

HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
22 MARCH 2018
RESPONSE TO PRESSURES ON URGENT AND EMERGENCY CARE SERVICES IN THE POST-CHRISTMAS PERIOD
REPORT OF HEAD OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To review how the urgent and emergency care system responded to significant pressures in the post-Christmas period.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to review the effectiveness of preparations for, and the response to pressures on the urgent and emergency care system during the winter period, with a particular focus on the post-Christmas period; and the lessons to be learnt for winter planning 2018/19.

3 Background information

- 3.1 In January 2018 Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust (NUH) and East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) announced that their services were facing significant pressure.
- 3.2 NUH declared a business continuity incident on 3 January 2018 in response to exceptional post-Christmas pressures on services, following a sustained increase in respiratory and frail elderly attendances and admissions. Patients were urged not to go to the Emergency Department unless in a real emergency. Nationally NHS England asked all hospitals to consider cancelling additional outpatient and routine operations during January to alleviate pressures on emergency services. As part of its winter planning, NUH had already significantly reduced the number of routine operations planned but, following a review of NHS England recommendations, took the decision to cancel some further routine operations and reduce/ cancel some outpatient clinics and redeploy staff to more pressured areas of the hospitals, including the Emergency Department.
- 3.3 The Committee received information from commissioners that in response to issues with discharge from NUH and flow through the system, in January additional community bed capacity had been commissioned across the City and County areas to take patients who were well enough to be discharged to a community bed, relieving pressure on beds at NUH.

- 3.4 Also on 3 January 2018, EMAS escalated to National Ambulance Resilience Unit's Resource Escalation Action Plan (REAP) Level 4 (the highest escalation alert level for ambulance trusts) in response to huge pressures in the NHS system; lengthy delays experienced by many ambulance crews with hospital handover; and 999 demand.
- 3.5 The Committee requested that representatives of the system provide a debrief for the Committee on the reason and context for those pressures; how pressures were dealt with, including the effectiveness of the implementation of winter pressures planning and business continuity planning; and lessons to be learnt for the future to minimise the impact on patients and patient outcomes.
- 3.6 NUH Chief Operating Officer; the Lead for Urgent and Emergency Care from Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group on behalf of the A&E Delivery Board; and the EMAS General Manager for Nottinghamshire and the Ambulance Operations Manager will be attending the meeting to discuss the situation with the Committee and answer questions about the system response.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Presentation 'Winter 2017/18 – the system's focus on keeping patients safe'

Briefing from East Midlands Ambulance Service

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 6.1 Press releases from NUH and EMAS dated 3 January 2018

7 Wards affected

- 7.1 All

8 Contact information

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