
Waiting for Hospital Care – Responses to our recommendations

Report and Recommendations

This summer we published our report “Waiting for hospital care”. <https://www.healthwatchsurrey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Waiting-for-hospital-care-June-2022.pdf>. Against a background of growing waiting lists, this project set out to understand the impact of delayed treatment on the health and wellbeing of those waiting. Our aim was to deliver patient-centred insight that could guide trusts in their efforts to minimise the detriment of delays.

Our report made the following recommendations:

1. Think Active Management – is the health of people on waiting lists being actively managed, or is it a hiatus in their care?
2. Review processes to ensure all patients are given the information, advice, contacts and signposting they need to stay well and minimise deterioration while waiting
3. Communicate with patients regularly to reduce stress, improve trust, and reduce timewasting inbound queries

Responses to our recommendations

When local Healthwatch make recommendations to providers, those providers have a statutory duty to respond within 30 days of receiving our recommendations.

We requested responses from the 4 main hospitals within Surrey Heartlands:

- East Surrey Hospital,
- Royal Surrey County Hospital,
- Epsom Hospital,
- Ashford and St Peter’s Hospital

with correspondence being sent to both the CEO responsible for these hospitals and the place-based leader for that area.

While Frimley Park hospital lies within Surrey the findings for the Frimley Health and Care ICS were reported separately. However, in discussions with the Interim Quality Lead we understand the management at Frimley Health found our recommendations valuable and actionable, and the team are working with the different directorates to review patient communication.

In June and July we received responses from

- Surrey and Sussex Healthcare (incorporating East Surrey Hospital)
- Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Guildford & Waverley Health and Care Alliance (incorporating Royal Surrey County Hospital)

We received a brief response from Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust in early Autumn.

We have also had meetings with Surrey and Sussex Healthcare and Guildford and Waverley Health and Care Alliance to discuss priority areas.

Our comment on the responses

- We are pleased that all providers recognise the need to improve communication with patients on their waiting lists.
- We appreciate that a review of generic advice, information and signposting is a resource-heavy task that will need to be undertaken by multiple different departments – there is no quick universal fix.
- Patients are crying out for regular, proactive, individualised updates or reassurance, however brief. We hope to see more initiatives aimed to meet this need in the future.
- While we recognise the potential value of My Planned Care, people are looking for personalised updates, and providers need to remain mindful of digital access/digital exclusivity.
- We hope providers can share initiatives and learn from each other's experiences, to maximise both patient benefit and efficiency of practice.

Responses – recognition

The responses from Surrey and Sussex Healthcare, Ashford and St Peter's Hospitals and Guildford & Waverley Health and Care Alliance all:

- **Welcomed our report and insight**
 - as ever your report provides valuable and balanced insight **Ashford and St Peter's**
 - the report has stimulated positive discussion across both Primary and Secondary Care **Guildford & Waverley**
- **Recognised that communication with people on waiting lists is not currently as good as providers would like it to be**
 - we recognise that we need to improve both patient experience and communication **Guildford & Waverley**
- **Reflected that this is a challenging area for providers already under considerable pressure:**
 - We have looked at a single point of access for patients...there is a significant resource implication...not affordable this year **Surrey and Sussex Healthcare**
- **Are committed to improvements in communications:**
 - we are working together [at place] to address the key challenges. **Guildford & Waverley**
 - Communication, Navigation and Access is one of 5 strategic priority areas for the NW Surrey Alliance overall **Ashford and St Peter's**

Responses – summary of actions

Providers told us of workstreams and plans intended to improve communications – some complete, some in progress. The full responses are appended to this document, but key actions that reflect our recommendations include:

Guildford and Waverley:

- In a range of clinical areas patients are actively triaged and contacted and offered leaflets and signposting
- Clinical Lead is currently working with clinical networks and RSCH to consider patient information points, triage and ongoing assessment
- Working collaboratively at Place to review lists and communicate more actively.

Surrey and Sussex:

- Recently updated many patient information leaflets for elective care
- Clinic letters all have direct contact details and telephone extensions; some have email addresses
- Started work on implementation of My Planned Care
- Relunched the Outpatient Improvement Workstream; added signposting to the workstream (in response to our report)
- Ambition to expand the outpatient booking team to take on some burden of managing patient contact

Ashford and St Peter's:

- Recently reviewed communication across the trust to improve clarity and reduce the number of different comms patients receive
- Create clearer points of contact for patients under the NW Surrey Referral Support Service
- Employed Care Coordinators to help people navigate and access support in the community
- Long term ambition for a single point of contact across all services

Epsom and St Helier:

The response from the Managing Director of Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust was delayed while waiting for implementation data on My Planned Care: to avoid further delay we received a short response focussed on the implementation of My Planned Care:

“It is evident that these recommendations align closely with the objectives of the national My Planned Care platform which is currently being implemented in all acute hospitals and so we would expect these recommendations will be largely addressed as part of this...

“Once this platform has been robustly implemented, we will then evaluate whether any further developments are required to improve the experiences of patients waiting for hospital care further”

Detailed Responses



Response from SASH
(1).pdf



Response from
AStP.pdf



Response from
G&W.pdf



EStH Response.pdf