



Greater Manchester Weekly Winter Stakeholder Briefing

14th December 2023 – Issue 3

This weekly briefing is intended to update stakeholders on how services in Greater Manchester are performing and how we work together to manage demand and provide care and support to the public.

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Media statement

Mark Fisher, chief executive of NHS Greater Manchester:

“The pressure on the NHS can feel relentless at this time of year. As we experience more spells of cold weather, we see a rise in seasonal illnesses as well as staff sickness. We are now also preparing for the latest round of strikes, once more prioritising urgent and emergency care – including emergency and life-saving surgery – to protect patient safety and ensure people who need help the most can receive the best possible care.

“Staff in health and social care continue to work hard to address pressures across the system. There is great partnership work every day on some of our toughest issues. Such as improving ambulance handover times to get ambulances back on the road quicker to respond to emergencies; getting people home or to another place of care when they don’t need medical help from hospital anymore; and providing more urgent dental care for those in need.

“As we approach the festive period, the public can help play their part by getting to know the wide range of NHS services that are available to them. If you are unwell, you can access healthcare advice in many ways including through several community services such as your local pharmacy, urgent dental and eye services, or seeking help through NHS 111. People can also book a GP appointment for help and advice.”

Weekly narrative

Demand for services, and attendances at all emergency departments including paediatrics have been consistently high this week. 999 calls have also increased this week. Towards the end of the week, there has been a reduction in ambulance handover delays, but overall acute hospitals remain very pressured. Mental health providers continue to experience some challenges with bed capacity and securing appropriate placements when people are ready to be discharged.

Across all providers and within both primary and community care, extensive work is underway to prepare for the next period of industrial action by junior doctors from 7am on 20th December to 7am on 23rd December.

Interview requests

- 🚩 Interview opportunities available on request.

Campaigns and shareable content

- 🚩 **Get To Know Where To Go – keeping you and your loved ones healthy this winter:** help us to showcase the fantastic services on offer across our NHS! Download assets via Google Drive [here](#) or our website [here](#). These include resources signposting to services, social media graphics along with accompanying messages, visuals for waiting room



display screens and an advert you can print or use in your external communication channels..

Please tag NHS GM in your social media posts – X @NHS_GM and Facebook @NHSGreaterManchester.

Case study

Shining a light on ambulance handover improvement work

Despite a challenged week with handover performance, two hospitals locally have seen significant, sustained improvements in hospital handover delays and are currently in the top performers nationally for the year to-date. North Manchester General Hospital had the best ambulance turnaround figures for any hospital in England so far for 2023/24, with Salford Royal Hospital also featuring in the list of top ten hospitals for mean (average) turnaround time.

National guidance states that patients arriving at an emergency department by ambulance must be handed over to the care of emergency department staff within 15 minutes. Previously, the emergency department at North Manchester was regularly breaching this standard. A huge amount of work has taken place, including engagement with staff and system partners, to look at the contributing factors to delays and to improve the situation.

The hospital has increased their capacity at the front door with senior clinicians supporting assessments and decision making in the rapid assessment and treatment unit. Additional bays and medical wards were opened, which has improved hospital flow and how quickly patients are admitted to a bed. A power hour has been introduced to help support and escalate decision making and triage processes when several ambulance arrivals close together.

Additional data:

- From April 2022 to October 2022, North Manchester General Hospital had 228 incidents of handover delays of over 2 hours. From April 2023 to October 2023, there have been 0 incidents.
- From April 2022 to October 2022, 12.4% of handovers at North Manchester General were over 60 minutes. From April 2023 to October 2023, the rate has reduced to 0.5%.

Data taken from Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (AACE).

Primary care data

There are approximately 1,800 primary care providers, with a workforce of around 22,000.

We recently launched our [blueprint](#) for primary care to improve access to GPs, dentists, optometrists, and pharmacists.



- ✚ Dentistry – of 221 practices reporting, 31% of dental practices are feeling a significant or very significant increase in demand, with a further 21% of practices facing extreme demand.
- ✚ General practice - of 265 practices reporting, 29% of GP practices are feeling a significant or very significant increase in demand, with a further 2% of practices facing extreme demand.
- ✚ Optometry - of 75 practices reporting, 8% of optical sites are feeling a significant or very significant increase in demand, with a further 1% of practices facing extreme demand.
- ✚ Pharmacy – of 96 pharmacies reporting, 23% of sites are feeling significantly challenged and 8% are feeling challenged but coping.

Note, work is underway to encourage more practices to use the pulse check so that support can be provided where appropriate.

Urgent and emergency care data

- ✚ For the week 4th to 10th December 2023, there were 23,056 attendances; of which type 1 attendances were 18,950. All attendances are lower than the previous week, however, type 1 attendances are slightly higher and above the six-week average.
- ✚ Hospital bed occupancy across Greater Manchester acute trusts has been just over 92% all week, with one day peaking at 93.5%.
- ✚ Paediatric services remain challenged and bed occupancy is hovering above 90%, though high-dependency unit capacity has improved.
- ✚ Attendances at emergency departments for mental health conditions have remained stable however the system is significantly constrained by a lack of mental health bed capacity in Greater Manchester, as well as nationally.
- ✚ Ambulance activity has been high with 4,328 ambulances attending Greater Manchester hospitals, a slight reduction on the previous week.
- ✚ Definitions on types of attendance can be found using this [link](#).

Hospital discharge data

The discharge figures are a snapshot in time provided for the weekly brief to illustrate both demand and pressure. These figures will be shared weekly.

- ✚ There were 810 people medically fit for discharge from acute trusts as of 12th December.
- ✚ This week (6th December to 12th December) there were 834 admissions to hospital across Greater Manchester and 943 discharges.

Reasons for delayed discharges are complex and vary from person-to-person. It is often the case that there is not sufficient capacity to provide appropriate care outside of a hospital setting to meet a specific level of need required. Other reasons include but not limited to waiting for rehabilitation services, further diagnostic testing, community equipment, medicines etc.



As demand for hospital beds increases over the winter months, a timely discharge is important both for an individual's ongoing recovery; and to make sure that people attending at emergency departments who need to be admitted do not have a lengthy wait.

Operational pressures escalation levels (OPEL) framework

The framework is used to provide a consistent approach to help understand the drivers of pressure and look at mitigating actions to manage performance. There is a focus on prioritising discharge and improved coordination and communication between acute and community providers.

Detailed work has taken place across Greater Manchester to implement the new national OPEL framework that has come into effect this month. Acute provider OPEL scores will be automatically calculated using a nationally defined algorithm. A Greater Manchester OPEL score will also be calculated which in addition to hospitals looks at primary care, community care and mental health providers.

The framework ensures that there are both clear actions to take at different levels, as well as oversight from system partners.

More information here: [NHS England » Operational Pressures Escalation Levels \(OPEL\) Framework 2023/24](#).

Industrial action

Junior doctors will be taking industrial action on these days:

- ✚ 7am on 20th December to 7am on 23rd December 2023.
- ✚ 7am on 3rd January 2024 to 7am on 9th January 2024.

Who is a junior doctor? Junior doctors are qualified doctors in clinical training. They have completed a medical degree and can have up to nine years' of working experience as a hospital doctor, depending on their specialty, or up to five years working and gaining experience to become a general practitioner (GP). All junior doctors work under the supervisor of a senior doctor.

Significant disruption to services is anticipated. It is important that the public do not hesitate to come forward to access care if they need it. NHS 111 online should be their first port of call if they need urgent health advice on days of strike action.

More information will be shared on our dedicated industrial action webpage: [Information for the public on industrial action \(strikes\) | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(gmintegratedcare.org.uk\)](#).



Patients with appointments at hospitals and GP practices are asked to attend these as planned unless they are told otherwise. If you are not contacted, please attend your appointment as planned.

Useful information

- ✚ **Greater Manchester Bank Holiday Pharmacy Opening Hours:** [Bank Holiday pharmacy opening hours | Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership \(gmintegratedcare.org.uk\)](#). People should plan ahead and order repeat prescriptions as soon as possible before the Bank Holidays. During the festive period, people should try and order 7 – 10 days before a prescription is due to run out. Have you booked your appointment?
- ✚ **Warm spaces in England:** the UK Health Security Agency's [warm spaces toolkit](#) provides a framework for organisations seeking to develop or evaluate a warm space for their local population during the winter. It is based on a systematic literature review, a small survey of local authorities across England and guidance from an expert network of providers of such spaces. The toolkit includes case studies sharing examples of best practice as well as signposting to resources to support organisations in developing their warm space offer.