture

- We are continuing to see record numbers of patients coming into our hospitals. We're under significant pressure, with many patients being brought in from nursing and care homes.
- In November we had our highest ever number of attendances per day (1,003).
- Performance for all types was 70.7%, having been impacted by the launch of our EPR go-live; until that point, we've been routinely in the upper quartile nationally.
- It's particularly challenging at Queen's, where our A&E was only designed for 325 a day. We see more than double this every day in a badly laid out, overcrowded department.
- This has meant some A&E patients are unfortunately receiving care in our corridors.
- While not ideal, we would rather bring patients into hospital to be treated than have them wait outside in ambulances.
- It's why we're campaigning for £35m to redevelop the department.
- Our staff are prioritising patients who are the most unwell, so people who aren't acutely unwell have very long waits.



Additional challenges

Electronic patient record launch

- In November, we launched our new electronic patient record (EPR).
- It holds all patient information including medications, test results, and treatment plans in one secure digital medical record.
- Staff are taking time to get used to the new system and a new way of working, which is impacting our performance.

Increase in flu cases

- Hospitals across the country are seeing increased numbers of patients presenting with flu symptoms.
- We had 33 patients in beds due to flu across both hospitals, as of 31 December 2025.

Discharge delays

- Discharge delays for medically fit patients while ongoing care is arranged.
- This is approx. 80-100 people per day which equates to 10% of beds occupied by patients who no longer need acute care.

Patients with mental health needs

- Our A&Es are becoming the default place of safety for those with mental health needs.
- In October, 399 patients with mental health needs attended our A&Es.



Addressing the challenges

- A new Medical SDEC (same day emergency care) has been introduced at Queen's which has had a significant impact in keeping patients out of the corridor. Senior doctors assess, diagnose and treat patients so they can go home that same day, if clinically safe to do so, rather than be admitted to a ward.
- Clinical teams are making decisions earlier to reduce unnecessary waiting in A&E.
- Patients who stay longer than expected on assessment units are being reviewed to identify and address delays that could be avoided.
- Ongoing work with PELC, who run our urgent treatment centres, to make the patient experience smoother from start to finish.
- Collaboration with London Ambulance Service
 - developing a Single Point of Access (SPoA)
 - seeking to increase uptake of the Frailty Advice Line,
 - working to improved utilisation of the Ageing Well Centre at St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub



Addressing the challenges

- At KGH, patients with mental health needs are now assessed in our urgent treatment centre (where our less seriously ill, Type 3 patients are cared for) with support from NELFT, our mental health provider. They only come into A&E if they need emergency care.
- We're setting up monthly meetings with the police, social services and the ambulance service to agree a strategy to respond appropriately to children and young people who end up in our A&Es when they are in crisis, or their placement has broken down.
- Review of discharge processes to reduce unnecessary extra inpatient stays overnight and help patients leave hospital as soon as it is safe for them to do so.
- Operational staff involved in bed and ward rounds to help identify and prevent potential delays in patient discharges.
- Working collaboratively with the ICB and other system partners – demand management cannot be managed in isolation.



Key takeaways

- We apologise to our patients and their families for long waits and for being cared for in corridors
- Please encourage residents to have their flu vaccination this winter to protect themselves and the reduce pressure on our hospitals.
- Please remind residents to go to the most appropriate setting for their condition, including GPs, pharmacists and walk-in centres, to ensure they receive the right treatment as quickly as possible and emergency resources are available for those who need them most.

