

Report title: Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust update	
Report to: Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust has three strategic goals, focused on quality of care, equity for our population and opportunities for our people. We consider our annual objectives against this strategy in the context of the needs of the mid and south Essex population, and the integrated care strategy of our system partners.

In this report to the Committee, the Trust presents updates on planned improvements and operational data.

2. Action required

To note the contents of the report.

3. Operational update from the Trust

3.1 Urgent and emergency care

- The Trust continues to see large number of patients arriving at its three emergency departments (EDs). Work is underway to meet the national target of delivering 78% four-hour performance by March 2025.
- Across all the Trust's EDs, performance was 71.2% in March, up from 68.1% in February.
- This was its best performance since April 2023, despite attendance in March being 10% above the average for the rest of the year.
- The Trust has in place a range of initiatives to improve urgent and emergency care delivery. There is an overall focus on alternative options for care in the community, such as the use of Unscheduled Care Coordination Hubs, as well a greater use of virtual wards.
- The Trust is also working to reduce the use of bank and agency for its medical staffing in the EDs, which will reduce expenditure and provide greater consistency.
- Measure taken at each hospital include:
 - Improving patient pathways in the ED at Basildon Hospital, especially for trauma, orthopaedics, surgery, and maternity care, so that each patient is placed in a bed suitable for their needs
 - Work is underway at Broomfield Hospital to improve processes for patients in the ED, who do not need a hospital bed, to discharge them more quickly. Staff are also identifying patients earlier with complex discharge needs
 - At Southend Hospital, there are initiatives to improve the use of same day emergency care unit, the clinical decisions unit, and acute medical unit by bringing urgent care

facilities physically closer, so that the right staff are concentrated in the best place.

3.2 Ambulance handovers

- All three EDs of the Trust continue to see a substantial flow of patients
- Performance improved in March, when 84.2% of the ambulances were handed over in under 30 minutes, up from 83.2% in February; and 44.9% handed over in under 15 minutes, up from 41.9% in February.
- This improvement is despite ambulance arrivals being 7% higher compared to the rest of the year.
- The average time to handover a patient was 23 minutes in March, which was the best in the region. The East of England regional average was 33 minutes.
- We are reviewing our rapid assessment, treatment, and ambulance handovers processes, working with our system partners, and work to make better use of same day emergency care facilities will also help to reduce handover times.

3.3 Cancer performance

- Improving cancer care performance continues to be a priority for the Trust.
- In February, 71.1% of patients were given their cancer diagnosis within 28 days – the faster diagnosis standard (FDS). This compares to 75.4% in the region, and was up from 59.9% in January.
- Breast cancer capacity remains a challenge for the Trust. Funding from the Cancer Alliance will continue in 2024/25 to bring in additional capacity, while the Trust will redirect referrals from Basildon to Southend Hospital where clinically appropriate.
- At the end of March, the Trust had 439 patients waiting over 62 days for treatment, which was better than its target of 475 patients. The year-end-position has been recognised by the region for its role in improving the national outlook.
- One of the more challenged cancers is urology. To improve performance, the Trust has taken initiatives including:
 - Use of a pathway analyser tool to identify delays in the pathway
 - Holding waiting list meetings three times a week, led by the director for outpatients, cancer, and Referral To Treatment access, to focus on the 62-day and 28-day faster diagnosis standards
 - Implementing learning from trusts known for best practice in faster diagnosis and backlog management around urology.

3.4 Elective care and actions to reduce waiting times

- At the end of the 2023/24 financial year the Trust's waiting list stood at 163,214, around 15% lower than its peak in September 2023.
- The Trust has increased its validation team to remove old or outdated entries on the waiting list, such as when someone no longer needs a procedure, with an aim to reduce the total waiting list by 40,000 by March 2025.
- The number of patients waiting over 65 weeks for their treatment was 1,414.
- The number of patients waiting over 78 weeks for their treatment was 98. This included patients in need of oral surgery, the highly complex care involved in plastic surgery, as well as through patient choice or those unfit for treatment.
- In 2024/25 the Trust is aiming to virtually eliminate waits over 65 weeks by the end of September 2024, while it is focusing on eliminating 78-week waits by the end of June 2024. The trajectories that will guide plans to reduce these backlogs are being worked on.
- As outlined in the March 2024 report, these efforts will be supported by better and more efficient use of the Trust's theatres, new facilities including a surgical day unit at Southend and the cardiac catheter lab installed at the Essex Cardiothoracic Centre in 2023.

3.5 Discharges from hospital

- In 2024/25 the Trust and system have a priority to further reduce length of stay to improve flow by increasing discharges to community capacity, including intermediate care beds and virtual wards.
- In March, 45.9% of patients stayed for more than seven days, which is an improvement from February's 47.8%. The proportion staying for over 14 days was 24.4%, the best performance in 2023/24 and in line with the region.
- The Integrated Discharge team are reviewing long length of stays and other relevant data to identify and prioritise medically optimised patients to be discharged so that they can go home or on to their next stage of care sooner.
- In March, there were 166 patients who had a delayed discharge, a reduction from 175 in February. The plan is to reduce this further in 2024/25.

3.6 Diagnostics

- Delivering diagnostic tests within six weeks remains a priority. The Trust achieved this for 68.4% of patients in March, down from 72% in February.
- There has been considerable improvement in urodynamics, flexi sigmoidoscopy, and gastroscopy, while services including audiology, echocardiography and cystoscopy faced challenges due to increased demand and vacancies.
- Additional mobile capacity for CT and MRI scans has been added at Orsett and Braintree hospitals which is helping to reduce waiting lists, with 1,700 CT and 1,100 MRI scans per month. This is alongside extra third-party capacity for CT, MRI and ultrasound.
- Additional capacity for endoscopy is now available at Orsett Hospital, ahead of the opening of the community diagnostic centres (CDCs), which has helped to reduce the time for patients to receive diagnoses for suspected lower gastrointestinal cancer.
- The Ophthalmology Diagnostic Hub in Orsett continues to support access to faster diagnostics for people waiting for tests who are suspected of having glaucoma or medical retinal conditions. Since opening on 12 March, the clinic has seen 706 patients from across Essex. A further clinic is being planned for this summer in Tyler's Ride to support patients in that area of the county. These clinics help the Trust to reduce its waiting lists more quickly and provide a better patient experience.

4 System financial position

- The Trust has been working to reduce its financial deficit against a challenging backdrop for some time. The system spends £2.1billion each year and runs one of the largest acute hospital trusts in the country.
- Despite making savings of £28million across three organisations this year, the Trust is still forecasting an overall deficit of £29.7million (after using £89million of non-recurrent funding during 2023/24). In the absence of non-recurrent funding the Trust anticipates the deficit rising to around £102million at the end of 2024/25, after the delivery of further stretching saving opportunities.
- NHS England - recognising the challenges that the system faces - have moved the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System into segment 4 of the National Oversight Framework.
- The Trust has developed detailed plans to improve value, building on existing programmes of work, recognising that it needs to go further and faster than before to significantly improve its financial position over the next 12 months.

- As well as on-going work to reduce length of stay and temporary staffing costs, the Trust has also worked up a raft of other schemes including:
 - Over-performing against its elective recovery target, with increased theatre utilisation
 - Closing escalation beds over the summer months by reducing unnecessary admissions
 - Looking at staffing models with a view to reducing the overall headcount by 600.
- Working more efficiently also leads to better patient care, and any action that is taken will need to be sustainable and drive improvement clinically – not just financially.

5 News and developments

- Tackle the Tower, a charity Abseil challenge organised by Mid and South Essex Hospitals Charity will take place on Saturday 18 May at Southend Hospital. This annual event has taken place over the last nine years and seen more than 500 adventure-seekers collectively raising over £200,000. For further information and to register: www.msehospitalscharity.co.uk
- The Arrhythmia team from the Essex Cardiothoracic Centre (CTC) at Basildon Hospital have won the Digital Innovation award at this year's Global Cardiovascular Awards. This recognises how they are helping patients from across mid and south Essex monitor their heart rhythm remotely using a mobile app called Fibrichck.
- A maternity bereavement team at Broomfield Hospital, known as The Blossom Team, were given the Bereavement Team of the Year at the Mariposa Awards for the compassionate care they provide to families experiencing baby loss. Individual members of the team were also celebrated with a special recognition award in the Compassionate Award, won by Max Ridley-Snell, a Specialist Bereavement Midwife, and another win for the Community Award by Julie Ellingford, the team's dedicated support group volunteer.